

# URBAN STUDIES UPDATE

Fall 2020

Newsletter for Alumni and Friends

## Director's Letter

Dear USP Community,

Greetings all and welcome to fall semester! I hope everyone had a chance to relax a bit over the summer, even if the vacation plans had to be downsized or scrapped altogether. As for myself, the long-planned trip to Ireland didn't happen of course, but we did at least manage to get as far as Lake Superior for a week of hiking, swimming, and relaxing on the beach with a good book.



This past year was a pretty normal one until the coronavirus pandemic hit Milwaukee in early March and UWM, like universities everywhere, was forced to suspend on-campus activities. Our instructors worked hard to quickly move their courses to an online format, and they deserve much credit for continuing to provide a high-quality educational experience for students under less than ideal circumstances.

Now, as we head into our first full academic year under Covid-19, we continue to adapt. Things will look a bit different on the 7th floor of Bolton Hall this year, and the USP community may be more of a virtual community than a face-to-face one, but we remain committed to providing the best learning environment for students that we possibly can. We're especially excited to be welcoming a very strong cohort of new graduate students to the program, who you can read about in the following pages.

All of us here at Urban Studies were deeply disturbed by the brutal and senseless murder of George Floyd at the hands of police this summer. As horrible as this and other police killings have been, the widespread protests of the summer in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and shift in public opinion on issues of racial justice suggest there may be an opening for change. Urban Studies has long incorporated racial justice and antiracism into our curriculum and other activities, but we realize we can and must do more. This fall, a group of USP faculty and students will convene to examine our program and recommend specific actions the program can take to respond to this historic moment. See more information about this on p. 6.

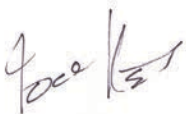
I pass along the sad news that **Steve Meyer**, the husband of **Margo Anderson**, passed away this summer. Steve was a history professor and USP faculty member until his retirement some years ago. He was a regular fixture in USP and filled an important niche in US labor history.

In other news, several members of the USP community received prestigious awards last year. Associate director **Jamie Harris** (PhD '05) was named winner of the Inspiring Student Success award for UWM alumni, dissertator **Tathagato Chakraborty** received a Distinguished Dissertation Fellowship, dissertator **Renee Scampini** was awarded a Graduate Student Excellence Fellowship, and incoming master's student **Joseph Moore** received both an Advanced Opportunity Program Fellowship and a Graduate Student Excellence Fellowship. Congratulations to all!

We're excited to announce the launch of a fundraising campaign to create a new fellowship opportunity for graduate students in Urban Studies. In partnership with the UWM Center for Economic Development, we will offer funding to former AmeriCorps/Public Allies, Vista, and Peace Corps volunteers who will work in paid internships in the community as they complete their graduate studies. More information about the campaign and how you can help make this happen is on p. 5.

We greatly appreciate the contributions of our generous alumni this past year. These donations are more important than ever today as the university faces unprecedented financial challenges resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. Thank you in advance for your generosity!

We hope that you and your families are staying safe and healthy during these challenging times. Best wishes for a happy, healthy, and productive year!



Joel Rast

Director



# Updates from the Associate Director



Jamie Harris, Associate Director and Undergraduate Studies Coordinator

As Joel mentioned in the Director’s Letter, this has been an extremely unusual and challenging time for both students and faculty/staff at UWM. All of us here (and across the globe) are figuring out how to adapt to this pandemic world, and feeling a sense of loss at what has changed. We’re also fearful, both of what the virus might do to us or someone we love, as well as the economic and other social impacts that stem from this pandemic. As an academic program engaged in public policy on such issues as inequality and economic development, we’re also dismayed by what has clearly been a very poor response to the crisis, and how the disease and economic fallout continue to expose the deep fault lines of race, class, and citizenship status in the United States. Many cities had only just begun to recover from the Great Recession and foreclosure crises of the last decade—so it’s hard to fully comprehend where we are presently given how much deeper and broader the current economic crisis is. But I think it is fair to say that students and faculty, particularly given the broader BLM movement in the wake of George Floyd’s killing by police, see this as a unique historic moment with the potential to shift politics and policy in more significant ways to better address these crises and the many unresolved forms of inequality in American society.

