150 Years of Women

Northwestern honors alumnae, students and faculty, including poet Natasha Trethewey P. 24

“There’s no greater gift that you can give your children than the tools to navigate their future lives.” p. 8
Space Bubbles

Using South African Radio Astronomy Observatory’s MeerKAT telescope, professor Farhad Yusef-Zadeh and an international team of researchers discovered a gigantic, balloon-like structure in the center of the Milky Way. The newly spotted pair of radio-emitting bubbles spans hundreds of light-years. In this composite view, the sky to the left of the second-nearest antenna is the night sky visible to the unaided eye, and the radio image to the right has been enlarged to highlight its features.

PHOTO: SARAO/OXFORD/NRAO
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Northwestern celebrates the remarkable alumnae — like up-and-coming comedian Ashley Nicole Black — who have faced obstacles, broken barriers and forged ahead to make a difference in the University community and the world at large.

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**The Next Generation of Catalysts**

In 1869 the Northwestern University Board of Trustees voted to admit women as students. This academic year we are commemorating 150 years of women at Northwestern, to celebrate the individuals who have taken risks, charted their own course and inspired great change.

At the end of September we welcomed 2,200 first-year and transfer students at the President’s Convocation in Ryan Fieldhouse. This entering cohort is our most diverse ever, with students hailing from 67 nations; with more than 20% of students coming from low-income, Pell Grant–eligible families; with 13% representing the first generation of their families to attend college; and with 6% coming from Chicago Public Schools. And apropos of our commemoration, 51% of our entering students are women.

In short, the incoming class is filled with the next generation of catalysts — and I can’t wait to see what they will accomplish here on our campus. I shared my hopes for them, as individuals and as future leaders, and touched on how they might be able to carry on a tradition of progress within their academic careers and lives, like those bold and brave women in the past 150 years who have opened doors, creating greater access and opportunity for all who followed.

Our new students reported to action at high schools in the area and across the globe, by current students, by faculty and staff and by many others. I read enough files to realize that finding 10 applicants to reject for each one that we accept is a daunting task, given that many of those we passed on would surely have thrived here if presented the opportunity.

Informed the outstanding few who beat those formidable odds that, now that they are here, our goal is for them to think of Northwestern as their home, their community and their family — not just for the next few years, but for a lifetime.

One of the concerns I shared with our entering undergraduates has to do with what many experts see as a national issue — stress and anxiety among college students at a time when the competition to outdo one another in academics and activities is more intense than ever. At Northwestern, we are always looking for ways to improve student well-being. We want our students to never be afraid to ask for help, to care for themselves and to watch out for one another.

Our new students reported to action within a particular context — a time, alas, of growing tensions and incivility in the world. With our recognition of 150 years of women at Northwestern, we’re reminded of the call to succeed not simply at a personal level but in a way that lifts up others. That is not easy, given what is going on in our larger world.

During the darkest of times, I recall perhaps the most memorable talk I have attended during my decade at Northwestern. The speaker was on campus in 2016 as part of our Martin Luther King Jr. celebration. She was Diane Nash, a civil rights legend who still stays active in her hometown of Chicago. She put her life on the line as she fought for voting rights, for desegregation and for dignity for all.

Ms. Nash’s talk was about effective activism, and this fall I recounted to our newest undergraduates how she made the point that advocates for social and institutional change have a choice to make. They can be content in simply expressing their moral outrage and being consumed by their anger, or they can invest in the hard work that results in lasting change.

That work, she argued, means treating your opponents with a modicum of respect, even when it is tempting to resort to pure vilification. “But why do that?” one might ask. “Aren’t our enemies the personification of all evil?” Perhaps not, she suggested. Give them some benefit of the doubt. First of all, it is a lot easier to convince people to change if you treat them in a civil manner, she argued; and second, even if you are unsuccessful in changing minds, treating them as humans rather than as symbols embodying all that you hate is quite simply the right thing to do.

I am not saying that there are always good people on all sides or that all sides are equally good — I believe that is absolutely not the case. But Ms. Nash offered our Northwestern community words to live by, even if they are easy to forget in the heat of the moment.

I told our new undergraduates that we need to understand and celebrate our differences, treat each other with respect, learn from one another and be examples for others to emulate.

I believe our incredibly accomplished and supportive network of alumni provides a model for the manner of community we seek to build on campus. And I’m grateful especially for the many ways in which you help Northwestern students to become the next generation of catalysts — as they develop deep and enduring friendships, gain the ability to educate themselves over a lifetime and prepare to repair a broken world. Because of our students’ talents and ambitions, and your ability to help bring those talents into full blossom, I believe you will be hearing from this entering class for years to come.

Best wishes,

Morton Schapiro
President and Professor
We want to hear from you:

Letters@northwestern.edu | NorthwesternU | NorthwesternU | NorthwesternU

Voices

By Lori Post

The past August ended as it began—with a mass shooting in which a gunman took a significant number of lives. On Aug. 31 a man killed seven near Odessa, Texas, just weeks after a shooter in El Paso, Texas, and another in Dayton killed a total of 31 people. Although mass shootings in the U.S. comprise less than 1% of all gun deaths, sensationalism drives news cycles and ultimately gun policy. Polls show that the majority of Americans believe some sort of gun control legislation is needed. In the wake of these recent mass shootings, politicians on both sides of the aisle voiced support for background checks as the solution. However, details emerged that the Odessa shooter had failed an earlier background check and still managed to obtain a firearm, this led some people to conclude that background checks don’t work. I strongly disagree.

In 2014 the Odessa shooter was denied a background check because he was adjudicated “a mental defective.” Yet despite this, he was able to buy a firearm through a private sale. This is a pretty clear case that the background check worked when it was conducted and that a comprehensive background check system requiring a check for all gun transactions would have prevented the actual sale. In Michigan I led a team that developed the national model for a comprehensive background check system for workers in long-term care facilities, to make sure that people who have physically abused or neglected patients or stolen Social Security checks don’t slip through the cracks.
Parents on average now spend almost twice as much time on parenting — interacting with their kids — compared to a generation ago, even though the number of kids has gone down.

Our interpretation is that a lot of this more intense parenting is a reaction to rising economic inequality. Parents react by trying harder to give their kids the best shot in this more competitive era, but when a child is facing additional challenges, having a therapist who's just there to support the couple can help a lot.

Craig Garfield, professor of pediatrics and medical social sciences and father of two

From 1965 to the present, the amount of time that dads are involved in fathering has more than doubled. When there’s more equity at home, it leads to more fulfilled parents. And children thrive when parents thrive.

There may be two things driving this increase. One is a societal expectation. And there has been a shift in perspectives in that men look forward to and want to be involved.

Shelly Vaziri Flais ’95, ’99 MD, ’03 GME, clinical assistant professor of pediatrics and mother of four

Despite awareness in the last couple of years about overparenting, helicopter parenting and lawnmower parenting, the tendency is to be overly involved in our children’s lives even as they get older. We as parents need to be self-aware and not swoop in and solve all our kids’ problems for them. We often err on the side of doing too much.

There’s no greater gift that you can give your children than the tools and resilience to navigate their future lives.

Matthias Doepke, professor of economics and father of three

Parents thrive. And children thrive when parents thrive. This intense parenting is a reaction to rising economic inequality. Parents react by trying harder to give their kids the best shot in this more competitive era, but when a child is facing additional challenges, having a therapist who's just there to support the couple can help a lot.

Alexandra Solomon ’98 MA, ’02 PhD, clinical assistant professor of psychology, clinical psychologist at the Family Institute and mother of two

There are more teens struggling with more significant mental health problems now than a generation ago. There are also more kids dealing with chronic conditions: food allergies, asthma, autism spectrum disorder, ADHD.

Parents should not feel ashamed about or resistant to asking for help. Parenting is hard enough in the modern era, but when a child is facing additional challenges, having a therapist who's just there to support the couple can help a lot.

@northwest

Illustration by Bruce Morser

Whatever you do, keep up, so that parenting is becoming to be able to afford. Not everyone can keep up, so that parenting is becoming to be able to afford. Not everyone can

@jane_grover

Fieldwork with a Flow

By Louise Kiernan ‘92 MS

Editor-in-chief, ProPublica Illinois

γ

@denaedae

This is what journalism education at its best can do: bring us into the places and lives that transform the way we think about the world.

When I was a graduate student at Medill, I took a legal reporting class in which we chose a local courthouse to cover. Cook County Circuit Court’s Juvenile Division sounded to most students, I think, like the least desirable option. None of the local news organizations covered it on a regular basis, and there wasn’t much public interest in the news the court generated.

But I found it appealing and asked for that assignment. From the first morning I walked through the court’s metal detector, what I saw and experienced was a revelation.

I wanted to understand and to tell. I realized that those were the stories individuals who have little power or systems affect the lives of their own children.

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SOUND OFF

Modern Parenting

How has parenthood changed in the past generation, and what are the advantages or drawbacks of 21st-century parenting?

Alexandra Solomon ’98 MA, ’02 PhD, clinical assistant professor of psychology, clinical psychologist at the Family Institute and mother of two

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WHAT INSPIRES ME

The Authentic Life

Professor and pastor finds common ground in the pulpit, the classroom and the boardroom.

Nicholas Pearce '10, M.S., '12, Ph.D., clinical associate professor of management and organizations

“I’m no less a pastor in the classroom, and I’m no less a professor in the pulpit. I really try to bring my whole self wherever I am. “I draw my inspiration from my faith. I really believe that I am doing this work because it’s a calling from God. But on a more humanistic level, what also inspires me is seeing people grow and flourish. That is really the unifying thread. In the classroom, seeing the lightbulb come on in a student’s eyes is a priceless moment. In the pastoral context, seeing parishioners grow in their understanding and seeing them prosper and thrive — it’s just an amazing privilege to know that you might’ve played some small part in encouraging them along the way.”

