

FROM THE CHAIR

Our last newsletter was published just as the coronavirus pandemic closed the doors of Manning Hall, and we all moved online. The year 2020 is one we will never forget. It was marked by pervasive anti-Black

racism, extrajudicial killings and brutality across the globe, economic recession, political unrest, raging wildfires, hurricanes and other climate events. The tragic list goes on. While 2020 brought extreme challenges, it also brought us together in a shared struggle for social justice and civility, and we were reminded of humanity's remarkable resilience and the power of social relationships.

The strength, resilience and strong community spirit of our faculty and students translated into the creative adaptation of our coursework and programming to an online platform.

During the majority of 2020, our students and faculty met entirely virtually for classes, communitybuilding events and remote ethnographic research.

With respect to teaching online, the transition has been fairly seamless, due in large part to our early investments in building our online curriculum. And in case you have not heard the good news, we reached a major milestone in March 2020 when our online BA was featured in national rankings.

The Guide to Online Schools ranked us No. 6 among 2020's Best Online Bachelor's Anthropology Degrees!

A strong focus of our program this year was on building networking and mentoring opportunities for our students. After several months of outreach, we finished the first phase in building our MA Alumni Mentor Database in October 2020. This database includes approximately 80 alumni who are practicing anthropologists and are open to serving as mentors to our students. We have already begun to make use of this exciting resource and received very positive feedback from those who have been matched. We also used this database to plan and host a series of online networking events for students to mix informally with alumni. If you are an MA graduate interested in being added to the database, please reach out.

In addition to these informal networking events, the department's Community Advisory Board hosted a panel on "Practicing Anthropology in Memphis." The benefit of being online was that alumni from across the country could attend, and the turnout was impressive! The session featured the work of Roshun Austin, executive director, The Works Community Development Corporation; Christin Reeder Young, senior research and evaluation manager, Habitat for Humanity; and Paige Walkup, managing director, Caissa Public Strategy.

The Department's Diversity and Inclusion Committee is also spearheading mentoring placements, as well as planning for a spring speaker series. Drs. Katherine Lambert-Pennington and Michael Pérez are the faculty leads for this group, and the department added a dedicated GA for spring 2021 focused on diversity and inclusion initiatives.

We are continuing to grow our graduate program partnerships with other units across campus, especially with Public Health and City and Regional Planning (CRP). We have seen a significant growth in three-year integrated MA/MPH students and recently formalized a three-year integrated degree with CRP focused on urban anthropology and city planning. In the coming months, we will be talking with Public and Non-Profit Administration about the potential for an integrated degree. Each of these new partnerships has significantly expanded student training and enhanced opportunities

for post-graduate career pathways, and we are grateful to have such excellent partner departments on campus.

We hope you enjoy this year's newsletter, and we look forward to coming together as a community soon.

Sincerely,

Dr. Keri Brondo

Keri Brondo

FACULTY NEWS

Dr. Keri Brondo moved her National Geographic projects to virtual collaboration in 2020 and transitioned to focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on local livelihoods. She is also collaborating with a women's group in Utila, Honduras, to develop an alternative market for lionfish filets and jewelry. COVID-19 inspired a group of NatGeo Explorers to collaborate on a Virtual Field School, which UofM Global offered for the first time in fall 2020. Brondo will publish two new books in 2021: *Multispecies Voluntourism: Life, Death, and Collaboration in the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef* (UAP) and *Anthropological Theory for the 21st Century – A Critical Reader* (UTP), co-edited with A. Lynn Bolles, Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz and Bernard Perley.

Dr. Ted Maclin gave a presentation at the UM3D Summit in December 2020. He used his experience of teaching his online course, ANTH 3201: The Anthropology of the Internet, to illustrate his argument that "technology is never politically neutral, and if you develop online classes without considering the influences of technology, then the technology is using you rather than the other way around." Access to the UM3D Winter Summit can be found at: **memphis.edu/um3d/wintersummit.php**

Dr. Lindsey Feldman was featured in an article by Zippia, Inc., weighing in on current job market trends and opportunities for anthropologists. Check out the article at: **zippia.com/organizer-jobs/trends**



Drs. Katherine Lambert-Pennington and Lyndsey Pender co-authored the article "Food Roots & Today's Pantry: The Multiple Meanings of 'Thrifty Know-How' among Older African American Women" in Anthropology and Aging 41(2). Their article can be found here: anthro-age.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/anthro-age/issue/view/36/showToc

Congratulations to **Dr. Linda Bennett**, professor emerita and associate dean, who has earned the well-deserved **University of Memphis Association of Retirees Traces Award (UMAR)** for 2020-21. This prestigious award is presented to a University retiree for "exemplifying the concept of remaining active in scholarly and/or civic pursuits into retirement." Those familiar with Dr. Bennett's work ethic and drive, know she is the embodiment of this and an exceptional choice for this award. Congratulations, Dr. Bennett!

