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# Building Community through Trust, Shelter, and Thread

Discussant: Shannon Struble, MA and MLS candidate, History and Archives Management, Simmons College

Panel Reporter: Erin Bazar, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, Simmons College

Panel Summary: Shannon Struble, MA and MLS candidate, History and Archives Management, Simmons College

## Panelists:

Mia Charlene White, PhD candidate, Urban Sociology, MIT

*"Gender Race and Place Attachment: A Case of Historic Neighborhood Recovery in Coastal Mississippi"*

Michele Friedner, PhD candidate, Medical Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley

*"Learning How to Thread, Wax, and Make Batiks: Gendered Deaf Space Production in New Delhi, India"*

Virginia Ferris, MA, Irish and Irish American Studies, New York University

*"Inside the Family Circle: Irish and African American Intermarriage in Nineteenth-Century New York"*

After Hurricane Katrina the coastal regions in the South faced devastating amounts of damage. However, the historical perceptions of place, family, and community created a unique opportunity for reasserting communal identity and the ownership of land, which Mia White explored in her presentation "Gender Race and Place Attachment: A Case of Historic Neighborhood Recovery in Coastal Mississippi." The articulation of identity inevitably involves references to gender and community. Through an exploration of the process of re-establishing Community Land Trusts in Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina, White examines how assertions of community became bound up in articulations of the historical value of gender in the community. In her presentation, White situated the individual within a narrative that recognizes the value of history, as well as

the demands of the present. By qualifying these tensions through place, she was able to highlight the importance of community in the assertion of gender and community.

Assertions of identity depend, in part, upon reciprocity; however, the tendency to marginalize communities, or individuals, complicates the identity of communities. Within this type of discourse the formation of informal spaces by excluded individuals presents a unique opportunity to examine the formation of transformative communities. In her presentation "Learning How to Thread, Wax, and Make Batiks: Gendered Deaf Space Production in New Delhi, India," Michele Friedner addressed the formation of a deaf community in New Delhi as a means to examine processes of situating gender and marginalization within a social milieu in order to integrate an imagined future into the present. She argued that issues of time are essential to realizing that change is rarely immediate; however, situating a future in a social, communal, environment challenges processes of integration and recognition. Thus, the struggle to create a future in a marginalized community implies the formation of a common history, and it seems that in the case of the Delhi Foundation of Deaf Women, the creation of formal place facilitates informal spaces of shared identity.

The idiosyncrasies of place affect the formation of communities, case in point: the Eighth Ward, Fourth District, of Manhattan in the late-nineteenth century. During this period inter-marriages between female Irish immigrants and African American men challenged historical notions of race relations in the United States. In her presentation "Inside the Family Circle: Irish and African American Intermarriage in Nineteenth-Century New York," Virginia Ferris explored the social and spatial dynamics of place as a means to situate the context for the development of culturally idiosyncratic relationships. Through the interpretation of census information from the years surrounding the Civil War, Ferris presented an interesting, and convincing, argument for interracial marriages in a New York neighborhood.