

Race and Social Justice Initiatives

History

The department of History is committed to strengthening racial and social justice at all levels of its research, teaching and hiring. Representatives of the department played a key role in the recent Asian American search, which yielded colleagues who, while ultimately situated in units other than History, will be involved in multisided research and teaching collaborations under the broader umbrella of Asian and Asian-American Studies.

History also fosters strong relations with Africana Studies and CSGS more generally. History's most recent hires of faculty (Nieves, Baumgartner, Parr) and staff (Hester) have been persons of color or members of underrepresented groups. More importantly, race and social justice are hard-baked into the research and teaching not only of these faculty, but of the department more generally.

Race and racial justice are increasingly integrated into the department's initiatives in the areas of digital and public history. The Public History MA program, especially, is a key site for the intersection of History and DEI issues, with students carrying out field work in local historical institutions around (e.g.) African American and women's education, the legacy of slavery, workers struggles and much more. Dr. Kabria Baumgartner's research on African America women's education informs her co-leadership of the Public History program in History. Angel Nieves, Director of Public Humanities in CSSH, uses virtual technology to reconstruct racialized spaces in Apartheid South Africa, bringing new light to the history of racial injustice in South Africa and the fight against it. Dr. Jessica Linker's use of virtual reality to reconstruct historical spaces related to themes of gender, women, and science emphasizes the previously-neglected history of non-white actors.

Jessica Parr, the department's newest hire (herself a descendant of Armenia genocide survivors) foregrounds the history of race in her teaching in the Public and Digital History space. In addition to her course offerings on Public History and the Digital Archive, Dr. Parr will be offering a future course on Comparative Slavery, and in Fall 2022, will be teaching the department's History of Boston course with strong emphasis on the history of underrepresented and historically-marginalized groups.

As these examples indicate, the field of history offers a rich palette for Northeastern's efforts in support of racial and social justice. With Dr. Angel Nieves assuming leadership of the Humanities Center, and Dr. Timothy Brown accepting the position of coordinator for environmental initiatives in the Humanities Center (title TBD), environmental justice will find a key place in a developing focus on combatting climate change. This focus will be central to a research collaboration with Gretchen Heefner from History and Jennie Stephens from the Policy School aimed at creating a digital atlas mapping the environmental impact of the global US military base network.

The goal of the project—being developed in collaboration with the Office of the Provost as an Impact Engine proposal—will be to understand a) the environmental impact of the US military's global base network, b) the military's own efforts in the area of alternative energy, and c) the possible future uses of the network in combatting the threat of global climate change. Intended to be scalable across Northeastern's global network, the digital atlas will be made available to academics and communities worldwide as a tool for

formulating local solutions to environmental problems that disproportionately effect communities of color and historically marginalized groups.

Highlighting the intrinsic link between broader issues of resiliency and sustainability and questions of access and equity, mutual understanding and diversity, the project will complement the ongoing efforts of the department, college, and university to place scholarship in the service of solving pressing real-world problems.