

ALUMNI NEWS

QUEENS COLLEGE • DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY • FALL 2019



From left to right: Carolyn Mikowski, Bryan DiPrima, and Miriam Fried, members of the QC Anthropology Society, during the New Student Welcome Day at QC.

A Message from the Chair

Happy Holidays and all the best to you and your loved ones in the year to come!



I write today to share with you exciting updates from the Department of Anthropology at Queens College. Our department is truly one of a kind. We treat our students as respected colleagues. We teach our undergraduate classes with an intensity and rigor suitable for competitive graduate programs. We maintain a superb teaching collection. We keep the doors of our teaching labs open to our majors and minors so that they can have a place to study or to simply hang out in the department with their peers.

Many of our students are first-generation immigrants struggling to survive away from their homes. Others come from immigrant families and/or families with modest incomes. The QC Department of Anthropology is determined not to let economic inequality thwart the ambitions and opportunities of our students. Your generous support enables us to maintain our teaching collections, organize student events, and to provide scholarships to our hardest-working students. I am gratified to continue to be connected to thousands of our alumni. It is heartening to learn about the diverse and meaningful careers of our alums and their important contributions to society. Please contact me at 718-997-5510 or by email at EPechenkina@qc.cuny.edu if you would like to share any updates or have comments and questions. We hope you will stay in touch!

With best regards,
Kate Pechenkina,
Chair

Make a Donation

To make a donation, please send a check (*designated to the Department of Anthropology*) to

Queens College Foundation
Kiely Hall, 9th Floor
65-30 Kissena Blvd.
Queens, NY 11367-1597

OR call 718-997-3920

OR visit our website at
[qccommunity.qc.cuny.edu/
pages/funds/anthropology-
department-fund](http://qccommunity.qc.cuny.edu/pages/funds/anthropology-department-fund)

Alumni News

Bernadette Boden-Albala, who earned a bachelor's degree in anthropology at Queens College, has been named director and founding dean of the University of California, Irvine's planned School of Population Health, effective July 1, 2019. Boden-Albala is a renowned researcher and administrator whose efforts to reduce health disparities for America's disadvantaged became a blueprint for community-based stroke and heart disease prevention.

Sheikh Rifatullah, anthropology alum '17.



He is now an enrollment Medicaid specialist at Healthfirst. He writes, "I help people who are disabled, chronically ill, and have low income to become Medicaid eligible so they can get medical help. I help them with Medicaid applications, renewals, conversions, and so on. I am also a field agent in addition to an office fish. This means, I travel all over New York City in different boroughs (use my participant observation) and visit my patients to help them. I always apply anthropology."

Chu Paing who graduated Queens College two years ago, is now a third year Ph.D. student in the Anthropology Program at University of Colorado at Boulder, where her studies are funded by NSF fellowship. She published an article "To Know a Bāthā: Family Language Socialization among Buddhist Burmese Immigrant Families in New York City" in Journal of Southeast Asian American Education and Advancement. The article is based on her senior thesis linguistic anthropology research project carried out in Jackson Heights, Queens which she wrote under the supervision of Prof. Makihara during her senior year at Queens College.

Victoria Tan, who graduated in 2016 with a BALA/anthropology degree and completed a senior thesis with Professor Strassler titled "Beauty and the East Asian Woman," has completed an advanced degree. Victoria graduated from Duke University Law School in May 2019 and is currently working at a law firm specializing in real estate.

Victoria says, "I definitely feel that my anthropology degree served me well. Much of law school involved heavy reading, writing, and critical analysis. Attention to detail is also central to the law practice, and I felt that I honed that skill through my anthropology courses."

Anthropology Club and Student News

We are thrilled to report that anthropology majors **Miriam Fried** and **Carolyn Mikowski** have won Donald Brownstein and John McDermott Scholarships. These scholarships are awarded to undergraduate students at the college who are majoring in or studying subject matters relating to a humanities discipline.

