

THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST

Boston University Arts & Sciences
Department of History Newsletter

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WINTER

BOSTON
UNIVERSITY

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FROM THE CHAIR'S DESK

JAMES JOHNSON, PROFESSOR AND CHAIR



Dear Friends of the Department:

The New Year always brings fresh promise, but with an arctic chill assaulting campus at the start of this semester, the feeling is frigid. We know the danger zones when it's cold: that ferocious wind tunnel near the Photonics Center, the fatal march to classes from West Campus, the "short" walk to the library postponed until Spring. We're lucky the T stops so close to our building. In all seasons—including the frigid—226 remains an active center of teaching, learning, writing, and reading. This edition of *The Presence of the Past*

introduces new colleagues and new classes, surveys some of the books and scholarly papers faculty, graduate students, and undergrads have delivered, and highlights two new books by History graduates. It ends with an important reminder: April 9th is Giving Day, a chance for friends of the department to help keep its work in the classroom and beyond strong.

Our *New Faculty Spotlight* introduces Chad Williams, who joins the faculty as the Tomorrow Foundation Chair of American Intellectual History and Professor of American and Black Diaspora Studies. You'll read about his award-winning books and learn of his wider interests. Two other colleagues who have recently joined the department offer appealing new courses to our students, with Madeline Williams' *Technological America* and Brooke Durham's *Love and Lust in the French Empire*. We also welcome Derek Briand and Giovanna Karlovic, our new two professional advisors in the History major.

The department was well represented at this year's American Historical Association meeting in New York City, with papers and commentary on topics ranging from opium in the colonial Philippines (Jilene Chua) and legal codes in the Manchurian countryside (Rui Hua), to Black educators in Virginia (Meredith Barber), histories of travel (Brooke Blower), histories of climate (Andrew Robichaud), rural colonialism (Sarah Phillips), and criminal imposture (James Johnson).

Our undergraduate program continues to thrive beyond the classroom. In early February, we'll initiate eighteen high-achieving History majors into Phi Alpha Theta, the national History honor society. (BU's chapter, founded in 1952, is among the oldest chapters in the U.S.) The History Book Club remains active: last semester's selection was Illyon Woo's *Master Slave, Husband Wife*. We'll begin this semester with Hilary Mantel's masterpiece of historical fiction, *Wolf Hall*.

In October, graduate workers voted to ratify a collective bargaining agreement to bring an end to a seven-month strike. The agreement will significantly increase graduate stipends, expand health care benefits and parental leave, and introduce subsidies for childcare. It will make the graduate packages offer competitive with those of peer institutions and strengthen our program overall. Much credit for this resolution goes to the persistence and determination of the graduate students of this department. Credit goes as well to the strong support of their cause among our faculty, who met the strike's challenges with understanding and professionalism.

Thanks for reading about the work of our department in *The Presence of the Past*. If you have news to include in a future issue, please let us know. May the New Year bring many good things to you.

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NEW FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Chad Williams

Chad Williams is the Tomorrow Foundation Chair of American Intellectual History and Professor of African American and Black Diaspora Studies at Boston University. He specializes in African American and modern United States History and African American and African diasporic intellectual history.



Chad is the author of *The Wounded World: W. E. B. Du Bois and the First World*, which was named a best book of 2023 by *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker* and *the Christian Science Monitor*, longlisted for the PEN/Jacqueline Bograd Weld Award for Biography and a Museum of African American History Stone Book Award finalist.

He is also the author of the award-winning book *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I Era*, recipient of the 2011 Liberty Legacy Foundation Award from the Organization of American Historians and 2011 Distinguished Book Award from the Society for Military History.

He is currently working on two book projects, an exploration of the meaning and significance of Black Studies, and a history of the intellectual and political development of pan-Africanism and West African independence movements through the experiences of Nnamdi Azikiwe and Kwame Nkrumah.

WELCOME, NEW ADVISORS!

Derek Briand

Derek Briand joined the History and Political Science team from the Department of Computer Science. He earned his BA in History and his MA in American Studies. He has been at BU for just about a year and is incredibly excited to be a part of this great department!



Giovanna Karlovic

Giovanna Karlovic is joining the History and Political Science team from the Department of Computer Science. They earned their BS in English Education in 2015 and their EdM in Language and Literacy in 2021, both from BU. Outside of work, Giovanna enjoys traveling with friends, going to concerts, and taking on too many craft projects at once.



Arianne Chernock will be presenting new research at the Rothermere American Institute at Oxford in February. Her talk, *Wake Up Women: American Women, Activism, and Engagement at Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation*, will look beyond the alleged "queen craziness" of American supporters and consider some of the serious personal, ethical and political calculations that drove female support for the mid-century monarchy. A link to more information can be found [here](#).

