

marquette comm

| Diederich College of Communication | 2019 | No. 08 |



UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL

College experts on
the state of political
communication

TREASURE HUNTING: JOHNSTON
HALL REBUILD REQUIRES DEEP
DIGGING. P. 10

MAKE 'EM LAUGH: TONY-NOMINATED
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Marquette University

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Comm is published for alumni, colleagues and friends of the college. We'd love to hear your feedback and story ideas for future issues. Email sarah.koziol@marquette.edu.

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DIEDERICH
College of Communication
MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

letter

from the dean



DEAR DIEDERICH COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION ALUMNI AND FRIENDS:

As you'll read on page 10, the Diederich College's beloved Johnston Hall has been in a state of reconstruction for the past year after a city bus hit the west door. I walked by the construction on the way to my office nearly every day for months, and it made me reflect on the importance of doors.

Doors are tied to experiences. They are tied to our stories. Often it is not so much the door itself that matters, but what doors represent — new beginnings, new opportunities, barriers or challenges to overcome.

We teach our students a process of reflection and discernment that prepares them to walk through new doors that were never a part of their plan. When theatre arts student Malaina Moore found that all the plays in her Acting III class were written for a white cast, she decided to write a play about the racial chasms apparent in our city and on our campus (p. 20). *You never know where you might end up when you walk through a door that was never expected.*

We teach our students to be mindful of those who have opened doors for them, so that they may in turn open doors for others. This October, we lost a beloved, longtime faculty member — Carl Schrank, Jour '57, Grad '91. Carl was an advertising professional who shared his valuable real-world experiences with our students, as the college's first professional-in-residence and then as a student adviser who tapped his vast network to help students find internships and

jobs. Many alumni I have spoken with say they would not be in the place they are today if it had not been for Carl. *Let us all remember our ability to impact others by opening doors.*

Perhaps the most powerful lesson about doors is from a source familiar to many: Matthew 7:7 says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." We teach our students to manage conflict, to engage in reflection, prayer and discernment, and to find the joy that brings us closer to the greater good. These are the tools they need to knock on doors throughout their journey. Throughout these pages, you can read about the journeys of some of our alumni who did not stand at the door and wait, but instead knocked and found themselves open to worlds they could never have imagined.

No matter where in the world your journey takes you, as a member of the Diederich College family, remember that the doors to Johnston Hall will always be here to welcome you home.

All my best,



Dr. Sarah Bonewits Feldner
Acting Dean
Diederich College of Communication



Celebrating the generous spirit of a beloved colleague, teacher, mentor and friend who inspired the best in others: CARL SCHRANK, 1934–2019



Learning Online

Diederich College launches university’s first fully online undergraduate degree.

What do an Olympic speedskater and a working mother have in common? They are both part of a growing demographic of people who want a college degree but cannot fit regular classes into their schedules. These students and others enrolled this fall to pursue a bachelor’s degree in strategic communication through Marquette’s first completely online undergraduate degree program.

“Most of the students registered for the online program are from the region, so they know and value a Marquette education but with their schedules or location cannot attend classes on campus,” says Dr. David Schejbal, chief of digital learning, who is responsible for integrating online education into Marquette’s curriculum.

According to President Michael R. Lovell, the online degree “provides opportunities to students who might otherwise face significant barriers to a Marquette education.” The degree addresses a *Beyond Boundaries* strategic plan objective — to enhance innovative teaching and learning experiences through the use of digital learning technologies, including online programs.

Launched this fall, strategic communication is the first program selected for a fully online degree because of the subject’s widespread appeal and skill sets needed in almost any career. “We also wanted a major that works well for adults employed in business,” explains Schejbal.

“Corporate work requires employees to accurately assess internal and external communication needs and frame strategic responses appropriate to multiple contexts and audiences,” says Dr. Scott D’Urso, academic adviser for the strategic communication major and chair and associate professor of communication studies. “This degree will help students develop the flexibility to thrive in the ever-changing world of strategic communication.”

The Diederich College also offers an online master’s in corporate communication, which can be a mix of online and on-campus classes. Students with an Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) credential are allowed to graduate with two fewer courses because these topics are covered in the APR program.

With the online undergraduate degree, the Olympic speedskater now can balance college classes with her intensive training schedule and the working mother can balance her studies with family time.

“We will offer more online programs in the future and are exploring a hybrid concept where most work would be done online, but there would be opportunities to take a weekend class for interacting directly with faculty,” Schejbal says. “It’s heartening to see we’re reaching the kind of students we hoped to reach and that we’re meeting student needs, whatever and wherever those needs might be.”
— Lauren Herb Schudson, Grad ‘97



A Ray of Ronshine

Alumnus returns to Marquette to lead nonprofit newsroom that shines a light on Milwaukee’s neighborhoods.

When Ron Smith was 8 years old, his mom told him that he should either be a reporter or an FBI agent based on how many “inappropriate questions” he would ask family members and neighbors. Perhaps her comment was just a facetious way to suggest Smith was too nosey, but he took the idea to heart.

Smith, Prof St ’05, Grad ’09, took his unapologetic curiosity from his south side Chicago neighborhood, where he reported for the youth media organization *New Expression*, to the basement of Johnston Hall, where he was the first student of color to serve as editor of *The Marquette Tribune*. He reported and edited at several weekly papers in Los Angeles, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Oregonian* and *Newsday*, before serving as the deputy managing editor for daily news and production at the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, for which he worked 14 years. In 2016 Smith moved to Washington, D.C., to be the managing editor for news at *USA Today*.

He returned to Marquette in February to lead the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service, a nonprofit news organization whose mission is to objectively report on Milwaukee’s central city neighborhoods and coach student journalists. There he uses that early-learned persistence and tenacity, as well as his natural warmth, quick-witted humor, dogged encouragement and affinity for memes.

Adam Carr, deputy editor for community engagement for NNS, says of Smith’s leadership style, “He’s both really joyful and playful, and he’s also really rigorous and demanding. Those attributes are usually not in tandem



Photo by Adam Ryan Morris

with each other, and I think that’s really a great mix for an editor.”

Smith’s legacy of bringing joy into the demanding work of journalism is evidenced by his nickname, Ronshine, which he

earned at the *Journal Sentinel*. He says he walked into the newsroom with a noticeable sense of cheer, greeting each co-worker, after what had been a hectic morning. Another editor, more disgruntled by the morning’s chaos, asked, “What are you, a ray of Ronshine?”

Shining that kind of light is also central to NNS’ mission.

“Our goal is to celebrate and illuminate what’s happening in Milwaukee’s neighborhoods,” he says.

NNS’ nonprofit model is much different from newsrooms of Smith’s past and often requires him to wear many hats, including editor, teacher, fundraiser and business executive. But he says that’s a “blessing.”

“I’m excited to serve stakeholders and not shareholders,” Smith says. “We don’t have to measure our worthiness based on clicks alone. We get to really focus on being of service to our readers.

“Milwaukee is a city that too often talks about what it isn’t. ... It doesn’t have this, or it doesn’t have that, but what we do have are ordinary people who do extraordinary things. At the end of the day, I want to make sure NNS is the organization that reports that,” Smith says.
— Allison Dikanovic, Arts ‘17



So to Speak

New lab fills need for public speaking and presentation skills-building.

What fills one in four people with dread, causes anxiety, dries the mouth, makes palms sweat and hearts palpitate? The answer: public speaking. “I’ve had several students this last semester with anxiety, and that’s a real issue,” says Tracey Sturgal, instructor of practice, communication studies, in the Diederich College of Communication.

But she may have a cure — The MIC, a new public speaking lab that provides even the most ill-prepared student a safe and supportive workshop environment to develop verbal communication skills. First launched in fall 2018, the lab has served more than 530 students, faculty and staff. After word quickly spread about its existence, it is already moving to a larger room to accommodate the growing demand thanks to a generous donation from Kevin McGavick, CJPA ‘93, a member of the President’s Society.

The MIC evolved out of a conversation Sturgal had in spring 2018 with acting Provost Kimo Ah Yun, who was then the dean of the Diederich College. They both acknowledged that many professors required students to give at least one presentation and that communication faculty regularly fielded requests from outside professionals for help with presentations.

