

INTRODUCING PRESIDENT AMBAR



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This page: The Cass Gilbert-designed Allen Memorial Art Museum, along with the Venturi-designed addition. On the cover: Carmen Twillie Ambar, photographed by Tanya Rosen-Jones '97



The World Needs Oberlin

THIS IS MY FIRST COLUMN FOR THE *OBERLIN Alumni Magazine*, and it might be the first time that some of you in the Oberlin community will hear from me. I hope that it's the beginning of a productive dialogue. I plan to be in touch often—all of my statements will be easily available online—and I welcome feedback.

I want to use this space now and in the future to talk a bit about our purpose together. We know these are times of national challenge. We know we have challenges specific to higher education, and to Oberlin in particular.

Just two years before the founding of Oberlin, our nation found itself in the midst of tremendous political and social tumult. At that time, there was an outsider president who captured much of the nation's attention and had successfully helped orchestrate an Indian Removal Act in 1830; in 1831 the first tribes from Ohio and other states were forcibly removed and marched westward. That year also saw Nat Turner's rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia. William Lloyd Garrison, the great abolitionist leader, began publication of *The Liberator*. A Second Great Awakening was underway.

Here at Oberlin, the seeds of a new college were being planted. A new vision was soon offered about who could be educated, who could teach, and who, indeed, could one day lead. It was the beginning of a vital history, not without flaws and imperfections. Yet, it was

a transcendent vision about what higher education could mean, not only to individual souls, but also to the soul of a nation that had been from its inception a source of great hope, and yet, in equal measure, a source of great despair for many of its citizens.

Oberlin was an early institution—the first in a number of crucial instances—in demonstrating that hope needn't be misplaced, that despair needn't be defining.

Oberlin was born in a period of national struggle and crisis. There was great contention about who we were, and who we were to become. Oberlin's founding has me asking today: What is the purpose of an Oberlin education in times of national crisis?

I think often of what we saw in Virginia this past summer. As I watched those marching in Charlottesville, I was struck by their youth. They looked as if they were the age of many Oberlin students. I began to say to myself—given what we hope our Oberlin students will go out and do, to change the world for good—that our mission of academic excellence and social justice has never been more relevant. Our charge, then, is to be good stewards, to make the difficult decisions that ensure Oberlin's sustainability. Because Charlottesville says that we are needed more today than we have ever been needed.

CARMEN TWILLIE AMBAR
President, *Oberlin College*

Oberlin

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WAITING TO EXCEL

I LOVED READING the piece from Lilah Drafts-Johnson '18 ("All Roads Lead to Oberlin... Eventually," Summer 2017) about being waitlisted at Oberlin. I think a lot of us, in retrospect, appreciate that Oberlin may have handed us our first real taste of rejection and failure. Those of us who do truly appreciate it no doubt realize how these experiences have shaped us into the best, most resilient versions of ourselves. To lack the experience of failing is to never truly know oneself. The constant struggle to maintain perfection keeps us from becoming who we were meant to be in this world. Thanks for your story, Lilah!

ALISON DONIGER '08
Berkeley, Calif.

THERE'S ALWAYS TIMARA

I FINALLY FOUND time to read "The Conservatory at 150" (*Oberlin Conservatory Magazine*, 2015) and wanted to add to your timeline for the year 1989. This was the year TIMARA became an official major; until then it was only offered as an "independent major." I served as the student representative on the committee to create the official major requirements and also became its first graduate. If I remember correctly, Professor Gary Nelson and Visiting Professor Denise Ondishko were the two faculty members on the committee. As noted in the timeline, this was the same year that the jazz studies major was also formalized.

JOSHUA SALESIN '89
Santa Cruz, Calif.

CLASS CONSCIOUS

A DECADE AGO, the Class of 2007 donated a large portion of its class gift to the Graduate Teacher Education Program (GTEP). GTEP

was a one-year program that utilized the resources and strengths of Oberlin College, the Oberlin City Schools, and the local community toward a Master of Education degree. After the program ended in 2009, there were quite a few educational materials remaining. These included an iPod for listening to picture books and chapter books, big books for group reading, jeweler's loupes for sketching, and tiny plastic bears for practicing counting.

Professor Deborah Roose, former director of GTEP, wanted to ensure these materials went to a good home. We are pleased to report that Roneisha Kinney Campbell '08 (GTEP MED '09) now uses these materials in her third-grade classroom in Canton, Ohio. All of the children in her school are on free or reduced lunch, and her students did not have many supplies and enrichment materials. Roneisha reports that her students loved the gift and use the materials all the time. Each year, most of the children in her class make almost two years of academic growth. The success of Roneisha's students is a prime example of how great teachers and rich, engaging materials matter. We are proud of all of our Oberlin classmates who are teachers and are grateful that our class could support the important work of Roneisha and other GTEP alumni.

Well done, Class of 2007!

JULIA DOCTOROFF '07
London, UK

MATHILDA MCGEE-TUBB '07
Boston, Mass.

The writers are president and vice president, respectively, of the Class of 2007.

RESOURCE-FULL

HERE ARE SOME ways the Oberlin community of students, faculty, administrators, and alumni might function as a special social resource in these terrible times.

Oberlin must always nourish and celebrate the arts. The Allen Memorial Art Museum could exhibit the works of refugee artists; the conservatory could put on concerts in which refugee musicians perform; and art students could make posters to publicize local job fairs and then sell the posters and donate the proceeds to support programs for residents of Lorain County facing hard times.

Students and faculty members must always meet the highest academic standards. A topic can be relevant to both scholarly debates and to social, political, or economic controversies. Such a topic can be studied as rigorously as any other, and the results can be presented with proper documentation, clarity, and order. For example: take a white, middle-aged, male, unemployed, one-time factory worker—racist, sexist, homophobic in his feelings and jokes. He regularly listens to right-wing talk shows, and he votes for right-wing candidates, even occasionally attends rallies for them, though at those rallies he only stands and cheers, nothing violent. Are there moral rights that this "deplorable" doesn't have because of his attitudes and conduct? If so, which ones and why?

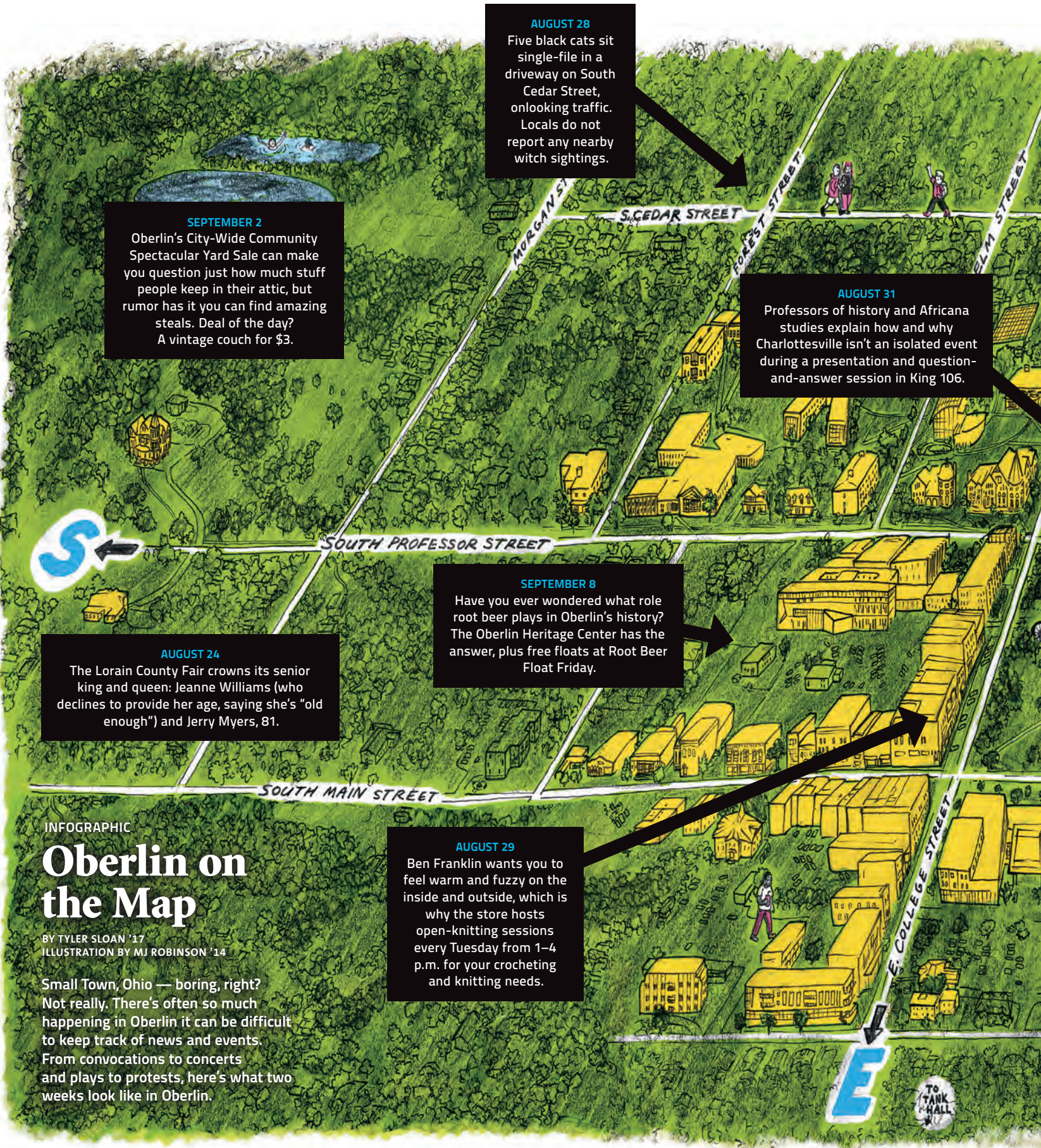
Alumni must help maintain Oberlin's traditions. One tradition is outreach beyond the campus, and one way alumni could continue this work would be to organize conferences—on campus but also in places where there are resource-rich Alumni Association chapters—at which relevant topics would be treated in intellectually responsible ways by experts (including, as appropriate, some of the many alumni who have become professors), with presentations geared to educated non-specialists and sessions open to non-Oberliners and, if possible, posted online. One topic might be the physical, economic, and legal obstacles facing homeowners trying to reduce their personal dependence on fossil fuels. Another might be doing more to protect workers from harmful impacts of globalization and technological change.

Too many of those in power today do not care whether the poor have health care, think it is better to win than to have allies, and all but boast of their invincible ignorance regarding global warming. Decent people should respond to the harm they do. Members of the Oberlin community should go beyond protest and use the resources they share to limit or offset the harm.

CHARLES NEWMAN '65
Jackson Heights, N.Y.

Oberlin Alumni Magazine welcomes comments from readers. Please address your letters to Oberlin Alumni Magazine, 247 W. Lorain St., Suite C, Oberlin, OH 44074-1089; or email: alum.mag@oberlin.edu. Letters may be edited for clarity and space. Additional letters may appear on OAM's website at www.oberlin.edu/oam.

Around Tappan Square



SEPTEMBER 2
Oberlin's City-Wide Community Spectacular Yard Sale can make you question just how much stuff people keep in their attic, but rumor has it you can find amazing steals. Deal of the day? A vintage couch for \$3.

AUGUST 28
Five black cats sit single-file in a driveway on South Cedar Street, onlooking traffic. Locals do not report any nearby witch sightings.

AUGUST 31
Professors of history and Africana studies explain how and why Charlottesville isn't an isolated event during a presentation and question-and-answer session in King 106.

AUGUST 24
The Lorain County Fair crowns its senior king and queen: Jeanne Williams (who declines to provide her age, saying she's "old enough") and Jerry Myers, 81.

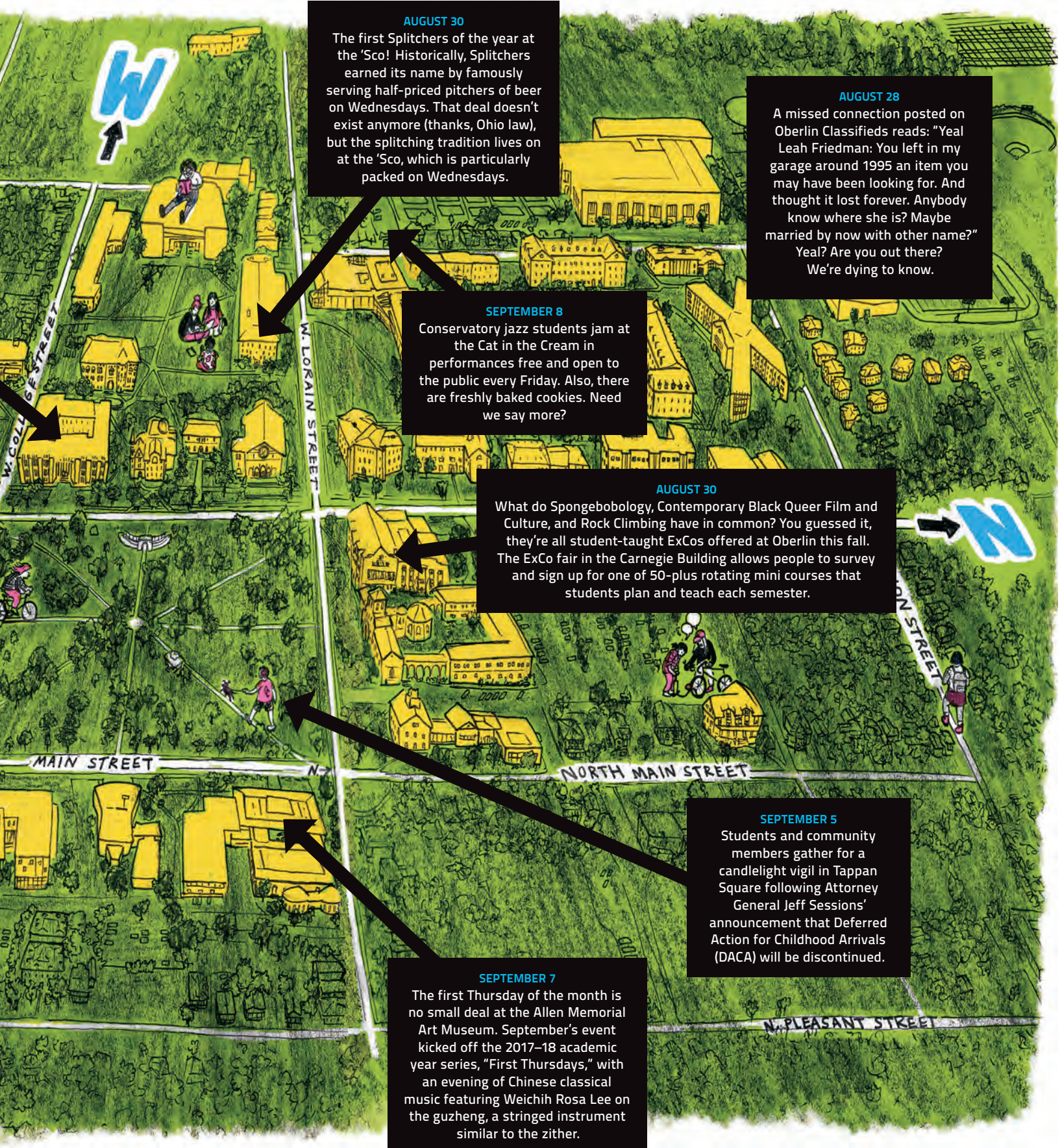
SEPTEMBER 8
Have you ever wondered what role root beer plays in Oberlin's history? The Oberlin Heritage Center has the answer, plus free floats at Root Beer Float Friday.

AUGUST 29
Ben Franklin wants you to feel warm and fuzzy on the inside and outside, which is why the store hosts open-knitting sessions every Tuesday from 1-4 p.m. for your crocheting and knitting needs.

INFOGRAPHIC Oberlin on the Map

BY TYLER SLOAN '17
ILLUSTRATION BY MJ ROBINSON '14

Small Town, Ohio — boring, right? Not really. There's often so much happening in Oberlin it can be difficult to keep track of news and events. From convocations to concerts and plays to protests, here's what two weeks look like in Oberlin.



AUGUST 30
The first Splitchers of the year at the 'Sco! Historically, Splitchers earned its name by famously serving half-priced pitchers of beer on Wednesdays. That deal doesn't exist anymore (thanks, Ohio law), but the splitching tradition lives on at the 'Sco, which is particularly packed on Wednesdays.

AUGUST 28
A missed connection posted on Oberlin Classifieds reads: "Yeal Leah Friedman: You left in my garage around 1995 an item you may have been looking for. And thought it lost forever. Anybody know where she is? Maybe married by now with other name?"
Yeal? Are you out there?
We're dying to know.

SEPTEMBER 8
Conservatory jazz students jam at the Cat in the Cream in performances free and open to the public every Friday. Also, there are freshly baked cookies. Need we say more?

AUGUST 30
What do Spongebobology, Contemporary Black Queer Film and Culture, and Rock Climbing have in common? You guessed it, they're all student-taught ExCos offered at Oberlin this fall. The ExCo fair in the Carnegie Building allows people to survey and sign up for one of 50-plus rotating mini courses that students plan and teach each semester.

SEPTEMBER 5
Students and community members gather for a candlelight vigil in Tappan Square following Attorney General Jeff Sessions' announcement that Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) will be discontinued.

SEPTEMBER 7
The first Thursday of the month is no small deal at the Allen Memorial Art Museum. September's event kicked off the 2017-18 academic year series, "First Thursdays," with an evening of Chinese classical music featuring Weichih Rosa Lee on the guzheng, a stringed instrument similar to the zither.



MUSEUM PIECES

Reunifying Oberlin's Natural History Collection

BY HILLARY HEMPSTEAD

INSIDE KING HALL, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF Anthropology Amy Margaris '96 sifts through bins of plastic sleeves. In each is a carefully preserved object from the department's ethnographic collection. Margaris gingerly holds a colorfully threaded sack made from the pericardium, the membrane that surrounds the heart of an animal. The once pliable bag, Margaris explains, used to flex and bend to hold whatever was placed inside.

Alongside the delicate bag are other objects: a bentwood cedar box whose purpose was likely for berry collecting, and an oblong wooden bowl whose dark stains suggest it was a vessel for holding meat.

These are just three of the 36 items in Oberlin's Arctic collection, an assemblage of ethnographic artifacts that came to the college in 1889 as part of a collection exchange with the Smithsonian Institution (known then as the United States National Museum). Each of the pieces was obtained by a who's-who of 19th-century Smithsonian naturalists who travelled to Native communities in Alaska and Canada to meet Yup'ik, Inuit, and Innu peoples. The objects still possess the Smithsonian's handwritten tags;

"Their sister objects are still at the Smithsonian in a famed collection," Margaris says.

And while this collection is noteworthy, it's just one of many on campus that Margaris dubs the college's "dangling collections"—objects and specimens spread across campus that once had a home in the college's natural history museum.

So why do we have these collections? And what happened to the museum?

The Oberlin College Museum, explains Margaris, began as a small-scale natural history "cabinet" that was administered by Albert Wright, a professor of geology. Wright gathered the early items in the 1860s from Northeast Ohio and during trips to Jamaica, New York, and out west. The items were kept in what was termed the College Cabinet.

Contributions from Oberlin alumni, many doing missionary work across the globe, helped the collection expand rapidly. In 1875, the collections moved to Cabinet Hall, a structure built specifically for exhibition and recitation space. The building caught fire three times yet, miraculously, no specimens were damaged. As the collections grew, the College Cabinet was termed a "museum," as was the fashion in the 1880s. Specimens were moved to various locations, including a fireproof building at Spear Library on Tappan Square, but attempts to fund a museum in its own building never came to fruition.

"Many schools at the time were building these kinds of collections," says Margaris. "But like at a

lot of colleges, the Oberlin museum eventually faded away. As the sciences changed and methods of inquiry changed, they were seen as out of date and taking up too much space. Those collections that were retained were dispersed among departments."

Margaris, along with other faculty and staff, are now working to bring these objects to the forefront and assemble them—at least digitally—into a "Cabinet 2.0."

Digitizing objects from the long-dispersed collections provides a wide range of research opportunities. "We not only make it possible for researchers at Oberlin and beyond to find and use our collections in research, we can also learn more about what we have," says Digital Initiatives Librarian Megan Mitchell. "We've been contacted by scholars abroad who have used our digital collections and provided us with additional information about objects. There's a lot of potential for making connections with people, places, and things."

Professor of Geology Karla Hubbard is one such faculty member who has been part of the initiative. Hubbard is working to digitize the thousands of objects in the paleontology collection of the former Oberlin College Museum. "It is a very slow and careful process," she says. "The collection has been languishing without serious curatorial attention for a very long time, so as we work on digitizing the specimens, we also update the information associated with each [object]. The database we create will be available to students for research projects and laboratory exercises, as well as something available to the global research community interested in fossil specimens from all over the world."

As for the 36-piece Arctic collection, the anthropology department and Mudd library are working with a student research assistant this fall to incorporate the objects into the online database of the Oberlin College Ethnographic Collection, a hub for Oberlin's many ethnological materials that were once housed in the former museum.

Moving these objects online not only allows access to the collections by students and researchers, it also gives access to individuals whose ancestors created the objects.

"These objects are cultural treasures," says Margaris. "What we see happening more and more are Native people visiting collections such as this as a way to learn old techniques and gather new knowledge. They're not repatriating the objects. Instead, they're repatriating the associated knowledge so that young people can learn about their ancestors and how they lived and carry that knowledge forward into the future."

RIVALRY

Oberlin vs. Kenyon: A Tale of Two Meme Pages

May 24, 2017, began like any other day in Oberlin. Students were peacefully posting institutionally specific memes on a Facebook page called Oberlin Consortium of Memes for Discourse-Ready Teens, poking fun at both themselves and the administration. Comment-section banter blissfully ensued, with content ranging from political debates to memes of memes inside a meme of a meme.

Then it happened: an Obie infiltrated Kenyon College's Memes for Philandering Teens' Facebook page—uncovering an image implying Kenyon's superiority—and promptly reported the discovery to the discourse-ready Obie teens. True to Oberlin's aesthetic, another student organized a poll on how to proceed with the newfound information. More than 220 people voted in favor of "There's a reason they meme about us and we don't meme about them." (Only 169 Obies picked "Although refus-

ing to engage in petty internet squabbling is moral victory, this opportunity for meaningless conflict is irresistible to me.")

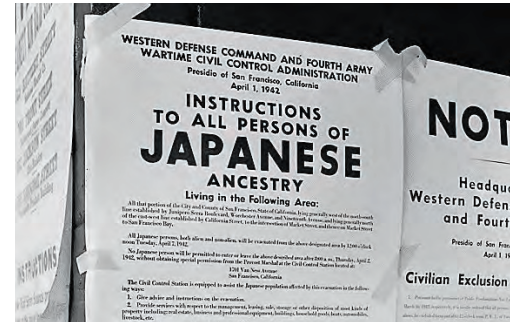
Despite the clear poll results, the anti-Kenyon memes, posted (mostly) in jest, continued rolling in. Kenyon students responded with more memes, and Oberlin naturally counter-punched. Even Buzzfeed got involved, publishing an article headlined, "You Won't Believe The Meme War Between These Two Small Ohio Colleges." Thus, the battle went down in history as one of the greatest meme wars of all time between small liberal arts colleges in Ohio.

Long before the historic battle, however, Oberlin's meme page was thriving with its own hilariously self-deprecating content. With more than 2,300 members (Kenyon's page has 1,020 likes, but who's counting?), Oberlin's meme group plays on age-old tropes about students and the college.

Admins from Oberlin's meme group monitor content

to ensure posts are Oberlin-specific, but the page is far from unique in form. Similar groups have exploded at colleges across the country. UC Berkeley Memes for Edgy Teens has more than 100,000 members; Harvard Memes for Elitist 1% Tweens has approximately 36,000 members; and now students can even major in memeing at Northwestern University.

The world has begun embarking on the journey to unpack this cultural phenomenon. Is it a collective form of commiserating and bonding that helps forge real relationships? A social tool that facilitates high rates of validation from peers? Or perhaps a sign of the early decline of the English language and that soon we'll begin communicating exclusively via memes? Whatever it may be, we can all enjoy, and perhaps even relate to, the internet art that Oberlin's meme page produces. —Tyler Sloan '17



SHOWCASE Exhibit on Japanese American Internment to Visit Oberlin

OBERLIN WILL HOST A NATIONAL TRAVELING exhibit and event series in the spring focusing on the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II and the communities—including Oberlin—that welcomed them.

"Courage and Compassion" is the work of the Go For Broke Foundation, a Los Angeles-based group that commemorates our shared story of the Japanese American World War II experience. The exhibit tells the general story of internment, while the 10 communities it visits tell their own.

Oberlin admitted Japanese American students during the war, a welcome that was extended by the town. The exhibit will be on display in the Richard D. Barron '64 Gallery of the East College Street Project from February 17 through March 18, 2018.

Educational events, including films, lectures, and presentations, will coincide with the exhibit's run. Tours and special programs for school groups and Oberlin alumni are planned, as is a module course for Oberlin students focused on the issues of internment and the idea of sanctuary cities and campuses.

