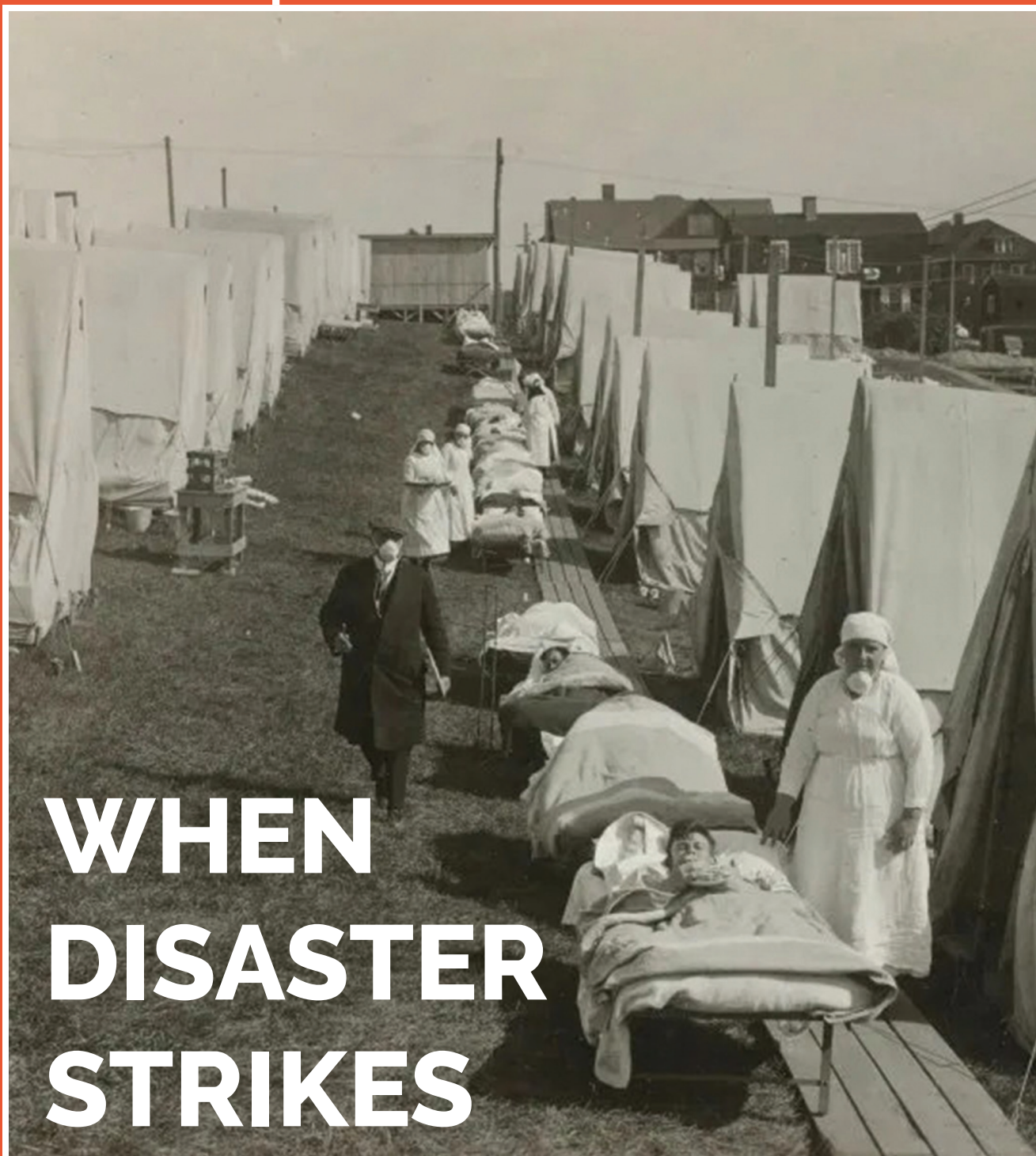


The newsmagazine of the American Historical Association

PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

Volume 58: 5
May 2020



WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

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ON THE COVER

We had been planning a themed *Perspectives* issue on disaster for months. Then the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, making the May issue—the first ever created by an AHA staff working from home—even more relevant. The issue features articles from Jessica Unger on cultural heritage, Laura Ansley on oral history, and R.E. Fulton on the Anthropocene. Nancy Tomes provides context for the Medicare for All debates of the last year, now even more charged in a nation struggling to “flatten the curve” of infection. Finally, executive director James Grossman reports on the AHA’s efforts to support historians during the crisis and president Mary Lindemann gives a medical historian’s view of the pandemic.

National Archives and Records Administration, 165-WW-269B-019

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LAURA ANSLEY

TOWNHOUSE NOTES

Another Renovation Update

The AHA has moved back to our townhouse at 400 A Street SE, but the construction continues around us—suddenly an easier situation now that our staff is teleworking during the COVID-19 outbreak. We promise a full photo spread in the fall after the renovation is complete, the building has been painted, and the landscaping is finished. But here we provide a teaser.

Accessibility was a major motivation of the renovation. The new entrance on the ground floor, equipped with a ramp, will allow all AHA members access to the building. You can also see the sample paints that we tested for the outside of the building. Unfortunately, we cannot remember which of those colors we settled on, so you'll have to wait for those fall photos.

Previously, the AHA didn't have a space large enough to accommodate Council and committee meetings here at the townhouse. We couldn't even fit the entire AHA staff around a table. With the new conference room on the ground floor, we can gather now for both meetings and casual lunches. Since public health officials discourage gatherings of more than 10 people, this space is waiting for our return.

Sustainability has also been a priority in the renovation. With the installation of solar panels on the townhouse roof, the AHA will offset much of our energy needs. The panels are going online just as we all move to work from home, so the reduction in both environmental impact and cost will be truly worthwhile.

Typically, I would end this missive by encouraging AHA members to come visit our lovely new offices. We look forward to seeing you in the future, after the shelter-in-place declarations have lifted and travel is permitted again. And if you're reading this, go wash your hands. Can't hurt. P

Laura Ansley is managing editor at the AHA. She tweets @lmansley.





TO THE EDITOR

I read with interest ShawnaKim Lowey-Ball's recent article, "History by Text and Thing" (*Perspectives on History*, March 2020). I agreed and disagreed, as you'll see reflected in my upcoming book, *Beyond Truman: Robert H. Ferrell and Crafting the Past* (Rowman & Littlefield). Diving into archives, or whatever source material is relevant, is essential, yet the secondary literature is indispensable as well. I was shocked that she would dismiss it so easily, as "not really *doing history*" (*italics in original*). We all stand on the shoulders of those who have come before, and while jumping into archives—what I did before I started my book—was imperative, meaning-making really took on much more depth and nuance once I knew how the topic was situated in what others had accomplished.

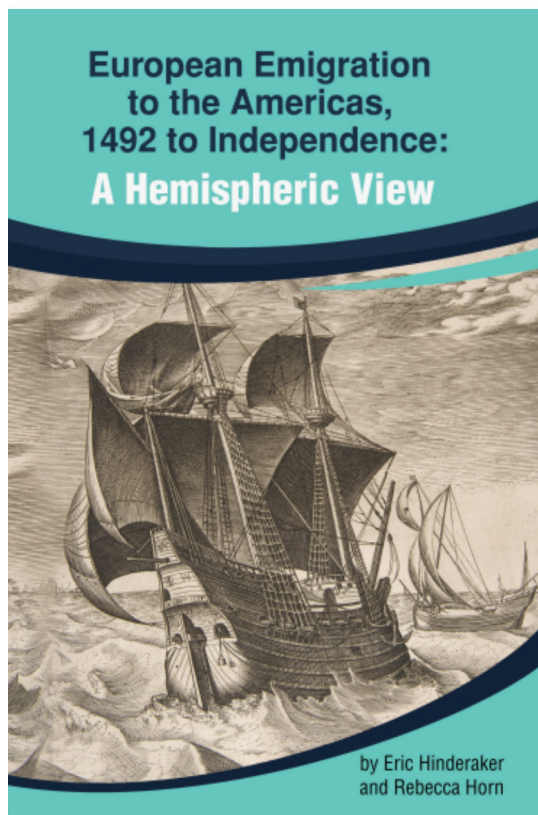
DOUGLAS A. DIXON
Austin, Texas



TO THE EDITOR

Many thanks for ShawnaKim Lowey-Ball's rumination on research, noting the importance of "serendipitous historical discovery" ("History by Text and Thing," *Perspectives on History*, March 2020). There I was in northern Italy, full of ideas regarding my project on Italian Futurism and the infamous *serate* of performance, when in one local newspaper after another I kept coming across stories and editorials about an alleged epidemic of suicide. I kept saying: "But I'm not here for this," even if I did have a predisposed understanding of Durkheim on the subject of *Selbstmord* in the Goethian German context. At a certain point my research led me to proclaim, "It doesn't matter what you're looking for; it matters what you've found." Thus my book, *Tired of Living: Suicide in Italy from National Unification to World War I, 1860–1915*, which would never have been written if I had stuck with my first project.

TY GELTMAKER
Los Angeles



Announcing a New AHA Booklet

*European Emigration to the
Americas, 1492 to Independence:
A Hemispheric View*
by Eric Hinderaker and
Rebecca Horn

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Members receive a 30% discount on all AHA publications



STATEMENT REGARDING HISTORIANS AND THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

The American Historical Association recognizes the many difficulties we all—individuals, families, communities, and institutions—confront in the current COVID-19 crisis. Indeed, institutions face particular challenges, given responsibilities not only to their mission (if not survival) but also to their employees and constituencies. We urge all institutions that employ historians to acknowledge the stressful conditions under which we are all laboring and to offer as much flexibility as possible in considering the needs of their employees and colleagues in these trying circumstances.

The AHA has joined 40 other academic associations in a statement authored by the American Sociological Association regarding recommendations for temporary adjustments in faculty review and reappointment procedures in response to the sudden transformation of the teaching and research landscape. We support calls for limiting the use of student evaluations in the review process of faculty and for adjusting expectations for scholarly productivity during a time when access to libraries, archives, and other scholarly resources is difficult if not impossible. Additionally, we join in the call for university administrators to be clear as to whether criteria for review, reappointment, and tenure will be modified and precisely how. We believe, however, that it is in the best interests of all concerned that any pause in reappointment, tenure, and promotion clocks be optional, according to the preference of the candidate. Not all faculty stand to benefit from a delay in their reappointment, tenure, and promotion decisions if mandated for all by administrations.

Similarly, not all higher education faculty are on the tenure track. The precise arrangements by which scholars are employed vary considerably, including the precarity of their appointments. The difficult financial position of many institutions themselves—many colleges and universities reasonably fear they are on the edge of collapse—renders this situation even more complicated as budget-cutting

starts with expenses least encumbered by restrictions or commitments. Cognizant of these financial challenges, the AHA nevertheless urges all higher education institutions that employ contract and/or part-time faculty to compensate them fully for courses already contracted for spring, summer, and fall offerings.

The AHA urges all institutions that employ historians to acknowledge the stressful conditions under which we are all laboring and to offer as much flexibility as possible in considering the needs of their employees and colleagues in these trying circumstances.

Historians are not only teachers; we are research scholars as well. Historical research has been seriously disrupted for historians in all categories of employment, as well as for our students. Many higher education faculty and graduate students have not been able to use research grants or other available funds, take up residential or other fellowships, or travel as needed. We urge departments and universities to be flexible and understanding in accommodating the needs of students whose studies have been interrupted through no fault of their own. Universities should consider extending the duration of funded support to graduate students as well as offering whatever support possible to graduate students who have suffered serious financial losses relating to the impact of the pandemic. Such disruptions might include incurring added expenses for interrupted travel;

Continued on page 7

LETTER TO THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA OPPOSING PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Upon request from historians working in the University System of Georgia, the AHA wrote the following letter expressing concern about the implications of potential changes to general education requirements. We received an almost immediate response, and conversations with system-wide administration about the importance of history to undergraduate education continue. A similar series of communications with the California State University system last year reminds us how important it is for historians to contact the AHA to intervene in these processes.

March 27, 2020

Dr. Tristan Denley
Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer
Chairman of the General Education Redesign
Implementation Committee
University System of Georgia

Dear Dr. Denley,

The American Historical Association (AHA) has learned that the University System of Georgia (USG) is considering redesigning its general education curriculum in a way that would diminish instruction in United States and Georgia history. This would be not only unwise, but also likely a violation of state law, which mandates for each and every student “instruction in the history of the United States and the history of Georgia and in the essentials of the United States Constitution and the Constitution of Georgia.”

The American Historical Association is America’s largest and most prominent organization of professional historians, with over 12,000 members engaged in the teaching and practice of history at colleges and universities, secondary schools, historical institutes, museums, and other institutions. The Association does

not claim expertise in the intricacies of state law. But we do know what constitutes proper “instruction in history,” and the requirements for delivering such instruction in a way that is professional, effective, and necessary to the learning outcomes implied in Georgia law. Currently, most USG institutions require students to take both American Government and a United States History survey. That approach seems intellectually and pedagogically wise, and well-suited to meet the requirements of Georgia law. Some USG institutions, however, currently permit students to fulfill both aspects of the requirement by taking a single course, either an American Government course or a United States History Survey. The redesign envisions expanding that approach across the USG. Hence at best students are learning history from a political scientist and vice versa. This is unwise from an educational perspective and contrary to the spirit if not the letter of the law.

Would you hire a first-rate plumber
to rewire your home? A radiologist
to do heart surgery? No. Nor
should your students learn political
science from a historian or history
from a political scientist.

Our role as an advocate for the study of history in all aspects of American intellectual life does not preclude support for initiatives that break down disciplinary boundaries and promote interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary work. These are worthy goals and we encourage (and have promoted) efforts in this direction. Interdisciplinarity is not the absence of disciplines, however, but rather their interaction. The logic is straightforward, and does not imply that either discipline lacks respect for the work of their colleagues. Would you

hire a first-rate plumber to rewire your home? A radiologist to do heart surgery? No. Nor should your students learn political science from a historian or history from a political scientist.

The American Historical Association opposes a redesigned general education curriculum that would purport to fulfill an American history requirement in a government course. History and political science are distinct disciplines pursuing differing approaches and aiming to achieve

differing learning outcomes. History courses should be taught by historians trained in the historical discipline. The mandate in Georgia law requiring students to take United States and Georgia history should be met in history courses taught by trained historians. **P**

Sincerely,

James Grossman
Executive Director

Continued from page 5

STATEMENT ON COVID-19

loss of rent, visa, and other fees; and similar situations that cannot always be specified in advance but which are quite real.

