



COLUMBIA | SOCIAL DIFFERENCE
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL DIFFERENCE

2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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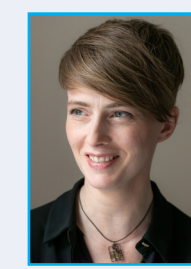
The Center for The Study of Social Difference is an interdisciplinary research center supporting collaborative projects that address gender, race, sexuality, and other forms of inequality to foster ethical and progressive social change.

The Center's work has two overarching research themes, [Women Creating Change](#) and [Imagining Justice](#).

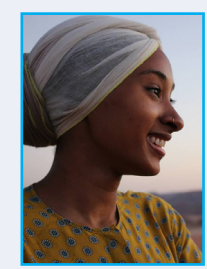
STAFF



PAIGE WEST
DIRECTOR



CATHERINE LASOTA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



AYAH ELDOSOUGI
PROGRAM COORDINATOR



FAHMIDA HUSSAIN
BUSINESS OFFICER

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- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
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DIRECTOR'S LETTER

For over a decade the faculty, staff, and students who make up the Center for the Study of Social Difference (CSSD) have been committed to understanding equality and inequality in both the past and the present, with a focus on building a collective imagination of what a future without inequality might look like. Our working groups examine race, class, sexuality, ability and gender, asking questions about inequality close to home in New York City and farther afield in the dozens of international sites where our faculty work. They engage with people on the frontlines of pandemics, climate change, and gender-related violence. They amplify and support the struggles for Indigenous rights, for debt free futures, for immigrant and migrant rights, and for the rights of domestic workers. At the core of all of this is a commitment to the belief that our scholarship can be mobilized to transform the world in positive ways. As this year has repeatedly tested myself and the CSSD staff both personally and professionally, we have all held onto this, to the fact that the work that we fund and facilitate contributes to a better future.

Our newest working group, "Prison Education and Social Justice Curricula," launches in Fall 2021 and exemplifies the kind transformative work that CSSD fosters. Brought to us by Professor Jean Howard, this group will bring together faculty and graduate students with alumni of the Columbia University prison education program to develop a plan for strengthening the prison education curricula and other educational opportunities for incarcerated students. Funded in a new partnership with the University Seminars, this group will develop new courses, train faculty to teach in the program, and work on the intersection of social justice, difference and the carceral system. Together, we hope to build a bridge for more groups formed at CSSD to transform into University Seminars, which are long-standing working groups, some running for decades. We are excited to work with the University Seminar's Director Alice Newton and her staff to create these bridge conditions.

This year, in addition to funding our newest faculty working groups, we initiated a Social Engagement program at CSSD that directs funds to previous working groups, with the intent of taking their scholarship and mobilizing it in partnerships with communities to produce meaningful and lasting social change. We funded two groups to realize projects in the coming year with this new Social Engagement granting mechanism, made possible with the support of Columbia President Lee Bollinger. Professors Ana Paulina Lee and Anupama Rao (Geographies of Injustice working group) are funded for their project "Reconstructing History in Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro and Dharavi, Mumbai." Together with partner groups in Rocinha and Dharavi, this project will build on the methodologies developed by Geographies of Injustice for mapping histories

of subaltern urbanisms and extend this work to the creation of public facing, community produced podcasts that will tell the stories of the urban poor in a way that works to foster urban planning, taking race, caste, class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality into consideration. Our second Social Engagement grant was awarded to Professors Marianne Hirsch, Diana Taylor, Laura Wexler, Susan Meiselas, and Lorie Novak (Women Mobilizing Memory working group) for their project "The Zip Code Memory Project: Practices of Repair". This project will work with community groups across zip codes in Morningside Heights, Harlem, Washington Heights and the South Bronx to find collaborative ways to memorialize the losses from the Covid-19 pandemic, with an eye towards both appropriate memorial practices, and fostering and supporting the mutual aid networks that these communities developed during the pandemic, honoring enduring collaborations that will allow for both social healing and economic justice.

Our staff, Program Coordinator Ayah Eldosougi, Business Officer Fahmida Hussain, and Executive Director Catherine LaSota, spent the year developing best practices for how to keep CSSD and our working groups connected, active, and as dynamic and productive as ever, even in another strange year of remote life. They worked tirelessly to transition to collaborative online meetings and extraordinary events, to understand new budgetary practices and constraints tied to university regulations about travel and in-person meetings, and to fundraise so that we can continue to do the work of the Center. I am extremely proud of the alacrity with which we learned how to do things and humbled by the constant kindness that these three exceptional women have shown to everyone since the Covid-19 pandemic began. It is with both great joy and great sadness that we say goodbye to Ayah Eldosougi. In August 2021, Ayah will leave us and New York City to embark on the next leg of her journey as she begins law school at Georgetown University. Ayah's deep commitment to social justice is what brought her to CSSD and what now pushes her to law school. We can't wait to watch her grow and we are so proud of her accomplishment.

When I describe CSSD to colleagues and friends not familiar with the Center, I describe it as a community of scholars committed to justice and a community of colleagues committed to kindness. We do not know what next year holds for the university, for New York City, or for the world. Yet I know that the work that we do at CSSD will help us understand the city and world and transform it for the better.