“There’s another piece of it too, and that is family. I married my high school sweetheart, and we have a toddler at home, and all of the things that I do outside the house are not as significant as who I am in the house.”

Nicholas Pearce teaches three popular courses at the Kellogg School of Management — Leadership Fundamentals and Beyond Diversity. He’s also an assistant pastor at the Apostolic Church of God, a megachurch on Chicago’s South Side. Pearce, founder and CEO of the Vocati Group, an executive consultancy, is the author of The Purpose Path: A Guide to Pursuing Your Authentic Life’s Work (2019).
Facility Spurs Collaboration

“Collaborations will flourish on campus.”
— Susan Quaggin, director of the Feinberg Cardiovascular and Renal Research Institute.

provides much-needed biomedical research space to continue the University’s projected growth. The 12-story building adds more than 325,000 square feet of research space to the Chicago academic medical campus. And it is designed for a future expansion, with up to 16 new floors in the second phase of construction.

The building brings physicians and scientists from Feinberg, the McCormick School of Engineering and Stanley Manne Children’s Research Institute together with colleagues from clinical affiliates Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago and Shirley Ryan AbilityLab — in one academic medical district. The floor plan for each lab is designed around the idea of flexible “research neighborhoods,” with the goal of creating a vibrant hub. Each floor, which can accommodate 33 principal investigators and their teams, also has deliberate interaction space in the center to promote conversation among the three lab “neighborhoods.”

“Collaborations will flourish on campus,” says Susan Quaggin, director of the Feinberg Cardiovascular and Renal Research Institute.

“I just know scientists will start talking about things that will lead to new directions and experiments, and bridge clinical and basic science.”

Quaggin says the larger lab space will also enable her to hire new scientists with stem cell, vascular and developmental biology expertise to advance her efforts to develop a bioengineered kidney and pancreas that grow blood vessels, which she calls “the holy grail.”

Flexible lab space also allows research groups to develop based on new discoveries and new funding. “You want space that is more open to expand and contract to follow where the science is going,” says Elizabeth McNally, director of the Center for Genetic Medicine at Feinberg.

“That’s what the Simpson Querrey Biomedical Research Center gives us,” McNally says. “Space in the new building will allow McNally to hire new scientists to advance work on her new treatment for muscular dystrophy, a group of diseases that cause progressive weakness and loss of muscle mass in children.

The Simpson Querrey Biomedical Research Center is named in honor of trustees Louis A. Simpson ’58 and Kimberly K. Querrey in recognition of their generous support that has advanced the University’s academic excellence and scientific discovery. (See “New Chicago Facility Spurs Collaboration and Discovery,” page 21.)

The Ticker

Northwestern University in Qatar welcomed its largest and most diverse class with 123 incoming students. Members of the first-year class represent more than 30 nationalities. The new class includes an aspiring poet from Zambia, a Chinese student who wants to be a novelist and a professional cyclist from Syria.

Northwestern University in Qatar received $800 million in research funding in 2019-20, a 15.6% increase over the previous year.

Northwestern is the sole law school partner in the Move the Needle Fund, an initiative focused on a more diverse, inclusive legal profession.

Northwestern’s new Master of Science in Energy and Sustainability degree, a full-time, one-year program, begins in fall 2020.

GLOBAL BEACH

Wildcats Around the World

CLIMATE CORES

Greenland

Pete Puleo ’18, an incoming doctoral student, collected sediment cores from island lakes in southern Greenland as part of Earth and planetary sciences professor Yarrow Axford’s mid-July to mid-August research trip. The samples will be used in coming years to examine climate change over the past 15,000 years with a focus on abrupt climate events in the south Greenland region.

RIC CARLTON/NU

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Music Preservation Podcast

Ghana

In the fall Cesar Almeida ’19, an incoming doctoral student, collected samples from a 90 million-year-old lake deposit in Australia to start developing a more complete reconstruction of the global carbon cycle from a high Southern latitude during an ancient hyperthermal period. Sagman received a Fulbright to support his sabbatical research, which could inform how we respond to current rapid climate change.

Catherine Woolley

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In the opening week of the NFL’s 100th season, 12 former Northwestern football players were on teams’ active rosters or reserve/injured lists, including four Green Bay Packers. For cornerback and special teamer Sherrick McManis ’10 the Sept. 5 kickoff against the Packers was his 100th game with the Chicago Bears. He is the longest-tenured active Bears player.

"My wish for you here is that when you graduate from Northwestern — and you will graduate from Northwestern — you're going to cherish the friendships you've made here, that you'll have the humility to realize that education doesn't end with an NU degree — it begins with an NU degree — and that you will gain the tools to educate yourselves for your lifetime," President Morton Schapiro told the new students gathered for the President’s Convocation at Ryan Fieldhouse.

"Most of all, I hope and pray that when you leave this campus you will be prepared to repair a broken and challenging world."

The convocation followed a week of Wildcat Welcome events, including new student orientation, March Through the Arch and a dash across Ryan Field at the start of the football game against Michigan State.

Parents on campus to say tearful farewells to their students included Denisse Guerrero, mother of Maria Daniela “Leli” Guerrero, a first-year student whose family is from Venezuela. Her younger brother Juan said Leli is living her dream — determined to study chemistry, then go into medicine.

“Oh my God, I’m going to cry,” said Denisse, standing in the middle of Sheridan Road before March Through the Arch. “I’m so proud. I’m speechless.”

Seismic Memories

Graduate students collect earthquake anecdotes on California excursion.

The view from Inspiration Peak in Joshua Tree National Park, overlooking a branch of the San Andreas Fault in California.

It wasn’t your typical California road trip. Doctoral students Leah Salditch and Molly Gallahue spent a week in September hunting down earthquake stories from residents of Central and Southern California. Since the early 20th century, U.S. government agencies have sought firsthand accounts of earthquake shaking. Information was once submitted via mailed questionnaires (until the mid-1990s) and can now be entered online via the U.S. Geological Survey’s “Did You Feel It?” system, introduced in the late 1990s. During the transition to the online system, some moderately sized earthquakes were overlooked. To help fill in this decade-long period in the data collection, Salditch and Gallahue, both doctoral students in Earth and planetary sciences, collected anecdotes about two early-1990s earthquakes. The data will be used to create a publicly available database of seismic intensity called CHIMP (California Historical Intensity Mapping Project) and help improve hazard maps in earthquake-vulnerable areas.
Economic Uncertainty Costs Female Candidates

Northwestern researcher Galen Bodenhausen says that despite women’s political gains, an economic crisis can spark gender stereotyping.

More than 90% of Americans say they would vote for a woman for president, and research suggests that, in general, the disadvantages facing female candidates in past decades have largely vanished.

However, psychologists Galen Bodenhausen and his former graduate student Ryan Lei ‘15 MS, ’17 PhD wondered, “Is that a stable gain, or is it a precarious gain that’s vulnerable to setbacks if the conditions don’t favor openness to female candidates?”

Research shows that people often look to men for leadership in times of war. Bodenhausen, a professor of marketing at the Kellogg School of Management, and Lei, now an assistant professor at Haverford College, wanted to see if the same sentiment prevailed in times of economic crisis.

In their recent study, they found that female candidates face an uphill climb in times of economic uncertainty.

In an experiment designed to evaluate voters’ responses to male and female candidates, Bodenhausen and Lei, the study’s lead author, manipulated the participants’ sense of economic anxiety by giving them an article to read about the state of the economy and then examined their support for hypothetical Senate candidates who were either male or female. (The candidate’s party matched the study participant’s stated party affiliation.)

When the economy was portrayed as strong, male and female candidates performed equally well. However, when the researchers amped up the economic anxiety, support for the female candidate declined while support for the male candidate was unchanged, in keeping with the stereotype that men are more capable at addressing economic issues.

Certain conditions can trigger latent biases, Bodenhausen says. “Women have made a lot of important gains, but those gains can be reversed in situations that may lead people to question the suitability of women for leadership.”

Research focuses on intergroup attitudes — beliefs people have about others based upon their group identities and demographic category memberships — says his study with Lei complements studies of women’s involvement in politics. One recent examination of nearly five dozen countries over a span of three decades corroborated that women’s electoral success in politics goes down in times of economic crisis.

In the aftermath of the 2016 election, there were two primary schools of thought on what led to Hillary Clinton’s demise. Some blamed her loss on sexism. Others say she lost because of the economy. “Our study suggests those two explanations aren’t necessarily mutually exclusive,” says Bodenhausen.

“They can actually dovetail in a way that may have disadvantaged Clinton.”

Bodenhausen is not in the business of predicting elections, but he says it would be an interesting test case if the economy is slumping and there’s a woman on the ticket against President Trump in November 2020.

Women appointed or elected to Congress in 2018

117

Of Americans believe that men are better suited for politics than women

13%

Of Americans say they would vote for a woman for president

94%

A new drug-delivery system disguises chemotherapeutics as fat in order to outsmart, penetrate and destroy tumors. “It’s like a Trojan horse,” says chemistry professor Nathan Gianneschi, who led the research. “It looks like a nice little fatty acid, so the tumor’s receptors see it and invite it in. Then the drug starts getting metabolized and kills the tumor cells.”

A treatment developed in the lab of professor Stephen Miller may reverse celiac disease, which can lead to damage in the small intestine. In a phase 2 trial, patients were given a biodegradable nanoparticle that contained gluten, hidden in a protective shell. The nanoparticle teaches the immune system that the antigen (allergen) is safe. After treatment, patients were able to eat gluten with a substantial reduction in inflammation.