Renee Romano, chair of the history department and an organizer of the local exhibit, says Oberlin was selected as one of sites after publication of a 2013 *Oberlin Alumni Magazine* article that told of the school's decision to recruit and admit Japanese-American students during the war and the support the students received from the community. That issue featured internee-turned-Oberlin-student Alice Takemoto '47, who appeared on the magazine's cover. Takemoto will be among the project's featured guests, as will Cassie Guevera '13, whose in-depth research provided much of the background for the *OAM* story. For more information, visit go.oberlin.edu/courage-and-compassion.



BOOK ON TV
Chaon Pens New Work, Adapts for TV

Dan Chaon, Oberlin's Delaney Professor of Creative Writing, finalized a deal with Buster Productions as writer, executive producer, and creator of a limited television series based on his 2017 novel, *Ill Will*. A finalist for the National Book Award and author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Await Your Reply*, Chaon also signed a major two-book deal with publisher Henry Holt & Company. *Sleepwalk*, a contemporary story about a middle-aged loner living off-grid whose life is upended when his biological daughter, whom he's never met, turns up seeking refuge after stumbling into a domestic terrorist plot; and *The Men Who Killed*, a historical tale involving an orphaned brother and sister who fall in with a gang of South Dakota bandits, were each acquired by the publisher following a three-day auction.

For the television project, Chaon will work with Mike Lombardo,

former president of programming at HBO, in adapting his novel for the small screen. While at HBO, Lombardo oversaw such milestone series as *Game of Thrones*, *Girls*, *True Detective*, and *The Leftovers*.

"I'm excited to collaborate with actors, directors, and other writers to see what this project is going to look like," says Chaon, who directs Oberlin's Creative Writing Program. "I'm also excited to be able to share the experience with my students when I teach film and TV writing."

He anticipates that the novel's storyline will change and expand. "So much of the novel is in the characters' interior minds, and there will be a lot of work to translate that into dramatic scene. Some parts of the novel won't ultimately work in film, so parts of it will need to be rethought."

Chaon's other novels include *Among the Missing*, a finalist for the National Book Award; *You Remind Me of Me*, named one of the best books of the year by the *Washington Post*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Entertainment Weekly*; the national bestseller *Await Your Reply*, a *New York Times* Notable Book that also appeared on more than a dozen "Best of the Year" lists; and *Stay Awake*, a finalist for the Story Prize. *Ill Will* has already received plenty of critical acclaim, with the *Washington Post* calling it "the scariest novel of the year."

AWARD

Grant Encourages STEM Study

OBERLIN IS ONE OF 24 COLLEGES AND universities nationwide to be awarded a \$1 million grant through the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI)'s Inclusive Excellence initiative. Oberlin's goal is to promote the success of all students in STEM fields by changing the ways the science community is built and the curriculum delivered.

"Oberlin's Inclusive Excellence proposal was the result of two years of community collaboration. This speaks to the strong and heartfelt commitment of the college to working toward the success of all of our students," says Professor of Biology Marta Laskowski, program director for the Oberlin grant. In developing the proposal to HHMI, she worked with grant codirector and Associate Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry Jason Belitsky; Associate Professor of Biology Taylor Allen; Center for Learning, Education, and Research in the Sciences Director Marcelo Vincas; Associate Dean and Professor of Geology Steven Wojtal; and Dean of Arts and Sciences Tim Elgren.

The Inclusive Excellence initiative's broad objective is to help colleges and universities encourage participation and cultivate the talent of students in the natural sciences. HHMI challenged schools to identify the reasons students are excluded from science and to find new ways to include students in opportunities to achieve science excellence. In particular, the HHMI initiative focuses on undergraduates who come to college from diverse backgrounds and pathways. These "new majority" students

include underrepresented ethnic minorities, first-generation college students, and working adults with families.

"We're thinking differently about how HHMI can help move science education forward," says HHMI President Erin O'Shea. "The challenges this program addresses are important for all of us who care deeply about developing a more inclusive and diverse scientific community."

The focus of the new initiative has shifted the locus of responsibility onto the schools—improving the structure of the curriculum and the way it's delivered; adjusting school policies and procedures; training faculty; and improving the climate and culture.

"Too many times we approach diversity with a deficit mindset in which interventions are aimed at 'fixing the students,'" said David Asai, senior director for science education at HHMI. Instead, the new initiative focuses on the important work of making the culture of the institution more inclusive, he said. "We want to change the way schools do business."

For decades, educational grants—including some awarded by HHMI—focused on interventions aimed at the students, such as summer research apprenticeships, tutoring, advising, and summer bridge programs designed to ease the transition from high school to college. While these interventions can help the students involved, they don't generally address long-term issues that, if changed, could have a more sustained impact, Asai said. "Our goal is to catalyze changes that last well beyond the lifetime of these five-year grants."



COLOR FIELDS Exploring Beauty and Truth in Worlds of Color: A Conference on Race, Art, and Aesthetics in the 21st Century took place at the Hotel at Oberlin for two days in late September. The conference was "a dilation of the growing acknowledgement of the importance of race and diversity in the field of aesthetics," says Associate Professor of Africana Studies Charles Peterson, who organized the conference. Nearly 40 critics, theorists, and practitioners—including alumni Aria Dean '15 (above right), Caitlin O'Neill '11 (above left), and a number of Oberlin faculty members, including Associate Professor of Theater and Africana Studies Justin Emeka '95—discussed race, art, and aesthetics as they exist in cultural and artistic work.



WATSON TWINS

Double-Degrees Score Watsons

BY AMANDA NAGY

DOUBLE-DEGREE GRADUATES KIRK PEARSON '17 AND PAULUS VAN HORNE '17 were each awarded a coveted 2017 Watson Fellowship, an extraordinary opportunity allowing them to travel the world this year in pursuit of an independent project.

Pearson holds degrees in composition from the conservatory and in cinema studies and geology from the college. Van Horne majored in Technology in Music and the Related Arts in the conservatory and environmental studies in the college. Each earned \$30,000 from the Thomas J. Watson Foundation to conceive an original project and execute it outside of the United States.

Pearson's fellowship, "an odyssey of invented instruments," began in August and is taking him to Paraguay, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, South Korea, and Japan in search of like-minded "tinkerers" working to expand our instrumental lexicon. Pearson plans to research robots that play instruments in ways humans cannot, live with a community that turns gardens into synthesizers, and scout his way through forgotten buildings that are now home to unforgettable sonic installations.

"This is a project that will let me celebrate the many disparate aspects of my personality—I am a musician, technician, avid tinkerer, and follower of cultural-political currents," says Pearson, a native of New York City. "While I have been lucky enough to direct films, build installations, and publish scientific papers, no project I have done before has let me work so extensively with people who synthesize every one of these aspects in totally innovative ways."

Van Horne is taking a journalistic approach to exploring "noise and the megacity" by studying the sonic landscape of the world's megacities—urban centers with a population exceeding 10 million—to learn how residents live with increasing noise. Stops include Japan, South Korea, India, Thailand, and United Kingdom.

Van Horne, who grew up in New York "surrounded by the commotion of three adjacent apartments on top of the noise of traffic and police sirens," will interview local urban planners about noise pollution, engage experimental musicians about their artistic uses of noise, and meet residents and activists who are on the front lines of quieting the din. Through human interactions and sound recordings, Van Horne hopes to piece together patterns and portraits of sonic life in with an eye toward the future of the urban metropolis and its health.

"My quest is to find out how my fellow megacity residents have learned to live with the noise of urban life. How have they adapted noise for their purposes such as protest and art? Have any of these residents been successful in reducing or eliminating urban noise? The world's largest and fastest growing cities are the best sites for this investigation."

Pearson and Van Horne are among two dozen of their Oberlin peers who received scholarships and fellowships during the 2016-17 academic year.

As in years past, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* named Oberlin a Fulbright Program "top producer" for landing two of just 40 fellowships awarded in 2017.

Additional Fellowship and Award Winners:

Jasmine Anderson '17 received a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship (ETA) to teach in Germany.

Emma Baxter '17 received a Fulbright ETA to teach in Taichung, Taiwan.

Rebecca Deutsch '13, a theater major, received a Fulbright ETA to teach in Greece.

Grace Evans '17, an East Asian studies major with a politics minor, received a Fulbright ETA to teach in Taiwan.

Holly Hoang '17, a history major, received a Fulbright ETA to teach in South Korea.

Marie Lilly '17, a biology major, received a Fulbright ETA to teach in Colombia.

Harald (Hank) Miller '17, a Russian major, received a Fulbright ETA to teach in Russia.

Oliver Okun '17, a Russian major, received a Fulbright ETA to teach in Russia.

Miriam Plane '17, a sociology major and Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies Program minor, received a Fulbright ETA to teach in Berlin, Germany.

David Zager '17, a double major in comparative American studies and in gender, sexuality, and feminist studies, received a Fulbright ETA to teach in Brazil.

Sophie Davis '16, a violin performance and environmental studies double major, received a Fulbright in Interdisciplinary Studies to study violin in Samoa.

Mitchell Miller '17, a double-degree student in organ performance and German studies, received a Fulbright research grant to study organ performance in Germany.

Xavier Tirado '17, a biology and sociology double major, and **Jason Heitler-Klevans '17**, a physics major, received Woodrow Wilson Academy Design Fellowships to work on the creation of a new graduate school of education for teachers.

Lindsay Brubaker '19, an East Asian studies and environmental studies major, received a State Department Critical Language Study award to study Japanese in Hikone, Japan.

Kiela Nelson '18 received the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship to attend the Dakar Institute's Summer Program in Senegal.

Briana Santiago '17, an economics major and Africana studies minor, received the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals (CBYX) fellowship to spend a year in Germany studying, interning, and living with hosts on a cultural immersion program.

Bikalpa Baniya '19, an economics major, received the Davis Projects for Peace award to work on a venture to help sustain an innovative grade school in Nepal.

Monique Newton '18, a scholar athlete with a double major in politics and law and society, was named a 2017 American Political Science Association Ralph Bunche Summer Institute Scholar.

Kate Ryan-O'Flaherty '19, a religion major, was awarded a Critical Language Scholarship to study Urdu, the native language of Pakistan and regions of India.

Mattea Koon '17, an English and anthropology double major, accepted a USTA award to Austria and was selected for a Fulbright ETA to teach in Germany.

Kameron Dunbar '19, a politics major, received a Mount Vernon Fellowship, a summer institute that develops leadership skills and provides mentoring and networking.

Helen Kramer '17, a math major with a concentration in peace and conflict studies, received a Humanity in Action Fellowship in Germany, a summer program that facilitates dialogue on human rights and social justice.

For more information on all the award winners, visit oberlin.edu/news.

Thought Process



From left: Fliesler '82, Lind '06, Sabin '14, Trivedi '92

SCIENCE Lost in Translation

OBERLIN ALUMNI SCIENCE writers took part in the symposium Translating Science in September, sharing with students their advice on science writing and related careers. Organized by Ally Fulton '16 and faculty, staff, and students from the sciences, rhetoric and composition, the libraries, and the Career Development Center, the symposium was intended to raise awareness of the importance of communicating science to the general public as a foundation of sound political and personal decision-making, as well as to inspire students in science writing careers.

The *Oberlin Alumni Magazine* asked the four alumni panelists to answer the question, “In your experience, what is the scientific issue that is most misunderstood by the general public?” Here are their answers:

Nancy Fliesler '82, senior science writer at Boston Children's Hospital and editor of the science and innovation blog Vector: It's not so much an issue that's misunderstood—I think the basic

problem is a fear of science. People feel they can't understand it, a feeling that's probably rooted in their early education. Even as adults, they can't get past it. Another difficulty is that science is couched in jargon, and scientists have forgotten how to share their ideas and passions in everyday language. They talk too much about their methods and their molecules and not enough about the “big picture”—because the practice of science, especially for junior scientists, is very much incremental and “little picture.” Also, since science is fluid and new knowledge is always emerging, conclusions of individual studies can contradict each other. This can foster a feeling of mistrust of science. The job of a science writer is to restore the wonder of scientific discovery and make it relevant to the person on the street—but also to put the findings in proper perspective. We do this largely by serving as translators and teachers. I think it's a great career for Oberlin students, who are naturally curious, passionate, and verbal.

Brianna Rego Lind '06, freelance science writer and historian specializing in history of 20th-century biomedicine, industry science, science policy, and controversial science:

There is a certain segment of the population that refuses to believe things like climate change, evolution, or vaccine safety. But I am an optimist and won't admit that such “science deniers” define the general public. Instead, I think there is another scientific concept that is much more misunderstood, potentially much more harmful (or at least confusing), and much more pervasive, even among those who think they understand it: the long tail of statistics. Medical survivorship, for example, is commonly misunderstood. A particular cancer might have a 27 percent survival rate, but what does that mean for a particular patient? How about a 5 percent survival rate? Or a 95 percent survival rate? Stephen Jay Gould wrote a wonderful essay on this, “The Median Isn't the Message,” after he was diagnosed with a particularly deadly cancer. He went on to live many more years, one of the patients in the “long tail” of survivorship. Nate Silver has also famously discussed the long tail in the contexts of sports and politics, such as with Hillary Clinton's loss to Donald Trump. The long tail is everywhere where there is any “chance” of anything, and the longer the tail, the more instances there will be within that tail.

Dyani Sabin '14 is a freelance science journalist based in Chicago:

I have found that scientific issues that challenge people's core identifying beliefs are the most misunderstood. Something like evolution or climate change challenges religious or political identities. Once that happens, you aren't arguing with logic, but with a person's identity, and so people push back.

Bijal Trivedi '92, freelance writer, specializing in biology, biotechnology, and medical research:

The politicization of science poses a serious threat to our democracy, our health, and the planet. For example, climate change, vaccine efficacy, and renewable energy are all issues that have been rigorously examined through the scientific method—but peer-reviewed science is being rejected for political gain. The challenge for science writers is to present these topics through language and storytelling that connects with everyone across the political spectrum. Another key issue is that current budget proposals would significantly slash federal funding for basic science and medical research. The private sector and nonprofits cannot fill the gap when government support wanes.”

EXCERPT

Totaled

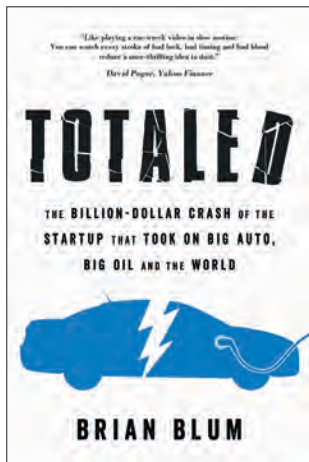
BY BRIAN BLUM '83

“For a moment, suspend your disbelief.”

This was Shai Agassi’s signature opening statement. He used it when talking to CEOs and students, to those in corporate conference rooms and in the corridors of power, to his devoted employees and to the more than a million people who would watch and share his viral video presentation.

Today, he was saying it to one of the wealthiest men in Israel, at the start of a polished speech that would change the destinies of everyone in the room.

Agassi was—and still remains—one of the smoothest-



talking, charismatic entrepreneurs the high-tech world has ever seen. Like his idol, Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, Agassi—a poker-playing Israeli boy wonder—is never at a loss for words. After just a few minutes, he can turn even the most

skeptical into a believer.

Agassi was in the Tel Aviv office of Idan Ofer, chairman of the Israel Corporation, Israel’s largest publicly listed company, and one of the richest men in Israel, at the time worth nearly \$4 billion. Also in the room was Mike Granoff, who headed up Maniv Energy Capital, a small venture capital firm, and who was responsible for arranging the meeting. Agassi would have 45 minutes to pitch Ofer on a plan for a business that, if successfully executed, would quite literally make the world a better place.

FROM THE INTRODUCTION TO TOTALED: THE BILLION-DOLLAR CRASH OF THE STARTUP THAT TOOK ON BIG AUTO, BIG OIL AND THE WORLD BY BRIAN BLUM '83, PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 2017 BY BLUE PEPPER PRESS.

POEM

To the Daughter I Never Had

BY ROB HARDY '86

I saw you today at the playground.
You were wearing a little dress
that reminded me of all the dresses

I never bought for you,
all the sundresses and twirly skirts,
all the Hanna Anderson.

You were on the swing, leaning back,
reaching up with your candy-striped legs,
as if to reinsert yourself

into an imaginary heaven,
into the realm of possibility.
You didn't see me watching you

from a future in which you don't exist,
but sometimes you smile at me
from the face of another man's daughter--

a smile that contains all the mornings
we never baked bread together,
all the cartwheels you never turned,

all the stories you never told me
about all the things that never happened.
You are six, or nine, or fifteen, and always

as beautiful as I imagined, growing up
smart and graceful and strong, and I am glad,
and it breaks my heart

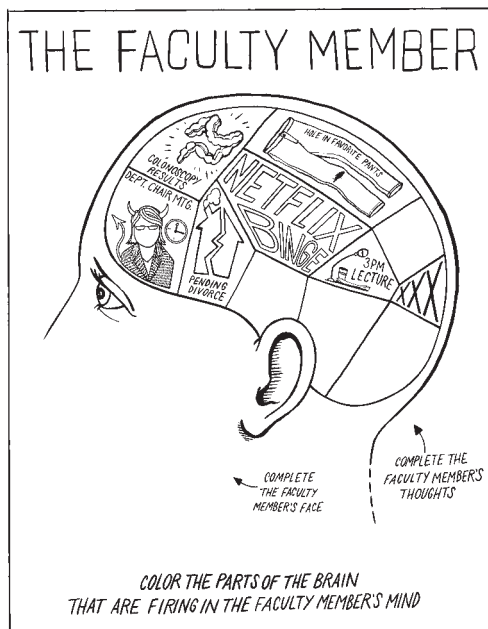
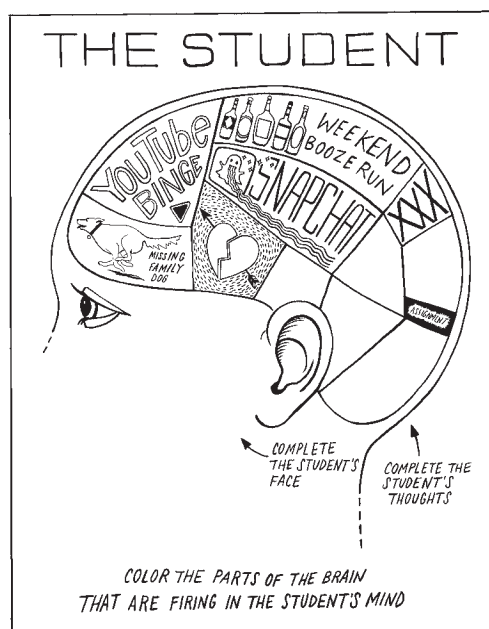
that you have become all this without me.
I have spent what would have been
your entire life breaking up

fights between the boys,
scrubbing the floor around the toilet,
trying to get them to change their underwear,

and knowing that I could not love anyone
more--
not even you.
Perhaps someday you will understand

how it's possible to regret
the life that never was, and still love nothing
more than the life that is.

FROM THE BOOK DOMESTICATION: COLLECTED POEMS 1996-2016, PUBLISHED BY SHIPWRECKT BOOKS IN RUSHFORD, MINNESOTA, IN FEBRUARY 2017 AS PART OF THE UP ON BIG ROCK POETRY SERIES. HERO NOW THEATRE IN MINNEAPOLIS PUBLISHED HARDY'S ADAPTATION OF AESCHYLUS'S ORESTEIA, WHICH INCLUDES AN INTRODUCTION BY OBERLIN'S NATHAN A. GREENBERG PROFESSOR OF CLASSICS EMERITUS THOMAS VAN NORTWICK, IN THE SPRING AND PRODUCED THE PLAY IN SEPTEMBER 2016.



ACADEMIA

Drawing from Experience

Julie Schumacher '81 has made a career in academia and a second career skewering it. A professor of creative writing and English at the University of Minnesota, she wrote the 2014 novel *Dear Committee Members*, a collection of hilarious off-the-rails letters of recommendation that was a best seller and won the 2015 Thurber Prize for American Humor. She's back with *Doodling for Academics*, a coloring book illustrated by Lauren Nassef (published by the University of Chicago Press) that features bathroom wall graffiti possibilities ("Schrodinger's Cat's Litter Box: full or empty?," a limerick that includes the phrase "surfeit of cathexis"), a dartboard taking aim at helicopter parents, and a Chutes & Ladders-style game of academic success (and failure). Above is a selection from the book.



ONE QUESTION

Jennifer Malkowski '04

Jennifer Malkowski is an assistant professor of film and media studies at Smith College. Her book, *Dying in Full Detail*, published by Duke University Press in March 2017, is a thoughtful exploration of documentary depictions of dying in the digital age.

What's the origin of your interest in the topic, and was it a hard book to write?

This book actually began at Oberlin as an undergrad honors thesis supervised by Geoff Pingree and Pat Day in cinema studies. Other than me having been a morbid person since childhood, the origins of the book come from a screening I attended in 2003 of a 1976 documentary, *Dying*, by Michael Roemer (which I write about in chapter two), that follows several terminal patients through their last months of life. Despite the age of the film at that point, it was clear to me in the Q&A that followed that the audience was unusually moved and surprised by this

material—many of them had never seen anything like it before, in film or in life. So that got me thinking about documentary taboos and the rarity of cameras recording actual death. The digital part came later, when in my research I realized how important digital technologies had become in helping people, both professional and non-professional, record deaths in progress and, crucially, distribute their footage unencumbered by some of the censorship models of media in the past.

As for the impact on me, it was definitely harder on an emotional level to research this material than anything else I've written. I'm happy to have the book in print now and to finally be able to encounter news stories about grisly deaths captured on camera without feeling immediately obligated to click on the video and watch. That's a hard thing to do for many years of book research, but I also feel that the pain and injustice suffered by many of the people whose recorded deaths I write about puts my own discomfort with the footage in perspective. In other words, it feels petty and privileged for me to complain about having to watch the recorded deaths of others who had to actually experience them. But I felt there was a political, and not just intellectual, importance in watching and thinking carefully about this kind of footage, and I hope that comes through in the book.

WORKLIFE

Improvising a Career Path

BY SAMANTHA SPACCASI '17

A CIRCUITOUS ROUTE through Oberlin led directly to a dream job for Gabe Pollack '11. After initially majoring in environmental studies, he added a conservatory major in jazz trumpet his sophomore year. But by his fifth year, this now double-degree student had changed course again, designing an individual major in jazz entrepreneurship that was geared toward the music business and venue management.

"For my final project, I wrote a business plan for a jazz club and applied for some grants," Pollack says. He earned funding through Oberlin's Creativity & Leadership program, which supports innovative entrepreneurial efforts by Oberlin students. He spun that into a summer internship at the Cleveland jazz club Nighttown, whose marketing coordinator, Jim Wadsworth, he had met through a class at Oberlin.

"Jim was a guest lecturer," Pollack recalls. "When I received the grant, I asked him if I could intern at Nighttown to get more experience. I moved to Cleveland and worked for him for a summer. When the grant ran out, he hired me. I worked there for three years as a booking agent during the day and doing sound production at night."

As Pollack was learning the industry on Cleveland's east side, a jazz club across town was floundering. The sleek and intimate Bop Stop, built in 2002, had enjoyed a nine-year run at its home overlooking Lake Erie before the owner decided to sell. Among the few suitors was someone who envisioned the place as a burger joint, Pollack recalls hearing.

"The potential buyer said, 'This is a great space, but what am I going to do with that?' and pointed to the stage. After that, the owner kicked him out."

The owner instead donated the club to the Music Settlement, a community music school in Cleveland's University Circle neighborhood that represented the Bop Stop's best hope for revival. In 2014, when the Music Settlement began looking for Bop Stop leadership, Pollack updated his resume—and dusted off his old business plan from Oberlin.

"I interviewed for the management job and submitted my Oberlin paper with my application," he says. "And they hired me."

Under Pollack's direction, the Bop Stop has thrived, boasting a steady schedule of local and touring jazz acts, including some 30 Grammy Award winners and counting. It was voted Best Jazz Club by *Cleveland Scene* in 2015 and 2016 and was even named Cleveland's "best date spot" by the online matchmaker eHarmony, an honor Pollack calls "hilarious."

The club also boasts a new



POLLACK: JULIE CROOKSTON-GULENKO '15

recording studio donated by Cleveland radio personality Robert Conrad. “We can do high-end recordings here,” says Pollack, noting that the studio recently hosted a Blue Note session for Terence Blanchard. “It’s pretty cool to have Blue Note call you up and ask if one of their artists can record in your studio!”

The Bop Stop also maintains close ties to Oberlin, with student groups and faculty members regularly making the rounds onstage. “The space gives student musicians an opportunity to play in Cleveland,” says Pollack. “It can be hard when you’re relatively far from a major city like New York.”

A recent three-night stand featured Conservatory Professor of Advanced Improvisation and Percussion Jamey Haddad and his intergenerational, international band, Under One Sun, performing tunes from the album of the same name. The concert included percussionist Patrick Graney ’17 in his final performance before leaving for Berlin to pursue a jazz career.

Pollack’s own Oberlin years included several crucial steps that led him to where he is today. “Being part of the conservatory was challenging, but worthwhile,” he says, recounting his own experiences making music. “It seemed like a lot of doors were closing, but when one door closes, another one opens. My experiences in the conservatory helped me figure out what I wanted to do after graduating.