Congratulations to our faculty who have been awarded upcoming PDA: **Dr. Michael Pérez** (fall 2021),

Dr. Lindsey Feldman (spring 2022) and

Dr. Katherine Lambert-Pennington (spring 2022)!

Dr. Fayana Richards participated in an invited seminar titled "The Past, Present, and Future of Human Aging" at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University, in October 2020.

Dr. Michael Pérez and **Professor Kenny Latta** were interviewed for a podcast by **Amy Schaftlein** ('10) and Christopher Williams on their wealth of musical knowledge. The podcast can be found on Sonosphere here: **sonospherepodcast.com**. See more on Sonosphere in Alumni News below.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS

Dr. Terry Williams-Buffington (MA '01)

Born under Jim Crow and a sixth-generation Mississippian, educator, social activist and cultural anthropologist, Dr. Terry Williams-Buffington shares her passion for social justice with personal stories of her own lived experiences in Mississippi's Jim Crow society. Her anthropological research on the lived experiences of Black males who, in 1960, were high school students enrolled in the "Negro" public school system in the antebellum town of West Point, Miss. This research highlights the South's complex cultural environment and Black Mississippians' sense of place, attitudes towards southern whites and a Jim Crow system that guided cultural norms and society movements.

Williams-Buffington became the first student of color to enroll and graduate with a bachelor of arts degree in Southern Culture and History from the University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture under the founding director and mentorship of Dr. William Ferris (a two-time Grammy Award winner for the multimedia set "Voices of Mississippi" and professor emeritus, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill). Subsequently, she earned a master's degree in Anthropology from the University of Memphis under the mentorship of Dr. Charles Williams, professor emeritus.

With more than 30 years of professional experience, Williams-Buffington's career includes, but is certainly not limited to: presidential assistant for Minority Affairs, Monmouth College, Monmouth, Ill.; lecturer of Anthropology for multiple institutions, including City Colleges of Chicago, the Cobb Institute of Archaeology in Starkville, Miss., and Alabama Southern Community College, Monroeville, Ala.; and field ethnographer, Southern Mississippi University, Department of History and Oral History, Hattiesburg, Miss.



INTERVIEWS OF ALUMNI

Alexis Wade, MA candidate, University of Memphis Department of Anthropology, interviewed two alumni. Below are excerpts of their conversations.

Theo Davis ('14) is the farm manager at Green Leaf. a two-thirds acre urban farm located in the Soulsville neighborhood of South Memphis. After completing his MA research with Green Leaf and graduating, Davis returned to work at the farm and now manages it. He finds that as a farmer, his anthropology background helps him interpret food access issues.

Wade: What led to your career in farming?

Davis: Before my MA practicum research, I had zero agricultural background. The most experience I had was weeding my mother's flowerbed and planting whatever she needed. But that was about it in terms of my background in farming.

Then I did my practicum research at Green Leaf on community gardening. I was interested in the history of the farm and how the dynamics of the farm changed over time. I learned how community

involvement was key to the farm's success. I called Green Leaf about a year after my graduation to inquire about a job opening. They hired me, and when the previous farm manager quit, I was like, "Oh, I get a raise and a promotion — cool!" The next day, I was laughing and thinking, "Oh God, I have no idea what I'm doing!"

Wade: So, how did you learn to farm?

Davis: I am very fortunate that I have a lot of friends that are in agriculture. I just started going to conference after conference that focused on agriculture. And of course, I studied YouTube. The companies we buy seeds from also have been very helpful with their wealth of knowledge and skills about farming. Other farmers are an immense resource. It is not like other industries where it is about competition. At least all the farmers that I know, we are all in it for the same reason: We want to increase the number of people eating organic and/or locally grown produce.

