

# Humanities

## **The Red Vienna Sourcebook Wins Best Historical Materials of 2020–2021**

ROB MCFARLAND (professor, German and Russian), Georg Spitaler (researcher at the Austrian Labor History Society in Vienna), and Igno Zechner (director of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for History and Society in Vienna) were selected for the American Library Association's Best Historical Materials list for 2020–2021 from the American Library Association for their book, *The Red Vienna Sourcebook*. This book follows the Austrian capital of Vienna just after World War I. It documents the many social experiments conducted on issues such as public housing and education. The book uses primary source documents from the period to teach us lessons about addressing contemporary social ills.

## **Alumna Natalia Benjamin Awarded Minnesota's Teacher of the Year**



IN AUGUST 2021, Natalia Benjamin, an English teacher in Minnesota, became the first person of Latin American heritage to receive the Minnesota Teacher of the Year award. She says her "experiences with language created

a passion and appreciation for multiple languages and cultures." Will Ruffin, the executive director of diversity, equity, and inclusion for Rochester Public Schools, said, "She's always doing something for a student. She never takes a break." Benjamin continues to humbly do what she loves: teach English learning and ethnic studies at Century High School in Rochester, Minnesota.

## **BYU Faculty Member Counsels How to Root Out Racism in Writing**

DURING THE LATTER-DAY Saint Publishing and Media Association Conference on October 9, 2021, adjunct English instructor Madeleine Dresden spoke on why it is important to include diversity in our writing: "Diverse kids want to find books that help them through their journeys of what it is like to be mixed race, or first-generation Asian

American, or African American—all of the Americans. This is why we need to tell these stories," Dresden said.

She invited authors to be aware of the tropes they are using, even subliminally or subtly, and to understand why the tropes are problematic. For example, many tropes teach BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, [and] People of Color) audiences that they "can't be heroic or can't end up winning"; these tropes negatively impact "BIPOC kids' mentalities about themselves." Instead, we should "empower those who still need to tell their stories."

## **BYU Professors Create Women's Literature Database**

VALERIE HEGSTROM (professor, Global Women's Studies) and Anna-Lisa Halling (associate professor, Spanish) are creating an online database titled "More Than Muses" with the help of the Office of Digital Humanities. This database will store the writings and biographies of female authors who wrote in Spanish before the nineteenth century.

"We want to promote the idea that these women writers are more than muses," Dr. Hegstrom says. "They're not just people who inspire other people, but they are themselves authors who are producing texts that are really valuable. Women have voices," says Dr. Halling. "Those voices are often silenced for lots of different reasons. I think it's our responsibility to recover and to magnify those voices."

## **BYU Hosts Sixth Annual Digital Humanities of Utah Conference**

ALTHOUGH "DIGITAL HUMANITIES" sounds like an oxymoron, it is a growing field of study in many colleges across Utah. For the past six years, colleges in Utah such as BYU, USU, UVU, Utah Tech, Weber State, and SUU have been coming together to share advances in the field. Professors,

graduate students, and undergraduate students all have the opportunity to submit their research for peer review and to be considered for hosting a short panel. Topics at the conference ranged widely, dealing with such issues as bringing public statues to life using an app, digitizing



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congressional records, developing media-generating AI, and modeling data for family history. Despite the range of topics, the heart of the conference brought together the exciting work that has been done by utilizing technology to aid in the study of the humanities.

## **Kristin Matthews Gives 2022 P. A. Christensen Lecture**

THE ANNUAL P. A. Christensen Lecture for 2022 featured Kristin Matthews (professor of English) as she discussed a contemporary phenomenon in Black American women's poetry—a return to the archives. Her lecture was called “A Poetics of Witnessing: Black Women's Poetry in Contemporary America.” She presented on some recent poetry collections by award-winning poets, showing how they all take an archival turn. These collections shed light on racist documentary representations of Blackness in archival documents. They also show programmatically White processes used to record, collect, name, and archive. In turning to archival documents, these poets participate in a “poetics of witnessing” in which they are readers first, then witnesses who testify of the experiences of Black people in America.



## **Portugal Awards Grant to College of Humanities**

PORTUGAL HAS A history of close ties with the United States, and, in an effort to further strengthen those ties, awarded the College of Humanities a grant to support study abroad opportunities in Portugal. In October, Dean Miller was invited to Portugal for a grant awards ceremony; while there he was shown around the country, making official rounds of key cultural institutes and sites. He described the visit as a cementing experience for BYU's relationships with Lisbon University, the Portuguese government, and the foundations that helped sponsor the award. He added, “As one of the largest Portuguese programs in the United States, we are fortunate to have garnered such a prestigious award that will benefit our students and strengthen cultural ties.”

## **BYU Administrator Receives Patriot Award**

BYU COLLEGE OF Humanities Language Assessment Coordinator Dave Nielsen received the Patriot Award from the United States Department of Defense on February 4, 2022. The award is presented to supervisors for going above and beyond to support employed Service members and their families. Nielsen was nominated by Technical Sergeant Abraham Engh, a BYU Persian instructor and linguist for the Utah Air National Guard. Engh credits Nielsen with making him a better teacher, his dream job. The award was presented by retired Command Sergeant Major Randy Edwards, who represented the Department of Defense.



## **Lynn Williams Gives 2021 James L. Barker Lecture**

LYNN WILLIAMS (professor, Spanish and Portuguese) delivered the James L. Barker Lecture on November 18, 2021. He discussed seventeenth-century Spain's fascinating history of social etiquette. Williams described how language and society interact to create courtesy. For seventeenth-century Spaniards, knowing how to address those around them enabled them to ask for military aid, to run a royal court, and to avoid paying enormous fines. Respect was a matter of utmost importance; and language was—and, incidentally, always has been—closely attached to power. Williams used seventeenth-century European practices to invite us to reconsider how we behave when we interact with others. He asked us to ponder, “Do we sometimes care more about the method of interaction than the content of the communication directed our way? How do we react when met with anger, flattery, or unwelcome criticism?” Fascinatingly, we can learn better how to properly treat our neighbor by taking a cue from the court language of seventeenth-century Spain.