

Trinity College
Leonard E. Greenberg
Center for the Study of
Religion in Public Life

Annual Report 2024-2025

Leslie Ribovich, Ph.D., Director
Reanna Kuzdzal,
Program Coordinator



Director's Note

Thank you to everyone who has welcomed me and our amazing new Program Coordinator, Reanna Kuzdzal, to Trinity this academic year. We have had a full and exciting first year at the Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life. I have been honored to succeed Professor Mark Silk, the Center's founding director, and build on the important work he did with the Center for nearly thirty years. I am especially grateful to the Greenberg family for their generosity in supporting our endeavors.

It has also been a joy to work within the Center's new structure at the college. The Center is now housed in the Religious Studies Department and Public Policy & Law Program, and the Director is jointly appointed in these two units. All long-term, full-time members of these units serve on our Advisory Board. This change further cements the Center's vital role in Trinity's academic life and intellectual work.

As we transition into an era of new leadership, my vision is to:

- Continue the Center's national profile and work with undergraduates,
- Integrate the Center's work into Hartford and Trinity communities and classrooms,
- Understand race and education as important areas where religion intersects in public life, and
- Solidify the Center as an invaluable resource for intellectual engagement for faculty, staff, and students on and beyond campus.

Highlight of Leslie's Activities

["Public Schools, Religion, and Race." *The Revealer*. 5 Sept. 2024.](#)

["No Separation: Religion, Race, and Moral Education in U.S. Schools." *Nothing Never Happens Podcast*. 30 Sept. 2024.](#)

["Teaching the Ten Commandments and Bible in Public Schools is about Race and History, Not Just the First Amendment." *The Canopy Forum*. 5 Sept. 2024.](#)

Book Panel: *Without a Prayer: Religion and Race in New York City Public Schools*. SSSR Annual Meeting, October 18-20, 2024. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

"Fanatics, Radicals, Mountebanks": Writing on American Religion, Thinking with Gilbert Seldes's *The Stammering Century*. AAR Annual Meeting, November 23-26, 2024. San Diego, California.

Author Meets Critics: Leslie Ribovich's *Without a Prayer: Religion and Race in New York City Public Schools*. AAR Annual Meeting, November 23-26, 2024. San Diego, California.

["Episode 53: Public School Secularization and Desegregation." *The Revealer Podcast*. 26 Nov. 2024.](#)

["Without a Prayer: Religion and Race in New York City Public Schools." *New Books Network Podcast*. 13 Dec. 2024.](#)

[*Brown v. Board* and "Religion and Law": Beyond the First Amendment. *Bloomsbury Religion in North America*. Dec. 2024.](#)

["Will the Supreme Court Force Taxpayers to Pay for Catholic Schooling?" With Charles McCrary. *Slate*. 3 Feb. 2025.](#)

We have worked toward maintaining our national profile through inviting speakers from throughout the country to campus to share their work. Reanna has also established a vibrant social media presence for us, where active engagement demonstrates an interested following. I have also published work in public-facing venues, including *Slate*, *The Revealer*, and *Canopy Forum*, appeared on three podcasts, and presented my research at multiple national conferences.

Our work with undergraduate fellows has been a highlight of this year. Fellows are now paid through student experience funds, and starting next year, will be paid in part through the Mark Silk Student Experience Funds raised by alumni of the fellows program. For the first time, they also now choose and develop a public-facing research project. Examples range from collaborations with local nonprofits on interfaith organizing and environmental justice to creating a more accessible digital archive of the Center's *Religion in the News*.

This research has allowed us to begin building more partnerships within Hartford, including with the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance. My upcoming fall course, "Religion in Hartford," is already promising to lay the groundwork for collaborations with more area organizations. Through our upcoming planning meetings on humanities approaches to school integration in Hartford and New York City, I have begun to build relationships with local educational organizers. Moreover, CT State Representative Maryam Khan visited my "Religion, Politics, and Policy" course in the fall to talk about public values and her experiences as a legislator.

In this vein, the Center has made engaging students a priority. All our speakers have visited one or more of my classes. My classes also attended our Distinguished Visiting Fellow lecture with Professor Terrence L. Johnson of Harvard Divinity School, and I wove readings by him and related assignments into my classes. Professor Johnson also met with numerous student groups during his visit for powerful conversations. In general, we have seen a reported increase in student participation in our events.

