

31st Annual International Roundtable

*“Slowing Down,
Seeking Roots,
Making Sanctuary”:*
Belonging Beyond the Anthropocene



Free + open to the public
macalester.edu/irt2024
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MACALESTER

Macalester College
October 9–11, 2024

31st Annual International Roundtable

The Macalester International Roundtable

Every autumn, Macalester hosts the International Roundtable, a community-wide and globally focused forum exploring critical issues from a variety of perspectives. Macalester invites speakers, academics, practitioners, artists, community members, and performers to offer their work and experiences to galvanize student engagement and prompt thinking across local, national, and global levels through plenary sessions, student-led sessions, and campus-wide activities.

Slowing Down, Seeking Roots, Making Sanctuary: Belonging Beyond the Anthropocene

“Slowing down is not about reducing one’s speed but about lingering in the places we are not used to. Seeking out new questions. Becoming accountable to more than what rests on the surface. Seeking roots. ... Making Sanctuary.”

–Bayo Akomolafe (2020)

Inspired by the idea of slow curation, we ask how we may stretch our collective attention span, to create and inhabit an extended flow of compassion, creativity and curiosity, of belonging in this time of global turmoil. We hope that the theme of IRT 2025 will grow out of our conversations and learnings from IRT 2024, allowing us to further explore the spacious idea of “belonging beyond the anthropocene”.

In trying to understand belonging’s multivalences and messiness, we invite the community to think beyond human-centered frameworks. The prevailing sense of despair might not be new to humanity, but what looms larger is the constriction of our human imagination by the imperatives of capital, the nation-state, and the technologies harnessed by them.

Belonging invites multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary inquiries along a vast spectrum of scales: from digital belonging complicated by mis- and disinformation to analog belonging fostered through aesthetic practices or artistic creations, from planetary belonging (climate justice and sustainability) to belonging on campus (in relation to our sesquicentennial celebration and other efforts in community building). How do we make sanctuaries in all of the time-spaces we inhabit?

Gratitude to

Advancement • Alumni Engagement • Art and Art History Department • Bon Appetit • Briggs House • Center for Study Away • Communications and Marketing • Community Engagement Center • DeWitt Wallace Library • Facilities • ITS • Institutional Equity • Institutional Research • Mac Weekly • Office of Student Research and Creativity • Special Events • Student Affairs • The President’s Office • The Provost’s Office

IRT 2024 Theme Selection Panel

Hui Wilcox, *Dean, Kofi Annan Institute for Global Citizenship*

Sedric McClure, *Associate Dean,
Kofi Annan Institute for Global Citizenship*

Mozhdeh Khodarahmi, *Associate Library Director – AIRS*

Joëlle Vitiello, *Professor, French and Francophone Studies*

Gonzalo Guzman, *Assistant Professor, Educational Studies*

Lela Pierce, *Assistant Professor, Art and Art History*

Yinka Saba '24, *Neuroscience*

Elizabeth Bolsoni, *Program Coordinator,
Office of Student Research and Creativity*

IRT 2024 Organizing Committee

Hui Wilcox, *Dean, Kofi Annan Institute
for Global Citizenship*

Joëlle Vitiello, *Professor,
French and Francophone Studies*

Khant Wai Yan '25, *International Studies,
Media and Cultural Studies, Critical Theory*

Lisa McCarthy, *Administrative Coordinator,
Kofi Annan Institute for Global Citizenship*

Shakthi Palraj '27, *Economics*

Mozhdeh Khodarahmi, *Associate Library Director – AIRS*

Nadia Lino, *Program Coordinator,
Kofi Annan Institute for Global Citizenship*

Sedric McClure, *Associate Dean,
Kofi Annan Institute for Global Citizenship*

Ruth Janisch, *Associate Dean,
Kofi Annan Institute for Global Citizenship*

Khaldoun Samman, *Associate Dean,
Kofi Annan Institute for Global Citizenship*

Suzanne Burr, *Program Coordinator,
Community Engagement Center*

Elizabeth Bolsoni, *Program Coordinator,
Office of Student Research and Creativity*

Tuesday, October 8–Monday, October 14

Participatory Art Exhibition open to all community members

Koch Gallery (first floor), Joan Adams Mondale Hall of Studio Art

Artists: Aahanaa Tibrewal '25 (*Computer Science and Studio Art*), students of the Drawing 1: Sketchbook Immersion First-Year Course, and other studio art students

Hosts: Megan Vossler and the Art and Art History Department

Wednesday, October 9

Student Session #1 - Panel

What's on your plate? Local food systems as pathways to ecological and cultural sanctuary

8:15–9:30 a.m.

