

Panther Geographer

Spring 2006, Volume 2, Issue 2

<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Geography/>

Geography Department Hosts Common Ground Conference on Racism

This January, Geography Assistant Professor **Meredith Reitman**, co-organized the Common Ground Conference: Building Coalitions Against Racism and Poverty in Greater Milwaukee. Here she shares some thoughts on the conference experience.

build a conference that would educate about racism and white privilege finding solutions to these common enemies.



What were some of the key messages shared at the conference?

The overall key messages were fairly straightforward. Educate yourself and others on racism and white privilege. Always resist, whenever and however you can. You are not alone in the fight.

What was the purpose of the conference?

Since arriving in Milwaukee from Seattle, I've been surprised and happy to find stories of race taking front and center stage in the newspaper and in everyday conversation. However, two things began to worry me. The first is content: it seems certain things are missing in the dialogue, particularly a historical and nuanced understanding of racism and a knowledge of what white privilege is and how it works. The second is tone: the many difficulties the greater Milwaukee area faces, including racial disparities in income, housing, employment, health care, discrimination and violence, seem to lead those who feel they are not personally affected by these challenges to turn away from them with a sigh of defeat. Most often this means white people feel disconnected from struggles over racial justice, leaving people of color alone to fight for change.

These two issues led me to John Fitzgerald and Nicole Carver of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee with a proposal for a conference. We then turned to UWM's Cultures and Communities Program for financial support. This also led to one of the most rewarding partnerships I've ever had in my life. Together we worked to

Who was your target audience?

As the purpose of the conference was to engage *all* groups in fighting common problems (racism and privilege), we were hoping for a widely diverse audience. We were particularly focused on getting a good split between whites and people of color, and folks from the campus and community, and that's what we got. Over 400 attendees in all.

How were conference participants affected?

Our evaluations showed nearly 40% of conference participants were most affected by the other participants. They made connections with others across racial boundaries, they found renewed hope and energy in fighting for racial justice. Race activists *need others* to succeed, primarily for emotional support but also to organize effectively over a long period of time. I think we provided the opportunity for that support to be realized.

What are the next steps for work begun at this conference?

We are following up the conference with a series of Meet-Ups at libraries around the city. These meet-ups will showcase particular issues of relevance to the greater Milwaukee area, including recent debates over the use of Native American mascots. We have also created an accompanying online community (Common Ground Allies) through which we are sharing the work of our presenters and organizing for upcoming events. If you'd like more information, contact me directly at mreitman@uwm.edu.

3 Student Volunteers Reflect on Conference

Parama Roy studies development and management of limited urban spaces in the predominantly African American neighborhoods of Milwaukee.

What sessions most impacted you? Why?

I was really intrigued by Gary Williams' session ["Old Glory, mom, apple pie and racism: A dialogue on race beyond black and white"]. He did not give a formal presentation; instead he initiated a very powerful dialogue amongst the audience. I feel this session was exactly a microcosm of what the Common Ground Conference had set out to do, i.e. develop a common ground for a dialogue between the different groups. It was amazing to see how people from different backgrounds actually negotiated their positions, when given a chance to openly talk about issues that are extremely sensitive, personal and often painful to express.

What was the "take home message" of the conference?

For me the take home mes-

Student Volunteers Reflect on Conference (cont'd)

(Continued from page 1)

sage was hope, faith and optimism that we can develop a common ground to negotiate a mutually respectful and compassionate relationship as individual human beings irrespective of our color.

How can we continue the work begun at the conference?

What has been initiated by the Common Ground conference I believe is just the beginning of a long journey. At this conference I saw common men, not just academics or intellectuals, come together to initiate a dialogue essential for any sensible resolution to issues of race. Yet, there remain huge masses, who are victims and perpetrators of racial discrimination and remain difficult to reach. So the next essential step would be to reach out to these people.

How will the conference impact your own research?

My own research is closely associated with issues of environmental inequality along class-race lines and I will be working with a predominantly African-American community for my dissertation. My experience at this conference has enhanced my sensitivity to issues of racial differences and discriminatory practices. I hope this will better enable me to understand, respect, and empathize with people from a different racial background than mine.



Conference participants at work.

Wen Lin studies how GIS practices and its embedded social contexts mutually shaped each other, through an in-depth case study of local government GIS in urban China.

What session(s) most impacted you? Why?