Given my research on race and education, these research areas have shaped the guests the Center has welcomed. For instance, Professor Mona Oraby (Howard University) shared her work on indigeneity and law, Professor Johnson spoke about Black and Jewish relations in a time of moral decadence, and Professor Tazeen Ali (Washington University in St. Louis) talked to my class about representations of Muslims on television as a public pedagogy.

Finally, the works-in-progress lunches we have started this year build on the previous Greenberg lunch series by offering a regular space for Trinity faculty and visitors to share work and create intellectual community. Students, staff, and faculty have joined us for these vibrant conversations. We have also hosted several co-sponsored and timely events (on topics such as academic freedom in higher education and the popular *White Lotus* television show) to bring people together to reflect on the day's issues.

We look forward to continuing our national profile, working with students, establishing partnerships within Hartford and Trinity, focusing on race and education, and cultivating our role as a site of intellectual engagement. Already, we have some exciting programming planned for the fall, which you can read about at the end of the report.

Thank you for the opportunity to think and work together.
Leslie Ribovich



Events

Get to Know Greenberg Reception

Wed., Sept. 18

Works-in-Progress Lunches

Wed., Oct. 9: Prof. Leslie Ribovich

Presented an article on post-9/11 character education and identity formation.

Wed., Nov. 13: Prof. Shane Gleason

Presented co-authored study-in-progress on how the selection process for oral arguments delivered to the Supreme Court is gendered.

Wed., Dec. 4: Dr. Mona Oraby (Howard)

Presented work from an upcoming book, *Fictions of Disgust: Classifications and the Human in Contemporary Literature*, focusing on Native justice.

Slight Festive Joy

Thurs., Dec. 12

Finals Study Break

New Books Celebration Panel

Wed., Feb. 12

Celebrating the works of Prof. Gabriel Hornung, Prof. Mareike Koertner, and Prof. Leslie Ribovich.

Panelists: Prof. Zayde Antrim, Prof. Davarian Baldwin, and Dr. Joel Lohr (HIU)



Events (cont'd.)

Dissecting *The White Lotus*

Tues., April 8
Prof. Susanne Kerekes



Works-in-Progress Lunch

Wed., April 16: Dr. Tazeen Ali
(Washington University in St. Louis)

Presented a chapter from an upcoming book,
"Performing Islamophobia: September 11th and
Muslim Masculinities in Hulu's *Ramy*," from her
upcoming book, *Muslims on Screen: Racism and
Sexuality in Anglo-American Islam*.



Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom in Higher Education Panel

Tues., April 22
Panelists: Prof. Ben Carbonetti, Prof. Isaac
Kamola, and Prof. Mareike Koertner
Co-sponsored with 9 entities on campus



Greenberg Fellows End-of-Year Presentations

Wed., April 30

Co-Sponsored Events

Policy Implications of the 2024 Election

Wed., Oct. 9

SASA Diwali Event

Sat., Nov. 9

Chapel Singers Concert

Wed., March 12

SASA Event on Religious Intolerance in South Asia

Wed., March 26

Trinity Hip-Hop Festival

Thurs., April 17-Sat., April 20



Distinguished Visiting Fellow

We thoroughly enjoyed having Dr. Terrence L. Johnson (Charles G. Adams Professor of African American Religious Studies and Professor of African and African American Studies, Harvard University) visit Trinity Wednesday, March 5- Friday March 7. Here are some of the highlights of his visit:



- Joined the Greenberg Center for our meeting with community partner GHIAA (Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance) at Story and Soil coffee shop.
- Met with Prof. Ribovich's classes, "Religion and Prisons" and "Religion, Race, and Public Education."
- Presented a chapter from his upcoming book, *The Law of Race and Public Religions: Talking Book Traditions and the Limits of Originalism*. Special thanks to Cheryl Greenberg, Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of History, Emerita for being the respondent.
- Gave his public lecture, "'Finite Disappointment, Infinite Hope': Why Blacks and Jews Matter in a Time of Moral Decadence" followed by a delicious dinner in Hamlin Hall.
- Met with students from Men of Color Alliance, Greenberg Fellows, Hillel, and Interfaith Fellows.

We are grateful to everyone who joined us for curious and thoughtful discussion during Dr. Johnson's visit.

