

SPRING ISSUE

JUNE 2025

ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

As another academic year comes to an end, we are excited to share with you a sampling of the accomplishments of our faculty, students and alumni this past spring. We are also pleased to have a new feature - articles from three of our graduate students who share with us their recent field work experiences from this past semester. Enjoy!

-Dr. Cheryl Knott (Interim Chair, AY24-25)



Arts & Sciences



FACULTY NEWS



THOMAS BARFIELD

was elected a Fellow of the Explorers Club. For over 100 years, this renowned club has supported and promoted exploration and field study across multiple disciplines.



WADE CAMPBELL

is one of two faculty recipients of the 3rd annual CAS Inclusion, Diversity, Access and Leadership (IDEAL) Award. The CAS IDEAL award honors CAS community members annually for leadership that advances the College's strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities and best exemplifies CAS's aspiration to create a welcoming and inclusive community for all.

LUKE GLOWACKI

Published a new article, "[Robust evidence that mobile hunter-gatherers participated in war: Comment on Fry \(2025\).](#)" and blog post, "the controversial origins of war and peace," in [Human Behavior and Evolution Society](#).



CAROLYN HODGES-SIMEON

was awarded the Frank and Lynee Wisenski Award for Teaching Excellence from the College of Arts & Sciences for her outstanding contributions to undergraduate Education.

JOANNA DAVIDSON

was awarded a Public Humanities Fellowship at BU's Center on Media Innovation for Social Impact (MISI) and BUCH for 2025-2026. This semester, she spent part of her sabbatical in rural Guinea-Bissau, where she has been engaged in ethnographic fieldwork since 2001. She is currently writing a book of essays based on this long-term research. Her new co-edited volume, [Pathos and Power: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Widowhood in Africa, Past and Present](#), hits the shelves this July.



FACULTY NEWS

JOHN MARSTON

has recently published two articles: "Climate, political economy, and agriculture in 1st and 2nd millennium CE Anatolia" (Antiquity, 2025) and "Wood fuel use in the Predynastic Upper Egypt Nile Valley." (Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports, 2025), which includes AN doctoral student Peter Kovacik as a co-author.



Anthropology students: Jessica Buckley (BA/MA in Archaeology and BA in Sociocultural Anthropology), Cat Metcalf (BA in Archaeology and Biological Anthropology) and PhD students Trevor Lamb and Isabel Beach, who all gave presentations. She and colleagues also have a new publication on the marine historical ecology of the Pacific cod fishery, "Integrating marine historical ecology into management of Alaska's Pacific cod fishery for climate readiness" (ICES Journal of Marine Science, 2025).

ROBERT WELLER

Delivered a talk, "Broken Rhythms and the Silences of Gods, Mothers and Sons," at the British Academy, London. In April, he delivered another talk, "Divine Intimacy, Madness, and the Frustration of the City: Changing Transhuman Kinship in China," at the Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan.



CATHERINE WEST

presented a paper at the Alaska Anthropological Association meetings in Anchorage, Alaska in April, entitled "The Foggy Isle: Life on Chirikof Island." She traveled to Alaska with four of our



MERRY (CORKY) WHITE

Retired? Yes, but loving teaching food anthropology, getting students into what anthropology can offer understandings of, and sometimes appetites for, interesting food. Pictured are students at the Annotated Banquet, to which students bring dishes relevant to an aspect of her course, ending the course with full stomachs!

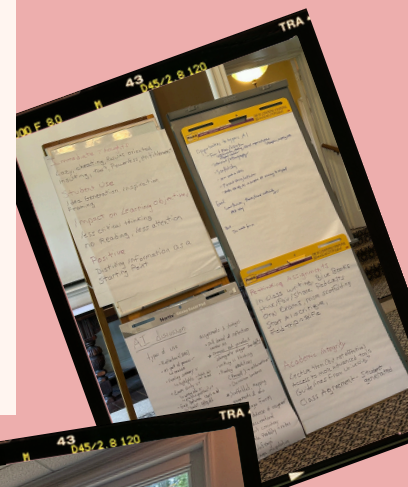
CHUN-YI SUM

received a Book Manuscript Incubator Grant from BU's Center for Innovation in Social Science to fund a book workshop for a manuscript tentatively titled "Dreamers and Volunteers: University Students and Their Experiments to Modernize Chinese Socialism."



