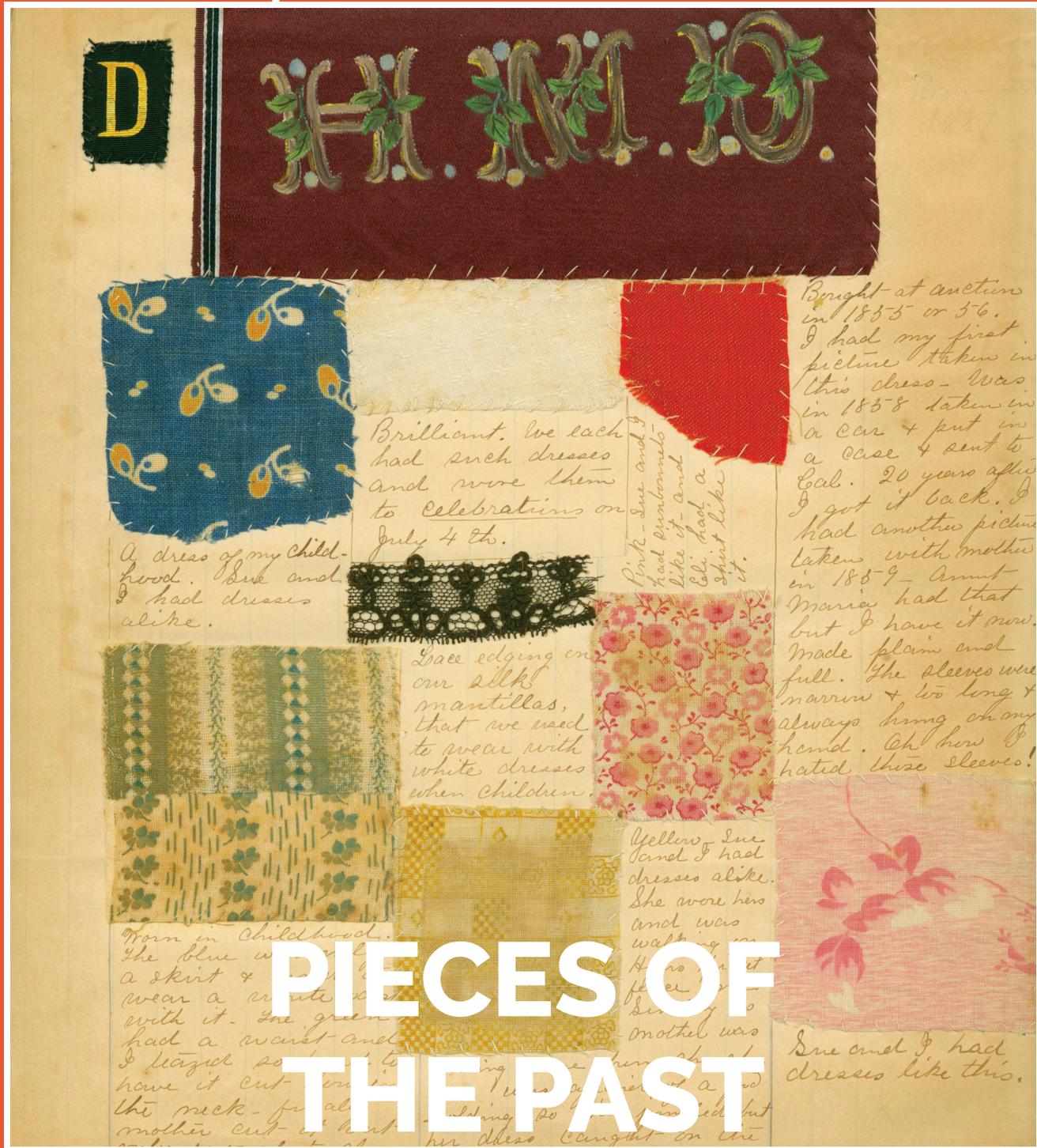
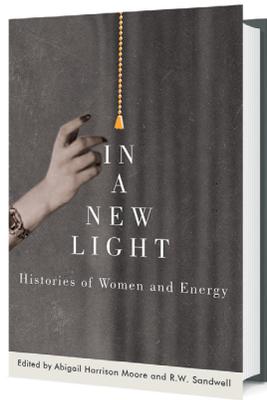


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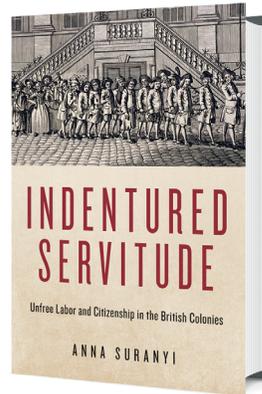
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Volume 59: 5  
May 2021