*Please join me in congratulating our Urban Studies Major (BA), Certificate (BA), and Graduate Student (Master’s and Phd) Grads!*

## Undergraduates

**Chloe Beyer**, Major, *Magna Cum Laude*

**Peter Carr**, Certificate, *Cum Laude*

**Sherwood Hard**, Major

**Fiona McGilligan**, Major, *Summa Cum Laude*

**Omar Sacramento**, Major

**Jordan Villegas**, Major, *Summa Cum Laude*

## Graduate Students

**Samantha Fleischman**, Master’s degree, (Advisor: Amanda Seligman)

Thesis title: “Redistributing Resources: Henry Maier, the Wisconsin Alliance of Cities and the Movement to Modify Wisconsin’s State Shared Revenues”

**Stephanie Harling**, Master’s degree, (Advisor: Joel Rast)

Thesis title: “A Case Study of Citizen Participatory Planning within the Milwaukee Choice Neighborhood Initiative”

**Kayla Kuo**, Master’s degree, (Advisor: Anne Bonds)

Thesis title: “Family Separation and Incarceration: An Intersectional Analysis of the Carceral System”

**Kelly Marie O’Brien**, Master’s degree, (Advisor: Ivy Hu)

Thesis title: “Transportation Network Company (TNC) Ridehailing Travel Patterns in Chicago’s Economically Disconnected Areas”

**Sally Svetic**, Master’s degree, (Advisor: Kristin Sziarto)

Thesis title: “Intersectional Experiences of Violence: Studying the Serial Murder of 16 Men and Boys in Milwaukee, 1987-1991”

**Kostyn Tyksinski**, Master’s degree, (Advisor: Joel Rast)

Paper title: “Locust Street in Riverwest: How do Commercial Stakeholders Perceive Locust Street?”

## Research on Race in Milwaukee

Two important studies were recently released from the UWM Center for Economic Development, one that provides a comprehensive analysis of racial disparities in Milwaukee and the nation’s largest metro areas authored by Marc Levine, Professor Emeritus of History, Urban Studies, and Economic Development, <https://bit.ly/3d5zKzx>, and a second study that examines Milwaukee’s racial divide and the impact of Covid 19 authored by Joel Rast, USP and CED director, <https://bit.ly/2GGKB6O>

**e.polis** | an online student journal of Urban Studies

Check out our *e.polis* website and most recent issue at <https://sites.uwm.edu/epolis/>





## Student Travels

“During the fall semester of 2019, I got a once in a lifetime opportunity to spend four months studying in a foreign country. Studying abroad was not something I always had envisioned myself doing. In fact, it wasn’t until the spring of my sophomore year that I truly began considering it. As I began to research my options and have conversations with others who had studied abroad, I quickly realized this was something I was going to do. Within a few months, I was signed up and registered to embark on the experience of a lifetime.”

You can read her full story at:  
<https://uwm.edu/urban-studies/undergraduate/student-profiles/>

Urban Studies Major Allison Sweere gives her reflections on studying abroad as part of the Urban Studies Exchange Program with University College Dublin.

## Internship Highlight: Milwaukee County Human Rights Commission

Urban Studies undergraduates contribute their time and talents in a number of ways from volunteering to service learning to professional internships. In the process students are able to explore different fields and professions and develop important skills. In these pages we want to highlight these beginning professional journeys and civic engagement.



