Last year, John Wang '16, March '21 won the third Radcliffe Institute Public Art Competition—the first undergraduate to do so. His winning entry, 100+ Years at 73 Brattle, now installed in Radcliffe’s Susan S. and Kenneth L. Wallach Garden through May 2019, uses a mix of granite, sage, soil, and wood to suggest the site’s building history.

FEATURES

SPECIAL INTERVIEW
Lizabeth Cohen Reflects on Her Years as Dean
BY PAT HARRISON
Lizabeth Cohen prepares for the next chapter and looks back at the greatest hits of her Radcliffe deanship.

Gathering the Ghosts
BY PAT HARRISON
As she donates family papers to the Schlesinger Library, Patricia J. Williams shares some extraordinary ancestral stories.

Biomedical Tools, Fluorescent Proteins, Robotic Hands, and the Jellyfish Guy
BY DEBORAH HALBER
David Gruber plumbs the potential of a marine enigma.

DEPARTMENTS

From the Dean
Around the Institute
New Books
Campaign News
Events Online
Newsmakers
Quick Study

The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University is dedicated to creating and sharing transformative ideas across the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences. The Fellowship Program annually supports the work of 50 leading artists and scholars. Academic Ventures fosters collaborative research projects and sponsors lectures and conferences that engage scholars with the public. The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America documents the lives of American women of the past and present for the future, furthering the Institute’s commitment to women, gender, and society.
Looking Back and Ahead

It seems only a short time ago—certainly less than almost seven years—that I became dean of the Radcliffe Institute. During these years, I have had the great good fortune to interact with Radcliffe alumnae/i, fellows, staff and faculty members, and supporters of the Institute who make our work possible. It has been among the great privileges of my career.

One person to whom I want to extend special thanks is Judy Vichniac, the associate dean of the Fellowship Program, who will be stepping down at the end of this academic year. For the past 17 years, Judy has shaped the Fellowship Program, providing leadership and mentoring for almost 900 artists, scholars, and scientists. Under her leadership, the program has grown more competitive and diverse. The first fellowship class that Judy led, in 2001–2002, had 579 applicants and 43 fellows. This year, in 2017–2018, we received 1,128 applications and admitted 53 fellows. The important intellectual and personal experiences that fellows report every year are due in no small part to Judy’s leadership. She will be greatly missed.

The cover story in this issue describes an example of the Fellowship Program’s collaboration with another Radcliffe program, the Schlesinger Library, in pursuit of our shared objectives. The voluminous family papers that Patricia Williams—a distinguished writer and legal scholar—is donating to the Schlesinger will bolster the library’s ongoing efforts to diversify its collections and support the telling of a more inclusive history of American women, which has been an important priority over the past several years.

Other recent highlights of the Institute’s work are the symposium we held on health care policy this past fall (page 10) and our annual science symposium, which explored new ways to understand, track, and respond to modern epidemics (page 16). These Academic Ventures events filled the Knaefel Center and attracted even more viewers online, helping us achieve our longstanding goal of sharing research with a broad public.

My time at the Institute has passed quickly in part because I’ve so enjoyed being engaged in projects like these. Advancing the work of scholars and artists, creating a vibrant multidisciplinary community within this large and decentralized university, and widely sharing new ideas are the essence of our enterprise here at Radcliffe, and they are deeply important to me personally.

The success of The Radcliffe Campaign, Invest in Ideas, which concludes in June, has strengthened the Institute’s ability to continue fulfilling these critical roles. While the next chapter of the Institute’s story will be authored by a new dean, I am proud that she or he will inherit a Radcliffe Institute that is stronger than ever before. I am excited to see—along with all of you—what’s next!

Lizabeth Cohen
Dean
Lizabeth Cohen Reflects on Her Years as Dean

By Pat Harrison
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DIANA LEVINE

In early October, Lizabeth Cohen announced that she will step down as dean of the Radcliffe Institute on June 30, 2018, at the end of her seventh year in the job. Radcliffe Magazine spoke with Dean Cohen in December to hear her thoughts about her time as dean and her plans for the future. We share with you an edited version of that conversation.
Radcliffe Magazine: You have been dean for almost seven years, you were a Radcliffe fellow in 2001–2002, and you have been a professor in the Harvard history department for 20 years. How do you view the evolution of the Radcliffe Institute since its founding, in 1999?

Lizabeth Cohen: Looking back at what’s happened over the past 18 years, I think the Institute has been through an amazing transformation. Maybe because I’m a historian who writes books, I think in chapters. So the founding of the Institute, with Drew Faust as dean, was chapter one. She convened a star panel of advisors to think about what the Institute should be, and then came the takeoff, with programs being created. The Fellowship Program—the core of an institute for advanced study—was the first new program, though it built on the fellowship program that existed at Radcliffe College. The Schlesinger Library, of course, had been around since the 1940s. Public programming, including conferences and dean’s lectures, was a somewhat ad hoc effort at first.

A very early decision was that the Institute would include the sciences. That’s not obvious. It isn’t easy to have science when you don’t have laboratories. But Barbara Grosz joined the Institute in 2001 as the dean of science to make sure that the Institute’s reach would be truly multidisciplinary. She became dean of the Institute in 2007—in what I’m calling chapter two—and led Radcliffe until 2011. Radcliffe’s annual science symposia and science lectures date from this period, and we’ve had many prominent women (and men) scientists as speakers and fellows since then.

You could say that chapter three, the one I’ve had the good fortune to oversee, has been a kind of maturation. We have worked very hard to create an institute that is larger than the sum of its parts—the Fellowship Program, Academic Ventures, and the Schlesinger Library. We’ve done that in several ways, including with our Institute-wide thematic initiatives, which create opportunities for integration across programs. We’ve also engaged a lot more with students, which has really distinguished us among similar institutes for advanced study. And our public programming and support for faculty-led workshops has expanded by leaps and bounds.

Among your achievements as dean, which are you most proud of?

I am very proud of the growth of the Radcliffe Professorships. We have helped to recruit 24 outstanding professors, who will contribute to building a more distinguished and diverse Harvard faculty, by offering candidates time at the Institute as fellows. Thanks to support from the current capital campaign, which concludes on June 30, we have been able to attract more and more professors, including tenured and tenure-track faculty members. I mentioned our thematic initiatives as one way we’ve worked to build a more integrated Institute. Our first theme was Native and Indigenous Peoples, and it was tremendously successful, not only in bringing Radcliffe together, but in what it did for the University. HUNAP [Harvard University Native American Program], has worked hard to make things happen in this area, but at the time we launched our theme, HUNAP’s programming had not yet attracted as much public visibility as it deserved. And Harvard didn’t have one tenured or tenure-track Native American professor. In partnering with HUNAP in 2015–2016, we provided a broader audience for its programs, for Native American studies at Harvard, and for the importance of educating our community about this topic. As a result, at the end of 2016, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences authorized an open-rank faculty position in Native American studies, and the history department has just hired the prominent Indigenous historian Philip J. Deloria, who arrived in January from the University of Michigan.

The Fellowship Program has become more competitive. In 2011, we had about 850 applicants—a very respectable number—but over the past four years we’ve had between 1,000 and 1,400 every year. And the pool has become more and more diverse in terms of fields, demographics, and international representation.

The capital campaign has also been very successful, allowing us to develop our arts program and to build a gallery; to undertake renovations—first of 40 Concord, which is a valuable annex...
space for the Schlesinger Library, and now of the Knafl Center and the Schlesinger’s main building; to expand our seminar and workshop offerings; and to enhance our public programming, which includes a new lecture series: the Kim and Judy Davis Dean’s Lecture Series.

The campaign has also brought us new friends, made the Institute more widely known, and sharpened the way we talk about ourselves so that everyone can understand our work. An institute for advanced study requires some explanation. Over the course of the campaign, we’ve gotten better at explaining why it’s so important for people to invest in long-term research. That dual mission we have—to support research and to share it broadly—is rare among institutions in our society, and the role we play is very important.

**Tell us about your most memorable moments at Radcliffe.**

My first year, the science symposium was titled “Molecules, Movement, and Motors,” and I was told I was supposed to make introductory remarks. I said, “And then I leave?” I was surprised, but it turned out to be fascinating, and I have loved all our science symposia. I’ve learned an enormous amount, and I am happy to sit in that chair all day long!

Another exciting moment was when we opened the new Johnson-Kulukundis Family Gallery with a spectacular exhibition by teamLab. It was a pretty ambitious thing to take on as our opening exhibit, and it allowed us to push the capability of the gallery to its extreme. So we got to see what we could do with demanding audiovisual art. teamLab is a Japanese consortium composed of artists, engineers, and computer scientists. That seemed perfect, because we were trying to create not just an ordinary gallery but one that would be a kind of laboratory for the multidisciplinary work that our fellows do in Byerly Hall.

**Your husband, Herrick Chapman, is a history professor at New York University. How is it to be married to another historian?**

I can’t imagine not being married to somebody who works in my field. Being a historian is the way I engage with the world, the way I understand things. That’s the way Herrick looks at the world too.

Early on, we both read every draft of everything we wrote, and it was just an ordinary great to have that inside the household. Now I can hear his voice saying things to me, so I don’t have to show him every draft. But we still read for each other. He has a book coming out with Harvard University Press in January, about reconstructing France after the Second World War. He’s worked on it for a long time, and I feel as if I’ve lived it with him. I love that. I wouldn’t trade that for anything.

I feel incredibly lucky to have met him. He was a couple of years ahead of me at Princeton, and I feel that we have grown up together.

**What’s next for you?**

You get a year of leave after you have served as dean. After a number of years of not being fully active in your field, you need to retool, replenish, and reconnect to your discipline and your scholarly work.

As many people know, I’ve had a book on the back burner for the seven years I’ve been dean, on postwar American cities and urban redevelopment—“Saving America’s Cities: Ed Logue and the Struggle to Renew Urban America in the Suburban Age.” I’ve been able to work on it only in August, at semester break, and at spring break. This is not the way to write a book, because I have to reintroduce myself to it over and over again. I have now managed to finish the last chapter, and I’m working on the conclusion. When I’ve finished it, I will go back and read the whole thing through, editing as needed, because I wrote it in segments, so I have to make it work as a book. I do hope that I can be finished with the manuscript by the end of the summer. I don’t want it to drag into next year, because I have many other things I want to accomplish then.

After I finish the book, I need to read in my field of 20th-century US history. I have to catch up on the most recent interpretations of important historical trends and events, so I have an ambitious reading list of articles and books.

Then I plan to launch a new book project, because when I go back to teaching, I want to have some momentum. It can be very difficult—amid the pressures of teaching, administrative service, and working with graduate students—to actually get a project launched. I also need to think about what I want to teach and how I can contribute the most in my department. I’d like to do some teaching around my new project so that I can create some synergy between my teaching and my research.

**What will you miss the most?**

Learning about so many different things. I’ll try to come to as many Radcliffe programs as I can, but I know I won’t be able to attend every conference and lecture. The breadth of my experience here at Radcliffe will be very hard to replicate.

“Our help to recruit 24 outstanding professors [to the Harvard faculty] . . . by offering candidates time at the Institute as fellows.”

LIZABETH COHEN ON THE VALUE OF RADCLIFFE PROFESSORSHIPS
Lifting the Lid on Family Secrets

A PANEL ORGANIZED BY THE SCHLESINGER LIBRARY REVEALED THE REVERBERATIONS OF FAMILY SECRETS.

At some point in our lives, many of us have stumbled into a secret that forced us to recalibrate the details of our family lore. But for the authors who gathered for a fall Schlesinger Library event titled “Hidden in Plain Sight: Family Secrets and American History,” the recent discovery of long-shrouded family truths not only altered their own origin stories but also inspired research that revealed new insights about American and global history and cultural evolution. The projects they shared suggest the extent to which, as the historian Jane Kamensky said, “what gets seen and what gets hidden” contributes to the larger story of “who we are and how we think.” Kamensky is the Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation Director of the Schlesinger Library.

The Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist and author Susan Faludi ’81, RI ’09 described the genesis of her most recent book, In the Darkroom (Metropolitan Books, 2016), as “an uncomfortable departure” from past projects that dealt with broad themes of feminism, gender roles, and the women’s movement. An intensely personal memoir, In the Darkroom had its origins in a 2004 e-mail she received from her estranged father, Steven Faludi, with the subject line “Changes.”

The message revealed that at the age of 76, Faludi’s father, whose “patriarchal dominance and belligerence” had fueled her early feminist ideals, had secretly undergone gender reassignment surgery in Thailand. Faludi’s subsequent quest to understand this unexpected and unsettling development in her own family ultimately led her back to the wide-ranging issues at the intersection of gender, cultural constraints, history, and politics that she has studied for years.

Faludi said that although she and her father had barely spoken in 25 years, when they reconnected, and she began to learn more about the “fluid” identities that Steven—now Stephanie—Faludi had taken on over the years, she realized that “we had actually been on a similar path: each of us struggling to free ourselves from the constraints of gender.” She continued, “My father’s transformation affirmed my bedrock feminist belief that gender is infinitely varied. We are more than the sex roles that society imposes on us.”

The journalist Gail Lumet Buckley ’59, daughter of the iconic singer, actress, and activist Lena Horne, had written about her famous mother’s family in a book titled The Hornes: An American Family (Knopf, 1986). When Horne died, in 2010, Buckley was moved to reexamine the treasured notes, clippings, and family letters in an old trunk handed down by her grandfather. She soon began to reconsider the family’s legacy in the broader context of African American history.

Buckley’s book The Black Calhouns: From Civil War to Civil Rights with One African American Family (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2016) chronicles the progress of six generations of her family against a backdrop of slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Harlem Renaissance, and the civil rights movement. “My job was a combination of putting the family into perspective and hunting down gossip,” Buckley said. Among the historical “secrets” she uncovered was the existence of a thriving African American business culture in Reconstruction-era Atlanta, Georgia.

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success, wealth, and relative mental health of Atlanta’s black middle class” from 1865 to 1877 was for Buckley “a pleasant surprise.”

Like Buckley, the historian and University of Southern California professor Alice Echols found the first intriguing bits of the archive that led to her latest book in an old trunk—as she described it, “a beautiful, battered Louis Vuitton trunk that had been in my family’s rec room, closed but unlocked, for nearly 50 years.” Subsequent research involving 70 boxes of papers from her childhood home immersed Echols in the life and times of Walter and Lulu Davis, her maternal grandparents and central figures in the collapse of the US building-and-loan industry as it played out in the microcosm of Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Echols said she experienced “a stew of emotions” when she discovered that her grandfather, the head of one of the largest building-and-loan institutions in Colorado, “had gone on the lam in 1932 when authorities discovered a $1.2 million shortfall in his bank, leaving many of his depositors destitute.” But in her new book, Shortfall: Family Secrets, Financial Collapse, and a Hidden History of American Banking (The New Press, 2017), Echols unflinchingly uses her embezzling grandfather’s misdeeds to help expose “the bloated underbelly of American capitalism.”

In the process, she examines the historical underpinnings of attitudes about class, government regulation, taxation, self-reliance, race, and property ownership that still reverberate profoundly in contemporary America. Ultimately, Echols said, her family secret forced her to consider why, as a nation, “we are so forgiving of capitalism and so unforgiving of those who fall behind, or who, by virtue of systemic inequality, have always been behind.”

The journalist Alex Wagner, a CBS News correspondent and a senior editor at The Atlantic, also talked about the ways in which family histories connect past and present and “help us reexamine current events in a different light.” The daughter of a Burmese mother and a white American father, Wagner pushed beyond the sanitized version of family history her parents had shared to pursue doubts and questions about her ancestry through DNA testing, conversations with far-flung family members, and research conducted in the United States, Burma, and Luxembourg.

“I embarked on this voyage not solely to get at the truth of my own family but to better unpack the well-worn narrative of the immigrant coming to America,” she said. Details of her journey will be published in a forthcoming book, Futureface: A Family Mystery, an Epic Quest, and the Secret to Belonging (One World, 2018). Wagner hinted that “in reality, immigration is hard, complicated, and full of terrible choices and broken hearts.” She said, “What I found is that much of what we may tell ourselves about what we are and what we were are lies.”

Following the presentations, an audience member asked for advice in grappling with the disturbing discovery of a slave-trading ancestor in her family. “Share it with your family and friends,” urged the panel moderator and Harvard historian Annette Gordon-Reed JD ’84, RI ’16, whose Pulitzer Prize–winning scholarship exposed the long-hidden secret of Thomas Jefferson’s relationship with Sally Hemings. “Make it part of your family story.”

Wagner concurred, saying, “We need to hand the truth forward. Finding your people in the past is a tricky concept. The community we have in the present is the tribe we should be focused on.”

Deborah Blagg is a freelance writer.
In Surge of Strawberries, Some Dirty Details

CALIFORNIA SCHOLAR DEVOTING RADCLIFFE FELLOWSHIP TO STUDY OF AN INDUSTRY TRANSFORMED

When Julie Guthman was young, her father enforced “intense food restrictions.” Even treats had to be good for you—whole-wheat cookies, carob chips, honey that tasted “horrible.” What that meant in practice was that she had to visit her friends’ houses to gorge on junk food.

“I loved to eat Wonder Bread rolled up into a ball,” says Guthman.

Healthful eating is easier (and tastier) these days than it was back when she hid the fast carbs, but there’s still plenty of room for improvement, Guthman says. The professor of social sciences at the University of California, Santa Cruz, has spent much of her academic life studying dietary advice and the challenges of balancing equitable access to food with supporting sustainable crops that are labor- and environment-friendly. As the 2017–2018 Frances B. Cashin Fellow at Radcliffe, she’s looking at the strawberry as a case study.

Guthman is researching a forthcoming book in which she’ll explore how growers, buyers, and scientists have combined with the characteristics of plants, soils, and climate in California to transform the popular berry from a summer treat into a year-round staple, diminishing its taste and harming both farmworkers and the ozone layer in the process.

“It was curious whether knowledge about the potential epigenetic effects of the more-toxic methyl iodide had entered into the regulatory debates,” she says. “The answer was no, but it did lead me to study how growers were contending with the methyl bromide phase-out in California, where 90 percent of US strawberries are grown.”

Methyl bromide is still used in California because of an exemption that allows it in strawberry nurseries. “It has to do with having to sell clean plants,” says Guthman, who plans to devote a chapter in her new book to the chemical. “California strawberry nurseries supply much of the world’s strawberry starts, and you can’t sell plants that have viruses, so even organic growers are getting fumigated starts.”

Partly because of consumer protests, methyl iodide was never widely adopted, and it was taken off the market in 2012, Guthman says. Today growers rely heavily on chloropicrin, or tear gas, which was once used in combination with methyl bromide. Consumers have little to worry about, Guthman said, because the fumigant dissipates in the air before fruit is planted, never coming into contact with a mature plant’s berries. Those who work, live, or go to school near fumigated fields are at greatest risk.

Guthman’s book will also address strawberry breeding and recent developments in genomic marking. Originally, the possibilities in strawberry breeding were infinite, says Guthman. But the industry has generally bred for shelf life, size, and color, “and not so much for taste—and unfortunately, not for pathogen resistance, which has now emerged as a high priority.”

Guthman followed a winding path to food studies. After college, she organized voter registration drives in California. Later, having earned an MBA at the University of California Press, 2011). At the time, a regulatory battle was brewing over methyl iodide, a compound that many hoped would replace methyl bromide, a pest-killing strawberry fumigant destined for international phase-out as an ozone-depleting chemical.

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Guthman’s book will also address strawberry breeding and recent developments in genomic marking. Originally,
of California, Berkeley, she became a nonprofit financial manager. Needing a break from crunching numbers, she visited Southeast Asia, where the lush landscapes struck a chord.

“The woman I was with was interested in looking at textiles,” says Guthman. “I was interested in what they were growing.”

That interest led her back to Berkeley for master’s and doctoral degrees in geography. Her next turning point came in a class focused on restructuring agro-food sectors around the world. It was the early 1990s, and expensive organic products had begun popping up in her local supermarket. Meanwhile, restaurants inspired by the nearby Chez Panisse, famous for using organic, locally grown ingredients, were taking off. Guthman pitched the idea of studying California salad mix, and she and her classmates “wrote an article that became the seminal article on organics in social science research,” she says. “That’s what really got me started.”

Today, she’s still pushing for change and for a sustainable model for food.

“We really need to find an approach beyond marketplace alternatives that allow privileged people to buy their way out,” she says. “We need to not only regulate enough so that growers are forced to use different technologies, but we need to provide those aiming to grow more sustainably with enough assistance through things like research and extension, and subsidy and crop insurance programs.”

This article originally appeared in the Harvard Gazette and has been edited for Radcliffe Magazine. Video of Guthman’s talk, titled “Social Justice and the New Food Activism” and part of HUBweek 2017, is available at www.radcliffe.harvard.edu.
Considering Health Care

Health care in the United States is complicated and varies from state to state. At a Radcliffe symposium, health professionals, policy and public health experts, and economists, among others, examined the functions and dysfunctions of the Affordable Care Act and explored other health insurance systems at the state and international levels.

So where are we now with health care? Given the complexity of the system—and the politics surrounding it—the answer is always changing, particularly when you consider the policy differences that exist from state to state. “To understand the dynamics and challenges of the US health system, we have to understand the interplay of history, politics, economics, science, and medicine,” said Radcliffe Institute Dean Lizabeth Cohen in her introductory remarks to “It Depends What State You’re In: Policies and Politics of the US Health Care System.” This fall event brought together an interdisciplinary group of scholars and practitioners to shed light on the sometimes muddy debate swirling around health care.

The Affordable Care Act has been the punching bag of health care reform but somehow survives, said Daniel Carpenter, faculty director of the Institute’s social sciences program and the Allie S. Freed Professor of Government in the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences. “Now we regard it as part of the status quo, albeit an unsettled one,” he said. Signed into law in March 2010, the ACA—“Obamacare”—represents the largest expansion of health insurance in more than 50 years, added Benjamin Sommers, an associate professor of health policy and economics at Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Twenty million Americans have gained access to health insurance thanks to the ACA, whether through state expansion of Medicaid, subsidized access to the health insurance marketplace, or children aged 26 and under staying on parents’ plans. Significantly, Sommers said, 31 states and the District of Columbia elected to expand Medicaid. “In that sense, we have a natural experiment in terms of health outcomes and costs,” he said. “The uneven expansion has also yielded striking disparities, with 3 to 4 million low-income adults in the 19 states that have not expanded Medicaid lacking an affordable option for health insurance. “If you are a single parent in Texas, your income has to be under $6,000 a year, as an approximate, to qualify for Medicaid,” Sommers said, citing just one example. (The cutoff in Massachusetts for a two-person household is just over $49,000.)

Given these discrepancies, how has the ACA as a policy influenced the way citizens participate in our democracy? “It wasn’t clear that the ACA
would spark engagement,” said the MIT political scientist Andrea Campbell ’88, RI ’13. “As legislation, it wasn’t all that popular.” She found, in some expansion states, participants in programs such as Kentucky’s Kynect and Tennessee’s TennCare were unaware that those names were simply rebrandings of the states’ Medicaid programs. Their new names removed some stigma from the programs, but fewer people grasped the origin of their benefits. Then came Republican efforts to repeal the ACA. “In threatening repeal, Republicans essentially succeeded in making the invisible visible,” Campbell said. Beneficiaries of the ACA—including those with disabled children or with family members suffering from opioid addiction—pushed back the repeal effort.

