

## Visiting Scholar Moura Gives Two Public Presentations in Fall Semester

The Center hosted James Ferreira Moura as a visiting professor and Fulbright Scholar. Moura is a Professor of Humanity Studies at the University of International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophony and the Graduate Program at the Federal University of Ceará in Brazil.



Moura's first presentation, on September 16, "Structural Violence and Human Rights in Brazil: Relations between Race, Ethnicity, and Gender," detailed a study he has been conducting with undergraduate students. Moura gave an overview of the COVID-19 situation in Brazil and his university, where the study was carried out. The university was established in 2010 as part of a strategy for historical reparation by cultivating Afrocentric perspectives among African students of many countries.

Moura described his research for the audience stating that his general objective is to analyze the relations between human rights and structural violence in discourses of university students in Brazil and the United States while considering the intersection of different identity markers. At the time of his presentation, Moura had conducted focus groups in Brazil, though not yet in the US. Using an epistemological perspective, participants answered questions about their understandings of violence, human rights, violations, and reparations. Moura then led the in-person and virtual audience through a visualization exercise, similar to that which participants experienced. Like he did in the aforementioned focus groups, Moura invited the audience to remember a moment in which a basic right or need was violated, and connect it with images, sensations, and feelings from that experience.

As Moura explained, structural violence is a part of daily life in Brazil. Brazilian history includes indigenous massacre, the system of slavery, and "whitening" policies. These realities demand a



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### ABOUT US

The Center for Human Rights and International Justice addresses the increasingly interdisciplinary needs of human rights work through academic programs, applied research, and the interaction of scholars with practitioners. The Center's Co-Directors are Law School Professor Daniel Kanstroom and Lynch School of Education Professor of Community-Cultural Psychology M. Brinton Lykes. Mr. Timothy Karcz is the Assistant Director.

Newsletter contributors: Elizabeth Hargaves, Cat Hoff, Lai Lai Liu and Ivana Wijedasa

## Center News & Notes

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» For information on summer 2022 internships with the Center, and summer 2022 research grants, including application deadlines and how to apply, visit our website at [bc.edu/humanrights!](https://bc.edu/humanrights)

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## The Martin-Baró Initiative for Wellbeing and Human Rights

### Community Wellbeing in Palestine and Guatemala

To commemorate the life and legacy of Ignacio Martín-Baró, the Center, along with its longtime partner project the Martín-Baró Initiative (MBI) for Wellbeing and Human Rights held the online event “Healing at the Center for Transformative Change: Community Wellbeing in Palestine and Guatemala” on November 16, 2021. The MBI aims to continue Martín-Baró’s work dedicated to psychological wellbeing and liberation psychology through awarding grants to grassroots organizations that work with communities affected by institutional violence, repression, and social injustice. Two organizations, a psychosocial wellness collective in Palestine and the Buena Semilla Project in Guatemala, have received grants from the MBI and presented their work at the event.

The event began with introductions from Professor Brinton Lykes, co-director of the Center and a co-founder of the MBI, and Trina Jackson, Solidarity Program Officer for the US Internationalist Program at Grassroots International. Lykes provided a brief overview of the life of Martín-Baró, his assassination, and his work with liberation psychology, wellbeing, and justice healing.

The first organization to present that received a grant from the MBI is a psychosocial wellness collective in Palestine led by Dr. Devin G. Atallah, an Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department at the University of Massachusetts-Boston. Aiding him in his work is Dr. Hana R. Masud, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow on Dr. Atallah’s research team. Atallah and Masud grounded those attending the

event by sharing about their villages, the harvests occurring at the time, and the violence that persists in Palestine due to the Israeli Occupation. Atallah then presented the work that he and Masud do in the Aida Refugee Camp located in Bethlehem within colonized Palestine in support of the Lajee Center. The Lajee Center provides healthcare for individuals with a focus on diabetes and hypertension which are strongly connected to the negative mental health effects of the Occupation. The collective that Atallah and Masud run works in collaboration with the Lajee Center to “create a Palestinian Decolonial Praxis Space” and to “create, implement, and evaluate a Psychosocial Workbook” for Lajee Center workers.