The AHA is also attentive to the impact of COVID-19 on other institutions that employ or serve the needs of historians. Libraries, museums, and archives should similarly be as flexible as possible, adapting working schedules for staff and rescheduling programming, events, and travel for both staff and research fellows. The National Archives and Records Administration, for example, has adjusted its normal operations to balance the need of completing its mission-critical work while also adhering to physical distancing recommendations for the safety of staff essential to operations. The AHA calls upon NARA to augment communications to the historical community regarding the effect of the virus on FOIA and other processing functions.

The work that historians do in all of these venues is especially important in troubled times when facts, evidence, and context are imperative to generating effective and humane public policy. Historians weave evidence and context into narrative; a society in crisis needs to have faith that the narratives that illustrate and define that crisis can stand the light of the scrutiny. Historians can also play an important role by providing context, in this case shedding light on the history of pandemics and the utility of that history to policy formation and public culture. Everything

has a history and historians are especially well suited to explain social and cultural challenges met in crisis situations, epidemics and pandemics among them. The fears, challenges, and permanent changes that will accompany this pandemic are both rooted in a historical context and have historical precedents themselves.

The work that historians do is especially important in troubled times when facts, evidence, and context are imperative to generating effective and humane public policy.

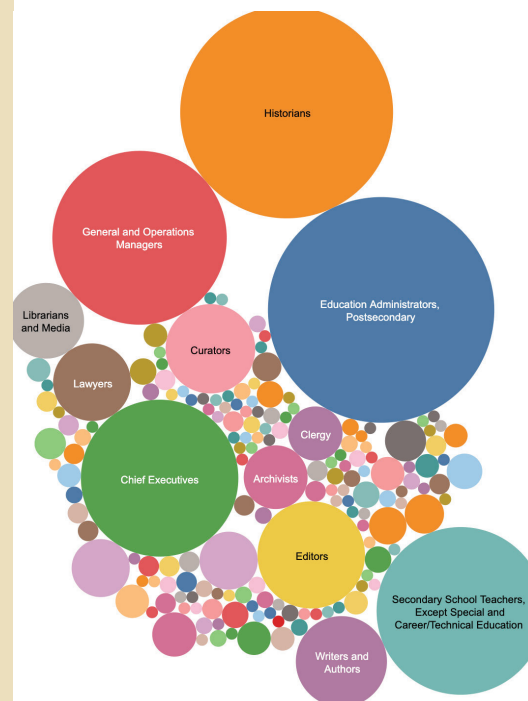
Like our colleagues in related disciplines, historians can also explore the challenges public health authorities, governments, and nonprofit institutions face in mediating possible conflicts between individual rights and the good of the greater society. When a neighbor asks, “is it worth sacrificing the economy for a few hundred thousand lives,” it’s time for a humanist to enter the discussion. This important, and difficult, conversation too has a history. **P**

Approved by the AHA Council on April 3, 2020. For a full list of signatories, please see the online version of this statement.

Curious about careers for history PhDs?

Check out **Where Historians Work**, an interactive way to explore the career outcomes of over 8,500 history PhDs working in and beyond the professoriate.

historians.org/wherehistorianswork



AHA Resources for Graduate Students

Are you applying for funding?
Preparing for comps?
Trying to pick up new skills?
Or even just thinking
about graduate school?

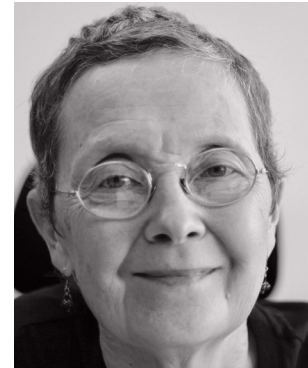
The AHA has resources for graduate students to use from day one to defense.

historians.org/gradschool

MARY LINDEMANN

THE HISTORIAN AND THE VIRUS

A Time Capsule from Mid-March



Historians know a lot about epidemics and have written extensively and intelligently on the subject across time and cultures. What can this accumulated knowledge do to help us understand our encounter with the novel coronavirus and the disease it causes, COVID-19? How might historians use what we know to analyze what is happening now and place it in a historical framework? How can we use that knowledge to inform, even shape, public reactions and policies?

The first response from fellow scholars might be that it is too early to write about an ongoing crisis *as history*. Writer Sloane Crosley warned authors recently in the *New York Times* that this isn't the time for their books on the virus. I began composing this column on March 16, five days after the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic and advised a policy of social distancing. Soon thereafter (sooner in some countries than others), schools, universities, restaurants, cafés, and coffee shops closed around the world. Remote teaching has begun, and toilet paper has flown off supermarket shelves. Conferences have been canceled, sporting events shut down, and even Spring Break was shelved when Miami Beach was declared off-limits in late March. I am very much aware that what I am writing now might be mostly irrelevant by the time my readers open their print-run *Perspectives* or click the online version in May 2020. By then, we may be mired even more deeply in what has become a public health, economic, and political crisis of still uncertain dimensions, or the virus may be passing slowly into history—though it will disappear neither entirely nor rapidly, and we will surely experience more microbiological threats in the future. At this moment, historians are eyewitnesses; the time for rigorous historical investigation of a major disease and its impact lies in the future.

Historians know a great deal about epidemics in the distant and recent past, but do we have a legitimate role to play *right now*? Perhaps our first job is to guard against too-quick

comparisons and analogies, choosing instead to fight panic with evidence and context. One respected academic compared the ongoing crisis to hurricanes striking a hundred major cities at once. Well, no. The pattern of concern, cost, and destruction differs; COVID-19 will cause no immediate structural damage, no loss of electricity, no failure of water systems, no flood surges.

The time for rigorous historical investigation of a major disease and its impact lies in the future.

COVID-19 *is* a major crisis, but we have to understand what kind of crisis it is. Comparisons with the global influenza epidemic of 1918–19 might be more relevant. It too was a new virus that caused a worldwide pandemic with mortality rates that remain hard to comprehend. Five hundred million people were infected, and mortality estimates range from 17 to 50 million, with some not improbable conjectures running up to 100 million. The most recent estimates indicate that about 650,000 people died in the United States alone. Now, as then, we are dealing with viral respiratory infections.

But the two epidemics are not identical, and we should be careful about drawing quick conclusions that flatten the differences between them. The 1918 flu affected mostly young adults, in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, and killed more rapidly, with a case mortality greater than 2.5 percent. Case mortality estimates for the COVID-19 virus range from 1 to 3.5 percent; its symptoms appear mild or moderate for most sufferers and tend to pose the most danger to older adults with underlying health problems. But no one is immune, and we are seeing some recent unsettling news about changing demographic trends. In an “average” flu season (for example, in 2017–18), the United States saw about 45 million symptomatic cases and 61,000

deaths, also heavily weighted to the elderly population, those already ill, or those with suppressed immune systems.

COVID-19 has also been compared to the plague, usually called the Black Death, that washed across the world in several pandemics. For many generations, the cause was believed to be the bacterium *Yersinia pestis* (once called *Pasteurella pestis*), first identified during the Hong Kong plague of 1894. But in the mid-20th century, a series of historians took another look at the evidence and raised concerns about diagnosing the 14th-century plague as identical to the pandemic of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. More recently, historians and historical epidemiologists working closely with geneticists have convincingly determined that *Y. pestis* was, in fact, the pathogen.

Comparisons with other epidemics should be made cautiously.

So who really cares about plague today? Well, to start with, anyone living in an area where burrowing rodents are common; plague is endemic among many of their populations. But there is a lesson specific to our discipline as well: it was historians and historical epidemiologists who applied differing historical and epidemiological methods to develop a series of interpretations over time that reflected the ways successive generations of scholars worked and the (often a priori) ideas they held. Simply put, the epidemics of the past are not inevitably the epidemics of today or the future, even if comparable viruses or bacteria cause them. They differ because we differ: among other changes, we live in a global culture, in (generally) more densely populated environments, and in a far more mobile society.

Comparisons with other epidemics should be made cautiously. In assessing the widespread and popular responses to epidemics, we are sure to find reactions of fear, hatred, and scapegoating; we see it happening today, directed especially at China and, more painfully yet, at Asian Americans. But historians who have probed the records more deeply have also found that epidemics call forth expressions of compassion, self-sacrifice, and civic responsibility. Relatively few people abandoned their families and homes, shirked their responsibilities, or fled—even in the face of the 14th-century plague that killed off, at a conservative estimate, one-third of Europe.

Historical study of epidemics can give us a more nuanced picture of the human response and of the impact of

epidemics across the globe—material that is interesting and relevant, and that has produced marvelous works of scholarship that use epidemics to explore broader historical topics (one need only mention Charles Rosenberg’s classic *The Cholera Years*). Still, the real value of the historian, both for examining epidemics in the past and for exploring how we live with this epidemic today, lies elsewhere. Scientists and physicians can describe how epidemics and diseases spread, and what can be done to prevent them; but it is the humanists, the social scientists, the ethicists, and certainly the historians who understand that successfully fighting an epidemic depends not only, or even principally, on scientific knowledge, vital as it is.

Rather, historians can help to explain why certain cultures, groups, and individuals have reacted to epidemics in particular ways; how hard or easy it is to change those ways; or why fear and loathing so often have deeper and more varied roots than the knee-jerk dread of infection. Historians understand the cultural, social, intellectual, religious, and philosophical differences that condition human responses. We also understand, perhaps as well as any working scholars, that all epidemic situations require us to balance privacy and individual rights against the good of the larger society. We are able to embed “resistance” to “rational measures” in a broader milieu of attitudes and assumptions. Herein lies our unique value, our civic contribution, and the area where our knowledge is critical to a situation that is not quite as exogenous or capricious as it may at first seem. **P**

Mary Lindemann is president of the AHA.

JAMES GROSSMAN

THE AHA, HISTORIANS, AND COVID-19

A Report from Mid-April



Many of us have learned a lot about infectious diseases in recent months. We've read about the dangerous implications of airborne contagion, surface versus human contact, and other forms of transmission. We've pondered the dangers of that person who passes too close on the sidewalk, the runner breathing heavily just behind us. These reflections are about people, the intensely human implications of the public health emergency that has engulfed our lives.

As historians, we work hard to understand people—the people we study and the people we teach, in the classroom and beyond. We also study institutions, how they work, why they matter, and their role in shaping and contextualizing human interaction, including our own work. Other than in a figurative sense, institutions are not susceptible to infection. President Nixon surely understood John Dean's reference to a “cancer on the presidency” as a plea for decisive surgery, but the metaphor did not extend to anything resembling chemotherapy. The status of corporate entities as individuals, despite its long and convoluted legal history, does not imply institutional quarantine—although I do find that image rather intriguing from time to time.

My perspective on the policy implications of the relationship between people and institutions is no doubt skewed by the physical immediacy of the Capitol, especially at a moment when daily walks along the National Mall are my only opportunity for outdoor activity and reflection (with an occasional rant thrown in). At no other time in my life, in no other place, would I have received email news bulletins reporting the latest manipulations, the tactics that determine who gets what when the proverbial legislative sausage is made. Negotiations over the CARES Act, the \$2 trillion coronavirus relief legislation, included debates over the allocation of funds to individuals (including tax cuts, direct payments, and unemployment insurance) versus institutions (such as corporate subsidies and loans, small business

assistance, higher education funding, and payments to states). Should the federal government provide relief to lenders in danger of bankruptcy because of mass loan defaults or funnel cash to homeowners who could then make mortgage payments? Either way, what happens to renters? It's not quite as straightforward as it might seem. Institutions employ people and provide services to individuals. But cash put directly in the hands of individuals will be spent quickly, filling coffers from which wages are paid and services sold. Andrew Yang was hardly the first to suggest the macroeconomic impact of a guaranteed national income.

As historians, we work hard to understand people—the people we study and the people we teach, in the classroom and beyond.

These different approaches are relevant to the AHA's concerns about how to help both individual historians and the institutions in which they work. Many of our most vulnerable colleagues are employed on a contingent basis in higher education. The AHA has sought support from foundations for direct immediate relief for individual scholars with insecure employment, but with no success so far; given the vast landscape of need, most funders are besieged with countless legitimate requests. Institutionally, we have publicly urged all higher education institutions that employ contract and/or part-time faculty to compensate them fully for courses already contracted for the balance of 2020. Larger and more influential associations, such as the American Council on Education, lobby on behalf of higher education, and we have notified our department chairs of the resources in a small part of this bucket that might be available to history departments.

As an institution that advocates for historians and provides mechanisms to support the work of individual scholars, the

AHA looks especially to funders with a particular interest in our constituencies. Through the National Humanities Alliance and the National Coalition for History, the Association has advocated vigorously for additional funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities. The NEH received \$75 million in the CARES Act, and the AHA stands prepared to help the agency distribute those funds to scholars who need help and who can provide expertise useful to education and public culture.

What might such projects look like? The Works Progress Administration from the 1930s offers a likely analogue.

What might such projects look like? The Works Progress Administration from the 1930s offers a likely analogue. Given the emergency, it's especially worth considering ideas that don't require creating new infrastructure. My years at the Newberry Library, for example, taught me how much public interest exists for thoughtful and informed conversation on humanities topics; these can be held online, led by unemployed and underemployed scholars with teaching experience. I would be surprised if there wouldn't be substantial interest in such topics as plagues, epidemics, refugees, sports (since there are none to watch now), and more. Everything has a history. Indeed, this epidemic's oral history should be recorded professionally and comprehensively. Even more obvious, with infrastructure in place, would be professional development for historians employed in any venue, or even webinars for nonhistorians who recognize that their work would benefit from historical-thinking skills. These employment programs would not be difficult to organize; historians work in institutions that have done it before.

The AHA has already embarked on such work, but we can provide only useful resources, rather than employment. Once it became clear that higher education would quickly move to remote teaching, the AHA convened its recently appointed ad hoc committee on online instruction to write discipline-specific essays to help historians confronted with the challenges of rapid transformation from in-person to remote instruction. These short blog posts provide both pedagogical advice and technology tips. One is oriented specifically toward beleaguered history department chairs. With a bit more planning, we have also mounted the Remote Teaching Wiki Project at ahadigital.org, a space where historians can share discipline-specific,

professionally vetted resources. We ask our members to contribute syllabi, recorded lectures, primary sources, and other teaching resources that could be helpful to fellow history educators.

