

# *Magic in the United States: 400 Years of Magical Beliefs, Practices, and Cultural Conflicts*

Heather Freeman, Project Director

## **Humanities Advisors**

### **Dr. Helen Berger - Resident Scholar, Women's Studies Research Center, Brandeis University**

Prof. Helen Berger is a sociologist and author of four books (two co-authored), an edited volume, and many articles focusing on contemporary Pagan and Witchcraft beliefs, practices, and social structures. Within these groups, Dr. Berger studies phenomena of social change, concepts of the self, political attitudes and behaviors, and changing notions of community.

### **Dr. Danielle Boaz – Associate Professor of Africana Studies, UNC Charlotte**

Dr. Danielle N. Boaz, author of *Banning Black Gods: Law and Religions of the African Diaspora* (2021), brings a unique combination of expertise in law, legal history, religious studies, and Africana studies to the project. She has a Ph.D. in History with a specialization in Africa, the African Diaspora and the Caribbean from the University of Miami, a J.D. with a concentration in International Law from the University of Toledo, and a LL.M. in Intercultural Human Rights from St. Thomas University. She is Co-Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Africana Religions*. Dr. Boaz is also a licensed attorney in the State of Florida and the State of North Carolina. Dr. Boaz's research focuses on the legal proscription of African cultural and religious practices in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the modern-day impact of those laws on public perceptions of these practices. Her book, *Banning Black Gods*, explores the increasing limitations on the freedom to practice African-derived religions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which have been fueled by a global rise in religious racism. Her website, [www.religiousracism.org/brazil](http://www.religiousracism.org/brazil), tracks cases of intolerance against Afro-Brazilian religions.

### **Dr. Yvonne Chireau – Professor of Religion, Swarthmore College**

Prof. Yvonne Chireau is an authority on African-based religions-in America, religion and magic, and black American religion. She is also interested in religion and comics, manga, and graphic novels. The author of *Black Magic: African American Religion and the Conjuring Tradition* (University of California Press, 2003), she has also co-edited, with Nathaniel Deutsch, *Black Zion: African American Religions and Judaism* (Oxford University Press, 1999). She has also published articles in several professional publications including the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center*, and *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*. Professor Chireau teaches courses on Religion in America, African American Religions, Black Women's Spirituality, and writes about Voodoo at [AcademicHoodoo.com](http://AcademicHoodoo.com).

### **Chas Clifton – Lecturer in English (Emeritus), Colorado State University - Pueblo**

Chas Clifton spent the first decade-plus of his adult working life as a journalist, working for two daily newspapers and other publications. As a newspaper reporter during the “cults scare” of the 1980s, Clifton became more interested in questions about the formation and development

of new religious movements than the journalistic world could accommodate and attended the University of Colorado for an MA In religious studies. While a graduate student, he started the small journal *Iron Mountain: A Journal of Magical Religion*. Fritz Muntean, founder of *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies*, cited *Iron Mountain* as one of his influences. This journal, in addition to Clifton's research on syncretism, definitions of "magic" versus "religion," and the legitimization of new religious movements, offered an early version of what is now called contemporary Pagan studies, as the American Academy of Religion terms it. Clifton spent the next twenty years in English departments and is co-editor of the Pagan studies book series that began circa 2004. He continues to act as editor-in-chief of *The Pomegranate* and has mentored many scholars in areas that intersect with and overlap with Pagan studies.

**Mary Catherine Hamner, author and Religious Studies Ph.D. Candidate, UNC Chapel Hill**

Mary Catherine Hamner is globally known under the name Thorn Mooney through her publications and YouTube channel. She is best known for her book *Traditional Wicca: A Seekers Guide* (Llewellyn Worldwide), which is an essential text for contemporary practitioners of initiatory Wicca. As an academic scholar of religious studies, she has presented at the American Academy of Religion, possesses a Masters in Religious Studies from UNC Charlotte, and is initiating her doctoral research in Religious Studies at UNC Chapel Hill this Fall.

**Daniel Harms - Associate Librarian, SUNY Cortland**

Daniel Harms holds two masters' degrees, (Anthropology and Library + Information Science) and researches magic from antiquity to the present. Harms is also editor of *The Long-Lost Friend: A 19th Century American Grimoire*; *The Book of Oberon: A Sourcebook of Elizabethan Magic*; *Of Angels, Demons, and Spirits: A Sourcebook of British Magic*; and author of the historical biography *Balloonists, Alchemists, and Astrologers of the Nineteenth Century: The Tale of George and Margaret Graham*. He has also been published in the *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic* and the *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*.

**Jesse Hathaway Diaz, independent scholar and performance artist**

Jesse Hathaway Diaz is a folklorist, artist and performer with a BFA in Drama and an MA in Performance Studies from New York University. He is an initiated priest in the Lucumí Orisha tradition, hosts an occult themed podcast called 'Radio Free Golgotha', and edits the 'Folk Necromancy in Transmission' imprint through Revelore Press. For the better part of two decades, he has been involved with Theatre Group Dzieci, a New York based experimental theatre ensemble which explores theatre and ritual as a way, blending service with self-exploration and performance. Dividing his time between the Bronx and a farm in the Hudson Valley, his artistic and written work navigate the world-as-magic through exploring orality and transmission, decolonialism, ritual theory and praxis, and herbalism and healing modalities through private study and apprenticeship, and community involvement.

**Dr. Cory Thomas Hutcheson, author and Lecturer in English at Middle Tennessee State University**

Besides his academic career teaching English and American Studies, Hutcheson is the cohost of

the popular podcast *New World Witchery*. He has a doctorate in American Studies with specializations in folklore, religion, and ethnicity from Penn State. He is a contributor to the *Oxford Handbook of American Folklore and Folklife Studies* and *American Myths, Legends, & Tall Tales*, and he has written for popular occult publications, including *Witches & Pagans*.