Last semester, urban studies major **Jordan Villegas** held an internship with the Milwaukee County Human Rights Commission, one of many human rights commissions and offices across the country, and one currently chaired by former USP faculty affiliate, **Robert Smith** (who is now at Marquette University), along with five other members, all appointed by the County Board. Although the Milwaukee County Human Rights Commission has been around for 75 years, it has not had a strong presence or role in local affairs (it currently lacks an office and paid staff), but the Commission is working to change that by seeking to expand its role to have a greater impact on local policy advising, community outreach, and collaborations with other human rights and justice organizations. Villegas was directly involved in laying the foundation for that expanded role through the work he did on researching other commissions and presenting that information at Commission meetings as well as managing media campaigns and drafting public statements related to local affairs and incidents, such as the Democratic National Convention, a joint statement with Forward Latino on domestic terrorism, and an update on the Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission’s Standard Operating Procedure restricting MPD’s involvement with ICE. One item that the Commission hopes to secure in the near future is holding an advisory role in the recently passed county ordinance, *To Advance Racial Equity and Improve Health Outcomes*.

For more information about USP internships and service learning opportunities, visit:  
<https://uwm.edu/urban-studies/undergraduate/internships/>



## USP Statement of Solidarity with Protests

*The Urban Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee stands in solidarity with protests over the brutal police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Joel Acevedo, Dontre Hamilton, and many others. Decades after the passage of civil rights laws in this country, the presence of institutionalized racism remains visible not only in law enforcement but in stark inequalities in economic opportunity, health care, education, housing, and environmental conditions. The disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on African Americans and people of color more generally is yet another manifestation of these longstanding injustices.*

*The Urban Studies Program was founded in 1963 in part to engage with the civil rights struggles of the 1960s. Through our curriculum, programming, and other activities, we seek to reveal and confront the structures behind racial injustice and other inequalities in our cities and communities. It is our goal to be explicitly and proactively antiracist, and to be a part of the change that protestors today are rightly demanding to break the hold of racism on our institutions, our behavior, and our society as a whole.*

More information about relevant research, projects, publications, and speakers and events can be found on the **Urban Studies Racial Justice and Equity** page of our website. <https://uwm.edu/urban-studies/racial-justice-and-equity>





## Incoming Students



### Madeline (Maddy) Fruehe (Master's Student)

I'm mainly a Wisconsin native with a little Chicago and Queens, New York influence, as much of my time growing up was spent with my extended family in the Chicago suburbs and my family lived in Queens for a few years as well—I'll die a Bucks and Brewers fan though much to everyone's chagrin. I came to UWM as an undergrad graduating in the spring of 2019 with a double major in Psychology and Sociology. I intended to take a full year off from school to decide if I wanted to go to law school or continue on in the field of psychology when I found the Urban Studies program. I've always been passionate about education inequality and volunteered for two years at Brown Street Academy here in Milwaukee. However, I've learned through my first semester in the Urban Studies program that there is much more to education inequality than sociology had taught me. That's the brilliance of an interdisciplinary program. I look forward to examining policies that affect our urban youth, specifically with environmental justice, education funding, and racial equity. This city has given me a home and I hope with what I learn, I can return the favor one day.



### Xiaohan Gu (PhD Student)

I continued my graduate studies in architecture at the University of Minnesota after obtaining my Bachelor's in Architecture degree in China. My master's thesis focused on the demolished Kowloon Wall City, Hong Kong, and its embedded informal urban form. Following the completion of my graduate studies in architecture, I furthered my studies in the MS in Metropolitan Design program at the University of Minnesota on understanding urban informal settlements and informal economy. I'm glad to continue my doctoral research on urban informal settlements as urban forms and potential improvements on their documentation with the conversant faculty staff members and interdisciplinary resources at UWM. [Xiaohan is also a TA-Instructor for Urban Studies 360 – Green Cities: Urban Agriculture, Sustainability, and Environmental Justice].