The second organization to present that received a grant from the MBI is the Buena Semilla Project, a grassroots organization in Guatemala supporting indigenous and other marginalized populations of Guatemala in reclaiming their voice, agency, self-determination and “Buen Vivir,” or collective wellbeing. Dr. Anne Marie Chomat, the director of Buena Semilla, provided an overview of Buena Semilla’s work that consists of women’s and men’s groups that promote participation, wellbeing, and psychosocial health through friendship and activities. Sadi Garcia, Dolores Sapalú, and Diego Petzey, who are colleagues of Chomat and active participants in the groups, shared their reflections on the work of Buena Semilla.

To conclude, attendees were divided into breakout groups to discuss their thoughts on wellbeing, healing justice, and self-care

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as it relates to themselves and their communities.

Communities all across the world continue to grapple with current and historic violence. The MBI provides assistance to organizations

working to heal the scars of violence in their communities in the spirit of Ignacio Martín-Baró.



**Dr. Anne Marie Chomat (Left) and Dr. Devin G. Atallah (Right)**

## Book Presentation: *Crossing: How We Label and React to People on the Move*

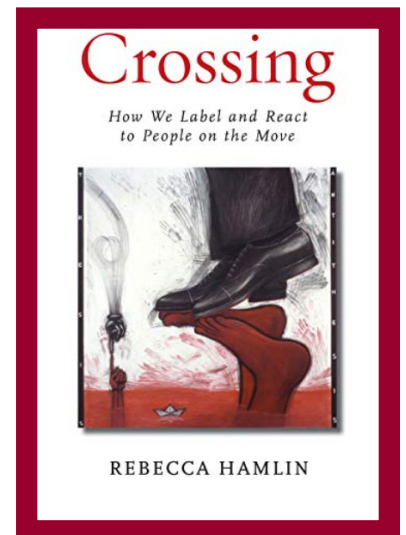
On September 21, the Center hosted Rebecca Hamlin, Associate Professor of Legal Studies and Political Science at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, to present her new book *Crossing: How We Label and React to People on the Move*. Serena Parekh, Associate Professor of Philosophy at Northeastern University, also presented as a discussant.

According to the UN World Migration Report, roughly 281 million people migrated internationally in 2020. Of those millions of international migrants, only 26.6 million are considered refugees by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Refugees are often thought of as the neediest of border crossers while migrants are sometimes considered as less deserving of aid. This distinction between refugees and migrants, and the degree to which it can be considered dubious, serves as the central theme of the book and of Hamlin's presentation.

The first part of the event was an overview of Hamlin's book. She began by explaining her interest in the distinction between migrants and refugees, starting in 2015 during the height of the so-called refugee "crisis" as many border crossers were using the Mediterranean Sea to enter Europe. News articles were published

attempting to clarify the differences between "migrant" and "refugee" to the general public. The three core assumptions found within that binary logic are (1) "refugees and migrants have distinct and distinguishable motivations for crossing borders," (2) "refugees are the neediest among the world's border crossers," and (3) "true refugees are rare." In short, Hamlin argues that the binary fails to address the needs of all border crossers, and it is difficult to sort people due to biases and complexities involved. Overall, Hamlin claims "the migrant/refugee binary masks the ways in which categories have been politically constructed to elevate the suffering of some people above that of others."

Hamlin then transitioned to detail the fourth chapter of her book: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or UNHCR and their communications and marketing efforts over the



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years. Through extensive research, Hamlin found that UNHCR leadership, UNHCR social media accounts such as Twitter and Instagram, and the UNHCR public relations team all support and justify the use of the migrant vs. refugee binary. There are several reasons for the UNHCR's stance in favor of the binary: UNHCR wants to remain the authority on refugees to maintain relevance; to assure voters in donor states that they are not required to assist all border crossers, rather a smaller subset of that population; and to inspire a feeling of moral obligation to aid refugees.

The second part of the event was a response to Hamlin's arguments by Parekh. Parekh asserted that "labeling is a matter of power," and agreed with Hamlin that organizations and governments are using their power to disenfranchise groups of people through the refugee/migrant classification binary. However, Parekh did not agree with Hamlin in eliminating the binary since Parekh does not believe border crossers will be treated better without it. Parekh advocates for structural justice in which migratory policies and systems are recreated to emphasize human rights rather than just focusing on the language we use to refer to border crossers. Afterwards,

Hamlin and Parekh answered questions from attendees.

While categorization and definition of border crossers may seem disconnected from current events, Hamlin and Parekh succinctly described the issues that arise from the current distinctions between migrants and refugees, and how they affect the behavior toward border crossers. All border crossers should have their human rights respected no matter which country they enter and that an expansion of classifications is necessary to fully encompass the complexities border crossers experience and present.