A gap was begging to be filled.

Sturgal forged ahead, setting aside space in Johnston Hall, purchasing audio equipment, developing training materials and hiring seven tutors. A brainstorming session with Laura White, former multimedia manager for the college, led to the lab’s name: The MIC, an acronym for Marquette Inspires Communication. Now, students and faculty alike can get help developing presentation ideas, focusing on or expanding upon content, rehearsing delivery, learning calming techniques and practicing ways to reduce nervous mannerisms.

Although the lab has been open only a year, Sturgal, who oversees The MIC, has compiled plenty of success stories — from the very first student who exclaimed, “This was so much more helpful than I thought it was going to be” to the incredibly anxious student who, after several coaching sessions and a successful presentation, said she couldn’t wait to do another one.

Eventually, The MIC may make its services available as workshops for local businesses or connect with middle schools, a YMCA or a Boys & Girls Club to instill public speaking confidence in community youth. But all of that is in the future. For now, Sturgal is content seeing novice speakers rise to the occasion.

“I love watching them succeed,” she says. — Tracy Staedter



Good as Gold

Professor’s filmmaking success flows from a commitment to visual storytelling.

Kristin Holodak’s documentary *Young of the Year* explores the mystery of the roseate tern, endangered despite high birth rates and stable adult mortality



trends. “Somewhere between hatching and returning to breed three years later, young terns are dying in disproportionate numbers,” says Holodak, assistant professor of digital media and performing arts.

To document terns preparing for their high-risk first migration from coastal Massachusetts to Brazil, Holodak fought through several setbacks.

An initial attempt to film during nesting season was abandoned when permitting fell through. After obtaining footage of adult terns, she created an initial cut of the film but realized it

failed to do justice to the bird’s journey. “I believed the film was going to help the birds,” Holodak says. “The birds are the birds without me, but they will have an easier time if people see my film.”

Waiting a year to film the chicks, Holodak had her patience rewarded. Completed in 2018, her film has had six festival screenings and won five awards, including the Impact Docs Award of Merit, recognizing documentaries with great potential to bring about change, and a gold Oregon International Film Award in the short documentary category.

Now working on her first feature-length film, *Enid’s Wall*, Holodak is playing out a similar script involving unwavering vision, tireless commitment and peer recognition. The film is based on a six-page short story by Jennifer Gostin that Holodak is adapting into a 90-page script, of which early versions have met with praise, including an official selection in the Auckland Film Festival’s scriptwriting competition in New Zealand.

— Alyssa Duetsch, Communication student



High Praise

Student media awards top last year’s tally.

For work covering 2018’s news on and off campus, Marquette Wire students garnered 84 national, regional, state and local awards this spring, which is up from 75 awards received in 2017, a previous high-water mark.

“This recognition for Marquette student media highlights the important work they are doing,” says Mark Zorowski, director of student media. (See related story on p. 24.)

Among the award highlights, *The Tribune* won the All-around Mark of Excellence Award (Region 6) from the Society of Professional Journalists. *Wire Weekly*, a radio newscast in its second year, won Best Radio Newscast from the Society of Professional Journalists. *Marquette Now*, a weekly MUTV newscast, won Best Newscast from the Milwaukee Press Club. *The Marquette Journal* won best use of multimedia and was once again nominated as Best Student Magazine by the Society of Professional Journalists. Students won in impressive categories across all competitions, including best breaking news, in-depth

reporting, multimedia reporting, website, public affairs and series.

Also, former MUTV general manager Tara Schumal, Comm ‘19, won the prestigious Student Leadership Award from the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association; Morgan Hughes, Comm ‘19, won the collegiate Journalist of the Year award from the Wisconsin Newspaper Association; and Caroline White was honored with the John Patrick Hunter First Amendment Award.



This spring, Marquette Wire students celebrated 84 awards recognizing their work covering news on and off campus.



Carillon and On

New student group spreads awareness of and appreciation for a campus treasure.

You're strolling down Wisconsin Avenue on a cool autumn afternoon when distant music catches your ear. The tune — rich and sonorous, like church bells — seems to ring out from high above the street. If you've found yourself in this situation on the Marquette campus, then luck is on your side. You're being treated to a Marquette carillon performance.

"Most people think that it's a tower you go up in, just press a button, and it imitates the tone of bells," says business student Holden Patterson. "No one knows there's actually someone up there playing the carillon like a piano for the whole campus to hear."

The 48-bell instrument at the top of Marquette Hall has been considered one of the university's greatest treasures since its installation in 1967. The roots of the instrument can be traced back to the 15th century, where carillons adorned church and civic towers of the wealthiest European towns. Only about 200 of them exist in America, including just two others in Wisconsin.

"It's an unusual instrument, and when people see it, they get excited about it and are naturally drawn to it," says Dr. Mark Konewko, professor of practice in digital media and performing arts and Marquette's sole carillonneur since 1999.

Patterson and Konewko count themselves among the founders of the Carillon Guild, a new student organization established on campus last year. The guild took root a year ago in Konewko's Carillon Discovery class. Officers of the guild have since organized around a goal of increasing awareness and appreciation for the carillon within the Marquette community.



The 48-bell carillon atop Marquette Hall has been played by only a select few until this year, when students received a rare invitation.

Potential plans for this year include a public concert program with guest carillonneurs, a semiformal event that could be enjoyed from the Central Mall. The guild also showed off the instrument to many fresh eyes with a big push for tours at Family Weekend.

Patterson's current pet project is pursuing the idea of selling song requests to the student body. "You could just pay \$5 to \$10 to celebrate a birthday and a carillonneur would play *Happy Birthday* in passing between classes," he suggests.

This ambition to expand interest in the carillon among the broader campus community comes as the carillon itself is graced by more hands. Now, in addition to Konewko, campus will be hearing the instrument played by music students, such as engineering undergrad Peter Christian, who have taken lessons under Konewko's tutelage.

"It's a thrilling time in that the students are now playing the carillon. It's also very gratifying that those playing right now are at such a good level," Konewko says. "I hope more will come."

Konewko encourages curious listeners to follow the music to the top of Marquette Hall. "Come up and see the instrument. I always leave the doors open so people can come see," he says. — **Ben Koziol**



A Fighting Chance

Performing Arts professor lends his fight direction skills to Broadway.

Professors in the arts who take the college's fourth-year research leave are encouraged to use that time to do something that "will raise their creative profile." Jamie Cheatham, assistant professor of digital media and performing arts and an accomplished fight director, took that directive seriously and last winter headed to Broadway to work on a gender-bending version of one of Shakespeare's darkest plays, *King Lear*, starring renowned British actor Glenda Jackson.

With its high body count and even higher drama, *King Lear* is a particularly bloody play, requiring ingenuity and assiduous attention from its performers. "Fight direction really covers any action of violence, whether it's slaps or trips or actual stage combat," explains Cheatham. "Our biggest focus is always on the safety and comfort of the actors."

For *Lear*, the fight direction responsibilities involved a high level of resourcefulness. In one scene, the facsimile of a gunshot wound was created with carbon dioxide cartridges that exploded in a blast of red spray; in another, director Sam Gold wanted a modern take on a classic duel but using medieval daggers. All of this was relatively tame, however,



Photo by Brigitte Lacombe

Actress Ruth Wilson, playing The Fool in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, ends her first "song" with a mock slitting of her throat with a butter knife. Marquette's Jamie Cheatham fight directed the Broadway adaptation that starred Glenda Jackson as King Lear.

when compared with the play's most gruesome scene: the blinding of Gloucester. That scene, which Gold intended to be especially gritty and realistic, was carried out through the creative use of a retractable spike and protective eye plates fitted over small sponges soaked in red liquid.

"I would love to do it again," says Cheatham of his sabbatical experience. "So often we work in isolation, and I learned so much just by bouncing ideas off colleagues." — **Jennifer Anderson**



Listen In

Podcast series offers students a platform to tell Marquette stories.