Of Americans believe the tumor cells.”

Metabolized and kills it and invite it in. Then the tumor’s receptors see it and invite it in. Then the drug starts getting metabolized and kills the tumor cells.”

A new drug-delivery system disguises chemotherapeutics as fat in order to outsmart
A Healthy Start

Sahar Jamal is creating a battery-powered breast pump so new mothers in East Africa can return to work.

During an internship at Jacaranda Health, a maternity clinic and nonprofit outside Nairobi, Kenya, in 2018, Sahar Jamal began to notice barriers to breastfeeding faced by middle-income new mothers. Many had to make the difficult decision to either stop working — often financially intolerable — or give up nursing their newborns, which can have dire health implications.

In developing countries, the risk of infant death is 14 times higher for babies who are not breastfed than those who are breastfed exclusively for the first six months. “This is especially challenging for mothers who need to return to work as early as one month postpartum and resort to substitutes like baby formula with tea or cow’s milk, which pose major health risks for both mum and baby,” says Jamal ’19 MBA.

Jamal, who spent time in maternal and newborn health-related work at Johnson & Johnson before attending the Kellogg School of Management, sought a solution.

Though only 7% of new mothers in Kenya use a breast pump, Jamal found in focus groups that women would be willing to pay for a more convenient, discreet, battery-powered model built for developing markets. “They’re already spending almost $250 over six months on baby formula for their baby,” explains Jamal. “I turned to pump alternatives.”

Jamal worked with a team of Northwestern biomedical and mechanical engineers to develop a basic prototype out of “tubes and funnels” at the Garage. She returned to Nairobi several times with the help of Kellogg’s Zell Fellows Program to market test different designs. Shortly before earning her MBA last June, she received Kellogg’s Social Entrepreneurship Grant, which provided $70,000 in seed funding. Jamal also won the Audience Favorite award at Northwestern’s VentureCat competition.

Jamal, whose parents are from Tanzania and India, is working with Mark Fisher, clinical associate professor of biomedical engineering, to refine the prototype and develop the final design. She moved to Kenya full time in October to continue her market research and develop partnerships with local clinics, NGOs and distributors.

PedalCell

Vishaal Mali, a McCormick School of Engineering senior, understood that more people might ride bikes if there was a reliable source of power onboard. So he started PedalCell with his University of Michigan–based co-founder, Adam Hokin. The two developed technology to convert the kinetic energy from a bike into stable and continuous electricity. PedalCell’s CadenceX product can power a rider’s devices, including a smartphone, bike lights and GPS. Chicago–based Future Founders named PedalCell one of its 2018 Outstanding Student Startups of the Year at its EntrepreneurshipU Awards last spring.
Northwestern Receives Its Largest Gift to Financial Aid

University Trustee Jeff Ubben and Laurie Ubben have committed $50 million for student scholarships.

The Ubbens’ bequest will transform the University’s financial aid programs, an area of focus for the two longtime donors.

Jeff ‘87 MBA and his wife, Laurie, have made an estate commitment of $50 million to support scholarships for undergraduate, graduate and professional school students. It will be the largest gift made to financial aid in the University’s history.

The Ubbens’ bequest will count toward We Will, The Campaign for Northwestern, which has raised $2.4 billion from more than 115,000 donors and support the Thrive at Northwestern initiative, which aims to enhance financial aid resources and services for students from all backgrounds.

"The work that will be conducted here is mind-boggling,” said Kimberly K. Querrey. "Kimberly and I are proud to be associated with the discoveries and the research that will come as a result of this building.”

New Chicago Facility Spurs Collaboration and Discovery

The Louis A. Simpson and Kimberly K. Querrey Biomedical Research Center unites physicians and scientists under one roof.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony on June 17, Northwestern benefactors, trustees and administrators joined with other Chicago and Illinois dignitaries to officially open the Louis A. Simpson and Kimberly K. Querrey Biomedical Research Center — the largest biomedical academic research building in the United States.

About 300 Northwestern supporters heard from several of the facility’s visionary philanthropists, including University Trustee Louis A. Simpson ’88 and Kimberly K. Querrey.

“The work that will be conducted here is mind-boggling,” Querrey said at the building dedication. "Lou and I are fortunate to be able to support the biomedical research community. And we’re humbled by the brilliant collaboration of the many scientists and physicians working together to transform human life.”

The 12-story, 625,000-square-foot facility will be a home for researchers from many of Feinberg’s major clinical partners, including Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago and the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab. Together, these institutions form one of the top medical districts in the world.

Throughout We Will, The Campaign for Northwestern, Simpson and Querrey have committed more than $196 million to the University, $90 million of which went toward the research center.

In addition to the research spaces, the Simpson Querrey Biomedical Research Center’s public spaces — such as the Petocnak Family Artium, the 160-seat Simpson Querrey Auditorium, the Judd A. and Marysoine Weinberg Gallery, the Kabiller Student Commons and the Seney Conference Center on the mezzanine level — will serve researchers, students and visitors for years to come.

“It’s a very exciting time for biomedical research at Northwestern,” Simpson said. “Kimberly and I are proud to be associated with the discoveries and the research that will come as a result of this building.”

SCHOLARSHIPS

A transformative gift from two longtime donors will help generations of highly qualified students obtain a Northwestern education. Trustee and alumnus Jeff Ubben ’87 MBA and his wife, Laurie, have made an estate commitment of $50 million to support scholarships for undergraduate, graduate and professional school students. It will be the largest gift made to financial aid in the University’s history.

The Ubbens’ bequest will count toward We Will, The Campaign for Northwestern, which has fueled 424 new endowed scholarships and fellowships to date, and support the Thrive at Northwestern initiative, which aims to enhance financial aid resources and services for students from all backgrounds.

Over the past 10 years, the University has gone from enrolling 12% to 20% Pell Grant-eligible students in incoming classes. In the 2018–19 academic year, financial aid benefited 41% of undergraduates and 47% of graduate and professional students. Northwestern also has eliminated loans from the financial aid packages of qualifying undergraduates.

“Laurie and I can think of nothing more worthy than to make a Northwestern degree accessible to as many outstanding students as possible,” Jeff Ubben says. In 2017, Jeff Ubben completed a 10-year tenure as chair of the national board of directors for the Posse Foundation, which identifies high school students with academic and leadership potential for admission into a partner college or university. He was instrumental in developing Northwestern’s partnership with Posse.

The Ubbens’ past Campaign gifts to Northwestern have benefited the Kellogg School of Management, Athletics and Recreation, the Bienen School of Music and the Institute for Sustainability and Energy at Northwestern. Jeff and Laurie Ubben have three children: Charlotte, Theo and Josephine ’20 MBA, who currently attends Kellogg.

We Will. The Campaign for Northwestern, Simpson and Querrey have committed more than $196 million to the University, $90 million of which went toward the research center. Their generous gifts have supported the Simpson Querrey Institute, endowed the Louis Simpson and Kimberly Querrey Professorship held by John Rogers and created the Simpson Querrey Center for Epigenetics at Feinberg.
INSPIRED GIVING

Women Philanthropists Pay It Forward

As Northwestern marks the 150th anniversary of coeducation at the University, we recognize our generous women donors.

Inspired by their families, a love of Northwestern and the desire to make the University and the world a better place, women philanthropists have created exciting new spaces, programs and opportunities for students. There is no denying the unprecedented leadership Shirley Welsh Ryan ’61, ’19 H has brought to Northwestern, in everything from the musical arts and groundbreaking research to athletics excellence and continuing education.

She and her husband, University Trustee Patrick C. Ryan ’59, ’99 H, made their first major gift to Northwestern in the early 1980s — Welsh-Ryan Arena is named in honor of her parents. In 2018 the arena underwent extensive renovations and is now one of the most accessible facilities in college athletics, thanks in large part to Shirley Ryan’s influence. In addition to the many other Northwestern facilities that bear the Ryan name, she and her husband have supported numerous endowed scholarships, fellowships and professorships. She also founded and remains involved in the University’s Learning for Life Lectures series.

At Northwestern, we recognize our generous women donors. As Northwestern marks the 150th anniversary of coeducation and continuing education.

When she and her husband, Louis A. Simpson ’58, both University trustees, were considering where to direct their philanthropy, “We felt like the transformative research taking place at Northwestern was something we wanted to support, as it will change the future of human health and disease,” Querrey says. Querrey and Simpson’s contributions during We Will: The Campaign for Northwestern represent the highest total giving from an individual family.

They have supported initiatives such as the Simpson Querrey Institute, the Simpson Querrey Center for Epigenetics and the Simpson Querrey Biomedical Research Center. This year they made an additional gift to advance research through the University’s Center for Bio-Integrated Electronics.

“We’re on the cusp of many exciting discoveries in biomedical research,” Querrey says. “What was once science fiction is now becoming reality through some of the brightest minds collaborating across disciplines.”

A former athlete, Querrey honored the two women who raised her when she was young with the Ryan name, she and her husband have supported numerous endowed scholarships, fellowships and professorships. She also founded and remains involved in the University’s Learning for Life Lectures series.

“Impact is marked by empowering others to use their skills, their creativity and their education to live a good life and to contribute to making America even better,” says Ryan, who earned a bachelor of arts in English from the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, in 2023.

“It was inspired by the education I received at Northwestern, which made me ready to face a rapidly changing world and try my best to make a difference for others,” she says. Through her generous support, Kimberly K. Querrey has propelled Northwestern’s prominence in scientific and medical research.