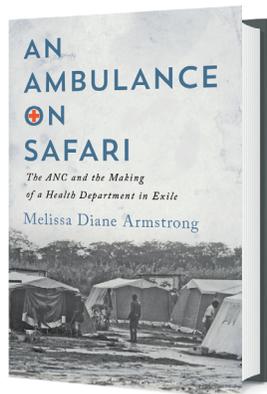


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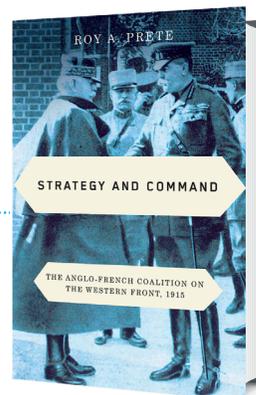
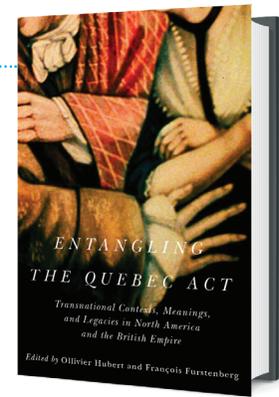
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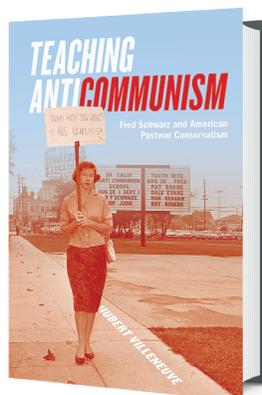
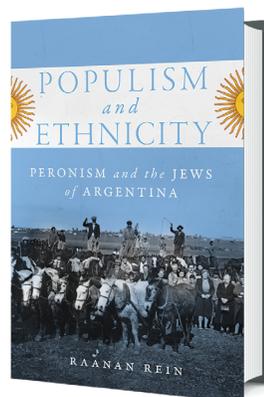
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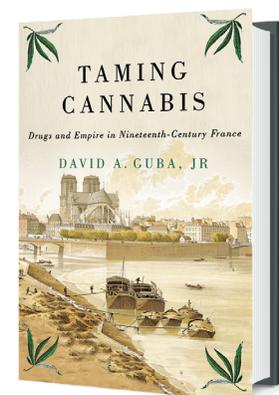
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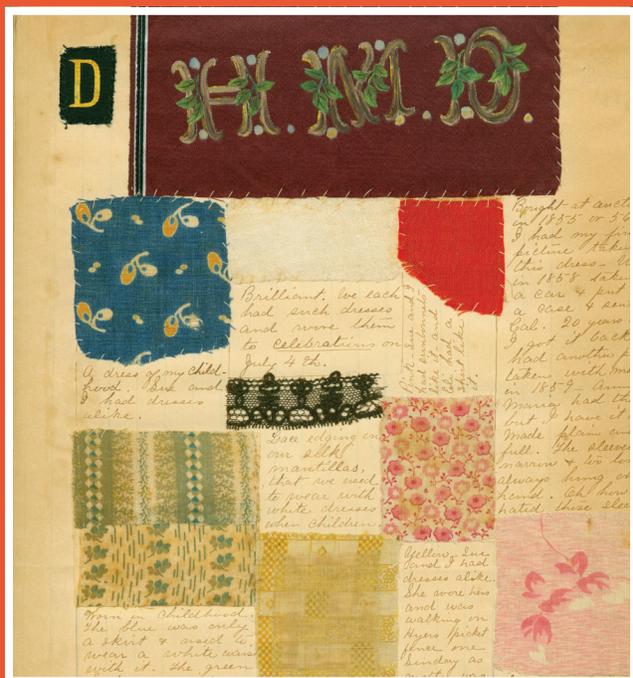
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### ON THE COVER

We launched the Everything Has a History feature in September to showcase short essays, each about a specific physical item. Since then, historians have written about pieces of the past ranging from bullfrogs to porcelain pigments, espresso machines, and a ship. Dina Kalman Spoerl's entry in the series, about a clothing scrapbook in the collections of the Naperville Heritage Society, is a fitting conclusion to the first year. She describes a scrapbook that blends fabric scraps and annotations, observing that the creator had a "historian's desire to get everything recorded that she could recall." This series has highlighted how, truly, everything has a history.

*Courtesy of Naperville Heritage Society*

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ASHLEY E. BOWEN

## TOWNHOUSE NOTES

*We're Not Going Anywhere*

The *Perspectives* team didn't step foot in the AHA townhouse for the entire 2020–21 publishing cycle. It may no longer be accurate to call my monthly column "Townhouse Notes." Perhaps it should temporarily be called something like "Dispatches from the Slack Channel" or "Zooming in on *Perspectives*." When I joined the AHA staff, my first priority was figuring out how to get "the September issue out while working at a social distance." We did that, on time, and then did it eight more times.

I am immensely proud of the work that historians did this year under extraordinary circumstances. During a year when history was "Front and Center," to borrow from James Grossman's September 2020 column, *Perspectives* authors provided valuable context to current events, reflected on the role of the profession in public life, and offered thoughtful essays on the impact that this work can have on individuals and communities. They completed this work while juggling new teaching modes, navigating limited access to research materials, meeting child and elder care obligations, and managing the daily stress of life during a pandemic. That our authors met deadlines, with good humor and enthusiasm, is a testament to their resilience.

My pride in the community of authors is surpassed only by my awe at the AHA's publications staff: director of research and publications Sarah Jones Weickel, managing editor Laura Ansley, editorial assistant Karen Lou, and the nine others from across the organization that make up the *Perspectives* editorial board. This magazine is the product of many people reading drafts, offering nuanced and thoughtful feedback, and catching errors or oversights. Our year of uninterrupted remote production was possible only because of their dedication and the contributions of all my colleagues on the AHA staff.

We have, all of us, earned a vacation. Maintaining productivity in a year characterized by national, professional, and personal loss has left many of us feeling



depleted (at best). Although the print magazine goes on hiatus in June, July, and August each year, *Perspectives* won't exactly put up a "gone fishin'" sign.

The team will spend this summer reviewing and analyzing our work. In October, we committed to ensuring that our content and author pool reflects the diversity of the AHA's members. For the past year, we have collected voluntary demographic data after publication from authors. We have also reviewed the content covered in various articles. With the help of an undergraduate intern, we expect to spend part of the summer analyzing this data to determine how well we met that "simple but audacious goal."

Finally, if you're reading *Perspectives* only in print, you're missing out. In just the last year, our online-only articles have covered everything from the tension between business and service at the core of the US Postal Service (something we were acutely aware of as we managed delays getting print issues into readers' mailboxes), a plea for historians to stop calling things archives, and a dozen Remote Reflections on teaching and research during a pandemic.

Visit the *Perspectives* website throughout the summer to read new online-only posts. We have exciting plans, including our annual graduate student summer columnists, a short series by historians who have participated in the Fulbright program, and much more. These will complement our regular *Perspectives Daily* posts while affording us the flexibility to respond to any emerging stories.

So while we're looking forward to a summer characterized by vaccinations and the slow return to "normal" life, we're also excited to take a breath, celebrate our successes, reflect on what this year has enabled us to do, and look forward. Not quite a vacation, but restorative nonetheless. **P**

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



## TO THE EDITOR

Due to the pandemic, I was unable to get to my university mailroom for several months, but perhaps I could still comment upon John Delury's enlightening October 2020 essay, "China as Equal: Putting China as Rival into Historical Context." I agree that the present situation reverses much in the historical relationship between the United States and China, and that, unfortunately, the new equality as nation-states has become intertwined with economic and strategic rivalry. But additional points enrich Delury's analysis.

