

AMERICAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

American Geographical Society Awards Wrigley-Fairchild Prize

Description: The Wrigley-Fairchild Prize, awarded by the American Geographical Society (AGS), is one of several prestigious honors given by the Society. Dr. Matthew C. LaFevor, Postdoctoral Fellow at the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESNYC), will receive the prize during the AGS Fall Symposium, to be held at Columbia University in November of 2016.

[New York City, NY] -- [9 February 2016]-- The American Geographical Society announced today that Dr. Matthew C. LaFevor, Postdoctoral Fellow at the National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center (SESNYC), has been selected to receive the seventh Wrigley-Fairchild Prize. The prize will be presented in November of 2016 during the Society's annual Fall Symposium to be held at Columbia University.

The Wrigley-Fairchild Prize was established in 1994 as a way to promote scholarly writing among new scholars. The prize is given every three years to the author of the best article by an early-career scholar published in the most recent three volumes of the *Geographic Review*. It is named for two storied editors of the journal, Gladis Wrigley and Wilma Fairchild, whose combined editorships covered 60 years of publication. Dr. Matthew LaFevor's *Geographical Review* paper "Building a Colonial Resource Monopoly: The Expansion of Sulphur Mining in New Spain (1600-1820)" 102(2): 202-224, embodied the qualities to be selected for the prize. "Matt's work represents the qualities that the journal seeks to highlight, original research that combines a field tradition, innovative use of archival materials, graphical richness and clear expression." Stated AGS Councilor Dr. Marie Price.

Dr. LaFevor drew on a diverse body of sources in the Mexican archives and used it to retell a complex series of historical events within the broader picture of human and environmental challenges. By concentrating on a minor, but critical natural resource - sulphur used in gunpowder and in mining explosives – he is able to present a powerful and focused narrative. He pieces together the changing geography of sulphur mining in the late 18th century and its relationship to gunpowder manufacture and distribution across Mexico. His detailed work exposes delicate negotiations between producers and regulators that allowed contraband mining to persist in the face of prohibitions.

Dr. LaFevor is a geographer who studies how people perceive of, impact, and are affected by the biophysical environment. His research examines human-environment relationships, water resources and management, conservation agriculture, environmental history, and the regions of Mexico, the Caribbean and the larger Atlantic world. On receiving the award, Dr. LaFevor stated "What started as a quick diversion from fieldwork turned into a long, exciting adventure through Mexico's vast colonial archives. The entire research and publication process has been valuable and enjoyable for me, and I am honored to receive recognition from the American Geographical Society." Dr. LaFevor is a published author of numerous articles, and received his PhD from the University of Texas at Austin.

Established in 1851, the American Geographical Society (AGS) is the oldest professional geographical organization in the United States. It is recognized worldwide as a pioneer in geographical research and education and has been awarding medals for outstanding accomplishments in Geography for over 117 years. The mission of the American Geographical Society is to link business, professional, and scholarly worlds in the creation and application of geographical knowledge and techniques to address economic, social, and environmental problems. The Society's work serves to increase geographical knowledge and the recognition of its importance in the contemporary world. With members worldwide, the Society maintains its Headquarters in Brooklyn, New York.



Dr. Matthew LaFevor

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