Our conversations with colleagues indicate substantial need for these kinds of resources; much of what their institutions provide is necessary but not sufficient. It is imperative to learn how to use the systems at your institution and to get tips that relate directly to institutional culture and students, but it's equally important to adapt those systems and methods to the work of a history classroom.

This kind of work, coordinated by a staff itself operating from our homes, is central to the mission of the AHA. So is advocacy, exemplified by the statement published in this issue of *Perspectives*, which hopes to inspire both the employers of our membership and historians themselves to think about what we need to do our work, and the contributions that we can make.

The AHA annual meeting is an especially important venue for this work, and we have been gratified by the interest shown by our members and affiliates as to whether we will be able to convene in Seattle in January 2021, as planned. We currently expect to do so, and our program committee met remotely in April to evaluate proposals. We hope that conditions will have returned to normal by fall, but are aware that this situation changes rapidly and is likely to remain uncertain for some time. We will regularly update members via our website, Fortnightly News, and social media, as advice from public health authorities and medical experts evolves. We will take whatever measures are necessary to maintain the health and safety of our members, while at the same time do all we can to promote the work and the interests of historians. **P**

James Grossman is executive director of the AHA. He tweets @JimGrossmanAHA.

RYAN K. SMITH

RUMORS OF WAR ARRIVES IN THE SOUTH

Changes to Richmond's Monumental Landscape

Richmond, Virginia, now has *Rumors of War*. The enormous new monument, featuring a young African American man in contemporary street clothes astride a rearing horse, was unveiled on the front lawn of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) on December 10, 2019. Artist Kehinde Wiley's response to the line of imposing Confederate leaders that tower over Monument Avenue only three blocks to the east, the statue is the latest and perhaps most profound contribution to the nation's reexamination of the Confederate memorial landscape currently underway.

Wiley is best known for his vivid paintings of African-Diasporic subjects set within European art traditions, as well as his official portrait of President Barack Obama for the National Portrait Gallery. *Rumors of War*, his first monumental sculpture, grew from his time in Richmond during a major exhibition of his work in 2016. Amid debates over Confederate statues, Wiley

was struck by the forceful sculptures on the city's famed Monument Avenue. He has described them as "totems of terrorism," which had been "designed to terrorize the black communities and to allow them to know exactly where they sat within the social hierarchy."

Indeed, Monument Avenue's place as a commemorative residential boulevard began a generation after the war with the unveiling in 1890 of the 21-foot-high Robert E. Lee equestrian monument atop a lavish 40-foot stone base. A sequence of similarly oversized Confederate monuments followed: the equestrian sculpture of cavalryman J. E. B. Stuart in 1907, the neoclassical memorial to Confederate president Jefferson Davis that same year, the equestrian sculpture of general Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson in 1919, and the recumbent sculpture of diplomat Matthew Maury in 1929. All were framed by roundabouts along the wide tree-lined avenue two miles west of Capitol Square. Their unveilings were accompanied by massive parades and reunions during the era of disfranchisement and racial

segregation. Historians have called Monument Avenue "the centerpiece" of Lost Cause commemorative efforts in the early 20th century.

Revising that legacy would prove especially difficult for Richmond, as state law prevents localities from removing or modifying "monuments or memorials for any war" and a considerable range of opinion remains regarding their proper fate. A prologue to those conversations occurred 20 years ago, when the Richmond City Council helped arrange a tribute to African American tennis star and humanitarian Arthur Ashe, a Richmond native, at the end of Monument Avenue. The resulting portrayal of Ashe, featuring a slightly larger-than-life figure, surrounded by children and holding aloft a tennis racquet and books, challenged the monumental power of the nearby Confederates—but in a limited way.

Aiming to address his campaign's position on providing context for the monuments, Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney convened a commission in June 2017 to solicit input and make recommendations for

the future of the Confederate monuments along the city's most famous street. Only two months later, a deadly protest occurred in nearby Charlottesville over monument removal. Richmond's commission delivered its report the following year, calling for removal of the Jefferson Davis

Historians have called Monument Avenue "the centerpiece" of Lost Cause commemorative efforts in the early 20th century.

monument ("the most unabashedly Lost Cause in its design and sentiment"), the re-contextualization of the other statues, and the commission of a new monument commemorating "the resilience of the formerly enslaved," perhaps via a work dedicated to the United States Colored Troops. On the other hand, the

commission acknowledged that roughly half of those providing public feedback had expressed a desire to keep all the monuments in place in some form.

In the midst of these deliberations, local art patrons William and Pamela Royall approached Kehinde Wiley's gallery for an update on what they had heard of the artist's plans for a related sculpture project. They lobbied for the first piece of that project to end up in Richmond and interested the board of the VMFA in its acquisition. This would allow for its installation at the museum, next door to

the headquarters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, on the boulevard that intersects with the Stonewall Jackson statue on Monument Avenue.

Additional Confederate connections charged the museum's grounds. In the rear of the VMFA stands a Confederate Memorial Chapel from 1887, which served the R. E. Lee Camp Confederate Soldiers' Home that operated on the site for more than 50 years. Over the past decade, the Virginia Flaggers and other heritage groups have called on the VMFA to replace Confederate battle flags

removed from the chapel's exterior. The museum's board declined, so protestors started a weekly practice of flying enormous Confederate flags of their own on the VMFA's front sidewalk, leading to occasional contentious interactions with passersby. Over these same years, the Sons of Confederate Veterans lost its lease on the chapel, further inflaming tensions. Placing Wiley's new monument on the museum's front lawn physically positions it within the debates.

Wiley's work engages with these controversies through creative reframing. He used the Stuart monument for direct

inspiration, calling its active pose "convincing and stylized and evocative and strangely beautiful." He designed a nearly identical rearing horse, mounted by a figure modeled on Najee Wilson, a 32-year-old from Charleston, South

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In *Rumors of War*, Kehinde Wiley blends a modern figure with the classic form of a mounted soldier.
Ryan K. Smith

Carolina, with a composite face to represent black men at large.

The sculpture was initially unveiled in New York City's Times Square in September 2019 during a triumphant ceremony. Three months later, its removal to Richmond and unveiling on the VMFA's lawn before a crowd at least 1,000 strong marked a turning point in the larger conversation. Art had taken action in the face of political stalemate.

Art had taken action in the face of political stalemate.

In Richmond, Wiley told the crowd, "There is something moving in the culture, and there is something changing in these winds." He explained that he wanted his piece to be "about black men and their place in this society, but in a much broader way a society that can say yes to black men." He hoped that "you're able to see those people that you once considered peripheral to your society, those voices that you once considered to be incidental to the grand narrative, and you're able to say, this is monumental." Wiley told the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* that he "couldn't think of any better place to have this than the former capital of the Confederacy, in a place where we see America at a crossroads."

The unveiling did not go off without a hitch. As the crowd

gathered and a marching band played, attendants hired by the United Daughters of the Confederacy next door worked to keep attendees off its lawn. And at the moment of unveiling, the monument's tarp became stuck on the figure's upswept hair, requiring a firefighter to cut it loose.

Still, excitement has remained high. The monument's title, *Rumors of War*, points to the words of Jesus in the New Testament: "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed" (Matthew 24:6). As such, it speaks directly to times of change and anxiety. That change is embodied in the statue's bronze form, which rises 27 feet high on its granite pedestal. The figure wears jeans, a hoodie, and Nike sneakers, a recognizable assemblage. Its general correspondence to the Stuart monument is uncanny. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* has created a digital tool that allows viewers to see how closely aligned are the form and pose of each monument's horse. But the rider provides all the difference, making the racialized nature of the earlier statue plain.

Rumors of War is not alone in changing the city's landscape. The Boulevard in front of the VMFA was renamed Arthur Ashe Boulevard in the summer of 2019. Only two years earlier, a statue of pioneering African American banker Maggie Lena Walker was dedicated on Broad Street, the city's main commercial

thoroughfare. Throughout town, activists have been working to recover the thousands of African American graves in cemeteries that until recently had been lost to vandalism, development, and overgrowth. The city's historic slave-trading district has drawn national attention for its commemorative potential. Two city schools with Confederate or slaveholding namesakes have been renamed, including Barack Obama Elementary School, formerly J. E. B. Stuart Elementary.

Looking forward, in January 2020, the Richmond City Council formally asked the state for control over the fate of its Confederate monuments, while the state legislature voted to eliminate legal restrictions that prevented local municipalities from removing such statues. And councilwoman Kim Gray is seeking to implement the Monument Avenue Commission's recommendation that a new monument to the United States Colored Troops be raised. In all these ways, the city is situating itself differently from other locales like New Orleans and Baltimore, which have removed prominent Confederate statuary, and communities like Charlottesville and Chapel Hill, where political unrest has driven the conversation.

Even so, the city and so many others like it remain mired in the high rates of poverty, murder, incarceration, segregated housing and eviction, and

disproportional educational opportunities that continue to afflict black residents and other minorities, despite the changes in the monumental landscape. Noted Richmond columnist Michael Paul Williams observed when *Rumors of War* was unveiled that "art, which on Monument Avenue and elsewhere has divided us, has the potential to heal. But that will happen only if we seize the moment to bring tangible meaning to the symbolic force of Kehinde Wiley's striking statue, and fashion justice and equity out of a legacy of injustice and inequality." In Richmond, the black rider atop a rising horse viscerally bridges past and present while pointing a challenging way forward. **P**

Ryan K. Smith is professor of history at Virginia Commonwealth University.

LAURA ANSLEY

FINDING THE FUNNY

Historians' Lectures Provide Material for Improv Comedians

On a Sunday evening in February, the audience relaxes into old-fashioned red velvet theater seats as the lights go down. The show's logo is projected on the back wall. The emcee and cast enter the stage, empty except for a simple podium, and over the next hour, history and improvised comedy combine for an unforgettable evening at Study Hall, the monthly comedy show hosted by the Philly Improv Theater (PHIT).

PHIT has been doing a version of these performances since 2011. They asked Michael Yudell, historian of public health and professor and chair of the Community Health and Prevention department at Drexel University's School of Public Health, to collaborate on a comedy performance at the Philly Science Festival. He was asked to pair actors with historians to dramatize history; when he arrived at the show, he discovered that the actors were actually improv comedians. A great show followed, including a satirical performance

based on the local yellow fever epidemic of 1793. Over the next three years, PHIT invited him back, and he participated in a similar performance at the local Fringe Festival in 2013. In 2014, the theater invited Yudell to be part of a regular monthly show called Study Hall.

Study Hall and the preceding festival shows are based on the Armando improv format, named for Chicago Improv teacher Armando Diaz. In this long-form game, a person performs a storytelling monologue for the audience. After the monologue, the performers improvise scenes that riff on the story.

For Yudell and PHIT artistic director Mike Marbach, also the director of Study Hall, the Armando game was a perfect way to bring together academic researchers and comedy. Marbach suggested that Yudell tell true stories from history, current events, and his own life, and over the past six years, Yudell has told more than 100 such stories on the stage.

As the show expanded, they began inviting guest lecturers. "It's fun to have guests,"

Yudell tells *Perspectives*. "It brings in different historical expertise and knowledge. And it's a unique outlet for sharing history with an audience that doesn't necessarily pay attention to history." Marbach agrees that Study Hall is a unique show in the theater's schedule. "At other improv shows, you don't learn," Marbach says. "Or if you do, it's by accident. The whole point of Study Hall is to educate people."

And educate the audience they do. At the February show, there were three monologues performed by local luminaries. WHYY host and podcaster Maiken Scott related the story of the Poison Squad. At the time, milk was watered down and whitened with chalk, and canned foods could be filled with borax or salicylic acid with no consequences. Government researcher Harvey Wiley formed a group of volunteers that, starting in 1901, tested the safety of American food. This research led directly to the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906.

Dorothy E. Roberts, professor of law, sociology, Civil Rights,

and Africana studies at the University of Pennsylvania, spoke about Dr. Samuel Cartwright, a notorious alumnus of the Penn medical school who practiced racial medicine in the antebellum South. Cartwright developed theories about illnesses that affected both enslaved and free African Americans, most famously "drapetomania," a disorder that caused the enslaved to run away. Roberts's lecture highlighted how the awful and racist ideas of physicians like Cartwright persist in medicine today.

In 2014, the theater invited Yudell to be part of a regular monthly show called Study Hall.

Finally, Yudell contrasted the history of the tobacco smoke enema, an ineffective technique for resuscitating drowning victims and a possible etymology of the phrase "blowing smoke up your ass," with *The Goop Lab*, an extension of

Gwyneth Paltrow's wellness brand on Netflix. He binged the six-episode series for the sake of comedy, laying out the specious health claims made on the show for the audience.

After each lecture, the improvisers let loose on the stage. Acting as a chef for the Poison Squad experiment, Caitlin Corkery asked if it was possible that, just this once, she could serve dinner *without* poisoning the meal. During a medical school interview, Keane Cobb emphasized the absurdity of racist ideas in medicine. And several cast members stood

over a drowned body, arguing over who would be the one to administer that lifesaving enema.

The performers have a hard task. They must listen carefully to the stories, looking for points of silliness or satire they can bring to the performance. But they also must be sensitive to serious subjects. Making controversial topics funny without being offensive is a fine needle to thread. Marbach's favorite lectures are those that make it tough on the cast, requiring them to work harder for the laughs

and highlighting how good they are at what they do. When dealing with tough subjects like race, "the cast always punches up," he says.

Historian-participants in the show confirm that the comedians handled their topics with care. Adam Rothman, historian of slavery and professor at Georgetown University, has been "increasingly interested in all of the nonacademic forms of storytelling and art that draw inspiration from history." His response to Yudell's invitation to participate in the show was also

personal, Rothman told *Perspectives*: "Part of my eagerness stemmed from the fact that one of my favorite history students at Georgetown did improv comedy, and I wanted to be able to tell him that someone had found a way to combine his two passions."

But Rothman was concerned about how they would handle slavery in the show. Yudell reassured him that "they would handle whatever I gave them with intelligence and sensitivity." During his December 2019 visit, he told the story of Henry "Box" Brown, an enslaved



Study Hall performers (from left) Keane Cobb, Daniel Corkery, Melinda Messina, Robert O'Neill, Aaron Unice, Jacob Todd, James Knight, and Caitlin Corkery during the February 9, 2020 show.

Sam Abrams Photography

man who shipped himself from Richmond, Virginia, to Philadelphia—and freedom—through the mail. Rothman was thrilled with what they did with the story. “I was awe-struck,” he said. The improvisers “illuminated something important in a deep and powerful, and even funny, kind of way. It was a moment of art.” Rothman hopes the troupe will visit Washington, DC, to perform at Georgetown.

