

Meeting the Moment



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Immigration History Research Center 2025-2026 Impact Report

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Message from the Director

This was an intense year for residents of Minnesota, particularly for immigrant and refugee communities. The surge in immigration enforcement provoked fear and outrage in the Twin Cities and beyond. Our communities, however, responded with an inspiring outpouring of solidarity, mobilization, and support.

I was immensely grateful for the friends and colleagues at the Immigration History Research Center who anchored me during this maelstrom. The brilliant scholars, students, and community partners affiliated with the IHRC brought clarity to the chaos and fought against terror with human connection.

The mission of the IHRC grounded me. As we threw ourselves into our work, we were reminded again and again of the importance of connecting US immigration history to present-day issues to provide informed perspectives for contemporary debates.

The surge in Minnesota was just one front in a larger assault on immigrants and refugees, a frightening turn towards xenophobia and nativism in our nation and our world. The IHRC is proud to support a global body of migration scholars and advocates advancing nuanced understandings of immigrant and refugee experiences.

By promoting research and public dialogue, the IHRC aims to transform how immigration is understood in the past and present. My hope is that this work leads to a more just and inclusive future.

Thank you to all our collaborators and to everyone who supported the IHRC this past year; you make our work possible!

Sincerely,

Llana Barber

Rudolph J. Vecoli Chair in Immigration History

IHRC's Mission

It is the mission of the IHRC to conduct interdisciplinary research on migration, race, and ethnicity in the United States and the world; connect US immigration history research to research on contemporary global and US migration and public engagement with contemporary immigrant and refugee communities; advance public dialogue about immigration that challenges systems of inequality and exclusion and works towards social justice and equity; support teaching and learning in and outside of the University; develop archives documenting immigrant and refugee experiences for future generations; and promote research in the Immigration History Research Center Archives (IHRC A) of the University Libraries and beyond.

The IHRC is part of the West Bank Collaborative Services Center administered by the Institute for Global Studies Hub within the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities.



#ImmigrationSyllabus

First created following the 2016 presidential election, the #ImmigrationSyllabus offers a guide to essential scholarship and resources on US immigration history. The original #ImmigrationSyllabus provided an important resource for teachers, students, scholars, journalists, organizers, and communities seeking to understand the centrality of immigrants and immigration to our nation's past.

In collaboration with the Immigration and Ethnic History Society, the IHRC convened a team of highly respected immigration historians to revise and update the #ImmigrationSyllabus in consultation with the original creators. The goal was to incorporate new scholarship and resources that have emerged since the original's publication and to highlight works in United States migration history that speak to the exigencies of the current moment.

The revised and updated #ImmigrationSyllabus follows a loosely chronological overview of US immigration history, but with thematic emphases on issues like deportation and detention that transcend time periods. As with the original, we hope that this updated resource guide will help educators and activists in their teaching, advocacy, and public discussions about immigration in the United States.

We plan for the updated #ImmigrationSyllabus to go live on the IHRC website in fall 2026.



By Jonathan McIntosh - Own work, CC BY 2.5 via Wikimedia Commons

First Inaugural Philip K. Hitti Memorial Fund Lecture

In November 2025, the IHRC hosted our inaugural Philip K. Hitti Memorial Fund lecture. Philip Khuri Hitti (1886-1978) was a Lebanese American professor and expert on Southwest Asia/the Middle East. He was also a groundbreaking scholar of Arab-American and Muslim communities in the United States. [A collection of his papers](#), including personal and professional correspondence, manuscripts, lectures, speeches, book reviews, personal memorabilia, photographs, and a scrapbook, is held at the Immigration History Research Center Archives (IHRC). The Hitti Memorial Fund provides money for fellowships, research, and events related to histories of Arab or Muslim America.