One farmer gave me her trade secrets for her growing plan for a year, so she basically just handed me a holy grail. That was a big deal. Much of it is just trial and error and practice, practice, practice. I am slowly figuring out what does and does not work.

Wade: What was your focus in the Anthropology program?

Davis: My research was primarily focused on racial causes of food injustice, a problem that is still pervasive. I looked at how the neighborhood (Soulsville, South Memphis) was formed from when it was a mixed-income neighborhood with Black and white people living together. Then flight to the suburbs occurred and discriminatory

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practices took hold. First, redlining was used to keep Black people in South Memphis. Then, supermarkets started

practicing redlining —
they still are practicing
redlining — by either not
establishing food retailers
in the neighborhood or
closing existing food/
produce establishments.
There are plenty of fast
food and convenience
stores in the area, but
there are currently only
two grocery stores
nearby, neither of which
carry high-quality items.

For instance, the onceclosest Kroger store on Third and South Parkway closed in late 2017 or 2018. Now, the closest grocery to the Green Leaf farm is about a mile-anda-half away. If you are a healthy person, that is not a big deal. But 60% of this neighborhood's residents are over the age of 55. There is also a shocking percentage of people who are overweight and an equally shocking percentage of people who have a disability of some kind. So, walking a mileand-a-half for groceries is just not feasible. Food injustice is still a problem.

Wade: How has anthropology impacted your work?

Davis: It does not take an anthropologist to understand the present issues, but I think it helps to understand how past issues have informed

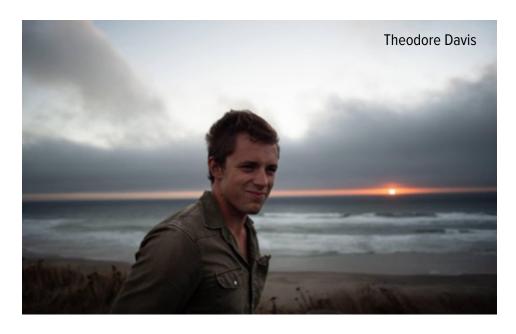
present ones. For instance, there is an intimate relationship between racism and agriculture in the United States. This has greatly influenced how I view my job and how I talk to people about what we are doing at Green Leaf. Some people here do not like to talk about agriculture because of how intimately it is tied to racism in the United States. This is unfortunate because the people who do not want to talk probably have just as much to offer as the people who do want to talk. For example, Walter Gates (a former farm manager), is a sharecropper. He has not let the abusive history of sharecropping deter his enjoyment. Today he grows okra, beans and watermelon. He is proud of his history as a sharecropper. Having an anthropology background really helps me navigate such social intricacies. Plus, what better way to share culture than food!

Wade: What advice would you give to someone who is interested in pursuing a degree in anthropology?

Davis: Do not get bogged down with thinking you are going to formally use your education. I, by and large, do not. Rather, I use my education as more of a form of enlightenment. I personally use it to look at the world differently. If you want to look at the world differently, then absolutely go for it because it is eye-opening.

Wade: What is your favorite part about your job?

Davis: There are two things, and they are interrelated. First, growing things is pretty crazy. You start out with a tiny seed and grow a carrot, tomato or an onion. Knowing that I am the person who made that



is super cool to me. My second favorite part is feeding people. That is all I really want and care about.

"You start out with a tiny seed and grow a carrot, tomato or an onion. Knowing that I am the person who made that is super cool to me."

It does not matter to me about the money or glory, I just like feeding people. It was like that before I was even a farmer. Before, working at a restaurant, I was feeding people because I was told to, whereas here it is on my terms. I am still doing it in a way that is true to me.

Wade: Who do you consider your inspirations and/or role models?

Davis: Those who have taught me to be a better farmer are my greatest inspirations: Chris Peterson (Alpha Omega Veterans Services farm), Mike Larrivee (executive director of Compost Fairy), Nathaniel Davis (Ronin Leo Farms) and Josephine and Randy Alexander (Tubby Creek). I see what they are doing and produce, and that is what I want to do. I would like to eventually have something of my own and a partnership where I have a little more control over what I do.

Marlon Foster, who is my boss, is also a huge inspiration. Knowledge Quest, the parent organization of Green Leaf, has been running for 22 years. That is a really long lifespan for a nonprofit. He is a talented orator; listening to him speak about social issues is very hypnotic.

Wade: What are some of your favorite pastimes?