With more than a dozen episodes already available for downloading, the *Be Connected* podcast series jump-started by the Diederich College of Communication last fall features student-created stories ranging from spotlights on alumni and current students to other happenings in the college. Students have covered topics ranging from Johnston Hall renovations to an entrepreneurial ice cream creator. While the podcast is meant to keep current students and alumni in the loop with what's happening in the college,



the deeper purpose is to help students hone their digital media skills so they can help their future employers "tell their stories" in an evolving media platform. Barb Volbrecht, instructor of practice, digital media and performing arts, hosts the episodes and publishes the content to ensure continuity. Students are responsible for generating episode ideas, as well as writing, voicing and editing their own podcasts.

If you're interested in listening online, Google "Be Connected podcast Marquette." If you're a podcast fan, go to your favorite app and search "Be Connected Marquette."



Paying It Forward

EOP graduate endows scholarship to give low-income, first-generation students opportunities for success.

In his junior year at Marquette, to help pay his tuition bills, Barry C. Cosgrove, Jour '79, inquired about a tutoring job with the Educational Opportunity Program, a university program that provides mentorship and support for low-income and first-generation college students.

"When I found out more, I said, 'Forget tutoring, I may be eligible for this program,'" Cosgrove recalls. "And sure enough, I was. That was the game-changer for me. It took all the financial stress away, and it gave me some of the biggest role models of my life."

Cosgrove credits EOP, celebrating its 50th anniversary this academic year, with teaching him about leadership, empathy and concern for others. It's his EOP experience that inspired him and his wife, Ingrid, to support students majoring in journalism and in the College of Business

Administration with a recent \$1 million endowed scholarship gift.

"Those who most often get caught in the struggle of higher education costs are the same students who most need a fair chance at the advantages of a Marquette education," Cosgrove says. "My hope is that this scholarship provides low-income, first-generation students a chance to build their skills and confidence. Their dreams are just as important and achievable as those who are fortunate to grow up in a more privileged environment."

Cosgrove is one of the founders of DaVita dialysis centers and currently serves as president, CEO and chairman of Blackmore Partners. In April the university recognized him with its 2019 Professional Achievement Award.

"The generosity of others gave me the opportunity to attend Marquette," Cosgrove says. "Now, I'm happy to do the same for future students."



Sweet Scoop

Vegan ice cream creation wins over judges in 707 Hub student pitch competition.

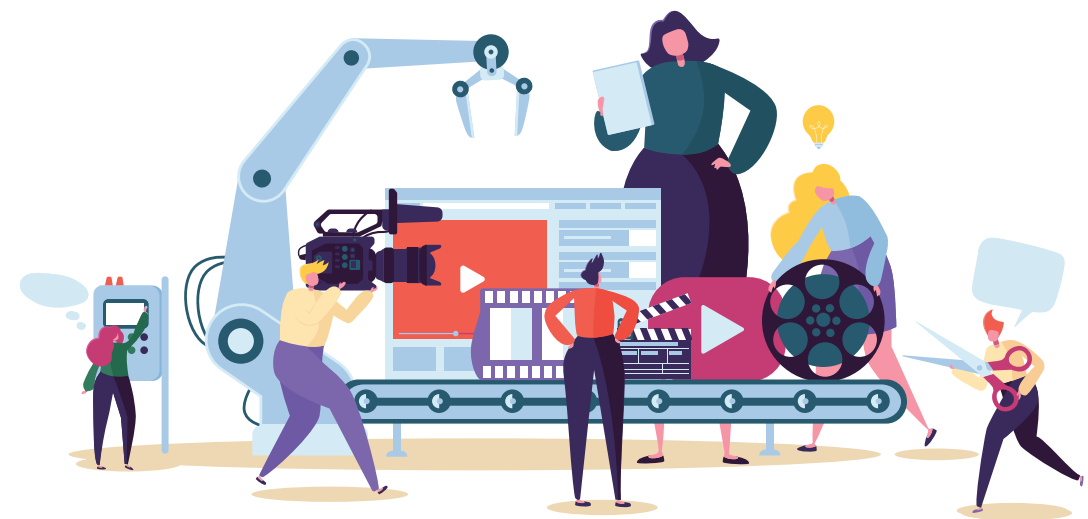
For Olivia "Liv" Menzia, Comm '19, a day without ice cream is like a banana without a split. In her senior year, Menzia began making a version of the frozen treat with a coconut milk base. Everyone raved about it, and so Menzia launched Liv a Little Ice Cream in January 2019. A month later, she began taking orders, at \$4 per half pint, for her 3 O'clock Coffee flavor. In 10 days, she had 100 requests.

Thanks to a nudge from Megan Carver, Comm '08, associate director of Marquette's Kohler Center for Entrepreneurship and 707 Hub co-director, Menzia entered the Brewed Ideas Challenge, an annual pitch competition sponsored by the Brady Corp. The competition awards

\$21,000 annually in seed funding and has given out more than \$100,000 in six years to support ideas, services and products sparked by Marquette student innovators.

Menzia was named a 2019 Brewed Ideas finalist and paired with volunteer mentor Theresa McClurg, global IDS finance director at Brady Corp. Menzia found McClurg's financial coaching invaluable. "She helped me build a financial model for my business that I never would have known how to do or even considered, which is what really makes a business successful," says Menzia.

In April Menzia won first place in the Traditional Business Case category of the competition. With the \$7,000 prize winnings, she bought an ice cream cart and now fills orders from her full menu, which includes Strawberry Pop Tart and I Love You So Matcha. Owning an ice cream shop is her dream, says Menzia. She thinks she has a head start in Milwaukee, thanks to the Brewed Ideas Challenge. "Based on the connections I now have, my business could thrive here," she says. —Tracy Staedter



Fellow Filmmakers Unite

Marquette-sponsored fellowships support promising filmmakers, as Milwaukee's film community grows.

The first recipients of the new Emerging Filmmaker Fellowships, launched by Marquette and film hub No Studios, represent the goals for which this landmark program was created — to build a rich, thriving community of filmmakers in Milwaukee. With that symbiotic relationship in mind, Marquette is supporting filmmaker fellows by providing access to its shared No Studios workspace, production facilities and equipment on site, as well as offering consultation from Marquette faculty, video engineers and other professionals.

Vianca Fuster, who directed the feature-length documentary *Invisible Lines*, which premiered at the Milwaukee Film Festival in 2018, and Shannon McInnis, a producer of both a film thriller and a TV series pilot, kicked off their fellowships in April 2019. They are using the collective resources and a stipend of \$2,500 to work on their projects through March 2020.

Fuster, who was awarded the social justice fellowship, says her inspiration for documentary storytelling comes from her upbringing on Milwaukee's south side, where

many voices are underrepresented and their stories left untold. Her current project — and the one she is using her fellowship time to complete — is a short documentary on a young female athlete active in the boxing program at Milwaukee's United Community Center. "I always knew I wanted to do something on the boxing program there," says Fuster, who was also a student of the UCC boxing program. Her goal, she says, is eventually to turn this short film into a feature-length documentary.

With a diverse array of film projects behind her, McInnis is focusing on a genre that is familiar to her — puppetry. In 2017 her senior-thesis puppet musical *ANGELAAA* won a Cream City Cinema prize at the Milwaukee Film Festival. As the recipient of the fellowship for a filmmaker working in any genre, she is working on a fiction short using wooden puppetry. Titled *Pine Romantic*, the film centers on a wooden peasant boy who lives inside a fictional cuckoo clock. The combination of music and puppetry needed to tell the story showcases the collaborative effort between artists, filmmakers and musicians.

After the fellowships' completion, Fuster and McInnis will share their filmmaking experiences with Marquette students. — Ann Christenson, CJPA '90

Marquette facilities experts dig deep to rebuild Johnston Hall to its original historic glory after a bus crashed into its entryway.

BY DAN SIMMONS, PHOTOS BY JESSE LEE

IT WAS LATE FRIDAY AFTERNOON, May 15, 2018. Spring semester finals had just finished. Lora Strigens was at a meeting off campus when her phone rang.

“You might want to get back to campus,” a co-worker said. “A bus just hit Johnston Hall.”

Strigens serves as Marquette’s vice president for planning and facilities management, and, in that role, carefully charts a course for the buildings and structures that add up to a small city. “A lot of things that happen are things that we try to predict and plan for,” she says, then grins and admits they also have to be ready to deal with things they haven’t planned for.

