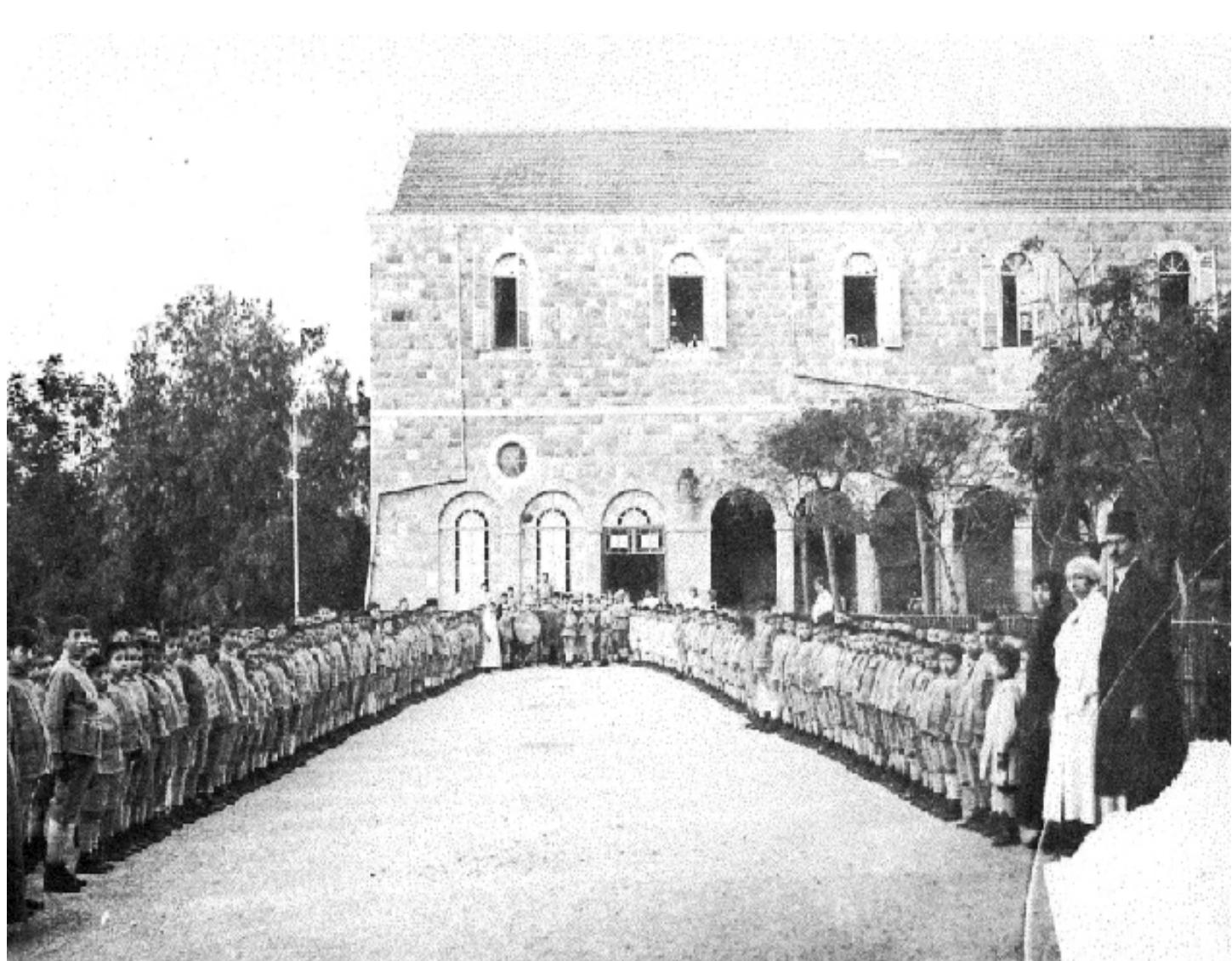


History Happenings

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Adoption in Postwar America

An Interview with Dr. Sarah Potter

Dueñas-Vargas: Your book is about adoption in a period when pronatalism in America was momentous. What was new about the desire to foster or adopt a child in an era so radically different from that of the Depression years?



everybody else **adoption** AND THE POLITICS OF DOMESTIC DIVERSITY

IN POSTWAR AMERICA *sarah potter*

Potter: During the Depression, the practice of adoption—which had become increasingly common during the 1920s—diminished as many struggled just to get by with their existing families. Marriage and birthrates dropped during the Depression, and many families split up. Social service agencies were often overwhelmed due to the crisis, finding it difficult to place children who needed foster care or were available for adoption.

Adoption rates started to increase again during World War II as Americans returned to work, but the uncertainties of wartime still meant many couples were unable to adopt. It

wasn't until the postwar years, when there was a surge of interest in marriage and parenthood among a wide swath of Americans, that adoption became common. From 1946 to 1964, Americans across race and class married more often, at younger ages, and had more children, creating the post-World War II baby boom. Reflecting these trends, adoption rates also rose, peaking in 1970.

In general, adoption during the Baby Boom was depicted as a solution to the perceived social problems of both unwed motherhood and infertility. White middle-class unwed mothers were increasingly encouraged to relinquish their babies to the homes of infertile middle-class white couples and to move on to a new life in which they would supposedly remain chaste until marriage gave them the opportunity to have a “legitimate” family. Meanwhile, childless couples were given access to the children they so ardently desired. Further, children who would otherwise be condemned to the stigma of being born out of wedlock and raised by an unwed mother were spared this potential shame when they were placed with married adoptive parents. This pattern kept the sanctity of the nuclear family intact on all sides of the equation. In contrast to the many promises attached to adoption among white families, however, black families adopted less frequently and black unwed mothers were more often encouraged to raise their children themselves.

Dueñas-Vargas: During the postwar era the nuclear family in America acquired new resonances, both as source of personal fulfillment and for individuals' political and social sense of belonging. Would you want to expand on this fascinating transformation?

Potter: When starting this project, one of my main questions was, “What did marriage and parenthood mean to diverse Americans during the post-World War II baby boom?” I used as my main archive couples’ applications to become adoptive parents or serve as foster parents to infants awaiting adoption because those situations



forced people to explain their desire for a family. Because I used the applications of a very diverse social agency in Chicago, the Children's Home and Aid Society of Illinois, it was also a source that allowed me to look into the lives of both black and white families, rich and poor. Unfortunately, these sources do tend to privilege the perspective of social workers that were in charge of placing children. But they are still one of the best windows available onto how ordinary people from diverse backgrounds described their families. I particularly liked that applying to become parents put these couples in a situation where they were likely to try to present their very best selves, which let me glimpse what they believed to be the "ideal" family and the ideal reasons for wanting to have children.