### Daniel (Danny) Benson (PhD Student)

A Milwaukee native, I have spent the last two years in Washington, D.C. primarily as a policy analyst for the Government Accountability Office. In D.C., I also interned at the Office of Management and Budget and the Federal Housing Finance Agency. Prior to leaving Wisconsin, I earned my Bachelor of Arts in History and Political Science from UW-Madison (2012), a Master's of Urban Planning from the School of Architecture and Urban Planning here at UWM (2016) and a Master's of Public Affairs from the La Follette School at UW-Madison (2017). My scholarly interests have typically focused on the intersection of race, poverty and urban policy, with an emphasis on housing policy. Outside of academics, I enjoy exploring urban spaces via bicycle with my wife of two years and catching movies at the local independent theater (Can't wait to do that again when the pandemic is over!). [Danny is also a TA-Instructor for Urban Studies 250 – Exploring the Urban Environment].



### Joseph Moore (Master's Student)

I am coming to UWM from the University of Oregon, where I studied Sociology. I grew up in poverty-stricken neighborhoods in the inner city so I have always had an interest in the workings of the urban environment. As an undergraduate, I performed several research projects; among these was an Intersectional Analysis of Heroin Use in the United States and Gentrification and Eviction in Tacoma. As a Master's student at UWM, I plan to study how class structure affects access to resources such as education, healthy food, quality housing, and social capital. I am looking forward to joining the Milwaukee community this Fall! [Joseph is a recipient of an AOP Fellowship and also a Graduate School Excellence Fellowship].



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## Incoming Students (continued)



### **Kacee Olachek (Master's Student)**

After finishing my undergraduate degree at UWM (B.B.A. Finance, Minor in Sociology, Honors College Degree), I found myself working in campaign politics, and have since transitioned to local government. I most recently served as a Management Trainee at the City of Milwaukee - Common Council - City Clerk's Office of Workforce Development. It is my goal to find joy in labor. So far this has happened when my work is paired with community engagement and appropriate civic enterprise. I look forward to understanding the systems that sustain our society, but also the importance and nuance of the day to day interactions that breathe life into it. I am excited to continue my education in and out of the classroom. In my free time, I work as an Executive Producer at Bridge the City where I produce content for our podcast and host our radio show. Outside of this, I enjoy dancing to disco or salsa, talking with strangers, and travel. I hope that with this education I may enter the world with a little bit more grace and serve my city well. She/Her/Hers. [Kacee is a recipient of the Urban Studies Maier Award].



### **Melissa (Missy) Ulrich (Master's Student)**

I am from Omaha, Nebraska, where I graduated from Creighton University in 2017 with a BA in Sociology and Spanish. After serving one year of AmeriCorps service with College Possible in St. Paul, MN, I moved to Santiago, Dominican Republic, where I have been working for the last two years as a program coordinator for the many visiting student and medical groups from Creighton University. Learning about community development within this cross-cultural environment is what inspired me to seek out further education in the form of a Master's in Urban Studies. I hope to continue practicing translating data into meaningful action and exploring the topics of community empowerment, identity, immigration, and language within the urban environment. This will be my first time in Wisconsin (I've never even visited!) and I'm excited to get to know the city and explore. I also love cooking, riding my bike, and reading. [Missy will also be a PA in Urban Studies with half of her time devoted to the Center for Economic Development].



### **Emily (Emmy) Yates (Master's Student)**

After graduating with my bachelor's in Journalism from Marquette University, I've taken my time learning what stories are truly important to me, and sharpening the role I wish to lead in my own community. My interests in urban social processes, the history of both community and city development, and the importance of covering stories for the underserved neighborhoods of Milwaukee has led me to pursue my Master's in Urban Studies at UWM. I also aspire to help build nonprofits, and city parks for urban sport activities. I've always found myself gravitating towards writing, creative arts, and nature. During my free time I enjoy being an aunt, painting, cycling, urban agriculture and gardening, being "the friend that cooks," as well as foraging, wine-making, and pickling. I am eager to begin my role as a project assistant with the Urban Affairs Association, and be a part of an environment of urban research and community action.