“You learn a lot from your courses, but the connections I made with people as a student were important, too,” he says. “There are lots of Oberlin graduates that are touring musicians, and it’s fun to book them at the Bop Stop. It’s important to take advantage of opportunities outside the classroom, too.”

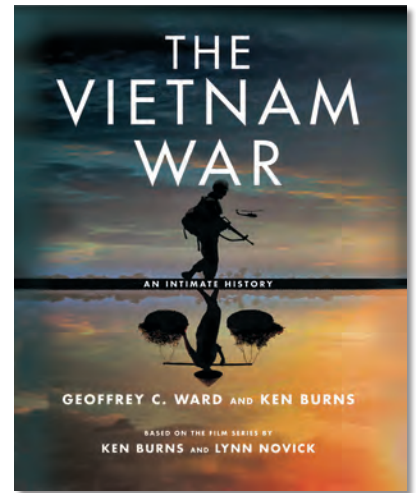
BOOKSHELF

Recent Releases

The Vietnam War: An Intimate History Geoffrey C. Ward '62 and Ken Burns

KNOPF

Vietnam has become the prism through which nearly every subsequent U.S. military engagement has been viewed, the oft-asked question being, “Will [fill in the blank] become the next Vietnam?” The cultural shifts it ushered in and domestic divisions it uncovered also linger to this day. Which is why this book—and the recent PBS documentary series to which it is a companion—are still important studies for understanding where we are today. Ward, the author of 19 books, has teamed up with Burns for public television documentary series before, and their takes on the Civil War, baseball, and jazz, among other topics, have led to renewed interest and fueled fresh and productive debates on the subjects.



Hidden Mother Laura Larson '87

ST. LUCY BOOKS

Part photography book, part extended essay, *Hidden Mother* tells the story of the adoption of Larson’s daughter from Ethiopia as mapped through 19th-century hidden mother photographs. The term “hidden mother” refers to the widespread practice in 19th-century child portrait photography in which the mother, though present for the shoot to hold or support the child, is somehow concealed in the photograph. The scant evidence of the mother’s presence in the image presents the idea of the mother there and not there, a meditation on the meaning of motherhood.



Infrastructural Ecologies: Alternative Development Models for Emerging Economies Hillary Brown '71 and Byron Stigge

MIT PRESS

With renewed attention on the crumbling infrastructure in the U.S., Brown’s book on developing nations could end up being a woulda-shoulda-coulda argument for developed nations. Brown, a professor at the Spitzer School of Architecture and director of the City College of New York’s master’s program in sustainability in the urban environment, proposes strategies for planning infrastructural services and waste handling in developing nations that are holistic, integrated, resilient, sustainable, economical and equitable, creating infrastructural ecology that functions more like natural ecosystems.



Thorn Molly Barth '97

CANTALOUPE MUSIC

Thorns can be prickly, but they can also latch. That’s certainly true with this new album of chamber music by Barth, a founding member of contemporary music pioneers eighth blackbird. On *Thorn*, she performs the music of David Lang, whose connections to Oberlin are numerous. What starts as short bursts of flute soon catches and stays with the listener—catchy and edgy at the same time.



Skyfishing: A Grand Tale with Grandpa Words by Gideon Sterer '11, Pictures by Poly Bernatene

ABRAMS BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

Do you need a body of water to go fishing? It depends on what you’re hoping to catch. Sterer’s tale is of a grandfather who loves to fish, but when he moves to the city to live with his family, has no place to cast off. His granddaughter suggests they drop a line off of the fire escape in their city apartment—and they catch...a Flying Litterfish. The first catch was followed by even more exotic fish—plants (Green Dancers), socks (Laundry Eels), and, soon, bigger fish: hats (Capfish) and jewelry (Goldfish). The world might not be your oyster, but with enough imagination, it could be your ocean.

Introducing President Ambar

Say hello to Carmen Twillie Ambar, Oberlin's 15th president.

By Jeff Hagan '86 | Photographs by Tanya Rosen-Jones '97

CARMEN TWILLIE AMBAR STANDS AT THE HEAD OF LONG OAK CONFERENCE table in the Cass Gilbert Room of the Cox Administration Building. She is surrounded by paintings of important figures from Oberlin history such as Asa Mahan, Charles Finney, James Fairchild. All but one of the portraits depict white males.

At the table with her is this year's freshman class of Posse Scholars, a group of 10 students from Chicago public high schools who have strong potential but who may have been overlooked in the traditional college selection process. The Posse Foundation partners with schools like Oberlin to provide scholarships and supportive environments to participating students.

Ambar is leading these students on a visioning exercise in which they enact the moment they walk across the stage on Tappan Square to receive their diplomas. "In four years," she reads, "you will graduate from this institution." Just 19 days into the job at this point, Ambar is as new as they are. She tells them she'll always feel connected to them since they started together. She calls out each student's name, hands each a scroll expressing faith in their ability to succeed, and shakes their hand firmly. The students receive hugs from Gina Perez, a professor of comparative American studies, who is mentoring this class of Posse scholars.

Once the students are back in their chairs, Ambar takes a moment to

explain that the room is usually used for meetings of Oberlin's senior leadership. "Every aspect of campus gets discussed in this room." The agenda for her next meeting is about what investments should be made around campus that might lead to better student retention. "We try in these meetings to have substantive conversations." She is working to demystify what happens in Oberlin's conference rooms and corridors of power for these Posse scholars, who are often of color or first generation college students or both. An advocate of visualization, who has used it for everything from piano competitions to swim meets, Ambar wants the students to visualize not just their graduation, but their presence at tables where important decisions are made. "That hasn't been lost on me my entire career," she says afterward. "You walk into the room, and there's no one like you in the room."

Before saying goodbye, she tells the Posse scholars that she's expecting them to be in their own boardroom someday. Before she leaves, she's asked to pose for a picture with them. "Great," she says. "I'll post it on Twitter."

"You're on Twitter?" a student asks in the kind of disbelief only an 18-year-old can express about the assumed social ineptitude of anyone over 25. Ambar, who has gone virtually paperless in her office and runs her world through a smart phone and a smart watch, answers with mock indignation. "Yeah, I'm on Twitter!"



Carmen Twillie Ambar, Oberlin's 15th president, in the living room of the President's house.



TAKING THE BATON President Ambar takes a turn conducting the opening concert of the Oberlin Orchestra (left); Ambar gives the heavy bag, held by trainer Wendy Reddinger, a left jab

ON MAY 30, 2017, IN THE AZARIAH ROOT ROOM OF THE CARNEGIE building, under the painted gaze of Oberlin’s previous presidents—all but one a white male—Carmen Twillie Ambar was introduced to the Oberlin community as its new president. Since 2008, she had been the president of Cedar Crest College, a women’s liberal arts college in Allentown, Pennsylvania; she is the only president in Oberlin’s history to have already served as a college president. Before Cedar Crest, she was vice president and dean of Douglass College at Rutgers, the youngest dean in that university’s history; assistant dean of graduate education at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton; and assistant corporation counsel with the city of New York. She earned her law degree from Columbia Law School, a master’s in public affairs at Princeton, and a BS in foreign service at Georgetown University. Ambar, who comes from a family with twins on both sides, has 10-year-old triplets with her husband, Saladin Malik Ambar, an associate professor in the department of political science and senior scholar at the Center on the American Governor at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. “I was just being efficient,” she likes to say.

Present that day in the Root Room were her parents, Manuel Twillie, a retired public school principal who picked cotton as a child in Arkansas and grew up to earn bachelor’s and master’s degrees, and her mother, Gwendolyn Brown Twillie, a PhD who was for three decades on the theater

and dance faculty, including serving as program chair, at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock.

Ambar begins her remarks with words of thanks to them. “Somehow [my mother] got in her mind to get a PhD in dance and related arts. There were no images to look to to know that what she wanted to achieve was possible. I always say to her it was simply divine intervention. Watching my mom in that pursuit demonstrated to me that a life of the mind and family life could exist in the same human being, could exist in this woman, could exist in this woman of color. That’s what she taught me.”

Ambar says that as a young man her dad would look up from the hot beating sun of the cotton fields and say to himself, “I don’t know what I want to do, but I know I don’t want to do this.”

“My dad, because he had the opportunity to go to college and then go on to graduate school—he not only changed his personal trajectory, he changed his family’s trajectory,” Ambar tells the room full of board members, administrators, faculty, students, and staff. “I’m one generation removed from picking cotton. We’re five generations removed from slavery. My dad had the opportunity to change his trajectory, and to change my trajectory, because I have the opportunity to be the 15th president of Oberlin College. Those intertwined missions: academic excellence, social justice, equity, access, opportunity—that is in my DNA. I’m deeply committed to that work.”

12 of 33 Questions:

Oberlin’s Office of Communications produces videos of Oberlin faculty members in which they answer 33 questions. Here are a few of the answers from President Ambar’s video, available at go.oberlin.edu/33q/president-ambar.

What’s your favorite movie of all time?

My husband is part Italian and part African American, so I have to go with *The Godfather*, parts one and two. But don’t give me three. It’s just not very good.

What do you listen to while you’re driving?

I have a really eclectic style, but if you want to know what my go-to music is—I’m just a disco person. I know that may sound bad,

but I’m a ’70s kid who loves my disco.

If you could, which Broadway play or movie would you star in?

Our family has been obsessed with *Hamilton* for the past 18 months, so we literally can sing every line of it. There are so many parts. Because they were willing to do sort of “blind casting,” I will take one of the traditional male parts and be Aaron Burr.

What’s the best way to spend a Saturday morning?

Oh gosh, if I had a chance to sleep, it would be so awesome! Honestly I would go old style: *New York Times* printed, good cup of coffee in bed, with nowhere to go. That’s the best way to spend it.

[The Ambars’ triplets enter the frame]

And who do we have here? This is the crowd that is the most fun for me. This is Gabrielle, and Daniel, and

Luke, and these guys are 10 years old.

What’s the best way to decompress?

Bad TV—always a good way to decompress. I don’t get a chance to do Netflix that often, but if I have a chance, it’s always nice. I did a couple of months ago get through all of *Game of Thrones*, so I was ready for the season opening. I felt so much like a part of a community!



(middle); Ambar meets the staff of the *Oberlin Review* in the basement of the president's house, one of many gatherings planned for the space.

EVEN BEFORE AMBAR OFFICIALLY BEGAN HER DUTIES AT OBERLIN, SHE had begun her duties: addressing various groups of new students during orientation, leading a faculty meeting two days before she became president. During this time she would joke, “Right now, I’m just an unemployed woman living in college housing.”

Once her tenure and the semester began, Ambar shifted into overdrive. Her packed schedule includes visiting as many classes as she can so that when she talks about the quality of an Oberlin education, she can speak from experience. She hosts student and staff gatherings in what was the basement family room of the president’s residence that she renovated specifically for that purpose, a practice she lifted from her time at Cedar Crest College. She appeared on the student-hosted WOBC radio show *Muse for Hire*, sharing a dozen or so songs that were important to her throughout her life (most of the show’s other guests are college students, so, at age 49, her catalog is a little deeper). Her hosts took it in stride when she demonstrated all the dance moves from the video to Prince’s “When Doves Cry” in the station’s cramped, grungy studio.

At every venue, she stresses that she’s there to listen and learn, and she makes a point of letting her audience know not to expect answers and pronouncements from her. “I’m, what, on day 13?” she asks a colleague during one speech; “I’m at three weeks today, I think,” she jokes at another event.

Ambar is managing expectations not just about how much she could

possibly accomplish in these early days of her administration, but about what’s ahead for the college itself. For the past two years, Oberlin has missed its enrollment targets, despite the fact that it had the third-highest applicant pool in its history last year. With its modest endowment, Oberlin’s revenues are primarily dependent upon tuition, so the shortfall reverberates throughout the budget and will continue to do so as the lower enrollment numbers cycle through school years. The result this year is a \$5 million operating deficit and, to Ambar, clear evidence Oberlin needs to rethink its financial model.

Ambar doesn’t pull her punches when discussing the challenges that lay ahead for Oberlin. She’s also aware that members of the Oberlin community often hold—and express—strong opinions. “You’re in a relationship with the college,” she tells her audiences. “And in a relationship, you can’t just tell the other person what you don’t like about them all the time. Sometimes you have to tell them what you do like.” She advises alumni, faculty, staff, students, and others to consider the things they value about Oberlin and commit to working on them.

AT EVERY GATHERING OF EVERY CONSTITUENCY—WHETHER IT’S cafeteria workers, maintenance workers, safety and security officers, emeriti faculty, or members of the general faculty—the president shares the same message regarding financial sustainability: “There’s a flashing red light up

Have you have had a teacher who really influenced you?

It was my third-grade teacher. Her name was Ms. Compton, and she wrote on my report, “Carmen is better in math than she thinks she is.” It was that one statement that I think made me end up being an economics major and made me have that math confidence that I think so many girls need.

Favorite thing to eat?

If I had a go-to thing, it would be pizza. I mean, you can’t go wrong with a good slice of pizza. There’s a lot of debate about what city, but my husband is a New Yorker, so I have to go with New York style.

Least favorite thing to eat?

I’m not a beets person. I think I could do it if I had to, but it’s not my preferred thing to eat.

What was the best gift you’ve ever received?

I’m a mom of triplets as you’ve now seen, and when the triplets were about a couple of months old—they were born in April so Mother’s Day happened afterwards—my husband gave me these little passes that I could redeem for a nap, and it was the best gift ever. I remember getting that pass and calling all my friends and saying, “Don’t call me because I’m taking

my nap!” If you’re a mom of triplets, a decent nap is hard to come by.

What’s the best thing about living in Oberlin?

The best thing about living in Oberlin is the community, I think. People have really welcomed our family, and we are totally acclimating ourselves now.

What’s your best advice for someone when they hit a creative wall?

When you hit a creative wall, the thing you have to do is to remember those things that inspire you and to go fighting to find them.

“At Oberlin, we’re going to have to rethink who we are in order to ensure that this institution will be here for years to come. That will be difficult. But the difficulty will be worth it, because what Oberlin offers and the types of students that we educate and the work that they’ll do is good work that the world needs.”

ahead, and while we’re not at it yet, we’re getting closer.” Oberlin must make some difficult decisions now, she says, to avoid being forced to do “something catastrophic” in the future.

“It is a sobering message, but it’s also an optimistic one, in that I believe we can do it,” she says. “And I think we have a mission that is so relevant and important that we must do it. And yet, because it’s asking us to do something we may never have had to do before, it will require all of us to be more open to change, more open to thinking outside of how we’ve seen ourselves.”

What that looks like, she doesn’t yet know. The question on the minds of many is: how much can Oberlin change and still be Oberlin?

“Would it fundamentally change the character of Oberlin if, for example, there were graduate programs here? I wouldn’t think so, but some people might. Would it fundamentally change the character of Oberlin if we had to discontinue certain majors or certain programs? Some would say yes to that.”

These questions are part of the bigger discussion about what it means to be a liberal arts college. “In my own view, it’s not a defined set of majors. It is whether we can deliver on what it means to have a broad-based education that offers critical thinking, writing skills, and cultural competency skills.”

Ambar says she will work with faculty, staff, alumni, and students to figure out what the Oberlin of the future looks like, yet adds, “I don’t think we maneuver our way out of this just by cutting. As an institution, you have to build toward what you’re becoming. Yes, we have to reduce our expenditures, but we also have to think about ways to increase our revenues. Some of that may be in growth areas, like new majors that have an ability to bring more students to Oberlin.

“I think the breadth and depth of how you think about how people can shape the world is broader than just working in just one field or organization. That work happens in a variety of areas. We can’t pigeonhole what we think is the type of student who could be transformed by Oberlin.” Ambar’s thinking is partly informed by the results of surveys of admitted students who chose not to attend Oberlin.

While Oberlin is facing its own specific issues, it is also confronting issues facing higher education in general. The declining number of high school students nationally has resulted in fierce competition among colleges. “That means that you’re asking Oberlin to win every battle in order to maintain its enrollment numbers. And people are questioning the value of a liberal arts degree and asking if it’s worth the investment. We have to demonstrate more clearly that it is, and some of that has to be about demonstrating more clearly the relevance of our curriculum to their life after Oberlin.

“Parents are not as willing to buy the ‘I’m just here on campus exploring’

idea. If tomorrow someone asks you to invest \$50,000 a year for the next four years, you would ask tough questions about outcomes. We can’t shy away from that and act as if we’re offended by the question. It’s a reasonable question, and we should be able to answer it.

“At Oberlin, we’re going to have to rethink who we are in order to ensure that this institution will be here for years to come. That will be difficult. But the difficulty will be worth it, because what Oberlin offers and the types of students that we educate and the work that they’ll do is good work that the world needs.

“Oberlin is more relevant today than it has ever been. We are wading through choppy waters in this country, in particular around income inequality, access to affordable health care, and issues of race and class in ways that feel like we are losing ourselves a bit as a nation. Oberlin has a chance to hold up our values in substantive ways. We have the opportunity to educate the next generation to carry those values forward in powerful ways. That’s why Oberlin is so important. But if we can’t sustain ourselves, meaning we can’t have our financial model work, then we miss the opportunity to shape society.”

Ambar believes that it will take more than money to meet Oberlin’s challenges. “I’ve been at Princeton—just having money doesn’t totally do it,” she says.

But what if she had a magic wand? What would she do?

“I would use a magic wand to help us have the resilience to do this challenging work. I don’t think I’d need a magic wand, and that’s a good thing, because I don’t have one.”

IT’S 5:30 IN THE MORNING ON A FRIDAY IN SEPTEMBER. PRESIDENT Ambar bounds into Phillips Gym, greeting her personal trainer, Wendy Reddinger. Clad in black workout clothes and pink sneakers, Ambar heads upstairs to begin a warm-up routine on the elliptical, Pitbull playing on her smartphone. Ambar tries to exercise every morning but saves the hardest workout for Fridays: “That’s when I box,” she says with worrisome glee.

At the command of her trainer, Ambar cycles through a variety of hitting styles on a heavy bag: small, jackhammering punches with frenetic footwork, followed by punishing hooks and jabs. “Stop it, Wendy!” she shouts, as if Wendy is the one making her do this routine.

The night before, at Ambar’s invitation, the staff members of the *Grape*, Oberlin’s alternative newspaper, held a staff meeting in her basement. “I’m just here to hang and see what you guys do,” Ambar told them. While the *Grape* staff went about their business, Ambar resisted the urge to chime in with ideas and advice. And she didn’t flinch when the topics turned openly NC-17 (one of the recurring features of the *Grape* is a column called “Bad Habits”). But she did graze on the spread of chips and salsa—a subject that came up during her boxing workout the next morning.

Seeing a parallel to what she faces with the college’s finances, she laughs and says, “I don’t want to out-eat my results.”

At this early hour, not many people are in the gym—“This is not a ‘happen to show up’ crowd,” says Ambar—and by the time she takes off her gloves for the next exercise, she sees another regular—fourth-year student Federico Consuegra, who usually comes with a buddy.

“Where’s your friend?” she asks as he passes by.

“He didn’t show up today,” Consuegra answers with gentle disapproval.

“Tell him I noticed,” says Ambar. She’s smiling, but she’s not kidding.

She moves onto the next phase of the workout, something awful called the “ab roller.”

“I really don’t want to do this,” she says to no one in particular. And then she does it. ■

JEFF HAGAN ’86 IS THE EDITOR OF THIS MAGAZINE AND THE FATHER OF A MEMBER OF OBERLIN’S CLASS OF 2021.



THREE'S A FUN CROWD
President Ambar with her husband,
Saladin Malik Ambar, and their
10-year-old triplets, Daniel,
Gabrielle, and Luke (from left).

Students in the environmental studies course Nature Culture Interpretation view a pastoral scene by Paul Bril (Flemish, 1554–1626), *Landscape with Nymphs and Satyrs*, 1623; oil on canvas. Photograph by Tanya Rosen-Jones '97



To Keep Bright the
One hundred years ago, the Allen Me



Torch of Learning
memorial Art Museum opened its doors.

B

By the first decade and a half into the 20th century, Europe was torn apart in a war it hopefully, but with tragic inaccuracy, called the war to end wars. Russia's revolutions came in such short order that they went by the names of the months in which they occurred. The poet Yeats would soon famously fret over things falling apart, centers not holding, and a rough beast slouching toward Bethlehem.



But in Oberlin on June 12, 1917, following a luncheon at the home of college president Henry Churchill King, guests filed into a splendid new building devoted to fine art, designed by one of the leading architects of the time. The Allen Memorial Art Museum was formally dedicated in an afternoon ceremony at the college chapel, where the audience heard remarks by architect Cass Gilbert, museum benefactor Elisabeth Severance Allen Prentiss, and director of the newly opened Cleveland Museum of Art Frederic Allen Whiting. The service included a closing prayer by Reverend Edward Bosworth and an organ postlude composed by Professor George Whitfield Andrews.

Also speaking was Clarence Ward, who had arrived at Oberlin from



Cass Gilbert (American, 1859–1934), *Study for Art Building and Cloister, Oberlin College*, ca. 1915; charcoal, graphite, wash and gouache on tracing paper

Rutgers a year earlier to direct the new museum and serve as the Adelia A. Field Johnston Professor of the History and Appreciation of Art. The juxtaposition of this genteel moment in Oberlin and the turmoil of the times was not far from his thoughts that day.

“It is perhaps unnecessary to remark what is in everyone’s mind, that we meet to dedicate an art museum in times which seem far removed from the thought of art,” he said.

“The present is a time of efficiency, efficiency often at the expense of the beautiful,” he continued. “It is our duty to yield, in a measure, to the unusual circumstances of the day. We must for the moment, at least, bury the individual in the mass. But pure knowledge, developed by individual

initiative, is sure to rise again from the ashes of the world war. To keep alive this individual initiative, to preserve this background on which the future is to build, is the duty of a college art department in time of war.”

“For such a future,” he added, “it is the duty of the colleges and universities of America to keep bright the torch of learning, that its light may lead in the days to come, when things beautiful will again take their place among things practical which for the moment have necessarily absorbed the greater portion of our attention.”

For the next century, scores of directors, curators, professors of art history and other disciplines, students, alumni, and donors kept bright that torch. ►



“I had never set foot in an art museum until I was a freshman at Oberlin in 1983. Not only was the Allen my first introduction to the history of art, having access to its collections shaped my understanding of what it meant to be an artist. To have the Allen host the ‘Hidden Mother’ exhibition was an incredible honor and homecoming.”

—Laura Larson '86, photographer and professor of photography and integrated media at Ohio University



Left: King Sculpture Court, with its recently restored ceiling; right: courtyard behind the art museum.

“My first job at Oberlin was working in the director’s office at the Allen Memorial Art Museum. Sharon F. Patton was the director, and, I didn’t know it then, but after more than a decade in the art world, I realize how rare it was to have an African American woman running the museum. My time at the Allen was transformative. I didn’t grow up going to museums, so that work-study job was my first prolonged experience with a museum. I loved every second of it. Without that job and the Allen, I don’t think I would be where I am today.”

—Lauren Haynes '04, curator of contemporary art at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art

“I started going when I was a little boy—1941 on. It was my playground. And then when I came back to Oberlin as an art student, the museum was a place that was essential to what I was doing. I could play soldiers and knights in that courtyard—my grandfather (museum director Clarence Ward) used to make me swords. I sort of had the run of the place—he was the boss.”

—Writer and former studio art major Geoffrey C. Ward '62



A Collection Built on a Solid Foundation

As the Allen Memorial Art Museum celebrates its 100th year, a new exhibition focuses on the modern works donated by one of the founders of Maidenform.

By Andria Derstine, John G. W. Cowles Director,
Allen Memorial Art Museum



Above: Enid and Joseph Bissett at the February 1954 gala opening of an exhibition of works from the AMAM collection at Knoedler Galleries in New York City.
Top: Enid Bissett and partner Ida Rosenthal in the company that became Maidenform found success selling brassieres like this 1936 model called "Variation."

VISITORS TO THE ALLEN MEMORIAL ART Museum over the years can be forgiven if, in the dazzle of European modernist holdings, they failed to look closely at the small panels of wall text that accompany the works. What they would have found on the labels of two dozen works in the collection—including many of the museum's most important paintings—is the phrase "Gift of Joseph and Enid Bissett." Though many may overlook their names, it would be hard to overlook the contribution of a singular couple whose 24 gifts during the 1950s and '60s helped to form the heart of the museum's holdings in mid-20th-century European modernism. While the works they donated tell important stories in the history of art, the story of the Bissetts is no less interesting, with poignant twists of fate, a tale of immigrant success, and a fortune founded on that most 20th century of American icons: the brassiere.

That the Bissetts would become important art collectors and museum supporters isn't readily suggested by their early lives. Enid was born in England in 1893 as Elsie Sellars, and, having changed her first name, sailed to New York City from Liverpool aboard the *Lusitania* in 1914 (which was sunk by a German submarine the following year). At some point, she met and married Joseph Bissett, who in the early years of the 20th century performed as part of the vaudeville act Bissett and Scott. His father had emigrated to the United States from Russia and he too had changed his name—from Siegel, a name his father, a cantor, had chosen when he arrived in the United States. Bissett and Scott had

performed in England, and it was there that he and Enid met. Together they became ballroom dancers and entertainers. Joseph had been due to sail on the *Titanic* to New York City in April 1912, he later told an associate, but, having gotten a gig in England, prolonged his stay.