Put in that category a Route 12 Milwaukee County Transit System bus losing control while turning from North 12th Street onto West Wisconsin Avenue, jumping the curb and crashing into the west entryway of Johnston Hall, home to the Diederich College. One of the oldest original buildings on campus, it was built in 1906 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986 and the State Register in 1989.

To everyone’s relief, the late hour on a Friday meant no one was standing or walking in the bus’ path. The driver and some of the five passengers did suffer injuries, none of them life-threatening. “In a way, we’re very lucky,” Strigens says.

But there remained the matter of the damaged entry to Johnston Hall, which is framed in a Gothic-style arch and topped by twin stone spires that bookend an ornamental cross at the peak of the archway.

Marquette police, construction crews and concerned staffers rushed to the scene. Kathy

Kugi-Tom, a project manager on Strigens’ team, assessed the damage.

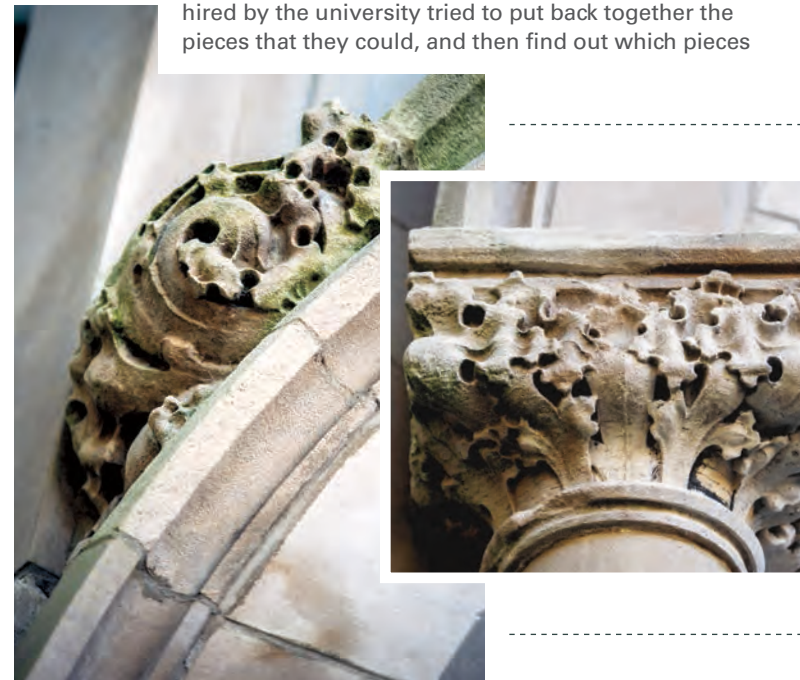
The facade, made of Indiana limestone and original to the building, was in pieces on the ground. A leaded-glass welcome sign spelling out “JOHNSTON” that hung just inside the entry was twisted and cracked. Some wood and plasterwork were damaged, too.

Reconstructing the historical pieces would come later. First, Kugi-Tom had to deal with a fallen drainpipe, also original to the building. In its absence, the next rainstorm could send water gushing into the building. The university cordoned off the entry and directed foot traffic to two other doors nearby. And in the next months, Strigens and Kugi-Tom took on the role of architecture detectives trying to piece together, literally, the historic century-old structure.

Milwaukee architect Charles D. Crane designed it, his first and only experiment with the Gothic-style construction. It originally provided a chapel, reading room, parlors, administrative offices, library, and laboratories for physics and chemistry. An observatory was on the roof. Jesuit professors once lived in dormitories in the south wing and also in the attic after a 1938 remodel of the hall.

The building, named for baking magnate Robert A. Johnston after he donated \$130,000 for the project, was the first on Marquette’s new campus. It set off a flurry of other building projects in the 1910s and 1920s that formed the core of campus.

“It was like putting together a puzzle,” Strigens says of the task they faced in reconstructing the entryway. “Crews hired by the university tried to put back together the pieces that they could, and then find out which pieces



After Johnston Hall’s west entrance was damaged by a bus in 2018 (above), a Marquette facilities management team worked diligently to rebuild it back to its historic significance (left). The restoration involved re-creating limestone details (below) using an identical entrance on the building’s east end as a model.

were missing. Then they went over to the other entryway to laser measure what those other pieces were.”

To further complicate this building rescue, they could find no original drawings of the building, and the Indiana limestone fashioned in the early 1900s is much harder to find today.

If they’d wanted to simplify and speed the process significantly, they could have chosen to fabricate the damaged or missing pieces from another material. But history wouldn’t approve. “We’re taking the longer, more complicated path to get there,” Strigens says. “Because of the treasure that this building is, it’s the right thing to do.”

After months of searching, Kugi-Tom found a quarry that produces a close match of the original Indiana limestone and could produce the stone on the university’s timeline. “It’s been a lot more challenging than I think any of us really thought it was going to be,” admits Kugi-Tom. “We finally found a company that could do it in the manner that we really wanted.”

Reconstructing the pieces to the original specs was made somewhat easier because of a matching entryway on the building’s east end. Contractors set up 3D cameras on tripods to scan the intact entryway, the first step in learning the size, shape and configuration of the stones.

Johnston Hall’s reconstruction was completed just before the 2019–20 academic year began. Arriving communication freshmen ready to begin their storytelling lessons were completely unaware their building had a story of its own to tell. And that’s exactly how Strigens and Kugi-Tom wanted it.



make 'em LAUGH

DELIGHTING AUDIENCES started early for Andy Grotelueschen, Comm '02. In fact, family lore suggests he could perform before he knew how to talk.

When Grotelueschen was a year old, his Aunt Karen, who was living with his family in Clinton, Iowa, taught Andy how to wink. After that, female parishioners were surprised by a winking cherub as they passed the Grotelueschen family on their way out of church.

In 2019 his peers on Broadway winked back at him, nominating Grotelueschen for a Tony Award for best performance by an actor in a featured role in a musical for his work in *Tootsie*, his first Broadway musical. Grotelueschen plays Jeff Slater, a struggling playwright who serves as conscience and foil for the main character, notably in *Jeff Sums It Up*, a caustic song and goofy dance number. *Los Angeles Times* critic Charles McNulty called Grotelueschen “captivatingly schlubby,” the kind

of plaudit a character actor would happily emboss on his business card.

Knowing he wanted to pursue theatre professionally, several factors led Grotelueschen to choose Marquette. The university was a comfortable size for a small-town kid who didn't want to get lost at a large state school. Also, “I just really loved Phylis (Ravel, then the theatre program director) the moment that I met her,” he says. The supportive vibe among other theatre students reminded him of his familial

Tony-nominated Andy Grotelueschen shares his comedic talents with Broadway audiences and theatre students alike.

BY JIM HIGGINS, JOUR '79

high school drama posse. And an actor Grotelueschen admired, the late Chris Farley, Sp '86, was a Marquette alum. Grotelueschen would go on to win the Chris Farley Scholarship for humor, awarded annually to a Diederich College of Communication junior through a competitive process.

The world outside Marquette began to notice Grotelueschen's talent, too. When Ravel directed a production of *Cut To: The Deal* for Milwaukee's Theatre X in 2002, she cast Grotelueschen, who was still a student. “The stage brightens every time Andy Grotelueschen appears in any of his three satiric roles,” wrote *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* theatre critic Damien Jaques, Arts '68.

Grotelueschen described his Marquette theatre education as more than art for art's sake. “It also has a social justice component to it. You make work that responds to the community,” he says. He takes to heart the Ignatian spiritual principle of *cura personalis*, or care for the whole person. Fittingly, his character in *Tootsie* confronts roommate Michael Dorsey (star Santino Fontana) with an essential ethical question: How can Michael, a man pretending to be a woman, take an acting role away from a woman at a time when women are fighting for equity?

After graduating from Marquette, Grotelueschen earned his master's from Brown University and joined the innovative, collaborative Fiasco Theater, performing in a highly acclaimed, stripped-down version of the musical *Into the Woods* both off-Broadway and in London.

As busy as he is, Grotelueschen has returned to both his Iowa high school and Marquette to lead workshops and share his experience with theatre students. On his most recent visit to Marquette in 2017, Grotelueschen led students in clowning exercises. That's not circus clowning, but a theatrical

“Every person has just one clown inside them, from which thousands of hilarious, wonderful, beautiful characters can spring.”

