

The Magazine of
Pitzer College
Fall 2023
Volume 56 Issue 1

PARTICIPANT

FULL CIRCLE

Strom C. Thacker Returns to Claremont
as Pitzer's Seventh President p.12



A Life of Advocacy: An Interview with
Isabelle Thacker p.17

What Makes Pitzer's Presidency
Different from Others? p.19

Founding President John W. Atherton
on Pitzer's Early Years p.48



President Strom C. Thacker met Madeline Pinsky Walker '73 and other community members during the Alumni Weekend mimosa brunch in McConnell Dining Hall.

An Innovative Search Process Produces an Innovative Leader



Dear Pitzer Community,

Since its founding, Pitzer College has been committed to producing engaged, socially responsible citizens of the world. Its emphases on social justice, intercultural understanding, and environmental sustainability are needed now more than ever. We are fortunate to have found in Strom C. Thacker a president who embraces Pitzer's approach to teaching and learning and who is committed to elevating the College's visibility and impact.

Strom comes to us from Union College in Schenectady, New York, where he was dean of the faculty and vice president for academic affairs. Previously, he served on the faculty and held leadership positions at Boston University. A political scientist by training, Strom's research and teaching focus on issues related to democracy, economic development, and healthcare in Mexico and Latin America.

It was important for Pitzer that our presidential search process be open and inclusive (see p. 10 for a story about our approach that appeared in *Inside Higher Ed*). Strom quickly emerged as a frontrunner in this process because of the profound impact that a liberal arts education has had on his life and his personal experiences at The Claremont Colleges.

Strom graduated from Pomona College in 1988 and spent time on Pitzer's campus. In fact, he credits a Pitzer course on international political economy—taught by Professor Tom Ilgen—as being one of the most impactful on his thinking and future career. You'll learn more about how his time in Claremont and other experiences have shaped his life in academia in our *Participant* interview on p. 12.

It should become clear to you—as it did to our search committee—that Strom “gets” Pitzer and has a deep understanding of and affection for The Claremont Colleges that distinguished him from other candidates. Last October we invited him and two other finalists to visit campus and meet with faculty, staff, students, board members, and alumni. All the finalists were impressive, but Strom's obvious embrace of Pitzer's core values, his thoughtful answers to our questions, and his ability to relate well with all members of the Pitzer community were central to his selection.

I hope you enjoy learning more about Strom, his family, and what he thinks about Pitzer's future in this new issue of *Participant* magazine.

Sincerely,

Tom Brock

Tom Brock '83
Chair, Presidential Search Committee
Pitzer College Trustee

PARTICIPANT

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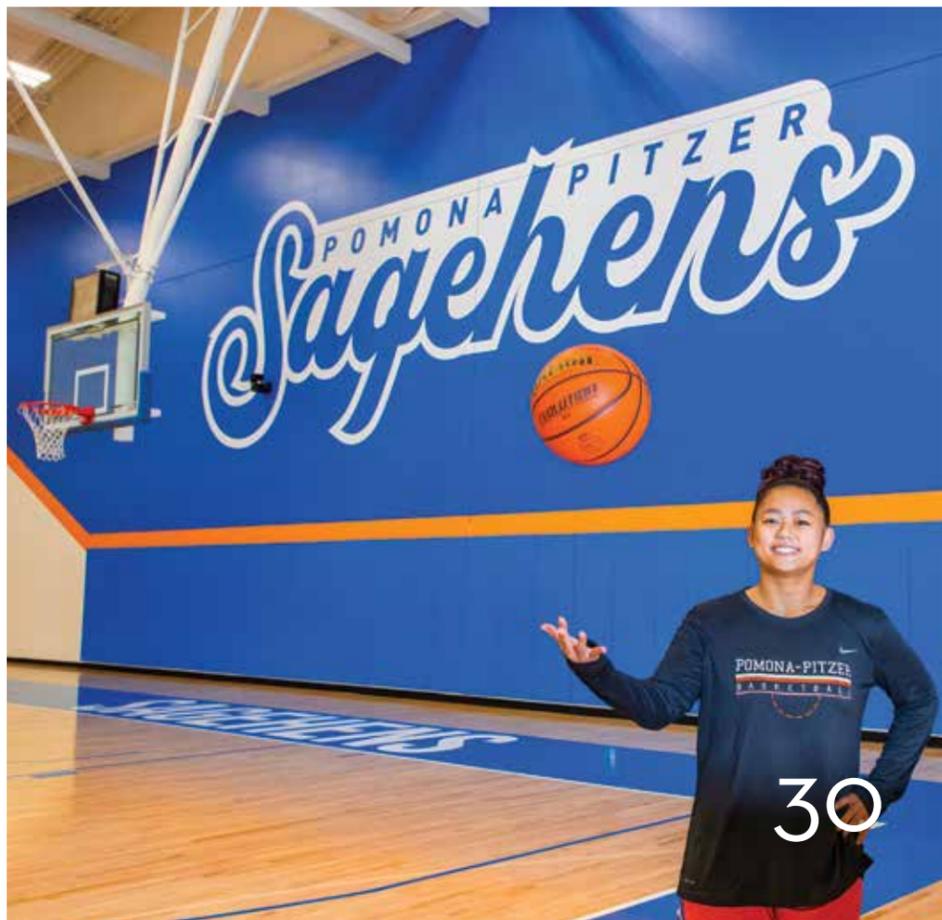
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ON THE COVER: President Strom C. Thacker

READ PARTICIPANT ONLINE

Visit www.pitzer.edu/participant for related video, extended features, and other web exclusives.



Some of Pitzer's early graduates, affectionately known as the "Women of the Sixties," returned to campus for Founders Day in February. The day's activities included a series of table conversations featuring (from left) Louise Thornton '68, Nancy Bushnell '69, Sara Smith '66, Caroline Reid McAllister '68, Mary Beth Garber '68, and Melinda Henning '68.

EVENTS

Honoring Pitzer's Past and Present

Inaugural Founders Day features the "Women of the Sixties"

Sixty years ago, Pitzer College was nothing more than a dirt field, a pile of rocks, and a dream. The founding members inspired generations of students to take ownership of their education and build a transformative community. On Feb. 21, Pitzer hosted an inaugural Founders Day event to celebrate its 60th anniversary and the people who made that possible.

Dubbed the "Women of the Sixties," some of the early graduates returned to campus to share their groundbreaking history with students, faculty, and other alumni. After watching a "Pitzer Then and Now" slideshow from the 1960s to the present, community members gathered with the alums for interactive conversations. Afterward, people perused the yearbooks and course catalogs from the College's early days and left mementos to be

placed in the Founders Day Memory Chest.

Later in the afternoon, the special group of alums led a walking tour across campus. They gave insight into a multitude of black-and-white photos in McConnell Center and Scott Hall, including the town hall meetings

"When I first looked at the campus, it was blank. ... I came here because it was a blank page, and it just drew me. It changed my life."

—Louise Thornton '68

(the beginnings of shared governance) and the founding faculty portraits. By the end of the tour, they were exchanging contact information with students and promising to see them again at Alumni Weekend.

Members of Pitzer's Trailblazers classes (Class of 1973 and earlier) talked about how they charted



Black-and-white memories: Caroline Reid McAllister '68 and Melinda Henning '68 looked at old photos during a Founders Day campus tour.

their educational course with eagerness and innovation—a tradition that students continue to this day. Beyond the festivities, Founders Day became an opportunity for bridging generations and honoring the past and present.

Trustee Louise Thornton '68 put it best when she said: "When I first looked at the campus, it was blank. Dirt, rocks, and sagebrush. I came here because it was a blank page, and it just drew me. It changed my life."

May Pitzer continue to change lives for the next 60 years and beyond.

See more photos from this year's Founders Day at www.pitzer.edu/participant



EVENTS

Live and In Person

Alumni Weekend returns to Pitzer

April 27–30 marked a very special moment at Pitzer: the first in-person Alumni Weekend celebration since 2019. The festivities kicked off with a senior thesis art exhibition, a CASA Pitzer alumni panel, and a talk with Michelle Dowd '90, author of *Forager: Field Notes for Surviving a Family Cult*. Friday ranged from campus tours and history exhibits to panels and receptions. Members of the College's early classes gathered for a 50th reunion dinner hosted by Interim President Jill Klein P'15.

Saturday was packed with tours, mixers, alumni panels, faculty talks, and a mimosa brunch with incoming president Strom Thacker, who took office July 1. The Braineaters (the Ultimate

Frisbee team started by Jeff Landesman '83) played a friendly competition among alumni and students. Trustee Ruett '81 and Rhonda '82 Foster shared how their son's death led to their powerful crusade against gun violence. Grammy-nominated spoken word poet Sekou Andrews '94 received the Distinguished Alumni Award, while community builder Keiko Budech '14 received the Young Alumni Award (see p. 43 for more).

Sunday topped it off with the Alumni Board meeting, community brunches, and a faculty art talk. Soon, alumni of all classes bid farewell to campus and the conclusion of a favorite rite of spring.

Explore photos and videos from Alumni Weekend 2023 at www.pitzer.edu/ participant



TOP: Storey and the Tellers (led by Storey Sheinberg '12) provided live entertainment during this year's alumni celebration. MIDDLE: Ultimate Frisbee with the Claremont Braineaters and founder Jeff Landesman '83 (front row, right). ABOVE LEFT: photo ops with Cecil the Sagehen. ABOVE RIGHT: an inspiring conversation with Ruett '81 and Rhonda '82 Foster about their social justice journey.

HISTORY

Participant at 51

1972 was a milestone year for Pitzer’s magazine; its former editor explains why

When Pat Nixon appeared on the cover of *Life* in 1972 and Lauren Hutton on the cover of *Vogue*, the cover of Pitzer’s *Participant* magazine also featured a female subject—the painting “The Emerging Woman.”

That painting was linked to a lengthy cover piece by sociologist David Riesman, a guest speaker, on the unique challenges facing educated young people, especially women.

But the cover also signaled something else: a dramatic transformation.

With the appearance of that issue in the fall of 1972, *Participant* expanded to a full magazine format of 30 pages. That was a significant change considering that, for five years, *Participant* had been smaller and simpler—an eight-page pamphlet-style publication that replaced an earlier publication, the four-page newsletter *Sound Off!*

For Lee Jackman, who served as the College’s vice president of development and communications at the time, the eight-page *Participant* had outlasted its purpose.

“The magazine really needed an upgrade,” said Jackman, who also served as the magazine’s editor and led the redesign. “It was too small, too basic, and we wanted something more sophisticated for Pitzer. The College was growing and we wanted a better way to present it. We had no shortage of material.”

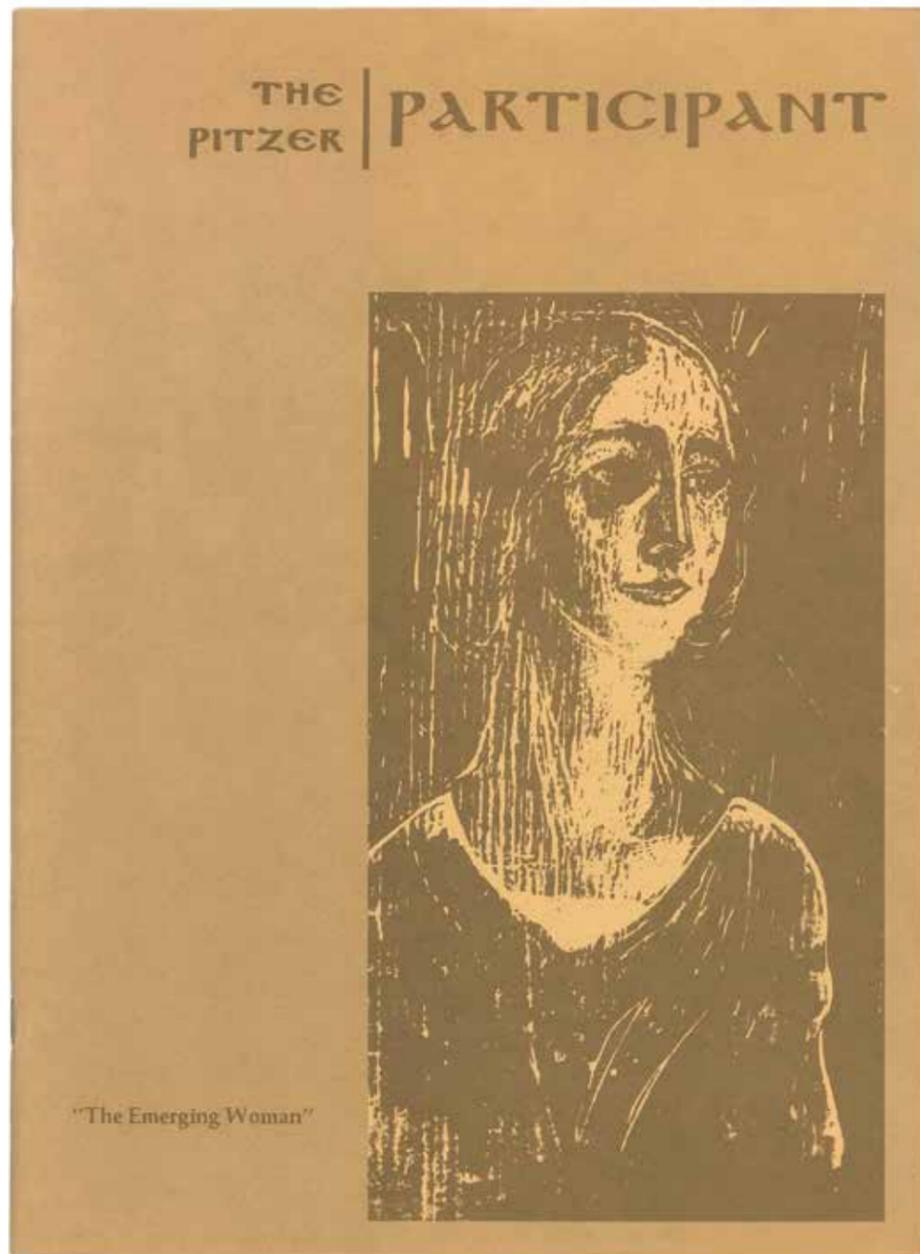
The magazine’s expansion to 30 pages resulted in more room for Pitzer’s faculty to stretch their scholarly wings and showcase the intellectual breadth of the College.

As *Participant* returns to print with the current issue after a hiatus starting in early 2020, Jackman—who lives in nearby Mt. San Antonio Gardens—said she’s proud of the changes that she and her team executed more than 50 years ago. Every issue of *Participant* is like a time capsule, she said; it contributes something important to Pitzer’s history.

For Lee Jackman, each *Participant* issue is a time capsule of Pitzer history.

Not only does the magazine capture a snapshot of life at Pitzer during a particular moment in time, Jackman explained, for future students and for the person who someday writes the College’s history the magazine also provides “a road map that shows you where we’ve been and how far we’ve come.”

Interested in seeing more of *Participant* magazine? View an archive of past issues dating from 1968 at www.pitzer.edu/communications/participant-magazine



“The Emerging Woman”



ABOVE: A magazine format for *Participant* was launched with this issue in the fall of 1972. LEFT: Early issues of *Participant*, like this one from July 1968, had a brochure-style format and were eight pages long.

STUDENT AWARD HIGHLIGHTS

The Future Belongs to the Youth

And if this year’s crop of Pitzer award winners is any indication, that future is in good hands

Early 20th century British labor leader Tom Mann gave us the words in the headline above, and what he said couldn’t be more timely or true than it is today.

As the world faces numerous challenges involving human rights, the environment, mental health and well-being, politics, and much more, Pitzer students pursued award-winning research and related projects during the 2022–23 academic year that just might make a difference in the future.

For more award-winners, visit www.pitzer.edu/communications.

Exhibitions and Fulcrum Arts.

A PITZER FIRST

Dominic Arzadon '23 became the first Pitzer student to ever receive a Marshall Scholarship, a highly competitive award that funds up to three years of graduate study in any discipline at any British university.



Arzadon will pursue an MPhil in environmental change and management at Oxford University.

“SOCCER IS LIFE”

Analise Pugh '25 is an American studies major who was chosen for the 2023 Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF) program. With support from The Claremont Colleges MMUF program, Pugh is working with Scripps College Professor Wendy Cheng on a research project titled “Soccer is Life: The role of youth soccer in disciplining citizens and upholding the U.S. empire.” Pugh plans to pursue a doctoral degree in American studies when she graduates.

POLITICAL PARTY MYOPIA

Aidan Henrikson '25 has received The Claremont Colleges Library’s 10th Annual Library Undergraduate Research Award for the paper “Warren County Democrats: The Urban and Rural Divide,” which examines the internal party dynamics of the Warren Democratic Party in Upstate New York. Henrikson shows how this party’s overemphasis on national and state politics and on overrepresentation of certain populations has resulted in alienating rural communities and eroding their support.

AN ECOBRICK VISION

After looking at the plain landscape and environment of three schools on the outskirts of her hometown of Nairobi, Kenya, **Michelle Muturi '23** proposed using ecobricks from used plastic bottles to beautify the schools and improve the surroundings. Her



Transforming trash: These students and volunteers in Nairobi are involved in Michelle Muturi’s ’23 exciting school improvement project that uses ecobricks.

project was selected for a \$20,000 Napier Award through the Napier Institute, which is the result of a partnership between the local Pilgrim Place senior community and The Claremont Colleges.

SURF’S UP

Ryan Lillestrand '23 was among this year’s recipients of student creativity grants from The Rick and Susan Sontag Center for Collaborative Creativity (known as the Hive), which support creative collaborations between Pitzer and other Claremont Colleges community members. Lillestrand used his grant to examine surfing and environmentalism with the project “Shaping Alaia: Beauty and Simplicity in the Waves.” Historic surf craft was explored by Lillestrand through the shaping of two alaia surfboards (traditional Hawaiian boards made from wood), one to the specifications of the original Hawaiian boards and

one that reflects a resurgence of these boards over the last 20 years.