I was very impressed by

Deborah Blanks' session – "The silent storm of racism", not only because her workshop was very interactive, but also because she raised an important issue: many times racism is built upon distorted histories of those being discriminated, thus how should "black people" (and other racially marginalized groups) have their stories told and heard?

What was the "take-home" message of the conference?

It has been stressed that racism is institutional construction rather than personal prejudice.

How can we continue the work begun at the conference?

One way could be to establish some workshops periodically to keep the dialogue going.

How will the conference impact your own research and work?

Perhaps, mapping and other information technologies could be one of the ways to address racial inequality

and to fight against it. For example, Ms. Blanks used two mental maps in her talk, vividly contrasting a "chaotic" inner city area (where black people were concentrated) with a "tidy" suburb.

Deanna Benson studies urban landscapes and urban planning, focusing on the interrelations between neighborhood organizations and social space.

What session(s) most impacted you? Why?

The keynote speaker, Dr. John A. Powell (who prefers the lower-case spelling of his name), was most interesting to me. He argued that the US democratic institutions were built when slaves were considered to 3/5 a person. To me the implications are quite profound. He suggested that we think about the transformative power of race, to think about it as a bridge. I read a book that he referred to, *Between Fear and Hope*, by Andrew Barlowe. I consider this book a must read in the post 9-11 era. What Powell helped me to see was our lack of discussion on race and integration. The idea that we've moved beyond racism is highly discriminatory and in fact a backward step from the 1960s equality movements. The discussion, in my opinion, must shift to investment in people, not individual rights. Powell used an intriguing analogy - when we use a structure like a fishing net to catch tuna, we kill dolphins in the process. He suggested Condoleezza Rice and Oprah [Winfrey] were tunas that got away and white people were dolphins. What he was saying that we're all connected and racist social structures/institutions hurt us all.

What was the "take-home" message of the conference?

We have a lot of work to do to create more positive statements on race, or for that matter to even bring it to the discussion. I am very concerned that too many people believe we've fixed that problem of 'race' when clearly it confronts us everyday in the war on terrorism, cuts in central city school funding, the predominately minority prison population, the significant numbers of Americans without health insurance, proposed immigration legislation....

How can we continue the work begun at the conference?

Unfortunately, the majority of 'white' people who attended this conference were already interested in race and had fairly open ideas about inequality. We need to expand the discussion of racism and inequality to broader audiences.

How will the conference impact your own research?

Importantly. I consider myself a student of the history of racism. I doubt whether any one can 'do' geography or history or any social science without attempting to understand race.

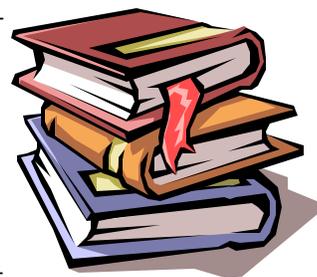
Geography Faculty Profiles

Dr. Linda McCarthy's research interests are in comparative urban and regional economic development in the U.S.A. and Europe, brownfield redevelopment, the automobile industry, and the globalization of the economy. She is currently working on research projects on the constitutionality of cities and states providing public subsidies to private corporations and on urban spatial structure in Guangzhou, China. Recent publications include: Knox, P. and L. McCarthy. 2005. *Urbanization: An Introduction to Urban Geography*, 2nd edition, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall and McCarthy, L. and S. Kim. 2005. *The Aging Baby Boomers: Current and Future Metropolitan Distributions and Housing Policy Implications*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Dr. Chris De Sousa published a paper in the *Professional Geographer* (57(2): 312–327) entitled *Policy Performance and Brownfield Redevelopment in Milwaukee, Wisconsin* and released the *State of the Valley 2005* report (<http://www.mvbi.org>). He also delivered several invited presentations in the fall for the Great Lakes Commission, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the University of New Brunswick Saint John, and the US EPA Region 5; and was a Visiting Scholar at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario. Professor De Sousa is also offering a study abroad course on Sustainable Cities this June in Vancouver British Columbia.