The inaugural lecture featured **Dr. Charlotte Karem Albrecht**, associate professor of American culture and women's and gender Studies and director of the Arab and Muslim American studies program at the University of Michigan and author of *Possible Histories: Arab Americans and the Queer Ecology of Peddling*, which was published open access with University of California Press in 2023. Dr. Karem Albrecht is a proud graduate of University of Minnesota's feminist studies doctoral program. The event was held at the beautiful Weisman Art Museum on the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus.



Celebrating IHRC Scholarship

IHRC scholars actively create and share knowledge about immigration. Throughout 2025-2026, the IHRC director, assistant director, and advisory council members continued to conduct research, speak to the media and at public events, and contribute to the national immigration conversation at a moment when factual information about immigrants is more important than ever.

IHRC Director **Dr. Llana Barber** conducted research in Washington DC and Nassau, Bahamas for her book project on the history of international refugee protections and the relationship between nativism and nationalism in the decolonizing Bahamas. Dr. Barber is also working on an edited volume: *Dark Waters: Centering Black Experiences in US Immigration History* (under contract with University of North Carolina Press). She is co-editing the volume along with Dr. Willie Mack, assistant professor of Black studies at the University of Missouri. In October 2025, the IHRC hosted a workshop for the evolving manuscript, convening 15 scholars doing groundbreaking work in the emerging field of Black immigration history to discuss their chapters-in-progress. This workshop was made possible with the support of the Imagine Fund Annual Faculty Research Grants through the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota.

“And yet, within this rich field [of immigration history], Black immigrants are nearly absent. This volume will examine the long history of Black immigration to the US, as well as Black experiences of nativism, exclusion, controlled mobility, and precarious citizenship.” Reframing the Narrative: Llana Barber on Centering Blackness in Immigration History, College of Liberal Arts, February 2026.

Assistant Director **Dr. Michele Waslin** taught a graduate course, “Immigrants, Urban Planning and Policymaking in the US,” at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs and a course entitled “How the US Immigration System (Usually) Works,” for Osher Online this spring semester. She also researched how tennis players’ immigrant heritage affected their decision to represent their countries in the Olympics and presented this work at the Center for Sociocultural Sport and Olympic Research Annual Conference.

Dr. Barber and Dr. Waslin regularly give public talks and serve on community panels designed to share knowledge about immigration policy and history beyond the ivory tower. This year, IHRC scholars participated in public conversations about migration and diaspora in an array of local venues, such as libraries and theaters. In addition, they engaged with journalists writing about a range of topics related to Operation Metro Surge and other threats to immigrant communities over the past year. For example, Barber was quoted in the [Minnesota Star Tribune](#) about the Trump administration's recent use of the term "alien" to refer to noncitizens. Waslin spoke to multiple news outlets, including WCCO radio, about the situation in the Twin Cities.

“Our immigration system is outdated,” Waslin said. “So we’re seeing states, regardless of party, or rural-urban split ... realizing that the current system isn’t working well for them.” “Advocates look to state-based immigration programs,” The Center Square, September 13, 2025



IHRC Advisory Council member **Dr. Vichet Chhuon**, associate professor in curriculum and instruction, published his book, *Cambodian American Youth, Identity, and Schooling* (Routledge 2025), which examines how Cambodian American high school youth reconcile stereotypes, identities, and school opportunities and the ways these factors impact academic achievement and well-being, through ethnographic research.

In October 2025, the IHRC co-sponsored a book event where Dr. Chhuon discussed his new work. He was joined by Peuo Tuy, who is a poet and teacher in the St. Paul Public Schools. Both speakers shared their experiences growing up as Cambodian Americans.

Advancing Public Conversations

In 2025-2026, the IHRC hosted 28 in-person and online events intended to educate and inform the public and build community. Nearly 1,000 people attended these IHRC events. We also co-hosted 14 events, highlighting our expansive list of University and community partnerships. The following non-exhaustive list of events illustrates the wide range of conversations and scholars the IHRC has hosted, as well as the large number of collaborations we have built in one year. More information about all of our events is available on the IHRC website, and many event recordings can be found on our YouTube channel.