HELPING STUDENTS HELP THEMSELVES

Sanya Dhama '24, Pitzer’s current Student Senate President, was awarded \$10,000 by Projects for Peace to create an educational task force and develop a curriculum to improve public health decision-making for students in school districts in Southern California’s Inland Empire. Dhama’s project, “Youth Health Education to Empower and Protect,” brings together health professionals, teachers, students, and others to create a field-tested curriculum that provides students with public health information that is nonpartisan and science-based.





COMMENCEMENT

A Class Act

Celebrating the achievements of the Class of 2023

A capacity crowd of families, friends, faculty, and students gathered under the tents May 13 to applaud this year's graduating seniors and listen to 2018 Nobel Peace Prize recipient Nadia Murad, who delivered the Commencement keynote address.

Interim President Jill Klein P'15 framed the graduates' achievements in the context of the College's history: "Class of 2023, six decades after the founding of our College, your accomplishments and character demonstrate the best of Pitzer."

Murad described her brutal journey from being enslaved by ISIS to becoming a global voice for human rights. "There are two tools that you need as you work for justice and peace: community and determination," said Murad.

Senior Class Speaker Nejat Ali '23 expressed appreciation to first-generation students, family, and the Pitzer community. Ali was followed by Senior Class President Annemarie Gerlach '23, who announced that the senior class gift would go to the First Gen student fund, and by Alumni Board President Diana Bob '02, who encouraged participation in the College's alumni network.

Once the ceremony ended, the graduates took a final walk of fame and enjoyed quality time with their loved ones to commemorate their brilliant achievement.

Watch the full 59th Commencement ceremony and view a gallery of photos at www.pitzer.edu/participant



"We Need More Than Just One Story to Understand the World"

Three questions for Nadia Murad

In the following Q & A, *Participant* talked with 2018 Nobel Peace Prize co-recipient Nadia Murad about visiting Pitzer and delivering this year's Commencement address.

Q. You had a chance to meet some of our students and other community members during a book-signing as well as during Commencement. How was your experience with our community? Was there anything memorable about your visit?

A. Spending time with the Pitzer community was a wonderful experience. Meeting so many young people at the book-signing and during Commencement with great and big intentions for the future fills me with hope.

I come from a big family, so for me the most memorable moment was having opportunities for chatting with the graduates' parents and hearing how proud they were of them, particularly those who were the first in their family to go to college.

Q. You never planned to become an activist until after ISIS attacked your village. Pitzer College has a long tradition of teaching students to become activists. Do you think there are advantages to showing students how to develop their voices as advocates?

A. Yes, I became an activist through atrocity. Although it gave me a passion for justice and advocacy, it is a route that I would not wish on anybody, which is something I shared during my keynote address.

I think that having a school like Pitzer that is dedicated to advocacy, where faculty help students to shape their craft and develop their voices, can only be a good thing for the world.

Q. You delivered a very moving message to the Class of 2023 about creating community, encouraging students to reach out beyond their familiar lives and "find your tribe." Why is that important? How does this effort make one's education stronger and better?

A. I think that when someone moves out beyond their own immediate world, it gives them a chance to experience huge enrichment. As Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has said, we need more than just one story to understand the world. When you do that and experience more stories, you can find connections, solidarity, and friendship with people who share your passion, if not your life's experience. When you get to that point there is so much you can learn from each other.

Watch Nadia Murad's full Commencement address at www.pitzer.edu/participant



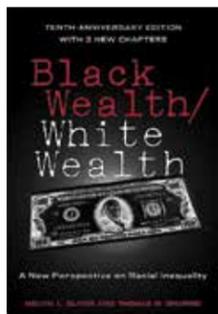
Nadia Murad shows off her Pitzer t-shirt near Commencement Plaza. (PHOTO COURTESY NADIA MURAD)

AROUND THE MOUNDS

The SCOTUS Affirmative Action Ruling: Jackson Cites Oliver and Other Pitzer Reactions

In her dissent to the Supreme Court's June decision against affirmative action in college admissions, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson cited research by Pitzer President Emeritus **Melvin L. Oliver** regarding racial wealth disparity in America.

Jackson pulled several of her points from *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*, which Oliver co-authored with Brandeis University Professor Thomas M. Shapiro. First published in 1995, their book analyzes how wealth has perpetuated racial inequality in the U.S. despite (and because of) public policies.



In her first citation, in which she directly quotes Oliver's book, Jackson wrote: "Given the lengthy history of state-sponsored race-based preferences in America, to say that anyone is now victimized if a college considers whether that legacy of discrimination has unequally advantaged its applicants fails to acknowledge the well-documented 'intergenerational transmission of inequality' that still plagues our citizenry."

The 10th anniversary edition of Oliver and Shapiro's award-winning book was published in 2006. Years later, *Black Wealth/White Wealth* remains a touchstone for discussions of racial inequality. Ta-Nehisi Coates cited the work in his *Atlantic* article "The Case for Reparations," and *The Washington Post* quoted Oliver in its six-part series, "George Floyd's America."

While he was Pitzer's president, Oliver established the Racial Justice Initiative, renamed the Melvin L. Oliver Racial Justice Initiative in his honor upon retirement, to embed racial justice throughout the College's educational experience. Oliver has called the initiative "a culmination of my life's work and an essential component of Pitzer's social justice mission."

Other Pitzer Responses

The Pitzer community's opposition to the high court's striking down of affirmative action in college admissions was visible in other media outlets and venues.

An email message to the College community from President **Strom C. Thacker**, Interim President **Jill Klein P'15**, and Admission and Financial Aid Vice President **Yvonne Berumen '97** expressed disappointment but also reaffirmed Pitzer's commitment to diversity within the changing legal landscape.

In addition, Pitzer alumna **Michele Siqueiros '95**, who serves as president of the nonprofit Campaign for College Opportunity, talked to *NBC News* about the ruling's impact.

Read Siqueiros' comments at www.pitzer.edu/participant/scotus-ruling



Welcome, Coach Q

Former Pomona-Pitzer women's basketball star and 2023 SCIAAC Player of the Year **Madison Quan '22** joined Head Coach Alaina Woo for the 2023-24 season. Quan was a standout student-athlete for the Sagehens from 2018 to 2023, graduating with marks all over the women's basketball record book. Quan is a first-generation college student who double majored in organizational studies and environmental analysis at Pitzer College before going on to receive her MBA from Claremont Graduate University's Drucker School of Management.

Up Close and Presidential

Inside Higher Ed took a close look at the search process resulting in the selection of **Strom C. Thacker** as president of Pitzer College in its February report, "An Expanded Faculty Role in the Presidential Search." The article showcased interviews with faculty, staff, administration, students, and alumni involved in the process. Unlike the secret process characterizing most searches, the College "in what faculty leaders and board members there agree was a too-rare triumph for shared governance these days ... gave its entire full-time faculty and representative groups of staff members and students the opportunity to meet with three finalists and weigh in on the final choice. More than half of the College's roughly 100 eligible faculty members chose to participate in the process" that resulted in Thacker's selection.



Still Going Strong 25 Years Later

This summer marked a milestone for one of Pitzer's leading study abroad offerings, the Costa Rica Summer Health program. In the 1990s, Professor of Sociology **Ann Stromberg** (pictured above, far right) was working with pre-med students who felt that they couldn't spend a semester abroad. Stromberg thought that a summer program based on health would appeal to them while engaging them in intercultural education and Spanish learning—an asset in this part of the world. After trying Guatemala for a year, Pitzer moved the program in 1998 to the Institute for Central American Development Studies (ICADS), a partner in Costa Rica that had already been hosting individual students. Whether students want to fulfill Pitzer's Social Responsibility Praxis requirement, improve their Spanish, or work in education or health care, they're able to expand their academic horizons in Costa Rica. "It's been one of the greatest pleasures of my career for Pitzer to allow me create this," said Stromberg. "A strong combination makes this program special: the home stay, intensive Spanish, hands-on internships, and raising questions of social justice and environmental health. It's all part of Pitzer's mission and ICADS' mission."

Cecil in Demand

Did you know that crochet is a social media sensation? It is for **Lucy Conover '23**, a major in science, technology, and society whose creation of



a crochet version of Cecil the Sagehen became a top-performing post on Pitzer's Instagram channel. Conover created a series of Cecils (and received several offers from interested customers!) for the Offices of Admission and for Advancement & Communications. "I like how Pitzer has embraced this niche hobby of mine and taken an interest in my creative side," she said in an interview.

A Pitzer in Nepal Founder Retires

After more than 35 years of service to Pitzer College, **Mike Donahue** has retired as the director of Pitzer programs and intercultural education.



Donahue helped establish Pitzer in Nepal, the College's longest-running study abroad program. He came to Nepal with a Pitzer cohort and stayed for months afterward to experience village life among the Sherpas. Since then, Donahue has supported intercultural learning in Claremont, Nepal, and beyond, and we wish him well on his next journey.

EASY PZ

Some facts and figures about the Pitzer community

15

Consecutive years that Pitzer has been among the top liberal arts college producers of Fulbright award winners (see story on p. 20)

60

Number of years since the founding of Pitzer College in 1963 (see story on p. 4)

16

Number of formerly incarcerated students to receive undergraduate degrees as part of Pitzer's trailblazing Inside-Out Program

7

Number of Pitzer presidents (read about No. 7 on p. 12)

3

Pitzer's ranking in *The Princeton Review's Top 389 Colleges 2024 Edition* for "Green Matters: Everyone Cares About Conservation"

51

Number of years since *Participant* was expanded into a magazine format in 1972 (see story on p. 6)

Participant caught up with Thacker this spring to discuss his career, insights into higher education, personal and professional experiences, the challenges of leading today's colleges, and the exciting opportunities that he sees ahead for Pitzer.

PARTICIPANT: How do you feel about returning to Claremont after 35 years?

STROM THACKER: This is really a special homecoming for me. Claremont has played such a critical part in the formation of my identity in higher education. Several decades may have passed and a lot has changed, but it still feels familiar here. Coming back still feels like coming home.

P: You've said that your options were limited when you wanted to go to college. Why did you feel like The Claremont Colleges were off the table?

ST: My parents were both 19 when they had me, and resources were always a challenge for us. They did a really good job of keeping me from realizing how tight things were when I was growing up. Looking back now, I can see that we faced food insecurity at times and didn't always know where the next paycheck would be coming from. We moved around, too; my family were serial renters.

My father didn't finish college and went into the workforce. My mom didn't go to college right away because she was raising me. When I was ten, they divorced,

and I was able to live with each of them because they lived in the same town. They had to work so hard just to pay the bills, and the challenges they faced really limited the resources available to us. I could see how difficult it was for them. I could see what a challenge it would be to afford to go to a top private college.

P: Despite the challenges of your family's situation, you applied to Pomona College. Why?

ST: Pomona emerged as my top choice early on, but I was not sure if I could swing it, even if I got in. What really convinced me was a Pomona admissions officer explaining their policy to meet full demonstrated financial need. She assured me that if I were admitted, they'd make sure I could attend. From that moment on, I had my heart and sights set on Claremont.

P: Did you ever visit the Pitzer campus when you were at Pomona?

ST: Yes, I actually took a class here. I took only one course outside of Pomona during my whole undergraduate career, and it was at Pitzer. It was called International Political Economy, taught by Professor Thomas Ilgen.

As a faculty member at Boston University and Union College (and twice as a visiting faculty member at Harvard), I've taught a similar version of Tom's class. In fact, I've taught that class more than any other over the course of my career. And one of the textbooks I use is a new edition of a book Tom assigned when I studied with him back in 1987-88. So, my exposure to Pitzer was limited to only one course, but it has really stuck with me.

P: You're fluent in Spanish. Did you learn it during your first academic job in the 1990s with the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) in Mexico City?

ST: I'd been studying Spanish since high school, but teaching international relations in Spanish in Mexico certainly helped a lot. I was reasonably comfortable with the language when I got to Pomona, where I continued studying it. But it was spending a year in Madrid that really cemented things for me. I lived with a Spanish family, took all of my classes in Spanish and traveled around the country quite a bit, both on program excursions and on my own. I realized the language was really clicking for me when I started dreaming in Spanish after a few months in Madrid.

P: Besides ITAM, you have held several prestigious appointments that seem like dream roles for anyone with an academic career. What made you decide to shift from a life of scholarship with great chances to see other parts of the U.S. (and the world) into a life of leadership?

ST: That's a great question. Being a professor is one of the best jobs in the world. I loved it, and still do. Going into leadership really wasn't something that I planned. I was invited to apply for an associate dean of faculty position when I was at Boston University, and the dean who nominated me wanted me to take the nomination seriously. I think she saw something in me that I had not yet recognized in myself.



Pomona College Commencement, May 1988: Thacker with his parents Roger Thacker and Terry Strom. (PHOTO COURTESY STROM THACKER)



The Thackers walk in front of an Avery Hall mural during their visit to Pitzer earlier this year.



Thacker at Boston University interacting with students. (PHOTO COURTESY STROM THACKER)

“I took only one course outside of Pomona during my whole undergraduate career, and it was taught at Pitzer: International Political Economy, taught by Professor Thomas Ilgen...I've taught a similar version of Tom's class. In fact, I've taught that class more than any other over the course of my career. So, my exposure to Pitzer was limited to only one course, but it has really stuck with me.”

—Strom C. Thacker



Thacker with a group of friends on the construction site of Pomona College's Rains Center, which has been renovated and expanded into the new Center for Athletics, Recreation and Wellness, in Spring 1988. From L-R: Jay Perez, M. Sam Bower, John Corman, Thacker, and Todd McGinley. All PO '88. (PHOTO COURTESY STROM THACKER)

STROM C. THACKER: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY



STANFORD UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

Hometown
Palo Alto, California

Education
PhD, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (1996)
MA, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (1991)
BA, Pomona College (1988)

Family
Spouse: Isabelle
Children: Matthew, CJ, and William

Books
A Centripetal Theory of Democratic Governance (Cambridge University Press) (with John Gerring)

Big Business, the State, and Free Trade: Construction Coalitions in Mexico (Cambridge University Press)

Career Highlights
Dean of the Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Union College in Schenectady, New York

Associate Dean of the Faculty, Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences, Boston University

Professor of international relations and political science, Boston University

College of Arts and Sciences Award for Teaching Excellence, Boston University

Assistant Professor, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México

work. But in my leadership role my impact was exponentially expanded through all the faculty I was working with.

A colleague at BU referred to this kind of work as philanthropic leadership—when your good work enables that of others. I think that phrase is just right. That's the kind of approach I've applied to my leadership roles ever since.

P: This spring you attended Alumni Weekend 2023 and introduced yourself to members of Pitzer's alumni community. How was that experience?

ST: It was wonderful to be on campus and to meet so many alumni at our first in-person celebration since 2019. I enjoyed being able to speak directly to people, both in groups and individually, rather than through email, phone, or video. It was

I'd served in some leadership roles already at the time so I felt like I had some of the right preparation for it. But I'd never actively considered moving into a larger role before that conversation with the dean. I was happy in my faculty life. But when I was nominated for the associate dean position, I thought, you know what? I'll give it a try. What's the harm? If I don't get it or enjoy it, I'll go back to a job that is still part of my core identity: being a professor.

P: You ended up getting selected for that position, right?

ST: That's right, and within a

“I've always loved my teaching and scholarship... But in my leadership role my impact was exponentially expanded through all the faculty I was working with.”

—Strom C. Thacker

few months I'd fallen in love with the work. It was so rewarding to contribute to something larger, at the institutional level. I enjoyed it the most when I felt my work was facilitating the good work of many others, like hiring a generation of talented, diverse new faculty, helping develop them and bringing them along, seeing them succeed, getting tenure and building programs. I just found it so rewarding, almost immediately.

P: More rewarding than teaching and research?

ST: Just different. I've always loved my teaching and scholarship, but I felt that my impact was limited to those in my classroom or those who read my published

also great to meet so many from across the spectrum of class years, from the earliest founding classes of Pitzer to our more recent graduates. Each brings a unique, invaluable perspective and helps make Pitzer so distinctive and so special. I'm excited to work with our advancement and alumni relations teams to build even stronger ties with our alumni. I know I'm far from alone in appreciating the pivotal role that my undergraduate experience has played in my life.

P: Are alumni concerned about anything specific that they want you to address as president?

ST: What really struck me is how much and how deeply our alumni



A February campus visit enabled Thacker to meet faculty including Associate Professor of Classics Michelle Berenfeld.

care about their alma mater and how much they want to make sure that it's in good hands. They wanted to know about my past professional experience and what has led and drawn me to Pitzer. They seemed pleased to know that I'm a Pomona alum. I think it was reassuring for them to know that I understand the culture of The Claremont Colleges from the student perspective. Many of them also shared with me that they want to make sure that access to a Pitzer education is available for everyone who qualifies for admission. They're rightly focused on that.

P: A recent *USA Today* report notes a surge in student activism across the country. Student activism has always been the norm at Pitzer since its earliest days. How do you feel about this? Are you glad that students are taught to exercise their voices?

ST: In many ways, the rest of the world is still working to catch up to where Pitzer has been for decades in its focus on student engagement, sustainability, and social justice. We're living in times when it's essential for younger generations to express themselves and be heard. They should have a say in the world that they'll be entering when they leave Pitzer, and it

makes sense that they should start practicing that activism now. The world needs to hear their voices and to have their help to solve the unprecedented problems it faces today.

P: Even if it means those voices might challenge you and the administration?

ST: Yes, even if that's the case.