Because of Yudell’s expertise and network—he’s published on genetics, race, and autism, and he coedits a book series on race, inequality, and health for Columbia University Press—medical and public health

history are common themes at Study Hall. Jacqueline Antonovich, assistant professor of history at Muhlenberg College, has participated twice. Antonovich studies women physicians in the American West, so she decided to answer the one question that people always ask her in her first lecture: “Were you inspired by *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*?” (Answer: no.) “I did a fun lecture on debunking Dr. Quinn, comparing the TV show to real-life woman physicians in the West, and telling the story of a woman physician who owned a bear named Pickles,” she said.

Antonovich’s second Study Hall lecture was directly

inspired by her public health history course. “I had just finished a lecture on the history of STDs, and some of the early treatments for syphilis always make my students laugh and cringe at the same time. It seemed like the perfect topic” for a comedy show. She is always looking for ways to connect academic and public history and has found Study Hall a new fun way to do that. “People don’t realize that, buried within our very serious research notes, historians have lots of weird anecdotes and funny tidbits of information. These stories can be a great way to hook people into larger, more significant histories, whether that’s in front of the classroom or on a stage. Plus, humor is a wonderful teaching tool.”

Study Hall also gives scholars an opportunity to try out new material. Kelly O’Donnell, a historian of medicine and women’s health who lives in the Philadelphia area, didn’t want to choose a topic that might be too weird for a general audience, so her usual work on abortion, the menstrual cup, and the side effects of oral contraception was out. But “fortunately, I had recently published a blog post about a creepy, but historically significant, hand puppet called Pinkie.” Using images of the puppets that she had found on eBay and in the archives, she told the story of “how doctors’ wives obsessively made these for sick kids for decades and explained how this bizarre material culture object could tell us a lot about the history of

health care in the mid- and late-20th-century US.” These visuals were an important part of the story. “The puppet itself is inherently funny, just looking at it, so I think it worked really well as a starting point for their improv,” O’Donnell said. She is already thinking about what topic she could cover during her next visit.

Historian-participants in the show confirm that the comedians handled their topics with care.

With six years of shows under their belts, Study Hall isn’t going anywhere. Yudell is always looking for historians and other experts to participate. “For anyone willing to take that leap, be vulnerable, and see their work twisted and respected at the same time—it’s a great opportunity,” he promises. The next time you’re visiting Philadelphia on the second Saturday of the month, check out the show. You’ll find some laughs and probably learn something too. **P**

Laura Ansley is managing editor at the AHA. She tweets @lmansley.



Michael Yudell started bringing historical stories to the improv stage in 2011, and has told over 100 such stories since Study Hall started in 2014.

Sam Abrams Photography

DANA SCHAFFER

ADVOCACY BRIEFS

AHA Supports Historians during Public Health Crisis

During the uncertainty of a global pandemic this spring, the AHA has continued to support historians and their work—protesting the destruction of archival records; urging funding for NARA, the NHPRC, and the NEH; and encouraging flexibility and understanding among institutions that employ historians in all fields.

AHA Expresses Concern over Deletion of Immigration Records

In a letter to the Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR) on February 27, the AHA expressed concern over reports that EOIR had omitted close to 1,000,000 records from its September 2019 anonymized data release. The missing records include more than 1,000 applications for relief filed by immigrants in the course of immigration court proceedings, which are not exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

AHA Supports Release of Grand Jury Records of Historical Significance

In connection with the amicus brief in *Pitch v. United States*, which was filed in September 2019, the AHA signed onto a letter on March 2 to the Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure of the United States Courts proposing a revision to Rule 6(e) to specify that the courts can release grand jury records based on historical significance. The proposed amendment would make clear that district courts have authority to order disclosure, in appropriate circumstances, of grand jury materials of historical significance, and it would provide a temporal limit for secrecy regarding grand jury materials that are stored as archival records at the National Archives.

AHA Encourages Funding for NARA and the NHPRC

On March 10, the AHA sent an Action Alert encouraging members to contact their congressional representatives to sign a letter requesting

significant increases in appropriations for 2021 for the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), which preserve and provide access to records and documents vital for historians and for a thriving democracy. That work is threatened by congressional budget cuts. In just the past two years Congress has reduced NARA's already constrained annual operating budget by over \$20 million even as its responsibilities have grown. The NHPRC's allocation is less than half of what it was a decade ago.

AHA Encourages Congress to Support NEH during COVID-19 Crisis

On March 19, AHA executive director Jim Grossman cosigned a letter to the chairs and ranking members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees requesting emergency funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), including support for historians whose income is imperiled by current conditions in higher

education and other history-focused institutions, professional development relating to teaching and other historical work, and other needs relevant to the COVID-19 crisis.

AHA Signs onto Statement Encouraging Temporary Adjustments to Faculty Review and Reappointment Processes during COVID-19 Crisis

On March 23, the AHA signed onto a statement from the American Sociological Association regarding faculty review and reappointment processes during the COVID-19 crisis. The statement encourages institutions of higher education to consider appropriate temporary adjustments to their review and reappointment processes for tenured and contingent faculty, including adjusting expectations for faculty scholarship, limiting the use of student evaluations of teaching, and extending tenure timelines. The AHA also urges all higher education institutions that employ contract and/or part-time faculty to compensate fully for

courses already contracted for summer and fall offerings.

AHA Joins Lawsuit Challenging ICE Records Disposition

On March 26, the AHA joined the Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington and the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations in a lawsuit against NARA and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) challenging NARA's approval of ICE's records disposition, which authorizes ICE to destroy several categories of records documenting mistreatment of

immigrants detained in ICE custody.

AHA Sends Letter to University System of Georgia Opposing Proposed Changes to the General Education Curriculum

In a March 27 letter to Tristan Denley, executive vice chancellor and chief academic officer for the University System of Georgia and chair of the General Education Redesign Implementation Committee, the AHA opposed proposed changes to the general education curriculum. The letter asserts that

the legislative requirement for instruction in the history and government of the United States and Georgia cannot be fulfilled by taking only one course, in either history or political science, and that proper instruction in history can only be fulfilled by trained historians. (See pages 6 and 7 for the complete letter.)

AHA Issues Statement Regarding Historians and COVID-19

On April 3, in a statement endorsed by several peer organizations, the AHA emphasized the importance of

historical thinking in understanding the current crisis and urges all institutions that employ historians to be flexible and humane in considering the needs of their employees and constituencies. (See pages 5 and 7 for the full statement.) **P**

Dana Schaffer is deputy director at the AHA.



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BRIAN CONNOLLY, HANS HUMMER, AND SARA MCDUGALL

WEIRD SCIENCE

Incest and History

The history of family and kinship has been an exciting and productive field of historical scholarship for decades. It strengthened the burgeoning field of social history in the mid to late 20th century and has since served as a nexus for interdisciplinary scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. In its variety and broad temporal sweep, this scholarship has opened up our understanding of how the systems that dominated the modern and premodern worlds—colonialism, slavery, and race among them—have been worked out at the level of intimacy. The complicated history of the incest prohibition is part of this scholarship.

In November 2019, an interdisciplinary team of economists and evolutionary anthropologists published an article in *Science* with a grand and provocative argument. It is also a *historical* argument, made without a historian on the team; consequently, it reduces the complex history of family, kinship, and incest to an abstract data point, one that elides the place of incest in the modern and pre-modern world. We felt compelled to take note. As historians who study incest and kinship, we would never argue that the incest prohibition is of little importance. Nor would we discourage scientists from using history. Even so, historians could have helped the authors make sounder use of the materials they engaged with (and some they did not).

Deploying an influential social-scientific concept known as WEIRD (Western Educated Industrialized Rich Democratic), the article asserts that a distinctive Western psychology—one valuing agency, autonomy, and kindness toward strangers—explains the differential development trajectory of the West and the Rest. “The Church, Intensive Kinship, and Global Psychological Variation” tells a linear story of how Westerners became WEIRD. Beginning in the sixth century CE, when the medieval Church became “obsessed” with incest, the article adopts a claim made by the eminent social anthropologist Jack Goody: that European kinship was transformed in the post-Roman West when Church officials broadened incest prohibitions, discouraged remarriage and adoption, and thereby redirected the flow of property away from families into the Church, weakening kinship. Church authorities codified a prohibition on marriage extending to third and, later, to sixth cousins. Combined with the abolition of polygamy, this resulted in a decline of extended kin networks and the emergence of the monogamous nuclear family. The transformation of the incest prohibition by the Church, the authors conclude, created the foundation for individualism, civil society, and democracy.

The *Science* team took Goody’s idea and performed a battery of statistical regressions to show that the intensity

of WEIRD traits corresponds to the duration of a population’s exposure to western Christianity, as measured by the date of the foundation of Latin bishoprics: the longer the exposure, the stronger the WEIRD traits. This conclusion is reinforced with modern demographic and ethnographic data about rates of cousin marriage, followed by laboratory interviews with living subjects to gauge their WEIRD psychologies.

Historians possess a disciplinary expertise that can help explain the data in ways that go beyond correlations.

The work is promising, with opportunities for exploring the relationship of historical phenomena to the present—a relationship that historians keenly feel but are not always equipped to demonstrate. On the other hand, historians possess a disciplinary expertise that can help explain the data in ways that go beyond correlations of the Freakonomics variety, enriching rather than merely reinforcing our understanding of the multilinear “evolution” of human cultures.

Let us imagine what might have happened had the *Science* research team

included period specialists. First, they would have recognized Goody's description of a Church summarily legislating the WEIRD transformation into existence for what it is: an unworkable model for a time when there was no hegemonic Church capable of implementing such change. As for the population that is alleged to have followed orders and stopped marrying incestuously: we have no evidence for this either. At best, we can discern noble and royal marriages, but we have little sense of broader social patterns. We can document a shift away from polygamous marriage on the part of the powerful in favor of serial monogamy (and serial adultery), but marrying close kin seems to have remained widespread, at least among those visible at the top of the social hierarchy.

Malleable, modified, and routinely flouted, there was never a single set of prohibitions issued by one coherent entity called "the Church" and followed by all Western Europeans. Contests over interpretation remained well into the modern era for Catholics and Protestants alike. While Roman Catholic communities continued to play fast and loose with the rules governing who counted as close kin, the prohibition of "cousin marriage" was left behind in many Protestant societies.

If the demographic frequency of cousin marriage fluctuated over a period of 10 to 15 centuries, it by no means disappeared. Indeed, it was of the utmost importance to the history of capitalism and race in the US, for instance, where

some scholars argue that up to one-tenth of antebellum marriages between white southerners occurred between first or second cousins. This was even more prevalent among wealthy southern planters and functioned to consolidate property within clearly bounded lines of inheritance. Just as important, it promoted the racial purity of "whiteness," acting as a bulwark of white supremacy. When mid-19th-century British and American physiologists and phrenologists debated the legitimacy of cousin marriage and reproduction, many of them favored it.

Studiously excluded from the *Science* study, therefore, are the hallmarks of modernity: European colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade. It is impossible to neatly disentangle



Charles Darwin married his first cousin, Emma Wedgwood, in 1839. They had 10 children during their more than 40 years of marriage, which ended with Charles's death.

Courtesy Richard Carter, portraits by George Richmond

individualism, civil society, and democracy from histories of colonialism and slavery. And the history of incest prohibitions is, in part, a history of the marker between “the civilized and the savage,” a line that has animated the logic of colonialism for centuries; indeed, it marks the earliest studies of kinship by anthropologists, who asserted in the 19th century that evolution moved all of humanity toward monogamous marriage. It was not exposure to Latin bishoprics, then, but the weight of European colonialism that explains why the maps of “kinship intensity” and “cousin marriage” in the *Science* team’s research supplement show no differences between the old Frankish heartlands, the United States, Canada, Mexico, and most of South America.

What all disciplines strive for is a deeper understanding of the human condition; cross-disciplinary work has the potential to illuminate a richer picture.

All of which is to say that the history of the incest prohibition sits at the vexed intersection of sexuality, family, kinship, race, colonialism, and the psyche. To elide that history with cultural evolution is to misunderstand the role of history in mediating . . . cultural evolution. Including historians on the research team could have enriched the interpretation of the data and helped in the development of a more supple explanatory model.

Should the team continue this absorbing research, it can tap promising historical work now being conducted on

early medieval Europe. For instance: though the team makes note of Karl Ubl’s work on incest legislation, it misleadingly uses Ubl’s research to buttress Goody’s thesis. Had someone like Ubl been included on the *Science* team, the team might have been privy to a heightened understanding of the Frankish ecclesiastical, political, and aristocratic pathways responsible for incest legislation. Moreover, Ubl has developed the *Bibliotheca Legum*, a powerful database for researching the early medieval law codes that transmit incest legislation. Similarly, and with the help of a sizable Leibniz Prize, Bernard Jussen assembled an interdisciplinary team whose lexical database makes it possible to explore the political and kinship vocabulary of early medieval Europe. Their work not only will elucidate the shift from the agnatic kinship of the ancient world to the cognatic, “marriage-centered” kinship of early medieval Europe, but will also explore the problem left unexamined by Goody and only partly explained by Ubl: how did a society lacking strong central authorities—compared, say, to Tang China—experience such deep social changes? What exactly was the relationship of this transformation to Europe’s early institutional history?

We can also point with great admiration to the work of an international team of historians, geneticists, archaeologists, and anthropologists who study ethnicity and mobility in late antique and early medieval Europe. Their work is tentatively shedding light on the elusive kinship patterns of pre-Christian Europeans that were more assumed than demonstrated by Goody and the *Science* team who relied on his research. Over the past 15 years, Christopher Johnson, David Sabeian, and Simon Teuscher have examined the broad patterns of kinship from the later middle ages to the present.

Among the many riveting findings made by this group of historians and anthropologists is the rampant rate of cousin marriage in Europe between 1750 and 1850, a development linked to economic strategies in modern capitalism. The practice abated with the onset of Darwinian thought and the geneticization of “blood,” which underscores again the non-linearity of historical and cultural change.

