

Minnesota ALUMNI

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION FALL 2020



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HERE?

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Fall 2020



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At the memorial site for George Floyd on 38th and Chicago in Minneapolis, Indigenous artist, educator and activist Mari Mansfield,

left, created the *Mourning Passage* art installation, featuring the names of people of color killed by police. Mansfield says, "I aim to create dignity and justice through art and action." Visiting the space in June, local photographer Caroline Yang noticed as a girl slowly drifted back from her family, carefully reading each of the names. "I couldn't help but wonder what she was hearing in her heart," Yang says.





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A Hard Conversation

IN LATE MAY, as 46-year-old George Floyd died under the knee of a white Minneapolis police officer as three others stood by, our



state began a seismic shift that continues to rumble beneath us.

The viral footage of Floyd's killing, and the explosive protests that began soon after, laid bare a truth that many might rather not face: When a Black man

was stopped for the minor offense of allegedly using a counterfeit \$20 bill at a neighborhood Minneapolis store, he was killed for it.

Over the last three months, those images and that reality have continued to haunt us. Many white people, some for the first time, have asked themselves, "If the same exact situation had happened to me, would I be dead?"

And the answer to that question is very probably, no. But as many Black and other people of color have said over and over and over again, their answer to that question could definitely be yes.

Research from scholars at the U of M and others lay out some bitter facts both about the Twin Cities and our wider society: Nonwhite people face a deeply unequal playing field here and elsewhere when compared to the advantages white people enjoy. They die at the hands of police at a higher rate than do whites. They face higher poverty rates and worse health outcomes as compared to whites. They also face significant disparities in educational opportunities when compared to whites.

These deep-seated inequities and disparities go by different names, including 'white privilege' or 'structural racism,' terms that are difficult for some white Americans to accept or discuss, and also words that elicit denial and rage in others. And at a time when our

nation faces deep schisms exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as by the racial injustices that Floyd's killing brought to the forefront, trying to find a better, more just path forward in simply acknowledging that our country is different for whites and those who aren't white can seem daunting.

But that doesn't mean we shouldn't try.

The fact that I'm a middle-aged white woman trying to acknowledge the intricacies of the complex topic of racism certainly doesn't escape me. The experiences of nonwhite people aren't mine, but I can work to listen and read and learn and reflect on the stories of those who live those truths daily.

Inside this issue, we asked a number of alumni of color to reflect on this moment in time, and to share their insights with their fellow alumni. We also report on research from the U of M to help add context and explanation to the issue of structural racism, and to explore where we might go from here.

It is my profound hope that we can use these insights in a way that makes a better Minnesota and country for us all. I'd welcome hearing your thoughts on the subject.

P.S. Inside this issue, you'll notice that *Minnesota Alumni* capitalizes the word "Black," but not the word "white" when speaking of race. We follow the lead of numerous journalism outlets in this choice. *The Columbia Journalism Review*, a noted arbiter of journalistic vernacular, explains their decision this way: "For many people, *Black* reflects a shared sense of identity and community. White carries a different set of meanings; capitalizing the word in this context risks following the lead of white supremacists" who have appropriated the capitalized term to speak of the superiority of the white race. ■

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Response to “And Then It Happened,” Summer 2020

Is there something about the water in small town Northeast Iowa ... benefiting Minnesota and the world?

Reading your fine article and others [in the summer issue] about Michael Osterholm, I am struck by the uncanny life and career similarities between him and another of the University's most highly esteemed alumni, the late Dr. Norman Borlaug, a 1970 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate.

Dr. Osterholm, of course, is a current world-renowned professor and director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University.

Both individuals were born and raised in Northeast Iowa, Borlaug on a

farm near Cresco, where he attended high school in a town of just under 4,000 inhabitants; Osterholm in Waukon, also a town of just under 4,000, located 40 miles east of Cresco. Both were high school athletes and scholars of modest accomplishment (under-sized football linemen, questionable college prospects). Both were also unassuming persons of Scandinavian American Lutheran heritage who experienced significant, but different, stressors in their lives growing up.

Both ultimately found their academic legs as undergrads, went to graduate school at the U of M, and earned doctorates in scientific disciplines. Both became internationally acclaimed leaders in their respective fields of expertise. Faced with dire threats to

COVID-19, Racism Resources

Explore University of Minnesota profiles, expertise, and research on the topic of racism on the Alumni Association's Addressing Racism website at umnalumni.org.

You can also learn more about the University's response to COVID-19 on the U of M COVID-19 page at twin-cities.umn.edu or on the UMAA COVID-19 hub at umnalumni.org.

mankind, both are credited with bodies of work saving countless lives.

Borlaug always remained loyal to his roots at the U of M and in Iowa, and Osterholm very much continues to do so as well.


*Don Henry, Ph.D. '71
St. Paul, MN*

Thanks for a great summer issue. A great variety of topics, all timely and so well written. Your publication is great!

*David L. Duval
M.D., M.A. '69
Fargo, N.D.*

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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New Rules for School

While many U of M classes will make use of distance learning this fall, certain activities like field microbiology employ social distancing and masks as the pandemic continues to upend daily life.

Photo by Eric Miller





Med School Fights COVID-19 Disinformation

To combat falsehoods about COVID-19 circulating widely on social media, a new virtual course at the U of M Medical School trains students to recognize and amplify reliable public health messaging and engage in respectful and informed medical discourse on social media.

Kristina Krohn (M.D. '10) created a four-week elective course, COVID-19: Outbreaks and the Media, with experts in the U of M's journalism school who specialize in public health communication. The course teaches

medical students about COVID-19 and fact-checking data, translating scientific literature, and using social media to connect the public with accurate information about the pandemic.

The success of the course led to its recent publication in the journal *Academic Pediatrics*, and earned it additional funding from the medical school through a COVID-19 Medical Education Innovation grant. Krohn says training medical students to be “sharers of knowledge” is critical—both for fellow physicians and for their patients.



Multiple Alumni Named 2020 Bush Fellows

The Bush Foundation recently announced its 2020 Bush Fellows, a group of 24 visionary leaders from Minnesota, the Dakotas, and the 23 Indigenous nations within the region. Several of this year's fellows have earned degrees at the University of Minnesota.

According to the organization, "Fellows [receive] up to \$100,000 over 12 to 24 months to pursue formal and informal learning experiences that help them develop the skills, attributes and relationships they need to become more effective, equitable leaders who can drive change in their communities and region as a whole."

Alumni from the Twin Cities campus include the fellows pictured at right: Amira Adawe (B.S. '07, M.P.H. '15), David Anderson (M.P.A. '14), Roque Diaz (pursuing his Ph.D.), Ani Ryan Koch (M.P.H. '16), and Brittany Lewis (M.A. '12, Ph.D. '15).

In addition, two of the fellows earned degrees at UMN-Duluth: Kirsten Kennedy and Jenna Udenberg.



Courtesy Turing Tumble

U of M 17th in Patents Among Universities Worldwide

The U of M ranks 17th in the world—ninth among U.S. public universities—on a recent list of universities granted the most U.S. patents in 2019.

The Top 100 Worldwide Universities Granted U.S. Utility Patents list, released by the National Academy of Inventors and the Intellectual Property Owners Association, draws on data from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to highlight the vital

role patents play in university research and innovation. UMN has ascended the rankings continuously for the past five years, climbing from 50th in 2014.

Patenting new technologies allows the University to protect intellectual property and license it to companies or organizations with the ability to develop it into a product or service. UMN received 102 U.S. utility patents in 2019, up from 89 the previous year. The most recent UMN Technology Commercialization annual report notes that, for the fiscal year ending June 2019, University researchers disclosed 391 new inventions and were granted a total of 187 U.S. and foreign patents.

Above: The Turing Tumble was designed by Paul Boswell (Ph.D. '08) as a low-tech way to help kids discover how computers work. The Venture Center helped Boswell launch a company to manufacture and sell the game.

U of M Scholarships Honor George Floyd

During George Floyd's memorial service, attendees called upon universities to create scholarships in his honor to help create a more just, equitable world.

The U of M, along with numerous higher education institutions, has announced several new scholarships as a result.

- The George Floyd Memorial Scholarship in Law was established in mid-June with a gift from spouses Catlan M. McCurdy (J.D. '11) and Sanjiv P. Laud (J.D. '12), which was matched by the U of M Law School. The endowed scholarship will provide critical financial support to allow students of color to pursue careers in law.
- The Office for Undergraduate Education also created a systemwide fund to support undergraduate students whose identities are underrepresented at the University or undergraduate students whose studies focus on racial and social justice. You can donate at makingagift.umn.edu
- U of M-Morris established a Racial and Social Justice Scholarship to advance equity, diversity, and inclusivity on its campus. It will be awarded to students who demonstrate a commitment to anti-racism, racial justice, or social justice.



U of M Press Recommends Racial Justice Books

In June, the U of M Press suggested a collection of anti-racist books for readers that it has published. The Reading for Racial Justice collection challenges white supremacy, police violence, and unequal access to resources in Minnesota, the U.S., and the world. The collection includes:

Degrees of Freedom: The Origins of Civil Rights in Minnesota, 1865-1912, by William D. Green

Hope in the Struggle: A Memoir, by Josie R. Johnson

Tell Me Your Names and I Will Testify: Essays by Carolyn Lee Holbrook

What God Is Honored Here?: Writings on Miscarriage and Infant Loss by and for Native Women and Women of Color, edited by Shannon Gibney and Kao Kalia Yang

Blood Sugar: Racial Pharmacology and Food Justice in Black America, by Anthony Ryan Hatch

Civil Racism: The 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion and the Crisis of Racial Burnout, by Lynn Mie Itagaki

Digitize and Punish: Racial Criminalization in the Digital Age, by Brian Jefferson

Educated in Whiteness: Good Intentions and Diversity in Schools, by Angelina E. Castagno

Prison Land: Mapping Carceral Power across Neoliberal America, by Brett Story

Survival Schools: The American Indian Movement and Community Education in the Twin Cities, by Julie L. Davis

Otto Bremer Trust Invests \$1M in Mobile Health Care Initiative

The U of M recently received a \$1 million gift from the Otto Bremer Trust to establish mobile health care services in communities that lack access to medical care because of COVID-19, civil unrest related to racial injustice,

or economic and other factors. Initially, the program will be based at the Broadway Family Medicine Clinic in North Minneapolis and the Community-University Health Care Center (CUHCC) in the Phillips neighborhood of South Minneapolis, with geographical expansion to come over the next several months.

The mobile health initiative brings together U of M health professionals from dentistry, nursing, pharmacy, medicine, and veterinary medicine to provide a range of services, including COVID-19 testing (both viral and antibody) and education, as well as enhanced access to healthcare for populations at higher risk for COVID-19 infection. The goal is to address health care disparities occurring in neighborhoods that are segregated or that have inadequate access to community facilities because of long-standing racial and social injustices.



“We believe this is a critical moment in our city’s history. We must acknowledge and remember how both the architectural and cultural landscapes have been altered here forever. One way of doing that is by documenting that transformation in all its pain and glory.”

David Hlavac (B.A. '97), president of the board of Preserve Minneapolis, a group that preserves the city’s historic architectural and cultural resources through advocacy, education, and public engagement. The group, founded in 2003, is curating images of the street art that appeared after George Floyd’s killing last May. They intend to use the art on a virtual map of Minneapolis, showing where the items were originally in place.

Above: Detail of mural in Uptown Minneapolis painted by students from PiM Arts High School



Safe Voting During COVID-19

Even during a pandemic, voting remains critical to our democracy. Here are some ways to do it more safely this fall. *By George Beck*

Over the years, I estimate I have been to the polls in Minnesota nearly 100 times, and not just because it's a duty of citizenship. I enjoy the ritual of joining with other Minnesotans to select our leaders. But this fall, considering that COVID-19 is still at large and considering my age, I'm concerned.

However, Minnesota leads the nation in voter turnout, and I won't be taking away from that achievement this year. I still intend to vote, and I want everyone else to, too. There are several ways you can vote this year and still feel safe.

The safest form of voting this fall will be by using an absentee ballot that is mailed to voters and that in turn, we return by mail.

If you want to do this, there are a few steps you must take first: In Minnesota, receiving an absentee ballot doesn't happen

automatically as it does in some other states. To receive one, you'll need to obtain an application for a ballot at mnvotes.org, a site run by the Minnesota Secretary of State's office. Fill your application out carefully and return it to your local city or county elections office. (The information for doing so is provided.)

Secretary of State Steve Simon recently announced that a registered voter witness will not be required for the general election absentee ballot. However, it is suggested that a witness be used, if convenient, due to the possibility of a legal challenge prior to the election. (The witness requirement was waived for the primary election due to the COVID-19 crisis.)

Absentee ballots will be mailed out starting September 18. *You should apply for an absentee ballot by October 2 for the general election on November 3* to allow enough time

Key Dates for Voting

SEPT. 18

Absentee ballots begin mailing

SEPT. 18

Early in-person voting begins and runs to Nov. 2

OCT. 2

Apply for an absentee ballot before this date and mail it in as soon as possible. Late votes will not be counted.

for the ballot to be mailed and returned. Don't wait too long to do this, especially given the challenges the Post Office says could occur with delivery of mail. If your ballot is received after Election Day, it will not be counted. The status of your absentee ballot can be tracked online at mnvotes.org.

If you don't wish to use an absentee ballot, the next safest alternative this year will be to vote early in person at your local election office. This is safer than voting on Election Day because fewer voters will be present, and masks and social distancing will be possible. *Early voting will begin September 18 and continues through November 2.* (Note that a portion of the federal CARES Act funding will be used to ensure sanitary conditions at the offices for early voting and at the polls for the general election.)

