



2018-2019

# ANNUAL REPORT

**A LOOK IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR**

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PREPARED BY

**THE HUMANITIES TRUCK TEAM**



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# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

DAN KERR

At the start of the 2019 Fall Semester, we celebrated the Humanities Truck's first anniversary. In late August 2018, I picked up the truck in Manassas, Virginia for the first time and drove it to American University. I very quickly learned that the truck does not drive the same as my Honda Fit! Honestly, as the truck rumbled along the outerbelt, I was terrified, realizing that I could wreck everything with a mistimed lane change. Still, four and a half years of planning had finally become a reality. In this first year, we have not only learned how to drive the truck, we have made significant headway in understanding how to use the truck to engage communities across Washington, D.C.

The Humanities Truck became a reality after the Henry Luce Foundation awarded the project a three-year \$225,000 grant to build the truck and get it on the road and in the streets of Washington, D.C. The detailed planning that went into the truck's design in the spring and early summer of 2018 will continue to benefit us for the entirety of the truck's lifespan. The truck itself is a used truck which delivered medical oxygen supplies in Chicago for its first 85,000 miles. It's been given a new life as a state-of-the-art vehicle to do community-based documentation, workshops, and exhibitions.

With the support of a small and very dedicated staff, Maren Orchard and Julie Hawks, we built and expanded our office, established a robust website ([www.humanitiestruck.org](http://www.humanitiestruck.org)), laid the groundwork for a new community archive, developed policies, procedures, and documentation for using the truck, conducted our first fundraising campaign, expanded our relationships on campus, and built informal partnerships off campus with the DC Public Library, Anacostia Community Museum, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Street Sense Media, the National Park Service, and others. Fall 2018 served as a beta-testing semester. In the spring of 2019, five Humanities Truck Fellows (myself, Malgorzata Rymsza-Pawloska, Adrienne Pine, Benjamin Stokes, and Ludy Grandas) integrated the truck into our projects across the city and in a variety of communities.

We were able to explore the versatility of the truck as we traveled to thirty-three community events, constructed and displayed sixteen separate exhibits, organized eleven community workshops, conducted thirty-seven interviews, and held two evening film screenings. We have developed a short form interviewing format which we call Mobilizing Memories. You can see these interviews in some of our web exhibits at [humanitiestruck.org](http://humanitiestruck.org), such as Late Skate at Anacostia Park. We've refined our exhibit building techniques so that we can quickly mount and change them. During our busiest weekends, we are now sending the truck out for three separate events. The truck is creating engaging humanities-based experiences across the city with diverse communities, including people experiencing homelessness, day laborers, civil war reenactors, LGBTQ+ activists, and others. Over the course of our first year, nearly three and a half thousand people engaged with the truck events directly. At our highest profile event, over fifty thousand people cheered as the truck drove by during the Pride Parade.

In the first installation of our Humanities Truck Speaker Series, Jeremy Brecher, who has dedicated his life to doing community-engaged research and scholarship in Connecticut's Naugatuck Valley, kicked off the series in March 2019 with a talk, "Fifty Years of Doing History from Below." A video recording of the talk can be found on our website. Brecher is author of *History from Below: How to Uncover and Tell the Story of Your Community, Association, or Union* and fifteen other books on labor and social movements. His oral history-based books include *Brass Valley: The Story of Working People's Lives and Struggles in an American Industrial Region* and *Banded Together: Economic Democratization in the Brass Valley*. In addition to his address, Brecher consulted with each of the truck projects and met with several of our community partners.

In the spring of 2019, the Humanities Truck Project received a three-year, \$650,000 grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation. The grant will support twenty-one truck projects over the next three years, fund nine graduate fellowships allowing students in AU's Public History and Public Anthropology programs the opportunity to work with the truck, help us continue the Speaker Series, facilitate the creation of a Community Advisory Board for the project, and do long-term digital strategic planning. The grant enables us to expand our office space and construct an exhibit design workshop. We now have a new button maker, a portable stage, a professional 10x10 tent and a 10x20 tent, new office computers, and a second video camera.

As part of the Mellon and Luce grants, we have committed to raising funds which will put us on the path towards self-sufficiency. We raised over \$7,000 in our fall 2018 campaign from a base of supporters who we hope to keep engaged with the project long-term. In the coming year, we hope to expand on that initial campaign as we seek to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the project.

The Humanities Truck Project has made significant progress in our first year. Community engagement is not a short-term proposition, and we hope to continue to build on those relationships we have developed across the city. We've discovered that the truck delivers excitement and energy as we deepen our engagement with the humanities and our surroundings. People intuitively understand that we need the humanities now more than ever.



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# WHAT IS THE HUMANITIES TRUCK?

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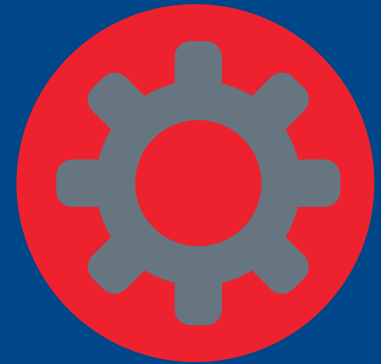
## MOBILIZE

We mobilize the humanities with our truck, which allows us to directly interact with communities in their own spaces.



## DOCUMENT

We conduct oral history interviews, digitize local collections, and photograph and film events, which we preserve in our archive.



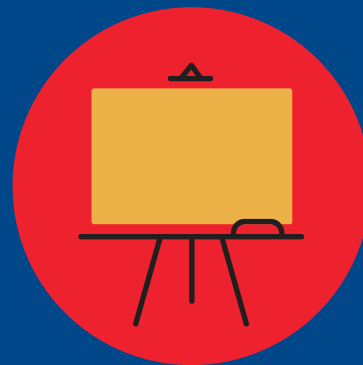
## WORKSHOP

We hold workshops with community partners to co-interpret our gathered documentation and outside research



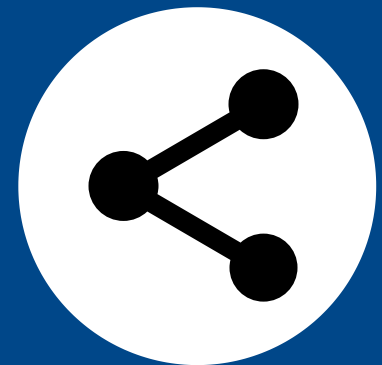
## CURATE

We co-curate our gathered materials as we seek to find and tell stories that are engaging for the communities we work with.



