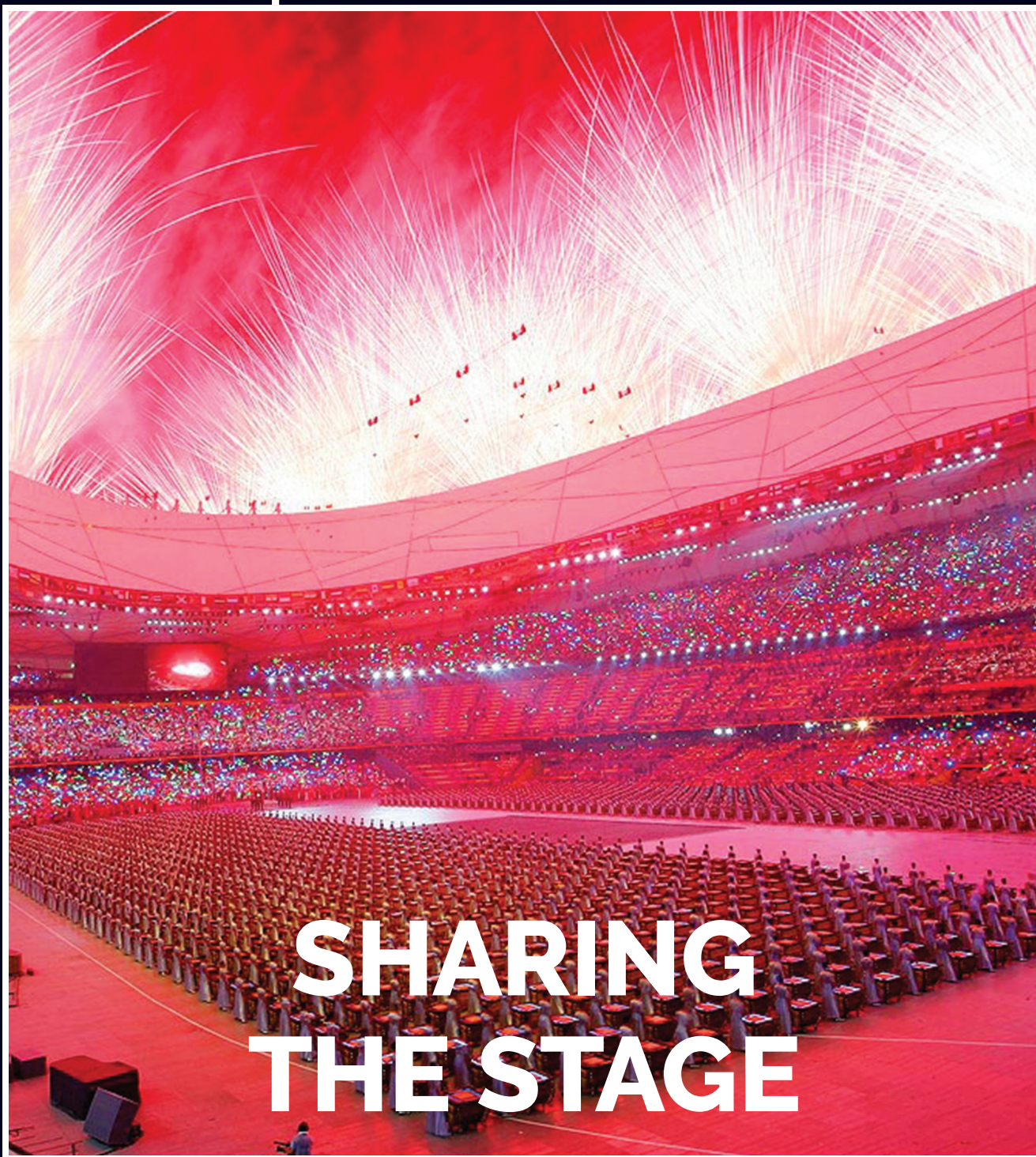


The newsmagazine of the American Historical Association

PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

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October 2020



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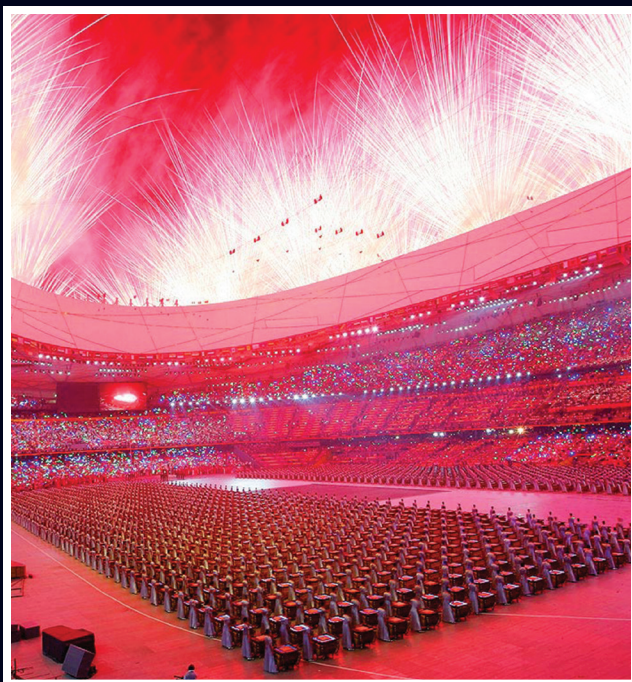
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Putting China as Rival into Historical Context

JOHN DELURY



ON THE COVER

The International Olympic Committee delayed the 2020 games in March and we missed watching everything from archery to gymnastics to wrestling this summer. But we aren't completely deprived of Olympics content. In this, our second election-themed issue, John Delury points to the 2008 Beijing Olympics as an important pivot point in the relationship between the United States and China. In "China as Equal," he explains that the 2008 Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony announced "China's arrival as a first-world power."

wuqiang_beijing/Panoramio via Wikimedia Commons/CC BY 3.0. Image cropped.

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News magazine of the

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400 A Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003-3889

PHONE: 202.544.2422

FAX: 202.544.8307

EMAIL: perspectives@historians.org

WEB PAGE: historians.org/perspectives



PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

Editor

ASHLEY E. BOWEN

Managing Editor

LAURA ANSLEY

Editorial Assistant

KAREN LOU

Web and Social Media Coordinator

ALEXANDRA F. LEVY

Manager, Data Administration and Integrity

LIZ TOWNSEND

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Executive Director

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AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
INCORPORATED 1884

ASHLEY E. BOWEN

TOWNHOUSE NOTES

A Simple but Audacious Goal

I've used the expression "drinking from a fire hose" to refer to my work life more in the last five months than I ever have before. On one hand, it's been inspiring to see the creativity and enthusiasm historians are bringing to the myriad crises of 2020. They're offering important, nuanced takes on everything from COVID-19 to election issues, monuments, and remote education. On the other hand, I suspect that the sheer number of current events that demand historical context has distorted *Perspectives*' focus.

Readers of the September and October issues, as well as much of the *Perspectives Daily* online content this summer, would be forgiven for thinking that *Perspectives* is primarily a publication that focuses on history of the 19th- and 20th-century United States. Two election-themed issues, coupled with a pandemic that shows no signs of waning and the urgent work of Black Lives Matter, mean that we've been somewhat myopically focused on the United States. Even the election articles related to international affairs have, by nature, centered on American interests. This is important work that I'm proud to see in the magazine; it is also not reflective of the historical discipline as a whole.

We have a simple but audacious goal for *Perspectives*: the magazine's content and its author pool should reflect the diversity of the AHA's members. At present, we fall short of that goal. Membership data from 2020 reveal that many of our members do, in fact, study US history—five of the top 10 field and geographic specializations are US-focused. Yet the Americas other than the United States and early modern Europe also make the top 10 and are woefully underrepresented in the pages of *Perspectives*. The thematic side is not much better. Cultural and political history are the two most popular thematic specializations among our members, so we could be forgiven for our heavy emphasis on articles related to contemporary politics and daily life. In contrast, religion, the third most popular thematic specialty among the AHA's members, is all but absent from our recent work.



Author diversity is just as important to us as diversity of content. To that end, we have begun to collect self-reported demographic data from our authors so that we can establish a baseline on their race, gender, education, and employment. We launched that author survey in July and hope to be able to gauge where *Perspectives* stands in relationship to the AHA's total membership next summer. Data alone do not solve problems—and can even create their own—but it's better than evaluating such issues by gut feeling alone.

Reaching this goal will be a slow and ongoing process. As anyone who publishes knows, there is often a long lag between manuscript submission and publication. I don't pretend that we will solve this problem quickly or that the results of our efforts to do so will be immediately visible. I am, however, certain that we can begin to make an impact by changing our practices: by querying different authors, connecting with new (to us) networks, and shifting our policies and procedures. Fortunately, we are not starting from scratch. I am indebted to my predecessors, who took important steps toward making *Perspectives* a magazine that reflects the richness of the discipline and the diversity of historians.

As part of this process, I must ask for your help. Please pitch story ideas to *Perspectives*, encourage your students to submit their writing, recommend a colleague who could write for us. For information about submitting to *Perspectives*, including style guides and a submission form, visit historians.org/perspectives/submit.

At its best, *Perspectives* cultivates the community of historians and promotes our work. Cultivation is an intentional, deliberate process and one that I take seriously. Let's continue to build a vibrant, diverse *Perspectives* together. **P**

Ashley E. Bowen is editor of Perspectives on History. She tweets @AEBowenPhD.

Recently Published Online in *Perspectives Daily*



The Baltimore Collection, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware

Building Archives, Training Scholars

Allison Robinson

Working with two digital history projects during her MA studies taught Allison Robinson the value of digital work.

Looking Out for Each Other

Leah Valtin-Erwin

COVID-19 is just the most recent crisis to throw the grocery store employee onto the frontlines of rapid and disorienting change.

Counting on the Census

Rachel Basinger

Summer columnist Rachel Basinger describes how short census questionnaires stunt historical research.

Plus Member Spotlights, Grants of the Week, and more!

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MARY LINDEMANN

OUR COLLEAGUES

Contingent Faculty in the Age of COVID-19

The COVID-19 crisis has wreaked havoc on the careers of virtually all faculty and graduate students. Teaching, research, and even administration have become increasingly difficult to negotiate, and this semester promises to be every bit as difficult as the last. Adding to these problems are the awful issues of layoffs, furloughs, and budget cuts. Just as distressing are the closing or amalgamation of departments and divisions, the disappearance of “less popular” majors, and the reduction, or total abolition, of research money, teaching resources, library facilities, and support centers and institutes.

If we all feel the pain, it has been non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty who feel it first and most acutely. They are the most likely to lose their jobs or have their income reduced. It is the responsibility of all securely employed members of a department, but especially department chairs and faculty holding administrative positions, to do what they can to improve the situation.

As an immediate response, the AHA has initiated a Historians Relief Fund for AHA members who are under- or unemployed, inside or outside of academia, during the COVID-19 crunch (for more details, visit historians.org/relief-fund). I hope that those of you who are in a position to do so will make a donation.

Department chairs and regularly employed historians should work with our NTT colleagues and professional organizations to rectify what is within our grasp. In today's context, it will likely be difficult to persuade administrators to do more for contingent faculty. Budget cuts, an emphasis on STEM fields to the detriment of the humanities, and concern about enrollments have made many administrators unwilling to take action. These sorts of larger trends are ones that departments and individuals can do little to alter on their own.

The AHA remains deeply committed to *Improving the Status of Non-Tenure Track Faculty*, the title of a statement approved

by the AHA Council in January 2020. Let me urge all of you, particularly department chairs and administrators, to read and heed that statement to the best of your ability. Many of the suggestions, especially those concerning departmental governance, assignment of office space, delegation of teaching responsibilities, use of departmental facilities, presence on the departmental website, arrangements for full library access, and more, lie well within the discretionary power of most chairs and departments. The statement also urges chairs to “promote” NTT faculty interests to upper administrators on issues relating to pay, job security, and benefits (health insurance, in particular). Chairs may not win battles around pay or benefits, but they *can* advocate for their contingent colleagues by being vocal about the value they bring to the university and the imperative of paying a living wage.

The AHA remains deeply
committed to improving the status
of non-tenure-track faculty.

Over the last decade, perhaps even longer, there have been repeated and justified outcries about the situation of contingent faculty in academia. Before the dimensions of the COVID crisis became fully apparent, the *New York Review of Books* published an article on contingent faculty, “Serfs of Academe,” in the March 12 issue. My first reaction was repugnance. There is no doubt that adjuncts are often treated abysmally. As one administrator said to NTT faculty, “You are not considered faculty, or even people. You are units of flexibility.” But the word “serf” bugged me. It seemed too flippant and sly to capture the real problems with which many contingent faculty contend. The discussion of what the academic labor market is like—how we deal with the status of NTT and adjunct faculty, their low pay and lack of benefits—ebbs and flows, while little is done to change it. I do not have a magic formula for



reversing this trend; it is a complex problem of economics and expectations. And not all contingent faculty are cut from the same cloth. For some, contingency proves a temporary situation, but for too many others, it has become a permanent fact of life.

