

Patton pursues concealed histories, family ties on sabbatical in Germany

History has tended to disregard personal accounts that fail to fit into the narrative written by those in power. In the wake of World War II, some 5,000 biracial children were born and living in Germany — the sons and daughters of coupling between white German women and black American soldiers.

Professor Tracey Owens Patton, of the Department of Communication and Journalism, wants to tell these mothers' stories — and is racing against the clock to do so because many of these women are entering their nineties and passing away, taking their forgotten, or forbidden, stories to the grave.

"I think it's important to capture these histories and memories and experiences," Patton said. "Usually, we have the experiences of the soldiers, or we have the state-sanctioned experiences where you have a beginning and a middle and an end to how we learn and understand about World War II in our history classes."

As the daughter of one of those estimated 5,000 children, Patton is taking a personal approach to research. She traveled to Germany this year to interview several of these women, including her own grandmother, and those biracial children.

On sabbatical for the 2018-2019 academic year, Patton spent time in nine German cities, adding to a research project that will eventually grow into a book about the international couplings of black U.S. servicemen or other soldiers of color and white German women, and the experiences of those women and their children.

"Most of those children were adopted out into more diverse locales, like the UK, Denmark, and the United States," she said.

This diaspora was encouraged by the German government — which sought to keep Germany white — and assisted by the United States government, which did not allow interracial marriage at that time.

Travelling throughout Germany was essential for gaining the appropriate perspective on the historical forces at work in modern German culture, Patton said. Whereas previously her work had focused mainly on what she could gather from Berlin, Patton's sabbatical allowed her to gain a deeper appreciation.

"It would be like if you were going to do research on the

United States and you only go to New York — you're not going to get a really good understanding of the rest of the country," she said. "I really hadn't thought about the local level until I really was able to be on the ground for a long period of time and travel throughout the country."

For Patton, the hidden histories of these

unions and the children they made are tied to her own family heritage. Patton's mother and aunt were two of those children and it was upon meeting her grandmother — oma in German — for the first time in 2012 that sparked Patton's interest in both her own family history and the forgotten or untold stories of others in similar situations.

"Suddenly, I have this family experience that is all wrapped up in the war, before during and after but not quite a fit ... and I started to learn more and more about how my family got wrapped up in this international experience involving adoption," Patton said. "I never imagined I would learn more about World War I, or World War II, or post World War II."

But as a critical cultural rhetorician — a scholar of the "isms" — Patton recognized the importance of collecting and parsing these unique memories before they were lost forever.

"With my research I look at the interdependence between things like race, gender, power and how they interrelate culturally and rhetorically in education, media, myth, speeches," Patton said. "When I look through that lens, I'm looking at things through a cross-cultural communication interaction, as well as a transnational interaction."



Williams makes top 5 in entrepreneurship competition

A business idea and the need for a thesis persuaded journalism student Abbey Williams of Laramie to enter in the John P. Ellbogen Entrepreneurship competition. She ended up in the top five.

The competition is hosted every year by the College of Business and invites students of any major to enter with their business idea for a chance to win a \$25,000 grand prize. Competitors must make it through a series of rounds to win. Williams submitted her idea for an independent record label for local musicians.

"I entered the Ellbogen mainly because it would fulfill my Honors College Senior Thesis project, but also because I've always had a desire to help local musicians in Laramie," Williams said. "I had a little experience with marketing through courses on campus, but I never really imagined trying to become a business owner, and when I entered round one, I tried not to expect moving on to round two."

Williams made it to round two and had to prepare a business plan to pitch in front of a few judges. Williams conducted her own research to help create the plan. She also attended a series of seminars that covered various topics in business, including law and marketing, put on by the Ellbogen.

"In writing the business plan, I really wanted to show the judges how important local music is to the city of Laramie, not just to me," Williams said. "I talked to several local musicians, called record stores and producers to see if I could make this label thing work, not just for the competition, but for the town and its artists. It was a long process, but I learned a lot."

Public speaking, public relations and other courses Williams took through the Department of Communication and Journalism also greatly improved her written and oral pitches.

"As a student in the COJO department, I really felt like my major helped me get as far as I did in the competition," Williams said. "I've also learned so much about writing over my college career and how to write something that is exciting for people to read, which really helped make my written plan more interesting. Having support and encouragement from faculty in the department was also a huge help."