Having long taught introductory world history courses, I find that China's strong, new global economic role has dramatically changed the way students view Chinese history. In the late 1990s I felt like I was arguing with students when I (along with my textbooks) emphasized the manifold Chinese technological achievements (silk, paper, iron plow, porcelain, etc.). There was still resistance to the idea that China has contributed to the modern world as much as other societies. Recently, students much more readily and respectfully engage in discussions and exam essays on these innovations (as well as Chinese intellectual traditions).

I would also emphasize more fully the moves by some Americans during World War II to treat China as an equal. Franklin Roosevelt's attempt to elevate our wartime ally as one of the "Four Policemen" that would organize the post-war world has long been ridiculed by scholars for placing undue faith in the hapless Chiang Kai-shek, or, more deviously, as a stratagem for US domination of the Pacific by manipulating a weak China. Clearly, in retrospect, FDR's effort backfired, as Chiang's repressive regime retreated to Formosa but retained its seat on the United Nations Security Council for 20 more years. Nevertheless, this diplomatic anomaly, which among other things exacerbated tensions between the United States and Mao Zedong, arose from an intention to remedy a century of unequal treaties.

Moreover, part of that World War II impulse toward equality with China stemmed from a source Delury mentions in another capacity. He notes the influence of Pearl Buck's novel, *The Good Earth*, in stirring a paternalistic feeling among Americans towards these poor but hardworking people. In the late 1930s and during the war, however, Buck, along with other Americans with long experience in China, had gone beyond this "noblesse oblige" approach. In a blizzard of books, articles and speeches, Buck argued that Americans must confront our own mistaken prejudices, accepting China

and other nonwhite peoples as equals. Success was both partial and fleeting, of course: the end of the Chinese Exclusion Act, for example, was more symbolic than substantive. Nevertheless, this new thinking constituted part of what scholars have identified as a significant legacy of World War II: repudiation of the intellectual basis of racism.

Today's US-China rivalry raises thorny questions for policymakers, human rights activists, and others (though all should reject Donald Trump's racist characterizations of the coronavirus). For historians, the rivalry increases the relevance both of our teaching and our research.

ROBERT SHAFFER

*Shippensburg University (emeritus)*



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# LETTER EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE NEW ORLEANS CITY COUNCIL STREET RENAMING COMMISSION

The AHA sent the following letter to the City Council of New Orleans, expressing enthusiastic support for the work of the New Orleans City Council Street Renaming Commission and its final report. The letter praised the process undertaken by the Renaming Commission and its consultation with historians, including many AHA members.

March 18, 2021  
New Orleans City Council  
New Orleans, Louisiana

Dear Council Members:

The American Historical Association (AHA)—the largest professional association of historians in the world—enthusiastically supports the work of the New Orleans City Council Street Renaming Commission.

Nearly four years ago, in the midst of a national debate over Confederate monuments, the AHA stated its opposition to memorials honoring Americans who committed treason on behalf of the claimed right of some humans to own, buy, and sell other humans. More broadly we have emphasized the imperative of integrating democracy and expertise in decision-making: “Naming, like monuments, articulates community values, identifying people whom a community has chosen to honor for their accomplishments.” At the same time, “these decisions require not only attention to historical facts, including the circumstances under which monuments were built and spaces named, but also an understanding of what history is and why it matters to public culture.” New Orleans offers an example of how these principles can be implemented through a thoughtful and inclusive process, informed by deep and careful historical research.

The ordinance that established the Renaming Commission specified criteria for street and place name removal that

pointed first and foremost to the relationship between treason and the defense of slavery. Commission members then consulted with historians who have a “demonstrable record of scholarship, formal or informal, regarding the history and geography of the City of New Orleans, especially in relation to traditionally underrepresented communities.” These scholars, including many members of the AHA, conducted research in order to identify streets and places that fit the ordinance’s criteria for removal, and remained open to considering new and conflicting sources as those sources were identified.

The final report issued by those scholars—which apparently greatly informed the commission’s discussions and decisions—is a remarkable document of collaborative historical research. In addition to identifying streets and places that fit the ordinance criteria for removal, the historians put forward a wide array of possibilities for official New Orleans place names—women and men deeply connected to the city’s history, and reflecting the relationship between history, place naming, and community values.

The final report issued by the  
Renaming Commission is a  
remarkable document of  
collaborative historical research.

For many years, historians have explored the roles and contributions of ordinary people in the history of the city of New Orleans. Indeed, the history of New Orleans, like that of other places, cannot be reduced to the actions of a few politicians or military officers. For example, historians have placed fugitives from slavery, public health leaders, local labor officials, African American soldiers, cultural innovators, and everyday civil rights activists at the heart of the city’s historical narrative. This research—broadly

accepted and valued within the discipline—clearly informed the choices made by the historians and scholars who donated their time and expertise to this process. In transforming these names, the city of New Orleans will align its official commemoration with cutting-edge scholarship, the expertise of professional historians, and democratic processes. Moreover, the commission’s report itself constitutes a historical document, open to review and scrutiny of future historians and citizens of New Orleans, an example of democratic transparency in decision-making processes often not afforded to previous generations.

It is indeed possible to listen to a broad spectrum of voices.

In New Orleans—like countless cities across the South—street and place names honored Confederate leaders as part of a broad and antidemocratic effort to deny African Americans their rights as US citizens and their place in the

city’s history. The more inclusive procedures undertaken in New Orleans are all the more remarkable considering the challenges presented by the pandemic. We urge all localities undertaking this kind of process to recognize that it is indeed possible to listen to a broad spectrum of voices, and not just the loudest, angriest, or most powerful. And, as the commission’s report observes, to recognize that historical questions do not have “definitive answers.”

Members of the American Historical Association plan to gather in New Orleans for our annual meeting in January 2022. We look forward to walking city streets bearing names that result from a democratic process driven by historical scholarship. **P**

Sincerely,

James Grossman  
Executive Director

Jacqueline Jones  
President, 2021



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# STATEMENT ON VIOLENCE AGAINST ASIANS AND ASIAN AMERICANS

The American Historical Association deplores the recent incidents of violence and harassment aimed at Asians and Asian Americans. This hostility against particular groups because of their ethnic origins—expressed via cultural stereotypes, scapegoating, physical aggression, and bloodshed—has deep roots in our nation’s past. To stem this persistent form of inequity and hate, we would do well to understand its history.