## **Economic Development Fellowship Fund Drive**

This year USP is launching an economic development fellowship fund drive to support a student enrolled in one of our graduate programs to participate in the Economic Development Fellows program in partnership with the Center for Economic Development. This program is a natural fit for eligible urban studies program applicants/students who have previously completed Americorps/Public Allies, Peace Corps, or City Year work. Economic Development Fellows receive full tuition remission and a paid stipend in exchange for a work placement in a local community organization or city agency involved in economic development initiatives. The goal of the program is to help foster, in conjunction with a strong academic curriculum, action-oriented, economic development leaders. You can help support this important initiative by contributing online here: <https://uwm.foundation/HenryMaierChair>

More information about the CED Economic Development Fellows program here: <https://uwm.edu/ced/fellows/>



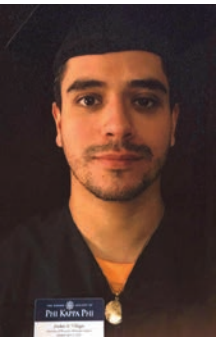


## Alumni Spotlight In Their Own Words



### Chloe Beyer, BA '20 (Magna Cum Laude)

My experience in the urban studies field as an undergrad is hard to put down into words, but mainly it was exciting, eye-opening in many ways, very literature and historical heavy—if you like that sort of thing—which thank goodness I do! This past spring semester I completed my capstone project which entailed an original research topic in the form of a paper and presentation. My capstone project focused on The Beerline Trail, located between Harambee and Riverwest neighborhoods in the city of Milwaukee. I chose this site because I was curious to learn how a creative placemaking project relates to community development. I expanded upon the current conversation of creative placemaking asking: how can the physical environment be revitalized into a beautiful form of art, illustrate the culture of a community and serve as a connector between residents? During my research, I discovered The Beerline Trail has a unique opportunity to connect residents from Harambee and Riverwest due to location proximity of each other and the trail. My capstone project connected to my career choice, as I am looking at going into Community Development—the collective action of bringing the community together to create opportunities for all and solve common problems while building individual and community empowerment. My current plans have changed slightly, and I am constantly staying up to date with current events and social justice issues—so I am prepared for my future line of work. I believe with the debates circling around racial justice issues, calls for criminal justice reform and police reform, and the growing movements of Black Lives Matter and LGBT organizations, I think Community Development as a field is more important now than ever before.



### Jordan Villegas, BA '20 (Summa Cum Laude)

Through earning my B.A. in Urban Studies, I became better equipped to operationalize a passion of mine: social justice. Exploring the complexities of urban phenomena allowed me to better analyze issues and conceptualize solutions with an ultimate goal of making our urban areas more livable and more inclusive places. The interdisciplinary nature of Urban Studies allows students to navigate multiple pathways of interest and civic engagement, leaving us prepared to take on a variety of challenges. The faculty was extremely dedicated and supportive to our education, especially during the disruptions caused by the coronavirus in my final semester. My capstone project, Race and Poverty Deconcentration in Metropolitan Milwaukee Housing Plans, analyzed the area's potential to address residential segregation and poverty concentration through county level plans. While understanding our area's troubles with segregation and inequality as well as the lackluster action taken to address these issues, the findings of this study still left me disappointed. I found that with a slight exception for Waukesha, the WOW counties didn't even mention segregation or poverty concentration. Further, not one of them had any regional-based plans to address these issues through housing. In the future, I'd like to work within local government or the non-profit sector in a position which focuses on equitable, sustainable community development.



### Stephanie Harling, MS '20

As a working professional in the field, the Urban Studies Graduate Program allowed me to pause and view my work with much more depth. I was able to look more critically at public policy, citizen planning, program evaluation, and at times get introduced to provocative ideas in governing on a local and global scale. On a more pragmatic level, my graduate work is translating to new ways in engaging stakeholders as I am more likely to hand over initiatives to community stakeholders in the name of building a long-term sustainable community. My graduate work has also taught me the value of research as I introduce new initiatives, evaluate impact, and seek resources to build the capacity of the organization.