The history of modern Europe, and those areas yoked to European culture by colonialism, is a multiplex story told most profitably by cross-disciplinary work that makes use of the specialized methods we have on offer. We must acknowledge the political contours of this work and avoid positivist traps that lead to pat, linear narratives. After all, what all disciplines strive for is a deeper understanding of the human condition; cross-disciplinary work has the potential to illuminate a richer picture. The history of the incest prohibition is one that opens onto the variegated ways in which family and kinship are made, oppressions and subjection are sustained in intimate life, and broad structures help determine the contours of daily life. This context is lost—and, with it, the possibility of various life-ways occluded—when history is reduced to abstract data. **P**

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Bridging the Two Cultures: Teaching the History of Science and Medicine with Hands-On Labs

In August 2017, Dean College faculty were awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to develop and pilot two courses in the history of science and medicine that incorporate hands-on labs: *History of Science* and *Beyond Henrietta Lacks: Race and Medicine in Modern America*. Piloted during the 2018–19 academic year, these courses continue to run on a regular basis. An interdisciplinary team, composed of two historians and a biologist, carried out the project, working together with the support of external faculty experts.

A project overview, selected course materials and initial findings can be found on our website:

dean.edu/humanitiesgrant



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JESSICA UNGER

THROUGH STORM, FLOOD, AND FIRE

Protecting Cultural Heritage from Disaster



In 2012 after Hurricane Sandy, a specialist working in New York's Cultural Recovery Center vacuumed dried mold from works on paper.
Courtesy Foundation for Advancement in Conservation

FIREARMS FROM THE Civil War, covered in mud, sat on the banks of the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the days after Hurricane Katrina. After Hurricane Sandy, costumes, props, and programs from the famed Martha Graham Dance Company floated in their storm surge-inundated storage room. Swirls of mold covered the walls of a Puerto Rican library from floor to ceiling in the weeks after Hurricane Maria.

We see them with increased frequency and ferocity: the large natural disasters that decimate communities. The sense of loss that accompanies such disasters is acute, a feeling that is heightened when our collective cultural memory is imperiled as well. We rely on objects to learn from past generations and to carry a record of our lives into the future. Books, letters, records, photographs, film, works of art—whether located in our nation’s great museums or cedar chests at home, tangible cultural heritage is found in objects. And those objects are at risk.

Some of these risks are due to inherent vice: organic materials are meant to decay. Collections staff at museums, libraries, and archives work to create controlled environments to delay these processes. But sometimes forces conspire to disrupt those environments. Hurricane winds can knock out a museum’s power and HVAC systems for days. Wildfires can pump soot and smoke into an archive’s ventilation systems. Exposure to these types of conditions can lead to a host of subsequent problems. Wet objects may warp and distort; dyes may bleed. If the environment remains damp for too long, mold will bloom and begin feasting on organic materials. Soot is highly abrasive; it will chafe the surface of exposed artifacts. And sometimes, good intentions in addressing damage can lead to further harm.

What is at stake? It’s not simply a question of property. The unique story contained in each object—and its potential for future research—can be lost as well. As a changing climate brings more frequent storms with increasingly severe consequences, it is incumbent on this generation to start planning now for how to best protect tangible heritage for the future.

Stewards of collections, including librarians, archivists, registrars, collections managers, and conservators, need to learn how to address damage to the objects in their care. Research in this area has moved forward in leaps and bounds over the past several decades, shaped in part by the response to the Florence Flood of 1966. This single event damaged thousands of items of immense historic and artistic value in the heart of Florence, Italy. Over the past half century, the field of disaster response for cultural resources has honed its

methods and developed new techniques, and worked to disseminate this information broadly.

Increased knowledge of materials on the molecular level has helped to drive decision making in responding to damage presented by water, soot, chemicals, or other by-products of disaster. For example, while mold is a major threat, some wet items can be safely frozen in order to create a hostile environment for mold growth. This can be an effective way to buy time for large collections that have sustained damage. Once frozen, some objects can even be safely dried using vacuum freeze-drying, a process that uses sublimation to move the frozen water directly into its gaseous state.

Many cultural institutions now own a copy of the Emergency Response and Salvage Wheel, a go-to guide for how to effectively handle different types of damaged materials. From textiles to photographs to electronic records, this resource provides high-level information about what to do—and not to do—when dealing with affected objects.

As a changing climate brings more frequent storms with increasingly severe consequences, it is incumbent on this generation to plan for how to best protect tangible heritage for the future.

Likewise, as the field of emergency management has professionalized in the United States, the forms and structures of response have taken shape. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) provides a framework for coordinating response and recovery activities. Operating within NIMS are the National Heritage Responders, a group able to provide free assistance to cultural institutions in need. National Heritage Responders offer advice on the phone and send small teams to help direct salvage operations at museums, libraries, and archives.

While establishing resources and processes for disaster response is essential, those activities don’t address the full scope of the disaster cycle. Preparedness and mitigation are critical investments requiring foresight, innovation, and cooperation. Emergency managers and first responders are keenly aware of the risks in their jurisdiction, and they train extensively on how to respond. Collecting institutions that develop working relationships with these professionals benefit from their diligent focus on preparedness. Programs like

the Alliance for Response initiative aim to bring together local cultural heritage professionals with emergency personnel to collaborate on planning, training, and risk mitigation.

These communities form cooperative disaster networks that work together to achieve collective goals. For example, a network in Seattle has a mutual-aid agreement in place for individuals and groups to support each other during the “big one.” In Salt Lake City, a network has collaborated with state agencies to write an annex to the state’s emergency response plan that includes cultural resources. And a network in Minneapolis–St. Paul has developed a guide to working with first responders.

Cooperating on the local level is essential, as each region faces its own challenges in terms of natural hazards. Climate change and its associated extreme weather patterns are changing those hazards as well. California institutions face increased risk of wildfires brought on by drought and extreme heat, while hurricanes gather more power over warmer water, threatening those in their paths with stronger storms. Local networks must be nimble in responding to these changing risk landscapes.

We are already dealing with loss and destruction, and there is more to come.

Recognizing and responding to the threats posed by climate change will be a major challenge for all those working to protect cultural heritage. But those who work in this sector must also recognize the power of heritage in supporting disaster-risk reduction through the communities they serve. Highlighting this connection is The Climate Heritage Network, a voluntary, mutual-support network committed to aiding communities in tackling climate change and achieving the ambitions of the Paris Agreement. The network was conceived in 2018 and launched in 2019; parties may sign onto a “Memorandum of Understanding” to formally participate.

The Climate Heritage Network recognizes that we are already dealing with loss and destruction—and that there is more to come. There are simply some things that cannot be saved. Stewards of immovable heritage (such as buildings and archaeological sites) confronted this reality early on, with slowly rising seas claiming coastal heritage sites. More inevitable loss means that we need to start making decisions about our risk-management strategies. What considerations should be made for those communities that will be displaced

by climate change? How will their heritage be protected when they are forced to move from their homes?

A connection with cultural heritage—with place, with history—offers tools for navigating the societal stressors associated with climate change. Looking to ways that humans managed the environment in the past may present options for a more sustainable future. Likewise, preservation of historic buildings represents a significant path to reduced carbon emissions from the built environment, since “the greenest building is the one that is already built.”¹ Facing the challenges of the future means protecting, valuing, and understanding our past.

Collecting institutions can play a significant role in positioning cultural heritage as a central vector in the fight against climate change. The field has made major strides in being more resilient as it’s worked toward building capacity for disaster response, recovery, mitigation, and planning. However, there is still much work to be done.

In February 2019, the Institute of Museum and Library Services published a report titled “Protecting America’s Collections: Results from the Heritage Health Information Survey.” The data indicate that among the approximately 30,000 collecting institutions in the US, only 42 percent have a disaster plan. What’s more, only 24 percent of all institutions have a plan and staff trained to carry it out. A plan may be helpful, but if it goes unread and unpracticed by staff, then it will be minimally effective during an event. Between those 30,000 institutions, there are approximately 13.2 billion objects held in the public trust. That means there are billions of objects directly at risk due to a lack of planning and training.

Current hazard projections will shift, and shift rapidly, during the coming decades. We must face the reality that not everything can be saved. But the steps we take now will have major implications for the future of our tangible heritage. We must endeavor to educate leaders in the fight against climate change about the knowledge that can be gleaned from past generations. And we owe it to future generations of researchers to protect those items in our care, so that we may pass along a material heritage from which to learn. **P**

NOTE:

¹ Quotation attributed to Carl Elefante.

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LAURA ANSLEY

DOCUMENTING DISASTER

The Recent Louisiana Disasters Oral History Project



The Museum on the Move, housed in a 1954 Airstream trailer, accompanied Liz Skilton's history students on trips around Louisiana. Each week, students reworked the exhibit to reflect the information gathered in previous trips.

Courtesy Liz Skilton

IN OCTOBER 2019, University of Louisiana at Lafayette undergraduate student Shydee Johnson introduced her history class to her hometown. Enrolled in a course that collected oral histories and interacted with the community around the state, Johnson was excited to bring her classmates and their historical research to the music festival organized by her family's radio station, Louisiana Proud KBON 101.1. Johnson loved being able to connect her university and home lives. "Not only was it tremendously successful, with over 100 visitors," Johnson said, but "my classmates and Dr. Skilton were introduced to a huge piece of my life and heart, a 22-year-old radio station that continues to defy the odds."

Over the last four years, Liz Skilton and her history students at ULL have created the Recent Louisiana Disasters Oral History Project. They have traveled around Louisiana to record local experiences of disaster, visiting 36 of the 64 Louisiana parishes since 2016. Covering the Lafayette theater shooting, the 2016 Louisiana floods, and Hurricane Harvey, they have created an archive of materials on gun violence and climate change in the 21st century.

During community events, using the History Harvest model, Skilton's students interview Louisianans about these disasters, asking questions such as: How do individuals and communities experience disaster? What was the immediate and long-term response? How did they rebuild? In courses like fall 2019's *The Historian's Craft* and *Louisiana History*, the students learn directly from the community about the importance of local history and the uses of oral history.

In 2019, the project added a new component: a Museum on the Move. The museum—housed in a 1954 Airstream trailer owned by the Lafayette Department of History—was used previously for exhibits on the history of Louisiana women, the oil industry, and Mardi Gras. With this addition, students conducted two types of interviews: oral histories of Hurricane Harvey and participants' impressions of the museum. The museum itself evolved throughout the semester and was constantly updated to reflect the new information learned in interviews.

Skilton began the Recent Louisiana Disasters Oral History Project by collecting the stories of those affected by the 2015 mass shooting in Lafayette. On July 23 of that year, a gunman killed two people and injured nine others at an evening showing of the comedy film *Trainwreck*. The shooting led the film's screenwriter and star, Amy Schumer, to become a gun-control advocate; she has appeared with her second cousin and now Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer to call for stricter laws and increased mental health services.

National attention quickly moved on, but researchers wanted to know more. As part of a team funded by the National Science Foundation, Skilton's role "was to document and provide data on the historical effect of the mass shooting in the community." As in many places that survive such gun violence, "there was an outpouring of response to the mass shooting incident, such as the creation of the #LafayetteStrong movement," Skilton said, "and I wanted to measure this at different moments post-incident."

Teaching in Louisiana offers a unique opportunity for a historian of disaster like Skilton. In 2017 and 2018, she turned to collecting stories of the 2016 Louisiana floods, centered on the one- and two-year anniversaries of the flooding. This research resulted in a podcast created by two of her undergraduate research assistants. With storms like Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastating the state, Louisianans have experienced varying levels of catastrophe, and each has a story about these events. And it is likely that climate change will lead to stronger storms, increased damage, and the further loss of American lives in this low-lying state.

Covering the Lafayette theater shooting, the 2016 Louisiana floods, and Hurricane Harvey, Skilton's students have created an archive on gun violence and climate change in the 21st century.

"Sometimes a community is interested in talking, but other times it is not," Skilton has learned. "But I do find that communities where we have an established field-work record are more apt to work with us in the future, and even at higher rates of participation." And Skilton's understanding grows with each new oral history project. She's learned how to answer a number of questions over the last four years. "Do you set up at a festival or a library? How do you advertise it? How do you make sure you're getting a wide range of the population to come out?"

The 2019 project, collecting on Louisianan experiences with Hurricane Harvey, was the most ambitious yet. Funding from the Louisiana Endowment from the Humanities, part of a larger rapid-response grant to study the effects of Hurricane Harvey from the National Endowment for the Humanities, helped Skilton and her students hit the road. Between September and November, the students piled into a van each weekend and, accompanied by the Airstream

museum, visited all 12 parishes that were declared federal disaster zones when Harvey made landfall in August 2017. Students learned that just because a disaster zone was declared, that doesn't mean the area was decimated by the storm. Though most associate Harvey with devastation in Texas, these Louisiana parishes played a huge role in the disaster response. One parish was the site of a mega-shelter for evacuees from across Louisiana and Texas, and stories from first responders became a major focus of the 2019 collection events.

An immense amount of work went into planning and implementing 12 trips around the state. Graduate assistant Annabelle Smith was pleased to see their hard work pay off at their first site visit. Along with undergraduate assistants Mary Catherine Constant and Wesley Brown, Smith was responsible for some of the early organizing, contacting site hosts in the early stages of planning and spearheading the publicity for these events. "The first time I saw the museum completely put together and in the field for our Natchitoches history harvest," Smith said, "it was incredibly rewarding to see all of our hard work come together and see people's interest in what we were doing."

All materials from the Recent Louisiana Disasters Oral History Project will be donated as an archival collection to the Center for Louisiana Studies.

Constant concurred: "I was showing someone our mobile museum in Acadia Parish, and as we were walking out, they told me that what we are doing for Harvey is really important, and they are glad that we are doing it." She is proud of their work: "These disasters affect our communities, and they have the power to change someone's life irrevocably if we aren't knowledgeable about them."

The oral history aspect of the classes was new for many of the students. Brown interviewed the mayor of Lake Charles, Louisiana, learning "how a mayor of a large city deals with a hurricane during and after the storm; what actions are taken by the government on the local, state, and government levels; what condition the community is in after the hurricane; and the steps taken to achieve change." Conducting oral interviews and transcribing them were new skills that Brown learned in the course that could be useful in many professional fields.

Students also created their own historical interpretation of these recent events. Those in the Louisiana History class created podcasts, using local history research and their interviews to build a picture of each parish they visit. The Historian's Craft students were tasked with updating the museum exhibits and interactive elements displayed in the Airstream on each site visit. The exhibits changed with the information they gleaned from previous site visits, making the museum itself as much a part of the collection project as the oral histories.

Along with the oral histories themselves and student creations like podcasts, Skilton's team has been building a series of maps that visually show disaster across these different projects. Students used data collected at site visits to map individuals' experiences during the hurricane against rainfall and electricity outage data using GIS modeling. All materials from the Recent Louisiana Disasters Oral History Project will be donated as an archival collection to the Center for Louisiana Studies.