I am not unfamiliar with the issues confronting NTT faculty. Like many of my cohort, I worked as an NTT faculty member for five years in the 1980s and was seven years out of the PhD before I got a tenure-track (TT) job. That was a happy outcome, and I fully realize that it is not necessarily a typical one. The prospects for TT jobs at that time, while never rosy, were certainly brighter than now. The two NTT positions I held were relatively cushy; as a visiting assistant professor, I either replaced a faculty member on sabbatical or had a longer-term appointment. Although I taught four courses a semester, I had benefits, an office, and congenial colleagues. Nonetheless, everyone who has held contingent or temporary positions suffers from the emotional, intellectual, and financial strains that go with them.

We enrich our intellectual lives and our teaching by actively engaging with our NTT colleagues.

Much later, as a department chair for a decade, I was in the lucky position of having no contingent faculty on staff, with the exception of one long-term lecturer. Thus, I was spared from employing people who not only held a contingent position but were poorly compensated and often considered disposable by the administration. The decision to hire only TT faculty was supported by the entire department, although the administration wasn't as happy about it. The department has, however, often employed visiting assistant professors, on one- or two-year contracts, who teach one course more per semester than TT faculty. These faculty members receive full benefits (medical and retirement) and access to departmental research funds, including an all-expenses-paid trip to one major conference a year.

Some problems our contingent colleagues encounter lie far beyond the capacity of single departments or individual administrators to deal with. In the January 2020 issue of *Perspectives*, executive director James Grossman and Becky Nicolaides, then a member of the AHA Council, outlined how “academic units can play a more positive role” in supporting the research of NTT faculty. Their recommendations are excellent; some will be considerably

more difficult to implement than others, but nonetheless they remain worthy goals.

But what about us as individuals? My suggestions are small ones, but if inadequate to address the bigger problems, they lie within the control of most permanent faculty. Far too often, contingent faculty are treated as though they are invisible. Even if some benefit from certain advantages—an office, access to funds for teaching or research—permanent faculty often fail to acknowledge their existence. A little commonsense humanity goes a long way. Departments differ in their social relationships; some are very chummy, some are not. Generational variation also plays a role. Admittedly, right now, the amount of socializing that we can have with *any* faculty is severely limited. Still, those of us who run speakers' series or an institute can be sure to invite our NTT colleagues to attend. We should also pay attention to those colleagues who may not actually be teaching at the moment or happen to be “in the area” for nonacademic reasons. Surely, we can invite them to whatever functions we hold. Offer to read their work, help them make contacts, peer-review their classes, volunteer to write letters, ask their opinions, and value their input.

This is not just “being nice”; we enrich our intellectual lives and our teaching by actively engaging with our NTT colleagues. Bringing contingent faculty into decision-making or administrative positions is one way to do this, yet at the same time we need to be careful that engagement does not slip over into exploitation. Be sympathetic and realistic, but avoid getting caught in repeated gloom-and-doom conversations. In short, treat NTT faculty like you would treat other colleagues, because they *are* colleagues. **P**

Mary Lindemann is president of the AHA.

JAMES GROSSMAN

NORMS, FACTS, AND THE LAW

Political Spectacle in 2020



I begin to write this as an opera singer performs “Hallelujah,” “Ave Maria,” “God Bless America,” and “America the Beautiful” to close a spectacular event at the White House capped by a long presidential speech. The smoke from a fireworks display over the nearby Washington Monument is visible from my home. Approximately 1,500 spectators sit shoulder to shoulder with barely a mask in sight. More than merely an audience, they are part of the spectacle itself.

What is happening here? As a historian, and a resident of the Swamp, I would normally take little notice of such theater. Spectacles at the White House are a dime a dozen, which is why we have so many military bands, one of them designated “the President’s Own.” Washingtonians have grown accustomed to looking toward the monument for over-the-top fireworks displays. Lots of elegantly dressed white people in chairs on the White House lawn? Nothing unusual about that; more frequent in recent years, perhaps, but also a sight with a very long tradition. Maybe a few more American flags than usual, but we’re used to White House gatherings that blow smoke, literally and figuratively. The goal of a spectacle, after all, is often to obscure reality, even to create *unreality*.

But “normally” does not apply to this week, and this was no “normal” event. It was a nomination extravaganza, culminating in an intensely grim and partisan speech that named the president’s opponent 41 times. Normally, sitting presidents accept their party’s nomination someplace other than where they sit each day—the White House. Normally, the secretary of state does not speak to a nominating convention, drawing a time-honored (if performative) line between diplomacy and politics. Normally, half of the “key speakers” at a presidential nominating convention are not members of the president’s family. Normally, the Secret Service isn’t depleted by officers sidelined due to preventable exposure to dangerous conditions. And normal presidents, in times of national crisis, seek to unite—even

superficially, even temporarily—rather than divide the nation.

I’m well aware that in this year of COVID-19, millions of Americans—including the AHA staff, all of whom are working remotely—inhabit a world in which little feels normal. Businesses across the country are closed, despite available staffing and strong demand for their goods and services. Baseball is played in empty stadiums. Reminiscent of William McKinley on his front porch in 1896, one candidate campaigns from his basement. But in each of these cases and thousands of others, the shattering of norms is an imperative driven by the unambiguous advice of medical experts amid a pandemic. Norms that must be broken should be broken.

Norms that must be broken
should be broken. . . . Some norms
are worth defending.

Some norms managed to remain in place during the spectacle on the South Lawn. Normally, White House audiences don’t wear masks. Nor did they this evening, while seated normally, in rows. Here, the spectacle was the *maintenance* of a norm, because normally a national leader might be expected to heed the advice of medical professionals. In this case, ignoring that advice—violating the “new normal” mandated in cities across the country (including Washington, DC)—was a purposeful component of a carefully scripted performance. It is not normal for a national leader to divide a nation by transforming violation of public health norms into a symbol of virility, political loyalty, constitutional guarantees, or American individualism.

Why does this matter? After all, a significant aspect of liberal education is teaching our students to question

authority (intellectual and otherwise), to interrogate the very concept of “normal.” For historians committed to the idea that human agency creates change, any notion of a fixed or innate normality makes little sense—intellectually, politically, culturally, or spiritually.

I’m wrestling with that, reluctant to sink to the level of “only norms that I value shouldn’t be questioned.” It’s not hard to find that perspective (nearly always implicit) in Washington, where many norms, intentionally or not, inhibit change. In some cases, the persistence of norms is clearly insidious, such as those that concentrate power and perpetuate exclusion. In others, norms are essential to public confidence in government, such as veracity and integrity. And sometimes, it’s complicated, as in the many aspects of compromise and collegiality perhaps essential to doing public work.

Nobody can make informed decisions unless they accept the imperative of getting the facts right.

Somewhere in this swamp lies a relationship between norms and ethics that, if I were still teaching, I would take into class tomorrow. In a graduate seminar, I might introduce the AHA’s *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct* to address the South Lawn spectacle and the use of spectacle historically to blur or distort reality. For historians, a bold line, a norm I accept, is laid out in the statement this way: “All historians believe in honoring the integrity of the historical record. They do not fabricate evidence.” Although “multiple, conflicting perspectives are among the truths of history . . . [and] historians can sometimes differ quite vehemently not just about interpretations but even about the basic facts of what happened,” we don’t make stuff up. We might disagree about what the evidence says and argue about which evidence matters; we don’t say something didn’t happen when clearly it did.

The president has described this as “the most important election in the history of our country. At no time before have voters faced a clearer choice between two parties, two visions, two philosophies, or two agendas.” Historians might consider the importance of the election of 1800, which created a norm for succession after victory by an opposing party. Or the election of 1860, which led to upending an assumption shared by much of the nation that

it was right, just, and somehow *normal* for some humans to own others as legal, conveyable property. But the second sentence probably wasn’t too far off: as the number of persuadable voters has declined, the space between the parties has become a chasm.

What makes this spectacle important is not only the significance of the impending election, but the way the spectacle poses norms and ethics in relation to fact and law. We all make mistakes. If in a 70-minute speech I make 25 claims that are untrue or grossly misleading, the ethical thing to do is to issue a public correction. News media adhering to their professional norms and ethics do this regularly. Nobody in government, in business, in higher education or elsewhere can make informed decisions unless they accept the imperative of getting the facts right. None of us want our medical professionals or auto mechanics to make decisions in an environment where they are free to accept, reject, or invent evidence based on self-interest. Some norms are worth defending.

And then there’s law. It may not be normal for a president to blatantly campaign from the White House, but it is not *legal* for anyone other than the president or vice president to use federal resources for that purpose. Norms intrude again. It is not normal for a high-level federal official to dismiss such violation not because she denies the *fact* of her actions, but because the fact simply doesn’t matter. “Blah, blah, blah,” said the president’s senior counselor Kellyanne Conway. “If you’re trying to silence me through the Hatch Act, it’s not going to work. Let me know when the jail sentence starts.”

If the law is irrelevant, if facts don’t matter, and if norms are no stronger than one man’s whims, then “law and order” is as much mere smoke from the fireworks as a spectacle scripted to replace medical science with political theater. It’s just blah, blah, blah. P

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

ROBERT DARNTON

A NEW VIEW OF EVENT HISTORY

Collective Consciousness As a Historical Force

Shaken like other citizens by the current crisis, historians are questioning some of the fundamentals of their craft. For my part, I find myself rethinking the notion of events and their relation to collective consciousness—an amorphous concept, I admit, yet a powerful force in history, one that should be distinguished from public opinion and that deserves more study.

We have witnessed many varieties of public opinion in 2020. Americans have taken sides in arguments about wearing protective masks, aiding the unemployed, participating in demonstrations, and monuments to the Confederacy's "Lost Cause," to say nothing about politicians. Despite our differences, however, we share a general sense of crisis. We have been swept up in collective anxiety about the direction of the country and a widespread need to reassess its past. Whether we favor removing or preserving statues, we recognize that the symbolic landscape is undergoing fundamental change.

Although historians have often studied disasters and their effects, they have not done justice, in my opinion, to the way events transform symbolic environments. Events do not come naked into the public sphere. They come clothed in attitudes, values, frames of mind, recollections of the past, and

projections into the future, full of passion, hope, and fear. A history of events should include the way events become absorbed in collective views of the world.

One difficulty, at least for those of us who study France, is the scorn for "event history" among the historians of the *Annales* school at the height of its influence after World War II. To them it was superficial—the froth that floated on the surface of the past as opposed to the deep currents that drove entire societies. A deeper understanding of history could only be attained by studying the play of structure and conjuncture over long stretches of time. In practice, that usually meant constructing statistical series that indicated the shape of a society as it evolved over the centuries—patterns in demographic, economic, and social structures.

By the 1960s, the *Annalistes* also made room for "the history of mentalities," but it, too, tended to be abstract and statistical. At the same time, British historians led by E. P. Thompson demonstrated the importance of understanding "history from below." American historians such as Eugene Genovese responded with similar, in-depth studies of social movements. A professional ethos developed: the deeper the history, the better.

A great deal has happened since those days, including attempts (notably by

Pierre Nora) to revive the history of events, which had been left by the professionals to popularizers, among them some wonderfully talented historians such as Barbara Tuchman and David McCullough. Unlike the older social history, however, the recent work does not address the problem of understanding collective states of mind.

A history of events should include the way events become absorbed in collective views of the world.

Although "the collective imaginary" is a commonly used term, it makes some of us uncomfortable. It is distressingly vague. It conjures up other amorphous ideas such as "mindset," "climate of opinion," "ethos," and the venerable but well-worn *zeitgeist*. Despite their ineffability, however, I think those ideas possess conceptual power, and they can help in the attempt to rethink event history.

Collective views certainly exist. They are somewhat like language: we share a common idiom, even though we speak with different accents and personal intonations. Yet they cannot be studied in the same way as politics and economics—that is, with the assumption that

the subject matter is unproblematic and with methods that, if employed uncritically, amount to little more than seat-of-the-pants positivism. How can the history of collective consciousness be studied with conceptual rigor?

We could begin with Claude Lévi-Strauss's insight that some things are good to think with. Ordinary people carry a great deal of mental baggage around with them—some of it explicitly doctrinal, as in the Nicene Creed or the Pledge of Allegiance, most of it implicit, as in some varieties of racism. We do not generally connect propositions in logical sequences as we make our way through our daily business. Instead, we ruminate on events—both small occurrences limited to the neighborhood and major happenings that strike the consciousness of everyone in the country, sometimes nearly everyone in the world.

The latter kind of event has now become familiar. Americans know the

feel of it from their experience of the assassinations of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., from 9/11, and, as I write, from the combined effects of the coronavirus, the economic collapse, and the revulsion against racism.

The effort to understand this sort of collective experience could profit from the sociology of Gabriel Tarde, who developed a controversial theory of imitation as a general social force and applied it to the experience of reading the daily newspaper. Tarde wrote during the late 19th century, when readers commonly consulted papers in cafés. Their political views differed enormously, he emphasized, yet they were conscious of reading about the same events at the same time as other readers in other cafés, thereby participating in a common consciousness. Benedict Anderson adopted a similar view in *Imagined Communities*. Nationalism, he argued, developed in colonial

societies from the collective experience of reading—that is, from the sense of belonging to an imagined collectivity and not merely from the message of particular books.

