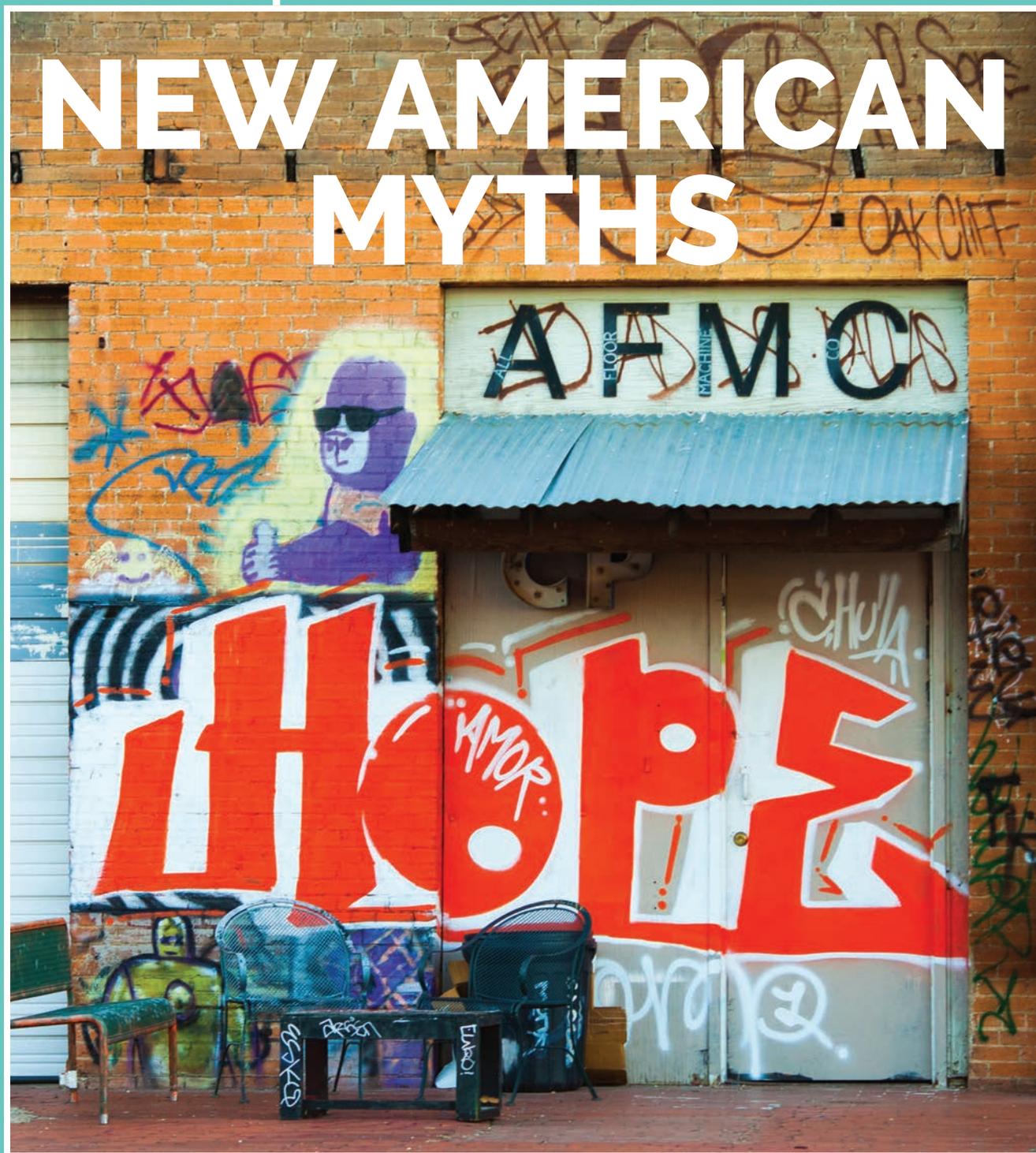


The newsmagazine of the American Historical Association

PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

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NEW AMERICAN MYTHS





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FEATURES

UN/BECOMING AMERICA..... 19

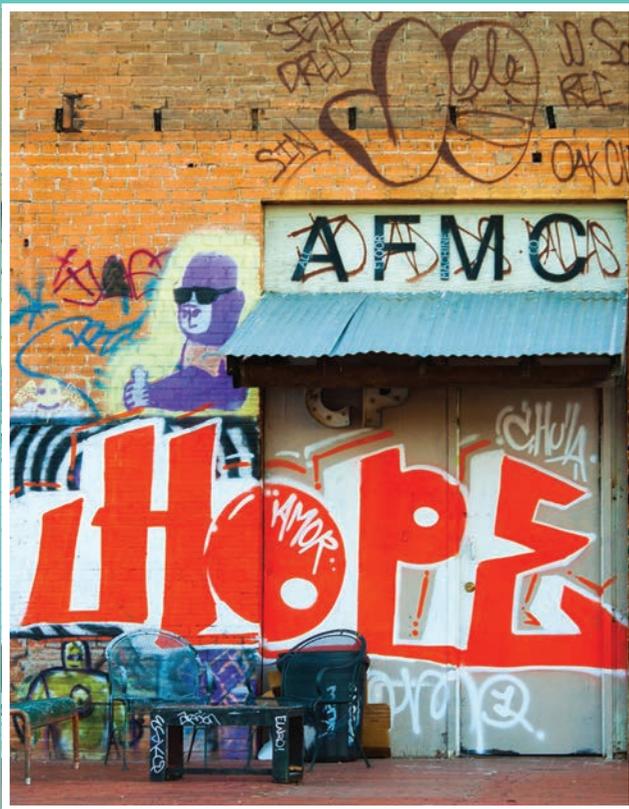
Finding a New “Vocation” for Historians

RACHEL WHEELER

GETTING TENURE WITH DIGITAL HISTORY 22

How One Scholar Made His Case

LADALE WINLING



ON THE COVER

Deconstructing American myths and symbols in the classroom is the bread and butter of history professors. But is that all they should be doing? In this issue, Rachel Wheeler argues that more than just acknowledging America’s past sins, historians should also inspire students with hope and “a vision of a better, more American America.” *Image: Thomas Hawk, Hope (2011)/Flickr/CC BY-NC 2.0.*

5 | FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Fate of the “AHA Interview”

JOHN R. MCNEILL

7 | FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Purpose-Driven PhD

JAMES GROSSMAN AND EMILY SWAFFORD

10 | NEWS

Reexamining Amritsar

KRIKA AGARWAL

Advocacy Briefs

DEVON REICH

16 | VIEWPOINTS

Not So Evident

KATHERINE BENTON-COHEN

25 | AHA ACTIVITIES

Dealing with a Fragile Past

ALEX LICHTENSTEIN

2019 AHA Nominations

COMPILED BY LIZ TOWNSEND

29 | IN MEMORIAM

32 | AHA CAREER CENTER

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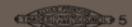
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CORRECTIONS

"Actions by the AHA Council: June 2018 to January 2019" (February 2019) noted that the AHA had "[a]pproved sending a letter" to two US senators in support of awarding the "Congressional Medal of Honor" to 226 women members of the Army Signal Corps who served in World War I. The letter in fact supported the awarding by Congress of its Gold Medal to the service members.

The online version of "See No Evil: Can Archives Prevent Offense? Should They?" (March 2019) noted that the researcher Garry Smith's great-grandmother was born in 1915. Instead, that was the year she passed away. Additionally, in print and online, the article implied that the original archival documents related to Smith's great-grandmother were altered. Instead, the copies provided to Smith were.

Perspectives regrets the errors.

JOHN R. MCNEILL

THE FATE OF THE “AHA INTERVIEW”

At Some Point, the Cons Might Outweigh the Pros

Thousands of historians, young and old, know the anxiety of interviewing for a job at the AHA annual meeting. For a half century and probably longer, the meeting has served as the primary site for preliminary job interviews, held in hotel rooms and suites as well as a designated space upon which generations of job seekers have bestowed not-so-nice nicknames. I remember it as “the pit.”

In the months ahead, the AHA’s Professional Division will take up the question of whether the AHA should continue in this tradition or exit the interview business entirely. Convention interviews once seemed to make the job market less unfair. They replaced a system based more heavily on personal contacts and phone calls from influential doctoral advisers. Nowadays, more and more preliminary interviews take place via videoconference anyway. So is in-person interviewing at the annual meeting worth continuing?

Convention interviews once seemed to make the job market less unfair, as they replaced a system based more heavily on personal contacts.

From my own experience—vast, if I do say so myself—I can see both sides of the question. For three straight years in the 1980s, I went to AHA annual meetings to interview. Like many people, I found it disagreeable, although I doubt I ever pondered the validity of the practice. The memory most searingly etched into my mind came in 1983, in Washington, DC. I had an interview scheduled in a suite in one of the two Woodley Park hotels. I went up to room 1328 (I believe it was) and, at the appointed hour, knocked repeatedly on a door without an answer, before it dawned



on me that I might be in the wrong building. I sprinted to the other hotel, arriving 20 minutes late. I put my ear to the door, heard voices, debated with my frantic self about whether it was worth it, and knocked. A shortened interview ultimately led to an appointment at Goucher College—for which I am forever indebted to professors Jean Baker and Julie Jeffrey, the voices behind the door who overlooked my manifest failings. Perhaps I appeared more at ease than in other interviews because I was sure I had sabotaged whatever chance I might have had.

Since then, I have served on 24 search committees and taken part in interviewing more than 200 job candidates at AHA annual meetings. I found those in-person interviews extremely helpful in helping to choose short lists, especially in trying to figure out who would shine in the classroom.

Others find videoconferencing or phone calls just as good for assessing candidates. But I remember being dead wrong when I argued for including on our short list someone whom I thought had nailed the videoconference interview. In person, within five minutes he convinced all my colleagues (and me) that he was not right for the job.

Despite my personal preference for in-person interviews, I see two important arguments for the AHA to stop supporting the practice. The first is that, in what I hope is only a small minority of cases, unseemly conduct occurs at convention interviews. Barstool or bedroom interviews—and worse—are far less likely via videoconference. The second reason is the expense to impecunious job seekers who, due to both the rise of the videoconference interview and the overall decline of academic job postings since 2008, are less likely to have multiple conference interviews and therefore probably receive a poorer return on their financial investment. In my day, while jobs were no more plentiful than today, hiring committees had fewer plausible alternatives to

YEAR	CITY	SEARCHES REGISTERED WITH THE AHA
2005	Seattle	270
2006	Philadelphia	311
2007	Atlanta	283
2008	Washington, DC	260
2009	New York	198
2010	San Diego	115
2011	Boston	168
2012	Chicago	160
2013	New Orleans	154
2014	Washington, DC	95
2015	New York	89
2016	Atlanta	52
2017	Denver	34
2018	Washington, DC	47
2019	Chicago	20

Source: AHA

interviewing at the AHA, given the available technology. So each aspirant had a better chance of multiple interviews, improving the logic of paying for the trip.