After pitching to judges in round two, Williams was then picked for the finals, making her one of five teams left to win the grand prize toward launching their business.

"I was in utter shock when I found out I made it into round three," Williams said. "Not only did I never see myself entering a competition like this, I didn't expect to have people care about it as much as I did. I guess my passion really showed in my pitch and showed how much music needs representation in Laramie."

Williams then conducted more research, where she said she

talked to "more people than I can even remember," including musicians, producers, members of the Wyoming Arts Council, professors, and her assigned mentor, Fred Schmechel from the Wyoming Business Technology Center.

"The more I was digging in my research, whether it was talking to people or reading articles and looking at data, I found the record label idea was slightly missing the mark for what Laramie needs to help the music scene thrive," Williams said. "I realized it would be better to start smaller than a label because a lot of bands aren't ready for a label to sign them. So I pivoted my idea to an artist development and booking agency."

Williams said this pivot was scary because it happened only

three weeks before her pitch, but she knew it would be more profitable for her and the artists if she started with this agency before moving to a label. She then began to center her pitch around helping artists grow through solidifying their brands and helping them make formal press kits to market themselves, along with gaining exposure through tour experience and booking more shows.

"I wanted my pitch to focus on the artists, but I knew not everyone I would be speaking to would be interested in music," Williams said. "I had to also focus on the culture aspect of my business to show the draw that a lively music scene could have for the town itself and the population. Through increased culture, the economy grows, and so do job opportunities."

Williams made her pitch in front of judges for the finals in the Marian H. Rochelle Gateway Center on April 18 and won honorable mention.

"Though I didn't win the competition, I am so grateful for the experience," Williams said. "I learned a lot more about the impact of music on the local level and made so many connections with people in the community. It was a lot of time and effort and at times very stressful and immersive, but I wouldn't change a thing."

Her mentor, Professor Cindy Price Schultz, was able to see the presentation to the judges. "Abbey did an outstanding job of presenting the need for arts and culture in Laramie and throughout the state of Wyoming," Price Schultz said. "She should be very proud of all she accomplished!"

Williams is unsure of launching the business to its full capacity without the funding, but has not given up on helping the Laramie music scene in smaller ways.

"Since the competition, I haven't looked at fully launching because of a lack of funds and the uncertainty of my future after graduation," Williams said. "I am helping some local artists book shows right now and I don't plan on stopping. If that grows into a larger job, then I will feel like I'm still contributing."



Williams also won several undergraduate recognitions from the COJO Department.

Hooker, Eischen honored for excellence in teaching

Two of just four graduate assistants across campus to be recognized for going above-and-beyond are GAs in the Department of Communication and Journalism.

Ashton Hooker and Jordan Eischen each received the Ellbogen Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award for academic year 2018-2019, which honors excellence in teaching.

They were recognized at the COJO Spring 2019 Banquet, and commended by mentors in the department.

"Jordan's skills as an instructor are evident by observing her in the classroom," writes Beau Bingham, senior lecturer in the Department of Communication and Journalism, and director of the Oral Communication Center. "Jordan guides students toward answers and solving problems. She accomplishes this by asking students a series of questions (to help students recall information). As a result,



Hooker (left) and Eischen (right) pose with Mary Ellbogen Garland, head of the Ellbogen Foundation.

students leave her classroom with increased confidence and feeling as if they accomplished the task themselves. This method of instruction is available to Jordan because of her in-depth knowledge of the subject matter she teaches."

Hooker also received praise for her service as a media writing graduate assistant, from Lecturer Mitzi Stewart, the course director.

"Frankly, Ashton's teaching is some of the strongest I have seen in my tenure of supervis-

ing graduate students," Stewart writes.

"Not only is she well-versed in the content and comes with professional experience, but she's also approachable and willing to help all students succeed."

Department of Communication and Journalism ranked 8th in nation for best value

The UW Department of Communication and Journalism was named one of the best of its kind in a national ranking that also placed university as 10th best college for the money.

College Factual placed the COJO Department even higher, in 8th place for the "Best Value for the Money" category.

This puts the department ahead of most of the other 507 communication and media studies analysis programs across the nation that were considered by College Factual.

"It's a large honor to be recognized for our stellar education," Department Head Cindy Price Schultz said.