Erving Goffman's "frame analysis" supplements these insights with an account of how groups construe reality. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, he shows how interactive behavior involves theatricality, even in ordinary situations such as ordering a meal in a restaurant. It is not simply that the participants play roles, Goffman argues, but that in doing so they define what the situation actually is. When we attend a performance of *King Lear*, we share the audience's common experience of witnessing a tragedy, even if we differ from others in our evaluation and interpretation of it. The white coat and professional manner of pharmacists tells their customers that the sale of medicine is a matter of providing scientific relief for



The gardens of the Palais-Royal were a great center of rumors and agitation in 18th-century Paris.
 Print by Louis Le Coeur, *The Palais Royal—Garden's Walk / Promenade du Jardin du Palais Royal*, 1787; National Gallery of Art, 1942.9.2265.
 Image cropped

a health problem; it is not simply a commercial transaction. From one interaction to another, we are constantly fashioning reality.

The perception of events was therefore as important as the events themselves.

My own research on the emergence of what I call a revolutionary temper in Paris from 1749 through 1789 provides a historical example. Recently I completed work on the events of 1788, using correspondence, diaries, newspapers, and clandestine journals that contain reports about happenings during nearly every day of the year. Different opinions appeared everywhere, yet a common sense of crisis emerged from the daily news, whether it was communicated by pamphlets, gossip, street singing, or “public noises.” As contemporaries perceived it, the crisis came down to a threat of oppression that they defined as ministerial despotism.

While building on the work of others who have studied ideological discourse, social structure, and material culture, I hope to show how events became bound up in the development of a revolutionary temper—that is, a radicalized worldview that went beyond public opinion. Contemporary accounts of events expressed a widespread conviction that public life was being overcome by despotism. It took concrete form in street-corner orations, rumors, songs, posters, graffiti, riots, and ceremonies such as the burning of straw men dressed to represent the ministers. A few intellectuals disagreed, but the overwhelming sentiment was directed against the government (not the king) in the alien world of Versailles.

I do not want to oversimplify the complex historiography of the French Revolution but rather to suggest an alternative way of understanding the collapse of the Ancien Régime. The legitimacy of the regime was undermined by something broader and more powerful than transitory shifts of public opinion. This revolutionary impulse was a shared sense of belonging to a community—that is, a nation, which had the right to assert its authority in determining the fate of the state. That idea can be found in many of the pamphlets of 1788 and in the works of several philosophers, particularly Rousseau. But the revolutionary consciousness was not formed merely by the diffusion of ideas, important as

that was. It crystallized collectively as Parisians took in reports of daily occurrences.

The perception of events was therefore as important as the events themselves. In fact, it was inseparable from them. The highly literate learned from books, but the population as a whole found events particularly good to think with. A reconceived history of events, I believe, can open the way to a history of collective consciousness. **P**

Robert Darnton is Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor of history, emeritus, at Harvard University and a former president of the AHA.



Rice University seeks applications for the Baker College Chair for the History of Science, Technology and Innovation

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THE TUDORS ARE TRENDING

An English Dynasty Continues to Dominate Popular Culture

In August 2019, Barack Obama put Hilary Mantel's 2009 novel *Wolf Hall* on his summer reading list. While he noted that Mantel's "epic fictionalized look at Thomas Cromwell's rise to power" had been released a decade earlier, he joked that he had been "a little busy back then, so I missed it." Also in 2019, Katherine of Aragon spent a heady 24 hours trending on Twitter. Earlier this year, Henry VIII's "ex-wives" arrived on the Broadway stage in the musical *Six*. In anticipation of their debut, superfans from the "Queendom" dressed up as their favorite, ill-fated Tudors and greeted cast members with what one *New York Times* reporter called "Beyoncé-at-Coachella screams." The Tudors are bigger than ever. Again.

Why does one royal dynasty from early modern Britain still get so much popular attention? The Tudors themselves reigned for only 114 years. But our Tudormania is mighty, playing out in books, radio, television, film, and, increasingly, social media. These are worn-out stories, but enthusiasm for the family that inspired them never seems to wane. Attending to the Tudors can seem classist, reifying history's long preference for lauding wealthy, well-known people. It can feed religious intolerance in its praise of Protestant ascendancy. It risks being heteronormative, centering on romances, marriages, feuds, and

divorces. And it has the potential to focus entirely upon the experiences of white people.

Historians of Britain often bemoan the popularity of the Tudors. This isn't because we can't recognize the inherent appeal: the central soapy drama—the marriages, divorces, executions, and political intrigue—is transcendent and a bit escapist. The Tudors have also benefited from their long inclusion in American cultural and educational life. Tudor food, music, costumes, and, of course, literature offer most modern Americans, at a minimum, a sense of vague familiarity with the women and men who were part of this family. For example, Shakespeare lived 39 of his 52 years under Tudor rule, and his plays, full of mystery, mirth, and murder most foul, are products of the period. Historians aren't immune to this draw. But they worry about how much more there is to give: how can we tell stories about the Tudors that don't just reassert, over and over again, premodern priorities and assumptions about religion, class, gender, sexuality, and race?

The answer may lie in following pop culture rather than fighting it. When we look at them closely, it becomes clear that the newest Tudor trends have attuned themselves thoughtfully and provocatively to our social and cultural moment. The most recent Tudor brands appeal to the tastes of a

more diverse, more savvy range of readers, film and TV audiences, theatergoers, and internet users.

Social media especially has helped keep the Tudors on top.

Social media especially has helped keep the Tudors on top. On Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, students and teachers, tour guides and interpreters, novelists and history buffs gather to reimagine this royal family in their own ways. They create memes, memorialize significant events, and share breaking news on archaeology and research. And their numbers are staggering: every single Tudor monarch has multiple social media profiles, with the most well-known figures commanding expansive realms online. The Anne Boleyn Files Facebook page has over 172,000 likes, and @KngHnryVIII boasts more than 77,000 followers on Twitter. People who work with the Tudors and their legacy have also become internet sensations. Lucy Worsley, Chief Curator of Historic Royal Palaces, which includes Hampton Court Palace, one of the largest museum spaces devoted to Tudor life, has over 180,000 Twitter followers. Authors and historians such as Tracy Borman, Helen Castor, Lauren Mackay, Hilary Mantel, and Alison Weir have produced a

myriad of Tudor-themed podcasts for popular audiences. Taken together, these Tudor influencers have more of an impact than most traditional scholars could ever hope to achieve.

Before historians succumb to jealousy or defensiveness, it's worth pausing to consider what the latest Tudor media has to offer. These projects feature more diverse casts, are pitched to audiences of all ages, and provide complex explorations of gender, religious toleration, class, and race. *Mary Queen of Scots* (2018), starring Saoirse Ronan and Margot Robbie, offered a confident, determined Mary whose Catholic beliefs were celebrated rather than reviled. News that the crew of the Tudor ship *Mary Rose* included at least one Londoner of North African descent, and details about the lives of his shipmates—most of them lower-status people—made a splash on socialmedia;

the ship itself boasts over 21,000 followers on Twitter. Playwrights Toby Marlow and Lucy Moss of *Six* were self-proclaimed Tudormaniacs, citing Antonia Fraser and Worsley alongside Beyoncé, Miley Cyrus, and Nicki Minaj as key inspirations for their musical. Moss, who studied history at Cambridge, stated that her work on *Six* was an extension of her interests in “feminist history and revisionist history,” and offered an opportunity to right a “historical wrong” by providing a “different take on [Henry VIII’s] wives.”

And finally, producers of Tudor media—perhaps inspired by theatrical productions such as Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton*—are naming, centering, and demanding the inclusion and recognition of people of color. In the West End production of *Six*, three of the six leads were actors of color; in *Mary Queen of Scots*, actors of color

were cast as ambassadors, courtiers, and the indomitable Bess of Hardwick (a white Englishwoman in real life). In the Starz television series *The Spanish Princess*, Stephanie Levi-John delivered a powerful performance as Catalina de Cardonnes, called Lina, an elite Black woman who traveled from Spain to England with Catherine of Aragon in 1501. Defending her decision to make Lina central to the series, co-creator Emma Frost asserted, “You can’t reappropriate history for women and ignore other groups that have been discarded and eliminated. It’s part of the same issue. History isn’t just about white men. Women were there. People of color were there.”

It is true that the increasing presence of actors of color has helped to make the Tudors seem relevant and relatable to broader, more diverse audiences. Whether this is enough is a different,



and important, question: race-blind casting has been the subject of intense debate among historians and film critics, who worry the practice might sidestep meaningful engagement with constructions of race and racism. This happened when *Hamilton* was praised for its diversity in casting but quite rightly criticized for not attending to the Founding Fathers' participation in or acceptance of enslavement. Tudor-themed films, musicals, and television shows must also grapple with these issues, with diverse casting as just one important step.

But the directors, actors, and fans who love the Tudors have shown themselves to be unafraid to take on these hard conversations by creating spaces for dialogue about social change and racial equity. After the death of George Floyd, *Six*'s Twitter and Facebook accounts acknowledged that it was "a show that has been seen to champion diversity and empower Black female-identifying voices," while also being "a show that is largely created and produced by white people . . . *Six* benefits from the talent and work of our Black cast members and colleagues." *Six* claimed that it was their "duty to support Black people always—and not just when it's trending—as to be silent is to be complicit" and proclaimed solidarity with Black Lives Matter.

These calls to action have been taken up by Tudor fans who are examining and reassessing Tudor legacies. Typically mythologized for his role in the victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588, Tudor privateer Sir Francis Drake's involvement in the forced enslavement and transportation of 1,200 to 1,400 people of African descent has led to calls for the removal of statues and the renaming of schools, roads, and buildings designated in his honor in both the United States and the

United Kingdom. Some of the most effective and active protests are being championed by students: at Sir Francis Drake High School in San Anselmo, California, current students and recent alumni sent a petition with over 2,000 signatures to their school board asserting that "Sir Francis Drake" does not symbolize the values, ethics, and integrity we believe should represent the Drake community." It is no coincidence that this historical reassessment of the Tudors' involvement in slavery and empire is taking place alongside movements promoting racial and social justice.

Those who love the Tudors have shown themselves to be unafraid to take on these hard conversations.

That interest in the Tudors, one of the most elite and exhaustively studied dynasties in the white, Western historical tradition, can help to drive social change should make professional historians sit up and take notice. The essential recognition that Black and Brown people were part of the Tudor world is long overdue. So too is the recognition of the work of scholars of color who made the lives of Black and Brown people in the Tudor era more visible—including studies by Imtiaz Habib, Kim Hall, Jennifer Morgan, Onyekia Nubia, and Olivette Otele, among many others—much of which has been underappreciated, uncited, or simply appropriated. Recent calls to make such scholarship more accessible by publishing it in paperback, making it open access, or, at the bare minimum, citing it to give the authors their due, would be important steps in correcting the gross injustices of the

Tudor historical record. And historians might look to our colleagues in literary criticism, where the ShakeRace and RaceB4Race communities are changing the field, for examples of how professional study of this time period might be approached.

The Tudors were deeply flawed people. Representations of them in popular culture can be misinformed or can make light of deeply serious topics. But the creators and consumers of Tudormania have opened spaces for us to talk about the injustices of both the past and the present. This is where historians can make a significant difference. We should embrace Tudormania and give it a place in our syllabi and in our conversations. When difficulties in interpretation arise, these moments open avenues for reflection, discussion, education, and critique. Fascination with the Tudors drives students into history classes and into the history major, year after year. Tudor-inspired media that feature diverse, inclusive stories deserve our attention, amplification, and respect. Tudor history is not repeating itself, but remaking itself. **P**

Jessica L. Keene is assistant professor of history at Georgian Court University; she tweets @KeeneOnHistory. Amanda E. Herbert is associate director for fellowships at the Folger Institute of the Folger Shakespeare Library; she tweets @amandaeherbert.

MARGARET O'MARA

ARE YOU BETTER OFF THAN YOU WERE FOUR YEARS AGO?

The Economy in Presidential Politics



Tax cuts were a big part of the Reagan administration's economic policy, as reflected in this image from a 1981 national address.
National Archives and Records Administration/White House Photographic Office, 12008442

THE ECONOMY, STUPID. “Are you better off than you were four years ago?” “A chicken for every pot.” The 2020 presidential election does not yet have a catchphrase, but the economy—hobbled by a pandemic that caused the most staggering level of job losses and business closures since the Great Depression—is front and center in former Vice President Joe Biden’s bid to deny President Donald Trump a second term.

The two rivals have starkly different economic visions. Trump has emphasized that all we need is a return to business as usual, pushing to reopen the economy and hailing each uptick in the stock market as proof of a comeback. Biden has proposed a detailed—and expensive—agenda of job creation, infrastructure investment, and health and environmental equity.

If history is any guide, Biden has room to be bold, and Trump has good reason to want business to rebound as quickly as possible. Sunny election-year economic news helped make Dwight Eisenhower, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton two-term presidents. Slumps precipitated the only presidential reelection losses in the 20th century: Herbert Hoover, Jimmy Carter, and George H. W. Bush.