The table on this page shows data on the decline in registered searches at the AHA in recent years (with the caveat that there are interviews that take place without the AHA's knowledge).

Even if in-person interviews yield more useful information than videoconferencing, the economic argument for abandoning the tradition is hard to resist.

In Atlanta in 2007, more than five times as many searches held interviews as in Atlanta in 2016. Three months ago, in Chicago, only about 20 searches occurred. Meanwhile, in 2017, 1,066 PhDs in history were awarded in the United States. Even if in-person interviews yield more useful information than videoconferencing, the economic argument for abandoning the tradition is hard to resist, both for budget-conscious chairs, deans, and provosts and for historians looking for a job.

The president of the AHA should be the last person to discourage anyone from attending the annual meeting. I encourage all historians to come to New York in 2020, Seattle in 2021, and New Orleans in 2022 in order to see firsthand all that is going on in our discipline, visit the fabulous Exhibit Hall, peruse the equally fabulous poster sessions, mix and mingle with peers at any number of receptions, and, of course, attend roundtables, workshops, and research sessions. You might enjoy it so much you'll make attending a regular habit.

Good reasons abound for making the trip. Suffering, or inflicting, acute interview anxiety with diminishing odds of any reward for job seekers is no longer among them. That, at the moment, is my view. Please let me know yours, which might change mine—ideally before June, when the Professional Division makes its recommendation to the AHA Council. I'll read it with interest and pass it on to those who must decide. [P](#)

John R. McNeill is president of the AHA. He may be reached at president@historians.org.

JAMES GROSSMAN AND EMILY SWAFFORD

THE PURPOSE-DRIVEN PHD

The Third Stage of Career Diversity Emphasizes History as a Public Good



The American Historical Association is now in the third stage of what has come to be called “career diversity.” Initiated in 2013, with parallel grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to the AHA and the Modern Language Association, career diversity aimed to better understand the landscape of employment beyond the professoriate in our respective disciplines and to find ways that our PhDs could negotiate that landscape. The AHA’s journey has taken unexpected turns, in large part because of what we have learned from the differing experiences of the 41 history departments that have participated in some aspect of the initiative.

As these kinds of efforts keep expanding, both at individual universities and through such organizations as the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), the American Association of Universities, and the Council of Graduate Schools, the term “career diversity” has flowed into general usage—even amid the continued visibility of terms like “malleable” and “versatile” PhDs, “alt-ac,” and more. As our colleagues in literary studies emphasize, language shapes knowledge and hence policy, and we have refined our vocabulary carefully. “Alt-ac,” for example, can imply that PhD employment beyond the professoriate is somehow “alternative,” and that anything other than “academic” as a professional identity is less than what a PhD deserves. And since, as historians, we value agency, we have stepped away from terminology that strips graduate students of the agency that we have known for four decades is an essential aspect of other people’s histories; for example, the AHA no longer refers to the “production” or “placement” of PhDs. (A PhD is earned by a candidate, not produced by a department; similarly, “placement” diminishes the considerable effort it takes to find a job, since it’s the candidate who does so, not their department or adviser.)

This is more than mere semantics. Career Diversity for Historians has evolved from an initial exploration of actual and potential history PhD career paths to leading cultural

and curricular change in graduate education. Our comprehensive data demonstrate that career paths leading to employment beyond the professoriate are not only viable, they’re valuable. We are now collaborating with 20 history departments to incorporate insights gleaned from the first two phases of this initiative.

These include the imperative to articulate the purpose of a PhD program. Faculty with little exposure to our career diversity work generally offer some variation of the traditional “to train the next generation of producers of new knowledge.” (One wryly said “cloning.”) Increasingly, however, our program participants use language that shows them wrestling with ideas about preparing PhDs for a variety of possible career paths.

The term “career diversity” has flowed into general usage—even amid the continued visibility of terms like “malleable” and “versatile” PhDs, “alt-ac,” and more.

That variety has been extended beyond our original focus on careers outside the professoriate. Our PhD programs not only prepare the next generation of researchers of historical knowledge; they also prepare the next generation of *disseminators* of historical knowledge, whether in the classroom or elsewhere. The PhD is, of course, a research degree. But only 47 percent of people with the degree are in tenured or tenure-track positions at four-year institutions, and of them only a third are at universities where research is the primary focus of actual work.

Another share of history PhDs—roughly 15 to 20 percent—are using their knowledge and skills in occupations other

than “historian.” Having history PhDs in the overall workforce is a public good. That’s why Career Diversity is more than a response to a collapsing academic job market. It emphasizes the public utility of historical thinking in many contexts. Our postgraduates bring to the private, nonprofit, and public sectors values and orientations—or, as one of our participants put it, “mindsets”—that are different from those of their colleagues.

That’s why, after countless formal and informal conversations about “purpose” in which we have participated during 19 site visits over the past 8 months, we offer this starting point: perhaps the purpose of a history PhD program is to prepare the next generation of producers and disseminators of new historical knowledge *in the public interest*.

This proposal is only a point of departure for conversation. The Association does not issue programmatic directives to its member departments. Unlike our counterparts in scattered other disciplines (such as STEM, law, and medicine), we neither certify nor accredit. But we now are prepared to suggest that PhD-granting departments reconsider curriculum, funding structures, and opportunities to gain experience within the context of a program’s articulated purpose, its alumni career outcomes (which we can provide for all 161 history PhD programs in the United States), and students’ changing goals and expectations.

The current phase of AHA Career Diversity focuses on that reconsideration. Our participants have begun to think about purpose and to pay more attention to the relationship between what their students learn and where they take that knowledge. At the heart of these transformations are culture and identity: How can a PhD program help students envision a historian as someone who is primarily a teacher? Or as someone using their preparation for work that is not primarily historical on the face of it? “Public historian” is one profession that many departments are increasingly willing to claim as a successful outcome, since that career path is widely recognized as legitimate for history PhDs. But other uses of “public” have surfaced in the discipline, such as public engagement and public utility. Increasingly, we even see advertisements for tenure-track jobs that include such language. These words stimulate thinking about how curriculum can evolve without sacrificing breadth or rigor.

Thus, for example, our participants now think about the role of internships in graduate education. Internships

outside the realm of historical work are especially useful in helping graduate students think about the value of being a historian. Moreover, the experience of our participants corroborates conclusions that can be drawn from the ACLS Public Fellows program: the presence of a historian in a workplace can generate appreciation for the value of historical thinking in unfamiliar places. One university has found a way to apply a graduate stipend to support history PhD candidates to do investigative reporting for a local newspaper—something the newspaper can no longer afford and that is particularly fitting to the tool kit of the historian. Elsewhere, history graduate students have assistantships in deans’ offices, where they learn how a university operates and what historical thinking can bring to decision making. We look forward to the evolution of the “public-service assistantship” in the works at still another site.

We’ve also found curricular innovation, such as a course resembling the business school “case study” model, with the “client” a museum that wants to create a new web space. Students are working collaboratively, they are writing in different registers, and they are interacting with historians and other professionals functioning in a different kind of workplace setting.

We will continue to report on the many ideas proliferating at our 20 third-stage sites over the coming two years. It turns out that our ideas were rather narrow when we envisioned changes in curriculum and internships. We are learning to appreciate the expertise of career services professionals, not just in helping to craft résumés, but also in helping students to map pathways through the university, driven by assessments of their goals, skills, and deficits. Our students are already getting the bulk of what they need to pursue many careers. The university has resources for what’s missing. Efforts like these enable students to think of career diversity not as something that complicates their trajectory, but as an initiative that cultivates agency.

We’re historians. We know that if you can figure out the relationship between structure, culture, and agency, you can figure out how change happens. **P**

James Grossman is executive director of the AHA. He tweets @JimGrossmanAHA. Emily Swafford is director of academic and professional affairs at the AHA. She tweets @elswafford.

PEACE HISTORY SOCIETY

Scott Bills Memorial Prize in Peace History

The Peace History Society, affiliated with the AHA since 1964, invites nominations (including self-nominations) for the Scott Bills Memorial Prize for a first book or a dissertation in English completed in 2016 or 2017 on a topic related to peace history. The Prize, awarded biennially, carries a cash award of \$500. By May 3, 2019, please submit a letter of nomination and one copy of the book or dissertation directly to each member of the Bills Prize Committee. For more information, including the addresses of the committee members, see:

<http://peacehistorysociety.org/bills/>

Charles DeBenedetti Prize in Peace History

PHS also invites nominations (including self-nominations) for the DeBenedetti Prize in Peace History for an English language journal article, book chapter, or book introduction on peace history published in 2017 or 2018.

The prize, awarded biennially, carries a cash award of \$500. Articles may focus on the history of peace movements, the response of individuals to peace and war issues, the relationship between peace and other reform movements, gender issues in warfare and peacemaking, comparative analyses, and quantitative studies.

Please submit a nomination letter and the article, chapter, or introduction in PDF format by May 3, 2019 to

Ryan Kirkby (chair) at rkirkby@uoguelph.ca.

For more information see:

<http://www.peacehistorysociety.org/debenedetti/>

Elise Boulding Prize in Peace History

PHS also invites nominations (including self-nominations) for the Elise Boulding Prize in Peace History for an outstanding English-language nonfiction book by a single author in the field of Peace History published in 2017 or 2018. First books and dissertations are not eligible. This prize, awarded biennially, carries a cash award of \$500.

By May 3, 2019, please submit a letter of nomination and one copy of the book directly to each member of the Boulding Prize Committee. For more information, including the addresses of the committee members, see:

<http://www.peacehistorysociety.org/boulding/>

Peace History Society Conference

The next Peace History Society Conference—Commemorating Violent Conflicts and Building Sustainable Peace—co-sponsored with the School of Peace and Conflict Studies of Kent State University and the Peace Studies Section of the International Studies Association, will be held at Kent State University, on October 24-26, 2019. For more information, see:

<https://www.kent.edu/spcs/conference-commemorating-violent-conflicts-and-building-sustainable-peace>

For more information on the Peace History Society, please contact Michael Clinton, president, at clinton.michael@gmercyu.edu or visit <http://www.peacehistorysociety.org/>

REEXAMINING AMRITSAR

Does the Historic Massacre of 1919 Warrant an Apology?

On April 13, 1919, British Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer ordered 50 troops to open fire on a gathering of about 15,000 to 20,000 people in Jallianwala Bagh, an enclosed park in Amritsar, Punjab, in colonial India. On February 19 of this year, nearly 100 years later, the House of Lords conducted a short debate on how the British government should commemorate the events of that fateful day. Lord Raj Loomba, born in Punjab, opened by expressing hope that the government would finally “make amends and offer a formal apology for the atrocities.” “It is a shocking event to recall, even after one hundred years,” he said, reminding the chamber that even Winston Churchill in his time had called it “an extraordinary event, a monstrous event, an event which stands in singular and sinister isolation.”