Greenberg Fellows



Fellows' Activities

Daniyah Ali '25 - Researched and advocated for a Hindu Student Association on campus, published an op-ed in the *Trinity Tripod*, and introduced the New Books Celebration Panel with Grace.

Surya Rai '25 and **Grace Sullivan '25** - Worked with Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance to create presentation on interfaith environmental activism initiatives and their importance and presented to the Asylum Hill Congregational Church's Climate Team.

Alexander Cacciato 'Dec. 25 - Researched Trinity's ties to colonization, responded to Dr. Tazeen Ali's chapter at Works-in-Progress lunch, and co-led a class session with Prof. Ribovich.

Frieda Seo '26 - Researched and surveyed on self-censorship at Trinity.

Anna Szesnat '26 - Created digital archive of *Religion in the News*, organized by topic, date, and geographic location.

2025-2026 Advisory Fellows: Alexander Cacciato, Frieda Seo, and Anna Szesnat

Senior Fellows: Shazif Ahmed '26, Henry Graf '26, Amber Gray '26,

Melanie Rayl '26, and Ella Samson '26

Junior Fellows: Jessica-Milagros Salinas Rodriguez '27, Nicholas C. Hanson '28,
and Maha Yamagami '28

Advisory Board

Stefanie Chambers*

Lucius Couloute

Glenn Falk

Shane Gleason

Amanda Guzmán

The Very Rev. Marcus G. Halley

Gabriel Hornung

Tamsin Jones*

Adi Katz

Ron Kiener

Mareike Koertner*

Susanne Kerekes

Timothy Landry

Serena Laws

Susan Masino

Todd Ryan

Abigail Fisher Williamson*

*Denotes also on Governance Committee

Faculty Research Highlights

Now that the Center is integrated into Religious Studies and Public Policy & Law, the Greenberg Endowment supports faculty research funds in these units. Here are a few highlights!

Shane Gleason - “I presented at the 2025 Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association in San Juan, PR. One of my co-authored papers examined how legal teams determine which member of their team will orally present their arguments at the U.S. Supreme Court. We argue that the norms baked into the Court make it harder for women to succeed. My other paper, at the same conference, examines how attorney experience impacts argument quality- and how gender plays a role in that.”

Gabe Hornung - “In November, 2024, I participated in a panel discussion at the annual AAR/SBL meeting in San Diego, CA. Along with four other panelists, I reviewed a recent book by a prominent scholar in my field, Gary A. Anderson’s

Faculty Research Highlights (cont'd.)

Gabe Hornung (cont'd.) - *That I May Dwell Among Them* (Eerdmans, 2023). The papers from this panel are also going now to be published in an upcoming volume of the *Nova et Vetera* journal.”

Tim Landry - “The research funds partly supported a research trip to London and a conference in Berlin, Germany to present on ideas I am working on in my book project on magic and consciousness.”

Serena Laws - “In AY 2024-2025, I used my annual research funds to support travel and lodging at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, PA in September 2024 and the Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting in Chicago in April, 2025. I also purchased annual licenses to software programs needed for my research, lunch meetings with my research assistant, and various books related to my research.”

Abigail Fisher Williamson - “In academic year 2024-2025 I primarily used my research funds to attend the Southern Political Science Association conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico in January 2025. There, I participated in a mini-conference on Borders and Migration where I presented a paper entitled ‘Federal Threat and Local Welcome: Sustained City-Level Immigrant Welcoming Policies in the Obama, Trump, and Biden Presidential Administrations.’ I also presented on a roundtable entitled, ‘Migration Policy and Politics for the New Administration.’ Finally, with Professor Dang Do, I presented preliminary findings from the Hartford Votes project. In addition to this conference, I regularly uses these funds to purchase research materials (books, software), and provide food for students and collaborators during research meetings.”

Coming up in 2025-2026...

Hartford-NYC School Integration Planning Meetings

Tuesday, June 10 and Wednesday, June 11



Urban Devotions Gallery Opening Panel

Prof. Efrain Agosto (Williams), Prof. Pablo Delano, photographer David González, and Prof. Alyssa Maldonado-Estrada (Kalamazoo)

Friday, September 26



Moses Berkman Award Event

Chana Joffe-Walt, *This American Life*

Wednesday, October 22 and Thursday, October 23

Works-in-Progress Lunches

Prof. Tamsin Jones

Prof. Susanne Kerekes

Prof. Abigail Fisher Williamson

