

# Preface



As we prepare this volume for publication, the University and the city look optimistically to the full reopening of schools, restaurants, parks, theaters, sports venues, and many other public spaces for gathering in Chicago. These things will signal the reemergence of our public life, and they are integral to the local and collective identity of the city. As we insist in the Chicago Studies program, living in this city is a foundational part of student experience in the College, an essential partner in student intellectual and civic development.

The pandemic has raised fascinating challenges for the program since March 2020. First there was Chicago Studies without Chicago, as the physical campus and the city itself emptied of the most routine manifestations of activity. Even as parts of social life filled, not least through engagement in protests and the partial reopening of campus in autumn, we have inhabited a much quieter cityscape, lacking many of the personal exchanges between College and city that enrich a typical year. This has been Chicago Studies in a subdued, largely virtual Chicago, memorable for a thousand virtues and anxieties, but challenging for courses, events, research, and engagements that prioritize a lived urban reality and immersion.

It is therefore encouraging to note that the investment of undergraduates in Chicago has been undiminished, as are the rewards in creativity. The 2020 Chicago Studies Research Prize Colloquium drew high-quality submissions from fifteen disciplines in the College, inviting six students to present their imaginative theses to a Zoom audience of faculty, friends, and family on May 26. We were delighted to award the prize to Alexandra Price, AB'20 (History), for her richly textured essay, "Finding Yiddishland in America: Chicago's Yiddish-Language Press and the Challenges of Americanization, 1918–1932," and look forward to sharing it with a wider readership in the next *Annual*. In the current academic year, the questions, stories, and geography of Chicago continue to attract student interest in the form of BA thesis topics and faculty-mentored research projects, even under very limited conditions for fieldwork and archival research. Meanwhile, programs of study have generated new place-based courses that interweave coursework and local engagement in dynamic ways, even without the tools of excursion and first-hand observation. The spring 2021 quarter will feature Chicago Studies "course bundles" dedicated to significant global topics such as the role of water in urban life, democratic practice, and sustainable (re)development.

Together with these topical markers of interest, Chicago Studies has adapted to the needs of the day with virtual resources on the application Vamonde, which supports a menu of self-guided tours that encourage students and the public to explore the city individually. The ability to access the expertise of staff and faculty about neighborhoods, historical themes, and natural areas at one's own pace and leisure—or remotely—has sustained the curiosity of explorers in the last year and will be an asset even when our public spaces are again crowded. You can find a growing list of tours organized by Dean John W. Boyer and Professor J. Mark Hansen, among others, at <https://chicagostudies.uchicago.edu/tours>.

Yet perhaps the most compelling question is not whether the symbioses

of 2019 will hold, but how the pandemic has changed Chicago and what opportunities will greet our students in the future. Readers of a vast number of media sources, from *Crain's Chicago Business* to the *New Republic* and the *Wall Street Journal*, not to mention Zillow and Redfin, have recognized a narrative of urban decline that has grown fashionable in the last year. The isolation and health concerns of the pandemic have converged to make close-knit social life in America's densest cities far less attractive than before. Combine this with ultra-low interest rates, high local taxes, options for remote work, and political polarization, among other factors, and we see a striking outflow, whether toward leafy suburbs or younger, warmer, and less expensive metropolitan areas. In this story, Chicago suffers only somewhat less than San Francisco, New York, and Boston from a post-COVID appreciation for space, distance, and autonomy.

In 2021, Chicago Studies has convened a vigorous campus-wide discussion about the future of the city, taking the story of decline as a useful, if overwrought, idea for discussion with experts from our faculty and local practitioners. The Chicago Futures Project commenced in the winter and continues in spring, with a program of distinguished lectures and conversations that consider the trends and potential outcomes for the city in many areas, from housing, health care, and public administration to justice and equity to restaurant, music, and theater culture. Students are contributing to this conceptualization through the Chicago Futures Design Challenge, which invites teams of students to articulate a vision of Chicago in 2050 in one specific domain of their choice. The response to this call has been strong and imaginative. It attests to our students' sharp observations and concern for the future and health of our city.

It has been a joy to work with the five contributors to the current volume of the *Annual*, who all participated in the 2019 Chicago Studies Undergraduate Research Colloquium and who labored with the tools of their academic majors to bring vital aspects of Chicago's past and present to public view.

Kaesha Freyaldenhoven, AB'19 (Art History) /AM'19 (Humanities), offers a deep reading of the motives behind the commission, design, and production of Kerry James Marshall's mural *Rush More*, located on the western façade of the Chicago Cultural Center. Intended to showcase the contributions of women to Chicago culture, the mural captures a multiplicity of meanings and experiences, and shows how public art can be instrumentalized for political, commercial, and representational purposes.

Olivia Jia, recipient of the Chicago Studies 2019 Research Prize, explores the relationships between the built environment of Chicago's Chinatown neighborhood and the overlapping, at times competing constructions of identity that have emerged there. Using sources like cognitive maps and ethnographies, Jia, AB'19 (Environmental and Urban Studies/Sociology), discovers how structures with a traditionally Eastern appearance help to identify and demarcate the neighborhood as "Chinese" for residents, even as contemporary designs support more open-ended visions of community.

Eleanor Khirallah, AB'19 (Public Policy Studies), brings our focus westward, to the Cook County Jail and the fates of hundreds of individuals who are discharged each year without trial. Though not convicted, Khirallah argues, these individuals face significant barriers to successful reentry, particularly as regards access to welfare programs like Medicaid, SNAP, and SSI. A formidable evidentiary basis informs Khirallah's recommendations to reduce these barriers, both formal and informal.