Kathryn LaMontagne, GRS '16, '20 was honored with the CGS Ismail Sensel award for Outstanding Professional Achievement this Fall. In early December, she gave an invited talk to a SRO crowd of over 150 students and faculty at Providence College on the role of convert women in the English Catholic church.

James Johnson recently published his new book, *Paris Concealed: Masks in the City of Light*, with University of Chicago Press. A link to more information about the publication can be found [here](#).

John Thornton published two articles on his current research: "How Jesus Became Black" (*Journal of Early Modern History*) and "Mwene Muji: A Medieval Empire in Central Africa?" (*Journal of African History*). He also published a short entry in the

Routledge Handbook of Medieval Strategy on the strategy of the Kingdom of Kongo. Thornton also presented a paper virtually at a conference in Florence, Italy on the Africa portions of a book by Alessandro Geraldini, who was best known as being the first bishop in the New World in 1522. Thornton writes: "He had some fantastic stories about Africa, most of them completely false. But here and there he had some authentic material to add."

Bruce Schulman published a new article in *Time Magazine*, "The Surprising Legacy of Watergate in Today's Politics." He reconsiders the meaning and impact of the events that drove Nixon from the White House and shook up American public life.

Nina Silber continues to work on a book about her family and the mid-twentieth century folk revival. This past August she published two articles related to that research. One was a piece for the *History News Network* on the left-wing summer camp her father attended in the 1930s where he first learned about Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger. The other was an article for *The Conversation* about the 1949 Peekskill "riots" - experienced by both of her parents - where attendees of a Paul Robeson concert were brutally assaulted. In December she published a piece for "Made By History" about her father's connection to the events portrayed in the new Bob Dylan movie ("A Complete Unknown").



BU History Department graduate students (L-R: **Rachel Monsey**, **Elizabeth Grumer**, **Courteney Smith** and **Margot Rashba**) attended the Northeast Conference on British Studies in Hartford, Connecticut.

Henry Tonks published many pieces this past semester, most recently a book review titled "The Whole Equation: Can 'Neoliberalism' Explain Everything?" Alongside this, he published four pieces in *Time*, *Public Seminar*, and *Phenomenal World*:

- "The Democratic Party Realignment That Empowered Trump"
- "Behind the Balancing Act of Kamala Harris's Industrial Policy"
- "How Moderate Republicans Went Extinct"
- "Back to the '90s"

Giovanna Rudis ('25, pictured below) recently traveled to Italy to conduct research for her honors thesis. Her thesis focuses on Leo X's papacy. Giovanna spent much of her time in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze, whose records of the Medici family are unsurpassed. She investigated Leo's collaboration with Raphael on several projects, including the painter's magnificent portrait of Leo X with the cardinals Giulio de' Medici and Luigi de' Rossi, the construction of Villa Madama, and the tapestry collections Acts of the Apostles and the Grotesques. By examining the interconnected roles of art, politics, and spiritual narrative, her thesis aims to reveal how Leo X's strategic, multi-media collaboration served not only as a testament to his rule but also as a transformative vision of papal authority.



Simone Moise ('27) was recently accepted to present a paper at the 49th National Council for Black Studies Conference, sponsored by the University of Cincinnati's Africana Studies Department. In March, she will travel to Ohio and discuss the gender dynamics prominent within the Black and mixed-race elite classes in Charleston, SC, and how the sexualization of women shaped their framework. Her research encompasses gender theory, arrival records, and primary and secondary sources documenting ownership and manumission.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Thomas Maroukis, GRS '74