FACULTY RETREAT

The faculty gathered at the end of the semester for a day long retreat at Rolling Ridge in North Andover. This beautiful location on the shores of Lake Cochichewick gave inspiration to discussions about a range of topics relevant to our teaching and research mission. This was interspersed with breaks to walk along the water, and in the woods, and even to play some yard games. Faculty were able to exchange ideas and brainstorm about some of the current challenges and opportunities in higher education.



GRADUATE NEWS

LAURA BRUBAKER-WITTMAN

presented some of her dissertation results at the AABA meeting in Baltimore, presenting on "Energetic and social factors of habituation behaviors in wild Bornean orangutans (*Pongo pygmaeus wurmbii*) in Gunung Palung National Park, Indonesia."

JIMMY ERKENS

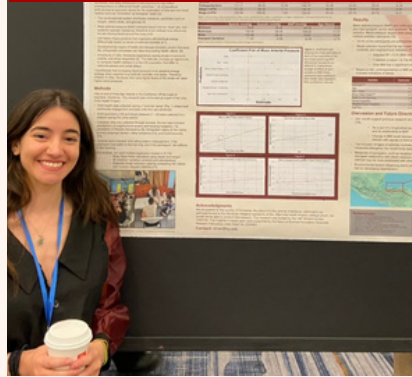
gave a poster at the AABA meeting on "Evidence of differential selection on CCR5 in African green monkeys (*Chlorocebus sabaeus*), a natural host of SIV, following transplantation to the Caribbean"



JESSICA MARTIN

Launched the first biological anthropology outreach program through a new partnership with the BU Learning Resource Network (LERNet), which connects Boston Public Schools with BU resources to support K-12 STEM education. The one-day program brought 9th-grade biology students from TechBoston Academy to BU for an immersive introduction to biological anthropology. The program featured interactive activities led by Martin along with PhD students **Nicole Merullo, Brooke Rothamer,** and **Mel Zarate.**

NICOLE MERULLO



gave two conference presentations in March, Both in Baltimore, MD. The first, "Life history syndromes predict blood pressure across primates," took place at the 92nd annual meeting of the American Association

of Biological Anthropologists. The second, "What explains variation in childhood blood pressure? An exploration of life history variables affecting blood pressure in Utila, Honduras" was for the 50th annual Human Biology Association Meeting.

SAMANTHA NADEL's

The first article of dissertation, *A Reconstructed Chaîne Opératoire for Mesoamerican Cochineal: Implications for the Archaeological Analysis of Insect Dye Production*, is now [available for download through Open Access.](#)

BROOKE ROTHAMER

presented a poster at the Human Biology Association and the Society for Research in Child Development's conferences. She gave a talk at the meeting of the Human Behavior and Evolution Society (HBES) entitled, "Age and sex patterns in the size and kin-makeup of children's playmate networks."

OFIR TENENBAUM

received The Robert Lemelson Foundation fellowship for summer research, awarded by the Society for Psychological Anthropology (SPA) which will be used to fund preliminary fieldwork in Berlin, Germany.

GRADUATE NEWS CONT.

SAMANTHA VEE

presented a poster entitled “Social network analysis in wild Bornean orangutans (*Pongo pygmaeus wurmbii*): a comparison of network centrality between age-sex classes” at the American Association of Biological Anthropologists conference in Baltimore, Maryland.

GABRIEL VICENCIO

was awarded the prestigious Alfonso Caso Award for his MA thesis from the Mexican National Autonomous University (UNAM).

AIZAZ YOUNAS

participated in a panel at the Boston Museum of Science’s Mugar Omni Theater to discuss the importance of art and music during times of conflict and war, particularly in the southasian context.



MELISSA ZARATE

won the “Outstanding presentation award for exemplary student research” for her presentation “A new reference mitochondrial genome for the yellow-tailed woolly monkey and implications for altitude adaptation” at the American Association of Biological Anthropology meeting in Baltimore, Maryland. Read a blog post about the award and Melissa’s research [here](#).