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## Visiting Scholar Moura Gives Two Public Presentations in Fall Semester (Continued from Page 1)

critical conception of human rights, one that benefits the Brazilian population in a localized and intersectional way. Moura then laid out pillars of strategies for reparations from a decolonial perspective, quoting several indigenous, Black, Quilombola, and African women in Brazil. The strategies include education, the humanization of Black and indigenous bodies, and accessible discourse. The presentation ended with a Q&A with audience members.

On November 29, Moura gave a second presentation, "Psychosocial Implications of Poverty in the Contexts of Structural Violence in Brazil." He began by examining the conventional definitions of poverty, which restrict our understanding to its economic aspects. Instead, Moura suggested a multidimensional approach, specifically an unsatisfied basic needs approach or capabilities approach. The expansion is necessary to more fully comprehend a psycho-social perspective on poverty and inequality.

According to Moura, the psychosocial perspective has a structural domain, and multiple dimensions: socio-cultural, psychological oppression, and psychological resistance. These dimensions function as a way to help understand the realities that Brazilian populations confront. In the face of colonialism, dehumanization,

and the criminalization and stigmatization of poverty, people find resistance through de-ideologization, consciousness-raising, community, and social support. Concrete opportunities are necessary along with these dimensions, furthering people's ability to question realities of structural inequality. Most notably, he spoke about the concept of "fatalism," and how people are led to believe that current inequalities are inevitable, or based on natural order. As a psychological process, this forces one to accept their reality as unchangeable. Psychosocial work aims to find ways for people to break out of this cycle, strengthening radicalization of community activities, facilitating concretization, and creating new movements. In his presentation, Moura supplemented his explanations with video footage of protests and demonstrations in Brazil with topics such as the injustices of evictions, unemployment, precarious health, and violence. He ended again with a Q&A session, speaking with an audience member about the origin of these different dimensions. To Moura, they are part of creating a process to question reality.

Moura has been very active with presentations and connections to other faculty at BC and beyond during his stay as a Fulbright Scholar, and departs for Brazil near the end of January 2022.

# Book Presentation: “THE RACIAL MUSLIM: When Racism Quashes Religious Freedom”

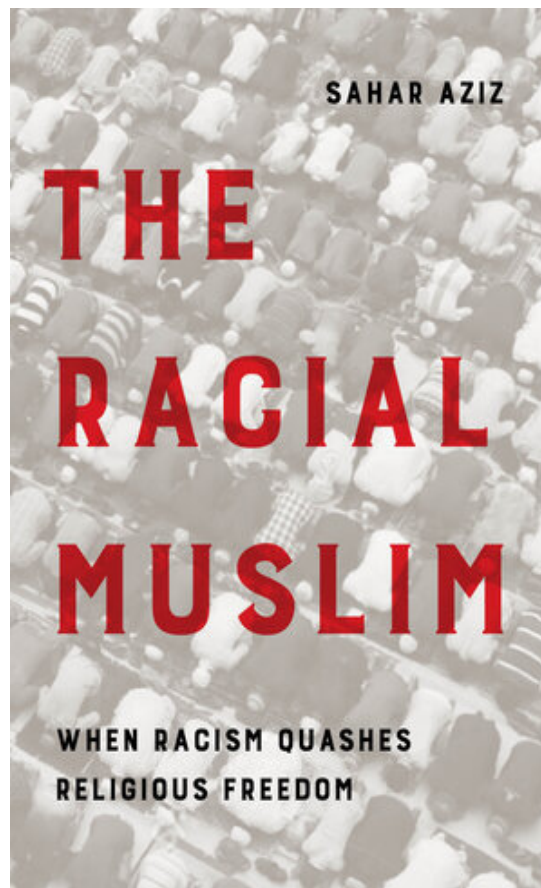
On November 17, the Center hosted Sahar Aziz, Professor of Law, Middle East Legal Scholar, and a Chancellor’s Social Justice Scholar at Rutgers University Law School, for a presentation on her new book, *The Racial Muslim: When Racism Quashes Religious Freedom*. The book focuses on religious freedom in the United States, and if our ideals of religious freedom are actually upheld in practice. To understand this, she crafted an impressive research study about the historical and contemporary experience of Muslims in the United States, as well as many other religious groups, and how the US’ principle of “religious freedom for all” has not held up. She posits that in the case of the Muslim experience, race and religion intersect to create the US’ perception of Muslims as the “Racial Muslim.”