Paige WEST

Claire Tow Professor of Anthropology, Barnard College and Columbia University

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

In early March 2020, we met as a staff at the Center for the Study of Social Difference (CSSD) to organize ourselves for an impending, indefinite time period of remote working. That indefinite period has continued for well over a year, and our wonderful Program Coordinator Ayah Eldogousi and fantastic Business Officer Fahmida Hussain and I have met every week online since setting up our home offices. I cannot thank these amazing women enough for their steadfast efforts to keep the vital programming of our Center churning, through what has been an extremely difficult time, both publicly and personally, for so many. As we have continued our work on important issues of gender, race, migration, and other social difference issues that demand careful thought and slow, steady research, I am also extremely grateful for the sense of supportive collaboration fostered in all of our 13 working groups over the past year.

2020-21 saw many of our projects taking action to address the needs of a world shaken. Notably, our On the Frontlines: Nursing Leadership in Pandemics working group was formed three years ago to examine the role of nurses who worked at the front lines of Ebola in West Africa, and the methods gained in their research were quickly adapted to interview nurses on the front lines of Covid-19 care in New York City. A dynamic website now exists to document this work, put a spotlight on the heroic nurses (almost entirely women), and inform policy making for years to come. Additionally, as we move into the coming year, the work of our Transnational Black Feminisms, Black Atlantic Ecologies, Migrant Personhood and Rights, and so many more CSSD working groups will continue to be urgent in the face of ongoing racial violence and injustice in the United States and globally. We also launched Just Three, a new social justice podcast, for our incredible collaborators to reach an even broader audience.

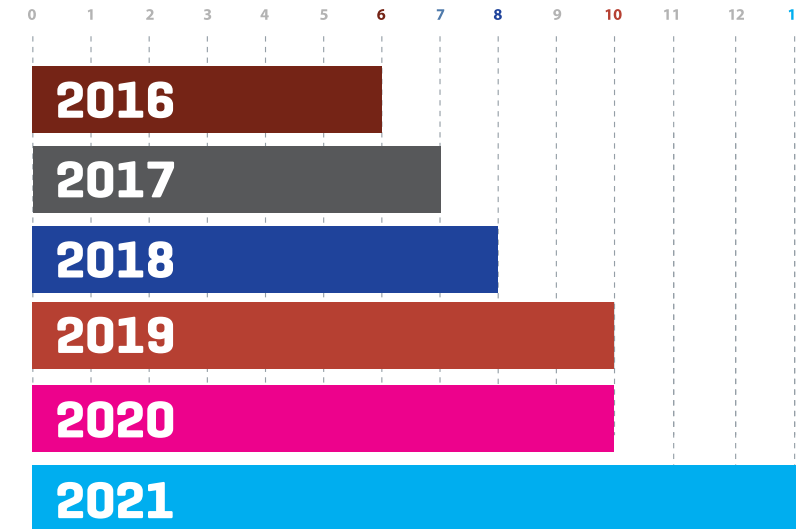
The demands of the past year, and the cracks that have been exposed in so many existing systems, have made the importance of our work all the more clear to so many. We were fortunate this year to break records for numbers of donors and funds raised for Women Creating Change and CSSD in Columbia's annual Giving Day. I would like to issue a special thanks to our Women Creating Change Leadership Council and its Chair Ann Kaplan for their efforts in leading this record-breaking giving.

The work of our faculty continues to garner impressive accolades: Premilla Nadasen, co-director of our Transnational Black Feminisms working group, received the inaugural Ann Snitow Prize; Lila Abu-Lughod, a founding director of CSSD, was invited to speak on the geopolitics of gender violence at the prestigious Theory from the Margins series in Norway; CSSD Director Paige West was named One of the 50 Explorers Changing the World by the iconic Explorers Club and received a Guggenheim Fellowship this year, as did CSSD affiliate faculty member Farah Jasmine Griffin.

The Center for the Study of Social Difference has led the way in interdisciplinary research on social difference issues that impact everyday lives, across the Columbia campus and beyond, for almost 13 years. Through this past year of change and hardship, we have been proud to keep our projects moving forward. I send all best wishes for health and ease to our incredible community..

Catherine LASOTA, Executive Director

NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS



CUTTING ACROSS DISCIPLINES

We're collaborating [across Columbia Schools and Units](#) on projects and content.



PHOTO CREDIT: Eileen Barroso, Columbia Office of University Publications.

- Columbia Law School
- School of Journalism
- Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
- Columbia University Libraries
- School of General Studies
- School of International and Public Affairs
- Columbia College
- Barnard College
- Mailman School of Public Health
- Columbia University Irving Medical Center
- School of the Arts
- Columbia Global Centers
- Teachers College
- The Earth Institute

TURNING IDEAS INTO IMPACT: HOW WE DO IT



BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS



PUBLIC EVENTS AND WORKING GROUPS



CREATING NEW ACADEMIC COURSES



INFLUENCING POLICY AND WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

OUR WORK: BY THE NUMBERS

3 YEAR
DURATION OF OUR PROJECTS

\$75,000
AVERAGE PROJECT COST

40+
EVENTS & WORKSHOPS PER YEAR

35
PROJECTS & COUNTING



OUR WORK SPANS **8 WORLD REGIONS AND OVER 35 COUNTRIES**



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IMAGE: CSSD Anniversary Symposium, "What We CAN Do When There's Nothing to Be Done," photo by Clark Jones



WOMEN CREATING CHANGE

Women Creating Change engages distinguished feminist scholars from diverse fields throughout Columbia University. With project partnerships across departments and schools, WCC focuses on contemporary global problems affecting women and on the roles women play in addressing these problems.