If neither of these options works for you, you will need to vote in person on Election Day. Observers say we can expect fewer polling places this year due a lack of poll workers, who have traditionally been older and who may choose not to work to safeguard their own health. (Younger citizens are being encouraged to apply to take their places.) Some election funding may even be used to staff polling places. You can expect the polling places to observe the usual COVID-19 precautions like masks and social distancing and cleaning of surfaces.

Another important concern this year is maintaining and increasing voter registrations, which have decreased during the pandemic. In a normal presidential election year, registrations increase, especially in the summer. But this year, the usual in-person voter registration drives, registration at drivers' license offices, and in-person efforts by the League

of Women Voters have been missing, although the League's site Vote411.org is a virtual effort to improve registrations and provide voting information.

Fortunately, all of us can register online and update our registration in Minnesota at votemn.org at the same time we request an absentee ballot. A written request for registration can also be submitted.

Young and new voters, in particular, must be encouraged to make sure they are registered and ready to vote. College students can register at their college address. (And University of Minnesota students led the nation in 2018 in voter turnout!) The University is encouraging students to vote by providing online voter registration at the same time students register for classes. This year, the registration deadline for the November 3 general election is October 13. Seventeen-year-olds can register this year if they will be 18 when the election arrives. In Minnesota, we can also register at the polls with proof of residence.

This fall we are facing one of the most consequential elections in my (very long) memory. We need our full electorate to participate and we need to do the extra work that will be required in 2020 to make that happen. But I'm optimistic that the draw of a presidential election as well as issues like COVID-19 and police reform will motivate a large number of voters. After all, as Ralph Waldo Emerson observed, "This time, like all times, is a very good one if you but know what to do with it." We know what we must do. ▣

George Beck (J.D. '70) is a retired administrative law judge and current chair of Minnesota Citizens for Clean Elections.

A call for racial justice

Important work to advance racial and social justice is happening across the University of Minnesota. A gift now, or in your will or trust, to support students, research, or outreach can help create a more just and equitable world for all. Learn about giving opportunities at Driven.umn.edu

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Flower Power

Anyone who has sought refuge from the COVID-19 pandemic by putting their hands in the dirt understands that gardening can be therapeutic. Now, a study from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs confirms that gardening not only enhances a person's emotional well-being but can also be a powerful tool in promoting sustainability in urban neighborhoods.

Researchers asked more than 370 randomly selected participants in the Twin Cities metro area to use an app called Daynamica, which was developed by Yingling Fan, a professor in regional policy and planning at Humphrey, who also coauthored the study. The app allows users to track their daily activities and rate how that activity makes them feel. After analyzing the data, they found that gardening at home is associated with a high level of well-being, similar to walking and biking. Vegetable gardening yields a higher level of happiness than ornamental gardening. What's more, gardening is an activity that is pleasurable to do alone and isn't dependent on a person's economic class. In fact, people with low incomes reported higher degrees of well-being than those with higher incomes.

Researchers hope the study will be of interest to urban planners, who can use the findings to both make cities more livable and also improve food security issues. "It's important to remember that 50 percent of



the world's population lives in an urban environment," says Fan.

Published in the June 2020 issue of *Landscape and Urban Planning*.

Saying No to Orphanages

At a time when millions of children across the world are being separated from their families due to migration, famine, and economic hardship, a new report coauthored by a group of international experts that includes three U of M researchers makes it clear that institutionalized care is never in a child's best interest. Using a meta-analysis of 65 years of data that compared the physical and emotional development of children in orphanages to children raised in family settings, researchers concluded definitively that family-like care offers the best environment for physical and emotional development in children who were orphaned or abandoned.

As a result, these experts say that family-based care—foster care, adoption, or living with

extended relatives or community members—offers the best environment to promote physical and emotional development in children who have been orphaned or abandoned. "Perpetuating the status quo of institutional care is no longer morally defensible," says coauthor Dana Johnson, a professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the U of M Medical School and founder of the University of Minnesota's Adoption Medicine Clinic.

"Within a family we learn to be complete human beings, so depriving children of this experience is a violation of their human rights."

The authors say that institutionalized care is especially harmful to children between the ages of 6 to 24 months, and that the longer a child is in an orphanage, the greater the developmental delays. They also note that these negative impacts can be reduced once a child is placed in a family-type setting.

Published in the June 2020 issue of *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*.

Lake Health

The U of M's College of Biological Sciences recently released findings that are critical for a state that takes pride in its 10,000 bodies of waters. Lakes, it turns out, continuously leak gaseous nitrogen into the atmosphere.

Researchers in the Cotner Lab Group, run by Ecology Professor Jim Cotner, examined samples from 34 lakes in the Upper Midwest. While they already knew that lakes release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, they were surprised to find that 87 percent of their water samples were supersaturated with gaseous nitrogen. When found in excess in lakes, nitrogen can cause toxic algal blooms that can harm fish, wildlife, and even the casual swimmer.

The findings are significant because they suggest that most lakes are naturally able to get rid of excess nitrogen. Cotner's team is now looking into whether lakes that are near farms and other agricultural land release more nitrogen into the atmosphere. They are also researching how much of the nitrogen shed by lakes is in the form of nitrous oxide, a highly potent greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming.

This study appeared in the July 6, 2020 edition of *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*.

As always, a hearty thank you to the University News Service for their work in compiling this information.

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Lessons from John Lewis

US. Vice President Hubert Humphrey once noted, “The test we must set for ourselves is not to march alone but to march in such a way that others will wish to join us.” In December 2016, the University of South Carolina, where I then served as Provost, recognized the late U.S. Congressman John Lewis—a man who exemplified the ideal of Humphrey’s sentiment.

In delivering the commencement speech to graduates after receiving his honorary degree, Lewis spoke for less than 10 minutes but he held the Carolina audience captive. He shared his calling to preach, the love of his family farm, and his first experiences with racial segregation. In particular, he noted that in 1955, as a 15-year-old 10th grader, he first heard of Rosa Parks, and first heard the words of Martin Luther King Jr. on the radio during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. King’s words and Parks’ actions inspired him “to find a way to get in the way.” And as he ventured into a life of “trouble,” he noted, “I got in good trouble. Necessary trouble”—and he encouraged the 2016 graduates to go out and do the same to help make the nation and world a better place.

Being in John Lewis’ orbit, even just for a short time, was a great honor. During his remarks, he only briefly referred to his historic civil rights work. There was no mention of being a founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, or being the last living member of the “Big Six” leaders who addressed the crowd at the 1963 March on Washington. He didn’t speak of the Freedom Rides and the bravery he exhibited in the face of bloody violence in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Nor did he speak of the over three dozen times he went to jail. In fact, he said, “During the 1960s, I was arrested a few times, beaten, left bloody, unconscious. I thought I was going to die on that bridge in Selma. I thought I saw death. But I lived.”

This past July, our nation, and the world, lost John Lewis. As we reflect on this loss, and our call to action as a result of George Floyd’s murder, we are reminded that the change we

seek requires us to feel uncomfortable, and often leaves us fatigued. But we grow strength from John Lewis and we hope you do too.

We are committed to being an equitable and just University. There is much work to do on our campuses and as a member of our larger community, but work we must. In this work, let us also remember the legacy of John Lewis and his incredible life of “good trouble” for the nation and the world, and the forceful charge he gave to the class of 2016, which also helps to guide us ahead: “Go out there and get in the way. Make a

little noise. Be bold. Be brave. Be courageous. And use your education, your training, to redeem the soul of our nation, and maybe help to make the world a better place for all human beings.”



With warmest regards,
Joan Gabel

“As we reflect on the loss of Congressman John Lewis, and our call to action as a result of George Floyd’s murder, we are reminded that the change we seek requires us to feel uncomfortable, and often leaves us fatigued.”



Fall Virtual Events

EVEN THOUGH WE'RE APART, WE CAN STILL
CELEBRATE OUR GOPHER PRIDE & SPIRIT
TOGETHER!

UMNAlumni.org/Events

UoFM DAY OF SERVICE



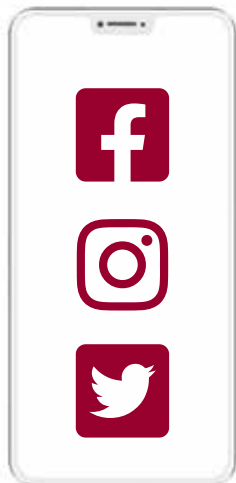
U OF M DAY OF SERVICE *presented by TCF Bank* September 19

Join Gophers around the world for one big day of community service and school pride.

The annual Day of Service engages alumni, students and friends in activities that benefit their communities. This year, more than 496,000 alumni around the world will have the opportunity to show their school pride by serving their community through food and supply donations.

To learn more about how you can participate, go to UMNAlumni.org/DOSregister.

#DayofServiceUMN



SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

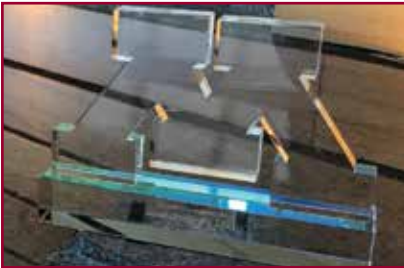
Stay connected throughout with your fellow Gophers near and far! All fall long we'll have activities for all ages, up-to-date event information and lots of virtual fun! Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter so you don't miss a moment. And don't forget to share with us how you are **#UMNProud** by tagging **@UMNAlumni**.



2020

ALUMNI AWARDS AFFAIR

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



ALUMNI AWARDS AFFAIR

September 24

Awards Presentation at 7 p.m. CST

Tune in for the 2020 Alumni Awards Affair, an inspiring evening that honors outstanding alumni.

Hear first-hand stories from award recipients from around the globe about how they have impacted their industries and strengthened the University community. This event will include the presentation of the Alumni Association Awards and the Alumni Service Awards.

Learn more at UMNAlumni.org/Awards20.

Alumni Service Award

Bruce Chamberlain	Bob Kueppers	Wendy Simenson
Doug Huebsch	Mary Kurth	Jeff Williams
Bruce Johnson	Myrna Shaw	

Outstanding Alumni Network of the Year

Greater New York, New Jersey & Connecticut Alumni Network

Outstanding Alumni Society of the Year

College of Design Alumni Society

Program Extraordinaire

Shenzhen Chapter Fight with Coronavirus Charity Campaign
Carlson School of Management Twin Cities Centennial Celebration

U40 Alumni Leader

Nick Halla

Advocate of the Year

Paul Portz

4TH ANNUAL MAROON SHIRT®

The Maroon Shirt® is the official **members-only** shirt from the Alumni Association. The limited-edition shirt is released each fall with a new design and vaulted before the end of the year. Any new UMAA membership purchase or the upgrade of an existing membership to multi-year or life level will receive the shirt FREE, otherwise it's only available for purchase by our current members.

More here: TheMaroonShirt.com







WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

After the widespread protests over the killing of George Floyd, Minnesotans and the country struggle to find a way forward.

Many believe our state offers an unparalleled quality of life, but that may only be true if you're white. *By Elizabeth Foy Larsen*

THE MINNESOTA PARADOX

IN 1992, Samuel Myers Jr. moved to the Twin Cities to become the director of the Roy Wilkins Center for Human Relations and Social Justice at the U of M's Humphrey School of Public Affairs. Myers, who earned his doctorate from M.I.T., was attracted to Minnesota's history of progressive, egalitarian politics. He also was impressed that Minneapolis had a vibrant Black middle class—at the time the University's medical school graduated the highest number of Black doctors west of the Mississippi.

During his interviews, the search committee introduced Myers to prominent Black Minnesotans, including Matthew Little, the longtime president of the Minneapolis NAACP, and then-Minneapolis Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton. The connections were appealing to Myers, who grew up in Baltimore and remembers water fountains designated for “colored” students at his mostly Black elementary school—a painful reminder of the city's segregated history. (His father, Samuel Myers Sr., was one of the first Black people to receive a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard and later became president of Bowie State University in Maryland. His mother was from a prominent Creole family in New Orleans.)

As Myers contemplated his move to the Twin Cities, he says the region's reasonable housing prices played a role in his decision.

“I'm an economist,” he says during a Zoom meeting, sitting in his expansive home in a St. Paul suburb. “The economics of moving here were actually quite attractive.”

But while Myers was able to purchase his house for a steep discount to the over \$1 million it would have cost on the East Coast, he soon realized that a significant portion of Minnesota's Black community wasn't even close to enjoying the similar social and economic benefits of the state's vaunted good life.

“I started thinking about how if it's true that this is the best place to live, how then do you explain all of the disparities in [school] test scores?” he says. “How do you explain the disparities of home ownership rates? How do you explain the disparities in arrests?”

Those disparities persist today—despite the Twin Cities' reputation for a high quality of life, fueled in part by being home to numerous Fortune 500 companies and a vibrant arts scene.

In August, an analysis by NBC News found that roughly 76 percent of white Twin Cities households own their homes, compared to about 25 percent of Black households—the largest gap in the nation. U.S. Census figures also show that the median income for a Black Minnesota household is about \$38,000 a year, compared with white families' \$84,500.

And according to a June NPR report, “Minnesota as a whole has the second biggest income inequality gap between Blacks and whites in the entire nation; only the District of Columbia is worse.” Minnesota is also one of the worst states in the country for education achievement gaps when measured by race and socioeconomic status, according to a 2019 report from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

Using applied econometric techniques in an effort to understand the disconnect between his new city's liberal self-image and the realities of the data launched Myers into a decades-long examination of what has been termed the Minnesota Paradox. Myers is one of a number of U of M researchers who have long understood that the killing of George Floyd last May by a white police officer and the subsequent uprisings it triggered wasn't an anomaly. In fact, if you look at the work of these researchers, the entrenched inequalities have long been a part of this community.