“Medicaid is the most important health insurance plan in our country today,” said Boston Medical Center President and CEO Kate Walsh, who noted that 39 percent of children, 17 percent of women, and 13 percent of men...
in the United States receive health care coverage under the plan. In Massachusetts, 1.8 million are covered by MassHealth (the state’s name for Medicaid), at a cost of 40 percent of the state budget; 79 percent of Boston Medical’s revenues come from government sources. “We have to figure out collectively how to reduce the spending and keep people well,” Walsh said. “The key is going to be a rigorous focus on the social determinants of health.”

Fifteen years ago, staffers at Boston Medical realized that one-third of its patients suffered from food insecurity, so they created an on-site food pantry with prescriptions available for a three-day emergency supply of food. They began by serving 500 people a month, Walsh said. That number has since increased to 7,000. Last summer, the hospital began farming the rooftop of its power plant, producing approximately 15,000 pounds of fresh vegetables in one season.

“Health is much more than health care,” said Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association. “Those are the social determinants we always talk about. . . . Your zip code fundamentally determines your access to a whole range of things.”

Ultimately, universal coverage should be the national policy, he said. But how to mobilize the political energy necessary for change? The answer, Benjamin said, lies in getting people to grasp the significance of a public health service—clean water, for example. Until it’s gone (think Flint, Michigan), that can be a difficult thing to communicate. “The business community gets it,” said Benjamin, noting that companies use metrics such as the percentage of obesity and other indicators of a community’s health when deciding where to locate a new factory.

Moving on from the ACA, the Harvard Medical School assistant professor Zirui Song moderated a second panel, which examined the potential of alternative health care models. In California, for example, a state legislative measure known as the Healthy California Act aims to institute a single-payer approach. Michael Lighty, director of public policy for the California Nurses Association and National Nurses United, cowrote the bill. “We’re on the side of guaranteed health care,” said Lighty. “We see it as a moral imperative.” Analysis shows that the plan would cost $331 billion and save $375 billion, ultimately reducing the state’s spending on health care by 18 percent. “Seventy percent of health care expenses in California are publicly financed,” Lighty said. “We are simply not getting our money’s worth. This is essentially a system that uses tax money to subsidize an industry model of revenue and profit instead of guaranteeing health care for all. That’s what we’re changing.”

William Hsiao, a professor of economics at the T.H. Chan School of Public Health, designed a single-payer system for nine countries around the world. The United
States, he said, is the only affluent country in the world that has built its health care system on the free-market principle; yet its quality of care is highly uneven, while health care costs continue to escalate. Research shows, Hsiao said, that moving to a single-payer system in the United States would lower spending by nearly $1 trillion annually, through reduced administrative costs ($500 billion), reduced abuse and fraud ($150 to $180 billion), reduced drug costs ($150 billion), and reduced costs for end-of-life care ($80 to $100 million). The expense of making this transition, which would involve expanded and improved coverage for the millions of Americans who need it and retraining for the 2 to 4 million people who would lose their jobs, would total some $400 billion to $500 billion.

“So why aren’t we there?” Hsiao asked. “Here I venture into political economy.” Simply put, the losers in a single-payer scenario—the private insurance industry, medical administrative personnel, and big pharma—are more powerful than the uninsured and underinsured who would benefit.

Michelle McEvoy Doty, vice president of survey research and evaluation for the Commonwealth Fund, broadened the scope of comparison. She said that Australia, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom are the world’s top performers in health care; all offer some version of universal care, whether through a single provider (the National Health Service in the UK), a single-payer insurance program (also known as Medicare in Australia), or competing private insurers (the Netherlands). Doty recommended three short-term strategies to create greater stability in the US market, including enforcement of the individual mandate; the funding and support of outreach and enrollment efforts; and payments to insurance companies for providing cost-sharing reductions to low-income consumers. Longer-term recommendations included making tax credits and cost-sharing reductions available to those with incomes above the poverty line; Medicaid expansion in the remaining 19 states; a reinsurance program to reduce premiums; and a fallback health-care option for counties without insurance options.

Drilling down to next steps, Song asked the panelists what changes the United States could feasibly make over a 10-year horizon.

“I’m the true optimist in the room,” said Lighty, who believes we have “a real shot” at passing the Healthy California Act. “If California looked different from the United States, and more like the Netherlands or Australia, that would motivate the federal government to move to a Medicare-for-all system much more quickly,” he said. “These countries transitioned to [their systems] 40 to 70 years ago, and it took 20 or more years to get to that point,” Doty said. “We have to operate within that political reality when we’re thinking about next steps in the United States.”

Single-payer insurance won’t be discussed in a serious, politically viable way until the 2024 presidential election, Hsiao estimated. Policy making, he said, occurs in three stages. First, a key issue is embraced by a political party or a powerful group. “Senator [Bernie] Sanders got the Democratic Party to do that. That’s a vision, like a beautiful mountaintop.” In the second, a politically viable option is designed. In the third, legislation is created. “That’s where the horse trading and what you call sausage making occurs,” said Hsiao. “Then you come up with something really workable. We are, in my view, at the first stage.”

Any reform will create many small winners but a few very powerful losers, said Janet Rich-Edwards, faculty codirector of the Institute’s science program and an associate professor at Harvard Medical School and the T.H. Chan School of Public Health. For this reason, all citizens need to be aware of what is at stake in health care reform. And we can all be part of the solution: “Different sectors need to come together to solve these problems, to elevate health as a shared value that reflects our commitment as a nation to justice, equality, and democracy,” Rich-Edwards said.

Julia Hanna is an associate editor at the Harvard Business School Bulletin.
A Master of Explaining the Universe

PHYSICIST BRIAN GREENE SEEKS WIDER AUDIENCE FOR THE WONDERS OF SCIENCE

He is the founder of the World Science Festival, the author of numerous best-selling books, including the Pulitzer Prize finalist The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory (W. W. Norton, 2003), and an expert at explaining knotty concepts. This past fall, Brian Greene ’84, a Harvard overseer and Columbia University theoretical physicist and mathematician, explored shifting ideas of space, time, and reality in the Kim and Judy Davis Dean’s Lecture in the Sciences at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study. We caught up with Greene to ask him about his passion for science and how he might define superstring theory in a tweet.

Where did your initial interest in math and physics come from? As a kid growing up in Manhattan, I was deeply fascinated with mathematics, and my dad taught me the basics of arithmetic at a young age. I was captivated from then on by the ability to use a few simple rules to undertake calculations that no one had ever done before. Now, most of these calculations weren’t ever done because they weren’t interesting, but for a kid to be able to do something new is deeply thrilling. Later on, when I learned in high school (and most forcefully when I got to college at Harvard) that math isn’t merely a game but something that can help you understand what happens out there in the real universe, then I was kind of hooked for life.

I know you are famous for being able to explain awesome scientific concepts. In the age of social media, could you define superstring theory in a tweet? Superstring theory is our best attempt to realize Einstein’s dream of the unified theory. #unification

So break that down for me—and this doesn’t have to be in a tweet format. What is the unified theory of physics, and why is it so important? Einstein envisioned that there might be a master law of physics, perhaps captured by a single mathematical equation that would be so powerful that in principle it could describe every physical process in the universe—the big stuff, the small stuff, and everything in between. And he believed it so deeply that he pursued it relentlessly for the last 30 years of his life. On various occasions, Einstein announced that he had the unified theory (always, however, having to retract that sometime later, when he realized that his latest proposal didn’t quite work). In the end, it was a very frustrating experience for him. And when he died, that dream of unification died with him.

But about 10 or 15 years later some scientist stumbled upon a new approach—this approach called superstring theory—and, over the course of decades, realized that this might in fact be the unified theory that Einstein was looking for. And that’s what we have been developing ever since.

What has been the main focus of your work for the past several years? I have been working on issues of cosmology, origins of the universe. I’ve been working on the possibility of a multiverse—that we might live in a reality that comprises more than one universe. I’ve been working on some strange features of quantum mechanics called quantum entanglement, in which distant objects can somehow act as though they are sitting right next to each other. Again, this is a discovery that sort of goes back to Einstein himself, so things in that domain have been my main focus of late.

Tell me more about multiple universes. Well, it’s a curious idea because for most people the word “universe” means everything: all that there is. But developments over the past couple of decades have convinced many of us that there is at least a possibility that what we have long thought to be everything is actually perhaps just a small part of a much bigger reality. And that bigger reality might have other realms that would rightly be called universes of their own. If that’s the case, then the grand picture of reality involves a whole collection of universes, and that’s why we no longer use the word “universe” to describe all there is . . . we speak of “multi”—there are multiverses because of this multiplicity of universes.

Is there current or future research that you could see really changing the nature of how we see the universe? My own feeling, and it’s shared by colleagues, is that the next breakthrough will come when we deeply understand the fundamental ingredients of space and time themselves. And this is an open question. Just as matter is made up of atoms and molecules, could it be that space and time are made up of more-fundamental constituents? In fact, this is what I talked about at Radcliffe—re-
cent work that at least hints at an answer to what the ingredients of space and time might actually be.

**What has inspired you to work to make science understandable?**

My view of science is not that it’s merely an effort to unearth the basic laws of physics. I view it more as a very human undertaking to see how we fit into the grand scheme of things and to answer the questions that have been asked since the time we could ask questions: Where did we come from? What are we made of? How did the universe come to be? What is time? What will happen in the distant future? All these questions, I think, speak deeply to who we are as a species, and for the vast majority of people to be cut off from the most up-to-date thinking on these deep questions because they don’t speak mathematics, they don’t have a graduate degree in physics—I think that’s tragic. So for decades now, I’ve felt that part of my charge is to bring these ideas to a wider audience, to make them available to anyone who has a curiosity and a little bit of stick-to-itiveness to push through some deep, difficult, but ultimately gratifying ideas.

**If you weren’t a physicist, what would you be?**

Well, if I was starting out today, I think I would probably go into neuroscience. I like to think of the big questions. Where did the universe come from? Where did life come from? And where does the mind come from? And for those, I think the time is really ripe to understand the nature of intelligence and thought. I think there are going to be great, great breakthroughs in that area in the next couple of decades.

**Favorite physicist?**

There’s nobody who compares with Isaac Newton in terms of the leap that he pushed humanity through, from the way we understood the world before he began to think about it until after he existed.

**What is your take on Voyager?**

The *Star Trek* version or the real version?

**The real version.**

I think it’s a great symbol of who we are as a species. We are explorers. We are deeply committed to understanding the universe. To envision these little spacecraft that have left the solar system and are floating out there in the great unknown as harbingers, if you will, of human life back on the planet is a deeply moving picture and one that really captures who we are.

Greene believes that the next big breakthrough in physics could be in how we fundamentally understand space and time.
Health Threats, New and Old

AS WE ENTER A NEW ERA IN PUBLIC HEALTH, EPIDEMIOLOGISTS, SCIENTISTS, SOCIOLOGISTS, AND OTHER RESEARCHERS SHARE THEIR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HOW TO UNDERSTAND AND COMBAT DISEASES SUCH AS ZIKA AND LYME AND SOCIAL SCOURGES SUCH AS THE OPIOID AND GUN-VIOLENCE EPIDEMICS.

Thanks to advances in medicine during the past century, diseases such as measles, mumps, and smallpox have declined dramatically, along with mortality caused by them. We are still, however, in the grip of contagion: new diseases such as Zika and Lyme, old threats such as malaria and Ebola that affect developing countries, and even social epidemics such as opioid overdose and gun violence.

Responding to the world’s grand challenges—whether delivering clean water to villagers or clean needles to addicts—requires research, collaboration, and cooperation among social institutions.

During a daylong Radcliffe Institute science symposium, titled “Contagion: Exploring Modern Epidemics” and organized by Academic Ventures, a diverse group of scientists, public health professionals, and social scientists discussed the threats that plague our modern world and how the public health community hopes to combat them.

A New Era

We are living in a new era of epidemics, according to Marcia Castro, an associate professor of demography at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, one in which cities in the developing world are growing more densely populated while facing considerable infrastructure challenges and a lack of resources. People, information, goods, and pathogens are moving around the interconnected world faster than ever.