By the early 1920s, Enid had opened a dress shop, Enid's Frocks, on 57th Street in midtown Manhattan. There she designed an early version of the brassiere, at first integral to her dresses, to enable the dress to hang in what she felt was an attractive manner. (As a former dancer, she was aware of the need to "corral" one's assets.) Along with her friend and partner, seamstress Ida Rosenthal, she began to produce and sell the brassieres separately from the dresses. Together the pair formed the company that would later attain international success as Maidenform, having designed their brassieres to celebrate a woman's feminine "maiden" form, as opposed to the "boyish" form then in fashion. Along with Ida's husband, William, the women opened a factory in Bayonne, New Jersey. For some years Joseph, known as Joe, was active in the company in sales.

Through the success of Maidenform, the Bissetts had the means by the 1930s to begin collecting art. Many of their works were purchased through the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York City. Matisse, the son of artist Henri Matisse, was a major force in mid-century European modernism. For many years he was the representative in the United States of Jean Dubuffet, one of the most important French artists of the 20th century. The Bissetts were among Dubuffet's earliest patrons in



Jean Dubuffet (French, 1901–1985), *Lili noir de fumée*, 1946; oil on board



the United States and became close friends with him and his wife, Lili. Enid had written to Dubuffet after purchasing the portrait *Lili noir de fumée* in December 1948 from Pierre Matisse, starting a 20-year relationship between the Bissetts and the artist that lasted until Joe's death in 1968. That painting and its acquisition are emblematic both of Dubuffet's "outsider" tendencies and of what he would later describe as Enid's "audacity;" it was featured in the December 1948 issue of *Life* magazine in an article titled "Dead End Art: A Frenchman's Mud-and-Rabble Paintings Reduce Modernism to a Joke," strongly critical of the artist's practice. Notwithstanding this assessment, many Americans—including Jackson Pollock, who cut out the image and put it on his wall, and Claes Oldenburg, an artist well represented in the AMAM collection—greatly admired Dubuffet, whose works are now celebrated for their anti-authoritarian individuality and experimental materials and techniques.

The Bissetts and Dubuffets visited each other

in France and New York City. It was on the return from a trip that included a visit to the Dubuffets in Vence, in the south of France, that the Bissetts had the harrowing experience of surviving the sinking of the liner *Andrea Doria* on July 26, 1956.

To complement the seven works by Dubuffet that the Bissetts donated to the AMAM—six paintings and one collage—Joe Bissett donated parts of Enid's correspondence with the artist and his wife to the museum following her death, including a letter written by Dubuffet upon learning they had survived the shipwreck. The museum also received, directly from Dubuffet, a manuscript he had written about the self-taught artist Emile Lebrun, part of his significant life's work to promote what he termed "art brut," or "raw art"—art by self-taught "outsider" artists, including psychiatric patients and prisoners.

Dubuffet is not, however, the only significant 20th-century European artist represented in their donation—the others include Marc Chagall, Raoul Dufy, Alberto Giacometti, Henri Matisse, Joan Miró,

Amedeo Modigliani, Pablo Picasso, Georges Rouault, and Max Weber. Also included is one 19th-century painting, by Alfred Sisley, and the painting *Harmonizing* by the African American self-taught artist Horace Pippin. Pippin had been championed by famed collector and educator Albert C. Barnes, with whom Enid was in touch in 1940 regarding advice on art acquisitions (the same year that she acquired the two earliest of her purchases to come to the AMAM, the paintings by Dufy and Rouault).

These works, by a diverse group of artists representing seven national origins, have not been on view together since a brief showing at the museum in 1968. They are a testament not only to the Bissetts' discerning eye, but also to their belief in the power of art for education. At first they had considered donating their collection to the Museum of Modern Art. That institution, however, already had strong holdings in European modernism, and on the advice of their nephew, J. R. Judson—who graduated from Oberlin in 1948 and went on to become an eminent art historian in the



Opposite page:
Amedeo
Modigliani (Italian,
1884–1920),
*Nude with Coral
Necklace*, 1917;
oil on canvas

This page, left:
Alberto
Giacometti
(Swiss,
1901–1966),
Figure, 1951;
oil on canvas

This page, right:
Horace Pippin
(American,
1888–1946),
Harmonizing,
1944; oil on
canvas

The Bissetts' wish that these works would be used to further students' educations has been fulfilled over many generations. Their inspirational gifts form the heart of the museum's modern European collection and provided a singularly important work by Horace Pippin.



field of Northern Baroque painting—they instead decided in 1952 to give them to the AMAM, expressly emphasizing their interest in having their gifts further the education of students in an academic setting. Hazel Barker King, the museum's curator, visited the Bissetts at their home in New York in September 1949, having been introduced to them via J. R. Judson, and by the time of a visit by museum director Charles Parkhurst in January 1952, Enid Bissett had decided to formalize the donation intent. Arrangements were made in the ensuing months, enabling the Bissetts to live with

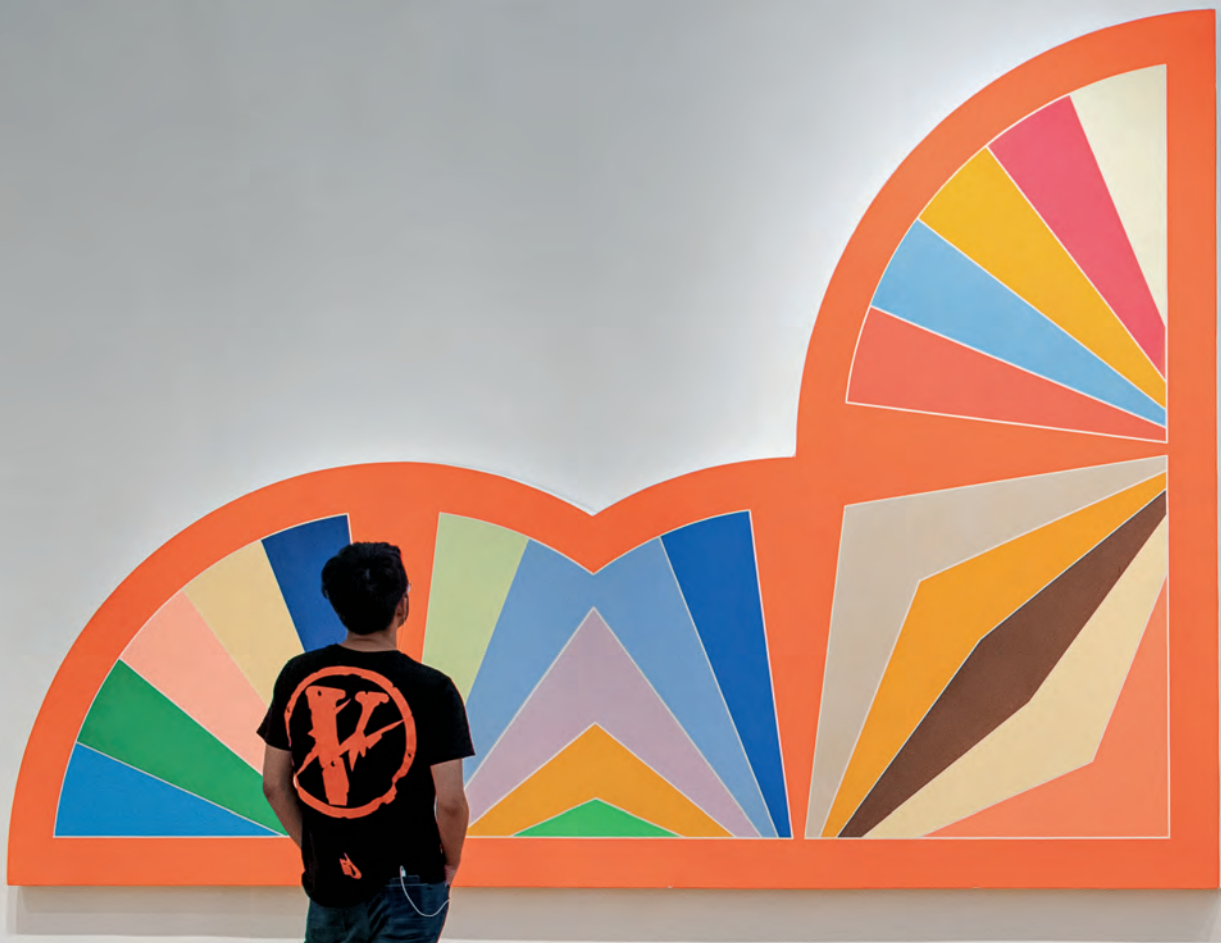
their collection and ensuring that the works would come to Oberlin after both had died, even though they were formally accessioned—or made an official part of the museum's collection—over the course of the years 1955 to 1966.

The Bissetts' wish that these works would be used to further students' education has been fulfilled over many generations. Their inspirational gifts form the heart of the museum's modern European collection and provided a singularly important African American work by Horace Pippin. They are often used in teaching across disciplines and as part of programs for the museum's general public. The donated works also demonstrate links with other figures important in 20th-century history, including the art critic and anarchist Félix Fénéon, who had previously owned Modigliani's *Nude with Coral Necklace*; the French Surrealist poet Benjamin Péret, for whose benefit Picasso donated the proceeds of his *Chair with Owl*, as Péret had been stranded in Mexico following World War II and needed funds to leave;

and famed architect Gordon Bunshaft, who previously owned *Miró's Women, Bird and Serpent in Front of the Sun*.

The story of this remarkable donation by an extraordinary couple—neither of whom had a college degree—is one of many that the AMAM seeks to highlight this year and is a testament to the generosity and foresight of the diverse group of people, including alumni, staff, donors, and others, who have helped to build the museum's impressive, irreplaceable collections over the past 100 years for the benefit of Oberlin's students, faculty, and general public. ■

ANDRIA DERSTINE IS THE JOHN G. W. COWLES DIRECTOR OF THE ALLEN MEMORIAL ART MUSEUM. SHE ACKNOWLEDGES THE KIND ASSISTANCE OF J. R. JUDSON '48, CATHERINE COLEMAN BRAWER, ALVIN LESTER SITOMER, MAXINE AND JOAN SIEGEL, AND DAVID O. FRIEDRICH, AS WELL AS THE SUPPORT OF AN H. H. POWERS GRANT FROM OBERLIN COLLEGE AND THE BROWN FOUNDATION FELLOWS PROGRAM AT THE DORA MAAR HOUSE, PART OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON. THE EXHIBITION *MAIDENFORM TO MODERNISM: THE BISSETT COLLECTION*, IS ON VIEW IN THE AMAM'S JOHN N. STERN GALLERY THROUGH MAY 27, 2018.



“When I was a 15-year-old early entrance student at Fisk University, my father died. I was so traumatized by the loss of my dad that my mother urged me to continue my college education at Oberlin where I could be near my sister who was a double major in voice and piano in the conservatory. During the first days that I was at Oberlin, I went to the Allen Memorial Art Museum. Walking among exquisite works of art brought comfort to my grieving heart. As I slowly began to adjust to the loss of my father, I did not stop going to Allen. For what had been a place of solace for me became a place where I received the countless gifts that a truly outstanding art museum offers.”

—Johnnetta Cole '57, emerita director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art

“The Allen Art Museum is a stunning collection that punches well above its weight for such a small town and college. I was ignorant enough to ignore it when I was a student, but not anymore. I always make sure to spend some time there whenever I visit Oberlin now.”

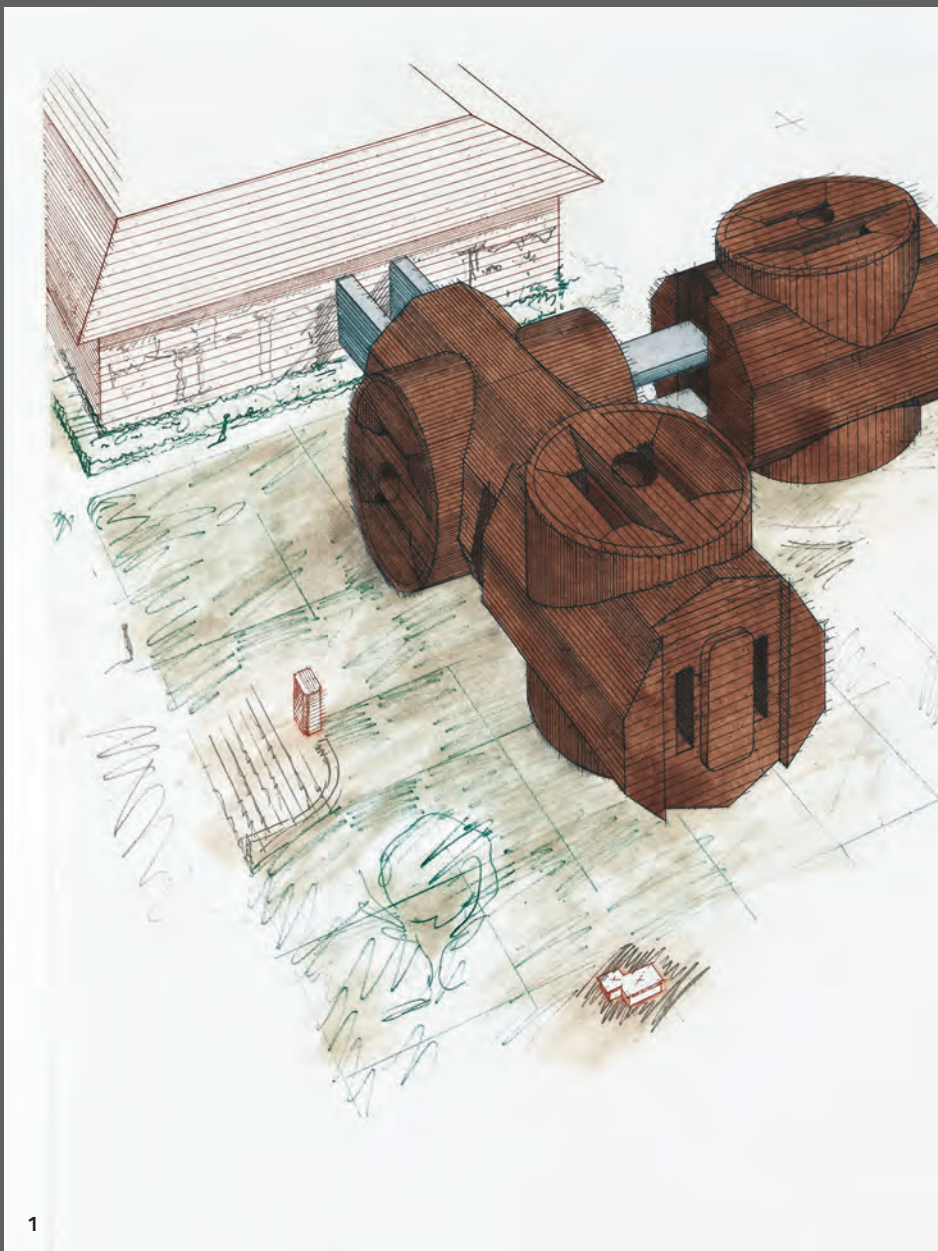
—author Tracy Chevalier '84



The Ellen Johnson '33 Gallery, funded by Ruth Coates Roush '34, to honor the longtime professor and collector.

From left: Frank Stella (American, 1936–) *Agbatana III*, 1968; acrylic on canvas; Larry Poons (American, 1937–) *Away Out on the Mountain*, 1965; acrylic emulsion on canvas;

Eva Hesse (American, born in Germany, 1936–1970), *Laocoön*, 1966; plastic tubing, rope, wire, papier-mâché, cloth, and paint



The “Oldenburg Addition”

ADDING ONTO CASS GILBERT’S Renaissance-style building seems like a risky endeavor. Architect Robert Venturi understood it as one, comparing the task to “drawing a moustache on a Madonna.”

Celebrated *New York Times* architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable put it best: “Having thus succinctly stated the problem, [Venturi] proceeded to solve it,” she wrote in her January 1977 review.

Venturi’s adventurous addition to the Allen in 1976 honored the

original by not attempting to mimic it. It was daring without being disrespectful. And it caused a splash. It was, wrote Huxtable, “true Venturi—urbane, cultured, deeply responsive to history and art, and unusually understanding of existing values—a solution of an extremely sophisticated, subtle, sympathetic, and sometimes wry sensibility.” She credited its “thoughtful logic” to the “exceptionally happy” collaboration between the builders and then-director Richard Spear.

What wasn’t mentioned in Huxtable’s rave was the impish influence of Claes Oldenburg, whose *Giant Three-Way Plug*—his first large public commission—had been installed shortly before plans for the addition had begun.

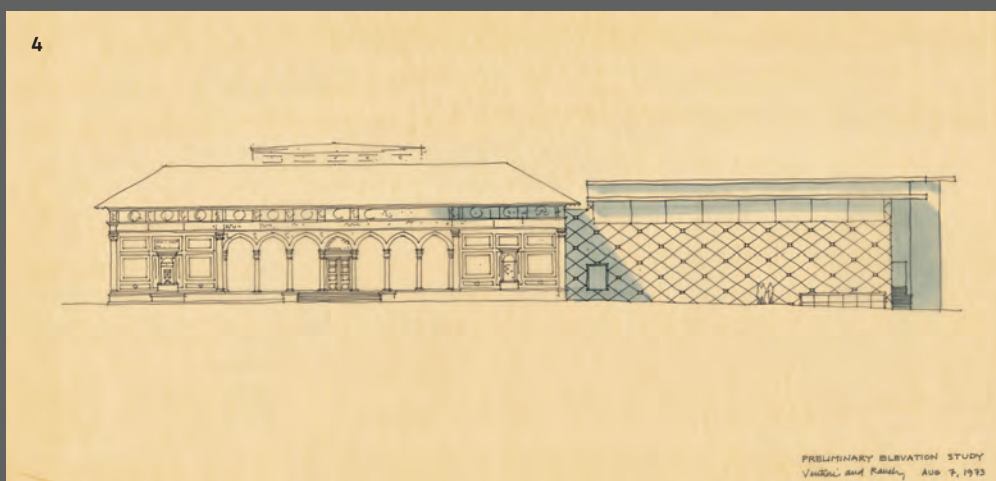
Oldenburg’s sculpture had an important impact on Venturi’s design thinking, not just for the Allen addition, but for other works to come, wrote art professor Katherine Smith of Agnes Scott College in the *Archives of American Art* in 2009. “Oldenburg’s

embrace of the complex coexistence of the sculpture’s contemporary subject and the architecture’s historical symbolism closely paralleled Venturi’s approach to his own commission at Oberlin,” she wrote. And, in fact, when he created the sculpture for Oberlin, he picked the three-way plug because he felt it had “a sort of a Renaissance aspect.”

Among the papers of Ellen Johnson, the much-celebrated art history professor, collector, and benefactor, is a small sketch by



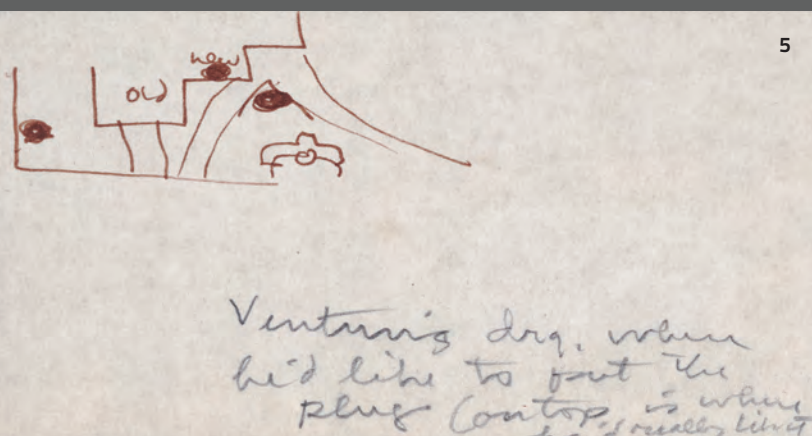
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1: Claes Oldenburg (1929-), *Oberlin Project: An Alternate Proposal for an Addition to the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio, 1979*; color etching and aquatint on paper
2: Oldenburg poses with *Giant Three-Way Plug* in 1970. 3: Robert Venturi and his wife and partner Denise Scott Brown in 2007.

4. Preliminary elevation study by Venturi, 1973, shows nixed surface pattern. 5: Venturi's sketch showing positioning possibilities for Oldenburg's sculpture at Allen Memorial Art Museum.



5

Venturi's drg. where he'd like to put the plug (on top is where he'd really like it)

Venturi in which he notes three options for placing the Oldenburg once the addition was complete. On that scrap of paper is a note in Johnson's handwriting: "Venturi's drg. Where he'd like to put the plug (on top is where he'd really like it)."

Though Venturi had explicitly made clear in his architectural theory writings a fascination with Oldenburg, the artist's influence on Venturi's designs were even more pronounced after the Oberlin commission. Most notable was a

Times Square information kiosk that featured a truly big Big Apple on its roof—"a Pop-art monument in the manner of Claes Oldenburg"

Oldenburg himself took his outsized whimsy to an even more outsized extreme when he created his own playful *Alternate Proposal for an Addition to the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio*. Its multi-input and output plugs might not have pleased Ada Huxtable, but it offered endless options for electric expansions. ■

Words on the Walls

Read the label. Good advice for buying groceries, taking medicine, and visiting art museums. While museums increasingly use text alongside artwork to help put the work in context, part of the story is in the fine print. Along with the name of the artist, the title of the work, the medium used, and the year it was created, the text—which often begins with “Gift of...” —offers a glimpse into how a piece comes to be part of a museum’s holdings.

The Bissett collection is one of the richest of the Allen Memorial Art Museum’s holdings, and the label “Gift of Joseph and Enid Bissett” dominates an entire gallery. Here are the stories behind a few of the others.

By Jeff Hagan '86



ELISABETH SEVERANCE ALLEN PRENTISS

Joy to All

The words “Mrs. F.F. Prentiss Bequest” sprinkled on labels throughout the Allen’s galleries obscure the identity of one of the most important benefactors: Elisabeth Severance Allen Prentiss. Her string of last names represents some of the wealthiest, most prominent Cleveland families at the dawn of the 20th century, and

the fortune behind those names bankrolled the entire museum building. Elisabeth, the daughter of Rockefeller oil business partner Louis Severance, married Dudley Peter Allen, Oberlin Class of 1875 and a surgeon, professor, and eventual Oberlin trustee. The couple pledged funds to build a structure to house



Left: A portrait of Elisabeth Severance Prentiss by Philip Alexius László de Lombos. Gift of Mrs. John A. Hadden, 1946.24.

Above: Cass Gilbert in 1924. Below: the museum under construction in 1916.

Elisabeth Allen said at the building's dedication in 1917. "A lover of the beautiful in nature and in art, he had coveted for many years for Oberlin a building such as we are dedicating today, where the aesthetic side of the student life might be stimulated and developed. When this vision became a reality, he was one of the most joyful and active members of the committee to consider plans. That he was not permitted to see these foundations laid, to watch these walls rise, was a tragedy. It has therefore been my privilege and a sad pleasure to perpetuate his deep interest in this particular department of the college life, and to erect this building, which I now present in memory of Dudley Peter Allen to the President of the Board of Trustees, with the hope that within its walls may come an inspiration to many and a joy to all."

Elisabeth and Dudley admired other campus buildings designed by architect Cass Gilbert, and Elisabeth stayed closely involved throughout the museum's design and construction.

Gilbert's design for the original Allen has been described in comically varied ways—dubbed at the time in the *Oberlin Alumni Magazine* as

"North-Italian Byzantine" and by Clarence Ward as "an adaptation of North Italian Renaissance." In a 1977 rave review of the Venturi addition, the original building was described as "a Renaissance palazzo out of Brunelleschi by way of Cass Gilbert and the Beaux Arts." In fact, a spring 2017 exhibit at Oberlin's art library organized by art librarian Barbara Prior to celebrate the centennial shows a clear debt to Brunelleschi's Foundling Hospital in Florence. Whatever its style, the architecture was universally praised. Too bad it didn't always have great art.

Eventually Elisabeth brought remedy to that, bequeathing hundreds of thousands of dollars to Oberlin when she died in 1944. Geoffrey C. Ward, a grandson of Clarence who grew up using the museum as his own play yard, remembers stories of how his grandfather was able to inspire Elisabeth's generosity. By then she had married Francis Fleury Prentiss, and the labels denoting works bought through her, including the 1841 Turner masterpiece *View of Venice: the Ducal Palace, Dogana, and Part of San Giorgio*," bear her final married name.



the college's growing art collection, which until then was spread throughout buildings on campus. Dudley died before the museum opened, but Elisabeth honored the pledge...and then some.