Donors often are inspired to give by others, such as University Trustee Paula Pretlow ’77, ’78 MBA, who travels across the country to engage alumni and friends in the “We Will” Campaign as its co-chair for participation. A member of the Campaign Steering Committee, she also co-chairs the San Francisco Regional Campaign Committee.

“My view of philanthropy was shaped at a very young age,” Pretlow says. “Even though I grew up in a household without the financial means to give money to certain causes, my mother would bake goods to distribute to neighbors and take to people who were sick, and my grandmother would visit people in their homes.”

Pretlow earned her bachelor’s degree in political science from Weinberg College and is now a member of its Board of Visitors. She supports several areas of the University, including the College, Student Enrichment Services, the School of Education and Social Policy and the Kellogg School of Management, where she earned her MBA.

“It’s important to me to support Northwestern because Northwestern has supported me in so many ways,” Pretlow explains. “I arrived on campus with very little, I left with a ton more knowledge and with the tools and opportunities to make the best of my life that I could.”

“It’s important to me to support Northwestern because Northwestern has supported me in so many ways.”

— Paula Pretlow
Northwestern celebrates the remarkable alumnae, faculty, staff and students who have faced obstacles, broken barriers and forged ahead to make a difference in the University community and the world at large.
It was a century and a half ago that women were first given the opportunity to enroll at Northwestern as undergraduates. To mark the 150th anniversary of coeducation we are championing our remarkable community of individuals, who have taken risks, charted their own course and inspired change throughout our history and today. We also recognize a new generation of catalysts who continue the journey to transform our community and our culture, by challenging conventional norms and working to ensure Northwestern — and the world — is a more equitable and inclusive place.

As in any significant change, of course, the challenges remain, but Northwestern has long been a leader. The University was one of more than a dozen Midwestern institutes of higher education to accept women undergraduate students in the 1860s and ’70s, more than 100 years ahead of some of our Ivy League peers, including Yale, Harvard, Princeton and Columbia. But even in the seemingly more progressive years of the 1860s and 1870s, more than 100 years ahead of some of our Ivy League peers, including Yale, Harvard, Princeton and Columbia.

The truth was much more complicated. As we reflect on 150 years of women at Northwestern, we can take lessons learned from these inspiring catalysts to focus on creating a more positive future where all individuals have the same opportunities to flourish.

Here, in the following pages, are 11 outstanding graduates who are driving positive change in our world and motivating others to take the lead, from politics to comedy to biopharmaceuticals and many other fields.

Claudia López, MAYOR OF BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

When Claudia López began her doctorate in political science at Northwestern in 2011, she was already well known in her native Colombia as an activist, journalist focused on countries that had tackled similar challenges.

Northwestern Library’s exhibition On the Same Terms: 150 Years of Women at Northwestern runs through June 20, 2020, at Deering Library.

To learn about Northwestern’s 150 years of women and the more than 200 remarkable individuals — past and present — who’ve left their mark on the University and the world, visit the 150 Years of Women website at www.northwestern.edu/150women

“…”

Claudia’s approach is celebratory and exciting,” says Northwestern professor Edward Gibbons, López’s dissertation adviser. “As a gay woman she will be culturally transformative and motivating to a lot of people who have felt left out of mainstream politics.”

López now applies the ideas she learned at Northwestern to the often dangerous world of Colombian politics — a warrior bolstered by intellectual rigor.

An ardent defender of constitutional rights since her university days, López’s defining moment came during a televised panel discussion in 2010, when she confronted then-President Álvaro Uribe about his connections to paramilitary groups, mass murders and drug trafficking. Uribe had been a formidable force in Colombian politics for decades, and López’s takedown of him was epic.

Her attacks in the press against Uribe and violent groups led to the loss of her job at the newspaper El Tiempo and so many death threats she was forced into exile twice. Eventually she left journalism for politics.

“I was frustrated,” López recalls. “The people in paramilitary groups and drug cartels are so powerful. Instead of reporting endlessly I went to work so we can change it.”

At Northwestern, López studied methods of modern state-building — particularly those that could be applied in Colombia’s essentially lawless rural areas. Her dissertation focused on countries that had tackled similar challenges.

“Other countries have been able to build a vibrant society with an inclusive capitalist market,” she says. “We have to understand how other countries did it and stop making excuses.”

López has become the voice of a new center-left coalition working for anti-corruption agendas, political reform, environmentalism, education and gender issues.

Although she has faced the worst of humanity, López believes that the key to a thriving, stable society comes down to one quality: “The 21st-century citizenship needs empathy. Adaptation will be the constant change — we have to foster empathy and self-esteem so people have the capacity to adapt without fear.”

When asked how she remains confident despite so many challenges, she replies, “We have nothing to lose and everything to win. We have a planet to save, We have democracy to save. And we have a generation to lead.”

—Lisa Stein ’94 MS
“I was speaking a language that no one in the comedy world was speaking.”

ASHLEY NICOLE BLACK ’08 MS, ACTOR AND WRITER

When I started out acting, I got a lot of messages like, ‘Well, obviously a plus-size black woman can’t do this,’” says Ashley Nicole Black. “Maybe you can write or maybe you can teach.” Then, my first job in television was on Full Frontal with Samantha Bee. I applied as a writer. I got the job, and pretty quickly Sam offered me an on-camera role. It was exactly the thing that so many people had told me would never happen — and it happened immediately.”

Whether you know Ashley Nicole Black as a correspondent on Full Frontal or from her viral tweets with Elizabeth Warren, she has certainly become a multipurpose powerhouse. Alongside fellow Northwestern alumna Robin Thede, Black recently made the leap to HBO, where she writes and stars in A Black Lady Sketch Show, a buzzy comedy that was quickly renewed for a second season.

But her road to TV stardom was not nearly as rapid. Growing up in the suburbs of Los Angeles, Black idolized actors Camryn Manheim and Gina Torres. “They stood out to me because they were alone,” she says. “There weren’t a ton of plus-size women on TV. There weren’t a ton of black women on TV. So, whenever there was one, I honed in on her.”

Black went to college to study acting, but after getting cast only in smaller supporting roles, she assumed she would never fully achieve her dream. “So I went into the graduate performance studies program at Northwestern to get the theoretical background,” she says.

After taking an improv class at Chicago’s famed Second City theater, Black knew it was time to free herself and unleash her full, comedic vision as a writer and performer. She left the doctoral program, having earned her master’s in performance studies program at Northwestern to get the theoretical background,” she says.

In the end, she says her experience at Full Frontal probably helped her stand out in a crowded field. “People took an immediate interest in me because my point of view and my voice were so defined and so different,” she says. “That’s partly because I was coming out of academia, speaking a language nobody in the comedy world was speaking.”

“When I was starting out, I couldn’t point to any one person and say, ‘I can do that,’” adds Black. “Now the idea that people can point to Full Frontal or A Black Lady Sketch Show and go, ‘Oh, there’s a place for me, there’s a finish line for me’ — I think that’s really great. Hopefully these shows provide that finish line for people to keep those diverse voices in the pipeline.”

—Martin Wilson ’20 MS

“I had a full-on freak out. I realized the Clock defect was genetic.”

MARTHA HOTZ VITATERNA ’92 PHD, RESEARCH PROFESSOR OF NEUROBIOLOGY, NORTHWESTERN

As the morning sun peeks over the edge of Lake Michigan, 41 mice in a pitch-dark laboratory climb off their wheels and nestle into their bedding. The lab is quiet. And then, there is a clicking. Click, click, slide. Click, click, slide. Mouse No. 25 is still awake. As he clicks along his running wheel, a pen spastically jolts up and down a rotating strip of paper. Martha Hotz Vitaterna, a doctoral student in the lab, will find the recording the next day.

“Mouse No. 25 was the founder mouse for the Clock mutant line,” says Vitaterna, a research professor of neurobiology at Northwestern’s Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences. “At the time, I didn’t know what I had on my hands.”

Before Vitaterna started her work, researchers did not think it was possible to find the genetic basis for circadian rhythms in mammals. When she applied to graduate school, three labs had turned off the lights entirely. “By running on their wheels, the mice could tell me what time of day they thought it was,” she says.

Typically, a mouse’s internal clock is about 23.7 hours a day. But mouse No. 25 experienced a 24.7-hour day. After getting the mouse to breed, Vitaterna found the same pattern in some of the mouse’s offspring.

“I had a full-on freak out,” she says. “I realized the Clock defect was genetic. It was one thing to be allowed to do this far-out, long-shot project, but then to have it work was an incredible experience.”

In 1994 Science journal published the results of Vitaterna’s experiment, which was the first molecular piece of the mammalian clock. Since then, research with Clock mutant mice has shown that circadian rhythms are important to almost every physiological process — from sleep to digestion to mood and more.

—Amanda Morris ’14 MA

Women-Focused Research from Northwestern

75% Percentage of female leaders who maintain an inner circle composed primarily of women.

86% Percentage of respondents in 2018 poll who report that men and women are equally intelligent.

$94K The average grant for female first-time principal investigators, $41,000 less than the average for men.
“I learned firsthand the power a team can have when bringing ideas to life.”

**ELISE WETZEL ’87, ’92 MBA, CO-FOUNDER, BLAZE PIZZA**

Blaze Pizza started with a trip to Chipotle in 2011. Looking for a no-wait pizza lunch, Elise Wetzel and her husband, Rick, ended up eating burritos, but the made-your-way format sparked an idea.

They immediately started sketching out plans for a build-your-own pizza shop. A year later, Blaze Pizza was born. It started with two California locations and has expanded to become one of the fastest-growing franchises in the U.S., with more than 340 restaurants in 41 states and five countries.