Asians in the United States have been subject to discriminatory legislation since large numbers of Chinese immigrants began arriving in the 1850s. The false charge that they were responsible for the loss of white people’s jobs sounds eerily familiar to accusations leveled against current immigrants from around the world. In 1850 and 1852, California imposed a foreign miners’ tax on Chinese immigrants to exclude them from a “Gold Rush” that attracted prospectors from many other countries as well. During the same decade, California also passed a law prohibiting Chinese witnesses from testifying against whites in court. The Chinese men who helped build the transcontinental railroad in the 1860s performed dangerous labor for long hours at low pay, using explosives to blast tunnels and smooth mountain grades. Yet they were considered expendable and deemed unworthy of wages and working conditions that would meet even the very low standards of the era. Across the American West, Chinese immigrant communities in this period were vulnerable to vicious attacks in which victims were killed and their homes burned (e.g., Los Angeles in 1871 and Rock Springs, Wyoming Territory, in 1882) amid claims that Chinese immigrants willing to work for starvation wages were thereby taking jobs that would otherwise go to white men.

Anti-immigration legislation served not only to block Chinese hopefuls from entering the country but to promote dangerous stereotypes that gave whites license to assault them with impunity. The 1875 Page Act prohibited entry

by Chinese women—portrayed in the legislation as “prostitutes” or women imported for illicit purposes—severely reducing the immigration of Chinese women and fueling stereotypes that their inherent immorality invited sin.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the only immigration restriction in US history based solely on a specific racial group (as the Chinese were considered at the time), remained on the books until 1943. Its immediate effects included the Tacoma/Seattle expulsion campaigns that targeted Chinese immigrants in 1885–86, attempting to drive out any who dared remain in the region after passage of the 1882 law.

Asians in the United States have  
been subject to discriminatory  
legislation since the 1850s.

Hostility to immigrants from Asia and their descendants is not limited to Chinese Americans. California passed legislation in 1913 prohibiting Japanese immigrants from owning land. A decade later, federal legislation barring immigration to all “aliens ineligible to citizenship” effectively extended the Chinese Exclusion Act to emigrants from Japan, Korea, and South Asia. During World War II, through Executive Order 9066, the federal government incarcerated approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans (two-thirds of them US-born citizens) in internment camps and seized their property in a blatant abrogation of due-process and civil-rights guarantees.

These moments of crisis punctuated the continued targeting of Asian Americans on the grounds of local business competition and allegations of employment displacement. When this misdirected sense of economic competition turned international, violence followed once

again. In 1982, automobile workers in Detroit murdered Vincent Chin, a Chinese American 27-year-old whom they assumed was Japanese, and hence culpable for the declining fortunes of the region's auto industry. During the same decade, Vietnamese immigrants found their shrimping boats burned off the coasts of Texas and Louisiana. By the time Korean Americans' shops were destroyed in Los Angeles in 1992, popular media had been promoting vicious stereotypes for more than a century, while depicting Asian American women in hypersexualized ways that left them more vulnerable to abuse.

The racialized misogyny explicit in the Atlanta killings is the product of generations-long stereotyping.

The racialized misogyny explicit in the Atlanta killings is the product of generations-long stereotyping and cultural denigration against Asian American women in particular. A study conducted by the Center for the Study of Hate and

Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, has concluded that hate crimes in the United States declined overall by 7 percent in 2020 compared to 2019. At the same time, such crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders increased by 150 percent.

For months, high-level federal officials in the United States referred to COVID-19 as the "China virus" and the "Kung Flu." This baseless and irresponsible scapegoating evokes the assaults in San Francisco 121 years ago, when members of the Chinese community were blamed for an outbreak of an epidemic, their property seized and homes destroyed. Indeed, the spurious association of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community with COVID-19 is another example of Americans blaming their fellow Americans for larger social ills. The murder in Atlanta of eight people on March 16, including six women of Asian descent, suggests that we have not transcended this history. **P**

*Approved by the AHA Council on March 22, 2021. For a full list of signatories, please see the online version of this statement.*

## Recently Published Online in *Perspectives Daily*



Tom Barrett/Unsplash

### Referencing a Pandemic

**Melanie A. Peinado**

As COVID-19 shuttered public life in the United States, the AHA geared up to document the many ways that historians responded to the crisis.

### Meeting Need, Collecting Need

**Amanda B. Moniz**

The National Museum of American History's curator of the history of philanthropy reflects on her efforts to document food insecurity during the COVID pandemic.

### Remote Reflections: Workarounds from an Underfunded Independent Scholar

**Phillip Reid**

One independent scholar explains how he worked through the spring and summer with the sort of make-do ethos that has been necessary throughout his career.

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JACQUELINE JONES

## ABSENCE AND PRESENCE

*Attending to Questions of Equity in Remote Education*



It's springtime, and the expanding availability of COVID-19 vaccines suggests it is time to reflect on the pandemic and its effects on the study and teaching of history over the past year. The remarkable ability of historians to adapt to this crisis has been well documented in these pages and on the AHA website; museum curators, librarians and archivists, faculty, graduate students, and AHA staff have shown tremendous resourcefulness and resilience in continuing to do their jobs and meet the needs of their varied constituencies. The historical enterprise has not only survived—in many aspects, it has thrived.

Yet it is dangerous to conclude that remoteness presents an enduring, viable alternative to in-person communication of all kinds. Indeed, online instruction and virtual presentations, including webinars and asynchronous events, have exacerbated familiar aspects of inequality in education, and opened up new fissures between the haves and the have-nots. We must keep in mind the consequences of these inequalities on students, faculty, staff, and researchers.

Before the pandemic, many historians effectively used online tools to teach students and reach people outside the academic community. Remote instruction can be a boon for students with disabilities, working students, parents, and those who commute long distances. Virtual programming, including Virtual AHA, has allowed historians and the general public to engage with historical scholarship without the expense of traveling to a conference. We should remain supportive of various, creative means to reach our audiences, and online learning will no doubt continue to play a major role in history education.