—Andy Grotelueschen, Comm '02

tradition of performing that he has studied for years.

“Every person has just one clown inside them, from which thousands of hilarious, wonderful, beautiful characters can spring,” he says.

In the effort to help each student find the essence of their personal clown, they sang songs, performed improv exercises and did comedic bits with red noses.

“It's difficult for performers to know what is funny about themselves,” Grotelueschen says. “You really find that out in front of an audience, so you have to try out all different kinds of things, often embarrassing things, or sometimes unwittingly embarrassing things.”

At Fiasco, which remains his artistic home, and elsewhere, Grotelueschen considers himself blessed to work in highly collaborative situations. “The whole thing that if you treat your collaborators like geniuses, they will be, I think it is really true. I've been lucky to breed well with a lot of wonderful minds.”

His secret to success in theatre? “Optimistic, dogged, relentless commitment,” he says, rolling out the words slowly, one at a time. “It is a strange, very singular, very personal journey through this art and this business.”



(Top) Amy Nielson, Comm '02, Andy Grotelueschen and Jodie Schell Gilbert, Comm '02, share a scene from Marquette's production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, directed by Debra Krajec. (Bottom) Grotelueschen and Sarah Stiles perform on Broadway in *Tootsie*. (Tootsie photos by Matthew Murphy)

★

UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL

As the country gears up for the 2020 presidential election and Milwaukee prepares to host the Democratic National Convention, *COMM* magazine sought out a panel of Marquette alumni and faculty experts to reflect on strong currents of political communication driven by partisan rhetoric and rapid-fire messaging.

EDITED BY SARAH KOZIOL, ARTS '92
ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN JAY CABUAY



How has **SOCIAL MEDIA usage changed the political communication landscape?**

Dr. Sumana Chattopadhyay: Recent Pew research numbers show ... 65 percent of voters in the 2016 election obtained their news about the campaign from digital sources. Political communication scholars have noted that the unparalleled use of social media in the 2016 election led to unpredictability, disruption and the muddying of political discourse. Tweets would lead to headlines; posts that had not been fact-checked started to be perceived as actual news; social media ended up as sources for cable news; and the credible legacy news sources became less important.

Dr. Nathan Gilkerson: It used to be that powerful “gatekeepers” within the traditional news media — national newspaper editors and broadcast network producers — made daily editorial decisions that influenced the news content, information and various political messages citizens were exposed to. While news outlets still hold enormous influence in determining the headlines and helping to shape public opinion on issues, politicians today can much more easily communicate their preferred messages directly and instantly with millions of supporters, without the filtering effect of “the media” weighing in on its importance or accuracy.

Cassie Smedile: Social media allows average, everyday Americans to hear directly from their elected officials in real time. It also allows everyone to hear directly from a lot of people who think they are officials, which can lead to confusion, misinformation or, just as bad, missing information. Social media is an integral part of every communication plan. It can be the hardest part to “plan” for because anything can happen, but it’s impossible to win the message without it.

How has your job as a journalist changed with the rise of the **24/7 NEWS CYCLE and social media?**

Ben Tracy: With the advent of cable news, social media and now streaming services such as CBSN, we report all day long. It’s great because there is always reporting we do that we can’t find room for in the morning and evening newscasts, but it also results in less time to digest news as it happens and shape it coherently. As a journalist covering the White House, there is no way to underestimate how much of my life is devoted to waiting for, reading and reporting on tweets sent by the president of the United States. President Trump has completely changed how a president communicates with the world. He does it directly instead of communicating through the media. This certainly gives him a greater ability to shape his own message, but the sheer volume of his communication can make it



CASSIE SMEDILE, Comm ’07, national press secretary for the Republican National Committee, brings 10 years of Capitol Hill communication experience to the RNC, most recently serving as communications director for Sen. Todd Young (R-IN) and Rep. Sean Duffy (R-WI).

a challenge for journalists to decide where to focus and what is important.

Elizabeth Williamson: The 24/7 cycle means that beat reporters publish what they learn in real time. Editors also expect the 30,000-foot, analytical piece that showcases beat reporters’ talents and knowledge, but that must be done simultaneously or at 3 a.m. When events happen, readers often find the first trickle of news on social media or cable, then turn to media websites like *The New York Times* for deeper coverage. If they don’t find it there at that moment, research suggests they won’t be back.

Social media is a powerful tool for reporters. It allows them to comment on events as they happen, offering color or details that aren’t in the published story, bolstering their authority on a topic. We also use social media to drive traffic to our work. Over the past few years, social media, particularly Twitter, has become a weapon wielded against journalists by the political right and left. My advice to students and young journalists: If what you are about to put out into the world could be used to embarrass you or cast doubt on your integrity, even years into the future, don’t.

Has the **CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE affected how you teach or affected your classroom?**

Chattopadhyay: It has certainly affected how I teach my classes, particularly my political campaigns class. Every student now is required to follow a candidate on Twitter

through the semester and tweet about the candidate and the campaign. Every class now talks about how digital platforms could be incorporated into the topic being discussed. For example, while talking about the issue of gender and politics, one starts to delve deeper into how social media has changed the way women decide they are running for public office, how they show us who they are outside the campaign trail, etc.

My goal is to make sure that my political biases do not seep into the classroom. I go the extra mile to ensure everyone in my class feels safe and comfortable to be able to share their political viewpoints no matter what those are. Given how much political discord there is outside the classroom, I try to not let that follow us into the classroom.

Gilkerson: I certainly don’t avoid political topics in class. In fact, my students and I frequently find ourselves talking about current political issues and often debate how companies, policymakers and politicians are crafting messages or being portrayed within the news media. I do wonder whether some of my students may occasionally be self-censoring what they are willing to share in class, if they are concerned about voicing an idea or political opinion that diverges from most of their peers. ... I work hard to encourage open discussion and debate so long as everyone is respectful and gives each other the opportunity to speak and be heard. I view this type of political discourse as a positive and healthy thing.



DR. NATHAN GILKERSON, assistant professor of strategic communication in the Diederich College, researches social media use in strategic communication, and the intersection of politics and public relations. Before Marquette, he worked in politics for a Minneapolis-based media consultant and was press assistant for Sen. Tim Johnson (D-SD) and deputy communications director of the South Dakota Democratic Party.

How have you had to **ADAPT IN YOUR ROLE as a communicator in this era of political division?**

Smedile: The “era of political division” is not new; we have had division in politics since our founding. However, *where* the politically divisive conversations are largely taking place is relatively new. Social media is now where everyone from public figures to our grandmothers are sharing their thoughts and opinions, and each of them believes those thoughts and opinions are just as valid as the next person’s — blue checkmark, or not. As communicators, we have an obligation to understand where people are already communicating and to take our message to them. Misinformation and missing information are common practices on social media. It’s important that we’re getting our message in the right place and to the right people to try to combat that.

Traditionally, politicians, in particular, have been a step or two behind the communication trends. That is changing — from the president to your city council member, elected officials are swapping traditional press releases and long-form columns for shorter posts in real time. If a topic starts trending, you are working with a matter of minutes — not days — to get your message to the intended audience, and often it’s better to take it to them directly instead of waiting and crossing your fingers that a reporter will include it in his or her story the next day.

How closely does this era of **HYPERPOLARIZED POLITICS mirror similarly strained political periods, and how is it different?**

Gilkerson: Candidates and political pundits are often much more concerned about speaking to and pleasing their already-persuaded “base” than they are in ... working to find common ground or winning over someone who is undecided. There are many complex factors at play — like highly gerrymandered congressional districts and a lack of transparency in campaign finance laws, which can lead to ambiguous or even anonymous sources of negative political ads and campaign messaging. There’s also the profit motive for celebrity commentators, cable news networks and political bloggers to make outrageous and incendiary statements, if they result in increased viewership ratings and monetized advertising eyeballs. ... A unique aspect of today’s political moment is the highly fragmented — and less “trusted” — news media environment, and the power and influence of the internet and social media as political communication tools.