Eschatological understandings of Chicago's future from the 1893 World's Fair—a counterpoint to the anxiety of 2020—support an engaging story of urban religious culture in the contribution from Breck Radulovic, AB'19 (Religious Studies/History). This study of Chicago's liberal Protestants, taking its cues from W. T. Stead's *If Christ Came to Chicago!*, considers the popular use of millennial language and symbols to make sense of Chicago's uneven moral and social development at the end of the nineteenth century.

The fate of forty-four school buildings closed by Rahm Emanuel's administration in 2013 centers our final contribution from Nora Sullivan, AB'19 (Comparative Human Development). For Sullivan, it is not the controversial process of the closings that needs explaining but rather the subsequent, halting efforts to repurpose the buildings in ways that will continue to serve their communities. Finding that the majority had not been repurposed as of spring 2019, she identifies several factors that have determined the success of these ventures and makes recommendations to improve the process.

I hope that this volume of the *Annual* finds you in good health and reminded of all that our graduates contribute to the life and knowledge of our city. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the support of James Dahl Cooper, AB'76 (Political Science), in bringing this volume to print and ensuring that the work of Chicago Studies has continued with vigor throughout a challenging year.

Daniel J. Koehler, AM'02, PhD'10 (History)  
*Associate Dean of the College*

# Acknowledgments



**KAESHA FREYALDENHOVEN** | I feel deeply grateful to the individuals who made this work possible. First, to Kerry James Marshall and Jeff Zimmermann, thank you for taking the time to share your knowledge, experiences, and artistic perspectives with me; second, to Professor Andrei Pop and Luke Fidler, thank you for your expert company on field trips across Chicago and invaluable art historical guidance through all stages of writing the thesis; third, to Daniel Koehler, the editors, and the College, thank you for this special opportunity to publish my research; fourth, to my family, thank you for showing me endless love and for encouraging my passion for the arts. After graduating from the University of Chicago in 2019 with a AB in Art History and AM in the Humanities, I earned a Davis Projects for Peace Grant to launch an improvisational movement collective called MPower. We promote mental health, catalyze conversations about intimate partner violence, and advocate for unity in San Luis Obispo, California.

**OLIVIA JIA** | This research would not have been possible without my faculty advisors, Instructional Professor Chad Broughton and Professor Emily Talen, Preceptors Rebecca Ewert and Ilana Ventura, and the resources of the Environmental and Urban Studies and Sociology

departments. Thank you all for your input, support, and guidance throughout this process. Thank you as well to my friends and family, who read through countless rough drafts, brainstormed and workshopped ideas, and have always been an incredible support system for me. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the many individuals who helped craft such a vibrant and dynamic picture of Chicago's Chinatown neighborhood. How we tell the story of a place, especially the places we belong to, is an intensely personal process—thank you for trusting me. Since graduating from the University of Chicago in 2019, I now manage communications for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), the architecture firm that coincidentally designed the Chinatown Library, which was so pivotal to my research and understanding of place-making in that neighborhood. At SOM, I continue to find ways to better understand the world through writing and the built environment.

**ELEANOR KHIRALLAH** | I would like to first thank my family and friends for consistently listening to me vent about my frustrations with the criminal legal system and how to navigate any part of it, let alone obtaining public assistance. My parents in particular have always been so incredibly supportive, so thank you! I would also like to thank Instructional Professor Chad Broughton and Andrew Hammond, formerly a senior lecturer at the university, for always being available to help me with both the research and content of my thesis. Lastly, thanks to every person I interviewed for taking the time to talk to me and teach me about their incredibly important work. I am currently in my first year at the University of Minnesota Law School, and I intend to go into public defense. I hope to use my newfound on-the-ground understanding of the criminal legal system to better understand my clients with my future legal work.

**BRECK RADULOVIC** | I feel incredibly lucky to have been able to finish my four years at the University of Chicago by writing this thesis. This, of course, would not have been possible without support from my

advisers, Professors Jim Sparrow and Jane Dailey, phenomenal preceptors, Alex Hofmann and Yoni Shemesh, fellow Regenstein-devotee Grace Quigley, and wonderful partner, Hannah Edgar (Chicago Studies '18). I would also like to thank Professor Curtis Evans, who read the early (and sorely underdeveloped) essay that would turn into this article. Since graduation, I have been keeping up with academic research as the editorial coordinator for *Law & Social Inquiry*, a sociolegal journal hosted by American Bar Foundation, here in Chicago. Finally, I would like to thank the Chicago Studies program for encouraging me to make Chicago my intellectual and professional home over the past few years.

**NORA SULLIVAN** | My deepest gratitude goes to the inspiring advocates for school communities across the city of Chicago; thank you for opening your hearts to me and sharing your experiences. I would also like to thank my advisor, Professor Emily Talen, for her faith, her guidance, and her connections that made this project possible. I am forever grateful to Sara Ray Stoelinga, formerly the Sara Liston Spurlark Director of the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute, who piqued my interest in the use of school spaces in Chicago and was an invaluable thought partner. To Mónica Luna, Christa Mercado, and Shaz Rasul at the Neighborhood Schools Program, thank you for giving me the opportunity to connect with local school communities and to experience their beauty. To my friends and family, thank you for your endless support and encouragement. Finally, to Dan Koehler, thank you for preparing this work for publication. After graduating from the University of Chicago with a bachelor's degree, I completed a master of science in education at the University of Pennsylvania and now teach preschool at a neighborhood school in Chicago, where I also serve as a union delegate.