## EXHIBIT

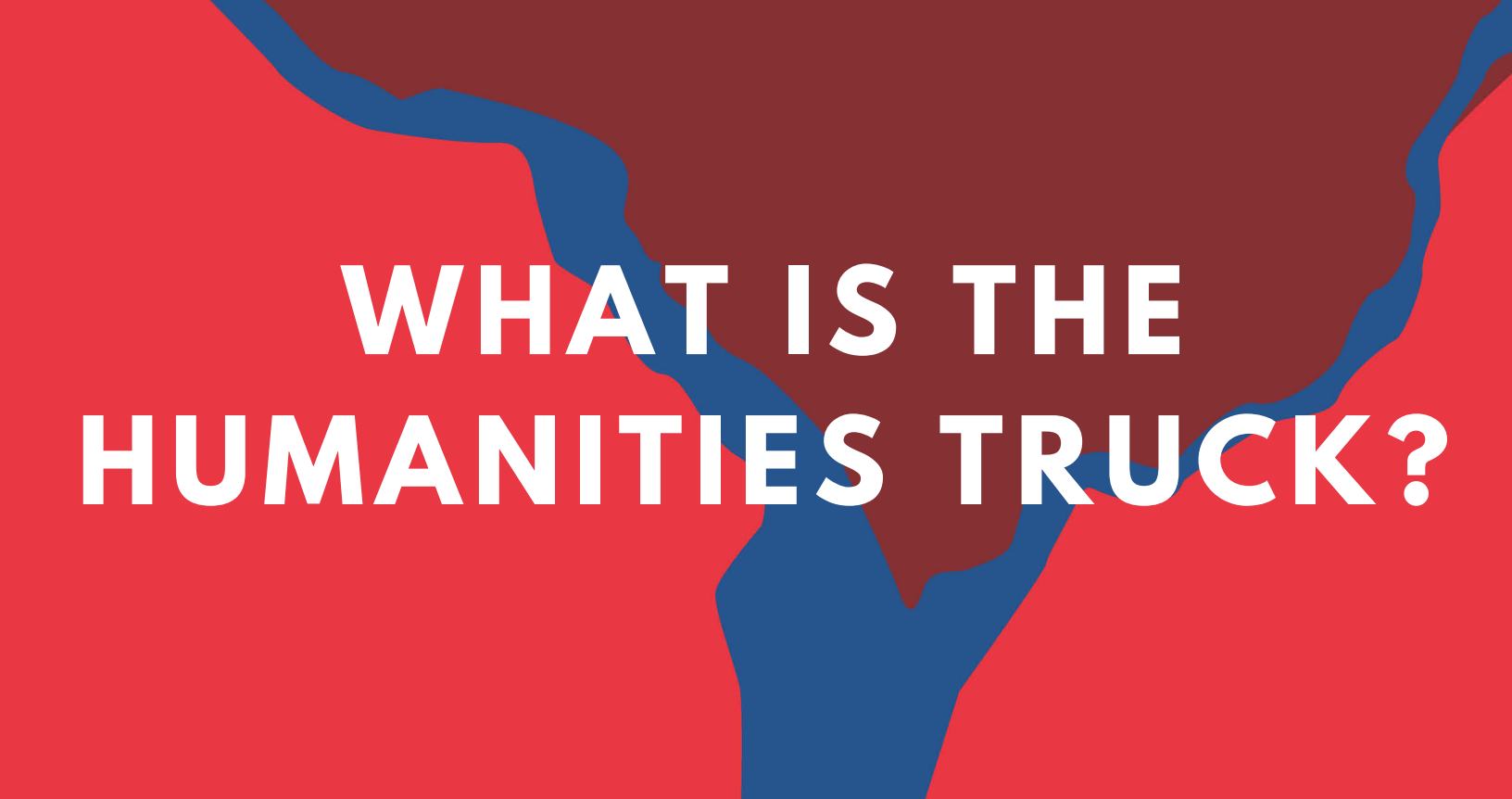
We collaboratively develop these stories into exhibits and performances that are impactful and accessible to communities across the city.



## CONNECT

We connect with people and engage in thoughtful discussions about events and issues relevant to those living and working across the DMV.





# WHAT IS THE HUMANITIES TRUCK?

Using the truck, we seek to mobilize the humanities and democratize the sharing and production of knowledge by bringing together scholars at American University with community residents across Washington, D.C.

The truck is mobile, yet it has the capacity to create dwellings in places such parks, streets, parking lots, and sidewalks as it parks and sets up its portable tent, chairs, and tables and people gather to watch films, create art, and sit down and engage in deep reflections about their personal experiences. The truck's custom design creates a unique space for facilitating participatory, cultural, and educational experiences in the humanities. It has the capacity to function as a recording studio, workshop and maker space, and exhibit and performance venue.



# HOW DO WE MOBILIZE THE HUMANITIES?

People can engage with the truck's interior and exterior spaces. The exterior features powerful speakers, an all-weather flat screen television, and brackets for attaching a 120" roll-down movie screen for film showings. The magnetized exterior wall of the truck can serve as an exhibition space or also be used to facilitate workshops. The interior of the truck is sound-insulated, equipped with air-conditioning, a second flat-screen TV, and ceiling speakers. It is modular and flexible as tables and shelving can be easily added and moved. The space can function as a recording studio for doing oral histories, a digitization station, a workshop space, or a pop-up exhibit gallery.

The Humanities Truck is made possible through funding from the Henry Luce Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and with additional support from American University.

# A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

SEPTEMBER 1, 2018 - AUGUST 31, 2019

1,427

PEOPLE ENGAGED  
IN FALL 2018

798

PEOPLE ENGAGED  
IN SPRING 2019

1,159

PEOPLE ENGAGED  
IN SUMMER 2019

FOR A TOTAL OF  
3,384  
PARTICIPANTS FOR  
YEAR ONE

**1**

**FORUM**

**2**

**FILM  
SCREENINGS**

**11**

**WORKSHOPS**

**37**

**INTERVIEWS**

**16**

**EXHIBITS**

**1**

**DIGITAL EXHIBIT**



# INTRODUCING OUR FACULTY FELLOWS 2018-2019

The Humanities Truck Fellows include a multi-disciplinary array of scholars, both faculty and graduate students, who are committed to the practice of community-based research. The Truck Fellows are committed to an ethically grounded, collaborative research process as they engage communities in the DC metropolitan region. The Truck creates an exciting tool that draws these Fellows together to engage in deeper dialogue with one another in order to help enhance each other's practice.

As a platform, the Humanities Truck is designed to facilitate collaborative community-based research, scholarship, and exhibitions. These collaborations take time and can take many different forms. The Humanities Truck Project Fellowship program provides a year for the Truck Fellows to be able to use the truck to develop these community relationships. Truck Fellows are expected to build a collaborative process that involves community partners in each phase of their projects, from research and documentation, to interpretation and scholarly creation in the form of accessible exhibitions and performances. Throughout the year, Truck Fellows meet together to reflect upon the effective practices of community-engaged scholarship, and also to share the findings of their own projects.



# DAN KERR

Working alongside other visionaries at American University, Kerr, an associate professor of history at AU, spearheaded and now directs the Humanities Truck Project. He is an active community and oral historian committed to the democratization of knowledge production. Since his earliest work with the Cleveland Homeless History Project, he has sought out ways to bring the oral histories he has collected back to the communities they originated from. Through community workshops, participants in his projects have collectively reflected upon and interpreted the gathered stories.

