Professor’s New Book Explores African Women’s History

Do African men and women think about and enact their ethnicity in different ways? This question has intrigued GC history professor Jan Bender Shetler since she began doing oral history in East Africa and noticed striking differences in the ways her female and male interviewees recounted and made sense of the past.

Bender Shetler recently edited a collection of essays, Gendering Ethnicity in African Women’s Lives, which directly engages women’s history in Africa and explores how and why women’s movements have a unifying role in African political organization and peace movements. The book is published by University of Wisconsin Press and contains eleven chapters by North American and African historians, linguists, anthropologists, and political scientists.

Many of the contributors to the book are younger scholars whose research had not previously appeared in print. Bender Shetler

Grad Pursues Historic Preservation Career

BY SETH A. MILLER ’15

Jackson Beck’s twin passions for history and community development have come together in the field of historic preservation. Beck (’13) is currently enrolled in a historic preservation master’s degree program at the University of Georgia. The impulse behind historic preservation is not simply a desire to save structures for nostalgia’s sake, Beck explains, but “a recognition that historic buildings, sites and community heritage are valuable resources—and limited ones at that.”

Beck is focusing on policy and program development. “One of my favorite classes involves learning about historic building materials. … [Now] I can date buildings based on what kind of saw marks are visible on the wood, what kind of nails were used, what kind of construction techniques were employed, and what architectural style was followed. It’s essentially like being a building detective.”

In a class on preservation law he “learned about the legal tools available to preserve buildings, the process of setting up historic district ordinances, design guidelines and preservation tax credits.” For Beck, “learning these practical tools was encouraging
During May 2015 Beck participated in a hands-on preservation field school project on Jekyll Island, Georgia. He was part of a team that restored the cypress porch of an 1868 "folk Victorian" cottage in the town of Brunswick in cooperation with the Historic Brunswick Foundation.

In recent years preservation has developed into a serious professional field with a wide variety of public and private sector career options. “There are definitely opportunities history graduates to explore,” Beck says. Those interested in governmental jobs may find themselves working with the National Park Service or as a State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) doing work in physical restoration, site interpretation, or project management and development. In the private sector careers include consultation, contracting, and design with and for architectural firms, municipalities, and other institutions to assess and conserve historic resources. Nonprofits also preserve community heritage through advocacy, conservation easements, managing historic sites, and assisting municipalities.

There are also international career possibilities with organizations such as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) helping preserve sites on the World Heritage List or in developing field of intangible cultural heritage preservation (folklore, music, art, etc.).

Beck’s experience is extending beyond the classroom. He obtained an assistantship with Professor James Reap and was able to help with research on legal pathways to preserve intangible cultural heritage, specifically Quinoa plant culture in Andean region of South America. “The United Nations had declared the year 2013 as “The International Year of the Quinoa.” This was in part reaction to the increasing stress put on its cultivation. As such, protecting the indigenous peoples who grow it and their growing tradition was the subject of a meeting in January 2015 that Professor Reap was attending.”

A variety of disciplines feed into historic preservation programs. Beck comments, “Overall there is a good mix of hands-on work and theoretical studies. I haven’t had a hard time adjusting to the area of study. Most people come from history backgrounds,” although “most historic preservation programs admit people with a variety of academic backgrounds.” At the University of Georgia it’s also possible to combine historic preservation with law school in a dual-degree program.

Given his opportunities, the small class sizes, and his assistantship, Beck reports that “all in all I’m having a good time.” And, he adds, “Goshen’s History Department prepared me well for grad school.”

### Primary Sources and Original Research Propel Class of 2015 Senior Theses

A dozen students completed baccalaureate theses in History Senior Seminar this spring, projects which, in most cases, they had begun researching as Junior Seminar students a year earlier. Each project utilized primary sources and culminated in public presentations in April. This year’s students and thesis titles:

- **Thomas A. Applegate** (Columbus, Ohio), “Kennedy, Mennonites and Anti-Catholicism: Mennonite Opinions on Kennedy in the 1960 Presidential Race”
- **Madeline Krehbiel Baskfield** (Saint Peter, Minn.), “The Legal Evolution of Conscientious Objection in the United States and the Role of Historic Peace Churches, 1940-1975”
- **Grace E. Boehm** (Merriam, Kans.), “Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center of Goshen College: Changes and Continuities, 1964-2014”
- **Sara Garcia** (Goshen, Ind.), “Goshen Community’s Initiative and the Development of Goshen School’s ENL Program, 1974-2015”
- **Micah A. Helmuth** (Goshen, Ind.), “Proceeding Through the Gate: Beginnings of the Woodlawn Amish-Mennonite Church, 1948-1960s”
- **Jacob H. Martin** (Colorado Springs, Colo.), “Torchbearers and Boy Scouts: Mennonite Masculinity and Pacifism, 1941-1984”
- **Seth A. Miller** (Wellman, Ia.), “The Mennonite Home Mission, 1893-1956: A Narrative of Diversity within a Little Westside Church in Chicago”
- **Brad J. Sandlin** (Valley Center, Kans.), “Olive Mennonite Church Conflict: Bishop David A. Yoder’s Role in the Olive Mennonite Church Conflict of 1949”
- **Angeliky H. Santos** (Goshen, Ind.), “Bienvenido: A Mental Health Program Created by the Community, for the Community”
- **Lizbeth S. South** (Goshen, Ind.), “Dr. Florence Cooprider Friesen’s Role in the American Mennonite Mission in India, 1916-1941”
- **Elizabeth L. Wittrig** (Hopedale, Ill.), “Her Open Table: The Peace Witness of Marian Claassen Franz (1930-2006)”
- **April L. Zehr** (Tiskilwa, Ill.), “World War I Mennonite Conscientious Objectors in Camp Grant: The Emergence of a Pacifist Identity in the Face of Opposition”

The Class of 2015 also included two students with minors or interdisciplinary concentrations in history: **Jacob B. Greaser**, Goshen, Ind., and **Anastasia R. Smith**, Salem, Ore. Congratulations to the class of 2015!
Consider myself lucky to work with brilliant, empowered women. I also have a deep appreciation for my female supervisors and especially the survivors of domestic violence I have come to know. They come to our office. I admire their strength and resilience, and I believe that having an open mind. By and large, I love working with the people who come to our office. I admire their strength and resilience, especially the survivors of domestic violence I have come to know. I also have a deep appreciation for my female supervisors and consider myself lucky to work with brilliant, empowered women who are gracious enough to share their wisdom and expertise with me while offering trailblazing leadership in the field.

Much to my surprise, I have found learning to navigate immigration law to be extremely interesting. Working through legal puzzles and applying the law to real people and specific circumstances, is actually a lot of fun.

At the same time, while I have been glad to gain knowledge about the U.S. immigration system, it is frustrating to know that even when we accomplish something important for a client, I am still working within the constraints of a system that is deeply flawed. My coworkers have done a lot to show me that even though comprehensive immigration reform is the goal, we can continue to push the limits of the system through interpretation of the law, litigation, and advocacy. Maintaining hope for such reform and for improvement in individual situations, however, has been a major challenge, and the last two years have taught valuable lessons on secondhand trauma, self-care, and finding way to keep hope alive.

As I am sure anyone who with a liberal arts education will love to hear, at Goshen College I learned how to keep learning, and it has been an amazing gift to have the opportunity to do that while working with people from Michiana communities, individuals who want desperately to live with a sense of safety and belonging. More than anything, I hope that if I master one tangible skill in this work, it will be that I can extend the dignity, understanding, patience, and love that each person warrants as a holy creation of God.

**Professor, continued from pg. 1**

...found it especially gratifying to bring these new voices into the scholarly conversation.

Most studies of ethnicity in Africa rely on men's experiences and some scholars have even invoked the adage “women have no tribe” to mean that a woman loses her ethnic identity when she marries into her husband's community. The essays in *Gendering Ethnicity*, however, demonstrate that women do make choices about the forms of ethnicity they embrace, in some cases rejecting a specific ethnic identity in favor of an interethnic alliance. The analysis helps explain why African women may be more likely to champion interethnic political movements while men often promote an ethnicity based on martial masculinity.

Bender Shetler wrote the book's introduction and opening chapter, which draws on her extensive research in the Mara Region of Tanzania. In the coming months she will be completing a full-length book based on her own research.

The publication of *Gendering Ethnicity* was made possible, in part, by a generous gift from retired Goshen College history professor James Hertzler and his wife, Diane.
Scholarship Recipients

The 2015-2016 Willard and Verna Smith U.S. History Scholarship has been awarded to Lynelle M. Leinbach (Souderton, Pa.).

Do Won Park (Abbotsford, B.C.) is the recipient of the Oswin and David Gerber Scholarship in Mennonite Studies for 2015-2016.

The generosity of the Smith and Gerber families has been very helpful to many Goshen College students. The History Department welcomes donations to the Smith and Gerber scholarship endowments.