LSA

FALL 2024


**GO RED, WHITE, AND BLUE**

"Our team is coming home with medals." That was U-M gymnast Frederick Richard's bold proclamation before the Summer Olympics in Paris. The U.S. has struggled in men's gymnastics on the world stage in recent years, but Richard's prediction was correct: The team won the bronze medal. Richard (left), now in his third year as an LSA undergrad, and Paul Juda (A.B. '23), an LSA psychology alum, were the team's representatives in the all-around final as well. They were among the 45 Olympians and Paralympians with U-M ties to compete this year. Juda (right) attributed much of his success to his time at U-M: "I'm so proud to join such a legacy of Michigan athletes," he said in an Instagram post. "Michigan has turned me into everything that I am. … Go Blue, forever." (See more, p. 4.)

John Cheng/USA Gymnastics


USA

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# FRONT & CE

## USA! USA! *LSA!*

Current and former U-M student-athletes—including many from LSA—made their mark at the Games of the XXXIII Olympiad with nine medals. **Charlie Swanson** (A.B. '20), an LSA economics alum, earned gold and silver medals in swimming relays. **Siobhán Haughey** (A.B. '19), an LSA psychology alum, earned a bronze medal in swimming for Hong Kong. Senior LSA student **Abigail Dent** rowed to a silver medal for Canada. **Alena Olsen** (A.B. '18), a biology alum, became the first rugby player in school history to claim an Olympic medal, earning bronze with Team USA. Led by gymnasts **Paul Juda** (A.B. '23), a psychology alum, and LSA student **Frederick Richard**, Team USA earned its first team medal in 16 years (see more, p. 1). Their U-M teammate, LSA computer science major **Lais Najjar**, competed for Syria, while former U-M gymnast and economics alum **Kevin Penev** (A.B. '22) competed for Bulgaria. And several Team USA men's gymnastics coaches came from U-M, including some assistant coaches who are LSA alums: **Sam Mikulak** (A.B. '15), **Syque Caesar** (A.B. '13), and **Jordan Gaarenstroom** (A.B. '14). In all, 45 Olympians and Paralympians with U-M ties competed in Paris.

Top: Swimmer Charlie Swanson (A.B. '20) won gold and silver medals at the Paris Olympics. Right: Alena Olsen (A.B. '18) won a bronze medal in rugby.

Top: UPI/Alamy. Right: Alex Ho/SIS Photos

# NTER

## POT OF GOLD

**A team of researchers** led by an LSA archaeologist has uncovered a hoard of gold coins, likely used to pay mercenary troops, buried in a small pot in the ancient Greek city of Notion in western Turkey.

The coins show a figure of a kneeling archer, the characteristic design of the Persian daric—a type of gold coin issued by the Persian Empire and probably minted at Sardis, 60 miles northeast of Notion, according to U-M archaeologist Christopher Ratté. Ratté is a professor of classical studies and director of the Notion Archaeological Project, the project that discovered the coins.

The hoard, which the U-M team dated to the fifth century B.C., provides a datapoint that can tell historians about the Persian daric's timeline and history. "The discovery of such a valuable find in a controlled archaeological excavation is very rare," Ratté says. "No one ever buries a hoard of coins, especially precious metal coins, without intending to retrieve it. So only the gravest misfortune can explain the preservation of such a treasure."

Courtesy of Andrea Joyce

**17 NUMBER OF OLYMPICS** covered by sports broadcaster **Andrea Joyce** (A.B. 1976), including the summer Olympics earlier this year in Paris. Joyce was inducted into the Sports Broadcasting Hall of Fame last December.

Andrea Joyce interviews gymnasts Aly Raisman and Simone Biles at the Rio Olympics, one of 17 she has covered as a sports journalist.

## *Look to Michigan*

The University of Michigan has kicked off a fundraising campaign called "Look to Michigan," in which LSA has a goal of raising $750 million for priorities that include support for the elimination of student financial need; enrichment of the student experience; and support for transformative teaching, research, and programs. Another priority is the LSA Dean's Discretionary Strategic Fund, which has been used in the past for endeavors such as the Meet the Moment Research Initiative (read more on p. 26 about some of the research being conducted with this funding).

myumi.ch/lsa-looktomichigan

*for* what's next ▸
**Look to Michigan**


# Olympic Dreams vs. the Struggle for Justice

A new documentary called *Detroit's Olympic Uprising*—directed by kinesiology professor Stefan Szymanski, written by LSA professor Silke-Maria Weineck, edited by independent filmmaker Aaron Schillinger, and produced by all three—explores Detroit's 1963 bid to host the 1968 Summer Olympics. It was the city's sixth attempt.

"The bid … in 1963 was the most elaborate, well-conceived, best organized bid," Weineck, the Grace Lee Boggs Collegiate Professor of Comparative Literature and German Studies, said in an interview with Fox News. "They thought, *this time, we're going to get it.*"

But the International Olympic Committee awarded the Games to Mexico City instead.

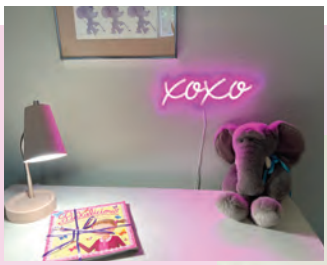
"One problem … was that the Black community was not sufficiently involved, and one young group of activists … mount[ed] a protest, saying Detroit is not worthy to host an event dedicated to universal brotherhood," Weineck says. Detroit's city council had just voted to keep housing segregation legal in the city, and police brutality and economic discrimination were rampant at the time, Weineck says.

The documentary was made possible by funding from the U-M Presidential Arts Initiative, LSA, and the U-M Center for Race and Ethnicity in Sports.

# A New Home

**When students move out in the spring**, the result could be Dumpsters full of furniture, linens, wall art, and more. Instead, local organizations are finding new homes for the high-quality castoffs. House N2 Home, a local nonprofit, collected items from sororities, 10 high-rises, and about 70 houses. The organization provides furnishings for people who are moving out of homeless shelters and into rental housing. One young couple had been sleeping in their car and, because their living situation was so tenuous, their 2-year-old daughter was not able to remain with them. They found housing, and House N2 Home furnished the home with the help of some student donations for the daughter's room (top).

The on-campus student move-out—which benefits House N2 Home, the Maize and Blue Cupboard, Ann Arbor PTO Thrift Shop, Ann Arbor Thrift Shop, Goodwill, Jewish Family Services, and Kiwanis—collected more than 10 tons of items in spring 2024.




Courtesy of House N2 Home

# Meet the Gnawsons

**For the first time** since the Matthaei Botanical Gardens was founded in 1907, beavers have made a home there. Beavers are returning to their former glory thanks to bans on beaver trapping and hunting in the 1900s and improved water quality. This little beaver is a member of the family called the Gnawsons—a name that earned 40 percent of votes in an online contest, beating out the Beaverines, the Chompers, and the Wolverstreams.

Courtesy of the Matthaei Botanical Gardens

Courtesy of Mónica Carvalho

# *Grape Seeds and Dinosaurs*

**Mónica Carvalho**, assistant curator at the Museum of Paleontology and assistant professor of earth and environmental sciences, was doing fieldwork in the Colombian Andes in 2022 when she spotted what turned out to be a 60 million-year-old grape seed fossil trapped in rock—among the oldest in the world and the first to be found in South America. The discovery led to a study published earlier this year, coauthored by Carvalho, that said grapes started to spread across the world after the extinction of the dinosaurs.

# Foolishness Abounds

**After a one-year hiatus, the fools returned to downtown Ann Arbor. The giant *papier-mâché* puppets in the FestiFools parade are all created by LSA Lloyd Scholars for Writing and the Arts (LSWA) students and community members, led by FestiFools founder Mark Tucker, LSWA art director and visual arts instructor. The FoolMoon procession and community party, founded by Tucker, featured glowing art displays, "constellation stations," roaming music, and illuminated humans.**

Tatum Poirier

Top: Student Seri Stewart creates a giant puppet for the FestiFools parade. Above: A celebrant twirls and shimmers during FoolMoon. Right: Mark Tucker, the founder of foolishness, marches through downtown Ann Arbor during FestiFools. The two processions occur around April Fools' Day.

Illustration by Becky Sehenuk Waite

# Get Out!

Travel can do wonders for your well-being. "Experiencing awe, going to novel places, engaging your creative mind, being in nature, and spending time with family and friends are all things that we know can increase well-being and even reduce stress," Stephanie Preston, a professor of psychology at LSA, told *Time* magazine. If you're particularly addicted to your phone, Preston recommends choosing a vacation destination that has limited internet access, such as a camping spot in the mountains.

Brenda Ahearn/U-M College of Engineering

## Did you know?

As shared on LSA's social media channels on Flag Day, the Diag flagpole was initially purchased at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 before being installed on campus in July 1898. The flagpole was moved to its current position in 1918.

This image shows a Veterans Day flag-raising on the Diag.

# The Return of the Piping Plover

"*Newly hatched Great Lakes piping plovers are all feet and fluff,*" said a recent MLive article. The feet and fluff can be found at the U-M Biological Station (UMBS), home to the world's only Piping Plover Captive Rearing Center. The facility along Douglas Lake in northern Michigan is staffed every spring and summer by avian specialists stationed at UMBS to incubate and hatch out abandoned Great Lakes piping plover eggs and care for chicks to save the federally endangered species from extinction.

The shores of the Great Lakes were once home to nearly 800 pairs of piping plovers. In 1990, that number had dropped to fewer than 20. In 2023 and 2024, UMBS released a combined 56 chicks into the wild.

Courtesy of the U-M Biological Station

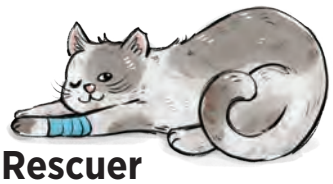
Doug Coombe

**Correction:** As a few green-thumbed and eagle-eyed readers pointed out to us, we ran a photo in the spring issue of *LSA Magazine* along with a story about the peony garden in The Arb that was in fact a picture of a climbing rose near the peony garden.

It's easy to get caught up in doom and gloom, but glimmers of hope abound. LSA alums, faculty, students, and staff are creating positive change in the lives of people, animals, and the planet. They remind us that hope can come in many forms—even a bowl of yak butter.

# 24 REASONS TO FEEL HOPEFUL ABOUT THE FUTURE

By Stephanie Wong, Gina Balibrera, and Katie Vloet



## 1 The Animal Rescuer

When a community is struggling after decades of civil strife, what happens to our animal companions? "Nearly every animal that we bring in is called in to us by local residents who see them struggling. We are only able to take in the orphaned, injured, or sick. We can't collect all street animals. But there is more effort towards welfare overall. At the times when it does seem hopeless, we just work harder and make our own," says Charlotte Maxwell-Jones (M.A. '11 and '12, Ph.D. '15), an alum who studied classical art, classical studies, and archaeology. Maxwell-Jones is president and founder of the nonprofit Kabul Small Animal Rescue, which rescued 294 cats and dogs from Afghanistan in an airlift to Washington, D.C., on June 3, 2024, and has saved thousands of animals since its founding.