Davis: Definitely playing with my dog, Carlos. Despite my illustrious education, I still play video games occasionally, ride my bike and cook.

INTERVIEWS OF ALUMNI (CONTINUED)

Dr. Christina Blanchard-Horan (MA '96) is an anthropologist and entrepreneur. She earned her master's degree in Medical and Urban Anthropology from the department in 1996, later earning her PhD in Health Services from Walden University in 2006. She is the principal consultant and director of Global Health Liaisons (GHLiaisons), a health service consulting firm in Washington, D.C. She has worked both locally and internationally to improve health services through community-based research and support of clinical trials.

Wade: How were you first introduced to the discipline of anthropology?

Blanchard-Horan: At the time, I was getting my undergraduate degree in journalism and photography. I decided to take the class Peoples of Africa taught by Dr. Charles Williams. While I was in his class, I decided that I would finish my bachelor's degree and then I would get my master's in Anthropology. I did not like journalism. Journalism did not seem in-depth enough!

While in the master's program, I conducted research in Sierra Leone. I was awarded three grants — one each from Kodak, the Tennessee Department of International Family Medicine and the University of Memphis. This was an audiovisual study of culture and medicine in and around Freetown, Sierra Leone. I was very interested in visual anthropology.

I subsequently produced an art exhibit at Christian Brothers University utilizing photographs from my research in Sierra Leonne. This photographic work was also used for my contribution to the "Voice and Visuals of Women Photographers."

Wade: What was the focus of your studies in the Department of Anthropology and how it did influence your future career?

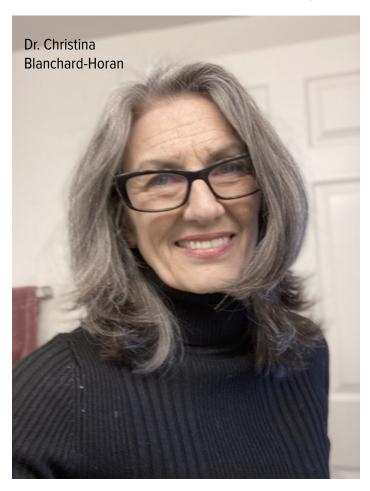
Blanchard-Horan: I graduated with my master's in Urban Anthropology and Medical Anthropology under Dr. Hyland and Dr. Williams. I worked abroad in Sierra Leone and locally in Orange Mound, Memphis. After graduating, I ended up working as a consultant in Memphis. I designed a survey and began conducting research and interviews. This resulted in a project for a small local medical company that was used by healthcare providers for the Tennessee Department of Health and TennCare.

Eventually, I went to work at the Prevention Center of the University of Memphis researching behaviors associated with tobacco use. Specifically, I looked at ways to help people stop smoking. I did this for a few years, but it all contributed to who I am today. I sort of view anthropology as my religion, in the way that it is so critical that we understand each other, and that we find a better way to exist with one another as humans. Anthropology helps us to achieve that.

Wade: What have you learned about health disparities in your work?

Blanchard-Horan: I am a generalist, so I like to do a little bit of everything. I ended up working for a peer review organization that reviews health files for people across the state. It was not until the U.S. Department of Health Services decided that they wanted to do a disparities project that I decided I needed another career shift.

This project was 20 years ago, before anyone knew what disparities in health care were, and basically the first of its kind. A friend had contacted me about a job



opening and I immediately applied. My application letter was the first one sitting on the recruiter's desk! I was hired as their project manager. It was a public health project where we looked at different ways to peer review organizations. We were trying to help them figure out how they would reach different populations. I did that for about five years and was promoted to assistant director. Then I got started doing consulting work in Uganda.

Wade: How did you come to be in your current position?

Blanchard-Horan: I decided to move to Washington, D.C., in 2004. At the time, I had a consulting job with World Bank. Since I was only consulting (and working for myself), I decided I needed to find a full-time job. I was hired to help a startup with an HIV clinical trials site in lowincome countries. There were 23 sites in Africa, Asia, South America and the Caribbean. I worked with the U.S. Health Department and the AIDS National Institute of Health to help them develop clinical trial sites. I did that for ten years and developed their database for insights that is now used for their whole system of tracking AIDS clinical trials research, which is pretty awesome.

These insights helped me start my own company, Global Health Liaisons (GHLiaisons), in 2015. Our first contract was a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) evaluation in Sierra Leone for their malnutrition treatment post-Ebola. We hired local companies, conducted interviews around the country and provided

UNICEF with all they needed. Our second contract was with them in Uganda doing the same thing.