The next day, Kim Wagner, senior lecturer in British imperial history at Queen Mary

University of London, tweeted his reactions. “Throughout the hour-long debate,” he wrote, “many of the usual misconceptions and factual inaccuracies were trotted out”—including the number of shots fired, the number who were killed, and the amount of compensation received by the victims and their families. “This is more than just an academic quibble,” he concluded. “When the facts cease to matter, the very grounds upon which historical claims are made, or apologies demanded, are critically undermined.”

“General Dyer’s experience was basically incompatible with that of the Indians who were on the other side.”

Wagner’s new book, *Amritsar 1919: An Empire of Fear & the Making of a Massacre* (Yale Univ. Press, 2019), opens with scenes from what is perhaps the most popular account of the event—Richard Attenborough’s 1982 film *Gandhi*. As Wagner writes, this is “how many people today think of what was

arguably the bloodiest massacre in the history of the British Empire.” In *Gandhi*, Dyer’s troops fire indiscriminately and without warning on a political gathering at Jallianwala Bagh. Men fall, women scramble toward a gate only to find it locked, a mother leans over her baby to protect it from bullets, and dozens of people jump into a well. When some try to scale the high walls of the park, Dyer directs his troops to fire on them, hitting them in their backs. Later we find out that the troops fired 1,650 rounds, killing 1,516 people;

Dyer is revealed as soulless and unrepentant.

Despite being one of the “major historical markers” of the British Raj, Wagner says, the Amritsar Massacre isn’t understood very well. There are no visual records of the deaths caused by the violence, and British accounts

of what happened and why vary significantly from Indian accounts. “Everyone can invoke it in a single word,” Wagner says, so “you never have to really go into detail because everybody assumes they know what that is.” In contrast, Wagner’s book goes into the details, offering a micro-historical approach to the massacre, the events leading up to it, and its aftermath.

To understand the massacre in 1919, one needs to go all the way back to 1857, when the first Indian uprising against the British took place: the so-called Indian Mutiny, during which hundreds of Europeans were massacred in places such as Meerut, Delhi, and Kanpur. In 1919, the Indian National Congress was cooperating with the British on reforms that would give Indians greater participation in governance. But, Wagner writes, “outright independence” from British rule was still a distant concept for many Indians. Rather, he says, Indians aspired to “the status of white dependencies of Empire, such as Canada or Australia[.]” At



White boxes enclose bullet holes left by General Dyer's troops in the walls of the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, Punjab.

Abhijit Tembhekar/Flickr/CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

the same time, contradictorily, the British, haunted by memories of 1857 and ever fearful of a revolt by “savage” natives, were busy preparing the Rowlatt Act, which would give them sweeping powers to suppress any form of political agitation in India. Many Indians saw the Rowlatt Act as antithetical to the promised reforms. Gandhi, in response, called on Indians to pledge satyagraha, or non-violent resistance, to oppose the act.

These national events set the backdrop for what eventually took place in Amritsar.

Inspired by Gandhi's pledge, in late March 1919, local leaders and activists in Amritsar called for a series of general strikes that eventually led to the arrest of two local leaders. On April 10, when activists found out about the arrests, they gathered a crowd and started walking to a British official's home to issue a petition to secure the leaders' release. From an Indian perspective, writes Wagner, the petition acknowledged the British in paternalistic terms: rather than challenge the terms of rule, the Indians sought to appease. The British, however, reacted with racialized

panic, meeting the crowd with a military picket. Shots were fired, and the crowd erupted into chaos. By the time things calmed down, five Europeans and dozens of Indians were dead. Many businesses associated with the British were burned, and two white women were physically assaulted.

It was the first time since the mutiny, Wagner writes, that “European civilians had been killed by Indian rioters, and white women had been attacked by brown men.” In response, the British issued an order forbidding any meetings or processions. The

proclamation failed to have an impact. Activists, many either unaware of the proclamation or not believing that the British would actually resort to violence, proceeded to announce a meeting at the Jallianwala Bagh that would take place on April 13, 1919. The stage was set.

Up to 20,000 people were present at the park, anticipating a lecture by a 75-year-old local judicial officer. Many were out-of-towners, celebrating a religious festival, who just happened to be there. Others had shown up to see what the fuss was

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about. Few women were present, as was common in public gatherings in India at the time. When the speeches began, they focused primarily on the Rowlatt Act, the petition for the release of local leaders, and the sacrifices that Indians had made during World War I. Wagner says: “On the 13th of April, 1919, there was nobody in Jallianwala Bagh who thought about independence. They were not heroic freedom fighters. They still had an abiding belief in the ultimate justice of the Raj, and they still thought of the British government as being the arbiter of justice.”

Dyer did not go to Jallianwala Bagh with the intention to

massacre people. But when he got there, Wagner writes, “he was overwhelmed by the sheer size of the gathering that he had walked in on.” Dyer later noted that he had “no doubt” that he was “dealing with no mere local disturbance but a rebellion[.]” Fearing a “great offensive movement gathering” against him, Dyer ordered his troops to fire.

As Wagner says, the massacre illustrates the difficulties of creating a set narrative about the event and what happened. “General Dyer’s experience,” he says, “was basically incompatible with that of the Indians who were on the other side. They were facing each other, but

they were by no means experiencing the same situation.” The Indians expected a paternalistic British government to ultimately be just in its rulings and actions, while the British reacted with racialized fear and violent suppression. Following the massacre, the British did not remove the dead, provided no immediate medical assistance to those injured, imposed a curfew and martial law, arrested and tortured individuals they suspected were involved in the April 10 riots, and in an instance that particularly reveals the racialized nature of their retribution, enforced a “crawling order” that made locals wanting to pass through an alley where a British woman

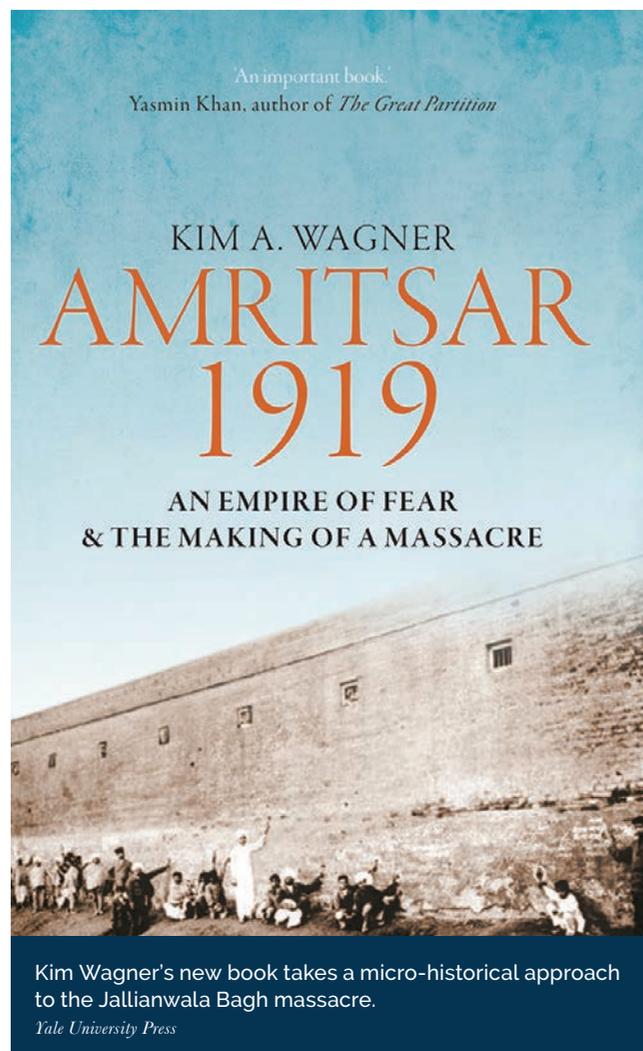
had been assaulted during the riots to crawl on their bellies.

British censorship ensured that details of what had happened in Amritsar took months to emerge. It wasn’t until October 1919 that the British, facing growing criticism from Indian political leaders and the vernacular press, set up an investigative committee, and it wasn’t until its report became available that the British press and public became aware of the true scale of the massacre. In July 1920, the House of Commons voted to censure Dyer for his actions. Those opposed to the measure justified Dyer’s actions as necessary. Those in favor

noted the “un-English” nature of what happened and painted his actions as a blemish on an otherwise untarnished British rule.

Wagner’s mining of the archival records discloses insights into the massacre that challenge some of the most commonly held beliefs about it. Examining both British and Indian estimates as well as accounts by eyewitnesses, he argues that 500 to 600 is a more “plausible estimate” of the casualties. He also finds that eyewitness accounts recall only one or two bodies as having been recovered from the well inside the park. These estimates differ quite starkly from the ones that often frame current conversation about the massacre, particularly the debate about whether the British should apologize. The number of dead, according to Wagner, is both higher than what the British officially estimated and much lower than what many Indian nationalists and those asking for an apology claim. The number, however, he says, doesn’t “actually change the enormity of what happened.” But, he adds, “If we don’t have the facts, it becomes just a deeply emotive discussion.”

Wagner says that he has thought about the question of apology for a while and considers himself “cynical.” He says he’s always wondered why, “of all the things that you could ask for,” one would ask for an



apology for Amritsar. In the history of the Raj, there are things, he says, like the Bengal famine or the partition of India and Pakistan that were arguably “many, many times worse.” The “obvi-

inequities of the Raj, he continues, “an apology for Amritsar” becomes “an apology for the Raj more generally.” The problem with this, Wagner says, “is that the British government

“The British government is never going to apologize for the Empire.”

ously one-sided” nature of the massacre, however, he says, makes it an easy event to demand an apology for. Furthermore, because the event also symbolizes the

is never going to apologize for the Empire.” An apology for one man’s actions, he says, is “deeply problematic because it perpetuates a narrative of the British

Empire as a force for good in the world. And that, to me, is really achieving the opposite of what an apology is intended to achieve.”

So rather than an apology, what Wagner wants for the centennial of the event is “a real reckoning with the past and what happened.” There could be a public debate, a ceremony, or something else—its exact form, he says, is not so important. With Brexit having opened “the floodgates” for British nostalgia for and amnesia about the Empire, he says he wants a “real debate about the bloody nature of the British Empire.” “It’s a deeply bitter and it’s a deeply emotive debate that’s going on in the moment in Britain and one in which I’ve sometimes found it a bit futile to sit and shout about facts and what actually happened,” he says.