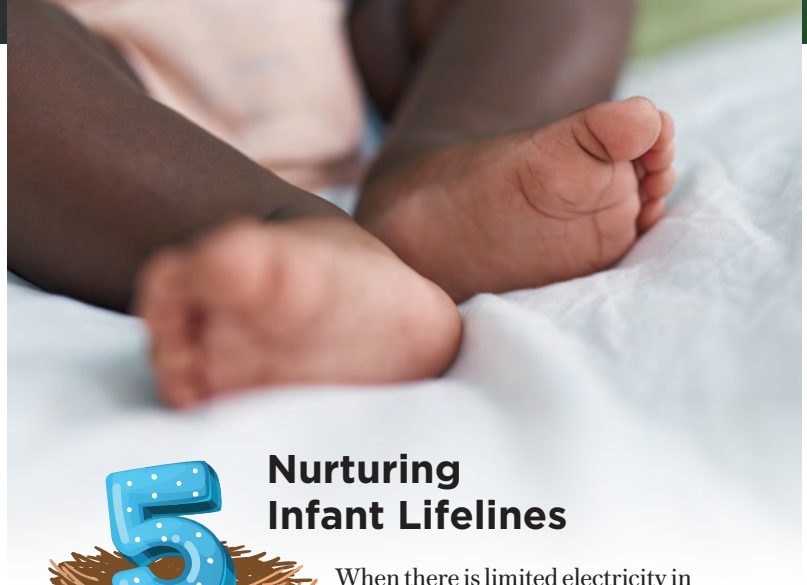
Illustrations by Nicole Cischke

## 2 Paani Means "Water"

The problem: Pakistan is facing a water crisis, with millions of people lacking access to clean drinking water. One solution: the nonprofit Paani (Urdu for "water"), founded by economics alum Arhum Arshad (A.B. '19) and Sikander "Sonny" Khan (B.B.A. '20). The organization helps provide clean drinking water, famine relief, education, and health care to rural communities in Pakistan. They started as students, raising funds initially by selling donuts on campus. Arshad, now a product manager at the Alumni Association at U-M, says, "When I can see the impact we have made in Pakistani lives with my own eyes, when I visit those communities, that's what is truly fulfilling to us."

## 3 If Hope Is the Thing with Feathers ...

... then look for the Kirtland's warbler! The yellow-breasted species, also known as the jack pine warbler, once bred exclusively in Michigan and experienced a significant decline, with numbers plummeting to roughly 300 birds in the 1970s. It now has a population of more than 5,000. Ecology and evolutionary biology Ph.D. student Max Witynski credits the warbler's recovery to the passage of the Endangered Species Act and subsequent careful management.



## 5 Nurturing Infant Lifelines

When there is limited electricity in low-resource communities, how will new parents care for their infants? Political science alum Jooyoung Chung (A.B. '24) helped co-found NeoNest Global, a health care nonprofit dedicated to providing non-electric bassinet incubators to communities that face high levels of infant mortality. By collaborating with hospitals and partnering with community organizations in Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda, Chung and his colleagues aim to finish their prototype and begin clinical trials. A future physician, Chung now feels prepared to "overcome political barriers to address health inequities."

## 4 Preventing Overdoses

There are no easy answers when it comes to the epidemic of drug overdoses, which is why one student group is taking a multi-pronged approach to the problem. The Lookout Project, a nonprofit student organization, was an awardee in the 2024 optiMize Social Innovation Challenge for its efforts to increase public awareness about substance use disorder and develop more comprehensive, empathetic, and efficient harm-reduction methods—including overdose prevention centers—in Washtenaw County. The organization is led by two LSA students, Katherine Hankes (neuroscience) and Rasha Hamoudi (biochemistry); and School of Public Health student Shravya Ghantasala.

## 6 A Balm for Climate Anxiety

In the Year of Sustainability at U-M, LSA has taken a number of big steps: offering classes that address climate anxiety, switching to compostable plates and forks at events, reducing swag, and establishing its first LSA Sustainability Team to help the college achieve carbon neutrality in its facilities—just to name a few. The college reinvested energy savings from last academic year into community-led projects, including a pollinator garden near the Power Center and equipment to save water used in chemistry research and teaching. And there are small steps that everyone can take while still having fun: the VIPs (Very Important Primates) Club, a student group, meets regularly to crochet, knit, bead, sew, and embroider eco-friendly clothes that combat the trend of fast fashion while raising money for wildlife conservation.

Illustration by Becky Sehenuk Waite

## 7 Lights, Camera, Action!

Film, television, and media students Mena Nasiri and Solomon Trice received support from LSA's optiMize to expand their film group, 48 Frames, which helps BIPOC student filmmakers with financial infrastructure, marketing, distribution, and personnel, and places creative control back in the hands of the artists. As they champion BIPOC stories on-screen, Nasiri and Trice are also building a community of like-minded student artists on campus. In the works is a film about the experiences of an autistic woman with the Socratic method in a high school classroom.

## 8 Out of This World

Already a Goldwater Scholar, junior Devarshi Mukherji has now been named an Astronaut Scholar as well. This merit-based scholarship is given by the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation and was established in 1984 by Mercury 7 astronauts to support the country's leadership in science and technology. The neuroscience major is leading a research project that aims to identify molecular mechanisms causing resistance to radiation therapy in pediatric brain tumors.

Illustration by Matt Vierling

## 9 Among the Fulbright-est

Last year, 27 U-M students and alums received Fulbright Scholarships; the majority were LSA undergraduate alums. They traveled to Turkey, Brazil, South Korea, Italy, Romania, and other countries. Their interests include the role of genomes in the development of prostate cancer among Indian men and analyzing how popular participatory theater is used for social change in South Africa. Three faculty members from the Ann Arbor campus also were named Fulbright U.S. Scholars for 2023–24, including Se-Mi Oh, associate professor of Asian languages and cultures in LSA.

## 10 A Rising Star Shares Her Shine

Aimee Ardrion

Shaquetta Morris, the student services coordinator for both the Department of Linguistics and the Weinberg Institute of Cognitive Science, received the prestigious Rising Star Award from LSA in 2023. Among her achievements is raising the female representation within the computational track at the institute—a field typically dominated by men—boosting it to a two-thirds majority of women. What's behind Morris's positive outlook? The impact her work has on students' lives.

Courtesy of Khamseen: Islamic Art History Online

# Digitizing Islamic Art

11

The first faculty position in Islamic art history in the United States was founded at U-M in the 1930s. U-M remains one of the world's hubs of Islamic arts-centered study and scholarship with projects such as the "Khamseen: Islamic Art History Online," the first free and open-access platform dedicated to Islamic art history. Founded by Christiane Gruber, professor of history of art, Khamseen has received more than a quarter of a million views in its first few years.

# 12 The Wallenberg Institute

This fall, the university launched the Raoul Wallenberg Institute. The institute will study hatred directed against religious and ethnic communities, foster cross-cultural understanding, and elevate civil discourse. Through teaching, research, and public engagement, the institute will develop strategies to combat antisemitism, divisiveness, and discrimination.

The institute is named after Swedish humanitarian and U-M alum Raoul Wallenberg, whose efforts on behalf of the U.S. War Refugee Board to rescue European Jews during the Holocaust saved thousands of lives. He is one of only eight people in history to be named an honorary U.S. citizen, and his legacy is also recognized at U-M through the Wallenberg Medal and Lecture and the Wallenberg Fellowship—and in the campus statue pictured here.

## Just So You Know ...

**13** **Women Also Know Stuff** is a database that promotes the work of women in political science. Its current and former board members include LSA professors Cesi Cruz and Yanna Krupnikov, and Ph.D. alums Ashley Jardina and Gisela Sin. Need an expert to consult for an op-ed, an essay, or a speaking engagement? You now know where to go.

## 14 A Place to Rest

History alum Mary Livesay (A.B. '01) writes proposals and grants to support the mission of Los Angeles-based Homeboy Industries: a nonprofit that provides wraparound workforce development, legal, education, and career services to clients seeking new beginnings after gang violence and incarceration. Three-quarters of Homeboy Industries' clients are experiencing homelessness, and this year, Homeboy Industries founder Father Greg Boyle, S.J., plans to acquire land for transitional housing for clients. They're hoping to add 157 beds by the end of 2026.

## 15 50 Years of Solitude (... and Joyful Community-Building)

This year, the English Department's New England Literature Program (NELP) celebrated its 50th year of rustic, place-based learning as 40 students and 13 U-M instructors lived, studied, and worked together in the woods of New England. They read New England authors like Henry David Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, and Morgan Talty; they produced book-length journals; and they explored the landscape that inspired so many literary works. Classes met on mountaintops and docks, in village commons, around campfires and cookpots, in lean-tos, and under the stars. NELP-ers gave up personal technology for the duration of the program, handwriting all their work and making all their own music—continuing a 50-year experiment in deliberate living that Thoreau himself could appreciate.

Courtesy of NELP

David Pillow/Dreamstime.com

# 16
## Focus: JOBS

Courtesy of Focus: HOPE

Focus: HOPE, a longtime nonprofit in Detroit, has launched a program with DTE Energy to train tree trimmers. It's a win for people seeking specialized job training and for residents who lose power during storms. Focus: HOPE is led by CEO Portia Roberson, who earned a bachelor's degree in English at LSA in 1990.


Paper and Lens Co./shutterstock.com


## 17 Things Are Coming Up Detroit

Economists at LSA have forecasted a brighter future for the city of Detroit: payroll jobs are expected to increase, the unemployment rate is expected to fall, and industries are expected to increase their employment of blue-collar workers. The report, called the "Detroit Economic Outlook 2023–28," anticipates economic growth in Detroit with cautious optimism.

# 18

## Boosting Literacy in Puerto Rico

Illustration by DaJaniere Rice

Building cultural bridges can start with a book. Alum Chloe Collon (A.B. '24), who majored in economics and Spanish, spearheaded a global reading exchange between fourth graders from Naranjito, Puerto Rico, and Michigan. The students, who all speak Spanish at home, were able to improve reading levels in both English and Spanish, reading comprehension, and vocabulary over the course of nine weeks of cross-cultural exchange.

# 19

## We Are the National Champs—in Debating!

Two 2024 LSA graduates—Kelly Phil (political science) and Bennett Dombcik (philosophy)—led U-M's debate team to victory at the 2024 National Debate Tournament. Founded in 1903 and consistently ranked one of the best collegiate debate programs in the United States, the team sponsors scholarships for students who compete. When the news was announced, Phil described the moment as "the culmination of all my years in debate." Dombcik experienced "not only an immense feeling of relief, knowing that the work we have done all year has paid off, but also of gratitude towards everyone who made winning the championship possible." Both Phil and Dombcik see law school in their bright futures.