"All of our faculty members, temporary lecturers and graduate teaching assistants contribute to the quality classroom experience, but without it being too expensive for the students."

The rankings are based on average time it takes a student to graduate, the quality provided by the school and average annual tuition costs.

"It's hard to beat University of Wyoming if you want to pursue Communication & Media Studies as a major," College Factual reported.

"Graduates of the communications program earn around \$36,564 in their early career salary and \$68,631 in their mid-career salary."

The College Factual website added that UW's location is a major sell, too.

"Laramie, Wyoming delivers a quaint small-town ambiance for students to learn in."

New UW trustee Bonner excels thanks to COJO

Newly appointed UW trustee and lawyer Brad Bonner has never worked a day of his adult life as a professional reporter.

And yet, you could say journalism runs in his blood.

Born and raised in Park County, Bonner and his siblings spent their adolescence lending a hand to the family business — *The Powell Tribune*.

"I grew up in a newspaper family," he said. "I was taking photographs for the newspaper when I was in my teens. I was writing for the newspaper all through high school, working every job in the newsroom."

So when he arrived at the University of Wyoming, his path was clear: enroll in the Journalism Department — later to be consolidated into the Department of Communication and Journalism — and pick up a pen and notepad for *The Branding Iron* student newspaper.

Bonner worked as a reporter, news editor, sports editor and — during his senior year — editor-in-chief, like his father before him.

Staring down the barrel of graduation, Bonner's path looked as obvious as it had when he arrived.

"I thought I was going to come home and run the newspaper," he said.

Life had other plans.

"A week and a half — ten days — before I graduated from my undergraduate degree, I got a call from Sen. Alan Simpson," Bonner said. "It changed the course of my life."

He called his parents in Powell and discussed his options. They told him to do what he thought best. So Bonner packed his car and headed straight from Laramie to Washington, D.C.

Bonner spent three years working for Sen. Simpson before returning to Laramie, now inspired to obtain a J.D. degree and practice law.

After graduating in 1992 with honors, did just that, working as civil trial lawyer and civil litigator before opening Bonner Law Firm in 2012. In 2014-2015, he served as president of the Wyoming State Bar, and also currently runs the Yellowstone Mediation firm in Cody.

It seems like an unorthodox career path for a journalism major, but Bonner said his background working for *The Powell Tribune* and the training he received at UW served him well in law school and now as a lawyer.

"I haven't worked as a journalist since college," he said. "But ... the training I received in the journalism school I apply every single day today and have for the past 30 years."



Oral and written communication are key to communicating with the court and filing motions and briefs, Bonner said.

"You're trying to be persuasive, and having the ability to do that in a cogent, effective way that is clean makes a huge difference," he said. "And I see others who don't necessarily have that training, and I feel like it's been an advantage for me to have the background that I have when I'm communicating both in writing and otherwise in the legal profession."

In February, Gov. Mark Gordon appointed Bonner to the UW Board of Trustees — the institution's governing body — and he was approved by the state senate.

Bonner was again following in his father's footsteps, who served on the board from 1989-2001.

"My interest has essentially been a lifelong interest in the sense that I have always had a really fond place in my heart for the University of Wyoming," he said. "It becomes something that is in your heart and soul."

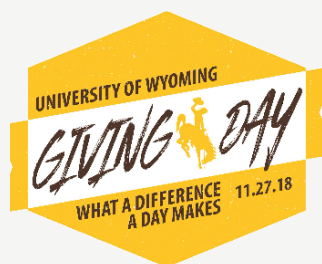
Returned to his alma mater — he also serves on the UW College of Law advisory board — Bonner said he's ready to bring fresh ideas to the board, though he plans to first listen and learn more about the workings of, and issues facing, the university.

"What matters to me more than anything is that the university continue to push for greatness but also remain affordable," he said.

"That's a big deal for me as it relates to substantive matters. I don't have a really substantial set of priorities because I don't know enough about the issues yet."

Like every endeavor he's taken on so far, his journalism background is likely to provide an invaluable set of tools for communicating effectively and succinctly.

"And I still remember AP style," he said.



The Department of Communication & Journalism would like to give a special shout out to all of our alumni and donors who contributed to Giving Day at UW! Thanks to you, COJO raised \$600 for the UW Debate Team to send members to the national tournament this semester.
Thank you!