Congratulations to our students who passed their comprehensive exams: Samantha Vee, Jessica Martin, Brooke Rothamer, & Bhavya Vadavalli.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW ALUMNI



Dr. LAURA BRUBAKER-WITTMAN

has successfully defended her dissertation, *A Mixed Methods Study of the Habituation Process in Wild Bornean Orangutans*.



Dr. HANNAH GRACE HOWARD

has successfully defended her dissertation, *Liturgical Care: Theological and Political Belonging in Athenian Greek Orthodox Charity*.



Dr. SALWA TAREEN

has successfully defended her dissertation, *Of the City and the Soul: Urban Disaster and an Islamic Ethics of Care in Karachi*.



Dr. XUYI ZHAO

has successfully defended her dissertation, *Living in the Future City: Time, Politics and Urban Imaginations in Chengdu's New City Center*.

POST DOC NEWS



MAUD MOUGINOT

published an article on bonobos in an outreach scientific magazine named “Pour la Science” in France for their March 2025 edition (pictured). She also conducted an interview with Radio Canada for Les années Lumières in french about fieldwork with bonobos.

AMY SCOTT

current post-doc and BU alum, presented a poster at the AABA meeting in Baltimore on “Historic urine samples as a source of host genomic DNA from wild primates” that showed how she has been able to extract DNA from decades old orangutan urine samples.



UNDERGRADUATE NEWS

REESE HOTTEN-SOMMERS

won the American Association of Anthropological Genomics Best Undergraduate Presentation award at the American Association of Biological Anthropologists annual meeting in Baltimore.

OLIVIA MILLS

has been selected by the BU Center for the Humanities Executive Committee as one of the recipients of endowed funds given by Alice M. Brennan. With this award and a \$4,000 monetary prize, BUCH recognizes excellence in the humanistic tradition, which holds an important place in the history and future of Boston University.



RUOFEI SHANG

was the recipient of the 2025 IDEAL undergraduate award. The CAS IDEAL award honors CAS community members annually for leadership that advances the College's strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities and best exemplifies CAS's aspiration to create a welcoming and inclusive community for all. She was also nominated by Prof. Takeo Rivera (pictured) and the WGS administrator G, for the WGS Community Impact Award and received an honorable mention for the award alongside other recipients.



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATING SENIORS

We had 31 seniors participate in our department Convocation Ceremony on May 17th, 2025. Congratulations to Naomi Alexander, Jessica Buckley, Yashi Cai, Olivia Cameron, Kathryn Christianson, Abby Dandrow, Meghan Fitzpatrick, Alexandria Gilbert, Birdie Gile, Emilia Giovannini-Yarnell, Arin Gokdemir, Hailee Helfrick, Anisha Khanna, Olwen Merritt, Caroline Metcalf, Jaclyn Meyer, George Lawrence Gentry Miller, Maia Minto, Alexis Noonan, Natalie Paine, Olivia Pepe, Faith Savery, Ruofei Shang, Olivia (Via) Sznewajs, Sophia Pinto Thomas, Catherine Traylen, Katrina Tronco, Cassidy Wall, Amanda Wu, Yuanruo Sherry Xie, and Jonathan Zhang!

RUOFEI SHANG won the Department Award for Research Excellence in Sociocultural Anthropology.

AMANDA WU won the Department Award for Research Excellence in Anthropology, Health, & Medicine.

BIRDIE GILE won the Department Award for Scholarly Excellence.

KATRINA TRONCO won the CAS College Prize in Anthropology.

FIVE STUDENTS GRADUATED WITH HONORS IN ANTHROPOLOGY

ALEXIS NOONAN graduated with honors in anthropology after successfully defending her thesis, *Does testosterone impact pathogen disgust? Evidence from three diverse samples*.

RUOFEI SHANG graduated with honors in anthropology after successfully defending her thesis, *Solidarity as Becoming: Asian American Youth, Racialization, and Their Struggle for Palestine*.