Skilton hopes that these collection events will continue in future years, and she is still figuring out how to use all of these new sources. "One of the things that we find," Skilton said, "is that people want to know that their story was not only preserved, but that it was used and used quickly." Academic publishing can take a long time, so she and her students are "thinking through how we can better participate, in a digital age, in ways that allow for analysis of these sources we're collecting, but that also process and present the material in rapidly." Podcasts have been one way of analyzing the material quickly, allowing people to listen and participate in the analysis.

Using their 2019 data, the students created one last exhibit. According to Skilton, they got to "take our research (which was structured and changed with their input) and analyze and present it in the final form." The resulting museum exhibit, "Reflections of Hurricane Harvey in Louisiana," is on a local tour through spring 2020. **P**

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R.E. FULTON

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL WITH THE ANTHROPOCENE?

Reflections from AHA20



Bowhead whales like these, photographed in the Arctic Ocean, are just one of the fascinating topics related to the Anthropocene presented by historians at AHA20.

GPA Photo Archive, US Dept. of State/Flickr/CC BY-NC 2.0

MY FATHER HOLDS a PhD in atmospheric science, studies the mechanics of hurricanes, and believes that climate change is a hoax. In leaving my hometown behind, I've stepped out of a world where the rhythms of nature are fixed and safe, where a spring so warm that the Southern Hemisphere catches fire is nothing but a thaw come early, and into one where the vagaries of the weather represent monumental shifts in our existence—a world where the sunshine outside my window is a reflection of corporate greed, systemic environmental collapse, and human error on an unprecedented scale.

Although the implications of climate change and its relationship with humanity seem most directly linked to fields like atmospheric science, historians also have begun to investigate this phenomenon. At the 2020 AHA annual meeting, many scholars asked the pressing question: How do we, as historians, operate in such a world?

Scholars have given that world a name: the Anthropocene. The term, cropping up in panel titles and plenaries throughout the weekend, refers to a proposed geological epoch in which human action has become the defining force in Earth's environments and ecosystems. It's a slippery word. Scholars who agree, broadly, that we're living in the Anthropocene disagree on when it began: The 16th century? The Industrial Revolution? Or was it the 1950s? It's a term with many definitions and interpretations, and while the discourse around the Anthropocene tends to swirl around the foreboding reality of anthropogenic climate change, conversations at the 2020 AHA annual meeting revealed that historians may be uniquely poised to extract new forms of knowledge from the Anthropocene.

John R. McNeill (Georgetown Univ.), the 2019 AHA president, believes that, by combining new techniques like paleogenomics with traditional archival research, we can do just that. In his presidential address, McNeill wondered whether we might be approaching “peak document”—a moment, as he put it, when written documents will produce diminishing returns, becoming less useful than nontextual sources such as genes, proteins, and LiDAR (light detection and ranging) imagery. Consider, he suggested, the death registers of an outbreak of plague in 17th-century Milan. Facing such archival sources armed only with the tools of textual research, a historian might learn a great deal about the names and numbers of the epidemic—but by analyzing proteins clinging to the pages of the same documents, one might gain the ability to analyze the diets of the clerks who took down the names. Teeth, McNeill reminded us, are a daily record of growth, nutrition, and stress in humans in

the same way that the rings in a tree's trunk constitute a legible biography of the plant itself. Using teeth as historical sources gives us access to a new version of childhood health history—one that might extend far beyond the written texts available on children's health.

By learning to use the tools necessary for understanding such sources, and by engaging in research in multidisciplinary teams, McNeill suggested, we may lengthen our sense of history, redistribute the power and privilege that often make some written texts more accessible than others, and even restructure the academic job market, encouraging a move away from specialization in period and region and toward a system that values expertise in tools and collaboration.

Throughout AHA20, I saw historians echoing McNeill's address and modeling exactly such archival reinvention, turning away from letters and journals to sources as varied as cows, satellites, winds, and rivers. In a session chaired by Kate Brown (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), “Forensic History: New Material Sources and Methods for Historians of the Anthropocene,” Timothy James LeCain (Montana State Univ.), Dagomar Degroot (Georgetown Univ.), Bathsheba Demuth (Brown Univ.), and Megan Black (London School of Economics) explored the histories of the cattle industry in the American West, global climate change, whaling, and mineral-driven imperialism through nontextual sources. Going into the session, I was unsure what to expect—from a traditional archival standpoint, it was hard for me to imagine how, as LeCain promised, a cow could “Create Many Histories.”

Historians may be uniquely poised
to extract new forms of knowledge
from the Anthropocene.

The result: surprising, rich re-visions of histories I'd thought I knew. LeCain called on the work of animal behavior expert Temple Grandin to tell the story of the cattle drive from the perspective not of the cowboy, but the cow. He demonstrated that mapping out the longhorn's unique plane of vision explains why cowboys rode slightly behind and to the side of cattle as they moved—a response to the complex social nature of the cow. In this light, the cattle drive becomes not simply a monumental human undertaking in which cattle were mindless cargo, but an instance of “extended culture” in the symbiotic cooperation of two social animals.

Bathsheba Demuth, similarly, reimagined the whaling industry of New England by first describing the culture of bowhead whales, a species of baleen whale living in the waters of Beringia, between Russia and Alaska. Bowheads, which live at least two centuries, are extremely social creatures. By repeatedly diving and resurfacing, Demuth explained, the whales “do work that makes the places where they live more alive,” moving nutrients upward from deeper waters. Indigenous cultures in the surrounding region understand the whales as animals living in a country of their own—a country invaded in the 1850s by sailors from New England who viewed whales as little more than sources of precious oil. Eventually, through repeated interactions with whaling boats, bowheads seemed to learn that the tall Yankee ships didn’t want to approach the edges of pack ice, and so they hid there, “refusing,” as Demuth put it, “to die for capitalism.” Textual sources from the time period, which called the whales “wild,” “shy,” and even “canny,” reflect a new awareness on the part of human actors of the conscious role whales played in forcing the industry to abandon the Bering Strait as a site for whaling.

Addressing the Anthropocene in our histories may mean more than picking new sources to work with.

Hearing history that is interpreted from the perspective of nonhuman actors carries not only new insights, but also a certain flavor of certainty often absent in textual analysis. Brown summed up this fundamental value of “forensic history” in the plenary on the Anthropocene: “People lie. Pine trees don’t.”

But addressing the Anthropocene in our histories may mean more than picking new sources to work with. During the plenary, anthropologist Zoe Todd (Carleton Univ.) spoke of the many names given to our current ecological state that speak to the unevenness of responsibility for humanity’s impact on Earth—“capitalocene” and “White-supremacy-cene” stand out. We have arrived at our current historical position, Todd argued, through the actions of specific actors—and to undo their work, we must dismantle white supremacy and reconfigure our relationship to land, water, and Earth. Todd urged historians to decolonize historical thinking and to turn to indigenous, non-Western cosmologies for guidance, replacing the global logic of “extraction, expansion, domination, and death” with reciprocity, kinship, and relationality.

What does this look like in practice? I’m not sure, but some scholars are pointing the way to this work. In the “Air, Wind, and Sky: Histories of an Omnipresent and Invisible Force” session, Alyssa Kreikemeier (Boston Univ.), Elaine LaFay (Univ. of Pennsylvania), Ela Miljkovic (Univ. of Houston), and Laura Uribarri (Univ. of Texas at El Paso) traced the impacts of settler colonialism on the meteorology of the American West and Mexico. Kreikemeier, in her account of the colonization of northern New Mexico by “lungers” seeking a fresh-air cure for tuberculosis, argued that New Mexico’s air itself literally led to its acceptance as a US state. LaFay, likewise, investigated settlers’ treatment of Texas’s “norther” winds as political instruments used to gauge how viable land might be for white settlement. Ryan Emanuel (North Carolina State Univ.), presenting during the “Alternate Currents: New Approaches to the Environmental History of Water” session, described the reciprocal relationship between the Lumbee Tribe of which he is a member and the Lumbee River, which runs through his home state of North Carolina. Examining shifting ecological conditions and increasing flooding, Emanuel asked: Can the values of indigenous ancestors help us to think about artificial drainage? His history of the Lumbee River is not a static narrative about the past, but a resource of knowledge for action and activism in the present.

A theme of any conversation about the Anthropocene is controversy and disagreement: What is it, what should we call it, and how, having named it, should we move forward? Whatever the Anthropocene is or may become, our challenge as historians is to inhabit this epoch as both actors and researchers. As historians living in the Anthropocene, we are responsible for untangling the complexities of a past that, as McNeill reminded us in his presidential address, may really extend beyond what we have been accustomed to call history and into what is called—wrongly in McNeill’s view—prehistory. But we must also grapple with the weight that our actions hold in the present as the raw materials of a future history we are engaged in writing, along with the full ecological scope of the planet. If there is one lesson from explorations of the Anthropocene at AHA20, it is that this is a historical task none of us can afford to ignore. **P**

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NANCY TOMES

MEDICARE FOR ALL IN THE AGE OF CORONAVIRUS

A History of US Health Care Debates



This field hospital was constructed in Brookline, Massachusetts, during the 1918 influenza epidemic. The coronavirus pandemic has led to similar emergency measures, such as the field hospital erected in New York City's Central Park in April. And it's unclear what lasting impact this crisis will have on the American health care system.

National Archives and Records Administration, 165-WW-269B-019

IN THE BEST of times, trying to make sense of the US health care system is a difficult undertaking. Now that the coronavirus has upended American lives, the terms of political discussion about health care are likely to change again in ways that are hard to anticipate. To pass the time as we huddle in our homes during the COVID-19 pandemic, a history of the US health care system might help with understanding the terms of the debate and what is at stake.

Prior to this crisis, health care reform had already emerged as a leading issue in the 2020 election campaign, especially in the Democratic Party. Democratic candidates have proposed various reform agendas, among which Medicare for All (MFA) got the most attention. For reasons that are not entirely clear, repackaging the concept of a single-payer health care program—an idea that has been around for at least 50 years—has succeeded in making the idea more politically viable. The phrase Medicare for All was first adopted by Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy in 2007; it was popularized by presidential candidate Bernie Sanders in 2016 and endorsed by a growing number of Democrats in Congress during the 2018 election. MFA proposes expanding Medicare, the federal program established in 1965 to provide health coverage for people 65 and older, to cover all Americans. Candidates who support MFA remain vague about how this would happen, what it would cost, and who would pay for it. At the same time, advocates argue that MFA will fix the well-documented dysfunctionality of the US health care system, including its uneven coverage, high costs, grave inefficiencies, and overall fragmentation of care.

The US has long been an outlier among nations in its approach to health care. It is the only country with a so-called advanced economy that does not provide universal coverage for essential health services. Fellow member nations of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development took many different paths to arrive at the goal of universal coverage from the 1950s to 1970s. Some chose a mix of public and private options, while others adopted single-payer systems, but all were seeking change after the devastation of World War II. Many political leaders in other countries came to see universal coverage as a desirable goal that government involvement was necessary to achieve.

In contrast, postwar US political leaders rejected the idea of universal coverage and decided against direct government involvement in the provision of health care. Instead, Congress provided generous indirect support, funding medical research through the National Institutes of Health and subsidizing hospital construction through the Hill-Burton Act, passed in 1946. Changes in the Food and Drug

Administration gave pharmaceutical companies added incentives to develop new prescription drugs. In theory, the expansion of private, employer-based medical insurance plans would make it possible for Americans to afford the better (and more expensive) care these indirect investments provided. This private insurance system linked coverage to being a valued worker; while it was initially a perk of white-collar occupations, unions secured the same for many blue-collar workers in the 1940s and 1950s. In line with its Cold War superpower status, the US promoted this “free enterprise” approach to health care as far superior to the “socialized” medicine being adopted in other countries.

But by 1960, the problems inherent in this privatized, employer-based system had already become apparent. Once employees retired, they lost their coverage, just when they needed it most. Workers in nonunionized fields or small businesses were not offered insurance, and their low wages made it hard to afford a doctor’s care without it. Meanwhile, this system allowed doctors and hospitals to set their own fees, inflating the cost of medical care and further widening the gap between those with and without insurance.

The US has long been an outlier among nations in its approach to health care.

These issues figured prominently in the presidential election of 1960. Democratic candidate John F. Kennedy won a narrow victory over Republican candidate Richard Nixon, in part because he promised to pass Medicare, a program he said was desperately needed in “every city and town, every hospital and clinic, every neighborhood and rest home in America—wherever our older citizens live out their lives in want and despair under the shadow of illness.” Kennedy’s assassination helped his successor, Lyndon Johnson, overcome fierce opposition from the medical profession and the GOP, and make good on that promise. In 1965, Congress created Medicare and Medicaid to extend publicly financed coverage to the elderly and low-income families, respectively. But Medicare was set up on the same fee-for-service principles as private insurance, helping accelerate the inflation of health care costs. The problems already apparent by 1960 just worsened.

Thus began a long, frustrating search for health care reform that saw various plans proposed and defeated, from the single-payer system proposed by Edward Kennedy and other Democrats in the 1970s to the hybrid system proposed by the Clinton administration in the 1990s. Finally, in 2010,

Congress passed the Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare, to create a new mechanism for expanding coverage: an insurance exchange administered by the federal government where people could buy private insurance covering essential health services. Due to Republican opposition, the legislation did not include a public option that would have let people choose a government-sponsored plan. Ever since, Republicans have been working to overturn the Affordable Care Act. Their alternatives—having patients shop by price and making them more responsible for paying for the care they want—have not proven popular among voters.

COVID-19 will no doubt fundamentally change the terms of the MFA debate, as the crisis exposes the US health care system's weaknesses.

Democrats are trying to take advantage of that weakness in the 2020 elections. During the 2020 campaign, candidates Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren went on record supporting MFA. Other candidates offered narrower fixes aimed at making the current system work better: those who are satisfied with their employer-based coverage may keep it; those without coverage or who want to change theirs can opt into the Medicare program or some other kind of public option. Instead of MFA, this is “Medicare for all who choose it.” Not surprisingly, this debate became highly polarized. While Democratic candidates supported the principle of universal coverage, they disagreed over how to achieve those goals, while Republicans attempted to turn MFA into a liability that would help Trump’s reelection.

Both MFA and its alternates inspired fierce resistance from within the health care industry. Since the 1970s, the US insurance system has fueled a huge expansion of the health care sector. Any measures that threaten to change the economic incentives created by that complex system have been and will continue to be fiercely resisted. The health insurance industry, the American Hospital Association, and the American Medical Association all oppose MFA. In their view, Medicare currently does not pay physicians and hospitals enough, so it would be a mistake to expand it.