The idea of the Racial Muslim is rooted in the treatment of Muslim people as a race, not as a religious group. Racism interacts with religion in the case of Muslim people and consequently excludes them from religious freedom protections. Aziz argues that this racialization is rooted in a racial religious hierarchy in the United States, not solely a racial hierarchy as many other scholars argue. White Protestant supremacy, xenophobia, Orientalism, and the US’ power on the world stage all interact to create this hierarchy. The construction of this hierarchy, which is a function of socialization, positions certain races and religions as more barbaric, less democratic, and inferior to others.

Race and religion do not exist in isolation from one another. Aziz brings forward many historical examples of the way that race and religion have interacted in the past to create complex systems of oppression and subordination, including the invocation of race and religion to justify slave codes, harsh immigration policies, eugenics, and the Ku Klux Klan. Aziz follows these narratives through the present day, depicting the way the media has contributed to these intersectional forms of oppression.

The creation of the Racial Muslim is done at a societal level by both governmental policy and through private actors. Aziz explained that the way these groups conceive of, and subsequently treat, the Racial Muslim takes on a hierarchical structure and is not dichotomous. Aziz identifies five representations of the Racial Muslim in this way: the religious dissident Racial Muslim, the religious apolitical or mainstream political Racial Muslim, the secular dissident Racial Muslim, the secular apolitical or mainstream political Racial Muslim, and the former Racial Muslim. The religious dissident is treated the most harshly, and the secular apolitical is treated the least harshly, with the former Racial Muslim justifying the poor treatment of all other representations. Aziz explains how race and religion intersect by saying that even a white presenting Muslim who is religious and a political dissident will experience harsh forms of oppression because of their identity beyond their appearance.

So, why are those who stand for religious freedom not protecting Muslims? Aziz believes it is because they have reconstructed the idea of Islam all together. It is not viewed only as a religion in the US but instead viewed primarily as a political ideology. Aziz concludes that law is the most instrumental, and we must be critical of how the law is deployed to deny Muslims protections. Aziz concluded by stating that only when the US succeeds in realizing the fundamental disconnect between its ideals to uphold religious freedom and the actual practice of doing so, can it begin to fulfill its aspirations to have a pluralistic and inclusive society.



# Center screens documentary *Stateless*, about racism and immigration in the Dominican Republic and Haiti

On October 19, the Center hosted Francisccka Lucien, the executive director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH) in Boston, to help contextualize an online screening and discussion of the documentary film *Stateless*. The heartbreaking and informative documentary directed by Michèle Stephenson addresses the struggle that people of Haitian descent endure in the Dominican Republic (DR), especially with regards to obtaining citizenship or a legal immigration status. The name of the film recognizes the over 200,000 people made stateless in the DR after the Dominican Constitutional Court in 2013 revoked the citizenship of Dominicans of Haitian descent retroactively to 1929. The film is centered around the experience of Rosa Iris Diendomi Álvarez, who is an attorney of Haitian descent in the DR who eventually runs for Congress. The film also focuses on Juan Teofilo, Rosa's cousin, and his struggle to obtain updated identification as a Dominican citizen and to be reunited with his children. As the film documents the advocacy efforts of Álvarez to push for the recognition of people of Haitian descent as Dominican citizens, it also follows the efforts of the Dominican National Movement through one of its leaders, Gladys Feliz.

To provide context to these issues, Lucien discussed the importance of recognizing the drivers for migration out of Haiti to the DR. While viewing the film, Lucien encourages adopting a broader framework of understanding of why people are choosing to migrate and what are the policy choices available to shift course towards democracy and stability. Throughout the film and as noted in the discussion portion of the event, many parallels could be drawn between the Dominican Republic's policies towards Haitians and the policies of the United States at its southern border.