KATRINA TRONCO graduated with honors in anthropology after successfully defending her thesis, *For My Family: Transnational Kinship, Care, and the Filipino Nursing Diaspora*.

AMANDA WU graduated with honors in anthropology after successfully defending her thesis, *Quantifying Microplastic Contamination in Wild Bornean and Captive Orangutan Populations*.

JONATHAN ZHANG graduated with honors in anthropology after successfully defending his thesis, *PTSD & Post-Combat Purification Rituals: An Analysis & Potential Therapeutic Benefits*.

ALUMNI NEWS



BU Anthropology had an impressive presence at the American Association of Biological Anthropologists annual meeting in Baltimore, MD, in March. Many of the faculty, and current and former students, presented a range of talks and posters. We gathered together on the first night of the conference for our first Boston University AABA alumni dinner to renew friendships and make new connections.

MEHRDAD BABADI

currently a Post-Doctoral fellow at Brown University, has accepted a tenure track position as Assistant Professor at Colby College beginning July of 2026.

FEYZA BURAK-ADLI

presented “The Portrait of an Alla Franca Shaykh: Sufism, Modernity, and Class in Turkey” at Northwestern University in March hosted by the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association (OTSA).

LIZ CROCKER

was promoted to Director of AGzu Thriving Earth Exchange, a community science initiative of AGU that has been connecting communities with scientists to do community-led science. [Here](#) is a short video about one of their 360+ projects.

FAYE HARWELL

PhD alum and current Visiting Assistant Professor at BU presented a talk at the AABA meeting on “Sex Differences in Estimated Lean Body Mass of Captive and Wild Orangutans” which highlights some of her findings on orangutan muscle mass, part of her dissertation work.

ALUMNI NEWS CONT.

HANNAH GRACE HOWARD

has accepted a 3 year postdoctoral position at the Center for Theologically Engaged Anthropology at the University of Georgia. Her title will be "Postdoctoral Research and Teaching Associate."

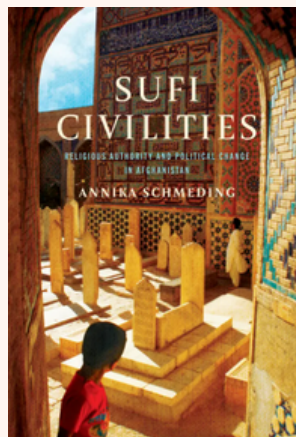
CAITLIN O'CONNELL

PhD alum and Deputy Director of the Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program presented a paper on "Variation in Orangutan Density Across Locally Managed Village Forests" highlighting her work that helps empower local people while protecting wild orangutans.

NATALIE ROBINSON

currently a PhD student in Anthropology at Rutgers's University, presented a poster at the AABA meeting in Baltimore on "Environmental Education Expeditions Increase Student Knowledge and Positive Attitudes Toward Orangutan Conservation in West Kalimantan, Indonesia".

ANNIKA ANEKO SCHMEDING



has won the Charles H. Norchi Afghanistan Prize for her book "Sufi Civilities: Religious Authority and Political Change in Afghanistan" (2024 Stanford University Press).

JACOB TISCHER

started as the "Global Taiwan Chair" at Charles University Prague (Institute of Chinese Studies) in January 2025.

XUYI ZHAO

has accepted a position at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She will be a tenure-track assistant professor at the Center for China Studies starting from August 1, 2025.

THE LOUD, ROWDY RAINFOREST AND ITS MANY SURPRISES

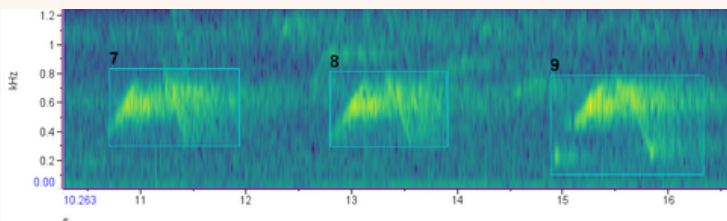
By Frank Short, PhD Student, Boston University

Read the full story in the [Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program newsletter](#).