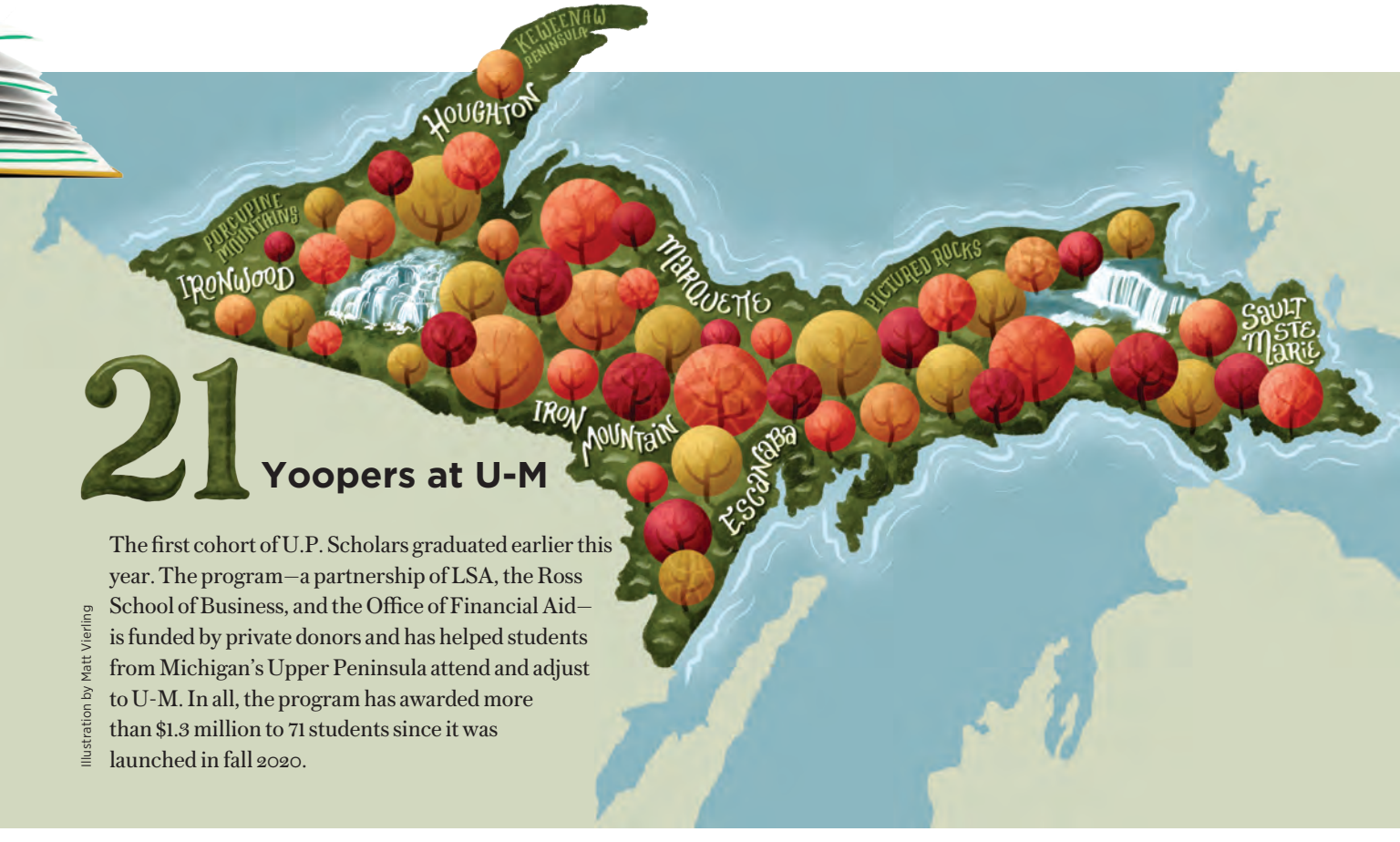
Andrew Herman/*The Michigan Daily*

# 20

## An Improvement in Human Rights

Years of depressing headlines can make us feel hopeless, but Chris Fariss, professor of political science, has a different outlook. Recently honored as the best undergraduate instructor in his department, Fariss combines computational methods with the study of global human rights. His point of view, based on his research, is that global standards of human rights enforcement are increasing and that human rights are actually getting better over time.

Aimee Andrion




# 21

## Yoopers at U-M

The first cohort of U.P. Scholars graduated earlier this year. The program—a partnership of LSA, the Ross School of Business, and the Office of Financial Aid—is funded by private donors and has helped students from Michigan's Upper Peninsula attend and adjust to U-M. In all, the program has awarded more than $1.3 million to 71 students since it was launched in fall 2020.

Illustration by Matt Vierling

# 22

## Cultivating Children's Stories

Illustration by Fran Olegario

Molecular, cellular, and developmental biology student Nicole Vergara and psychology student Janelle Bernardino are among the co-founders of A Colorful Collection, a nonprofit collective focused on showcasing intersectionalities through children's literature. These books highlight themes that include food as a love language, intergenerational connections, acts of hospitality, and celebrating diverse identities. The team's belief is that the representation of marginalized voices in children's literature can help young minds form the foundations of a "more empathetic, understanding, and inclusive society."

# 23

## Ancient Diets, Modern Times

Alicia Ventresca-Miller—assistant curator of archaeological sciences at LSA's Museum of Anthropological Archaeology and an assistant professor of anthropology—runs an archaeological and chemical laboratory that studies ancient cuisines in Central and Inner Asia. Using isotopic analysis from sites in Kazakhstan and Mongolia, she focuses on identifying the consumption of dairy, fermented foods, and human movement across steppe landscapes. The research conducted by her team illuminates the ways that livestock were managed by past societies, and may allow us to build sustainable practices in the present day. Her team's most recent find? An ancient vessel filled with yak butter.

Julia Clark/NOMAD Science


Scott Soderberg/Michigan Photography

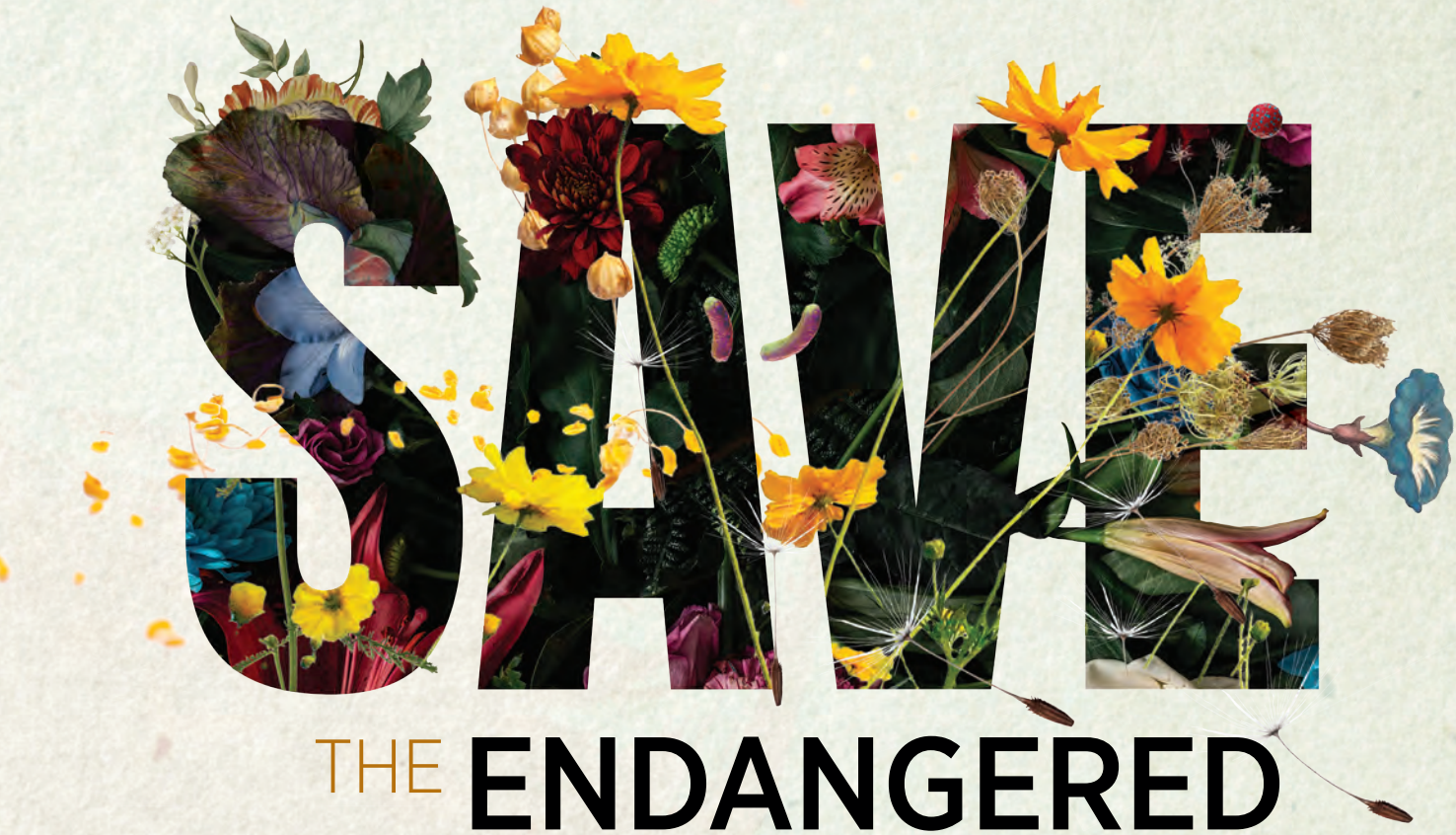
24

## Open Heart, Open Mind

Linda Garcia, executive assistant to the chair of the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, began quilting 10 years ago. During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, she spotted a pattern on a quilt blog that spoke to her. She ordered it and stitched together a brightly colored quilt featuring optimistic words and related symbols: moxie, respect, love, hope, and more. Countless passersby in the Biological Sciences Building, where it is displayed, have commented on it. "I let it speak to people. I try not to add any commentary to it," Garcia says. "The middle says 'open heart, open mind,' and I believe this is what we all need." ■

**BY JORDYN IMHOFF**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BECKY SEHENUK WAITE




# THE ENDANGERED SPECIES, SAVE THE HUMANS

Two LSA-led research teams have set out to protect frogs, bats, and bees in innovative ways—to preserve their species, the planet, and even our own lives.

Above and on p. 29: EEB Profs. Regina Baucom and Elizabeth Tibbetts, left to right, are on a research team that is investigating how the herbicide dicamba affects pollinator survival and the quality of food provided by plants in major field crops on Midwestern farms.

Leisa Thompson/Michigan Photography

Tim Cernak isn't looking at the world through rose-colored glasses. Many recent examples, including habitat loss and rising global temperatures, point to declining ecosystem health with broad implications for human health, so it's hard not to see the planet as being on a precipice. But he believes we can still do something about it by making necessary, rapid changes.

"We're living in a mass extinction event," says Cernak, associate professor of chemistry and medicinal chemistry. The words carry a sense of urgency, like when COVID-19 began to wreak havoc around the world and we were told to stay home, or when we learned that microplastics weren't only all around us, but in our bloodstreams damaging our cells.

However, the fate of any particular species isn't sealed, including our own. Cernak's words are actually accompanied by something unexpected: a glimmer of hope.

"We wondered in March 2020 if COVID-19 would be an existential moment for our species, but we broke the mold with how quickly we could create a vaccine. What used to take 10 years took eight months," Cernak says. "I imagine a future where we could treat any species. Where we could make medicines quickly, not just for humans—a future using tools from the frontlines of medicine to tackle any wildlife disease and prevent future pandemics at the same time."

And Cernak isn't the only one working to create better days ahead, for humans and Earth's critters alike. LSA professor Regina Baucom, a plant adaptation and evolution researcher in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (EEB), studies ways in which both Midwest farmers and pollinators can thrive, assuring sustainable food production for centuries to come.

"To contribute new knowledge to the field of sustainable agriculture and stop the rapid decline of our pollinators, who are responsible for pollinating nearly 80 percent of all flowering plants ... that's the goal," says Baucom.