I found that these couples, regardless of their race or class background, described being married and having children as crucial to their sense of personal fulfillment and to their feeling of social belonging. They felt both social pressure and a strong personal desire to marry and have children because being single or childless made them feel excluded and inadequate in a culture that privileged family membership. The very centrality of their families to their sense of personal and social worth, however, also made it essential to their understanding of race, gender, and class politics. As they worked to support and advance their families' wellbeing, they encountered both privilege and inequality. Family became a crucial way ordinary people thought about social and political inequities during the postwar years.

In this way, my work challenges prevailing interpretations of the baby boom family. We tend to think of 1950s families as suburban, white, and privileged. We assume that that Baby Boom family's main political significance was that it was outside politics: ordinary men and women looked to their homes and families for security and fulfillment, and to escape from the anxieties of an increasingly uncertain nuclear age. Yet, I contend, this view of the Baby Boom family ignores the real diversity of American families at the time. Many families struggled to cope with the era's numerous political and social upheavals, were excluded from its prosperity, and did not

have the luxury of hiding in a suburban enclave. For these men and women, family was not separate from the social and political disparities they encountered as they went about their daily lives, but was indeed at their heart.

Dueñas-Vargas: In what ways do the new representations of the family differ from those of the earlier decades of Depression, Migration, and the Second World War?

Sarah Potter: I think that the politicized postwar family actually grew out of ordinary people's experiences with the Depression, the Great Migration, and World War II. The hardships of economic depression, relocation from South to North, and supporting and fighting a world war all encouraged people to see both the practical and emotional value of their family relationships. These events cemented the family as the primary unit through which people navigated adversity and uncertainty, and thereby set the stage for the important connections between the family and the world outside the household during the postwar years.

Dueñas-Vargas: You also suggest that the happy family portraits of the early postwar period soon began to show fractures. On the one hand, the formidable social and political change of the 1960's—the Civil Rights, and Black Power movements, the rejection of the Vietnam War, the sexual revolution and second wave feminism—challenged the centrality of the nuclear family. On the other hand, women began to question the value of domesticity. Would you want to elaborate on this point?

Potter: The immediate postwar consensus around the family fell apart quite quickly in the 1960s. By the 1970s, the birth rate had dropped dramatically, the divorce rate soared, young people embraced the sexual revolution, and family was at the center of many fractious debates between feminists and religious conservatives. My work helps us understand how that happened by demonstrating that these tensions were in fact deeply embedded in the idealized postwar family itself. I show, on the one hand, how and why family membership was so profoundly important to ordinary people's sense of belonging during the postwar



years and, on the other hand, how family membership simultaneously created a number of anxieties, resentments, and divisions along gender, class, and race lines. Rather than viewing the 1960s as a simple rejection of the stifling 1950s, I reveal that these two decades are deeply intertwined.

Dueñas-Vargas: Studies of the postwar family usually favored white, suburban, middle-class, and nuclear households. Your book clearly contributes to a new and fresh approach. Your main focus is on working-class and African-American families. In what ways, turning your attention to ordinary men and women, does your work contribute to the history of gender and the family in America?

Potter: In addition to the interventions I've described above, I also chose this approach to make a more pointed statement about the assumptions we make as historians when we frame historical questions. I wanted to make the ideas and experiences of African-American families and

working-class families as essential to my analysis as those of the white, middle-class families that usually populate studies of postwar families because doing so automatically disrupts many of the assumptions we make about so-called "mainstream" family ideals. We often give a privileged position to the white middle class by setting up their story as the dominant narrative and then asking how others differed from that narrative. Alternatively, we tell separate stories for separate groups of people, as if race, class, and gender differences can be understood apart from each other. While I certainly believe it is important to give focused historical analysis to generally understudied groups, I also believe many social categories work in tandem with one another and are constituted relationally—making it important to think about them as being in conversation with one another. By taking seriously the experiences of diverse men and women, I reveal that we simply cannot understand the origins, power, and legacy of Baby Boom familial ideals without considering the lives of African-American and working-class people.