At the same time, too much of what can be a good thing can be a very bad thing. We must remain attentive to who is absent from the remote classroom, as well as to who is present. High schoolers in neighborhoods with lower

socioeconomic status, regardless of race, have dropped out of online schooling at an alarming rate. As documented extensively by our colleagues in the social sciences and reported in outlets like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, the pandemic has had a devastating effect on communities of color, regardless of socioeconomic status. Lower income households, however, often have additional stressors, such as struggles with unemployment, the threat of eviction, food insecurity, high rates of illness, and mental health challenges. In March 2021, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that the enrollment of first-year Black and Latino students in Massachusetts community colleges fell by one-third in the 2020–21 academic year. Data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center indicate that community colleges suffered a nearly 30 percent drop in first-year students from those same groups. The disruptions of the past year have deprived these students of the resources and the in-person counseling that would support them in filling out applications and financial forms for college. Over the past year, traditionally underrepresented groups have found it even more difficult to earn a postsecondary degree.

Online instruction and virtual presentations have exacerbated familiar aspects of inequality in education.

Reporting in *Inside Higher Education* emphasizes that students in lower-income households must manage the dual pressures of finding a job and contributing to the household income, on the one hand, and staying in school, whether in online or in-person classes, on the other. While online education may lift some barriers, it often creates others. Students often work on aging laptops, lack access to reliable internet connections, and must sometimes contend with conditions that are not conducive to learning. Video and

sound functions reveal living spaces, and a student's home circumstances might intrude into the digital classroom. Teachers and students may judge differences in Zoom background in terms of class differences, doubling down on messages of who "belongs" in higher education.

New modes of instruction place added burdens and stress on instructors and staff as well. They have had to adapt their courses and presentations, learn about new forms of technology, and deal with periodic glitches in Zoom and other online platforms—at times while juggling child care and the care of ill family members. The workload has increased dramatically for women and for people of color who are performing the "invisible labor" of mentoring students contending with anxiety and distress, and for graduate teaching assistants trying to complete coursework or conduct research. The AHA and other organizations have offered resources to support faculty and other instructors transitioning to online instruction. Unfortunately, faculty still suffer from burnout borne of new modes of instruction and the urgent demands of their own households, a trend documented by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

### Most at risk in this economic environment are non-tenure-track faculty and nonacademic staff.

Fiscal challenges resulting from COVID are both a cause and a pretext for slashing history faculty, staff, and programs generally. According to the *New York Times*, higher education has lost \$120 billion since the beginning of the pandemic. Some small colleges have had to close their doors altogether. Under budgetary pressure, some institutions have eliminated history as a major, others have consolidated history with other departments, and some have cut history-related programs such as Black studies and religious studies. In some states, governing entities are considering measures that would facilitate elimination of tenure without the conventional high bar of financial emergency. The AHA has protested policies that would do away with employment protections for tenured faculty (for example, in the Iowa and Kansas state university systems, and at John Carroll University).

Most at risk in this economic environment are non-tenure-track faculty and nonacademic staff. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has found that between February and August 2020, colleges and universities cut their employees by more

than 300,000, mostly staff jobs. Vulnerable employees like non-tenured faculty and staff, along with graduate TAs, might not feel secure enough to protest unsafe working conditions. Unfortunately, as the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported, they are also most likely to be forced into crowded classrooms and offices, making them more susceptible to COVID. Their workloads have increased without a corresponding increase in pay, and without the job security that tenured faculty enjoy.

The inequalities among institutions of higher learning stand in stark relief as well. On one end of the spectrum are wealthy schools that can provide state-of-the-art technology, round-the-clock tech support to instructors and students, regular COVID testing, and reasonably safe classrooms. These well-resourced institutions have streamlined paperwork for small in-house grants; modified requirements for annual reviews and dissertations; and granted extensions on the tenure clock and the suspension of committee service for junior faculty—flexible policies all in line with suggestions the AHA made in its *Statement on Research during COVID-19* in July 2020. These institutions have paid for students' internet connections, mobile hot spots, and private-home utilities service, and provided laptops and emergency cash stipends to students in need.

At the other end of the spectrum are those less affluent institutions that provided their faculty minimal support for online instruction, sent them into unsafe classrooms, and continued to mandate rigid expectations for graduate degrees, tenure, and promotion, despite all the disruptions of the last year. This go-it-alone tactic increases exhaustion and resentment among faculty, staff, and students alike.

The destructive effects of COVID-19 have been distributed unevenly throughout American society. We must caution against concluding that Zoom has ushered in a new era of educational progress, where all students, now rendered as small boxes on a screen, have the same opportunities for learning. One need not be opposed to remote learning to offer a word of caution when it comes to assessing what might otherwise be seen as a miraculous development in the history of communications—our ability to reach millions of students and other audiences in the midst of a pandemic—when in fact that "miracle" can perpetuate and exacerbate dangerous forms of inequality. **P**

*Jacqueline Jones is president of the AHA.*

JAMES GROSSMAN

## NEVER ONE PERSON

*Writing and Advocacy at the AHA*



Regular readers of this column are by now familiar with the substantial increase in statements and letters recently issued by the AHA. I've explained why this activity is central to the Association's mission, how it fits within a broader advocacy agenda that has changed over time, the reasons we've been so prolific, and why we need support from members to do this important work. What I haven't done, however, is explain *how* these texts are generated.

This question arose recently in conversations with colleagues about AHA statements that generate disagreement. Such controversy is not new, of course. Our letters defending the academic freedom of historians in other countries have not infrequently roiled the waters of nationalist politics, in one case to the point of a pointed response from the office of a nation's chief executive. More often, the objections come in the form of commentary on Twitter (sometimes civil, sometimes not). Statements focused on domestic controversies, especially those that some readers consider too "political," are the most likely to generate email, usually accompanied by a request for membership cancellation. I respond to nearly all such correspondence from members, setting aside only those that completely lack substance (and therefore offer nothing to engage) and the very few that are so ill-tempered as to suggest little opportunity for thoughtful engagement. More than once, an extended email conversation has even resulted in a change of mind and an expression of surprise that strong disagreement would engender substantive dialogue.