Dr. Dennis Wei received Distinguished Scholar Award from the Regional Development and Planning Specialty Group of the Association of American Geographers (AAG.) He has been elected Chair of AAG's Asian Geography Specialty Group and Vice Chair of AAG's Regional Development and Planning Specialty Group. He has the following recent publications: (1) "Planning Chinese Cities: The Limits of Transitional Institutions," *Urban Geography* 26(3): 200-221, 2005; (2) "Development Zones, Foreign Investment, and Global City Formation in Shanghai," *Growth and Change* 36(1): 16-40 (with C.K. Leung); (3) "Geospatial Analysis of Regional Development in China: The Case of Zhejiang Province and the Wenshou Model." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 46(6): 445-464, 2005 (with Xinyue Ye); (4) "Globalizing Shanghai: Foreign Investment and Urban Restructuring," *Habitat International* 30(2): 231-244, 2006 (with C.K. Leung and J. Luo).

Dr. Mick Day currently chairs the department, but maintains his research and teaching interests in karst and caves, traveling extensively, most recently to Jamaica, Austria, the U.K. and New Zealand. He is serving second terms as a member of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas and on the Steering Committee of the IGU's Karst Commission, and is External Examiner for Physical Geography at the University of the West Indies. Mick's 2005 publications included the following: Chenoweth, M.S. and Day, M.J. "Remote sensing of citrus grove expansion in the Cayo West Special Development Area, Belize." *Caribbean Geography* 13(1): 88-97; Day, M.J. "Landscape and environment in Belize: an introduction." *Caribbean Geography* 13(1): 3-13; Day, M.J., Kueny, J., Parrish, A. and Tenorio, R. "Testing a preliminary model of spring location in the karst of southwestern Wisconsin." *The Wisconsin Geographer* 20: 29-34; Zhang, C., Li, W. and Day, M.



Dr. Mark D. Schwartz completed a major co-authored journal article (which appeared in *Global Change Biology* in early 2006) documenting changes in the onset of spring at all temperate land areas around the Northern Hemisphere over the 1955-2002 period, entitled "Onset of spring starting earlier across the Northern Hemisphere." More details about this work can be found at: <http://www.uwm.edu/~mds> under "Research Projects." Many of his efforts over the last year have been devoted to development of a USA National Phenology Network (USA-NPN). He was co-organizer of an initial implementation planning workshop for this effort (funded by the National Science Foundation and several other Federal agencies and attended by about 40 scientists), held in Tucson, AZ during the third week of August, 2005. Since then the group has published an outline of our plans in the journal *EOS*, formed an Implementation Team (of which he is co-chair), and held a second meeting in Tucson during March 2006. For more details on USA-NPN and the planning efforts, you can visit the prototype USA-NPN web page at <http://www.npn.uwm.edu> Lastly, he and his doctoral student (**Liang Liang**) will be traveling to northern Wisconsin (vicinity of the WLEF Ameriflux tower, near Park Falls, WI in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest), starting in late-April or early-May) as part of a new (two to four year) collaborative research project involving intensive spatial and temporal measurement of spring tree phenology in a 300 m by 600 m area. They will record the phenological state of 216 previously identified trees in the study area at least every other day from the time of bud burst until full leaf expansion (approximately three to four weeks).

Best Wishes to Betty Morgan on Her Retirement

It's difficult to imagine what the department is going to be like when Program Associate Betty Morgan retires at the end of this spring semester. Betty joined the department in 1980, and has been an invaluable and integral member of our team for 26 years. In that time, she has helped us all, faculty and students alike, with her encyclopedic knowledge of the university and its operations; if you have a question or a problem, Betty knows the answer or the solution, or at the very least she knows who else can resolve the issue. Scheduling issues, financial questions, anything requiring the chair's signature – Betty can do it all!



Betty Morgan retires in May

More than that, though, Betty has been a great friend to many of us over the years, and has helped us through our difficult phases, academic and otherwise. She always has a sympathetic ear, and has played the role of unofficial departmental psychiatrist, providing a great source of comfort particularly to the numerous graduate students who have unburdened themselves to her of their financial, professional and personal struggles. In her time here, over 20 different faculty members and literally hundreds of students have come and gone through the department. Not one of them has left the department without the greatest respect and admiration for Betty and all that she contributes to our program and our lives, or without a deep gratitude to her for all the assistance rendered and the emotions shared. All this with grace, elegance, charm, and a never-failing sense of humor.

In Her Own Words

Like most of us, Betty herself has experienced the ups and downs of life over the past quarter century, with more than her share of emotional turmoil, loss and grief. It would be nice to think that our departmental support has played some contributory role in maintaining her strength, composure, and belief in a better future, but the reality is that the primary source of this faith and resolve emanates from within Betty herself, shored up by her wide circle of family and friends. Simply stated, Betty is an example to us all.