A Story of Survival

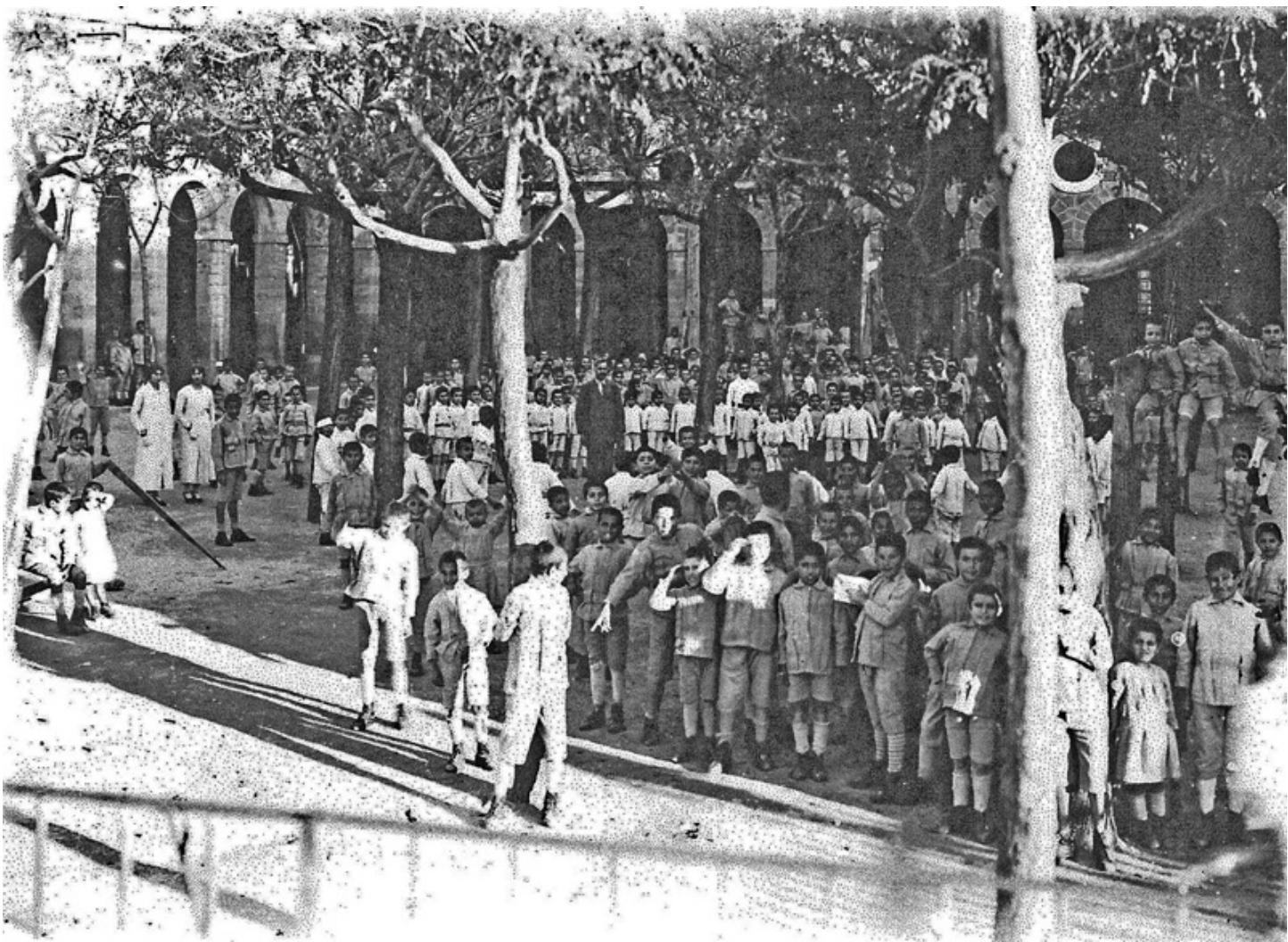
By Dr. Aram Goudsouzian

When Karnig Panian was five years old, he lived in the primarily Armenian village of Gurin, in what is now Western Turkey. In 1915, at the outbreak of the Great War, Ottoman officials forcibly marched him and his family to a concentration camp in the desert outside Hama, Syria, where they were left to starvation and disease, victims of what would be called the Armenian Genocide.

Panian's saga was heartbreakingly extraordinary. His father had been conscripted into the army; Karnig never saw him again. In the camp, he watched his mother, brother, and sister die; they were tossed into nearby caves along with thousands of other rotting corpses. Young Karnig, after various twists and turns, ended up in an orphanage in Antoura, Lebanon. The orphanage was a pet project of Jemal Pasha, one of the architects of the Armenian Genocide. He sought to transform young Armenian and Kurdish children into Turks: forcing them to speak Turkish, converting them to Islam, and indoctrinating them with propaganda. (The cover photograph for this issue of the newsletter and all of the pictures in this article illustrate the orphans.)

Panian's story – captured now in the English translation, *Goodbye, Antoura: A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide* – is one of resistance. Karnig and his fellow young children try to hold on to their identities: their names, their language, their history, and their memories of their murdered families. On a more basic level, it is a story of survival. The teachers and administrators at the orphanage employ brutal discipline tactics, and they provide the tiniest morsels of food for the children, leaving Karnig and his friends to risk daring nighttime raids of the countryside. At one point, he and some friends even escape the orphanage, living for months in isolated caves.





Karnig Panian lived to tell his story, of course. *Goodbye, Antoura* traces his journey through the aftermath of the Great War. He, protected by American relief workers and committed Armenian teachers, survived the warfare that accompanied the evacuation of French troops in modern-day Syria, and ended up in an orphanage in Jbeil, Lebanon, where he could finally rebuild his shattered life. He then had a long life and a sterling career as an educator.

I was very fortunate to serve as the editor of *Goodbye, Antoura*. Sometimes a historian completes a project after years of deliberation, immersion in the historical literature, and exhausting archival research before slowly, carefully putting pen to page. This was not one of those times. My participation was unexpected, fast, outside my comfort zone, and richly rewarding.



I was visiting friends and family in Boston this summer, when my aunt, Houry Boyamian, asked me to read her late father's story. Karnig Panian had originally written it in Armenian, and Houry and her sister contracted Simon Begekian to translate it into English. She was curious to see if she could get it published with one of the small presses associated with Armenian history and culture.

The manuscript was a mess – it had many repetitions, a few narrative contradictions, unconventional formatting, and a bizarre structure, with some very long chapters and others that were just a few pages long. But it contained beautiful, poetic language and an amazing story. I did some light editing

on this version, and I urged Houry to see if she could get a scholar of the subject to write an introduction that put it in context. Despite my Armenian heritage, I am a historian of the modern United States, and I lack the expertise to do justice to that task.

With some luck, the manuscript ended up in the hands of UC-Davis historian Keith David Watenpaugh, a notable scholar of humanitarian movements and the Middle East. Keith not only wrote the introduction, but also championed the project to Stanford University Press editor Kate Wahl. It also received an endorsement from Richard Hovannisian, the retired UCLA professor who is the true dean of Armenian history. Vartan Gregorian, the former president of Brown University and now president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, wrote a fine foreword.

By late August, the press had agreed to publish the book. Now Panian's memoir can reach not only interested Armenians, but also scholars of human rights, childhood, and the Middle East, among others. Vitally, it could also be assigned in classrooms.

But Stanford wanted the book out in April 2015, in time for the worldwide commemorations of the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, and it wanted a dramatically trimmed-down, more conventionally structured, and more readable manuscript – in six weeks. So I pulled out my red pen (my grad students know it well), and I cut, and I moved, and I reshaped. I confronted tricky questions about the reliability of Panian's memory, especially when he told two different versions of one event, and I wrestled with which stories to include and which to eliminate. These were intellectual burdens, but also personal ones – my aunts, my cousins, and their young children are here because Karnig Panian survived, and their story is his.

In the end, it got done, and our whole team is optimistic that *Goodbye, Antoura* finds an audience among scholars, students, and the general public. With some luck, it becomes part of a larger movement to raise awareness about the Armenian Genocide and stoke international recognition of its horrors.

Race and Racism in Post-war France

By Dr. Andrew Daily

In 1946, France, only recently liberated from occupation and war, wrote a new constitution that would govern both metropolitan France (known colloquially as the “hexagon”) as well as France’s vast colonial empire. The new polity was named the Union Française, and was founded on the principles – if not always the practice – of French republicanism: liberty, equality, fraternity. At the same moment France was rewriting its constitution, representatives from the so-called *vieille colonies* (old colonies) of Guadeloupe, Guyenne, Martinique, and Réunion asked to be incorporated into the very definition of the French nation. The four colonies shared common histories: all were small colonies primarily inhabited by the descendants of Africans that had been carried into slavery in the 17th and 18th centuries, and all were “creole,” defined by a mixing and mingling of cultural forms from Europe, Africa, and Asia. In a law that came to be known as “Assimilation,” the four colonies – the oldest parts of France’s empire – became part of the French nation as “overseas” departments, a status that they still share. If you look closely at a euro-note, for example, the four territories, parts now of the EU as well as France, appear in a small

box at the edge of the currency, the far-flung edge of the European Union.