In the film, Gladys Feliz represents the typical nationalist and racist sentiments expressed against immigrants. She claims that Haitians are violent and characterizes them as murderers, robbers, and rapists whereas the Dominicans are the true victims. In order to protect the Dominicans, she believes that the government must build a wall and close all 85 Haitian entry points. In one scene, Feliz, along with the rest of the National Movement, rallies outside the Office of Migration and Passports in the DR calling for the deportation of Haitians. While Feliz advocates against people of Haitian descent, Álvarez fights for them and for their recognition and right to live in the DR as citizens. It is not an easy journey for Álvarez and those she fights for including Teofilo. The film shows the emotional and legal barriers that they endure in the process of trying to advocate for the citizenship of people of Haitian descent. Teofilo describes the whole process that Haitians go through as

a mental game that produces trauma. He feels like a foreigner in the DR, although that is the place he was born and lived for many years. Álvarez is seen crying in many scenes, demonstrating the emotional toll of advocacy work. The film also highlights the physical threats of being killed and attacked that activists endure. After running for Congress, Álvarez's death threats increased and she sought and was granted asylum in the US as a result.

Though the film is centered on Haiti and the DR, it addresses issues common to many nations today. Dan Kanstroom, co-director of the Center and a professor at BC Law School, notes that the film shows how citizenship status, denationalization, and deportation fit so seamlessly with racism, xenophobia, and classism. The film also addresses community organizing and how difficult that is with corruption and bribery, which contributed to Álvarez's loss in the election. As part of a way to move forward, Lucien in her comments encouraged students and people who want to be involved in this issue to engage with material, understand it, and try to learn what is happening to become part of the informed public.



# Summer Research Grant Reports

» Reports of findings from our 2021 summer research grantees. Deadline to apply for 2022 grants is March 17. Details at [bc.edu/humanrights](http://bc.edu/humanrights).

## Liturgical Variation among Ecclesial Base Communities in El Salvador

*Laurel Marshall Potter, PhD student in Theology,  
Morrissey School of Arts and Sciences*

### 2021 Kelsey Rennebohm Fellowship Recipient

With the 2021 Rennebohm Fellowship award, Potter researched the differences in liturgical practices in seven Salvadoran communities. Potter studied “ecclesial base communities,” or CEBs by its Spanish acronym. A CEB is defined as a local Catholic Christian group that conducts worship. However, as noted by Potter, some communities are leaning away from the label of CEB as it excludes non-Catholic and indigeneous religious practices. A more inclusive term that Potter uses to refer to the communities researched is “marginal ecclesial communities.”

Potter identified nine liturgical elements that are consistent among all seven marginal ecclesial communities that participated in the study: selections of readings for liturgy, prayers of intercession, homilies, physical spaces where liturgies are held, songs, composition of altars, eucharistic celebrations, demographics of participants, and leadership of the practice. The components of the liturgical practice varied widely from community to community. For example, two communities held liturgy in a home, four communities conducted liturgy in a community center or chapel, and the final community changed location frequently depending on the members they were visiting.

In addition to examining the liturgical practices of the marginal

ecclesial communities, Potter investigated the socio-political issues important to those in the community. The most common topics were COVID-19, the current climate crisis, the current president of El Salvador, cryptocurrency (due to the Salvadoran president establishing Bitcoin as an official tender), and “the struggle of a large agricultural cooperative to retain its land despite legal attacks from the oligarchy.”

While impeded by the COVID-19 pandemic in her research, Potter was able to yield a valuable analysis on marginal ecclesial communities. There are numerous similarities and differences between the participating communities in their liturgical practice yet most communities share the same concerns in regards to socio-political matters. Potter’s research serves as a starting point for her dissertation on “non-normative” liturgical practices and how they encourage community members to engage with their Christian religion.



## Exploration of Life Pattern of Emerging Adult Immigrants from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador



**Jane Hopkins Walsh, PNP-BC, MSN, RN, PhD**  
*candidate, Connell School of Nursing, Morrissey School of Arts and Sciences*

Hopkins Walsh in her research sought to explore the individual life patterns and health responses of a group of emerging adult immigrants (18-22 years of age)

from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, particularly in light of the increasing numbers of people in this population seeking refuge in the US over the past decade or so.

As part of the qualitative study which is part of Hopkins Walsh's larger doctoral dissertation, she is conducting interviews with people in the target population of the study. She is employing the Newman research praxis, which pays attention to visual, sensory and auditory images in the narratives being related, as a way to disrupt what she refers to as traditional colonizing research

approaches to nursing research.

She recounted some narratives that came from the interviews, such as a 20-year-old who had fled extreme violence in Guatemala saying, "Voy a tener un segundo libro mío" (I am going to write/have my second book) after migrating to the US. And another young woman from Honduras whose identity as a lesbian had placed her in potential danger of violence, reporting that she now felt safe and in a loving environment living with her sister in Ohio now. This was after she endured a six month migration journey in the peak of the COVID pandemic, which included time in immigration detention.

