

University of Mississippi

eGrove

University of Mississippi News

1-6-2022

UM Student Wins National Collegiate Honors Council Portz Scholarship

Edwin B. Smith

Follow this and additional works at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews>

Recommended Citation

Smith, Edwin B., "UM Student Wins National Collegiate Honors Council Portz Scholarship" (2022).

University of Mississippi News. 6370.

<https://egrove.olemiss.edu/umnews/6370>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Mississippi News by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

UM Student Wins National Collegiate Honors Council Portz Scholarship

Brigitte Lewis' research could stimulate awareness of erased histories

JANUARY 6, 2022 BY EDWIN B. SMITH



OXFORD, Miss. – A graduate of the **University of Mississippi's Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College** has been awarded a prestigious scholarship from the **National Collegiate Honors Council**.

Brigitte A. Lewis, who graduated summa cum laude in May 2021 with a bachelor's degree in African American studies and English, and minors in creative writing and French, has been named a 2021 NCHC Portz Scholar. The native of Harvard, Massachusetts, is among four recipients nationwide.

She presented her honors thesis during the 56th NCHC in-person conference in Orlando, Florida, in October, winning \$350 for her paper's "unique originality" and "for the depth and breadth" of her research.

"It is nice to have my research recognized," Lewis said. "(This award) exemplifies to me that this research can make a real impact."

Lewis' thesis, "The Legend of Neptune: A Portrait of Enslavement and Emancipation in 18th-Century Worcester County, Massachusetts," is focused on uncovering the voice, history and stories of an enslaved and then free Black man named Neptune. The project uses an array of primary sources to construct a narrative chronicling Neptune's life and experiences, supported by secondary historical research.

Lewis said that while growing up, she often heard the stories about Neptune, a man enslaved by the original owner of her 300-year-old childhood home. She began her research in high school, spurred on by a scholarship she received from the Harvard Historical Society.

"I joined the Honors College at UM specifically to write this undergraduate thesis and became an African American studies major in order to gain the tools to adequately tell Neptune's life and conduct this research," she said.

According to Lewis' research, Neptune was enslaved from 1742 to 1757 but found freedom sometime during or after the American Revolution. She learned that Neptune married and was a 20-year resident of Barre, Massachusetts, until his death in 1811.

Her project also chronicles the history of the land that enslaved Neptune, how Neptune arrived at Still River and the four moments that Neptune is mentioned in the historical record. She uses these histories to construct a larger narrative that gives a micro-historical look into the way slavery and freedom functioned in colonial and early rural New England.

Lewis ends her project by proposing avenues for further research and discussing the importance of raising erased histories.

Working on a master's degree in history at the University of Chicago, Lewis is tracking the lives of a series of historical actors she found during her undergraduate research.

"I'm hoping to shed light on the relationships between the American Revolution, slavery, freedom and democracy in Massachusetts during the Revolutionary War period," she said. "I have continued my undergraduate research into my graduate career and will continue it into a Ph.D. The final research at the end of my Ph.D. will become a book."

Shennette Garrett-Scott, associate professor of history at Texas A&M University, served as adviser for Lewis' honors thesis.

"Winning such a prestigious and competitive award is a testament to the Honors College's and



Brigitte Lewis, a 2021 Honors College graduate, is among four recipients of the National Honors Council's Portz Scholarship. The Harvard, Massachusetts, native presented her award-winning research at the the council's annual meeting in Orlando, Florida in October. Submitted photo

Follow us on social



Campus Briefs

Students Learn 'Real Politics' in Washington, D.C., Winter Session

OXFORD, Miss. – Eleven University of Mississippi students spent their winter break learning about the people who work behind the scenes of the American government in Washington, D.C. Lead by Jonathan Klingler, assistant professor of political science, the students of Pol 391: Applied Politics met not with candidates, but with the people who make candidates'

[Read the story ...](#)

More Posts from this Category

Thank You To Our Donors

Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy's new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying "thank you." "It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

[Read the story ...](#)

More Posts from this Category

Ole Miss In the News

Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to abate. The Federal Reserve's

university's commitment to nurturing and developing talented, budding scholars," said Garrett-Scott, who helped introduce Lewis to African American history over three courses at Ole Miss. "Many students express excitement as they learn more about the rich African American past, but Brigitte went far beyond piqued interest.

"She expressed a deep intellectual curiosity and vibrant historical imagination, expressed not only in the complex questions she asked of the past but also in her deep engagement with the works and topics in the class. I wanted to encourage her interests."

Lewis said she thinks her thesis, which will be available through eGrove but is under an embargo, would be of interest to other researchers because of its originality in subject, interrogation of primary sources and commitment to counter-narrative history.

Interim Dean Ethel Scurlock expressed pride in Lewis' achievement.

"We nominated Brigitte's thesis over those of her peers in the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College because her project displays her passion for history, deep intellectual curiosity and independent research skills," Scurlock said. "We are glad that the National Collegiate Honors Council also recognized the power of her work.

"Once again, our SMBHC scholars distinguish themselves not only on campus, but in the nation with their scholastic commitment and pursuit of knowledge and understanding."

For more about the 2021 NHCH Portz Scholars, visit <https://www.nchchonors.org/students/awards-scholarships/portz-scholars>.

[Read the story ...](#)

More Posts from this Category

 FILED UNDER: [NEWS RELEASES](#), [SALLY MCDONNELL BARKSDALE HONORS COLLEGE](#)

[Return to top of page](#)

Copyright © 2023 · [The University of Mississippi](#)