P: Why?

ST: Because it's a part of their education and self-discovery process; it's an important part of figuring out who they are, what they believe, and how they will work to make the world a better place. They're acquiring and developing the tools and the training here at Pitzer to help them detect and perceive injustices in any organization. It's understandable that one of the first they see is the school they're attending. I love the fact that Pitzer is proud of its activist heritage, and I've found an activist spirit is alive and well at other schools where I've worked as well.

One key to maximizing this element of our core educational mission is making sure that we all live our community values to their fullest ideals by engaging in respectful, constructive dialogue and conversation, rather than



A shared commitment to social justice: Strom and Isabelle Thacker.

ADVOCATING FOR OTHERS: A CONVERSATION WITH ISABELLE THACKER

When she was a child, Isabelle Thacker knew what she wanted to be when she grew up. While other kids were drawing pictures of animals or race cars, Thacker was drawing pictures of herself as a stick-figure lawyer. She also wrote down that she was going to help people one day—and she's stayed true to that childhood promise.

Prior to moving to Claremont, she was the supervising attorney in the Immigration Unit at The Legal Project in Albany, New York. The Immigration Unit focuses on providing humanitarian relief to immigrants. Thacker is looking forward to finding exciting ways to combine her professional experiences with Pitzer's focus on social justice as her husband Strom settles into his new role as the College's seventh president.

"I want to partner with Strom to help Pitzer move forward and get the word out about all the great things happening at the College," she said.

SUPPORT FOR THE VULNERABLE

Advocating for others through the law has evolved over the years for Thacker. After graduating from the University of North Carolina Law School, she worked as a staff attorney at Georgia Legal Services Program and focused on domestic violence, housing, and public benefits. She took time off to raise their three children before returning to the workforce with the Greater Boston Legal Services and Latinas Know Your Rights Program. This was the first time Thacker practiced immigration law.

Thacker has also practiced law at an anti-poverty agency, a domestic violence program, and a refugee agency.

“I want to see how my experience can help further Pitzer's mission. I'm excited that the community and I share values in social justice. It's nice when people are working toward a common goal.”

—Isabelle Thacker

At her core, Thacker said she enjoys “helping people who are facing barriers so that we can work through their problems together and improve their situations.”

According to its website, The Legal Project has “a special commitment to people who have traditionally had difficulty in obtaining legal assistance, including the working poor, women, immigrants, and the LGBTQ community.” Thacker was deeply involved in the immigration program, which specializes in domestic violence, trafficking, asylum, juvenile cases, and family reunification cases. The program also helped groups of displaced people such as Afghans, Ukrainians, Haitians, and others.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES AT PITZER

Thacker has not yet done work on the U.S.-Mexico border, but she sees Pitzer's proximity to it as a potential opportunity to explore that. In the meantime, she is excited to join the Pitzer community that shares her values in social justice and community engagement. As she gets to know people, she hopes to learn from them about ongoing projects and see where she can be most useful.

“I'm fairly nimble: If you work in a nonprofit for any number of years, you have to be able to do a lot of things,” said Thacker. “I'll roll up my sleeves and do what needs to be done.”

Of course, she will not be doing so alone. Isabelle and Strom Thacker have been partners since meeting on a study abroad program in Madrid during their junior years in college.

Pitzer represents another leg in their journey together that has taken them to San Francisco,

North Carolina, Georgia, Mexico City, Boston, Palo Alto, and Upstate New York. You may even catch them walking around campus or the Claremont Village with another member of their family—Opal, a 13-year-old retired sled

dog that they adopted during the pandemic.

“I want to see how my experience can help further Pitzer's mission,” said Thacker. “I'm excited that the community and I share values in social justice. It's nice when people are working toward a common goal.”

simply yelling past each other. Naturally, we may not always agree. But we can always seek to better understand the issues at hand, and, importantly, each other and ourselves.

Your question reminds me of a story from my Boston University days. One day when I was working in my administrative office, I heard a protest march coming down the street and wondered if our son—who was then a student at BU and involved in a number of social justice initiatives—might be in that group. I looked out the window to see him helping lead a peaceful march down Commonwealth Avenue at that precise moment. It was a proud moment for me, both as a parent and as an administrator.

P: A recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* report notes that many critics are asking if it's even worth it to take on the job of college president. How would you answer them?

ST: It really depends on the school, the person, and the fit. It's a much harder job than it used to be, without a doubt. Every year the average tenure of college presidents falls (to fewer than 6 years now). I asked one of my mentors who's been a college president how his outlook on the job has changed. Specifically, I asked if he'd do it all over again now (as opposed to when he first got into the role). There was a long pause before he answered, "I think so." He really had to think about it given the landscape of higher ed today. That was an instructive moment for me.

There are a lot of schools where I wouldn't want this job and just a few where I would. Pitzer is one of the few in that special category for me. Pitzer is unique, a word I don't use lightly. In so many ways, Pitzer is a model in how it lives its values and its mission, and the way the faculty and staff help all students to achieve and succeed inspires me. I still get a thrill out of the practice of building something bigger than any of us, of contributing to the development of an institution that serves such an important purpose in higher education and the world.

Even though the presidential role may be harder than it used to be, I still find it rewarding and fulfilling.

P: What do you think are Pitzer's greatest strengths?

ST: It's interesting to look at it from a longer-term perspective. While in one sense I'm new to Pitzer, I've observed and admired this school for a long time. I first arrived in Claremont in 1984, and I think Pitzer has stayed true to itself and its values and honed them ever since. What is compelling is how the world has come around to Pitzer's values now. The College has always emphasized the values of interdisciplinarity, sustainability, social engagement, social justice, applied learning, and community engagement, and now you see the rest of the world of higher education finally embracing these ideas. When you look at all the



Meet the Thackers (from left): Matthew, Isabelle, William, CJ, and Strom. (PHOTO COURTESY OF STROM THACKER)

challenges and opportunities we're facing, it becomes clear the world needs Pitzer now more than ever.

P: You sound very optimistic about Pitzer's future.

ST: I am. Pitzer just has so much going for it: its mission, its values,

the lived student experience, its community, and the consortium, to name just a few. Our faculty and staff impress upon students the notion that anything is possible, that they can make a difference, and then help them acquire and

“What is compelling is how the world has come around to Pitzer's values now. The College has always emphasized the values of interdisciplinarity, sustainability, social engagement, social justice, applied learning, and community engagement, and now you see the rest of the world of higher education finally embracing these ideas.”

—Strom C. Thacker

President Thacker joined the Pitzer community for a special brunch during Alumni Weekend earlier this year.

develop the tools to make that happen. It's not just lip service or platitudes here. Pitzer continues to attract such an impressive, bright, and talented group of students. We have some real changemakers on our campus, and they're doing amazing things, with so much more to come. We will continue moving forward to make sure they have as many opportunities as possible as they prepare for the world after graduation.

You can see this happening across the campus (and beyond) in real, tangible ways, on a daily basis.

P: Such as?

ST: To cite just one example among many, look over at the construction of the Nucleus science building, which will open in

fall 2024. Building on our existing strengths to create new ones, these integrated science facilities are going to take our interdisciplinary approach to education to a whole new level for our students and Scripps students.

P: For you every answer goes back to making sure that our students have a chance to develop their sense of self-identity and discover their own path forward, right?

ST: Yes, exactly. That's what I experienced all those years ago as an undergraduate. I want that for our students, too. I could not be more excited to be here.

For an extended version of this interview, visit *Participant* online at www.pitzer.edu/participant/cover-story

SHARED GOVERNANCE AND THE PITZER PRESIDENCY

When Will Barndt considers Strom C. Thacker's qualifications for the presidency, he's encouraged by his scholarship.

Thacker's 2008 book *A Centripetal Theory of Democratic Governance* suggests to Barndt, an associate professor of political studies, that Thacker is a serious student of leadership.

"He's spent much of his career in theory and in practice thinking about how to bring people together around common goals. In his scholarship he's focused on bringing different forces together, and that's applicable to our governance structure, too," said Barndt, who served on the presidential search committee that selected Thacker.

A PLACE AT THE TABLE

What Barndt is referring to is the College's shared governance model, which was developed at Pitzer decades ago. Under this model, all stakeholder groups have a say in how the College is run.

You can see this in action today during regular meetings of Pitzer's faculty, student senate, staff council, and college council. For Professor of Political Studies Rachel VanSickle-Ward, who serves as a member of the Faculty Executive Committee, student engagement is one of its most important and unique aspects.

"Students serve on committees that make critical decisions about the College, including the hiring and review of faculty," she said. "Their voices are vital, and their leadership interrogates our governance structure."

Collective decision-making appeals to many institutions (not just in higher education) but few implement it. Why not? Two reasons: time and conflict. By increasing the number of groups involved in the process, every decision takes longer and the likelihood of disagreement and conflict increases. The process can be very messy.

INCREASED BUY-IN AND SUPPORT

For Jim Marchant, who serves as vice president and chief of staff, that messiness can lead to better results.

"When more parties are involved, the chances are higher that you're going to have more buy-in and support for decisions, and it's important to have that, especially for the big issues," he explained. "Shared governance requires investing the time so that everyone gets to know each other's perspective. It's based on building relationships and, ideally, trust. Many leaders and institutions don't have the patience for that."

For 60 years Pitzer has demonstrated that patience, and Barndt, Marchant, and VanSickle-Ward, and others look forward to what Thacker adds to the College's tradition of shared governance from his experience and scholarship.

For Pitzer Founding President John W. Atherton's views on shared governance see *Participating* on p. 48.



The first town hall meeting held on September 29, 1964 in Scott Hall.

2023 FULBRIGHT AWARDS

At Home in the World

This year's Fulbright cohort is spending a year of study, teaching, and research around the globe

Nine members of the Class of 2023 were offered 2023-24 Fulbright U.S. Student Program grants. For 15 consecutive years, Pitzer has been among the top baccalaureate producers of Fulbright recipients according to a recent report in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

1 Alyssa Dunn '23 is an organismal biology major who is conducting research in Poland on blood-borne infections, parasites, and coinfection dynamics in rodents. "Greater research on coinfection is critical for increasing understanding of how parasites are transmitted and treated," Dunn explained.

2 Jack Friedman '23 is teaching English in Uruguay as he immerses himself in the country's rural and urban environments. A writing and rhetoric major, he plans to draw on his teaching and tutoring experiences as a Writing Center Fellow.

3 Amaya Gustave '23 is teaching English in Mexico as she expands her interest in the diversity of Indigenous and Afro-Mexican cultures, pre-colonial history, and ecosystems. An organizational studies major, Gustave has taught while participating in Pitzer in Ecuador.

4 Ariel Kivela '23 is teaching English in Taiwan and looks forward to sharing her personal and unique approach to learning English that has been inspired by her own struggles with dyslexia. In her application she explained that she hopes "to provide empathy and patience to students learning English while also creating an engaging way for them to learn."

5 O'philia Le '23 is teaching English in Taiwan as she seeks to build bridges between communities of learners and

create compassionate spaces. A sociocultural anthropology and environmental analysis double major, Le plans to pursue a career as a public health professional.

6 Shraya Poetti '23 is conducting research in Spain on the political dynamics affecting affordable housing. Her research aims at the question: Should affordable housing be framed as a partisan or ideological issue? A double major in political science and psychology, Poetti plans to analyze the housing justice movement.

7 Sergio Quechol '23 is studying the art of racialized travesti and trans femmes in Brazil and how artmaking can serve as agency and care for them despite threats of erasure and violence. Quechol is a double major in Latin American & Caribbean studies and gender feminist studies.

8 Elliot Raskin '23 is teaching English in Tajikistan as he explores mutual learning, empathy, and intercultural understanding. A political studies major, Raskin participated in Pitzer's study abroad program in Vietnam.

9 Jocelyn Vega-Robledo '23, a sociology and Chicana-Latinx Studies double major, is teaching English in Portugal. As a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow, she researched the parental involvement experiences of Latinx farmworkers and how they contribute to their children's educational trajectories.



Read the complete Fulbright announcement at www.pitzer.edu/communications/2023/05/05/fulbright

FACULTY DISTINCTIONS

High-Impact Scholarship

Announcing Pitzer's first ACE Fellow and other faculty highlights

ACING HER FELLOWSHIP

Associate Professor of Economics **Menna Bizuneh** has been selected as a 2023 Fellow of the American Council on Education (ACE). She is the first Pitzer faculty member ever chosen for this highly competitive, highly prestigious program. ACE Fellows study another institution's best practices before returning to their own school and putting these lessons into action. Bizuneh joins 35 other Fellows who were selected after being nominated by the senior administration of their institutions and undergoing a rigorous application process.

AN S.O.S. TO THE GOVERNOR

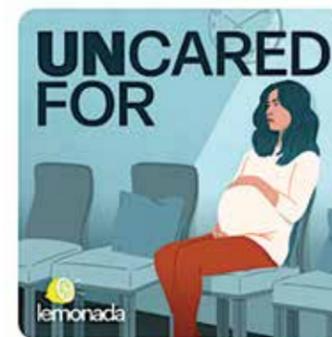
Earlier this year a coalition of more than 60 Southland environmental and social justice groups and organizations sent a report and letter to California Gov. Gavin Newsom asking for a halt on the construction of new warehouses until the health and environmental impact can be better understood. Spearheading that effort was the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice, the Sierra Club (San Geronio Chapter), and the Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability at Pitzer College, led by Director **Susan Phillips**. Her research on warehouse sprawl and its potential public health threat forms the core of "A Region in Crisis," the massive report sent to Newsom that has generated much attention and coverage, including major reports in *Cal Matters*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and other print and broadcast media outlets.



ACE Fellow Recipient: Associate Professor of Economics Menna Bizuneh.

MIDWIFERY MATTERS

Professor of Sociology **Alicia Bonaparte** co-organized this spring's Midwifery is Public Health two-day conference (featured in *The Claremont Courier*) and appeared on the "Uncared For" podcast. She discussed the historical role of midwives in laying the prenatal care groundwork for midwifery as it's known today.



THEORISTS VERSUS LIARS

A report in *Reason* magazine this spring on the second International Conspiracy Theory Symposium cited Professor of Philosophy **Brian L. Keeley's** work, in particular his argument that it's important to distinguish conspiracy theorists from conspiracy liars: "The former, he explained, are sincere. The latter are propagandists and snake-oil salesmen who promote stories they don't genuinely believe."

A FAILED PANDEMIC STRATEGY

Assistant Professor of Political Studies **Hanzhang Liu** talked to *Bloomberg News* in two separate reports on Chinese unrest over President Xi's mishandling of Covid-19 restrictions and how the abrupt ending of these restrictions has left citizens struggling to figure out how to survive on their own.

CYBER INSIGHTS

Fletcher Jones Associate Professor of Political Studies **Geoffrey Herrera** has been chosen to serve as scholar-in-residence at the U.S. Cyber Command to provide his strategic perspective on that agency's performance. Herrera's coursework at Pitzer includes *The War on Terror* (POST 128) and the senior seminar *Technology and Politics* (POST 196).

SCHOLARLY PROGRESS

Professor of Psychology **David Moore** recently published the paper "Leveraging Developmental Psychology to Evaluate Artificial Intelligence" and was selected to serve as a Fellow with the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University. He is director of the Claremont Infant Study Center.

A VISIT WITH THE CONSUL GENERAL

Visiting Professor **Asiya Daud** took students from her course *International Relations of the Middle East* (CGS 146) to meet with Qatar's Consul General in Los Angeles, Mansour bin Abdulla al-Sulaitin. A Critical Global Studies field group member, Daud arranged the trip so her students could gain an international perspective on world and Middle East affairs by talking to al-Sulaitin, who described various initiatives that Qatar has with the U.S.

For recent media activity involving Pitzer faculty, see *Commentary* on p. 33

RETIREMENTS

A Lasting Legacy of Achievement

Ethel Jorge Professor of Spanish

Since her arrival at Pitzer in 1999, Ethel Jorge has shared her expertise in community-based language learning, Latin American cultural studies, popular culture, and more in her extensive scholarship and teaching. Jorge's innovative courses include Spanish in the Community:

Children of Immigration; Latin American Cultural Diaspora; and Los Angeles, the City, and Its People.

Before joining Pitzer's Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures Field Group, Jorge earned a PhD in Latin American Cultural Studies from Union Institute in Ohio and a bachelor's and master's in Latin American History from the Universidad de la Habana in Cuba.

At Pitzer, Jorge created the Community-Based Spanish Practicum and developed a more comprehensive integrative Spanish program that links foreign language teaching to student engagement with multilingual and multicultural communities. She increased connections with other academic disciplines and in the College's study abroad programs in Spanish-speaking countries.

Jorge's research includes community-engaged language pedagogy, interdisciplinary transnational language and culture connections, and popular culture in the Spanish-speaking world. Jorge has served as an associate editor of *Hispania*, the journal of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP). She has also produced documentary films about Uruguayan culture and society. In 2014 she was named Outstanding Teacher of the Year for College-Level Educators by the AATSP. The award recognized Jorge's exceptional teaching and her contributions to the scholarship of community-engaged language teaching and learning.