## WHOSE DOWNTOWN?

### The Past and Future of the Federal City Shelter

Sitting two blocks from the Capitol building, sits one of the nation's largest homeless shelters, which houses up to 1300 people a night in a World War II era building that was originally constructed by the federal government as part of an alley dwelling clearance policy. The shelter, as well as the building that houses it, have long and storied histories that are intertwined with national urban renewal and homeless assistance policies. Proposals, however, are calling for the demolition of the building for private redevelopment in 2021. The Whose Downtown? project will bring the truck to the shelter, document the experiences of the residents, share these experiences with other residents, and use the truck space as a workshop to reflect on the past and future of the shelter so that the residents can engage more effectively with the planning processes that will dramatically impact their lives. This project will continue through the duration of the grant and will document what could potentially be the last years in this iconic shelter's existence.



# LUDY GRANDAS

Ludy Grandas is a senior professorial lecturer at the Department of World Languages and Cultures. For the last few years she has been collaborating with Trabajadores Unidos de Washington, DC, a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower day laborers, low income workers as well as immigrant workers in DC. She has led two Community Based Learning Courses which connect AU students to these specific populations.

## JORNALEROS: MANOS INVISIBLES DAY LABORERS: INVISIBLE HANDS



Jornaleros: Manos Invisibles/Day laborers: Invisible Hands is a group exhibition of ten day laborers who photographed their own everyday lives as jornaleros using their cell phone cameras. Through their eyes, the day laborers' goal was to open an invisible yet all too present world to us; to take us through their day, to share their reality, one that for some is hopefully temporary but for others is a whole way of life. Put together, the photos take us from morning to evening and all that happens in between.

# ADRIENNE PINE

Adrienne Pine is a critical medical anthropologist at American University. While most of her work has examined the embodied impacts of violent and racist U.S. policy abroad, she has recently shifted her focus dramatically to examine the embodied impacts of violent, racist U.S. policy in the DMV.



## HISTORIC AFRICAN RIVER ROAD PROJECT



The Historic African River Road Project is a collaboration between students and faculty of the AU Anthropology Department and Montgomery County, MD communities originally founded during the Reconstruction Era by free and formerly-enslaved people of African descent. Begun as a class project aimed at using the tools of ethnography to support the River Road, Scotland and Tobytown communities in their struggles against displacement and the desecration of their cemeteries, it has grown into a collaborative effort to document and celebrate the rich histories of these communities on a larger scale. In 2018, the AU Library Archives opened its Historic African River Road Connections (HARRC) Collection. Project participants were excited to make use of the Humanities Truck in the interactive, on-site analysis and curation of community documents, artifacts, and oral histories, and in conducting other forms of ethnographic research in preparation for curating the Summer 2019 Katzen Museum Historic African River Road exhibit.



# MJ RYMSZA-PAWLOWSKA

MJ Rymsza-Pawlowska grew up in D.C. and is thrilled to be living and working here! An assistant professor in AU's Department of History, MJ is interested in popular history, form, and representation, MJ's research asks how our understanding and portrayal of the past changes alongside larger cultural shifts. Her first book, *History Comes Alive: Public History and Popular Culture in the 1970s* was published in 2017.



## COMMUNITY HISTORY SNAPSHOTS



In the Spring of 2019, graduate students from American University's M.A. Program in Public History worked with Project Partners to create, develop, and document four Community History Snapshots that put the present and the past into conversation with one another. A "Snapshot" is a part of the community's past that speaks directly to its present: in Cleveland Park, the historic Park N' Shop site is central to a conversation about the nature of the neighborhood and today's retail landscape and. As we approach the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage, a new generation of student activists at American University are curious about its history. In Tenleytown, neighbors are learning about Reno City, a vibrant African American community that was eradicated in the 1930s. In Shepherd Park, white and black residents formed Neighbors Inc. and fought against blockbusting practices. Today, neighbors continue to work to build a strong sense of community.

# BENJAMIN STOKES

Benjamin Stokes is a civic media scholar and designer at American University with the Game Lab and in the School of Communication. His designs for cities have introduced neighbors through play, and retold local history with rebuilt payphones. Previously, Benjamin co-founded Games for Change, the movement hub for advancing social change with games. Benjamin's publications include research on participatory design, neighborhood storytelling, and urban mapping by bicycle.



## NEIGHBORHOOD STORYTELLING SYSTEM



### New Ways to Circulate Community Voices and Shared History

This project investigates how the truck can be part of a “storytelling system” for neighborhoods, including to bring museum content to the streets. The Truck features stories from the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum (ACM), and its anniversary exhibit “A Right to The City.” We connect the truck to residents’ cell phones, paper maps, and even custom phone booths to record new stories. We are investigating how strong neighborhoods can tell their own stories by connecting platforms, especially physical to digital. In partnership with the DC Public Library and with funding from the ACM, the truck will anchor a series of activities and events around the city, each tied to neighborhood history and identity.

# INTRODUCING OUR FACULTY FELLOWS 2019-2020



# MARY ELLEN CURTIN



Mary Ellen Curtin is a professor and the director of the American Studies program at American University. Her recent research is a political and personal biography of the first black woman from the South elected to Congress, Rep. Barbara Jordan of Houston, Texas. As her research on Jordan draws to a close, Mary Ellen is looking forward to exploring similar issues regarding sexuality, race, and activism in a local context in Washington, D.C.

## **TAKING THE TRUCK OUT!**

### **Recording Lesbian Activism in the AIDS Crisis**

This project begins to take on the unique challenge of researching, preserving, interpreting, and presenting to the general public the history of lesbian women's leadership and activism during the HIV/AIDS crisis in Washington DC. Today, treating HIV/AIDS patients is viewed primarily as a medical issue that can be solved by science. But during the 1980s and 90s, activists insisted that the HIV/AIDS epidemic represented a political crisis and a lack of moral leadership. Lesbian activists converged on Washington DC, and joined with local residents and emerging public health organizations, such as Whitman Walker, to fight for the rights of AIDS patients and gay and lesbian communities. Decades later, the work of these activists to stand up to censorship laws and public scorn to fight for the lives of AIDS patients and those vulnerable to infection has receded from view. Contemporary audiences remain largely unfamiliar with the AIDS crisis, ignorant of lesbian history, and unaware of the discrimination faced by LGBTQ activists. This project brings together scholars, public historians, and activists to collaborate on recuperating and documenting the history of lesbian activist organizations in DC.

# LUDY GRANDAS

## D.C. LOW WAGE WORKERS AND LATINO IMMIGRANTS: HISTORIES THAT MATTER



The immigrant community in DC in general and the day laborers in particular, unlike other groups, stand in plain sight, yet they continue to be invisible even as they embody the nowadays popular stereotype of an undesirable immigrant who, among other things, comes from Mexico, is undocumented, “steal our jobs”, and will unlikely assimilate into US society. Trabajadores Unidos de Washington, DC (TUWDC) has provided a much needed respite for the day laborers through various programs intend to improve their everyday lives as key participants in the economic, social, political and cultural life of DC.

The collaboration between the Humanities Truck and TUWDC and the community members it serves will provide a unique opportunity to create and exchange knowledge and experience. This is chance to mobilize the humanities and democratize the sharing and production of knowledge by bringing together AU faculty, TUWDC and the DC Low Wage Workers and Latino Immigrants.



