

History Department Newsletter

STUDENT EDITOR: **Jenae Longenecker '18** | FACULTY EDITOR: **Jan Bender Shetler**



Senior history majors **Malcolm Stovall** (*left*) and **Laura Miller** (*center*) take part in a student panel during the Minority Ministries Council Conference. *Photo by David Fast/MMN*

History Students engage Minority Ministry Council

BY **Joshua Stoltzfus '17**

The Minority Ministries Council (MMC) has convened once again from March 29 to April 1, many years after the dissolution of the Council in 1973. The reunion took the form of a conference: “Black, Brown, and Mennonite: Lessons from the Chicano, Puerto Rican, and Black Freedom Movements for the Mennonite Church.”

When former members of the council arrived, they took part in oral history interviews, which organizers of the conference and Goshen College history students recorded to be transcribed and held in the Mennonite Church USA Archives for future access.

Under the supervision of Philipp Gollner, assistant professor of history at Goshen College and *Mennonite Quarterly Review* book editor, five history students participated in prep sessions in oral history interviewing, listening to participants’ stories, and developing them into a finished product that will be archived and used by future academics. The workshop was led by Tobin Miller Shearer, Associate Professor of History and Director of African American Studies at the University of

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ISGA New Home for Online Encyclopedia

For the past five years the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism (ISGA) at Goshen College, led by professor of history John D. Roth, has promoted research on the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church. In addition to overseeing the “Bearing Witness Stories Project” (martyrstories.org), the ISGA also manages the online resources of the Global Anabaptist Wiki (anabaptistwiki.org), and is a key partner in the emerging data-base of Spanish theological resources called the “Bibliotheca Digital Anabaptista.” In February, the ISGA published *The Global Anabaptist Profile*, a collaboration with Mennonite World Conference, that marked the first survey of faith and practices of MWC churches around the world.

Now it is adding the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO), a highly-regarded online source for information on Anabaptist groups around the world, to its portfolio. Roth will serve in a new position as the project’s general editor.

The vision behind GAMEO emerged in the 1990s at the initiative of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, as an effort to transfer the content of the five-volume Mennonite Encyclopedia into a digital format that would be accessible to internet users

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Class of 2017 Engages Research, Internships

Four 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:

Christian Bechler, "To the Household of Faith: Evaluating Mennonite Central Committee's Relationship with Nicaraguan Mennonites from 1979-1990"

Laura Miller, "Challenging Bureaucratic Racism: The African American Mennonite Association's Anti-Oppression Work, 1975-1989"

Dona Park, "From Exotic Foreigners to Activist Challengers: The Changing Role of International Students in Goshen College's Vision of Global Education, 1980-2013"

Malcolm Stovall, "Gathering Peacemaker: The Story of John Powell and the African Afro-Americans Inter-Mennonite Unity Conference (AFRAM), Limuru, Kenya, 1964-1973"

Three students engaged in internships this year as part of their major requirements:

Laura Miller, Church Community Services, Elkhart IN - Researching and Writing a History of the Organization

Malcolm Stovall, Minority Ministries Council (MMC) Conference in Goshen, Indiana, March 27-April 1, Oral History Interviews preparation and processing for archives

Whitney Peterson, Legislative Intern at the Indiana House of Representatives (Republican Conference)

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Montana, who was also a speaker at the conference.

"We were thrilled to collect and record these stories, pass on some legacy of the MMC and make sure future researchers have access to the wide and interethnic stories of these trailblazers during that part of Mennonite life in North America," said Gollner. "In particular, we're excited to see our students and other researchers connecting the dots between these stories, and what Goshen College is becoming."

Each interview took a total of two hours, along with a group session with the former MMC members all together.

Malcolm Stovall, a fourth-year history major, said he learned much from the interviews, both as a student and as someone entering the workforce.

"I had the blessing of interviewing Lee Roy Berry, a well-respected lawyer in Goshen, and three women; Gracie Torres, Esther Hinojosa and Helen Brown, who were not officially apart of the MMC leadership, as the leadership was all male, but sacrificed a lot for their husbands to even be able to do their transformative work."

The MMC was a coalition of African American, Latino and Native American members of the Mennonite faith who came together in 1969 to address issues of race that were prominent in the United States and permeated the Mennonite Church. John Powell, one of the forerunners of the council was at that time the leader of the Urban Racial Coalition, which was primarily an African-American group.

Powell, along with John Ventura and Lupe de León, leaders in the Latino community, decided that rather than separately combating this issue of minority representation throughout the Church, combining their efforts would lead to more effective action.

After four years of work, the Council was eventually disbanded in 1973. Over the weekend, the members were part of panel discussion in which they spoke on the work of the council and the somewhat controversial disbanding of it.

The members expressed belief that the church failed to support the initiatives put forth by MCC, and many within the denomination felt uncomfortable with the radical changes that were pushed by the council, like leadership positions for people of color. Competing ideas from within the council hindered progress as well.

"These stories are an invitation to dig into the roots of Mennonite diversity and take up history not as a burden but as something that is inspiring us forward, messes and all," said Gollner.

"The legacy of the MMC is important," said Stovall, "because it shows us the limits of the engagement of Mennonite missions and white leadership when it came to dealing with issues of race and power, particularly issues brought up in minority communities within the mission context."