Now Blaze is running for the pizza delivery giants, introducing larger, shareable sizes.

Wetzel first learned to think about consumer behavior when she studied economics as an undergrad and earned her MBA from the Kellogg School of Management, where she was part of the “28% Club,” a tongue-in-cheek reference to the percentage of women students at Kellogg when she attended. “We would say membership has its privileges, like the line in the women’s room wasn’t very long.” (The Kellogg Class of 2020 is a record-high 46% women.)

“My time at Northwestern was foundational,” she says. “I learned firsthand the power a team can have when bringing ideas to life. In one advertising class, I was part of a group charged with creating a campaign for the National Egg Commission. That shared endeavor gave me a more layered learning experience than working in an individual silo and was a great lesson in the value of teamwork.”

Elise and Rick have been launching brands as a team for 25 years, starting with Wetzel’s Pretzels in 1994. They have a daughter, Madison, and a son, Jack, who is a sophomore at Northwestern.

—Sean Hargadon

**JOLENE LOETSCHER ’01, CEO, MUD MILE COMMUNICATIONS; PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP SCHOLAR**

Jolene Loetscher decided to run for mayor of Sioux Falls, S.D., while feeding her newborn daughter at 3 a.m. “I just had this epiphany as I’m holding this little nugget: If I don’t run, my daughter will learn that it’s OK to give into your fears and let doubt take over.”

Loetscher and her husband, Nate Burdine, had talked about her running for mayor for months.

At the time, the couple was creating a sports marketing arm of the agency they run together, Mud Mile Communications. That work, paired with first-time parenthood, made a campaign a daunting task.

She lost in a runoff, but the experience proved she could overcome her fears — again.

Born and raised in Nebraska, Loetscher was sexually abused by a family friend as a teen, and she decided years later that she could no longer ignore her pain. In 2011, as a former local news reporter in Sioux Falls, Loetscher knew that publicly sharing her story might change public perception of her. Her family members might feel like they failed to protect her. Some people might even see her as a victim first and foremost. But here, as with the campaign, she refused to be guided by fear.

“I had been given a gift to be able to use my voice to tell stories, and so much of that was shaped by my Medill experience and my subsequent newsroom experience,” Loetscher says. “I witnessed the power of vulnerability and the cascade of change it creates. I felt a calling to put purpose to my pain.”

A state legislator reached out to Loetscher after seeing her TEDx Talk describing her abuse and its impact. The two worked together to revoke the statute of limitations on criminal rape in South Dakota. In 2014 the state passed Jolene’s Law, but there was an attempt to kill it by a legislative committee that objected to its $21,000 cost when the law came up for renewal in 2015. Jolene’s Law was saved by an executive order signed by Gov. Dennis Daugaard ’78 JD. The resultant Jolene’s Law Task Force, led by the University of South Dakota’s Center for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment, outlined six major goals and 48 supporting objectives that address a comprehensive approach toward ending child sexual abuse in South Dakota.

Loetscher was named a 2019 Presidential Leadership Scholar in recognition of her service through storytelling. “Everything for me is about service.” Loetscher says. “When I went into journalism, I wanted to serve the community that I reported on and lived in. With Jolene’s Law, I’m trying to make the world safer for kids and families and for my daughter.”

—Clare Milliken

**The First Woman Graduate**

In 1874 Sarah Rebecca Roland became the first woman graduate of Northwestern University. Years later, Roland remembered that “when President [Charles] Fowler — presented me my diploma on Commencement Day, he said, ‘You are the first of a long line, Miss Roland,’ and I was a true prophet.” Born in Cedarville, Ill., Roland started attending Northwestern’s College of Liberal Arts in 1870. (She was not the first woman to enroll; Rebecca Hoag enrolled in 1869 but did not complete her studies.)

After Roland graduated with a bachelor’s degree in philosophy, she married John Aiken Childs, the owner and editor of the Evanston Index newspaper, in 1879. They later moved to Pasadena, Calif., where Roland participated in the Northwestern Alumni Association. After Roland died on June 14, 1937, at age 86, the Pasadena chapter of the NAA organized her funeral service. Her two daughters also attended Northwestern.

In 1922 Northwestern named Roland Hall, a women’s infirmary at the intersection of Clark Street and Orrington Avenue, in honor of its first woman graduate. Roland Hall later became a women’s dormitory; it was razed in 1974. The Sarah Rebecca Roland Professorship honors her legacy.

—Sean Hargadon

**JOLINE HENRICKSON ’11, CHAIR, NAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

In 1922 Northwestern named Roland Hall, a women’s infirmary at the intersection of Clark Street and Orrington Avenue, in honor of its first woman graduate. Roland Hall later became a women’s dormitory; it was razed in 1974. The Sarah Rebecca Roland Professorship honors her legacy.

—Sean Hargadon
“Change the storytellers, change the world.”

VILLY WANG ’90 JD, FOUNDER, PRESIDENT AND CEO, BAYCAT

Raised by an immigrant single mother in the projects of New York City, Villy Wang longed to tell her mom’s story. That longing forged a passion for media because of its power to share and shape narratives. So Wang founded the Bayview-Hunters Point Center for Arts and Technology (BAYCAT), a nonprofit social enterprise in San Francisco that helps young people from low-income communities capture and tell untold stories and create social change. After 15 years, BAYCAT has educated more than 4,000 students, and its recent graduates have gone on to work at Netflix, Lucasfilm, Pixar, HBO, Universal Studios and other production companies.

“I had this crazy idea: What if I could have this place where we teach young people the value of how their story matters and who they are matters?” recalls Wang, a Northwestern Law alumna. “Nobody ever told me that as a kid. And it’s certainly not represented in media — even today.

As she contemplated creating what would become BAYCAT, Wang observed firsthand the lack of resources in schools that were teaching the arts and digital media in lower-income communities — just as Silicon Valley was beginning to explode.

“We’re in one of the wealthiest, most innovative technology cities in the world, and I remember walking into one classroom that was a trailer, and part of it was burned down, and there were not even outlets for computers,” Wang says. “This is what we were dealing with, the gigantic contrast between that and how wealthy the Bay Area is. Solutions to equity and racial justice start with access.”

Today BAYCAT youth learn what the pros learn — training on the latest technology in video production.

“These skill sets are transferable to anything,” Wang says. “We don’t expect every kid to want to be a filmmaker when they grow up, but we have created this pathway from education to employment.”

Women and people of color are highly underrepresented in the media industry. Their stories are not being told, Wang says, which results in further underrepresentation in all forms of media.

“Change the storytellers, change the story” is BAYCAT’s motto, and Wang says the organization’s mission also is about breaking the cycle of poverty and helping to end racism and sexism.

BAYCAT has employed and placed more than 200 young adults in digital media, including Iman Rodney, now a 26-year-old three-time Emmy winner and cinematographer for the San Francisco Giants, who started in the program when he was 13 years old.

“Thank God I had BAYCAT,” says Iman’s mother, Regina Rodney, of San Francisco. “The forces of the street were calling him. As a mother, I didn’t know what to do.

“Villy was able to pull out Iman’s potential,” Regina adds. “She was able to say, ‘This is not your best. You can do better.’ I saw his maturity and growth.

“They say, ‘It takes a village.’ I say, ‘It takes a Villy.’

—Hilary Hurd Anyaso

“It’s part of my purpose to share the lessons I’ve learned.”

KRISTEN KJELLMAN MARSHALL ’07, VICE PRESIDENT OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AT WEPLAYED

Sarah Albrecht remembers how the dynasty began. It was the 2005 NCAA Women’s Lacrosse National Championship in Annapolis, Md. Northwestern faced Virginia.

With the team’s first title in their sights, Albrecht remembers that her teammate Kristen Kjellman wasn’t blinking.

“She just came out firing,” recalls Albrecht ’06, now head coach for University of New Hampshire women’s lacrosse. “We were just getting out of her way and letting her do her thing.”

Northwestern’s win signaled the beginning of the Wildcats’ reign over the lacrosse world, and Kristen Kjellman Marshall led the charge with her intensity and work ethic. She helped Northwestern earn its first three national championships, from 2005 to 2007.

Marshall, who twice won the Tewaaraton Award, given to the best player in men’s and women’s college lacrosse, stays involved with collegiate sports as vice president of business development at WePlayed, a community-driven sports video platform for all college sports.

A mother of two with another baby on the way, Marshall also remains active in the lacrosse world. She is an assistant coach for the varsity girl’s lacrosse team at New Hampshire’s Phillips Exeter Academy. She also hosts pro lacrosse camps, serves as a director on the US Lacrosse Foundation board and co-wrote The ABCs of Girls’ Lacrosse.

“The game has given me so much and had such an impact on the trajectory of my life,” she says. “Being a mentor to young women and girls on a personal level is very important to me. It’s part of my purpose to share the lessons I’ve learned with the younger generation and help make others better.”

—Jacob Muñoz ’21
"I look for artists who don’t have a plan B."

JODY GERSON ’83, CHAIRMAN AND CEO, UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING GROUP

Jody Gerson wields enormous influence in the entertainment industry. She has overseen the signings and publishing-contract extensions of songwriters Rosalía, Billie Eilish, Ariana Grande, Elton John, Post Malone, Prince, Quavo, Carly Simon, Bruce Springsteen, SZA, Jack White and many others. “In the music business, you’re defined by the success of the talent you find,” explains Gerson, chairman and CEO of Universal Music Publishing Group (UMPG), headquartered in Santa Monica, Calif. “And in turn, my relationships with talent are what led me to this job at UMPG.”