# LAURA WATERS HINSON

Laura Waters Hinson is an award-winning filmmaker and Assistant Professor in the Film and Media Arts Division of the School of Communication. Laura serves as the division's social impact coordinator and director of the Community Voice Lab.

## COMMUNITY VOICE LAB Colloaborative Film Initiative

The Community Voice Lab (CVL) will be using the Humanities Truck to run a community engagement project to take the 2019 CVL Film Series to non-profits across the city. Our goal is to host a least 3 public events in which we exhibit our short film series in an outdoor setting using the truck's mobile projection system. We will host talkbacks after each screening with stakeholders from each community, as well as the storytellers from the film, to get feedback on viewer responses to the films. The aim is to honor each specific community and to promote critical dialogue among these DC storytellers, their communities, and our students, arriving at a community interpretation of what these stories mean on a collective level. The CVL team will also be commencing production on a collaborative documentary centered on the newsroom at Street Sense Media, following a group of journalist filmmakers who have experienced homelessness as they report on the issue of DC's Tent City. The Street Sense filmmakers co-op will collaborate with our AU film team to tell the story of one of America's most unique newsrooms, reflecting the myriad perspectives on homelessness from reporters who know homelessness first hand. The Humanities Truck will be used as a mobile review system throughout the editing process, allowing our team to show unfinished cuts of the film to the people represented in the film for feedback.



# DAVID RAMOS

David Ramos is a designer, developer, and design educator based in Washington, D.C. He teaches in the graphic design program at American University and co-organizes Knowledge Commons DC. His research and creative practice looks at using products of design—maps, interactive systems, images, and in-person events to help us imagine landscapes past, present, and future. David holds an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design.

## BEFORE THE FLOOD:

using drawing, mapping, and design fiction to imagine an equitable response to climate change

This project examines the city's relationship with the river, and imagines what the city should look like in the future, in the face of rising seas and a climate in crisis. Too often, public process offers a no-build option, under which nothing new will arrive. In the current emergency, there is no no-build option. We'll use the Humanities Truck as a participatory, mobile design workshop, bringing visual tools to residents so that they can explore landscape changes in the past, share their own experiences with the city's built environment, and to test future possibilities for how the city can respond. The project focuses on waterfronts, streams, and streets. We see the city and its waterways as a palimpsest, built of layers reaching back to before European settlement; the truck's exhibits and programs will themselves be a palimpsest of personal visions, current data, and historical maps and images.

# BENJAMIN STOKES



## TWO INTERACTIVE LISTENING PILOTS

This project investigates how the truck can be part of a “storytelling system” for neighborhoods, including to bring museum content to the streets. We feature stories from the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum (ACM), and its anniversary exhibit “A Right to The City.” We connect the truck to residents’ cell phones, paper maps, and even custom phone booths to record new stories. We are investigating how strong neighborhoods can tell their own stories by connecting platforms, especially physical to digital. In partnership with the DC Public Library and with funding from the ACM, the truck will anchor a series of activities and events around the city, each tied to neighborhood history and identity.





# NAOKO WOWSUGI

Naoko Wowsugi is a community-engaged artist of Korean-Japanese descent. Using combined practices of visual art, local research, and community participation, Naoko's projects highlight and fortify everyday communal and interpersonal identities.

## GROUP PORTRAIT JOURNEY IN D.C.

With the current political climate, there is a strong need to showcase our connection with people of all kinds, rather than what separates us. Group Portrait Journey in D.C. is a series of group portraits that will visually trace the intersectional nature of personal identity and our intangible connections as one large community in Washington, DC.

The goal of the project is to document a series of social groups in formal portraits over the course of a year that will visually show how, through one individual, diverse groups within the city are connected to one another. In the process, the project will explore what we mean by the word “group” and invite participants to elaborate on their own notions of belonging—and perhaps surprise viewers by showing how many social roles one person can occupy. The project is part documentary, part archive, part participatory, and part community art.

# INTRODUCING OUR GRADUATE FELLOWS 2019-2020

The Humanities Truck graduate fellows run the behind-the-scenes operations in the office, from designing the exhibits to archiving the exhibits. The graduate fellows also facilitate the faculty fellows' year-long projects by helping them to imagine and realize the potential of the Truck.

## **A word from one of our graduate fellows:**

*"Working with the Humanities Truck provides the ideal opportunity to come alongside partners in the D.C. community, listen to their stories, and collaborate on how to amplify their collective voices in a meaningful and honoring way."*

**- Carmen Bolt**



# MAREN ORCHARD

Maren is a graduate student at American University pursuing her MA in Public History. She earned her BA in Public History and Women & Gender Studies from Ball State University in her hometown of Muncie, IN. Her research interests include reproductive justice. Working with the Humanities Truck is an ideal experience because it provides her a hands-on opportunity to take the humanities into communities through community-based projects.

# CARMEN BOLT

Carmen is a graduate student at American University pursuing her Ph.D. in History with a focus on public history and environmental history. She comes to AU from William & Mary where she worked as Oral Historian for the past three years. Her research interests include oral history, public memory, and disaster studies, and she is particularly interested in how communities are impacted by and respond to disaster events.



# JENNA GOFF

Jenna is pursuing her MA in Public History at American University. Her research interests include women's history and local history, especially when used as a tool for community engagement. With a BA in English and French from Davidson College, Jenna believes in an interdisciplinary approach to engaging the past. She is thrilled to be working on the Humanities Truck, where she can get hands-on experience in involving a variety of communities with history and the humanities in the DMV.



# KIMBERLY OLIVER

Kimberly is a graduate student in the Public History program at American University. She received her BA in History and Anthropology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her research interests include public memory and community histories, particularly in the context of women's and Southern history.



# MEGHAN DIECKMANN

Meghan is a graduate student in the Public Anthropology MA program at American University. She graduated in June 2018 with a BS in Anthropology and Geography from California Polytechnic State University, SLO. Her undergraduate research capstone paper analyzed welfare policies in the United States and how these changing policies affect different demographics of women. Her research interests include the intersections of gender, race, and class - and she is excited to apply these interests to local issues in the DMV.



# JULIE HAWKS

Julie developed the Humanities Truck website and community archive during the 2018-2019 school year. Julie is a PhD candidate in twentieth-century history at American University where her research focuses on the politics of memory and identity, public commemoration, material culture, racism, gender studies.