"As many of you know, dear friends, the interests of his Alma Mater were very dear to the heart of Doctor Allen,"

ELLEN JOHNSON '33

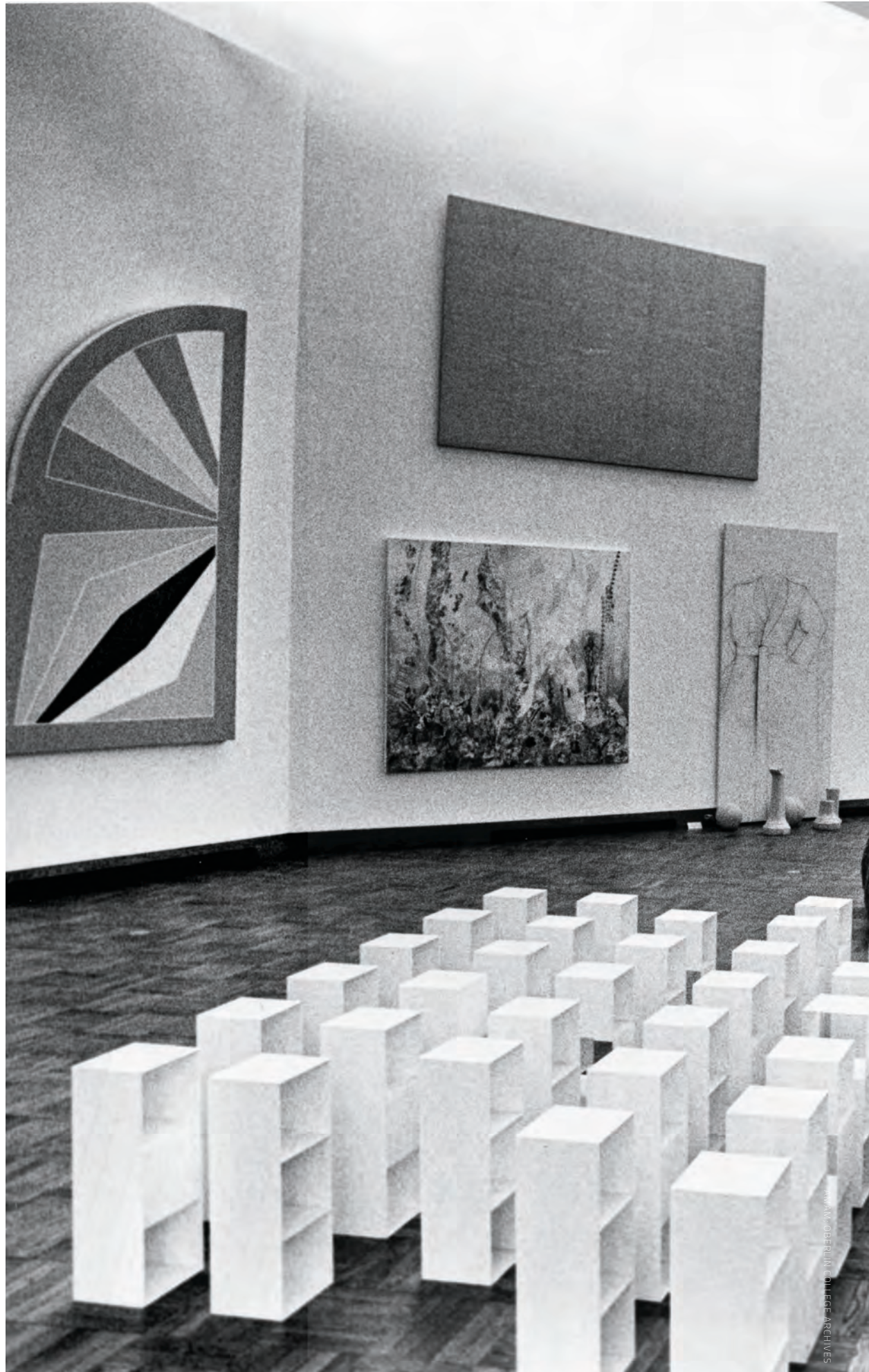
Good Friends

With her ability to see around corners as to what was coming up in the art world, Professor Ellen Johnson '33, who also earned a master's degree from Oberlin, gained the respect and loyalty of artists like Jim Dine, Larry Poons, Claes Oldenburg, Bruce Nauman, and Frank Stella—in part for her early recognition of them.

She helped present the *Young Americans* show at Oberlin, which brought to campus contemporary artists before they became household names, including Joan Mitchell, Robert Rauschenberg, and Chuck Close. And upon her death in 1992, Johnson bequeathed to Oberlin her impressive collection of contemporary art—more than 300 works, many gifted by the artists she befriended—as well as the Frank Lloyd Wright house that was her home.

Andy Warhol's 1964 silkscreen *Jackie*, Roy Lichtenstein's 1964 *Craig*, and a 1976 portrait of her by Alice Neel all bear some variation of a credit line that leads back to Johnson, and her connections and collections helped to make the Allen the powerhouse college art museum it is today.

Since 1940, Johnson's other legacy is Oberlin's celebrated art rental program. Not only has it brought art of the masters of all eras into the dorm rooms and apartments of generations of Oberlin students, it spawned a duplicate. Alison Caplan '00, director of education at the Akron (OH) Art Museum, organized an art rental program in conjunction with the Akron-Summit County Public Library; 26 original works of art will be available for rent from the library beginning in February. Oberlin faculty member Kristina Paabus is represented in the collection, which represents mostly regional artists or artists who have shown at the Akron museum. "Our hope is to inspire people to feel that art is accessible to anyone and connect them with artists and related resources in the community—very much in the spirit of Ellen Johnson," Caplan says.









R.T. MILLER JR.

Making the Allen Collection “Important”

Up until 1939, the Allen had “no more than a handful of good original works,” according to a 1947 article by Wolfgang Stechow. But it would soon experience a dizzying influx of high-quality pieces thanks to the donations of R.T. Miller Jr., an 1891 graduate who had founded a correspondence school in Chicago.

Clarence Ward once recalled Miller telling him that Oberlin had a fine building in the Allen, “but very little of importance in it.”

Miller helped to fix that. Each year from 1940 on, without being solicited, Miller donated funds for the purchase of art—an average of \$25,000 annually for more than two decades—with the stipulation that the funds be spent within a year or two. The R.T. Miller Jr. Fund allowed the Allen to purchase works by Cezanne, Gorky, Kirchner, Monet, and—among its best-known works, Ter Brugghen’s *St. Sebastian Tended by Irene*.

And because Miller’s gifts were of money and not art, the resulting works reflect not the idiosyncratic interests of a gifted amateur, but rather the best wishes and most-informed choices of a string of curators, directors, and members of the museum’s collection committee.

In a bulletin sent by the museum following Miller’s death, curator Hazel King recalled that despite his large donations, Miller steered clear of influencing purchasing decisions, even though he was often invited to weigh in. He’d told her: “Now, Mrs. King, if you were to ask me to help you select a riding horse, I would do it with the greatest pleasure, for I know something about horses.”

CHARLES F. OLNEY

The Slenderness of the Teacher’s Pocketbook

Although 2017 marks 100 years since the Allen opened its doors, Oberlin’s art museum actually began a few years before 1917 and miles away from its current site at the corner of Main and Lorain. It began...in Cleveland.

Charles F. Olney, who was a New York public school teacher and administrator, began collecting art in the 1850s. In the early 1890s, he began displaying the works in a building that adjoined the Cleveland home he shared with his wife, Abigail, in the neighborhood of Tremont, a small pocket just south and west of downtown. The Olneys willed their collection to Oberlin, yet when Charles died in 1903 and his wife a year later, the college had no appropriate space to house it. The artworks remained in the Cleveland gallery (thanks to the generosity of the house’s new owners) for several years until Oberlin created a temporary space in its newly built Carnegie Library. The main portion of the collection was placed in the library’s Art

Room by June 19, 1908, and exhibited each day of the college’s weeklong celebration of its 75th anniversary.

As Art Professor Frederick O. Grover stated diplomatically in the college’s 1907-08 annual report: “In estimating the value and character of the collection, it should be remembered that it is the product of rather intermittent collecting extending over a period of forty years or more, and that it is the expression of lifelong interest in beautiful objects on the part of a man of little or no specific art training, and with an income by no means large. For thirty years prior to 1888 Mr. Olney was a teacher in the New York public schools, and during that time he had, I understand, a comparatively small income besides his teacher’s salary with which to satisfy his art instinct.”

Grover continued along these lines, avoiding putting too fine a point on it. “The collection which was finally gathered together

represents in part the native taste of Mr. Olney, which was both fine and catholic, in part a compromise between this taste and the slenderness of a teacher’s pocketbook, in part the mistakes inevitable to lack of training in art expression. Although as a consequence very unequal in merit, it is as a whole a collection of unusual artistic excellence, of wide scope, and of large commercial value.”

When the Allen Memorial Art Building was dedicated in 1917, Frederic Allen Whiting, director of the Cleveland Museum of Art (which had opened the previous year) predicted that the fine Cass Gilbert building would attract a great many gifts. But Whiting urged Oberlin not to bind itself to keep collections together, nor to accept exacting conditions on its gifts. He felt this would obligate Oberlin to display inferior works alongside excellent objects.

But Oberlin was way ahead of him. The college accepted the Olney gift with the understanding that portions of it could be sold to buy works of higher quality. Of the 8,000 or so objects the Olneys donated, the Allen kept about 700. But the Charles F. Olney Fund designation can be spotted on labels throughout the museum today, attached to works as diverse as Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione’s 17th-century etching *Circe Changing Ulysses’s Men to Beasts* and Ernst Ludwig Kirchner’s 1915 painting *Self-Portrait as a Soldier*. Today, the Charles Olney Fund is generally used to conserve Olney gifts.



Upper left:
R.T. Miller Jr.’s
senior college
portrait, 1891.
Left: Ernst
Ludwig Kirchner
(German,
1880-1938),
*Self-Portrait as a
Soldier*, 1915;
oil on canvas

Opposite page:
Hendrick
ter Brugghen
(Dutch, ca.
1588-1629),
*Saint Sebastian
Tended by
Irene*, 1625; oil
on canvas





Lasting Impressions

A number of Oberlin's most important faculty members and museum directors returned for the Allen's centennial. Standing, from left: **William Chiego**, Emeritus Director, McNay Art Museum, San Antonio; **Stephanie Wiles**, Richard J. Schwartz Director, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University; **John Pearson**, Eva and John Young-Hunter Emeritus Professor of Art. Seated, from left: **Richard Spear**, Mildred C. Jay Emeritus Professor of Art; Affiliate Research Professor, University of Maryland, College Park; **Athena Tacha**, Emerita Professor of Art; Past Curator of Modern Art, Allen Memorial Art Museum; **William Hood**, Mildred C. Jay Emeritus Professor of Art; Visiting Professor, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University; **Anne F. Moore**, Museum Consultant and Fine Art Appraiser, New York. Portrait by Tanya Rosen-Jones '97





Booker Peek's Empowering Words

Following a nearly half-century run, the Oberlin professor brings his gap-bridging educational program to a close. By Justin Glanville | Portrait by Tanya Rosen-Jones '97

THIRTY MILLION WORDS.

That's the surplus in spoken language heard by children born into affluent families, as compared to children born into low-income families, by the age of 3. This phenomenon—sometimes called the “word gap”—was first identified several decades ago and is blamed for vast differences in educational achievement between low-income and affluent students.

But to the dismay of Booker Peek '66, the general public still regards this gap as news.

“I saw it reported on TV two days ago, as if it's a surprise,” says Peek, shaking his head. “Our society is still coming to terms with the fact that poor children do not get exposure to the language of the culture that's in power.”

Working to close that gap has been a primary driver of Peek's near 50-year career at Oberlin (he retired from teaching in 2011). The courses he taught as a professor of education and later of African American studies grounded students in the reality of racial inequality in early childhood upbringing and education.

Off-campus, it motivated him to create direct-service programs for local low-income students and students of color. These programs provided one-on-one instruction that exposed students to the

comparatively large vocabularies of their college-educated tutors.

The longest-running of those programs, Words Are Very Empowering (WAVE), ended last year after a 46-year run. The summer program, taught by Oberlin College students, annually served about 100 elementary and high school students from Oberlin and beyond, offering coursework to both at-risk and advanced children. The program consisted of morning sessions in the King Building geared to young children, who met in small groups to practice simple sentences and math problems, while afternoons were reserved for drop-in tutoring sessions for high school students.

During his many years supervising WAVE, Peek—often dressed in his trademark denim jacket, white shirt, and tie—became a familiar and inspiring sight to public school students and families in Oberlin, Lorain County, and beyond.

“He personally had a positive impact on hundreds of students over the years,” says Kofi Lomotey '74, a former Peek student and current professor of educational leadership at Western Carolina University. “I can think of students who are physicians, who are lawyers, thanks directly to him and his work.”

Peek himself views WAVE as one of his most important achievements, as much for its social benefits as its academic ones.

“Words and knowledge allow you to persuade people, and they also create peace,” he says. “If you have words, you don’t need guns or knives or fists.”

GUNS AND KNIVES AND FISTS WERE NOT FAR OUTSIDE PEEK’S OWN repertoire when he first arrived in Oberlin as a graduate student in 1964.

He’d grown up in Jacksonville, Florida, during the height of the Jim Crow era, attending strictly segregated schools and living in an all-black neighborhood. As a teenager, the anger and frustration he felt at his situation drew him to a group of boys who were routinely arrested for theft and other misdemeanors. Peek viewed them as heroes, emulating their poor classroom behavior and earning F’s and D’s on his report cards.

“I wasn’t as bad as some of the guys, but I was close,” he says.

Then two things happened. First, the ringleader of the group was imprisoned for shoplifting, removing the most compelling negative role model from Peek’s life. Second, he fell in love—with a smart, optimistic girl who found empty rebellion unattractive.

“I’d been interested in her for years, and I knew she was looking at guys who were staying in school, getting good grades,” he said.

To ask her out, Peek knew he had to turn around his grades and his reputation. So when he reached tenth grade, he tried something simple: “I started paying attention,” he says. “That was really it. I didn’t work harder or study more, I just started listening in class.”

Within a semester, the D’s and F’s became straight A’s. His crush said yes when he worked up the nerve to ask her out, and Peek was voted “most dignified” in a class poll.

Nearly half a century later, the girl, Annette, is his wife of nearly 60 years—a woman he credits with everything from persuading him to attend college to teaching him how to smile. And that “most dignified” designation? It means more to him in retrospect than it did back then.

“You can’t be dignified unless you respect people. You want people to do their best and be their best.” The moment he started doing that, he says, is when his life began to change.

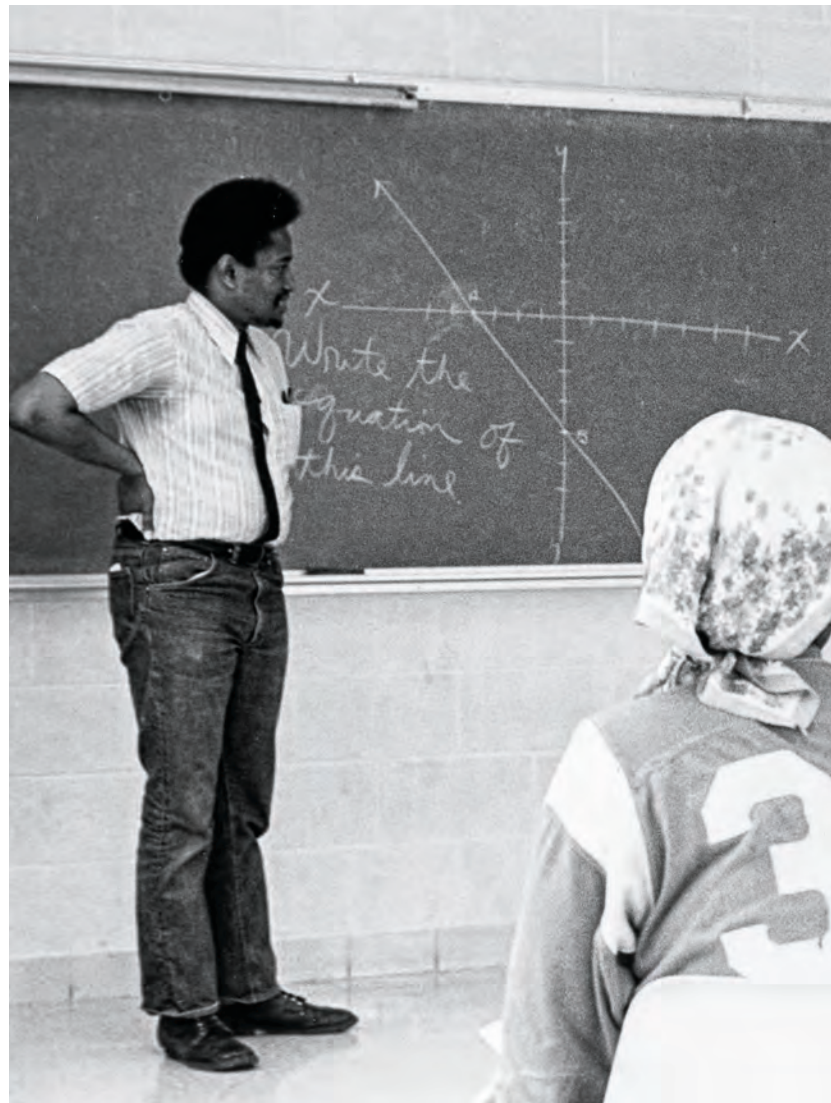
But challenges lay ahead. While at Oberlin pursuing his master’s degree in teaching, Peek found his academic gains and newfound self-confidence overtaken by apprehension—and not just because he was far from home. Due to his segregated primary school education and his undergraduate years at the historically black Florida A&M University, Peek’s exposure to white people, particularly affluent white people, had been minimal.

“Up until that point—and I was 24 by then—I had not met a white person that I could talk to or even look in the face,” he says. “My upbringing, how separate I’d been from whites—I think it gave me the thought there was something wrong with me.”

Peek was the only black student in the master’s program. He dropped out after his first term, impulsively hopping a bus back to Jacksonville and vowing to stay in Florida forever. But then two of his Oberlin professors, Ira Steinberg and the late Frank Laycock, contacted him and asked him to return. Peek says he was surprised and touched by the gesture—and by their invitation to join the department’s faculty after he graduated.

“What did they see in me to give me this chance?” he asks. “I was never going to be a traditional academic. In fact, I was very clear with them that I had no interest in that.”

Steinberg and Laycock were adamant in their wish: simply that Peek be a great teacher, be it on campus or off, with or without his terminal degree (without), or whether or not he published (he did, although little).



“They allowed me to be who I am, to pursue what I wanted,” Peek says, then pauses. “I’ve come to realize, especially since retirement, that my life has been defined by people who valued me in a way that I didn’t value myself.”

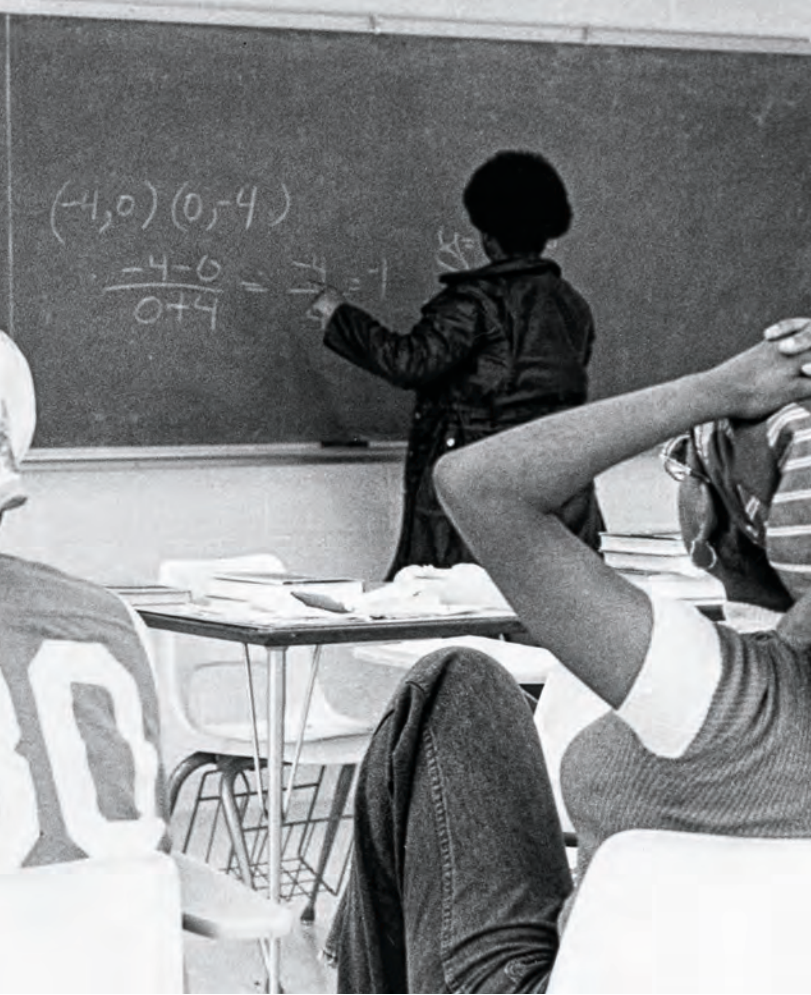
FOSTERING A SENSE OF SELF-WORTH UNDERPINNED MUCH OF PEEK’S teaching at Oberlin and in programs like WAVE. He started WAVE in 1970—the same year he joined the faculty—as a way of nudging low-income students onto the path that he himself had taken out of poverty and marginalization. WAVE provided instruction in a variety of subjects—math, science, reading—and helped to prepare students for standardized tests and college entrance exams.

“The idea was, how do we bring every child under the same umbrella of love and support that we would give our own children?” Peek says.

Kevin Gilfether ’13, who was a student of Peek and a WAVE tutor, remembers one of Peek’s favorite acronyms (and Peek, he says, loved acronyms): ISME, or “instant success, minimal effort.”

“He wanted to give disadvantaged kids an early sense of how pleasurable success is,” Gilfether says. “So you start with easy stuff, like asking students to say their name in French, give them over-the-top praise for that, and then they’re energized to move on.”

CLASS ACT Seen in this undated photo from the Oberlin College Archives, Peek maintained a commitment to educate young people at all levels, not just his college students.



The approach made sense to Gilfether, who grew up in a low-income family in Oberlin. “In a college town like Oberlin, there’s a strong class divide, and if you grow up low-income you’re very aware of that,” he says.

As a tutor, Gilfether watched countless students grow in performance and confidence. Tutors worked mostly one-on-one with kids in a variety of academic areas, either to bring them up to a level with peers or simply to keep their skills fresh over the summer. “We called the program Words Are Very Empowering, but it was also Numbers Are Very Empowering,” Gilfether jokes.

But it wasn’t just the instruction that was valuable. WAVE sessions were typically held in buildings on Oberlin’s campus, which exposed the students to college life and a wide range of college students.

“I liked that the student tutors were from all different backgrounds,” says

“Words and knowledge allow you to persuade people, and they also create peace. If you have words, you don’t need guns or knives or fists.”

Oberlin resident Dena Pfenninger, whose two daughters attended WAVE between 2008 and 2012. “That let my kids know that if you like something, you can do it, whatever your background.” Her older daughter recently started college, and her younger, still in high school, wants to be a scientist.

Pfenninger, whose family identifies as African American, remembers Peek’s frequent visits to the tutoring sessions as significant in themselves. “To know that he’d grown up in the South, rather poor, and had made his way through college and was making a difference, he was definitely a role model for my daughters,” she says.

Because WAVE worked mostly at the interpersonal level—and because Peek rarely sought media attention or formal publication in academic journals, his contributions, and those of the program, were easy to underestimate, says Lomotey.

“His commitment was consistent, and it was in both word and deed,” he says. “Parents would call Booker up and say, ‘Can you help me with my son?’ and he would say, ‘Bring him over.’ It wasn’t uncommon for him to have students in his garage over a summer while he helped them prepare for graduate school or medical school entrance exams. He wasn’t a traditional academic, but I’ve still never seen anyone as committed to education, particularly of black students, as Booker Peek.”

THESE DAYS, PEEK’S CONCERNS CENTER MOSTLY AROUND HIS HOME, A contemporary colonial on Oberlin’s north side that bustles with near-constant activity.

On a recent weekday morning, his daughter Angela, a kindergarten teacher, breezes through the kitchen on her way back from a workout, giving her father a kiss as she passes. His granddaughter hovers nearby, holding out her drinking cup for Peek to look inside.

“We have a rule that she needs to finish her water before she can watch TV,” Peek explains, smiling, before checking the cup and giving her a nod of approval. (Peek, who once weighed 260 pounds, says raising his water intake helped him achieve his now-trim figure.)

Peek ended WAVE in part to devote more time to caring for his wife, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease 15 years ago. When he’s not actively caring for her, he often sits on a couch in his window-walled sunroom, a video monitor of her bedroom at his side.

“I realized just this morning that right here, in this seat, I’m surrounded by my life story,” he says. “Annette is here on the screen, my kids and grandkids surround me, and over there”—he points out the window, across his backyard—“is the house of the man who basically brought me to Oberlin.” The house belonged to Frank Laycock, his education professor, who died several years ago. The two men moved to the neighborhood at the same time so their families could be close to each other.

Over the course of his career, Peek believes, there have been advances and setbacks in the education of black and low-income students in the U.S. On the one hand, school segregation by race and income has returned to levels not seen since the 1970s. On the other, he sees a rise in black students’ self-image and in their conviction that whites and blacks should have the same quality of education. Whether that leads to measurable change, he says, will likely take years to gauge.

