

Resolution on the Death of Professor Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, Prince of Asturias Chair in Spanish Culture and Civilization

The History Department invites the Tufts community to join us in remembering and celebrating the life of our dear friend and colleague, Christopher Ebert Schmidt-Nowara, Prince of Asturias Chair of Spanish Culture and Civilization. Chris passed away unexpectedly after a brief illness on June 27th, 2015 in Paris, France, where he was visiting his beloved daughter Althea. We are shocked and heartbroken by his death at the age of 48.

Chris was born in Cleveland, Ohio and grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He graduated from Kenyon College with a BA and highest honors in History in 1988. While at Kenyon, he spent a year in New York University's program in Madrid, which stoked his scholarly interest in the Iberian world. He then pursued his doctoral work at the University of Michigan under the direction of Rebecca Scott and Geoff Eley, where he was both a Mellon fellow and a Fulbright recipient. In 1995, he completed his Ph.D. with a dissertation entitled "The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Capital."

Chris's career took him first to a lectureship at Stanford, and then a tenure track job at Fordham University, where he rose swiftly from Assistant Professor of History to Full Professor between 1998 and 2008. At Fordham he served variously as the Associate Chair of the History department and the Director of the Latin American & Latino Studies Institute. We were lucky enough to woo him away from Fordham in 2011, when he became the third holder of the Prince of Asturias Chair here at Tufts.

Chris's wide-ranging scholarship examined slavery, abolition, colonialism, and nationalism in Spain's Atlantic empire and Latin America in the long nineteenth century. At the very core of Chris's being lay a sense of justice that informed his interest in these topics. His three books are all widely recognized as seminal contributions to his field: *Empire and Antislavery: Spain, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, 1833-1874* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), *The Conquest of History: Spanish Colonialism and National Histories in the Nineteenth Century* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), and *Slavery, Freedom and Abolition in Latin America and the Atlantic World* (University of New Mexico Press, 2011). He was likewise the co-editor of two collections of essays, the editor of a special issue of *Social History*, and the author of numerous articles. His work is esteemed by scholars of Spain, the Caribbean, and Latin America alike. He was committed to a transnational and global approach to history, and he brought that sensibility to his writing and his teaching with great effect. At the time of his death, he had just completed a manuscript entitled *Flight to Freedom: A Spanish Prisoner in Napoleon's Europe, 1814*, an edition of Lieutenant Fernando Blanco White's account of his escape from captivity during the crisis of the Napoleonic Empire. Family and colleagues are working to make sure that it appears in print in the near future.

Chris was thus a star in his field, but you would never hear it from him. Although he was a serious scholar, he never took himself too seriously. He was easygoing and laid back—

a true breath of fresh air. He treated students, colleagues, and staff alike with courtesy and generosity. He loved to prepare delicious meals for faculty and staff friends, and he organized an informal dinner each semester to encourage fellowship among the graduate students, for whom he was a treasured mentor and advocate. He formed and nurtured connections across the university with colleagues in the library, in Latin American Studies, in the Consortium of Studies on Race, Colonialism and Diaspora, and beyond. Among his many contributions to our community, Chris worked with the donor of his endowed chair to secure a generous gift to purchase materials for Tisch Library in the fields of Spanish and Latin American history. Chris collaborated closely with the librarians to fill gaps in the collection and to enable the library to support a richer experience for students conducting research in Atlantic history.

Chris's move to Tufts was actually a homecoming of sorts. Throughout his youth, he spent many summers in New England with family, and was particularly close to his grandparents, Dr. Robert H. Ebert, a former dean of Harvard Medical School, and Emily Hirsch Ebert. One consequence of this time "out East" was his devotion to New England sports teams, particularly the Red Sox, but also the Patriots. After suffering through the lean years of Boston baseball and football from afar, he arrived here triumphant when his teams were ascendant. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of sports trivia stretching back to the 1970s and was equally at home discussing pitching rotations as slavery in the Caribbean. Whether it was world cup soccer or the NHL, Chris could talk sports intelligently with anyone. In addition, he was a true connoisseur of film noir and crime novels.

Chris's passion for sports was just one way in which he displayed his dry, yet sparkling sense of humor. Among friends and family he was known for his hilarious one line emails and texts about anything under the sun. He loved delicious food and drink, and delighted in relating comical personal and professional anecdotes over a good beer. Simply put, he knew how to live well and how to bring joy to others. It was always a pleasure to spend time with him, no matter what the context. His loss has occasioned an outpouring of grief and love from the many students, colleagues, and friends he touched across the Americas and Europe.

Just before Chris's first year at Tufts, his daughter Althea was born, and it seems fitting to close this resolution with a mention of how much fatherhood meant to him. He adored Althea and delighted in sharing the latest pictures of her with colleagues in the department. Just a few months ago, he was beaming with pride when telling friends that she had learned to ride a bike. Indeed, the greatest cruelty of his loss is that he was taken from her so early in her life.

We ask that this resolution be included in the minutes of the Faculty of Arts, Sciences and Engineering, and that a copy be sent to Chris's parents, Elizabeth Ebert Schmidt-Nowara and Wolfgang Schmidt-Nowara, MD, his siblings Molly and Peter Schmidt-Nowara, and his daughter Althea Rose Spieler-Nowara.