

Unheard Stories: Five Years of the Historical Accountability Student Research Program

This summer we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Dartmouth Library's Historical Accountability Student Research Program (HASRP). For the last five years, the program has been sponsored by the Provost's Office under the auspices of the campus-wide Inclusive Excellence initiative. Born in the summer of 2018, the program initially provided for three competitive and fully funded fellowships, with an additional fourth fellowship funded every year through the generosity of the Sphinx Foundation. To date, the program has supported twenty undergraduate fellows and numerous interns, all of whom have conducted independent archival research related to issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion in Dartmouth College's past.

Our innovative and dynamic program offers an open-ended scope for project topics. The program's goal is not to create a definitive report or scholarly publication but instead to provide student researchers with hands-on experience conducting archival research and to keep the dialogue about historical accountability alive and moving forward. It is an ongoing conversation about our institution's historical accountability, and not a conclusion or referendum.

So, although the program has been a great success so far, there is still much work to be done. Thanks to guaranteed funding from Dartmouth's Office for Institutional Diversity and Equity, the Library will continue to provide opportunities for students to practice archival research skills while blazing trails into IDE issues for future researchers and scholars. Please celebrate the success of the program with us by exploring this exhibit that highlights the projects and research of select interns and fellows from the first five years of its existence.

Frequently, historical accountability research involves working with materials that caused harm in the past and may continue to cause harm today. This exhibit contains several potentially harmful items that we felt were integral to the research of our fellows and interns and therefore are necessary to present a fuller picture of the issues presented in the exhibit. Specifically, one of the cases contains photos and actual costume pieces from Dartmouth's former stereotypical "Indian" cheerleader. We hope that you will engage with this exhibit insofar as you are able.

This exhibit was curated by Val Werner '21, Historical Accountability Student Research Program Coordinator, and Morgan Swan, the Special Collections Librarian for Teaching & Scholarly Engagement. For more about the Historical Accountability Student Research Program, visit us online at dartgo.org/hasrp.

Case One

Over the past five years, the Historical Accountability Student Research Program's student interns have contributed to the furthering of knowledge about issues of institutional inclusion, equity, and diversity, mostly behind the scenes. Their task has been to supplement the work of the student research fellows by exploring topics that complement fellowship projects, with the goal of creating a broad body of knowledge about historical accountability at Dartmouth. This case focuses on issues related to the research efforts of two of our early interns, Savannah Eller '22 and Veselin Nanov '20. Eller explored the troubling history of the "Indian Symbol" and its role as the College's unofficial

mascot for much of the 20th century, while Nanov's work shed light on the long-standing and destructive relationship between alcohol and Dartmouth undergraduate night-life.

Dartmouth Cheerleader dressed in "Indian" mascot costume during football game at Memorial Field, date unknown. ["Cheerleaders" – Dartmouth Photo Files Collection](#).

Part of a Dartmouth "Indian" cheerleading costume, including loin cloth, raccoon hairpiece, and moccasin. [Realia 82](#).

For much of the college's history, Dartmouth held a connection with Native Americans based more in fascination than in fact. Inspired by real historical students enrolled in Eleazar Wheelock's short-lived Indian Charity School but with very few contemporary Native American classmates, Dartmouth students began creating "Indian" traditions and symbols around the turn of the 20th century. The rise in popularity of college sports became a particular catalyst for this type of branding, as newspapers in Boston started calling Dartmouth teams "Indians" in the 1920s. From gracing official college letterheads to serving as the inspiration for the popular "Wah Hoo Wah" call, the symbol pervaded every facet of college life. Nowhere was the "Indian" more visible than when used as a costume during sporting events.

Ray Cirotta's application to Dartmouth College, including photograph. February 14, 1945. Ray Cirotta 1949 Alumni File.

Anonymous correspondence sent to Dean Lloyd K Neidlinger, Dean of Students, concerning the death of Ray Cirotta. Raymond Cirotta Case records (DA-46), Box 3139.

Dartmouth College Press Release providing details of Ray Cirotta's death. March 1949. Raymond Cirotta Case records, DA-46, Box 3139.