WOMEN CREATING CHANGE WORKING GROUPS

[Transnational Black Feminisms](#)

[On the Frontlines: Nursing Leadership in Pandemics](#)

[Motherhood & Technology](#)

[Insurgent Domesticities](#)

[Menstrual Health and Gender Justice](#)

[Women's Heart Disease Awareness: Digital Intervention, Creating Change](#)

[Geographies of Injustice: Gender and the City](#)

TRANSNATIONAL BLACK FEMINISMS

The [Transnational Black Feminisms](#) working group aims to think about how transnational Black feminisms can move us beyond survivability and demands for recognition, and instead generate alternative frames and understandings around belonging, community, justice, and equity. Black feminism has, by necessity, emerged in tandem with political mobilizations: the struggle against slavery and colonialism; demands for government assistance or social services; and opposition to sexual or state violence, including Black Lives Matter. Such struggles have created the conditions of possibility for nurturing a politics of radical social transformation. They have also raised broader, foundational questions about the relationship between theory and praxis, lived experiences and the articulation of expansive visions of social change.

In an era of heightened anti-Black racism—which manifests as systematic police violence, webs of carcerality, discourses of cultural depravity, ghettoization, gentrification, and disposability—it is essential to center a politics of blackness through a feminist, queer, anti-capitalist and anti-imperial lens, as an important vector for the political and social possibilities of imagining and working towards the realization of justice. This working group explores the historic and ongoing intellectual engagements between Black feminism, transnational feminism, queer politics, anti-imperialism, and anti-capitalism—all of which Black feminisms speak to through Black women’s analyses of intersecting oppressions, the simultaneity of oppression, and strategies for reimagining freedom. This group aims to assess the coherence and/or visibility of a transnational Black feminist politic, as well as the convergences and divergences, overlaps and contradictions, and synergistic associations among Black feminism, Indigenous feminism, Latinx feminism, and Asian feminism.

DIRECTORS:



[CELIA E. NAYLOR](#)

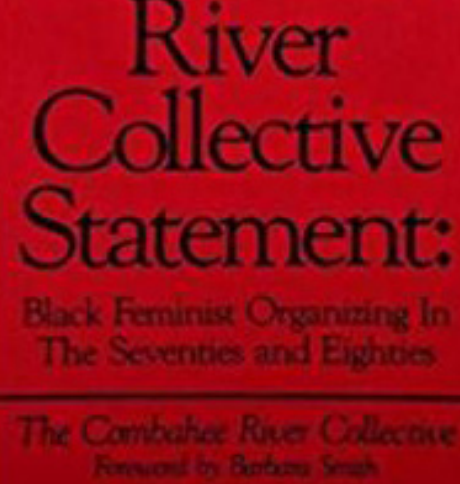


[PREMILLA NADASEN](#)

[Celia E. Naylor](#), Associate Professor, Africana Studies and History, Barnard College

[Premilla Nadasen](#), Professor of History, Barnard College

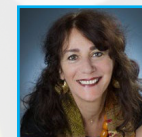
GRADUATE ASSISTANT: [Destiny Spruill](#), Graduate Research Assistant, Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies, Columbia University



ON THE FRONTLINES: NURSING LEADERSHIP IN PANDEMICS

[On the Frontlines: Nursing Leadership in Pandemics](#) seeks to understand the role of nurses as change agents in the prevention, detection and response to pandemic infectious disease outbreaks. Although nurses are crucial to combatting pandemics, their work is often not considered when international leaders gather to discuss global health issues. This is a consequence of both the MD-centered hierarchy of medical practice and the fact that nursing remains a profession in which women predominate (in the US, over 90% of registered nurses are women). This is a dangerous omission, since although nurses are on the front lines of care, little is known about the range of activities they undertake beyond what may be obvious in patient care. Key clinical innovations are overlooked when they should be universally implemented, and there is little record of the painful choices nurses and other health professionals often make between taking care of patients and protecting themselves and their families. This group formed around an interest in understanding the work of nurses and midwives in the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa. In response to recent events, the group has expanded its scope to include a comparative study of the work of nurses and midwives in the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak, conducting oral histories of COVID-19 nurses in collaboration with the Columbia Center for Oral History Research.

DIRECTORS:



[JENNIFER DOHRN](#)



[WILMOT JAMES](#)



[VICTORIA ROSNER](#)

[Jennifer Dohrn](#), Associate Professor of Nursing, and Director of Global Initiatives, Columbia University

[Wilmot James](#), Senior Research Scholar at the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy (ISERP), Columbia University

[Victoria Rosner](#), Dean of Academic Affairs, School of General Studies; Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University

COORDINATORS

[Kurt Holuba](#), Post Baccalaureate Student, School of General Studies, Columbia University

[Mina Shah](#), Post Baccalaureate Student, School of General Studies, Columbia University

<https://frontlinenurses.columbia.edu> [@QFrontlines](#)

MOTHERHOOD & TECHNOLOGY

The [Motherhood and Technology](#) working group explores how technological innovations have radically transformed the biological and social experience of motherhood in recent decades. Advances in genomic and reproductive care, the circulation of novel kinship structures, the entrenchment of existing global networks of power and privilege, and the politics of contested bodily sites mark this emerging constellation. Technological progress and development is often seen as the driver of these changes, but the revolution in motherhood is as much a product of changes in other domains: ethics, social structures, aesthetics, and lived experiences. The group is motivated to understand how medical technologies have changed—and have been changed by—the experience of motherhood in a global context.

In their inaugural year the Motherhood and Technology working group worked through the challenges of the pandemic, gathering remotely to discuss a range of topics including disability and the politics of prenatal testing; parenting in pandemic; the legal regulation of trans parentage; and parenting, race, and bioethics. During the Spring semester the group also hosted virtual events including [Parenting in Pandemic](#) in which panelists discussed the history, theory, and data of mother's health decision-making and pandemic-related disruptions to the family, as well as of familial navigation of disability, education, and adaptive digital devices.