During his research, Myers came to an important conclusion: It “wasn’t about any deficiencies in Blacks themselves, but rather the barriers and roadblocks and structural factors where a community didn’t admit that there’s something called white privilege that gave benefits to whites that were not accrued by Blacks.”

U of M Economics Professor Samuel Myers Jr. at Rondo Commemorative Plaza in St. Paul. The site memorializes the Rondo neighborhood, which was largely demolished in the late 1950s to make way for the I-94 freeway. Hundreds of Black families lost their homes and businesses.



MYERS' WORK on the Minnesota Paradox started in earnest in the 1990s, when he was prompted by Minneapolis Public Schools Superintendent Carol Johnson (M.A. '80; Ph.D. '97) to look into test score disparities between white and Black students. The issue was getting a fair amount of attention in the press, and Myers felt the conclusion being drawn that poverty rather than race was the driving issue was misguided.

Johnson helped Myers get a grant to do a Minnesota-specific analysis, which was followed by another project sponsored by the Urban Coalition of Minneapolis. One of the first challenges Myers encountered was that the state aggregates all nonwhite students into a group called "people of color," a term he hadn't heard before. He was concerned that using that terminology "created an impression that there was a uniform experience of deficiencies and defects and of poor performance" amongst such a varied group.

Myers also objects to the term for reasons that have less to do with economics and more to do with racial justice: "People of color," in an interesting and subtle way, averts attention away from whiteness and 'white supremacy' and 'white privilege,'" he says.

During his research, Myers also came to an important conclusion about the source of the Minnesota Paradox, where white and Black people in the state have such different experiences: "It wasn't about any deficiencies in Blacks themselves, but rather the barriers and roadblocks and structural factors where a [community] didn't admit that there's something called white privilege that gave benefits to whites that were not accrued by Blacks."

That disparity includes the fact that Black Americans have historically been denied the right to buy property, which is the primary way white Americans have been able to build wealth and pass it down through generations. This inequity goes back to the founding of our country, and continued into Reconstruction, when former slaves were not allowed to purchase property after they were freed. At the same time, white European immigrants were receiving land incentives to come to America.

Later, many cities also put in place racial covenants and redlining laws to prevent Black Americans from buying homes in white neighborhoods. Federal lending policies also discriminated against Black people in qualifying for mortgages.

The U of M's Mapping Prejudice Project (mapping-prejudice.org), based in the John R. Borchert Map Library, documents these racist housing practices. Its initial analysis laid bare an unsettling truth behind Minneapolis'

Continued on page 24



HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN HERE?

FOR MANY WHITE MINNESOTANS, as well as countless others across the U.S., the events sparked by the killing of George Floyd may have felt as if our cities and towns exploded without notice.

However, for researchers who study racial inequity, the massive outpouring of rage and ensuing protests were anything but unexpected. It wasn't a question of if, but of when.

To understand how the Twin Cities boiled over in the aftermath of Floyd's death, it's important to note that numerous studies show that in fact, there are two Minnesotas—one for white residents, and a second for Black and other people of color.

Why have racial inequalities persisted in Minnesota? In part, scholars say, because Minnesotans tend to believe that racial injustice is less likely to happen here than in, say, the Deep South. And the roots of that injustice—from disparities in tests scores to less wealth in



communities of color to worse health outcomes—require taking a hard look at where we've been and where we're going.

"We in Minnesota want to believe that we are so progressive and liberal that it is hard for us to acknowledge and then really take responsibility for the racial injustices in society," says Douglas Hartmann, sociology professor at the U of M.

Hartmann, who is white, grew up in southern Missouri and moved to the Twin Cities 20 years ago by way of Chicago, where he went to graduate school and studied race, particularly with regard to how it plays out in sports.

As one example of inequity, he says for years he too believed the sentiment that says the scholastic achievement gap in Minnesota between Black and white students is not caused by Black kids doing poorly in school, but by exceptional white students scoring much higher than other white kids across the country.

"We [as Minnesotans] allowed ourselves to believe ... that Black folks and other people of

color didn't have it that much worse [here]—and maybe even had it better than folks of color in the rest of the country," he says. "And that belief absolved us of having to worry about the opportunity and privilege that was clearly tilted towards white Minnesotans.

In 2015, 87 percent of white students graduated from Minnesota public high schools in four years, while only 62 percent of Black students did. In 2019, those numbers were 88.4 and 67.4 percent, respectively. A 2019 Federal Reserve report also showed 68.9 percent of white students graduate ready for college, but only 24.7 percent of Black students do.

"This, to me, is the essence of white privilege, white complicity," Hartmann says. "We can easily live with the big gaps and inequities in our midst because we don't think we're racist, we don't think folks of color have it that bad, and we don't want to give up any of the privileges that we have that are part of the system creating the gaps and inequities in the first place."

"We want to believe that we are so progressive and liberal that it is hard for us to acknowledge and then really take responsibility for the racial injustices in society."

Douglas Hartmann, sociology professor at the U of M.

The U of M's Mapping Prejudice Project uncovered the fact that early racial covenants in the Twin Cities and elsewhere set the stage for a pattern of segregated housing that still exists today.

reputation as an idyllic oasis of parks and easy access to nature: Early maps of the city show that some of the area's most beloved natural assets, including Lake Harriet and the Mississippi River near West River Parkway, were bordered by neighborhoods that barred people of color from owning homes there. One common Minneapolis covenant of the time reads: "[T]he said premises shall not at any time be sold, conveyed, leased, or sublet, or occupied by any person or persons who are not full bloods of the so-called Caucasian or White race." The project's research further shows that the demographic patterns set in place by those covenants remain largely unchanged today. (The project recently received a \$324,478 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to expand its work and tools to other communities.)

In addition to this longstanding practice of denying people of color the right to move into some neighborhoods in the Twin Cities, in other cases, their traditional neighborhoods were simply destroyed by official acts in the name of "progress."

In St. Paul, the primarily Black Rondo neighborhood was bulldozed to make way for the I-94 freeway; more than 600 families lost their homes. In Minneapolis, the construction of 35W in 1959 also demolished one of the few neighborhoods where Black people could own and rent homes.

"Rondo would have been the most burgeoning middle-class community in Minnesota, period," says Alisha Volante (B.A. '07; Ph.D. '18), who as a graduate student specializing in Black history researched Rondo for the U of M's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (cura.umn.edu).

Volante, who is now the national research coordinator for Restaurant Opportunities Center United, which represents restaurant workers across the country, understands these housing disparities not just from the perspective of a scholar. As a child growing up on the North Side of Minneapolis, her family was evicted from their rented home when the landlord stopped paying

the mortgage. Her mother was later able to purchase a house in Northeast, a historically white neighborhood. "The dream of owning a place and not being able to be kicked out overrode the fear of being harassed because we were Black," she says.

Today, Volante still lives in that house in Northeast. "We're trying to build Black wealth [through passing on assets] as best we can in the Twin Cities," she says.

Given the widespread protests over the past months, and the University's role in helping lead change in the community, Volante feels the U of M has crucial opportunities to help communities of color move forward. In particular, she would like to see a greater commitment to recruiting and supporting Black students from Minneapolis and St. Paul.

"I know students who say, 'We love the diversity of the Black perspective [at the U of M] because there's a lot of Somali and Eritrean students from the diaspora,'" she says. "Which is really great, but folks who are not descended from those who were enslaved have a very different perspective."

In 2014, U of M President Eric Kaler commissioned a Campus Climate Report in response to BIPOC students (an acronym that refers to Black, Indigenous and people of color) saying they didn't always feel supported on campus. Addressing that issue became a key point of the University's strategic planning process in 2014, after campus groups and other grassroots efforts voiced their concerns.

The ensuing report from the U of M's Campus Climate Workgroup, released on Jan. 15, 2015, found that students of color sometimes felt less welcome and respected than white students on campus. It also said BIPOC students felt campus would be more welcoming if they saw more people like themselves, including more professors, staff, and other students. Over the past five years, and continuing under President Joan Gabel's leadership, the University has continued to work to implement both the short- and long-term recommendations created by the workgroup. (You can read more about this work at campus-climate.umn.edu.)

As the U of M continues working to address racial disparities both on campus and in the larger community, Volante also encourages alumni to get involved in the cause of racial justice in whatever way they can. She recommends seeking out organizations that promote racial equality, including Black Lives Matter and Renters United.

"If you cannot give them money, give them your expertise," she says. "If you're a researcher, help them with some research. If you are a graphic designer, help them with graphic design or branding. If you are an accountant or you're really good with numbers, help that way."

WHILE SAMUEL MYERS' research uses economics as a tool to impact public policy, U of M Professor Emeritus John Wright (B.E.E. '68, M.A. '71, Ph.D. '77), who retired in 2019, examines the issue of systemic racism through the lens of a cultural, social, and intellectual historian.

"We need a more holistic outlook that requires the vantage point not just of social scientists, but of humanists and historians in order to understand this issue," he says, "and begin to try to save us from further social catastrophe, which is the trajectory that we have been on for a very, very long time."

Wright sees the late-May killing of George Floyd by a white police officer as part of a continuum that started when this country was founded by white settlers. He says those new arrivals repeated European patterns of conquest and exploitation, first killing and displacing American Indians, and then enslaving African people. He also likens the current moment to the aftermath of Rodney King's brutal beating by Los Angeles police officers in 1991, another racially charged event that was videotaped and later broadcast on television.

"[That] was another circumstance in which an unemployed young Black man with a police record, primarily of misdemeanors and so forth, who, when stopped by the police, feared [that] getting a traffic ticket would result in the revocation of his parole," Wright says of King.

Wright's Minnesota roots stretch back four generations: His father and aunt attended the U of M in the 1930s, during the period when then-University President Lotus Coffman enforced policies that prevented Black students from living on campus. When Wright arrived at the University in 1963, the country was being shaken by both the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement. He remembers walking across the campus the fall of his freshman year and learning that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated. Two years later, it would be Black activist leader Malcolm X.

Wright notes that there were few Black students on campus during those years. Figures from 1974 show only 2.16 percent of undergraduates enrolled on the Twin Cities campus were Black.

According to the U of M's Office of Institutional Research, in fall 2019, 6.3 percent of Twin Cities campus undergraduates were Black, 12.6 percent were Asian, 4.3 percent Hispanic, 1.3 percent American Indian, and the rest identified either as Hawaiian, "international" or



Jack Rodgers / Minnesota Daily

John Wright voiced his support for renaming several campus buildings at a Board of Regents meeting in April 2019.

"We need a more holistic outlook that requires the vantage point not just of social scientists, but of humanists and historians in order to understand this issue and begin to try to save us from further social catastrophe, which is the trajectory that we have been on for a very, very long time."

John Wright



Protests and demonstrations in the Twin Cities quickly spread across the entire country after the murder of George Floyd at the hands of a white police officer.

unknown. White students accounted for 65.3 percent of undergraduates. Figures from fall 2019 also show that for both undergraduate and graduate students on the Twin Cities campus, 60.2 percent were white, 5.5 percent identified as Black, 10.82 Asian, 3.7 Hispanic, and 1.4 percent American Indian.

In 1966, Wright was part of a group of students that founded Students for Racial Progress (STRAP), which called out racial disparities at the University. The group brought both Martin Luther King, Jr. and civil rights activist Stokely Carmichael to campus. When King was assassinated in 1968, Wright wrote a list of seven demands, ranging from increasing the numbers of scholarships for Black high school students to the creation of an African American Studies program. When those requests stalled in the bureaucracy, 70 students took over Morrill Hall in January 1969. The group practiced nonviolence and, despite threats from angry counterprotesters, secured two important victories: the establishment of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Program in the College of Liberal Arts, which provides academic advising services, and the creation of what is now the African American & African Studies department.

(As a present-day parallel to that group's activities, immediately after the killing of George Floyd, Jael Karendi, the first Black student body president in the history of the U of M, also presented President Joan Gabel with a list of demands. Read more about this on pg. 36)

Today, Wright says the U of M is "on Ground Zero for what is now being viewed as the epicenter of a global reaction." He cites the Board of Regents' decision last year to not rename Coffman Memorial Union, or Nicholson, Middlebrook, and Coffey Halls, each named for past individuals now widely seen as racially divisive, as one of several issues that should be revisited.

ALTHOUGH THE PRESENT moment seems fraught with division as America and Minnesota grapple with systemic racism, the opportunities are tremendous, according to Keith Mayes, a U of M history professor who specializes in African American history from the 1960s to the present. Mayes says demand for his courses has exploded over the past several years. "Black history, social movements, and civil rights—everyone wants to learn about them and is learning about them," he says.

The liberal arts in particular offer opportunities for students and scholars to develop critical thinking skills to help understand these underlying issues.

U of M Associate Sociology Professor Enid Logan says she didn't see her experience of Blackness reflected in the media while growing up as the daughter of a professor and

a doctor in 1980s Washington, D.C. When she started her undergraduate studies at Yale, Logan planned to major in molecular biology and biochemistry. Then, at the end of her sophomore year, she discovered sociology.

"I was just amazed," says Logan, who teaches courses in the African American & African Studies department. "There was this discipline that allowed me to make critical, empowered sense of all my sometimes confusing, difficult, very formative experiences."

That also holds true today. "Sociology has given me a way to explore this devastating reality that being upper middle class doesn't protect any Black American from the fact that their Blackness, their Black bodies, make them vulnerable to brutality," she says. "Black racialization, after all, originated in the need to permanently dispossess Black people of control over their own bodies, both through enslavement and also through using those bodies for labor. And then you see this imperative of racialization echo throughout our history. ... It's very haunting to see these connections so nakedly and clearly."