Music publishing companies administer the copyrights of artists’ compositions, collecting royalties when recordings are sold or streamed and when songs are performed live or licensed for film and television (also known as sync). “I look for artists whose music and influence will make an impact on global culture,” she says, “someone who doesn’t have a plan B.”

Gerson, who grew up watching Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin at the Philadelphia nightclubs owned by her family, majored in communication studies at Northwestern. She began her career in music publishing at Chappell, then joined EMI, where she signed Alicia Keys and Norah Jones. In 2008 Gerson became co-president of Sony/ATV Music Publishing, where her first signing was the then-unknown Lady Gaga.

In 2015 Gerson became the first woman to be named CEO of a major music publishing company. She has transformed UMPG into a billion-dollar-plus company, and its revenue has increased 40%.

Last year Gerson, along with Grammy winner Keys and two other music industry veterans, co-founded the nonprofit She Is The Music to increase the number of women working in the business. “We champion equality, inclusivity and opportunity for women in our industry,” she says. Its programs — all-female songwriting camps, a global database of women creators and a mentorship program to educate and develop the next generation — are “all focused on moving the needle to change the numbers.”

“In my role, it’s really important to help other women achieve this kind of success,” Gerson told Billboard in 2018. “Being the only one is not OK anymore. I won’t be satisfied until there are more of us.”

“It’s really important to help other women achieve this kind of success. Being the only one is not OK anymore. I won’t be satisfied until there are more of us.”

—Jacob Arnold
“Dreaming is required for living.”

**JADE MAZE ’08 MMUS, MUSICIAN, AUTHOR AND EDUCATOR**

Jade Maze remembers one of the times that she hit rock bottom: It was the late ’80s, and she was trying to start a band in Santa Barbara, Calif.

On a creative kick, she rented a garage where she planned to live and write music full time, but she fell victim to a bait-and-switch scheme. Instead of a tidy garage with a concrete floor, like the model she’d been shown, she was given the keys to a dilapidated, mouse-infested, dirt-floor garage. Before long, she was couch-surfing. Then all her belongings and equipment were stolen from her car.

“Everything was gone,” she says. “It put me in a bad place mentally.”

When a friend found her walking aimlessly on the beach and asked if she was OK, Maze realized she needed help. “I did not want to fall through the cracks,” she says. “I immediately went to this crisis center and said, ‘Help me!’

“It was a life-changing moment. If I hadn’t realized that I needed help, that I was not in control, I don’t know where I would be today.”

It wasn’t the first time Maze had to overcome a personal crisis. She walked away from a troubled home in Oakland, Calif., at age 15. The harrowing journey that followed — including periods of homelessness and incidents of rape, manipulation and isolation — shaped her life, but it did not define or defeat her.

Maze eventually landed on her feet back in her hometown of Minneapolis and devoted herself to music. She toured Germany and France with the Minneapolis Jazz Machine. After going through a divorce and dropping out of college in California, Maze moved to Boston in 1992 and became a jazz and pop headliner. She moved to Chicago in 1994 for living.”

By Sean Hargadon

**Women’s Rights — NOW**

After Karen Lipschultz DeCrow ’59 came across an interview about the National Organization for Women (NOW), the largest organization of feminist activists in the U.S., the former journalist joined the organization and quickly rose through the ranks.

DeCrow established NOW’s Syracuse chapter and coordinated the national Women’s Strike for Equality while working toward her law degree at Syracuse University in 1972. She ran for mayor as a student in 1969, becoming the first female mayoral candidate in New York. Though she lost, DeCrow used the experience to organize a program to train women for politics.

NOW’s updated multi-issue agenda until 2017 and oversaw the organization’s battle against Donald Trump’s travel ban. NOW also campaigned for awareness of voter suppression and worked to eliminate the culture of domestic violence in the NFL. Today O’Neill is executive director of the National Employment Lawyers Association.

DeCrow’s leadership, Terry O’Neill ’74 was named president of NOW in 2009. Also a feminist attorney, O’Neill guided NOW’s updated multi-issue agenda until 2017 and oversaw the organization’s battle against Donald Trump’s travel ban. NOW also campaigned for awareness of voter suppression and worked to eliminate the culture of domestic violence in the NFL. Today O’Neill is executive director of the National Employment Lawyers Association.

Maze, who lives in Westchester, Ill., says getting an education was the turning point in her life. A former straight-A student, she went back to school, earning her GED in her late 30s and then an undergrad degree from the University Without Walls program at Northeastern Illinois University.

Thanks to a partial scholarship, Maze studied voice with Bienen School of Music artist-in-residence Nancy Gustafson ’80 MMus and earned her master’s degree at Northwestern. Within days of graduating, she received a call from the Merit School of Music, a community music school in Chicago that serves talented youth in its tuition-free college-prep conservatory.

“It is my duty to push these students hard toward excellence by making them aware of how talented they are and what a responsibility that is,” Maze says. “I give my students — from all walks of life, rich or poor — a reality check, sugar-coating nothing. And if I think they have what it takes to go far, I back up my encouragement by doing my best to infuse them with fearlessness and brazenness that is necessary to pursue a solo performance career. And their efforts are reaping fruit.”

—Sean Hargadon
“The most important thing you can do as a leader is to lift up others.”

EMILY HARBURG ’18 PHD, DIRECTOR OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION AT EF EDUCATION FIRST

While working at Walt Disney Imagineering as a behavioral sciences researcher, Emily Harburg didn’t always feel comfortable speaking up. “Every day I’d be in meetings where I was the only woman in the room,” she says. “It took a while to get over the feeling that I didn’t belong to that space.”

Experiences like that one inspired Harburg to team up with Anna Bethune ’19 MA and Jen Kamins to build Brave Initiatives, a series of workshops and camps for girls designed to promote self-efficacy and develop confidence in coding. To date, more than 700 girls have participated in Brave programs around the world, and nearly 90% continue to code.

After receiving encouragement from a female mentor to get her doctorate, Harburg came to Northwestern to learn how to design technology that supports learning in the Technology & Social Behavior doctoral program. As a test of her learning, Harburg developed a mobile app called Parachute that pairs newcomers with mentors in the tech industry. The app is used today by Brave Initiatives, and Harburg updates it frequently by adding mentors she meets through networking to support aspiring female coders.

“For me, the most important thing you can do as a leader is to lift up others,” she says. Harburg, who lives in Boston, currently manages a team of programmers as director of emerging technology and innovation at EF Education First, an international education company. She is working with her team to design technology to support learning, connection and exploration as students travel the world with EF.

“Designing technology that helps people better connect with the world and look out rather than down, these types of projects — the ones that can totally change our relationship with learning — are the ones I’m most passionate about and why I decided to do the work that I do,” she says. —Monika Wnuk ’14 MS

“I do believe that we’re here for a higher purpose.”

SHEILA GUJRATHI ’92, ’96 MD, CO-FOUNDER, PRESIDENT AND CEO, GOSSAMER BIO

When Sheila Gujrathi was a student at the Feinberg School of Medicine, she took a year off between her second and third years to live in an ashram in the south of India. Her mother, a pediatrician, was so worried about Gujrathi that she called the ashram and asked them to send her daughter home to finish school. But Gujrathi, a second-generation Indian American, wanted to lead a more centered life. Her father, a psychiatrist, had encouraged her to study sacred Hindu philosophies and scriptures. He passed away when she was a teenager, and Gujrathi was still grieving. At the ashram, she says, she was able to work through her grief and explore a spiritual path.

“It was one of the best decisions I’ve made in my life,” says Gujrathi of her gap year. “It gave me the strength, values, resilience and courage to continue to move forward in my life and follow my dreams.”

Her dreams have taken her far — on an unconventional journey from becoming a doctor and treating patients to leaving the practice of medicine to becoming a management consultant to doing research in biotechnology to co-founding a biopharmaceutical company. Her goal was to create a next-generation, innovative biopharma company to do cutting-edge science and help as many patients as possible.

Today, as president and CEO of Gossamer Bio in San Diego, Gujrathi leads a company focused on the discovery and development of therapeutics in the disease areas of immunology, inflammation and oncology.

In co-founding and building Gossamer, Gujrathi says, it was essential to use a different business model from the big pharma companies. “I wanted to have the ability as a small, nimble biotech company to push the envelope every day and take risks,” she explains. “My thinking here is that we will have these successes, and when we don’t have successes, we’ll want to make those decisions quickly to stop programs and move on to what’s next. Our ability to do that and then understand where the science is going and make new discoveries and keep furthering the field is so exciting for all of us.”

When Gujrathi ended her stay at the ashram, she returned to Northwestern to finish medical school, completing the seven-year Honors Program in Medical Education, in which she had also earned a bachelor of science degree in biomedical engineering. After her residency in internal medicine at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston, she did a fellowship year in allergy and immunology at the University of California, San Francisco, and Stanford.

“I always thought I’d be a physician,” Gujrathi says. “But I wanted to see if I could have a broader impact.” Coming into contact with entrepreneurial clinicians in the Bay Area and seeing the vibrant interaction between industry and academics, she made the decision to go into management consulting at McKinsey & Company.

“It was terrifying to leave medicine, but I learned a tremendous amount about communication and analytical and project management skills,” she says.

Eventually Gujrathi went back to clinical research within the biotech industry, focusing on science as a physician executive. From there she progressed to high-level management positions, eventually becoming the chief medical officer at Receptos, a drug discovery and development company, and then moved on to start Gossamer.