Our company is unique as a permanent consortium model. We hire people in our consortium to do work. Individuals who want to do work can, but they can also have another job. They do not really have a lot of time to go out and look for work as a consultant. They come to us and we put them into our system. We vet them to make sure they fit our agenda, and then when work comes up that is appropriate, we contact them.

Currently, we are doing work for the American Society of Hematology Research Collaborative. They are a group of scientists who come out of the American Society of Hematology clinical trial for blood diseases. The project we are working on is sickle cell disease, which is an international issue, but we are starting in the U.S. We help them in the development of their sponsor engagement with their history, how they do things and working with their community. Community engagement is a big part. This brings me back to the work I have been doing for the last 15 vears. We look at the effects of who has been impacted by sickle cell in these communities. We are teaching them how to consult on clinical trials that impact them, and we are looking to engage other companies and help them do the same.

Wade: Tell us who you are today.

Blanchard-Horan: I do business. I do project management. I do consulting.

"I am a subject matter expert in clinical trials, developing community advisory meeting boards and developing clinical trial sites. The nuance of doing that in the international setting is definitely an art because it is not the same everywhere."

I am a subject matter expert in clinical trials, developing community advisory meeting boards and developing clinical trial sites. The nuance of doing that in the international setting is definitely an art because it is not the same everywhere.

It is pretty exciting work. I love what I do! I am a jack of all trades — I get to work with our marketing department, the development department and work on projects. I am an entrepreneur interested in business development. Anthropology has helped shaped my goals as a business owner and a consultant: to improve and provide services that improve conditions for women and children, and for people who are vulnerable.

ALUMNI AND STUDENT NEWS

Special thanks to alumni **Kyle Simpson** (MA '15, BA '13), **Jenessa Spears** (MA '15) and **Johnda Washington** (BA '19) for joining the students enrolled in ANTH 3010 (Practicing Anthropology) to discuss their careers in anthropology. Simpson currently serves as a senior research manager in donor insights and strategy at ALSAC/St. Jude; Spears works as an anthropologist for Consilience Group, LLC.; and Washington is a special projects coordinator in agronomy for Indigo Ag.

Sonosphere, Inc., a nonprofit organization run by **Amy Schaftlein** (MA '10), president/CEO, and Christopher Williams, president/CEO, that produces programming such as live performances and lectures, music festivals and audio documentaries. The podcast, Sonosphere, explores sound in music and art movements through history and today. **sonospherepodcast.com**

Congratulations to **Melissa Murray Howie** and **Patrick Howie** (MA '10) who welcomed baby Riley Mae Howie on April 11. Welcome to the world, Riley!

Colleen Chandler (née McCartney) (MA '16) and **John Chandler** (MA '18) were married Nov. 14, 2020. Congratulations, Colleen and John — we wish you all the best!

The Anthropology Club is being revived and elections were held early in the spring semester. The newly elected officials are **Lydia Babcock**, president; **Tracey Nguyen**, vice president; and **Samantha Moore**, treasurer and EMS scheduler.



Amy Shaftlein and Christopher Williams



Chandler's wedding photo



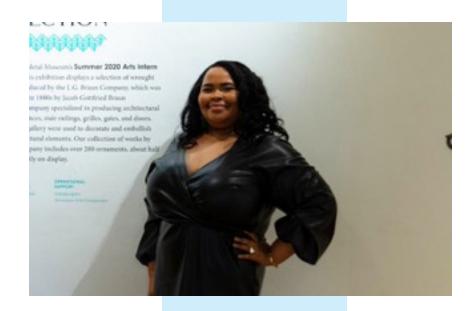


Riley Mae Howie

Theresa Smith (BA anticipated '21) was a collections intern at the National Ornamental Metal Museum in Memphis. The Arts Intern program is run by the Studio Institute and offers paid internships in the arts to undergraduate students. Smith's project involved materials from J.G. Braun Company (1887-1997) and included inventorying, cataloging, photographing, researching and co-curating the fall 2020 exhibition of the collection.

The J.G. Braun Company produced elaborate metal ornaments, railings and fences, which became a sensation in the Victorian and Art Deco buildings of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The 280+ objects in this collection were donated by Ernest Wiemann of Wiemann Iron Works to the museum back in the 1970s. The museum's J.G. Braun Collection represents only a small portion of what the company produced.