This era has all the ingredients to foster the spread of infectious disease. “There is nothing a pathogen likes more than a densely populated slum,” said Caroline Buckbee, a professor of epidemiology also at the T.H. Chan School. To confront these challenges, especially in the developing world, Buckbee said, local public health efforts need to combine research, surveillance, and capacity building. She pointed out that over the next 30 years the world’s cities will grow by 2.5 billion people, with 90 percent of the growth happening in Asia and Africa, and those public health entities need to prepare.

The importance of bolstering local public-health capacity emerged as a major theme of the conference, and there was no better example of how to do it than in Nigeria during the Ebola outbreak of 2014. Christian T. Happi, a professor of molecular biology and genomics at Redeemer’s University, in Nigeria, recounted his experience during the crisis.

In March of 2012, a remote village in Guinea was plagued by an Ebola outbreak. Happi was concerned that it might spread with devastating effect from the village where it began to more populous areas such as his hometown of Lagos, a city of 22 million. The rest of the world watched and waited while Happi, eager to use new genomics tools to understand and contain transmission, sprang into action. Preparing for the worst, he called on colleagues from as far away as the Broad Institute and Harvard to help strategize and carry out a plan to contain the spread of the virus. He also trained a group of Nigerian epidemiologists on the ground to use genomics tools to diagnose and isolate the newly infected.

In July, when Ebola arrived in Nigeria, Happi’s team members were ready. They implemented a rapid diagnostic test they had developed and worked with the government and health care systems to isolate patients.
have no centralized way of scanning the globe for new outbreaks. “Why isn’t there a National Weather Service for infectious disease?” asked James M. Wilson, the director of the Nevada Medical Intelligence Center. He was referring to the network of sensors throughout the world’s oceans that collect data on ocean surface temperature to strengthen predictions about weather and climate.

C. Jessica E. Metcalf, an assistant professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at Princeton University, shared Wilson’s concern about the lack of centralized health surveillance. Metcalf builds computational models to predict the spread of measles and other infectious diseases, but she is limited by a lack of information about people’s susceptibility to disease. Without knowing how many people have been vaccinated against measles, for example, she can’t predict its spread.

Metcalf thinks there is a wealth of information in serological blood assays—information about diseases to which people have been exposed and to which they are still susceptible. Serology could vastly improve prediction models that would ascertain where epidemics might strike. Just as people in the path of a hurricane protect themselves by evacuating the area, people in the path of an epidemic could get vaccinated.

This idea led Metcalf and several of her colleagues to propose building a global immunological observatory that would serve as a centralized repository of information gathered from blood samples around the world. “Our blood is this unbelievable sensor of all of the things we have been infected by . . . and an incredible window into the future and the likely burden of infections,” she said, admitting that many logistical and ethical challenges remain to be ironed out. But she is optimistic that it will be feasible in the future, through the use of blood from blood banking centers or even through future technology to test saliva samples in national census surveys.

Bodily fluids are not the only source of data being used to head off impending epidemics. Genomic data, increasingly cheaper and faster to obtain, can glean information about the DNA of pathogens. Cell phone data, also widely available, can be used to follow the flow of people (and pathogens) through populations. Traditional data that can be captured in standard public health records—such as on-the-ground epidemiological reporting—is as useful as ever when combined with new modeling techniques.

Are Social Epidemics Contagious?

During the symposium’s final panel of the day, the conversation turned from the biological causes of mortality to those with social roots.
Andrew V. Papachristos presented his work on how proximity affects both gun and police violence.
such as the opioid epidemic and gun violence. Looking at these problems through the lens of contagion, researchers can identify risk factors in vulnerable populations and stage interventions similar to those used to fight infectious diseases.

In the case of neighborhood gun violence, which accounts for the majority of gun deaths in the United States and disproportionately affects young men of color living in inner cities, researchers can use network science—an analytical tool for studying social connections among populations—to predict how violence may spread through a community.

Andrew V. Papachristos, than a professor in the Department of Sociology at Yale University, presented a body of work that models the high-risk networks in the inner cities of Chicago and Boston. In one high-crime area in Boston, for example, he found that in a network of roughly 700 people deemed to be high risk, 85 percent of all gunshot wounds occurred in only 6 percent of the population. The probability of getting shot was directly related to how many people in one’s inner circle had already been victims—meaning the closer a person was to a gunshot victim, the more likely the person was to be a victim as well. Papachristos also found that the time between gun deaths was predictable—information that could help inform a focused intervention to prevent future attacks.

Papachristos hopes that by modeling how violence spreads like a flu epidemic, authorities can stage interventions more effectively. “We model gun violence like an airborne pathogen, tracking how rates go from one high-crime neighborhood to the next,” he said. He wants to use this information to intervene with community members between bouts of violence. “You catch a bullet like you catch a cold,” he said. Putting gun violence into a public-health framework could help steer interventions that are local, open, and responsive without increasing the number of arrests.

Whether tackling violence or virulence, public health encompasses a vast number of challenges as it enters a new era. These challenges highlight the need for interventions that are local but rooted in collaboration and that take advantage of the latest tools and technologies.

Janet Rich-Edwards, a faculty codirector of the science program at Radcliffe and an associate professor at Harvard Medical School and the T.H. Chan School of Public Health, issued a call to action: “We need to align our academic, government, and industry incentives to do the right thing and demand more from our institutions and our governments,” she said. “We increasingly have the power to combat networks of disease with networks of information, knowledge, communication, collaboration, and shared resources.”
Gathering the Ghosts

The renowned writer and law professor PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS pores through the more than 100 years of family papers that she’s giving to the Schlesinger Library. She is starting her new book by writing about her mother, Ruth Williams, who died this past fall and is pictured in the following pages.

By Pat Harrison  Photographs by Jason Grow
“My family are pack rats,” Patricia J. Williams says. “They saved everything. They took pictures of everything. They kept detailed journals and scrapbooks; they published articles and books; and they often were themselves the subject of articles, particularly in the African American press.”

Williams, who holds the 2017–2018 Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation Fellowship at Radcliffe, has donated 65 boxes (so far) of her family’s papers—spanning more than 100 years—to the Institute’s Schlesinger Library. It’s unusual for any family to collect papers over such a long period of time, but especially rare for an African American family. As Williams says, “Things get lost in a society as perpetually mobile as ours.” Her family is extraordinary in having the rare good fortune of being residentially stable, unusually well educated, and incredibly long-lived.

Williams herself earned her undergraduate degree from Wellesley and her law degree from Harvard in 1975; she has been a law professor for the past 30 years. Since 1991, she has taught at the Columbia University School of Law, where she is the James L. Dohr Professor. Among her many honors is a MacArthur Fellowship, awarded in 2000. For two decades, she has published a column titled “Diary of a Mad Law Professor” in the Nation. The author of four popular books and hundreds of articles, she thinks of herself as having parallel careers: one as a law professor, the other as a writer and journalist.

The Williams Family Papers Come to the Schlesinger Library

Williams didn’t decide to give her family’s papers to the library—that’s simply how things evolved. Kathryn Allamong Jacob, the Johanna-Maria Fraenkel Curator of Manuscripts at the Schlesinger Library, got in touch with Williams and asked if she’d be willing to donate her own papers—“as a black feminist from a certain era,” as Williams puts it. “And I thought that was a fine idea.” Soon thereafter, Williams’s parents—in their late 90s—were dealing with health problems and needed to move, so the family home in Boston was put up for sale. But before the sale, Williams investigated the attic. “It was packed to the rafters,” she says, “and every room in the house was filled with boxes of letters and books and journals. Because we’re all writers, and we keep stuff.”

Not only was Jacob interested in the papers of Williams’s parents, but she visited Williams’s second home, on Martha’s Vineyard, to look at additional family papers. Then there were the archives of Williams’s aunt Marguerite in New York, a journalist who had been on the board of governors of the Overseas Press Club and one of the original United Nations correspondents. Marguerite had willed her apartment to Williams, so that was another trove she needed to deal with. Again, Williams chose the Schlesinger—which houses an array of African Americans’ papers—even though her aunt had already given some of her papers to the Amistad Research Center at Tulane, a repository that specializes in the history of African Americans and other ethnic minorities. “What she did not give to Amistad,” Williams says, “was the personal
family stuff. That’s why it felt more logical to put everything in Massachusetts, where most of the family was from at the time this archive begins.”

Williams has read only parts of the vast archive she is giving to the Schlesinger. In her application for a Radcliffe fellowship, she said she intended to study the papers and begin a narrative, titled “Gathering the Ghosts” and covering four areas: “African American lives in Boston and Cambridge; the lives of African American college-educated women at a time when few women of any race went beyond high school; love letters describing both intraracial and interracial romance, commitment, and marriage; and photographs of African American family life dating from the late 1800s through the contemporary era.”

But, as often happens, things changed. This past October, Williams’s mother died, just weeks before she would have turned 100. “She was the long memory of this project,” Williams says. “I talked to her frequently. Can you remember . . . ? I’m very lucky to have had her as long as I did. And I realize that now I am the memory that’s left.”

Williams tells about a condolence note that Jane Kamensky—the Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation Director of the library and a professor in the Department of History—wrote to her, saying that the archive could be like an afterlife. “I do feel that, just that phrase,” Williams says. “When I walked over to the library this morning—it was the first time I’d been back since my mother died—I thought, yes, this is going to be very comforting.”

Since her mother’s death, Williams’s idea for a long narrative with four strands has shifted. Now she plans to write a collection of related essays—a form she has used before and of which she’s a master (see excerpts from Open House). “I’m going to follow my instinct and write about my mother, because that’s what is haunting me,” she says. “Some of my best writing comes when I’m in that emotionally affected place and allow myself to see what comes up.”

Williams has also thought about making larger changes. “I’m thinking about learning to be more of an historian, because this sort of research is what I truly want to do. This project has given me a passion that I didn’t know I had.”

**An Abundance of Family Stories**

“People underestimate how important the written word is in African American culture,” she says. “They forget that the entire jurisprudence of the 20th century was about trying to integrate schools. It wasn’t just about being the black face in the classroom; it was about getting the education and using the books and machines and technology in those schools. Many African American families
“I’m going to follow my instinct and write about my mother, because that’s what is haunting me. Some of my best writing comes when I’m in that emotionally affected place and allow myself to see what comes up.”

Ruth Williams, 1918–2017

(Left to right): Ruth Williams on her wedding day; Patricia Williams’s great grandmother Mattie Miller; Ruth Williams on earning her master’s degree from Emerson College; Ruth Williams at right with her older sister Elizabeth Vincent

guard documentation fiercely, and my family is one of them.”

Williams’s conversation—and her books—are rich with compelling stories about her family. One is the story of Old Pete, or the Walkaway Slave, as he’s known in the family. Before Emancipation, when Williams’s great-grandfather on her father’s side was in his 70s, he walked away from the swamps of north Florida, where he had been enslaved. According to family legend, Old Pete walked very, very slowly, so no one noticed. He made it to a “maroon” colony in South Carolina, where runaway slaves, Native Americans, and abolitionist missionaries lived. After settling there, he married a younger woman with whom he had eight children, all of whom survived. Williams’s grandfather, the eldest, lived to be 96, and the other children lived to be over 100. Williams’s father was proud, she says, of helping his grandfather, Old Pete, learn to read. “He was just so determined,” Williams says of her great-grandfather.

A story she tells about a more recent event involves Williams’s favorite writer, the great Nobel Prize–winner Toni Morrison. “I met her when my son was five weeks old,” Williams says. “I had contributed to an anthology she put together, and we were all on a panel. I brought my son to her and she kissed him on the forehead. So my son was baptized by Toni Morrison.”