Now, thanks in part to LSA's Meet the Moment Research Initiative grants—which support projects that showcase how the liberal arts and sciences address the most pressing generational challenges—Cernak, Baucom, and their fellow researchers are working toward a better future.

## FIGHTING FUNGI AND FUTURE PANDEMICS

Cernak and EEB professors Timothy James, as well as researcher Kelly Speer, have been seeking a new drug to thwart the rapid decline of frog and bat populations that are plagued by two fungi: *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* and *Pseudogymnoascus destructans.* In frogs, *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* has led to global extinctions of several subspecies. In bats, *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* has given rise to white-nose syndrome,

Chun-Yi Tsai, a chemistry Ph.D. candidate; Prof. Tim Cernak; and Yu-Pu Juang, a medicinal chemistry research fellow, work in Cernak's lab.

Scott Soderberg/Michigan Photography

putting previously common bats, like the little brown bat, at risk of extinction.

Like many animals, frogs and bats have a profound impact on biodiversity, the economy, human health, and society as a whole. Frogs, for example, help control mosquito populations, which are vectors for human disease, and grow to play an important role in the food chain as predator and prey. Similarly, bats are seed dispersers and pollinators, as well as partners in maintaining healthy ecosystems by managing insects that damage agricultural crops.

Both of these fungi have been around for a long time; why is it a problem now, specifically for frogs? That's what James wants to understand.

"We can see today [that] we've failed to mitigate these outbreaks because we lacked the basic understanding of these diseases. Without basic understanding, we can't put policy in place that would stop this, so diseases continue to spread quickly," says James, an expert in amphibian health and fungi curator at LSA's Research Museums Center. "With frogs in captivity, we can treat them with an antifungal—but, despite their efficacy, there are bad side effects. For bats, biological solutions haven't worked at all."

Speer recently finished her term as director of the Michigan Pathogen Biorepository and assistant professor in EEB. Like James, she is interested in why these fungal infections are a problem now, particularly in bats. "Bats are a model system for being able to tolerate or resist infections," she says. "Viral and bacterial infections that prove fatal in other mammals don't demonstrate the same outcome in bats. However, they're susceptible to this fungus."

The team has access to the Michigan Pathogen Biorepository's high-quality, wildlife-associated parasite and pathogen specimens. Here, researchers can study host-fungus interactions using genetics, creating a bridge between biodiversity science and public health, in which James and Cernak specialize, respectively.

"It's the classic operation in medicine, where researchers are interfaced at the hospital and patients' tissue samples can be gene sequenced to fully understand their tumor or condition. Then, we can match it to a drug, or we begin creating a new one," says Cernak, also a member of U-M's Center for Global Health Equity.

By using U-M's Drug Repurposing Library and the Michigan Pathogen Biorepository, the team has access to myriad clinical compounds and disease strains. This allows Cernak to plug wildlife medicine research into the modern drug discovery workflow, as if it were coming from a human hospital.

"I'm looking forward to bringing my background in pharmacokinetics to conservation work. I can try to understand how a possible antifungal treatment distributes in a frog or bat's tissues and eventually exits the body. We don't want to over- or underdose. But frogs and bats are different from humans. They don't take their pill with breakfast every morning, and they live in different environments and are different sizes," says Cernak. "But pushing dosing models into a new dimension is scientifically exciting."

## FROG-O-SPHERES AND BAT CONDOS

James remembers where his idea for how to handle the frogs came to him: a Brookstone store at the mall. "They had an African dwarf frog in one of their Frog-O-Sphere kits, which is a small, plastic tank. It may not be the most ideal system for the frog, but it was clear to me that this frog could be small, strong, fully aquatic, and susceptible to the fungus we're interested in. This frog is related to the African clawed frog, and I thought that would be the perfect species for us to take and develop a model, an improved one, to understand the fungus and frog better."

Now, James has been able to observe these frogs in a healthy aquarium habitat and understand the best ways to take care of them while studying the complicated life cycle of the fungus. However, creating a similar process to study bats presents different challenges.

"It's harder to maintain bats because they require larger enclosures and many species live in large colonies, so we have to explore other options to study them," says Speer. Creative solutions, including genome sequencing and enlisting the help of Ann Arbor residents, may provide a way to learn about bats while keeping them in their natural habitat.

Bat1K, a global initiative to sequence the entire genome of all living bat species, gives researchers hope that they can use the genetic information to understand why bats are so susceptible to fungal pathogens at a cellular level. It's a long-term goal. In the meantime, researchers will focus on testing the efficacy of antifungal application to bat condos in the lab, eventually recruiting the help of the community to install antifungal bat houses outside their homes. However, the first and most critical step is identifying a drug that is safe and effective.

"Museum collections don't often have opportunities to implement real-world conservation and pandemic strategies, even if we have the knowledge of how to do it, so getting to engage in this project offers us an exciting opportunity," says Speer.

In partnership with Brian Gratwicke from the Smithsonian National Zoo and other organizations, including Bat Conservation International and the Bat Biology Foundation,

Alison Harrington, the Research Museums collection manager for fungi, and EEB Prof. Timothy James examine a tube from the cryoarchive, a liquid nitrogen freezer.

Scott Soderberg/Michigan Photography

LSA's research team will consult with leading experts in fungal, pharmaceutical, ecological, bat, and frog research to ensure working with the different live species can be done in the most ethical and effective way.

## WAKING UP, SMELLING THE COFFEE

Another LSA-led research team implementing real-world conservation strategies is the one led by Baucom, and the group is committed to better understanding how the herbicide dicamba affects pollinator survival and the quality of food provided by plants in major field crops on Midwestern farms.

The group seeks to answer questions such as: Does direct exposure to dicamba affect pollinator survival? How does dicamba drift alter the quality and abundance of pollen and nectar that weedy plants in agricultural margins provide? Where in the state of Michigan and the Midwest are farmers using this herbicide, and can we mitigate its consequences on the pollinating community?

"A world without pollinators is a world without apples, chocolate, and even coffee," says Baucom. "This research comes at a critical time when Midwest farmers have begun using the herbicide dicamba, which drifts and pollutes natural communities that provide shelter and nourishment to these important species."

The knowledge gap related to the effects of herbicide is shocking, especially because 73 percent of the 408 million tons of pesticide applied yearly in the United States are some form of herbicide, Baucom says. Baucom's team consists of EEB professors Elizabeth Tibbetts and Luis Zaman; David Sherman, a Hans W. Vahlteich Professor of Medicinal Chemistry and professor of chemistry; and colleagues from other parts of the university.

Humans and the planet rely on pollinating insects. Bee species, wasps, and flies, are responsible for 75 percent of the food species we consume and up to 10 percent of the overall global food production. Additionally, access to safe, nutritious food is an environmental justice issue, and it's heavily relevant to Michigan, where the southern portion of the state is dominated by agriculture.

> **"A world without pollinators is a world without apples, chocolate, and even coffee."**
> —EEB Prof. Regina Baucom

Tibbetts, who studies wasps and their sophisticated social interactions, began conducting field work on plants and pollinators at U-M's Matthaei Botanical Gardens with Baucom over the summer. After finding out which weeds appear to be resistant to dicamba and if exposure to the herbicide affects pollinator behavior via experiment and control groups, the duo created curated prairie strips of healthy species that will also help nourish pollinators. The prairie strips, if effective, could be installed at farms all over the Midwest to help farmers maintain areas of their land.

And with the help of Sherman, Baucom and Tibbetts's research findings can be translated into critical action.

## WHY WINDSHIELD BUGS ARE A GOOD THING

Sherman, also a professor of microbiology and immunology and research professor at U-M's Life Sciences Institute, has been working in the field of natural products for more than 20 years, using new microorganisms obtained from environmental samples he has collected and seeing "what happens in a petri dish, what bioactive natural molecules the organisms produce," he says. These molecules are well known in the pharmaceutical industry because of how they can cure and control certain diseases, like the chemotherapy drug Taxol, or bacteria-derived tetracycline and erythromycin antibiotics.

"The blueprint for these naturally occurring molecules is encoded in the microorganism's DNA. Each new microorganism we isolate has the instructions to potentially create more than 100 molecules. The goal in my lab is to understand how these microorganisms make these complex molecular structures," says Sherman.

Baucom and Tibbetts's work gives Sherman a chance to study the bee microbiome and chemically profile a small sample of bees, their nectar, and dicamba using mass-spectrometry, which could lead to the discovery of new microorganisms on the bee's surface and in the gut.

"I want to know how their microbiome changes, by comparing the bees, nectar, and pollen between those that have been exposed to the herbicide and those that haven't," he explains. "What microorganisms are missing? Do the bees get sick when they lose them? What new ones appear? Do they provide any protective or medicinal properties?"

Later, the team's research will be used to conduct community outreach to further their impact and inspire generational change.

Baucom and Tibbetts plan to integrate students as interns in their studies and to collaborate with high school teachers to develop lesson plans about the importance of pollinators and environmental science more broadly. Zaman will develop a mitigation strategy using ecological modeling and machine learning to figure out the best combination of species for farmers to use in prairie mixes. Jennifer Blesh at the U-M School for Environment and Sustainability and Noah Webster at the U-M Institute for Social Research will conduct social surveys and interviews to understand where dicamba is being used and the likelihood that the farming community would use the prairie strips.

"It wasn't too long ago that your windshield would be splattered with bugs when driving on the highway. Maybe it's convenient now that this is no longer the case, but we want people to wonder why," says Tibbetts. "We can't just want to save pollinators—we need to. Our lives depend on it." ■

Prof. David Sherman collects field samples from high-biodiversity ecosystems, which are then analyzed in the lab to discover drug-producing microorganisms aimed at combating infectious diseases and cancer.

Stephanie King/U-M Life Sciences Institute


“We can’t just want to save
pollinators—we need to.
Our lives depend on it.”
—EEB Prof. Elizabeth Tibbetts

# SHINING LIGHT

With her words and images, LSA alum Supriya Kelkar brings a fresh voice to children's literature and inspires readers "to decolonize, to hold their heads high, and to never forget their shine."

BY GINA BALIBRERA

**Book illustrations by Supriya Kelkar**
**Photography by Natalie Condon**


LSA alum Supriya Kelkar's latest children's book, *And Yet You Shine: The Kohinoor Diamond, Colonization, and Resistance,* is the first that she has both written and fully illustrated.

Supriya Kelkar sits cross-legged on the floor of her studio and lays out old saris from her mother, studying their colors and textures.

She likes to mix rough and sheer fabrics to emphasize endurance and gentleness—qualities that are also a part of the stories she writes. She layers tissue to complement the wrinkles in ancient silk or homespun cotton.

Then she begins adorning handmade paper from old Indian wedding invitations, cutting shapes and painting a peacock and a flower onto the paper. She adds jewels and sequins with tweezers. Later, the embellished paper will be collaged with the fabric.

As Kelkar works in her studio—actually her family room at her home in Metro Detroit, during the hours her three kids are at school—she's remembering family stories, the labors of skilled artisans in the country where her parents were born, the animals from folk tales she heard as a child. Throughout, she pauses, steps away from her work, and examines the big picture she is creating.

"I want there to be a sense of three dimensions here in a flat illustration

Kelkar uses techniques of multimedia collage, block printing, and both digital and analog painting to create her ornate and dimensional illustrations.


Kelkar's love of history—and personal connection to the history of the British colonization in India—guided the creation of *And Yet You Shine*.

because I'm writing about a vibrant place, one that was alive before colonization."