“If I were to come back in 200 or a thousand years, there’s only one thing I’d want to see,” he says. “What is happening with our 1, 2, and 3-year-old children? If I find they are learning the language of those who are the most powerful, that would tell me that we’ve finally arrived.” ■

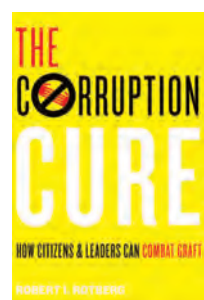
JUSTIN GLANVILLE IS A CLEVELAND-BASED WRITER AND THE AUTHOR OF *NEW TO CLEVELAND: A GUIDE TO (RE)DISCOVERING THE CITY*.

Class Notes

1950s

1954

Historian **Stephen W. Sears**, who wrote 2003's *Gettysburg*, has a new book on the Civil War. *Lincoln's Lieutenants: The High Command of the Army of the Potomac* was published earlier this year by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.



Rotberg '55

and his composition "Prayer" was sung by mezzo-soprano **Denyce Graves '85** in a recital at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. In 2017, Leslie was a panelist at Cleveland Opera Theater's New Works Festival and was a member of the Composer's Roundtable following a performance of his art song "Since You Went Away," part of the U.S. Army Band's Chamber Music Series at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington. In August, Leslie's "For You There Is No Song" was performed by baritone Ryan Speedo Green at the Ravinia Festival. ■ **Robert I. Rotberg**, founding director of the Program on Intrastate Conflict at the Harvard Kennedy School, president emeritus of the World Peace Foundation, and author of *Africa Emerges, Transformative Political Leadership*, and *When States Fail*, has a new book from Princeton University Press. *The Corruption Cure: How Citizens & Leaders Can Combat Graft* puts some 35 countries under an anticorruption microscope to find solutions to defeat sleaze and graft. Robert is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and former president of Lafayette College.

1960s

1960

Michael Charles Klein received the Order of Canada, one of the country's highest civilian honors, in recognition of service to the community and the nation. Michael, a

physician who settled in Canada in 1967 after refusing to serve in the U.S. Army Medical Corps in Vietnam, was honored for his achievements in maternity care. Also a professor at McGill University and the University of British Columbia, he has been a leading advocate for family-friendly birth practices.



1961

Ann Clymer Bigelow retired from *Current Digest of the (Post-)Soviet Press* 10 years ago and has since enjoyed researching and writing articles about early Ohio social history—particularly care of the mentally ill. Her son Dan and his family live in Connecticut, and her grandson Adam attends Carleton, his father's alma mater. ■ Historian **Richard D. Brown**, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Connecticut, has written a new book, *Self-Evident Truths: Contesting Equal Rights from the Revolution to the Civil War*, published by Yale University Press. His previous books include *Knowledge Is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700–1865*; *The Strength of a People: The Idea of an Informed Citizenry in Early America, 1650–1870*; and the coauthored microhistory, *The Hanging of Ephraim Wheeler: A Story of Rape, Incest, and Justice in Early America*. ■ Rabbi **Kenneth D. Roseman** of Corpus Christi, Texas, uploaded

KORNER MASTER

Todd Barkan '68, who created San Francisco's influential Keystone Korner jazz club in Long Beach, was named a 2018 National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master.

the first 10 lectures in his "The History of the Jews in America" series, which begins with Jewish settlement in Spain during Roman times and continues through the present day. "If you are bored with late-night television, watch these lectures and then sleep soundly as a more educated Jew!" he suggests. The videos can be found on YouTube by searching "We Saw the Lifted Lamp." Kenneth was ordained in 1966 at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. He has written several books, including *Lone Stars of David*, which chronicles Texas Jews. [w] <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC33sRwvGF6CtROxLMUbkf2w>



Monroe '64

Ervin **Monroe** earned the National Flute Association's Lifetime Achievement Award at its annual conference. Ervin's long career includes 40 years as principal flute of the Detroit Symphony and principal flute roles with the Bolshoi, Royal Danish, and Royal English ballets. He has served as an NFA board member, founded *The Flutist Quarterly*, and served on the faculties of Wayne State and Oakland universities. ■ **Robert Tittler**, a professor of history emeritus at Montreal's Concordia University, was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

1966

Harvey Baker helped the Golden State Legends win the title in the U.S. Adult Soccer Association's 2017 International SoccerFest (aka Veterans Cup). The team took joy in beating its archrival, Kizuna of Japan, 2-0 in the semifinal. Harvey coaches high school soccer in Waynesboro, Tenn., and operates a custom woodworking business. He enjoys organic gardening with his wife, Dorie. ■ Pianist and conductor **David Montgomery** released his second book, *Unfinished History: A New Account of Franz Schubert's B-minor Symphony* (Brown Walker Press). Its foreword



SKETCHY STUDENTS

Art students learn from the masters at the Allen Memorial Art Museum in this undated photo.

was written by fellow conductor David Zinman '58. David lives in the San Francisco area, where he loves meeting up with fellow Oberlinians.



Rosenberg '67

1967

Robert Merfeld has written the book *Is It So if You Think It's So? Thoughts on Teaching and Performing Chamber Music—An Anti-Manual*. It has already earned acclaim from

musicians including Richard Goode, Joseph Lin, and Arnold Steinhardt. Robert is a former student of Emil Danenberg. ■ **Joel Rosenberg's** rich career in music includes great memories of his Oberlin experiences, among them Oberlin Orchestra performances at Carnegie Hall, Symphony Hall in Boston, and the Academy of Music in Philadelphia, and hitchhiking to Kennedy's funeral with friends—and running out of money while there. In 1995 he founded the Salt Lake City nonprofit Festival Concerts, whose performances benefit numerous charities. A violist and conductor, Joel recently

was soloist for the Slovak Radio Orchestra in Bratislava—a concert sponsored by the U.S. Embassy—and was guest conductor with the Elbland Philharmonic in Germany. He would love to catch up with Obies who travel through Utah. ■ Set in 1950, **Sarah Levine Simon's** new novel *Winged Victory* (Black Opal Books) follows a 9-year-old Jewish girl in Pittsburgh, whose world is split between a sick father and a mother who cannot hear. Persecuted by those around her, she retreats into a world of books and imagination until family matters deterio-



Levine Simon '67, Chun '68

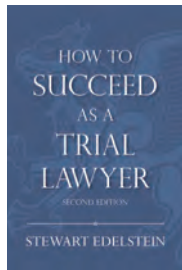
rate even further, and she and her mother are left to find their way through seemingly endless challenges.

1968

Edna Chun and Jay Kyung Chun were on hand to present the second annual Alexander D. Chun Compassion in Surgery Award, an award for a resident physician at Mt. Sinai Hospital in Miami Beach, Fla., to Derek Nieber. The award is named for their son, **Alex '08**, who died in 2015. Alex was a physician assistant at the hospital. Alex's friends and family members also established the Alexander D. Chun '08 Scholarship in Neuroscience at Oberlin. ■ **Richard M. Isackes** has written a book on the Hollywood scene painters whose trompe l'oeil backdrops for films such as *North by Northwest* and *The Wizard of Oz* were generally uncredited by the movie studios. A collaboration with Karen L. Maness, a colleague at the University of Texas who curated the images, *The Art of the Hollywood Backdrop* (Regan Arts) has been widely acclaimed as the definitive work on these unsung artists, and is

now in its third printing. A resident of Austin, Texas, and Otter Rock, Ore., Richard has been married since 2010 to Alisa M. Gabriel '72.

1970s



1970

Stewart Edelstein's book *How to Succeed as a Trial Lawyer* was published in a second edition by the American Bar Association, earning favorable reviews. Stewart lives with his wife, Lynn, in Stockbridge,

Mass. He retired after 40 years as a trial lawyer, during which time he taught clinical courses at Yale Law School for two decades. He currently serves as an arbitrator for commercial disputes, recently taught an adult-education course on etymology, and is president of the board of the Stockbridge Library Association and a board member of the Stockbridge Land Trust.

[e] stewedelstein@gmail.com

1971

Judith Yaross Lee was named a distinguished professor at Ohio University, where she has served on the School of Communication faculty since 1990. In the past year, she also served as a Fulbright professor of American studies at Leiden University in the Netherlands. "I became an English major at Oberlin through the inspiration of Dewey Ganzel, my professor for the introductory literature class I took as a sophomore because I missed reading for pleasure when I thought that I wanted to study chemistry as a freshman," she says. "By the time I graduated, I was taking five literature courses a semester—in Spanish and Russian as well as English, including Ganzel's course on Faulkner—to my everlasting delight."

■ **Katherine Lane Nuckolls Monti** and John G. Huck were married May 20, 2017, in Elgin, Ill. Attendees included Kathy's two and John's three grown children and their combined seven grandchildren, as well as Matron of Honor **Janneane Ferguson Gent** (pictured left of bride) and **Martin Gent** and (right) **Camille Larson '69**. Kathy, Janneane, and Martin all met in Intro to Calculus in September 1969. Kathy earned her PhD in biostatistics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1975 and worked until January 2017, when she retired from her position as chief statistical



Monti '71

scientist at Rho Inc. She has been elected to a three-year term as vice president of the American Statistical Association.

1973

Richard Haass released his latest book, *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order* (Penguin Press). It examines the history of world order from the rise of the modern state system to the end of the Cold War, reflects on momentous shifts in the last quarter-century to shed light on our current state of affairs, and outlines specific steps we must take to begin addressing the many challenges we face. Richard is president of the Council on Foreign Relations.

1975

Barbara Newman was elected to the American Philosophical Society in Humanities in April 2017. She is the John Evans Professor of Latin

ALUMNI TRUSTEE ELECTED



Georgia Yuan '75 was confirmed by the Oberlin College Board of Trustees to serve a four-year term after winning the 2017 Alumni Trustee

Election. Yuan brings to service as a trustee her professional background in higher education and a unique perspective on the larger trends in education gained from working in the Obama administration. She is also the parent of an Oberlin graduate, **Kimberley '07**.

The Trustee Search Committee seeks to expand its pool of potential candidates (college and conservatory) for future elections. If you wish to suggest a candidate, please contact **Danielle Young**, executive director of the Oberlin Alumni Association, at alumni@oberlin.edu.

RITORNO

Artist Nanette Carter '76, who spent her junior year studying art in Perugia, Italy, four decades ago, returned last spring for an exhibition of her work at the Alessandro Berni Gallery there.

Language and Literature at Northwestern University and also teaches English, religious studies, and classics.



Frelick '76

1976

Bill Frelick attended the April 2017 Climate March in Washington, D.C. ■ **Dena Netherton's** new novel, *High Country Dilemma* (Anaiiah Press), follows **Fallon Hart**, whose theatrical aspirations have her dreaming

of a life beyond her small Colorado hometown...until she encounters handsome firefighter and amateur actor **Lucas O'Farrell**. Originally from the San Francisco area, Dena has also cultivated a life in performance, both onstage and behind the scenes.

1977

Jennifer Moore Ballentine was named executive director of the California State University Institute for Palliative Care at Cal State, San Marcos. She previously served as president of the Iris Project and executive director of the Life Quality Institute in Denver. She has also been a research program strategist for the Denver Hospice-University of Colorado School of Medicine and director of programs for the Colorado Center for Hospice and Palliative Care. ■ **Robert M. Wolff** of the Cleveland office of the employment and labor law firm Littler was named one of the 100 Most Powerful Employment Lawyers for 2017 by *Human Resource Executive* magazine and *Lawdragon*. He was also awarded top recognition by *Chambers USA: America's Leading Lawyers for Business*.

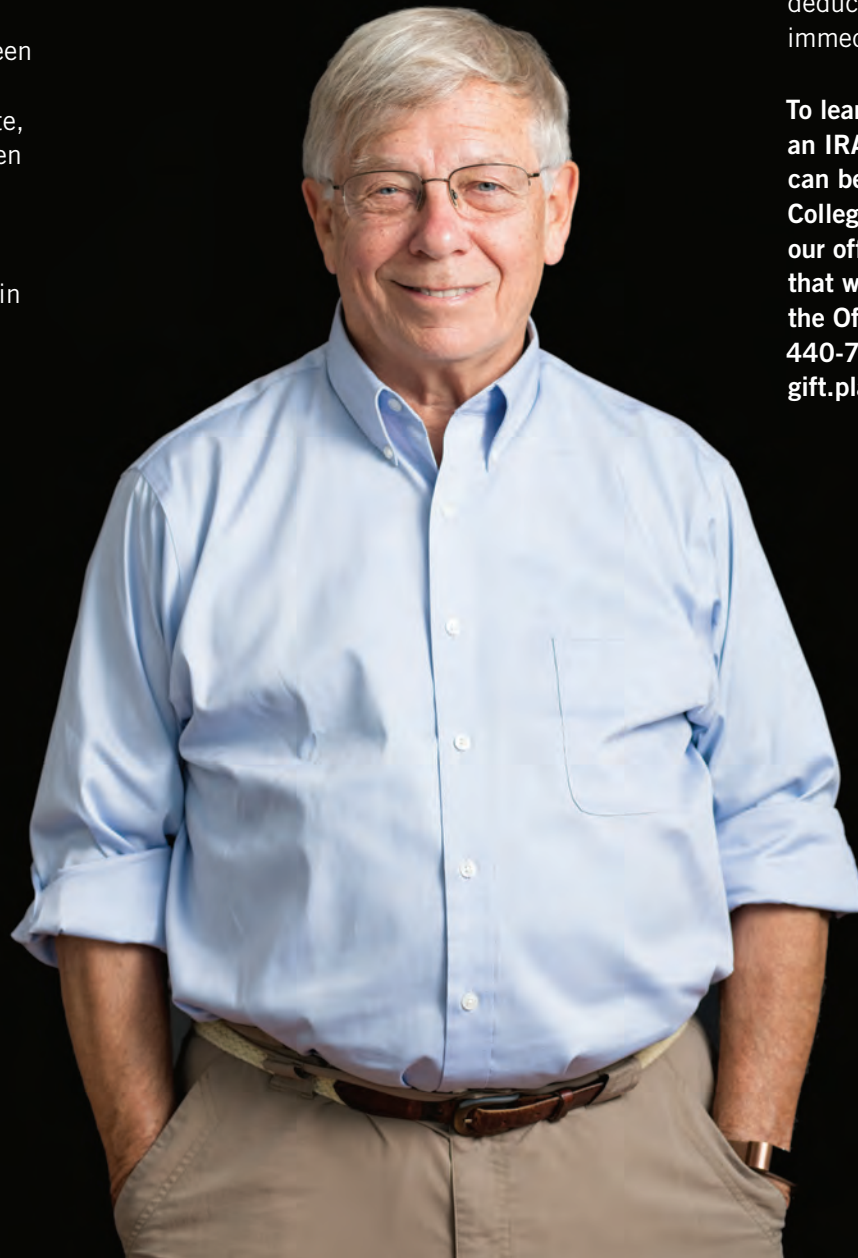
**“Over the years
I’ve seen the students
grow, and they’re
just as passionate,
just as dedicated as
when I started
56 years ago. And so
are the faculty.”**

**—NORMAN HENDERSON,
PROFESSOR EMERITUS**

Norman Henderson was only filling in temporarily when he joined Oberlin’s psychology department as an instructor. “My wife and I moved here in 1961 and I’ve been here ever since.

“I make my gift to the general fund because I trust the college to spend the money wisely. The catalog of classes available is just so rich, and an Oberlin education really opens the doors for students.

“Over the years I’ve seen the students grow, and they’re just as passionate, just as dedicated as when I started 56 years ago.” The man for whom the Norman D. Henderson Endowed Professorship in Psychology was named adds with a smile, “And so are the faculty.”



Norm, like many alumni 70½ years old and older, has started taking advantage of the IRA Charitable Rollover when making his gift to Oberlin. An IRA Charitable Rollover is a great way for you to make a TAX FREE gift to Oberlin from your individual IRA account. It allows you to satisfy your required minimum distribution for the year, reduce your taxable income, make a gift that isn’t subject to the 50 percent deduction limits, and see an immediate impact.

To learn more about how an IRA Charitable Rollover can benefit you and Oberlin College or to work with our officers to plan a gift that works for you, contact the Office of Gift Planning at 440-775-8599 or email gift.planning@oberlin.edu.

1978

Larry Ball coauthored an article that appeared in the July 2017 issue of the *American Journal of Archaeology*. It lays out the recent activities of the Pompeii Forum Project, of which Larry is assistant director. "We are conducting a systematic study of the standing architecture in the forum area of Pompeii, the street grid around it, and urbanistic and chronological issues raised by this systematic study," Larry says of his work with coauthor and PFP director John J. Dobbins. The article is available at www.ajaonline.org.



Clohossey '80, Zack '81



1980s

1980

Daniel Clohossey participated in the Climate March in Washington, D.C., in April. He was accompanied by **Ivy Main** and marched with fellow Obies **Lynn Shaw '66** (pictured with Daniel), and **Mark Nelson**. "It was truly inspiring to see so many people from all over the country, including 450 buses from states near and far, all standing up for climate, jobs, and justice," Daniel reports.

1981

Joanne Ungar is the 2017 New York State Council on the Arts/New York Foundation for the Arts

Fellow in crafts and sculpture. Her work will be featured at the Front Room Gallery in New York's Lower East Side in March 2018. ■ **Cathy Zack** met up with fellow Obies in Houston in February 2017. After 23 years in office practice as a family physician, she moved to a part-time hospitalist position in 2014 at Middlesex Hospital in Connecticut in order to spend more time with her husband, John, and children, Dave and Arianna. **Laura Marsh**, a geriatric psychiatrist, directs the Mental Health Care program at the Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Houston. **Ann Dugan '82** returned to Canada after 20-plus years in Japan, London, and New York,

and feels that despite the climate, it remains a sane place to live. Since leaving Oberlin, she has worked in journalism and public relations and had three children. She reports that she is currently in the midst of a midlife crisis with no end in sight. After teaching and publishing for two decades in Oceania, **Linda Crowl '82** now teaches political science at Lone Star College in the Houston area. **Michelle Brot '82** is a scientific researcher at the University of Washington in Seattle, where she lives with her husband, two college-age sons, and a goldendoodle. **Ellyn Kusmin '82** was operations manager of the New York Philharmonic and assistant to André Previn, and she currently works for James Taylor. She



ALUMNA KEEPS FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

Jeanine Donaldson '75 joined the staff of the Elyria (Ohio) YWCA a year after she graduated from Oberlin. Only three years later, she became its executive director, a role she has held ever since. Throughout her career she has pioneered innovative programs for low-income women and

children and pressed for programs dealing with race, class, and the disadvantaged. Under her leadership, the Y has provided support services for grassroots organizations and developed joint ventures with minority organizations.

In 1995, she secured over \$700,000 in federal funds to establish the first Transitional Housing Program in Lorain County. This was followed by another award to establish a Permanent Supportive Housing Program for women with disabilities in downtown Lorain.

That same year, Jeanine won the first of three four-year terms as a member of the Lorain Board of Education, the only African-American board member in a school district where 60 percent of the enrollment was comprised of Hispanic and African-American students. She served as president

for several years beginning in 1998, and under her leadership Lorain City Schools hired its first female superintendent, and five years later hired its first African American and female superintendent. Recognition of her accomplishments has been bipartisan: In 2002, Republican Gov. Bob Taft appointed her to the Ohio Civil Rights Commission and in 2005, Governor Ted Strickland, a Democrat, appointed her chairperson of the commission, which made her the first female chairperson in the 49 years of the commission's existence. Additional honors include being named a recipient of the Ohio Department of Health's "Woman Making a Difference Award," which acknowledges women who have made an impact in the elimination of health disparities among women and people of color, and the Sojourner Truth Award

from the national YWCA for exemplifying outstanding community service and embodying the spirit of the award's namesake. In 2015, she received the distinguished service award from the Oberlin Alumni Association. The award is presented to an alumna or alumnus whose work or volunteering reflect Oberlin's values by directly improving the quality of life for humanity.

As the leader of the Fair Minded Coalition of Lorain County, she told Lorain County commissioners in June that she and thousands of others would not be attending that summer's county fair because it included a vendor selling the Confederate flag.

"For people who believe it's just a piece of cloth or a piece of history, in today's world," she told the *Elyria Chronicle*, "it's the number one recruitment tool for neo-Nazi groups."

HEALTHY PROMOTION

Richard van Breemen '80, professor of pharmacy at the University of Illinois at Chicago, was named director of Oregon State University's Linus Pauling Institute, which studies the role of vitamins and other micronutrients in enhancing health and preventing disease.

has been co-producer on several Grammy-nominated jazz and pop albums.

1982

Paul P. Marthers was named to the newly created post of vice provost for enrollment management at Emory University. Paul will lead enrollment and retention efforts at the university's four undergraduate schools and play a key role in shaping a transformative Emory student experience. Previously, Paul was associate vice chancellor at the State University of New York, Albany, and chief enrollment and student affairs officer for the SUNY system. Before that, this first-generation college graduate was Oberlin's director of admissions.

■ **Will Weigler's** fourth book, *The Alchemy of Astonishment* (University of Victoria), won the 2017 Distinguished Book Award for outstanding contribution to the field from the American Alliance for Theatre and Education. The book and a supplementary deck of teaching cards grew out of Will's PhD research on what makes a theater performance unforgettable.

1983

John Becker's meta-list website, Make Lists, Not War, recently garnered its 200,000th view. It contains best-of lists on a wide range of topics, from arts to science. [w] www.beckchris.wordpress.com ■ **Tim (Mikesell) Riley** was awarded tenure at Emerson College. Tim is the graduate program director in journalism and teaches music and cultural criticism. His son Moses '19 is a geology major at Oberlin; his

younger son Adam recently sang in his high school production of *Spamalot*. Tim's wife, author Sara Laschever, lectures widely on women and negotiation. [w] timrileyauthor.com

■ **Wendy Uhlmann** writes: "Oberlin taught us to think critically and comprehensively about challenging issues. Therefore, it is no surprise that there were at least five Obies at the 4th Ethical, Legal and Social Implications (ELSI) Congress, Genomics and Society: Expanding the ELSI, held June 2017 in Farmington, Conn. Gail Henderson '71 chaired the last ELSI Congress in 2011, and Wendy, Dave Kaufman '90, and Joy Boyer '83 all took part in the 2017 planning committee. Also in attendance was Kate McGlone West '03.

1984

Matt Lehrman of Scottsdale, Ariz., has opened Social Prosperity Partners, a process design and facilitation practice "dedicated to restoring trust, inclusivity, and optimism to the practice of civic engagement," as Matt puts it.



1985

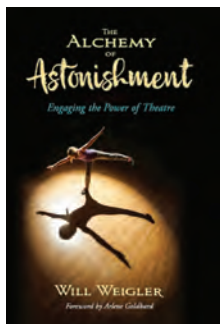
Tom Gardner and his wife, Alina, welcomed a baby, Israel Stephen, on the first day of Passover. Tom is the rabbi of Riverdale Temple in the Bronx.

1988

Susan Olson has published a new book for young readers, *Time Jump Coins: An Adventure in Historic Philadelphia*. It's a tale of time travel that leads its 10-year-old protagonists through a series of historic adventures and, ultimately, to a textile mill where they are forced to work with other children amid treacherous conditions.

1989

Deborah Smith won the H.W. Wilson Scholarship Fund Award from Kent State University's



Weigler '82, Becker '83



Save the Date!

Commencement/ Reunion Weekend: May 25-28, 2018

(Note: This is Memorial Day weekend!)

Your class reunion is approaching! Past attendees will tell you that connecting with classmates and revisiting campus was a highlight of their year. Commencement/Reunion Weekend 2018 promises to be an amazing celebration of class/cluster reunions and commencement. Look for a schedule booklet and registration information to arrive in early spring.

Volunteer for your 2018 reunion!

Join other classmates in shaping the activities of your next reunion.

15th:

CLASSES OF 2002, 2003, 2004

35th:

CLASSES OF 1982, 1983, 1984

25th:

CLASS OF 1993

50th:

CLASS OF 1968

65th:

CLASSES OF 1952, 1953, 1954

TO GET INVOLVED, CONTACT THE OFFICE OF ALUMNI RELATIONS AT 440.775.8692 OR ALUMNI@OBERLIN.EDU

“Knowing that I can achieve my dreams with the help of an Oberlin education inspires me. Waking up every morning and finding the resources to help me reach my academic and professional goals inspires me to do better. And my professors inspire me with their support and dedication.”

—Salam Karahawa '20



Salam's dream of an Oberlin education was made possible from the generous support of Oberlin alumni. Gifts to the Oberlin Annual Fund, the college's collective giving fund, provided the necessary scholarship funding for Salam's education. Your annual fund support helped make Salam's education possible. Most annual giving—nearly 90 cents of every unrestricted dollar donated—supports scholarships and financial aid, making an Oberlin education a reality for those who otherwise could not afford it. Collectively, annual fund gifts allow Oberlin to achieve its highest priority—meeting 100 percent of demonstrated financial need for all students.

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From left: González-Rivera '90, Stirling-Harris '91, Cohen '92, Fisher '92, Purdy '92

School of Library and Information Science, where she is pursuing a master's degree. She hopes to become a family history or government librarian.

1990s

1990

Historian **Victoria González-Rivera** earned an ACLS fellowship to coauthor a book on the last 100 years of LGBT history in Nicaragua, where rights for such people have often been trampled. “Nicaraguan LGBT people have not received the attention they warrant in histories of the period,” Victoria writes. “By examining intersections among sexuality, state formation, and capitalist development in Nicaragua, this study shows that Nicaraguan history was not made solely by heterosexuals, that LGBT Nicaraguans were not socially marginal, and that the country's past is understandable only by attending to sexuality.”