Daniel A. Segal Jean M. Pitzer Professor of Anthropology and Professor of History

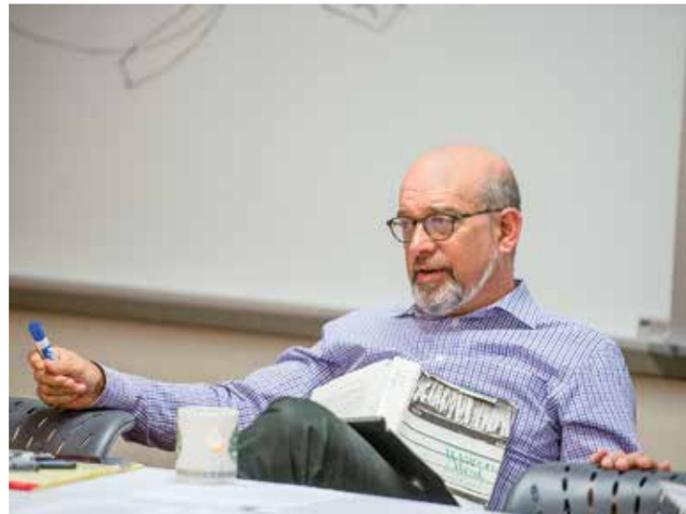
Daniel A. Segal brought his extensive knowledge of the Caribbean, post-Columbian world history, and the social construction of race to Pitzer in 1986. Among his courses were a two-semester world history sequence and a seminar on Donald Trump's America.

In 2017, Segal was awarded a Fulbright U.S. Scholar research fellowship to examine the entry of the Brazilian state into the northern Amazon. Within the context of a larger theoretical study of "the state" across historical contexts, Segal explored the impact of the increased presence of the federal state in the former Brazilian territory of Roraima from the late 1980s to the present.

Segal's academic publications include "Witnessing Chimpanzee-Human Closeness: Jane Goodall at Gombe and Since" in *Anthropological Quarterly* and "Some Reflections on Editing with Contrarian Sensibilities" in *Cultural Anthropology*. Segal also received the National Endowment for the Humanities "Travel to Collection Fellowship" to visit Haitian art in U.S. museums.

Segal was the inaugural director of Pitzer's Munroe Center for Social Inquiry and is a former fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University, as well as the past secretary of the American Anthropological Association and past president of the Society for Cultural Anthropology.

He graduated *summa cum laude* from Cornell University and earned his master's and PhD from the University of Chicago.



Muriel Poston Professor of Environmental Analysis

Muriel Poston served as dean of the faculty/vice president for academic affairs at Pitzer from 2012 to 2015. Poston was also named the vice president of strategic initiatives at Claremont McKenna College in 2021. Poston has sought to broaden the involvement of underrepresented students and faculty in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

(STEM). Her education research includes undergraduate biology education, and her scientific research includes plant systematics, especially the evolutionary relationships of the neotropical family *Loasaceae*.

Prior to Pitzer, Poston was the division director for the Human Resource Division in the Education Directorate at the National Science Foundation (NSF). She also served as dean of faculty and professor of biology at Skidmore College. At Howard University Poston spent over 20 years as a professor in the Department of Biology/Botany. Poston previously was a program director and deputy division director in the Biological Sciences Directorate at the NSF.

She has served as chair of the Committee on Equal Opportunities in Science and Engineering and the NSF Advisory Committee for the Biological Sciences Directorate. She has also served as a member of the National Academy of Sciences and National Research Council Board of Life Sciences. She was elected as a fellow by the American Association for the Advancement of Science and has been a member of the board of directors of the American Institute of Biological Sciences as well as the Advisory Committee for AACU/Project Kaleidoscope.

Poston earned a bachelor's degree from Stanford University, a master's and PhD from UCLA, and a JD from the University of Maryland.



Albert Wachtel Professor of Creative Studies

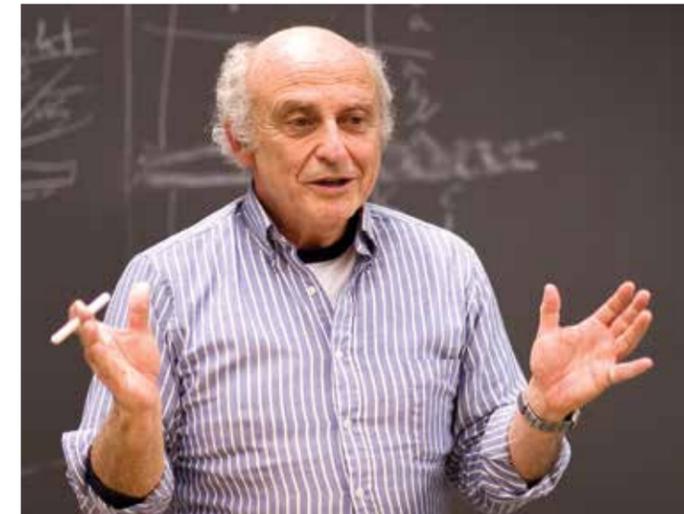
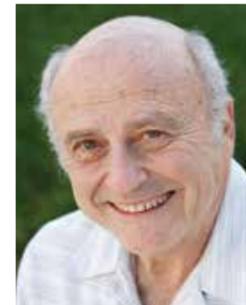
Albert Wachtel has introduced students to the wonders of literature, writing, and creative thought since he arrived at Pitzer in 1974. Wachtel has passed on his wellspring of knowledge in James Joyce, Shakespeare, epic and scripture, the ancient world, theory of literature, and non-fiction and fiction writing.

A sample of Wachtel's classes include: The Bible and Homer, Greek Tragedy in Translation, Yeats and Magic, and Creative Writing and Creative Thought. His academic honors include three years as a National Defense Education Act Fellow, the Creative Arts Institute Fellowship, two National Endowment for the Humanities grants, and an appointment as a Danforth Associate.

Wachtel's publications include "The Basement" in *Broadkill Review*, "Goddess" in *The Gettysburg Review*, and "Modernists" in *Critical Survey of Poetry*. He is the editor for *Critical Insights: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (2011) and *Critical Insights: James Joyce* (2013) with Salem Press. He has also been a member of the Writer's Guild, a distinction granted to writers whose work has

been performed in film or on television.

Wachtel received his PhD from the State University of New York and his bachelor's from Queens College. Prior to his arrival at Pitzer, he also served as an assistant professor at UC Santa Barbara and as an instructor and assistant to the dean at the State University of New York.





POMONA-PITZER WOMEN'S GOLF TEAM EARNS SECOND SCIAC CHAMPIONSHIP

The Pomona-Pitzer women's golf team came back from 10 strokes down in the final day of the SCIAC Championships to claim their second title in as many years. The Sagehens defended their SCIAC title against Redlands with a come-from-behind win to earn the trophy by a stroke.

MADISON QUAN '22 MAKES HISTORY IN WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Madison Quan '22 was recognized as the SCIAC Offensive Player of the Year. A Pitzer alum and recent Claremont Graduate University graduate, Quan played the 2022-23 season as a Sagehen after missing one year to Covid as an undergraduate.



Quan became the program's first SCIAC Player of the Year after leaving her mark all over the Pomona-Pitzer women's basketball record books. Quan ended her career sixth in all-time points, first in three-pointers, fifth in career assists, and third in career steals. She also broke the single-game points record and set the single-game steals record. Quan was also named to the D3Hoops.com First Team All-West Region team.



BEN WILLETT '23 SETS PROGRAM RECORDS IN MEN'S SWIM AND DIVE

When the men's swim and dive team closed out their regular season home meets, Pitzer's Ben Willett '23 (pictured above) highlighted the Sagehens' efforts.

Willett set a new program record in the

6-dive competition with 385.15 points to take first place. Willett also shone in the 3m dive, setting another program record with 383.85 points to take first. These triumphs earned Willett a SCIAC Athlete of the Week.

Read the full spring sports recap: www.pitzer.edu/communications/2023/05/08/sports



Pomona-Pitzer student-athletes have always distinguished themselves through their robust passion for sports and academics in NCAA Division III. This spring that passion was on clear display with a string of team and individual achievements.

A WAVE OF WINS: WOMEN'S WATER POLO TEAM TAKES ALL

An unstoppable force in the water, the Sagehens repeated the triple-win of the SCIAC Regular Season Championship, the SCIAC Tournament Championship, and the Division III National Championship. The team has now won four of the past five SCIAC Tournaments and looks forward to taking their game to the next level next year.

Pitzer's Namlhun Jachung '24 also earned SCIAC Player of the Year honors in her second year as a collegiate water polo player after receiving various awards in 2022—including SCIAC Newcomer of the Year. Jachung finished the

spring 2023 season just under the 50-goal mark for the season while leading the team in assists and points.



WOMEN'S LACROSSE TEAM EARNS SECOND STRAIGHT SCIAC TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONSHIP

After winning the SCIAC Regular Season Championship, the Pomona-Pitzer women's lacrosse team claimed their second-straight SCIAC Tournament Championship title. Pitzer's Carly Sullivan '23 was awarded the Tournament Most Valuable Player award for her stellar defensive prowess.

SYDNEY LANDAUER '25 NAMED OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR IN LACROSSE

The Pomona-Pitzer women's lacrosse team had nine players earn All-SCIAC honors highlighted by Offensive Player of the Year, Pitzer's Sydney Landauer '25. Landauer earned Player of the Year honors after leading the most potent offense in the SCIAC this season. Landauer led the conference in points with 74 on 42 goals and 32 assists.



POMONA-PITZER MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM CLINCHES SCIAC REGULAR SEASON TITLE

The Sagehens triumphed with their fourth-straight SCIAC Regular Season Title and earned their fifth 20-win season in program history.

Sagehens Win First SCIAC Football Title

Last November, the Pomona-Pitzer football team earned its first SCIAC Championship in program history after their 28-14 win over CMS in the Sixth Street Rivalry. The Sagehens and Stags became Co-Champs in the SCIAC with both ending the season with one SCIAC loss, while the Sagehens represented the SCIAC in the NCAA tournament.

This fall, Pomona-Pitzer and CMS will face off for their next Sixth Street Rivalry. Are you ready to cheer on the Sagehens? Do you have the school spirit to make Cecil the Sagehen proud? Join us September 30 for this year's matchup. For more information, visit www.pitzer.edu/alumni-families/rivalry-weekend.



SPRING 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

SPORTS RECAP

A victorious spring for the Pomona-Pitzer Sagehens

A CHILDHOOD spent waiting for the APOCALYPSE

Michelle Dowd '90 presents an unexpected coming-of-age story in her acclaimed new memoir *Forager: Field Notes for Surviving a Family Cult*

By TOM JOHNSON

The opening sentence of a book can be unforgettable. Anyone familiar with Melville's *Moby Dick* knows it famously starts with "Call me Ishmael," while Ray Bradbury begins *Fahrenheit 451* with a simple confession: "It was a pleasure to burn."

The same is true of the opening sentence of *Forager: Field Notes on Surviving a Family Cult*, a memoir by Michelle Dowd '90:

I grew up on a mountain, preparing for the Apocalypse.

That sentence is unforgettable, and it's hardly an exaggeration. Published earlier this year by Algonquin Press and favorably reviewed by the *Los Angeles Times*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Publishers Weekly* and other outlets, *Forager* recounts ten years of Dowd's childhood growing up in a cult called the Field and on a 16-acre plot she calls the Mountain located in the Angeles National Forest (on the San Andreas Fault no less). The book is a survivor's testament; a memoir harrowing at times but ultimately triumphant and (from that first sentence) thoroughly engrossing.

Dowd explains that though she foraged daily for edible plants on the Mountain, her real home wasn't a place but an idea, one that her maternal grandfather turned into the Field. Of this community Dowd writes:

Both Field and Mountain were governed by Grandpa, the ruler of our world. Grandpa said he was God's prophet and would live to be five hundred years old, that the angels would descend from heaven and take him up into the clouds like Elijah. Grandpa's followers believed every word he said, because at the Field, he was the only one with authority. His pontifications were the soundtrack of my childhood, and his sincere belief that God's vengeance would be unleashed upon the world unless a small group of God's chosen people stayed his hand terrified me.



"In the Field we used the word 'unity' a lot. It was almost like we were cheerleaders for the concept. We moved as one and everyone had a role to play."

"My grandfather decided the truth, and he lied all the time," Dowd explained during a recent *Participant* interview. "Everyone in the Field called him 'Grandpa,' so I didn't even know as a kid that he was my biological grandfather. It was confusing, and I never really trusted myself. If I ever asked my mom questions, she would just shut right down."

It's not surprising that one of the lasting effects of growing up in a cult is trauma, something that she confronted years later in therapy.

"There are a lot of us out there, and we think we're fine until we're not," Dowd said. One of the biggest issues she had to reckon with was the realization that her parents didn't love her or her siblings. "They couldn't express love in any way that any of us could feel. They gave us up right at our births to the collective. They didn't nurture us; didn't hug us or say 'I love you.' I felt that lack from a very early age."

AN UNEXPECTED EXPERIENCE OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD

A seminal event in Dowd's early life occurred at the age of 10 when she entered Children's Hospital Los Angeles for symptoms that might have been chickenpox. At the time, Dowd was the first child of a leader to ever leave the confines of the cult.

Ironically, or perhaps inevitably, it took Dowd's hospital stay to begin to give her a sense that there were different places in the world. The chickenpox diagnosis soon led to an extended stay in isolation when it was discovered she had idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura, a condition in which the immune system mistakenly attacks platelets and requires bone marrow transplants.

Through the many months of treatments, Dowd's mother was her only visitor, and her visits were infrequent.

"I felt like I was going to die abandoned and alone," Dowd said. "But when I got back to the community, there was a part of me that had shifted."

Once back at the Field, Dowd found that her grandfather had scapegoated her with accusations that she had gotten sick because there was evil in the community and, worse still, that Dowd might have been the Antichrist or the wicked Jezebel of the Old Testament.

"But I didn't think he was crazy," Dowd said. "I thought I might have been Jezebel. For sure there was shame about me being sick. My mother was so embarrassed that she never told people. To most of the Field, I had just disappeared."

PITZER AND BEYOND

When she was 17, Dowd made her escape from the cult, enrolling at Pitzer in 1986.

"At Pitzer, people would ask me where I came from and where I went to high school," she said. "I didn't go to high school, of course. It was uncomfortable, and I'd say I was home schooled. I just couldn't talk about it. I didn't know any contemporary music, television, movies. I didn't have a way to relate."

According to Dowd, she didn't choose Pitzer, Pitzer chose her.

"I didn't even apply to the College," she said. "Somebody sent my application, which I had written with a pencil, to Pitzer, and they sent me a note saying they received my application from another school and that they would like to offer me funding to come to Pitzer." Dowd thought becoming a lawyer was a noble (and lucrative)

pursuit, and she decided to major in English as part of her pre-law preparation.

But that changed when she encountered English Professor Jill Benton. Benton became her academic adviser, mentor, and later her friend. Dowd took four courses with her and realized that literary inquiry was an area that was joyful and worthy to stand on its own merits. She decided that she wanted to share that joy with others.

After Pitzer, Dowd earned a master's degree at the University of Colorado at Boulder and is currently a journalism professor at Chaffey College in Rancho Cucamonga.

RESILIENCE AND A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Dowd's mother never apologized to her for the neglect she experienced during her

childhood, but Dowd believes her parents were both brainwashed. Regardless, she credits her mother, who was a skillful naturalist, with giving her survival skills, the most important one being resilience.

"I've been told my whole life that I'm resilient," she said. "I think the skills my mom taught me in nature—how to look around and make do with what you have—are important. There is always something you can use and you're never helpless. She taught me the opposite of helplessness."

Another qualified "positive" that Dowd sees in living in a cult is that members have a rich sense of community.

"I learned very young that family didn't need to be blood and that you could really have each other's backs," she said. "In the Field we

used the word 'unity' a lot. It was almost like we were cheerleaders for the concept. We moved as one and everyone had a role to play."

LISTENING TO HERSELF

Dowd wrote *Forager* in four months during the pandemic. Despite the book's many startling incidents, she says she didn't want to pummel the reader with "drama porn."

"I came from a family that didn't own a camera," she said. In her book, Dowd compensates for that by painting word pictures that are as crystalline as any photograph.

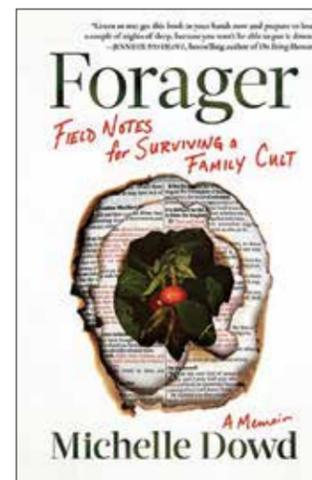
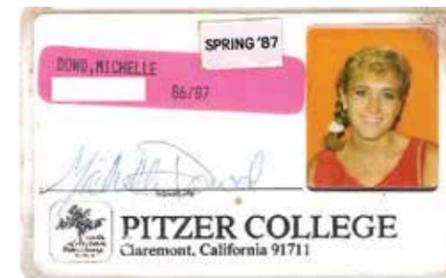
Dowd said she had been unable to discuss her past for most of her life, but that changed with the writing of this book. She worked in near darkness, writing the book by hand in a room illuminated by a single candle.