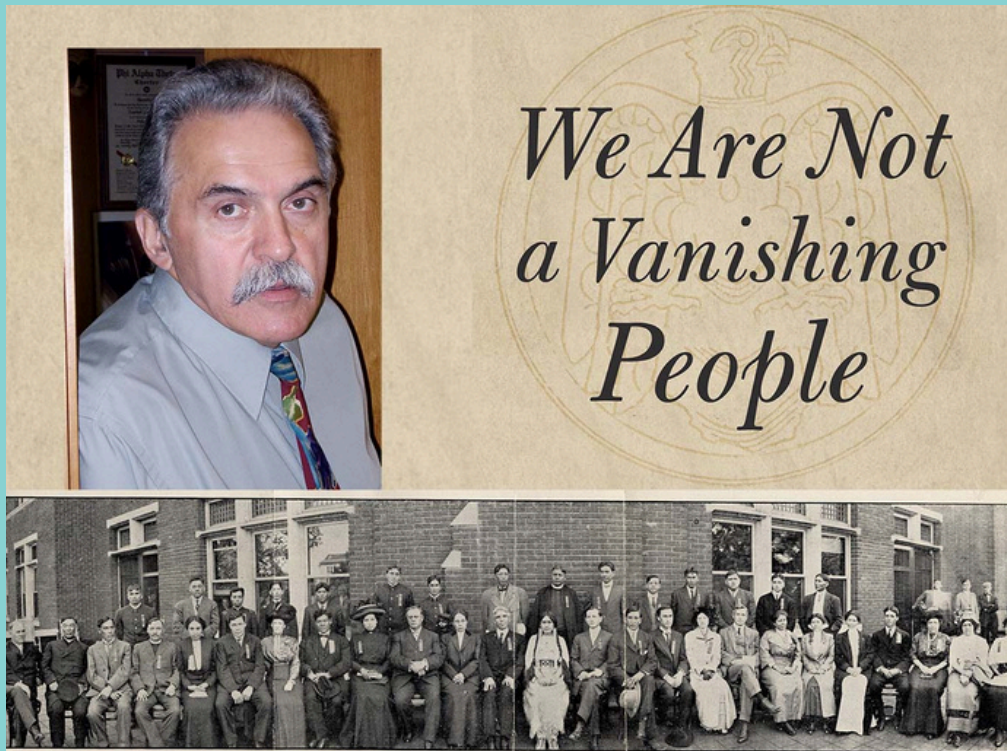
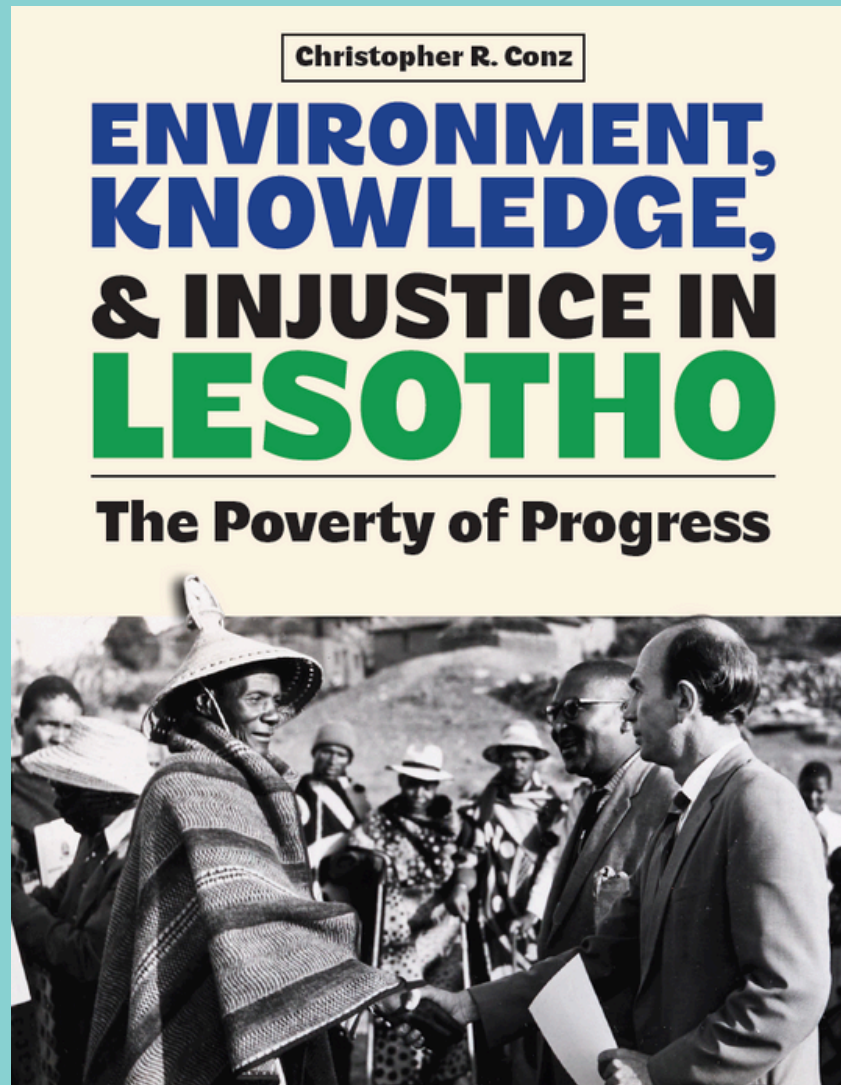


Image Credit: University of Arizona Press.