Following Assimilation, hundreds, and eventually thousands, of Guadeloupeans, Guyanese, Martinicans, and Réunionais moved from their homelands to metropolitan France, most settling in and around Paris. The Antillean emigrant population had reached such numbers by the 1960s that Martinicans took to referring to Paris as the “third island.” The first migrants were mainly students, traveling to Paris and other university towns like Montpellier and Bordeaux to continue their educations. Migrants looking for work soon followed, encouraged after 1962 by a government agency, BUMIDOM, that helped migrants find jobs and housing. Migrants looked to Paris as a promised land in which they could escape the unemployment and low pay of their home departments.

French citizens with all the rights and privileges guaranteed by the French rights of man and constitution, their arrival in Paris did not go as smoothly as many had hoped. Compared

to their homes, France was large, anonymous, cold, with a dramatically different culture and way of life. Louise-Hélène Marie-Anne, a literature student in Paris, told a group of students considering future study in Paris, that France could be “indifferent” and that the French lacked “the same friendly warmth that you find at home.” Antillean writers Joseph Zobel and Edouard Glissant, both students in postwar Paris, wrote about the strangeness of the massive metropolis, and even about the foreignness of snow to students who had lived their entire lives in the tropics. Other French didn’t understand their fellow citizens, and often patronized and even exoticized Antilleans. Madeleine Lastel, a Catholic youth activist from Guyenne and a sharp chronicler of Antillean immigrant life in the metropole, told the story of a well-intentioned but ignorant white Catholic student who wanted an “African” to help organize and arrange a meeting that her group was putting together; when a young *metis* (mixed person) Antillean volunteered the young woman exclaimed, “That one isn’t black enough!”

Others substituted racial animus for ignorance. While Antilleans considered themselves fully French and possessed all the attributes of Frenchness – most were Catholics, all spoke French, and all had been educated in French culture in French schools – Antilleans soon discovered that racism and prejudice were rampant in the metropole, which the deadly colonial war going on across the Mediterranean in the French colony of Algeria had exacerbated. Students reported difficulty finding lodging due to their skin color; others reported that waiters refused to serve them in cafés and restaurants. Workers complained about being excluded from working-class bars, and about the poor condition of

blacks,” and then repeated a laundry list of racist stereotypes about people of African descent.

Other Antilleans reported being harassed by the police, and by right-wing student groups that resented the new immigrants.



Police in Lyon arrested the Martinican psychiatrist Frantz Fanon as a “pimp” because he was out walking with his fiancé, Josie, who was white. In June 1959, members of the right-wing student group, Jeune Nation, assaulted and beat up a group of Martinican students who had been walking with a young white woman in the Gare du Nord metro station. The militants “shamed” the woman for “going around ‘with n****’s” and when the Martinican

students protested, the right-wing militants, shouting racial epithets, severely beat them.

Frustrated with the contempt, racism, and even violence they encountered, many young Antilleans began to reconsider their relationship to France. If the French insisted so strenuously on their “difference,” perhaps it was time to explore that difference. They organized student unions and organizations to contest their marginalization and treatment, and, in a prolific burst of writing, they explored what it meant to be both French and Antilleans in books, poems, student newsletters, essays, and political tracts. From their experience in the metropole, and their frustration with the racism of French society, was born a cultural renaissance that helped lay the foundation of the rich and deep culture of the French overseas departments. Prominent writers such as the Martinicans Edouard Glissant and Raphaël Confiant, the Guadeloupeans Maryse Condé, Simone Schwarz-Bart, and Daniel Maximin, and the Guyanese Bertène Juminer, as well as historians Jacques Adélaïde-Merlande and Oruno Lara, emerged from this generation of postwar students. Their push back against both racism and contempt led to a revitalization of Antillean culture and history, and a reinvigoration of Antillean identity.

Today many difficulties face the French overseas departments – now five with the 2011 addition of the Indian Ocean island of Mayotte – with unemployment, wealth inequality, environmental degradation, and poverty still major problems. Frustration with the persistence of these problems led to 2009 strikes in Guadeloupe, which soon spread to Martinique, Guyenne, and Réunion, protesting the high cost of living, the concentration of economic wealth in the hands of a few,



Antillean students meeting in Paris in the early 1960s

the apartment blocs they lived in on Paris’ northern edges. Maddy Lastel told stories of how metropolitan classmates, and even teachers, frequently reassured her, in confiding and patronizing tones, that as an Antillean, “she was not like other



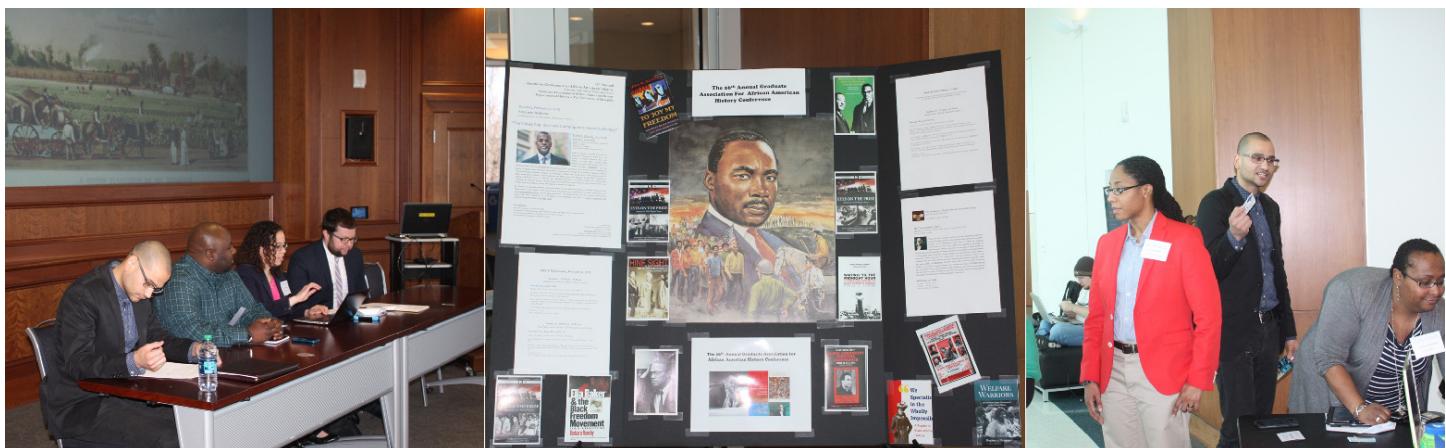
Protest in Guadeloupe in 2009

and the perceived indifference of Paris to conditions in the overseas departments. Migrants living in the “third island” of Paris report that tensions in France over Maghrebi and West African immigration to France have affected them as well, as the police, shop owners, and employers mistake them for immigrants and harass and discriminate against them. Antilleans, Guyanese, and Réunionnais have also

watched the growing popularity of the Front National with concern, remembering the many disparaging things that the Party’s founder, Jean-Marie Le Pen, said about people of African descent. In a France that seems to be turning against multiculturalism and plurality, many Antilleans, despite the security of their French citizenship, worry about their future with France.