"The timing of the pandemic threw the stakes of our work on Motherhood and Technology into sharp relief. Throughout the year, I was moved by our group's keen ability to at once treat on-the-ground realities and reflect on relevant theoretical frameworks. This attention and skill modeled, for me, an ideal form of work that joins scholarship and activism to respond to an acute moment for timeless effect." **Katrina Dyzak, Graduate Assistant, Motherhood and Technology**

DIRECTORS:



ARDEN HEGELE



RISHI GOYAL

[Arden Hegele](#), Medical Humanities Fellow and Lecturer, English Literature, Columbia University

[Rishi Goyal](#), Assistant Professor, Department of Emergency Medicine and the Institute of Comparative Literature, Columbia University

GRADUATE ASSISTANT: [Katrina Dyzak](#), Ph.D. Candidate, English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University

[Working group bibliography](#)

INSURGENT DOMESTICITIES

[Insurgent Domesticities](#) brings into focus the insurgent environments, objects, and practices that make up the maintenance, creation, labor, and intimacies of home. Our collective investigates the more processual aspects of domesticity, to interrogate the politics of 'home,' through histories of solidarity, disobedience, stealth, and militancy, from the scale of the clothesline to that of the state.

The Insurgent Domesticities working group is committed to liberatory historiographical approaches and scholarly caregiving, orientations that transcend ideological frames deploying 'domesticity' to organize, limit, or subjugate life, time, people, and places, from the non-male figure to the non-capitalistic landscape. It draws on practices that emerge from and constitute interiority, which transform the figurations, materiality, and narrations of 'home' and 'domesticity' within the present worldwide protectionist climate, in which 'home' is still a fiercely pursued, maintained, and guarded space. Dissident domesticities, bound up in questions of governance, global economies, (geo)political borders, war, labor, and ecological crisis, call for emancipating, subversive, and collaborative research approaches that straddle or sit between territories, institutions, states, and national space. With an international core membership the Insurgment Domesticities working group met virtually in their first year in discussions on "Concepts, Epistemologies, Feminisms," "Establishing the Interior," "Material Intimacy," and "Queer and Feminist Care." The group has also developed their first teaching tool based on the Establishing the Interior session.

DIRECTOR:



ANOORADHA IYER SIDDIQI

[Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi](#) Assistant Professor, Architecture, Barnard College

GRADUATE ASSISTANT: [Ife Salema Vanable](#), Ph.D. Candidate, Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Columbia University

[Insurgent Domesticities Teaching Tool](#)

MENSTRUAL HEALTH & GENDER JUSTICE

The [Menstrual Health and Gender Justice](#) working group critically evaluates the current state of menstrual studies research, with interest in examining whose voices are being represented in the field, which actors shape the dominant narrative, whose voices are marginalized, what the gaps are, and how interdisciplinary collaboration might help remedy some of these gaps. Attention to menstrual issues across the lifespan surfaces broader societal issues and tensions, including gender inequality, practices and discourses of embodiment, processes of radicalization and commodification, and emergent technologies. From the perspective of gender justice, menstruation is a fascinating subject of study as it combines various facets including biological processes, deeply rooted stereotypes and social norms, and associated cultural and religious practices. Menstruation has become a category of analysis as a multi-dimensional transdisciplinary subject of inquiry and advocacy. Against this background, this working group capitalizes on the presence of faculty across different schools and departments interested in menstruation and provides a forum for encouraging individual and collaborative research that crosses disciplinary boundaries.

DIRECTOR:



INGA WINKLER

[Inga Winkler](#), Lecturer in the Institute for the Study of Human Rights, and Director of Undergraduate Studies for the Human Rights Program, Columbia University

COORDINATOR: [Michelle Chouinard](#) Concentration Coordinator, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University

- [Menstrual Health and Gender Justice Blog](#)
- [The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstruation Studies](#)
- [@periodsatCU](#)

WOMEN'S HEART DISEASE AWARENESS: DIGITAL INTERVENTION, CREATING CHANGE

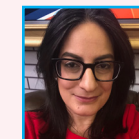
Cardiovascular disease [CVD] is the leading cause of mortality for women in the United States, accounting for more deaths than breast cancer, cervical cancer, and Alzheimer's disease combined. While the majority of women age 40-60 have at least one risk factor for CVD, very few have had this risk assessed by their doctor. Nearly half of women are still not aware that CVD kills more women than cancer and only about a third of Hispanic and African American women identify it as the number one cause of death.

In order to effect real change, we must not only find ways to increase awareness of heart disease in women, but also identify ways to get women to make lasting changes in their lifestyle. The [Women's Heart Disease Awareness: Digital Intervention](#) group seeks to identify barriers to heart disease awareness and explore pathways to change on a personal individual level as well as a community and population level that lead to improved women's heart health. This group studies whether one specific tool, a mobile health App called [Love My Heart](#), is better able achieve these goals compared with usual care. In addition, this group explores more broadly the ways that digital tools and social media can improve health education and identify what factors, such as fear, empowerment, etc., promote women to exercise more and eat healthier - these are lifestyle changes that historically have been hard to achieve with a more traditional approach.