In the years to come, these stories will be augmented by the tales sitting in those 65 boxes and in the cartons yet to arrive at the library. Williams and other writers will gather more ghosts to advance the larger story of African American life.
From Storyteller Patricia J. Williams

Excerpts from Open House: Of Family, Friends, Food, Piano Lessons, and the Search for a Room of My Own

This is who I am. A soft-spoken, fiftysomething mush of a minority, deferential but strong, really I am. I confess to a tendency to collapse under rightish pressure, but I try to compensate by writing brave, leftish articles for the Nation under the Joan of Arc byline “Diary of a Mad Law Professor.” I teach courses in contracts, consumer protection, history of civil rights, theories of equality, and general issues of law and public policy. My hair is so unruly that new students get mesmerized by it before they finally manage to wrestle themselves back down to eye contact with me. I am an anxious mother, a worrier by habit, and therefore a pretty decent lawyer. My skin is a soft custardy mustardy brown, with lots of freckles and imperfections.

* * *

My grandfather used to tell us about the white doctor in one small Georgia town who, while “kindly” enough to have delivered many of the black children in the area, had named all of them after medical procedures, as in “Appendectomy Jones” or “Hydropsy Smith.” It was very moving as my grandfather described it: The illiteracy of the parents meant that they were actually grateful for the grand-sounding names.

It took a while for the bitterness to set in.

* * *

“Slavery wasn’t that long ago,” my mother once cautioned. “I grew up talking to people who had been slaves.”

How, when, where, I asked her. And my mother described her experiences playing chamber music at Resthaven, a black nursing home founded by a man she remembers only as Mr. Benjamin. His family had also come up from the Deep South. He had gone to law school, had become a solo practitioner, and was doing well. With some help from the Episcopal Church, he opened Resthaven in honor of his mother. She had been born in slavery but ran to Boston after the Emancipation Proclamation and worked as a maid while making sure her son got a good education.

Nursing homes were a new thing then. In those days there were very few places for an elderly person other than home or a boardinghouse. But there was a new and urgent need for some kind of care facility because a whole generation of ex-slaves was growing old. These were people who had worked as servants all their lives, who had little or no family. While the feudal system of black servants living with the families that formerly owned them continued to exist for a while in many places in the South, the North was different. Their new employers didn’t often house them for life, didn’t dream of feeding or caring for them after they grew too feeble to work. The ones hardest hit were the domestics who had spent years “living in.” They were largely a childless female population, elderly women who had coped with the demands of being “just like family,” but who, at the end of their tenure, had no place in the world to go.

And that is how my mother came to offer the weekly solace of her cello to an audience of former slaves.

Published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, copyright © 2004 by Patricia J. Williams
Ruth Williams on the beach, in her mid-80s
Biomedical Tools, Fluorescent Proteins, Robotic Hands, and the Jellyfish Guy

David Gruber—a marine biologist and self-described jellyfish champion—plumbs the potential of an oceanic enigma.

By Deborah Halber  Photographs by Tony Luong
GROWING UP IN NORTHERN NEW JERSEY, DAVID Gruber would ride his BMX bike to the Passaic River. He ducked under waterfalls, fished for sunfish, and scrutinized tiny worms and crustaceans—he didn’t know their proper names back then—that clung to his skin when he emerged from the brownish water.

He also didn’t know that a century of industrial activity had laced the Passaic with dioxin, PCBs, heavy metals, and pesticides. Later, when Gruber was pursuing a PhD at Rutgers University, he considered coming up with toxin-eating bacteria to help clean up the Passaic—by then one of the biggest Superfund sites in EPA history.

He opted instead to study oceanography, but poking around the river and surfing off the Jersey shore fed Gruber’s fascination with water and an almost transcendental belief that despite our cavalier attitude toward nature, we are inextricably tied to the natural world. He plans to delicately read and decode the genetic libraries from living jellyfish and other deep-sea marine life that could lead to new biomedical tools and treatments. And he hopes to explore what’s causing jellyfish populations around the globe to proliferate out of control. “Is it true,” he muses, “that climate change is leading to the takeover of the oceans by jellyfish zombies?”

The Intersection of Humans and Jellyfish
In 2013, Gruber was in a submarine in the depths of the South Pacific, peering at the exotic world outside the sub’s clear acrylic dome. Every species that swam or drifted by was new to him. It was, he says, like being a kid in a candy shop.

A professor of biology at City University of New York and a research associate of Invertebrate Zoology at New York’s American Museum of Natural History, Gruber has collected fluorescent proteins from fantastical, glowing creatures he’s uncovered in remote depths of the Pacific, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, and undersea canyons off California. Since these kinds of proteins were first discovered, in the 1960s, they’ve been used to track cancer cells, illuminate how pancreatic cells produce insulin, and display brain circuits working in real time. Yet little is known about what the glowing proteins do for the creatures that generate them.

Jellyfish themselves are an enigma: The term encompasses thousands of species that combine plantlike simplicity, animal-like mobility, and an almost bacterial ability to reproduce rapidly, according to the biologist Juliet Lamb. Gruber is devoting his year as a Radcliffe fellow to writing a book on what he calls the intersection of humans and jellyfish. He’s exploring their history, biomedical applications, and potential as a human food source, as well as their alarming ability to thrive—like rats or cockroaches—under certain conditions. In recent years, enormous jellyfish blooms have closed beaches, damaged trawlers, decimated fish stocks, and clogged power plants.

Gruber, more of a jellyfish champion than a detractor, seems delighted to have become “the jellyfish guy” to Institute colleagues. They’ve told him about vacation-ruining stings at the beach and screen savers featuring undulating jellies. These conversations can become dialogues, he says, that focus attention on marine life in a new light.

Blue light, specifically. Beyond the reach of sunlight in the ocean depths, it’s a blue spectral world. Gruber started out studying bioluminescent coral reefs. But a glimpse of an elusive green glowing eel off the Cayman Islands in 2011 changed that. In submarines, using remotely operated vehicles and extended-range SCUBA wielding special blue lights, Gruber and his colleagues have descended a thousand meters in search of what he calls the world’s most cryptic sea life: sharks and fish and sea turtles covered in fluorescent green, orange, and red patterns and sparkly spots. He’s filmed underwater light shows of creatures that have for some reason developed the ability to absorb blue light energy and transform it into a myriad of other colors.

The Uses of Bioluminescence
In the 1990s, the gene for green fluorescent protein (GFP) in a common North American jellyfish was cloned. If they attached this harmless genetic marker to a protein of interest, researchers could see a distinctive green glow when the protein became active. Biofluorescence, Gruber says, is a powerful tool that happened to be floating around in the ocean. Its research uses seem almost infinite.

The new fluorescent protein Gruber uncovered in the eel, for instance, is very different from GFP, which earned its discoverers a Nobel Prize in 2008. The eel protein lights up when it binds to fatty acids such as bilirubin, a key blood compound that helps clear waste products generated by the breakdown of aged red blood cells. That protein and others isolated from the more than 200 new species of biofluorescent fish Gruber uncovered may lead to additional tools for medical research. One found in a coral in Australia is already being employed to...
“They’re incredibly delicate. They seem so simple, yet they’re complex. They’re little packets of water that can do miraculous things. They have lots of charisma, if we dig in.”

Deborah Halber is a freelance journalist.
Life with a Literary Oenophile

FROM ITS SUPPLE first sentence—“My father was a lousy driver and a two-finger typist, but he could open a wine bottle as deftly as any swain ever undressed his lover”—to its sparkling closer, Anne Fadiman’s *The Wine Lover's Daughter* is a book to savor, like a ’29 Clos des Lambrays, one of the dozen Burgundies her father, Clifton, “laid down” as a young oenophile for $28 in 1935, worth $2,600 today.

Clifton Fadiman may no longer be a household name, but he was among the 20th century’s eminent men of letters, a star pupil alongside Lionel Trilling at Columbia University, the wunderkind president of Simon & Schuster at age 28. Next came stints as book critic for the *New Yorker* and as emcee of NBC’s quiz show *Information Please*, where he coaxed witticisms from Alfred Hitchcock, Boris Karloff, Ethel Barrymore, and others, and proffered plenty of his own. This was “just the tip of the vocational iceberg,” his daughter writes in a chapter titled “Multihyphenate.” For long stretches, Clifton Fadiman, who died at 95 in 1999, held as many as 13 jobs at once. An “editor-critic-emcee-teacher-translator-lecturer-columnist-essayist-anthologist-agent-consultant,” he was “constantly, pathologically, insanely busy.”

Yet the senior Fadiman seems to have been the kind of parent who, rather than boxing out his family with his busy-ness, drew his offspring into his working world, instilling a passion for language and a propensity for critical discernment that enabled his daughter’s own distinguished if not-quite-so-hyphenate career as writer-editor-professor. What he could not pass along, Anne Fadiman is forced to admit, was a taste for wine. And this was a sorrow to both: “Aside from books,” the daughter writes of her twice-married father, “he loved nothing—and no one—longer, more ardently, or more faithfully than he loved wine.” Books on wine ensued, and the younger Fadiman absorbed the vocabulary and lore with which her memoir is delectably laced; yet once of an age to sip, she could not like, resulting in a nagging concern that animates this affectionate narrative.

Although Fadiman has given herself the book’s title role, *The Wine Lover’s Daughter* is more accurately a biography at first hand, one that enables the reader to know and love the Brooklyn-born pharmacist’s son whose “fancy” first name was plucked from a phone book by his Ukrainian immigrant mother—and for whom wine connoisseurship represented the “civilization” he could not acquire from books alone.

Like two of my favorite novels, A. S. Byatt’s *Possession* and Deborah Weisgall’s *The World Before Her*, Rachel Kadish’s instantly compelling *The Weight of Ink* toggles back and forth between plots set in the present and the past, creating a synergy that amplifies suspense and meaning. Kadish’s third novel features an unlikely pair of modern-day researchers—Helen Watt, a British scholar of Jewish history nearing retirement, and her headstrong American graduate assistant, Aaron Levy—who have been tipped off to a trove of manuscripts, relics of a fledgling community of Jews who settled in London in the mid-17th century. They work feverishly to interpret their find—letters and treatises in Portuguese and Hebrew written, they are astonished to learn, in the hand of a woman—racing against other scholars to publish their discovery.

That woman: Ester Velasquez, an orphan and scribe to an elderly rabbi cruelly blinded during the Inquisition. Ester’s predicament as an unprotected female in Restoration London, in love with language and ideas but with precious little liberty to pursue them, lies at the heart of this vibrant novel, whose mysteries give themselves up, satisfyingly, at the last.
Goodman’s knowing and loving descriptions of Cambridge neighborhoods in her eighth work of fiction should be enough to win over readers who have walked those streets anytime in recent decades. But one soon senses that physical place signifies so strongly in this novel because of the threat posed by virtual reality. Goodman renders imaginary places and characters in an addictive video game just as powerfully as her flesh-and-blood protagonists and their Cantabrigian home.

Collin, a waiter at Grendel’s, is the chalk artist of the title, whose inspired blackboard sketches serve as scenery for a pop-up drama troupe and last only as long as each night’s performance. Even his free-spirited single mom implores him to save his work. Nina, daughter of the video-game mogul whose decoration goes seriously awry. I’ll remember most the bossy 11-year-old Penny, whom the other kids don’t much like, but who cares for her diabetic little brother with a will of iron, and 14-year-old Isabel, the Argentine couple’s daughter, a fragile beauty who tangles with her captors in unforeseen ways. In fiction as in life, it is the children who suffer most from their parents’ mistakes, and the childishly impervious American parents have the most to learn from this epic journey into the unknown.

Reading of a prodigy’s rapid rise can deliver the satisfactions of biography in double, even triple, time. The early emergence of talent and its apparently swift and sure realization seem to confirm a fatedness that is one of the genre’s chief pleasures. And yet, as the 15 profiles in Ann Hulbert’s far-ranging study reveal, precocity’s closest neighbor is precariousness, not predictability.