2025-2026 By the Numbers

28 total IHRC events

966 total attendees (in-person and online)

including

7 graduate student events

6 webinars

Applying Lessons from the Past to the Current Conversation

A major aspect of IHRC's work is to connect US immigration history to present-day issues in order to provide informed perspectives for contemporary debates. One of the ways we do so is through our "History of the Present" series of online discussions.

Birthright Citizenship



With the Trump administration and the US Supreme Court taking on the issue of birthright citizenship, the IHRC hosted **Birthright Citizenship: A History of the Present Webinar in September 2025**. An impressive panel of experts provided historical context for today's birthright citizenship debate and explained why the upcoming Supreme Court decision is so important for immigrant communities as well as for all Americans.

Students of Diaspora and the Fight for Justice

International students, including UMN students, have been targets of immigration enforcement activities. In this context, the IHRC hosted Students of Diaspora and the Fight for Justice: A History of the Present Event. A panel of scholars of diaspora and activism examined how international and immigrant students in the US have organized against repression. Drawing on historical and contemporary examples of diaspora activism, the speakers connected earlier movements to struggles today and explored lessons for study, struggle, and solidarity in the current moment.

IHRC graduate assistant **Xun Yu**, PhD candidate in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development, developed and organized the event, which was related to her own dissertation research.

Promoting Interdisciplinary Research and Hosting Scholars

In 2025-2026, the IHRC continued its tradition of welcoming migration scholars from other universities to UMN and organizing events for the University and local Twin Cities communities.

Race and Immigration

In March 2026, we were fortunate to welcome **Dr. Kelly Lytle Hernández**, Thomas E. Lifka Endowed Chair in History at UCLA, to discuss her new project, **The Whites-Only Immigration Regime, 1803 to Now**. Lytle Hernández is one of the leading experts on race, immigration, and mass incarceration and a 2019 [MacArthur “Genius” Fellow](#). This talk chronicled the rise, evolution, and persistence of an immigration regime that has targeted Black, Asian, and other nonwhite immigrants for exclusion, punishment, and removal, and created the framework for our modern immigration system.

Exploring Indigenous Histories

The IHRC acknowledges that immigration to the United States has been part of settler-colonial practices that displace and dispossess Indigenous peoples. The study of immigration must reckon with these intersections, consequences, and legacies. As part of that reckoning, the IHRC collaborated with the University of Minnesota’s [Department of American Indian Studies](#) to draw together scholars in February 2026 for an online discussion, “**Intersections in Indigenous and Immigration Histories.**” The panel examined Indigenous communities’ unique histories of citizenship, borders, and migration, and charted a path for future research in this important field.

Focus on Somali Communities

As the Somali community of Minnesota became the subject of intense national scapegoating, the IHRC welcomed **Dr. Maxamed Abu-maye**, author of *Black Muslim Refugee: Militarism, Policing, and Somali American Resistance to State Violence* (University of California Press, 2025). Abu-maye traced the globe-spanning journeys of Somali refugees, from civil war-era Somalia to the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya to their eventual arrival in the United States, and spoke about the links between US military violence abroad and police brutality at home through a profound exploration of Somali refugee lives.

