

The Kutsche Chronicle



Kutsche Office of Local History is part of
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Letter from the Director

It has been such a privilege to direct the Kutsche Office of Local History over the past three years. Together, we have recorded hundreds of memories, taken photos, collected papers and memorabilia, and installed exhibits. We have walked neighborhoods, explored archives, museums, and historical societies, and built collections together. You have shared your knowledge with me. You have asked me tough questions and generously engaged in critical dialogues. In ways large and small, you have demonstrated the power of local history to give voice to diverse and marginalized communities.

I have learned so much from all of you. Thank you. I will carry these lessons and experiences with me as I move on to chair the GVSU Liberal Studies Department. And I look forward to continuing to work with many of you in this new role as well.

The Kutsche Office remains in excellent hands. Beginning August 2016, Dr. Kimberly McKee, assistant professor of Liberal Studies, will become the new Director. Dr. McKee holds a Ph.D. in Women, Gender, and Sexuality

Studies from Ohio State University, a M.Sc. in Gender and Social Policy from the London School of Economics, and a B.A. in International Affairs from George Washington University. She has a rich background in working with community-based organizations nation-wide. Some of these includes serving as assistant director of the Korean American Adoptee Adoptive Family Network since 2011, working with the New York Governor's Committee on Scholastic Achievement, and the Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America.

Dr. McKee is working closely with office coordinator, Courtney Sherwood, and myself through the summer as we make this important transition. I look forward to seeing Dr. McKee realize her vision for the Office in the months and years ahead and to supporting her in my new role as Department Chair.

Welcome to Dr. Kimberly McKee!

Melanie Shell-Weiss, Ph.D.



Local History Roundtable

7th Annual Local History Roundtable

The 2016 Local History Roundtable was held on March 24 in GVSU's Mary Idema Pew Library. Focused on the theme of "Changing Communities," this year's Roundtable was the best attended meeting yet – attracting several hundred attendees over the course of the day and evening.

Highlights of the meeting included keynote addresses by Professor Todd Robinson (University of Nevada at Las Vegas), author of *A City Within a City: The Black Freedom Struggle in Grand Rapids*, and Mr. Timothy Gleisner, head of Local History and Special Collections at the Grand Rapids Public Library. Panel discussions focusing on Grand Rapids and Holland generated good discussion, as did a special talk by Professor Delia Fernandez, assistant professor of history at Michigan State University.

This year's event was co-sponsored by GVSU's Department of History, Meijer Honors' College, Office of Multicultural Affairs, Office of Service Learning, and the Community Reading Project.



Photo credit: Kristina Bird, Adam Bird Photography

Community Conversations with Todd Robinson

Partnering with the GVSU Community Reading Project, GVSU's Office of Service Learning, and LINC-UP, the Kutsche Office organized two community conversation events focusing on race, racism, and equity in Grand Rapids.

On Thursday evening, March 24, a community conversation with Professor Todd Robinson was held in the LINC-UP Gallery in Grand Rapids' Madison Square neighborhood. Speaking to a crowd of over 200, Dr. Robinson reflected on lessons learned from the 20th century Black Freedom Struggle as well as contemporary struggles for fair housing, economic opportunity, and political representation. The conversation was facilitated by Mr. Jeremy DeRoo and Mr. Derel Ross, II, co-directors of LINC-UP. Dr. Robinson's book, *A City Within a City*, was selected by Grand Rapids' Mayor Rosalyn Bliss as the city's "book of the year."

The next day, Friday, March 25, Dr. Robinson spoke with over 100 students about racism and micro-aggressions as part of a Community Reading Project campus dialogue. Held in the Mary Idema Pew Library, the conversation was facilitated by Professor Louis Moore, associate professor of history at GVSU and coordinator of African and African American Studies.



Photo credit: Taylor J. Photography

Product and Process

by Paul Kutsche

The local history professionals among us may have known it all along, but to this amateur (I am a cultural anthropologist, which is kin but not close kin) it came like a floodlight that our product and our process are quite different from each other.

Dreaming of our present local history venture, I saw school library shelves lined with short biographies—role models and culture heroes for kids who had too few of either—blue rows for African-American life histories, maybe, red-white-green for Mexican, and so forth.

That didn't happen and probably won't.

Of course, we are filling the archives of the Grand Rapids Public Library and several other repositories with taped autobiographies. But something else is happening, beyond what Gordon Olson and I envisioned, more immediate and exciting: the act of giving one's story, or one's family story, itself validates, it empowers, it provides self-respect, it leads toward enfranchisement. No waiting time, no mediating steps.

Wally Lamb's female prisoners in Connecticut (whose stories fill his books *Couldn't Keep it to Myself* and *I'll Fly Away*) feel they are somebody when they see their personal stories in print. Migrants feel like full citizens when they share how they made it across the Great River. In our own work, archivist Tim Gleisner reports gleefully the reactions of small Hispanic children who see their stories archived in the Michigan Room of GRPL blurt out versions of "Gee, I DO amount to something after all."

Product and process are both important, and we shall emphasize each in its place in our future work. Product is permanent and provides the data which scholars can analyze whenever they like. Process gives sudden impact, immediate (if small) social change. It enriches lives while the sun still shines on the day the people share with us.

Kutsche Office Interns

Belinda Bardwell, Project Coordinator

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Belinda Bardwell holds a B.S. in Liberal Studies (GVSU '14), and is currently a full time student in the MPA program. She is a member of the Native American community who has served a four-year term as Tribal Councilor for her tribe, The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, and worked for the Native American Education Program for GRPS for eleven years. She currently sits on the GVSU Native American Advisory Board, is the Chair of the Grand Rapids' Community Relations Commission, and serves as a board member for the West Michigan Environmental Action Council.