Davis Court, Markim Hall

Organizers:

Mathilda Barr '25 (*Economics major; French minor*);

Minori Kishi '25 (*Environmental Studies and German Studies major; Food, Agriculture and Society concentration; Geography minor*)

Panelists:

Alondra Cano (*Farmer Education Specialist, Marbleseed*);

Alpa Goswami (*Program Director, Marbleseed*)

Mentor:

William Mosely (*Geography, International Development, Food, Agriculture and Society, African Studies*)

Abstract:

“To damage the earth is to damage your children.” – Wendell Berry

For centuries, humans have sought sanctuary on our earth through agriculture, cultivating a reciprocal relationship with the land. However, few Americans remain connected to the production of the food on their plates. In an age dominated by industrialized, high-efficiency agribusiness, modern food systems have drifted from their roots in place-based tradition. This raises the question: How can we nourish our growing population while remaining connected with the land? What does it mean for our agricultural knowledge to grow and intertwine with culturally significant traditions of the past, present, and future? Inspired by environmental thinkers like Berry, our discussion will investigate how farming brings us closer to natural human cycles of growth, decay, and life. Drawing perspectives from local experts and community leaders, we will explore food sovereignty and justice to understand how slow, small-scale agriculture and education can help nurture an ecosystem of local, cultural food systems.

Student Session #2 - Workshop

Sitting with the prairie: Doing nothing in multispecies community

9:45 –11 a.m.

Davis Court, Markim Hall

Organizers:

Meira Smit, '25 (*Environmental Studies and Educational Studies*);

Joel Sadofsky '25 (*Geography*)

Mentor:

John Kim (*Media and Cultural Studies*)

Abstract:

Mindful observation of the natural world struggles to outcompete the near-constant onslaught of digital information and stimulation. As busy college community members, we seldom find time to slow down and notice beyond our immediate agendas. It is hard to slow down beyond when exhaustion necessitates it. With limited time to notice the traits, habits, stories, and processes of our hyperlocal ecological cohabitants, ecological attunement is ever important for personal mental, societal, and ecological health. Join us in a sit-spot attunement exercise, trace the Indigenous roots of the practice in professionalized outdoor education spaces, and introduce the practice as a long-term relationship-building process with the Land.

Linda Hogan, *Chickasaw* author encapsulates our intentions through this quote: “There is a way that nature speaks, that Land speaks. Most of the time we are simply not patient enough, quiet enough, to pay attention to the story”. As two environmental educators and students of the Land, we challenge our participants to find new ways to engage with their multispecies neighbors. Our goal is to teach reciprocity, awareness, and reverence for our ecological neighbors beyond the confines of a 75-minute session.



Wednesday, October 9

Student Session # 3 - Workshop

Showing up to the Minga: Cultivating belonging through mutual-aid in a multicultural context

11:15 a.m.– 12:30 p.m.

Davis Court, Markim Hall

Organizers:

Leo Corral '25 (*Sociology and American Studies major, Food, Agriculture and Society concentration*)

Luna Johnston '25 (*Geography major, American Studies, Environmental Studies, Spanish minors, Urban Studies concentration*)

Mentor:

Ernesto Capello (*History*)

Guest speaker:

Daniel Bryan (*founding director of Ecuador's Pachaysana Foundation*)

Abstract:

Our workshop will explore how mutual aid fosters belonging and envisions a more equitable future. The event will begin with an embodied meditative ritual led by Daniel Bryan, founding director of Ecuador's Pachaysana Foundation. Following this, the discussion will focus on rituals like Minga (Andean collective labor practice) and Guayusa Upina from Mushullakta, Ecuador, which emphasize localized, non-hierarchical collaboration. These practices offer forms of care that institutions within the Anthropocene fail to provide. Guayusa Upina fosters relationship-building, while Minga translates shared visions into collective action and mutual aid, creating spaces for empowerment.