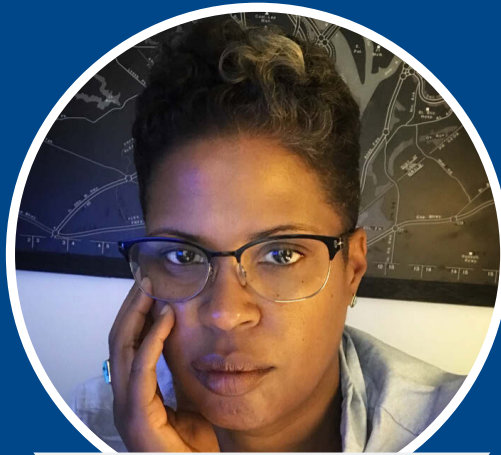


# COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD



**Samir Meghelli**

Smithsonian Anacostia  
Community Museum



**Kerrie Cotten  
Williams**

DC Public Library



**Noel Lopez**

National Park Service



**Kimberly  
Springle**

Charles Sumner School  
Museum & Archives



**Naima  
Jefferson**

Shepard Park Citizens  
Association



**Nancy Shia**

Community  
Photographer

# HUMANITIES TRUCK COMMITTEE



**MJ Rymza-  
Pawlowska**

Assistant Professor of  
History



**Adrienne Pine**

Associate Professor of  
Anthropology and  
Director, Health Inequity &  
Care Program



**Leslie Nellis**

Associate Archivist,  
University Library



**Rob Albro**

Research Associate  
Professor, Center for  
Latin American and  
Latino Studies



**Jane Palmer**

Professorial Lecturer in  
the Department of  
Justice, Law, and  
Criminology



**Juliana  
Martinez**

Assistant Professor,  
World Languages &  
Culture

# AN OVERVIEW OF EVENTS AND PROJECTS

September 2018 - August 2019

DC History Conference: Whose Downtown?  
November 2-3, 2018

DC Homeless Memorial  
December 20, 2018

Scotland Oral History Day  
February 17, 2019

AU Scholars Research Symposium  
April 13, 2019

Invisible Hands: Journaleros  
April 19, 2019

Community Snapshots: Reno City  
April 27, 2019

Who is DC?  
May 2, 2019

Adams Morgan Day Festival  
September 9, 2018

Humanities Truck Movie Night  
October 2, 2018

Faculty Retreat  
October 12, 2018

Class of 1968: Retrospective  
October 19, 2018

Whitman-Walker Walk and 5K to End HIV  
December 1, 2018

Truck Speaker Series: Jeremy Brecher  
December 20, 2018

Grant Writing Workshop  
February 26, 2019

Community Snapshots: Shepherd Park  
April 14, 2019

Community Snapshots: Cleveland Park  
April 27, 2019

Community Snapshots: AU Archives  
April 30, 2019



**Downtown Displaced**  
**May 20, 2019**

**Invisible Hands: Jornaleros**  
**May 22, 2019**

**Capital Pride Parade**  
**June 8, 2019**

**Pride at SAAM**  
**June 9, 2019**

**Late Skate Series**  
**June, July, and August 2019**

**Fort Stevens**  
**July 13, 2019**

**Murals Festival**  
**July 14, 2019**

**Busboys and Poets**  
**July 17, 2019**

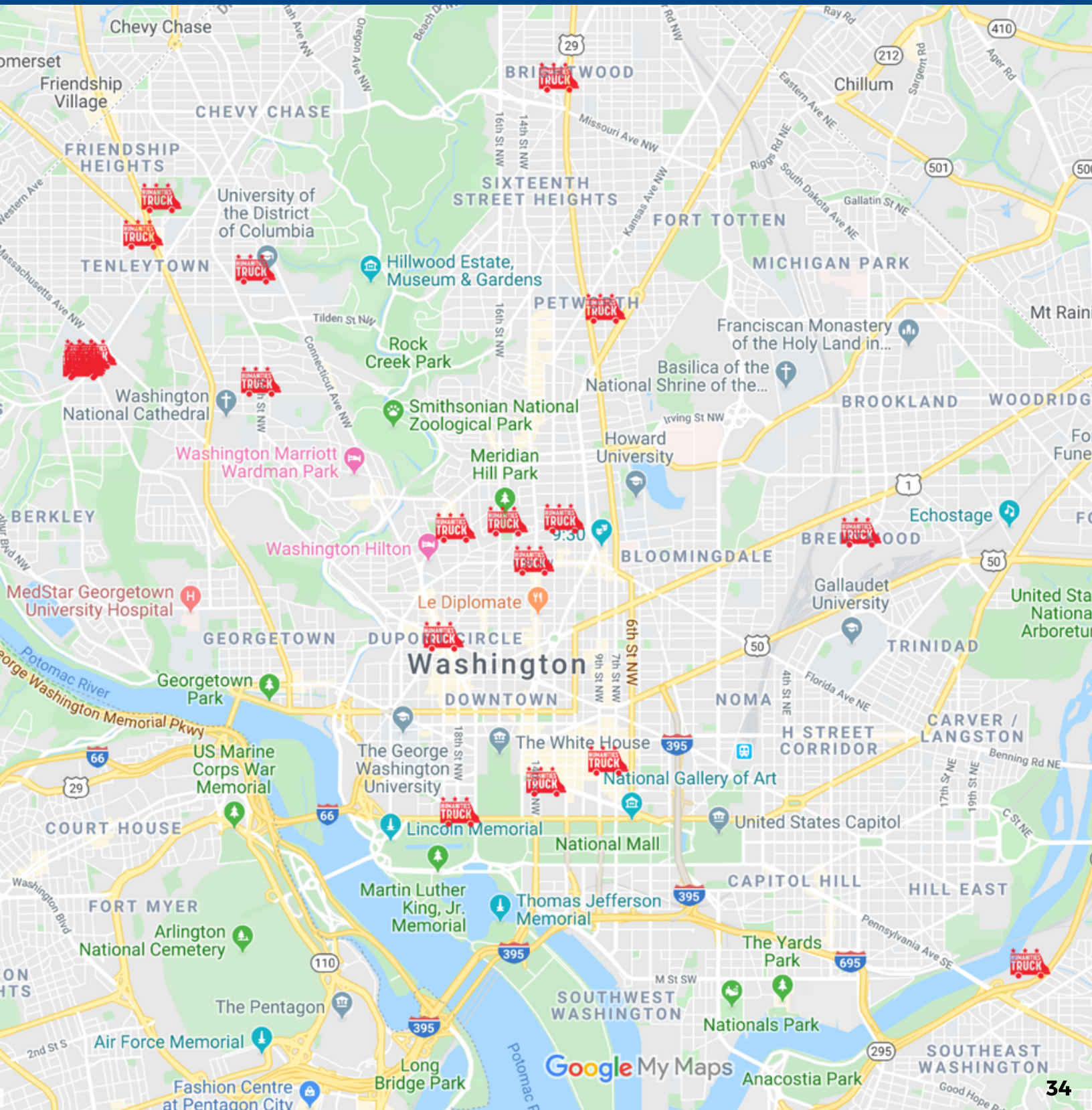
**Humanities Truck Grant Writing Workshop**  
**February 26, 2019**

**CCNV Exhibit**  
**July 31, 2019**

**Teacher Preparation Day**  
**August 21, 2019**



# WHERE'S THE TRUCK?



# EVENTS AND PROJECTS

## Adams Morgan Day - September 9, 2018

The Humanities Truck made its first public appearance at the 40th annual Adams Morgan Day. Humanities Truck Fellow Dr. Benjamin Stokes partnered with the DC Public Library and the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum to promote the “A Right to the City” exhibition, curated by Samir Meghelli. Stokes also introduced technology for the DC Storytelling System, an ongoing Humanities Truck project. The Humanities Truck powered DCPL’s community stage to share live music, dance performances, and interviews with long-time residents. A quick collaboration was formed with local, neighborhood resident, activist, and photographer, Nancy Shia to display a pop-up exhibit of her photography. Festival attendees could take a moment to step out of the rain and into the Humanities Truck to reflect on ways in which the neighborhood has both changed and remained the same. Adams Morgan Day provided a model for future festival-style events.