Chattopadhyay: The current environment is certainly hyperpolarized. ... The 1950s, with segregation and McCarthyism, and the 1960s, with Vietnam and the civil rights movement, did see some polarization happen

politically in the U.S., but the numbers are nowhere comparable to where we are today. The periods after the world wars were a time for bipartisanship, which could be perceived as postwar “consensus,” but such cross-party collaboration was also the result of a huge ideological range within the two major parties, something that we don’t see much today.

In these polarized times, can there be agreement on anything, even BASIC FACTS? How does the answer to this question influence your work?

Tracy: As a journalist, I think my job is simple in this regard. Facts do exist, and I need to communicate them. On any given day, I will get messages on social media calling me an idiot, a stooge, a partisan hack, a Trump defender, a Trump hater, etc. People want to hear things that reinforce what they already believe to be true. My job is to find out what is true to the best of my ability and report that. How people react is not my concern. When you have politicians calling the vast majority of journalists “fake news,” it certainly makes our jobs more difficult. It allows a certain segment of the population to completely disregard what we are saying if they don’t want to hear it. I do find it amusing that we are “fake” if anything we report seems critical, but as soon as there is something positive, it must be “real.” We don’t live in a post-fact society. Facts exist, we report them.

Williamson: Our job as reporters is to seek and write facts, not seek “agreement” on facts. If your story is true, factually correct and fairly written, it stands on its own. It is more important than ever to pitch a perfect game in journalism, and when you don’t, to own the error and correct it as swiftly as possible. Bad-faith critics, many of them politically motivated, now weaponize mistakes, sloppiness and bias to discredit a reporter and her outlet. We try not to hand ammo to them by screwing up.

We reporters can get a little thin-skinned, in part because social media allows people — by the thousands! — to call us out by name when we write something they disagree with or don’t like. But informed, good-faith criticism of our work helps us get better, and we welcome it, or should. We carry a big stick at *The Times*, and the people we cover get an opportunity to respond. Readers, too.

Do you see today’s extreme polarization as an aberration to be followed by a pendulum swing back to more familiar patterns, or think IRREPARABLE DAMAGE is being done to our political discourse and how it’s communicated?

Chattopadhyay: Polarization has been viewed as an aberration by many political observers who feel things



DR. SUMANA CHATTOPADHYAY, associate professor of digital media and performing arts in the Diederich College, researches why people vote the way they do and what issues candidates pursue during campaigns. Chattopadhyay co-authored *Bush Versus Kerry: A Functional Analysis of Campaign 2004*.



will go back to more familiar patterns in the political sphere. However, I am less hopeful of that happening because we live in a social media universe where selective exposure, selective attention and selective perception are even more of a reality than these were with traditional media platforms. Voters can now filter out all kinds of opinions that don’t fit in with their worldview, and the politicians appealing to them can just talk to their base directly. That kind of environment is just a recipe for greater polarization.

Gilkerson: We have observed over the past several years that many voters aren’t as concerned with decorum and traditional political etiquette as had previously been assumed. Political consultants are undoubtedly telling at least some candidates that one way to gain media coverage and social media attention, and perhaps to become perceived as authentic, is through using more coarse, unscripted language and taking risks in personally attacking political opponents. My honest hope is ... voters decide to reward politicians who demonstrate a respect for their opponents, even those with opposing viewpoints, and show both true knowledge of the issues and a sincere willingness to debate them. I’m paraphrasing here, but there’s the old saying, “In a democracy, you get the government you deserve,” which in this case I take to mean that it’s really on us, as voters, to solve these problems.

Smedile: Just as many thought the cassette tape would be the

end of radio, many believe Twitter is the end of respectful discourse. Most humans are at once resistant to change and then adapt to it and can’t recall life before it all changed. That’s not to say many of us don’t yearn for kinder, more thoughtful conversations, but we are going to have to be the force that demands the market to change. A daunting task, but on this, I subscribe to the wisdom of Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Tracy: Unfortunately, I don’t see the polarization easing. Both sides seem so entrenched. It is much more about whether your candidate or your political team wins versus what they actually do once they take office. If the only outcome that matters is the outcome of an election, that rewards extreme polarization. Some elements of the media certainly contribute to this. If you believe one thing, you can have it reinforced every night on the cable channel of your choice. Where I am somewhat more optimistic is, I think the vast majority of people in this country would prefer if we could all be more respectful, stop demagoguing and actually debate ideas rather than throw around cheap insults. I haven’t lost hope yet for a return to civility.

Williamson: I am a Midwestern optimist, but I also read history. We’ve weathered “extreme polarization” in varying forms throughout our nation’s existence, and it goes way beyond political discourse. We’ve been torn by civil war, political assassinations, and in



ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON, Jour ’85, a writer for *The New York Times*, previously reported on national politics and the culture of Washington at *The Wall Street Journal* and was also a reporter for *The Washington Post*.



BEN TRACY, Comm ’98, Grad ’04, a CBS News White House correspondent based in Washington, D.C., reports for all CBS News platforms, including the *CBS Evening News*, *CBS This Morning* and *CBS Sunday Morning*, and has been with the network since 2008. Tracy is a member of Marquette’s President’s Society.

the 1970s, 1,000 politically motivated bombings a year, to say nothing of today’s constant threat of attacks from extremists based here and abroad. America is a resilient place. We’re again seeing a rise in terrible impulses and acts — never in my career anywhere in the world have I been stalked and threatened, but I am now. Still, I believe our institutions prepared us to survive this moment and our political discourse to rebound. There’s a reckoning coming, not least for social media companies whose platforms facilitated a deterioration in our national debate, disruption of our politics, attacks on our democracy and our people.

How did your EDUCATION AT MARQUETTE, during a different political era, prepare you as a communicator to work in this fast-changing political environment?

Smedile: I was at Marquette from 2003 to 2007. The news was dominated by our involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. So, passionate conversations about war were frequently taking place in classrooms across campus. I appreciated going to a classroom environment where we could freely and openly discuss the situation, the global and local impacts of it and all develop an informed position — if not necessarily a unanimously agreed upon position.

Tracy: Marquette taught me to seek truth in all things and that it is not about *what* you think but *how* you think. Those are life philosophies and values that are not changed by any particular political environment or new technology. I try to use the values Marquette instilled in me as guideposts for how I live my life and do my job. Yes, things move so fast today that it is sometimes hard to take time to be reflective, but we have to try.

Williamson: I was a bad journalism student in that I didn’t read as widely as I could have and lock onto courses that put events into global context. I spent 10 years as a correspondent in Eastern Europe wondering what I was doing in Father Donnelly’s Western Civilization class instead of paying attention. (Class of 1985, don’t answer that.)

I taught a reporting class this summer in D.C. and was blown away by my students’ deep political awareness and active determination to make change. I encouraged them, as I was encouraged at Marquette, to reexamine their views as they learn and read and travel, and to engage people they disagree with in respectful conversation. I can get strident about my own views, particularly on subjects I’m immersed in. But it’s important to know what you don’t know and seek answers, to listen and walk in the other guy’s shoes. Marquette taught those old-school values, and they inform my work today.



A VOICE HEARD

Student playwright
Malaina Moore uses
the stage to spark
dialogue on racial
inequities she's
experienced firsthand.

by
LORA
STRUM

photo by
ADAM RYAN
MORRIS



Marquette students performed *White Privilege* to sold-out audiences in fall 2018. The play, written by theatre arts major Malaina Moore, received a Citizen Artist Award for its social justice impact from the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, which also hosted a performance of Moore's production in 2019.

Photo by A.J. Magoon

M

alaina Moore is recounting the heartache and hilarity that inspired

her to write *White Privilege* — her artistic take on inequities big and small from the perspective of young people navigating racism in post-9/11 America — when she becomes suddenly subdued.

“I get scared sometimes,” she admits. “I have three brothers, and writing this play was my way of protecting them.”

Using the arts to educate the world on the injustices threatening those she loves is what Moore, a senior in the Diederich College of Communication, aspires to at Marquette. *White Privilege*, a play exploring the societal advantages often experienced by white people, hit the community with the subtlety of a load of dynamite.

“It blew up right away,” remembers Debra Krajec, the show's director and associate professor of digital media and performing arts. “At the end of that first performance people were standing and cheering. Students of color ... were crying. Everyone was overcome.”