Wagner isn’t hopeful that his book will change the conversation on Amritsar. When there’s a demand for an apology, he says, “people who are deeply invested in the Empire as a force for good . . . feel personally under attack.” A book, he says, won’t “necessarily change people’s minds.” **P**

Kritika Agarwal is managing editor of Perspectives. She tweets @kritikaldesi.

ADVOCACY BRIEFS

AHA Protests Cuts to Higher Education and Limits on Scholarly Discourse

The American Historical Association is committed to advocating on behalf of historians and the broader coalition of the humanities. Since February, the Association has urged attention and action on a number of issues to ensure that the history discipline retains its autonomy, integrity, and centrality to civic engagement.

Letter Concerning Potential Impact of Plan S

AHA President John R. McNeill expressed reservations to cOAlition S, an international bloc of research funders, about the application of Plan S to the humanities. While the Association supports democratizing research and values the goals of Plan S to achieve greater

open access, it voiced concern regarding the initiative's execution and impact. Many European scholars who receive funding from agencies that have adopted Plan S would be unable to publish in US-based journals, including the *American Historical Review*, and independent scholars would face onerous article-processing charges. The absence of these diverse voices would compromise the integrity of such publications.

Letter Supporting Academic Freedom in Hungary

In February, the Association contacted László Lovász, president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, to express solidarity in the face of governmental reforms threatening the autonomy of the academy and its Institute of



The headquarters of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest.

Aisano/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 4.0

History. Recent stipulations from the Hungarian Ministry for Innovation and Technology jeopardize academic freedom by requiring ministerial approval for research funding. The separation of scholarship and state politics is vital to the academy's international reputation and for independent academic inquiry.

Letter Protesting Censorship by Michigan Mayor

James Grossman, AHA executive director, contacted Mayor John B. O'Reilly Jr. of Dearborn, Michigan, to vehemently object to his decision to prevent circulation of the most recent issue of *The Dearborn Historian* and to terminate the contract of Bill

McGraw, the journal's editor. O'Reilly took these actions to prevent the dissemination of an article in the journal examining Henry Ford's anti-Semitism. Encouraging O'Reilly to reinstate McGraw and to resume distribution of the journal, Grossman emphasized the gravity of suppressing uncomfortable truths and punishing historians for unbiased inquiry.

Action Alert Protesting Curricular Changes at the Nation's Largest University System

In March, the AHA alerted its members and other

contacts in California about a new proposal from the California State University's General Education Task Force to sharply cut civic education and history requirements for graduation. The Association urged recipients to contact state representatives and to push for the preservation of a comprehensive civic study of American history and government.

Joint Letter Concerning Budget Cuts in Alaska

The Association joined over 30 other organizations to urge Alaskan state officials to reconsider precipitous budget

cuts to higher education. The 41 percent reduction in state support for the University of Alaska would have profound, far-reaching economic and social consequences for the state's constituents, further shifting costs of higher education to students and their families while all but dooming the university's faculty and staff to extensive layoffs. With support from the AHA, the American Council of Learned Societies compelled officials to reexamine its responsibilities to fund higher education. **P**

Devon Reich is operations and marketing assistant at the AHA.



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NOT SO EVIDENT

How Experts and Their Facts Created Immigration Restriction

Facts have a history, and we ought to admit it. In op-eds, public lectures, and social media, historians take great pains to correct falsehoods about the past and the present (especially in my field, immigration history). But the basis of much of our profession's outrage—that policy should be based on a certain kind of fact—**itself has a history.**

Ultimately, that history dates most prominently to the Enlightenment. But more directly, in the history of federal power and the administrative state—in the United States, but also in Europe and Latin America—it dates to the Progressive Era's professionalization of expertise. With it came the enshrinement of objective facts to undergird and justify public policies such as economic regulation, conservation and environmental policy, and—not least—immigration.

My recent book, *Inventing the Immigration Problem: The Dillingham Commission and Its Legacy* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2018), explores the confluence of government social science expertise and “facts” in early 20th-century US immigration policy. From 1907 to 1911, the Dillingham Commission conducted the largest-ever study of immigrants in the United States, and it helped create the idea that immigration was a

“problem” that (only) the federal government could and should “fix.”

The Dillingham Commission had nine appointed members: three senators, three congressmen, and three “experts” chosen by President Theodore Roosevelt. Jeremiah Jenks, a professor of economics at Cornell University, organized much of the work and has been called by historians of social science the first “government expert.” The commission and its staff visited or gathered data on all 46 states and several territories. A staff of more than 300 men and women compiled 41 volumes of reports, including a potent set of recommendations that shaped immigration policy for generations to come. The commission's

agents had advanced degrees from the Ivy Leagues and large public research institutions like Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio State, and Berkeley. Economics degrees dominated, though others had degrees in sociology, law, medicine, political science, and anthropology (including Franz Boas, who wrote an important treatise on new immigrants' bodies and head shapes for the commission). Twenty reports on immigrants in American industries formed the bulk of the work, but other volumes considered everything from conditions on transatlantic steamships to prostitution, debt peonage, crime, schools, agriculture, philanthropic societies, other countries' immigration laws, and immigrant women's “fecundity.”



Border wall prototypes near the Otay Mesa Port of Entry in San Diego, California. U.S. Customs and Border Protection/Flickr/United States Government Work

Throughout the process, the commissioners insisted that they and the social scientists they hired were objective. In 1909, Massachusetts senator and commission member Henry Cabot Lodge defended the commission member most sympathetic to immigrants, Republican Congressman William S. Bennet, who represented Jewish Harlem. Bennet “is as determined as I am to get all the facts,” said Lodge. In the commission’s work, he insisted, “Bennet has not tried to suppress anything.” But what did objectivity mean for these men? Lodge was a true believer in social science; he earned one of Harvard’s first PhDs in history and government. He was also, in the words of immigration historian John Higham, the new immigrants’ “most dangerous adversary.” His fellow commissioner, California businessman William R. Wheeler, insisted that they wanted to “learn the facts.” The commission’s final report insisted that its conclusions would not be based on race or cultural considerations, but on the sound basis of economics and social science.

The Dillingham Commission is best known for recommending what would become the first restrictions on immigrants based on quantity (numbers) rather than quality (individual politics, health, class, or race status, as previous laws prescribed). It recommended a literacy test for immigrants, along with a continued ban on Asian immigrants, additional regulations and head taxes, and—for the first time—actual numerical limits on immigration, a quota. The literacy test was enacted in 1917 over two vetoes by Woodrow Wilson. And the final recommendation became, by the 1920s, the national origins quota system that openly discriminated against southern and eastern Europeans by using a national quota based on the US population in 1890—before most of

the so-called new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe had arrived.

The members’ backgrounds and training relied on a new social science model of “problem” (in this case, immigrants) and “solution” (restrictive legislation). Commissioners produced a particular kind of knowledge, valued because it was quantitative and produced by experts. But the commission did not necessarily follow it to its conflicting conclusions—the commission’s data and evidence, as historian Oscar Handlin long ago recognized, did not support its recommendations. But the commission

The Dillingham Commission relied on a veneer of objectivity but engaged in thinking and work that was deeply flawed.

believed in federal power in general, and in federal power over immigration policy specifically. So, too, did its rank-and-file employees, from the women who enjoyed rare career opportunities and personal authority to the economist technocrats who had worked in Puerto Rico and the Philippines, where federal officials experimented with new forms of governance.

We historians do our work in particular moments, and is not even our devotion to expertise and facts relative to our own moment? I began this project in the early days of the presidency of Barack Obama, whose own infatuation with experts made me a bit nervous. Although I was thrilled by his election,

I was never comfortable with Obama’s reliance on Ivy League-educated wonks. My research on the Dillingham Commission made me more deeply skeptical of its experts, whose conclusions had enduring and racist consequences. The commission and its staff relied on a veneer of objectivity—one they themselves carefully applied and believed in—but engaged in thinking and work that in retrospect was deeply flawed.

I’ve often told my students that you know you’re doing good history when it bumps up against your own politics. But then came the election of Trump in 2016, and now my (minor, cautionary, gesturing) inveighing against experts feels quaint at best, dangerous at worst. Context is everything, and I must confess that I now see the Dillingham Commission’s experts in a more sympathetic light, although I still disagree with their conclusions. The Dillingham Commission was responding to a real event—the massive influx of new immigrants to the United States from southern and eastern Europe since 1882. Their subject was real, even as their labeling it as a “problem” was deeply subjective. In contrast, some so-called immigration problems or crises don’t even appear to be real—border crossings are down, undocumented immigrants commit fewer crimes than US citizens (I could go on). And “facts” seem to have nothing to do with “problems” or the proposed or actual solutions to them. Some—like family separation—are far worse than the “problems” for which they are prescribed. Rhetoric about the border is totally unhinged from reality.

Yet the Dillingham Commission’s utter wrongness—that Asians and eastern and southern Europeans would not assimilate, that they were a “problem” in the first place—ought to give us all



Immigrants wait in the Great Hall at Ellis Island after finishing their first mental inspection.
Edwin Levick/The New York Public Library/Public Domain

pause, too. We ought to recognize that our own claims of truthfulness are situated in a belief system that is about values, too, not just about facts. It is telling—and salutary—that the AHA’s 2013 tuning of the history discipline lists empathy as one of the essential components of historical practice. To practice empathy is to be sympathetic and mindful of the complexity of our subjects and, I would argue, the limits of our own and others’ expertise. The burgeoning authority of social science and certitude in its modern facts encouraged statist solutions to social problems. In turn, it bolstered support for the very governmental overreaches in immigration policy at which President Trump lunges.

Historians’ professional status has a history, rooted in the Progressive Era’s invention of credentialed experts.

Historians should, of course, continue to call out the falsehoods and vitriol that are today presented as public discourse. But we should also recognize that our professional status has a history, rooted in the Progressive Era’s invention of credentialed experts, whose own hubris became baked into the rise of the

administrative state. If the administrative state is part of the immigration “problem,” and it was in some sense created by our social science forebears, then we need to recognize that we are living out a paradox that no call for reason based on facts can unravel. **P**

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RACHEL WHEELER

UN/BECOMING AMERICA

Finding a New “Vocation” for Historians



Many historians have hoped that “deconstructing old myths . . . would bring about a better future.”
Thomas Hawk, Hope (2011)/Flickr/CC BY-NC 2.0. Image cropped.

HISTORIANS NEED NOT look far these days for reason to spiral into existential crisis. The STEM steamroller, the evaporation of history majors, the shuttering of liberal arts colleges, and the devaluing of non-vocational education as represented by the evisceration of humanities programs all raise the question: “What are history professors for, anyway?” The rise of “Make America Great Again”—as a campaign slogan and a social movement—adds insult to injury: one little phrase seems to nullify decades of hard-won revisionist Americanist scholarship premised on the conviction that histories of non-white, non-male, non-Christian peoples matter, too.