"Five or six undergraduates on a Saturday night got to house-hopping, as they called it. Going around to houses that were having beer parties or liquor available, and getting free beer and free liquor, moving from house to house until they were, if not drunk, at least, well, intoxicated, if there's a distinction....Somebody in the group decided they would go and challenge some undergraduate. His name was Cirrota....Well, they got into a fistfight in the boy's room. He was knocked to the floor, and got...a brain hemorrhage, and died." -- Former College President John Dickey

This "incident," as it was often called by College administrators, took place on the night of March 18th, 1949. Raymond "Ray" Cirrota '49, the victim of the attack, was taken to Dick's House after complaining of a headache and then died that same night. The story quickly got picked up by the state and national newspapers, putting Dartmouth at the epicenter of a sensation: a murder on campus, alcohol abuse, debauched soirees at fraternities, stars of the football team implicated, an unclear motivation, and a College administration that kept its mouth shut. As the case went to trial, this setup was clearly hospitable for misinformation and an intense if ungrounded response by the larger public.

During the last five years, Rauner has supported twenty Historical Accountability Student Research Fellows. It is impossible for one exhibit to demonstrate the impact each individual fellow has had on Dartmouth's understanding of its own history; all we can do is give a sampling of the materials our fellows have learned from and created. This case features the work of Caroline Cook '21, who researched Hannah Croasdale, Dartmouth's first tenured female professor; the work of Christian Dawkins '22, who researched diversity and inclusion in Dartmouth's fraternities; the work of Leeza Petrov '22, who researched AIDS and safer sex at Dartmouth; and the work of Emmanuel Mariano '23, who researched historian, radical feminist, activist, and former Dartmouth professor Marysa Navarro-Aranguren.

Hannah T. Croasdale, *Woods Hole, 1929-1933*. Hannah Croasdale papers, MS-882, Box 2, Folder 20.

Hannah Croasdale spent several summers at the Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, Mass. She clearly cherished these summers, filling this album with photos and jokes from her time at Woods Hole. The burned edges of the pages likely resulted from a house fire that, fortunately, the album survived.

Caroline Cook, *Tell Them to Be Quiet and Wait*. Atmosphere, 2022.

Following her fellowship at Rauner, Caroline Cook went on to publish a fictional novel based on Hannah Croasdale's life. Croasdale herself is depicted on the cover. The title, *Tell Them to Be Quiet and Wait*, comes from a real quote by Croasdale, who rejected the idea that she was a pioneer who had done anything for the women following her at Dartmouth except "tell them to be quiet and wait."

Hannah T. Croasdale, "Woods Hole Algae, *Sargassum filipendula*." Summer 1929. Hannah Croasdale papers, MS-882, Box 4, Folder 2.

Hannah Croasdale took this algae sample—*Sargassum filipendula*—at Woods Hole in the summer of 1929. By the end of her career, Croasdale was respected internationally as an authority on algae—although her status at Dartmouth didn't always reflect her level of expertise.

"Address by Nobel Prize-Winner Disrupted by Dartmouth Students," *Concord Monitor Patriot*, October 16, 1969.

The National Academy of Sciences held their fall 1969 meeting at Dartmouth. Among their lecturers was William Shockley, who planned to present his paper theorizing that there were genetic differences in intelligence between races. Shockley never did present his paper, as a group of seventeen Black students in attendance stood to applaud at the start of his speech—and didn't stop applauding.

William Loeb, “Academic Freedom Dies at Dartmouth,” *Manchester Union Leader*, December 17, 1969.

Carroll W. Brewster to Paul N. Wenger, October 29, 1969. Dartmouth College, Shockley incident records, DA-23, Box 2852, Folder 3.

Dartmouth College Office of Information Services, Untitled press release, December 1969.

The seventeen students who protested were accused, both inside and outside Dartmouth, of suppressing academic freedom. The Black Judicial Advisory Committee, which made recommendations to the College Committee on Standing and Conduct in cases involving Black students, defended the students’ right to defend themselves against “group libel” in a lengthy report. Each of the students involved was suspended for one term, prompting the entire Judicial Advisory Committee to resign in protest.

Case 3

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Mia Nelson, “*An Admirable Community in the Wilderness*”: Diversity and Inclusion in the Dartmouth Outing Club, November 27, 2019. [DC Hist LD1438.8 .N45 2019](#).

Mia Nelson created a scrapbook in the Book Arts Workshop for her final project on diversity and inclusion in the Dartmouth Outing Club. The cover features colorful string sewn across a map of her favorite hiking trails, which represent, in her words, “the paths we have walked, and the trails we have yet to blaze.”