Hopkins Walsh's ongoing research hopes to uncover more the hopes and challenges of this young immigrant population, in addition to learning more about the status of their health and access to healthcare, and to gain their insights as to how nurses working with people in their situations can be more effective in serving them.

## Intersections between Human Rights, The Contemporary United States Prison Abolition Movement, and the Catholic Faith

**Luke Trinka, Master of Divinity, School of Ministry & Theology '23**

Trinka studied the intersections between human rights, the contemporary United States prison abolition movement, and the Catholic faith. The starting point of his analysis is the present crisis of mass incarceration which he frames as a human rights issue. Among the human rights struggles being waged against mass incarceration is the prison industrial complex (PIC)

abolition. The research also examines the ways that Catholic religious tradition might embolden the PIC abolition movement.

Trinka's research covered four topics including the crisis of mass incarceration, mass incarceration as a human rights issue, PIC abolition, and Catholic contributions to PIC abolition. With

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research conducted on the crisis of mass incarceration, Trinka found that about 2.3 million people are incarcerated in the U.S. and about 3.6 million people are on probation. The most striking feature of the crisis was found to be its racial, gendered, and socioeconomic dimensions. In the US, Black people, women, and the poor are disproportionately represented in jails and prisons. Trinka also found that mass incarceration denies rights for those with criminal records through the disenfranchisement of a large percentage of Black men and legalized discrimination in housing, employment, etc. Thus, he declares mass incarceration as a human rights issue which violates many articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In his research, Trinka found that the PIC abolition movement seeks revolution rather than reform, which tends to reinforce

the current system. The core demands of PIC abolition include the elimination of policing, imprisonment, and surveillance, and the rejection of the expansion of the PIC. At its core, the abolitionist vision is a human rights one which seeks a restructured society and world. To conclude, Trinka notes how Catholic moral tradition is abolitionist at its core and can assist the PIC abolition movement. Faith-based abolitionists have transformed national conversations before about slavery and the civil rights movement. Catholic tradition criticizes the PIC on the assertion that every person bears the image of God and holds that institutions and systems that harm the most vulnerable must be dismantled. Therefore, Catholic ethics oppose the logic of the prison and can empower the abolitionist struggle for human dignity.

## Responding to the Rise in Race-Based Hate Crimes Against the Asian and Asian American Community Following the Trump Administration's Anti-Asian Rhetoric

**Nicole Huie, BA in Secondary Education and English '23, Lynch School of Education and Human Development**

Huie studied the surge of Anti-Asian and Asian American (AAA) hate crimes since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. As part, she analyzed how former President Trump's rhetoric contributed to the increase in hate crimes against AAA people. Huie sought to uncover reasons for the phenomenon, what is being done about it, and how educators can teach about the topic in a culturally aware manner. Critical Race Theory, which argues that race-based hate crimes are intertwined with systems we maintain in society including the education system, helps inform the study's analysis.

Huie found that the increase in hate crimes against the AAA community in 2020 was in fact linked to Trump's rhetoric with derogatory COVID-19 terminology such as the "Kung-flu" and "Chinavirus." Since this rhetoric, violent crime against AAA

people spiked and continued to be at an all-time high. She referenced a graph of several

major cities and their respective surges in AAA-related hate crimes. Huie identified several counteractive measures being employed in defense of the AAA community. For example, Representative Grace Meng of New York introduced the H.R. 8519 bill to the U.S. House of Representatives which includes funding to teach AAPI history in schools. In her research, Huie recognized that there is not more being done because the AAA community is not speaking up much about the hate

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crimes committed against them for several reasons, including fear of retaliation. As a way to combat these issues, Huie found that educators should be trained before teaching the AAA curriculum. The trainings would be developed by experts in the field and then modified at the state and district level. Teachers could be required to complete and pass modules regarding the increase in hate crimes against the AAA community and other

social justice issues. Teaching about the AAA community is a joint effort and it can lead to AAA members feeling more empowered to speak up. Huie suggests education reform as a way to promote inclusivity and spread awareness in order to combat the increase in hate crimes.