But what, exactly, is “the economy”? How do voters and candidates measure it, and why do they care so much about it? The concept has been politically alluring because of its universality: nearly every American, regardless of identity or political affiliation, participates in and can be affected by its condition. At their essence, campaign-season arguments about the economy are about how much the federal government can and should do. Yet how they play out, and the metrics by which “the economy” is measured, are revealing windows into the political priorities and imperatives of the historical moment, which are particularly vivid when elections occur amid economic crises.

The 1896 battle between Republican William McKinley and Democrat William Jennings Bryan, the election historians consider the first modern campaign, was waged in the aftermath of a ruinous economic downturn, the Panic of 1893. Prosperity, according to McKinley, would be achieved by boosting business through protective tariffs and the gold standard, and “economy” (i.e., thrift) in government spending. For Bryan, economic health depended upon market interventions of a different sort, including adopting the silver standard to increase and democratize the flow of capital.

The campaigns reflected the stark regional and class divisions in America. Massive industrial strikes were met with equally massive corporate retaliation, sometimes with federal military assistance. New industries like railroads and steel

surgled to immense size and influence, while small farmers found themselves ensnared in a new web of global finance, where railroad barons and distant bankers set the prices they would pay and the money they would earn.

The economic debate of 1896 also reflected the small size of government. In that moment, when the modern federal financial and regulatory bureaucracy was still in its infancy, a key policy fix for “the economy” was something the US government actually controlled: the money supply.

Bryan did not win the day, but the populist energy he harnessed contributed to a significant expansion of government power and market regulation in the decades ahead. McKinley’s brand of fiscal conservatism soon was on the wane, replaced by the progressivism of his vice president and successor, Theodore Roosevelt, and by another Democrat, Woodrow Wilson.

How do voters and candidates measure the economy, and why do they care so much about it?

But the American economic system remained fragile and inequitable, leading to its greatest collapse. In the first weeks after the October 1929 stock market crash, President Hoover “determined that the Federal government should use all of its powers” to shore up the economy. But Hoover was reluctant to expand those limited powers. He believed that the government handing out cash to individuals would undermine the mutualistic spirit of what he termed “American individualism.” By the time Franklin D. Roosevelt challenged Hoover in 1932, the Democrat was running on an economic agenda far bolder, and more interventionist, than anything mainstream American politics had seen before.

For Roosevelt and the Democrats in 1932, “the economy” was measured by misery: unemployment figures, breadlines, farm foreclosures, sickness. Echoing his cousin Theodore, who in 1912 trumpeted the need for government to champion workers crushed by a punishing industrial system, FDR spoke of “the Forgotten Man.” Roosevelt envisioned a different kind of economic compact, rallying supporters to imagine an America where a federal government took a stronger role in shaping the economy—and, in turn, their individual economic futures—than it had in the past.

The Great Depression and Roosevelt’s resulting New Deal redefined the realm of the politically possible. McKinley-esque tut-tutting about deficits gave way to government

spending and economic stimulus informed by the theories of British economist John Maynard Keynes, who famously declared in 1933, “Look after the unemployment, and the Budget will look after itself.” Not all of the New Deal’s interventions endured beyond Roosevelt’s first term, but those that did fundamentally changed the economic relationship between individual and government. They also cemented the president’s role as the person voters understood to be chiefly responsible for the health of the American economy.

This intensified in the wartime years of the 1940s and the quarter-century that followed. Federal policies from the GI Bill to housing policy to interstate highways helped remake American economic geography. While measures of economic inequality were at their lowest, prosperity was not evenly shared. Racial discrimination in employment and housing, and de jure and de facto educational segregation, shut out Black Americans and other racial minorities from much of the wealth that this affluent society enjoyed.

The economic winds shifted dramatically by the time Jimmy Carter made his reelection bid in 1980. Just as the 1930s upended prevailing economic orthodoxy, 1970s stagflation challenged the order that ruled the prosperous postwar decades. New global competitors challenged US manufacturers, who sheared off blue-collar factory jobs. Union membership declined, and industrial cities spiraled into budgetary crisis.

Carter’s Republican challenger, former California Governor Ronald Reagan, promised a set of economic changes as fundamentally different from the status quo as Roosevelt’s New Deal a half century before. This time, however, Reagan made the case that government should do far less, and that its size and regulatory apparatus were, in fact, chief causes of the nation’s economic suffering. “The nine most terrifying words in the English language,” Reagan later quipped, “are: I’m from the government, and I’m here to help.”

Reagan’s resounding 1980 victory helped accelerate a rightward shift in American politics. “The economy” began to be measured by the upward crawl of stock-market tickers, corporate earnings statements, and performance against overseas competitors. Market-based economic models informed not only Republican lawmakers but, increasingly, Democrats as well, especially presidential contenders like Senator Gary Hart (who ran in 1984 and 1988) and Governors Michael Dukakis (the 1988 nominee) and Bill Clinton (the 1992 victor).

The economy was again front and center in the 1992 race between Clinton, incumbent President George H. W. Bush, and independent electronics billionaire H. Ross Perot. The go-go

1980s had deflated after the end of the Cold War and other global economic realignments, and Bush further angered his Republican base by going back on an earlier promise not to raise taxes.

Reagan's resounding victory helped accelerate a rightward shift in American politics.

Clinton placed bread-and-butter issues squarely at the center of his economic agenda, promising health-care reform, job retraining and education, and other familiar features of previous Democratic campaigns. But he also added measures that left liberal constituencies anxious and charmed swing voters, including welfare reform and support of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). At Clinton’s first State of the Union address in 1993, Apple CEO John Sculley and Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan’s presence signaled the rising power of two domains—Silicon Valley and Wall Street—that would come to define the 1990s and beyond.

The growth of tech and finance also drove a growing dissonance between how “the economy” was defined politically, and the lived experience of most Americans. Starting in the late 1970s, average Americans saw their purchasing power decrease and their jobs become more precarious, while a privileged “1%” at the top became staggeringly wealthy. The inequities became even sharper in the aftermath of the market meltdown of 2008 and the subsequent Great Recession.

As they had in the tumultuous and deeply inequitable 1880s and 1930s, economic populism surged on both right and left in the 2010s, disrupting the two major parties and once again altering the realm of political possibility. Deep dissatisfaction with the political and economic status quo helped elect Donald Trump in 2016 and has propelled a surge of protest and activism throughout his presidency.

As November 2020 nears, Americans are extraordinarily, worryingly polarized about who should lead the country and what its government can and should do. But they still share a common hope: for an economy that will treat them fairly, and a president who will deliver better days ahead. **P**

Margaret O'Mara is Howard and Frances Keller Endowed Professor of History at the University of Washington. She tweets @margaretomara.

JOAQUÍN M. CHÁVEZ

NEOLIBERALISM'S LONG LEGACIES

Pondering the Impact of the US Presidential Election in Latin America



Protests broke out in Santiago and other Chilean cities in late 2019, mobilizing against the lasting effects of neoliberalism.
Flickr/Felipe y Jairo Castilla/CC BY 2.0

THE OUTCOME OF the 2020 presidential election in the United States will shape the future of democracy around the world. At present, US power and influence in Latin America have seriously deteriorated. US foreign policy over the next decade could promote a constructive multilateral approach to the region's conflicts or could further unilateralism and the decline of US influence.

What impact will the US presidential election have in Latin America? To what extent do President Donald Trump and Democratic nominee Joe Biden hold substantially different views on Latin America? The two candidates are closer on certain issues than many in Latin America may hope, but there is a sharp contrast between Trump's unilateralism and Biden's multilateralism, their foreign policy expertise, and their concern with the rapid erosion of US power in Latin America.

Trump has focused on particular issues that reflect his administration's unilateralism—most notably, failed attempts to overthrow Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro and the reversal of President Barack Obama's normalization of relations between the US and Cuba. Trump's border wall between Mexico and the US epitomizes this approach. Trump ordered the construction of a physical barrier to reduce the exodus of Central Americans to the US caused by environmental and humanitarian crises, separating the Americas. In response, Biden has faulted the Trump administration for having “wantonly abdicated” US leadership in Latin America.

But it is unclear if a Biden administration would offer more innovative policy. Historically, Biden has endorsed initiatives that prioritized support for repressive military and security forces that infringed human rights in Latin America. However, he also played a role in the normalization of US relations with Cuba. His main concerns appear to be restoring US power, in response to the growing influence of China and Russia in Latin America.

Current US foreign policy is out of touch with the region's most critical problems, particularly the implosion of neoliberalism in Chile and the ongoing political crisis in Venezuela. In Latin American contexts, neoliberalism is both a political economy and a societal model that privileges commerce and finances over social and labor rights. Venezuela and Chile represent opposing societal models and visions of regional integration that have transformed US–Latin American relations in the past two decades. Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez (in office 1999–2013) and his successor, Maduro, became the nemeses of neoliberalism and US influence, while Chile, a US ally, championed them. Contests over neoliberalism will be at the center of US foreign policy challenges in the region for many years.

Neoliberalism in Latin America must be understood within the contexts of 20th-century Latin American history. Neoliberalism promoted individualism, consumerism, and intense economic competition. It involved the privatization of the health care, education, and pension systems, the sale of public lands and other state-owned resources, low wages, and the elimination of workers' rights. These policies were embraced in response to the deep economic crisis that prevailed in Latin America in the 1980s, dubbed “the lost decade” due to massive public debts, currency devaluations, and dramatic increases in poverty across several countries. “The lost decade” epitomized the failure of nationalist economic policies that had been popular in the region since the 1950s. Latin American economists who trained abroad and financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank became the main promoters of neoliberalism in Latin America, and US-backed authoritarian regimes ushered in these policies during the Cold War.

US foreign policy is out of touch with the region's most critical problems.

The 1973 military coup in Chile that deposed President Salvador Allende, a democratically elected socialist leader, and established the Pinochet dictatorship (1973–90) illustrates this point. Pinochet's state terror, inflicted on thousands of Chileans, matched the rise of neoliberalism, and Chile under Pinochet became a testing ground for neoliberal orthodoxy. These policies generated economic growth at great social cost in Chile as public investment in housing, education, and health care diminished substantially and the wealth gap increased exponentially in the past two decades. The result? Chile today is one of the world's most unequal societies.

The nation is now experiencing an unprecedented mobilization against neoliberalism. Protests in Santiago and other Chilean cities shook the government of billionaire President Sebastián Piñera in late 2019. Chileans who mobilized against Piñera rejected the privatization of social and economic life, the deep social inequalities, and the 1980 constitution sanctioned under the Pinochet dictatorship, which remains the foundational governing document. In turn, Piñera ordered a crackdown against protestors. The Carabineros, a militarized police force that perpetrated systematic human rights violations during the Pinochet dictatorship, brutally repressed peaceful protests in Santiago and elsewhere.

Trump backed Piñera's repression in Chile, appealing for the restoration of “national order” and claiming that the protests were driven by unnamed “foreign efforts.” Yet these

platitudes missed the point. The implosion of neoliberalism in Chile is not the product of a foreign conspiracy, nor it can be resolved through repression. It shows the widespread public rejection of neoliberalism as a societal model and the legacies of the Pinochet dictatorship in that country.

The only feasible and desirable solution to the crisis is a domestic political negotiation with broad international support that leads to free and fair elections.

The election of Hugo Chávez, a military officer turned socialist leader, as president of Venezuela in 1998 was another watershed in continental politics. Chávez's Bolivarian Revolution openly rejected US influence and neoliberalism in Latin America. Chávez advocated continental unity among Latin American countries, echoing the legacies of Simón Bolívar, the 19th-century leader of South American independence movements. Chávez announced his intention to build "the socialism of the 21st century" in Venezuela, forming alliances with Cuba and leftist parties and movements within Latin America. Chávez promoted the formation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), a continental organization that excludes the United States and Canada. CELAC's efforts to create an inter-American system, replacing the Organization of American States (OAS) and including Cuba, constituted a major blow to the OAS's standing and US foreign policy in the region. The OAS was founded at the outset of the Cold War under US auspices. It expelled Cuba from the inter-American system in 1962 at the height of the Cold War in Latin America.

The death of Chávez and the election of Maduro as president in 2013 marked a new cycle of tensions between the United States and Venezuela that now endangers regional peace. In 2015, President Obama signed an executive order stating that the Venezuelan government posed an "unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States."

Since 2019, the Trump administration has contested the legitimacy of Maduro as the constitutional president. The self-proclamation of right-wing politician Juan Guaidó as president in January 2019 and the subsequent recognition of Guaidó by the United States and nearly 50 other countries made clear the competing centers of powers in the nation. But Maduro appears to be firmly in control. Venezuela's

official armed forces and other state institutions consider Maduro the legitimate president. Civilians who benefited from Chávez's massive social reforms support Maduro. Maduro also relies on international allies like Russia, China, Iran, and Cuba to remain in power, while also retaining significant support from other Latin American countries. The Trump administration's efforts to topple Maduro and impose Guaidó as president of Venezuela have proved counterproductive. After more than a year, Guaidó and his supporters have lost momentum, and the institutional crisis in Venezuela has only deepened with the existence of two competing legislative bodies.