Mayes says in his classes, he encourages students to understand the role they can play in changing both this dynamic and society. "I tell students all the time that lawmakers don't roll out of bed and pass laws—they are forced to," he says. "They are often forced to because of our young people, because they are bold and courageous."

As to the future, change will not come easily.

"One hopes that this process of confronting [racism] will be constructive," Wright says. "But if we're going to in any way break out of the entrenched cycles of the past, it's going to inevitably be painful. Both in terms of reckoning with those aspects of our institutional past that we still have failed to grapple with, and the question about the future." ■

Elizabeth Foy Larsen is the senior editor of *Minnesota Alumni*.

"I tell students all the time that lawmakers don't roll out of bed and pass laws—they are forced to. They are often forced to because of our young people."

Keith Mayes

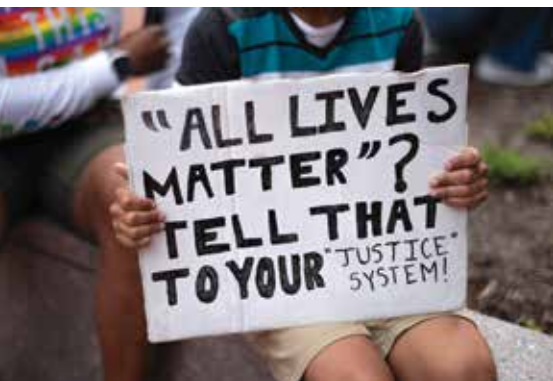
WHITE OR BLACK? EXAMINING RACE, WEALTH, AND LEGAL DISPARITIES

THE ISSUES behind racial and wealth inequality drive both Rose Brewer's research as a U of M professor of African American & African Studies and her life as an activist.

A native of Tulsa, Brewer grew up in a neighborhood that she says was "vibrant but economically very, very, very dispossessed." She also found herself wrestling with the history of her home area—where roughly 100 years ago, an angry white mob killed an estimated 300 Black residents and destroyed a prosperous financial area in Tulsa known as Black Wall Street.

Brewer went on to study history and sociology, and eventually came to the U of M in the late 1980s.

"Social-stratification, deeply rooted racial inequality, wealth inequality: These are the things that have driven me over the years to try to understand why, in the 21st century, we're dealing with deep levels of exclusion and dispossession by some groups," she says. "And of course,



©Caroline Yang

we're in multi-crises now with COVID-19 and police violence and protest. It is quite a moment, to say the least."

Brewer sees parallels between her Tulsa childhood, where Black people with excellent credentials were denied well-paying jobs, and the economic stratification in today's Twin Cities.

"We've got work to do," she says.

In 2001, Brewer was part of a delegation at the World Conference Against Racism, also known as Durban 1. One of the more controversial subjects the group looked at was the issue of reparations, a movement which recommends making payments to Black descendants of slaves to atone for centuries of inequity. That work was set aside after 9/11, but she believes now may be a time to revisit it as one piece of "a tapestry of a pretty in-depth, pervasive set of shifts and changes. There's been no real acknowledgment of what enslavement of African peoples has meant, the tremendous toll it's taken, and in spite of that, the tremendous contributions, the *sturdiness* of being here 400 years later," she says.

"I often tell my students that it's really inspiring to think that if you take 1619 as a nodal point for the inception of what would be the U.S. slave industry... [and] think that those Africans 400 years later are standing here still fighting these fights."

The ongoing economic disenfranchisement that exists for many people of color can take many forms, and even extends to the criminal justice system. According to Joe Soss, a professor at the Humphrey School, many fee-based law enforcement techniques came about in the 1990s, when tax reforms led to less money in government coffers. In turn, he argues, local municipalities started to raise money by increasing fineable offenses, anything from increased traffic stops to jaywalking to higher bail and court fees. This "siphoning from the bottom" of the economic spectrum disproportionately impacts the very people already being targeted by the police, namely people of color.

To illustrate his point, Soss says that

"Social-stratification, deeply rooted racial inequality, wealth inequality: These have driven me over the years to try to understand why, in the 21st century, we're dealing with deep levels of exclusion and dispossession by some groups."

Rose Brewer

when Philando Castile was fatally shot in 2016 by a St. Anthony police officer, Castile had received \$7,000 in various fines and fees in the years before he was killed. All were for minor violations, including a broken taillight, and a seatbelt violation. Castile had also been fined for driving with a suspended license.

"Philando Castile was in a Catch-22," says Soss. "He needed to drive to work to pay off his debt to the courts, but he was also then risking more fines by driving with a suspended license. Eventually, those repeated interactions [with the police] proved to be deadly."

Soss believes in creating a more progressive tax code to raise revenues for disenfranchised communities. "There needs to be a dedicated effort to invest in these communities, because what we've done in the past is invest heavily in policing and punishment." He notes shifting a portion of police funding to mental health services, schools, and other social services would also help. —EFL



WHEN RACISM LITERALLY MAKES YOU SICK

Studies show a dramatic link between racism and health outcomes that leaves people of color hurting. *By Susan Maas*

CERTAIN statistics haunt Minneapolis pediatrician and internal medicine hospitalist Nathan Chomilo (M.D. '09). "As a Black person, my risk of dying of COVID is somewhere around 1 in 1,350," Chomilo says. "And as a Black man, my risk of dying at the hands of cops is 1 in 1,000 in my lifetime."

According to a study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* last year, Black men do face a 1 in 1,000 chance of dying during a police encounter over their lifetime—a rate more than 2.5 times higher than white men. Black alumni like Chomilo point to the death of George Floyd in May as a real-life example of that fear.

And with a national pandemic underway, Chomilo says being Black also makes him more likely to have an adverse outcome should he become sick. In July, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that Black and Latinx Americans are three times as likely as white Americans to contract the novel coronavirus, and twice as likely to die from it. (In Hennepin County in Minnesota, the gulf is even larger: Black residents are over five times more likely to contract COVID-19.)

Chomilo says those statistics illustrate a widespread structural disenfranchisement for people of color when it comes to health care and health outcomes. His bleak assessment also underlines why he believes racism is truly a threat to Black Minnesotans, as well as to the health of other people of color.

As Minnesota's new medical director for Medicaid, Chomilo is now expanding his quest to confront racism at the intersection of health care and public policy. He sees opportunity to advance a racial equity agenda in his new role, while prioritizing community-driven solutions to poor health outcomes. Among his goals? Helping institute antiracism training across the agency and using quality metrics to better measure "what's driving some of our inequities."



Nancy Musinguzi

'Protest is absolutely necessary'

According to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), people of color, American Indians, people with disabilities, people living in poverty, and members of the LGBTQ community have "less opportunity for health and experience worse health outcomes in Minnesota."

Studies from the MDH, the U of M, and others also show Black Americans experience dramatic disparities in chronic medical conditions, maternal and infant mortality, exposure to toxins, housing and food insecurity, unemployment, unsafe working conditions, and much more.

The MDH says that "social and economic structural factors are major contributors to overall health," adding that, "It is not surprising that Minnesota has some of the worst health disparities in the country, because it has significant inequalities in areas such as income, education, and home ownership."

"When you look at the long haul and what are the biggest risks for me, my children, and my grandchildren, protest [against racism] is absolutely necessary," Chomilo says. Just days after George Floyd's death, some 1,300 public health and infectious disease experts agreed. The signatories to an open letter to the public published online



in early June said that COVID-19 was one more reason why the late May and early June antiracism protests weren't only justified, but essential.

Chomilo, who's a cofounder of Minnesota Doctors for Health Equity, which works to educate physicians on the root causes of health disparities, has long been a highly sought authority on structural racism in health care. He's a frequent guest on panel discussions and in media stories, and he gives lectures and grand rounds to doctors-in-training and faculty about how "white supremacy" throughout U.S. medical history has adversely affected people of color, and to explain what physicians can do personally and professionally to dismantle structural racism.

As the son of a pharmacist from Cameroon and a nurse of Norwegian descent, Chomilo says he felt "pretty sheltered" from overt racism as a mixed-race Black boy growing up in Minnesota. "Those deeper conversations didn't really happen in my family," he says. "For one thing, I think my dad's experience was very different from Black Americans who grow up here."

Chomilo traces the beginning of his "deeper awareness" of racial dynamics to medical school. In his first year, he became involved with the U of M's chapter of the

In June, Chomilo helped lobby the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners to declare racism a public health crisis in the county. The resolution passed.

HEALTH AT STAKE

Minnesota's longstanding reputation for being a healthy, vibrant place to live and work doesn't hold up quite so well when statistics are broken down by race:

Black Minnesotans experience gaps in access to housing and home ownership, education, and employment. A recent report from the Minnesota Department of Health shows:

- 41 percent of U.S.-born Black Minnesotans live below the poverty line, compared to 8 percent of white Minnesotans.
- While Black Minnesotans make up just 6 percent of the state's population, they represent 40 percent of homeless adults in the state.
- The on-time graduation rate for Black Minnesotans is 67.4 percent, vs. 88.4 percent for white Minnesotans. (On-time graduation is linked to a greater likelihood of employment, a greater likelihood of receiving prenatal care during pregnancy, a lower likelihood of smoking, and a lower likelihood of developing diabetes.)
- An analysis by the MDH released in late June found that Black Minnesotans have the highest age-adjusted death rate among all racial and ethnic groups at 70 per 100,000 residents. (The age-adjusted rate for whites is about 20 deaths per 100,000 people.)

Black patients are routinely undertreated for pain.

Student National Medical Association, which supports Black, Indigenous, and other under-represented medical students. “We did a lot of work raising understanding of health disparities—but that was still a step away from understanding structural racism,” he says.

And because his parents worked in health care, “There was always this basic trust in medicine and almost lionization of it,” he says. “To me, becoming a doctor was a way to help the community.”

Chomilo helped write a statement earlier this year that the presidents of nine Minnesota physician organizations signed, asserting that systemic racism is a public health



Andy Koster / Minnesota Daily

U of M Medical School student Dominique Earland after addressing a crowd outside the Hennepin County Medical Examiner’s office on June 2.

emergency in Minnesota. “As medical professionals, we see firsthand the effects of racism that have led to conditions in which people of color do not have the same opportunity as white people in Minnesota to live healthy lives,” the statement reads. “We stand in solidarity with all people protesting racial inequities. In doing so, we acknowledge that the health care system we are part of has been complicit in upholding white supremacy and reproducing oppression.... We must do more.”

And in June, Chomilo also helped lobby the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners to declare racism a public health crisis in the county. The board’s resolution, which passed 4-3, included 10 directives aimed at reducing disparities in health care, housing, education, employment, and incarceration.

Medical school awakening

Chomilo believes the conditions in which people are born, live, work, and play affect their health outcomes. These social determinants of health (or as Chomilo prefers, social drivers of health) are different for Black, Indigenous and other historically under-resourced communities than they are for white communities, he says.

As an adjunct professor of medicine at the U of M, in guest lectures and in other medical education settings Chomilo often speaks with students and faculty about the history of racism in medicine and how it permeates many aspects of health care to this day.

Chomilo points to a 2016 Association of American Medical Colleges article showing the persistence of “race-based medicine,” which treats race as a biological concept and frames health disparities as inherent. In fact, Chomilo points out, this framing is without scientific merit; race is a social construct. And it serves to reinforce health inequities.

A 2016 research article in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, titled “Racial Bias in Pain Assessment and Treatment Recommendations, and False Beliefs about Biological Differences Between Blacks and Whites,” looked at two studies illustrating how and why Black patients are routinely undertreated for pain. “What they found was that not only did 50 percent of medical students and residents endorse at least one biological belief, but that if you endorse *any* biological belief about the differences between Black and white people, you are likely to rate Black people’s pain as less severe, and you are less likely to give adequate treatment,” Chomilo says. “There’s still a *lot* of work to do.”

To that end, Chomilo helped write and introduce a resolution to the American Academy of Pediatrics calling for a ban on race-based medicine, which results in worse patient care. “[S]haring a racial category [does] not equate to shared genetic ancestry; rather race is a marker for social risk and system oppression, and there is value in understanding how racism results in racial health disparities,” the resolution reads. At press time, the resolution was still under consideration.

In clinic, the bow-tie-clad Chomilo talks openly about race with his young patients and their caregivers. Many of the families he sees are Black, mixed-race, Hispanic, white, and Asian and African immigrants. He encourages parents “not to be afraid to engage in conversations about race, not to ‘shush’ it. That sends the message that it’s a taboo thing—we can’t be afraid to explore it.” ■

Susan Maas is a freelance writer in Minneapolis and the copyeditor for *Minnesota Alumni*.

U OF M ALUMNA STUDIES RACE AND HEALTH

There's a statistic that U of M reproductive and maternal health researcher Rachel Hardeman (M.P.H. '11, Ph.D. '14) often cites for people:

"As a [Black] professional with the highest degree I could achieve, I am at greater risk of having an adverse birth outcome—or of experiencing maternal mortality or morbidity—than a white woman who hasn't graduated from high school," Hardeman says. "One of the things white people sometimes use to explain away health disparities is, 'it's poverty,'" she notes. But in the reproductive health equity field—in which Hardeman is a leading light—the effects of structural racism often transcend socioeconomic status.

In July, Hardeman was awarded an endowed professorship, funded by the Blue Cross Foundation, in the U of M's School of Public Health Health Policy and Management Division to expand her research exploring how racism affects health outcomes.

"My work is pushing folks to make the connection between structural racism and the social determinants of health," she says. "The reason your ZIP code matters for your health? [It's] a legacy of norms and ideologies and policies that has dictated your ability to purchase a home in a certain community."

Statistics propel Hardeman's work, including this national one: "Black and American Indian babies are twice as likely to die in the first year of life as white babies," she says. "Black mothers are three to four times more likely to die during

or in the year following childbirth."