## THE SHRINKING DIAMOND

Kelkar (A.B. 2002) is an author whose latest book, *And Yet You Shine: The Kohinoor Diamond, Colonization, and Resistance*, is the first that she has both written and fully illustrated. It tells the story of a stolen diamond that illuminates a larger history: the British colonization of South Asia.

For the book's illustrations, Kelkar improvised her own modern versions of South Asian metal work, block printing, textiles, and folk art, to honor the survival of these art forms against painful odds. The materials and artistic practices survived colonization and the British East India Company, which taxed and suppressed the work of South Asian artisans for centuries.

Kelkar graduated with a double major in film, television, and media (FTVM) and psychology. She also took nearly enough courses to qualify for a history minor as well—and Kelkar says that her love of history is infused in all of the books she writes.

*And Yet You Shine* tells the story of how the British came to possess the Kohinoor diamond, which at the time was the largest in the world. Kelkar's telling focuses on a real-life story of a 10-year-old child king who was separated from his mother and tricked into handing the diamond over to the British East India Company, which took it as a trophy of conquest. Over centuries, the diamond was cut down in order to match British standards of brilliance. Today the Kohinoor diamond sits in the museum of the Tower of London when it's not being worn by British royalty.

Symbolically, the diamond holds tremendous power for Kelkar and others. "For so many people in the South Asian diaspora, this stolen diamond represents so much more than a gemstone. It symbolizes the brutality of colonization and its lasting effects today." And for Kelkar, the story of British colonization in India is not a distant history, but a family story; her father was born in British-colonized India in 1946.

## HIDDEN STORIES

Kelkar's creative road to *And Yet You Shine* took several turns. A screenwriter by training, Kelkar studied with Professor Jim Burnstein in FTVM. She credits him with helping her develop a strong foundation in storytelling. After graduating from LSA in 2002, Kelkar began working as a


"THE STORY OF THE KOHINOOR DIAMOND IS THE STORY OF A PEOPLE."
—ALUM SUPRIYA KELKAR

screenwriter in Bollywood, attending to a rigorous production schedule between Michigan, Los Angeles, and Mumbai.

The Bollywood screenwriting job kept her busy but was not where she gravitated creatively, she says. Knowing she had other stories to tell, she began writing her first book, *Ahimsa,* in 2003, and over the next decade she wrote more than a dozen other titles. Kelkar also started a family during this busy time.

"I was pregnant with my third child, a week before giving birth actually, in 2016, when I sold *Ahimsa*, and I was just about ready to give up on that dream of publication," she says. *Ahimsa* was finally published in 2017.

Today, Kelkar's list of published books includes bestsellers and award-winning middle-grade novels such as *American as Paneer Pie; Strong as Fire, Fierce as Flame; The Cobra's Song;* and *The Many Colors of Harpeet Singh*, which was the Michigan Center for the Book's honoree in the Library of Congress's "Great Reads from Great Places" in 2021.

In 2023, Kelkar was honored by the Michigan Legislature on the House of Representatives floor for her contribution to children's literature as a "distinguished author and Michigan treasure who has touched the lives of countless children, adults, and families."

Kelkar may be known for her lush, layered illustrations, but when it comes to the creative process, she puts her "writer hat" on first. "When I'm drafting, I'm not thinking about the visuals," she says. She writes first, going directly to the storytelling tenets she learned from Burnstein in FTVM.

In the case of *And Yet You Shine*, she had noticed that in the retelling of stories from this time period, South Asian people were often excluded from the narrative. Kelkar shares that she and many of her BIPOC peers had been shut out of children's books for decades, and that creating diverse books for all children felt especially urgent in an age of book banning.

This urgency inspired Kelkar to turn her storytelling skills to the hidden history of the Kohinoor diamond. The story came out in second-person, with the diamond presented as the protagonist and addressed as "you" throughout.

"The story of the Kohinoor diamond is the story of a people," she says.

## A COMMUNITY OF READERS AND WRITERS

Kelkar finds support among her creative colleagues and peers in children's literature. They inspire


each other in the creative process, and they are there for each other, whether their books are getting taught or banned.

"While I was excluded from previous eras of publishing, we're creating a new era of diverse kid-lit," she says, mentioning other authors and illustrators like Karina Yan Glaser, Christina Soontornvat, John Schu, and others. "We're working together to make sure kids of all backgrounds see each other in a book."

Kelkar's readers inspire her sense of hope in this work. Every school visit, every enthusiastic letter she receives from readers, reminds her that good storytelling matters. Kelkar's next project, *Thank You, Teacher!*, is a picture book for early elementary-aged readers. The book, forthcoming from Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 2025, honors the work of educators.

*And Yet You Shine* is as ornately illustrated as a picture book, but it's a middle grade book, geared toward third- through seventh-grade readers. "That's a great age for having these discussions," Kelkar says. "Kids at this age are starting to become critical thinkers. I was experiencing the effects of racism in preschool, so middle grade readers can definitely handle these stories, and they have the critical thinking skills to make connections."

As a writer, she feels a responsibility to tell these stories well. Kelkar describes a mutual respect between the author and the reader, a relationship she takes very seriously.

"Kids know that these stories matter. And that gives me a lot of hope." ■

The relationship between author and reader inspires Kelkar to keep telling these stories and gives her hope.

# What's So Funny?

For this LSA graduate student, stand-up comedy is a powerful form of storytelling.

**AMERICAN CULTURE** graduate student and stand-up comedian Julianna Loera-Wiggins is workshopping some new material about getting into her first fist-fight on the rugby field.

"I was punched by another Latina," says Loera-Wiggins, a national-level rugby player. "She was a new player, fairly inexperienced, and she was playing dirty. I was distributing the ball, and she kept grabbing my ankle and tripping me. She did it four times, then I did it to her." That's when the punches started flying.

"We always talk about making our ancestors proud, right?" she says. Loera-Wiggins imagined her ancestors and the other player's ancestors hovering over the rugby field, surveying the fight, judging her subpar fighting skills, and all of the ancestors choosing to side with her opponent instead of with her. They were watching over her, but they were not proud of her at that moment. "The ancestors chose to root for her instead. She really knew how to fight."

Loera-Wiggins did not sustain serious injuries during the rugby brawl, but she says her bruises felt more painful for having been dealt by another Latina. By turning the experience into a joke about ancestor betrayal for a future stand-up routine, she is rewriting the narrative on her own terms. "At the time, I was shaken up," Loera-Wiggins says, "but the story makes for good comedy."

Leisa Thompson Photography

"I share my identity with my audiences, and we also bring each other into these different spaces," Loera-Wiggins says, adding that she's pulling from these different spaces in an attempt to build a new academic field of Latinx comedy.

"When marginalized voices speak out we can set the record straight, offer solutions for more inclusivity, and we can also explore the ways that humor can quiet the dissonance around us and soften it with our laughter."—JULIANNA LOERA-WIGGINS

When we know ourselves through "*conocimiento*," Loera-Wiggins says, we can interrupt harmful stereotypes and speak out, and we can bring the playfulness of our communities into spaces where we feel unsafe and unseen—and that work can happen in comedy.

## ORIGIN STORY

Loera-Wiggins has been interested in Latina comedy for a long time. In the process of interviewing family members about intergenerational Mexican American women in northern New Mexico for her graduate program research, she noticed that the women in her family used humor to tell stories. "In *las carcajadas* [the cackles] of my mother and *mis tías* [my aunts]," Loera-Wiggins says, painful events transformed into power—and academic inspiration. As her research progressed, she began to explore in her own comedy the ways that pain and joy coexist.

She traces her entry into performing stand-up to a moment in 2020, in the Zoom audience of a comedy show, cackling at a joke by comedian Gwen La Roka that combined the solitude of the COVID pandemic and her longing for *paletas*, sweet treats sold by a neighborhood ice pop vendor.

The experience sharpened Loera-Wiggins's curiosity into a desire to learn more about stand-up and to build an academic field around Latina comedy. La Roka invited her into Las Locas, a collective of Latina stand-up comedians, where Loera-Wiggins noticed the feminist principles of this community; unlike any other comedy space she'd been a part of, performers—whether headliners or newcomers—were paid equally and given equal time on stage. Soon Loera-Wiggins was performing stand-up with Las Locas as well.

These days, Loera-Wiggins is writing a dissertation about feminist Latinx humor, preparing to teach a course on Latinx stand-up, collaborating on a funny, tender art installation on campus, and telling plenty of her own jokes, too.

## THE 1%

Loera-Wiggins describes herself as a "stand-up comed-demic." Both touring comedian and academic, she carries two notebooks in her bag while attending to her robust performance schedule: a book of fieldnotes and a joke notebook.

"My methodology in my research is very much tied to being a performing comedian and hanging with other Latinas. And the research and the performance roles inform each other."

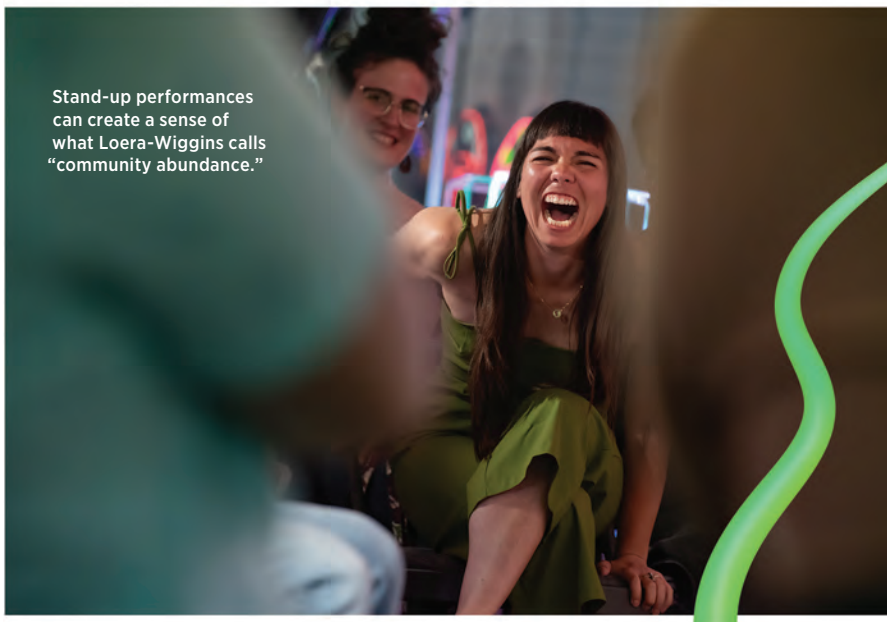
In both academic and comedy spaces, Loera-Wiggins is often the only Latina in the room. She shares some statistics: Latinas make up only one percent of stand-up comedy performers, and at the same time, Latinas represent less than one percent of doctorate holders in the country.

But Loera-Wiggins believes that humor provides a way to examine the pain that comes with that kind of exclusion, and to heal it. Stand-up performances hold the potential to create a sense of what she calls "community abundance," despite tough odds. Stand-up brings societal issues to a public forum, transforming pain into a punchline.

## TELL ME YOUR STORY

Loera-Wiggins is passionate about infusing academic spaces with laughter, and about inviting her students onstage to tell their stories. At the core of her research is a recurring theme of joy, Loera-Wiggins says. "And I craft joy through self-narrative." Comedy is also storytelling, or "*testimonio*," Loera-Wiggins says, referencing a mode of inquiry and narrative practiced by Chicanx, Latinx, and Latin American scholars and thinkers. "We speak our own truths, from and to the Latinx community, and laugh together about the tough stuff."