Trump ran out of political options in Venezuela. His bellicose rhetoric against Maduro sounds hollow, given Maduro's continuing power. Risking a US conflict or a proxy war with Venezuela, a country with roughly 29 million people and a powerful army, is a dangerous option. Arguably, the only feasible and desirable solution to the crisis is a domestic political negotiation with broad international support that leads to free and fair elections. The outcome of the US presidential election may determine how likely this last alternative is.

Though Biden holds similar views on the Venezuelan crisis, Trump's impasse in Venezuela might motivate Biden to support a political solution to the crisis. Overall, Biden advocates a multilateral approach that focuses on democratization, regional security, anticorruption, and immigration. Still, Biden shares with Trump a hostility toward Cuban socialism and Maduro's government and support for Chilean neoliberalism. Biden could revive a Pan American rhetoric to counter the influence of China in the region and deal with the devastation generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the least, there is a contrast between Trump's piecemeal approach to the region's problems and Biden's declared intention to implement a coherent foreign policy to restore US leadership in Latin America.

The current challenges of US foreign policy in Latin America are unprecedented. Above and beyond the growing influence of China and Russia in the region, the COVID-19 pandemic is deepening the social crisis generated by neoliberalism across the region. In this context, US policy in Latin America can facilitate political settlements to ongoing conflicts, while strengthening democracy and human rights, or it can promote further polarization and authoritarianism—with potentially devastating results. **P**

Joaquín M. Chávez is associate professor of history at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

JOHN DELURY

CHINA AS EQUAL

Putting China as Rival into Historical Context



In August 2008, Beijing welcomed the world to a spectacular Olympic Opening Ceremony, a stunning display of China's arrival as a first-world power.

wuqiang_beijing/Panoramio via Wikimedia Commons/CC BY 3.0

A S AMERICANS HEAD to the polls in November, voters face a firestorm of existential challenges at home—surviving a pandemic, fixing a broken health-care system, reviving a devastated economy, healing wounds of racial injustice and civil strife. The president’s effort to label COVID-19 the “China virus” notwithstanding, US-China relations barely seem to register on the barometer of burning and divisive issues. Nor do the China policy postures of the two leading candidates, Joe Biden and Donald Trump, offer the kind of sharp contrast that might tip the undecided mind—their differences seem to boil down to a choice between tough and tougher.

And yet, a momentous shift is underway in how the United States as a nation perceives the People’s Republic of China, one that is likely to define the foreign policy possibilities of whoever wins in November. For the first time in centuries, Americans are looking upon China as an equal in terms of national wealth and power; and for the first time ever, the parity presents itself as a threat to the interests and security of the United States. By putting this perception of China as *rival* in historical context, we can appreciate just how novel and uncharted is the territory ahead for the two nations.

One has to travel quite a distance into the past to find the last time Americans talked about China as a “peer competitor” or a “near-peer,” in the current lingo of US defense officials. We need to go all the way back to the American colonial period and early republic, before the United States expanded across the continent and before the Qing Empire fell from its place as Asia’s hegemon. Through the 18th century, Qing China was the superior power—albeit far enough away that it posed no danger. The founders’ generation admired China as a prosperous land of porcelain, silk, and tea, an enlightened civilization governed by Confucian “literati.” The allure of the Qing economy was well-founded; if, as Kenneth Pomeranz shows in *The Great Divergence*, the wealthy regions of China were as well-off as England until at least 1750, the same would hold for North America as well.

The 19th century was as merciless to the splendor of the Qing Empire as it was fortuitous for the rise of the United States. Americans would gradually associate China not with enlightened governance and luxury manufactures, but with backwardness, poverty, and weakness. We might locate an unnoticed tipping point in a pair of dramatic attacks in the respective capitals that occurred within a year of one another: In September 1813, the Qing Emperor narrowly avoided an assassination plot in the Forbidden City; in August 1814, President James Madison had to flee Washington, DC, in

advance of invading British troops. For the Qing Dynasty, the Eight Trigrams Rebellion of 1813 inaugurated a century of domestic rebellion and foreign invasion that would unravel its might and undermine its sovereignty. China suffered one humiliating defeat after another in the two Opium Wars, the Sino-French War in Indochina, the Sino-Japanese War in Korea, and the Boxer War; whereas for the United States, the War of 1812 was the last major foreign attack on American soil until Pearl Harbor. The United States grew into a first-rank imperial power able to defend hegemonic claims over the Western Hemisphere (the Monroe Doctrine) and what Daniel Immerwahr describes as a “hidden empire” of islands across the Pacific Ocean and a colony in the South China Sea—the Philippines.

As the United States rose and the Qing Empire declined, Americans’ perceptions of China underwent a fundamental shift. Missionaries encouraged their compatriots to pray for “heathen Chinese” (and support their own proselytizing efforts). Merchants lobbied their government to prop up the Qing regime so they could continue doing business out of treaty ports like Shanghai. Politicians whipped up xenophobic sentiments, blaming Chinese immigrants for stealing jobs and driving down wages for “native” (i.e., white) Americans. Whether coming from a place of pity, greed, or scorn, Americans looked down on China as the “sick man of Asia,” in the fin-de-siècle phrase popularized by reformist intellectual Liang Qichao.

A momentous shift is underway in how the United States as a nation perceives the People's Republic of China.

China’s chaotic experiences in the first half of the 20th century—revolution, warlordism, invasion by Japan, and civil war between Nationalists and Communists—only reinforced Americans’ image of China as needing their help. As historian Gordon H. Chang details in *Fateful Ties: A History of America’s Preoccupation with China*, many Americans felt a special responsibility for China’s fate. Raising a family in 1940s San Francisco, my grandmother, who escaped poverty in Ireland for the promise of the American Dream, would guilt-trip my mom and uncle into finishing their dinner with the injunction to “think of the starving children in China.” Perhaps she had read Pearl S. Buck’s bestselling novel *The Good Earth* or seen the 1937 film version. During World War II, she could not have avoided propaganda celebrating America’s heroic allies in Free China.

Feelings of sympathy evaporated in 1949 when Mao Zedong's Communist Party founded a Soviet-allied state, the People's Republic of China. Americans' fear of "ChiCom" aggression and subversion displaced the sense of pity or goodwill. But this did not qualify China as a "near-peer," even when its soldiers drove US troops out of North Korea in 1950. China was dangerous because, in its weakness, it had come to serve the Soviet master—America's rival was the USSR, not the PRC. Senator Joseph McCarthy preyed on such fears, choosing the China scholar Owen Lattimore as the first victim in his smear campaign, accusing Lattimore of being the "top Soviet agent" in America. Fears of subversion took on an apocalyptic aspect when Beijing developed atomic weapons in the 1960s, but joining the nuclear club did not make China an equal, either.

For the first time in centuries,
the United States is looking at
China as an equal and doesn't
like what it sees.

Even the diplomatic breakthrough of Richard Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972 did not alter the underlying American perception of China as a lesser power. The Nixon-Mao détente transmuted fears into hopes for cooperation against the Soviets and opened the door to restoring some spirit of friendship between the two peoples. But the positive dynamics generated by "normalization" were buoyed, on the American side, by the perception that China was trying to "catch up" to the West and become more like America. This hope reached its apotheosis in 1989 when Chinese students paraded a homemade Goddess of Democracy, sculpted in the likeness of the Statue of Liberty, through Tiananmen Square. After Deng Xiaoping brutally crushed the democracy protests on June 4, some Americans still believed that China's modernization would inevitably lead to liberal democracy; others became reconciled to a China stuck in a retrograde system of Leninist authoritarianism. Either way, China was perceived as a lesser organism in the evolution of political species.

A couple of years after the trauma of Tiananmen, Deng managed to revive his economic strategy of "reform and opening"—under stricter party control—and China's explosive growth became its defining feature for the world. Americans came to see China as one giant factory churning out low-priced goods and using the proceeds to buy trillions of dollars in Treasury bills that subsidized America's national debt. The pace and scope of China's development in the

late 20th and early 21st century was staggering. It was this "China boom" that set in motion a fundamental transformation in the American image of China.

Again, we might choose a pair of events that marked off divergent trajectories for the century to come: In August 2008, Beijing welcomed the world to a spectacular Olympic Opening Ceremony, a stunning display of China's arrival as a first-world power. Weeks later, Wall Street unleashed a global financial crisis, and the Federal Reserve had to bail out insurance giant AIG, a company founded in treaty port Shanghai in 1919 by an American businessman.

In the dozen years since, China's economic growth, military spending, and diplomatic influence have advanced inexorably, even as its political system shows no sign of "convergence" toward the American model. Barack Obama entered office hoping to cooperate with Beijing on global challenges like climate change and nuclear nonproliferation, but in his second term ended up announcing a "pivot to Asia" to contain China's rise. The Trump administration defined China as a peer competitor and national security threat from day one, and by year four had launched a trade war and ideological campaign against the "Frankenstein" of a wealthy and powerful China.

With the November election looming, the Trump administration stoked old fears of Chinese subversion, casting students, journalists, diplomats, and Communist Party members and their families as targets of suspicion. Liberals blush at the hawkish excess, but—disturbed at detention of Uighurs in Xinjiang and repression of democrats in Hong Kong—agree with the need to push back. Underlying these policy debates is a deeper, historical shift. China is no longer visible in America's rearview mirror. For the first time in centuries, the United States is looking at China as an equal and doesn't like what it sees. **P**

John Delury is professor of Chinese studies at Yonsei University Graduate School of International Studies in Seoul, South Korea. He tweets @JohnDelury.

Virtual | AHA

The American Historical Association announces **Virtual AHA**, a series of online opportunities to bring together communities of historians, build professional relationships, discuss scholarship, and engage in professional and career development. A service to our members as they navigate the current emergency, Virtual AHA provides a forum for discussing common issues, building research networks, and broadening and maintaining our professional community in dire circumstances. It also provides resources for online teaching and other professional and career development. We are creating a variety of content to help historians connect, while helping us learn more about what our members want and need.

Virtual AHA will run through June 2021. Virtual AHA incorporates the AHA Colloquium, our name for content drawn from the canceled 2021 annual meeting. It also includes an online teaching forum, career development workshops, a series of History Behind the Headlines webinars, National History Center programming, and more. These programs are free and AHA membership is not required to register. Many of the webinars will be available for later viewing on the AHA's YouTube channel.

See historians.org/VirtualAHA for details.

Virtual Exhibit Hall

The AHA Virtual Exhibit Hall launches on October 1 and will be available online through June 2021. The Virtual Exhibit Hall provides an opportunity to learn about the latest historical scholarship, take advantage of publisher discounts, and network with editors and press staff. If you normally look forward to the exhibits at the annual meeting, the Virtual Exhibit Hall offers a similar experience from the comfort of your home. Best of all, no name badge is necessary: the Exhibit Hall is free and open to the public. Check it out at historians.org/ExhibitHall.

Programming Content Streams

- **AHA Colloquium:** Bringing together communities of historians who ordinarily meet face-to-face at our annual meeting through web-based programming.
- **History Behind the Headlines:** Featuring prominent historians discussing the histories behind current events and the importance of history and historical thinking to public policy and culture.
- **AHA Online Teaching Forum:** Helping historians plan for teaching in online and hybrid environments.
- **Virtual Career Development:** Emphasizing career exploration and skill development for graduate students and early-career historians.
- **Virtual Seminars for Department Chairs:** Supporting department chairs through the transitions and uncertainties resulting from COVID-19. Webinars will be small-group discussions (capped at 10 participants) and facilitated by an experienced department chair.
- **National History Center Congressional Briefings:** Briefings by leading historians on past events and policies that shape the issues facing Congress today.
- **Washington History Seminar:** Facilitating understanding of contemporary affairs in light of historical knowledge from a variety of perspectives. A joint venture of the National History Center of the AHA and the History and Public Policy Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Upcoming Events

Visit historians.org/VirtualAHA for details on these and other events.

October 1	AHA Online Teaching Forum: History Gateways: “Many Thousands Failed” in 2020: A Conversation with Drew Koch
October 2	Washington History Seminar: <i>Gambling with Armageddon: Nuclear Roulette from Hiroshima to the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1945–1962</i>
October 5	Washington History Seminar: <i>A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order</i>
October 8	AHA Virtual Career Development: Making the Most of Your Postdoc
October 14	Washington History Seminar: <i>Threat of Dissent: A History of Ideological Exclusion and Deportation in the United States</i>
October 19	Washington History Seminar: <i>Engaging the Evil Empire: Washington, Moscow, and the Beginning of the End of the Cold War</i>
October 22	AHA Online Teaching Forum: History TAs in the Time of COVID
October 26	Washington History Seminar: <i>Suffrage: Women’s Long Battle for the Vote</i>

In Case You Missed It

The following recordings are available on the AHA’s YouTube channel.

Online Teaching Forum

- Dual and Concurrent Enrollment in History: Strengthening Programs and Learning
- Teaching History This Fall: Strategies and Tools for Learning and Equity
- From High School Social Studies to the College Survey: A Conversation with Teachers and Students
- The Middle Ages for Educators: Online Resources and Strategies for Teaching the Pre-Modern Era
- Teaching World History in the New World with Trevor Getz
- Engaging Students Online: Using Digital Sources and Assignments in Virtual Classrooms

History Behind the Headlines

- Teaching the History of Racist Violence in the High School Classroom
- Erasing History or Making History? Race, Racism, and the American Memorial Landscape

Career Development

- What Is Grad School Really Like?