Participants will reflect on the significance of knowing and showing up for their neighbors and environment, challenging the Anthropocene's binary, separation-driven mindset. Leo and Luna, alumni of Pachaysana's Rehearsing Change program, will share their experiences and discuss their ongoing connections with the Mushullakta community. The event will highlight the transnational nature of these relationships, advocating for bridges across differences and borders. It will conclude with reflections on this summer's intercultural exchange between Dakota and Kichwa elders, organized by Pachaysana and Macalester, exploring how these experiences inform ongoing responsibilities.

Student Session #4 - Workshop

Truth telling: A grassroots method used to heal a divided country

12:45–2 p.m.

Davis Court, Markim Hall

Organizer:

Kampe Rushoka '26 (*Political Science, Mathematics*)

Mentor:

Joëlle Vitiello (*French and Francophone Studies*)

Abstract:

In 1994, after Rwanda experienced its devastating genocide, perpetrated by extremist Hutus killing over 1 million Rwandan Tutsis, the country had to decide how to move forward. The post-genocide government revisited our historical conflict management strategies system, "Gacaca," a truth-telling space where perpetrators are encouraged to reveal their crimes to their victims for lesser punishments. Initially judged as inadequate to resolve a genocide, this method proved effective. The overwhelmed judicial system was unable to solve all the 130,000 cases, and Gacaca expedited the pace while serving the needs of the people. It allowed survivors to learn the fate of their killed families and perpetrators to receive shortened sentences. This prompts the question of how we can use our history to find innovative solutions and strategies, extending beyond our narrow understanding of justice.

I plan to execute this with a two-part workshop. The first will include a short presentation on Gacaca as a transformational transitional justice system, along with a 15-minute video explaining Rwanda's context, Gacaca's history. This will ensure participants understand Gacaca's background, functioning, and raise awareness on these initiatives.

I will follow with small group discussions allowing participants to explore Guacaca's depth and connection to the IRT theme.



Opening Keynote Speech
For those spirited away: Making sanctuary as a vocation of exile in restless times

Wednesday, October 9
4:45–6:30 p.m.
Kagin Ballroom

Speaker:
Bayo Akomolafe

Biography:
Bayo Akomolafe (Ph.D.), A widely celebrated international speaker, posthumanist thinker, poet, teacher, public intellectual, essayist, and author of two books, *These Wilds Beyond our Fences: Letters to My Daughter on Humanity's Search for Home* (North Atlantic Books) and *We Will Tell our Own Story: The Lions of Africa Speak*. He is the Founder of The Emergence Network and host of the online postactivist course, 'We Will Dance with Mountains'. He currently lectures at Pacifica Graduate Institute, California and University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont. He sits on the Board of many organizations including Science and Non-Duality (US) and Local Futures (Australia). In July 2022, Dr. Akomolafe was appointed the inaugural Global Senior Fellow of University of California's (Berkeley) Othering and Belonging Institute, where he acts as the Forum's "provocateur in residence", guiding Forum members in rethinking and reimagining our collective work towards justice in ways that reject binary thinking and easy answers. He has also been appointed Senior Fellow for The New Institute in Hamburg, Germany. For more information, please see bayoakomolafe.net.

Thursday, October 10

Student Session #5 - Panel
Sow and tell: Planting seeds of change in environmental storytelling

10–11:15 a.m.
Davis Court, Markim Hall

Organizers:
Meira Smit '25 (*Environmental Studies, Educational Studies*);
Stella Gardner '25 (*Environmental Studies, Religious Studies minor*)

Mentor:
Christie Manning (*Environmental Studies*)

Guest speakers:
Michael Chaney (*Founder of Project Sweetie Pie and co-founder of TheFamilyofTrees.org and GrowingNorthMinneapolis; activist, storyteller, poet*);
Mason Berube (*Your Change is Now*); Karla Moreno Polanco (*Youth Farm*);
Nura Ahmed (*Feeding Frogtown*)

Abstract:
In the face of climate anxiety, it can be hard to recognize the good that is happening in our communities. It is also easy to become numb to the responsibilities, opportunities, and possibilities that each of us have to make a difference.