With support from the U-M Arts Initiative's Graduate Students Arts Research Grant, Loera-Wiggins will bring this embrace of vulnerability to a campus art project called "Dear Diary, Here's a Joke For You" during the fall 2024 semester. She'll host a stand-up event featuring rising queer comedians and comedians from communities of color, who will share material on loss, identity, and bodily autonomy. Audience members will be given notebooks in which they can write their own jokes, reflections, and stories. Afterward, Loera-Wiggins will string their papers up in Haven Hall, *papel picado*-style, in a celebratory airing of dirty laundry.



Stand-up performances can create a sense of what Loera-Wiggins calls "community abundance."

Loera-Wiggins is also preparing a course on Latinx stand-up comedy, which will culminate in a series of student performances in and around Ann Arbor. She hopes students can become aware of violent and harmful narratives, but also learn how comedy can be restorative.

"Aside from studies about racist aspects of comedy, there hasn't been much academic work about Latinx humor," she says. "I'm interested in how Latinx humor can be impactful and informative. ... As laughter moves the diaphragm, it can also move your mind." ■

# 5 Questions ...

... for Shawnt Bazikian, co-founder of the One Bicycle Foundation, and how a casual dinner conversation sparked a pedal-powered movement that has delivered hope, education, and discovery.


Near the Kenyan city of Kisumu, students use their bicycles to get to and from school, enhancing student retention and academic performance.

Courtesy of One Bicycle Foundation

**ECONOMICS ALUM** Shawnt Bazikian (A.B. '20) is the co-founder of One Bicycle Foundation, a charity that has delivered more than 1,000 bicycles to orphans at 20 schools in nine countries, including the United States. He lives in Los Angeles, where he works as an associate at the Levine Leichtman Family Office, an investment firm in Beverly Hills. LSA spoke with Bazikian about youth philanthropy, interorganizational collaboration, and the world's cutest businessman from Armenia.

**LSA: How did One Bicycle get its start?**
**Shawnt Bazikian:** We had a family friend who was a director of an orphanage in Kenya. She was over for dinner one day in 2012, when I was 16, and we, as a family, were speaking about how we might help. She went through the normal laundry list of things we could buy: shoes, toiletries, health products, things like that. But then she casually mentioned that these kids walk two hours to school. That's obviously shocking, and it was just a passing comment from her. At the time, and still today, my brother [Sebouh] was really passionate about cycling, and he threw out that with bicycles, we could help improve this problem.

Long story short, that project turned into a charity bike race among family and friends. And it raised close to $5,000; we were able to purchase some bikes locally and ship them to Machao Orphanage Foundation in Makueni, Kenya, in August of 2013. My brother went on that first trip. We delivered the bikes, and then I thought, "We're good here. That was fun."

But then we started hearing the stories of how the kids were, all of a sudden, excited to go to school. We got data that grades and attendance were improving [and heard that] the kids have more time to do things that they actually want to do. And that's when the light bulb went off. Ever since, we've refined the whole process of how to raise money, deliver bicycles, monitor progress, and be impactful with every dollar we spend.

Courtesy of One Bicycle Foundation

Shawnt Bazikian (right), with Los Angeles County Supervisor Kathryn Barger (center) and Pasadena Community College Chief Executive José A. Gómez. At this event in Pasadena in 2023, 24 foster youth received bicycles for commuting to school.

**LSA: What has your journey as an organization been like?**
**SB:** Initially, we didn't have a good grasp of logistics. We didn't have any international contacts, and so we had to fundraise [in the United States] and then ship the bikes over. But then it got complicated, because when the bikes got there, how would we deliver them? Starting in 2014, we now work with a wonderful organization called World Bicycle. They're global, and their general objective is to get bicycles in the hands of those who need them for a range of purposes, not just education. They were a perfect match, because we were great at identifying these specific orphanages or schools that needed bicycles, and they had local manufacturing operations within these countries. They hire local labor, and being able to help the local economy simplifies our logistics. It felt right.


Steve Scauzillo/Pasadena Star-News

Pasadena City College student Dulce Ortiz received a free bicycle at a One Bicycle Foundation giveaway event. The bicycles allow students more flexibility and efficiency in their commutes, circumventing the limits of public transportation.

Courtesy of One Bicycle Foundation

One Bicycle Foundation teamed up with the Matungu Community Development Charity in Kakamega County, Kenya, to get bicycles to farmers who needed a secure form of transportation to work, school, and sources of water.

deliveries. We gave him a bike six years ago, and three years ago we heard he was the assistant deputy to the mayor of his town. And it's just really cool to see something like that. Did the bike help? Hopefully! Maybe it gave him more time to pursue certain interests that led him to that position.

You can't put a limit on what these kids can do when you give them some time. They're so resourceful, like turning the bikes into something that can carry produce to a local market. We love that the possibilities are larger than just a transportation method to school.

**LSA: Do you have a particular story that you would like to share?**

**SB:** I just remember this one kid in Armenia who would wear the same outfit every day: dress shirt, suit jacket, and a flip phone in his pocket that didn't work. He would whip it out every now and then to take fake phone calls. He was eight, on the younger end of the students we supply bikes to. But he shows that there's that spirit: dreaming, being someone who he's not yet.

There are lots of these stories. One of them is about a kid named Boaz from one of our Kenya

**LSA: What's on the horizon for you and One Bicycle?**

**SB:** We're really proud of our youth philanthropy program. The one thing we can do that pays dividends into the future is sharing some of the knowledge that we have about how to start a foundation, how to throw an effective fundraiser, how to identify problems, how to speak to donors.

We've already helped one of the people in our program with his first fundraiser. He's been on top of us ever since with new ideas he has and

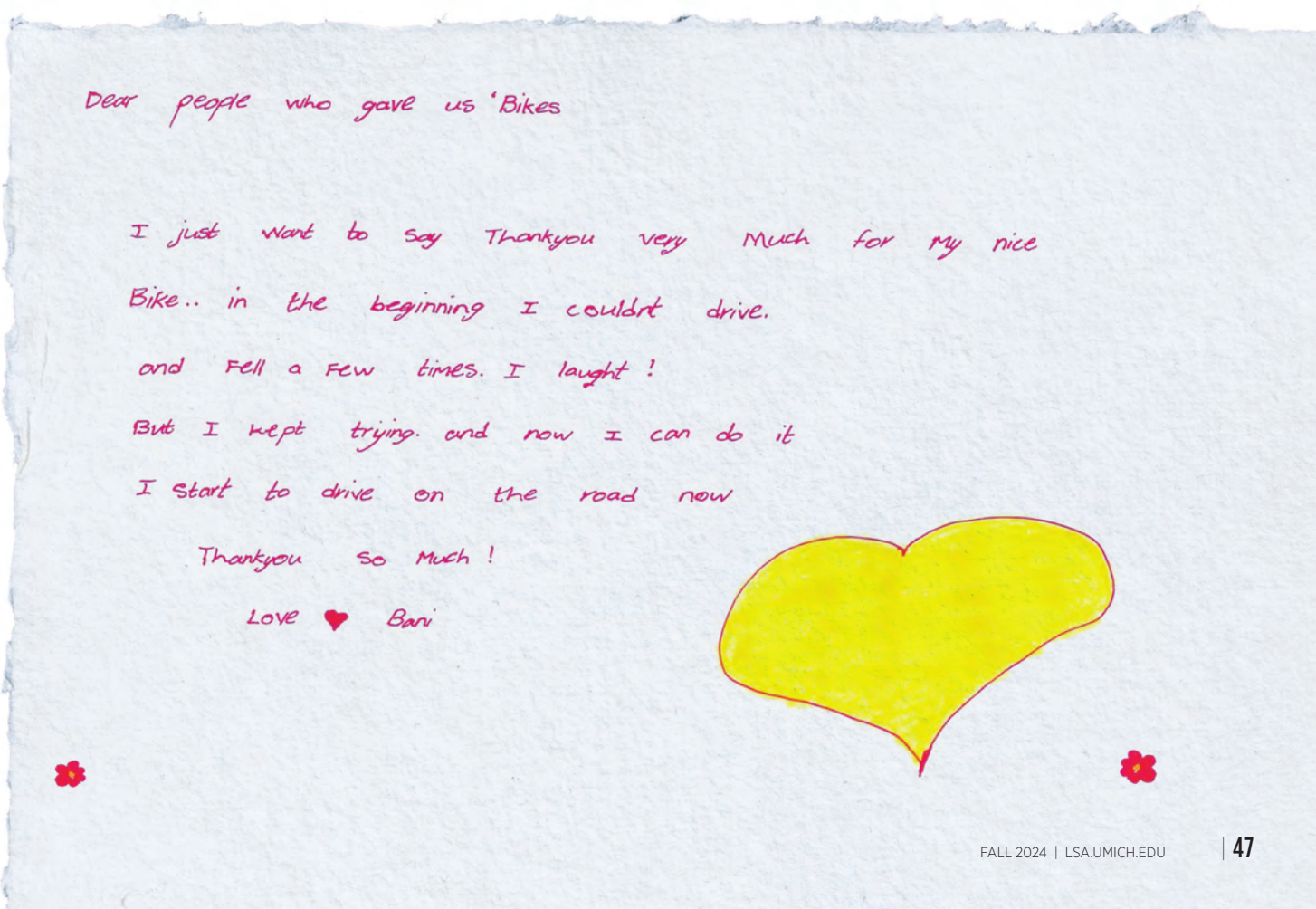
"You can't put a limit on what these kids can do when you give them some time. They're so resourceful, like turning bikes into something that can carry produce to a local market … possibilities are larger than just a transportation method to school."—ALUM SHAWNT BAZIKIAN

things he wants to do. He's in the eighth grade, so he's already beating us by four years from when we started.

**LSA: What is your advice for future young philanthropists?**

**SB:** It's simpler than you think to start something really important. We didn't have our 100-year plan from day one. It was like, "We'll try it out. If it works, it works. If it doesn't, it doesn't."

There's so much you learn from the first step that it becomes easier to take the next step. Dig down deep, figure out what your passion is, and think about how your expertise in your passion can be applied to something good. ■




Children at Khayelisha Care Project, based in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, sent sweet thank-you notes to One Bicycle to express their gratitude for their new bicycles.

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RESEARCH BY JORDYN IMHOFF

# Can Anti-Aging Interventions Delay Dementia?

You've heard the pseudoscience about manipulating the aging process. Here's the science.

**WHY DO WE AGE,** why do some of us stay healthy longer than others, and what can we do about it? In an age rife with multi-step skincare regimens, cryotherapies, and intravenous vitamin therapies, these questions intrigue the general public and researchers alike.

Anti-aging remedies are often shrouded in dishonest gimmicks and sometimes even macabre treatments. But LSA Professor Ursula Jakob has a science-centric vision for the fight against aging that we all face. Her dream? To be able to extend the healthy years of human life by building biological resistance against the many diseases that we face as we get older.