That was the state of the health care debate before the coronavirus pandemic arrived in the US. The ensuing chaos will no doubt fundamentally change the terms of that debate, as

the COVID-19 crisis exposes the US health care system’s weaknesses. Without universal access to good-quality prevention and treatment, many Americans face the pandemic already suffering from chronic conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, and obesity, that heighten their vulnerability to the virus. Federal funding for public health functions, including tracking infectious diseases, is half of what it was before the 2008–09 recession. As a result, the US faces a two-fold meltdown in medical and public health services. Hospitals are being inundated with very sick patients with too few ventilators to treat them with and not enough personal protective equipment for the workers who care for them. With the pandemic making it impossible for hospitals to schedule the medical procedures that pay most of its bills, they are going deeply into debt; some are laying off health care workers even as the crisis escalates. Meanwhile, due to historic inequalities in health care access and quality, the pandemic is wreaking havoc on poorer Americans who lack income, food, and housing security, as well as health insurance.

In these ways, the coronavirus calls attention to the enduring problems of the American health care system. The pandemic threatens to reveal the terrible cost we pay for failing to provide universal coverage for all Americans. In the eyes of proponents of universal coverage, the current system reinforces many dangerous assumptions: that people do and should control not only the course of their own individual health—demonstrably untrue—but should control other people’s as well; that cost barriers are necessary to keep people from abusing health care by using “too much of it;” that health care works best when delivered on a for-profit basis regulated to benefit those who make the profits; and that a highly privatized health care sector can respond nimbly to new public health threats. These assumptions have led to the systematic undervaluing and underfunding of the *public* health resources that leave us unprepared for the global pandemics that are likely to become a routine part of 21st-century life. **P**

Nancy Tomes is Distinguished Professor of History at Stony Brook University. She is the author of The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women and the Microbe in American Life (1998) and Remaking the American Patient: How Madison Avenue and Modern Medicine Turned Patients into Consumers (2016), winner of the 2017 Bancroft Prize.

ALEX LICHTENSTEIN

HAITIAN LEGACIES

In the June Issue of the American Historical Review

This year marks the bicentennial of a momentous event in the history of the revolutionary Atlantic. In 1820, after two decades of postrevolutionary turmoil and civil war, the nascent Republic of Haiti unified under autocratic president Jean-Pierre Boyer. Although such unified sovereignty provided the “Black republic” with a nominal stability, it hardly ended the island’s enduring poverty and political corruption. Nevertheless, 1820 marked Haiti’s launch into the Atlantic world as a sovereign nation. The June issue of the *AHR* offers both a Forum and a Roundtable on the important, if once neglected, place of Haitian history in the Atlantic world.

The Forum, “Haiti in the Post-Revolutionary Atlantic World,” includes two articles followed by a comment. In “Repairing Damage: The Slave Ship *Marcelin* and the Haiti Trade in the Age of Abolition,” **Mary D. Lewis** (Harvard Univ.) observes that between 1814 and 1831, French slave traders trafficked approximately 200,000 enslaved individuals across the Atlantic basin. A small, but still surprising, number of their slave ships stopped in Haiti on their return voyage after selling captives elsewhere in the Americas. Using the case of the brigantine the *Marcelin* as her prime example, Lewis demonstrates how legitimate commodity trading with Haiti could serve as a cover for illicit French slaving in the abolitionist era. She situates the *Marcelin* within a hidden “second slave trade,” one that emerged as European countries abolished the transatlantic trade on paper but continued it in practice, leaving very limited historical traces. Lewis reconstructs the contours of the French participation in this proscribed commerce from fragmentary archival evidence, while arguing that, ultimately, the archive itself can do violence to the realities of the 19th-century slave trade.

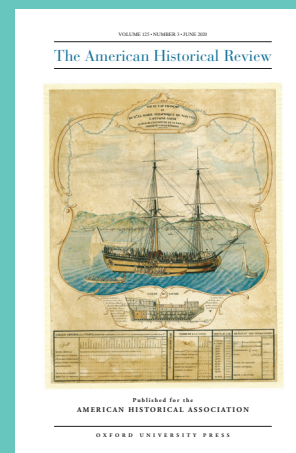
If Lewis traffics in Haiti’s hidden history of commercial exchange and networks, **Julia Gaffield** (Georgia State Univ.) considers the new republic’s emerging role on the diplomatic stage. Her article, “The Racialization of International

Law after the Haitian Revolution: The Holy See and National Sovereignty,” explores how the Haitian state shaped international definitions of sovereignty and national legitimacy after its Declaration of Independence in 1804. Haiti’s 19th century was not a period of isolation and decline, she reminds us; instead, its first six decades were globally connected as the country’s leaders challenged their postcolonial inequality with diplomacy and state formation, forcing the Atlantic powers to redefine the boundaries of international relations. Gaffield emphasizes Haiti’s decades-long negotiations with the Catholic Church, illuminating the racialization of the global hierarchy within the 19th-century “family of nations.” Even as the Haitian Republic cultivated internal policies and practices that rejected predominant racist assumptions, these same discriminatory ideologies became increasingly explicit in an international legal system in which Haiti sought to demonstrate its sovereign status.

The June issue of the *AHR* offers both a Forum and a Roundtable on the important place of Haitian history in the Atlantic world.

Finally, in “From Revolution to Recognition: Haiti’s Place in the Post-1804 Atlantic World,” **Manuel Barcia** (Univ. of Leeds) offers a trenchant response to Lewis’s and Gaffield’s contributions. Appreciating both articles’ place within a wider body of scholarship that looks at the Age of Revolution across oceans and nation-state borders, Barcia emphasizes their ability to reveal how postrevolutionary Haiti’s international position influenced the strategic imperatives of Atlantic powers, often exposing their underlying racist ideologies and deceitful policies. By engaging with issues that go beyond Haiti and its transformative revolution, Barcia notes, both Gaffield and Lewis offer persuasive arguments pertaining to crucial aspects of international trade, diplomacy, and politics of the first half of the 19th century.

The slave ship *Marie-Séraphique* at harbor in Haiti in 1773 (watercolor; artist unknown, Musée d'histoire de Nantes). This image, from the peak years of the French slave trade with Saint-Domingue (today's Haiti), illustrates the primary currency of the slave trade, which lay in textiles and metal products. Such products would remain telltale signs of slaving when the transatlantic trade became illegal. In "Repairing Damage: The Slave Ship *Marcelin* and the Haiti Trade in the Age of Abolition," Mary D. Lewis uses an 1818 receipt full of suspicious products sold in Haiti to reconstruct the voyage of a French brigantine, demonstrating how it used a stopover in free-soil Haiti as a cover for illicit slave trading in Cuba. Situating the *Marcelin* within a "second slave trade," Lewis shows how illicit slave trading was most "successful" when it left the fewest archival traces. Her article is part of an AHR Forum titled "Haiti in the Post-Revolutionary Atlantic World," which also includes essays by Julia Gaffield and Manuel Barcia and is accompanied by a review roundtable on Julius S. Scott's *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution*.



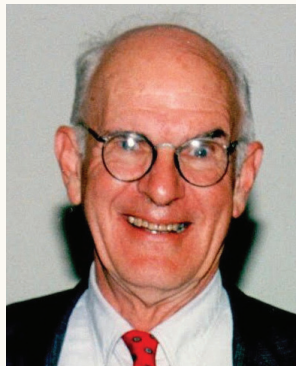
If a single work inaugurated the scholarship of the Age of Revolutions upon which Lewis, Gaffield, and Barcia build, it was Julius S. Scott's 1987 dissertation, "A Breathing of the Common Wind: The Sea, Politics, and Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution." Scott's influential and long-simmering unpublished work on the plebian information networks instrumental to and unleashed by Haiti's revolutionary moment, now published as *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (Verso Books), has already been the subject of numerous workshops, conference panels, blog posts, and published roundtables. The *AHR* asked six scholars of Caribbean, Haitian, and Atlantic history—**Brandon Byrd** (Vanderbilt Univ.), **Laurent Dubois** (Duke Univ.), **Natasha Lightfoot** (Columbia Univ.), **Matthew Smith** (Univ. College London), **Cristina Soriano** (Villanova Univ.), and **Sasha Turner** (Quinnipiac Univ.)—to offer brief thoughts on the impact of Scott's work on the study of Haiti and the ongoing ripple effects of its revolution.

The rich material on Haitian history does not exhaust the June issue's contents. **Caroline Dodds Pennock** (Univ. of Sheffield) provides a different perspective on Atlantic history in her article, "Aztecs Abroad? Uncovering the Early Indigenous Atlantic." Indigenous people are often seen as static recipients of transatlantic encounter; Pennock points out, influencing the Atlantic world only in their parochial interactions with Europeans. In fact, she shows, thousands of Native Americans crossed the ocean during the 16th century as diplomats, entertainers, traders, travelers, and, sadly most often, as enslaved people. As a result, Pennock argues, Indigenous people created a worldview framed in transatlantic terms. Focusing on purposeful travelers of "Aztec" (Central Mexican) origin, she uses the distinctive context of the 1500s to rethink the meaning of the "Atlantic world," positing Native people as global actors who created and transformed

social, economic, political, and intellectual networks. Pennock discovers a truly "Indigenous Atlantic," allowing us to reimagine the history of the ocean itself as a place of Indigenous activity, imagination, and power.

New global imaginaries are also the subject of the issue's final article, **Hilary Kaell's** (Concordia Univ.) "Renamed: The Living, the Dead, and the Global in Nineteenth-Century U.S. Christianity." Over the 19th century, thousands of North Americans and Europeans paid to sponsor and rename foreign children in mission stations across the world. Piecing together extant records, Kaell discovered that US Protestants commonly renamed foreign children after their own beloved dead, offering insight into how Americans who never traveled abroad still cultivated global subjectivities. By nurturing relations with enchanted presences, such as God, angels, and the dead, these otherwise disenchanted believers cultivated a sense of themselves as subjects who were Christian, American, and globally engaged. For grieving families, renaming appeared to impress their dead kin's "qualities" onto foreign children, creating what they viewed as unique opportunities to collaborate with the dead and reconstitute ruptured domestic relations. Focusing on middle-class Protestants in the US, a group often assumed to be the most disenchanted of 19th-century moderns, this article calls for more attention to the "otherworldly" in histories of global relations and imaginaries. Indeed, the affinities between Haitian *loa*, the ghost-like intermediaries who link the world of the living with the world of the spirits, and the renaming rituals described by Kaell are quite striking. **P**

Alex Lichtenstein is the editor of the American Historical Review.



Roger H. Brown

1931–2020

Historian of Early America

Roger H. Brown loved the White Mountains of New Hampshire as much as he loved libraries. A great hiker, with a long stride, in England he would be called a strong walker. After a life of adventure with books and in the outdoors, Roger passed away on March 19, 2020, at 88 years old.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, to a family of New Englanders, Roger attended Exeter Academy, then Harvard University, where he earned his BA (1953) and PhD (1960). He was a teaching assistant for Samuel Eliot Morison and spoke often of his mentor, Frederick Merk. A historian of early American politics, Roger's research focused on the origins of the United States and the experimental, even tenuous, nature of the early republic. Before completing his graduate studies, he authored *The Struggle for the Indian Stream Territory* (Western Reserve Press, 1955). Roger's first major book, *Republic in Peril: 1812* (Columbia Univ. Press, 1964), argued that partisan rancor in the 1790s was the foundation for the decision to go to war with England, but that war was ultimately undertaken to secure the republic. In short, James Madison and the Republicans of 1812 had an admirable, even laudable, ambition for war.

In 1993, he published *Redeeming the Republic: Federalists, Taxation, and the Origins of the Constitution* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press). Based on extensive study of state politics in the 1780s, Roger showed a pattern of failure to meet the financial contributions needed by the central government. He argued that taxation, as instrument and practice for a nation in debt and seemingly without the means to become solvent, became the leading cause for champions of a federal government under the new Constitution and then for establishing a "Republic, firm but flexible, that would last for the ages." In the *American Historical Review*, this work was described it as "superbly researched" and "must reading for every student of the period."

Roger taught at Dartmouth from 1960–63, but he spent the core of his academic career (1965–98) at American

University, where he also served as history department chair. Always generous to the university, Roger founded Friends of the Library at AU. He also funded a graduate student dissertation-completion fellowship, remembering how meaningful that kind of support had been for him at a similar stage. He continued to offer courses as an emeritus professor, to the great delight of the many students who were inspired by his passionate commitment to the craft and the discipline of history and to the importance of early America. Students remember his uncanny mastery of intricate histories, his ability to render complex historical analysis in pithy stories, and his kindness with colleagues and students alike.

A descendent of the Roger Brown who fought at Lexington and Concord during the American Revolution, Roger appreciated his family's early American heritage. He also used that heritage to teach and to learn. He enthusiastically showed students an 18th-century gentleman's silk suit—more than one student remembers the agony of watching Roger stuff his very tall person into a very small and seemingly fragile jacket. And he shared family papers with his fellow scholars.

A keen sportsman as well as outdoorsman, Roger also loved theater and the arts and was a member of St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Reston, Virginia, for many years. Roger is survived by his beloved wife, Nancy Barrow Brown; his children, Matthew and Jennifer, from his first marriage to Christine Brown; his stepchildren Martha Buonato, Sarah Wright, Lisa Wright (widow of his late stepson Chris Wright), and their families. A wide circle of family, colleagues, and friends will miss him enormously. From North America, Britain, and Africa, many from this far-flung circle attended an online funeral service in late March. Roger will be buried in the family plot at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord, Massachusetts.

Karin Wulf

*Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture
and William & Mary*

Photo courtesy Brown Family



David F. Healy

1926–2019

Historian of US Foreign Policy

David F. Healy, professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and historian of US foreign policy in the Caribbean, died on April 28, 2019, in Fort Collins, Colorado. He was 92.

As a bookish child in River Falls, Wisconsin, David exhausted the holdings of the town library, prompting the family doctor to warn his parents that their son would be blind before adulthood. Unconvinced, the Healys moved to Madison, Wisconsin, the Midwestern Mecca of learning, where David graduated from high school. At age 18, he went off to war, serving in the US Merchant Marine and US Navy during World War II and the Korean War.