Rather than contesting the *decision* to issue a statement, some object to specific aspects of the AHA's argument. As one might expect, for example, our June 2020 *Statement on the History of Racist Violence in the United States* was bound to generate debate on social media and in private correspondence over decisions about what we included in just 793 words and the many important issues or events

that were left out. Our recent critique of the decision (since postponed) of the San Francisco Board of Education to rename 44 public schools, based on research that had no input from professional historians, generated concerns (in private email) about whether the statement had a "superior tone" that could detract from constructive dialogue. This was a thoughtful and reasonable critique, but also one that easily could lead to the proverbial decision to "agree to disagree."

### How are these advocacy statements written?

Recently, a more difficult situation arose over significant interpretive aspects of the March 2021 Statement on Violence against Asians and Asian Americans, issued in the wake of the murder of eight people, six of them Asian or Asian American women, in Georgia (see pages 7 and 8 for the full statement). Some disagreement relates once again to interpretive issues—in this instance, the relationship between race and ethnicity as historical constructs, as well as what could and could not be included given the many examples that might be appropriate, and the decision to limit examples to domestic policies and incidents. Disagreement on the use of concepts of race and ethnicity (and one might add nationality) related no doubt to imprecise wording on our part. More generally problematic, however, was a loud silence: the failure of our statement to include the word "racism." "Racist misogyny" refers to the issue, but does not explicitly identify the centrality of racism to the statement's narrative. As the executive director of the AHA, I take full responsibility for this omission.

By the time this significant absence was brought to our attention, more than 40 other organizations had signed onto the statement, and the text had been sent to 4,000 local newspapers across the country. The text could not be

revised, but I hope it generates appropriate debate among readers of the statement.

How can this happen? How are statements written? (This column focuses largely on statements, rather than letters; the two modes of commentary are closely related but not identical.) Unlike some other professional associations, our statements are not signed. So who actually writes these statements?

Never one person. Sometimes two. Often more. These pieces are difficult to write, requiring a combination of substantive expertise with experience in a peculiar genre. Here is how it works.

We want statements to inform local reporting and to generate debate in as many places as possible.

The first draft is nearly always written by someone who knows something of the topic or issue. Optimally, this is a member of the AHA Council or senior staff; if we don't have appropriate expertise, we recruit a former AHA officer or an established scholar in the field. That draft is reviewed and revised (sometimes substantially) by an ad hoc drafting committee comprising the executive director and one or two Council members, often including the president. The document then goes to either the full Council or the Executive Committee, depending on whether time is of the essence.

Whether the document goes to the Executive Committee or the full Council for approval, members of that body often weigh in on content or wording. Generally I coordinate that editing process, by drawing on the email conversations and revising as discussion proceeds. Between the initial drafting committee's work, and then the input from the Council or Executive Committee, it is not unusual for a single advocacy statement to go through drafts that number in the double digits.

This all sounds very smooth. But it's more complicated than this narrative would suggest. This work coincides only occasionally with our semiannual Council meetings, so much of it is conducted through email. According to the law in Washington, DC, and many states, a nonprofit governing board voting to approve an action via email must be unanimous, with everyone voting. Most statements

are discussed via email for two to four days, depending on the level of controversy, and with 16 historians at the table, commentary is likely. In some cases, the Council's admirable culture of collegiality and task-orientation generates compromise and, if necessary, individual willingness to accede to a near-consensus. The result can be a statement that is too mild or diplomatic in tone for some tastes, but one that is more likely to represent the diversity of perspectives among our membership.

Once the Council or Executive Committee has reached consensus on a statement, we send it to AHA affiliated societies and to our peer organizations in the American Council of Learned Societies for endorsements. Because every association has its own, often complicated, procedures, we accept these endorsements on an ongoing basis.

We work hard to keep advocacy documents short. We want statements to inform local reporting and to generate debate in as many places as possible, including history classrooms. Some statements have even been invoked in civic spaces such as city council meetings. We want to speak with authority as professional historians, but also provide the basis for the kinds of conversations that historians seek in our classrooms and other education venues.

For this reason, the interpretive disagreements and the controversies that statements can evoke are useful. So too are the flaws. Perhaps a teacher can distribute an AHA statement and ask why a historical perspective is useful to public consideration of this issue. What is the relationship between facts and interpretation in this statement? Why should anyone care what the American Historical Association thinks? [P](#)

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

LAURA ANSLEY

## HISTORY PODCASTING LAID BARE

*Three Historians Bring the Chippendales Dancers to Your Earbuds*

**M**any of the most popular shows in history podcasting are made by journalists as part of their work with major media outlets. Shows like *Slow Burn* from Slate and *Throughline* from NPR feature journalists doing deep dives into past events.

But a recent podcast production from Pineapple Street Studios and Gimlet Media proves the exception to the rule.

Hosted by Natalia Mehlman Petrzela and co-produced by Neil J. Young and Nicole Hemmer, *Welcome to Your Fantasy* tells the salacious history of the Chippendales male striptease show, from the founding of the Chippendales Club in 1979 through their international fame, touring productions, and the ubiquitous Chippendales Calendar. Digging up a tale of lust, excess, and even murder, the Spotify Original podcast reveals just how sexy history can be.

Petrzela, an associate professor of history at The New School, stumbled upon the Chippendales story by accident. A few years ago, she was invited to appear in a European television documentary about the Chippendales and the politics of consent in the 1980s. In doing preliminary research for the show, Petrzela was struck by three things, as she told *Perspectives*: “Chippendales was founded by an Indian immigrant, feminists were fighting in the pages of the *Los Angeles Times* about



There is no central Chippendales archive, so research for *Welcome to Your Fantasy* relied on a number of personal collections in building the story.  
*Courtesy Logan Clarke*

whether or not the male strip show advanced or hindered women’s liberation, and the founder—at the height of the brand’s success—had his partner, a children’s television producer from New Jersey, *murdered*.” When she posted about these finds on social media, a friend suggested that it could make a good podcast.

It took two years for the three historians to take the project from concept to release.