DIRECTORS:



DR. NATALIE BELLO



DR. SONIA TOLANI

[Dr. Natalie Bello](#), Assistant Professor of Medicine, CU Irving Medical Center

[Dr. Sonia Tolani](#), Assistant Professor of Medicine, CU Irving Medical Center

- [Love My Heart for Women App](#)
- [@whccolumbia](#)
- [@whccolumbia](#)

GEOGRAPHIES OF INJUSTICE: GENDER AND THE CITY

[Geographies of Injustice: Gender and the City](#) is a working group of interdisciplinary scholars who are interested in asking how spatial politics intersects with inequality and social difference (race, caste, and ethnicity). The members of this group focus on marginalized and stigmatized spaces, for example “slums,” “favelas,” and “ghettos,” and examine the gendering of those spaces, including how motherhood and the family structure are devalued and deconstructed in these spaces, and how creative life-making strategies might redress histories of stigma and exclusion.

This group asks how we might generate public facing pedagogy and outreach that has the capacity to redress spatial inequality through design, policy, activism, and cultural production. To that end, Geographies of Injustice collaborates with an array of site-specific scholars, activists, urban planners, students, and community organizations to formulate both new pedagogies and research methods to develop strategies for social equity and spatial desegregation. Connections across Rio de Janeiro and Mumbai, as well as collaborations with partners in Jordan and Lebanon, are a special focus of the working group.

DIRECTORS:



ANUPAMA RAO



ANA PAULINA LEE

[Anupama Rao](#), Associate Professor of History, Barnard College, and Associate Director of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society, Columbia University

[Ana Paulina Lee](#), Assistant Professor of Latin American and Iberian Cultures, Columbia University

NEW SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS AT THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL DIFFERENCE

The Center for the Study of Social Difference is proud to announce the inaugural recipients of CSSD’s Social Engagement Grants launching fall 2021, [The Zip Code Memory Project: Practices of Repair](#) and [Reconstructing History in Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro and Dharavi, Mumbai](#). Each of these new projects are led by current and former CSSD working group directors and build on the work of former CSSD working groups, moving that work toward new forms of public engagement and partnerships, in alignment with Columbia University’s Fourth Purpose “to extend Columbia’s abilities to bring the extraordinary knowledge and capacities of the University in tandem with the wider academic community and actors beyond the campus to more effectively address pressing human problems.”



[The Zip Code Memory Project: Practices of Repair](#)



[Reconstructing History in Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro and Dharavi, Mumbai](#)

Courtesy of The Sanfoka Museum

Frances
Negrón-Muntaner

Aleksandra
Perisic

IMAGINING JUSTICE

Imagining Justice brings together scholars, activists, and artists on projects that envision new ways of fighting inequality and promoting gender, racial, economic, and environmental justice in global and domestic contexts.

WORKING GROUPS 2020-2021:

[Data, Algorithms, and Social Justice](#)

[Black Atlantic Ecologies](#) [with support from The Earth Institute]

[Environmental Justice, Belief Systems, and Aesthetic Experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean](#) [with support from IRCPL]

[Queer Aqui](#)

[Migrant Personhood and Rights: Crises of Recognition](#)

[Racial Capitalism](#)

NEW WORKING GROUP LAUNCHING IN 2021:

[Prison Education and Social Justice](#)

DATA ALGORITHMS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The [Data, Algorithms, and Social Justice](#) working group catalyzes interdisciplinary dialogues and research into urgent contemporary issues around artificial intelligence, automated decision-making, power, and social change. In the twenty-first century, conceptions of social difference are shifting rapidly in response to the increasing influence of algorithms and automated decision-making processes, with profound impacts on employment, medical care, criminal justice, government services, and more. Emerging techniques of data gathering and analysis not only impact the treatment of pre-existing social groups or demographic categories, but also create new vectors of difference along lines that do not neatly correspond to pre-digital collectivities. To effectively intervene in the injustices posed by our data-driven world will require new approaches and analytical tools, combining the critical lenses of the humanities with the skills of data scientists, programmers, statisticians, and more.

In 2020-21, the Data, Algorithms, and Social Justice working group brought together scholars working in a variety of disciplines at Columbia and beyond to engage these critical questions, through working group meetings and lively online public events.

DIRECTORS:

GRADUATE DIRECTOR:



MATTHEW JONES



LAURA KURGAN



DENNIS TENEN



CHRIS WIGGINS



NIKITA SHEPARD

[Matthew Jones](#), James R. Barker Professor of Contemporary Civilization, Columbia University

[Laura Kurgan](#), Associate Professor of Architecture, Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation, Columbia University

[Dennis Tenen](#), Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University

[Chris Wiggins](#), Associate Professor of Applied Mathematics, Columbia University

GRADUATE DIRECTOR: [Nikita Shepard](#) Ph.D. candidate, History, Columbia University

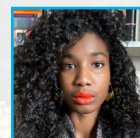
BLACK ATLANTIC ECOLOGIES

The [Black Atlantic Ecologies](#) group, supported with funding from The Earth Institute at Columbia University, supports and elaborates scholarship that centers the enduring effects of coloniality and the dynamic power of protest in African diasporic confrontations with environmental crisis. Taking as our provocation the refiguring of human and nonhuman ecologies occasioned by the transatlantic slave trade, we seek to understand what Nadia Ellis has called, riffing on José Muñoz, “the queer work of raced survival” as we come to grips with contemporary dimensions of anthropogenic climate change. As inspiration for the work that we undertake together, we ask after visions for survival and justice that are grounded in Black queer, Black feminist, and antiracist responses to the subjugation of the earth as well as of our human and nonhuman cotravelers. And given the crossing of linguistic and imperial zones that the transatlantic slave trade occasioned, we pay particular attention to the divergences and synergies among anglophone, francophone, hispanophone, and lusophone analyses of our predicament as we articulate our conditions as well as the political possibilities on our horizons. This group poses a single central question: How might Black Atlantic experience with peril, with perishment and with premature death offer a rubric for thinking futurity, including reproductive futurity, in a moment of environmental collapse?