Graduate Student Conference in African-American History

By Andrea L. Ringer



In February 2015, the Graduate Association for African American History (GAAAH) hosted another successful conference at The University of Memphis. The 16th Annual Graduate Conference in African-American History attracted applicants from universities throughout the United States. The three-day conference featured panels, roundtables, and keynote addresses from February 11 through February 13 and was generously sponsored by Student Event Allocation Funds, the Department of History, the Program in African and African American Studies, Roberta Church Fund, and the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change.



The conference, held at the University Center on campus, featured paper presentations of original research by the twenty-two participants. The thematically organized panels included topics on African-American culture, social policy, and the African diaspora. Bryan Kessler (University of Mississippi) won the Memphis State Eight top paper prize with his paper, "White, Black, and Blue: The Battle over Black Police, Professionalization, and Police Brutality in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963-1970." Additionally, Sher Afgan Tareen (Florida State University) and Samuel Gale (The University of Wisconsin-Madison) won the second- and third-place prizes, respectively. GAAAH president Jeff Jones is shown above with Sher Afgan Tareen.

A luncheon sponsored by the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change featured Dr. Daniel Matlin of King's

College London. Dr. Matlin's most recent book, *On the Corner: African-American Intellectuals and the Urban Crisis* (2013), won the prestigious Benjamin Hooks National Book Award for Outstanding Scholarly Work on the American Civil Rights Movement and its legacy.

A roundtable discussion on recent social activism attracted a lively discussion. Drs. Eddie Glaude, Chris Johnson, and Earnestine Jenkins joined local activist Jayanni Webster of Christian Brothers University to lead the discussion. Valuable insights regarding such topics as the role of media in effecting activism, the disparity between established classes and the ever-increasing poor, and the dichotomy between law enforcement and communities, were shared by each of the panelists. Ms. Webster offered tremendous insight from her first-hand experience with the "Put the People First Campaign." Dr. Kaylin Ewing moderated and spurred discussion with thought-provoking questions and talking points that encapsulated such concerns as the fast-food workers' campaign, the transference of social media into action, and the "black lives matter" controversy.

The feature event of the conference was a keynote speech by Dr. Eddie Glaude of Princeton University. He is the author and editor of several books, including his most recent, *Democracy in Black* (2014). With an introduction from Dr. Chris Johnson, Dr. Glaude presented his lecture, entitled "The Values Gap: Race and Contemporary American Politics," to an audience of professors, conference participants, graduate students, and local Memphians.

Each GAAAH member worked hard to ensure the success of this year's conference and planning began more than one year ago. The event would not have been possible without the support of the faculty advisors, Drs. Chris Johnson and Michele Coffey, and their presence both at the conference and throughout the year. Additionally, Dr. Aram Goudsouzian has offered continued guidance for the organization. The members of GAAAH are also very appreciative of administrative associate Karen Bradley. Thank you to all participants and volunteers. We hope to see everyone at another successful conference next year.



Speak to Me: Searching for Alberta Hunter

By Dr. K. T. Ewing

Some people are born to write. I was not. A child of summer, I was born to chase sunshine and take long naps. Miami, Florida, is the perfect place for someone with my temperament. However, it was right there, in the middle of the most beautiful summer day in Miami Beach, that Alberta Hunter called my name. Of course I didn't answer. I'd left her in Memphis and had no intention of returning. I kept swimming and brushed her voice aside, but she was more persistent than I imagined. She clung to my skin more thickly than Atlantic sea salt. Almost six years later, I fully understand that we can't run from our passion. It carries us. Mine carried me back to Memphis, Tennessee.

Alberta Hunter, a native Memphian born in 1895, became an internationally acclaimed blues and cabaret singer in the early 1920s. We share a hometown, love of blues music, passion for travel, and a desire to honor the lives and legacies of African American women. As she neared the end of her life in 1984, she consented to a series of interviews with journalist Frank C. Taylor. He meticulously tracked Hunter as she moved through time. Though her biographer had come to hear her story, she was determined to weave the lives of other people into the fabric of his narrative. Hunter repeatedly mentioned women whose names had faded from popular memory. She insisted that her story would not be complete without them. My journey picks up where Taylor's left off and fills in some important gaps. His work is a beautiful tribute to a woman he admired, but her desires are often obscured in his writing. Centering Hunter's voice was my primary concern.

When people imagine the lives of graduate students, they usually think of sprawling college campuses, libraries filled with buzzing fluorescent lights, and aromatic coffee shops. All of these settings played a role in my process, but those aren't the things I remember

most. I remember taking the train to Chicago, Illinois. I remember the sound of steel wheels on steel tracks humming me to sleep while I wondered how Hunter made the journey in a segregated car almost one hundred years earlier. I remember watching grass, trees, and snow whiz by the windows. My research began to make sense on those train cars. In between stolen naps, I took notes, chasing and writing history at the same time. When I arrived to Chicago, I walked through Union Station feeling the presence of millions who passed through the city seeking a better life. Hunter was one of those people.



Dr. K. T. Ewing received her PhD degree in December 2014. Her dissertation, with Dr. Beverly Bond as major professor, was on the life of Alberta Hunter.



I did not stay in Chicago. Hunter's stomping grounds were too busy, and I needed solitude. I moved further north to Kenosha, Wisconsin, and settled into a century-old house steps away from Lake Michigan. That environment nurtured some of my favorite paragraphs. Though I crave isolation, I enjoy writing about people. Reading Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns* reminded me of how an author can master the beauty of describing individuals. I studied her technique alongside James Baldwin and Toni Morrison. Because I can, at best, only draw stick figures on paper, I drew faces and bodies in my mind. I recreated brown skin, gray hair, red fingernails, wide smiles,

and swaying hips. When I opened my eyes, I tried to convey these images on paper. This exercise kept me moving through the writing process when the research seemed to stand still. Reading fiction by African American authors like Baldwin and Morrison also helped me relax while keeping me grounded in the history and tradition of the people my work explores.