Dogged by the question of my professional utility, an anxiety clearly exacerbated by my solidly middle-aged status, I started playing a sort of internal cocktail-party game at conferences: If this speaker had a different, more “useful” vocation, what would she be? I did the same with books on my shelves. I was surprised how easily historians of early America (like me) could be sorted by our vocational likenesses: Some are forensic pathologists (historians of settler colonialism), charting the structural roots of disease in our national childhood. Others are more like Freudian analysts (literature scholars), plumbing the depths of the American psyche, exposing the dangerous national myths with the aim of dislodging them by bringing them into the light. In a different vein are the intrepid pathbreakers (scholars of Native American and indigenous studies), developing new methods to study previously neglected realms. All of these fields, including women’s studies, Native American studies, African American studies, and other fields began with a hope that deconstructing old myths and incorporating new content would bring about a better future.

Library shelves are brimming with histories of America’s richly complex past, and yet the notion of America as white and Christian has stubbornly refused to dissipate.

Library shelves are brimming with histories of America’s richly complex past, and yet the notion of America as white and Christian has stubbornly refused to dissipate. Indeed, proponents of American exceptionalism today—including Fox News pundits, David Barton, Mike Huckabee, and the Texas State Board of Education—are not simply unthinking

perpetuators of inherited tradition; they are reactionaries who want to undo the work of two generations of historians through textbook elisions and fundamentalist assertions of “alternative facts” that explicitly and consciously deny what the revisionist revolution accomplished.

The ideological and religious right have been phenomenally successful in laying claim to the myths and symbols of America, distorting them to the point of caricature. Historical scholarship now draws vicious fire from pundits on the right who see campuses as hotbeds of anti-American, liberal orthodoxy, even as it has achieved wide dissemination among the cultural left. But, informed by historians’ efforts at deconstructing American myths, some quarters of the left veer into a dystopian iconoclasm. This first crystalized for me as I followed reactions to the immigrant family separation crisis on social media last summer. Proclamations of “This is not who we are” from one quarter of the left were quickly met with reminders of slavery, Indian boarding schools, Japanese concentration camps: “This is exactly who we’ve always been!”

Here is the problem: meeting MAGA fundamentalism with dystopian iconoclasm only affirms the central claim of today’s right wing—that America’s soul is white and Christian, disagreeing only over whether that is cause for celebration or lament. Yet iconoclasts rarely persuade the iconophiles. Pathologists do not cure cancer, and prosecuting attorneys do not rehabilitate the criminal. It is not their job. Which brings me back to the question, in the context of American civic life: What are we history professors for?

If we want to impeach the MAGA movement’s brand of American nationalism, we need to offer something in its stead, but for many of us this feels heretical. Nationalist histories have been tightly bound to a whitewashed American exceptionalism, underwriting colonialism and empire, so the obvious choice was to not write nationalist histories. However, removing ourselves from dialogue about American ideals has not eliminated the desire of our publics for compelling national myths and symbols. Many of us have a vision of what a more just America would look like, but we shy away from painting that vision for our students—often, I suspect, because we are agnostics or even atheists when it comes to America and because we actively reject the triumphalist boosterism of earlier historians and current nationalists.

But what if we choose a different professional model? What if we envision our work as prophetic preachers of an American civil religion? This doesn’t require dramatic change, but

simply a reframing of our thinking about what we're already doing. Our lecterns are our pulpit and our lectures sermons, with the power to make congregants squirm in their pews at our country's many sins, while also inspiring them with a vision of a better, more American America. Students are hungry, I believe, for exactly this sense of possibility. As the would-be keepers of America's past, we owe it to our parishioners—our students—to help them imagine a future. Right now, I fear we often leave them straitjacketed by history. We dangle them over the pit of an American hellscape like Jonathan Edwards's spider and preach of the indelible mark of our nation's original sins, but we fail to offer the accompanying sermon that holds out hope of salvation.

More than a decade ago, Barack Obama was elected on the hope that we could become a different America. The 2016 election was felt by many as a violent thunderclap that revealed those hopes as tragically naive, while confirming for others what they had long experienced to be true. There is plenty of evidence to justify the hopeless view that America's history is stamped at every turn by oppression. But the victims of that oppression are also American. Many died, and many had the horizons of their lives tragically circumscribed in countless cruel ways. America cannot un-become the genocide, the slavery, the oppression, the territorial conquest of our history unless we reconstitute American identity with alternatives. We should reject the sort of originalist thinking in history that we decry in the realm of law and religion. So how do we give meaning to these painful histories as we construct our narratives about who or what America was, is, and might become?

The path to becoming a different America is to affirm that those who endured and survived assaults on their very existence, that they, too, are America. And if we see their stories as deeply and profoundly and humanely *American*, rather than circumscribing their existence to the experience as victims of the *real* America, then perhaps we can inspire our students with a passion to become America. We historian-preachers might bend our efforts toward re-visioning the right-hand side of the hyphen—African *American*, Native *American*—insisting that the particular experiences on the left-hand side are what collectively constitute the right side: *American*. We will imagine ourselves more richly as a nation if we can do this.

Our national conversion narrative must acknowledge our sins, but we should not wallow in our longing for a prelapsarian America. Thanks to the excellent work of generations of scholars, we now know about the warp and weft of daily lives of many more people who have lived in this land

than we once did. If we want to create a different future, I think we need to shift the angle of our storytelling pens. While many Native Americans, for example, have understandably abandoned any hope that nation-states are capable of transcending the legacy of empire and genocide, focusing their energies on realizing sovereignty, others have articulated an inspiring vision of America absent the willful naivete of American exceptionalism. These visionaries have imagined a different America and a different way of being American, even though their voices were often drowned out or suppressed or denied legitimacy. Nonetheless, William Apess, Frederick Douglass, or James Baldwin and Martin Luther King have been the prophets of an American civic theology: they refused to cede their country to the forces that would exclude them. Their experiences bestowed on them a clear understanding of America's failings, yet they painted a vision of a future America that might do better.

If we want to impeach the MAGA movement's brand of American nationalism, we need to offer something in its stead, but for many of us this feels heretical.

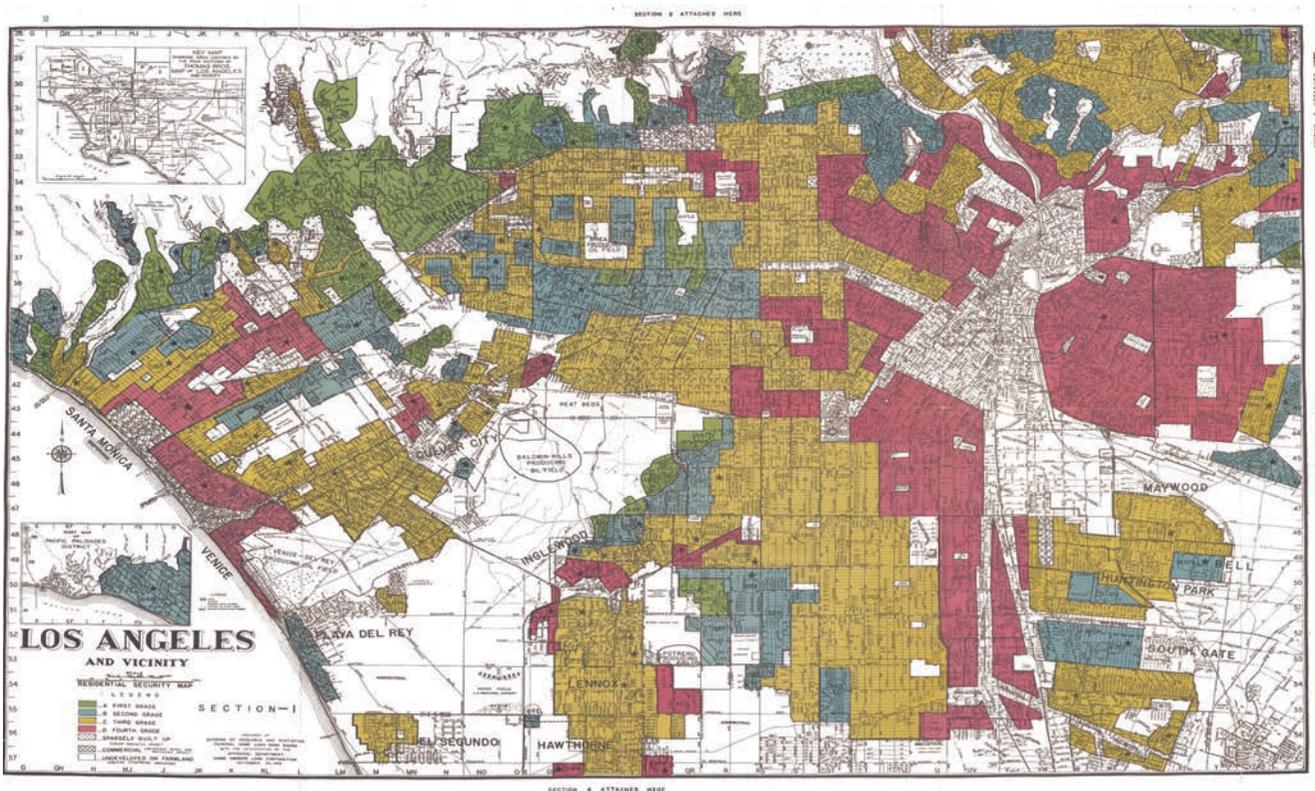
This is not a call to “get over” the wrongs of the past. Nor is it a project that will ever be checked off as complete. I was reminded of exactly this as I read David Treuer's brilliantly humane new book *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present* (Riverhead, 2019), in which he reminds his readers, Native and non-, that after Wounded Knee, “Indians lived on, as more than ghosts, as more than the relics of a once happy people. We lived on increasingly invested in and changed by—and in turn doing our best to change—the American character.”

I wish I could say I carry within me a faith or certainty about America's goodness. I don't. Humans are as good and horrible as they've always been. As much as the “post-fact” world of social media inspires us to double down on the cold hard facts of history, the myths and symbols of America are important. And sitting out the battle for them is no longer tenable. **P**

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GETTING TENURE WITH DIGITAL HISTORY

How One Scholar Made His Case



The Home Owners' Loan Corporation engaged in a practice known as "redlining" to determine eligibility for federal home loans. Maps (like this one of Los Angeles) were color-coded to grade "desirability," with red sections listed as "hazardous." The digital project *Mapping Inequality* allows users to click on individual neighborhoods to read HOLC comments, and much more. *Mapping Inequality* | CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

IN 2011, VIRGINIA TECH hired me to help create a public history program and to teach digital history classes. That meant that public engagement and nontraditional publication were inherent parts of the job. Members of the department had undertaken public-facing digital work like this before, including the Digital History Reader and Virtual Jamestown, but there were no guidelines for how to evaluate it, other than as a side project or a post-tenure exploration—as much service as research. At that point, the 2010 white paper on publicly engaged scholarship from the National Council on Public History and the Organization of American Historians had just been released, laying out a set of principles. The department chair was aware of the report and supportive, but could offer few specifics for how the department could use it to evaluate faculty work.

