

OXFORD AMERICAN

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A New Day for the OA

The Oxford American announces transitions on the leadership team

MARCH 4, 2021—CONWAY, AR—The Oxford American is thrilled to share news of several transitions at the organization.



In January, the OA's headquarters relocated from downtown Little Rock to the campus of the University of Central Arkansas in Conway, and the OA's Executive Editor, **Dr. Sara A. Lewis**, was promoted to Executive Director. Lewis has been leading the OA's digital initiatives for the past three years. In fact, you've likely heard her voice already—she is the host and co-producer of the OA podcast, *Points South*, which recently secured a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. In addition, Lewis's 2018 OA essay, "Safe Houses," was a finalist for the Pushcart Prize. A native Texan, Lewis holds a PhD from the University of Southern Mississippi and teaches an OA-focused publishing practicum at UCA.

"I'm grateful to the OA's board of directors for this dream of an opportunity," Lewis said, "and to Ryan Harris and Eliza Borné, who have been fantastic stewards of this organization. I look forward to furthering our mission and continuing to connect with our audience through powerful stories. We already feel right at home on the campus of UCA and eager to share some exciting new projects currently underway."

Ryan Harris, the OA's former Executive Director, will now serve the organization as Finance Director. On Harris's watch, the OA came out of debt, launched a popular concert series in Little Rock, and developed public programs like the *No Tears Suite*, a commissioned jazz suite that was performed at Central High School National Historic Site in 2017, and which has subsequently expanded into a touring arts/humanities program.

"Working at the Oxford American the last eight years has transformed me personally and professionally. I'm humbled to have had the opportunity to help build new programs and goodwill for the OA and its community, while also supporting the continued publication of the OA's flagship, the Oxford American magazine. I'm grateful to all of my colleagues, but especially to Eliza Borné, who deftly and gracefully guided the OA's editorial voice during my tenure as Executive Director while also serving as a strategic thought partner. She diligently ensured the quality and integrity of the magazine met the highest standards, and challenged our editorial decision-making process to help propel the OA to new heights. I look forward to supporting Sara A. Lewis, who will thrive as the Executive Director, and the rest of the team as the OA evolves its storytelling and digital presence. Sara's tireless energy and acumen in digital publishing are the perfect combination to lead the organization into its next iteration."

Dr. Lewis is the first queer and first female Executive Director in the OA's twenty-nine-year history.

Eliza Borné will also step down from her role as Editor of the *Oxford American*. Borné, who joined the OA as Associate Editor in 2013 and was named Editor in 2015, will join the Central Arkansas Library System as the Director of Development.

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Danielle A. Jackson, who joined the OA as Managing Editor in February 2020, will serve as Interim Editor after Borné's departure on March 19. Jackson led the magazine's music issue project in 2020 and has edited stories by Bryan Washington, Harmony Holiday, Patterson Hood, Jamey Hatley, and others. A native of Memphis, Jackson is a former associate editor at Longreads, and her work has appeared in *New York Times Book Review*, *Bookforum*, the Criterion Collection, *Lapham's Quarterly*, and elsewhere.

"The Oxford American is the pinnacle of literary publishing and a definitive voice of our region that I looked to for years as a student of writing long before I imagined myself as part of the institution," said Jackson. "Contributors like Alex Mar, Kiese Laymon, Jesmyn Ward, Zandria Robinson are the best in the world, and have shaped my tastes and vision of a future that is beautiful and wondrously complex. Similarly, partner-editing with Eliza Borné has been a master class and resulted in moving stories, happy writers, a delighted readership. I am grateful for the trust the team has placed in me and look forward to evolving and shaping the magazine's future in an ever more connected world."



Jackson will be the first Black Editor-in-Chief in the OA's twenty-nine-year history.

During her OA tenure, Borné, who was the OA's first female editor-in-chief, oversaw such projects as the 25th anniversary editorial celebrations (including the publication of a three-part excerpt from Jesmyn Ward's novel *Sing, Unburied, Sing*), the 100th issue featuring a commissioned Wayne White painting on the cover, and the magazine's 2019 redesign. While she was Editor, the OA was a three-time finalist for a National Magazine Award in General Excellence, winning the award in 2016. Essays and stories she has edited have been widely anthologized and celebrated, including by writers such as Zandria F. Robinson, Lauren Groff, Diane Roberts, and Stephanie Powell Watts. She developed the OA's live author series, *South Words*, and has contributed to the magazine's podcast. Borné first came to the OA as an editorial intern in 2006.

"Since I was a teenager, I have believed that the OA is one of our greatest magazines, and I'm proud I was able to play a role in its story," said Borné. "I hope our readers applaud this transition on our editorial and business teams, because the OA is in very good hands. I have worked closely with Danielle A. Jackson over the past year and have been continually wowed by her brilliance as a writer and editor. I will deeply miss working with the OA's contributors, but they will be so lucky to have an exemplary editor like Danielle shaping and supporting their work. Over the eight years we've worked together, Ryan Harris has shown extraordinary commitment and discipline—ushering in an era of fiscal responsibility while never losing sight of the importance of developing and bolstering programs that make the OA special. One of the best decisions he made as Executive Director was promoting Dr. Sara A. Lewis onto the leadership team in 2019. Through our work on the podcast and many other projects, I have come to know Sara as a hard worker and a visionary thinker who cares deeply about making the OA a stronger, better organization. I'm so excited to watch the OA grow and flourish with Sara at the helm."

Today, the OA reaches a larger audience than at any other time in its twenty-nine year history. The future of the organization is bright as we prepare to launch a redesigned website, release podcast episodes, and announce the 2021 music issue theme. Copies of the new food-themed issue, guest edited by Alice Randall, are arriving in subscriber mailboxes now, and the issue will be available on newsstands nationwide on March 23. To support courageous storytelling and the next chapter of the Oxford American, please consider joining our membership program at oxfordamerican.org/subscribe.