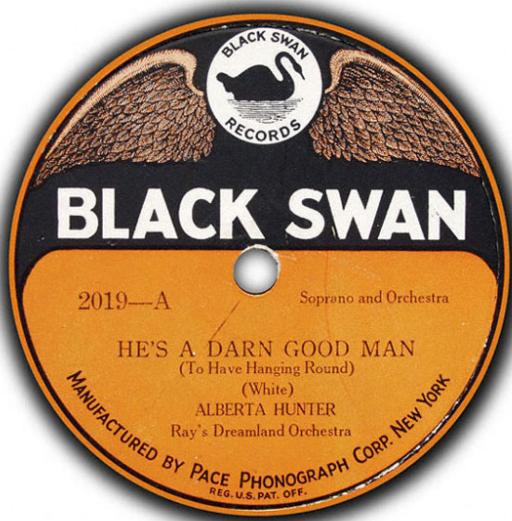
I eventually left the relaxed atmosphere of Wisconsin and followed Hunter to New York, the city she called home for most of her adult life. Conveniently located around the corner from the Countee Cullen Library in Harlem, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture houses the Alberta Hunter Papers—a collection of her newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, recorded interviews, and other personal effects. I assumed it would be the place where I would have the most luck courting a woman who successfully shielded her private life from all but her closest friends. Archival research was not as seamless as I preferred. Always a stubborn and relatively quiet woman, Hunter sometimes ignored me. I felt like I had her on speed dial and she had me on her blocked caller list. When she would not speak, I listened to her songs, watched her performances, and listened to her interviews. Wash. Rinse. Repeat. Finally, I had to remind myself that Alberta Hunter was an individual surrounded by thousands of other people. They were the lifeblood of this project. When everything else failed, I looked to them.

I called Gertrude “Ma” Rainey by reading Sandra Lieb. I conjured Bessie Smith by reading Michelle C. Scott. I summoned Ethel Waters by reading Donald Bogle. I evoked Bricktop by reading Ada “Bricktop” Smith. Of all these women, it was Bricktop who, despite her flair for embellishment, taught me the power of letting them speak for themselves. Almost everything Hunter did was intentional; therefore, if I was going to capture her essence, I needed to become as fastidious as she was. I listened to her voice intently. Each pause and stressed syllable was an opportunity to get to know her better. I read her face like a text, begging the slight wrinkles on her brow to tell me stories.

After spending weeks lost in endless periodicals and photographs, I slowly realized that I had become so entangled with details that I overlooked the obvious: Hunter’s music is the most accessible part of her legacy. She sang over four hundred songs in seven different languages. She also wrote over seventy songs. I found her in those lyrics. Those words revealed her understanding of herself as an artist, a woman, and a finite being. However, of all the music I listened to, her staccato laugh pleased me most. She laughed so freely and often that I carried the sounds into my sleep.

The dissertation happened between her music and her laughter—the shifting spaces where her public and private selves merged. Hunter often spoke with audiences in between songs. Her albums, documentaries, and other recorded appearances provided me with ample opportunities to listen to these conversations. They oozed nostalgia in a way that is not present in her earlier performances. These playful yet vulnerable moments of public reflection reveal a woman who survived hard times and looked toward the future with confidence.

Listening to hours of her voice bred a familiarity resulting in a tendency to call her by her first name. I talked about her so often that, when I complained, “she’s not speaking to me,” my partner usually replied, “Who? Alberta?” My tendency to speak to a woman I carried inside my head amused everyone, including me. These lighthearted moments were some of the most important parts of the dissertation process, because the path is long and emotionally draining. Like many of us who ran the gauntlet of dissertation writing, I had mixed feelings. I procrastinated. I doubted. I celebrated minor victories. Most importantly, I did not quit. Alberta would have it no other way.



Phi Alpha Theta Happenings

By Dr. Andrew Daily and Amanda Lee Savage



In its own words, “Phi Alpha Theta is an American honor society for undergraduate and graduate students and professors of history.” With thousands of members in hundreds of chapters, it is one of the largest honor societies in the United States. Its mission is to promote the study of history and to encourage good historical practices in the university and in society at large. Epsilon Nu, the University of Memphis, has undergone dramatic change in the last year, as leadership has shifted from graduate students to undergraduates, and as greater emphasis has been put on history outreach and taking history to the wider university community.

In the Fall 2014 semester, Phi Alpha Theta organized two main events: a history-themed Halloween costume contest and a Quiz Night. The Halloween costume contest, held on the step of Mitchell Hall, featured over two dozen entries, including some excellent efforts by HERC director

Dr. Chrystal Goudsouzian as Pegasus, HERC interns Tannie Arnsdorf and Allie Benoit as “wealth disparity,” and Phi Alpha Theta treasurer Meredith Lones as “the Specter Haunting Europe.” Following the judge’s deliberations and the popular will of the people (if you don’t vote your voice won’t be count!), three costume winners were ultimately chosen: Rickey Alexander as Michael Jackson; Fred Knichel as Louis XVI; and Will Van Wyhe as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.



In December, to celebrate the end of term, Phi Alpha Theta hosted its second annual trivia night. Over a vegetarian korma and naan, three teams battled it out for supremacy, answering a wide array of historical and cultural questions gathered by Dr. Andrew Daily and Amanda Lee Savage, the PAT advisors, to test which team had the

true trivia chops. Questions ranged from US vice-presidents to Egyptian dynastic succession to geography (do you know the eastern-most point in the US?) and, after three rounds of spirited competition, the Team: Clever Team Name featuring Lillian Page, Kait Bell, and Nolan Wilson emerged victorious, though Team Queen Puabi and the Human Sacrifices (Allie Benoit, Tannie Arnsdorff, and Meredith Lones) and Team The Three Muses (Kyra Clapper, Jenni Turner, and Victoria Dowdy) were close behind.



At trivia night, Phi Alpha Theta discussed a number of events for Spring 2015 term, including pairing with the Center for Research on Women to promote Women's History month, a faculty lunchtime lecture by Beverly Tsacoyianis, another trivia night for May, and partnering with the HERC to promote Clio's Closet, an effort to collect clothes, toiletries, food, and other materials for students in need. Phi Alpha Theta, now led by Allie Benoit, will meet February 9th at 2:00 pm and again on February 23rd at 2:15 pm to finalize its spring schedule of events.

One event to definitely mark on your calendars is Phi Alpha Theta's Spring Honors Banquet, which this year will be held on Friday, April 10th, from 1:00 to 2:30 pm

in the University Center ballroom. As in past years, new members of Phi Alpha Theta will be inducted into the society, and History Department awards will be distributed to undergraduate and graduate students and faculty. This year's speaker is Dr. Laurie Green, associate professor of American history at the University of Texas, Austin. The author of *Battling the Plantation Mentality: Memphis and the Black Freedom Struggle*, Dr. Green focuses her research on civil rights and black power in Memphis, and she is sure to deliver a fascinating talk on the history of Memphis that will interest professors, students, and the public alike. Watch your inboxes for information about eligibility for Phi Alpha Theta membership, further information about the spring banquet, and for the full calendar of PAT's spring events.

“Tuning” the Department of History

By Dr. Sarah Potter

The Department of History at The University of Memphis was recently selected to join the American Historical Association's "Tuning Project." The Tuning Project works with history faculty from across the country to define the core competencies of history as a discipline, and then assists departments in revising and improving their undergraduate curricula to better teach those competencies to their majors. It also provides participating departments with tools and information to better communicate the value of our major to students, administrators, employers, and the general public.