Digital history and digital humanities activities are increasingly important features of the academic landscape, but how to build a career that incorporates them, especially on the tenure track, where intellectual and bureaucratic changes can be slow, is still largely unclear. In my case, instead of emphasizing questions of medium, I focused on the broader challenge of balancing the inside game of institutional culture and the outside game of scholarly impact, which may be a helpful way for other scholars to think about this process.

There are few models for historians earning tenure based on digital or public work, especially at research universities.

In my first few years, the department discussed updating our tenure and promotion guidelines, and we drafted new language to incorporate digital and public work. Many colleagues backed new guidelines, but ultimately the faculty could not agree on any changes. That meant that we defaulted to the existing standard for tenure at a research university: a peer-reviewed book from a university press. The message I received, in word and in action, was “we value your public work, but make sure you get your book out.”

That wasn’t a surprise. I had never had any doubt that a book would be the centerpiece of my tenure case. Indeed, publishing a book on the effect of university growth on urban development was why I wanted to remain a historian after graduate school. I did not want to pull the double duty that so many public historians are forced to perform—publishing and managing community projects—but I was intrigued by the immediacy of communicating over the web

and interpreting digital archives. A few digital projects seemed so compelling that I could not resist them.

Among urban historians, racial inequality and housing segregation have long been key concerns. Inspired by scholarship on the redlining maps of the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC), I began taking research trips to the NARA II facility in College Park, Maryland, to explore what the collections held on HOLC. There were scores of the color-coded maps in the archives, I realized, and I began to learn of other researchers who were building collections of HOLC materials.

This project and another, on congressional-elections mapping, took time from work on my book, and I passed up ideas I had about articles I might have written, but I found the digital work invigorating, both important and immediate. I decided to take a risk on HOLC because it was so key to my research on cities, race, and space. I formed a collaboration with colleagues from the University of Richmond, Virginia Tech, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Maryland. We assessed the existing paper archive, met via videoconference to plan and create our own digital archive, and distilled historiographical trends into short essays and discussed the meaning of features in the web interface we created.

It was clear that this project would have an impact when *The Atlantic* used my materials in the online version of Ta-Nehisi Coates’s “The Case for Reparations,” prompting numerous web features and driving traffic and downloads from all around the internet. Once we launched the *Mapping Inequality* site in October 2016, journalists from across the country got in touch, and colleagues contacted us about using materials in their research and in their classrooms. A TNT documentary series on segregation featuring Charles Barkley was next. Reporters from the Center for Investigative Reporting used our work for historical context as they documented present-day redlining.

Digital and public historians need to fight a two-front battle to change ideas about tenure. One is the “inside game” within the institution; the other is the “outside game” within our subfields and discipline. I discussed the project with my chair and mentors in my department. My third-year review, before the launch of *Mapping Inequality*, modestly acknowledged my digital work. The fifth-year review, after the launch, praised it at length. My colleagues were supportive enough that I felt I could make a case that this digital work would fill the role of the articles that often go along with a book project—that I could get some credit in the tenure

case. The project had primary source material; engagement with secondary source material; historiographical analysis; intervention into scholarly debates; and post-publication review, including by established historians. All of the elements of a scholarly work were present, and the topic was close to my record of print publication because it was an organic outgrowth of my research interests in urban history. I had chosen to focus on the subfield of urban history rather than the discipline-wide conversations on digital history, but I felt good about it. Whether I got tenure or not, I had made a solid mark in ways that mattered to me.

There are few models for historians earning tenure based on digital or public work, especially at research universities. The classic examples of the digital history world—the Ayerses and Cohens—mostly took on their digital work after tenure or in addition to their tenure books. There are a few more examples in the public history world, but we are still in the first generation of scholars who joined the faculty after Anthony Grafton and Jim Grossman acknowledged that it was time to think about and begin valuing public history. As the time approached to draft the dossier for tenure, my department also still lacked guidelines for giving credit. Thus, I worked to demonstrate the research value of *Mapping Inequality*, just as I would for a print project. I made presentations at conferences and to my department colleagues, I brought speakers to campus to present on digital and urban history, and I began publishing on the project and the research that came out of it. The AHA's 2015 guidelines on evaluating digital scholarship helped shape expectations and gave some guidance that reinforced the work I was doing.

My chair indicated that external letters were the most important elements of the tenure dossier. While there was the inside game of satisfying my colleagues, this is where the outside game of standing in my field came in. The committee generally wanted reviews from full professors at comparable or higher-ranked institutions. While I suggested a handful of scholars with digital expertise, for the most part my list of suggested reviewers consisted of subject-matter experts in urban history. After discussion with my colleagues and department chair, I prepared explanatory materials on *Mapping Inequality* to send out with my file to external reviewers when I prepared to apply for tenure. The work on redlining came out of the same interest in urban development and inequality that had inspired my book *Building the Ivory Tower: Universities and Metropolitan Development in the Twentieth Century* (2017). This made it easier to explain the impact to external reviewers, who were already familiar with the broader research on redlining and understood the relationship between my print and digital work. In my tenure

dossier's introductory statement, I could also draw a clearer line to connect the dots of my key projects and pivot into my next book project, *Chicago and the Remaking of American Real Estate*, on the origins of the modern real estate regime.

Digital and public historians need to fight a two-front battle to change ideas about tenure: within the institution and within our subfields and discipline.

Because so much of my work and its reception lives in the digital ether, my box of supporting materials of evidence was only half full. Some colleagues have two bankers' boxes of folders stuffed with paper—articles, conference papers, course syllabi—but outside of a few key reviews and screenshots, I refused to print out all the material from the web. When I submitted my materials, the box felt lightweight and looked insubstantial, but I was confident of the inherent value of the work, ethereal though the information seemed.

I got word last year that I had been granted tenure, and it was a proud career achievement. There was no time to pause, however. As I shifted toward my post-tenure projects, my research engaged political history much more directly. The politics of the moment, centered on the midterm congressional elections, meant the time was right to push forward and release *Electing the House of Representatives, 1840–2016* with the University of Richmond's Digital Scholarship Lab. After all, it was time to start thinking about next steps, and I want digital work to feature in my case for promotion to full professor, as well. **P**

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ALEX LICHTENSTEIN

DEALING WITH A FRAGILE PAST

In the April Issue of the American Historical Review

Historians concern themselves with the retrieval of sources and the creation of knowledge. But how do we cope with loss and destruction, either through tragic accident or deliberate efforts to obscure the past? The April issue of the *American Historical Review* features a pair of contributions to the journal's new section, "History Unclassified," that consider the problem of vanished historical data.

In "The Death of Brazil's National Museum," **Ana Lucia Araujo** (Howard Univ.) measures the enormous cultural losses occasioned by the museum's destruction by fire last September. Charting the place of Rio's colonial Museu Nacional in the forging of the nation of Brazil, Araujo emphasizes the importance of its ethnographic collections. The loss of artifacts documenting the country's indigenous and African pasts comes at a fraught moment in Brazilian politics, as the recently elected right-wing government erodes many of the recent gains achieved for these populations. A reckoning of the museum's loss can also be accessed in the recent "AHR Interview," available at bit.ly/2TM1AcL, conducted with scholars and curators familiar with the collection. In that interview, curator Mariza de Carvalho Soares observes that historians, like archaeologists, have always had to rescue remnants of the past for the present.

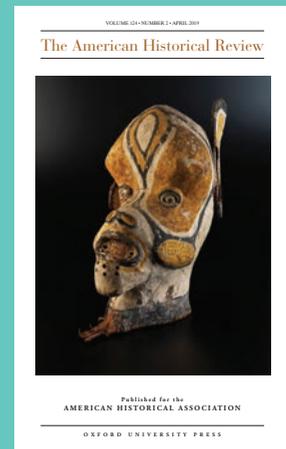
If poorly protected artifacts present one challenge to preservation, state control of the internet portends another. In "Peering Down the Memory Hole: Censorship, Digitization, and the Fragility of Our Knowledge Base," **Glenn D. Tiffert** (Hoover Inst.) explores how technological and economic forces are radically restructuring our ecosystem of knowledge. Using an illustrative case from China, Tiffert shows the negative effects of digital tampering on scholarship. He demonstrates how Chinese knowledge platforms comparable to JSTOR are stealthily redacting their holdings of Chinese legal journals that registered alternative legal principles in the early years of Maoism. Machine-learning models can now accurately reproduce the choices made by human censors, threatening to impose a new, algorithmic paradigm of information control and censorship that poses an existential

threat to the foundations of all empirically grounded disciplines.

The April issue contains four additional articles, many offering methodological innovations. "Early Modern Social Networks: Antecedents, Opportunities, and Challenges," by **Kate Davison** (Univ. of Sheffield), historicizes the recent application of social network theory to analyses of early modern history. Davison detects the origins of the study of social networks—embedded in associational life, intellectual exchange across borders, commercial relations, and ties of patronage—in the emergent social thought of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In doing so, she suggests the extent to which social network analysis shares antecedents, interests, and goals with more traditional historical methods. When sensitively applied, she contends, network analysis presents many opportunities for historians engaging with enduring questions about the nature of social relations in the past.

If Davison shows that a "new" method has older roots than we commonly imagine, **Kathryn Olivarius** (Stanford Univ.) advances an argument resting on a powerful neologism in "Immunity, Capital, and Power in Antebellum New Orleans": "immunocapital." Olivarius reminds us that antebellum New Orleans was a "necropolis": yellow fever routinely killed about 8 percent of its population. A person's only apparent protection against the scourge was to survive a bout of yellow fever. Repeated epidemics, Olivarius argues, generated a hierarchy of immunocapital, whereby "acclimated citizens" (survivors) leveraged immunity for social, economic, and political power while "unacclimated strangers" (poor, recent immigrants) languished in social and professional purgatory. Not surprisingly, immunocapital had racially differentiated meanings. For whites, acclimation indicated that a person had paid their biological dues and could pursue economic advancement in a slavery-based racial capitalist system. For enslaved black people, immunity enhanced their value as capital for investment by their white owners. By fusing medical history with the study of slavery and capitalism, Olivarius presents an exciting new model for

For more than 125 years, Brazil's National Museum (Museu Nacional) was located in the historic São Cristóvão Palace in Rio de Janeiro. When the deteriorating structure caught fire in September 2018, the massive blaze consumed millions of objects that had been amassed over two centuries, including priceless archaeological, anthropological, geological, and paleontological artifacts, as well as hundreds of thousands of books and documents and irreplaceable audio recordings of extinct indigenous languages. In "The Death of Brazil's National Museum," Ana Lucia Araujo shares the history of the Museu Nacional and laments what was lost to the flames. The Tikuna mask pictured on the cover of this issue was part of the museum's huge collection of indigenous artifacts. It appeared in one of the illustrations in Jean-Baptiste Debret's *Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil* (1834–1839), based on a drawing the French painter made of the mask during his residence in Brazil from 1816 to 1831.



how power operated in a 19th-century Atlantic society wracked with disease.

