Meet the Humanities Responders

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Please sign up for the Center's mailing list to receive further updates on the Humanities Responders. Send an email to info@humanities.wisc.edu and provide your email address and/or mailing address.

MADISON, Wis. (June 3, 2020) – As Wisconsin and the world navigate this pandemic, the UW-Madison Center for the Humanities called for students to serve as "Humanities Responders" by creating remote projects that serve and bolster the current work of community organizations, non-profits, cultural institutions, and public agencies.

The call is being answered.

Please welcome a few of the first Humanities Responders and learn more about how they’re leading projects and supporting community partners right now.

**Justyn Kase Huckleberry**

*Protecting the Wolf River: Activism, Tradition, and Place*

Amidst COVID-19, as mineral exploration on the Wolf River continues apace, mining activists face the logistical challenge of how to safely organize and gather during a pandemic. Justyn Kase Huckleberry, a Ph.D. candidate in the Nelson Institute’s Environment and Resources program, is partnering with the Wolf River Action Committee, an interdisciplinary and collaborative group of tribal members and experts, to help protect the environmental and cultural resources in the area. Huckleberry aims to create a website to emphasize the oral tradition of the tribal communities connected to the Wolf River to give activists a platform and resources to counter the logistical challenges of activism during a pandemic.

**Orion Lee Risk**

*GenderTalks: Wisconsin and Iowa*

Drawing from a background in theater production and directing, Orion Lee Risk aims to transform online conversations among trans, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming people into documentary theater. Risk, a Master's student in Interdisciplinary Theatre Studies, has a scholarly interest in how theater can contribute to a more equitable world, and is connecting people in Dane County and Black Hawk County, Iowa, an epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S. Risk is seeking to bring people together through online dialogues on gender experiences and theater performances at which invited audiences of any gender can listen in.
In rural Wisconsin, Latin American farmworkers may struggle to communicate with English-speaking farm owners, and often face geographic and cultural isolation and xenophobic attacks. Without advocates or finances, these farmworkers struggle to provide for basic needs, especially much-needed access to legal representation. Dustin Cohan, a doctoral candidate in History, is partnering with Legal Action Wisconsin and Latinx grocery stores across the Fox Valley to offer access to legal services and to document and share farmworkers’ experiences through oral history interviews.

Alexandra Lakind
Essential but Expendable: Storying Experiences with Child Care Providers
Over the past decade, regulated family child care in Wisconsin has declined, reflecting the trend of neglect that de-professionalizes the mostly women who do this work. Today, these providers have become essential but expendable; society relies upon their work but the additional support offered has been wholly insufficient. In partnership with Satellite Family Child Care and Madison Public Library, Alexandra Lakind is working collaboratively to restore a professional development series that was canceled due to COVID-19, with an emphasis on full bilingual access and participation for Spanish-speakers. Lakind, a doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instruction and Environment and Resources, hopes providers will have a chance to engage in storytelling experiences that foster connection, reflection, and expression. Child care providers interested in signing up for this free series may do so at this Madison Public Library registration page.

Yidong Wang
Promote Trust and Collaboration in Queer Media Ecology: A Community Communication Coalescence
Yidong Wang’s Humanities Responder project explores the ways marginalized groups within LGBTQ+ communities can gain better access to community resources. Wang, a PhD candidate in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, will facilitate a discussion among the leading LGBTQ+ non-profits in Dane County to identify a common issue of need during the pandemic, discover previous barriers to collaboration, and coordinate community resources. The aim is to identify the connections (and disconnections) among community networks to increase our capacity to tackle common but critical challenges. Wang is partnering with Our Lives Magazine to publish a feature article and further publicity to highlight this unique collaboration.

Interested students: Undergraduate students, please learn more about being a Humanities Responder and apply with our HEX-U program; graduate students, please visit the HEX program.