Petrzela is not new to podcasting. With Hemmer, an associate research scholar with the Obama Presidency Oral History Project at Columbia University, and Young, a historian and contributing writer for *The Week*, Petrzela has been co-hosting *Past Present Podcast* since 2015. On *Past Present*, the three historians gather weekly to give historical context for today’s politics and culture. But *Welcome to Your Fantasy* was a new format for the team, and Petrzela turned to Young and Hemmer to help her refine the concept for the show. They pitched the story to media outlets, and Pineapple Street Studios signed on to make *Welcome to Your Fantasy* in early 2019, with Petrzela as host and co-producer and Hemmer and Young serving as consulting producers. Spotify and Gimlet Media later signed on to make the podcast a Spotify exclusive (it will become available on all podcast platforms this summer). It took two years for the three historians—along with a team of two executive producers, three producers, two editors, an engineer, and a fact-checker from Pineapple Street—to take the project from concept to release. This process required that Petrzela, Hemmer, and Young take on a variety of behind-the-scenes roles in researching, writing, and producing the show.

Because of his location in Los Angeles, the original home of the Chippendales

club, Young focused on conducting research and doing preliminary interviews with many of the subjects. He found that finding the Chippendales in the archives was “very much a needle-in-the-haystack” search. There is no centralized Chippendales archive, so Young spent weeks combing through archives, both in-person and online. At UCLA’s Film and Television Archives, Young watched every single tape they had of the Chippendales’ multiple talk-show appearances in the 1980s and 1990s, finding episodes of *The Phil Donohue Show* and *The Sally Jessy Raphael Show*. He watched hundreds of hours of local television news broadcasts, looking for any possible coverage of the Chippendales’ LA club. These lengthy searches yielded relatively few results, but Young says, “Even that was an important discovery in itself. We realized that although Chippendales eventually became a world-famous brand, it certainly didn’t start out that way.”

While working on their weekly podcast requires a lot of quick research,

synthesizing of sources, and the ability to make arguments in conversation with Hemmer and Petrzela, Young likened this research process to “more like writing a book.” The Chippendales project required “a ton of archival research, although far more of it focused on audio and video records than what most historians usually consult; reading lots of primary sources, from personal memoirs to newspaper accounts to a mountain of legal documents; consulting secondary literature on the big historical themes our show explores; and, of course, lots and lots of oral histories.”

Those oral histories form the backbone of the audio project. Young and other producers often conducted preliminary interviews with those who experienced the Chippendales from the start: the dancers themselves, other club employees, a Chippendales tour manager, the man who brought a racial discrimination lawsuit against the club, even neighbors who still live in the blocks surrounding the original location. Along with their



Neil J. Young, Nicole Hemmer, and Natalia Mehlman Petrzela have been podcasting together since 2015.  
*Eleanor Kagan*

memories, interviewees often shared photographs, memorabilia, even costumes from the show with the podcast producers. When they were ready to go on tape for the podcast, Petrzela conducted most of the more than 60 interviews for the show.

Armed with Young's archival research and Petrzela's interviews, Hemmer got busy writing episode scripts. Along with cohosting *Past Present*, her podcast experience includes creating *A12: The Story of Charlottesville* in 2018, a six-episode show about the 2017 Charlottesville white supremacist rally. She describes *A12* as "such a passion project for me," which came from living in Charlottesville and covering the violence for national news outlets. "It was my first experience conducting audio interviews—I spoke with around 30 activists, city leaders, and historians—and my first time writing and editing a narrative podcast," experience that served her well on *Welcome to Your Fantasy*. In 2020, she also began cohosting *The Day in Esoteric Political History*, a short-form podcast that publishes three times a week.

*Welcome to Your Fantasy* is a storytelling podcast, with scripts crafted in a writers' room where Hemmer was often the only historian. Though she has published a monograph and academic articles, and writes a weekly column for CNN, Hemmer says that working on the show "was a process of learning an entirely different form of writing." As she tells *Perspectives*, "I wrote the first draft of most of the episode scripts, but the writing process was almost entirely collaborative." In weekly meetings at the Pineapple Street studios in Brooklyn, New York, Hemmer and other producers worked to refine and rewrite scripts, sharing them with Petrzela, Young, and others at table reads, when the staff would gather to workshop the script. At this stage, Hemmer says, "Everyone would pitch in, throwing out suggestions for rewrites and jokes and

turns of phrase. It was a long process—we wrote something like 26 versions of episode 1!—and the most collaborative writing process I've ever been a part of." Throughout production, their expertise as historians was essential. "Pineapple saw having historians on the team as a huge asset. It was the other producers who cut story lines that seemed too driven by salaciousness, and who kept coming back to us for more analysis and more history," Hemmer says.

## Podcasting let the team get closer to their audience.

After episodes were drafted, Petrzela's role as host took center stage. While *Past Present* takes the form of a chat among friends, the recording process for *Welcome to Your Fantasy* was a different beast entirely. As Petrzela says, recording the episode narration "took many, many hours, and was a huge learning curve for me." She would read the scripts multiple times, "in multiple tonalities," while being coached by the producers. "The show is scripted, but it's supposed to sound relatively natural, so I would also always do a few takes 'in my own words,' which is harder than it sounds!" Once the narration was recorded, a producer would mix in tape from the archives and interviews, along with music. Then the team would listen to audio drafts of each episode, with Petrzela re-recording sections that needed revision. As she says, "It was an intense, and intensely collaborative, process!" Lastly, the audio engineer would finalize the episodes with sound design, music composition, and mixing.

For all three historians, the experience of working with Pineapple Street was quite different from their previous podcasts. "Our partnership provided crucial support on our historical research, kind

of like having several extremely engaged and talented RAs, but also on aspects in which we as historians have no training—from writing a script to scoring music to designing the cover art to the marketing campaign," Petrzela says. "There exists a popular notion that anyone with a mic and a good idea can make a podcast, and while that's technically true, making *Welcome to Your Fantasy* is proof positive of how much collaboration, expertise, and resources are required to make an elaborate show like this."

Many historians who stumbled upon this story would have written a monograph, or perhaps have shown it (in all its glory) in a documentary. But podcasting let the team get closer to their audience. As Hemmer says, "It's an odd choice, in a way: we're talking about male stripping, which is a *very* visual art form! But podcasting offers a level of intimacy and texture that's different from written work or even film. It plays right into your ears, forming a bond between the host and the audience that's unlike other genres."

For Petrzela, the podcast allowed for a different kind of storytelling: "I actually think that stripping out the visual aspect, especially in our interviews of the dancers, whose careers had been largely defined by their appearance, allowed us to explore them as more complex, multi-dimensional figures."