Maxamed Abu-maye speaking at the Liberal Arts Engagement Hub

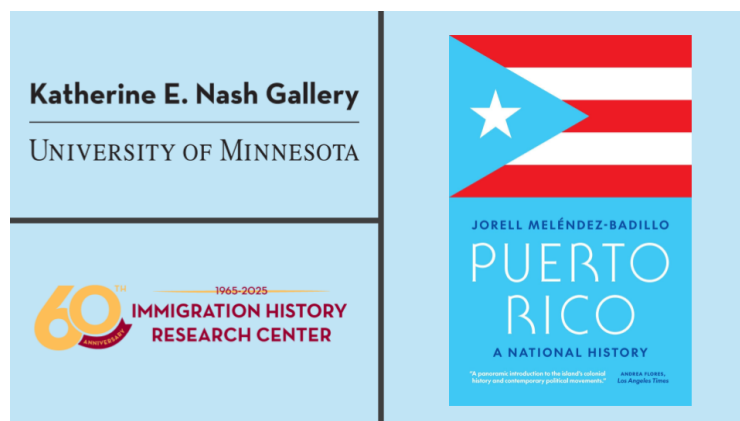


Building Lasting Collaborations

Katherine E. Nash Gallery

In 2025, the IHRC embarked on an exciting new partnership with the Katherine E. Nash Gallery at the University of Minnesota. Together we hosted a variety of activities focused on Puerto Rican history and the Puerto Rican diaspora in Minnesota and beyond. The events were centered around the Nash Gallery's *Vaivén: 21st-Century Art of Puerto Rico and Its Diaspora*, a multidisciplinary exhibition spanning 25 years of Puerto Rican artistic production from 43 artists working in Puerto Rico and its US diaspora.

In October, we hosted a conversation, moderated by UMN graduate student **Tabatha Cruz**, highlighting three Puerto Rican community leaders, **Ricardo Levins Morales**, **Luis Ortega**, and **Elsa Pérez-Vega**, and their contributions to Minnesota's arts and culture sector. In December, we welcomed [Professor Jorell Meléndez-Badillo](#) who discussed his new book [Puerto Rico: A National History](#), chronicling the history of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans from pre-Columbian times to the present. The IHRC appreciates the opportunity to collaborate with the Nash Gallery to shed light on this important diaspora community.



Immigration and Ethnic History Society

The IHRC continues its close collaboration with the [Immigration and Ethnic History Society \(IEHS\)](#), the major professional association for immigration historians in the United States. In March, the IHRC and the IEHS cosponsored our third annual online discussion. In anticipation of the United States' 250th anniversary celebration, this year's theme was "The Founding of the United States and Immigration History." Scholars of citizenship, borderlands, refugee policy, and the early American republic critically assessed the place of migration in the creation and early history of the United States.

The IEHS and IHRC also collaborated on updating the extremely popular #ImmigrationSyllabus, a guide to essential scholarship and resources on US immigration history (for more on the #ImmigrationSyllabus, see page 3.)

Liberal Arts Engagement Hub



For the third year, the IHRC has provided support for a Liberal Arts Engagement Hub residency. Hub residencies support community-based collaborative projects in the arts, humanities, and humanistic social sciences that engage a topic of important public interest and involve at least one community partner and one person affiliated with the University of Minnesota's College of Liberal Arts.

In 2025-2026, the IHRC supported a project entitled *Memories of Abundance: The Diasporic Journey of Southeast Asians in Minnesota*. This residency, led by Southeast Asian Diaspora Project (The SEAD Project) and [Dr. Palita Chunsangchan](#), assistant professor, [Asian & Middle Eastern studies](#) presented a series of grassroots storytelling events commemorating 50 years of the diasporic journey of Southeast Asians in Minnesota, uniting Southeast Asian communities and the broader Minnesota region through firsthand narratives and key historical moments. The project culminated in a series of public events held in May and June 2026.

Immigration History Research Center Archives (IHRCA)

Like the IHRC, the IHRCA commemorated its 60th anniversary in 2025. The two entities continue to work together on a variety of projects including supporting scholars using the archival collections through the Grant-in-Aid awards and the Michael G. Karni Scholarship; educating the next generation of scholars about how to conduct archival research; and bringing migration scholars and relevant programming to the Twin Cities campus.

*“As the world’s gaze settles on the Twin Cities, rocked by a climate of xenophobia, the archives’ mission to provide a fuller understanding of migration has never been more important, said **Ellen Engseth**, curator of the IHRCA. ‘Archival source material helps people connect present moments to its historical context. ... Anti-immigrant actions taking place in many communities, including our own Minneapolis, is embedded in a long national history.’”*

“The IHRCA at 60 is showing how immigration shapes society,” University of Minnesota Libraries News & Events, February 26, 2026.