Texas Conference on Introductory History Courses


- Texas Higher Education and COVID-19 Response and Recovery with Dr. Harrison Keller, Commissioner of Higher Education for the State of Texas
- Teaching History in This of All Years: Uncertainty Revisited

Washington History Seminar

- Recordings are available on the National History Center’s YouTube channel.

Further Information about the AHA Colloquium for Those Accepted for the 2021 Program

People originally scheduled to be on the 2021 program will have a variety of options for sharing their work. We will solicit feedback from them and from our membership as we develop plans over the course of the next few months. We are looking forward to working with participants on creative new ways to share their work. Keep an eye on **historians.org/VirtualAHA** for regular updates.

A PDF program, documenting all sessions accepted by the AHA Program Committee and the affiliated societies, will be posted on the AHA website in the fall so that participants can document their expected participation for their CVs. Anyone who was expecting to deliver a prepared presentation will have the opportunity to post written remarks on the AHA website. 

Call for Proposals for the 135th Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association

**The AHA's annual meeting is the
largest yearly gathering of historians
in the United States.**

All historians are welcome and encouraged to submit proposals. The AHA also invites historically focused proposals from colleagues in related disciplines and from AHA affiliated societies. The Program Committee will consider all proposals that advance the study, teaching, and public presentation of history.

The Association seeks submissions on the histories of all places, periods, people, and topics; on the uses of diverse sources and methods, including digital history; and on theory and the uses of history itself in a wide variety of venues.

**We invite proposals for sessions in a variety
of formats and encourage lively interaction
among presenters and with the audience.**

Session Proposals

Sessions last for 90 minutes. Most sessions will be limited to four speakers plus a chair. The Program Committee will accept proposals for complete sessions only. We encourage organizers to build panels that bring together diverse perspectives.

Poster Proposals

The meeting will feature a poster session to allow historians to share their research through visual materials. Proposals for single, individual presentations may be submitted as posters.

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The Program Committee welcomes proposals from all historians, whatever their institutional affiliation or status, and historians working outside the United States. With the exception of foreign scholars and those from other disciplines, all persons appearing on the program must be members of the AHA, although membership is not required to submit a proposal. All participants must register for the meeting when registration opens. The Association aspires to represent the full diversity of its membership at the annual meeting.

Electronic submission only, by midnight PST on February 15, 2021

Before applying, please review the annual meeting guidelines
and more information at historians.org/proposals.

Questions about policies, modes of presentation, and the electronic submission process?

Contact annualmeeting@historians.org.

Questions about the content of proposals?

Contact Program Committee chair Mark Ravina, University of Texas, Austin (ravinaaha2022@gmail.com)
and co-chair Margaret Salazar-Porzio, National Museum of American History (salazar-porzio@si.edu).

KAREN LOU

NEW FACES AT THE AHA

Meet Our Research Staff

The AHA welcomes five new staff members: Melanie A. Peinado as a Career Diversity fellow and researcher for the “Confronting a Pandemic: Historians and COVID-19” project; Maureen Elgersmann Lee, Suzanne Marie Litrel, and Marketus Presswood as researchers for “Confronting a Pandemic;” and Hope Shannon as the PhD career outcomes researcher.

PhD candidate **Melanie A. Peinado** first joined the AHA in early March through the Career Diversity initiative. Days later, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the AHA to close its offices. Her work expanded beyond Career Diversity, and she began compiling “A Bibliography of Historians’ Responses to COVID-19.” The bibliography, along with the AHA’s Remote Teaching Resources, became part of the NEH-funded “Confronting a Pandemic: Historians and COVID-19” project.

A third-generation Mexican American, Peinado is the first in her immediate family to speak and understand Spanish fluently.

Peinado now serves two roles at the AHA. Within Career Diversity, she is involved with the AHA’s Career Contacts program, which she described as her “own introduction to different opportunities for historians.” As a researcher, Peinado is excited to see “Confronting a Pandemic” continue to grow, and she looks forward to seeing the bibliography evolve online. Both roles have helped her to gain a broader view of what historians can contribute in a time of crisis. She has also enjoyed working with the Remote Teaching Resources that historians have shared. “I’m excited about teaching again,” Peinado told *Perspectives*. “Realizing that there is so much out there is letting me be more creative about what I can teach in the future.”



Melanie A. Peinado

Peinado is completing her dissertation on the history of law, medicine, and sexuality in 20th-century Chile at the University of California, Davis. She became fluent in Spanish while studying in Argentina and Chile. A third-generation Mexican American, she is the first in her immediate family to speak and understand Spanish fluently. In her free time, she enjoys dancing and experimenting with new recipes.

Maureen Elgersman Lee comes to the AHA as a researcher for “Confronting a Pandemic.” Previously, she participated in a focus group for the AHA’s “Extending the Reach of Scholarly Society Work to HBCU Faculty” project. This spring, she was teaching undergraduate courses at Hampton University when COVID-19 suddenly forced her and many other faculty to shift their teaching online. She looks forward to sharing with others the online resources that she found helpful through the Remote Teaching Resources.



Maureen Elgersman Lee

Growing up in Canada, Elgersman Lee wanted to be an interpreter, and she dreamed of traveling or working for the Canadian government. Her interest in history did not spark until late in her undergraduate years at Redeemer University, where she majored in French. A work-study job in the registrar's office gave her access to a large collection of course catalogs, which she spent her free time reading. She learned about history departments, the discipline, and the range of material covered. She completed her MA in African and African American studies and a PhD in humanities at Clark Atlanta University.

As a Canadian living in the United States, there are few things Elgersman Lee misses more than her family and Canadian chocolate, which she asserts is superior to its American counterpart. So if you ever meet her and happen to have some Canadian chocolate in hand, please feel free to share.

Suzanne Marie Litrel did not much enjoy her high school history classes. So when she enrolled at the University of Michigan, she studied economics. After graduation, Litrel moved to Taiwan. She taught English to support herself and backpacked across mainland China to Moscow and eventually to Berlin, shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall. From there, she moved back to the United States and enrolled at Michigan for her MA in Asian studies. She then worked in the private sector before finding her way back to teaching.

Litrel spent 14 years teaching social studies at Bay Shore Senior High School on Long Island, New York. She found that teaching history fostered her own love for the discipline. She recalled, "In preparing to teach, I had to dig into the



Suzanne Marie Litrel

stories. I loved the research that goes into good teaching." She also published the Jackie Tempo historical fiction series as an accessible read for AP World History students. These books have been used in classrooms from New York to Texas to China.

Litrel eventually moved to Georgia and earned a PhD in history at Georgia State University. A historian of Latin America, she has forthcoming publications on the Portuguese Atlantic reaction to the 17th-century Dutch challenge for Brazil. As a researcher for "Confronting a Pandemic," she looks forward to connecting secondary teachers to the AHA.

Marketus Presswood spent the spring at the University of California, Irvine, frantically finishing his dissertation on the African diaspora in East Asia. His research grew out of his experiences living in East Asia. He first spent an undergraduate semester abroad in China. After earning his BA in history from Morehouse College, he returned to Asia, living in Japan and then China for 10 years. There, he worked in international education and founded a study abroad program that sent several cohorts of Black students to China to study Mandarin. During his time there, he wondered about the history of African descendants in Asia. He could not find much literature on the topic, so he returned to the United States to pursue a history PhD.

Dissertation now complete and PhD in hand, Presswood joins the AHA as a researcher for "Confronting a Pandemic." When asked what he is most excited about in his new role, he said, "I like to have some kind of stake in helping to



Marketus Presswood

create a space for educators in history. Given our current racial and political situation, talking about these issues as we think about resources that will be useful for teachers is important. It's exciting to be a part of that."

Outside of his work, Presswood is an avid jazz listener. His favorite jazz musician is saxophonist Wayne Shorter. He has combined this hobby and his research by working on a documentary about the history of jazz in China.

Hope Shannon joins the AHA as the PhD career outcomes researcher. She will work with Career Diversity's Where Historians Work database and participate in other data-driven projects on doctoral education. She hopes her work at the AHA will help her incorporate career diversity into her part-time consulting work.

Shannon, who recently earned a joint PhD in United States history and public history from Loyola University Chicago, said of her career path, "I came at it backward." She majored in history at Boston University, then worked for a historical society, where she learned about the careers one can have with a graduate degree in history. After several years in public history, she moved to Chicago for her PhD. She found that teaching and academia were considered the norm, yet never thought she would pursue academia herself. She further explored this trend as an AHA Career Diversity fellow. She reflected, "Career Diversity broke down the barrier between public history and academia. You can be



Hope Shannon

in academia and do public history. You can work in public history and work in academia."

Presswood has combined this hobby and his research by working on a documentary about the history of jazz in China.

Shannon often thinks about the implications of her dissertation, which looks at the role that heritage politics—the politicization of history to achieve a particular goal—played in urban and suburban redevelopment in the late 20th century. Her research concluded that heritage politics is exclusionary and "reinforces boundaries between neighborhoods," yet the concept is mostly evaded in conversations about segregation. She wonders how her research can be employed in the world today, where history continues to be used to justify why neighborhoods should or should not be changed. **P**

Karen Lou is editorial assistant at the AHA.

SLEEP, FOOD, AND SEX

In the October Issue of the American Historical Review

The October issue of the *AHR* features four research articles, an *AHR* Exchange on writing the history of childhood, a roundtable review of a new book on the promise and perils of digital research, and an essay on sex and food.

The issue opens with “Sleeping in Church: Preaching, Boredom, and the Struggle for Attention in Medieval and Early Modern Europe,” by **Daniel Jütte** (New York Univ.). As Jütte points out, the word “boredom” was not used in English before the 18th century. Yet pre-18th-century people did experience what we think of as this modern condition. Across the confessional spectrum in premodern Europe, Jütte shows, religious somnolence was depicted as a common and grave problem. Probing medieval and early modern controversies about sleepiness and boredom, Jütte’s article invites a reconsideration of premodern culture and mentalities, revealing a struggle for attention that we would not expect to find in a world in which disenchantment did not yet prevail.

The remaining full-length articles in the issue consider diverse aspects of 20th-century history. In “The Kibbutz and the Ashram: Sarvodaya Agriculture, Israeli Aid, and the Global Imaginaries of Indian Development,” **Benjamin Siegel** (Boston Univ.) examines the partnership between advocates of communal agricultural settlements in the new nations of Israel and postcolonial India. In the first two decades of Indian independence, India’s popular, nonstate program for rural social uplift partnered with Israel’s developmental apparatus to build a communal agricultural settlement at Gandhi’s former ashram. Working in the face of large-scale development, Cold War politics, and uneasy diplomatic relations between the two countries, Indian advocates of small-scale rural development saw possibilities in Israeli collective agriculture. For their part, Israelis saw their work with Indian civil society as a means of securing formal diplomatic sanction from a powerful nonaligned nation. Both projects’ initial promise of small-scale rural development eventually succumbed to the growing hegemony of the developmental state.

Ari Joskowitz (Vanderbilt Univ.) looks at the post–World War II settlement from a very different angle. In “The Age of the Witness and the Age of Surveillance: Romani Holocaust Testimony and the Perils of Digital Scholarship,” Joskowitz questions the common practice of relying on witness testimony to document atrocities. Of course, efforts to preserve the accounts of marginalized people have broadened the range of voices available to historians. Yet, Joskowitz argues, we have paid insufficient attention to the potentially disturbing consequences of the creation and distribution of such testimonies, especially in the digital age. Focusing on the experiences of Romani Holocaust survivors, he suggests that new practices of surveillance and victim-witnessing developed in tandem. Beginning in the 1960s, German prosecutors asked Romani survivors to testify about the crimes committed against them under Nazism—even as state authorities continued to criminalize and surveil Romanies across Europe. Romani witnesses, Joskowitz observes, have often had to balance the desire to have their stories heard against the fear of being listened in on. Despite its potential to empower, victim-witnessing can create new vulnerabilities, potentially exacerbated by digital technology, he concludes.

The October issue features
four research articles, an *AHR*
Exchange, a roundtable review,
and an essay on sex and food.

The ethical dilemmas highlighted by Joskowitz’s article can be considered alongside a “review roundtable” conducted as a conversation among digital scholars. In “History’s Future in the Age of the Internet,” **Daniel Story** (Univ. of California, Santa Cruz), **Jo Guldi** (Southern Methodist Univ.), **Tim Hitchcock** (Univ. of Sussex), and **Michelle Moravec** (Rosemont Coll.) discuss **Ian Milligan**’s (Univ. of Waterloo) recent book *History in the Age of Abundance? How the Web Is Transforming Historical Research*. Collectively, they

In March 1968, student and youth demonstrations erupted in Poland in support of democratic freedoms. They were met with a violent reaction and an anti-Semitic campaign from the ruling communist regime, which vilified protesters as “imperialist agents,” “Marxist revisionists,” and “Zionists.” As Malgorzata Fidelis argues in her article “Tensions of Transnationalism: Youth Rebellion, State Backlash, and 1968 in Poland,” both sides employed a “transnational imagination” related to the global Cold War, but in different ways and for divergent goals. The cover photos represent two faces of 1968 in Poland. The top image depicts students and some faculty, who are marching through the streets of Warsaw. The photograph was taken by the security apparatus and is currently the property of the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw. The bottom photograph depicts one of the state-organized counterdemonstrations. The image represents the official state propaganda deployed against protesters and their sympathizers. It is currently part of the collection of the Polish Press Agency (PAP/Włodzimierz Wawrzynkiewicz).



ask how historians, librarians, archivists, and students might adapt their practices of source analysis and the organization of information to analyze the vast and often unstructured archives of internet data. Milligan responds to their interventions.