Like other members of the Greatest Generation, David came relatively late to his profession. Between two tours of military service, he earned his degrees from the University of Wisconsin–Madison: a BA in history in 1951 and a PhD, under the direction of Fred Harvey Harrington, in 1960. According to David, “after zigzag maritime wanderings” in the South Pacific and the Caribbean, “my life as a history professor became orderly and linear.” He began his teaching career at Illinois College (1960–64) and published his dissertation as *The United States in Cuba, 1898–1902: Generals, Politicians, and the Search for Policy* (Univ. of Wisconsin Press) in 1963. From Illinois College, he moved to the University of Delaware (1964–66) and then the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee in 1966, where he remained until his 1998 retirement. His publications grew apace: *US Expansionism: The Imperialist Urge in the 1890s* (Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1970); *Gunboat Diplomacy in the Wilson Era: The US Navy in Haiti, 1915–1916* (Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1976); *Drive to Hegemony: The United States in the Caribbean, 1898–1917* (Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1988); and *James G. Blaine and Latin America* (Univ. of Missouri Press, 2001).

To appreciate the early maturity and authority of David’s scholarship, one could do no better than to read the AHA “blue pamphlet” that he wrote in 1967. These publications

were designed to keep history teachers abreast of historiographic trends; in practice, they often served PhD candidates preparing for prelims. In David’s hands, AHA Publication Number 69, “Modern Imperialism: Changing Styles in Historical Interpretation,” turned into not just a timely review of the literature, but a timeless work of literature itself. Replete with his boundless knowledge, balanced analysis, and gifted prose, the document bears reading today as a model for the historian’s craft.

David’s avowed first priority, however, was teaching. He shunned reductions in his teaching load; his only leaves were for teaching positions in England, Germany, and the Soviet Union. His clear and compelling lectures made him a favorite among students. His student Ted G. Carpenter dedicated one of his books to David, writing, “David taught us that there are no easy answers; only a daunting array of important questions that deserve to be asked.”

As an admiring colleague and dear friend of 52 years, I might add that David had an unerring eye for naked emperors. He was the smartest guy in the room, who always asked the consequential question. A dispassionate scholar, a passionate champion of social justice, and a military veteran, David enjoyed respect above the fray.

Late in life, David took up downhill skiing, motivating him and his wife, Ann (also a scholar and a skier), to retire in Colorado. David made the most of the mountains, skiing into his late 80s. And he made the most of his time: still reading everything in sight, writing, publishing, volunteering for good causes, and traveling the globe (appropriately visiting Cuba shortly before he died).

Following David’s wishes, his ashes were cast into the Poudre River, whose mountain waters from the Colorado ski slopes might carry the sailor-scholar into the Caribbean.

Tragically, David and Ann’s daughter, Ellen, was struck and killed by a truck in 2007 in Boulder, Colorado. Surviving David are Ann (still skiing), sons Matthew (Kim) and Jonathan (Anita), and grandchildren Timothy and Alexandra.

Walter (Bud) Weare
University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (emeritus)

Photo courtesy Anita Healy



Karl Hufbauer

1937–2020

Historian of Science

Karl Hufbauer, professor emeritus of history at the University of California, Irvine, died on January 28, 2020, at his home in Seattle, Washington, after a long struggle with diabetes and Parkinson's disease.

Karl was born in San Diego, California, on July 7, 1937. He earned joint degrees in history (BA) and engineering (BS) at Stanford University in 1959 and a diploma in history and philosophical science from St. Antony's College, University of Oxford, in 1961. He obtained his PhD in the history of science from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1970, with a dissertation directed by Roger Hahn, Hans Rosenberg, and Charles Susskind.

Karl began teaching at the University of California, Irvine, only one year after its creation and spent his entire career there, from 1966 through 1999. During this period, he sat on countless departmental, school, and university committees (including the important Committee on Academic Personnel). He served as chair of the history department from 1992 to 1996, and from 1997 to 1998, he was director of the Education Abroad Program in Copenhagen, Denmark, and Lund, Sweden. His colleagues remember him as a truly outstanding administrator and chair—a person of undisputed integrity, always well-informed and impartial but insistently pursuing the interests of his academic unit and of his colleagues, always firm in his commitments and convictions, and always fair-minded. He was also an outstanding teacher.

In his scholarship, Karl sought to understand and describe the history of science as a social product, in part under the influence of Thomas Kuhn—with whom he studied during his first year at Berkeley. “I believe that the central problem of the history of science,” he once wrote, “is to understand how scientific knowledge has been generated and certified in different social contexts.” To exemplify his conceptualization of science, Karl focused on two extended case studies. In 1982, he published *The Formation of the German Chemical*

Community, 1720–1795 (Univ. of California Press), an expansion of his PhD dissertation that examined how increasing social support for chemistry in Enlightenment Germany enabled chemists to form one of the first national discipline-oriented communities. His second book, *Exploring the Sun: Solar Science since Galileo* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1991), studied the history of inquiries into the sources of stellar energy and the fruitful collaboration of astronomers and physicists in their effort to understand this phenomenon. The study was commissioned and supported by a grant from NASA. These projects embodied Karl's interest in the conditions and considerations that inspire some scientists to venture outside the familiar ground of their own disciplines in pursuit of interdisciplinary connections and conclusions. He also published a large array of reviews and articles.

Karl retired in 1999 and relocated to Seattle, Washington, to be close to his daughter and grandchildren. After retirement, Karl participated regularly in the meetings of colleagues interested in the history of science at the University of Washington.

Beyond his academic interests, Karl was a mountain climber, a scuba diver, and a passionate rock hound. Despite his passion for stone, he surprised his colleagues when he took up sculpture after retirement. He purchased a set of electric sculpting equipment and worked for several years in his basement and in a rented studio. He took regular trips to hillsides and creek beds throughout the western United States looking for promising material on which to work. Several of his creations were purchased both locally and nationally, and a number are on public display: in one of Seattle's leading hospitals, in a sculpture garden on one of the San Juan Islands, and in the Huntington Library Gardens of San Marino, California.

Karl is survived by his wife of over 59 years, Sally; his children, Sarah Beth, Benjamin, and Ruth; and six grandchildren. His friends and colleagues will miss him very much.

Timothy Tackett
University of California, Irvine (emeritus)

Photo courtesy University of California, Irvine



Charles Royster

1944–2020

Historian of American War and Society

Charles Royster, a student of early America and the Civil War, died on February 6, 2020.

Born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1944, Charlie grew up in California. Ever the individualist bemused by dominant customs, he regularly carried a briefcase to class in 1960s countercultural Berkeley. At the University of California, Berkeley, he earned a BA and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in 1966 and an MA in 1967.

Charlie then served in the US Air Force, including as an intelligence officer in Thailand during the Vietnam War. He returned to Berkeley and completed his PhD in 1977 under the direction of Robert Middlekauff. He spent two years as a fellow at the Institute of Early American History and Culture at the College of William and Mary, followed by two years as an assistant professor at the University of Texas at Arlington. In 1981, he arrived at Louisiana State University, where he became a Boyd Professor in 1992, the highest academic honor the LSU system bestows on a faculty member and one he richly deserved.

Between 1979 and 1999, Charlie published four major books: *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775–1783* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1979); *Light-Horse Harry Lee and the Legacy of the American Revolution* (Knopf, 1981); *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans* (Knopf, 1991); and *The Fabulous History of the Dismal Swamp Company: A Story of George Washington's Time* (Knopf, 1999). *A Revolutionary People at War* won five awards, including the Francis Parkman Prize, and *The Destructive War* won the Bancroft and Lincoln Prizes and the Sydnor Award. He also edited the Library of America's edition of William T. Sherman's memoirs.

Charlie was a voracious reader of manuscripts and other primary sources; anyone who doubts his exhaustive research need only look at the first footnote in *The Destructive War*. He possessed a gift for sprightly prose and vivid description.

He worked hard to develop his insightful interpretations but also to structure his books to best explain them. The Guggenheim Foundation supported his scholarship, and he held fellowships at both the National Humanities Center and the Huntington Library. The Huntington, one of his favorite places to work, became a second home. He was also elected to the Society of American Historians.

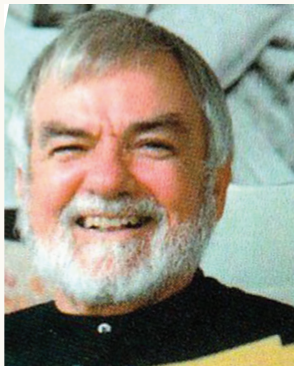
Research and writing always remained Charlie's passion, but he took his teaching and service responsibilities at LSU seriously. His undergraduate courses on the Civil War and American military history usually enrolled over 100 students, to whom he delivered captivating, sophisticated lectures. He was a rigorous graduate mentor. As a senior member of the department, he supported the scholarship of his colleagues. He helped promote the department's culture of civility, entertaining faculty and graduate students with his sharp wit and wonderful stories.

Although his work consumed him, Charlie was in many ways a Renaissance man. He thrived on urban culture, particularly that of Washington, DC, and San Francisco. He loved opera and good theater, especially the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. He proved equally passionate about fine restaurants.

A stroke in 2005 brought his writing career to an end. He returned to teaching for a brief time, only to retire permanently in 2012. He never could resume serious work on his new topic, the Vietnam War. As a result of his early research, though, he edited and wrote an introduction for James O'Neill's *Garrison Tales from Tonquin: An American's Stories of the French Foreign Legion in Vietnam in the 1890s* (Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

Charlie's insights on the Vietnam War would have been fascinating to read, as he had already shaped historians' understanding of two of America's most important wars. Charlie always bristled at being termed a "military historian," although he would admit that he studied "war and society." Given that he wrote two books on wartime rage and violence, another on one of early America's more scandalous figures, and a fourth on a get-rich scheme among its founders, perhaps he was, more than anything else, a historian of human follies and failings.

Gaines Foster
Louisiana State University



Joel Williamson

1929–2019

Historian of the
American South;
AHA Life Member

Joel Williamson died on November 9, 2019, at the age of 90, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Born in 1929 to the Rev. Henry James and Carrie Mae Swaney Williamson in rural Anderson County, South Carolina, Williamson grew up in red hills farmland, in the cotton fields where the rolling Piedmont climbs into the steep elevations of the Blue Ridge. In 1944, at age 15, he went off to the University of South Carolina (USC), where he chose to major in history as a result of his interest in the archival resources of the city and the university. As his student Gaines Foster often noted, Williamson always had an attraction toward primary sources, something he imparted to all students.

Williamson earned his BA (1948) and MA (1951) from USC; the Korean War interrupted his graduate work, when he became a US Navy communications officer. Discharged on the Pacific Coast, he attended the University of California, Berkeley, where he worked with Kenneth M. Stampp and Charles G. Sellers, earning a PhD in 1964. His dissertation became his first book, *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861–1877* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1965), which has continued to be a vital account of the period. *After Slavery* was dedicated to his first wife, Marie Ahearn Williamson (deceased), with whom he had beloved children William, Joelle, and Alethea.

Hired at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1960, he was tenured in 1966, named the Lineberger Distinguished Professor in 1985, and awarded emeritus status in 2003. In 2000, he was honored with a named chair in the department, the Joel R. Williamson Distinguished Professorship. He created an innovative and interdisciplinary undergraduate course, Introduction to Race Relations, which drew hundreds of undergraduates every semester and became his signature teaching achievement. As a teacher, Williamson had a profound personal impact on many of his students; it was an appreciative undergraduate alumnus, John A. Powell, who established the Williamson Professorship. He also attracted excellent graduate students,

mentoring a baker's dozen of scholars, and many more whose dissertations he read and critiqued.

He won seven grants, including from the Ford Foundation, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, and the Guggenheim Fellowship, to fund his copious research. In 1966, he began the long road to *The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1984). It was a “big book” that began even bigger; a long section of the manuscript became *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattos in the United States* (Free Press, 1980), an important book in its own right. Nevertheless, as he put it, “the writing machine stopped and died” about 1980, and he doubted his ability to finish the project. However, in 1983, he married artist Anna Woodson Williamson; she deserves some credit for the remarkable publishing activity that ensued almost immediately. A Pulitzer Prize finalist and winner of the Francis Parkman Prize and the Ralph Emerson Book Award, *The Crucible* was such a commercial success that Oxford University Press issued *A Rage for Order* (1986), an abridged version designed for undergraduate classroom use.

Williamson published two more books, forays into biography. *William Faulkner and Southern History* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1993) was his second Pulitzer finalist; it led to special appointments at Harvard University's Charles Warren Center and Stanford University's Center for the Study of the Behavioral Sciences, as well as a senior advisory position with the National Humanities Center. In Williamson's final years, he wrote, with Donald L. Shaw, *Elvis Presley: A Southern Life* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2015), which argued that it was teenage girls breaking the bonds of 1950s sexual norms who made Elvis what he was.

In his final years, he developed dementia and eventually lost the ability to speak, though he still wrote out fascinating notes about Tennessee Williams, Eudora Welty, and Margaret Mitchell. With Anna's help, he tended his spiritualist side, even accomplishing yoga routines with some of the country's prominent yogis.

Joel Williamson, ever searching and researching, ever reaching and teaching, and ever seeking, was to the end the historian's historian.

Jack Roper
Coastal Carolina University

Photo courtesy Anna Williamson

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Middle East. Wesleyan University's History Department invites applications for a visiting assistant professor

to teach the history of the Middle East. The position will run from September 1, 2020, until May 31, 2021. Teaching responsibilities for visiting professors at Wesleyan are a 2-3 teaching load (apportionment to be decided at time of appointment) and will include the History of the Middle East survey and 1-2 courses on Islam or Islamic Civilization. Teaching might include supervision of

undergraduate senior theses, essays, or research projects. Candidates must have a PhD in history or related field in hand by the time of appointment to be hired as a visiting assistant professor; a successful candidate may be hired as a visiting instructor if the candidate does not have a PhD in hand at the time of appointment. Please contact Ethan Kleinberg (ekleinberg@wesleyan.edu) if you

have questions about the position or process. Apply at <https://careers.wesleyan.edu/postings/7320>. Note for Interfolio users: We gladly accept letters of recommendation from Interfolio. From your Interfolio account, please use the "web delivery" method to upload your letters directly to our online application.

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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.



AHA CAREER CONTACTS

Are you a graduate student or early-career scholar who is interested in learning about the career paths open to historians?

Are you a history PhD employed beyond the professoriate with advice and experience to share?

Jonathan Sureau, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, flic.kr/p/fdp8i6

Sign up to participate in AHA Career Contacts, a service that matches graduate students and recent PhDs with historians employed beyond the professoriate for one-time informational interviews.

For more information and to sign up, visit www.historians.org/aha-career-contacts.
Questions and feedback about the program should be directed to Dylan Ruediger, Career Diversity Coordinator,
druediger@historians.org

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Contributors

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