DIRECTORS:



VANESSA AGARD-JONES



MARISA SOLOMON

[Vanessa Agard-Jones](#), Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Columbia University

[Marisa Solomon](#), Assistant Professor of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Barnard College

GRADUATE ASSISTANT: [Alyssa A.L. James](#), Phd Student, Anthropology, Columbia University

THE EARTH INSTITUTE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, BELIEF SYSTEMS, AND AESTHETIC EXPERIENCES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The [Environmental Justice, Belief Systems, and Aesthetic Experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean group](#), supported with funding from the Institute for Religion, Culture, and Public Life at Columbia University, studies current struggles for justice that are articulated through the expressive cultures and aesthetic experiences of local communities in these regions. Environmental conflicts have increased dramatically over the past few decades, affecting and displacing indigenous populations, Afro-descendants, women, children, and peasants. Communities have to confront the transnational increase of agribusiness, hydroelectric projects, mining corporations, systematic food injustice, and their entanglement with the drug war and localized armed conflicts. Such struggles are taking place amidst dramatic events provoked by climate change as well as the rise of extremist governments in the Americas, supported by the evangelical right, increasing the number of climate, alimentary, and war refugees and asylum-seekers.

The resurgence and mobilization of what have historically been called traditional, indigenous, and Afro-descendant expressive forms-- songs, rituals, images, objects, feasts, culinary arts, and ceremonies -- has been dramatic, as is the rise of an indigenous film movement in different countries in Latin America. Technologies such as loudspeakers, microphones, hard drives, and other media are changing public and private space. New alliances between artists, scholars, and ritual specialists like shamans or babalaos, and between sound artists and activists, are informing these aesthetic expressions. This working group contends that these forms of aesthetic experience – in narrative form, through visual images, through sounds, through unexpected alliances – give shape to new ways of imagining justice and of imagining the relation between humans and non-humans, including deities and other religious entities.

DIRECTORS:



MARÍA VICTORIA MURILLO



ANA M. OCHOA GAUTIER



[María Victoria Murillo](#), Professor of Political Science and International and Public Affairs, and Director of the Institute for Latin American Studies, Columbia University

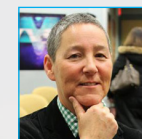
[Ana M. Ochoa Gautier](#), Professor of Music and Chair, Department of Music, Columbia University

QUEER AQUI

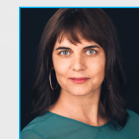
[Queer Aqui](#) [formerly Queer Theory: Here, Now, and Everywhere] sets out to discuss, debate and investigate the politics of sexuality and gender in a global frame. This group builds upon the vast network of queer scholars in the New York area and reaches out to groups in Beirut, Buenos Aires, Rio De Janeiro, Quito and Istanbul in order to consider how best to resituate queer studies to respond to shifts in the meanings of family, sexual health, gendered embodiment, religion, sexual practices, gender variance, activism and sexual communities worldwide. This group's main focus is in considering the place of sexuality and gender in both the spread of global capitalism, right-wing populism, and in the activist responses to these new forms of authoritarianism.

Scholars in Queer Aqui have worked on neoliberalism, LGBT law, trans* issues, transnational imaginaries, queer diaspora, negative affects, art and politics, the queer decolonial, temporality and spatiality, phenomenology, and much more. This multidisciplinary group is committed to asking questions about the future of queer politics, the future of queer culture, and the potential of new forms of solidarity, protest and queer thought.

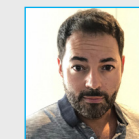
DIRECTORS:



JACK HALBERSTAM



MACARENA GOMEZ-BARRIS



DANIEL DA SILVA

[Jack Halberstam](#), Professor of Gender Studies and English Literature, Columbia University

[Macarena Gomez-Barris](#), Chairperson of Social Science and Cultural Studies and Director of the Global South Center, Pratt Institute

[Daniel Da Silva](#), Assistant Professor of Spanish and Portuguese, Rutgers University

GRADUATE ASSISTANT: [Daniel S. Sáenz](#), Ph.D. Candidate, Latin American and Iberian Cultures, Columbia University

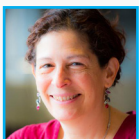
MIGRANT PERSONHOOD AND RIGHTS: CRISES OF RECOGNITION

The [Migrant Personhood and Rights: Crises of Recognition](#) working group investigates the community impact of anti-immigrant sentiments and policies. We engage academic research and the expertise of community-based advocacy organizations to question the myths – both positive and negative – that surround migrant communities and to develop novel approaches that address current immigration issues.

Our project stems from the rising tide of anti-immigrant sentiment that characterized U.S. political culture over the course of the 2016 presidential election and the preliminary years of the Trump presidency. We ask: How does a nation-state reach the point where it becomes national policy to remove thousands of children from their parents as a deterrent to seeking asylum? How does a nation-state reach the point where it prosecutes individuals for providing water to migrants in a desert? How does a nation-state reach the point that it bans people from entering the country based on their religion?

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, our project has broadened to investigate how our partner communities are directly impacted by the virus and to explore ways we can contribute to the ongoing re-imagining of the U.S. nation-state spurred by the inequities the pandemic has exposed.