Despite common misconceptions, the rainforest is in some ways more like a city than a tranquil escape. The rainforest is crowded, loud, and busy. Only the rain provides respite from the commotion, with all animals reluctantly falling quiet in deference to its natural power. No matter how long you have spent in the field, the rainforest during a strong storm never ceases to amaze with its beauty. Rushing to rescue our barely dried clothes, we may curse its inconvenience, but the calm cool wonder it bestows always ultimately assuages any grievances.

Ironically, that very same tranquility has become the bane of my existence as a bioacoustics researcher. That cacophony, that sound of thousands of individual animals bellowing out to announce their existence, is exactly what I am interested in. Nothing could prepare me, though, for the auditory feast I experienced first walking into the Bornean rainforest of Gunung Palung National Park. The overwhelming diversity of animal vocalizations heard here can barely be put into words. By far, however, the roar of a flanged male Bornean orangutan is the king of the rainforest when it comes to impressiveness. I will forever remember the first time I had the privilege to experience it in person.

While I first came to the Cabang Panti field site 3 years ago in 2022, there were no males present the entire duration of my stay. This time, though, I arrived right at the tail end of the mast, when thousands of trees fruit in synchrony. This abundance of food resources means that everyone comes to the party, so I knew there was a much better chance of me catching some flanged males. As it turns out, I was right. The first flanged male I was able to follow was Balon, named for his notably massive throat sac.



A spectrogram of an orangutan long call visualized in Raven Lite 2. Frequency is on the y-axis and time is on the x-axis.

I was immediately impressed by his size compared to other orangutans I had followed. Flanged males are often twice the size of adult females, and the way that they traverse the trees of the rainforest is far heftier and, to be honest, threatening. However, my objective of hearing a long call was more of a test of patience than what I had expected. Balon would begin the characteristic low grumbles I had heard so many times from long call recordings, but he never progressed to the trademark “roar” that marks a true long call. Every time he would begin to grumble, I stood there holding up my recorder on a makeshift stick in quiet anticipation. Ultimately, it was another male known as “Mr. Perfect” for his immaculate features that would bestow me with my first true long call experience. I will never forget how he vigorously threw several branches to the ground before letting out a fearsome classic long call with all of its typical parts: a build up of low grumbles, a crescendo of loud roars, and then a slow cooldown of deep booming “sighs”. I remember standing there with probably the stupidest wide-eyed smile I’ve ever displayed in my life.



Frank Short with a placed bioacoustic recorder.

The research for my dissertation entails the placement of passive acoustic recorders throughout the study area to assess the presence of orangutans and other primates. These devices can record continuously for hundreds of hours, and with the power of artificial intelligence models can parse through thousands of hours of recordings across multiple sites to gather detections of these species from their vocalizations.

This has meant traversing through all of the eight habitat types found in these extremely diverse forests, whether it be through flooded peat swamps or up ridiculously steep mountains. Often times, this also causes me to have to bushwack through less-

THE LOUD, ROWDY RAINFOREST AND ITS MANY SURPRISES

By Frank Short, PhD Student, Boston University

frequented trails, all while dealing with the superbly annoying and spiky rattan that hooks into your clothes and skin, or massive tree falls that greatly hinder or completely halt your path. However, this kind of exploration also comes with some perks. It was on one of these especially frustrating excursions that I came across one of the most elusive and shy primates in the Bornean rainforest: the tarsier.



A Horsfield's tarsier clinging to a tree in the peat swamps of Cabang Panti.

Tarsiers are notoriously rare to encounter. Many people who have worked in Gunung Palung National Park for over 20 years have never seen one. This is because many tarsier species, such as the Horsfield's tarsier that inhabits the park, are primarily nocturnal and solitary. To further complicate things, many of their vocalizations are inaudible to human ears and exist in the ultrasonic range above 20 kHz. So, you can imagine my surprise when after dodging rattan and tripping over tree roots in the peat swamp I found myself face to face with one of these creatures. Even more surprising was that it was in broad daylight, in the middle of the afternoon. I clearly must have awoken it from a deep sleep with my rude and sloppy stumbling. It blinked while looking at me with its massive eyes (the largest of any mammal relative to body size) as it clung to a tree probably only about 10 meters away from me. I was lucky to have my phone on me and the ability to take a picture.