While Hardeman's expertise has been nationally respected for years, the crises of George Floyd's murder and COVID-19—where Black and Latinx people are three times more likely to be infected, and twice as likely to die—have elevated her profile. In June, she coauthored an essay in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, "Stolen Breaths," that hauntingly juxtaposes two public health disasters, the coronavirus and police violence against Black people. "Please—I can't breathe," the piece repeats, quoting George Floyd. The commentary concludes with several policy suggestions, including moving to universal single-payer health care, desegregating the health care workforce, and mandating and measuring equitable outcomes.

And Hardeman's recently been quoted in the *New York Times* about a Philadelphia study showing "Black and Hispanic pregnant people are five times more likely to be exposed to COVID, because of their occupation and other social determinants," she says. "We know that because of chronic and toxic stress due to racism across the lifespan, Black women are going to be more vul-

"As a Black professional with the highest degree I could achieve, I am at greater risk of having an adverse birth outcome—or of experiencing maternal mortality or morbidity—than a white woman who hasn't graduated from high school."

Rachel Hardeman

nerable to poor outcomes during pregnancy. Now we're dealing with COVID on top of that."

Hardeman recently finished a four-year project in North Minneapolis looking at police violence, stress, and reproductive health. She examined the impact of police violence on reproductive health, including preterm birth and low birth weight, and was anticipating new NIH funding for the effort as this issue of *Minnesota Alumni* went to press.

Public health efforts continue to evolve. "So much of what I was taught as a student of public health was around behavior and lifestyle choices—"if we could just educate these people to change"—without considering the impact of structural racism that dictates an individual's ability to choose," she says.



Sara Rubinstein

WE NEED TO TALK

The University has an opportunity to be a leader in starting to dismantle structural racism. Will we take it? *By Adora Land and Ernest Comer III*

Adora Land (B.A. '11) and Ernest Comer III (B.A. '09) are cochairs of the U of M Black Alumni Network (BAN). They wrote this essay for Minnesota Alumni.

THIS past spring, in the midst of a global pandemic, our world slowed down. As we watched George Floyd gasp for air, call out for help and for his dead mother, and cry that he *could not breathe* for 7 minutes and 46 seconds, the eyes of many Minnesotans and others across the world were opened to a global pandemic Black people have felt for centuries: racism.

Racism is a form of sickness and it's a far greater pandemic than COVID-19 could ever be.

George Floyd was certainly not the first Black man to lose his life at the hands of police officers poorly equipped to handle their role in our community. Perhaps the most disturbing part of his case is that he is just one among many known and unknown examples of brutality and inexplicable police encounters that ended in unnecessary loss of life.

Beyond police brutality, the demonization and criminalization of Black bodies has been at our front door for more than 400 years. Colonization and the transatlantic slave trade created the foundation for how the ideals of anti-Blackness were fortified. Those issues also laid the groundwork for institutionalized racism, a deep-seated wrong that still perpetuates in society today.

This problem exists both in and well beyond police brutality. In our Black bodies, we walk through society constantly brutalized verbally, emotionally, and physically by some of those around us. And despite our household income, home address, education, or profession, the attacks still come.



Nancy Musinguzi

As a result, we find ourselves fighting to survive and falling into a mindset designed to extinguish the audacity of hope or quell any ambition beyond surviving from one moment to the next.

Despite the racism and anti-Blackness that plague our society, Black people still ascend. We reach new levels of achievement individually and embolden efforts for collective prosperity. Our backs together, we uphold one another despite the people, institutions, and systems that would have us be anything but alive and well.

What comes next at the University of Minnesota?

Last year, the U of M celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Morrill Hall Takeover. During that event, 70 Black students of the Afro-American Action Committee entered and occupied the University administration building for 24 hours. Their demands included an Afro Studies Department, the transfer of an MLK scholarship to a Black organization, and financial assistance for a Black Student



“Racism is a form of sickness and it’s a far greater pandemic than COVID-19 could ever be.”

Over the years, the U of M has eliminated programs and colleges that historically served as an entry point for Black and other students of color into the University. Eliminating programs such as the General College significantly decreased the number of Black and brown students on our campuses. [Ed. Note: General College was closed in a 2005 U of M restructuring and absorbed into the College of Education and Human Development] If we believe education truly is the pathway out of poverty, and that it serves as a means to combat oppression, then we must build, sustain, and strengthen pathways for education equity.

The University of Minnesota was founded in 1851, and Jael Kerandi was the first Black student body president in the institution’s nearly 170-year history. We believe her example can encourage future Black students of the U of M to become her successors and prepare this institution for what the future can bring.

Where do we go from here?

The University has an amazing opportunity today to continue setting the tone nationally and leading work in a movement to defund policing and reimagine a society where these resources are allocated in ways that bring more safety, security, and preventative measures to campus life and the student experience.

In order to lead in this way, the University must listen to the voices of Black students and alumni. We want to share insight, perspectives, and stories about our experiences. And we want to see the University invest in Black leadership, including faculty, staff, students, vendors, professionals, and community members who are committed to the success of the student body, as well as the institution. We want to see the University research and build institutional knowledge of the root cause for negative outcomes and experiences for Black people on campus, and then leverage that knowledge to drive accountability internally. And we want to see University leadership continue taking massive action in real time to correct circumstances that exacerbate the challenges of being a Black person, Black business, Black organization, or Black initiative engaging with this institution.

Listen, invest, research, drive accountability, and take massive action in real time. This is where we should go from here, and it’s the path forward. ■

Conference. The result was the formation of the Afro Students Department, what is now the Black Student Union, and the inclusion of community voices on the MLK Scholarship Committee.

As Black alumni, we acknowledge and applaud President Gabel’s response to the call to action from the first Black student body president of the U of M, Jael Kerandi, to cut a number of ties between the University and the Minneapolis Police Department. This act also elevated an ongoing conversation around what it would look like to potentially defund, divest, and dismantle the police departments. Minneapolis and St. Paul Public Schools have already canceled their contracts for school resource officers within their districts. Nationally, cities, schools, universities, and communities are having a broader conversation about the role of police departments, with the hope of redistributing funds to other necessary functions.

There is more work to be done.

TAKING A STAND

Undergraduate Student Body President Jael Kerandi's impassioned letter led to the U of M limiting ties with the MPD.

IN THE spring of 2018, Jael Kerandi (B.S.B., '21), who later would become the U of M's first Black undergraduate student body president, attended Somali Night, an annual event sponsored by the U of M's Somali Student Association. The gathering celebrates traditions of the Somali diaspora, from fashion to music to dance.

As she left Northrop Auditorium, Kerandi, then a freshman at the Carlson School of Management, says she was shocked by the large number of police patrolling a family-friendly event. "I remember asking an officer a simple question and being met with such aggression and force," she says.

The event made headlines and sparked disputes: The police said they were needed on site to break up a large fight and a robbery, and they deployed a chemical irritant in doing so. The Somali Student Association said the police used excessive force and assaulted attendees, including pulling a woman by her hijab.

Although accounts of the event differ, Kerandi says memories of the experience resurfaced for her on the night that George Floyd was killed.

In response, she authored an open letter (excerpts of which are reprinted below) to President Joan Gabel, her administration, and members of the U of M Board of Regents that ultimately led to the University severing a number of ties with the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) two days after Floyd died.

Since that time, other community organizations have made similar moves to cut ties with the MPD, including Minneapolis Public Schools, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Walker Art Center, the Minnesota Orchestra, and more.

Kerandi, who was born in Nairobi and moved to the U.S. with her family when she was a toddler, is now a senior majoring in finance and marketing, with a minor in business law.

And while her term as undergraduate student body president has now ended, she remains one of eight student representatives to the U of M's Board of Regents.

Kerandi hopes the international attention brought to Minnesota by the tragedy of Floyd's death will result in significant changes. At the University, she'd like to see an increased commitment to more Black mental health counselors to support the specific needs of Black students. She'd also like to see an increased commitment to hiring tenure-track faculty of color and a commitment to curricula that educate students about systems and institutions.

"People should know what redlining is and what it did to our communities ... and how house deeds used to say, 'whites only,'" she says. "People need to understand that these things existed, and that racism never really went away. It simply evolved."

In recent months, voices have risen both locally and nationally calling for municipalities and educational institutions to go even further in changing the current police system by either partially or fully defunding departments, reallocating some of that money to other areas. The idea has become a political flash point for many. (The U of M Libraries has curated a number of resources to help people gain more information on this at continuum.umn.edu/2020/06/a-matter-of-facts-defunding-the-police/.)

"I struggle with [the fierce opposition to defunding/] because it comes from such a place of privilege," Kerandi admits. "[White people] have the opportunity to sit there and say, 'The police have been protecting me, therefore you are removing a resource that protects me.' Whereas Black people have been saying for years and years and years that we have not been protected by the police."

Below are excerpts of the letter Kerandi and other signatories sent to the U of M administration.

A Response to the Murder of George Floyd

"This morning we woke up to a graphic video that depicted the violent murder of an unarmed, restrained Black man named George Floyd by Minneapolis police Officers Derek Chauvin and Tou Thao. Chauvin knelt on the neck of Floyd and pressed him into the hot asphalt, forcing Floyd to inhale the fumes from an SUV owned by the Minneapolis Police Department while Thao stood guard and watched. Chauvin continued to apply pressure even as George lay motionless and pleaded in pain, saying 'Please, please I can't breathe.' George Floyd was murdered by the Minneapolis Police Department. Full stop. Regardless of the reason for his arrest, his death cannot be justified, and those who attempt to do so are part of the problem.... The Minneapolis Police Department has repeatedly demon-

strated with their actions that Black bodies are expendable to them. This is a norm that we have been desensitized to due to its frequency.

...A part of the Twin Cities campus is embedded within the confines of Minneapolis and students often are under the jurisdiction of the Minneapolis Police Department, a dubious status for any person of color. MPD has continually shown disregard for the welfare and rights of people of color on our campus. This disregard is especially blatant in interactions that include but are not limited to, the discrimination and racism that was experienced by students during Somali Night in 2018, and generally, the way students of color are treated with mistrust and suspicion while on or around campus.

...We have lost interest in discussion, community conversations, and 'donut hours.' We no longer wish to have a meeting or come to an agreement, there is no middle ground. The police are murdering Black men with no meaningful repercussions. This is not a problem of some other place or some other time. This is happening right here in Minneapolis. ...[A]s student leaders, we do have a stake in the operations of the University of Minnesota Police Department. Therefore, we clearly and without hesitation DEMAND that the University of Minnesota Police Department ceases any partnerships with the Minneapolis Police Department immediately. This is inclusive of any previous contracts, events, security operations, and any additional relations that were inclusive of the Minneapolis Police Department, barring any reporting structures.

As a land-grant institution, statements professing appreciation of diversity and inclusion are empty and worthless if they are not backed up by action. A man was murdered. It is our job as an institution to exert whatever pressure we can to keep our students safe and demand justice in our city and state."

With deep loss, disgust, and exhaustion.

Jael Kerandi

A Black woman

Undergraduate Student Body President

"People should know what redlining is and what it did to our communities ... and how house deeds used to say, 'whites only.' People need to understand that these things existed, and that racism never really went away. It simply evolved."

Jael Kerandi



Jack Rodgers / Minnesota Daily

U of M Student Association President Jael Kerandi speaks to student demonstrators outside Northrup Auditorium on May 29 to protest the killing of George Floyd.

FROM THE ASHES

Our North Minneapolis clinic was damaged after the murder of George Floyd. We aren't mad at the protesters.

By Andrea Westby and Renee Crichlow



Renee Crichlow and Andrea Westby at a community garden across the street from their North Minneapolis clinic.

U of M physicians Renee Crichlow, M.D. and Andrea Westby (M.D. '09), both practice in North Minneapolis, an area that was hit particularly hard by some who used the largely peaceful George Floyd protests as cover for acts of vandalism and destruction.

While their longtime clinic in the area was a target and damaged, both say they understand the profound anger of their community over systemic racism and the cost it has exacted on people of color.

The duo penned this article in the immediate aftermath of events. Today, their clinic has reopened, but the memory of their community burning and the rage that fed the protests lives on.

WE ARE family physicians and educators who provide full-spectrum care in the Hawthorne neighborhood of North Minneapolis. Hawthorne is one of the seven North Minneapolis neighborhoods that has experienced systemic and structural racism and disinvestment by the city and those in power since the early 1900s. North Minneapolis has also experienced defunding of local social services and safety nets, over-policing, redlining, school neglect,

excessive air and environmental pollution, predatory lending, slum leasing, and an attempted silencing of strong and vibrant community leadership. And yet, North still somehow is an amazing, resilient, thriving community of primarily Black, Hmong, and African immigrants, and its strength is unparalleled.

Our clinic has been in North Minneapolis in the strip mall near the U.S. Bank for 20 years and on Broadway for more than 40 years. The majority of our patients are local residents and Medicaid or Medicare recipients. We're here for pregnant people and their babies, for teens in their athletic prime, for people with disabilities, mental illness, and multiple chronic health needs, for those who want office-based medication treatment for opioid and alcohol use disorders, for sexual and gender minorities looking for inclusive primary care, and for those nearing the end of their lives. Simply put, we are here for the

people of the community in sickness and in health, wellness or injury. We care and we are here.

On the Monday evening of May 25, George Floyd was murdered by a Minneapolis police officer who knelt on his neck for almost eight minutes while Mr. Floyd was handcuffed, prone, and calling out for help.

"I can't breathe."

For three days after that, communities in Minneapolis and the surrounding metro experienced the burning of righteous fire and rage sparked by Mr. Floyd's death, and in response to decades of oppression, racism, and violence.