1991

Gregory Hampton was named full professor of English at Howard University. He specializes in the study of 19th- and 20th-century African American and American literature and gender studies. He has written two books, *Imagining Slaves* and

CLEVELAND SWINGS

In August, Randall Fleischer '81 conducted the Cleveland Orchestra in a swinging tribute to jazz vocal legend Ella Fitzgerald, in celebration of what would have been her 100th birthday.

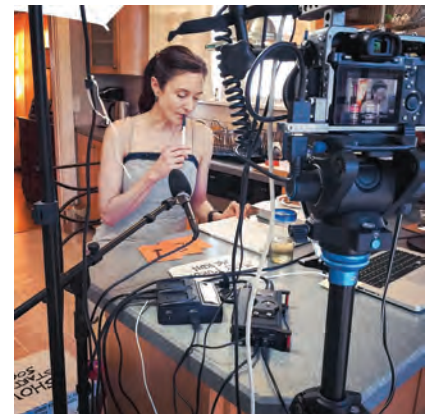
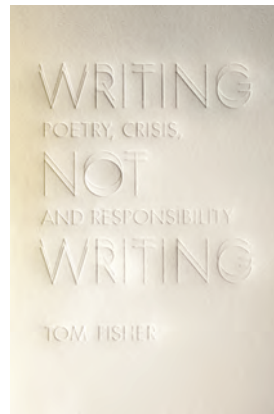
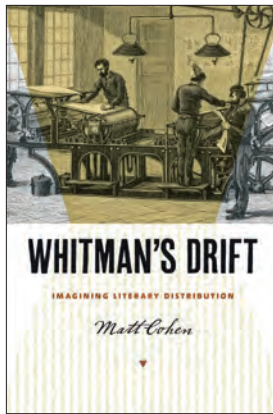


Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday's Slave with Tomorrow's Robot and *Changing Bodies in the Fiction of Octavia Butler: Slaves, Aliens, and Vampires*. He also serves as director of the English department's Graduate Studies Program and the Office of Faculty Development's Scholarly Productions Workshop. ■ **Katie Stirling-Harris** and Earl Stirling were married on April Fool's Day 2017. Katie is associate professor of history at the University of California, Davis. They live in Berkeley and East Oakland.

1992

Pianist **Kate Boyd** performed works by Sofia Gubaidulina, Elaine Agnew, Bach, Chopin, and Prokofiev in a May 2017 concert in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. Active as a soloist and chamber musician, Kate has played solo recitals at Schubert's birth house in Vienna, the National Concert Hall in Dublin, and the Musikhalle in Hamburg, among other prominent international locales. She is a faculty member at Butler University and the Interlochen Center for the Arts. Her first solo CD, *Music for the End of Winter* (Ravello), consists of previously unrecorded works for solo piano by Daniel Koontz, Michael Schelle, Frank Felice, Howard Frazin, and John Halle. Her second solo recording, consisting of works by John Cage (Navona), received more than 150,000 digital downloads and streams to date.

■ **Matt Cohen** has published *Whitman's Drift*, which draws parallels between the expanding communications technologies of Walt Whitman's 19th century and those of today. "Whitman's works sometimes ran through the 'many-cylinder'd steam printing press' and were carried in bulk on 'the strong and quick locomotive,'" Matt points out. "Yet during his career, his publications did not follow a progressive path toward mass production and distribution. Even



at the end of his life, in the 1890s as his fame was growing, the poet was selling copies of his latest works by hand to visitors at his small house in Camden, New Jersey." ■ **Leslie Ferguson's** first published work, *How Many Wholes: Circles*, is a hands-on math game for students who struggle with fractions. The game pieces are cut from the book, and each player chooses a domino from a bag for a denominator, without looking, and then spins a spinner for a numerator. Students assemble this generated fraction using pieces of a circle. After three rounds, the student with the most "wholes" wins! Keep an eye out for Leslie's next project, *How Many Wholes: Rectangles*. ■ **Tom Fisher** has written *Writing Not Writing: Poetry, Crisis, and Responsibility*, published by University of Iowa Press, which explores the role of an artist in a time of crisis. The book discusses the work of a number of poets, including George Oppen, who said, "There are situations which cannot honorably [be] met by art," such as when a neighbor's house is burning. To write poetry then, the poet argued, "would be a treason to one's neighbor." Tom's book looks at "the political

and ethical possibilities of silence, not-doing, and disavowal." ■ **Mary Purdy** is happily settled in Seattle, where she works as a registered dietitian with Arivale, heading up clinical training for fellow dietitians and providing nutritional counseling using personalized genetic data and functional labs to guide clients to improve their health and prevent disease. She is also the host of the web series and podcast "Mary's Nutrition Show: Where humor meets health." [w] www.marypurdy.co

1993

Urmila Seshagiri, an associate professor of English at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, devoted her summer to rebuilding the life of Virginia Woolf through support from a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend. A specialist in 20th-century modernism, Urmila is preparing the first scholarly edition of Woolf's memoir, *A Sketch of the Past*. "Despite its decades-long canonical status, this posthumously published autobiography has never been edited, annotated, or

GOOD CONDUCT



Grammy Award-winning conductor, pianist, composer, and teacher Robert Spano '84 kicked off Oberlin's 2017-18 Convocation Series with a conversation moderated by Conservatory Dean Andrea Kalyn on September 14, 2017, in Finney Chapel. Spano drew on his 17-year career as music director for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, offering perspectives on the innovative ways new generations of musicians are forging careers in the arts.

Spano, who is a professor of conducting in the Conservatory of Music, is known worldwide for his intense artistry and distinct communicative ability. He is one of two classical musicians inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame. The series, presented under the auspices of the Finney Lecture Committee and the Office of the President, presents free, public discussions of cutting-edge issues by some of the country's most prominent thinkers from an array of disciplines and professional fields.



DEAR OBERLIN FRIENDS

DECIDING ON THIS LETTER'S TOPIC HAS BEEN A STRUGGLE. IN A TOXIC POLITICAL environment, what events should I highlight? Do I dare tell you what I really think? I don't have any answers, but I cannot ignore the challenging times we face today.

With natural disasters, unconscionable violence, and a caustic, polarizing president, I am rattled to the core. Homes, schools, and businesses, completely destroyed due to hurricanes and fires in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and California. Lives have been lost or forever changed in Charlottesville and Las Vegas. In addition to these current tragedies are those that have been festering for generations. The immigration debate, Islamophobia, fear of persecution in the LGBTQ community, poverty, lack of access to quality education and health care, the degradation of women, and the opioid crisis grind away at the notion we've been taught that all of us are created equal. The list goes on. I'm angry, I'm sad, and I'm scared. But that's where Oberlin comes into the discussion.

Thirty-four years ago I chose to attend Oberlin because of its commitment to social and racial justice, its focus on the liberal arts, and its dedication to the arts. Through good times and bad, those values helped me make sense of a world that seemed off-kilter and out of whack, just as it does today. Oberlin was not perfect then and it's certainly not perfect now, but the people who work, teach, and study there today still embody the core principles that made it the right place for me. While I am daunted by the state of our country today, I remain hopeful in part because I see in my fellow Obies the light that can lead us out of this dark tunnel.

Carmen Twillie Ambar, our new president, has joined this community. All of us associated with the institution will profit from her unique experiences, training, and perspectives, all of which will help her get to know Oberlin, warts and all. My wish for Oberlin is that President Ambar will help guide it through some serious challenges and secure its rightful place as a leader in higher education and an incubator of discourse that will have ramifications for the future of our nation.

It has been my distinct honor to serve as president of your Oberlin Alumni Association. In this, my last column, I thank my family for supporting my service to Oberlin. I am especially grateful to my husband of 25 years, George Bent '85, for his constant encouragement, love, patience, and understanding. More specifically, I am profoundly indebted to my many Oberlin mentors, especially former president Chuck Spitulnik '73 whose support has meant more than he could ever know. I am grateful for Danielle Young and her dedicated Alumni Office staff. With impressive colleagues President-Elect Carol Levine '84 and Secretary Bálint Gergely '00 at the helm, the Oberlin Alumni Association is in excellent hands. I have been honored to serve with current and former Alumni Leadership Council members—my Oberlin family; they are a fun-loving and dedicated group.

But, in the end, my greatest thanks go out to you, the people who have made this place such an inspiring and influential institution to me and to generations of students who have learned as much from each other as they have from their talented faculty. You have shown me what it means to live a life of purpose, how to fight the good fight, and how to resist and represent when the chips are down. In these troubling times, take care of yourselves, and whenever possible, do what you can to make the world a better place. There is hope because of you...

LORRI OLAN '87
President, Oberlin Alumni Association

introduced for contemporary scholars," she says. "A scholarly text of *A Sketch of the Past* would establish Woolf's artistic conception of the memoir, which is not fully visible in its current form." She conducted the bulk of her work at the Mortimer Library at Smith College and the Houghton Library at Harvard University.

1994

Ben Lapidus was part of Andy Gonzalez's Grammy-nominated recording *Entre Colegas*; they performed the music together at Jazz at Lincoln Center in September 2016. In November of that year Ben received the Chico O'Farrill Lifetime Achievement Award from LatinUSA for his contributions to the genre. He is associate professor and chair of the art and music department at John Jay College.

■ Since 2006, **Devon Strolovitch** has produced the *Philosophy Talk* podcast, which is hosted by Stanford philosophers John Perry and Ken Taylor. [w] www.philosophytalk.org

1995

Mark DeLancey's book *Conquest and Construction: Palace Architecture in Northern Cameroon* (Leiden: Brill) investigates the palace architecture of a region that was

PERFECT PLURALISM

In September, Benjamin Wittes '90, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and editor-in-chief of the blog Lawfare, received the Muslim Public Affairs Council's "Empowering Voices" award, which honors "political and cultural leaders working to perfect American pluralism by championing the civic and political empowerment of American Muslims."



conquered in the early 19th century by primarily semi-nomadic, pastoralist, Muslim, Fula forces and incorporated as the largest emirate of the Sokoto caliphate.

■ **Brent Durbin** was promoted to associate professor of government

with tenure at Smith College. ■ **Martin Regan** earned an Arts & Humanities Fellowship from Texas A&M University. He is an associate professor and associate head of the Department of Performance Studies in the College of Liberal Arts. His award will support the recording of a series of compact discs that will feature his works for Western orchestral instruments and voice.

1996

In January 2017, NYU Press published the first book by **Vince Schleitwiler**, *Strange Fruit of the Black Pacific: Imperialism's Racial Justice and Its Fugitives*. The book traces the interrelated migrations of African Americans, Japanese Americans, and Filipinos across U.S. domains.

1997

Thorn, the new CD from Eighth Blackbird cofounder **Molly Barth**, consists of music by Pulitzer Prize-winning and Oscar-nominated composer David Lang. It also includes **Matt Albert '96** and **Stuart Gerber '96**, former Kronos Quartet cellist Jeffrey Zeigler, and several of Molly's colleagues at the University of Oregon. A May performance at National Sawdust in Brooklyn, N.Y., heralded the CD's release. ■ **Amy Evans'** new play *The Champion*, inspired by the legendary musician and activist Nina Simone, had its world premiere at TheatreSquared in Fayetteville, Ark., this fall. The play is Amy's third mainstage production and her first U.S. premiere.

1999

Sarah Jovan works for the U.S. Forest Service, for which she conducted groundbreaking research on moss as an indicator of air quality. Among other things, she discovered unexpectedly high levels of heavy metal pollution in Portland, Ore. Sarah's studies have resulted in interviews with *The New York Times* and PBS. She is a finalist for the 2017 Samuel J. Heyman Service to America People's Choice Award. ■ The daughter of **Mandy Fischer** was a



OBIE OFFSPRING Oberlin's Class of 2021 includes 37 legacy students—those with at least one parent who also attended Oberlin, many of whom are pictured here with their parents. Legacy families often include multiple generations that have maintained strong connections with Oberlin College and shared experiences with each other. The parents of legacies represented the classes of 1966 to 1994.

kindergarten classmate last year with the son of Zach Williamson (pictured with Mandy and their respective kids) and Kim Brockway in Burlington, Vt.

2000s

2000

Will Alexander has released a novel for young readers called *A Properly Unhaunted Place*, published by Margaret K. McElderry Books. The story revolves around a pair of kids who



try to save their town by bringing back its ghosts. Will won a 2012 National Book Award for his book *Goblin Secrets*.

2001

Adam Giannelli's recently published book of poems, *Tremulous Hinge* (University of Iowa Press), won the Iowa Poetry Prize. His poems have appeared in the *Kenyon Review*, *New England Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Yale Review*, *FIELD*, and elsewhere. He is the translator of



Alexander '00,
Giannelli '01

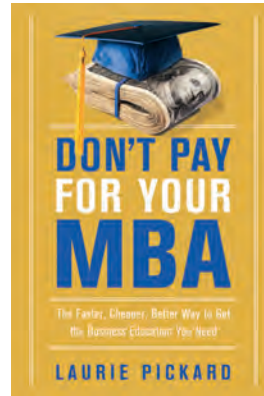
a selection of prose poems by Marosa di Giorgio called *Diadem* (BOA Editions), which was shortlisted for the 2013 PEN Award for Poetry in Translation.

2002

Cleveland-based nonprofit arts administrator and freelance double bassist **Matthew Charboneau** was appointed chair of the Center for Music at the Music Settlement in Cleveland. He will lead the teaching faculty and future direction of the 104-year-old organization's music education programs, including the programming focus of the new settlement campus being built on the west side of Cleveland, which is scheduled to open in late-summer 2018.

2003

Alisha Lola Jones is assistant professor of ethnomusicology in the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology at Indiana University. In October 2016, Alisha delivered a keynote



address entitled, "You Are My Dwelling Place: Black Male Vocal Worship as Autoeroticism in Gospel Performance" at the Race-ing Queerness Symposium of the American Musicological Society in Vancouver. The research presented in her keynote address for the symposium will be published in *Women and Music Journal* in 2018.

■ **Laurie Pickard** and husband Daniel Handel welcomed twins Holly and Owen in February 2017. This fall, Laurie celebrates the release of her book *Don't Pay for Your MBA: The*

Cheaper, Faster, Better Way to Get the Business Education You Need, a practical guide to using massive open online courses from top universities to get a business education that mirrors a traditional MBA. The book grew out of Laurie's blog, NoPayMBA.com, which chronicled her efforts to get a top-tier business education without going into debt.

2005

Meagan Brus and her husband, Gerard, welcomed daughter Matilda Paige O'Shea in November 2016. Meagan also released an album called *Lieder/Canciones* with her voice/clarinet/piano chamber group, sTem, in September 2016.

2006

Anita Arthur is a human medicine student at Michigan State University, where she received the American Medical Association Foundation's Excellence in Medicine Minority Scholars Award for 2017. Prior to enrolling in medical school, Anita was a high school chemistry teacher, a surveillance epidemiologist at the Florida Department of Health, and an epidemiologist at the Michigan Department of Community Health. She intends to treat patients and practice public health in an underserved area. ■ Violinist **Edwin Huizinga** recently toured New Zealand, where he and a fellow musician worked with indigenous Polynesian schoolchildren. At the end of their time together, the children honored the teachers with a traditional Haka war cry in the school gymnasium. "As these young students began to cry out, stomp, shake, show their tongues, beat their chests, tears were flowing down my cheeks," Edwin remembers. "The unbelievable sheer energy coming from these kids, the focus, the emotion, the history. I felt like I was on the edge of an ancient world." In recent years, Edwin has turned his attention to writing, and he was commissioned this year to compose a work for solo violin and dance for Opera Atelier of



MIDSUMMER'S NIGHT DREAM OUTING

During a July trip to Los Angeles, Julia Christensen, associate professor of integrated media at Oberlin, gathered a number of her former students from different classes whom she thought would hit it off. The group met at Kismet, whose chef, Sarah Hymanson '09, fresh from being named one of the Top 10 New Best Chefs by *Food and Wine* magazine, joined them. Pictured left to right: Claire Read '14, cofounder and codirector of a curatorial group and project space called AUTO BODY; Aria Dean '14, assistant curator at Rhizome; Alie Ciginski '09, regional director for North America for a Singapore-based strategic communications firm; Julia; artist Isabel Yellin '11; and chef Sarah.



From left: Fischer '99, Brus '05, Pickard '03, Buzdygon '07, Dodd Peterson '07, Lacheva '08

Toronto. ■ **Pooja Rangan**, an assistant professor of English in film and media studies at Amherst College, has written *Immediations: The Humanitarian Impulse in Documentary*, published by Duke University Press in 2017. The book examines the tropes often used by filmmakers to “give a voice to the voiceless” that also set up their subjects as the “other.” Instead, she advocates for “an approach to media that aims not to humanize but to realize the full, radical potential of giving the camera to the other.” ■ **Michael Sakir** has joined Opera Memphis as music director. “The company and city felt like home two years ago when I first music directed *30 Days of Opera*, and again this past spring when I guest conducted Jake Heggie’s *Three Decembers*,” Michael says. Over the summer, he participated in OPERA America’s 2017 Leadership Intensive in New York City.

2007

Kym Buzdygon married Ema Blumhagen in June 2016 in a wedding attended by many Oberlin alumni. Pictured from left: Meaghan Pugh, Ema, Kym, Nereida Heller, and Samantha Kushnick; not pictured: Gus Visscher '05, Molly Danielsson, Celeste Eustis; Jake Grossman, Sarah Kotcon Katie “O” Ortnor, and Vanna Waldron, all Class of 2008; and Ruth Allanbrook '09. ■ **Emily Dodd Peterson** celebrated the birth of a daughter, Grace Ivy, and has moved back to her hometown of Portland, Ore., to teach chemistry at her former high school. ■ Soprano **Alice Teyssier** has completed a DMA from the University of California, San Diego, and was appointed clinical assistant professor of performance in the Music Department of New York University.

2008

Pianist **Elena Lacheva** has joined the music staff at Louisiana State University School of Music and is the cocreator and program

director of the Collaborative Piano Institute, which she says may be the only summer program of its kind in the world. The first institute took place in June 2017 at the Shattuck-St. Mary’s School in Faribault, Minn. Her photograph was taken by Simon Pauly.

2009

Rob Chew, a research data scientist at RTI International, was selected as a 2017-18 Data Fellow by the National Consortium for Data



DJ’S DOC

DJ Savarese '17, a writer and advocate for nonspeaking autistic people, returned to Oberlin in September for a screening of the documentary film about him, *Deej*. Filmed over a six year period, it’s an insider’s look at autism. Savarese’s work has been published in the *Iowa Review*, *Seneca Review*, *Prospect*, and *Disability Studies Quarterly*, among other outlets.

TAKEN BY THE WIN

Musician and songwriter Rhiannon Giddens '00 was named one of 24 winners of a 2017 John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship. The fellowship, which includes a grant of \$625,000 awarded over five years and is sometimes referred to as the “genius award,” honors “exceptionally creative people.”

Science, a public-private partnership to advance data science and address the challenges and opportunities of big data. Rob’s project is called SMART: Smarter Manual Annotation for Resource-constrained collection of Training data. ■ **Peter Kim** (pictured center) married Haydee Naula in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 2017. In attendance were (from left): Cheska Tolentino, Jeayoon Lee '08, Niels Bantilan, Margaret Kent '10, Brendan Shea, Joel Solow, Daniel Tam-Claiborne, Christina Giuca Krause, Yvonne Lin '10, Kenny Liao, Andrea Landin, Eugene Kang '10, Andrew Yoon, Shibo Xu '08, and Yerim Kim. ■ Soprano **Nikoleta Rallis** and her husband, Aza Sydykov, have launched a pair of international music festivals in New York City and Wilmington, N.C. The Eurasia Festival introduces musicians from Russia, the Baltics, the Caucasus, and Central Asia to New York audiences. “Our festival events will provide a source of high-quality performances to music lovers thirsty for exposure to works they’ve never heard before,” Nikoleta says. “And we intend to provide an added bonus: the chance to meet our performers and make new artistic friends in comfortable salon settings.” The Wilmington Music Festival is dedicated to promoting music education in Nikoleta’s hometown. They plan to offer performances and affordable instruction by world-renowned artists. “I am so proud of Wilmington and so lucky to have been brought up here,” she says. “I want to give something back to my home!” ■ **Everett**

BAE OF THE BARD

Marina Shay '12 landed the lead role in the Cleveland Playhouse's recent production of *Shakespeare in Love*.

Schlawin and Jung Mee Park celebrated the arrival of their first child, Alden J. Schlawin, in June 2017. Everett is a postdoctoral researcher in the astronomy department at the University of Arizona's Steward Observatory. ■ Sarah Moon Stamey and her husband, Brent Stamey, welcomed daughter Margaret Genevieve in July 2016. The family resides in Bloomington, Ind. ■ Alyssa Greenberg and Simon Nyi '10 were married on May 6, 2017, in Chicago. Later that day, Alyssa received her doctorate in art history and delivered the student commencement speech at the College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Over the summer, she began a postdoctoral fellowship at the Toledo Museum of Art. Alyssa and Simon would love to connect with Obies living in northwestern Ohio and southeastern Michigan.



Clockwise from top left: Kim '09, Rallis '09, Schlawin '09, Greenberg '09, Moon Stamey '09.



OBERLIN PRESS

Alice Ollstein '10, a reporter with Talking Points Memo, posted this photo on Facebook, with the caption, "TFW you're a key swing vote on Obamacare repeal and you're surrounded by dogged Obie reporters." Ollstein was referring to Alaska's Senator Lisa Murkowski on her way to a July 20, 2017 vote, bookended in this photo by Ollstein, far right, and CQ Now healthcare reporter Sandhya Raman '10, far left (note to some readers: TFW="that feeling when"). Ollstein's previous credits include the *Oberlin Alumni Magazine*.

2010s

2010

Baroque violinist **Fiona Hughes** and organist **Wesley Hall '12** performed in the 2017 Boston Early Music Festival in June. Their program included works by Bach and Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber.

2013

Alice McAdams and **Brook Luers '12** were married July 1, 2017, in Madison, Wis. They met on a 2010 winter-term trip to Guadalajara, Mexico. Both are now pursuing PhDs at the University of Michigan. Obies in attendance at their wedding were **Dylan Luers Toda '09**, **Asaki Toda '11**, **Peter Manheim '12**, **Ian Martin '12**, **Sophia Bamert '13**, and dance professors **Carter McAdams** and **Nusha Martynuk**.

2015

Katelyn Emerson won the National Young Artist Competition in Organ Performance, held in Houston in June 2016. Open to organists ages 22-32, it is the premier competition for the American Guild of Organists and a springboard for young musicians. Katelyn earned a cash prize, performance engagements, a management contract, and a CD project. **Nicholas Capozzoli '16**, **MM '16** and **Kirk Rich '10** were also finalists.



Hughes '10

2017

Nimo Ahmed Ismail has returned to her native Somaliland to work as a teacher and dean of girls at the Abaarso School. Nimo attended the school from 2009 to 2013 and received a scholarship to Oberlin. She is also helping Abaarso launch a teachers' college in Somaliland and will eventually take on the responsibility of its admissions director. She hopes to attend law school and someday sit on the Somaliland Supreme Court. The Abaarso School was started in 2009 by Jonathan Starr, a former hedge fund manager who invested \$500,000 of his own money in the school. It has since been featured on *60 Minutes* and in numerous major U.S. newspapers.

CLASS NOTES are prepared from a variety of sources, including news media reports, press releases, and other material sent to us. Send your news—and high-resolution images—to alum.mag@oberlin.edu.



ALUMNI TRAVEL PROGRAM



VENETIAN MASTERPIECES

June 2-9, 2018

Escorted by Allen Memorial Art Museum Curator
Andaleeb Badiie Banta

Discover the rich tapestry of artistic and architectural marvels that transformed Venice from a small harbor into the 'Queen of the Adriatic.' Explore the city's greatest art collections, from the lauded halls of the Accademia to the tiny local churches that house magnificent paintings. Discover the rich history of performance and operatic traditions with visits to the oldest theaters in the city. Leave the bustle of the Grand Canal behind for the quiet local neighborhoods of Cannaregio and the Old Ghetto, where Venetian history has been painstakingly preserved. Tour the best contemporary art exhibits the city has to offer and visit local galleries to get a sense of what modern Venetian artists are creating. Highlights of the tour will include an exclusive after-hours tour of St. Mark's Basilica, access to the contemporary art exhibits of Palazzo Grassi, and behind-the-scenes access to the storied Teatro La Fenice opera house. Brochure available.



SOUTHERN INDIA: THE CULTURAL AND MUSICAL SOUL OF INDIA

January 8-21, 2019

Escorted by Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology
and Anthropology Jennifer Fraser

Let India's cultural complexity envelop you as tranquility and chaos vie for your senses, and peacocks and Brahman cows cross your path. Our wide-ranging itinerary aims to examine many fascinating topics, including India's rich musical and dance traditions, Tamil Hindu culture, foreign influences and trade, silk weaving, temples, the Spice Village Thekkady, and South India's wildlife. This tour, designed exclusively for the Oberlin Alumni Association, includes many "must see" destinations in Southern India: Kanchipuram, known as the Golden City of a Thousand Temples; Madurai, where we will explore flower and vegetable markets by rickshaw; Kumarokom, known for paddy fields and inter-linked canals; Periyar Wildlife Reserve, where we will try to spot elephants, sambar, and langurs by boat; and much more. The tour will also be laced with music as we learn about India's musical traditions. We hope that you will join Oberlin alumni and friends as we journey through India's soulful south. Brochure soon available.