There are familiar faces here—Shirley Temple and Bobby Fischer—along with less well-known marvels, such as the literary phenoms Barbara Follett and Nathalie Crane, who achieved celebrity in the 1920s, when typewriters first allowed child scribblers to submit their work to editors. Like assignations to write for publication without betraying their authors’ ages. Hulbert tracks these children through a succession of gifted-and-talented vogue from the early 20th century into the 21st, when autistic savants and highly coached tiger cubs hold sway, always reminding us that “exuberant tenacity” and “absorption in an activity purely for its own sake” may be hallmarks of any childhood, along with parental “hopes and fears about what a child will grow into, or out of.”
In recognition of a $10 million commitment to support campus renewal, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study has established the Susan S. and Kenneth L. Wallach House. Formerly Buckingham House, the building is the dedicated home of Academic Ventures, one of the Institute’s three core programs, which brings together scholars from across Harvard and around the world to break new intellectual ground in all disciplines.

Located at 77 Brattle Street and recently renovated, Wallach House sits along the southwestern edge of Radcliffe Yard. Fittingly, it overlooks the Susan S. and Kenneth L. Wallach Garden, home to public art installations selected through Radcliffe’s University-wide student public art competition, where 100+ Years at 73 Brattle, by John Wang ’16, MArch ’21, currently welcomes visitors. The building has been a part of Radcliffe since 1911 and has served a variety of purposes, from graduate dormitory and classroom to center for research programs and undergraduate admissions. In 1943, it was named for Harriet Dean Buckingham, a secretary of Radcliffe College who resided there during the early 20th century.

“I am thrilled that we are able to rename this historic building in honor of two longtime champions of the Radcliffe Institute,” said Dean Lizabeth Cohen, speaking of Susan S. Wallach ’68, JD ’71 and Kenneth L. Wallach ’68, JD ’72. “Susan and Ken have been instrumental in the success of the Institute since its founding. It is gratifying to recognize their generosity prominently on our campus. Their gift will significantly boost our ability to engage ever growing numbers of students, scholars, and the broad public in the latest thinking on a myriad of subjects. Wallach House will become the hub of exciting program planning for conferences, lectures, exhibitions, seminars, and workshops, many of them featuring innovative cross-field collaborations.”

The Wallachs’ commitment to the Radcliffe Institute reaches well beyond Wallach House and the Wallach Garden. A graduate of both Radcliffe College and Harvard Law School, Susan remained deeply involved with her alma maters, eventually joining the final Radcliffe Board of Trustees and helping to negotiate the merger that united Radcliffe and Harvard. With the founding of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, in 1999, both Susan and Ken were excited by the opportunity to help forge a brand-new Harvard school within the centuries-old University environment. Since then, they have remained stalwart advocates and volunteers. Susan serves as chair of the Dean’s Advisory Council and cochair of The Radcliffe Campaign, and both Wallachs are motivated by the chance to inspire others to support the Institute. Susan also served as a Harvard overseer from 2005 to 2011 and received the Harvard Medal in 2012.

As part of The Radcliffe Campaign, which has received more than 22,000 gifts and will continue until June 30, 2018, donors are support-
Dean Cohen Takes Radcliffe’s Message to Asia
SHARING INSTITUTE LESSONS AND PRIORITIES

OCTOBER 2017

The dean also lectured about her research on urban renewal, considering local developments.

In October 2017, Dean Lizabeth Cohen spent 10 days in Seoul and Hong Kong sharing the work of the Radcliffe Institute with alumnae/i, offering her expertise as a leader of an institute for advanced study, and delivering lectures about her research on 20th-century urban renewal. It was the first trip to Asia by a dean of the Institute.

In Seoul, Dean Cohen met with leaders and faculty members of Kyung Hee University, who invited her to impart lessons from her experience leading the Radcliffe Institute as they endeavor to launch a new institute for advanced study and fellowship program. In a talk titled “Lessons from Radcliffe: The Evolution of an Institute for Advanced Study,” Cohen provided an overview of Radcliffe’s history, from its founding as a women’s college to its current role as Harvard’s institute for advanced study. Reflecting on how this history continues to shape the Institute’s work and values, Cohen encouraged her audience to craft an institution uniquely suited to advancing Kyung Hee’s core commitments. She also recommended thinking big about how a new institute can enrich the university’s intellectual life, noting that the Radcliffe Institute emerged in part as an answer to Harvard’s needs and priorities, such as investing in the arts, recruiting a more diverse faculty, and breaking down disciplinary silos.

Dean Cohen also shared her research with the Hong Kong community. In a lecture at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center, she detailed the history of American urban renewal and how the shift to suburban development following World War II shaped the country’s cities. She ended her talk with reflections on the postwar development of Tokyo, Hong Kong, and Seoul, stating that Asian cities face unique challenges deriving from population booms and rapid industrialization. In a Q&A session moderated by Ronnie C. Chan, the chairman of the board of the Hong Kong Center, Dean Cohen emphasized the need for stronger partnerships between public and private interests in urban development and issued an impassioned call for public involvement in urban planning.

Throughout her trip, Dean Cohen met with Radcliffe and Harvard alumnae/i, Radcliffe fellows, and leaders in the Seoul and Hong Kong communities to share the work and mission of the Institute. “As the Radcliffe Institute engages with issues of pressing concern in the world, it is imperative that we engage with our global community of alumni, fellows, and friends and share the important work happening at the Institute far beyond Cambridge,” said Dean Cohen, reflecting on her visit, which included an event at the Harvard Club of Hong Kong. “By this measure, the trip was an overwhelming success.”
CATCH UP ON INSTITUTE HAPPENINGS

Events Online

Struggling toward Coeducation: Where Have We Come From? Where Are We Going?

In this Schlesinger Library event, Nancy Weiss Malkiel AM ’66, PhD ’70 examines the flood of decisions that led to coeducation at highly prestigious colleges and universities in the United States and the United Kingdom from 1969 to 1974, considering particularly where Harvard and Radcliffe stood in this development.

The Museum, the City, and the University: Boston Art Museum Directors in Discussion

This panel brings together five distinguished museum directors to discuss their leadership of major cultural institutions in urban and university settings and to share personal perspectives on their work. The directors and the moderator address questions about the role of museums in debates about public and private support for the humanities and arts; in research and learning endeavors, including creative efforts by living artists; and in conversations about citizenship, identity, and diversity.
Evolution, Speciation, and Adaptation of Cichlid Fish

Axel Meyer RI ’18 shows us why fish are much more interesting than humans.

Five Scarves: Doing the Impossible—If We Can Reverse Cell Fate, Why Can’t We Redefine Success for Women?

Rana Dajani, a biologist and the 2017–2018 Rita E. Hauser Fellow, describes the many hats—or scarves—that she wears with pride. She looks at the challenges that women face in academia; how they vary across cultures, religions, and disciplines; and how women have dealt with these challenges in different ways.

Should Law Foster Forgiveness? Child Soldiers, Sovereign Debt, and Alternatives to Punishment

Looking at issues within the United States and at international debates, Martha Minow RI ’18 considers whether and when legal systems and rules should promote forgiveness. Should the law be used to encourage people to forgive each other? And should the law itself forgive?

Does the Left Have a Future?

In the 2017–2018 Kim and Judy Davis Dean’s Lecture in the Social Sciences, Michael Kazin, a professor of history at Georgetown University and an expert in US politics and social movements, discusses how the political left found itself in crisis and how radicals and liberals might move forward again.
From Felon to Lawyer—At Last

Reginald Dwayne Betts RI ’12 was admitted to the Connecticut bar on September 29. A poet who earned a JD from Yale Law School after his Radcliffe fellowship, Betts, who was convicted of felony carjacking as a teenager and served nearly a decade in prison, was the subject of a New York Times opinion piece titled “Admit this Ex-Con to the Connecticut Bar.”

Betts’s admittance to the Connecticut bar was under review—even though he passed the exam last February—while the Connecticut Bar Examining Committee decided whether he was of “good moral character.” He has now earned the right to practice law and is currently enrolled in the PhD program at Yale Law School.

The New Yorker ran a Page-Turner piece about the admittance ceremony, “A Poet, with Prison behind Him, Becomes an Attorney,” written by Betts’s friend Nicholas Dawidoff, who also attended a celebratory gathering afterward with family and other friends. He wrote, “The poet Elizabeth Alexander [RI ’08] then raised a glass and spoke of the way in which everyone is evolving and changing all the time, and how, in prison, through his deep feeling for language, Betts had found beauty enough to identify ‘the words that saved him.’”

Honor Roll

In November in New York City, Gish Jen ’77, BI ’87, RI ’02 was honored by the Museum of Chinese in America with a 2017 MOCA Legacy Award. MOCA prepared a video of Jen sharing details about her experiences, alongside other luminaries sharing testimonies; it’s available at http://vimeo.com/243983290.

Henry S. Turner RI ’13 earned the Elizabeth Dietz Memorial Award for the best book in Renaissance Studies for The Corporate Commonwealth: Pluralism and Political Fictions in England, 1516–1651 (University of Chicago Press, 2016), on which he worked during his fellowship. The book also received an honorable mention for the Barnard Hewitt Award for Outstanding Research in Theatre History by the American Society for Theater Research.

Shirley B. Daniels ’48 was recently honored by the YWCA Metropolitan Phoenix. Daniels began working in the field of technology in the 1950s and was given the award in recognition of her status as a pioneer and for her accomplishments in the field.

The MacArthur Foundation named the fiction writer and cultural critic Viet Thanh Nguyen RI ’09 as one of its five-year fellows, an award often referred to as a “genius grant.” Nguyen, who is the Aerol Arnold Chair of English and a professor of English and American studies and ethnicity at the University of Southern California, will deliver the 2017–2018 Dean’s Lecture in the Humanities at the Radcliffe Institute on February 8.

In “Feeling Conflicted on Thanksgiving,” which appeared in the New York Times, Nguyen admitted that to him, a refugee, the Thanksgiving meal is full of ambiguity—and the holiday is as much about genocide as it is about gratitude.
**Rana Dajani RI ’18** has received a 2018 University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine Distinguished Alumnus Award. Her father was also chosen to receive an alumni award for his contribution to medicine in Jordan, so they will accept them together in April. The younger Dajani is a 2005 alumna of the school, where she studied molecular biology; her father graduated in 1970 in internal medicine. On International Literacy Day this past fall, Dajani also accepted the 2017 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize for We Love Reading (WLR), the grassroots reading program she founded in Jordan in 2006. Since its founding, WLR has developed 30 Arabic-language children’s books and begun to encourage a culture of literacy. Dajani, who is the 2017–2018 Rita E. Hauser Fellow, is an associate professor of biology and biotechnology at the Hashemite University and an authority on the genetics of the Circassian and Chechen populations in Jordan.

**Joyce Chapman Lebra PhD ’88** has been honored by the University of Colorado’s Norlin Library, which named her a University Legend and organized an exhibition of her life and work, to be on view at the library for two years. Lebra has written 14 books about the history of India, Japan, and Asian women and three novels of historical fiction. She was a professor of Japanese history and Indian history at the University of Colorado until her retirement.

**Inklings**

**Ann Patchett BI ’94** wrote eloquently in the *New York Times* about what she learned from her 2017 New Year’s resolution. In “My Year of No Shopping,” she said, “The things we buy and buy and buy are like a thick coat of Vaseline smeared on glass: We can see some shapes out there, light and dark, but in our constant craving for what we may still want, we miss life’s details.” She will continue her experiment in 2018.

The fall 2017 issue of *Tin House*, on the theme of true crime, excerpted *An American Marriage: A Novel* (Algonquin Books, 2018), the most recent book by **Tayari Jones RI ’12**. The magazine called it “a strong, standalone excerpt that closes with a powerful bit of prose.” In advance praise for the novel, the author Edwidge Danticat said, “Skillfully crafted and beautifully written, *American Marriage* is an exquisite, timely, and powerful novel that feels both urgent...”

**Rita E. Hauser** Fellow, is an associate professor of biology and biotechnology at the Hashemite University and an authority on the genetics of the Circassian and Chechen populations in Jordan.