In my role as Director of Undergraduate Studies, I spearheaded our involvement in the project for a number of reasons. First, I wanted to build on and share the many successes of our History Educational Resource Center (HERC). The HERC has given history students a place to meet their fellow students, study quietly, get tutoring on history coursework, and obtain career advice and guidance. Alongside changing how many students relate to the department, the founding of the HERC has also generated a number of faculty conversations about the academic and personal support we provide for our students, our goals for our courses, and future projects to enhance our undergraduate program. Tuning seemed a good avenue for

channeling those discussions into action. Tuning also offered us a crucial opportunity to share the HERC as a model for history departments around the country.

I was also intrigued by the Tuning Project because I believed it would help us respond productively to the growing pressure we face from both students and administrators to meet student needs in order to recruit, retain, and graduate our majors. As a department, we believe that a history degree is valuable



in a multitude of personal, intellectual, and professional ways. We are dedicated to providing our majors with skills and knowledge that will enrich their lives, make them more engaged citizens, and help them find meaningful and interesting work upon graduation. The tuning process promised new ways of thinking about what we teach and how we teach it in both our on-campus and online programs so that we may continue to achieve those outcomes.

We began our adventure in tuning in January, when Chrystal Goudsouzian, Amanda Lee Savage, and I traveled to the American Historical Association's annual meeting in New York City. We participated in a workshop with other "tuners" that opened our eyes to the many possibilities for tuning. We heard colleagues from other schools discuss a variety of strategies: from joining the local Chamber of Commerce to better promote the skills of history majors to small businesses in the area, to brainstorming with adjunct instructors about the key learning outcomes for general education courses, to brokering meetings between four-year and two-year college departments to better communicate the preparation and expectations for transfer students. We also shared our own success with the HERC, and inspired the history department at Middle Tennessee State University to try to create a similar space for their students. As a bonus, we even reunited with U of M PhD graduate Reginald Ellis, who helped run the workshop as a master tuner!

We came back from our time at the AHA wrestling with the question: how can we tune our department to more effectively serve our undergraduates? Some options seem obvious. We are developing a presentation we can give in our survey courses and a video we can post on our website to better communicate to students the many ways a history degree will be valuable to them. We are also working on growing our



Dr. Chrystal Goudsouzian, Dr. Sarah Potter, Dr. Reginald Ellis, and Amanda Lee Savage at the AHA's Tuning Workshop, New York City, January 2015

internship program, and on reaching out to employers and others in the community to let them know about the strengths of our students and graduates. Further, as the HERC has become so central to undergraduate life in our department, we have doubled down on our commitment to support its projects. For example, at the start of the spring 2015 semester we opened Clio's Closet as a resource for those on our campus who need food, gently used clothes, baby

supplies, and other necessities. The Closet is open daily and is unstaffed so that students and others may take or donate items anonymously. Clio's Closet, like the HERC itself, embodies our commitment to building a community among students and faculty that recognizes and supports its members' academic and personal needs.

We are also exploring ways to tune our curriculum to enhance the experiences we are providing for our students in our classrooms. For instance, we are considering refining our course number system to clarify for majors how different course levels develop their historical skills and knowledge. In addition, it's increasingly clear that, to both employers and students alike, the opportunity to do independent research is critically important. Since our department does not currently have a formal research requirement built into our degree, we have decided that we would like to focus at least some of our tuning energies on creating a student research paper requirement. The contours of this requirement are still under discussion, but I'm confident that we will develop an excellent plan to help meet this worthwhile goal.

As Director of Undergraduate Studies and a dedicated tuner, I'm eager to continue developing ways to better meet our students' educational, personal, and employment goals. I'm always open to suggestions, so please drop me a line if you have ideas (spotter1@memphis.edu).

Clio's Closet

By Dr. Chrystal Goudsouzian

As faculty and advisers, we are lucky to hear the success stories of our students, from new academic interests and goals, to marriages and babies; we share in their joy. But we also hear stories of struggles: students and their parents buying groceries for other students, students who can't afford interview clothes for potential jobs and internships, even students who are deciding whether to use gas to get to work or school – because they can't afford both.

We know that our students who drop, fail, and withdraw from our classes more often do so because of financial stresses. Our students shouldn't have to decide between books or food, work or school, family or self, but they often do. We do our best to help our students get to the right places to obtain financial support, but our students often need more than loans. For some, being able to pick up food, clothes, and other necessary items makes all the difference.

This spring semester, the Department of History's student resource center, the HERC, opened up a new annex – Clio's Closet. Clio's is a food and clothing pantry that aims to help students in need. The closet is stocked with non-perishable food, gently-used professional clothes for men and women, baby and kid items, and cold-weather clothing. Located in Mitchell 130 and run by the HERC staff, the closet is open from 8:30 to 2:30 each day. Clio's is a private office with an unlocked door; the space allows students to enter anonymously and take the items they need.