In 2025-2026, the IHRC was fortunate to collaborate with many University of Minnesota and external partners.

Thank You to All of our Partners and Co-Sponsors!



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Partners

- Approaching Global Asia Collaborative
- Asian American Studies Program
- James H. Binger Center for New Americans
- Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies
- Center for Race, Indigeneity, Disability, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (RIDGS)
- Critical Disability Studies
- Department of African American & African Studies
- Department of American Indian Studies
- Department of American Studies
- Department of Anthropology
- Department of Asian & Middle Eastern Studies
- Department of Chicano & Latino Studies
- Department of Cultural Studies & Comparative Literature
- Department of Curriculum and Instruction
- Department of History
- Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development
- Department of Sociology
- Human Rights Program
- Immigration History Research Center Archives
- Institute for Global Studies
- Katherine E. Nash Gallery
- Liberal Arts Engagement Hub
- Libraries: Archives & Special Collections
- Religious Studies Program

Additional Partners



Supporting Immigration Research

The IHRC promotes interdisciplinary research on migration and diaspora through grants, workshops, and networks. Providing financial support for graduate students is an essential part of the IHRC's work. In 2025-2026, the IHRC granted two academic year fellowships and three summer fellowships to outstanding graduate students from a number of disciplines researching global migration and US immigration. When they have completed their fellowships, IHRC graduate student fellows share their research and experiences in the form of a presentation, written report, or digital project.

2025-2026 Academic Year Fellows



American Latvian Association Fellowship

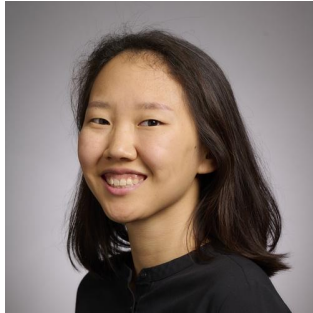
Vincent Kancans received his PhD in German Studies with a minor in moving image studies in 2026. His dissertation research presented a media history of magnetic tape's invention, mass adoption, decline, and recent revival.



Finnish American Immigration Endowed Graduate Research Fellowship

Johara Suleiman completed her PhD in social work in spring 2026. Her dissertation, "Stories of Somali Motherhood: Uncovering the Impacts of US Child Protection Service Intervention on Somali Mothers' Self-Understandings," examines first-generation Somali immigrant mothers' interactions with the US child welfare system and the impacts of those interventions on their understandings of themselves and the child welfare system as a whole.

2025 IHRC Summer Graduate Fellows



Yun Jung Kim, PhD candidate in history, "Bases and Borders: US Military Bases and Migration Control in the Pacific (WWII-Present)."



Alisa Kuzmina, PhD candidate in history, "Caught in the Cold War: Immigrant Families in Minnesota."



Khoi Nguyen, PhD candidate in American studies, "The Borders Crossed Us Too: Global Indigeneities, Migration, and World-Making."



Nasema Zeerak, PhD candidate in international policy, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, "Afghanistan as Method: War, Peace, and Resistance from Exile."

Both of our academic year fellows and two of our summer fellows successfully defended their dissertations and graduated in 2026. Congratulations Dr. Kancans, Dr. Suleiman, Dr. Kim, and Dr. Nguyen!

Michael G Karni Scholarship

The Michael G. Karni Scholarship supports visiting scholars and researchers, including faculty members, independent scholars, and graduate students, using the archival sources of the IHRCA. The award is a memorial to Michael Karni, a pioneering historian and publisher of Finnish American ethnicity, who was chiefly responsible for the initial development of the Finnish American collection at the IHRC Archives. The fund has been made possible through gifts from friends and members of the Karni family along with other supporters of Finnish American scholarly activity. Scholarship recipients are chosen in partnership with the IHRCA.