## "WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOU MAKES YOU STRONGER"

The upbeat Kelly Clarkson song lyric and popular affirmation appears to have some truth to it, based on what Jakob has learned. Jakob, the Patricia S. Yaeger Collegiate Professor in the Department of Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology, studies aging in the short-lived roundworm *C. elegans*. The commonalities between roundworms and humans at the molecular level make the worms valuable tools for the discovery of anti-aging regimens relevant to human health. Instead of waiting years to see whether the anti-aging intervention works, researchers using this model organism can have answers within a few weeks.

Jakob and her team made the exciting discovery that some of the longer-lived organisms within the population naturally experienced an

Illustrations by Becky Sehenuk Waite

> "Our main impetus is to find interventions that promote healthy aging and increase lifespan. What more could we want?"
>
> —PROFESSOR URSULA JAKOB

oxidative stress event very early in life. Then, when the researchers exposed the entire population of worms to oxidative stress in early life, the animals lived a healthier and longer life.

These findings were particularly exciting, Jakob says, as other studies have indicated that interventions that slow the decline in aging physiology extend lifespan by delaying the onset of many chronic diseases. This includes cancer and potentially even neurodegenerative conditions such as Alzheimer's disease. Jakob's research supported this idea by showing that worms that produced more oxidative stress early in their development lived longer and were more resistant against the toxicity of proteins associated with Alzheimer's.

The idea that stress can actually make us healthier may seem counter-intuitive. However, triggering mild oxidative stress, such as during moderate exercise in the gym or on the tennis court, is different from experiencing persistent oxidative stress conditions that are associated with chronic inflammation and become worse as we age.

"Oxidative stress is a cellular and molecular process that stems from an overproduction of oxidants and free radicals in the body. It can damage us in higher doses but can trigger a long-term beneficial response when experienced at the right time and at the right amount," Jakob explains. This effect is referred to as hormesis.

The results are intriguing—yet how would this work at the molecular and cellular level? Jakob and her team have now shown that these oxidative stress events alter the epigenetic make-up of the cell. In other words, they lead to persistent changes in the types and levels of cellular macromolecules without causing permanent genetic changes or mutations.

Jakob's lab is currently focused on identifying the crucial players and processes that are responsible for these beneficial cellular long-term changes. "We are very enthusiastic about this research, and where it will lead us—who knows, maybe simply increasing the amount of olive oil in our diet will do the trick," says Jakob.

## LONG-LASTING RESILIENCE

Jakob's work, published together with her former postdoctoral fellow Daphne Bazopoulou and current research lab specialist Bryndon Oleson, builds on the foundational knowledge produced by U-M's robust anti-aging research community—particularly the work of Michigan Medicine researcher Richard A. Miller, professor of pathology and director of the Paul F. Glenn Center for Aging Research.

Miller and his team have found that newborn mice can live 15 percent longer if they receive less milk in the first three weeks of life. The same

Leisa Thompson/Michigan Photography


group also found that the drug rapamycin can extend lifespan by up to 26 percent in mice, and delay the development of cancer, kidney disease, and age-dependent changes in the heart, liver, and tendons.

With plans to test her ideas in mice, Jakob hopes her findings on transient stress, hormesis, and epigenetic state will eventually lead to the development of medications and behavioral changes that extend healthy lifespan in humans, and thus reduce the burden of age-related diseases. "An estimated one in 10 adults over the age of 65 in the U.S. has some form of dementia," Jakob says. "Finding such interventions could be a game-changer in the field of neurodegenerative diseases and potentially other age-associated diseases."

Jakob points out that the major risk factor for many other diseases—including cancer, diabetes, and heart disease—is age, and "the socioeconomic burden of these diseases on both the afflicted person and their loved ones is immense," Jakob says. She advocates that "instead of trying to target these diseases individually, we should be targeting the overall process of aging with the goal to produce long-lasting protection against all of these diseases at the same time.

"Our main impetus is to find interventions that promote healthy aging and increase lifespan. What more could we want?" ■

Prof. Ursula Jakob, pictured here with MCDB doctoral student Akash Rai, hopes her research eventually leads to the development of medications and behavioral changes that extend healthy lifespan in humans.

**STUDENTS** BY GINA BALIBRERA

# A Legendary Court

An LSA student imagines the future of Black nobility with uncompromising creative expression.

**WHEN YOU HAVE** a grand artistic vision, it helps if you can surround yourself with the right people: a talented photographer, diverse and radiant models deserving of knighthood, skilled costume and set designers, and—why not?—a sword-collector.

The vision they brought to life was that of LSA undergraduate student Daniel Williams, the creative director of "Black Knight." It stemmed from a particularly inspired seminar paper, and

Anthony Kabiity

comprises a highly curated fashion photography project, a written series of personal profiles and interviews, and an art book.

Williams had been dreaming about a collaboration like this for years, but the "Black Knight" project finally took shape during a conversation in Professor Scott Ellsworth's Zora Neale Hurston seminar in the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies, about the term "paladin." Williams was moved by the cultural idea of the paladin as a legendary knight, a character who is chivalrous, noble, and also ordinary.

He realized that he knew a lot of paladins in the Black community of Metro Detroit, where he grew up. They were mothers, artists, students who made others feel safe and included and who lived on their own terms. He thought of a DJ continuing the history of Detroit techno music and of the creators of a local Dolls Night who brought queer and trans people together to dance in a welcoming space. A photographer friend, Anthony Kabiity, suggested a ballerina who describes performance as "a quest." Williams thought of the courage of friends who live authentically despite homophobia, anti-Blackness, and transphobia.

And he wanted to knight these folks, to celebrate their stories, simply for the brave beauty of their existence.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE FUTURE

Williams and Kabiity brought together 12 Black models and community members—12 for the number of knights who comprise a king's court. Many are of queer, femme, and trans identities, and they include DJs, fashion influencers, visual artists, mothers, and local activists, as well as four U-M students.

Williams interviewed each of the 12 and wrote moving profiles of each. Williams—a five-time Vogue model himself—also worked with Kabiity and students from Detroit's College for Creative Studies (CCS) to design sets and costumes, and photograph each subject in striking, saturated color.

Dressed in black, white, and metallic costumes, some of them holding swords, the 12 knights appear historical but also wildly futuristic. Paintings at the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) provided references for some of the actions, stances, and poses that Williams created for the models, and for the elaborate costumes.

He was helped by two CCS design students who crafted replicas of costumes found in historical art and reimagined by Williams, made to fit the models. A friend of Kabiity provided the swords for the project from their personal collection.

Williams wasn't thinking entirely about the past. He describes himself as a science fiction nerd, as inspired by the historical art of medieval knights in chainmail as by the black vinyl outfits

Opposite page: Inspired by Zora Neale Hurston and his own community, LSA student Daniel Willams creative-directed the "Black Knight" project in a spirit of collaborative celebration.

Top: Ayanna Bell, a 2024 graduate of the Stamps School at U-M, poses with a sword. Photographed by Anthony Kabiity, Williams's co-creator of the "Black Knight" project.

Sacred Overstreet-Amos/Moon Reflections Photography

one of the models wears to DJ sets. He was thinking about our present moment, and honoring the aesthetics of science fiction and Detroit's deep roots in Afrofuturism. In the community portrait of "Black Knight," he says, "I was looking to the past but imagining a new future.

"One of the ways to imagine Afrofuturism is in the tangible goals, hobbies, gender expressions, parenting, and artistic creations of Black people."

## WITH LOVE

As a working Black model, Williams had insight into some of the persistent issues faced by Black models in the fashion industry. "Taking pictures of Black people well is a challenging thing for the fashion industry to get right," he says. Many photographers fail to capture the beauty of different Black skin tones, but Williams trusted Kabiity with the technical skills and vision required of the role.

Williams was committed to honoring the ingenuity and creativity of Black style, which he says is often misrepresented or appropriated by the fashion industry. "Black people lead fashion," he says, "but it takes listening and asking. So often as a model I felt like just another body."

Williams aimed to create a supportive, humanizing space that "allows us to exist without fear. We are so often commodified or demonized for expressing our true selves."

One of the Black Knights is Demi Baston, a fashion model and a junior in LSA who is studying communications and working at the Opportunity Hub. Her experience with Williams and Kabiity was unlike many of her other modeling experiences.

"I was honored to be a part of a project that tells Black stories," she says, noting how powerful she felt reframing old notions of nobility with Black people. "I love telling stories about the Black experience and community that break stereotypes and offer fresh perspectives."

As a creative director, Williams says, "I wanted to do things differently than the way they are usually done. I wanted the models to feel confident, inspired, and loved. I wanted to infuse this process with love."

Right: LSA student Demi Baston says she was "honored to be a part of a project that tells Black stories."

Below: Black Knight model Charlesann Roy began dancing ballet as an adult, and has created a strong community of Black femme dancers in Detroit.

Opposite page: Model Moe Black is dressed and posed by Williams for a "Black Knight" shoot.

Photography by Anthony Kabiity

"One of the ways to imagine Afrofuturism is in the tangible goals, hobbies, gender expressions, parenting, and artistic creations of Black people."

—LSA STUDENT DANIEL WILLIAMS

## *Dedicated to Viola Culberson*

The "Black Knight" project is dedicated to Williams's grandmother, Viola Culberson, who passed away last year. Williams says that the project exists because Culberson did. Born into sharecropping, Culberson worked tirelessly for most of her life to ensure her survival and the survival of her family.

"During so much of her life she had no choice, and then when her kids were old enough, she went to school at 40 and got her degree. Her life made her hard in some ways," he says. While his grandmother was alive, she was known for this hardness, and for her sacrifices for others. Williams mentions a rarely glimpsed softer side to his grandmother, and how he wishes he could have celebrated her in the way he celebrates the femmes of "Black Knight."

"She would have loved to be celebrated in this way, celebrated outside of the work that she did. I really wanted her to exist outside of plight—and to be celebrated simply for her beauty, simply for her being." ■

# Fostering Fortitude

From homelessness in Michigan to working at the White House, an alum's professional success belies the true depth of her journey.

Mark Bugnaski Photography

**AT A GLANCE** Isabel Stasa's resume would catch the attention of any employer: head of community engagement and public affairs at a national nonprofit, Congressional intern, policy consultant. But, as Stasa shares, there is more than meets the eye.

Growing up in southern Michigan with seven of her siblings and a single parent, Stasa (A.B. '23) never had a secure living environment. The family, which lost two children over the course of Stasa's life, made temporary homes in tents, churches, and shelters. From a young age, Stasa took on the role of primary caretaker for her younger siblings, actively serving as a parent figure.

The transient nature of their lives, as well as their experiences of poverty and homelessness, led social services to intervene when Stasa was 13. While her older siblings had already aged out of care programs, Stasa and her two younger siblings were separated and placed in different foster homes. The destabilization of separation and abuse within the foster network was exacerbated by four and a half years of no contact with her family.

There were bright spots in Stasa's life. While moving from home to home, Stasa found defenders in her teachers and case workers. One high school counselor was so dedicated to Stasa's academic success that he burst into a room full of classmates crying to tell her that she had received an invitation to apply for the HAIL Scholarship at U-M. Her foster caseworker supported her through the tangle of financial aid forms, walking her through the convoluted FAFSA process and taking her on a tour of Ann Arbor.

While on campus, Stasa stopped to watch a student speaking outside of the Michigan Union. This was the moment she realized that she could see herself as a college student—a teenager who could feel excitement about their future without worrying about how it would happen. Miriam Connolly, then the director of the Blavin Scholars Program at U-M, gave her the final push. "Put your worries aside," Connolly told her. "You have to trust me."