DIRECTORS:



[THEA ABU EL-HAJ](#)



[J.C. SALYER](#)

[Thea Abu El-Haj](#), Professor in Education, Barnard College

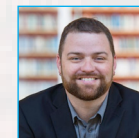
[J.C. Salyer](#), Assistant Professor of Practice in Human Rights and Anthropology, Barnard College

GRADUATE ASSISTANT: [Corinne Kentor](#), Ph.D. Candidate, Anthropology & Education, Teachers College, Columbia University

RACIAL CAPITALISM

Since its first usage by antiapartheid activists in South Africa to its elaboration by political theorist Cedric J. Robinson, racial capitalism is a concept that delineates the interlinked relationships of race and class constitutive of global capitalism. The [Racial Capitalism](#) working group is a site of sustained collaborative research and study, with collective work rooted in a commitment to Black radicalism, historical materialism, feminism, and anti-imperialism. This working group theorizes the connections between exploitation and expropriation in interlinked political geographies. With members that include scholars from Barnard, Columbia, and the Center for Place, Culture, and Politics (CPCP) at the CUNY Graduate Center, as well as local scholars, graduate students, organizers, and visiting international scholars, this group seeks to ask: what visions of justice does the critique of political economy enable us to imagine, and to achieve? Through public lectures, seminars, manuscript workshops, conferences, community-based research projects, publications, exhibitions, and a digital archive, the working group seeks to gain clarity on the material and ideological links between Indigenous dispossession, racism, imperialism, and capitalist political economy.

DIRECTORS



[JORDAN T. CAMP](#)



[CHRISTINA HEATHERTON](#)



[MANU KARUKA](#)

[Jordan T. Camp](#), Visiting Scholar in the Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History at Harvard University

[Christina Heatherton](#), Assistant Professor of American Studies, Barnard College

[Manu Karuka](#), Assistant Professor of American Studies, Barnard College

COORDINATOR: [Hannah Pullen-Blasnik](#), Ph.D. candidate and Paul F. Lazarsfeld Fellow in the Department of Sociology, Columbia University

WOMEN CREATING CHANGE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL



“In our current global environment, it is extremely important that we understand the influence of women on the economic, political, and cultural forces that shape our surroundings. Our programs seek to incorporate academic research about women and other underrepresented groups in the classroom and to better inform global decision making.

Our faculty leverage donor [support](#) in an impressive way to produce extraordinary global projects. Please join us in supporting this dynamic research and outreach.”

Ann KAPLAN, Columbia University Trustee Emerita
 Partner, Circle Wealth Management

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[contact socialdifference@columbia.edu](mailto:socialdifference@columbia.edu) for more information

Columbia University’s [Women Creating Change Leadership Council](#) is comprised of individuals who are committed to the exploration of issues which affect women and the ways in which women address global gender challenges. The mission of the Council is to promote interdisciplinary collaborative research and to sponsor events that publicize this important work. Council members will assist the faculty in framing how their academic endeavors can create greater impact. The WCC Leadership Council will provide a critical link between the University’s faculty-led projects and the global business, academic, and civil society.

WCCLC Member List:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| ANN KAPLAN [Chair], New York | MELISSA FISHER , New York | LOIS PERELSON-GROSS , New York |
| ANNETTE ANTHONY , London | AMAL GHANDOUR , Lebanon | PHILIPA PORTNOY , New York |
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| ABIGAIL ELBAUM , New York | DIANA MOREINIS NASSER , São Paulo, Brazil | |
| JANICE REALS ELLIG , New York | ALYSON NEEL , New York | |

BRINGING TOGETHER PARTNERS TO CREATE CHANGE

CSSD projects have received **support from external partners** and from Columbia University, including:



CSSD STAFF STATEMENTS

STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH BLACK LIVES MATTER

Part of our core mission at CSSD is the understanding of difference, in all of its forms, through time and across space. Intertwined with that is our desire to understand the social, economic, and political structures that underpin inequalities that are rooted in both real and perceived differences. In the past two weeks we have watched, with the backdrop of the COVID-19 crisis, the structures that shore up racism and racist violence in America come to the fore in the killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, and in threats of violence made toward Christian Cooper in Central Park. At CSSD we stand in solidarity with the families of Mr. Floyd, Ms. Taylor, and Mr. Arbery, and with Mr. Cooper, as well as with the families of all others murdered because of the color of their skin. **We believe that Black Lives Matter.**

Paige West, Director

Catherine LaSota, Executive Director

Ayah Eldosougi, Program Coordinator

Fahmida Hussain, Business Officer

STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH GRADUATE STUDENT WORKERS

As the staff of the Center for the Study of Social Difference (CSSD), we express our solidarity with all students affiliated with CSSD who are members of the Graduate Workers of Columbia University (GWC-UAW Local 2110). We support the graduate workers' right to act on the vote of the overwhelming majority of the bargaining team and to withhold their labor as part of the collective bargaining process. As fellow employees of this university, we urge the administration to conclude the bargaining process fairly and expeditiously.

Paige West, Director

Catherine LaSota, Executive Director

Ayah Eldosougi, Program Coordinator

Fahmida Hussain, Business Officer

STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH AAPI COMMUNITIES

The Center for the Study of Social Difference (CSSD) is deeply saddened by the recent murders in Georgia and the ongoing attacks of hatred against members of our AAPI communities. We must continue the important work of addressing systemic racism and dismantling white supremacy. We stand in solidarity with the families of those we have lost and all who are mourning.