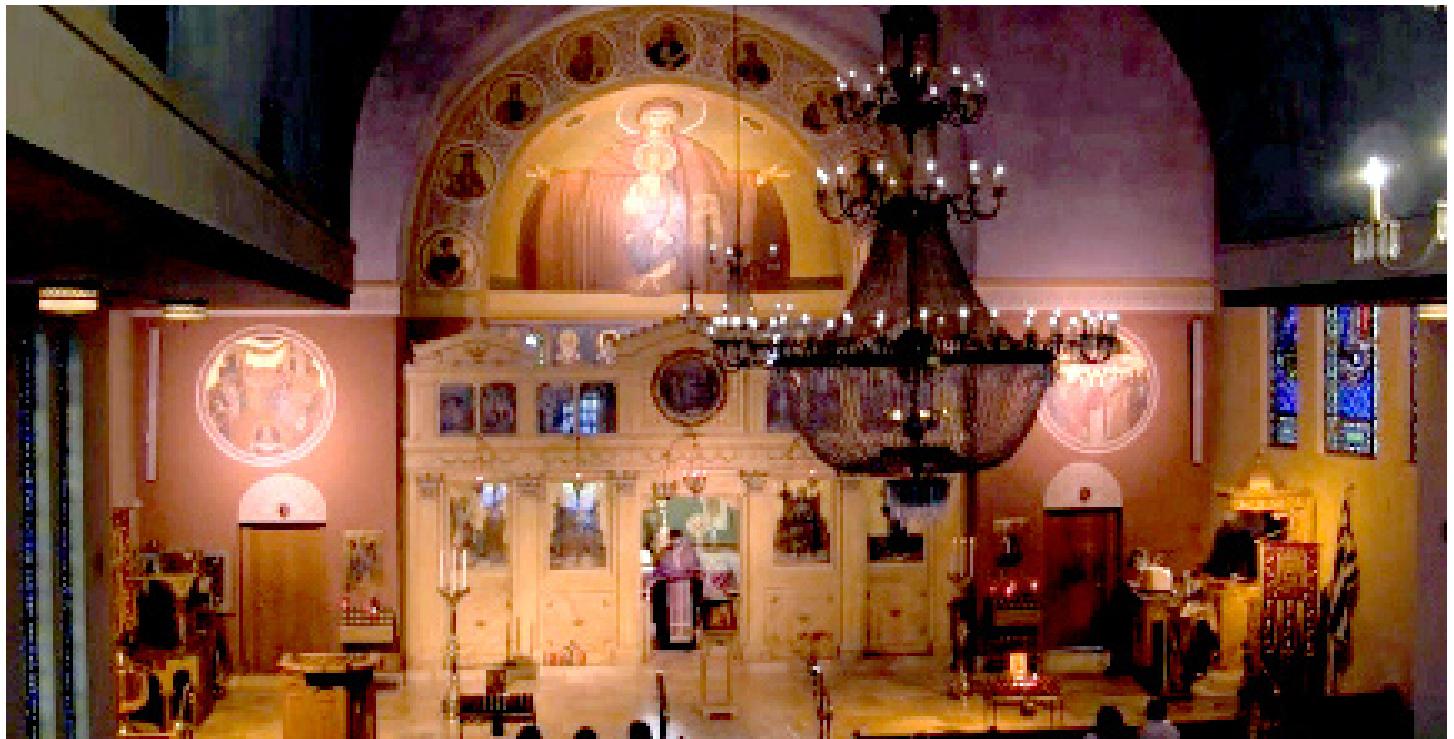
With the gracious clothing, food, and monetary donations from faculty, staff, and students over the past few months, Clio's is beautifully stocked. It has been nice to see the food and clothes dwindle these first few weeks of school.

We would love to keep the closet stocked and keep the donations coming. If you are interested in helping, donations can be brought to the HERC, Mitchell 147, from 8:30 to 2:30. If you don't have a lot of items hanging around but still want to help, consider shopping our Amazon wish list and have something sent straight to the department: <http://amzn.com/w/2HCFYB91FKY7S>

We've all needed help along the way and Clio's is a great way to give back. We appreciate your support!

Loving the Greek Language

By Dr. Beverly Tsacoyanis



This year, I happily embarked on a new language project to add to my multi-cultural interests and proficiency in English, Spanish, French, Hebrew, and Arabic. I am currently learning some Greek with a master storyteller and scion of Memphis, Father Nicholas Vieron. His fifteen-week class on Greek language and culture, open to complete beginners, has been a feature of the Memphis scene for over forty years. It meets every Monday night from 6:30 to 7:30pm in the main hall of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, a beautiful building on Highland near Sam Cooper Boulevard. The class always begins, significantly, on Martin Luther King Jr Day. The timing is significant; the now-89-year-old Fr. Vieron has a storied history in Memphis connected to his social justice activism and his support of Dr. King and the civil rights movement in Memphis.

Born in New Orleans in 1925 to Leonides and Ellas (née Metaxas) Vieron (and with a pre-immigration surname of Vieros) Fr. Vieron lost his father to illness the year he began seminary at Holy Cross as a teenager. Graduating in 1947 and ordained in 1948, he eventually found his way to Memphis and became active in a range of local issues while leading the Greek Orthodox congregation at Annunciation from 1955. On Friday, April 5, 1968, the day after James Earl Ray assassinated the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Fr.

Vieron was one of the many faith-based community leaders to march to Mayor Loeb's office and plead for justice and cooperation. He was also deeply invested in the sanitation workers' strike of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees local union 1733 that Dr. King and hundreds of local clergy supported despite Mayor Loeb's actions to resist them. This passion for social justice was part of the reason he combined his passion for religious studies with secular legal studies, as he earned a JD in 1970 from Memphis University School of Law.

Now a retired clergyman, Fr. Vieron spends much of his time devoted to study and research in the library of Annunciation's church, and he continues to work in interfaith groups and social activism organizations in the area. I first met Fr. Vieron at the Metropolitan Interfaith Association (MIFA) Founder's Day luncheon in September 2014, where I was a guest of Rabbi Chana Leslie Glazer of Beth Sholom Synagogue. Father was thrilled to see the sticker I wore, which revealed my very Greek last name (I married into it) and had a pamphlet for his Greek class on hand right there, ready to distribute to anyone interested. I accepted the pamphlet, but I had actually already planned to take the class, having heard about it when my husband and I attended the Greek festival at Annunciation church on May 9th and 10th, 2014.

After enjoying a spirited traditional dance performance by local Memphian Greek children (complete with fantastic costumes and music) and dining on lamb kabobs, rice pilaf, spanakopita, dolmathes, and baklava cheesecake (and of course we saved some room for saganaki and strong Greek coffee) my husband and I joined a tour of the Greek Orthodox sanctuary. My only regret is that we were in the evening rather than the afternoon tour, and therefore missed out on seeing the sunlight streaming through the gorgeous stained-glass windows of the sanctuary.

The students in my Greek class at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church come to Fr. Vieron from a variety of paths. Some are clergy in other (non-Orthodox) churches, and have a strong interest in learning some Greek to improve their understanding of religious texts. Others (like me) are there because they have family members who grew up speaking Greek, and would like to connect with that aspect of their heritage. (The social historian in me is particularly interested in the branch of my husband's family that was part of the forced population transfer and resettlement negotiated between the Greek and Turkish governments in the 1920s.) Still others take the class because they have traveled to Greece before (as I did, for a few days' vacation in the summer of 2006 after my US government-ordered evacuation from Lebanon during the 2006 summer war with Israel cut my language study plans in Beirut short) and want

to return to Greece for personal, business, or educational reasons. And there is, of course, the most intrepid fourth category of Memphians in the class: people who (also like me) have almost no background in the modern or ancient Greek languages, but have heard of Father Vieron's charm, wit, patience, and kindness, know of his great love for his adopted city and for seeing peace in it, and have witnessed his deep faith and love in God, and who want to experience first-hand a classroom setting with him while he is still able to stand up before us and teach us of his past, his ancestors, and our common heritage. In fact, the very first words Father Vieron taught us were *theos* and *agape*, meaning God and love. This Valentine's Day, as we are constantly reminded of love, it's important to me that I draw a connection between the holiday and a love of learning. And especially, a love of learning Greek in Memphis.

To learn more about Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church and its many events (like the upcoming Greek Festival in May 2015, and next year's language class) visit <http://www.goann.net/>.

The photograph accompanying this article is a view inside Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, from April 2012. A full video of this Holy Week service is available online at YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Ejh8s2OWek>.