A different kind of environmental history animates "The Walrus and the Bureaucrat: Energy, Ecology, and Making the State in the Russian and American Arctic, 1870–1950," by **Bathsheba Demuth** (Brown Univ.). Through a comparative analysis of US and Soviet exploitation of the Pacific walrus, Demuth demonstrates that the shared ecological context of the Bering Strait influenced both nations' roles in reshaping the Arctic environment. Demuth shows how Cold War competition to increase Arctic economic viability, while making capitalist or socialist citizens of indigenous peoples, encouraged walrus hunting in the Bering Strait. Both countries experimented with massive harvests of blubber and ivory to stimulate the Arctic economy before eventually adopting mirrored conservation policies. Demuth identifies the inherently metabolic nature of modern states—which function by assuring flows of energy through their economies—as the common source of these practices. In the Bering Strait, that energy came in part from walruses, making it imperative for the two countries to manage the species' biological capacities.

Finally, in "Catholics, Protestants, and the Violent Birth of European Religious Pluralism," **Udi Greenberg** (Dartmouth Coll.) explores one of post-World War II Europe's most dramatic, if overlooked, ideological transformations: rapprochement between Protestants and Catholics. Greenberg's article charts ways in which political upheavals between the 1930s and 1960s led to new conceptions of religious pluralism, tolerance, and freedom. Greenberg contends that such developments called for equality between Christian denominations while simultaneously excluding religious minorities, especially Jews and Muslims. During the 1930s, Nazism's promise to unite the two denominations in a racial community instigated the first systematic inter-confessional

cooperation. In the postwar era, the unfolding of decolonization in Africa and Asia further expanded this ecumenicalism. The postwar decline of state-sponsored missionary work, alongside anxieties about the spread of Islam among newly liberated nations, pushed Christian leaders to solidify an inter-Christian alliance. In both instances, the anti-Marxism of leading Christian thinkers and politicians eased the way. Greenberg concludes that this history helps explain why contemporary Europe easily accommodates both Catholics and Protestants but often discriminates against non-Christians.

The April issue also includes another contribution to our ongoing series, "Reappraisals." In "Worlds without End," **Cammilla Townsend** (Rutgers Univ.) assesses the contribution made by Charles Gibson in his pathbreaking work of 1964, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519–1810*. Townsend regards Gibson as ahead of his time, prepared by his own life experience to recognize not only the victimization of Native peoples but also their agency and strength. Untrained in any indigenous language, Gibson proved unable to rely on indigenous-authored sources, whose importance he nevertheless underscored. His emphasis on indigenous subjectivity was taken up by the next generation of scholars of colonial Mexico, who, with language training, further disseminated Gibson's focus on indigenous perspectives.

The April issue closes with an experimental "review roundtable." Four scholars critically examine Michael M. Gomez's 2018 book *African Dominion: A New History of Empire in Early and Medieval West Africa*. Gomez, in turn, offers a response to his critics. Subsequent review roundtables will consider Julius Scott's *The Common Wind* (2018), Jill Lepore's *These Truths* (2018), and Adel Manaa's *Nakba and Survival* (2017), to date published only in Hebrew and Arabic. **P**

Alex Lichtenstein is editor of the American Historical Review.

COMPILED BY LIZ TOWNSEND

2019 AHA NOMINATIONS

The Nominating Committee for 2019–20, chaired by Laurent Dubois (Duke Univ.), met in Washington, DC, on February 22 and offers the following candidates for offices of the Association that are to be filled in the election this year. Voting by AHA members will begin June 1.

President

Mary Lindemann, University of Miami (early modern Europe, medicine)

President-elect

Jacqueline Jones, University of Texas at Austin (US labor/African American/southern/women)

Philip D. Morgan, Johns Hopkins University (early America, Atlantic)

Professional Division

Vice President

Rita C-K Chin, University of Michigan (post-1945 Europe, immigration and displacement, race/ethnicity/gender)

Katrin Schultheiss, George Washington University (modern France, medicine, gender)

Councilor

Paul R. Deslandes, University of Vermont (cultural history of male beauty in Britain, transatlantic cultural exchanges)

Reginald K. Ellis, Florida A&M University (US since 1865, African American history)

Research Division

Councilor

Sara Georgini, Massachusetts Historical Society (early American history, religion and culture, public history)

Robert Neer, Hult International Business School (global history of US military, global business, politics and law)

Teaching Division

Councilor

Shannon T. Bontrager, Georgia Highlands College, Cartersville (commemorations and public memory, death and burial of military dead)

Jonathan A. Lee, San Antonio College (US economic, international relations)

Committee on Committees

Ari Kelman, University of California, Davis (US history)

Raúl A. Ramos, University of Houston (19th-century US-Mexico border, transnational identity construction)

Nominating Committee

Slot 1

Herman L. Bennett, Graduate Center, CUNY (early modern freedom, African diaspora)

Carla G. Pestana, University of California, Los Angeles (early America, Atlantic world)



AHA members can vote starting June 1.
depositphotos

Slot 2

Gregory H. Maddox, Texas Southern University (Africa, environmental)

John Thabiti Willis, Carleton College (religious encounters, African and diaspora religions)

Slot 3

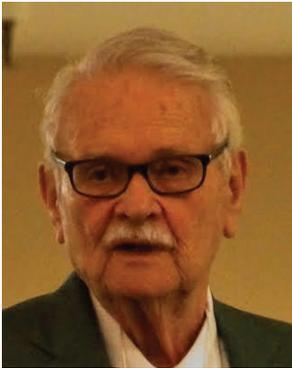
Fahad Ahmad Bishara, University of Virginia (Indian Ocean economic and legal, Islamic law and capitalism)

Craig Perry, University of Cincinnati (medieval Middle East, history of slavery, global history)

Nominations may also be made by petition; each petition must carry the signatures of 100 or more members of the

Association in good standing and indicate the particular vacancy for which the nomination is intended. Nominations by petition must be in the hands of the Nominating Committee on or before May 1 and should be sent to the AHA office at 777 6th St. NW, 11th Floor, Washington, DC, 20001. All nominations must be accompanied by certification of willingness of the nominee to serve if elected. In distributing the annual ballot to the members of the Association, the Nominating Committee shall present and identify such candidates nominated by petition along with its own candidates. **P**

Liz Townsend is manager, data administration and integrity, at the AHA.



G. Wesley Johnson

1932–2018

Public Historian

G. Wesley Johnson passed away on November 16, 2018, at the age of 86. A historian whose scholarly research and writing focused on topics ranging from the Mormon religion to Senegalese politics, he was probably best known in the wider profession as a founder and leader in the field of public history.

Educated in the Phoenix, Arizona, public schools, Johnson began his undergraduate work at Brigham Young University but soon transferred to Harvard University. There he was influenced particularly by Ernest R. May, a strong advocate for the application of historical research and scholarship to public policy issues. Johnson's Harvard career was interrupted, though, by a family responsibility in the form of two and a half years as a Mormon missionary in France and Belgium—an experience that he later characterized as broadening his academic interests, providing invaluable language skills, and offering experience in organizing and proselytizing. After returning to Harvard and completing his undergraduate work, Johnson responded once again to family expectations and entered Stanford Law School. Historical studies continued to beckon, however, and eventually he followed his own strong inclinations and entered the graduate program in history at Columbia University, where he received both his MA and his PhD.

Wes Johnson's first academic appointment was at Stanford University, where he began what turned out to be a lifelong study of Francophone Africa, on which he published several monographs over the years. It was also at Stanford that he began to pursue the academic study of the Mormon religion, joining several other young historians to establish *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, a journal that recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. Later, in his final academic home at Brigham Young, he was one of the leaders in establishing the Mormon Outmigration Leadership History Project.

When Johnson left Stanford to join the history department at the University of California, Santa Barbara, it turned out

to be a move that brought him into a close working relationship with Robert Kelley, a well-known scholar of political and intellectual history who early in his career had been a US Air Force historian and had continued over several decades to serve as a historical consultant and expert witness. Although Johnson always credited Kelley with coining the phrase “public history” to describe the new graduate program they launched together at UCSB, it was he who publicized their efforts to the larger academic community, traveled widely in the United States and abroad to countless meetings of historical organizations, and garnered outside support from private and public foundations that substantially aided in the launching of both a new scholarly journal, *The Public Historian*, and the National Council on Public History. A key figure in organizing the NCPH, he served as its chair for several years.

A historian of Africa who studied French colonialism, Johnson was by nature inclined to discover and encourage public history practices outside North America, and in 1981, he secured a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to do just that, subsequently visiting several British universities as well as others in France, Germany, and Italy. On that same trip, he met with representatives of the British Social Science Research Council, an encounter that led ultimately to their joining with Erasmus University in Rotterdam to sponsor the first public history conference in Europe, held in 1982. During those years, he also visited and presented public history in Ivory Coast and Nigeria as well as at a meeting in Paris, at the French Institute for Contemporary History, focused on African colonial history, and in several other countries in Europe, where one British historian described his efforts as “preaching the public history gospel.”

Wes Johnson is survived by his wife, Marian, also a historian and his partner for many years in the consulting historical research firm of Ashby & Johnson, and three children, including historian Benjamin Johnson of Utah Valley University.

Arnita Jones
American Historical Association, *emerita*

Thomas Cauvin
Colorado State University

Serge Noiret
European University Institute



Arnold P. Kramer

1941–2018

Historian of Germany
and the United States

Arnold P. Kramer, professor emeritus at Texas A&M University, died on September 24, 2018, at the age of 77 in Bryan, Texas. He was born in Chicago on August 15, 1941, to David and Eva (Vas) Kramer, both Jewish immigrants from Hungary. His father had come over in the 1920s with his family, but his mother arrived just in the nick of time, in April 1939. Kramer lost relatives in the Holocaust, and that era would dominate his scholarship and teaching throughout his career.

Kramer received his BS, MA, and PhD degrees from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, earning his doctorate in 1970. He was mentored by two distinguished scholars in exile: Theodore Hamerow advised his master’s degree, and George Mosse his PhD. After four years teaching at Rockford College (now University) in Illinois, Kramer joined the faculty of Texas A&M University as associate professor of history in 1974 and earned promotion to the rank of professor in 1979. Over a career that spanned 41 years at Texas A&M, he was awarded Senior Fulbright Lectureships at the German universities of Tübingen (1992–93) and Friedrich Schiller Jena (2002–03), and was twice a visiting lecturer at Rice University.