On the opposite end of the spectrum from the wet swamps, in the lowland areas of the park, are the higher elevation habitats that lead up to the summit of the mountain at 1116 m elevation (3661 ft). There are two main trails that ascend to different parts of the mountain – UB and GP. Because I wanted to increase my sample size as much as possible for my

research, I knew I would have to climb up both of them. The southern trail of UB has a bit of a reputation, and I soon found it was very warranted. At many parts, you're not so much hiking up a mountain as you are rock scrambling. There is not actually any clearing at which point you can get an unobstructed and beautiful view of the rainforest below. Still, UB offered me my first experience of the magical montane habitat. Here, you are greeted by sparser vegetation and trees, unique mosses and fungi, and mysterious intermittent clouds of mist.

I knew I had a better mountain climbing experience awaiting me later on in GP. As the more cheerful and popular brother of UB, GP possess two particularly crowd-pleasing characteristics: a more gradual ascent and the promise of a great view. Yes, the ascent was more gradual, but it was still a journey with a more than 3000 ft climb in elevation. Soon, though, I had a first quick glimpse of the sky, and shortly after we came across a view that surpassed all expectations. From this vantage point, you can see from the great swaths of the rainforest that lie below, to twisting rivers, and even at some points to the sea. This was clearly the reward for the horrors of UB. GP even had more gifts to bestow still. Only a couple of dozen meters ahead of this gorgeous view was a crystal-clear flowing mountain stream. It's still the best water I've ever tasted.



View of Gunung Palung National Park from a clearing on the GP trail.

The next step in my journey is to visit six of the Hutan Desa (Village Forests) overseen by the Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program / Yayasan Palung. These village forests are part of the Indonesian social forestry initiative, which grants communities the legal land title to the forests they have traditionally used. Like my previous experiences, I know that this part of my adventure will be challenging in new and unforeseen ways. I just know that something amazing is waiting right around the corner.

SPEAKING IN CODE:

YOUTH POETRY AND THE POLITICS OF POSSIBILITY IN URBAN UGANDA

By Sarah Lewinger, PhD Student, Boston University

I came to Kampala, Uganda for the first time in 2018 to study the effects of abstinence-only education and how the transnational evangelical lobby has influenced Ugandan politics. During my preliminary fieldwork in 2023, I examined youth involvement in charismatic Pentecostal Christianity, spending eight weeks attending services, fellowships, and bible studies at four different churches. During this time, I stumbled upon Ekyoto Night – ekyoto means bonfire in Luganda, around which elders would traditionally tell stories – after seeing a Facebook post advertising the event. I listened as young poets grappled with major existential questions. One poet shared a poem that essentially asked, how can you believe in a God who has cursed you with an identity that makes you feel unlovable and unacceptable?

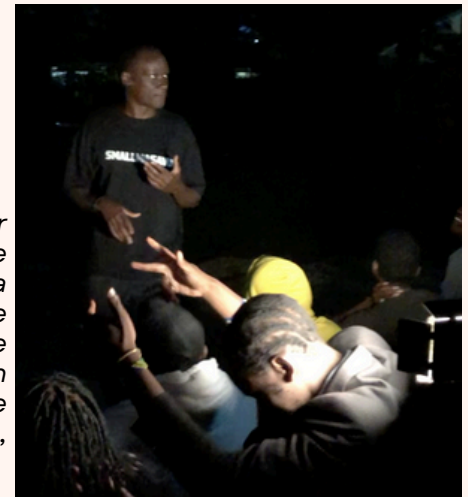


Ekyoto Night at the Alliance-Francaise in June 2023, organized by Tontoma (from the Luganda ebitontome, recitations). Tontoma is one of many poetry collectives in Kampala, loosely organized groups of mostly young people.

This was June 2023, right after the 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act had passed, restricting freedom of speech on LGBT topics with up to 20 years' imprisonment. And yet, here were poets engaging with this topic and having other politically sensitive discussions.