History Ph.D. alumnus **Thomas C. Maroukis** (GRS '74) recently published his new book, *We Are Not a Vanishing People: The Society of American Indians, 1911-1923* (University of Arizona Press). In 2023, he was inducted into Capital University's Professors Hall of Honor.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

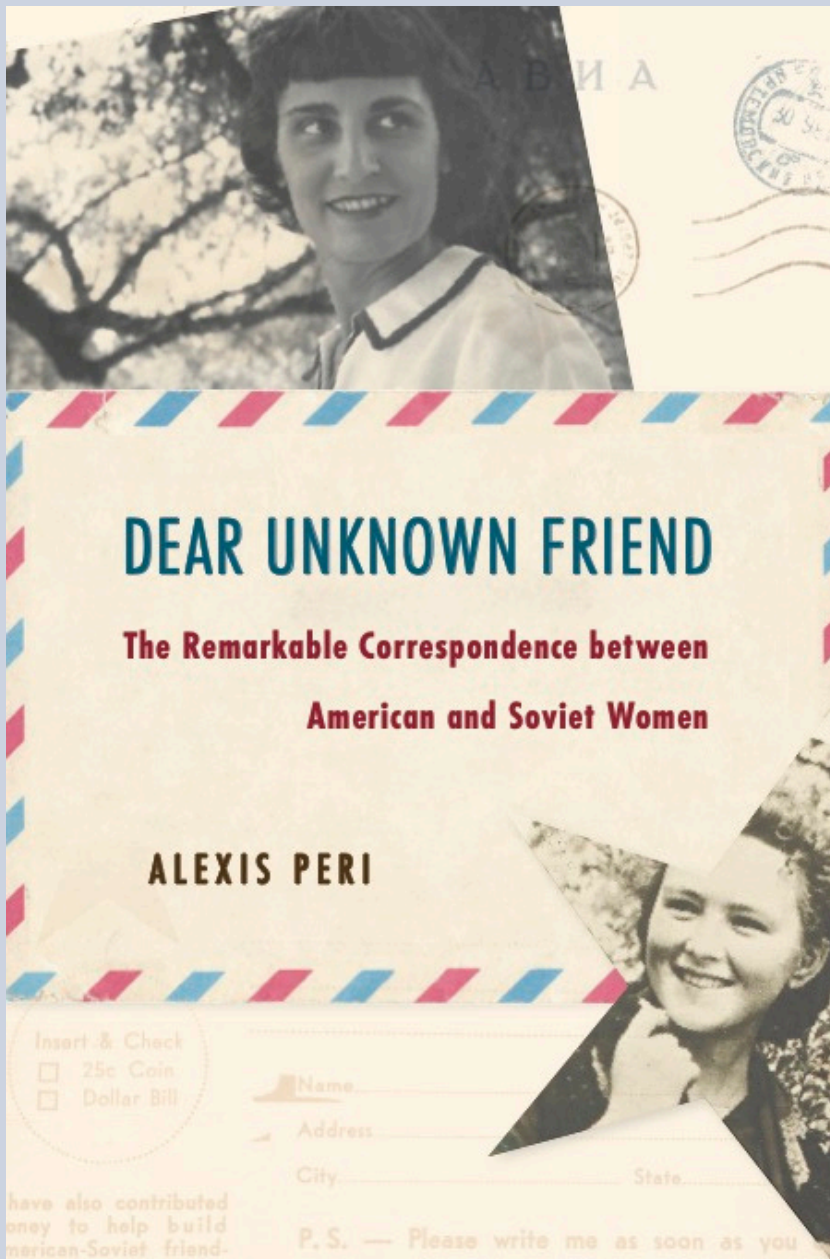
Chris Conz, GRS '17



History Ph.D. alumnus Chris Conz (GRS '17) published **“Environment, Knowledge, and Injustice in Lesotho: The Poverty of Progress”** (Boydell & Brewer/James Currey) in July 2024.

SAVE THE DATE: Book Launch for Professor Alexis Peri

Tuesday, February 11th, 2025
4:00-6:00pm
CDS 1750
665 Commonwealth Avenue



Please join Professor Alexis Peri of the Boston University Department of History in conversation with Professor Kate Brown from MIT. RSVP is available via [Eventbrite](#).

UPCOMING EVENT: **GIVING DAY 2025**

Wednesday, April 9th, 2025

Boston University Giving Day is a one-day online fundraising drive. Each year, BU Giving Day brings together Terriers from around the world; please consider donating to our beloved department!



**KEEP IN
TOUCH**

Email HISTORY@BU.EDU to share research, events, publications, or other milestones. Consider filling out a GRADUATE STUDENT, UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT, or ALUMNI profile form to get featured on our website or in the newsletter!