

ASA Report

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Attending the ASA in Montreal for the first time was a truly life-changing and pivotal moment in my academic journey as a third-year Ph.D. student. The conference was an enriching experience as I attended panels where scholar activists whose researching themes aligned closely with my own research interests. The opportunity to not only listen to the presenters but also engage in meaningful conversation with both the speakers and fellow attendees was particularly valuable. Among all the meaningful experiences, the panel comprised of authors of books and papers I had read during my doctorate course work at University of Hawai'i at Mānoa stood out to me and was exceptionally moving.

One panel that left a lasting impression was the discourse on transgender and affect. Exploring the sensorium as a means of trans survival and delving into questions about how transgender archives are approached, how they define the line between private and public, and how transgender history is remembered added new nuanced layers to my understanding. The panels and discussions overall provided spaces for a deeper consideration of what the term “transgender” does.

The ASA conference heightened my academic interest in oral history, performance studies, and affect theory. It became clearer that my desire is to contribute to the construction of knowledge using living archives. I aspire to become a scholar activist, actively contributing to social justice. The rich discussions and insightful presentations at the conference deepened my commitment to American studies, sexuality studies, and transgender studies.

I am grateful to ASA-JAAS for offering this invaluable opportunity for my intellectual and personal growth. The conference not only expanded my academic perspectives but also reaffirmed my dedication to pursuing in scholarship that actively contributes to positive societal change.

ASA 2023 Annual Meeting Report

Tagen Haga

This year's annual meeting of the American Studies Association took place in Montreal from November 2nd to 6th. I participated in it with the support of ASA-JAAS travel grants. A wide range of panels held at the conference gave me the opportunity to be exposed to cutting-edge scholarship. Responding to this year's theme, "Solidarity: What Love Looks Like in Public," each session introduced and discussed experiences of racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ communities, labor movements, people with disabilities and impairments, and women, as well as the intersections of various kinds of discrimination and solidarity between minority groups. In addition, the conference offered me the opportunity to interact with other scholars.

Among the diverse panels, "Re-Visioning Family" impressed me most with the thought-provoking content and the innovative way of presentation. In this session, panelists questioned from different angles the family norm that prioritizes "white heteronormative social and reproductive relation." Anne Castro offered a close examination of Demetria Martinez's 1994 novel *Mother Tongue*, which featured an El Salvador refugee woman. Martinez analyzed how the novel reimaged a family history, criticizing both neo-colonial and domestic violence. Faith Barter read Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* as an example of Black world-making. Barter showed Jacobs wrote an alternative history for herself, utilizing the form of confession. Alice Rutkowski studied the reality TV show "RuPaul's Drag Race" and depicted how it demonstrated various forms of alternative kinship and disrupted the traditional family norm. In addition to the three scholars, this panel had a poet, Emily August, as a panelist. August read pieces from her poetry collection, *The Punishments Must Be a School*, which tells a history of a biracial family. This panel was eye-opening not only because it questioned the dominant idea about family but also because it challenged the traditional form of scholarly presentation in academic conferences. Instead of panelists presenting their works individually, they gave their papers collaboratively, alternately reading parts of their manuscripts. The audience witnessed the scene instantly switching from El Salvador to an antebellum plantation to the contemporary US, and after a recitation of a poem, going back to El Salvador. The session went back and forth between presenters, changing the order. The form of presentation challenged the listeners' preexisting notions of academic conferences and made them rethink of scholarly affiliation.

Not only did this conference afford me the chance to learn the latest developments in the field of American studies, but it also allowed me to interact with scholars from different institutions. Discussions with panelists helped me deepen my understanding of my area of expertise. The luncheon with ASA/JAAS committee members provided me an opportunity to discuss the future collaboration between the American and Japanese associations. Interaction with other graduate students from Japan widened my perspective by exchanging information about the programs each of us belongs to. It was a great experience to attend this year's annual meeting. I am grateful to all the opportunities this it gave me, and I hope to come back as a presenter in the future.

American Studies Association Annual Meeting Report

Hiraku Abe

Overall, I very much enjoyed the conference in Montreal and am grateful for the opportunity. This year's conference theme was "Solidarity: What Love Looks Like in Public" and I attended several panel sessions that asked how solidarity creates justice in public life, particularly in museum spaces. In a paper session titled "Reimagining the Museum," for instance, panelists discussed the challenges of bringing the complex topics of religion, race, and community histories into museum spaces and making historical minorities visible in those spaces.

This question of visibility connects to another paper session on the exhibition of (anti-)lynching art, which I looked forward to attending most. The session was to discuss the ways in which we formulate a visual and spatial means for honoring lynching victims. Last summer, I made a trip to the Equal Justice Initiative's National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama—the memorial which marked the first step in the remembrance project of racial violence. I have a great interest in how we remember the history of lynching and commemorate its victims in public spaces. Although the session was canceled at the last minute for unknown reasons, I learned that efforts are being made to create memorials for lynching victims around the country and I am curious to see how the project will develop from here.

