Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation Career Enhancement Fellowship

During the fellowship, I am proposing three inter-related research and writing projects. First, I plan to complete edits to my book manuscript currently titled Expanding Racisms: Transnational Feminisms, Intersectionality Politics, and Human Rights in the Américas. My manuscript takes a new approach to the study of women’s human rights activism at the United Nations (UN). Rather than investigating the role of women in UN conferences and committees focused on women, I examine the role of women in UN forums about racism. My research demonstrates how an expanded discourse and approach to racism and antiracism has taken shape at the UN, even though it remains a largely male-dominated institution. I offer an integrated sociological analysis of an expanded understanding of racism occurring at the UN. This expanded understanding attempts to reflect the interaction of race and gender, known conceptually as intersectionality. Theories of intersectionality underscore how a reductionist approach to discrimination does not adequately reflect the lives of men and women who may experience multiple types of discrimination simultaneously based on race, class, and gender. As a result of a more holistic approach to understanding racism and antiracism, my research argues that new opportunities for women’s political organizing have emerged. Expanding Racisms is a comparative project involving Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Peru, and utilizes qualitative methodologies.

Second, I have conducted extensive archival research at the University of California, Berkeley, Columbia University, the University of Maryland, and Stanford University since 2011 reviewing the records pertaining to the 1945 United Nations Conference on International Organization, which led to the founding of the UN. During this research, I uncovered that out of eight hundred signatories for the UN Charter, only four of them were women; three of these four women came from the Américas region (the U.S., Brazil, and the Dominican Republic with the fourth delegate being from China). I plan to conduct some additional archival research on UNCIIO as a Wilson fellow and subsequently write an article based on this research to argue that the Latin American delegates from the 1945 conference embraced a more explicit and unapologetic feminist politics than the delegate from the U.S., who appears to have been deliberately selected by the U.S. government because she largely distanced herself from any feminist movement. Yet at the same time, these Latin American feminists practiced a somewhat flawed politics given they appear to not have denounced overt racism of the time.

Thirdly, I plan to make continued progress on my next significant project focused on the building of a human rights culture in Peru. This new research project intends to move beyond human rights legalism (which refers to an over-emphasis on the legal dimensions to human rights) and examine how new social actors, who are not public interest and/or progressive lawyers, interpret and translate human rights. These forms of critical engagements by new social actors reflect an alternative logic and analytic of human rights. This Peruvian based research will involve three distinct communities: domestic workers seeking knowledge about their labor rights, activists/artists commemorating the decades of internal armed conflict (specifically 1980-2000), and the social and political organizing efforts of Afro-Peruvian activists.