For context, Uganda has had the same president since 1986, who is deeply unpopular among young people – the majority of the country – and operates an increasingly authoritarian state where public criticism of the government can result in arrest or disappearance. Poetry spaces are not necessarily safe spaces, but controversial speech is accepted, as long as it is coded enough to maintain plausible deniability. Poets use allusions and metaphors, often biblical, to share their sorrow and anger. As I began attending more poetry events, I was struck by how they resembled churches. Poets often adopt similar affectations as charismatic preachers, and audiences mirror the unbridled enthusiasm of churchgoers.

Lule, a popular Luganda language poet, performing a poem about police brutality at Makerere University's spoken word club, Kelele (Kiswahili for noise), in October 2024.



When I came back to Kampala the following summer to begin my long-term fieldwork, my project had shifted to focus more on poetry and performance and how these spaces incubate alternative political imaginations. For the past ten months, I've attended dozens of poetry shows, from free open mic nights at bars with half-interested drunken patrons, to expensively ticketed, elaborately choreographed shows with costumes and smoke machines.

I've also been closely involved with two poetry workshops, and conducted in-depth interviews with many poets about what draws them to poetry and what keeps them motivated despite the risks and limited financial rewards. What I'm discovering is how poetry functions as quasi-religious practice – facilitating spaces for healing and transcendence, while remaining distinctly amoral – challenging conventional boundaries between sacred and secular.

With massive youth unemployment and limited access to formal economic opportunities, poetry functions as critical infrastructure, with poets creating alternative systems for social reproduction, emotional support, and political imagination.

For many educated but underemployed urban youth, poetry provides access to elite spaces they could not otherwise enter: performing at high-end restaurants where they can't afford a single dish, maintaining an insider/outsider position that reflects broader contradictions in their lives.

Poetry communities operate according to complex networks of reciprocal exchange, where mentorship, opportunities, and intimate relationships become intertwined in ways that reflect broader social logics of patronage and obligation. Young Ugandans are creating alternative forms of value that operate within capitalism, without being reducible to it – revealing how people generate meaning, community, and political possibility under authoritarian rule and economic dysfunction.



Lus performing his epic protest poem in my backyard in April 2025. The most politically sensitive shows are often staged in personal residences. Behind him is an image of writer Kakwenza Rukirabashaija after his 2022 torture.

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READING BONES IN AN ANCIENT CITY: MY TIME AT THE ALBRIGHT

By Alexander Dorr, PhD Student, Boston University

I arrived at the Albright as rain drizzled over the cobbled sidewalks of East Jerusalem. As I meandered from the trolley station with my suitcases, I noted the rows of shops lining Salah al-Din Street. Many sat empty, doors firmly shut. I would learn over my three months in Jerusalem that this would become an increasingly common sight.

After recovering from jetlag, I immediately set to work on what I had come to the Albright to do. I was led down a twisting stone staircase to a locked metal door. Inside, I was met with the smell of dirt and dust, as light from the small windows bled into the damp basement. On the shelves were twelve boxes, each filled to the brim with bag upon bag of animal bones. Over the next three months I would spend my mornings going through those bags, going specimen by specimen to identify them to the greatest taxonomic specificity. Counting and measuring became everyday tasks, the quiet filled in with the noise of the neighboring streets.



One of many boxes of bones.

These bones come from the Hellenistic occupation of a site called Tel Shimron. This period was a dynamic time in the region. From a historical reading, one would assume it is a time of war, of borders shifting between the competing Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires. While wars were undoubtedly waged (there are in fact seven to thirteen Syrian Wars in the Levant depending on who you ask), this era was also one of the first that we can define as truly cosmopolitan. Art and literacy flourished, along

with the rise and founding of new great cities as part of Hellenistic imperial state-making. During this time, Shimron had been a small farmstead located at the base of a former monumental Bronze Age city in the Jezreel Valley. By analyzing these animal remains I aimed to gain clarity on two things: 1) What were people at the site eating?; and 2) How were animals managed at this small rural farmstead?