The Twin Cities, and the broader Minnesota are witnessing a growing movement to food justice. Michael Chaney, co-founder of Project Sweetie Pie, established the first Urban Farming legislation in the country, allowing for communities to reclaim land, grow food, and redefine a broken agricultural system. Growers such as Michael Chaney, Karla Moreno Polanco ('24 Mac graduate), and Mason Berube are on the forefront of the climate change movement.

This panel is a conversation about climate, community, growing food, reclaiming urban spaces and remaining hopeful during challenging times. We hope it will be a safe space for everyone, and encourage a positive exchange of ideas, advice and hope as we all do our part in protecting our planet and our people.

It features a mix of structured questions from Stella and Meira, and includes a segment for open conversation with the audience. This panel opens up a space for Environmental Storytelling, as a method to create community and build hope together.

Thursday, October 10



Keynote Speech
Solidarity programs in the anthropocene

Thursday, October 10
11:30 a.m.–12:45 p.m.
Weyerhaeuser Boardroom

Speaker:
Dr. John Kim (*Media and Cultural Studies*)

Abstract:
This talk will reflect on our work with the Mississippi River Open School for Kinship and Social Exchange, a collaborative project that spans the river's headwaters to the Gulf. The Open School has engaged pressing issues at the intersections of race, environment, and extraction through education, cultural exchange, and action. A core aspect to this work has been partnerships with communities, many on the frontline of struggles against conditions associated with the Anthropocene, including resource extraction and climate-change related natural disasters.

Biography:
John Kim, associate professor, has taught at the University of San Francisco, Stanford University, and Williams College. A theorist and practitioner of new media, he has published widely, including a book (*Rupture of the Virtual* in 2016), journal articles, and other print publications. John has also exhibited interactive art, sculpture, video games, and software in galleries and festivals around the world, including MassMOCA, DiaCenter for the Arts, and Northern Spark. With his art design group, Futures North, John was recently commissioned to build a public art piece for a new baseball stadium in downtown St. Paul, MN. Before teaching, John worked as a programmer and designer at a handful of Internet startups. For information about his recent work, visit www.johnwkim.name.

Lunch Provided
12:45–1:15 p.m.
Weyerhaeuser Boardroom

Community reflection and conversation
1:15–2:30 p.m.
Weyerhaeuser Boardroom

Speakers:
Bayo Akomolafe, John Kim, Leticia Casildo, Marcus Young, and Megan Vossler

Facilitator:
Hui Wilcox

Student Session #6 - Panel
International students voices research project: Belonging and community

2:45–4 p.m.
Davis Court, Markim Hall

Organizers:
Marouane El Bahraoui '25 (*International Studies, Political Science*);
Nancy Bostrom (*Director of Assessment*)

Mentor:
Nancy Bostrom (*Director of Assessment*)

Abstract:
In this session, we'll share results from our *International Students Voices Research Project*. This is an international student-driven research project in partnership with the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment. The first component of our research focused on academic experiences among international students and was completed last spring. Inspired by Participatory Action Research, our project began with an open session for international students to brainstorm survey topics, and then we conducted a follow-up survey to get their feedback into what's going well, and how the College, and we as a community, can foster a sense of belonging for international students at Macalester. We will share a summary of results and get your feedback on key findings and recommendations. This will be an interactive session with time to discuss results and ideas with stakeholders.

Friday, October 11

Student Session #8 - Panel ***Digital sanctuary and belonging in the age of AI***

11:15 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Davis Court, Markim Hall

Organizers:

Aram Petrosyan '27, Akshat Koirala '26 (*Mathematics*);
Mozhdeh Khodarahmi (*Library Associate Director - AIRS*);
Bethany L. Miller (*Associate Provost and Chief Data officer,*
Institutional Research and Assessment)

Mentor:

Mozhdeh Khodarahmi (*Library Associate Director - AIRS*)

Abstract:

Our session aims to explore the intersections of digital environments, artificial intelligence, and the human need for connection and community. This event is envisioned to be a multidisciplinary dialogue, bringing together students and faculty to delve into the challenges and opportunities presented by AI technologies in fostering inclusive digital spaces.