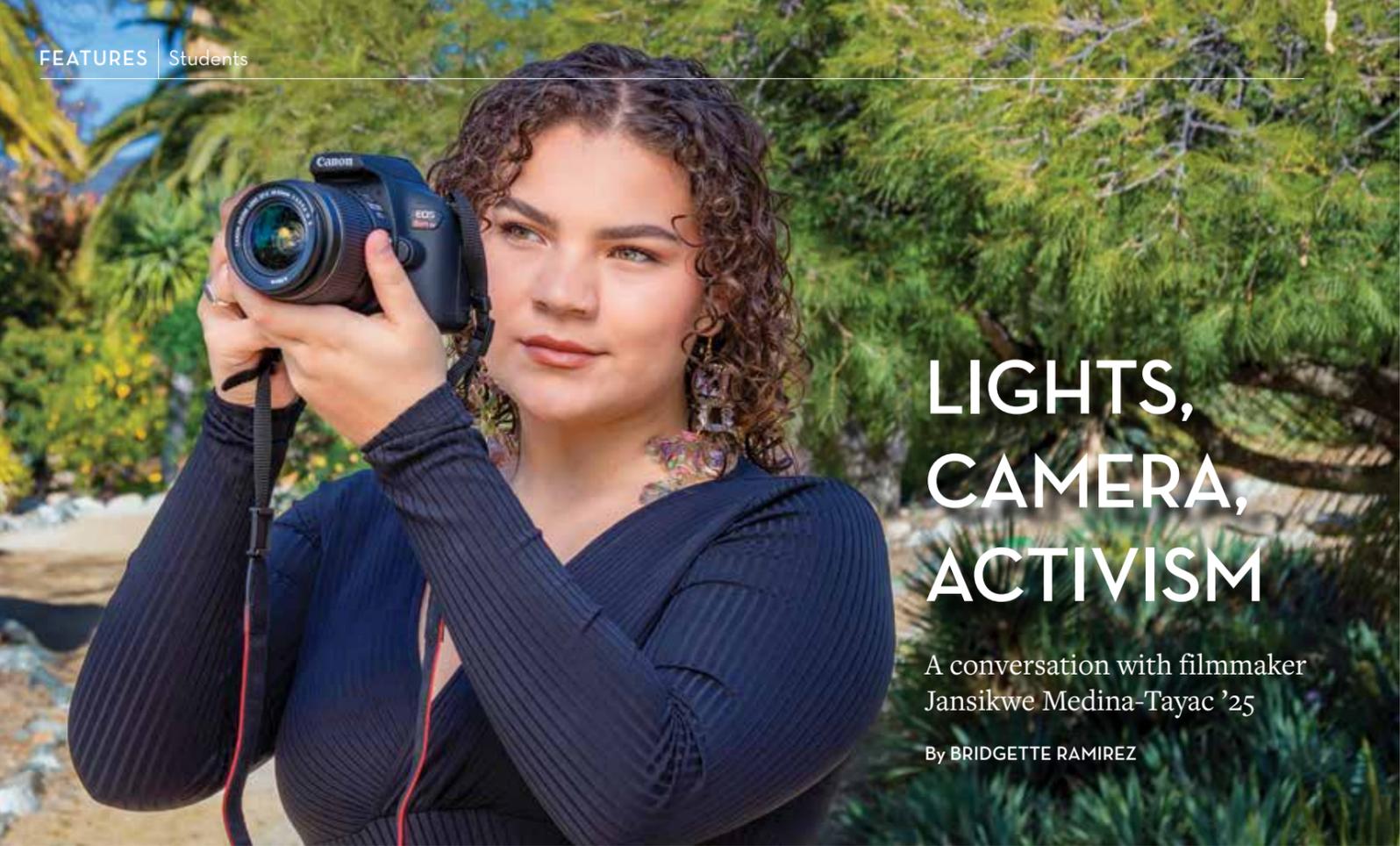
"I just channeled the young girl inside of me," she said. "No one had ever listened to her. I just sat and 'listened,' and her story just flowed out of my hand."

Dowd said that when you write a memoir it really is about what you leave out. "You can always go deeper down the rabbit hole," she said.

The little girl from the Field and the Mountain may be gone, but the woman who has taken her place has reemerged from that rabbit hole and in doing so has testified to a time, place, and experience unfathomable to most of us.

Visit www.pitzer.edu/participant to watch the Alumni Weekend 2023 conversation between Michelle Dowd '90 and Professor of Sociology Phil Zuckerman.





LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTIVISM

A conversation with filmmaker
Jansikwe Medina-Tayac '25

By BRIDGETTE RAMIREZ

With fists raised and throats sore from hours of rousing chants, protesters marched down the street as they waved signs of every kind—from fabric, to foam core, to cardboard with colorful marker drawings. The daughter of a Piscataway mother and a Colombian father, Jansikwe Medina-Tayac '25 has been surrounded by such ardent activists ever since her parents took her to her first protest as a baby.

A media studies major at Pitzer College, Medina-Tayac has continued the traditions inspired by her parents by becoming an activist filmmaker. In spring 2022, Medina-Tayac took the course Digitizing Testimonios: Chicana-Latinx Documentary Storytelling, taught by Visiting Assistant Professor of Chicana Latinx Transnational Studies Lani Cupchoy, and produced the six-minute film *Jornalxerx* about the experiences of San Bernardino jornalxerx (day laborers). The film went on to receive much critical attention.

EARNING HER SUBJECTS' TRUST

As she planned to film *Jornalxerx*, Medina-Tayac connected with the Pomona Economic Opportunity Center (PEOC), a haven for day laborers to find safe work at a fair wage and learn new skills. The PEOC organizers referred her

to those who were fighting to establish a similar center in San Bernardino.

"Because of my organizing experience and family background, this felt comfortable," said Medina-Tayac. "You must be mindful of what you put out. These workers are extremely vulnerable. I trusted myself to pay attention to what the organizers and workers wanted versus imposing my own idea."

Jornalxerx spotlights workers who faced a police raid and thousands of dollars in unfair tickets as they advocated for a day labor center. Medina-Tayac's film brings to light the injustices that many undocumented workers face.

Cupchoy encouraged Medina-Tayac to submit *Jornalxerx* to the 13th OC Film Fiesta, an award-winning selection of films, documentaries, and activities that connect Orange County residents with their international, multicultural heritages. Medina-Tayac was one of four Pitzer student filmmakers whose work was chosen by the Film Fiesta.

Medina-Tayac strives to make her work accessible and free for anyone to watch.

"I'm not in it for accolades," she said. "Capturing injustices on film exposes the systems of oppression we're facing and lets us see it with our own eyes. At Standing Rock, there were people documenting what was happening, so it spread to more people."

EXPLORING HER HERITAGE

Because of her Indigenous and Latinx background, Medina-Tayac feels a personal dedication to amplify and advocate for these communities. She is a Native Indigenous Initiatives coordinator through Pitzer's Community Engagement Center and the co-president of the Native Indigenous Student Union (NISU).

"There are not many Native students," said Medina-Tayac. "It's been important for me to help create space where Native and Indigenous students feel safe."

In addition to NISU, Medina-Tayac credits Cupchoy and Visiting Associate Professor of Media Studies Gina Lamb for strengthening her sense of belonging at Pitzer. Cupchoy and Lamb taught her new skills, encouraged her to submit to film festivals, and talked to her about job opportunities.

"Pitzer is special in that my professors and I have a close relationship and they know who I am," she said. "I've been able to find awesome mentors here."

Visit www.pitzer.edu/participant for more information on watching Jansikwe Medina-Tayac's documentary *Jornalxerx*.

SEED BY SEED

Pitzer students preserve a rare Southern California ecosystem on campus

By BRIDGETTE RAMIREZ

What did Claremont look like 100 years ago? One parcel on Pitzer College's campus gives us a glimpse: the Outback Preserve. Home to alluvial sage scrub—one of the rarest ecosystems in the world—the Outback is a 3.4-acre living-learning laboratory for students to engage in hands-on science with California's indigenous plants.

Environmental analysis majors Tommy Sheno '24 and Zoë Wong-VanHaren '25 made the Outback a passion in action. After taking Professor Emeritus Paul Faulstich's Restoring Nature class in the Outback, Sheno and Wong-VanHaren were inspired to create an independent study to establish a seed collection.

"We have developed an appreciation for the Outback, its microclimates and seasons of growth, and the incredible amount of knowledge about seeds and restoration ecology," said Sheno.

BANKING ON THE FUTURE

By creating a seed bank, Sheno and Wong-VanHaren preserved the genetic material of plants and aided in future restoration projects. They also worked on a floristic inventory and herbarium specimen vouchers (pressed plant samples).

"The Outback is one of the last pieces of native coastal sage scrub habitat on Pitzer's campus," said Wong-VanHaren.

Sheno and Wong-VanHaren collaborated with Seed Conservation Program Manager Cheryl Birker at the California Botanic Garden (CalBG), which houses one of the largest seed banks dedicated to the long-term conservation of California's native flora. The students used Birker's lab to process and prepare seeds from the Outback for storage at the botanic garden.

Professor of Environmental Analysis and Director of Pitzer's Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability Susan Phillips was the academic adviser for the independent study, which began an ongoing partnership between the Conservancy and CalBG. Phillips provided funding through the Conservancy for Sheno and Wong-VanHaren and allowed her students to forge their own path for the project.

"It was fascinating to learn something experientially rather than theoretically," said Wong-VanHaren.

"We were doing hands-on work and learning from something that isn't necessarily incorporated into the classroom," said Sheno. "We were using our senses and learning more outside than inside."

Sheno used geographic information systems (GIS) to build on a map of Pitzer's trees (created by Joey Sulpizio '22) and broaden the data to include all flora in the Outback. This spring Sheno presented his interactive map and floristic inventory database at the American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ROOTS

For their seed preservation project, Sheno and Wong-VanHaren also partnered with the Outback Club and Professor Monica Mahoney, an



Zoë Wong-VanHaren '25 at work in the Outback.



"We have developed an appreciation for the Outback, its microclimates and seasons of growth..."

—Tommy Sheno '24

adjunct faculty member who took over the Restoring Nature class to ensure the Outback's continued care. Sheno wanted his GIS work to continue supporting this effort.

"As data and drone photography continue to be collected, my database will be used by the Restoring Nature class and Outback Club to analyze trends of plant diversity and plant health and inform long-term restoration plans," said Sheno.

For Wong-VanHaren, their work in the Outback had strong ties to Pitzer's core values, especially interdisciplinary learning.

"We were learning a range of subjects, from the importance of certain plants to Tongva people to the scientific names for the different parts of seeds," said Wong-VanHaren.

Sheno and Wong-VanHaren appreciated the opportunity to chart their academic course with Phillips' support.

"Independent studies can personalize your studies if you find a professor who can support you in a topic that they know well," said Wong-VanHaren.

"It's also more intimate," said Sheno. "We got to work one-on-one with our adviser and partners."

In many ways, this independent study continued the project Sheno launched in summer 2022 as a Hive fellow when he utilized human-centered design to help Claremont students connect to their environment and local plants. "In our time of climate change and natural habitat loss, preserving these spaces is vital to protecting our keystone species, improving the health of our communities, and connecting to our local ecosystems," he said.



On the home court: Peyton Mullarkey '25 in the Voelkel Gymnasium

New Campus Resources Redefine ATHLETICS AND SCIENCE EXCELLENCE

By BRIDGETTE RAMIREZ

The Center for Athletics, Recreation, and Wellness opens to fanfare

A basketball thumps on the court like a heartbeat. Wheels whir on a Peloton bike. Orange dumbbells rise and fall. Feet brush against vibrant green turf. Zumba dancers move in sync with upbeat music. California sunlight pours from tall windows, shining on rich blue walls, pale oak wood, and state-of-the-art equipment in almost every size and shape.

Such are the sights and sounds of the 100,000-square-foot Center for Athletics, Recreation, and Wellness (CARW)—the new nest of Sagehen Athletics' 21 varsity teams and the Pomona-Pitzer community. According to Director of Athletics Miriam Merrill, this facility “ushers in a new definition of wellness and what it can look like.”

“It’s great that we have fitness and strength equipment, but it’s also a space for folks to sit down or reflect,” said Merrill. “We invite people to engage in wellness in whatever capacity that may be.”

From Pilates to yoga to pickleball, fitness activities abound at CARW—providing opportunities for fun activities

FIRST-CLASS FEATURES

The \$57-million building and renovation project has equipped CARW with features such as:

- N & N Practice Gymnasium, boasting a sweeping view of the San Gabriel Mountains
- Draper Public Fitness Area, a 5,877-square-foot recreational area with cardio and weight equipment
- Athletic Performance Center, a 4,876-square-foot strength and conditioning space
- Studios for fitness classes
- A thoroughly refreshed Voelkel Gym for basketball and volleyball
- Classrooms fitted for academic seminars, club meetings, and more
- A LEED Platinum certification

and improved well-being. Merrill and the CARW team are expanding educational wellness programming about topics such as nutrition, sleep, emotional health, and how to get started with workouts.

BLENDING ATHLETICS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

CARW’s multifaceted resources reflect how Sagehen Athletics takes a well-rounded approach to fitness for its varsity teams. The Pomona-Pitzer Sagehens program combines the best of academics and sports to create a collegiate experience that tests both the minds and bodies of its scholar-athletes.

Peyton Mullarkey '25, a management engineering major at Pitzer, had always been a good student, but he didn’t have a love for learning until he met his basketball teammates.

“The basketball team is full of academic studs,” said Mullarkey. “The guys and professors inspired me, and now I love competing in the classroom.”

According to Mullarkey, the team is full of premed students, and usually at least one person arrives late to practice because of a lab. Coaches support students in prioritizing school, but that doesn’t mean the team takes the sport any less seriously. In February, the team clinched their fourth-straight SCIAC regular season title over CMS.

Charlize Andaya '23, a mathematics major and data science minor, shared a similar experience in women’s basketball.

“The student-athletes are hardworking and determined in both academics and athletics, so seeing that pushes me to do my best in the classroom and on the court,” said Andaya.

Andaya and Mullarkey appreciate how student-athletes show up to games or meets in other sports to rally support. With its pristine and spacious attractions, CARW has drawn more fans to games and built camaraderie in the Pomona-Pitzer community.

“It feels like there’s an endless amount of resources at the CARW,” said Andaya, citing the team workouts at the Athletic Performance Center, the two basketball gyms, and the equipment for weightlifting, plyometrics, and conditioning.

“Besides the equipment, we have a really great athletic department that cares about us as people,” continued Andaya. “Our coaches push us to be the best version of ourselves not just in our sport, but in life. We also have our athletic trainers, and they help us with aiding and preventing injuries.”

A SPACE FOR EVERYONE

Merrill affirms that the CARW is “tailored for the community”—whether you are a faculty member signing up for a spinning class, a friend group putting together a volleyball match, or an athlete looking for an Olympic-level workout.

“There are certain spaces geared toward student-athletes, but that too is a space for everyone,” said Merrill.

For Mullarkey, CARW enhances not only his experience in wellness, but also the community’s.

“It is a place where students and athletes can unite on their fitness journey,” said Mullarkey. “I appreciate all the donors and experts that have made CARW happen!”



Visit www.pitzer.edu/the-nucleus for more about the Pitzer-Scripps partnership behind the creation of The Nucleus.

Nucleus Rising: Construction Update

The bridges that connect The Nucleus, a new state-of-the-art science building, with the existing Keck Science building are a subtle symbolic reminder about the nature of science. Science is a cumulative process: Like the bridges between the two buildings, current achievements are connected to past discoveries.

When it opens in fall 2024, The Nucleus will create unprecedented new opportunities for students in the sciences as a result of an important partnership between Pitzer and Scripps Colleges to take science education to a whole new level.

For Keck Science Dean Ulysses J. Sofia and his faculty, this project has been eagerly anticipated.

“We’ve been planning this for a long time,” Sofia said. “There’s a lot of excitement—and relief—that construction is underway.”

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Rising just west of the Keck Science building, the approximately 70,000-square-foot building will feature teaching laboratories, collaborative learning spaces, community courtyards and plazas, an art installation, and a rooftop greenhouse for scientific use. As of publication, the major structural and external features of the building have been completed, and construction crews are now busily at work on the building’s internal elements.

“Now that construction is quickly moving along, we’ve been able to start thinking of exciting ways to build more connections between Pitzer’s and Scripps’ core values,” he said. “We’re really going to be able to flex our interdisciplinarity more than we’ve ever done before.”

Make a gift in support of The Nucleus: A Pitzer and Scripps Colleges Partnership at www.pitzer.edu/the-nucleus



Keck Science Dean Ulysses J. Sofia was a featured speaker at The Nucleus groundbreaking ceremony last year.

Timely and Influential

The following selection of excerpted commentaries illustrates how Pitzer alumni and faculty are shaping tastes and influencing opinions in some of today's leading publications and media outlets. For more information on reading the full pieces excerpted here, visit www.pitzer.edu/participant.

EXCERPTED FROM POETRY MAGAZINE

On Bert Meyers

By DANA LEVIN '87

As an undergraduate at Pitzer College in 1984, I set up camp in the Bert Meyers Poetry Room. It was upstairs in the front bedroom of the Grove House, a Craftsman-style bungalow that had been moved to campus with great fanfare some years before, to serve as a student union of sorts. For three years, I read and wrote under the gaze of a portrait of Bert, which had a knack for falling off the wall whenever I was especially brooding about life. At those moments I always thought Bert was trying to get my attention: "Snap out of it! Get back to work!" And so I would. I hung out in the Poetry Room so much I moved in by accretion, eventually spending each night on the outside sleeping porch just off a side window for most of a semester, until the custodial staff found me out. Although Bert was five years dead when I started college, his presence was very alive in that room and in the classrooms where I began to study poetry. ...

In 2007, nearly thirty years after he died, University of New Mexico Press brought out a collection, *In a Dybbuk's Raincoat*, which is how new and younger readers found his work. Small presses, university presses—Bert's work would not have survived without them. Considering the financial precarity such presses continually face, it's no surprise that all of Bert's books are out of print.

No one at Pitzer ever referred to Bert as anything but 'Bert.' There was a sense of reverence and bemusement in the way his many former students and colleagues talked about him.

Which brings us to now. Nearly forty years after I first walked into the Bert Meyers Poetry Room, I've had the luck to edit a volume of his work for the *Unsung Masters Series* at Pleiades Press, a volume which published in March. My coeditor, Adele Elise Williams, and Bert's son, Daniel Meyers, have been integral to this endeavor. I extend special gratitude to Daniel, who has kept his father's archive of poems, journals, letters, notes, and photos alive: this book—and this folio—would not exist without Daniel's stewardship of Bert's memory.