As a small farmstead, Shimron would have been a provisioning site, meaning that these farmers raised animals both for their own day-to-day needs, but also for those who resided in cities on the coast, such as Akko-Ptolemais. Understanding the herd profile, the species and the ages and sexes, of what animals were being consumed at the site will serve to provide greater clarity as I seek to reconstruct agricultural economy in Galilee during this period.



A punctured sheep/goat foot bone.

The Albright served as a place where I could settle into myself as a scholar. This is one of the only times in my life where I was surrounded by scholars who were all working in the same region. While our periods of interests, methods, and questions may all have been different, the Albright allowed me to connect and learn from fellow junior scholars and seek the insights of established senior scholars.

Early on in my stay at the institute, I was already hitting the ground running. Prior to coming to the Albright I had finished work on an animal assemblage I'd inherited from the site of Kedesh. Kedesh was a rural administrative center in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. It serves as an excellent case for trying to establish how an imperial administrative center would have been provisioned, but also serves as a key piece in attempts to understand how and if provisioning and agricultural economy changed with shifting administrations.

READING BONES IN AN ANCIENT CITY: MY TIME AT THE ALBRIGHT

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I presented my conclusions on the assemblage in a public lecture at the Albright in February. Contrary to initial hypotheses and other existing scholarship, I argued that the fauna from Kedesh illustrated that animal economy and provisioning at Kedesh remained stable for the centuries that the building was occupied.



The ruins of the past and present in East Jerusalem

Despite this nurturing scholarly environment, life on Salah al-Din and East Jerusalem in general was fundamentally different from my previous stays in the city. Within only a week of arriving, Israeli police raided the famous Educational Bookshop and arrested Mahmoud and Murad Muna on accusations that they were stocking “inciteful” materials in their store. The Educational Bookshop is located right

down the street from the Albright, no more than a two minute walk. This event set the tone for the remainder of my time in East Jerusalem. There were, of course, still moments of joy and happiness. Ramadan meant that nights on the street known as “the heart of East Jerusalem” were a cacophony of honking, music, and shouting. I remember failing to fall asleep one night, sitting out on the balcony and watching the bright string lights decorate shops, casting various colors down onto passersby as they streamed up and down the street in the crisp night air.

The best way to describe this Jerusalem was as subdued. There was a heavy weight over the city. The Old City sat nearly abandoned, and many of the famous buildings and sites that tourists and pilgrims would flood sat quiet and waiting. Storefronts were shuttered, and whenever I spoke to local owners of restaurants and shops our conversations were always bittersweet. They were excited to have business, but knew that I was a peculiarity, a blip. Many in Jerusalem have built their lives around the money brought in from tourism. With the ongoing war and heightened tensions, those livelihoods are increasingly under threat.

While my time in Jerusalem was ultimately a productive one, it was also incredibly sombering. The Holy City still maintains its magic, filled with so much history, faith,

and hope. But the realities of what is occurring in Gaza and the West Bank are unavoidable. I hope to return, sooner rather than later, to the Albright and Jerusalem, though hopefully under the auspices of peace.

Archaeology is firmly in the past but it is also inextricable from the modern-day, from the places where we do our fieldwork. While I sat in the Albright basement, scouring over some 15,000 bone fragments, I



A feast of Makloubeh!

weighed my time in Jerusalem, the value of doing this work in this place at this precise moment. It was an Albright staff member who left me feeling more assured. My morning chats over breakfast with Nauval Herbawi, served as a reprieve but also an important opportunity to hear about her life in her town of Beit Hanina. Interspersed in these morning chats about our lives and the news were questions and conversations about the past. There was a joy there talking with her and other fellows at the table – getting to enjoy the pursuit of knowledge and the past in a city so steeped in it. My hope is that conversations like those we had over coffee can continue to happen, for archaeology and history to be a bridge of communication in a city and region so steeped in it.



Presenting on findings from Kedesh.

Now that I’ve returned from the Albright, I am settling into the final stages of my dissertation. The final hurdle remains interpreting and writing up all of the data I’ve accumulated over the past five years. As I sit at my desk, pouring over excel sheets and typing away, I know I will be thinking back to the months hunched over in a dim basement, listening to the sounds of life and the beating pulse of Salah al-Din Street.

Thank you!

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