**With her poetry collection The Glass Age—on which she worked while at the Institute as the 2010–2011 Bunting Fellow—Anna Maria Hong RI ’11** was the winner of the Cleveland State University Poetry Center’s First Book Poetry Competition. The award includes cash along with publication, and the book will be out in April of this year. In 2004, Hong’s novella *H & G* won the inaugural Clarissa Dalloway Prize from the A Room of Her Own Foundation; it will be published by Sidebrow Books in February. Hong is a visiting creative writer at Ursinus College and a lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania.

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and indispensable.”

In December, HuffPost featured Hala Aldosari RI ’18, a Saudi rights activist and the 2017–2018 Robert G. James Scholar Fellow at Radcliffe, in a political story titled “Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince is Pushing His Country to the Brink. Will It Hold Together?”


A Q&A with Megan Marshall ’77, RI ’07, titled “‘Garden, Temple, Tea, River, Miracle, Sun’: Megan Marshall on Kyoto and Elizabeth Bishop,” appeared in HuffPost. Marshall held a residency at Kyoto University this past fall.

Francine Prose ’68, AM ’69 continues to critique films and books. Recently, she reviewed Before Pictures (Dancing Foxes/University of Chicago Press, 2017) for the New York Review of Books. She called the autobiography by Douglas Crimp, a denizen of the downtown New York art scene in the late 20th century, “the sort of book that can make its readers feel as if they have made an interesting friend (or at least an acquaintance) without the bother and awkwardness of getting to know an actual person.” Earlier in the same publication, Prose reviewed the feature Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri, directed by Martin McDonagh and starring Frances McDormand. She also reviewed Reckless Daughter: A Portrait of Jani Mitchell (Sarah Crichton Books/Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2017), by David Yaffe, for the New York Times Book Review.

Martha Sandweiss ’75, a history professor at Princeton University, is leading the school’s five-year Princeton and Slavery Project, officially unveiled in early November. “The project’s website includes hundreds of primary source documents and more than 80 articles exploring topics like early slavery-related university funding, student demographics and the sometimes shocking history of racial violence on a campus long known as the most culturally ‘Southern’ in the Ivy League,” said the New York Times in an article titled “Princeton Digs Deep into its Fraught Racial History.”

Harvard Magazine published a cover story on the Polaroid portraitist Elsa Dorfman BI ’73. The lengthy profile revealed that Dorfman has produced thousands of 20x24-inch Polaroid portraits during the course of her career—and her most frequent subject was Allen Ginsberg. Although she still takes the occasional portrait when she can, the only remaining maker of Polaroid 20x24 film ceased production at the end of 2017.

Linda Greenhouse ’68 reviewed Divided We Stand: The Battle over Women’s Rights and Family Values that Polarized American Politics (Bloomsbury, 2017), by Marjorie J. Spruill RI ’07, in the New York Review of Books. In “Who Killed the ERA?” she said of the cultural history, which was researched in part at the Schlesinger Library, “It’s an ambitious book, built around a close study of . . . the congressionally mandated, federally funded National Women’s Conference that took place in Houston in November 1977.”

Reading, Writing, and Traveling

On the eve of the publication of her fifth novel, The Burning Girl (W. W. Norton, 2017), the New York Times Magazine published a profile of Claire Messud RI ’05. The article—titled “Who’s Afraid of Claire Messud?”—noted the writer’s penchant for bringing “difficult women” to life in her novels and covered such ground as her childhood, views on female friendships, body of work, literary preferences, and writing process: “She usually works at the dining table or in the den, using a lap desk bought years ago from the Levenger catalog. ‘You get the pad, you get the pen, you get the [expletive] on with it,’ she said.”

Messud also contributed an in-depth piece of travel journalism, “Where the West Was Born,” to the New York Times Magazine in early December. In the article, part travelogue and part history, she details her family’s visit to the Mediterranean country of Malta, of which she wrote, “It provides a crash course in Western civilization—and in the evolution and struggles of Christianity from its earliest days.”
Twenty years after the publication of her book *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* (University of Virginia Press, 1997), Annette Gordon-Reed JD ’84, RI ’16 published a *New York Times Book Review* essay titled “Sally Hemings, Thomas Jefferson, and the Ways We Talk about Our Past.” Said the Times introduction to the essay, “In a piece submitted just before the tragic events in Charlottesville, Va., Gordon-Reed reflects on the complexities that endure in our understanding of Hemings.”

In late summer, the *New York Times* published an obituary of Elaine Ford ’64, who died of a brain tumor at age 78. Ford was the author of five novels—including *Monkey Bay* (Viking Adult, 1989), which *Publishers Weekly* praised for “spare, ringingly authentic dialogue” and “ironic humor”—and many short stories. Most recently, Ford was working on two books based on her family history, “God’s Red Clay” and “Bread and Freedom.” Her second short story collection, *This Time Might Be Different: Stories of Maine* (Islandport Press, 2018), is due out in March.

In the aftermath of the deadly Charlottesville Unite the Right rally, Tony Horwitz RI ’06 published the article “Shades of Gray in the New South” in the *Wall Street Journal*. For it, he tracked down some of the southerners he spoke with in the mid-1990s during research for his book *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (Pantheon, 1998)—and found reason to believe that the Confederacy may be a fading memory.


Rebecca Onie ’98, JD ’03 appeared in the *Boston Sunday Globe*’s recurring feature “Five Things You Should Know About . . .” She is the CEO of Health Leads—a nonprofit she founded while an undergraduate. Originally begun to connect patients with social services, the organization now consults with health care providers who are interested in screening for and tackling social issues that affect their patients’ health. In 2009, Onie was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship.

**Shelf Life**

Zadie Smith RI ’03 has a brand-new book out, *Feel Free: Essays* (Penguin Press, 2018). In a starred review, *Kirkus Reviews* said, “In her second book of essays, Smith (Swing Time, 2016, etc.) likens her wide-ranging yet unified pieces to thinking aloud while fretting she might make herself sound ludicrous—far from it; if only all such thoughts were so cogent and unfailingly humane.”

*Inheriting the War: Poetry and Prose of Vietnam Veterans and Refugees* (W. W. Norton, 2017), edited by Laren McClung, addresses unanswered questions of the Vietnam War more than 50 years later. The collection includes contributions from lê thi diem thúy RI ’03 and Viet Thanh Nguyen RI ’09.

Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Maria Tatar B1 ’78, RI ’07 collaborated to publish *The Annotated African American FolkTales* (Liveright, 2017). *Kirkus Reviews* called it an “exhaustive, informative, and entertaining survey of African-American folklore.”

An *Excess Male* (Harper Voyager, 2017) is the debut novel of Maggie Shen King ’85. The story, set in China in the near future, speculates on the effects of the country’s one-child policy. “King’s novel takes its cues from classic sci-fi dystopias, from *The Handmaid’s Tale* to *Ender’s Game*, to demonstrate the repressive control mechanisms already at work in everyday life,” said *Kirkus Reviews*. “An intelligent, incisive commentary on how love survives—or doesn’t—under the heel of the State.”

Katherine Ibbett RI ’13 has published *Compassion’s Edge: Fellow-Feeling and Its Limits in Early Modern France* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), on which she worked during her Radcliffe fellowship. Ibbett is a professor of French at the University of Oxford and the Caroline de Jager Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford.

The latest book from the historian Linda Gordon B1 ’94, RI ’14, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (Liveright, 2017)—born of her fellowship project—has been published. “In her telling, the second Klan is at once utterly bizarre and undeniably American,” said the *New York Times* in a review. “The 2010s may not be the 1920s, but for anyone concerned with our present condition, The Second Coming of the KKK should be required reading.”

the more impressive.”

Sun in Days: Poems (Norton, 2017) is the third collection from Meghan O’Rourke RI ’15. In it, she explores her chronic autoimmune disease. Said a Publishers Weekly review, “While O’Rourke hones in on her illness, the poems that transcend her physical situation are the most memorable.”

Rosalyn Drexler BI ’98, Lorraine O’Grady BI ’96, and Sarah Sze RI ’06 are among the 60 artists included in the anthology Tell Me Something Good: Artist Interviews from the “Brooklyn Rail” (David Zwirner Books, 2017). The collection, billed by the publisher as “seminal interviews with the most influential artists of our time,” brings together visual and verbal portraits published in the Brooklyn Rail since its founding, in 2000.

In Democracy and the Welfare State: The Two Wests in the Age of Austerity (Columbia University Press, 2017), Alice Kessler-Harris RI ’02 and Maurizio Vaudagna bring together historians and social scientists to examine changes in what Americans and Europeans think of social democracy and the welfare state in an era of changing distribution of wealth. Kessler-Harris teaches at Columbia University, where she is the R. Gordon Hoxie Professor of American History, emerita, and a professor at the Institute for Research on Women.

In Multiracial Parents: Mixed Families, Generational Change, and the Future of Race (NYU Press, 2017), Miri Song ’86 examines how multiracial identity is—or is not—passed down to children.

Christie Johnson Coffin ’65 recently published Making Places for People: 12 Questions Every Designer Should Ask (Routledge, 2017), which she coauthored with Jenny Young. Although aimed at design students, the book has been finding a wider audience owing to its raising basic social questions in community building and architecture. Coffin practices architecture internationally, and her focus is on social design for health care and research laboratory buildings.

Jonathan Lazar RI ’13 recently published a pair of books: Research Methods in Human-Computer Interaction, 2nd edition (Morgan Kaufmann, 2017), of which he was lead author, and Disability, Human Rights, and Information Technology (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), of which he was lead editor. Last April, Lazar also received a 2017 USM Regents’ Faculty Award in the research, scholarship, and creative activity category—an award given to only 4 of the more than 7,000 faculty members on the 12 campuses of the University System of Maryland.

Marie Howe BI ’90 has published Magdalene: Poems (W. W. Norton, 2017), loosely based on the biblical Mary Magdalene. The Washington Post praised it as a “smart, engrossing collection.”

The Imagineers of War: The Untold History of DARPA, the Pentagon Agency That Changed the World (Knopf, 2017) is the latest book from Sharon Weinberger RI ’16, which the New York Times called “deeply researched and briskly paced.” Weinberger is an executive editor at Foreign Policy.

The National Book Award winner Lily Tuck ’60 has published Sisters: A Novel (Atlantic Monthly, 2017). In a starred review, Publishers Weekly called the novel (Tuck’s seventh) “elegant, raw, and powerful” and “magnificent enough to be reread and savored.”

Jorie Graham BI ’83 has published
An Original Retelling

Sophronia Scott ’88 recently published her second novel, Unforgivable Love: A Retelling of Dangerous Liaisons (William Morrow, 2017) reimagines a French classic, placing the action in Harlem in 1947. “Scott sets this fresh retelling of Pierre Choderlos de Laclos’ novel against an alluring backdrop of city nightclubs, country retreats, tightknit church communities, and the Brooklyn Dodgers,” said Kirkus Reviews, which also deemed the book “a dazzlingly dark and engaging tale full of heartbreak, treachery, and surprise.”

Scott also published two works of nonfiction: This Child of Faith: Raising a Spiritual Child in a Secular World (Paraclete Press, 2017), cowritten with her son Tain, which follows their spiritual healing process after the shootings at his school, Sandy Hook Elementary, in Connecticut, and Love’s Long Line (Mad Creek Books, 2018), an essay collection.

In March, the novelist Junot Díaz RI ’04 will publish Islandborn (Dial Books, 2018), his first book for young readers. A picture book illustrated by Leo Espinoza, Islandborn is the fulfillment of a promise Díaz made to his goddaughters two decades ago. “They asked me if I could write them something, and foolishly, I said yes,” he told the New York Times. “Behind their request was this longing for books and stories that resonated for them and included them, and opened a space where they could be protagonists in the world.” The story’s protagonists are Dominican girls living in Washington Heights, in the Bronx.

On Stage and Screen

The Final Year (2017), a film about American foreign policy during Barack Obama’s last year in office, counts the United Nations ambassador Samantha Power JD ’99, RI ’18—the Perrin Moorhead Grayson and Bruns Grayson Fellow at Radcliffe—as one of its stars. The Harvard Art Museums hosted an advance screening in late November, followed by a Q&A with Power and the director, Greg Baker. The Los Angeles Times called the documentary, which premiered nationwide in January, an “invoking, deftly assembled documentary.”