On Thursday night, May 28, the Broadway Avenue corridor surrounding our clinic experienced similar violence, and our clinic was damaged. On May 29, we were forced to close our doors temporarily to protect patients and staff while we regrouped and rebuilt the physical space, although we did continue uninterrupted virtual care for a week, and then reduced operations

Nancy Musinguzi

until roughly mid-July, when we were able to reopen fully.

We have a lot of emotions right now...

We are *afraid* for our patients and community because the pharmacies they depend on to provide medications and important supplies have been damaged and are indefinitely closed.

We are *concerned* about how people will get food, formula, and diapers when our grocery stores and convenience stores are closed. The lack of public transportation means many people are stranded without resources, a situation that is exacerbated by the pandemic.

We *worry* about the health of our patients who are unable to complete the telephone or video visits that we are offering instead of in-person visits, or those who need urgent medical care we cannot provide.

But we are not mad.

We are *not mad* at protesters, rioters, or those whose anger, fear, and pain boiled over and spilled into our physical clinic space.

We are *enraged* that our community has been ignored and dismissed for decades and that it required generations of toxic rage overflowing to get the attention of those in power.

We are *outraged* that people in power could have chosen to make this different, could have chosen to express values of justice, equity, and reparations, and didn't.

We are *incensed* that health inequities experienced by people of color are attributed to individual choices and behaviors instead of the impact of historical trauma and chronic toxic stress.

We are *frustrated* that our own medical systems would rather focus on finding "genetic" or "biological" reasons for poorer outcomes than to address the racism and structural determinants at the core.

We are *angry* that the dignity and humanity of Black and brown people are repeatedly and systematically ignored and violated.

We are *furious* that Minnesota is touted as exceptional in so many ways, *except if you aren't white.*

In the poetic words of local activist D.A. Bullock, we understand the anger and despair that has led to the "**harnessing [of] revolutionary fire.**" *We aren't mad at that.*

Justice and accountability are more valuable than property.

And as for us, we aren't leaving. We will continue to work in and with our community in the ways we can.

We have been here to care for a vibrant and thriving North Minneapolis, and that's exactly what we're going to do. ■

Andrea Westby, M.D. and Renee Crichlow, M.D. are family physicians who practice in North Minneapolis.

Haley Min Young Kreofsky



TURNING PAIN INTO POWER

When the color of my skin no longer matters, we will have created a world we want to inhabit. *By Holly Choon Hyang Bachman*

Holly Choon Hyang Bachman (B.A. '03) is originally from South Korea and was adopted as an infant and raised in Minnesota. She is cochair of the U of M's Multicultural Alumni Network, and founder and president of the Mixed Roots Foundation headquartered in Los Angeles, with regional offices in San Francisco, Minneapolis, and New York. The foundation raises awareness and funds for the multicultural adoption and foster care community.

She wrote this essay for Minnesota Alumni.

ON Monday morning, May 25, I was sitting in my Los Angeles studio. I had just posted a message on my Facebook account for Memorial Day about honoring and remembering those we've lost due to war and COVID-19. I also shared my excitement over celebrating the nine-year anniversary of my foundation, which has its roots in social justice and the concept that "we all have mixed roots."

“I truly hope this moment will be powerful for us collectively as the world struggles to come to grips with the reality that racism exists, and it deeply hurts.”

Holly Choon Hyang Bachman

Less than 12 hours later, I, along with all of you, became a witness to a crime as I watched the constantly replaying video of the tragic murder of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis Police.

Those deeply shocking images literally took place right in front of all of us ... and that horrific scene will be forever etched in our memories.

I was deeply upset knowing this this was taking place in my home state of Minnesota and specifically, in South Minneapolis, where I frequently visit.

I've always been proud to call Minnesota home, even though I was adopted from South Korea and grew up in a predominantly white family and community in Owatonna, Minnesota. (More than 20,000 Korean children have been adopted into Minnesota, and studies say Minnesota has the highest number of adopted Korean children in the U.S. and around the world.)

That said, as an Asian American woman, I have faced and still face racism and discrimination because of the color of my skin. And growing up, I never felt like I completely fit in because of that. While I lived in a white community,

I'm not white. And as a Korean, I don't fit in because I don't speak the language of my ancestors or understand the Korean food and culture I've never really known.

I want to live in a world where the color of my skin—or the color of the skin of those around me—never factors into making a child or adult feel like they don't fit, or that they're outside of the mainstream.

The death of George Floyd reminded the world of the basics of humanity. It also triggered a global outcry for a more just and equitable society, where the color of our skin is irrelevant to our ability to be happy, successful, and equal.

I truly hope this moment will be powerful for us collectively as the world struggles to come to grips with the reality that racism exists, and it deeply hurts.

As a cochair of the U of M's Multicultural Alumni Network, immediately after the murder of George Floyd, we issued a statement in support of the protesters that said it's time for us to think deeply about what comes next. It read in part:

“MCAN applauds and supports President Gabel's swift response to the letter [she received] from Undergraduate Student Body President Jael Kerandi. President Gabel immediately announced that the University of Minnesota would no longer contract with the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) for additional law enforcement support needed for ceremonies and large events. ... MCAN condemns racism and social injustice, and we feel that silence is compliance, so we want to make it clear that Black Lives Matter.

“We recognize that the damage in our communities is not a result of the pain from the death of George Floyd alone, but [of] ongoing oppression and racism for over 400 years...We will individually be doing our part in supporting the rebuilding of our communities. We invite you to join us.”

Although our world is in great pain right now, and as individuals we may be going through very difficult times, I believe if we can all keep hope and faith, and truly come together as a single, inclusive community, we can turn our individual pain into collective power. I believe we can dismantle the walls of hate that divide us once and for all and create a more just and equitable society for all.

I also believe our individual voices can and will inspire and make a difference in creating real change for our future, but more importantly, in creating real change for our children's future. ■



Nancy Musinguzi

An all-volunteer mutual aid station dispensed food and household supplies at 38th Street and Chicago Avenue on May 30. Many such sites sprang up around Minneapolis in the days after the uprising.



On July 12, protesters and family members gathered at the Capitol in St. Paul as part of the National Mothers March Against Police Violence, to recognize loved ones who died at the hands of law enforcement.



Jeremiah Ellison

WHITE FOLKS IN THE FIGHT

Being an ally to communities of color requires introspection more than “help.” *By Michael Lee*

Alumnus Michael Lee (B.A. '15) is a nationally known poet and a longtime organizer and youth worker on the North Side of Minneapolis. During and after the protests sparked by the killing of George Floyd, Lee saw his community and others across the city erupt in anger.

At the height of the uprising, overwhelmed police and fire departments say they were unable to respond to numerous calls requesting help.

In response, North Side neighbors, Lee among them, spent hours patrolling North Minneapolis, working in part to identify and protect the many Black-owned businesses there from arson.

He wrote this essay for Minnesota Alumni, reflecting on what it takes for members of the white community to be accomplices in the fight against racism.

Above: Michael Lee, far right, and local poet Danez Smith, take a break from helping install plywood over the windows at Juxtaposition Arts, a youth-oriented visual art center in North Minneapolis.

IN 2015 upon completing my bachelor’s degree at the U of M, I pursued my master’s at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. While there, my Ethnic Studies professor engaged our class in an associative activity using the words “white” and “black.” This lesson would be one of the most memorable from my time as a graduate student.

We broke into groups, and each was given two large pieces of paper and instructed to write down common societal beliefs, attitudes, and associations tied to both words.

For each group, the associations with the word white were overwhelmingly positive. Words like “pure,” “clean,” “peaceful,” “wealth,” and “civilized,” covered the page. On the sheet dedicated to the word black, words like “dirty,” “bad luck,” “violent,” “poor,” and “uncivilized” appeared.

Over the past five years, as an educator and organizer, I have led this same activity many times with groups of all ages and races. I never preface it with discussions of race, power, or stereotype, but the exercise always organically leads to the same associations and discussions as it did that first time.

This activity illustrates not just how inundated we are with racist messages in our society, but that “whiteness” and “blackness” as social identifiers have been constructed in opposition to each other: Our society’s positive associations with whiteness depend on negative associations of blackness. And if we are to understand this historical moment and our place in it, then we have to understand how our relationships and our imaginations got us here.

In Minneapolis, after days of protest following the murder of George Floyd, both North and South Minneapolis awoke to countless buildings destroyed, most by outside agitators—either organized white supremacist groups or kids from the suburbs or neighboring states looking to enjoy a chaos they did not have to wake up to.

In response, community did what communities do: We took care of each other. We boarded businesses, created neighborhood watches and patrols to defend Black and people-of-color-owned businesses from arson and white supremacist attacks, provided medical care to protestors and shelter to our displaced neighbors.

Droves of white people from the suburbs and elsewhere arrived on both sides of the city to help clean up, to offer resources, food, and essential items to those in need. Many who came wanted to do more, asking questions such as “What can I do to help?” or “How can I be an ally to the Black community?”

SOCIAL MEDIA ISN'T REAL LIFE

If we want real change, we need to do more than just reshare social media posts.

By Alexis M. Murillo

Alexis M. Murillo (B.S. '18) is a Latinx woman and the cochair of the U of M's Multicultural Alumni Network (MCAN), one of several groups of alumni who drafted statements immediately after the killing of George Floyd decrying his death and asking fellow alumni and others to recognize and help dismantle structural racism.

She wrote this essay for Minnesota Alumni.

IF YOU were surprised by the uprising in the Twin Cities and across the world after the murder of George Floyd, you haven't been paying attention.

The protests that ushered in this monumental moment in history were not only an immediate response to his death. They were about the structural racism that is rooted deeply in unfair power structures and institutions that perpetuate unequal treatment for millions of people.

Now, more than ever, each of us has a choice to make: We need to decide whether we will speak up and be on the side of history that is advocating for freedom, liberation, and justice or if we'll remain silent and complicit. I believe if we remain silent



Tony Saunders / Minnesota Daily

While questions such as these are well intended, they reveal precisely what we as white people do not understand about racism and how it functions in this country.

To “help” someone is to offer your power to complete a task, but when that task is over, your power remains. Thousands had the power and access to deliver momentary aid to West Broadway or Lake Street. I find the fact that so many white people were in a position to “help” highlights exactly what is wrong: Momentary and situational help will not shift the social, cultural, and political landscape which allows for populations to have such starkly different access to capital and resources.

Our country has only recently begun to widely acknowledge “white privilege,” though truthfully, the more precise term is “white power.” We as white-bodied people are the beneficiaries of racism, and a history of power secured by plunder and violence.

Lilla Watson, an Indigenous Australian activist, once said, “If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

As a white person visibly living, working, and organizing in North Minneapolis for nearly a third of my life, people (mostly white) often assume that means I’m here to help. I’m not. I’m here because as a white-bodied, working-class writer and organizer, I understand how capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy operate in unison to render specific human bodies disposable.

As long as we are oriented toward a system designed against certain groups of people in service to a dominant group, we will continue to trade any and all life for its maintenance. Whiteness will, if it has to, also dispose of white people in order to uphold itself. The poorest among us are the first to go.

What the educational exercise mentioned at the beginning of this essay reminds us of is that before we were white, we were something else: Irish or Norwegian or Italian, etc. Who we were meant something other than abject power over people and land. If there is to be any hope for us, for a new and safer world, then we must become something else again.

The question isn’t how we can help or be allies. The question is, what will we give up in service of the liberation of our neighbors? How do we reorient ourselves to this world, and to each other? We must reimagine who we are, and the violent systems that we’ve made and that have made us. ■

“We need to decide whether we will speak up and be on the side of history that is advocating for freedom, liberation, and justice or if we’ll remain silent and complicit.”

Alexis M. Murillo

about these injustices, it will be the equivalent of being one of the officers that watched George Floyd die.

Lately, I have seen many people on my social media feeds attempting to speak out and confront the reality of racism—sometimes after years of minimizing or ignoring it. While this may feel like a start in trying to address racism, I’m afraid much of what I’ve seen has fallen into the category of “performative activism.”

Performative activism is a surface-level form of advocacy rooted in optics. People want to feel like they’re actively stepping up, but sometimes, what they’re doing doesn’t really go much beyond sharing social media posts. I think most people falling into performative activism typically share posts out of a fear that they will not be seen as good people if they *don’t* show support, rather than out of empathy and *genuine* support. Unfortunately, immediately following George Floyd’s death, this type of performative activism also included some people who attended a protest ONLY to post photos of themselves on their social media and then leave. (And yes, I witnessed this personally).

The problem with performative activism is it does nothing to truly contribute to the Movement. For each of us, it is not enough to only be in solidarity. Folks need to show up, daily. Don’t get me wrong: It’s helpful to bring awareness to important topics like racism online, but then you need to follow that up with action. After sharing a post, ask yourself, “What am I doing to positively contribute and take action on the topics I’m retweeting or sharing?”

I’ve got a few initial suggestions:

Self-educate and engage in difficult conversations

Take time to educate yourself about what racism actually looks like today, and how it manifests. Listen to podcasts, read books, watch documentaries, and explore topics that might make you uncomfortable. Then share what you’ve learned. Engage in uncomfortable conversations with your family and friends to break the silence. Address the racist people in your life—all of us have them. And for non-Black folks of color, this includes recognizing the inherent anti-Blackness in our own communities. Lasting change cannot happen without putting in the work to deconstruct our learned, toxic, narratives. It is no longer enough to not be racist. Be *actively anti-racist*.

Reflect, listen, and recognize your privilege

As a mixed Latinx woman, I recognize my own privilege and acknowledge my proximity to whiteness. It is important to me that I recognize this reality and make a commitment to reflect, listen, and have truthful conversations with myself and others. Colorism is part of white supremacy and has deep and historical implications in BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color) communities, from beauty standards and professional opportunities to even how people in the same family treat each other. To anyone else who is also mixed-race or a lighter-skinned BIPOC, think about how colorism benefits you and what you can do to bring more good than harm.