For more information about alumni travel opportunities, visit <http://new.oberlin.edu/office/alumni/travel-tours/>. If you would like to receive electronic news and brochures about our programs, please call 440-775-8692 or e-mail deb.stanfield@oberlin.edu. Please consider traveling with fellow Obies! Oberlin parents are always welcome!

Losses

Faculty, staff, and friends

Dr. Ralph Harold Turner was a faculty member in Oberlin's Department of Psychology from 1947 to 1979, serving as department chair for 11 years. He received a BA and MA from Ohio Wesleyan and a PhD from Ohio State University. He was a member of the Oberlin Unitarian Fellowship and enjoyed science, movies, and music. As a resident of Kendal at Oberlin, he was involved in discussion groups, woodshop activities, and presenting classic movies. Dr. Turner died April 16, 2017, at Kendal. He was predeceased by his wife, Louise Turner.

■ **Dr. George H. Langelier** received a PhD from the University of Michigan in 1959. That same year he arrived on Oberlin's campus to serve as a biology professor. He soon followed with a series of administrative positions—including registrar and Oberlin's first director of financial aid—until 1966 when he took on the role for which he was most known, dean of students. During his tenure as dean, which lasted until 1989, Dr. Langelier helped introduce transformations to campus life that would be later adopted across the country, including the establishment of one of the nation's first coed residence halls and the formation of one of the first campus dispute-resolution programs. Dr. Langelier died September 30, 2017, at Kendal at Oberlin. He was 89. A Memorial Minute for Dean Langelier will appear in a future issue of this magazine.

1937

Elizabeth Ropp of Durham, N.C., died March 16, 2016, at the age of 104.

1942

Dr. William Breuleux Muchmore devoted his professional career to the University of Rochester, where he taught biology for 36 years and became an international expert on pseudoscorpions, several of which were named in his honor. He served with U.S. Army hospital units in the South Pacific during WWII and completed his PhD at Washington University upon returning home. An avid naturalist, he volunteered for 30 years at the Genesee Country Village. Dr. Muchmore died May 11, 2017. He was preceded in death by his wife, Marjorie, and is survived by two daughters, seven grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren.

1943

Carolyn Jane Harrison Huntley coordinated numerous church programs in the faith communities served by her pastor husband of

50 years, Joseph Huntley. Together they worked for parishes in Illinois, Wisconsin, Florida, South Carolina, and Virginia. Ms. Huntley was active with groups for the young and old, including the Leisure Time Group at Epiphany Lutheran Church in Richmond, Va., which she continued to coordinate for years after the death of her husband in 1997. She died July 26, 2017, leaving a daughter and numerous loved ones.

1945

Polly Comegys Olmsted Fine died June 9, 2017.

1946

A geologist by training, **Dr. Peter T. Flawn** served two stints as president of the University of Texas at Austin and previously held the same position at the University of Texas at San Antonio. He earned a doctorate at Yale University and worked for the U.S. Geological Survey before rising to prominence in his role with UT's Bureau of Economic Geology, which he directed for 10 years. He later assumed the role of professor of geological sciences and public affairs in 1970, then Leonidas T. Barrow Professor of Mineral Resources. Dr. Flawn's first stint as UT president was marked by his declaration of "war on mediocrity," which he waged in part by raising faculty endowments from 112 to 851, sponsoring \$100 million in research awards, and spearheading construction of five new research buildings. Upon Dr. Flawn's retirement in 1985, the Peter T. Flawn Academic Center was named in his honor. In addition to his work in academia, he was elected to the National Academy of Engineering and served as president of the Geological Society of America and the American Geosciences Institute. Dr. Flawn died May 7, 2017. He was preceded in death one year earlier by his wife of 70 years, Priscilla Pond Flawn, and also by a daughter. ■

■ **Dorothy Anne Higinbotham Osgood** was an administrative secretary for the newly formed Federation of American Scientists in Washington, D.C. It was there that she met the man who became her husband, a Foreign Service officer with whom she lived in numerous international locales—from Germany to Suriname to Malaysia—for many years. As a Foreign Service wife, Ms. Osgood served in numerous capacities while raising the couple's children. In retirement, she remained active in folk dancing and choral groups. Ms. Osgood died April 5, 2017, leaving Tedd, her husband of 60 years; three children; and four grandchildren. ■ **Marion E. Deininger Pedersen** played and taught piano

for many years, including formal teaching stints at Ashland College and Bloomfield College. A piano and organ student at Oberlin, she later completed a graduate degree at the Eastman School of Music. For nearly 40 years, she served as organist and choral director at numerous churches in northern New Jersey. She also sang with the Robert Shaw Collegiate Chorale in New York City and the Oratorio Society of New Jersey, and she directed the Madrigal Singers with the Upper Montclair Women's Club from 1970-72. For 15 years, she performed as half the piano duo Pedersen & Platt. Ms. Pedersen died June 11, 2017, following the deaths of her husband of 61 years, Martin Pedersen, and a stepson. She is survived by three daughters, six grandchildren, two step-grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

1949

A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Oberlin, **Barbara Schott** was a medical technologist for Hackensack Labs in New Jersey until her retirement in 1995. She remained active with numerous volunteer efforts and with the West Side Presbyterian Church, where she sang in the Chancel Choir for 60 years. Ms. Schott died March 28, 2017, leaving her husband of 66 years, Frank; a son and two daughters; six grandchildren; and one great-granddaughter.

1950

Kathryn Burnett earned a master's degree from Smith College and was the school's music librarian and chief cataloger for 50 years. In 2002 she became the first recipient of the Music Online Computer Library Center User's Group Distinguished Service Award for her contributions to the music library community. Away from the library, she was an avid hiker who created and maintained the Mt. Tom State Reservation trail system; the reservation's KayBee Trail was named in her honor. Ms. Burnett died May 28, 2017, leaving many loved ones. ■ **Georgine Kretzmann** taught first grade for many years in Mundelein, Ill. With her husband, Connie, she often opened her home to foreign exchange students, high school students in need of homes, and fellow members of their church who visited from around the world. For decades, she served a plain meal of rice every Wednesday to bolster solidarity with those less fortunate. Ms. Kretzmann died June 22, 2017. She is survived by her husband, three children, seven grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. ■ **Royce**

McWharter devoted a 36-year career to the mental health field, much of it working directly with teens and families in New York and Pennsylvania. He served in the Air Force during WWII before enrolling at Oberlin, where he lettered four times on the baseball team. He later earned a master's degree in social work from the University of Pittsburgh. An avid outdoorsman, he enjoyed fishing expeditions to Quebec and playing tennis. Mr. McWharter died March 17, 2017. He leaves two sons, daughter Karen McWharter '77, and four grandchildren, including Jackson Evans '15; he was predeceased by his wife of 61 years, Eunice '51, whom he met at Oberlin. ■ **Mary Owen**

Rosenthal was a fine artist and printmaker who earned an MFA from Western Michigan University. She died April 18, 2017, following the death of her husband, Vincent Arthur Rosenthal. They had three children, three grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

1951

Violinist **Sarah Scheiber Evans** played in numerous string quartets over many years and enjoyed taking lessons on the instrument into her 80s. She earned a master's degree in social work from Boston University and supported the arts throughout her life. Ms. Evans died July 17, 2017, leaving her children and grandchildren, among other loved ones. ■ Originally an elementary school teacher, **M. Myra Parker Hogan** devoted her efforts to raising children before finding a new calling in midlife. Early in her career she earned a master's degree in elementary education from Columbia University's Teachers College. In the 1970s, she took up studies at Claremont School of Theology and the University of California, San Diego; she became a diaconal minister in 1978 and was ordained a deacon in 1997. In 30 years of ministry, she developed a daycare and preschool program, expanded summer day camps, and led teacher-training workshops. While at Oberlin, she met a dozen of her closest friends, who for 66 years have remained in touch through a system of letter writing. Rev. Hogan died March 3, 2017. She was preceded in death by her husband, Hurst, and is survived by her two children and a grandchild.

1952

E. Eugene Maupin served as a chaplain's assistant in the U.S. Navy in Fort Lauderdale in the mid-1940s. He was an organ student of Grigg Fountain, a piano student of Emil



IN MEMORIAM

Yeworkwha Belachew 1952-2017

Yeworkwha Belachew, or "YB," as she was known to almost everyone, pioneered the role of ombudsperson and conflict mediator at Oberlin. She was beloved for her warmth and openness. She described her approach to mediation as one of inclusiveness, of viewing people on their own terms and not according to societal labels. "People are more important than where they've come from," she told the *Oberlin Alumni Magazine* for a story on the renaming of the dialogue center in her honor. "You count on every word, so that every person has an opportunity to be themselves."

"Throughout her career at Oberlin, YB was a cherished and dedicated counselor, friend, and mentor to all who knew her—from students to presidents," says Professor David Kamitsuka, a longtime friend. "She deeply loved Oberlin students. Her personal and professional credo was to do all she could to affirm the dignity of each person in the Oberlin community. We honor her legacy by endeavoring to do the same."

One of YB's greatest achievements was establishing, nurturing, and guiding the Oberlin College Dialogue Center, which is celebrated nationally as a best-practices model. "Her impact on the Oberlin community has been enormous," says former Oberlin College President Marvin Krislov. "Oberlin will always benefit from her legacy of commitment to dialogue and understanding. She helped Oberlin become a stronger, more inclusive institution."

Not one to share much about her personal life, YB came to Ohio from Ethiopia in the 1970s. She and her then-husband studied at Bowling Green State University and moved to Oberlin in 1978. He taught in the African American studies department, while she became a residence

hall director for Noah Hall. After the couple separated, YB lived in an apartment in Noah while raising her young son, Meiraff.

During her years as the residence hall director, YB created an indelible bond with students. It's also when she developed a knack for negotiating conflicts and disputes. Although she had no formal training in mediation or conflict resolution, she had a natural gift for helping students better understand each other.

The college administration took notice of YB's skills. She became an assistant dean of residential life in 1989, then interim director of residential life in 1998. In 2000, then-president Nancy Dye appointed her to the newly created position of ombudsperson.

A year after settling into the role, YB set out to start a formal mediation program at Oberlin. Working with Leah Wing '84 and Diane Kenty '77, she facilitated a design team to explore a variety of mediation program models. From the start, a guiding principle of the dialogue center was multipartiality—the ability to meet the needs of each party in a dispute.

"Sometimes an ombudsperson seems [like] a very powerful person, but really the power belongs to the people," YB told the *Oberlin Review* in 2005. "About 80 percent of my time is spent mediating between individuals: student to student, student to faculty, employee to supervisor, sometimes even parent to institution. I'm very blessed to work at an institution where my input is really valued, but I still have to work extremely hard. This is a 24/7 job."

In 2006, YB worked with students to create the Social Justice Institute, which invites first-year students to participate in a two-day event during orientation week, with the goal of making them more aware of the ways oppression and privilege influence people's lives.

YB retired in fall 2015 after 35 years of service to the college. Upon her retirement, she was honored with the renaming of the dialogue center as the Yeworkwha Belachew Center for Dialogue at Oberlin College. A staff award bearing her name also was created, and it is given annually to an employee who has gone above and beyond in service to Oberlin College.

YB died June 14, 2017. A service and reception in her honor were held at First Church of Oberlin.

Danenberg, and a devoté of longtime Oberlin eurythmics teacher Ina Howland. After graduation, he moved to Frankfurt to study harpsichord with Maria Jäger, conducting with Kurt Thomas, and organ with legendary German professor and international recording artist Helmut Walcha. The following year, he worked in Paris with André Marchal. Upon his return to the U.S., Mr. Maupin took church jobs in Niagara Falls, N.Y., and Bristol, Va. He held university teaching appointments in Bristol as well as in Fairfield, Iowa, and Lexington, Ky. In 1972 he was instrumental in the installation of a monumental two-manual Flentrop organ at Virginia Intermont College in Bristol; the instrument forever changed the organ landscape of Virginia, West Virginia, and Tennessee. Also at VIC, Mr. Maupin formed a civic concert choir that performed large-scale works by Vaughan Williams, Menotti, Poulenc, Mozart, and others. Equally at home on the theatrical stage, he presented meticulously detailed performances of works by Christopher Fry, Thornton Wilder, and William Shakespeare. His teaching style was always encouraging and never denigrating, and he exposed his students to his vast European experience. Many went on to enter exclusive music schools and universities and are professional musicians to this day. Mr. Maupin died February 21, 2016.

■ **Dr. William J. Sheppard** enjoyed a career of more than two decades with Battelle Memorial Institute in Columbus, Ohio, where he focused on economic analysis of the chemical industry, a role that included considerable world travel. He earned a PhD in organic chemistry from Harvard University and began his career teaching at Swarthmore College. Dr. Sheppard died July 24, 2017, leaving his wife of 62 years, Eva K. Sheppard; their two children, including **George S. Sheppard '84**; and five grandchildren, including **Julia C. Sheppard '15**.

1953

Dr. W. Thomas London was a highly respected internist and endocrinologist who was part of a team that made vital breakthroughs in the understanding of hepatitis B in the 1960s and who later led international initiatives to promote vaccination from the disease. He spent most of his career with the Fox Chase Cancer Center, where he founded the Liver Cancer Prevention Program in the

1970s and ran it for two decades. In 1992, Dr. London's study of more than 109,000 patients in China and Senegal identified key risk factors for liver cancer in those countries. He served as vice president of the board of the Hepatitis B Foundation and its research arm, the Baruch S. Blumberg Institute, which in 2015 announced the endowment of a professorship in his name. He earned his medical degree from Cornell University Medical College and was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a founder of the American Society of Preventive Oncology, and editor of several scientific journals. Dr. London died June 3, 2017. He leaves his wife of 60 years, Linda; three daughters; and eight grandchildren. ■ After graduating from Oberlin, **Mary Ann Siegfried** set out to aid U.S. troops in South Korea with the American Red Cross. Upon returning she began work with the Asia Society, a nonprofit dedicated to introducing Americans to Asia. As editor of a newsletter on Afghanistan for more than 25 years, she became an expert on the country and traveled there and to other regions extensively. In retirement, she was a loyal volunteer at Springs Library in East Hampton, N.Y. Ms. Siegfried died November 25, 2016, leaving numerous loved ones.

1954

Susan Cort Kotta was a teacher of French and secondary English and a translator of French literature, all while raising two sons. She completed a master's degree at Columbia University, where she met her eventual husband, Albanian exile Nuçi Kotta, who died six months before the birth of their second child. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ms. Kotta began working with missionary groups to aide newly liberated Albanians. She died July 7, 2017, and is survived by her sons. ■ **Dr. Shih-yen "Sam" Wu** was born in Taigu, Shansi, China, on the Oberlin MingHsien campus and arrived at Oberlin College via Taiwan in 1950 to study chemistry but found a life-long passion in the study of economics. Dr. Wu received a PhD in economics from Northwestern University in 1960 and began his career as a lecturer of economics at the University of Minnesota, before joining Los Angeles State College. In 1964, he joined the University of Iowa economics faculty, where for more than 30 years he helped build the economics

department into an internationally recognized program in economics teaching and research until his retirement in 1996. Following his retirement, he and his wife Margaret spent 10 years at the Academy Village in Tucson, Ariz., before moving to the St. Louis area to be closer to their son. He died September 15, 2016, and was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Margaret Schlosser Wu. He is survived by his daughter, **Jennifer Wu '90**; a son; and six grandchildren.

1956

Jean Elliott Johnson was a teacher in numerous settings, including 20 years devoted to the Friends Seminary. There she developed a world history manuscript with her husband, Donald Johnson, that became the popular high school textbook series *The Human Drama*. She earned a graduate degree from Columbia Teachers' College and won a Klingenstein Award in 1983. Ms. Johnson died April 4, 2017, leaving her husband, three children, and three grandchildren. ■ **Judy Manwell Moore** was a longtime social worker whose roots in service included three years teaching English in Taiwan as a Shansi rep and later a stint on the Shansi board. She earned an MSW from the University of Chicago and worked for the Salvation Army. Through her Unitarian church, she met the Rev. Christopher Moore, founder of the Chicago Children's Choir, and they married. She enjoyed traveling to China, and upon moving from Chicago to Cummington, Mass., she became involved in local government. Ms. Moore died December 16, 2016, leaving a son and two grandsons. She was preceded in death by her husband.

1957

Mary Lou Beaman Paschal was a music instructor for three decades at Central Piedmont Community College, where she developed an early music program before retiring in 2001 as director of the division of music, art, and design. In that time, she also served as an organist and choir director at Sharon United Methodist Church, one of several church music positions she held throughout her life. She earned a master's of music degree from the University of Mississippi, with additional graduate studies at Winthrop and Harvard universities. Beginning in 1995, she toured Asia, Australia, Europe, and the U.S., playing

piano with her niece, flutist Teresa Beaman. Ms. Paschal died May 7, 2017, leaving her husband, John, and a son.

1961

A former high school valedictorian, **Cynthia Chapin Ballou Lerner** created and ran her own social work practice in Maryland for more than 40 years. She earned a master's degree in social work from the University of Chicago and enjoyed staying in touch with Oberlin friends from the Class of 1961. Ms. Lerner died March 13, 2017. She is survived by her two children, a grandson, and her former husband, Charles Lerner. ■ **Karen Davis Mayer** taught French and Spanish and was recognized by the state of Michigan as the High School Foreign Language Teacher of the Year in 1999. She earned an MA from Michigan State University and was married for 38 years to John P. Mayer. In retirement, she served as an elder at her church and sang in the DePaul Community Chorus. Ms. Mayer died July 21, 2017, leaving two daughters and three grandchildren.

1962

Ann Congling Cogdell earned a master's of music in piano from Boston University and was a pianist and artistic director for 31st St. Concerts. She was the wife of John Cogdell, whom she married in 1965. Ms. Cogdell died July 31, 2017. ■ **Dr. Charles F. Wells** was a mathematics professor at Case Western Reserve University for 35 years and an Oberlin Affiliate Scholar. He earned a PhD from Duke University and focused throughout his career on finite fields, group theory, and category theory. In retirement, he enjoyed singing with his church community in Minneapolis. Dr. Wells died June 17, 2017, leaving his wife of 54 years, Jane Wells; two sons; and two grandchildren.

1965

Lloyd Lee Loope was a conservation biologist for the U.S. Geologic Survey and worked at Haleakala National Park in Hawaii. He devoted his efforts to thwarting invasive species on the islands, and he also worked at times at Grand Teton National Park, Everglades National Park, and UNESCO in Paris. Mr. Loope died July 4, 2017. He is survived by his wife, Keri Duke-Loope, as well as three children and four grandchildren. ■ The first in his family to attend college, **Dr.**

Thomas R. Wolanin embarked on a career that took him in three distinct directions. He began as a teacher of American politics and education policy, first at Oberlin College and then at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, George Washington University, and the Warsaw School of Social and Economic Studies, in addition to an administrative role at New York University. He later transitioned to work with the federal government, including service to various U.S. congressmen for 17 years that centered on education reform. In 1993 he was appointed by President Clinton as deputy assistant secretary for legislation and congressional affairs in the Department of Education. He then worked for a decade as a consultant for the Institute for Higher Education Policy. He was widely celebrated for his work in developing federal grant and loan programs that improved access to higher education for millions of Americans, and he authored or coauthored four books, eight monographs, and more than 60 articles and reviews. He earned a PhD in political science from Harvard University. Dr. Wolanin died April 2, 2017, leaving Donna Christian, his wife of more than 25 years; two sons; and two grandchildren.

1967

Jeffrey Charles Goldman was beloved for his deep passions—especially for music and family—and his unrelentingly positive attitude. He died January 14, 2017, leaving his wife Dianne. ■ **Martha Graham Judd** taught French and enjoyed traveling for many years with her husband, Bob Judd '67. She died March 29, 2017, leaving her husband, their two daughters, and four grandchildren.

1968

Barry Lee Busse was a world-renowned tenor whose career spanned 30 years, including a stint at Radio City Music Hall as a soloist, as Santa Claus, and as a tap-dancing Easter Bunny. He earned a master's degree in voice from the Manhattan School of Music and master's degrees in education from Ashland College and Walsh University. As an opera singer, he was equally at home in traditional and contemporary repertoire, including the roles of Don Jose in *Carmen* and the title role in David Lang's *Nosferatu*. In his Ohio hometown, he was a member

of the choir and a frequent soloist with St. Timothy's Episcopal Church of Massillon and a volunteer acting coach in local high schools. Widely talented, he cofounded the nonprofit Ohio Opera Theatre, created a private chef service called the Quintessential Epicurean, developed educational software for children, and enjoyed cabinet making. Mr. Busse died May 15, 2017, leaving countless loved ones at home and around the world.

1969

Dr. David Edward Kempner was a highly regarded labor and employment lawyer at Pear Sperling Eggan & Daniels in Ann Arbor, Mich. He earned his law degree from the University of Michigan and harbored a deep love of golf throughout his life, attending tournaments across the U.S. and Europe and competing against other accomplished amateurs. Dr. Kempner died June 12, 2017. He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Patty; their three daughters; and four granddaughters.

1971

Raised on a sailboat in the Caribbean, **Joyce Erdman Way** met the love of her life, **Greg Way '71**, on her second day at Oberlin College. They moved to Canada in 1970 and remained there, with Ms. Way delighting in taking care of her family as a homemaker and cook. She loved the water and would swim as often as she could. She died May 13, 2017, leaving her husband of 48 years, their daughter, and two grandchildren.

1974

Dr. Jonathan Ballou died April 30, 2017. He is survived by his wife, Linda.

1978

Vincent Emerson Taylor was a reporter in Washington, D.C.; Greensboro, N.C.; Rochester, N.Y., and Montgomery County, Md. He died June 9, 2017, leaving his wife, Suzann Ludlow, and a son.

1979

Steve Meyer was a geology student at Oberlin who held a career with several petroleum companies, primarily Shell, for which he relocated to Holland. Recently retired, Mr. Meyer died December 19, 2016, leaving his partner of 15 years, Jo Van Teylingen, and a daughter.

“I can hardly conceive of a more interesting and completely worthy candidate for a statue alongside General Lee. I do not offer this merely as a bland way to sweep controversy under the rug in the name of maintaining a domestic tranquility that some clearly think is specious. This is a challenge. An artfully placed statue of John Mercer Langston beside that of Lee would give a more rounded picture of the national epic than anything else that I at any rate can imagine.”

Lou Tanner, a history teacher at Renaissance School in Charlottesville, writing in the Scottish newspaper *The National* about Langston, Oberlin Class of 1849 (M 1852)

“A play is not a tweet. It can't be compressed and embedded and it definitely can't be delivered apologetically. The very act of saying anything more nuanced than 'us good, them bad' is under attack.”

Actor **Corey Stoll '98**, about performing in Shakespeare in the Park's production of *Julius Caesar*, in *vulture.com*

“I spent 30 years as a man, 25 as a woman, and now gender bores me. No one is 100 percent comfortable with the gender roles put on them.”

Transgender activist **Holly Boswell '72**, founder of Asheville, North Carolina's Phoenix Transgender Support Group, who died in August 2017

“For what it's worth, I think the (Tappan Square) squirrels are actually leucistic and not albino.”

Bronwen Densmore '98, in a discussion on the Oberlin alumni Facebook page, September 8, 2017

“Bronwen Densmore—most Oberlin comment ever. I think I love you.”

Robin Moore Lasky '88, in reply

“The problem isn't that the government is broken. It's that it's fixed.”

Greg Coleridge '81, who works for Move to Amend, a coalition fighting to “end corporate rule (and) legalize democracy”

“We must face the fact that we are a society where far too many black and brown men, women and children live with the fear of their liberties being trampled on for no other reason than they fit the profile. For these Americans, there is no safe space in the streets and no solace in the courts. When the laws of a society are enforced in an unjust manner, where do the average go for their justice?”

Michael Sorrell '88 in the *Dallas News*, the website of the *Dallas Morning News*

“Next time, please arrange for fewer ex-girlfriends to attend.”

A member of the Class of 1976 in a post-reunion 40th reunion survey

Is It Time to *Paint* a New Canvas?

Imagine living in a community that celebrates the arts and learning. Whether enjoying the latest exhibits in the galleries at Kendal, the treasures of the Allen Memorial Art Museum, concerts at the Conservatory or a class at the college - Kendal at Oberlin residents experience creative culture in many ways.

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Artist and Kendal resident,
Peggy Kwong-Gordon, in
her Oberlin studio.

Photo by Dale Preston.

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"I THINK WE HAVE A MISSION THAT IS SO RELEVANT AND IMPORTANT THAT WE MUST DO IT. AND YET, BECAUSE IT'S ASKING US TO DO SOMETHING WE MAY NEVER HAVE HAD TO DO BEFORE, IT WILL REQUIRE ALL OF US TO BE MORE OPEN TO CHANGE, MORE OPEN TO THINKING OUTSIDE OF HOW WE'VE SEEN OURSELVES."

—PRESIDENT CARMEN TWILLIE AMBAR