The final research article, “Tensions of Transnationalism: Youth Rebellion, State Backlash, and 1968 in Poland,” by **Malgorzata Fidelis** (Univ. of Illinois at Chicago), considers an unexpected element in postwar Europe: the surprisingly transnational aspect of student protest in eastern Europe. Fidelis’s article looks at Polish students who challenged the communist state’s hegemony with their own alternative interpretation of socialism during the 1960s, culminating in mass demonstrations in March 1968. In contrast to dominant narratives that depict 1968 in Poland and eastern Europe as shaped by domestic politics, Fidelis regards Polish students as active participants in a global search for a new kind of leftism. The communist regime itself, however, deployed a transnational frame against the protesters by stigmatizing them as Zionists and foreign agents alien to the Polish national community.

An *AHR* Exchange revisits the discussion of chronological age, the subject of a roundtable in the April 2020 issue. **Sarah Maza** (Northwestern Univ.) challenges historians of children to abandon what she regards as a flawed search for the history of children and childhood. As she puts it, “Writing the history of children is difficult not because we lack sources or willing scholars but because of the nature of a group of people incommensurable with any other in the field’s canon.” Maza proposes a shift from writing the history *of* children as active historical agents to writing history *through* children.

Naturally, scholars attempting to produce a social and more subjective history of children take exception to Maza’s critique. While recognizing the need for further refinement in the field’s approach to children and childhood, respondents **Robin Chapdelaine** (Duquesne Univ.), **Steven Mintz** (Univ. of Texas), **Nara Milanich** (Barnard Coll.), **Ishita Pande** (Queen’s Univ., Canada), and **Bengt Sandin** (Linköping Univ.) all insist that children’s voices and agency can and should remain an animating aspect of investigating the history of childhood. Readers will come away with a remarkable summary of trends in this important area of study, as well as a set of thoughtful remarks on the importance of agency in writing the history of subordinated people more generally.

Finally, the October issue includes an essay in our History Unclassified series. In “*Vocabula Amatoria*: A Glossary of French Culinary Sex Terms,” **Rachel Hope Cleves** (Univ. of Victoria) takes readers on a tour of 19th-century French-English erotic glossaries. These texts, sources of popular sexual discourse, reveal the French habit of speaking of sex in idioms drawn from the pantry and the kitchen. As such, Cleves maintains, they can serve as a valuable resource for understanding the differences between French and English popular attitudes toward food and sex in the late 19th century. Her essay includes many delicious selections from the glossaries; I think it safe to say that nothing like this has ever before appeared in the pages of the *AHR*. **P**

Alex Lichtenstein is the editor of the American Historical Review.

NOMINATIONS INVITED FOR AHA OFFICES, TERMS BEGINNING JANUARY 2022

Under the AHA constitution and bylaws (Article VIII, Section 1; Article IX; and Bylaws 11 and 12), the executive director invites all members of the Association to submit, on or before January 4, 2021, recommendations for the following offices:

President-elect

Vice President, Teaching Division (member of the Council, chair of the Division)

Councilor, Professional Division, one position (Council—governance of the organization; Division—responsible for overseeing matters concerning working conditions and practices of historians, primarily by articulating ethical standards and best practices in the historical discipline)

Councilor, Research Division, one position (Council—governance of the organization; Division—responsible for promoting historical scholarship, encouraging the collection and preservation of historical documents and artifacts, ensuring equal access to information, and fostering the dissemination of information about historical records and research)

Councilor, Teaching Division, one position (Council—governance of the organization; Division—responsible for the Council's work relating to history education, including efforts to promote and improve teaching and learning of history at all levels of education)

Nominating Committee, three positions (nominations for all elective posts)

Committee on Committees, two positions (nominations for large number of Association committees, including book awards and prizes; member begins serving immediately after election)

Members of the Council and elective committees **as of January 7, 2021**, are listed below. Positions being replaced in the June 1–July 15, 2021, elections are in **bold**.

Unless otherwise indicated, terms expire in January of the listed year.

Presidents

2022 Mary Lindemann, Univ. of Miami (early modern Europe, medicine)

2023 Jacqueline Jones, Univ. of Texas at Austin (US labor/African American/southern/women)

2024 James H. Sweet, Univ. of Wisconsin–Madison (Africa, African diaspora, Brazil)

Professional Division

2022 Nerina Rustomji, councilor, St. John's Univ., New York (Middle East, Islamic world)

2023 Rita C-K Chin, vice president, Univ. of Michigan (post-1945 Europe, immigration and displacement, race/ethnicity/gender)



Library of Congress, 97510725.

2023 Reginald K. Ellis, councilor, Florida A&M Univ. (US since 1865, African American history)

2024 Simon Finger, councilor, Coll. of New Jersey (American colonial to early republic, medicine, maritime, labor)

Research Division

2022 Christopher R. Boyer, councilor, Univ. of Illinois at Chicago (environmental and social history of Mexico)

2023 Sara Georgini, councilor, Massachusetts Historical Society (early American history, religion and culture, public history)

2024 Ben Vinson III, vice president, Case Western Reserve Univ. (African diaspora, colonial Mexico)

2024 Pernille Røge, councilor, Univ. of Pittsburgh (18th-century France and French empire, political economy)

Teaching Division

2022 Laura McEnaney, vice president, Whittier Coll. (World War II and postwar, working class/gender/race)

2022 Alexandra Hui, councilor, Mississippi State Univ. (European science and culture, modern Germany, sensory and environment)

2023 Shannon T. Bontrager, councilor, Georgia Highlands Coll., Cartersville (commemorations and public memory, death and burial of military dead)

2024 Katharina Matro, Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart (modern central and eastern Europe)

At Large

2024 Sherri Sheu, Univ. of Colorado, Boulder (modern US, environmental)

Nominating Committee

2022 Daniel Greene, Newberry Library (public history/museums, Holocaust/American response)

2022 Akiko Takenaka, Univ. of Kentucky (Japanese war responsibility/reconciliation, cultural heritage, gender)

2022 Karin Wulf, Omohundro Inst. of Early American History & Culture, Coll. of William & Mary (early America, women and gender, family)

2023 Fahad Ahmad Bishara, Univ. of Virginia (Indian Ocean economic and legal, Islamic law and capitalism)

2023 Carla G. Pestana, Univ. of California, Los Angeles (early America, Atlantic world)

2023 John Thabiti Willis, Carleton Coll. (religious encounters, African and diaspora religions)

2024 Amy M. Froide, Univ. of Maryland, Baltimore County (female investors and single women, Britain 1500–1800)

2024 Beatrice Gurwitz, National Humanities Alliance (Latin American/Jewish history, higher education policy, public humanities)

2024 Sharlene Sinegal-DeCuir, Xavier Univ. of Louisiana (African American, New Orleans)

Committee on Committees

7/2021 Madeline Y. Hsu, Univ. of Texas at Austin (migration and transnationalism, international, Asian American studies, modern China)

7/2021 Jennifer L. Palmer, Univ. of Georgia (18th-century French slavery/race/gender)

7/2022 Raúl A. Ramos, Univ. of Houston (19th-century US-Mexico border, transnational identity construction)

7/2023 Leo J. Garofalo, Connecticut Coll. (colonial Andean cities and markets, Afro-Iberians and African diaspora)

Suggestions should be submitted by email to committees@historians.org. Please specify the academic or other position and the field of the individual, and include a brief statement of their qualifications for the position. Refer to the *Statement on Diversity in AHA Nominations and Appointments* (historians.org/ahadiversity), which was drafted in the hope that it will encourage members to suggest more individuals from diverse backgrounds for both appointments and nominations. All suggestions received will be forwarded to the Nominating Committee for consideration at its meeting in February 2021.

Schedule for Nominations and Elections of AHA Officers

January 4, 2021	Deadline to make suggestions to executive director.
February 2021	Nominating Committee meets to determine slate.
March–April 2021	Slate published in <i>Perspectives on History</i> and <i>Perspectives Daily</i> .
June 1, 2021	Link to ballot emailed to AHA members.
July 15, 2021	Final deadline to record votes.
August–September 2021	Results announced in <i>Perspectives on History</i> and <i>Perspectives Daily</i> . Committee on Committees elected member begins term of office immediately.
January 8, 2022	Results announced at business meeting during 135th annual meeting in New Orleans.
January 9, 2022	Individuals begin terms of office.

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

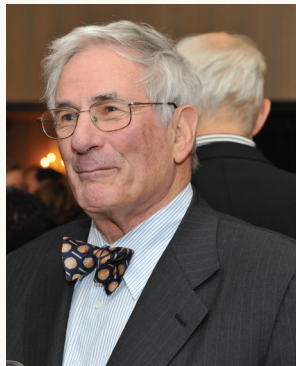
The graphic features a large orange speech bubble at the top with the words "Gift Membership" in white. Below this, on a light beige background, is the text "Share the benefits of AHA membership with the historian in your life." followed by "AHA membership supports historians in all fields, all professions, and all stages." in a bold, dark blue font. At the bottom, a dark blue bar contains the word "Contact" in white, followed by a white arrow pointing to the email address "members@historians.org" in white text, and then the phrase "to learn how you can give the gift of AHA membership." in a smaller white font.

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Richard Gilder

1932–2020

Collector, Philanthropist,
and Activist

Richard Gilder, an investor and philanthropist who promoted historical study to people of all ages, died on May 12, 2020, in Charlottesville, Virginia. The 2012 winner of the AHA's Theodore Roosevelt–Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service, Gilder was co-founder of both the Gilder Lehrman Institute for American History and the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at the MacMillan Center at Yale University.

Born in Manhattan, Gilder was a fifth-generation New Yorker, son of a real estate property manager and a homemaker. He earned a BA in history from Yale and briefly attended Yale Law School. In 1968, he started the investment firm Gilder, Gagnon, Howe & Company, which would become a multi-billion-dollar company. As a philanthropist, his largesse extended from the rehabilitation of a dilapidated Central Park to the funding of a graduate school at the American Museum of Natural History, the first museum in the Western Hemisphere to begin a doctoral-granting degree program.

In the late 1980s, Gilder began parlaying a lifelong passion for American history into a suite of activities that, taken together, would widely influence American historical consciousness. He started by saving Civil War battlefields, which he likened to three-dimensional documents, until learning the joy in collecting actual historical manuscripts from his friend Lewis E. Lehrman. The men joined forces to create the Gilder Lehrman Collection of American documents, the foundation of the Gilder Lehrman Institute. The institute has cataloged and digitized the collection (now 72,000 items) for online access.

The institute has elevated the teaching and learning of American history on a national scale. In 1995, after attending a captivating lecture on transatlantic slavery by Yale professor David Brion Davis, Gilder and Lehrman speculated that social studies teachers might be similarly inspired by studying with eminent historians. The resulting “summer seminars,” a competitive program for K–12 teachers, began a few months later,

with Davis leading a weeklong course for two dozen New York City schoolteachers. Over 25 years, the program has expanded to more than 1,000 teachers studying each summer at universities across the country, and has served approximately 20,000 teachers since its inception. More broadly, the institute has created a network of 26,000 affiliate schools and programs across all 50 states, supporting more than 50,000 teachers and more than three million students each year. In addition, the institute's National History Teacher of the Year prize honors exceptional K–12 history teaching annually.

In 1998, Gilder and Lehrman supported Davis in the creation of the Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition, the first such institution in the world. Of Gilder, its director David Blight wrote: “He put his confidence and his resources behind the effort to create knowledge about human exploitation and to spread that knowledge around the world. He trusted historians, expertise, research, and the great arts of teaching. He set in motion an institutional means by which to cross all manner of political, economic, racial, and ethnic boundaries in grasping the meaning of the past.”

More recently, the establishment of the Pace–Gilder Lehrman MA in American History program, a fully accredited, online degree program, enables students, primarily teachers, to receive a master's degree in US history awarded by Pace University.

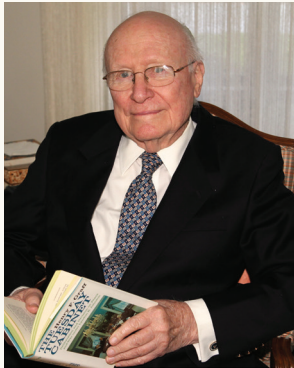
Outside the academy, Gilder's work as executive committee chair of the New-York Historical Society in the early 2000s led to a transformation that ranged from the renovation of the museum's headquarters to clarifying its mission to the roll-out of “blockbuster” history exhibitions, including *Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern America* and the highly acclaimed *Slavery in New York*.