Gujrathi credits the year she spent in the ashram for giving her a holistic perspective on running a company. “One of my motivations for forming Gossamer was that I wanted to bring those spiritual values to work and continue to grow myself, professionally and personally, but also help anyone around me who would like to also take that journey with me,” says Gujrathi. “You want to bring your authentic, whole self to work. It’s transformed my life and for the better. It is at the core of how I think and what I do. And I do believe that we’re here for a higher purpose. We’re all doing our part in this universe to achieve that.”

—Stephanie Russell

“I wanted to bring those spiritual values to work and continue to grow myself, professionally and personally, but also help anyone around me who would like to also take that journey with me.”

—SHEILA GUJRATHI

FALL 2019
Soul Restoration

Natasha Trethewey believes in the healing power of poetry as she confronts a family tragedy and the misapprehensions of American history.

By Adrienne Samuels Gibbs

Photograph by Andrew Kornylak
ulitzer Prize–winning author and Northwestern professor of English Natasha Trethewey’s beloved mother died decades ago, and yet her grave, down in Mississippi, remains unmarked by a headstone. The reasons for this are varied and complicated, and they speak to the essence of Trethewey, one of the most acclaimed poets of our time. Or perhaps the reasons are also singular and simple — alluded to in Trethewey’s latest collection, Monument: Poems New and Selected (2018). Line by brilliant line, she details uncomfortable truths about growing up biracial and black in Mississippi, the insidious nature of racism, the forgotten history of black laborers and the murder of her mother. The epigraph, a line from Walt Whitman’s “The Great City,” provides context for the entire tome: “Where no monuments exist to heroes but in the common words and deeds...”

Trethewey’s monument to her mother — and to other forgotten Americans — is this book, a work that illustrates how leaning into memories, and memorializing the marginalized, delivers the soul. The two-term U.S. poet laureate, who laughs just as much as she cries when discussing how sorrow led her to head to Northwestern, her beautiful new home caught fire and nearly burned to the ground — with all her boxes of memories and notes for a new book inside it — within months of moving in. But all was not lost.

The two-term U.S. poet laureate, who laughs just as much as she cries when discussing how sorrow led her to head to Northwestern, where she is a Litowitz Creative Writing Graduate Program faculty member who also teaches undergraduates. Upon arrival, she knew she belonged. The realization came on Halloween, when a little boy rang the bell and said, “Trick or treat.” “I was born on Confederate Memorial Day and now? I feel like this is a place I was supposed to be,” she says. “It seems like I have chosen the geography in which I want to place myself.” She pauses. “This just feels like destiny.”

No one was hurt. And the books — her books, her husband’s books, her father’s books — emerged unscathed. The volumes were packed so tightly on the shelves that no oxygen could get to them, and they did not burn. The couple’s individual working documents had already been uploaded to the cloud. And the fire somehow skipped over the family photos and her father’s beloved Alpha Phi Alpha wooden pledge paddle. Trethewey and her husband, Northwestern professor Brett Gadsden ’99 MA, ’07 PhD, gutted the entire house and moved into an apartment for two years. They are finally, just now, moving back into their returned home. “The house reminded me of my mother,” says Trethewey, dabbling her eyes while mentioning the fleur-de-lis etched into a stained-glass window and the dfadlyb and narcissus that line her garden in the spring and also make appearances in her poetry of Mississippi. “The fire was just terrible. But there’s growth in how it didn’t break me. It felt like the house did a cleansing, you know? The fire got rid of everything that needed to go. And now we get to start over.”

In “Pastoral,” a poem reprinted in Monument, Trethewey speaks about her beloved father. It’s a piece that on the surface is about a dream: taking a group photo with the famous “Fugitive poets” of the South. In the end, though, the poetry sears.

In part, she writes:

We’re lining up now — Robert Penn Warren, his voice just audible above the drone of bulldozers, telling us where to stand. Say “race,” the photographer croons. I’m in blackface again when the flash freezes us. My father’s white, I tell them, and rural. You don’t hate the South? They ask. You don’t hate it? People often ask questions when they really make statements, says Trethewey, who underscores this communication style within the words of Fugitive poets. But more than that, the piece illustrates Trethewey’s connection to her father, Eric Trethewey, a young white poet who met his future wife, Gwendolyn Ann Turush, while both were students at Kentucky State College. He stood out from the crowd and, despite being in the Deep South, was invited to join the historically black fraternity Alpha Phi Alpha in 1963. Her parents divorced when she was 6, but a young Natasha often visited her father at Tulane University in New Orleans, where he was in graduate school, and years later would write of her visceral memories of being a child able to “pass for white” even while her mother and grandmother were unmistakably black.

Trethewey has always been interested in historical memory and historical erasure. She says that her poetry comes from two existential wounds, the wound of history and the immeasurable loss of her mother. “W.H. Auden, in his memorial to William Butler Yeats (In Memory of W.B. Yeats), wrote, ‘Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry,’” she says. “Mad Mississippi, with its history of racial violence and oppression, inflicted my first wound. My mother’s death was the second. This is what hurt me into poetry.”

In the 2006 collection Native Guard, Trethewey dug deep to find materials about the Union regiment that was housed at Ship Island, near her native Gulfport. These soldiers were named the Louisiana Native Guards and were one of the Union’s first black divisions, mustered in late 1862 and charged with guarding Confederate prisoners during the Civil War. One of
a handful of “colored” regiments, the Native Guards fought for their own freedom, and the freedom of the country, but many suffered the indignities of dying without acknowledgment or even a grave. That is, until Trethewey and others from her part began to celebrate the contributions of those soldiers. After Native Guard’s release, Mississippi honored the regiment’s memory with an actual monument near the dock where people boarded the boat to

Ship Island. Trethewey’s words helped manifest a miracle; she wrote those dead soldiers back into their rightful place in American history. 

Trethewey has published six books that blend historical research with poetry. One, Bellocq’s Ophelia (2002), is about the life of a biracial, antebellum-era New Orleans prostitute who lived in one of the “octoroon” brothels. Another, Domestic Work (2000), is the result of creating poems inspired by historic images of African Americans at work in the pre–civil rights era of the 20th century.

When Trethewey was named poet laureate, James Billington, then the librarian of Congress, said this about her work: “Her poems dig beneath the surface of history — personal or communal, from childhood or from a century ago — to explore the human struggles that we all face.”

T

at Northwestern, in her class Poetry and the Historical Imagination, Trethewey asks students to investigate the intersections between public history and their personal history in the places they come from. She says that when they consider family stories and place, they begin to see deeper truths. After such an assignment, the process often leads students to expose their own hidden layers.

“I tell them also that unless they’re willing to write about things that are frightening to them, unless they are really trying to tell a truth — an emotional truth — then they’re not really writing,” says Trethewey. “I try to make a space in my classroom where students feel like they can reveal parts of themselves — where they can reveal that emotional landscape without judgment. Even the most traumatic events in our lives can be changed — be transformed — in the language of a poem.”

As poet laureate, Trethewey was tasked with bringing more poetry to the masses. She traveled the country and gave more readings than she can remember. She also wanted to make poetry more accessible and to show how people are already making use of poetry in their daily lives, which is why she taped Where Poetry Lives, a PBS NewsHour series with senior correspondent Jeffrey Brown.

“I think there’s a poem out there for everyone,” she says. “It starts with enthusiasm, and I try to find poems that will be meaningful to people, that will get them interested, get them hooked.”

National Book Award Finalist Jericho Brown, who was in graduate school when Trethewey won the Pulitzer, has seen this teaching in action as a student of poetry. The two first met when she taught a class at the Callaloo Creative Writing Workshop at Texas A&M. He knew years ago that Trethewey’s talent was something special.

“She’s a brilliant teacher — not just about poetry, but about life. She’s proof that when you are true to who you are and what you do, you have a kind of confidence about yourself that you can get beyond yourself,” says Brown, who is now director of the creative writing program at Emory University. “We try to write the poems that we need to write for ourselves,” Brown explains, “and it turns out that other people need those poems too.”

Trethewey’s plaque will lead visitors down a path of historical discovery as they read her catalog. And that’s exactly the point, says Kevin Young, director of New York City’s Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and a primary reader for Trethewey’s first book of poetry, Domestic Work. “Natasha has always had grace and power in her writing,” says Young. “She’s always had a vision for what she wanted out of a poem. She writes out of a passionate place. She writes about memory, loss and land. You will be moved when you encounter her monument.”

But Trethewey has not yet settled on a location. Should it be next to the newly erected monument to the Native Guards? Should it be in Gulfport on family land that sits fallow and has for years? The poet ponders the question. “I could have it on my mother’s grave,” she says. “I can have it on my grandmother’s property. It needs to be somewhere where the act of remembrance leads people to more remembrances — not just of me but of the larger web of history that we’re all a part of.”

Adrienne Samuels Gibbs ’99 is a graduate of the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications. See video of Natasha Trethewey reading her poem “Waterborne” at numag.nu/Trethewey.
Creation

Five Questions with Jeffrey Shulman ’01, ’04 MS, ’06 PhD
In his documentary On the Brink, the University of Washington business professor evokes the human impact of gentrification in Seattle’s Central District.

1. What did you learn about the Central District from producing and directing On the Brink? I was struck by the intense feelings of trauma, tragedy, and loss that residents in the Central District are feeling while the city is experiencing an economic boom. I lived in Seattle for 10 years before my work with Seattle Growth Podcast opened my eyes to a rich history that’s in danger of becoming history forever. Nationally renowned talents such as Ray Charles, Jimi Hendrix, Quincy Jones and Sir Mix-A-Lot called this once-thriving African American community home. This rich history also includes racial covenants that formed the community and disinvestment in the neighborhood through redlining. Knowing how these communities were formed and starved of resources gives context to why displacement happening now is not just about simple economics. I’ve been struck by the reaction from audiences in cities from LA to New York who relate to what’s portrayed in the film. Seattle’s Central District story is truly an American story.