## Sentencing Reform for Sex Trafficking Survivors: Past, Present, and What Could Be

***Mckayla Yoo, BA in History and English,  
Morrissey College of Arts & Sciences, '23***

Yoo's study sought to articulate the context of laws that harm survival-sex workers and sex trafficking victims today, and what we can do to address current sentencing. She studied the "White Slave Crusades" of the 1910s, a period of panic that white women were being sold into slavery. Through her research, Yoo argues these fears were in fact a guise and vehicle to dismantle the broader commercial sex industry. The attitudes found a century ago have still transferred to contemporary legal frameworks for sex trafficking and survival-sex prostitution.

Yoo writes that even in the 1910s, legislators and commentators clearly noted the financial desperation of young women who were driven into the industry. When compared to the inadequate wages of most professions for women at that time, they were much more likely to be able to support themselves and their families through prostitution. Having considered these factors, lawmakers showed very little concern for the victim's legal rights or for providing resources to better their circumstances. More commonly, "crusaders" would implicate local governments as profiteers of red-light districts, and the issue of sex trafficking was used as a pawn in other political aims.

Yoo brings in several examples of efforts to change laws around sex trafficking, tracking the legal injustices and changes needed to this day. For instance, the Chicago Vice Commission

of the 1910s was one of the surprising advocates for sentencing reform and proto-affirmative defense. In other words, it showed signs of wanting to help survival-sex workers rather than legally damning them.

Ultimately, Yoo argues that criminalization is not the answer, and harms the victims of sex trafficking more than its perpetrators. She emphasizes that certain groups and individuals are more vulnerable than others, due to certain economic pressures, identities, and backgrounds. As such, solutions should require pre-emptive action, providing relief to alleviate the difficulties that force women to turn to commercial sex, and for those who are reentering society, safe and healing resources are needed to best facilitate the process with wellbeing in mind.



## Investigating Causes of Underrepresentation of Women in Politics: Case Study in Pakistan

*Urwa Hameed, BA in Political Science and International Studies, Morrissey College of Arts & Sciences, '22*

Hameed worked in Pakistan to understand the factors in the country's underrepresentation of women in politics, as women are startlingly absent from the state government. For example, no women serve in two of the four state assemblies, and the large national assembly only seats eight female members. Noting this lack of female presence in government, Hameed hypothesized five contributing factors: (1) education, (2) religion, (3) society/culture, (4) financial independence, and (5) political parties and patriarchy. These factors were the subject of her interactions with 50 Pakistani women on the topic of female representation in government.

She conducted her research with the participants through both a survey and an interview. Her 25 question survey asked participants to rate experiences with the aforementioned factors in their careers as female politicians, rate their experiences with these factors, and share stories of the effect these factors have had on their political lives. In her interviews, Hameed asked each woman simply to comment on each of the factors, and in turn, she was told many stories of empowerment, sexism, and discrimination that these female politicians experienced throughout their careers.

Her findings were astounding and highlighted the discrimination and prejudice that these women face in the political field. The responses highlighted ways in which the five factors Hameed identified play a significant role in the representation in politics. Women reported that it is necessary to hold higher educational degrees and that female politicians feel they hold a

higher burden of proving their educational qualifications. Female politicians also reported high levels of discriminatory behavior on the basis of their gender, and feelings of being held to a different and lower standard than men.



Additionally, her findings highlight the strength of these Pakistani women and the means by which they persevere through this oppression. Hameed gathered stories of standing up to the patriarchy, whether that be going against the wishes of a male family member or being one of the first women to practice law in their home city, and defying the odds.

Her findings have been published in her new book entitled "Steering Towards Change: Women Politicians Challenging Patriarchy, Class and Power in Pakistan."

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## Upcoming Spring 2022 Events



**MARCH 17**

**Book presentation: “Central America’s Forgotten History: Revolution, Violence, and the Roots of Migration”**

12:00 PM • McElroy 237 and on Zoom

With author **Avi Chomsky**, Professor of History, Salem State University



**MARCH 31**

**Abuses are the Rule not the Exception: Counterinsurgency Logics and the Policing of Everyday Life in War-torn Guatemala**

12:00 PM • McElroy 237 and on Zoom

With **María Águilar**, Postdoctoral Associate, Council on Latin American and Iberian Studies (CLAIS) at the MacMillan Center at Yale University



**APRIL 21**

**Sanctuary on Wheels: Wayward Care in The City of the Deported**

12:00 pm • Campion 139 and on Zoom

With **Barbara Sostaita**, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Mahindra Center, Harvard University

More info and how to register, either for in person attendance or on Zoom, on our website at [bc.edu/humanrights](https://bc.edu/humanrights)



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