The first documentary feature from Requiem for a Running Back (2017). Carpenter’s father, Lewis Carpenter, was an NFL running back for 10 years; he played for Vince Lombardi’s championship Green Bay Packers. The film investigates the former player’s post-mortem diagnosis of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE)—he was the 18th NFL player to be diagnosed with the condition—along with his daughter’s attempts to understand the science behind CTE.

Bella’s Choice, a one-act play by Judith Nies BI ’93, won the Actors Studio of Newburyport (TASN) competition for new plays by women, on the theme of Glass Ceilings. It illuminates Bella Abzug’s 1976 campaign to become New York’s first woman senator while confronting obstacles arising from her legal work defending a black man in Mississippi 30 years earlier. The play was performed in the fall in TASN’s Newburyport black box theater to sold-out audiences. Nies, a nonfiction writer, included a chapter on Abzug in her book Nine Women: Portraits from the American Radical Tradition (University of California Press, 2002) and is planning to expand the one-act play to full length.

Abigail Child ’68, RI ’06 has a new experimental documentary, Acts & Intermissions, which “combines several visual formats and sound collages to connect modern-day protest with early 20th-century dissident Emma Goldman,” wrote Daniel Egan in Film Journal. “It’s a bracing work that finds alarming patterns and repetitions in methods of repression over the past century.” The film appeared at the Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival, in the Czech Republic; at the Alternativa 2017, the Barcelona Independent Film Festival; and at the DocYard, a film and discussion series at the Brattle Theater in Cambridge. In addition to Acts & Intermissions, Child showed two previous works at the Houston Cinema Arts Festival this past November: Is This What You Were Born For? and The Suburban Trilogy.

This past summer, the Fort Salem Theater in Salem, New York, produced the premier of Happy If—Happy When, an original musical by Kimerer LaMothe MTS ’89, PhD ’96.
RI '01. The production was inspired by her family’s move to a farm in rural New York. LaMothe wrote the book, music, and lyrics; her partner, Geoffrey Gee, arranged and orchestrated the music; and their five children performed in the show, playing versions of themselves.

Art Aware

Judith Seligson ’72 has translated her sharply geometric paintings into an art rug collection. Each rug is available in an edition of nine and can be produced in various sizes.

Currently on view through October 28, 2018, at the Institute of Contemporary Art Miami is a sculpture, *Lift Every Voice and Sing (amerikanske gorki)*, by Abigail Deville RI ’15. The Whitney Museum of American Art hosted another unique new piece by the artist, *Empire State Works in Progress*, on which she worked closely with the director Charlotte Brathwaite. The piece included a series of kinetic sculptures that were activated by a performance, titled *The Invisible Project*. These were accompanied by a film, *Only when it’s dark enough can you see the stars*, directed by Brathwaite. Deville’s project, inspired by a Martin Luther King Jr. quotation, was part of the Whitney’s larger series *Colder: Hypermobility*.

The work of Jesseca Ferguson ’71 appeared in three recent exhibitions: *Sténopé Exquis*, an international exhibition of pinhole photography, was on view at L’Atelier, in Nantes, France. *Equivocal Exposures: Alternative Photographic Processes* was on view at the Baum Gallery of Fine Arts at the University of Central Arkansas. And the Suffolk University Gallery hosted *We Dream/Beauty Beyond & Beneath*. Ferguson also took part in Boston’s Fort Point Open Studios, during which she welcomed visitors into her work space.

It was a busy fall and early winter for David Levine AM ’05, RI ’14, who had a full schedule of performances, exhibitions, and lectures. He began the season with *Light Matter VII*, a performance-lecture based on his essay “Matter of Rothko,” at Fondation Cartier, in Paris. Artnet News chose his exhibition *David Levine: Private View* as one of its weekly editors’ picks. That exhibition concluded with a performance from Levine’s *Light Matter* series. Levine also co-curated the exhibition *Active Ingredients: Prompts, Props, Performance* at Williams College Museum of Art. As part of that exhibition, he presented a new performance, titled *A People’s History of Performance Art*. Levine

Jesseca Ferguson, known for her pinhole photography, thinks of her work as “a story written with light.” The image above is a detail of *Two horses/ book*, a 1988 pinhole negative.
then closed out the year with the exhibition *Progeny!*, a show about artists and their parents who are also artists, which he also co-curated for the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts.

**Bouchra Khalili RI ’18** took part in a Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) panel discussion, “Patriot Games: Contextualizing Nationalism,” that explored nationalism around the world, especially in relation to globalization. Shortly after, she traveled to Chicago for the group exhibition *Singing Stones*, curated by the Palais de Tokyo’s Katell Jaffrès and showing at the DuSable Museum of African American History, and a related discussion at EXPO CHICAGO. Khalili is on the shortlist for Artes Mundi 8 and for the Guggenheim’s Hugo Boss Prize 2018. Both awards will be announced in October 2018.

This past fall, the filmmaker **Roman Karmakar RI ’13** had two new pieces on display at documenta 14 in Kassel, Germany: *Byzantion*, a 15-minute video, and *The Emergence of the West—From Beginnings in Antiquity to the Fall of Constantinople*, a 73-minute LED installation.

The exhibition *Expanding Abstraction: New England Women Painters, 1950 to Now*, which was on view at the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum for much of 2017, showcased the work of such regional painters as Maggi Brown BI ’87, Jeanne Leger BI ’68, Elizabeth Rosenblum BI ’92, Jo Sandman MAT ’56, BI ’87, May Stevens BI ’89, and Maxine Yalovitz-Blankenship BI ’94.

**Public Life**

**Alyssa Mt. Pleasant RI ’16** appeared in an episode of the award-winning podcast *Ben Franklin’s World*—part of a series titled *Doing History: To the Revolution*—that considered the American Revolution through the eyes of Native American peoples. Mt. Pleasant, whose area of expertise is the history of the Haudenosaunee, is an assistant professor of Native American studies in the University at Buffalo’s Department of Transnational Studies. The research she presented in the podcast is drawn from the project on which she worked during her Radcliffe fellowship; that book-in-progress looks at Buffalo Creek as a site of recovery and resistance for Haudenosaunee people from the Revolutionary War to the opening of the Erie Canal.

**Zia Haider Rahman RI ’18** recorded a program titled “A Folder Called ‘Hope’” for BBC Radio 4’s series *A Point of View*. In it, he revisits the letters he’s written to some British institutions about their lack of diversity. An earlier piece, “A Picture Held Us Captive,” looks at the popular use of metaphors—and the effect that their misuse can have on the public’s understanding of such modern issues as biology, business, economics, and environmental policy.

WNYC’s *The Brian Lehrer Show* featured **Margaret Morganroth Gullette ’62, PhD ’75, BI ’87** in a segment titled “Age Shaming of the Aging.” A resident scholar at the Women’s Studies Research Center at Brandeis University, she is most recently the author of *Ending Ageism, or How Not to Shoot Old People* (Rutgers University Press, 2017). “Through her decades of criticism, Gullette often compares ageism to the other isms that have more entrenched, and integrated social movements such as racism, sexism and ableism,” said a lengthy review of the book by WBUR. “Of these, she maintains, ‘ageism is the least censured, the most acceptable and unnoticed of the cruel prejudices.’”

**Pamela Thomas-Graham ’85, JD ’88, MBA ’88** is the founder and CEO of Dandelion Chandelier, an online destination that aims to explore the world of luxury in a fresh way. Thomas-Graham is also the lead independent director of the board of the Clorox Company and has written three mystery novels published by Simon & Schuster.
Jonathan Guyer RI ‘18, an independent journalist and contributing editor of the policy journal Cairo Review of Global Affairs, has spent the past five years researching Arabic comics. To that end, he has interviewed many comic artists and translated hundreds of their cartoons. He is now writing a book about what he’s calling a “new wave” of comic art that has swept the Middle East and North Africa in the past 10 years.

Powered by Cairo

Jonathan Guyer

Who are your heroes? I admire the tenacity of many journalists I have met across the Middle East, far too many to name.

Who is your muse? Cairo. The city of 20 million has been my source of inspiration for a decade . . . the engine of my ideas. I owe the city everything.

Tell us your favorite memory. When I worked as a Mideast researcher in DC, I staffed a swanky invite-only event at the illustrious Café Milano. By 10 PM, my bosses had already left. I found myself at a long table drinking champagne with Quincy Jones. He recounted Aretha Franklin’s birthday party on a yacht in Detroit. How I wish I had asked him about producing Thriller.

Describe yourself in six words or fewer. Don’t forget your Panama hat!

What is your most treasured possession? The first issue of the Paris Review, from 1953. I found it at the infamous John King Books in Detroit.

What inspires you? Those who can maintain a sense of humor in the face of adversity and conflict.

What do these visual forms reveal about the Arab political climate? Even if many of the comics in question are not overtly political, the emergence of alternative comics and graphic novels in the Arab world in the past decade reflects many of the political ideas of the 2011 revolutions. In the many horizontal comic collectives that put out illustrated ‘zines, one can see radical politics, experimental narrative techniques, and new aesthetic approaches in the drawings and compositions.

Credit card payments at corner stores and local establishments. Carry cash, people. You’re really going to charge a cup of joe?

Were your life to become a motion picture, who would portray you? The dream: Paul Rudd. The reality: Jason Schwartzman. And if the director knew me well: Larry David.

What drew you to Arab comics and graphic novels? I have always been an amateur illustrator. So when the Arab revolutions broke out in 2011, I wondered what Arab cartoonists were thinking and doing. I made a research plan and applied for a Fulbright. Little did I know that graphic novels, a relatively new medium, were budding in Cairo and Beirut and, more recently, across North Africa.

What is your fantasy career? Honestly—and I’m pinching myself here—it’s what I’m doing right now. How many people get to write about comics for a living?

What is your greatest triumph so far? The fact that I’ve managed to get my facility in Arabic up to a level where I can be as spontaneous as I am in English, or at least fake it. Over the past year, I have interviewed poets and novelists in Arabic and even appeared on live radio on BBC Arabic. The sophomore version of me, conjugating verbs and studying word lists, could never have imagined it.

What is your most challenging aspect of being a Radcliffe fellow? Sharing the glories of the Ivory Tower with those outside the Harvard orbit. I am eager to help scholars abroad at risk, for instance, and there is a particular urgency in countries like Turkey. The challenge is how to go beyond our research projects and contribute to something that isn’t just another book or paper.

What is your pet peeve. Name a pet peeve. Credit card payments at corner stores and local establishments. Carry cash, people. You’re really going to charge a cup of joe?

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Today, the very meaning of citizenship at local, national, and global levels is in flux. More than 65 million people are currently displaced from their homes. Gender—in all its forms—is essential to any analysis of these trends and to our understandings of citizenship around the world, although it is often overlooked in public debate.

Conference participants will explore these themes through three panels, an evening focused on film and citizenship, and a reading by and keynote conversation with the Pulitzer Prize–winning author Jhumpa Lahiri.

To find out more about this event and to register, please go to: 

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On Radcliffe Day 2018, Friday, May 25, we will award the Radcliffe Medal to Hillary Rodham Clinton.

As an attorney, first lady, senator, secretary of state, and the first woman nominated by a major party for the US presidency, Secretary Clinton has worked tirelessly over the course of decades in the public eye, often in the face of unprecedented scrutiny, to make meaningful change.

The day’s program will feature a personal testimonial from former Secretary of State Madeline Albright; a keynote conversation between Secretary Clinton and Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey ‘92; and a panel on America’s role in a changing world, featuring Nicholas Burns, Michèle Flournoy ‘83, David Ignatius ’72, Meghan O’Sullivan, and Anne-Marie Slaughter JD ’85.

Public access to this event will be limited, but we invite you to view the event online. We will stream the proceedings live. For more information, go to www.radcliffe.harvard.edu.