A panel of students took the stage over the weekend as well, many of them the same students who conducted the interviews. The students who spoke identified themselves as activists on campus, leading different clubs and

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Meet the Professors



John Roth

Professor of History, Mennonite Historical Library Director, Mennonite Quarterly Review Editor, Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism Director

My current passion, in addition to teaching, is research and writing on the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church and promoting several projects related to the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism (ISGA). I also recently translated a book from German (Hanna Schott, *Love in a Time of Hate: The Story of André and Magda Trocmé and the Village that Said No to the Nazis* [Menno Media, 2017]) that I think is relevant for our time. And I'm planning an international Believers Church Conference to be held this fall at Goshen College (Sept. 14-17) called "Word, Spirit, and the Renewal of the Church."



Jan Bender Shetler

Professor of History, Chair of the History and Political Science Department.

This May Term I led the Southwest History course, Representations in Public History, Native America with 17 students. We spent one week learning archeology of the Ancient Puebloan people at Crow Canyon Archeological Center and another week on the Hopi and Navajo reservations, including home stays. This summer I am working on revisions for a book manuscript, *Re-Imagining Civic Virtue: A History of Gendered Social Network Memory in the Mara Region, Tanzania 1880-present*.



Philipp Gollner

Assistant Professor of U.S. History, Mennonite Quarterly Review Book Review Editor

I am currently working on a book project entitled *Good White Christians: How Immigrant Religion Made Racial Privilege in America*. I am interested in how activist "white religion" in America as we know it today is not simply an afterthought of racial binaries, but a fundamentally spiritual construct – never simply Anglo-Saxon, nor always American-born. I love to be able to teach and research on broader questions of ethnicity and religion in America at Goshen College as well. In addition, I am teaching a new course on the history of eating in the United States this Fall.

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around the world. That project resulted in an online encyclopedia of over 12,000 articles. In the years since then, volunteer editors of GAMEO, along with regional committees around North America, have updated information on thousands of articles and added more than 4000 new entries.

Public interest in the site has steadily expanded. In the month of April, 2017, nearly 50,000 researchers visited the site seeking information on topics related to the Anabaptist-Mennonite

tradition. Today, GAMEO is routinely cited by news organizations, scholars, genealogists, and a host of other users. "As GAMEO has matured we have increasingly felt as if it needed an institutional home," said Richard Thiessen, outgoing managing editor of GAMEO. "The ISGA, with its strong academic foundation and global perspective, is a perfect fit for the next chapter of GAMEO's development."

Roth, the founding director of ISGA, agreed. "The origins of GAMEO go

back to the creation of the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* in the 1940s and 1950s at Goshen College. As the scope of Anabaptist-Mennonite research here has broadened to include the global church, it is fitting that we could bring the long tradition of 'scholarship for the church' to support now the global vision of GAMEO in the digital age."

To access the resources of GAMEO visit: www.gameo.org 

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protests, such as Black Lives Matter marches.

“It’s this issue around power that we’re still struggling with,” said Powell. “The question is, how do we get the system to listen rather than sitting around a table like this and nodding and agreeing?”

On the panel were several student representatives of on-campus clubs, such as Black Student Union, Latino Student Union, Prevention Intervention Network and International Student Club. Students discussed issues such as lack of intersectionality between clubs, specifically in how they compete for the same funding, the hegemony of white Mennonites on campus and addressing questions concerning sex, especially in the context of Mennonite culture.

“The stories of our elders are so important for understanding our current problems,” said Laura Miller, a fourth-year history major. “Our problems may not all be exactly the same, but we all want the same thing—a voice in the system, decision-making power, and justice/equality.”

The former council members also greatly appreciated the interviewing process.

“It felt really good passing on the stories,” Powell said about the interviews. “The students were inspired and engaged. We were passing the mantle I guess, just in a different place. It’s a mentoring situation.”

“Activism and spirituality are not mutually exclusive,” said Gollner. “Our generation, and the students’ generation was invited to take over the baton from MMC leaders and draw from the deep spiritual resources of a faith community to transform the present even when – and especially when – that faith community is flawed and has failed you.” 🌿

Recent History Alumni Activities

Samita Thapa '13 worked in Nepal with Accountability Lab for a year and a half before moving to Santiago, Chile where she volunteered with Start-Up Chile, a leading accelerator in Latin America. This fall, she began a Masters in Development Studies at the Graduate Institute of Geneva, Switzerland.

Emily Leischner '10 is an MA graduate student in Anthropology at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, with interests in museum anthropology, first nations and indigenous studies, and community-based research projects. Over the summer, Leischner volunteered with the Nuxalk Stewardship Office in British Columbia and participated in the Smithsonian Institute of Museum Anthropology in Washington, D.C.

Minda Clemens '11 serves as Director of Development for the North Central Region for Ivy Tech Community College. She works with donors and community partners to grow student success within the region.

Jessica Meyers '03 is an Asia correspondent for the Los Angeles Times, based in Beijing. She is married to Jeff Kearns, an economics editor for Bloomberg News.

Grant Rissler '99 defended his doctoral dissertation, entitled “Advocate or Traditional Bureaucrat: Understanding the Role of ESL Supervisors in Shaping Local Education Policy toward Immigrant Communities” for a PhD in Public Policy and Administration in June 2017 at Virginia Commonwealth University. Rissler is currently Assistant Director for Programs at the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute.

Send your updates to jans@goshen.edu



Scholarship Recipients

The 2017-2018 Willard and Verna Smith U.S. History Scholarship has been awarded to **Katie Yoder** (Stryker, OH.) (*above*).

Jenae Longenecker (South Bend, IN.) (*below*) is the recipient of the Oswin and David Gerber Scholarship in Mennonite Studies for 2016-2017.



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. To donate, contact finaid@goshen.edu.

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