This internship gave Smith the opportunity to experience real museum work as an undergraduate anthropology student. Special thanks to Jared, Amy, Brooke and all the staff at the Metal Museum.







Theresa Smith and her displays

Christian Reeder Young (MA '07) is senior research and education manager at Habitat for Humanity and shares the following about Habitat's Aging in Place program:

According to a study from the Tennessee Housing Development Agency:

- Nearly 230,000 senior owner households are low-income, and the likelihood of falling below the poverty level tends to increase as seniors age.
- The number of cost-burdened seniors is projected to increase to almost 350,000 households statewide by 2030 and to more than 385,000 households by 2040.
- 88% of older Tennesseans live in homes built before 1980. Homes built prior to 2000 are five times more likely to need accessibility modifications, and aging housing stock often needs critical repairs.

Roof leaks, water damage, and issues with heating and air units, plumbing and electrical systems can exacerbate respiratory illness, increase the risk of falls and negatively impact mental health. Thousands of older Tennesseans lack the resources to make the renovations that would enable them to continue living in their homes safely, comfortably and independently.

Habitat for Humanity of Greater Memphis is a leader in addressing this issue, launching an Aging in Place program in 2015 and providing home repairs and accessibility modifications to more than 1,000 Fayette and Shelby County homeowners. In 2019, Memphis Habitat also worked with 14 other Habitat offices to launch their own Aging in Place programs to serve more than 1,200 Tennessee seniors across 25 counties by the end of 2021.

These programs are inspired by research and followed by evaluation that explores the health and quality of life experiences of older adults. Despite the work and applied research, a great need still remains and continues to grow. The need for services far exceeds the



Zoom meeting of Practicing Anthropology

limited funding resources and affordable housing service providers that currently exist.

In January 2021, Habitat for Humanity of Greater Memphis hosted the Tennessee Health + Housing Summit which convened leaders in nine different panels from the health care, philanthropy, community development and government sectors to exchange information about trends, tools and new resources to sustain current and future interventions, and identify opportunities to collaborate to improve the health of older Tennesseans.

Reeder Young moderated the panel "Data-Driven Solutions: Critical Research that Catalyzes Community Change," which was comprised of researchers and practitioners who have been working diligently at the intersection of health and housing to drive evidence-based change. Attendees learned more about the assessments and outcomes associated with Habitat's local- and state-level evaluations.

Speakers included Dr. Brian Rahmer, senior policy fellow at the Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School of Public Policy & Administration at the University of Delaware; Dr. Jennifer Molinsky, senior research associate at the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University; and Dr. Alice Bonner, director of Strategic Partnerships in the CAPABLE Program at Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing.

memphishabitat.com/tnhealthhousingsummit

Dr. Lorenzo D'Orsi is a postdoctoral research fellow at Catania University and will be a virtual Visiting Researcher in the Department of Anthropology and the School of Urban Affairs and Public Policy during the spring of 2021. Dr. D'Orsi's research spans questions of intergenerational memory and political violence in Uruguay and Turkey and post-industrialism in Sicily. He is currently working on a project called "Practicing the Smart City: New policies and urban imaginaries in Sicily," which focuses on the smart

city agenda and its implementation in the post-industrial scenario of southern Italy. He is investigating how the global smart agenda reconfigures discursive regimes, imaginaries, and territorial politics in Gela, a Sicilian city historically marked by structural deficiencies and the presence of a now defunct oil refinery that has left high rates of pollution and unemployment. He looks forward to engaging with faculty, community partners and students on urban development issues.



Dr. D'Orsi

SUPPORT THE DEPARTMENT

The Department of Anthropology wants to thank all of its donors who have helped to support our department. Donations are increasingly important in providing excellent opportunities to undergraduate and graduate students. Financial gifts to the Department of Anthropology go toward funding scholarships to students, conference travel, membership to the SfAA, increases in student stipends, student professional development programs and in attracting high-quality and dedicated students and faculty to the department.

HOW TO DONATE

Do you want to join other alumni and friends by making a gift in support of the Anthropology Enrichment Fund? Simply complete this form (either here or online) and return it to the department.

Enclosed is my gift in the amount of \$\ made payable to the University of Memphis Foundation (with the specification that it be in support of the Anthropology Enrichment Fund).

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