Michelle Jacobs received her BA in Anthropology at the University of Akron and her MA and PhD in Sociology from Kent State University.

What are your research interests? My research interests are social inequalities (broadly), race and ethnicity, and qualitative research methods.

Tell us about your current research. I am working on a book manuscript based on my dissertation research, which looks at how urban American Indians experience their racialized identities. Based on 2½ years of fieldwork in two urban American Indian communities and 39 in-depth interviews with American Indian residents of Northeast (NE) Ohio, my research reveals how different historical forces have shaped the lives, identities, and resistance strategies of American Indians who followed two distinct pathways to urban “Indianness” – relocation and reclamation. My analysis reveals that relocators’ and reclaimers’ divergent pathways lead them to develop different strategies for accomplishing Indian identities at the individual level and for negotiating ethnic boundaries at the group level. Each community embraces distinct ideas about who can be authentically or appropriately Indian.

What has been your best moment as a professor? There are so many! I love it when students are excited about a topic we are discussing in class. I love it when students linger after class to ask me follow-up questions about the materials we just discussed. I love talking to students about their future goals and career plans and helping them figure out the best next steps to take. I love it when students send me unsolicited emails about how much they learned in class or how much their perspective changed as a result of taking one of my classes. And I love hearing from former students who are now enrolled in graduate programs in disciplines as varied as counseling and human rights.

What celebrity do you get mistaken for? Haha! (Are there any 5’1” celebrities?)

If you could witness any event past, present or future, what would it be? I want to participate in (not only witness) civil rights actions – marches, protests, the Freedom Rides, etc.

What is your favorite book? The Miracle of Mindfulness by Thich Nhat Hanh is my “go to” book. It reminds me to appreciate every moment of life. A really good book that I read recently is The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in race, ethnicity, genes, health, medicine, and/or the pharmaceutical industry.

If you could be a superhero, what would you want your superpowers to be? Time-space travel. I want to click my heels like Dorothy and suddenly be wherever I want.

When not teaching what do you like to do in Detroit? Visit Belle Isle. I love to walk, and I enjoy being near the water.

What would you name the autobiography of your life? A work in progress.