This panel discussion represents a unique opportunity for the community to engage with the profound questions of our digital age, particularly the role of AI in shaping our social landscapes. We believe that by bringing together diverse perspectives, we can foster a rich dialogue that will not only enlighten participants but also contribute to the development of more empathetic and ethical digital spaces. The primary objective of this panel discussion is to shed light on how AI influences our sense of belonging and the creation of safe, inclusive digital communities.

Closing community reflection through participatory art-making, writing, and movement

12:45–2:15 p.m.

*Janet Wallace Fine Arts Center Commons and the Koch
Gallery (first floor), Joan Adams Mondale Hall of Studio Art*

Facilitators:

Megan Vossler and Hui Wilcox

Student Session #7 - Workshop ***Cultivating identity and empowerment: Celebrating central American culture and building sanctuary spaces***

4:15–5:30 p.m.

Davis Court, Markim Hall

Organizers:

Yamali Rodas Figueroa '27 (*Sociology*); Dani Arana '27;
Damaris Zamora-Aguilar '27; Anna Settel-Palacios '27

Mentors:

Derek Johnson (*Assistant Director, Community Engagement - KAIGC*);
Gonzalo Guzman (*Educational Studies*)

Guest speaker:

Leticia Casildo (*Founder of Familias Unidas en Accion*)

Abstract:

Our startup idea, Central Americans For Empowerment (CAFE), born out of a grassroots initiative, establishes inclusive spaces for Central American students at Macalester College. We recognize a shared need for representation and community among Central Americans on campus. This led to the formation of CAFE, and our subsequent involvement in the Racial Justice Fund. "Honduran Music & Afro-Indigenous Culture and Drumming Explorations" was designed to celebrate and preserve the rich cultural heritage of Central America, with a particular focus on uplifting the marginalized Garifuna community. Our goal is to cultivate a sense of belonging and empowerment among Central American youth, especially those from Afro-indigenous backgrounds.

Garifuna community organizer Leticia Casildo will share insights on the importance of creating intentional communities for marginalized indigenous groups in Central America and highlight her work with Familias Unidas en Acción, an immigrant-led grassroots organization in Louisiana, which resonates with our mission to empower immigrant communities through solidarity and education.

Our session addresses cultural preservation, identity affirmation, and social justice, facilitates discussions on the significance of embracing one's true self, preserving indigenous languages and traditions, and advocating for equitable access to resources like education and inspire and empower Central American communities both locally and globally.

**Tuesday, October 8–
Monday, October 14**

**Participatory Art Exhibition
open to all community members**

*Koch Gallery (first floor),
Joan Adams Mondale Hall of Studio Art*

Wednesday, October 9

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***What's on your plate? Local food systems as
pathways to ecological and cultural sanctuary***

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***Sitting with the prairie: Doing nothing in
multispecies community***

9:45–11 a.m.

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Organizers: Meira Smit, '25; Joel Sadofsky '25

Student Session #3 - Workshop

***Showing up to the Minga: Cultivating belonging
through mutual-aid in a multicultural context***

11:15 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Davis Court, Markim Hall

Organizers:

Leo Corral '25; Luna Johnston '25

Student Session #4 - Workshop

***Truth telling: A grassroots method used
to heal a divided country***

12:45–2 p.m.

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Organizer: Kampe Rushoka '26

Opening Keynote Speech

***For those spirited away: Making sanctuary
as a vocation of exile in restless times***

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Kagin Ballroom

Speaker: Bayo Akomolafe

Thursday, October 10

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***Sow and tell: Planting seeds of change in
environmental storytelling***

10–11:15 a.m.

Davis Court, Markim Hall

Organizers: Meira Smit '25; Stella Gardner '25

Keynote Speech

Solidarity programs in the anthropocene

11:30 a.m.–12:45 p.m.

Weyerhaeuser Boardroom

Speaker: Dr. John Kim

Lunch Provided

12:45–1:15 p.m.

Weyerhaeuser Boardroom

Community Reflection and Conversation

1:15–2:30 p.m.

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Celebrating central American culture
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Friday, October 11

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Digital sanctuary and belonging in the age of AI

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participatory art-making, writing, and
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and the Koch Gallery (first floor),
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Facilitators: Megan Vossler and Hui Wilcox

Cover Design: *Correspondence I*,
by Nicole Sara Simpkins