**Dr. Dennis Kelley, Associate Professor of Religion, University of Missouri, Columbia**

Dennis Kelley is an associate professor of Religious Studies at the University of Missouri, Columbia. He received his Master's and Doctorate from the University of California, Santa Barbara, with emphases in American Indian Religious Traditions, Religion in American Culture, and Myth and Ritual Theory. His most recent book is *Tradition, Performance, and Religion in Native America: Ancestral Ways, Modern Selves*, and is currently working on a book tentatively titled *Having Had a Spiritual (Re)Awakening: Religion and Alcohol Addiction Recovery in Indian Country*.

**Dr. Sabina Magliocco, Professor of Sociocultural Anthropology and Chair of Program in Religion, The University of British Columbia**

Sabina Magliocco, Ph.D. is Professor of Anthropology and Chair of the interdisciplinary Program in the Study of Religion at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. A recipient of Guggenheim, National Endowment for the Humanities, SSHRC, Fulbright and Hewlett fellowships, and an honorary Fellow of the American Folklore Society, she has published on religion, folklore, foodways, festival and witchcraft in Europe and North America, and is a leading authority on the modern Pagan movement. She is the author of numerous books and articles, including *The Two Madonnas: the Politics of Festival in a Sardinian Community* (1993, 2005), *Witching Culture: Folklore and Neo-Paganism in America* (2004), *Neopagan Sacred Art & Altars: Making Things Whole* (2001), and with filmmaker John M. Bishop produced the documentary film series "Oss Tales," on a May Day custom in Cornwall and its reclamation by American Pagans. Her current research is on nature and animals in the spiritual imagination.

**Dr. Sean McCloud - Professor of Religious Studies, UNC Charlotte**

Prof. Sean McCloud teaches, researches, and writes about American religions and religion and culture. He is the author of *Making the American Religious Fringe: Exotics, Subversives, and Journalists, 1955-93* (2004), *Divine Hierarchies: Class in American Religion and Religious Studies* (2007), *American Possessions: Fighting Demons in the Contemporary United States* (2015), and co-editor of *Religion and Class in America: Culture, History, and Politics* (2009) Prof. McCloud's approach to studying religion is multidisciplinary and his research and teaching interests focus on the primary materials of American religions, the cultural history of the study of religion in the United States, social theory, and theories and methods for the study of religions. He is primarily interested in examining how religion in different contexts creates, maintains, or tears down boundaries and identities; how religion both enables and constrains our conceptions of the world; and how religion itself is defined—by academics, journalists, and practitioners—and how such definitions work in social and cultural arenas to "mark" the status of different individuals and groups.

**Media Team**

**Prof. Heather D. Freeman, Creative Producer, Writer, and Director.**

Prof. Heather Freeman is the project lead on *Magic in the United States* and will conduct interviews and develop all scripts for review by the Associate Producers and Humanities advisors. Prof. Freeman has taught and researched in time-based media including animation, video, mobile apps, and podcasts for over twenty years. Freeman's previous films have won over twenty awards and appeared in over 120 film festivals, media festivals, and public television broadcasts. Her most recent project, the 21-episode podcast series and 20-minute short film *Familiar Shapes* involved interviews with over twenty historians, computer scientists, journalists, literary scholars, philosophers, and other humanities and social science experts to explore the role of information technologies and the shape and spread of disinformation in unique historical contexts. This biweekly podcast series ran from April to September 2020 and received over 3,000 downloads from over forty countries. The short film *Familiar Shapes* recently premiered at the Bristol International Short Film Festival and the podcast will be featured in two media festivals later this year.

**Jason Saldanha, Executive Producer**

Jason Saldanha is Chief of Business Development and Content at PRX and has worked in public radio for more than 15 years and at PRX since 2019. Prior to joining PRX, Saldanha was the Managing Director of Communications and Audience Experience at The Chicago Humanities Festival (CHF), and before that, a senior producer at Sound Opinions, the music and talk show from WBEZ, and Managing Producer for the Emmy nominated six-hour radio drama *The Man in the High Castle*. At PRX he oversees a content portfolio of 100+ podcast and broadcast properties. As Project Director, Jason will liaise with the production team and facilitate connections with other departments at PRX, including distribution and marketing.

**Meg Freeman Whalen, Associate Creative Producer**

Meg Freeman Whalen is the College of Arts + Architecture Director of Communications and External Relations. Before joining the College of Arts + Architecture, Whalen served as the Director of Public Relations and Community Engagement for the Charlotte Symphony. Prior to joining the Symphony, she was a freelance arts writer for the Charlotte Observer, Charlotte Viewpoint, and Classical Voice North Carolina and the arts editor for Charlotte magazine. Whalen is the author of a short history of the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, *The Sound of Charlotte: The First 75 Years of the Charlotte Symphony*, and contributed the Foreword for *North Carolina Musicians: Photographs and Conversations* by Daniel Coston (McFarland Press, 2013), in addition to academic papers published in the *Journal of North Carolina Association of Historians*, *The Journal of the Conductors' Guild*, and *Women of Note Quarterly*. She is co-PI on the 2020 National Endowment for the Arts Research Grant, "Arts-based social mobility: Exploring cultural capital in Charlotte, N.C." Whalen serves on the Board of Directors for The Possibility Project - Charlotte, Movement Migration, and A Sign of the Times of the Carolinas and is the University representative on the Board of Directors for WFAE 90.7FM and the Arts & Science Council Cultural Sector Advisory Council. Whalen will serve as Associate Creative Producer on this project and review outlines and scripts for creative content and direction targeting general audiences.