Premiered early in the main-stage season, *White Privilege* wasn't expected to draw a crowd, let alone sell out all three of its performances. “Nobody does that,” insists Stephen Hudson-Mairet, chair and associate professor of digital media and performing arts.

Because it is a student-written piece, Hudson-Mairet was unsure how people would react to *White Privilege*. He laughs about that now that the play has received many accolades. Now that it was selected to perform at the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (Region III) in January 2019 and also won a national Citizen Artist Award for its social justice impact from KCACTF. Now that it has garnered Moore a Difference Maker Award from Marquette President Michael R. Lovell and positioned the young playwright as a rising star.

But hidden in the play's success is Moore's own struggle with identity.

Moore spent her childhood in racial silos. First attending school on the “white side” of Milwaukee before enrolling at Rufus King International High School, where, though the student body was diverse, Moore still saw herself as a racial “other.” “I was always looked at as this perfect black person ... who had to have all the answers,” she recalls.

Moore's first months at Marquette were no less difficult. Immersed in a predominantly white culture, Moore struggled to make friends as she pursued a degree in theatre arts. She became depressed and considered transferring to a historically black college.

But from that sense of ostracization, Moore examined the disconnect she felt among her white peers and, through conversation with other black students, found they too saw

a major, and historic, chasm between the black and white communities at Marquette and in Milwaukee.

That gap was evident in Moore's Acting III class where five white and two black actors couldn't find a play to perform together. “All the plays were written for a white cast,” Moore says. “I could play the mamie or the mermaid — whatever supernatural creature has no color — but there wasn't a play for all of us.”

So, she wrote one.

White Privilege is a mélange of Moore's observations — of a girl she knew in high school, from a seminar on gentrification in Milwaukee — and thoughts on Kim Kardashian and cultural appropriation; President Donald Trump; Marquette; inside jokes; casual conversations.

To synthesize these ideas into a cohesive work, Hudson-Mairet tapped Krajec — a 35-year veteran of Marquette's Theatre Arts program — to direct. Her response: “I'm an old white lady. Am I really the right person for this?”

But Krajec, like many who touched *White Privilege*, found power in listening and confronting ignorance. Hudson-Mairet supported the further development of the play through Marquette's Phylis Ravel Theatre and Social Justice Fund, a special endowment for initiatives with social justice themes. The endowment connected Moore with Marti Gobel and Marcella Kearns, two Milwaukee theatre professionals, who led play reading and writing workshops with professional actors who guided Moore and added another layer to the play's take on race.

Gobel and Kearns helped Moore refine her work until it became the comical and gut-wrenching piece the actors performed. Rene Leech, Comm '19, portrayed one of the play's most vitriolic racists, and when questioned at talkbacks — discussions between cast and audience — about including such a hateful portrayal of the white race, Leech stood by her polemic character.

“If she wasn't an extremist, if we toned her down, this show wouldn't ring true,” Leech insists.

“But *White Privilege* was ... for people who were ready to see something thought-provoking and, sometimes, uncomfortable.”

Not everyone in the community was ready. Before *White Privilege* opened, the Theatre Arts program and Moore received hate mail. As a safety precaution, a Marquette plainclothes police officer attended every performance, but

otherwise Hudson-Mairet declined to respond directly to the letters. “The play stands and speaks for itself,” he declares.

Moore embraced the fury her play ignited in certain circles. “You learn in anger,” Moore explains. “Anger shows you're listening.”

For Brielle Richmond, the only black actor aside from Moore in the original Acting III class, exploring anger while performing *White Privilege* was critical to her self-expression. “This play became a way for others to hear me without an argument,” says Richmond, Comm '19. “It was a play, but it was also our voice.”

That voice spurred immediate change in the community — Judge Carl Ashley commissioned a performance of *White Privilege* as the keynote for the Race, Equity and Procedural Justice Committee's annual conference that addresses implicit bias in local law enforcement, and a white woman cut off her dreadlocks after seeing Richmond's character explain how the hairstyle appropriated black culture.

At Marquette, the play has encouraged students of color to point out white privilege on campus — such as the dearth of plays with strong black leads — and spurred Hudson-Mairet to continue working toward making his department more inclusive. He hopes Moore publishes *White Privilege* so the rest of the world might also make this change.

But for Moore, the themes in *White Privilege* are emotionally taxing, and she lingers on the thought of writing just “a regular play.” With that, she pauses again, reminded of her brothers. One of them spent time in jail. In spite of herself, she doesn't think she could make art that ignores that reality.

“I feel compelled to give black people a voice because I know I have such a strong one,” she says. “For me, theatre is not just an outlet ... but a way to talk about real issues.”

“All the plays were written for a white cast. I could play the mamie or the mermaid — whatever supernatural creature has no color — but there wasn't a play for all of us.” — MALAINA MOORE

the grapevine



Even with a spot in the Milwaukee Press Club Hall of Fame, Mark Zoromski (standing, center) is most proud of his work mentoring student media in the Diederich College.

Photo by Kat Schleicher

Press Club Hall of Fame and the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences' Silver Circle.

It's an impressive résumé, but it doesn't include the accolades that make him proudest. "This year students working for the Marquette Wire won a staggering 84 national, regional, state and local awards, including best newspaper, best radio newscast, best television newscast, and best magazine," he says. "Student awards are the ones that really make me proud." (See related story on p. 5.)

Zoromski says that teaching communication in the era of "fake news" surprisingly has its benefits. "In some ways it makes it easier to teach about what it takes to be a professional journalist, why codes of ethics are important, why fact-checking is important," he says. "In the past, when we talked about remaining impartial, independent, balanced and fair, it felt a bit esoteric or theoretical. Now, we have too many real examples we can point to that show a lack of fact-checking and biased reporting."

Another trend he says is shaping the way communication is taught is the recent increase in physical and emotional threats against journalists. "It's something we need to take very seriously. That's why we're working with the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation to develop the curriculum for a journalist-safety training program that we will be instituting in all our classes," he says.

When not working, Zoromski likes to spend time with his wife of 35 years, Jill, a journalist-turned-human-resources professional who now runs her own management consulting business. The couple have two adult sons, Drew and Joe, and a daughter, Kate, who tragically passed away in a car accident in 2007 at the age of 16. "I devote every day to trying to make her proud of me," says Zoromski. From a look at his professional awards and the devotion of his students — who were the driving force behind his Marquette 2019 Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence — he's doing a good job of it. — **Guy Fiorita**

1

A FAITHFUL FIT

Seasoned news professional Mark Zoromski directs student media to award-reaping heights.

Mark Zoromski calls working at Marquette "a match made in heaven."

"Just a few days after making a New Year's resolution to get back to attending to my faith more intently, I got an email asking me to apply for the newly created director of student media. I took it as a sign from above," he says.

Zoromski came to Marquette with years of teaching and professional experience. As director of news planning for WITI-TV, senior broadcast journalism lecturer at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, past president of the Milwaukee Press Club and now as the Diederich College's director of student media, he has won numerous local and national awards and has been inducted into the Milwaukee

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2

DIVERSIFYING A WORKFORCE

From a multicultural floor in O'Donnell to a job diversifying museums, Kyle Parsons' experiences of inclusion provide valuable takeaways.

When Kyle Parsons, Comm '10, graduated with a degree in communication and a minor in Spanish, he had very little understanding of the issues facing museums. "I didn't know what to expect, but I was excited about landing a job in diversity, equity, access and inclusion. Plus, my years at Marquette had rekindled the love of history that I had as a child, so it was a great fit."

A decade later Parsons continues to work at the Minnesota Historical Society, which preserves the state's history through its museums, libraries, collections, programming and education. As manager of inclusion and community engagement, Parsons manages a team of six, and together they run talent cultivation programs with local students, provide internal support around diversity and inclusion, and build trust relationships with underserved communities. "We also work internally to build intercultural competence within our staff," he says.

Parsons says Marquette taught him a valuable lesson in diversity. "When I reflect on my freshman year in O'Donnell Hall, 1NW, I realize that we were of many different religions, races and countries of origin. The fact that we represented so many different backgrounds and cultures was a unifying factor, even though we rarely ever discussed it."