Readers will notice I keep referring to Bert as "Bert," and not "Meyers," which would be the convention for an introductory essay on a literary figure—I can't help it. As a student at Pitzer College, no one I met who had known Bert referred to him as anything else. There was often a sense of familial love, reverence, and bemusement in the way his former students and colleagues



Bert Meyers in 1966. (ELLIOTT ERWIT/MAGNUM PHOTOS)

talked about him. Even though I never met Bert, I began to feel part of this family, part of the protective and loving circle that seemed to surround his memory and his work. A deep bow to Kevin Prufer and everyone on the board of the *Unsung Masters Series*, as well as to the editorial team at *Poetry*: you make space for the recovery and reclamation of significant literary voices nearly lost to time.

Levin is an acclaimed poet whose books include *Wedding Day*, *Sky Burial*, and *Now Do You Know Where You Are*. Her essay on late Pitzer professor Bert Meyers, which first appeared earlier this year, is excerpted here with permission from *Poetry Magazine*.



EXCERPTED FROM LA NUEVA VOZ

Building Multi-Racial Unity Through Economic Models Targeting Historical Inequities

By JOSÉ Z. CALDERÓN
Emeritus Professor

IN THE LAST FOUR DECADES—although the U.S. economy has doubled in growth—the bottom half of households have seen no income gains. In these same years, the top 1 percent had their annual income go up from an average of \$400,000 to \$1.3 million.

The result of this is that workers have had to work longer hours, take on more debt, and see more numbers in the family forced to work. The reality is that one of every seven persons in this country lives below the poverty line. ...

At the local level, we need a social movement that is about building models of democratizing wealth based on the collective and not just the interests of the

To address racial injustice, new models of democratizing wealth are desperately needed.

individual. This takes us into the realm of cooperative models such as that of the Green New Deal (proposed by Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez) to shift to 100 percent renewable energy in 10 years, to create tens of thousands of new jobs, and to advance the implementation of publicly owned banks like the North Dakota Bank. Already, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy and California Gov. Gavin Newsom have committed to establishing state public banks.

This follows with the thinking that a whole new economy is

emerging that includes models of economic development with racial justice in the forefront. The rise of this new economy includes worker-owned cooperatives such as the "Si Se Puede" cooperative (a Brooklyn house-cleaning enterprise owned primarily by Latinas) and union cooperatives such as the Communications Workers of America Local 7777 in Denver (Green Taxi) where the leadership and board are made up entirely of immigrant drivers from East Africa and Morocco.

Further, worker co-ops are being implemented now in Cleveland,

Albuquerque, Milwaukee, New York City, Newark, Oakland, Rochester, and Madison. These economic innovations include more than 6,600 employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs) throughout the country with \$1.4 trillion in assets and "businesses owned by the people they serve" (they include credit unions, agricultural cooperatives, and consumer cooperatives) that represent \$500 billion in revenue and employ more than 2 million people.

There are four principles that involve moving in this direction of racial equity: One, thinking of new ways to democratize wealth. Two, placing the building of community and what is in the interests of community in the forefront in all development. Three, decentralizing power in general—so that there is community input. And four, planning in the interests of quality of life.

Rather than a culture of greed and selfishness in the forefront, there is the capacity for a new kind of planning with a culture of collectivity in the forefront—to use the earth's resources and local partnerships between schools, cities, businesses, and community-based organizations to build multi-racial unity in advancing concrete models that get at the systemic sources of unjust and historical inequities.

Calderón is emeritus professor of sociology and Chicano/a and Latino/a studies. His commentary appeared earlier this year in the Stop-the-Hate special feature series published by Pomona-based *La Nueva Voz*. This excerpt is reprinted with permission of Jeff Schenkel (publisher) and Renee Barbee (vice president of marketing and operations) of *La Nueva Voz*.



EXCERPTED FROM *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

This Was the Perfect World Cup for Our Strange Era

By DAVID GOLDBLATT
Visiting Professor

FOR ALMOST A DECADE the Global North, especially the United States, Britain, Germany and Scandinavia, have set the agenda on the Qatar World Cup. Aided by the relative openness of the country to foreign journalists, the media, NGOs and football federations have relentlessly criticized Qatar's shortcomings on migrant workers, LGBTQ and women's rights, press freedom and environmental protection. In contrast to the free pass it gave Russia in 2018, the mainstream media have integrated these critiques into their coverage.

But much of the rest of the world does not see things in this light. Strikingly, coverage in almost all the Global South has been strictly sporting, while the Arabic press has been unequivocal in deeming Qatar 2022 to be the best World Cup ever. There has also been considerable support for Qatar's last-minute decision to restrict already limited alcohol sales around the stadiums. It is not really about the ethics of prohibition—Qatar has long tolerated drinking for wealthy migrants who have access to expensive hotel bars—but about a shift in the balance of power.

With Argentina's win, this was the most closely scrutinized and culturally contested World Cup ever, and that is a good thing.

Unlike the South Africans or the Brazilians, the Qataris were able to impose their will on FIFA and a global corporation of the scale of InBev without missing a beat.

This clout was manifest in the official response to European teams' plans to wear rainbow armbands and spectators to sport rainbow insignia. Sides were threatened by FIFA with yellow cards, and supporters endured brusque treatment from security and the confiscation of flags and clothing. Nasser al-Khater, the chief executive of the cup's organizing committee, felt confident enough to dismiss the death of a migrant worker on a site close to Saudi Arabia's camp, saying, "Death is a natural part of life, whether it is at work, whether it is in your sleep." (A second migrant worker, who worked as a security guard at one of the stadiums, has since died.)

European hypocrisy has contributed to this confidence. After the German team protested



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the supposed denial of its freedom of expression, Qataris responded by showing posters of Mesut Özil, the German footballer whose outspokenness seemingly led to his being silenced by the German media and football authorities. Environmentalists have pointed out the madness of staging a carbon-intense event in a place so threatened by climate change, and rightly so. But given that the German government sealed a 15-year deal with Qatar for liquid gas during the tournament and that the next World Cup, to be held in North America and Mexico, may carry a larger carbon footprint, such charges were easy to dismiss.

With Argentina's win, this was the most closely scrutinized and culturally contested World Cup ever, and that is a good thing. The personal, cultural and political

presence of the Global South has been made tangible and that, too, is important. Perhaps the tournament's biggest legacy will be a global media and public more critically sensitized to the political and cultural meaning of spectacle? That, at least, would be worth celebrating.

Goldblatt is a visiting professor and the author of several books, including *The Games: A Global History of the Olympics*. This excerpt from his December 2022 commentary about the 2022 World Cup in Qatar is adapted and reprinted with permission of *The New York Times*.



EXCERPTED FROM *THE CONVERSATION*

3 Big Numbers That Tell the Story of Secularization in America

By PHIL ZUCKERMAN
Professor

THE MOST NOTABLE critic of secularization was sociologist Rodney Stark, who, in the 1980s, insisted that secularization theory was a sham. Stark was so sure that religion was as strong as ever that he wrote the very idea of secularization ought to be carried off to "the graveyard of failed theories."

Secularization cannot occur, Stark argued, because religion addresses certain human needs and fears that are fundamental, universal and unchanging. He viewed religions in diverse societies like companies in an economy: If a religion appears anemic, it

Why is secularism increasing? The transition from a traditional nonindustrial society to an urban, industrial or post-industrial society is a key part of the answer.

is only because its "firms" aren't marketing themselves well enough. Once they improve their outreach, messaging and branding, religious life continues as usual, or even increases.

As recently as 2015, Stark wrote that religion in the U.S. has actually strengthened, arguing that Americans simply aren't responding to pollsters much anymore, and therefore results were unreliable. He also noted that only a small slice of people identify as atheists: fewer

than 5% in most nations.

In our 2023 book *Beyond Doubt*, however, my co-authors and I argue that religious faith, participation and identification are unambiguously weaker than they have ever been.

This is not only true in the U.S., but many parts of the world. ... In 2013, for example, 10% of Libyans and 13% of Tunisians said that they had no religion. By 2019, those numbers had more than doubled. Declines in belief

in God are apparent in countries from Denmark and Singapore to Malaysia and Turkey.

But why? In our analysis, the transition from a traditional, rural, nonindustrial society to an urban, industrial or post-industrial society is a key part of the answer—along the lines of the first sociologists' predictions. As these changes take place, religion is more likely to become unyoked from other aspects of society, such as education and government. ...

In nearly every society that we examined that has experienced these concomitant phenomena, secularization has occurred—often in spades. Of course, compared to most other wealthy countries, the U.S. is quite religious. Fifty-five percent of Americans, for example, say they pray daily, compared to an average of 22% of Europeans.

Still, we argue that the latest numbers regarding religious belief, behavior and belonging in the U.S. paint a clear portrait of secularization. Beyond the more universal factors, other developments that have been detrimental to religion include a strong reaction against the political power of the religious right, and anger at the Catholic Church's child sex abuse scandal.

The consequences of religion's weakening are unclear. But while its meaning for America remains an open question, whether secularization is happening is not.

Zuckerman is professor of sociology and secular studies. This excerpt from a recent commentary piece is reprinted with permission of *The Conversation*. For more on his new book *Beyond Belief*, see p. 38.





EXCERPTED FROM *LION'S ROAR*

Reimagining Safety After a Mass Shooting

By KATHY YEP
Professor

My students and I tutored participants of the adult literacy program at the public library not too far from the site of the mass shooting in Monterey Park, Calif. in January for over ten years. When I saw the grainy photo of the shooter, Huu Can Tran, I felt like he could be an uncle in my family—or perhaps someone I’d met for tutoring at the local library. My mind raced as I began to think of those in my community.

A married couple, “the Lees,” would come to class diligently. It slowly came out that they loved to ballroom dance. Their faces lit up as they described dancing in Monterey Park. For them, dancing was a space of freedom, joy, community, and creativity in the face of past historical trauma and current uncertainty as low wage workers seeking U.S. citizenship. ... Since the mass shooting, I’ve been continually checking my email and the news to see if Julian, the Lees, and others are listed as

I implore us to reimagine what it means to be “safe.”

challenges of surviving as a working-class, Asian male refugee in the U.S. “In my own language I can say everything,” he told me. “Here, I am nothing.” His speaking and sharing his story in our class was a form of practicing the first noble truth with sangha. As we breathed together, we held his acknowledgement that there is suffering.

dead. After the shooter, Mr. Tran, was found dead after a standoff, I keep seeing the refrain that we are now “safe”—that we should heal as a community. I keep mulling over these words: “safety” and “healing.” What does it mean to be safe in this situation? What does it mean to heal? How do we recognize the suffering in this moment and return to our breath? ...

As I wait to hear if Julian, the Lees and others are alive, my heart hurts. I yearn for us to ask, reflect, and act upon deeper questions. Mr. Tran acquired assault weapons meant for a battlefield and used them in a dance studio. Just as Julian, the Lees, and I notice suffering and our breath at the Monterey Park library, I want us to notice how war, gendered violence and militarization impact our daily lives. How did war, violence, and militarization affect Mr. Tran as an

Asian male and those around him? How were his basic needs of food and mental health care met or not met before this mass killing? ...

I implore us to reimagine what it means to be “safe”—a place to dance in community, to breathe and heal from war and trauma, to have our basic needs for food and mental healthcare met. “Safety” can be honoring and respecting fundamental human dignity, gender, and cultural identities, with mindfulness and breath—just like Julian and the Lees.

Yep is professor of Asian American studies. An excerpt from her commentary on the January 21 mass shooting in Monterey Park, Calif., is printed with permission from *Lion’s Roar: Buddhist Wisdom for Our Time*.



Yep is professor of Asian American studies. An excerpt from her commentary on the January 21 mass shooting in Monterey Park, Calif., is printed with permission from *Lion’s Roar: Buddhist Wisdom for Our Time*.

EXCERPTED FROM *ONLYSKY*

Speaking Kazakh: How Putin’s Attack Woke Me to My Own Identity

By AZAMAT JUNISBAI
Professor

Growing up, we were always taught that Russia’s presence in Central Asia was a generous gift of modernity and civilization. The word “colonialism” was never used. To this day, describing Moscow’s control of Central Asia as Russian colonialism is likely to generate irate responses from even otherwise liberal Russians, or at least a tinge of disappointment about the lack of gratitude for “roads, schools, and hospitals.”

In contrast, our curriculum omitted mention of Soviet nuclear testing carried out on Kazakh soil, Stalin-era purges of the Kazakh intelligentsia, the Aral Sea ecological disaster, or even the catastrophic man-made famine of the early 1930s in which an estimated 40% of Kazakhs starved to death.

Since Russia’s attack on Ukraine, I have been increasingly circling back to the uncomfortable memory of contempt for most things Kazakh that I had felt growing up. I associated Kazakh language and culture with being rural and uncultured. Low status. I was quick to label Kazakhs who spoke accented Russian as mambety—an insult that makes me wince today. Looking back, I can see that it was a derogatory term I reserved for those whose connection to the Kazakh language and culture has not been severed as my own had been.

It seems that Moscow’s long rule in Central Asia extended far beyond political and economic control or even erasure of language and culture. I didn’t just lose Kazakh language and culture: I learned to feel contempt for them, to be embarrassed by them. I have an uncomfortable childhood memory of thinking how strange and awkward it was that in the



It is clear that Ukraine’s heroic struggle against Russian aggression as well as the clear and present danger of the Kremlin’s neo-imperial ambitions toward Kazakhstan have rejuvenated my own sense of Kazakh identity.

Kazakh language the word for “palace” is sarai which corresponds to “barn” in Russian.

I suppose this is precisely what a thorough colonization is supposed to accomplish. Internalized racism is a term that comes to mind. Another is colonized conscience. Or even self-hatred or self-loathing. Coming to terms with the depths to which my own conscience was colonized is painful.

I am still trying to process this as

I write, but it is clear that Ukraine’s heroic struggle against Russian aggression as well as the clear and present danger of the Kremlin’s neo-imperial ambitions toward Kazakhstan have rejuvenated my own sense of Kazakh identity as nothing ever has.

I am starting Kazakh lessons this fall. And I hope that my daughter, born in June of 2022, will grow up proud of her Kazakh heritage. Maybe this is what the beginning

of decolonization of consciousness feels like.

A professor of sociology, Junisbai was born and raised in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. In this excerpt from a fall 2022 commentary for *OnlySky* that is reprinted with permission, he recalls how Kazakh culture and language were minimized in school and how cultural self-loathing has been one of the numbing legacies of Soviet imperialism.



COMMUNITY BOOKSHELF

Crises, Conflicts, and Transformations

New and recent books from Pitzer alumni and faculty offer timely considerations of secularism, racism, climate change, dystopian worlds, and more



1. COUNTDOWN: A LIFE IN 20 SONGS
(BOOKBABY)

When cultural historians want to analyze a decade or other time period, one of the best ways is to look at that era's songs. **Tom Waldman '78** applies a similar method to his life in the memoir *Countdown: A Life in 20 Songs*. From the Beatles to Beethoven, Waldman ranges far and wide as he devotes each chapter to a specific song and its connections to him and the world around him. The iconic "War," for instance, offers a chance to reflect on the impact of Vietnam on his life (and society in general) though he was too young to be drafted for that war. A *Claremont Courier* piece about Waldman's book explains that he isn't practicing nostalgia here but instead gives readers a highly personalized approach to history and some of the significant events that have influenced his life.

2. BEYOND DOUBT: THE SECULARIZATION OF SOCIETY
(NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS)

Is our society really becoming more secular? In *Beyond Doubt*, Professor of Sociology and Secular Studies **Phil Zuckerman** and his co-authors **Isabella Kasselstrand** and **Ryan T. Cragun** suggest that the theory underscoring secularization—which many opponents have claimed is flawed, incomplete or outright wrong—is indeed correct. They also

demonstrate that the impact of organized religion is declining as a result of modernization. Rather than present a simple defense of the theory, Zuckerman and his co-authors seek to produce a formalization that includes clear definitions of relevant terms as well as propositions that can be tested. This openness to testing and the authors' general approach to the subject has resulted in a book that will serve as a resource for anyone interested in studying religion, secularism, and the dynamic between them. (For more on the book, see p. 35.)

3. LANGUAGE AND GENDER IN CHILDREN'S ANIMATED FILMS
(CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS)

According to Pitzer Professor of Linguistics **Carmen Fought**, Disney is renowned for presenting itself as a purveyor of sweet and innocent family fare but the "messaging" of the studio's films can sometimes be downright dangerous. That's the big reveal in Fought's new book co-authored with **Karen Eisenhauer '13**. Disney and Pixar might be beloved by audiences of children and adults, but the authors challenge the kind of messaging that is found in the characters and stories created by these media giants. They apply in-depth qualitative analysis to examine the portrayal of male characters, female characters, and queerness in their films, and demonstrate how different linguistic tools and techniques can be used to better understand popular children's media.

4. MASTERS OF HEALTH: RACIAL SCIENCE AND SLAVERY IN U.S. MEDICAL SCHOOLS
(UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS)

Hailed by Harvard historian Vincent Brown as "a meticulous autopsy of a ghoulish intellectual scandal," Professor **Chris Willoughby**'s book examines the deeply problematic area of how racial theories distorted medical education in 19th-century America. A visiting assistant professor of medicine and health at Pitzer, Willoughby shows the medical establishment's significant hypocrisy when it came to experimentation. Despite a belief in the biological differences between races, medical practitioners didn't hesitate to dissect the cadavers of Black people to help them understand bodily functions. In the process he reveals how ideas about anatomical differences became accepted in medical schools not by some extremist or fringe group, but by some of the leading mainstream figures of the day.