“Outing Club - Officers.” Dartmouth College Photographic Files.

This photo features the 1974-75 Dartmouth Outing Club Directorate. At the top of the pyramid on the right is Elise Erler, Vice President and the first woman on the DOC Directorate.

Joseph Schwartzman to Sanford Ferguson, “Re: The Dartmouth Outing Club, Co-education and the ‘Sophomore Plan,’” February 6, 1970. Dartmouth Outing Club records (DO-1), Box 6170, Folder 8

When the Board of Trustees was studying the idea of coeducation in 1970, they reached out to Joseph Schwartzman, an employee involved with the Dartmouth Outing Club, to assess the effect coeducation might have on the DOC. While Schwartzman said acceptance of women would vary

between different activities, he concluded: "The Dartmouth out of doors is a big place, and I am sure we can easily find room for a few girls."

"Undergraduate Referendum," March 4, 1954. Dartmouth College, Dean of the College records, DA-8, Box 2558, "Fraternity Discrimination".

The Undergraduate Council held a referendum in 1954 asking how the College should deal with fraternities with discriminatory clauses. 1,128 students voted for the first option on this ballot: to require that all fraternities remove discriminatory clauses by April 1960 or face expulsion from campus.

"Discrimination in Fraternities, Fall, 1956," 1956. Rauner Vertical Files, DA-857, "Fraternities 4, 1950-1979".

Whether a fraternity had a discriminatory clause was sometimes a complicated question. Some national fraternities dictated discrimination, forcing the Dartmouth chapters to go local. Sometimes, as we can see in this list, fraternity presidents admitted to unwritten discriminatory policies.

Blackball box, undated. Delta Kappa Epsilon Fraternity, Pi Chapter (Dartmouth College) records, DO-37, Box 13146.

The blackball system allows a fraternity member to forbid a student from pledging by placing a blackball on the pledge's name, no explanation needed. In 1956, five Dartmouth alumni used this system to prevent a Black student, Raymond Johnson '59, from pledging Delta Upsilon. In response, Delta Upsilon spent six months persuading each alumnus to recall his blackball, refusing to initiate the entire pledge class until Johnson was allowed in. This blackball box once belonged to the Dartmouth chapter of Delta Kappa Epsilon.

"Celebrating Coeducation," 1972. Marysa Navarro papers, MS-1174, Box 1, Folder 39.

Marysa Navarro was a professor of history at Dartmouth from 1968 to 2010. Born in Spain shortly before the Spanish Civil War, she and her family were forced to flee to France, then to Uruguay, before Navarro eventually came to the United States to study at Columbia University. Navarro's Hispanic identity was important to her, and she dedicated much time and effort to supporting Hispanic students and advocating for the creation of a Latin American Studies program. Navarro identified as a radical feminist and staunchly advocated for coeducation. The night before the Board of Trustees voted on coeducation, she bet the editor of *The Dartmouth*, Jerry Johnson '73, that the Trustees would vote against it. When they voted for it after all, she fulfilled her end of the bet by running a lap around the Green wearing a football uniform.

Marysa Navarro and Brenda Silver to Concerned Women Faculty, October 14, 1980. Marysa Navarro papers, MS-1174, Box 1, Folder 2.

Even after coeducation was first implemented, gender inequity persisted at Dartmouth. Navarro was a member of the Concerned Women Faculty, who persistently advocated to administrators to address issues affecting faculty women.

Marysa Navarro to David McLaughlin, June 5, 1987. Marysa Navarro papers, MS-1174, Box 1, Folder 10.

It is clear from Navarro's correspondence that she was not afraid to speak up on issues she cared about. She sent this letter to David McLaughlin at the end of his tenure as Dartmouth's president and sent a copy to the incoming president, James Freedman. According to Emmanuel Mariano, this was the letter that inspired him to research Navarro.

"Safer sex kit," 1986. Realia 145.

In response to the AIDS epidemic, the Dartmouth College Health Service provided interested students with "safer sex kits": plastic baggies containing various items for practicing safer sex and pamphlets with information about safe sex practices. Coverage in *The Dartmouth Review* and the *New York Post* drew national attention—both positive and negative—to the kits.