The books he authored or edited include *The Forgotten Friendship: Israel and the Soviet Bloc, 1947–1953* (1975); *Nazi Prisoners of War in America* (1979); *Hitler’s Last Soldier in America*, co-authored with Georg Gaertner (1985); and *Undue Process: The Untold Story of America’s German Enemy Alien Internees* (1997). He is best known for his work on the hundreds of thousands of German POWs held in the United States during the Second World War. He wrote with great sensitivity about life in the camps and relations between German prisoners and ordinary Americans in rural communities across the country. He generously mentored academic and amateur researchers who wanted to explore the topic further, and spoke widely to community organizations and the media.

At Texas A&M, Kramer served on 26 MA committees, chairing 7, as well as 37 doctoral committees, 8 of them as

dissertation adviser. Asked for their memories of working with him, Kramer’s graduate students recalled his compassion, dedication to improving graduate-student life, and eagerness to help them navigate the complexities of the profession.

Kramer also had an impact on thousands of students as a teacher of undergraduates. His obituary elicited a response from a student who had graduated in 1976, and who still remembered Kramer as “engaging, enthusiastic, and one of the best professors I experienced in my pursuit of a history degree.” Kramer earned four Distinguished Achievement Awards in Teaching, two at the university level and two more in the College of Liberal Arts. His upper-level courses—such as Germany since 1815, Nazi Germany, and the History of the Holocaust—filled quickly. He went to great lengths to expose his students to eyewitnesses of the events he taught, among them concentration camp survivors. Kramer also led Study Abroad student groups to Germany, Italy, Normandy, and Poland. Assigned to the US survey when he arrived at A&M, Kramer continued teaching the course throughout his career. His last lecture, to a class of 300, was attended not only by a number of colleagues and friends, but also by people from the local newspaper and TV station. It ended with a standing ovation.

Kramer is survived by his wife of 27 years, Jan Smith Kramer; his partner in many European excursions; two sons, Adam and Doug; and three grandchildren.

Walter D. Kamphoefner
Texas A&M University

Adam R. Seipp
Texas A&M University

*Image: Cushing Memorial Library
and Archives, Texas A&M University*



Jan Vansina

1929–2017

Historian of Africa

Jan Vansina, one of the world's foremost historians of Africa, died peacefully in Madison, Wisconsin, on February 8, 2017. He was surrounded by his wife, Claudine, and his son, Bruno.

A pioneering figure in the study of Africa, Vansina is considered one of the founders of the field of African history. His insistence that it was possible to study Africa in the era prior to European contact, and his development of rigorous historical methods for doing so, played a major role in countering the idea that cultures without texts had no history.

Born in 1929 in Antwerp, Belgium, Vansina trained as a medievalist before accepting a position in 1952 as an anthropologist in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, then a Belgian colony. After conducting field research and working at the Institute for Scientific Research in Central Africa (IRSAC) in Rwanda, Vansina returned to Belgium to earn a *licence* (BA) and a PhD at the Catholic University of Leuven, submitting his thesis, "The Historical Value of Oral Tradition: Application to Kuba History," in 1957. He also spent a few months at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, getting to know the work of Nigerian historians Kenneth Dike and Jacob Ajayi. Along with them and British scholars Roland Oliver and John Fage, Vansina participated in three major conferences on African history at SOAS. This collaboration helped forge networks that culminated in the publication of the UNESCO *History of Africa* (1964–99). In 1960, Vansina accepted an invitation from Philip Curtin to join the history department at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Vansina and Curtin created the first program in African history in the United States and trained the first and second generations of specialists in the field. Vansina quickly became a towering figure, writing over 200 articles and 20 books. He combined an encyclopedic knowledge of linguistics, anthropology, and history with a steadfast commitment to rigorous historical research, and a unique talent to recover intricate historical changes in places where few traces of the past could be retrieved.

Beginning with the publication of *La tradition orale* (1960, English translation 1965), his work led to the acceptance of oral traditions as valid sources of history. *Oral Tradition as History* (1985), a complete reworking of *La tradition orale*, subsequently became his best-known book. He promoted the use of interdisciplinary tools, especially historical linguistics, archaeology, and art history, to recover the African past.

Vansina was the first historian to tackle the challenge of reconstructing the past of societies in the rainforest over several millennia. His magisterial *Paths in the Rainforests: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (1990) covered more than 2,000 years of history. Several major books followed, including *Living with Africa* (1994), *When Societies Are Born* (2003), *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom* (2004), *Being Colonized* (2010), and *Through the Day, Through the Night: A Flemish Belgian Boyhood and World War II* (2014).

Vansina twice won the African Studies Association's Melville Herskovits Prize for the best book in African studies and received the association's Distinguished Africanist Award. In 2014, he won the AHA's Award for Scholarly Distinction. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1982, from which he quietly resigned when the group failed to denounce the use of torture during the presidency of George W. Bush, and to the American Philosophical Society in 2000.

Vansina retired in 1994 at the age of 65. Living near campus, he remained a generous presence for African historians, students, friends, and many visiting scholars. Every year, he offered the inaugural seminar at the African Studies Program at UW. In his last few months, he worked on a joint article on Bantu languages for the *Journal of African History*.

Vansina rarely went to conferences and cared little about the social fineries of academia. His creative energy fueled a primary goal: debating with his peers about the meaning of the past, tirelessly searching for new knowledge and new methods, and transmitting his expertise to the public. He was committed to promoting the writing of African history for African audiences. He hoped the younger generation of Central Africans could read rich, up-to-date, and accessible histories of their region. A sense of pride in their past, he believed, could help them to deal with the challenges of the present.

Florence Bernault
University of Wisconsin–Madison (emerita)

Editor's note: A version of this essay appears at <https://janvansina.africa.wisc.edu/about-jan/>. Used with permission of the author.

AHA CAREER CENTER

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UNITED STATES



NEW JERSEY

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY— NEW BRUNSWICK

New Brunswick, NJ

Postdoctoral Associate in African American History. The Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis announces a postdoctoral position for scholars pursuing research in African American history, 1940-present. The successful applicant must have the doctorate in hand at the time of application and be no more than six years beyond the PhD. The position, with a salary of \$65,000, is for one year. It includes health benefits and a \$5,000 research allowance. The primary duties of this postdoc will be to administer and supervise research, writing, digitizing, and editing of the “Scarlet and Black Project” on the history of Native and African Americans in Rutgers history. Consult <http://rcha.rutgers.edu/black-bodies> and <http://scarletandblack.rutgers.edu> for details. Applications should be addressed to Prof. Deborah Gray White, Postdoc Search Chair, and submitted electronically to <http://jobs.rutgers.edu/postings/83274>. Applications should include the following: letter of interest, CV, research proposal, writing sample, and at least three letters of reference. The deadline for applications is April 30, 2019.

Postdoctoral Fellowship in Race and Gender History. The Department of History at Rutgers University

announces a postdoctoral fellowship for scholars pursuing research in race and gender studies. The successful applicant must have the doctorate in hand at the time of application, be no more than six years beyond the PhD, and be able to teach history courses. The fellowship of \$60,000 is for one year and includes benefits and a \$5,000 research stipend. The recipient will teach at least one small course in the history department and participate in the seminar series at either the Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis (<https://rcha.rutgers.edu/future-project/description>) or the Institute for Research on Women (<https://irw.rutgers.edu/seminars-list/365-2019-2020-irw-seminar-call>). Applications should be addressed to Prof. Deborah Gray White, Postdoc Search Chair, and submitted electronically to <http://jobs.rutgers.edu/postings/81023>. Applications should include the following: letter of interest, CV, research proposal, writing sample, and at least three letters of reference. The deadline for applications is April 15, 2019.



NEW YORK

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

New York, NY

Elihu Rose Scholar in Modern Military History. The Department of History at New York University invites applications for the Elihu Rose Scholar in Modern Military History. The successful candidate will be appointed as a faculty fellow effective September 1, 2019, subject to budgetary and administrative approval. The appointment will be for one

year, with the possibility of renewal for up to three years. Applicants who hold assistant professor positions at other universities are eligible to apply for a one-year appointment while on leave from home institutions. The committee welcomes applications from military historians, broadly defined, working on any geographical area. The Rose Scholar will teach one course per semester in military history, including one course on a major conflict of the 19th or 20th century (geographic scope and focus are open). The Rose Scholar will be provided with funds in support of research and to organize public events on military history. Applicants must hold a PhD in history at the time of appointment and must have received the doctorate no earlier than 2014. Submit application at <http://apply.interfolio.com/60109> with CV, a letter of application, three references, and a writing sample (article, book chapter, or dissertation chapter). The application deadline is March 31, 2019. Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the deadline. The Faculty of Arts and Science at NYU is at the heart of a leading research university that spans the globe. We seek scholars of the highest caliber that embody the diversity of the United States as well as the global society in which we live. We strongly encourage applications from women, racial and ethnic minorities, and other individuals who are under-represented in the profession, across color, creed, race, ethnic and national origin, physical ability, gender and sexual identity, or any other legally protected basis. NYU affirms the value of differing perspectives on the world as we strive to build the strongest possible university with the widest reach. To learn more about the

FAS commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion, please visit <http://as.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/as/administrative-resources/office/dean/diversity-initiative.html>. AA/minorities/females/veterans/disabled/sexual orientation/gender identity/EOE.

AD POLICY STATEMENT

Most job discrimination is illegal, and open hiring on the basis of merit depends on fair practice in recruitment, thereby ensuring that all professionally qualified persons may obtain appropriate opportunities. The AHA will not accept a job listing that (1) contains wording that either directly or indirectly links race, color, national origin, sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, ideology, political affiliation, age, or disability to a specific job offer; or (2) contains wording requiring applicants to submit special materials for the sole purpose of identifying the applicant's race, color, national origin, sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, ideology, political affiliation, veteran status, age, or disability.

The AHA does make an exception to these criteria in three unique cases: (1) open listings for minority vita banks that are clearly not linked with specific jobs, fields, or specializations; (2) ads that require religious identification or affiliation for consideration for the position, a preference that is allowed to religious institutions under federal law; and (3) fellowship advertisements.

The AHA retains the right to refuse or edit all discriminatory statements from copy submitted to the Association that is not consistent with these guidelines or with the principles of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The AHA accepts advertisements from academic institutions whose administrations are under censure by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), but requires that this fact be clearly stated. Refer to www.aaup.org/our-programs/academic-freedom/censure-list for more information.

For further details on best practices in hiring and academic employment, see the AHA's Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct, www.historians.org/standards; Guidelines for the Hiring Process, www.historians.org/hiring; and Policy on Advertisements, www.historians.org/adpolicy.

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