The 2025-2026 Karni Scholarship was awarded to **Dr. Julia Devlin**, a project leader for the Amigra Reaching Out project at the Textile and Industry Museum in Augsburg/German Museum in Nuremberg, Germany. Her project looks at the thousands of refugees of Baltic origin who resided in the Valka and Fischbach displaced persons camps near Nuremberg until the 1950s. Devlin visited the Immigration History Research Center Archives in May 2026.



Engaging Graduate Students Across Disciplines

The IHRC prioritizes supporting graduate students studying migration-related topics from all programs throughout the University. For the past several years, we have offered networking opportunities, professional development workshops, and safe places to share work-in-progress or practice conference presentations, through our [Graduate Student Collaborative](#). The collaborative also hosts social events as well as opportunities to meet migration scholars in smaller, more intimate settings thereby allowing students to ask questions and have meaningful conversations with researchers.

This past year, with the assistance of our graduate assistant **Xun Yu**, we hosted a workshop on fellowship opportunities, two graduate student work-in-progress events featuring the work of four students, as well as “coffee and conversation” with several visiting scholars. We also convened a workshop for graduate students on how to use ArcGIS StoryMaps, a tool that allows researchers to preserve, transform, and share their work with the public. Nou-Chee Chang, a graduate student in communication studies moderated the workshop and explained how she and others use StoryMaps for teaching and digital exhibits.

The IHRC [website](#) now includes pages dedicated to graduate students including information about our Graduate Student Collaborative as well as travel grants and fellowships.

Immigrant Stories

Immigrant Stories is a digital storytelling project that helps people tell, share, and preserve personal and family immigration stories. Since 2013, immigrants and refugees have been telling their own stories in their own words using the Immigrant Stories website. Participants craft a 3-5 minute video made from their own photos, text, and audio. These stories are preserved and shared publicly, and educators around the country have used them to teach about migration using our Immigrant Stories Curriculum. **Our collection currently includes more than 400 digital stories.**

This project defines "immigrant" broadly and includes digital stories from people living outside their country of birth as well as stories created by their children and grandchildren. Immigrant Stories also welcomes stories from international students, international adoptees, and people who do not feel that their stories fit a particular, or just one, category. The technology behind Immigrant Stories needs a refresh, so we are not currently collecting stories, but we encourage you to explore this powerful collection.

IHRC Staff

Llana Barber, Director

Michele Waslin, Assistant Director

Xun Yu, Graduate Assistant 2025-2026

Shinya Yoshida, Graduate Assistant for #ImmigrationSyllabus project Spring 2026

IHRC and IHRCA Joint Advisory Council Members 2025-2026

The IHRC is grateful to its advisory council members for their support and feedback. We are fortunate to have such an incredible team of experts guiding our work.

Cawo Abdi, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology

Sebastian Alfonso Manzo, Communications and Events Specialist, Department of Chemical Engineering and Organizer, Serpentina Arts

Ryan Allen, Associate Dean for Research, Humphrey School of Public Affairs

Paloma Barraza, History, Iberian, and Latin American Studies Librarian

Sarah Chambers, Chair and Professor, Department of History

Vichet Chhuon, Associate Professor, Curriculum and Instruction

Evelyn Davidheiser, Assistant Dean for International Programs and Director, Institute for Global Studies

Xochitl de Anda, PhD Student, Department of Sociology

Andre Deckrow, Associate Professor, Department of History

Kirsten Delegard, Project Director, Mapping Prejudice Project; Affiliate Faculty, Department of Geography, Environment & Society

Sheer Ganor, Assistant Professor, Department of History

Michael Goldman, Director, Institute for Global Studies; Associate Professor, Sociology

Patricia Izek, Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility, University Libraries

Mai Na Lee, Associate Professor, Department of History

Jason Roy, Director of Cataloging, Metadata, & Digitization Services, University Libraries

Carrie Walling, Executive Director, Human Rights Program

Shinya Yoshida, PhD Candidate, Department of History



THANK YOU!

Please support the IHRC so that we can continue our important work.



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