Paige West, Director

Catherine LaSota, Executive Director

Ayah Eldosougi, Program Coordinator

Fahmida Hussain, Business Officer

STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE

We, the undersigned at the Center for the Study of Social Difference, stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine. We support their right to resist Israel's ethnic cleansing and to seek justice and their rights in the face of racist exclusion, dispossession of lands and homes, blockades and military violence by the Israeli state and its citizens.

Our core mission at CSSD is to create the conditions for understanding and being able to challenge inequality and oppression in all its forms. We understand all forms of oppression are interconnected and so our commitment to solidarity with Palestinians is rooted in our commitment to imagining racial, gender, economic, and environmental justice globally.

Paige West, Director

Catherine LaSota, Executive Director

Ayah Eldosougi, Program Coordinator

Fahmida Hussain, Business Officer

JUST 3



 COLUMBIA | SOCIAL DIFFERENCE
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL DIFFERENCE

The Center for the Study of Social Difference is proud to present our new podcast, Just Three, hosted by [Catherine LaSota](#). Hear artists, activists, scholars, and others from around the world talking about how their work intersects with social justice, and how we can confront the biggest social justice challenges of our time. Just Three can be found on [Apple Podcasts](#) and [Spotify](#). *Listen and subscribe!*

Episodes, show notes, and transcripts can be found on the Just Three podcast page [here](#).



KAYHAN IRANI



ANNETTE MWANSA NKOWANE



IŞIN ÖNOL



DEEPTHI SUKUMAR



MUSU BAKOTO SAWO



ALYSSA JAMES



GEORGE ESTREICH



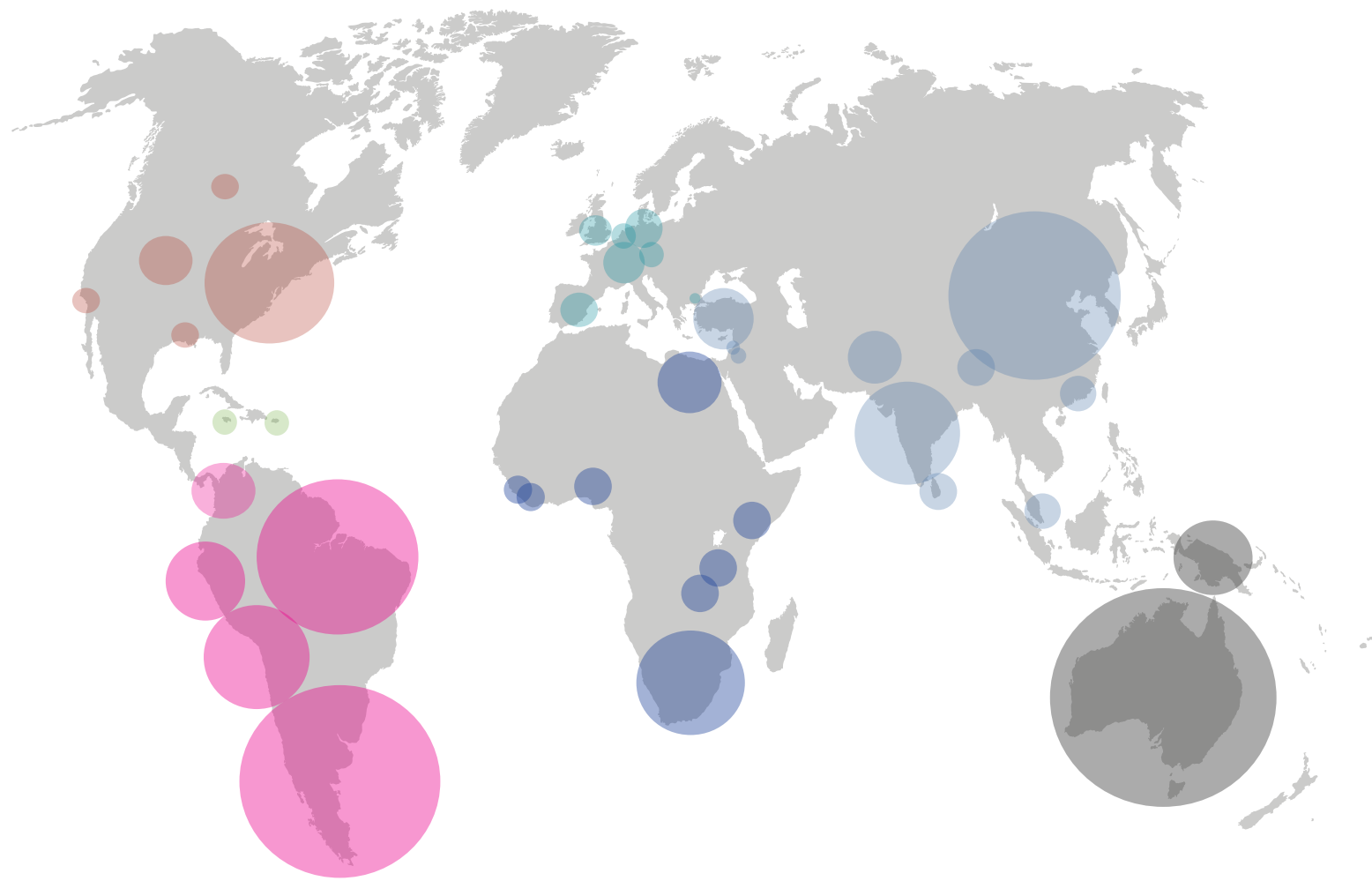
JEN LEWIS



NONI CARTER

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| India | Malawi | | Colombia | Netherlands | |
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socialdifference@columbia.edu

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