As part of my thesis, I conducted a case study on the implementation of Milwaukee's first Choice Neighborhood Initiative (CNI). I researched the authenticity and the impact of citizen participatory planning in the rebuilding of what is now known as the new Westlawn Gardens. I sought to answer the question: Does the CNI model work in the context of gaining authentic citizen participation and did that participation result in a transfer of power to the citizens impacted by the CNI model from those perceived as the authorities such as the City of Milwaukee, Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee, and to a smaller extent my own agency, Havenwoods Economic Development Corporation?

To conduct my research I interviewed citizens who participated in the CNI planning at various levels. Residents of Westlawn, the Havenwoods Community and Steering Committee members were asked to provide insights about their experiences in the participatory planning process and to determine whether they felt as though they witnessed a transfer of power down to the grassroots level of community. The main themes that emerged from the interviews were participants' feelings of meaningless citizen participation and powerlessness. These two main themes transcended all three of the stakeholder groups interviewed.



## Events

### 2020-21 In-Person Events in Urban Studies on Hold!!

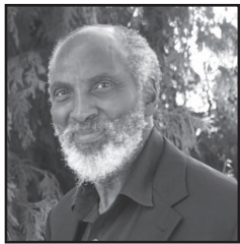
Given current CDC guidelines and UW system restrictions on in-person gathering, our public programming will be significantly curtailed this coming year. However, we hope to organize and cosponsor a variety of virtual talks. See our website for more information.

#### Coming in November:

USP will join MSOE History Dept for a virtual talk with History Professor, Lizabeth Cohen about her new book, *Saving America's Cities: Ed Logue and the Struggle to Renew Urban America in the Suburban Age*, which just received the Bancroft Prize in American History. <https://bit.ly/2Fqeh80>

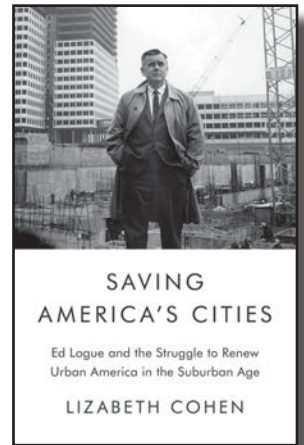
#### A Recap of a few of our Events from the Last Year

Some of the last year's events sadly had to be canceled as the university (and the rest of the country) went into lockdown. Our beloved Student Research Forum—a highlight for our undergraduate majors and graduate students—had to be canceled. In addition, the Urban Affairs Association's annual conference in DC (and its 50th anniversary), which many of our students and faculty were planning to attend, was only a few weeks away when it too was canceled.

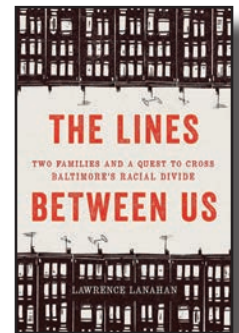


Urban Studies was proud to be a co-sponsor of the 2019 Charles Causier Memorial Lecture that was held to a packed lecture hall on Oct. 22 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at UWM. This year's speaker was John A. Powell and the title of his talk was "Racial Equity and Economic Justice in Urban Planning Practice and Community Building." John A. Powell is a law professor and the director of the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society at the University of California – Berkeley and author of *Racing to Justice: Transforming Our Conceptions of Self and Other to Build an Inclusive Society*.

Last November, USP held an author event in Greene Hall in collaboration with the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council featuring award-winning journalist and author Lawrence Lanahan who discussed his recent book, *The Lines Between Us: Two Families and a Quest to Cross Baltimore's Racial Divide* (2019). The book chronicles how two families navigate the highly segregated neighborhoods of Baltimore, which could easily be any city, U.S.A. What followed was a lively discussion about race, segregated neighborhoods, and how to change the status quo in cities like Baltimore and Milwaukee.



SAVING  
AMERICA'S CITIES  
Ed Logue and the Struggle to Renew  
Urban America in the Suburban Age  
LIZABETH COHEN



*All of us in Urban Studies would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our donors whose gifts since 2019 go directly to support graduate student research.*



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