# Humanities Truck Move Night - October 2, 2018

The Truck partnered with the American University Scholars program to host a movie night for first-year students on the campus quad. AU Scholars offered six groups of first-year students the chance to do in depth research, one course focused on foreign films. The Truck brought the research and interest of one course to the entire AU scholars program. The event screened two films: *Por Primera Vez* (1969), a short documentary film chronicling a mobile cinema truck that brought moving pictures to a rural village for the first time, and *Modern Times* (1936), starring Charlie Chaplin.



# Class of 1968: Retrospective - October 19, 2018

The Humanities Truck collaborated with Leslie Nellis and the American University Archives and Special Collections to create an exhibit on the Class of 1968 for All-American Weekend. The Truck played Thurgood Marshall's 1968 speech at American University on the external speakers and asked graduates to share their memories through short video oral history interviews. The Humanities Truck engaged current students by encouraging them to visit the exhibit and ask a question about AU in the 1960s on a talk-back board on the truck. This event solidified a lasting partnership with AU Archives and Special Collections and introduced us to the campus community.



# DC History Conference: Whose Downtown?

## November 2 and 3, 2018

The Humanities Truck greeted over 200 conference attendees at the DC History Conference. Based on his previous research, Dr. Dan Kerr created an exhibit called “Whose Downtown? The Past and Future of the CCNV Shelter” in conversation with the conference theme of Mobility, Movement, and Migration. Attending the D.C History Conference was productive for networking with local historians and D.C. organizations.



# Walk & 5K to End HIV - December 1, 2018

On the 30th anniversary of World AIDS day, the Truck joined thousands of participants at Whitman-Walker Health's annual Walk & 5K to end HIV. The truck housed a pop-up exhibit "We Can See the Finish Line: Origins on the Walk & 5K to End HIV." Curated by Hannah Byrne, an AU public history graduate program student and Whitman-Walker employee, the event explored new avenues to collaborate with community groups and AU students to research and create exhibits.



# DC Homeless Memorial - December 20, 2018

Each year for the past six years, activists seeking to end homelessness have held a vigil on the longest night of the year to remember those who have died while homeless. The truck joined the march to Freedom Plaza and stayed for the overnight vigil. The truck displayed the "Whose Downtown?" exhibit, which explores the history of activism to end homelessness in D.C. The exhibit generated discussions which led to the creation of the Downtown Displaced project in the spring.





# Scotland Oral History Day - February 17, 2019

The Scotland AME Zion church hosted the first Scotland Oral History Day, alongside first-year graduate students in the “Craft of Anthropology” course who organized the event. Students outfitted the iconic red and blue truck with significant artifacts and documents from and about the community. Maps, newspaper articles and artifacts were exhibited inside the truck. Alongside the materials, a documentary played on the inside screen of the Humanities Truck about neighboring church choirs and their music. The most notable documents were land deeds for the Scotland community from 1880 and 1887. Pictures of past and current congregation members, as well as members of neighboring communities were also featured inside the truck. Although it was a chilly afternoon, Scotland church members and leaders offered a warm welcome and invaluable feedback on the presentation of materials in the mobile museum. Scotland church members have graciously allowed students to work alongside them in rewriting narratives about their community.



# Humanities Truck Grant Writing Workshop

## February 26, 2019

The Humanities Truck worked with American University's development office to organize a grant writing workshop for faculty and graduate students interested in working with the Truck. Following the workshop, two projects received outside funding. Laura Waters Hinson won a production grant from HumanitiesDC, a sub-grantee of the National Endowment for the Arts, to use the truck and produce a collaborative documentary on the issue of homelessness and tent city in downtown DC. Dan Kerr, Maren Orchard, and Sierra Solomon received funding from National Park Service to use the truck to conduct an oral history project on Malcolm X Park (Meridian Hill Park).

## Humanities Truck Speaker Series: Jeremy Brecher

### March 20, 2019

The Humanities Truck and Humanities Lab hosted the first inaugural lecture in the new Humanities Truck Lecture Series. Jeremy Brecher, a lifelong practitioner of community-based history shared a talk reflecting on the history of "history from below" and how popular participation in interpreting the past might contribute to shaping the future. The talk was instructive and well attended. Faculty, students, and community members attended. For the rest of his visit, Brecher advised ongoing Humanities Truck projects.



# AU Scholars Research Symposium - April 13, 2019

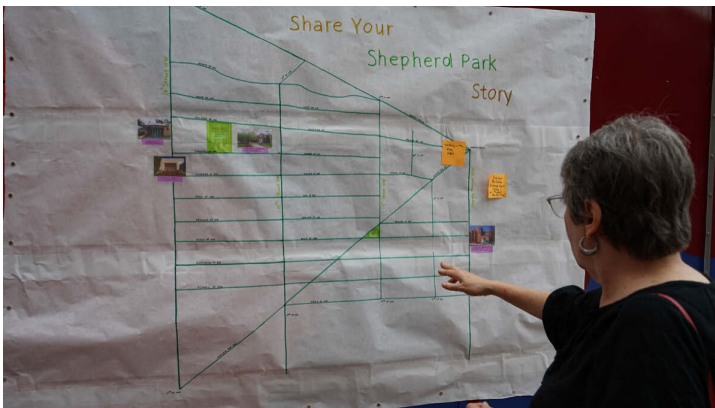
The Humanities Truck made its inaugural appearance at the AU Scholars Research Symposium where it showcased the original research conducted by first year students. Students from two scholars courses, "Whose Downtown" taught by Dr. Dan Kerr and "Religious [Minorities] in DC" taught by Dr. Martyn Oliver, exhibited their work. In the morning, Dr. Oliver's students presented posters utilizing the Truck's magnetic exterior with a video they created to showcase their research on the exterior screen. In the afternoon, Dr. Kerr's class presented their exhibit on CCNV shelter. The students conducted archival research at the George Washington University's Gelman Special Collections, and wrote and curated an exhibit based on their research.



# Community Snapshots: Shepherd Park

## April 14, 2019

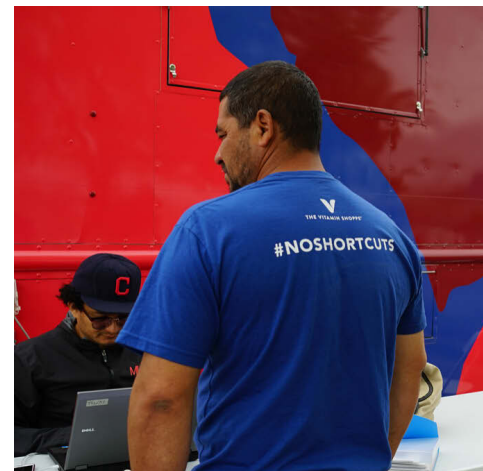
This community event was designed to encourage residents to share their memories and to contribute to the neighborhood's effort to later create a historical society. We helped a team of students in the Public History spring practicum course design a “collecting event.” They conducted oral histories, scanned residents’ documents, and designed a map where residents could connect their memories spatially to the neighborhood. The event was excellent for networking in another D.C. neighborhood, Shepherd Park.