5. POSTCOLONIAL FICTION AND COLONIAL TIME: WAITING FOR NOW
(EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY PRESS)

The theme of "waiting" in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* provides an entry-point that allows **Amanda Lagji**, assistant professor of English and world literature at Pitzer, to explore the work of more contemporary African writers including Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee, Zakes Mda, and



others. Lagji argues in *Postcolonial Fiction and Colonial Time: Waiting for Now* that waiting is a fundamental element in understanding time and power in postcolonial fiction. Critics have praised Lagji for her innovative perspective, including the University of Adelaide's Andrew van der Vlies, who writes that Lagji "presses reset on our tendency to read waiting as stasis, instead recasting apparent impasse as productively disruptive to hegemonic temporalities. A timely and important work."

6. ORGANIZING LESSONS: IMMIGRANT ATTACKS AND RESISTANCE!
(COMMUNITY INNOVATORS LAB)

José Z. Calderón, professor emeritus of sociology and Chicano/a Latino/a studies at Pitzer, and **Victor Narro**, UCLA Labor Center project director, have released a collection of essays from labor activists and activist scholars working for immigrant and workers' rights. The book's essays articulate how immigration policy relates to larger questions of nation-building, racialization, political participation, and more. Calderón notes how the essays gathered here "draw out lessons on the importance of building multiracial and intersectional solidarity in our immigrant rights, labor, and community-based movements."

7. NATURAL CONSEQUENCES: INTIMATE ESSAYS FOR A PLANET IN PERIL
(CHIN MUSIC PRESS)

Char Miller '75, W.M. Keck Professor of Environmental Analysis and History at Pomona College, presents vignettes and historical interpretations that clearly map out environmental challenges and threats due to climate change. Miller's collection features 75 environmental essays that explore the threats of fire, drought, development, and fracking. For acclaimed naturalist writer John N. Maclean, Miller "brings to the task a scholar's wealth of knowledge about how bad things really are, but he also sounds a note of solace: we can find healthy ways to connect to the planet's creatures, plants and phenomena like wildland fire, but it comes through coexistence, not domination."

8. BECAUSE I LOVED YOU
(SHE WRITES PRESS)

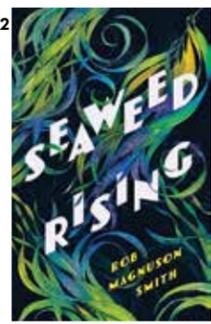
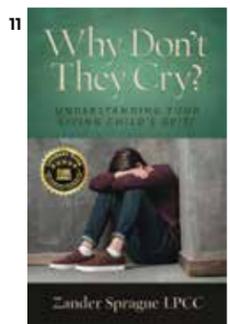
In her debut novel, **Donnaldson Brown '82** presents a moving portrait of star-crossed lovers in East Texas, brought together by their love of horses and torn apart by tragedy and closely-guarded secrets. After a span of years have passed, lovers Leni and Caleb meet again, and their old passion reignites. But can their love for one another overcome choices made in the past? Award-winning novelist Mary Morris credits Brown's book with possessing "an enduring power ... that traverses decades and takes many forms" even as the characters' lives take them in different directions.

9. NOW DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE
(COPPER CANYON PRESS)

Dana Levin's '87 recent fifth collection of poetry walks readers through what critics describe as "the disorientations of personal and collective transformation." Written during the tumultuous years of 2016 and 2020, *Now Do You Know Where You Are* not only addresses the familiar and timely topics of climate change, Covid-19, the 45th U.S. president, and other issues gleaned from the day's headlines, it also investigates how great change calls the soul out "to be a messenger—to record whatever wanted to stream through." Named to the *New York Times* list of 100 Notable Books of 2022 and one of NPR's "Best Books of 2022," *Publisher's Weekly* writes that "Levin's luminous latest reckons with the disorientation of contemporary America." **See more from Dana Levin on p. 32.**

10. FORAGER: FIELD NOTES ON SURVIVING A FAMILY CULT
(ALGONQUIN PRESS)

In *Forager: Field Notes on Surviving a Family Cult*, **Michelle Dowd '90** describes her childhood growing up in a cult called the Field and later on a 16-acre plot she calls the Mountain in the Angeles National Forest. **Read Participant's interview with the author on p. 26.**



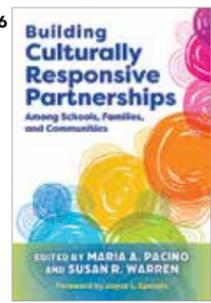
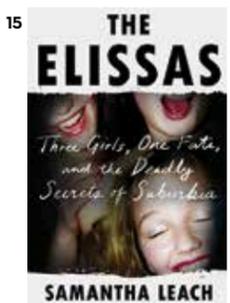
11. WHY DON'T THEY CRY?: UNDERSTANDING YOUR LIVING CHILD'S GRIEF
(PARADISO PRESS)

Zander Sprague '91 suffered an irreparable loss after his sister Lucy was murdered, and he didn't want to further burden his parents with his pain as they dealt with their own grief. In *Why Don't They Cry?* Sprague uses his own personal experiences and passion toward sibling survivors to provide insights for parents who wish to seek reconnection with their surviving children. He sheds light on the sufferings of many sibling survivors, whose grief is often eclipsed by the grief of their parents.



12. SEAWEED RISING
(SANDSTONE PRESS)

Move over, H.G. Wells: In Rob Magnuson Smith's '91 new novel *Seaweed Rising*, the human race faces another alien threat long hidden on earth and waiting for the right time to strike. Unlike Wells' Martians, these sentient beings hide beneath the sea, and only an amateur seaweed collector seems to recognize the signs of their ominous presence. A senior lecturer in creative writing at the University of Exeter, Smith's previous novels include the lyrical *The Gravedigger* and the darkly comic *Scorper*. His publisher describes *Seaweed Rising* as a genre-bending existential addition to Smith's body of work, taking readers "from a Cornish fishing village to the Spanish coast up to the blinding glacial landscape of the Arctic" in a tale in which "human society falls under the microscope."



13. SPEAK NOW THIS CHARM
(JACAR PRESS)

In her fourth poetry collection, Deborah Bogen '72 creates what her publisher calls "a mosaic from states of mind we all experience, but are trained to ignore, or forget, or devalue. She records what is visible and what is positioned beyond consciousness." *Speak Now This Charm* presents an exploration of grief, trauma, and vulnerability with a series of concise and moving poems that share a common length of one to three paragraphs, none longer than a page. Each poem stacks on the others in a pattern suggestive of building blocks, resulting in a vast tapestry of meditations on the many ways that mortality impacts us all.

14. WE ARE A HAUNTING: A NOVEL
(ASTRA HOUSE)

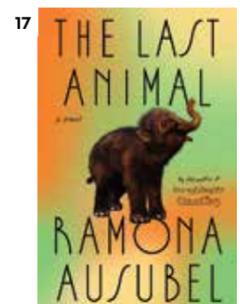
Described by NPR as "an absolute triumph," Tyriek White's '13 debut novel *We Are a Haunting* introduces us to Colly, a high school student who can communicate with the dead—especially his mother Key, whose sudden death leaves him drifting in a perpetual state of confusion and grief. The media director of Lampblack Lit, a literary foundation which seeks to provide mutual aid and various resources to Black writers, White tells a story that switches between Colly and Key's viewpoints as the son struggles with the loss and his mother's spirit struggles to give him answers he desperately needs.

15. THE ELISSAS: THREE GIRLS, ONE FATE AND THE DEADLY SECRETS OF SUBURBIA
(LEGACY LIT)

The "Troubled Teen Industry" is the target of this poignant book that combines sociology and memoir by *Bustle* editor-at-large Samantha Leach '15. That industry preys on young people eager to emulate celebrities like Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian in order to win popularity with their peers despite the dangers and suffering involved. One example is Leach's childhood friend Elissa, a wealthy suburban teen who cultivated a rebellious, promiscuous self-image and eventually spent time in several therapeutic boarding schools before her death at 18. Leach captures the societal pressures facing upper-middle-class women in America and the institutions supposedly trying to save them.

16. BUILDING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PARTNERSHIPS AMONG SCHOOLS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES
(TEACHERS COLLEGE PRESS)

Schools alone can't help our children navigate an increasingly complicated world; networks and collaborations among many groups provide a better model for what students will need in the years ahead. That's an argument showcased in this new book co-edited by Susan Warren '78. Warren has accumulated 40 years of teaching and administrative experience in higher education and in pre-K12 organizations and is a senior research and evaluation associate with the Claremont Evaluation Center. The book serves as a primer on how to create culturally responsive, socially just school-family partnerships that improve student learning outcomes.



17. THE LAST ANIMAL: A NOVEL
(RIVERHEAD BOOKS)

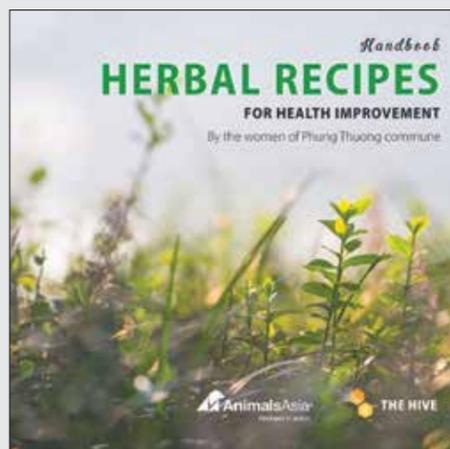
Famed British chemist Rosalind Franklin isn't the only female scientist ever to get a raw deal and have her contributions overlooked. In Ramona Ausubel's '01 latest novel, we meet Jane, a single mom, widow, and scientist who is irritated at being "twice as capable and half as appreciated" as the other members of UC Berkeley's paleontology lab. The novel opens during a summer expedition in Siberia, where Jane and her group are searching for woolly mammoth bones and hoping to extract DNA that might be used to one day bring the creature back from extinction. *The Christian Science Monitor* calls Ausubel's new novel "a wild and woolly global escapade about unbounded scientific experimentation. Yet what comes into sharpest focus under her authorial microscope are mother-daughter and sister relationships."

18. BEA WOLF
(FIRST SECOND/ROARING BROOK)

In his latest tale for readers grades five and older, Zach Weinersmith '03 pays obvious homage to the *Beowulf* saga with this graphic novel about an epic struggle between a band of child warriors and a menacing adult who lays siege to their treehouse fortress. "Listen to the lives of the long-ago kids, the world-fighters, the parent-unminding kids, the improper, the politeness-proof," Weinersmith writes, applying a mock-heroic style to this story set somewhere in American suburbia. This group of wild child celebrates its youth in the fortress of Treeheart, and their revelry soon irritates the joyless Mr. Grindle, whose withering touch can instantly turn children into grown-ups. With illustrations by French artist Boulet, Weinersmith has created what *Publishers Weekly* calls "a joyously lyric, rapid-fire epic that honors the original's intricate linguistic constructions."

PROTECTING THE BEARS OF VIETNAM

Pitzer alumni research has resulted in an herbal recipe book with a special purpose



Freshly dried sand ginger slices. A crystalline bottle of rice liquor. Put them together for 10 days, and you have an aromatic ginger essential oil that can melt the sore stiffness in your arthritic joints. This massage alcohol—a potent example of herbs' healing properties—has the potential to rescue the Asiatic black bears of Vietnam.

In collaboration with Pitzer and Claremont Colleges alumni, Animals Asia, the Traditional Medical Association of Vietnam, and The Rick and Susan Sontag Center for Collaborative Creativity (the Hive) published a book of local women's herbal remedies such as the aromatic ginger massage oil. This book presents an alternative to the practice of bear bile farming that is harming Vietnam's bear population. In October 2022, the group hosted a launch party to celebrate printing 1,000 copies of *Herbal Recipes for Health Improvement* with alternative treatments to animal medicine.

The Phung Thuong region is one of the last hotspots of bear farmers in Vietnam. Bear farmers extract bile from Asiatic black bears' gallbladders to treat inflammatory, liver, and degenerative ailments. The nonprofit Animals

Asia partnered with the Hive—a hub for creative innovation at The Claremont Colleges—to use human-centered design to empathize and collaborate with Phung Thuong residents to explore herbal alternatives in ways that resonated with the community.

"Using human-centered design with Animals Asia turned out to be one of the most transformative experiences of my life," said Pitzer alum Lena Tran '18, who was on the Hive's 2018 cohort for this project.

"From co-designing with community members to prototyping ideas for collective care, I learned how to advocate for community voices, facilitate creative problem solving, and ultimately leverage design for social change," said Tran.

Students such as Tran worked on various prototypes until they landed on an herbal remedies book highlighting recipes from older village women. The Hive's three research teams in Vietnam included four Pitzer alumni—Tran, Kimberly Ha '18, Mai Nguyen '19, and Olivia Hewitt '22—as well as other Claremont Colleges alumni.

Learn more about the project on vietherb.org.



GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

New Scholarship Targets the Unexpected Financial Challenges Affecting Many Students

The adage that the “best-laid plans often go awry” applies not just to college students’ academic plans, but to their financial ones, too. A group of alumnae from the Sixties have announced the launch of a new scholarship to address the unexpected crises that often threaten to upend a student’s undergraduate career.

The new *Provida Futuri* Endowed Scholarship fund will provide additional support for students who have experienced a sudden unexpected challenge to their family’s circumstances—for example, a loss of employment or the death of a family member—that can drastically affect their ability to continue at Pitzer.

“Not every student’s undergraduate years are smooth and unaffected,” said Pitzer Trustee Louise Thornton ’68, “and my classmates and I

recognized this and wanted to do something tangible to address it.”

The new scholarship will provide extra help for students who have had a sudden unexpected change in their family’s financial circumstances.

Pitzer sophomores through seniors will be eligible for the new scholarship, which will become available once the endowment is complete. Support is being sought in the form of gifts of cash, stock, donor-advised funds, and other planned-giving vehicles involving

bequests. Fundraising is already off to a solid start with a significant planned gift for the endowment.

Specific levels of funding for student applicants will be determined on an individual basis and all applicants will be reviewed annually. An important feature of the *Provida Futuri* Scholarship is that it won’t affect a student’s previously determined financial aid package. In other words, receiving this additional aid won’t translate into losing other forms of financial support.

“Our Women of the Sixties group is thrilled and excited about this,” said Yulanda Davis-Quarrie, assistant vice president of Advancement, “and we welcome anyone else who wants to join them in creating a terrific new financial safety net for students now and in the future.”

Interested in supporting the *Provida Futuri* Endowed Scholarship? Contact Yulanda_Davis-Quarrie@pitzer.edu

GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Prison Education Receives \$1.1 Million from Mellon Foundation

This summer Pitzer College was awarded a \$1.1 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in support of its Critical Justice Education (CJE) program. The grant will enable CJE’s further integration in The Claremont Colleges and an expansion of Pitzer’s highly successful Inside-Out program.

“We are thrilled and honored to have the Foundation’s continued faith and support in our efforts to improve higher education opportunities for incarcerated students,” said Allen Omoto, Pitzer’s vice president for academic affairs and dean of faculty. “In our Inside-Out model, on-campus students take classes alongside incarcerated individuals, creating rich and unexpected opportunities for transformational learning, collaboration, and awareness.”

The Foundation grant follows another \$1.1 million Mellon grant in 2018 to establish the CJE program and coordinate collaborative justice education programs across The Claremont Colleges. The new grant will enable that work to be amplified through the creation of the Justice Education Center, which will oversee these collaborations.

For Professor Nigel Boyle, who directs Pitzer’s trailblazing Inside-Out program, this second award from the Foundation is an encouraging recognition that education remains vital to addressing mass incarceration in America and around the world.

“Creating a space for integrated higher education programs that bring traditional and incarcerated students together is pedagogically and institutionally radical,” Boyle said. “There is an intensity to this ‘learning across difference’ approach that is spectacular for all participating students. It’s great that the Mellon Foundation recognizes the power of this initiative.”

Pitzer College is one of seven institutions and programs nationwide to receive a grant through the Mellon Foundation’s Higher Education in Prisons initiative, according to a *Forbes* report. Pitzer will also continue to explore a college pathways initiative at the California Rehabilitation Center and with Norco Community College.

Forbes also notes that a recent survey by the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison shows that “only about 600 of nearly 5,000 state and federal prisons and local jails provided higher education programs.” For Omoto, such data is a clear indication that programs like Pitzer’s are needed now more than ever.

“Pitzer’s pioneering efforts,” he said, “along with our Claremont Colleges peers provides an important blueprint for how other institutions might join us in expanding educational opportunities while also providing meaningful professional development for faculty.”

“There is an intensity to this ‘learning across difference’ approach”

—Nigel Boyle,
Professor of Political Studies

ALUMNI NEWS

Words with Power

“You are what you say, so don’t say what you do, until you do what you are.”