Although racism still damages us, we cannot deny that we have privilege. And as a non-Black person, I do not have a right to say how the Black community should react to their pain. *Why?* Because *I am not Black*. It’s really that simple. Instead, I work to listen instead of speak, and to elevate other’s voices to help create and embody change.

Donate resources and time

By all means, attend protests against racism, but don’t just show up because it’s a good photo op. Activism shouldn’t be trendy. Instead, activism needs to focus on the communities affected by these issues. Sign petitions, volunteer, and if you can, pour financial resources into BIPOC communities in pursuit of economic justice.

Keep going, this is only the beginning

These are only first steps. Over the summer, most of us watched the news turn away from that first crush of coverage on racism, but to make real change, we need to keep the conversations and support going online AND offline. The fight is not over.

So, non-Black people, will you show up for the freedom and justice of Black lives? I know I will, and I’ll continue to fight for Black people, my Latinx community, and the other voices that continue to be silenced.

I demand to live in a world where George Floyd would be alive today. I also demand to live in a world where families are not separated, where children are not locked in cages. Oppression in all its forms does not exist behind closed doors, concealed from public view, but in broad daylight, outside a store with many eyes watching.

We can begin to embody change if we show up daily, protest, self-educate, reflect, and donate our time and money. And every day, please ask yourself, “How will I continue the momentum?” ▣

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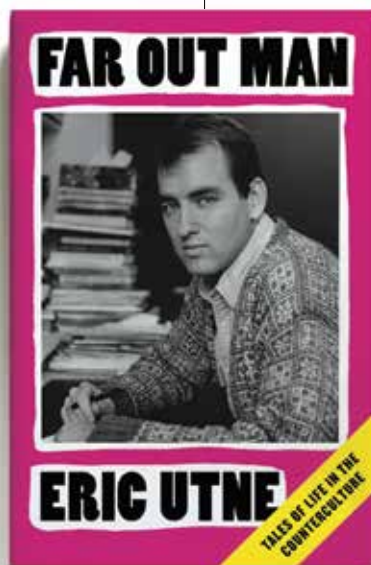
My son
Life



A Famous Editor, a Famous Architect,

Minnesota Alumni's quarterly roundup of notable books.

By Lynette Lamb



Lynette Lamb (M.A. '84) is a Minneapolis writer.

Thirty years ago, an unlikely Norwegian surname became famous across the country thanks to the growing popularity of the *Utne Reader* magazine. Now the bearer of that name and founder of that periodical, **Eric Utne** (B.A. '72), has written a memoir of

his experiences publishing his digest of the alternative press—among many other life adventures. *Far Out Man: Tales of Life in the Counterculture* (Random House) brings the reader along on Utne's decades-long quest for answers and meaning, which took him from exploring Eastern medicine and macrobiotics to the men's movement and Waldorf Schools, with significant stops along the way to found and run both *New Age Journal* and *Utne Reader*.

Full disclosure: I served as managing editor of *Utne Reader* for eight years, and thus worked closely with Utne. Despite that proximity, I found I was unfamiliar with most of the rollicking, almost Zelig-like life he has led.

From his beginnings as a Baby Boomer growing up in a ranch house in Roseville, Minnesota, Utne became close friends with macrobiotics guru Michio Kushi, poet Robert Bly, and author Brenda Ueland, who also happened to be his step-grandmother (her third

marriage was to his maternal grandfather, artist Sverre Hanssen). Along the way he also managed to rub elbows with Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Tina Brown, Margaret Mead, Garrison Keillor, and many other famous 20th century characters mentioned within the book's 300-plus pages.

Utne is and was a true seeker, and his persistent investigations of various philosophies and spiritual practices make for fascinating reading. Although such heartfelt and wide-ranging searching can be easily parodied as dilettantism or flaky New Age meanderings, his searches have been real, and the lessons he has learned along the way many and true.

As can often be the case with lifelong seekers, Utne's childhood was a fractured and fractious one; he writes he alternately endured criticism and neglect from his unhappy—and unhappily married—parents. He remained close to his three siblings, however, particularly to his younger sister, Mary, who died of cancer in her 50s, and younger brother, Tom, who died much earlier.

Tom Utne—who was, if anything, an even more ardent searcher than his brother—died on the Oregon compound of the controversial religious leader Bhagwan Rajneesh, the victim of an untreated allergic reaction to peanuts. Tom had been instrumental in helping Eric pull together the first issue of *Utne Reader*. It was published just after his death and dedicated to his memory.

Utne was also strongly connected to Ueland, who acted for him as a kind of combination cheerleader/mentor/inspiration for



and a Few Other Good Reads

many years, until her death in 1985. After reading his description of the magazine he intended to publish, “Brenda could not have been more supportive,” writes Utne. “Without her hyperbolic and inflated praise, I might not have had the courage to go forward. She acknowledged me for qualities I didn’t know I had, and very probably did not have until she claimed to see them in me. Brenda’s encouragement made me want to live up to her vision of me, to be better, braver, and more noble—the heroic person she challenged me to be.”

His memoir movingly describes the now 73-year-old Utne’s lifelong quest to become that person, a quest he pursues even still.

And the rest...

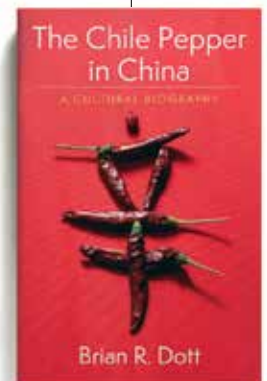
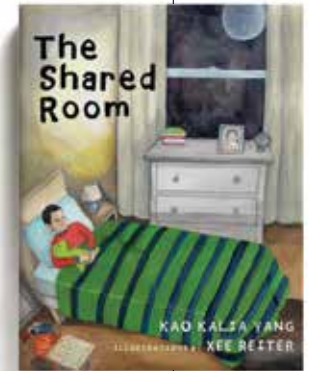
For a look at the life and work of another famous Minnesotan, pick up a copy of the beautifully produced coffee table book *Elizabeth Scheu Close* (University of Minnesota Press) by **Jane King Hession** (M.Arch. '95). Elizabeth “Lisl” Scheu Close spent 60 years working as a Minnesota architect after emigrating to the United States from Austria as a young woman. Together with her husband, Winston Close, she made important contributions to the Twin Cities residential architectural landscape, designing more than 250 modern homes, including a distinctive cluster in the University Grove neighborhood of St. Paul. One of the few women working as architects in mid-century America, she inspired hundreds of women who followed her into the profession.

The Twin Cities is also the setting of a wrenching children’s picture book with a sadly

universal message about death. *The Shared Room* (University of Minnesota Press) by **Kao Kalia Yang** (with illustrations by Xee Reiter) tells the story of a Hmong American family dealing with their profound grief after the accidental drowning of their older daughter. Told from the perspective of the dead girl’s brother, who is asked if he would like to move into her now-empty bedroom, *The Shared Room* is a beautiful and tender story of loss and abiding love.

The lifelong resonance of home and family is also the theme of *The Second Home* (St. Martin’s Press), a first novel by **Christina Clancy** (B.A. '91). Set mostly on Cape Cod, the site of the protagonists’ vacation cottage, the book tells a kind of joint coming of age story of the three Gordon siblings, Ann, Poppy, and Michael. Their complicated relationships with each other, their parents, and other Cape Cod locals, and especially their profound connection to a longtime, much-loved family cottage, are skillfully explored in this evocative, richly detailed novel.

If you’d rather read something set a bit further afield, look for *The Chile Pepper in China: A Cultural Biography* (Columbia University Press) by **Brian R. Dott** (B.A. '87). A professor of history at Whitman College with a specialty in China, Dott’s book is a fascinating look at how the non-native chile (it wasn’t introduced into the country until the 16th century) became ubiquitous in China, influencing not only its cuisine but its medicine, language, and cultural identity as well. ■





Poet Éireann Lorsung meditates on “white privilege” in her latest book.

By Elizabeth Hoover

Examining Whiteness

Éireann Lorsung took 10 years to write her third collection of poetry, *The Century*, in part an examination of how being white organized her education and obscured other perspectives. Over the past decade, she’s made a lot of discoveries, which she shares with her readers. However, Lorsung (B.A. ’03, M.F.A. ’06) cautions against calling her ideas “new.”

“When we call something new, we need to ask, ‘new to whom?’” she says. “The Columbus rhetoric is: ‘I discovered something because I saw it.’ It erases all the people who have seen it before.”

To counteract that sentiment, Lorsung scatters mentions of the writers, activists,

and artists—mostly women of color—she studied while composing *The Century*.

“Citation is an ethical practice,” Lorsung explains. “It’s a way of indicating community, as well giving credit.”

Community is foundational to her writing practice; one of her biggest joys is “being in rooms with other people working out ideas.”

This may come from growing up in Minneapolis with three younger brothers. The siblings did homework at the kitchen table while her parents cooked or did chores. An avid reader even as a child, Lorsung was also excused from class to explore the library. “The library was one of the first places where I experienced free-

“The Columbus rhetoric is: ‘I discovered something because I saw it.’ It erases all the people who have seen it before.”

Éireann Lorsung

dom and self-determination,” she recalls. “I could make my own decisions there.”

While majoring in Japanese and English as an undergraduate at the U of M, she started to think about the political and social context of writing. She remembers her literature professor, Qadri Ismail, asking his British literature class, “Why can William Wordsworth walk around in daffodils and write poems? Who’s doing his laundry?”

After finishing her master’s in creative writing with a minor in studio arts in 2006, Lorsung spent 12 years living in Europe, teaching in France, and receiving a doctorate in Critical Theory from the University of Nottingham in 2013. She eventually settled in East Flanders, Belgium. She says her own experience of migration taught her a stark lesson about “white privilege” as she witnessed immigrants of color treated very differently from her while going through the same processes. “Benefiting from being white means you support other people’s suffering,” she reflects. “My poetry had to think about that.”

To help with that thinking, she launched projects like Dickinson House, a residency for disadvantaged writers and artists in East Flanders. Most recently she completed a three-year stint as a visiting professor at the University of Maine-Farmington. There she and her partner, a musician, ran a music series and hosted visiting poets in their living room.

Her first book of poetry, *Music for Landing Planes By*, was published in 2007, followed by *Her* book in 2013. In 2016, she received a National Endowment for the Arts grant for a novel that is still in progress. Despite these achievements, Lorsung shies away from the title of “writer.”

“I don’t like nouns,” she says. “I am more comfortable with verbs!” She adds, “I make things—paintings, houses, gardens, poems.” She challenges herself to consider how the making—both the finished product and the process itself—is ethical. “You have to be aware of your politics,” she insists. “It’s important for me to understand my own responsibility.”

This Century, to be published in October by Milkweed Editions, is in part a record of her grappling with her responsibility as a white person within a system she believes is rigged in favor of whiteness. Throughout the book, she returns to images—of thread, fog, and screams—to track how her upbringing trained her not see certain aspects of race. “Whiteness operates as an invisible barrier,” she says. “It appears that you can see through it, but you can’t see through it.”

The Century begins with a meditation on the hollowness of public monuments and includes poems about racial violence. It feels remarkably prescient after a summer of nationwide protests following the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor by police. “White people haven’t thought about what it means to have your racial identity constructed as the dominant one,” she says. “Every white writer should try to trace the origin of their whiteness and write about how they understand themselves as a white writer, but that needs time and space. It’s very important to quietly and humbly do the work of reading and thinking,” she suggests. “One of the ways to disavow power is quietude, but not [if that quiet is] cowardice.” ■

Elizabeth Hoover is a freelance writer based in Milwaukee.

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Doctor without Borders



Alumnus builds a career that spans global health, prosthetics, and entrepreneurship.

By Joel Hoekstra

Andrew Pedtke (M.D. '08) was 6 when his family moved to Ireland for three years. They eventually returned to Minnesota, but by then Pedtke had been bitten by the travel bug. During college, he studied in Denmark. He worked in a hospital in Tanzania, guided tours in Ecuador, and lived in Brazil. He bicycled from Belgium to Turkey and, later, from Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania to Capetown in South Africa. "I've always found the experience of being in a different place exciting," Pedtke, now a New York City resident, says. "We learn so much from seeing how other people live."

Today, Pedtke is the cofounder and CEO of LIM Innovations, a prosthetics manufacturer, and the entrepreneur-in-residence at the Hospital for Special Surgery's Global Innovation Institute in New York, where he consults with physicians hoping to develop companies. "I was trained as a surgeon, but it turns out I'm more of an entrepreneur," he says.

"I have a real passion for helping other entrepreneurs grow their companies from the ground up."

Pedtke's interest in healthcare led him to the University of Minnesota Medical School in 2003. Five years later, Pedtke earned an M.D. and moved west to do a residency in orthopedic surgery at the University of California, San Francisco. Shortly thereafter, he took a trip that altered the trajectory of his career.

A visit to Nicaragua let him undertake an international orthopedic rotation. But one day Pedtke and his friend, Garrett Hurley, a prosthetist, also took a tour of a local factory that made prosthetics for amputees. The process seemed backward and the results less than satisfactory to Pedtke, but his friend told him that the industry operated similarly around the world—even in the United States. When Hurley sketched some designs he thought could improve the prosthetic's process and fit for the wearer, Pedtke saw an opportunity: "The space was totally in need of innovation."

“I was trained as a surgeon, but it turns out I’m more of an entrepreneur. I have a real passion for helping other entrepreneurs grow their companies from the ground up.”