# Invisible Hands: Jornaleros / Manos Invisibles: Day Laborers

April 19, 2019

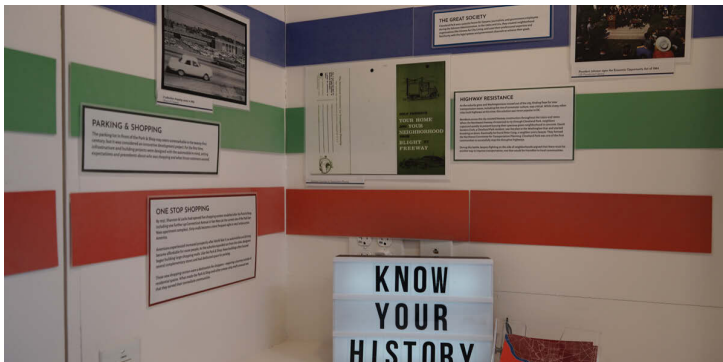
This exhibit was organized by Professor Ludy Grandas and represents a collaboration between American University students, faculty and staff, Trabajadores Unidos of Washington, D.C. It was sponsored by the Humanities Truck at American University; the Department of World Languages and Cultures, the Studio Art Program, the College of Arts and Sciences, and the D.C Commission on the Arts and Humanities. Invisible Hands: Jornaleros/Manos Invisibles: Day Laborers is a co-curated exhibition created by ten day laborers who used their cell phone cameras to photograph their own everyday lives as jornaleros. The goal of the exhibition for both Ludy Grandas and for the day laborers, was to open an invisible yet all too present world to us; to take us through their day, sharing their reality— a reality hopefully temporary for some, but for others is a way of life. Put together, the photos take us from morning to evening and all that happens in between: the unnamed famous corner, the parking lot, the street, the construction site, a home. Individually, each photograph encourages the viewer to observe familiar spaces, faces, gestures in order to challenge our own perception of the photographer and the context where the photo was taken. For the first time, using the Humanities Truck, the exhibition was returned to the community to whom it belonged. During the exhibit, TUWDC representatives provided resources and photo IDs to day laborers.



# Community Snapshots: Cleveland Park

## April 27, 2019

The Cleveland Park practicum project was an exercise in working with an invested community, reflective on the past and excited for the future. This project carefully considered these different perspectives by communicating with neighbors from different sides of the vigorous neighborhood debate about the future of the community. We strove to ensure that all residents would see their perspectives represented in the exhibit but also challenged through the context of the history of development. The merits of the Park & Shop as history, as architecture, as a retail center, and as a place of contention provided the community voices to an exhibit about history, development, retail, transportation, and making a neighborhood a place.



# Community Snapshots: Reno City

April 27, 2019

Finding Reno explores the story of the displaced community at Reno City and the daily lives of its former residents. Through a scrapbook-like experience, the public was invited to participate in the remembrance of the community by investigating historic images from the town and contributing to a conversation about the history and legacy of Reno City. This event provided an opportunity to think about how to create events for communities no longer in existence. Though it wasn't intended to be an event to spark future research, the methods used to invoke memories could be useful for a workshop-model event or as a story-gathering exhibition.



# Community Snapshots: AU Archives

## April 30, 2019

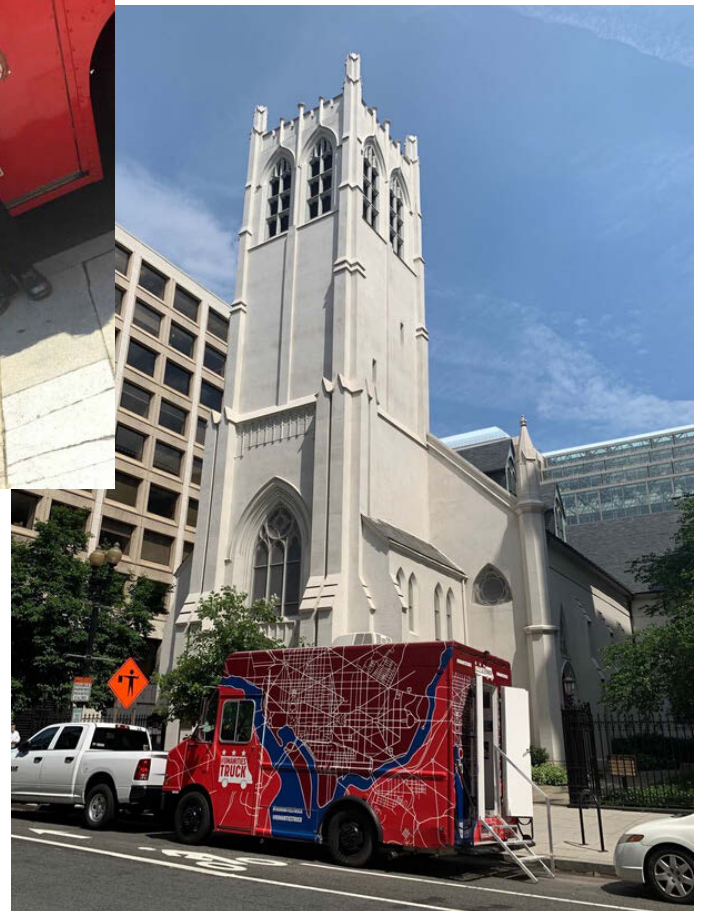
This exhibition told the history of the founding of American University and the Washington College of Law through the lens of women's activism. The exhibit was on AU's campus and welcomed students to reflect on how they are making their voices heard. This exhibition further solidified the Humanities Truck's working relationship with the AU Archives and Special Collections.





# Downtown Displaced - May 20, 2019

The Downtown Displaced project involved an extensive collaboration between the Humanities Truck, Dan Kerr and students from his Engaged Community History course, and the Street Sense Media Filmmakers Cooperative. The group conducted eight workshops from January through May as it co-researched, co-interpreted and co-curated the project which ultimately became the “Downtown Displaced: A Case Study of Gentrification in Mount Vernon Square, 1840-Present” exhibit. The truck delivered the exhibit to the Street Sense Media office downtown. In June, the filmmakers co-op did a performance at the Carnegie Library, which drew upon this research.



# Invisible Hands: Jornaleros / Manos Invisibles: Day Laborers

## May 22, 2019

In this iteration of the exhibition Invisible Hands: Jornaleros/ Manos Invisibles: Day Laborers, we set up outside the Office of Latino Affairs at 14th St and U. Few people displayed much interest in the truck's presence, and it was difficult to get people inside or to talk with us. Staff from the Office of Latino Affairs did come down to see and talk about the exhibit, which was a beneficial contact. The low attendance and interest in the exhibit at this location could lend itself to thinking creatively about who exhibits are for and what taking something into the "community," broadly defined, looks like when there isn't an explicit interest in a pop-up exhibit. This was a reminder about location and thinking carefully about how to get people interested in the Humanities Truck and the exhibits being brought into the city.