During the past 26 years, I have served as the Program Assistant in the Department of Geography. I must say, the experience has been rewarding in more ways than one. Professor Donn Haglund was Chair at the time of my appointment and he also was responsible for appointing me. I have seen the department become brand new from the time of my arrival. Current Professor Mick Day was here when I arrived. Other than Mick, the entire faculty was hired since I have been here. I have had the opportunity to work with many Chairpersons, Donn Haglund, Barbara Borowiecki, Harold Rose, Ludwig Holzner, Mark Schwartz and Mick Day. The working relations with all of them were more than anyone could ask for. I have met many graduate and undergraduate students, all of whom have been just wonderful, and many still keep in touch. Early retirement is a bitter/sweet thing, I am very excited to start another phase in my life, operating a home based child care center, but The Geography Department has been a great part of my life for the past 26 years, and that is not an easy thing to let go. I am happy to go, but you guys will be greatly missed.

There have been good times as well, lots of laughter and not infrequent hilarity. It's nice to think that the department played at least a minor role in Betty meeting and subsequently marrying Glen Morgan, and we certainly wish them all the best for their future together. Having contacts in Parking and Transit never hurts! Of course, many things about Betty have changed over the years, as others have remained constant. In the former context, Betty's ever-evolving hairstyle has kept us all guessing, and the canine fans among us were glad to have Betty become a latter-day dog fancier. In the more immutable category, Betty has never really conquered her, shall we say wariness of bridges!

Alone of those currently on the faculty, I recall the chaotic situation in the department office prior to Betty's arrival, and I regard the future, particularly as chair, with some trepidation. Betty has tried valiantly to instruct me in the ways of administrative efficiency, but she knows a lot more about geography than I do about office management! What I have absorbed, though, is a modicum of Betty's common sense, her helpfulness and her kindness. These traits have served Betty well during her tenure at UWM, as they will throughout life after the university.

Betty is moving on to a higher calling, caring for a much younger student body unburdened by adult policies and procedures. My prediction is that she'll be as deeply appreciated and warmly regarded by them as by us and, on behalf of us all, I wish her all the best for the future. Tempting though it is to construct puns about bridges to the future, I'll just end by saying a heartfelt "Thank you Betty, and bon voyage."

—Mick Day, Department Chair

Graduate Students Share their Plans

Rich Shaker, MS, December 2006



I completed the Graduate Certificate in GIS last fall, and am currently working towards my MS in Geography. In doing so, I have been involved in EPA Star grant research looking at landcover/landuse and their temporal effects on the Great Lake's watershed basins ecosystem dynamics. This opportunity is supported by **Tim Ehlinger** and the Biological Science department at UWM.

This summer I plan to do in situ research for Tim Ehlinger's ecology lab sampling macroinvertebrate and fish populations for ecosystem integrity analysis of the Fox River Watershed. This work will complement my thesis which will look at landscape/urban design factors using landscape ecology techniques temporally for a specific watershed. Through my thesis work I will be able to link the changing landscape to an ecosystem integrity metric to see how different landscape/urban designs affect ecosystems differently through time. I anticipate completing my thesis in December.

Additional work includes working on a paper investigating patch transition in exurbia using landscape ecology, GIS, and cellular automation techniques with graduate student **Rama Mohapatra**. Another paper in process looks at urban/landscape design effects on urban heat islands within Milwaukee, specifically investigating small urban parks with and without fountains for microclimatic analysis.

My longer term goals include beginning an accredited PhD program in Fall, 2007 in either Geography, Urban Design and Planning, or a multi-disciplinary program. My research interests would focus on: biogeography, ecosystem dynamics, GIS, landscape design, landscape ecology, new urbanism, and urban design, with exurbia as my overall geographic area of interest.

Parama Roy, PhD Student



My research interest is in the processes of social production of unequal urban environments. My PhD project will focus on the uneven production, maintenance and management of urban green space within the inner-city African-American neighborhoods of Milwaukee with particular attention to the Walnut Way neighborhood. Walnut Way Conservation Corp. (WWCC), a

community-based organization formed by the Walnut Way neighborhood residents, is playing an active role in improving access to urban green space through their community gardening/greening efforts.