Still, worries abounded. A scholarship would solve some of Stasa's problems, but not all. She was still living in her car, still fully entrenched in the survival mode that had stayed with her since she entered the foster care system. Her experience made her feel isolated, and she yearned for the opportunity to be with her siblings—particularly the one with whom she had been closest in her childhood.

At U-M, Stasa was equipped with the resilience, adaptability, and efficiency of a young trauma survivor.

Stasa is now pursuing her Master of Public Administration at Western Michigan University. She is photographed here at Celery Flats in Portage, Michigan, near Kalamazoo.

By the time they were able to reach each other again in January 2020, Stasa was about to start college as a first-generation student and they knew nothing of each other's lives. Her sibling saw her successes—a dorm, a car, an internationally renowned higher education—and felt resentment. "You abandoned me," they said. "I can't even call you my sister anymore. I never want to see you again." Devastated, Stasa told them that the door was always open to communicate. She understood that though she was grieving their estrangement, her sibling had never fully understood why they had been separated as children.

As is the case with many stories of trauma and insecurity, the path to resolution and healing was not linear. Shortly after Stasa started her first semester of college, COVID forced students out of their dorms, and she was unhoused again. She wrestled with pernicious feelings of heartbreak due to the estrangement of her sibling. "When you lose someone who's still alive," she says, "you forget who they are or what their laugh sounds like. You know that they're too far away to reach and they're making memories with someone else. That's a much more difficult kind of grief."

At U-M, Stasa was equipped with the resilience, adaptability, and efficiency of a young trauma survivor, and filled her time accordingly. She collaborated with the Program on Intergroup Relations and won multiple university honors for academic achievement by her senior year. She landed several prestigious internships, including one in the United States Senate and another in the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute. Though her professional career was ramping up and she was beginning to heal and discover her own power, she continued to feel isolated in her success. Outsiders, she wrote in a blog post, thought she had "made it," like she had "written the happy ending of a must-read novel." They never stopped to consider the "pain, grief, loss, and loneliness that comes with having 'made it,'" and only focused on her "triumphs in the face of adversity."

"Making it" continues to be an evolution in Stasa's life. Now a Master of Public Administration student at Western Michigan University, Stasa has ambitions to work in policy at the federal level after graduation. She has started trauma therapy for individuals with complex PTSD. And a few months ago, she looked down at her phone and was surprised to see a missed call from her estranged sibling, who had not been in contact for years. Panicking, she called them back, asking if something was wrong. "No," they said. "I'm just in a fight with my parents right now, and I needed someone to talk to."

Flooded with relief, Stasa thought: *My whole world. I was who they thought of when they were going through something hard. There's a chance for us to feel like siblings again.* It wasn't "making it." But it was a triumph. ■

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Editor, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, University of Michigan, 309 Maynard Street, Suite 200, Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734.615.6333 | lsamagazine@umich.edu



@umichLSA

# TEAM Effort

To illustrate the theme of this issue of *LSA Magazine*—**Glimmers of Hope**—the LSA Advancement design team imagined, X-Acto'ed, glued, stapled, illuminated, and layered an image of a 3D-printed rowboat cutting through the water. The resulting strata of handmade paper, cardstock, cheesecloth, paint, and blue yarn was photographed by the LSA Advancement video team and can be seen on the cover of the magazine. We don't often provide a behind-the-scenes look at our work, but this project was a labor of love—and the occasional papercut. We hope you enjoy it.

Original artwork by Aimee Andrion, DaJaniere Rice, Becky Sehenuk Waite, and Matt Vierling

Photography by Natalie Condon, Liz DeCamp, and Tatum Poirier



# Q&A with Dean Ceballo

Rosario (Rosie) Ceballo began a five-year term as dean of LSA in August, drawn back to U-M by "the incredible caliber of the people who are part of the LSA community."

**DEAN ROSARIO (ROSIE)** Ceballo began her professional career at U-M as a faculty member for more than two decades in the Department of Psychology and the Department of Women's and Gender Studies. Dean Ceballo—who earned her B.A. in psychology from Yale University and her M.A. and Ph.D. in clinical and developmental psychology from U-M—previously held several administrative roles, including chair of the Department of Women's and Gender Studies and associate dean for the social sciences in LSA. Before returning to the University of Michigan as dean of LSA, she served as dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at Georgetown University.

At U-M, Dean Ceballo has been recognized with the John Dewey Award for outstanding undergraduate instruction, the Harold R. Johnson Diversity Service Award, and the El Primero Award presented by La Casa students. She received the Women in Psychology Leadership Award from the American Psychological Association (APA) and was elected to the APA's Committee on Socioeconomic Status, serving as chair in the last year of her term.

Dean Ceballo is a nationally recognized, interdisciplinary, NIH-and NSF-funded scholar whose research examines the strengths and resilience of families living in poverty, with a focus on adolescents who experience community violence. In a second line of research, she investigates the experience of infertility and the impact of race- and class-based stereotypes about reproduction on women of color.

*LSA Magazine* asked her about her return to LSA and the value of a liberal arts education.

Levi Stroud

"So many successful people across every job sector and field attribute their professional success to the breadth of their liberal arts education."—DEAN ROSARIO CEBALLO

**LSA: Welcome back! We're glad you're here. What drew you back to LSA?**
**RC:** That's easy—Zingerman's, the Big House, waffles at Zola's, and the Arb. Seriously, LSA is a truly remarkable, inspirational community of scholars, students, and staff. The University of Michigan and LSA are my home. I was a student at U-M so I am an alum of this great university. I then served on the faculty of LSA for 26 years. The teachers who taught me, the mentors who guided me, the colleagues whom I worked with as a faculty member, the students who I was privileged to teach, the graduate students who worked on my research team, the staff in my departments and in the college … I was drawn back by knowing the incredible caliber of the people who are part of the LSA community.

**LSA: What are your top priorities, especially in your first year as dean?**
**RC:** My most immediate priority is to listen. I want to meet and talk with as many students, faculty, and staff as I can and learn about what is on people's minds. Although I know many things about the LSA community because I was here for a long time, I also know that many things can change in three years, and I look forward to learning about where the LSA community is today.

My priorities will be guided by the LSA mission and our values, which means that I will be a strong advocate for the value and transformational power of a liberal arts education, for the importance of diversity and inclusive excellence, and for prioritizing a culture of purpose and well-being in which all students can thrive and feel a sense of belonging.

LSA is a rigorous, intellectual powerhouse and I am committed to supporting our faculty to do what they do best: pushing boundaries to advance science and knowledge in their research and teaching our students, the next generation of world leaders and citizens.

**LSA: What is something you wish more people knew about LSA?**
**RC:** I wish more people knew about all of the ways in which LSA offers our students the opportunity to belong to smaller communities by assisting professors in their research labs, participating in the Michigan in Washington program, joining any one of our many student programs like optiMize and Women in Leadership, or belonging to one of the 10 residential learning communities on campus.

**LSA: The university has just kicked off its Look to Michigan fundraising campaign. How can a campaign like this benefit our students, faculty, and staff?**
**RC:** Philanthropy plays a crucial role in allowing LSA to do everything that we do as a college. Without the generosity of our alums and donors, we would be greatly limited in our ability to support the well-being of students, to launch programs that foster student success, to meet students' financial needs, to provide important experiential opportunities for students, and to advance the innovative, breakthrough research conducted by our world-renowned faculty.

**LSA: What role can alums play in affecting LSA's future?**
**RC:** LSA alums are a large and powerful constituency who can be found in every corner of the world. I hope our alums find ways to stay engaged with LSA, and I know that their engagement will look different at different points in their lives. Some alums will help interview prospective students, some will mentor current students on campus through undergraduate programs, others will provide contributions that help fund important initiatives. Our alums are an important part of our community, and LSA will always be their home. I hope they come back and visit us often.

"Our students make me feel hopeful. I think that's why I became a professor—because you never stop learning from your students and being inspired by their energy and passion to change the world."
—DEAN ROSARIO CEBALLO

**LSA: These days a lot of people question the value of the liberal arts. What would you say to them?**
**RC:** I have so much to say on this topic because I'm a fierce advocate and believer in the value of a liberal arts education. I know that there's been a rising focus on acquiring marketable skills for well-paying jobs. Of course, the ability to earn a living is important. Still, the data simply do not support the idea that you cannot acquire a good paying job or have a successful career with a liberal arts degree. On the contrary—so many successful people across every job sector and field attribute their professional success to the breadth of their liberal arts education.

I believe a liberal arts education teaches students not just to think critically, but also to dialogue across our differences respectfully, to remain open to new perspectives, to embrace intellectual exploration, to tolerate uncertainty, and to foster concern for the greater good, for service to others, and for social justice. These are such crucial skills. Also and importantly, a liberal arts education teaches students the essential value of embracing interdisciplinary approaches to tackle large, complex problems.

**LSA: How has U-M changed since you were a student here?**
**RC:** One of the best changes has been the expansion of the LSA building! LSA students now have a central building on campus with lots of beautiful space for studying, holding meetings, working with fellow students, and taking a break from a busy day.

**LSA: How have *you* changed since you first came to Michigan?**
**RC:** I grew up in New York City, the daughter of poor immigrants from the Dominican Republic. My parents knew nothing about the educational system in this country. When I went to college, I had to explain to them that even after four years of college in the U.S. I would still not be a doctor or a lawyer when I graduated.

After college, I worked in D.C. for two years at a public interest lobbying group before deciding to become a psychologist. I had never been in the Midwest when I arrived in Ann Arbor for my graduate school interview in clinical psychology. The size and stature of the psychology department and its faculty simply blew me away! I was thrilled to be admitted to U-M and thought that I would return to New York as soon as I finished my dissertation.

As a first-gen student, college and graduate school meant managing a mix of hard work, financial aid, work study jobs, and a heavy dose of imposter syndrome. I never imagined that I would be invited to join the faculty at the University of Michigan and certainly never imagined that I would have the honor of one day serving as the dean of LSA. Like all of us over time, I've changed a great deal since I first arrived on this campus as a young prospective student. One thing that hasn't changed is my love of reading, writing, learning, and being part of this vibrant intellectual community of scholars and students.

**LSA: What is one of your favorite places on campus?**
**RC:** I have so many favorite places on this campus. Yesterday, I watched a toddler race towards the Cube, determined to push it and make it move. A supportive parent followed behind and provided a little help to make it go, and I smiled thinking that I was watching a future Wolverine in action.

**LSA: The theme of this issue of *LSA Magazine* is "glimmers of hope." What makes you feel hopeful?**
**RC:** What a wonderful theme! Our students make me feel hopeful. I think that's why I became a professor—because you never stop learning from your students and being inspired by their energy and passion to change the world. ■

Tatum Poirier

## POLLEN COUNT

With butterfly nets and tally counters in hand, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Professors Regina Baucom and Elizabeth Tibbetts, left to right, are on the hunt for pollinators at U-M's Matthaei Botanical Gardens. Their search yields several wasps, which live in special houses set up for them at Campus Farms, so researchers can study how best to conserve them. Up to 40 wasps reside in each box—a luxury condo for these precious pollinators. Read more about their research examining the effects of herbicide on plants and how it impacts our food, farmers, and consumers (p. 24).

Leisa Thompson/Michigan Photography

**University of Michigan**
**College of Literature, Science, and the Arts**
309 Maynard Street, Suite 200
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

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