



**BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES**



# **SOCIAL SCIENCES INTERNSHIPS IN SOCIAL JUSTICE & SUSTAINABILITY**



**Final Presentations**

Friday, April 16, 2021

3 to 5 p.m.





# PRESENTATIONS

**Helen Bekele (CAS'21)**

Criminal Justice Reform – Changes to the Carceral State in  
Light of the Pandemic and Black Lives Matter Protests

**Rownyn Curry (CAS'21)**

Religious Toleration in China and Korea, Past and  
Present. The Case of Christianity.

**Lauren Knasin (CAS'21)**

The Ancestral Alutiiq Foods Project

**Cristina Rivera Morrison (Pardee'22)**

**Ariana Thorpe (Pardee'22)**

Race and Radioactivity: Uranium Mining in Namibia, Niger, and New Mexico

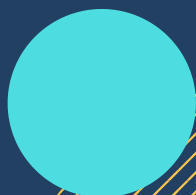
**Kathleen Novak (CAS'21)**

**Emily Parkington (CAS'21)**

The Role of Nature in Facilitating Resilience and Well-Being in Women of Color

**Madison Tyler (CAS'21)**

Stories of the State: State Actors, Emergent Narratives and Inequality in Three Cities



# ABSTRACTS



**Helen Bekele (CAS'21)**

## **Criminal Justice Reform — Changes to the Carceral State in Light of the Pandemic and Black Lives Matter Protests**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused different cities in the United States to adapt to changes in institutions, such as the criminal justice system, and our project hopes to address what happens to the judicial system during a crisis. We've analyzed how Massachusetts, New York, D.C., and Los Angeles respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the decisions made by institutional actors during the pandemic directly affects prisoners' conditions, studying the changes in the criminal justice system brings awareness to the efforts of metropolitan cities to either protect or further harm prisoners. Our data includes statements from institutional actors in New York, Massachusetts, D.C., and Los Angeles about decarceration during the pandemic and recent Black Lives Matter protests. To gather our data, we browsed social media, websites, news articles, and legal documents for actors' responses to the pandemic.

Some of our research's key findings are that institutional actors in each metropolitan city follow the theme of resisting decarceration because of the perception that prisoners are a threat to society. Regarding responses about the Black Lives Matter protests, actors have similar reactions and state their condemnation of violence against black people. While there tends to be support among Massachusetts actors for the release of prisoners during the pandemic, because of the opposing views about decarceration, minimal effort has been made to ensure prisoners' protection. Similarly, Massachusetts' inability to change policing practices or acknowledge Black Lives Matter activists' demands, including defunding the police, causes discrimination against black people to be ignored.

**Rownyn Curry (CAS'21)**



## Religious Toleration in China and Korea, Past and Present. The Case of Christianity.

During the Joseon dynasty (1392-1911), Christianity was brought to the peninsula by Korean envoys who learned about Christianity from both Westerners in China and Chinese Christians. Through a comparative perspective, this project aims to examine and visualize how and why Christianity spread to Korea during the Joseon dynasty from the Qing dynasty (1644–1910) and how Christianity persisted in both states despite anti-heterodox government policies, violent persecution, and the ideological conflicts between Christianity and Confucianism.

This has been accomplished with the analysis and synthesis of primary and secondary source documents; recording of key figures (with special attention to the literati and yangban classes), their locations, and their relationships; and examining the role of objects (specifically Christian texts and ancestral tablets) as actors. Importantly, the project examines the role of Confucian doctrine in Christian persecution during the Joseon and Qing dynasties and suggests a key factor in the persistence of Christian influence on Korean and Chinese ritual culture is the localization of its practices in relation to Confucianism. The collection of a series of useful Korean sources on translation, romanization, and source material for future researchers as well as expanding the China Historical Christian Database (CHCD) to include the Korean peninsula are part of the current work. This will be useful for future researchers to visualize Chinese and Korean Christianity through a historical perspective.



## The Ancestral Alutiiq Foods Project

The Ancestral Alutiiq Foods Project is a collaboration between the BU Zooarchaeology Lab and the Alutiiq Museum in Kodiak, Alaska that seeks to understand, revitalize, and protect Alaska Native foodways. Alutiiq (or Sugpiaq) people are Alaska Native people who live along the Gulf of Alaska coast, and their identity is closely related to traditional foodways. Though still thriving today, the Alutiiq people have experienced immense cultural suppression throughout history, and one of the ways they are revitalizing their culture is through the use of traditional foods. This project uses archaeological midden samples from the Kodiak archipelago of Alaska to chronicle what food was eaten by ancestors and how that food was harvested. Middens represent food waste left behind by Alutiiq ancestors over thousands of years and contain the bones of commonly harvested foods like marine mammals, fish, and birds, as well as the remains of plants and shellfish.