I expect to conduct ethnographic research most of the coming year within WWCC and the Walnut Way community more generally. Collection of data through interviews and archival research supported by some quantitative data analysis will also be done. In conducting such research, I hope to reveal the struggles, contradictions and opportunities associated with such underserved communities' efforts to mobilize limited resources toward developing a more equitable and hence sustainable environment for themselves.

At the same time, I've been working on publications with my advisor **Nik Heynen** and fellow graduate student **Harold Perkins**. Already accepted for publication in the Urban Affairs Review is the paper "The Political Ecology of Uneven Urban Green Space: The Role of Private Property and Urban Political Economy in Producing Environmental Inequality in Milwaukee." Currently under review by the Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers is a paper titled "The Dialectics of Urban Environmental Metabolization and Social Reproduction: Race, Gender, Labor and the Production of Milwaukee's Urban Environment."

Wen Lin, PhD Student

From late March to late August, I will be conducting dissertation fieldwork in China, which aims to investigate the social construction of GIS within local governmental agencies in Shenzhen, China. In particular, I plan to visit three cities (Shenzhen, Beijing, and Wuhan) for interviews, document collections, and observations, in order to examine how local government GIS practice in Shenzhen and its embedded social contexts shape each other. I plan to present selected findings at the East Asian Regional Conference in Alternative Geography (EARCAG), in Taipei, June 24-30.



Anyone interested in pursuing graduate work at UWM should contact the graduate representative, **Dennis Wei**, (wei@uwm.edu) or the Geography Department Chair, **Mick Day** (mickday@uw.edu).

In Other News...

Graduates Secure Faculty Positions

Recent or upcoming graduates were invited to share news of their recent faculty appointments as well as tips for current students about conducting a successful job search.



Harold Perkins, '06. I will be teaching in the Geography Department at Ohio University in Athens this fall. I will be teaching an upper division urban environments course and introductory human geography courses as needed by the department. Certainly my coursework in urban geography and collaborative research efforts with faculty in the Geography Department at UWM have given me the experience necessary to start my own career in Geography!

Jun Luo, '06. I have accepted a tenure-track assistant professor position in the Department of Geography, Geology and Planning at Missouri State University. I will be teaching GIS courses and quantitative methods. Missouri State is the second largest state university in MO with nearly 21,000 students. The department focuses mainly on the environment and physical geography. They have a Masters program in geospatial science. My suggestion for current job seekers and soon-to-be

grads is to build upon every small thing, like papers/project competitions, and conference presentations as a way to get published. Reading a lot in your area of interest and thinking about it is a way to figure out new ideas.

Danlin Wu, '05. I am currently an assistant professor in Geography in Montclair State University's Earth and Environmental Studies, in the College of Mathematics and Sciences. I am a GIScientist and regional geographer, with my primary research focused on GIS-science/systems, spatial data analysis and modeling, and China. Currently, I am teaching World Geography, Spatial Analysis, and Introduction to American Urban Studies. There is only one word in my opinion that can help future UWM geography graduates to be strong in the job market: *publication*...both quantity and quality.



Graduate Students to get Computer Lab

Through the support of Department faculty and the determination of several current students, Bolton 479 will be transformed into a graduate student computer lab. For the past year and a half graduate students

have lamented the lack of a place to do collaborative work with peers. Because most funded graduate students share an office with two others, and unfunded students have no office at all, this lab was proposed as a way for students to work and collaborate on geographic research and departmental projects.

PANTHER GEOGRAPHER

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

University of Wisconsin-
Milwaukee

Bolton Hall 410

P.O. Box 413

Milwaukee, WI 53201

PHONE: 414.229.4866

EMAIL:

GeogNews@uwm.edu

WEBSITE:

[http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/
Geography](http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Geography)

EDITORS

Kathleen Doherty, editor

Taly Drezner, faculty editor

Meredith Reitman, faculty editor

Let us hear from you!

Please send us news of yourself either by email to: GeogNews@uwm.edu or by sending this form to us.

Name: _____

UWM Degree(s)/Date(s): _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Post-UWM Degree(s): _____ Employer: _____

Please enclose news of yourself on separate sheet of paper. *Gifts can be made to the "UWM Foundation – Geography Fund," 3230 E. Kenwood Boulevard, Milwaukee, WI 53211.*