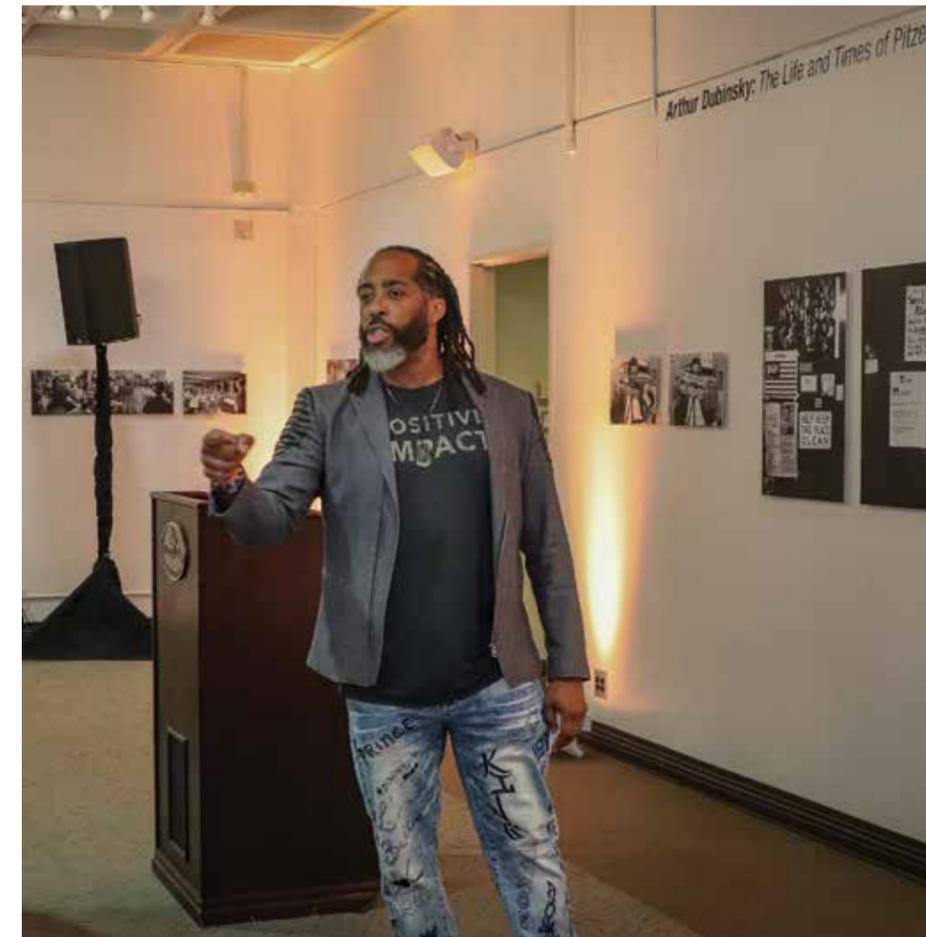
These words are from a poem by Grammy-nominated spoken word poet **Sekou Andrews ’94**, winner of the 2023 Distinguished Alumni Award.

Andrews returned to campus (along with Young Alumni Award recipient **Keiko Budech ’14**, a community builder and racial equity practitioner) for this year’s awards dinner held during Alumni Weekend 2023. Andrews didn’t just thank the audience for his award; he gave them an electrifying performance that showed why he’s an acclaimed voice in the world of spoken word poetry.



It was a thrill to honor him and Budech for their impactful work at our first in-person Alumni Weekend since 2019.

Lines like the one above from Andrew’s poetry are true of the entire Pitzer alumni community. Many generations of alumni started out as students with dreams of social change and went on, as Andrews says, to do what they are as changemakers and social justice warriors.



Jai Phillips '02



Elijah Pantoja '18



Mark Cunningham '89 P'25



Diana Bob '02



Derric Johnson '95



Josue Pasillas '17

A Changing of the Guard

Changing the world doesn’t mean leaving behind one’s alma mater. Many alumni give back to Pitzer in many ways—with their time, talent, or treasure—and earlier this summer the alumni board announced members and leadership.

These two-year posts give members a chance to represent alumni voices on campus as well as engage with the alumni community at large in meaningful ways.

New members are **Jai Phillips '02**, a senior program officer of youth development at the California Community Foundation; and **Elijah Pantoja '18**, former assistant director of digital communications and analytics at Pomona College who previously supported Pitzer’s Annual Giving office.

New officers are **Mark Cunningham '89 P'25**, who takes over the reins as board president from **Diana Bob '02**. Bob has represented alumni interests on the Pitzer College Board of Trustees and has successfully overseen all pillars and committees of the board. Cunningham has been a board member since 2020 and serves as a senior partner in the New Orleans office of Jones Walker LLP, where he co-leads the firm’s Corporate Compliance and White Collar Defense Team.

Cunningham is joined by **Derric Johnson '95**, race and justice chair, a newly created role to support alumni engagement by identifying and activating alumni in support of the College’s social justice programs and efforts; **Josue Pasillas '17**, reunion chair, which is also a newly created role to help advance reunion giving efforts and increase alumni engagement through volunteerism and alumni weekend participation; and Alumni Board Secretary **Elijah Pantoja**, who has taken over this role from Pasillas.



You're Invited

Alumni are invited back to campus Oct. 20 to celebrate the installation ceremony for **Strom C. Thacker**, seventh president of Pitzer College.

Many Pitzer alumni had a chance to meet President Thacker during a special mimosa brunch this spring, a casual occasion that gave everyone a chance to learn more about his vision for the College. We will formally welcome President Thacker as a member of the Pitzer community with a special ceremony. Alumni are invited to attend: more updates and information will be coming soon.

Stay Connected with Pitzer

There are many ways to keep up with your alma mater. One simple way is to visit www.pitzer.edu/alumni for information on alumni news and upcoming events. Another is to watch out for *Connections*, our regular monthly newsletter for Pitzer's alumni community. You can also reach out for help at engagement@pitzer.edu or contact **Shannon Spaccarotelli** (pictured), senior director for Alumni & Family Engagement and Annual Giving, and the entire alumni engagement team.



GET SOCIAL

Follow Pitzer's alumni community at

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for the latest updates and news about your fellow alumni.

CLASS NOTES ARE AVAILABLE ONLY VIA THE PRINT ISSUE OF PARTICIPANT.

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COMMUNITY

IN MEMORIAM

Peggy Shepherd Hedrick '72
Sociology and German

A longtime lawyer and advocate for women's rights, Peggy Hedrick passed away in January after a long battle with Alzheimer's Disease. She was 87.

Born in Lake City, Iowa, Hedrick was the daughter of a U.S. Army major and a self-described Army brat. She attended 22 schools before graduating high school. She met and married her husband of 67 years, Charles, while he was on active duty in Munich, Germany. Hedrick studied sociology and German at Pitzer before going on to obtain two law degrees from the University of La Verne and the Benjamin Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University. In 1981, she was admitted to the Missouri Bar.

Hedrick was an advocate for underrepresented groups; she was the first woman to run for circuit judge in Missouri's Greene County and served as a member of the League of Women Voters and chair of the Board of Directors of the Springfield Council of Churches. According to a tribute posted on the website of The United States Army Chaplain Corps Regimental Association, Hedrick was a defender of the LGBTQ community "before LGBTQ was a term" and created "a method for same gender couples to establish and protect their families."

Hedrick is survived by her husband, Charles; sister Betty Bouris and brother Everitt Shepherd; her children Charles, Janet, and Lois; and by an extended family including her grandchildren, great grandchildren, many cousins, nieces, and nephews.


James A. Joseph
Former Chaplain, The Claremont Colleges

A former Claremont Colleges chaplain, an adviser to four presidents, an ambassador to South Africa, and a lifelong fighter for equality and social justice, James A. Joseph passed away in February. He was 88.

After finishing Yale Divinity school, in 1963, Joseph moved to Tuscaloosa, Ala., to be on the faculty and dean of students at Stillman College, a member of the nation's network of historically black colleges and universities. Joseph became a leader in the civil rights movement and after a year with violent demonstrations and bomb threats around Tuscaloosa, Joseph sought a safer place for his young family.

In 1964, Joseph moved to Claremont and became the chaplain for Pitzer and the other Claremont Colleges. Joseph forged a strong bond with students from Pitzer College and co-founded a local group leading protests and sit-ins during the height of the civil rights movement in the Claremont-Pomona area.

Joseph taught classes at Pitzer and connected with students including Sara Wood Smith '66, who wanted to learn more about civil rights issues for Black people in the U.S. Smith said that Joseph was instrumental in helping arrange a visiting student program so that she could spend a life-changing semester at Stillman College in the spring of 1965. Joseph left Claremont and began a decades-long commitment to developing philanthropy that addressed the needs of people underrepresented in having access to generational wealth.

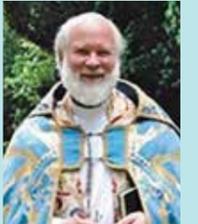

Jeffrey Smith '79
History

A member of the clergy in the Episcopal Church whose ministry eventually took him to England, Jeffrey Smith passed away last November after a fight against renal cancer. He was 66.

Born in Inglewood, Calif., the son of schoolteachers, Smith attended Claremont High School before attending Pitzer College and the Church Divinity School of the Pacific. Smith was ordained as an Episcopal deacon in 1986 and as a priest in 1987 whose ministry began at St. Paul's in Visalia and would take him and his family to several church postings in England, Bermuda, and Scotland.

His daughter Melissa wrote in a tribute in *The Guardian* that Smith "looked beyond the parish; meeting and connecting with people from different backgrounds and traveling the world. He visited and served at St. Mary the Virgin, Belgrade, Serbia. Invited by a friend from Malawi, he traveled there for a month of teaching and preaching. He raised funds to build a school in Kenya. He often walked long distance routes, including the Pilgrim's Way from Winchester to Canterbury, the Camino from Porto, Portugal, to Santiago de Compostela, Spain, and the route to the Black Madonna icon of Czestochowa, Poland."

Smith is survived by his wife Barbara; daughters Laura and Melissa; and grandchildren Thomas, Naomi, Anna-Maria, Lydia and Ezra.


Victoria Weber '69
Art History

A longtime law librarian with a particular interest in environmental affairs and issues, Victoria Weber passed away last December in her Bethel, Vt., home. She was 75.

Born in 1947, Weber attended Abbott Academy in Massachusetts before receiving a bachelor's degree in art history at Pitzer College and a master's degree in library science from Simmons College in Massachusetts. For 27 years Weber served as a law librarian at the Vermont Law School in South Royalton. During her tenure there she held several positions, including environmental reference librarian, which enabled her to create a special collection and train people in accessing environmental information in various formats.

As an undergraduate at Pitzer College Weber met longtime partner and future husband, Davis Dimock; they settled on his family's Vermont property and later married in 2010. In retirement Weber was a committed member of the Hardy Plant Club of Northern Vermont and a devoted enthusiast of gardening and herbal medicines.

Weber is survived by husband Davis and sister Jan Porter Weber.





President John Atherton talks with students in Mead Courtyard on the first day of classes, September 26, 1968.

PARTICIPATING

“I Like the Prospect of People Rocking the Boat”

John W. Atherton on Pitzer’s approach to governance

Editor’s note: In a 1993 interview, the College’s founding president John W. Atherton reflected on his experiences as president during the creation of Pitzer’s governance structure. These remarks have been adapted from interview notes and cast in an essay format.

The mandate for the establishment of Pitzer within The Claremont Colleges was to create a new women’s college with an emphasis on the social and behavioral sciences. It was the ‘60s, the time of the Berkeley riots; students were beginning to demand greater involvement in their own education.

I loved Claremont Men’s (McKenna) College; I loved working there, and George Benson was a wonderful person to work with. But the structure of the college—as with the others in Claremont—was hierarchical. There was not much interaction among students, faculty, and the administration and the board.

I wanted to have all members of the community—trustees, faculty, staff, and students—involved on all committees, involved in making real decisions. As dean of the faculty at CMC, I tried to use as much faculty input as possible. Problems were much easier to resolve than when a decree is issued to a department from the dean.

In terms of its participatory approach to governance, Pitzer is most distinctive. At the time we began, the members of the American Association of Colleges were exploring ways of increasing the meaningful input of students. They never got very far; the colleges were too conservative, and the faculties weren’t too interested in sharing power with students.

A new president has the greatest leeway in shaping the new college through the selection of the first faculty. The original faculty was receptive, young, and open for participation. ... I hired instructors and assistant professors in the social

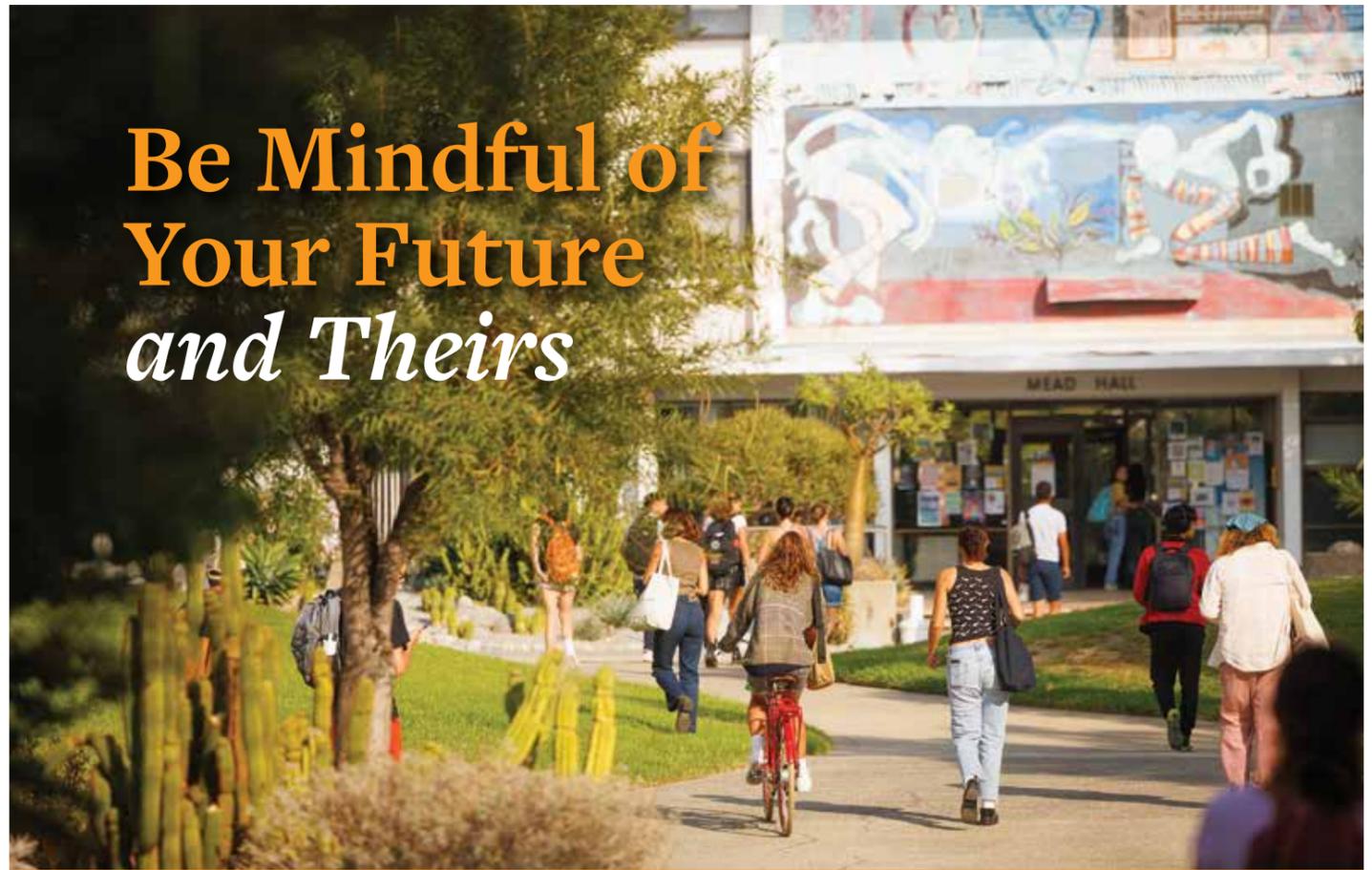
sciences; they were ready for experiment, ready to try something new. The first faculty were young, feisty, excited; anxious to be part of a new college where they could come in and create their own courses and curriculum. In their turn they tended to recruit teachers like themselves.

I like activism. I like the prospect of people rocking the boat. There was always something going on on campus. For example, on the question of going co-ed, the faculty and students thought it was crazy for a college in the social sciences to admit women only. There was much excited discussion among all of us—faculty, students, trustees. We set up a special committee with everyone represented to consider the question. When we became co-ed in 1970, we were all in agreement. There was no trouble with the board. It took seven years and plenty of debate, but it worked.

In general, the participatory process demands a tremendous amount of time from everyone involved.

Pitzer could never have survived if it hadn’t been part of The Claremont Colleges. The other colleges were coming closer to the same model, but they didn’t change their structures; they didn’t really try to incorporate students, faculty, administration, and trustees into active committees. The reputation and conventional structure of the other colleges in Claremont enabled Pitzer to take the risk of being “experimental.”

For more on the impact of John and Virginia Atherton at Pitzer, read the special *Participant* issue from 2012 dedicated to their contributions at www.pitzer.edu/participant



Be Mindful of Your Future and Theirs

JOIN THE PROVIDA FUTURI SOCIETY TODAY

Pitzer’s *Provida Futuri* Society honors those who are making planned gifts to ensure that the College continues to thrive.

Provida Futuri or “mindful of the future” is Pitzer’s motto. It describes the thoughtful approach of many who have made a financial gift in support of Pitzer’s students and mission.

Planned gifts are a highly effective way to create future income for yourself while also designating a future beneficiary of your estate plans.

Q: Who can join the *Provida Futuri* Society?

A: Anyone who includes Pitzer in their estate plans is eligible. The Society’s membership includes trustees, alumni, parents and friends who have all chosen to support the College through their wills, estate plans, or life income arrangements.

Q: How will these gifts be used by the College?

A: Planned gifts continue to fund many important areas, including:

- student scholarships
- academic programs
- laboratories
- classroom facilities
- professorships

Interested? To join the *Provida Futuri* Society, please use our online Declaration of Intent Form to let us know that you have supported Pitzer through your will, revocable living trust, estate plan or life-income agreement. For more information, visit Pitzer’s Planned Giving homepage at pitzer.myplannedgift.org or contact Lily Shin, senior associate director of gift planning, at (909) 621-8432 or plannedgiving@pitzer.edu





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SAVE THE DATE

The Inauguration of the Seventh President of Pitzer College

STROM C. THACKER

Friday, October 20, 2023