# Capital Pride Parade - June 8, 2018

The Humanities Truck partnered with the AU LGBTQ+ Affinity Group on campus to provide a support vehicle during the Capital Pride Parade. This event provided the Humanities Truck with its largest audience yet! AU was the only university to participate in the parade, and the Humanities Truck helped the group stand out in addition to supplying a place to store water and snacks on a hot day!



# Pride at SAAM - June 9, 2018

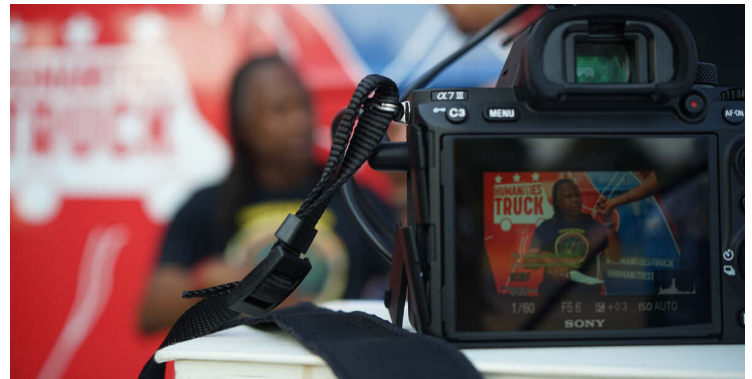
The Humanities Truck provided outdoor entertainment during the Smithsonian American Art Museum's Pride Festival festivities. A team of staff and students at AU planned the events and activities. The theme, speakOUT!, guided the team to create activities which allowed for participants to share what pride means to them. The walls of the truck were papered and turned into a space to graffiti the walls. Visitors also made buttons and could contribute to a video diary. The Truck also hosted community performances from three queer DMV groups. This event stretched our capacity and gave us another opportunity to expand our offerings in a festival-setting. We benefited from having a number of volunteers help us plan and execute the event.



# NPS Late Skate Series

## June, July, and August 2019

The Humanities Truck joined the National Park Service for Late Skate at Anacostia Park Roller Skating Pavilion. During the event, community members, neighbors, family, and friends host cookouts and gather at the pavilion to skate and do family-oriented activities including face painting. At three separate events, in June, July, and August, we conducted brief interviews with community members about the importance of Anacostia Park to the neighborhood including themes about go-go music and skating. After recording, we would play the interviews on the opposite side of the truck to quickly allow narrators and spectators to see themselves and hear their story.



# Fort Stevens - July 13, 2019

In partnership with the Alliance to Preserve the Civil War the Defenses of Washington and the National Park Service, the Humanities Truck was welcomed to the 155th anniversary event for the Battle of Fort Stevens. The Humanities Truck featured an exhibition curated by local historian Marvin Tupper Jones and a presentation created by Loretta Neumann. The truck also powered a community stage where several talks took place. This endeavor set an excellent precedent for how to work with community groups on a one-time event with a highly invested audience.



# Murals Festival - July 14, 2019

The Humanities Truck made an appearance at the Art Museum of the Americas for the 2019 Murals Festival. The Truck featured some posters and oral history videos. The vision was to play music in the parking lot for dancing. However, extreme temperatures prohibited this aspect of the event. Despite this disappointment, and low attendance numbers, we were able to make contact with new communities, especially in Latinx and artistic communities.



# A Right to the City (Shaw) - July 17, 2019

The Humanities Truck partnered with the Anacostia Community Museum to circulate its exhibit “A Right to the City” while the museum was closed for renovations throughout the summer. Using our new large format printer, we customized the panels of the exhibit to be compatible with the truck’s wall space. Benjamin Stokes brought his storytelling system to a sidewalk near 14th and U Streets NW.





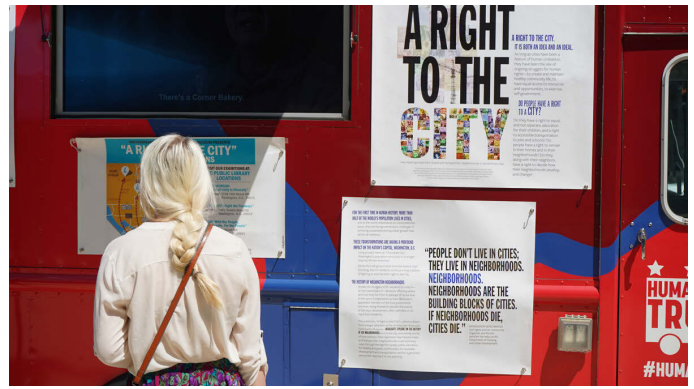
# Resistance and Revolution - July 31, 2019

The exhibit “Resistance and Revolution: The Struggle to End Homelessness in the Nation’s Capital” further developed the themes raised in the Whose Downtown? project. Throughout the spring, AU students delved into papers at the Special Collections Research Center at George Washington University from several activists involved with the campaigns of the Community for Creative Non-Violence. The SCRC generously allowed us to bring original photos and objects from these collections to circulate in our truck exhibit. We brought the exhibit to the Downtown Day Services Center, GWU, the Patricia Handy Place for Women, and the Federal City Shelter.



# Teacher Preparation Day - August 21, 2019

This exhibit helped recruit D.C. public school teachers to bring history into their classrooms for the rest of the year. Our approach had two elements: inside the truck we featured content from the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum, in hopes that teachers would bring their classes to see the full exhibition in the museum in the fall. Second, outside the truck we had our payphone for our storytelling system, and handed out packs of calling cards, so that teachers could easily assign their classes to call in later and hear the oral histories featured in the exhibition.



# Mapping the Road Ahead

Dan Kerr

As we move into the second year of the project, we expect to deepen our work with communities across Washington, D.C. Our second phase projects are well underway, and they are led by six Humanities Truck Fellows doing outstanding work. We also have five stellar graduate fellows who manage our website, community archive, and our digital audio and video collections. They are doing a fantastic job running new in-house exhibit making workshops. The truck stop is bustling with activity.

In the coming year we hope to draw upon the expertise and energy of this core staff to take the truck out on the street more frequently and to use it more creatively and with greater impact. In our first year we became keenly aware of the seasonal fluctuations of events, festivals, and community gatherings. Building off of our work with Adams Morgan Day, the D.C. Homeless Memorial, the Pride Festival, and the Anniversary of the Battle of Fort Stevens, we expect to be more proactive as we plan truck events that will coincide with African American History Month, Women's History Month, and a range of other community festivals.

We are working to further develop interactive and content rich components of our website and our exhibits. We expect to more fully utilize Benjamin Stokes' "storytelling system," which creates opportunities for engaging people through their own cell phones and our "classic" landlines. We also hope to develop a new interactive kiosk that will allow truck visitors to engage with the audio and video content gathered in their communities.

We are excited to Keep on Truckin'!