Although Gilder's conservative political leanings provoked skepticism in some circles about the larger implications of his interest in the teaching and dissemination of history, by all accounts his support for scholarship was, in the words of Henry Louis Gates Jr., “nonideological, nonpartisan, cosmopolitan, and fearless.”

Gilder is survived by his wife, the actress Lois Chiles; four children from a previous marriage, Ginny, Peggy, Britt-Louise, and Richard Gilder III; a sister, Peggy Tirschwell; and 10 grandchildren.

Valerie Paley
New-York Historical Society

Photo courtesy Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History



Henry F. Graff

1921–2020

Historian of the
American Presidency;
AHA 50-Year Member

Henry F. Graff, who was associated with the Columbia University Department of History for more than 75 years, died of COVID-19 on April 7, 2020, at the age of 98. Probably no other historian in the United States knew more presidents or wrote more about them.

He was born on August 11, 1921, in New York City, the son of Florence (Morris) Graff and Samuel Graff, a garment district salesman. He had a twin sister, Myra Balber, who predeceased him. Because his family lacked the money for diversions during the Depression, Henry said, he read every history book in the nearby branch of the public library.

Henry entered graduate school at Columbia in 1941, but he remained only one year before enlisting in the US Army. He rose from private to first lieutenant in the Signal Corps, serving as a Japanese language officer and cryptanalyst in the Signal Intelligence Service. Graff's wartime task of reading foreign codes and ciphers, particularly the now famous Purple Code, proved to be extraordinary. In November 1943, he translated part of a message from the Japanese ambassador in Germany to the Tokyo foreign office that described German plans to counter the expected Allied invasion of France. As recounted in the BBC documentary *Hiroshima*, he also translated a 1945 communiqué from the Japanese to the Swiss, asking for help to get them out of the war—making Graff the first American to learn of Tokyo's imminent surrender.

Upon his honorable discharge, Graff returned to Columbia, where he earned his PhD in 1949. He married Edith Krantz in 1946. The love of his life, she died in 2019 after almost 73 years of marriage. They had two daughters, Iris Graff Morse and Ellen Graff; with his sons-in-law, Andrew Morse and Martin Fox, they blessed him with five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

From 1949 to 1991, Graff was a professor at Columbia, where he specialized in the history of foreign relations and

the US presidency. In 1959, Harry Truman sat in on his seminar on the presidency; Gerald Ford did the same in 1989. In 1965, Lyndon Johnson appointed him to the National Historical Publications Commission, and in 1993, Bill Clinton named him to the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Review Board. Graff was a regular network television commentator on presidential elections and inaugurations.

A marvelous storyteller and lecturer, Henry loved to regale listeners with anecdotes about history and people he knew. Whenever you entered his office or passed him in the hall, he would practically shout your name, as if there were no one with whom he would rather visit. An avid golfer, he loved chocolate and baseball, and he treated everyone—whether janitors, waiters, or corporate executives—with the same respect and affection. Always generous, he funded the Columbia history department faculty lounge in Fayerweather Hall in 2010.

Graff was the author or editor of more than a dozen books. His first monograph was *Bluejackets with Perry in Japan* (New York Public Library, 1952). He co-authored, with Jacques Barzun, *The Modern Researcher* (Harcourt, Brace, 1957), which went through a half-dozen editions into the 21st century. His best-known general book was *The Tuesday Cabinet: Deliberation and Decision on Peace and War under Lyndon B. Johnson* (Prentice-Hall, 1970), which was based on his attendance at meetings of the president and his senior advisers during the Vietnam War. He also wrote a half-dozen high school and middle school textbooks, which were educational and commercial successes.

Over a long and distinguished career, Graff garnered many honors. He twice chaired the Pulitzer Prize jury in history, and he was an elected member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Century Association, and the Society of American Historians. He won Columbia's Great Teacher Award and the Mark Van Doren Award, awarded annually by students for humanity and distinguished teaching. And most unusually, in 2005 he received an honorary doctor of letters degree from Columbia. As one of his friends wrote, "It's hard to be too lavish in praise of Henry Graff." Quite simply, he lit up and enlightened every room he entered.

Kenneth T. Jackson
Columbia University (emeritus)

Photo courtesy Mike Fox



Paul A. C. Koistinen

1933–2020

Historian of American Warfare; AHA 50-Year Member

Paul A. C. Koistinen, historian of the political economy of American warfare, died on January 25, 2020, at the age of 86. He taught US history at California State University, Northridge, from 1963 to 2002, retiring as professor emeritus.

Koistinen was born into a large, working-class Finnish American family in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1933. He resolved at an early age to escape the confines of his family's fundamentalist Apostolic Lutheran sect of the Finnish Lutheran church, the rigidity of which gave him a lifelong suspicion of the power of all institutions.

Koistinen began his undergraduate studies at Contra Costa Junior College, later transferring to the University of California, Berkeley. Drafted into the army in the 1950s, he came to regard war as utterly perverse. This antipathy, together with his suspicion of institutions and elites, shaped his professional career. In 1963, he completed a PhD in history at Berkeley, where he was chiefly influenced by Richard Drinnon. Koistinen then published a series of articles and two books, *Hammer and the Sword* (Ayer Co Pub, 1979) and *The Military-Industrial Complex: A Historical Perspective* (Praeger, 1980).

At that point, he launched what was surely among the most ambitious scholarly projects undertaken by any American historian of his generation—a multi-volume history of the political economy of American warfare. The series began with *Beating Plowshares into Swords*, which carried the story from 1606 through the Civil War. There followed *Mobilizing for Modern War* (1865–1919); *Planning War, Pursuing Peace* (1920–39); *Arsenal of World War II* (1940–45); and finally, *State of War* (1945–2011). Published between 1996 and 2012 by the University Press of Kansas, the five volumes interpreted war mobilization across American history, taking into account the maturity of the economy, the capacity of the federal government, the condition of the military services themselves, and the state of war technology. A year in

residence at the Charles Warren Center at Harvard University significantly advanced Koistinen's magisterial project.

As dedicated as he was to scholarship, Koistinen likewise demonstrated a powerful commitment to teaching, for which he received the Distinguished Professor award from Cal State Northridge in 1982. He had a commanding classroom presence and very high standards. Koistinen particularly welcomed students who had academic potential but faced obstacles in life, and in talking about them he could become quite sentimental. For decades, he battled for academic freedom, faculty governance, and collegial fairness in the university setting. He could be justly passionate, even fierce, in defending all three. To a rare degree, he embodied principle, compassion, and kindness.

Paul Koistinen is survived by his wife of 58 years, Carolyn; a son, David, himself a history professor at William Paterson University of New Jersey; a daughter, Janice; and two grandchildren.

John Broesamle
California State University, Northridge (emeritus)

Photo courtesy David Koistinen

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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY ABU DHABI

Abu Dhabi, UAE

NYUAD Institute/Humanities Research Fellowships for the Study of the Arab World. The NYU Abu Dhabi Research Institute invites scholars who wish to contribute to the vibrant research culture of NYUAD's Saadiyat campus to apply for a residential fellowship, starting September 2021. The Institute welcomes applications from scholars working in all areas of the humanities related to the study of the Arab world, its rich literature and history, its cultural and artistic heritage, and its manifold connections with other cultures. This includes, among others, Islamic intellectual history and culture, any areas of particular relevance to the MENA region, as well as projects thematically connected to existing research projects and initiatives at NYUAD's divisions of Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences (see <https://nyuad.nyu.edu/en/research.html>). Both distinguished scholars with an established reputation and promising scholars who are at the beginning of their career can apply for a research fellowship. The program awards one-year senior fellowships and one-/two-year postdoctoral fellowships. Each fellow receives a competitive stipend commensurate with experience, housing, health insurance, work/office space on campus, full access to NYUAD's library facilities (with close connections to NYU's main library in New York), research

allowance, an opportunity to host a small workshop funded by the Research Institute, and support for travel to and from Abu Dhabi. We expect successful candidates to commence their appointment on September 1, 2021, pending final approval. The fellowship program is hosted by the NYU Abu Dhabi Research Institute. For more information, please visit <https://nyuad.nyu.edu/en/research/centers-labs-and-projects/humanities-research-fellowship-program.html>. Applications are due October 1, 2020. For questions, please reach out to Alexandra Sandu, Assistant Program Director, alexandra.sandu@nyu.edu.

UNITED STATES



CALIFORNIA

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles, CA

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research, or community service has prepared them to contribute to our commitment to diversity and excellence. All qualified applicants are encouraged to apply online at <https://recruit.apo.ucla.edu/JPF05574> to upload their information for this position. This position is subject to final administrative approval. Documents should include a letter of application, a CV, and the name and contact information of three scholars who might be contacted for a letter of reference. A statement addressing the applicant's past and/or potential contributions to equity, diversity, and inclusion is also required. Please visit the UCLA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion website for Sample Guidance for Candidates on the Statement of Contributions to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: <https://equity.ucla.edu/programs-resources/faculty-search-process/faculty-search-committee-resources/sample-guidance/>. The University of California is an AA/EOE. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, age or protected veteran status. For the complete University of California nondiscrimination and affirmative action policy see: UC Nondiscrimination & Affirmative Action Policy.



NEW YORK

QUEENS COLLEGE, CUNY

Flushing, NY

African American History. The History Department of Queens

College, CUNY is conducting a search for an assistant, associate, or a full professor of African American history. Beginning in fall 2021, the successful candidate will also serve as director of the Africana Studies Program for a minimum of six years with the goal of strengthening and developing initiatives related to advancing the program, student engagement, alumni and community involvement, and fundraising. Regardless of research specialty, the candidate will be expected to teach both halves of the History Department's African American History survey course, as well as other undergraduate and master's level courses in their field of expertise. For application information and more details, go to <http://cunyjobs>, in the box under "Job titles and keywords," enter the job ID "22025," click on "Assistant/Associate/Full Professor - African American History" and select the "Apply Now" button and follow the instructions. AA/IRCA/ADA/EOE.

AD POLICY STATEMENT

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

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

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

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

CARINA RAY

THE PITH HELMET

When Melania Trump donned a pith helmet on her 2018 trip to Kenya—one of four African countries she visited during her first official solo trip abroad—commentators pointed out that her choice to wear the colonial-era throwback was tone deaf and smacked of nostalgia for a time characterized not only by sartorial oddities, but by brutality and plunder. Others observed that it was consistent with her husband’s white supremacist governing ideology, which, by extension, she represents as First Lady. Predictably, there were those who dismissed criticism of Trump’s colonial millinery as liberal hysteria.

When I saw the photograph of Trump on safari perched in the back of a Land Cruiser with the white hat sitting atop her hair, my mind raced to an altogether different rendering of the pith helmet—one that I encountered in a secondhand bookstore in Old Havana. In this poster, the pith helmet’s distinctive shape and crisp white color are brought into stark relief against a solid black background, which amplifies the bright green arrow that pierces the helmet. The iconography is unequivocal: **DOWN WITH SETTLER COLONIAL RULE!** Designed by Cuban artist Faustino Pérez, the poster demonstrates why the “it’s just a hat” defense doesn’t hold water. The spare but powerful image is so fiercely anticolonial because the pith helmet is so quintessentially colonial. Produced in 1970 by Cuba’s Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America—better known as OSPAAAL—the poster commemorates March 17 as the *Jornada de Solidaridad con Zimbabwe*, or the Day of Solidarity with Zimbabwe. The African population of what was then known as Southern Rhodesia was still a decade away from achieving independence from white settler colonial rule, but Pérez purposefully recognized the name they claimed for themselves, Zimbabwe, and paid homage to their ongoing liberation struggle, one of the bloodiest in Africa’s history.



Although the pith helmet was a favorite of Cecil Rhodes, who famously declared his intention to establish a contiguous British imperial footprint from “the Cape to Cairo,” it wasn’t just a staple of white Rhodesian settlers. By the mid-19th century, it was standard-issue for Europeans fanning out across Europe’s second empires in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Its material origin is found in India, where pith—spongy tissue in the inner stem of vascular swamp plants—was dried and shaped into the helmet’s iconic shape before being covered with white cloth. Pith was later replaced by cork, a more durable alternative.

While the pith helmet forms part of the sartorial culture of colonialism in ways that underscore just how linked fashion and power always are, its historical roots in 19th-century scientific racism point to a telling paradox: anxieties over white colonial fragility lurked just beneath the surface of this archetypal symbol of colonial power. The pith helmet and other protective devices like the spine pad were meant to shield Europeans in the colonies from so-called tropical solar radiation, which was thought to have deleterious effects on their nervous systems. By the early 20th century these allegedly heat-induced afflictions came to be known as tropical neurasthenia, a “whites only” condition, which lost its scientific purchase by World War II. The pith helmet’s appearance on the war’s battlefields, and nearly 80 years later on Melania Trump’s head in Kenya, underscores its symbolic power, which has outlived the ailments it was supposed to ward off. It also reminds us that the colonial past remains ever present. **P**

Carina Ray is associate professor in African and African American studies, and H. Coplan Chair of Social Sciences at Brandeis University. She tweets @Sankaralives.

Poster by Faustino Pérez (OSPAAAL), 1970; image courtesy Carina Ray

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