Ultimately, Parsons sees inclusion not only as the right thing to do but as the smart choice. "There is endless



research that points to the fact that diverse teams outperform homogeneous teams, so striving for that variety should be a goal of any successful business," he says. Parsons is proud of his work at the historical society, believing he has helped hire a multicultural museum workforce that represents the many cultural intersections that make Minnesota "a wonderful place to live."

Along with his other duties, he oversees two fellowship programs that bring him closer to that goal by encouraging Twin Cities undergraduates from diverse communities to consider a career in the museum field. "It's challenging, but I love seeing the direct impact as more students secure jobs within cultural institutions around the country," he says.

Parsons lives in south Minneapolis with his partner, Lizzie, and their daughter, Kyah Genevieve, who turned 1 in October. "I want my life to be about more than work, which is why I participate in community-centered groups like the New Leaders Council and the Shannon Institute," he says. "I also work with Summer Festival Camp to help create a safe environment for young people to learn about Christ." — **Guy Fiorita**



3

BRAND ELEVATION

Business owner Kate Burgess uses a smaller market locale to build authentic partnerships with major national brands.

If there's one theme that defines Kate (Kuehl) Burgess' career path — starting with her time as a Marquette undergraduate — it's her eagerness to embrace risks.

Today, Burgess, CJPA '91, is the owner and chief executive officer of Elevate97, a branding company in Green Bay, Wisconsin, with a client roster that includes Carhartt, Adidas and Estée Lauder. But when Burgess first arrived at Marquette from her hometown of 300 people, she had a different career path in mind: teaching.

After her sophomore year, Burgess decided that education wasn't a fit. So she reflected back on one of her favorite high school activities — public speaking on the forensics team — and switched to a degree in communication.

Burgess worked in sales after graduating and was eventually recruited for a job at Anchor Food Products. She hadn't always envisioned a career in sales, but she dived headfirst into the opportunity.

"I had very little experience in sales," Burgess says. "But they liked me; they believed in me."

Four weeks into her new job, she was asked to take a promotion that would send her on the road to train other salespeople within the company.

"I said yes," Burgess says. "You won't know if you're on the right path if you don't feel free enough to take those risks."

As Burgess worked her way up the ladder at Anchor, where she eventually became vice president of human resources, she and her husband, Tom, were planning a venture of their own on the side. Burgess continued working at Anchor while Tom started FulfillNet, a



fulfillment and direct mail company. Once the company was off the ground, Burgess left Anchor to join her husband at the company, which eventually became Elevate97.

The early days of entrepreneurship were as intense as they were exhilarating, Burgess recalls.

"At one point, we were literally pushing a borrowed hotel lobby cart filled with our own marketing materials up and down Madison Avenue in New York City," she says.

Multiple expansions, several acquisitions and a name change later, Burgess is now at the helm of a team of more than 150 employees at Elevate97. The company provides branding services for clients, from supplying point-of-purchase items for Pandora Jewelry and Carhartt to supporting major brands right in Green Bay — including the Packers.

Running a branding company in a smaller market has its advantages, Burgess says, especially when it comes to offering customer service with a personal touch.

"The client experience we provide is very special," she says. "The services we provide and the relationships we build feel authentic because they are."

Ultimately, Burgess credits her success — which includes a recent Greater Green Bay Chamber's Business Person of the Year honor — to her willingness to always leap forward, often into the unknown, and, most importantly, to surround herself with an amazing team.

"This has become a guiding principal for me: Take the opportunity, take that risk and empower your people," she says. — **Lauren Sieben**

4

TALKING IT OUT

In a divisive political climate, Arica Van Boxtel promotes a simple but powerful problem-solving technique.

Arica Van Boxtel, Comm '13, believes in the power of conversation. When people want to address a problem — whether it's on a national, local or personal level — she says the first step to finding a solution is simple: Get into a room and start talking.

That idea perfectly captures the mission of The Aspen Institute, the nonprofit where Van Boxtel works as the associate director of communications. The nonpartisan organization hosts conferences, programs and other events that encourage open discussions on pressing issues facing the country and the world. These events allow a diverse group of leaders, academics and advocates to share their opinions on a wide range of issues — from sports and the arts to race and health care.

"They bring up a lot of difficult conversations, but those are the conversations that need to be had," Van Boxtel says. "They need to be had in a space where people aren't

talking at each other, but they're talking with each other, and they're really listening."

In a culture dominated by social media-driven shouting matches — especially in Washington, D.C., where the institute is headquartered — creating an environment that stimulates civil, constructive conversations is needed more than ever. And while the institute provides a neutral ground for these discussions, Van Boxtel emphasizes that the people who participate are opinionated and passionate. In fact, their differing viewpoints and backgrounds are critical to exploring solutions to divisive issues.

"There isn't really one method or response that can fix the divisiveness that exists, but there shouldn't be one method," she says. "The institute fosters that exploration of bringing people into a room and talking about what we can do to develop a road map or some kind of concrete next steps. That's the power of convening."



Van Boxtel credits Marquette with helping nurture her passion for this type of work. As the president of student government, she collaborated with various student groups to focus on diversity, equity and inclusion across campus, making sure everyone had a "seat at the table." At conferences hosted by the Diederich College of Communication, she learned the storytelling skills that she still uses today to share news about the innovations being made at The Aspen Institute.

And although she admits that covering events at the institute can be challenging, especially if the topics discussed are widely debated, she doesn't see that as a negative. "That's how you know you're doing the work that matters." — **Claire Nowak, Comm '16**



Seminars, panel discussions and tutorials at the Aspen Ideas Festival, an annual weeklong program hosted by The Aspen Institute, explore challenging issues such as global economics, U.S. policies, technology and education.

5

HEART IN THE GAME

Transferring his coaching skills from the basketball court, Joe Chapman scores victories in the game of life.



Having wrapped up its sixth cable-televised run this summer, The Basketball Tournament is proving to be a formidable competition. And the former professional and collegiate ballers making up much of the 64-team field are proving the same. Led by head coach Joe Chapman, Comm '06, this year's Golden Eagles alumni team was poised to build on its past success and cash in on the winner's \$2 million payout before it fell to Ohio State's alumni team in the finals, 66–60.

"We keep getting to this point ... Our players want to prove themselves. It's the same with me as a coach," says Chapman. "I want to make sure I'm preparing them the right way."

Chapman's game-playing résumé shows he is well-prepared to coach a team of his peers. After playing four years at Marquette — including a freshman-year Final Four appearance with Dwyane Wade; Steve Novak, Comm '06; and Travis Diener, Comm '05 (who played on this year's TBT team) — Chapman went on to play internationally for more than 10 years. In countries such as England, Chile, Japan and Argentina, he heightened his love of the game and his leadership skills on and off the court.

"Joe's coaching and preparation have been a big reason why we have been so successful in TBT over the years. He brings his experience as a college and professional player along with his passion for teaching the game," says



Joe Chapman (with clipboard) coaches the Golden Eagles alumni team in the championship game of The Basketball Tournament this summer. The Golden Eagles lost to Ohio State's alumni team, 66–60.

Dan Fitzgerald, Bus Ad '08, the Golden Eagles' general manager for TBT and Chapman's former college roommate and teammate.

After retiring as a player, Chapman took his game in a new direction — as entrepreneur. Summers spent coaching Marquette youth basketball camps followed by a few years mentoring high school athletes hoping to play collegiate basketball inspired Chapman to open his own training company.

Now, with a Wisconsin training facility opening in 2020, another academy chapter opening in Texas, and more than 30 coaches and skills trainers on staff, Chapman Basketball Academy is thriving. Through camps, clinics, private training sessions and Team Takeovers, the academy meets its mission: "Students learn basketball skills and technique in the context of life because what makes you successful on the basketball court also makes you successful everywhere else."

Chapman brings that same life-affirming philosophy to his Team Takeovers, in which he shares basketball and life skills with youth teams whose members struggle for wins amid difficult socioeconomic and domestic circumstances. It's a background to which he can relate. "Every kid goes through something different. As soon as you can recognize that and hit home with them, the more they will appreciate you and believe in what you say," he says.

— **Sarah Koziol, Arts '92, with Jeff Bontoff**

Travis Diener is a President's Society member.

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