2. What do people need to understand about gentrification? What many people see as progress means loss to community members who made big contributions to their neighborhood. A takeaway is that there’s a real human impact of “progress.” My hope is that by bringing attention to people who are struggling in an economic boom, we can find solutions that can include them in building a positive shared future.

3. How did your award-winning Seattle Growth Podcast develop? Seattle is a dynamic city. I lived in the South Lake Union neighborhood, which has changed dramatically. Three years after moving away from the neighborhood, I didn’t recognize it. I set out to understand how people in Seattle are reacting to the changes around them. Seasons of the podcast have focused on homelessness, the music scene and finding community.

4. How do Seattle’s changing demographics fit with your role at UW’s Foster School of Business? I teach, research and engage in service. My research primarily focuses on using game theory to look at pricing, product returns and marketing implications of cloud computing. Seattle Growth Podcast and On the Brink were acts of service, looking at what role business can play in serving the needs of the community in a way that leaves fewer people behind. It’s coming from an interest in how we as a public business school can be a positive force in a transforming city.

5. How has your career been guided by your time at Northwestern? Being exposed to different people and ideas at Northwestern sparked a curiosity that has guided me through all these different projects. I also learned the importance of community and looking out for one another at the University.

Interview conducted by Jacob Munar, a junior from Ingleside, Ill., who is studying journalism and psychology.

An Artful Harvest
Nashville-based visual artist Beth Reitmeyer ’98 MFA likes to make people happy with her colorful and often playful installations.

In August her giant plush tomatoes were featured at East Nashville’s 10th annual Tomato Art Fest.

Omar Jimenez ‘15, a Chicago-based national correspondent for CNN, moonlights as the rapper OJ Trop. On Oct. 18 he released The A-Block, a six-song EP. “I make a living telling other people’s stories every day,” Jimenez says. “This is a chance for me to tell a little bit of my own story.” Growing up in the Atlanta suburbs, Jimenez followed such hip-hop stars as Outkast and Ludacris. But he credits the offbeat work of Donald Glover, aka Childish Gambino, for inspiring him in high school to pave his own musical path. “He wasn’t the gangster type of rapper that I grew up listening to and watching,” says Jimenez. “That helped me with my creativity and gave me confidence in thinking that I don’t have to fit this certain type of mold.”

In his documentary On the Brink, the University of Washington business professor evokes the human impact of gentrification in Seattle’s Central District.
Sports Broadcast Innovator Focuses on Food Technology

The chipmunks were giving Hank Adams '99 MBA a headache, tearing up the garden in his Evanston backyard. So he started looking for an indoor alternative, but was not impressed by the options. Adams had just sold Sportvision, a tech firm known for sports television innovations like the first-down yellow line on football broadcasts. “I spent my career in technology,” Adams says, “but really I wanted to do something that would have an impact. I wanted to make it simple for people interested in eating better to be able to grow things like salad greens, kale and tomatoes indoors.”

With this inspiration, Adams in 2017 launched Rise Gardens, a hydroponics system that can be set up anywhere. He and his team developed his gardens can provide as much as 3 pounds of fresh lettuce a month per level. The Rise Gardens kits aren’t only for home gardeners. Users can purchase small seed pods and their nutrients separately or subscribe to a monthly plan. The Wi-Fi-connected system also includes ultrasonic sensors that tell gardeners via an app when to water and add nutrients. Adams says his gardens can provide as much as 3 pounds of fresh lettuce a month per level.

The Rise Gardens kits aren’t only for use in the family home. Schools and universities, including Cornell, have shown interest in using the gardens for educational purposes. Adams says his gardens can provide as much as 3 pounds of fresh lettuce a month per level.

“People are starting to realize that they can grow things indoors,” says Adams. “It’s better to be able to grow things like salad greens and herbs as well as tomatoes and climbing crops like peas and cucumbers. Adams is now exploring adaptations that make it possible to grow root vegetables. He’s also looking into ways to make his gardens more accessible for people with disabilities.”

The Rise Gardens kits aren’t only for home gardeners. Users can purchase small seed pods and their nutrients separately or subscribe to a monthly plan. The Wi-Fi-connected system also includes ultrasonic sensors that tell gardeners via an app when to water and add nutrients. Adams says his gardens can provide as much as 3 pounds of fresh lettuce a month per level.

For more information about Rise Gardens, visit numag.nu/Goodavage.

Read more about Maria Goodavage and her book at numag.nu/Goodavage.

Canine Companions

Doctor Dogs by Maria Goodavage


She also delves into the world of dogs working with scientists to uncover the scents of myriad diseases, including several types of cancer and Parkinson’s in addition to deadly pathogens like antibiotic-resistant bacteria. “Dogs are so beautifully attuned with people,” Goodavage says. “It’s like we’re extensions of each other.” This is her fourth book about working dogs.

The Ultimate Condiment Combo

A former Wildcat quarterback and his startup team launched a new mustard-ketchup concoction.

Todd Somers ’73 helped direct Northwestern football’s offense as a quarterback for parts of three seasons in the early 1970s. Now, as a longtime Wildcats season ticket holder cheering from the stands, he’s created a new game-day condiment combo, MustKetch.

Standing in a long line for mustard and ketchup at a sporting event, Somers had a thought: “Why hasn’t anyone combined these two tasty condiments before?”

So Somers, former resident of the N-Club, and his wife, Ann Cooney Somers ’74, went into the kitchen, experimenting with proportions to create MustKetch, a proprietary recipe that mixes the two staple condiments with spices, seeds and other ingredients for added flavor.

Todd, who lives in Trout Valley, Ill., and his brother Scott Somers ’75 MBA, a Los Angeles–based entrepreneur, formed the company Somers Family Specialties to develop the brand. With help from his friend and fraternity brother Michael Sapierienza ’74, ’76 MBA, Todd secured a connection with Chicago chef Charlie Baggs, who serves as the company’s chief innovation officer.

The non-GMO and preservative- and gluten-free condiments are manufactured in Melrose Park, Ill. MustKetch comes in three flavors — Original, Zesty and Smoke — and is available in grocery stores throughout the Chicago area and nationally on Amazon. “It’s been both invigorating and fun,” Somers says of the MustKetch launch. “There’s nothing better than hearing people who have tried the product say that they really like it.”
Storytelling at Its Best
Veteran newspaperman and author Mike Stanton brings colorful characters to life.

In the mid-1990s Mike Stanton ’82 MS shared a Pulitzer Prize as a member of the Providence Journal investigative team, a role that put him in constant contact with one of America’s most notorious mayors, Buddy Cianci. The charismatic but felonious architect of the Providence renaissance became the subject of Stanton’s debut book, New York Times best-seller The Prince of Providence (2003). In the fall, Trinity Repertory Company adapted Stanton’s book to the stage with a script written by playwright George Brant ’91. It had an extended, sold-out run in September and October. Stanton’s second book, Unbeaten: Rocky Marciano’s Fight for Perfection in a Crooked World (2018), earned best of 2018 nods from The New York Times and the Providence Journal. Stanton, who was certainly a wonderful investigative team, a role that earned him Pulitzer Prize as a member of the Providence Journal, has reached agreement in principle to develop a movie based on a recent Oscar-winning film with a Hollywood producer.

Being at Northwestern for a year was a transformative experience. I have rewarding memories of being the editor of the first magazine that [journalism professor] Abe Peck had his magazine students produce in what has become such a renowned program. I also studied urban politics and worked out of Medill’s downtown Chicago newsroom with Donna Rosene Leff ’70, ’71 MS and David Nelson ’67, ’68 MS. And I spent a lot of time at Wrigley Field, including with one professor who would take his students there and grade papers in the bleachers. Chicago was certainly a wonderful laboratory for studying urban journalism, political corruption and baseball.

I wrote my first book about Buddy Cianci, this larger-than-life, colorful, roguish mayor who transformed the city. But he also presided over a breathtaking array of corruption, in not one but two administrations. He had to resign after beating up his ex-wife’s lover and holding him hostage in his house on Power Street. Buddy became the longest-serving mayor in America. Then the FBI came in, and he was convicted of racketeering conspiracy.

Boxing was a very colorful world, and even if you’re not a boxing fan, Rocky Marciano’s story is a great window into what America was like in the middle of the 20th century. Here’s a guy who was born in the 1920s, when there was a lot of anti-Italian immigrant fervor, like you see with immigration today. He came of age during the Great Depression. He fought in World War II. And then he became the boxing champion.

I uncovered this really fascinating episode where Rocky became friends with Muhammad Ali. They met in a secret studio in Miami to film a fake bout between the two of them — a radio promoter’s really hokey idea — and they sparred several rounds. This was 1969, and he and Ali really bonded. They talked about the race riots in America, and they had an idea: “What if you and me, a white man and a black man, two champions, got on a bus and went to Detroit and went to Watts and we talked about how blacks and whites can get along?” They were sitting by the side of the ring eating grapefruit, talking about this idea. A few weeks later Rocky got on a plane in Chicago to fly to Iowa to the opening of a mob pal’s nephew’s steakhouse, and he died in a plane crash.

The fact that both of my books have been successful, and also drawn movie and stage interest, speaks to the power of storytelling — and journalism as the foundation for stories that people want to hear.

Interview by senior editor Sean Hargadon.
All-American Awards for Wildcat women athletes, including lacrosse star and four-time honoree Kristen Kjellman Marshall ’07. Read about Marshall, one of 58 women in the Northwestern Athletic Hall of Fame, in our coverage of 150 Years of Women at Northwestern. See page 31.