This project specifically looks at the shellfish remains recovered from an archaeological site on Chirikof Island that dates to 500 years ago, when people lived in coastal villages, traveled widely by kayak, and relied primarily on the sea for subsistence. Shellfish are thought to have been a critical resource and many of the local shellfish species continue to be harvested today. Commonly identified shellfish species include bivalves such as butter clams (*Saxidomus gigantea*) and mussels (Mytilidae), and gastropods including limpets (Acmaeidae) and barnacles (Balanidae). While not as common, sea urchins (*Strongylocentrotus purpuratus*), an Alutiiq delicacy, have also been identified. Though more definitive identifications need to be performed, this research helps support the idea that a diversity of shellfish have been a common food source of Alutiiq people for at least 500 years.

**Cristina Rivera Morrison (Pardee'22)**  
**Ariana Thorpe (Pardee'22)**



## **Race and Radioactivity: Uranium Mining in Namibia, Niger, and New Mexico**

Uranium mining is an integral part of nuclear energy and weapons development, but it's rarely studied in international relations and political science scholarship. This scholarship is most attentive to top-down policies relevant to nuclear proliferation and deterrence at the cost of ground-up analyses of the human and environmental costs of nuclear energy and weapons. Through this project on uranium mining in Namibia, Niger, and New Mexico, we adopted a ground-up approach in which we examine the dispossession of land and labor and the connectedness of that disenfranchisement across time and space. Based on qualitative textual and spatial data from maps, oral testimonies, primary and secondary sources as well as quantitative data from bureaucratic institutions and NGO reports, we developed three in-depth connected case studies of mining sites to study the global nature of disenfranchisement of land and labor and the processes of that dispossession over time.

We employed inductive reasoning to develop generalizable observations associated with systemic disenfranchisement. We find evidence that the invisible character of radioactivity, preexisting dispossession of Indigenous and Black labor, and state and/or corporate control of land perpetuate the acute power hierarchies that make radioactivity a racialized experience. Whether it's the South African apartheid state's support for Rio Tinto's mining in Rössing, or the Tuaregs' nomadic lifestyle rendering their radioactive exposure as irrelevant, or the Pueblo communities' experience of radiation illnesses from uranium mining in New Mexico, we find Indigenous and Black populations are more disenfranchised by uranium mining than other groups.

**Kathleen Novak (CAS'21)**  
**Emily Parkington (CAS'21)**



## The Role of Nature in Facilitating Resilience and Well-Being in Women of Color

This presentation highlights the results of our year-long Social Justice and Sustainability Internship at Boston University. Throughout this work, we employed Community-Based Participatory Research (Leavy, 2017) to design a mixed methods study for Black women in the greater Boston Area. The goal of this work is to explore the role of nature in facilitating resilience and well-being. Specifically, this research addresses Black women's perception of their psychological well-being as it extends to their sense of connection to nature, spirituality, and community.

This study also addresses the barriers Black women may face in accessing community-based resources. In preparation, we have interviewed several Black women leaders in the greater Boston area (e.g. city councilors, religious leaders, and educators) to obtain their perspectives on several issues including the needs Black women must meet while seeking psychological refuge. Several culturally relevant themes emerged from our conversations including conceptualizations of community, sense of social connection/disconnection during COVID pandemic, limited access to nature for those living in "sacrifice zones," and the impact of economic and social inequality on mental health. In this presentation, we will discuss how these themes have shaped and affected our research design, as well as the importance of designing studies that address racial and environmental injustices. Importantly, it's our long-term goal to partner with nature-based, community-oriented programs throughout Boston to support Black women in their need for psychological refuge, especially those living under conditions of extreme adversity.

**Madison Tyler (CAS'21)**



## Stories of the State: State Actors, Emergent Narratives, and Inequality in Three Cities

How individuals see the state informs their political and civic engagement throughout their lives. This project examined how youths' experiences with the state and state actors shape the narratives they construct about the legitimacy of the state and state power. Additionally, this project sought to understand how these narratives align with patterns of engagement or avoidance with institutions later in youths' lives.

To achieve these goals, this project utilized in-depth longitudinal interview data from young people in three high-poverty US cities collected by the Center for Promise at Boston University between 2011 and 2014. The interviews were coded for narrative components such as time order and for interactions with institutions and individuals using NVivo. Code-specific memos examining the themes and distinctions within youths' references to programs, church, the criminal legal institution, and violence were written. Through developing these code-specific memos, it was found that while youths identified community and school-based programs as sources of support, they also offered critiques of the programs.

Additionally, it was found that violence in their neighborhoods prompted youths to both want to leave their neighborhoods, as well as to make changes within them through the creation of new programs. Finally, it was found that youths had mixed feelings regarding the ability of the police to protect them from harm. These findings may be helpful for the development of future school and community-based programs that are informed by the needs and experiences of young people in cities.