The **QC Anthro Society** is proud to be the only anthropology club at Queens College. After a period of inactivity, the new executive board members decided to revive the club and encourage student interest in the department. The goal of the club is to provide a friendly and welcoming space for members of the student body to discuss and debate topics in anthropology and to network with professors, fellow students, and future colleagues. The Anthro Society has offered, and will continue to offer, diverse events and opportunities for its members. These include faculty and student lectures, information sessions, and social gatherings. We are also looking forward to a group trip to the American Museum of Natural History, complete with a private tour of the museum's Anthropology Department and Archaeology Lab, as well as ticket vouchers for all those in attendance. The board members hope programming like this will continue to draw interest from QC.



Faculty News

We are thrilled to share updates about recent accomplishments of our faculty members. **Mandana Limbert** recently delivered the Fredrik Barth Memorial Lecture at the University of Bergen. The title of her lecture was, “On Homelands and History in Southern Arabia.”

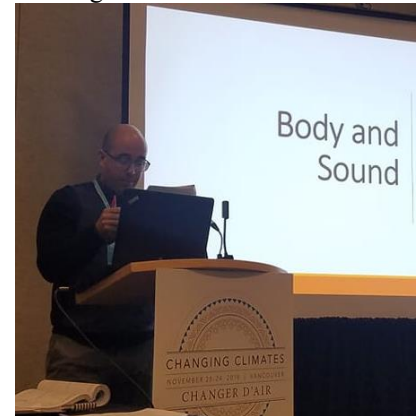
Omri Elisha recently co-organized an international conference entitled “Ethnographies of God” at the University of Toronto, which was funded by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Kevin Birth was one of the guests on the November 1 edition of NPR’s “The Pulse.” In his first segment, he explains the use of master clocks from around the world and how they’re used to help calculate time. He also explains how time zones came to be, how the second came to be defined, and what a tropical or solar year is. Birth also discusses the “Frankenstein monster” of the different cultural aspects of time measurement. He recounts how when he lived in Trinidad years ago, he stopped looking at his watch—knowing that certain stores would open as long as customers were there, or that he could catch interviewees during the day whenever he heard the theme from *The Young and the Restless*; he also explains a bit about using time cues other than watches, especially the problem of trying to time cooking (the perceived need for Minute Rice, for instance). When the interviewer asks him about favorite time-related objects, he mentions, among other things, Japanese Edo clocks and the “pissing baboons” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Larissa Swedell and **Tom Plummer** have been collaborating to develop new ideas about the evolution of social behavior in our hominin ancestors, using recent advances in paleoanthropology, paleoecology, and behavioral ecology. Their most recent treatise on this topic was published in the *Journal of Human Evolution* in November 2019. This article focuses on the evolution of a complex society in *Homo erectus*, modeled after the society of hamadryas baboons, in which kinship ties among males and females and pair bonds between the sexes all work together to provide foraging benefits, cooperative child rearing, predator protection, and social benefits to individuals. This combination of features, likely crucial to the evolution of modern human society as we know it today, would have only been possible in the context of a multilevel society.

Related to this work, **Larissa Swedell** was interviewed for an article in *The New York Times* about multilevel societies in the vulturine guinea fowl, a small-brained bird. While some researchers have suggested that cognitive sophistication is a necessary prerequisite for multilevel societies because there are so many individuals to keep track of, Professor Swedell pointed out that such societies might actually make it easier to keep track of your neighbors because you only have to be able to recognize a few individuals in each of the sub-units. More importantly, such societies allow individuals to reap the benefits of both large and small group size, i.e., they can “have their cake and eat it too.”

Miki Makihara and **Juan Rodriguez** presented their co-authored paper on linguistic stance, power, and politics in a discourse analysis conference held in a medieval university town of Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, Spain, this summer. This international conference drew participants from Europe and the Americas, and was conducted in Spanish, Catalan, Galician, Portuguese, and English.



Timothy Pugh finished up research supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation, which investigated public and private space at Nixtun-Ch’ich’, an early Maya city. In 2019, he published three articles on this research. He was also invited to speak at the European Maya Conference at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, where he spoke about Catholic churches in Spanish colonies in the Maya region.

Karen Strassler was a keynote speaker at a conference on “Chinese Indonesians: Identities and Histories” at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia on October 1, 2019. Her talk, “An Oblique Lens: Photography and Chinese-Indonesian Histories,” explored the under-recognized contributions of ethnic Chinese photographers to the cultural project of nation-building in the decade following Indonesia’s independence from Dutch rule.