Andrew Pedtke

Prosthetics have changed significantly in recent decades. Amputee runners can now keep pace with the fastest sprinters on the track, thanks to new prosthetics like Cheatahs that feature blade-like ends made from carbon-fiber. In other models, microprocessors control electronic knees. But fitting the body into the socket can be complicated: Even with the best prosthetic limbs, there’s some amount of rubbing and blistering. And since each body is different, fitting an amputee with a prosthetic requires customization and expertise—which is both expensive and often hard to find in places like Nicaragua, for instance.

In 2014, Pedtke and Hurley officially launched LIM Innovations, a name that plays on the word *limb*. Unlike traditional prosthetics, which rely on a plaster-cast method to create a snug fit, LIM’s prosthetics use 3D scans and the fit can be adjusted by the user as needed. The new model was praised by amputees and designers alike. “The biggest compliment we get is from amputees who say, ‘you make my day longer,’” Pedtke says, since users no longer have to remove the prosthetics for hours at a time because of discomfort.

LIM’s products have also drawn interest from the U.S. Department of Defense, which is interested in fitting disabled veterans with the devices, including sensors that can monitor everything from usage to heart rate to sweating. “We’re working with the DoD to capture the real-time experience of amputees,” Pedtke says. “Are they walking? How much are they

walking? How does the prosthetic improve mobility, function, and performance?” Prosthetics are in some sense, he says, the “ultimate wearable tech.”

Prior to COVID-19, Pedtke and LIM were also collaborating with a nonprofit in the Democratic Republic of Congo to find ways to provide prosthetics to amputees across Africa, although that work has been temporarily halted. A few years ago, Pedtke was invited to do a presentation at Upright Africa, a nonprofit in that serves people impacted by the Rwandan genocide of 1994. John Woods, founder of Upright Africa, says he was surprised when the meeting drew nearly 100 amputees, many of them on crutches and wooden legs. LIM has since donated more than 20 sockets and several thousands of dollars to the nonprofit, and Woods and Pedtke are also exploring ways to set up a workshop in Congo.

Sourcing and manufacturing prosthetics from LIM’s designs in a local facility could significantly lower costs, making the devices more affordable in a country where most people live on roughly \$1 a day. In addition to cost, Woods says, durability can also be an issue: components need to withstand dust, dirt, rocky roads, and rough conditions. “Still, in a place where most amputees are using wood pegs and old belts, the difference between what people use now and what LIM can offer is as stark as the difference between day and night.” ■

Joel Hoekstra is a freelance writer based in Minneapolis.



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ALUMNI NEWS & EVENTS

A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

The past few months have been exceptionally difficult for all of us. However, even in times of great disruption, the U of M constantly looks for ways to create a better, stronger future.

Recently President Gabel outlined Phase 3 of the U of M's Systemwide Strategic Plan to the Board of Regents, the latest stage in a multi-part process that began in 2016.

The strategic plan sets out five key priorities for the University in coming years: student success; discovery, innovation and impact; Mntersections; community and belonging, and fiscal stewardship.

The fourth of those tenets, community and belonging, refers to “fostering a welcoming community that values belonging, equity, diversity, and dignity in people and ideas.”

As we work to eradicate racism and unequal treatment throughout our society, that priority has never been more important. In practical terms, it prioritizes recruiting and retaining diverse students, faculty, and staff, and reducing disparities among underrepresented groups. It also encompasses developing education and training to increase intercultural competency and interactional diversity. In addition, it includes advancing a deeper understanding of the U of M's institutional history, and driving mutually beneficial relationships with underserved local communities, as well as with strategic partners to enhance society and access to higher education.

The Alumni Association has been serving the U of M alumni community for an astonishing 119 years. We recognize and acknowledge the unique experience each former student has had here—and also recognize when that experience has sometimes fallen short, as some students or faculty of color have said they felt overlooked or undervalued or unheard during their tenure here.

We welcome President Gabel's leadership on this key issue, and look forward to doing our part to make sure we meet and exceed the U of M's stated goals.

In the aftermath of the widespread, heartfelt protests over the killing of George Floyd, we recognize that this is a moment when all are called upon to do better, and forge a stronger future. We know all of us must push even harder to make sure that every student, faculty member, and staffer who calls the U of M home feels truly welcome—and the Alumni Association stands ready to help.



Warmly,
Lisa Lewis

*President and CEO
Life Member and Alumni Leadership Circle Donor
University of Minnesota Alumni Association*

“WE RECOGNIZE THAT THIS IS A MOMENT WHEN ALL ARE CALLED UPON TO DO BETTER, AND FORGE A STRONGER FUTURE.”



BE A VOTER IN THE 2020 ELECTION

With Election Day approaching on Nov. 3, the Alumni Association encourages all alumni to be voters. Voting by mail is highly recommended during the COVID-19 pandemic in Minnesota and in many other states. Visit umnalumni.org/vote to find voting information, and resources to vote by mail. Make your voice heard. (You can also find more details on safe voting this year on pg. 12 in this issue.)

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*Reflects April 11 to July 10, 2020



2020 MAROON SHIRT® IS HERE!

A year ago, the University of Minnesota Alumni Association partnered with the College of Design to give students the opportunity to work on a real-life design challenge—creating the 2020 Maroon Shirt.

Professor Abbey Kleinert approached Dan Burdeski, Alumni Association senior art director, about partnering on a potential project for her class. After talking, it was clear that the 4th edition Maroon Shirt was the perfect opportunity. Working on the project gave students firsthand experience in how to work with a client, understand their needs, research ideas, and pitch their designs.

Erin Suski (B.S. '21), pictured above, was among 16 students to develop original concepts for this year's shirt. Ultimately her "Gopher State" design was selected as the best fit for the alumni audience and the Alumni Association's mission.

The members-only Maroon Shirt featuring Suski's design is available now at TheMaroonShirt.com. And if you're not currently a member of the Alumni Association, join now and receive the shirt free!



MAROON AND GOLD FACE MASKS DONATED

At the end of June, the Alumni Association began delivering thousands of face masks which were donated through our buy-one, give-one program. For every maroon and gold face mask sold through the Alumni Association's Minnesota Alumni Market, one is donated to patients and families at M Health Fairview. UMAA Board Chair Mark Jessen (B.A. '86) and past UMAA Board Chair Laura Moret (B.A. '76, M.B.A. '81) participated in the first dropoff at M

Health Fairview's Clinic and Surgery Center on campus. A total of more than 17,000 masks have been donated since the program launched in April. You can help keep the momentum going! Adult and youth sizes of the reusable, cloth face masks are available for \$15, along with two new styles. Check out all the design options available at MNAAlumniMarket.com

This program was made possible thanks to our partners, Woodchuck USA, Liberty Mutual Insurance, The Pillars of Prospect Park, and Securus ID.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ALUMNI NETWORK FORMED

In fall 2019, UMAA helped launch the Student Government Alumni Network. This network was formed to create a community of support for former and current student government leaders through events, advocacy efforts, and collaboration to support student leaders. Alumni come from the three main student government groups on cam-

pus, the Minnesota Student Association (MSA), the Council of Graduate Students (COGS), and the Professional Student Government (PSG).

The official kickoff took place virtually on June 30 with Regent Emerita Maureen Ramirez. She shared her experiences as the director of opportunity at the Minnesota Department of Employment

and Economic Development during the current pandemic and unrest in Minnesota, as well as spoke about her time on the UMN Board of Regents as the first Latinx member, first Duluth student, and first non-traditional student to do so.

If you'd like to watch the conversation with Ramirez, it's available at youtu.be/4SRogoUpSGI

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Why the Rebellion Began Here

By Su Hwang

Having grown up in New York, then spending much of my adult life seesawing from there to San Francisco and Oakland, I was an insufferable, bicoastal snob when I first arrived in the Twin Cities.

Back then, I complained a lot about seemingly endless winter months, shoveling so much snow, feeling landlocked, and Minnesota Nice. As an Asian American woman, I had trepidations about living in a flyover state because race is a constant companion I travel with, as it is for so many of us, and I really had no idea what to expect in the Land of 10,000 Lakes. I vowed to return to the West Coast as soon as I was done with my U of M M.F.A. program in creative writing.

But then the socioeconomics of the Bay Area became untenable for a 40-something poet like me, and perhaps more surprisingly, I found community here. For the first time in my wayward life, I began setting down roots.

Many white Minnesotans are married to the state's squeaky-clean image of bike-friendly paths, being the home of Prince, pristine parks, Swedish meatballs, cheese curds and hotdish, and pontoons on shimmering, cabin-dotted lakes befitting those "The Best of" lists that get published every year, but the reality is far from these sanitized archetypes.

And yet, in the wake of George Floyd's killing, Minnesotans are finally waking up, some forcibly so. It's hard to look away when there's an enormous conflagration on your street, the literal burning down of centuries of apathy, willful ignorance, hoarded privilege, and misplaced entitlement. Citizens continue to fill the streets to protest, mourn, clean, paint

murals, and plan for a better future. Even at the height of violence and raging fires, huge, diverse crowds spontaneously gathered at numerous sites with brooms and buckets to assist in the aftermath, day after day after day. Bleary-eyed, over-caffeinated bands of neighbors and community leaders continued to come together to offer mutual aid, mobilize supply drop-offs, and organize neighborhood patrols. In the embers, something truly beautiful seemed to be coming to life.

Many are calling this time an "inflection point" in American history, including myself, but the more I think about it, the less water it holds. Inflection implies singularity, of one musculature or a single stream of consciousness, when there have been multiple inflections since the looting of this land from American Indians to the founding of the country on the backs of Black lives. I believe we are truly at a point of convergence. Convergence or confluence implies multiplicity and cumulateness—a cacophony of voices and perspectives. In this distinction, we honor the lingering ghosts of all our ancestors. We can no longer afford pivoting from one point to another and calling it progress or justice—the weight of our collective histories can no longer support these blatant disparities.

What we're seeing and experiencing is a cavalcade of centuries of protest, of deaths and rebirths, the final heave for human decency for all. ■

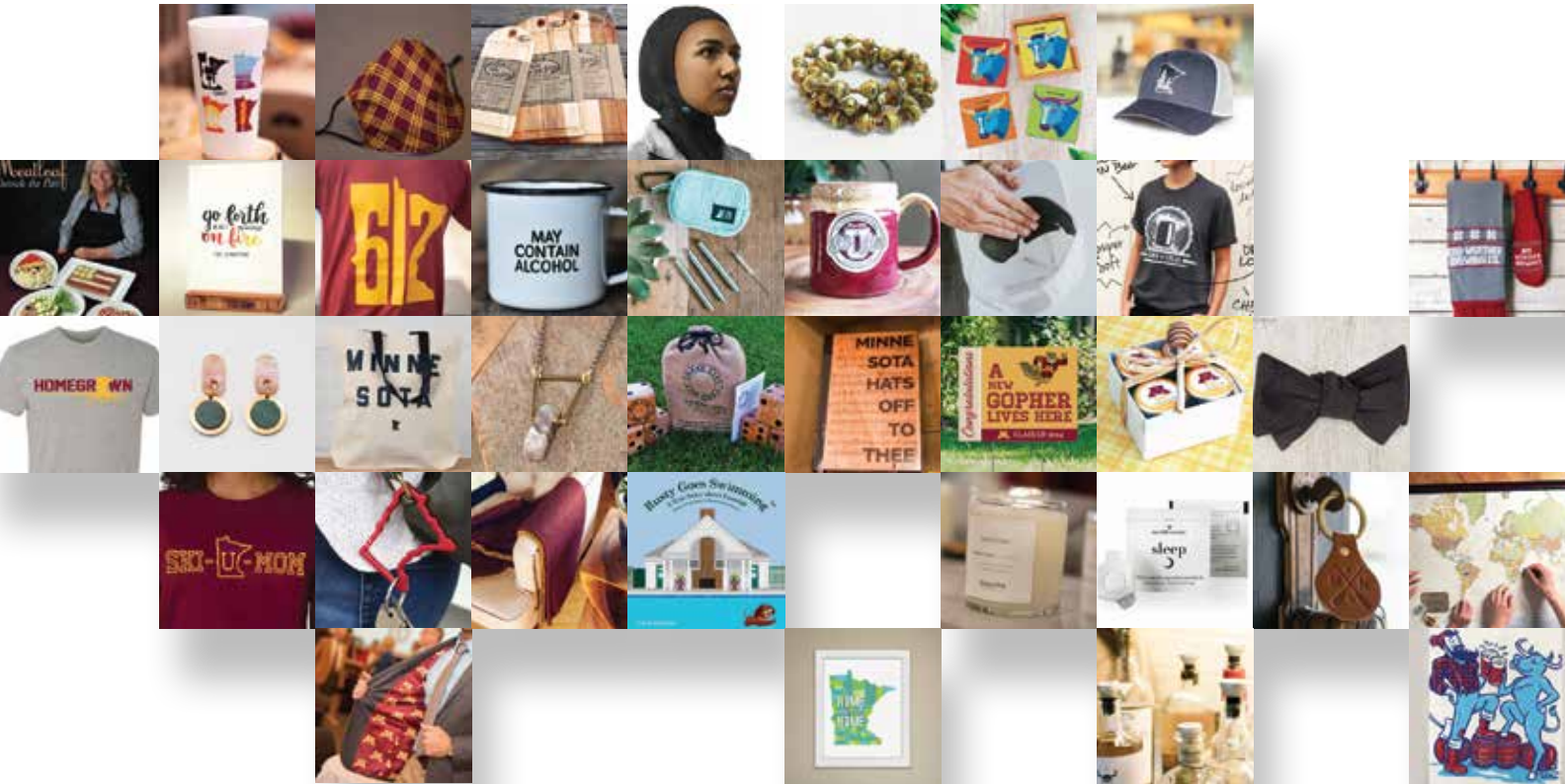
Excerpted with permission from Literary Hub. Read the complete essay at lithub.com/letter-from-minneapolis-why-the-rebellion-had-to-begin-here/



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