On Saturday afternoon, many of the panelists canceled their sessions to participate in the ASA/MESA walkout for Palestine. As Israeli forces continue to bombard the Gaza Strip, killing many civilians, people across the world have protested against Israel's war on Gaza. In solidarity with this global movement, many members of ASA and MESA walked out of the conferences to join the march at Place des Arts. As I walked closer to the site, I saw a huge crowd chanting, "Free, free, Palestine!" and "So, so, so, solidarité, avec, avec, avec la Palestine (Solidarity with Palestine)!" Attending the march aligned with the conference's mission which seeks to participate in building a practice of solidarity and justice, as well as my own work that presents a critique of violence.

ASA 年次大会参加報告書

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After the five tremendous days in Montréal, I feel my faith in scholarship was renewed. A “renewal” might be an odd word to use to describe a post-conference feeling, or it should at least sound hyperbolic, but given the nature of my experience over the past three years in a U.S. doctoral program, this word feels most right to me. I am, of course, referring to the impact of COVID-19 and the transition of numerous events to online since the spring of 2020. Before Montréal, with in-person contact opportunities with people outside my university so limited, my academic journey had been quite disconnected from that of others.

So, perhaps naturally, the most memorable aspect of my participation in the American Studies Association’s annual meeting in 2023 concerns with in-person *interactions* with people rather than the specific contents of the panels I attended. (The latter, too, nonetheless inspired me in numerous ways. As a student of religious studies, I primarily attended religion-related panels, such as “Beyond the Golden Tablets: Material Culture and the Creation of Mormon Solidarity,” “Christian Nationalism and the American Citizenry,” and “Collaboration, Critique, Resistance: Rethinking the Study of Religion and U.S. Empire,” all of which were so inspiring and relevant to my work.) I recall a number of pleasant conversations (all in person!) that I had during the conference. I met a scholar L.H. whose work on religious liberalism I had admired for so long without having a chance to meet in person due to the pandemic. One of the panels I attended ended up so small in the audience size that we put our chairs in a circle during the Q&A session, which felt quite intimate and joyful. I also spent wonderful evenings with my fellow Japanese graduate students from various U.S. universities. We talked about our research, life, struggles, and future dreams. We discussed politics, culture, social justice, and the roles of scholarship in them. This was such a precious experience, reminding me of the loftiness of a scholarly enterprise as well as its potentialities in changing the world.

Lastly, I would like to note my deepest gratitude to the Japanese Association for American Studies for its extremely generous funding that made all of the above possible. I am particularly grateful to Professors Yuki Oda and Yohei Sekiguchi, who were, besides making various logistical arrangements for us, wonderful mentors for us throughout the conference. In our conversations over a few meals during the conference, the two shared with us a lot about academic cultures in the U.S. and Japan, while patiently listening to our experience and challenges in American graduate student life, for which I am so immensely thankful.

American Studies Association Annual Meeting 2023
ASA-JAAS
Ena Ozaki

Under the theme of “Solidarity: What Love Looks Like in Public,” the American Studies Association’s 2023 annual meeting posed an important question as to how to visualize the intangibles in the field of American studies.

Sessions including “Memory and Memorialization in Space and Place,” “Curation as Care: Gathering and Sorting as Material Culture Methods in Solidarity,” and “Memorial Cultural Interventions as Networks of Care” successfully addressed the question in diverse ways with tangible objects ranging from photographs, paintings, and ephemera to scrapbooks, digital maps, and monuments. In the panel on memory and memorialization, for example, panelists and audience members discussed the concept of absence in the practices of commemoration and memorialization. The public historical projects that the panelists engaged in, which recorded unmarked historic sites and removed and destroyed statues and monuments, reminded us of the importance of “read[ing] absence,” as one panelist put it. Other sessions, such as “What Love Sounds Like in Public: The Sonic and Commune in Performance,” attempted to answer the questions about seeing solidarity with intangible objects like music and performance, encouraging participants to consider how the ideas of silence and harmony could be a tool for minoritized people to shape and transform public spaces.

This year’s theme resonated beyond the conference venue. On day three of the meeting, I had an opportunity to participate in a walkout in which scholars and students from the ASA and the Middle East Studies Association joined in solidarity with Palestine to demand a cease-fire. The streets were filled with multilingual chants, including “So, so, so, solidarité! Avec, avec, avec la Palestine!” “Free, free, Palestine!” and “Occupation no more.” With Palestinian flags, signs, and call-and-response chants, participants expressed solidarity in their own ways. A man carrying a sign with a cover image of Angela Y. Davis’s *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle* (2015) passed by me. As someone doing a PhD in American Studies, I listened to the crowd yelling, “Biden, Biden, don’t you hide, you’re supporting genocide,” with a sense of responsibility to resist settler colonialist violence in which the US has been involved.

While going back and forth between different disciplines, diverse approaches, and even the conference rooms and the streets, the 2023 annual meeting served as a space for reflection on the actuality of American studies. I appreciate the opportunity the ASA-JAAS travel grant provided me to ponder how we could translate our scholarly attention to solidarity—whether in texts, images, objects, or sounds—into concrete practices to address the crises we face, and vice versa.