Kenya La'Shawn Fuggs



Kenya started her studies at GVSU in 2010 as an engineering student with a love for Spanish language, computer science, and a deep commitment to cultural awareness. She used all of those skills during a winter internship with the Kutsche Office, assisting with oral history collection, multimedia recording, and planning for the 7th Annual Local History Roundtable. Kenya graduated from GVSU this spring with a B.A. in Liberal Studies with an emphasis in "Culture, Innovation, and Technology."

Kassie O'Brien



Kassie O'Brien recently graduated from Grand Valley with a double major in Spanish and International Relations and a minor in International Business. Her time at GVSU was highlighted by her study abroad semester in Ecuador, her translation internship with the Kutsche Office, and some fun opportunities for her to begin learning more languages like French and Portuguese. Kassie is now pursuing her dream career in Spanish interpretation and translation.

Our Asian Pacific American Community



Beginning in January 2016, GVSU students, faculty, and staff partnered with Holland's Herrick District Library, Holland Museum, City of Holland, Latin Americans United for Progress, St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church, Integrated Fabrics, and LifeQuest Church to collect oral histories and portraits from Asian and Pacific Americans in West Michigan. Nearly 50 individuals and families contributed their stories. We celebrated together in a public reception, held on Monday, April 25 in Herrick District Library. These materials are now a permanent part of Herrick District Library's collections and can be heard and seen by visiting their Genealogy Department.



Photo credit: Bri Luginbill, Adam Bird Photography



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Growing Community in Oceana County

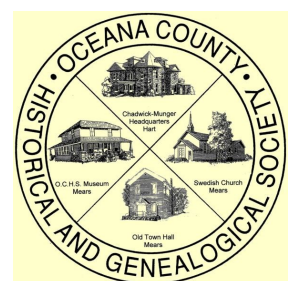
Thanks to a Common Heritage Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Kutsche Office of Local History is working with El Centro Hispano de Oceana and the Oceana Historical and Genealogical Society to collect oral histories, digitize photos, and other memorabilia that will more fully tell the history of Oceana County's agricultural communities. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the experiences of growers and migrant families alike as well as promote more community interaction.

Launched in January, community volunteers and GVSU students are already conducting some oral histories. Some highlights of the project so far include the participation of nearly 100 8th graders at Shelby Middle School who read documents collected by the project and shared their own experiences growing up in Oceana County. Twenty-five community members attended a luncheon and oral history training workshop on May 16 to assist with the project.

Anyone wishing to share their story or share materials with the project may contact the Kutsche Office or one of the community partners. A Community History Harvest is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, June 18, 2016 in the Hart Community Room, 407 State Street in downtown Hart. We will continue collecting oral histories and digitizing photos, letters, news clippings and related materials through July.



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE
Humanities





3rd Annual Gordon Olson Award

The annual Gordon Olson Award recognizes outstanding, lifetime contributions to local history, especially those that exemplify the Kutsche Office's mission of using history to give voice to diverse communities.

This year's winner, Carl Bajema, is perhaps best known for this collection of newspaper clippings at the Grand Rapids Public Library. These materials document the experiences of African Americans, Syrians, women, and many other communities who have lived in Grand Rapids over the twentieth century. Dr. Bajema is a retired GVSU professor of Biology. He is currently writing streetcar history of Grand Rapids.

Jeff Smith and John McGarry were finalists for the award. Jeff directs the Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy and runs the "Grand Rapids People's History Project." John served as executive director of the Lakeshore Museum in Muskegon from 1990 until his retirement in 2015.



Remembering John McGarry

We mourn the passing of John McGarry, a finalist for this year's Gordon Olson Award and one of the Kutsche Office's founding Advisory Council members. John suffered a fatal heart attack on May 12.

Known as a dynamic speaker, champion fundraiser, strong mentor, and advisor to museums, libraries, and cultural heritage organizations across the region, John was nationally recognized for his work as a military historian.

A native of West Virginia, over his rich career John directed the Mel Fisher Maritime Heritage Society in Key West Florida, served as Registrar of the History and Museums Division at the Marine Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C., and as Ranger/Historian at the National Park Service's Fort McHenry National Monument in Baltimore, Maryland.

During the 25 years that he directed the Lakeshore Museum John grew the institution to include eight separate buildings and founded the Michigan Heritage Park at Hilt's Landing in Whitehall Township. He was among the founding members of GVSU Kutsche Office's Advisory Council, serving on the Council until 2011.

Help keep efforts like the annual Local History Roundtable going by becoming a friend of the Kutsche Office of Local History

\$45 Annual Membership (Individual) provides free admission to the annual Roundtable and a one-year subscription to the *Kutsche Chronicle*

\$100 Annual Family/Institutional Membership provides the same benefits, up to four free admissions to one Annual Roundtable plus a one-year subscription to the *Kutsche Chronicle*

\$250 Annual Supporting Partner, includes four free admissions to one annual Roundtable, one-year subscription to the *Kutsche Chronicle*, plus special invitation to Office events throughout the year

\$500 Sustaining Partner, includes four free admissions to the annual Roundtable through 2018, three year subscription to the *Kutsche Chronicle*, plus special invitation to Office events throughout the year

\$1,000 Lifetime Membership, include all benefits listed above for life

To make your gift online, please go to www.gvsu.edu/giving/givenow. Or you may mail a check to:

Grand Valley State University, Kutsche Office of Local History

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