Young agrees, saying, "Telling it in audio form allows listeners to not be as distracted by the obvious things—images of sexy stripping men and of dramatic crime scenes—but rather to focus more on the incredible, surprising, heartbreaking, and, oftentimes, infuriating people and events that fueled this phenomenon." **P**

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

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KAREN LOU

## FROM JAZZ CLUBS TO BARBERSHOPS AND MUSEUMS

*Historians Consult on Pixar's Soul*

**In October 2020, *Soul* became the first Pixar animated film to feature a Black lead. *Soul* is not a historical film, but it draws on Black history, and the story is grounded in Black experiences. The creators understood that they had to get the film right.**

*Soul* follows Joe Gardner, a charismatic Brooklyn-based middle school band teacher who dreams of becoming a full-time jazz musician. Voiced by Jamie Foxx, Joe is disciplined and ambitious, but his pursuit takes him on an existential detour. After an accident, he ends up in the “Great Before” dimension, where he befriends an unborn, blob-shaped soul named 22, who is voiced by Tina Fey. When he returns to Earth, he ends up in the form of a cat, while 22 occupies his body. *Soul* is the story of Joe’s journey, but it’s also a story about humanity and life, of finding purpose and passion.

And yet *Soul* began without Joe in mind. Director Pete Docter told the website Polygon that he knew that the film would explore the balance between personal ambition and a simple life, but he was less certain how it would play out on the screen. Docter, co-screenwriter Mike Powers, and producer Dana Murray considered different possibilities, but ultimately decided to tell the story through a jazz musician’s experience. They reasoned that music is a common passion, and viewers could likely relate to it. When Kemp Powers, who saw a bit of himself in

Joe, was brought on board as co-director and co-screenwriter, *Soul* was well underway.

Recognizing the centrality of Black history and experiences to the film, Pixar’s creative team consulted a wide range of experts: jazz musicians, artists, community activists, barbershop owners, and historians. Through the Office of Strategic Partnerships at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), curator Mary Elliott and museum specialist Timothy Anne Burnside joined the team of historians tapped by Pixar for their expertise. *Perspectives* recently spoke with Elliott and Burnside about their roles in *Soul*’s development.

The group had conversations about how best to tell stories about a community to which they did not belong.

When Elliott first took the Pixar team on a tour of the NMAAHC’s Slavery and Freedom exhibit, she emphasized the power of storytelling across different media. The exhibit carefully weaves together objects, images, and voices. It illustrates the shared histories of American slavery and freedom, while underscoring how the individual experiences

of Black men and women varied. In Elliott’s view, the Pixar team took on a similar task with *Soul*. They needed to consider how they would depict the Black community without portraying it as monolithic or perpetuating harmful stereotypes. For *Soul* to resonate with its audience, Joe also had to be relatable. So, as Elliott recalled, the team asked themselves, “How do we use the African American lens to connect on universal themes, in this case, of humanity and community?”

Burnside’s work is concentrated on the top floor of the NMAAHC, where the Musical Crossroads exhibit is located. Over the course of two exhibit tours, she showcased the history of Black music for the Pixar team, highlighting artifacts and images that would serve as inspiration for the film: jazz clubs, jewelry, elements of fashion. The group also had conversations about how best to tell stories about a community to which they did not belong. Like Burnside, many of the people involved in *Soul* are not Black. They discussed the importance of grounding these stories in real voices from the Black community. The goal “was to elevate those stories and make sure they are being told truthfully.” The Pixar team agreed. They traveled to New York City, visiting locations that would serve as the basis for several of the film’s scenes, and spoke to locals about their experiences as musicians, Brooklyn residents, and members of the Black community.

The team's thoughtful work paid off. In March 2021, *Soul* received three Oscar nominations for Best Animated Feature, Best Original Score, and Best Sound. The film's animators received praise from media outlets for the care that went into illustrating the Half-Note Jazz Club (based on New York's Blue Note Jazz Club), the familiar barbershops and subway stations, and the texture of Black hair. The writers were applauded for their just-right, witty delivery of the core message: It's easy to get caught up in our personal ambitions, but the meaning of life is in our relationships with others and the joy of everyday moments.

Still, *Soul* was not received without criticism. Reviewers have argued that *Soul* was primarily produced for non-Black audiences, and they have questioned the decision to have Joe spend the majority of the film outside of his body. Elliott recalled the segment where, due to an accidental switch-up, 22 ends up on Earth in Joe's body. Elliott noted that "[22] is in the body of a Black man. In that body, she has the freedom to enjoy life, look at the trees, and look at the families, and just *be*. The Black man didn't have that sense." Aside from exploring racial identity, *Soul* also touches upon familial ties and cultural expectations. In scenes between Joe and his

mother, Libba, we see tough love as she pushes Joe to pursue a more stable career, which might remind viewers of their own relationships. Behind this, there is also an unspoken history at play, as Elliott observed: "Do [African Americans] have the luxury to dream big, when historically, it was about having to put your head down and go to college?" Critics suggest that this allowed non-Black viewers to more easily look past race, therefore increasing the character's relatability at the expense of his identity and experiences.

Despite these criticisms, *Soul* manages to deliver an artistic commentary on



Malvin Gray Jonson, "Brass Band," oil on canvas, ca. 1900–34.  
New York Public Library. Public domain

humanity, built upon decades of Black history, that a global audience can relate to. It does so through the lens of a Black protagonist and a strong sense of history and place. Viewers will pick up on hair-style and hip-hop posters in the background, small references contributed by the historical and cultural consultants. New Yorkers will nod at the sidewalk grates and thin pizza slices.

For a story to click with an audience, it must *at least* get the facts straight.

Pixar's careful approach in developing *Soul* is becoming more common in today's entertainment industry. Although the Los Angeles-based consulting firm History Studio did not work on *Soul*, co-founding partner and Charles & Mary Beard Distinguished Professor of History at Rutgers University Erica Armstrong Dunbar spoke with *Perspectives* about the importance of accurate storytelling through film and television.

When Dunbar and colleagues Heather Ann Thompson and Becky Nicolaides first started History Studio, they envisioned a company that would “bridge together the worlds of academia and entertainment.” Dunbar and her colleagues had previously been approached to offer insight into various projects, but the interactions were loosely constructed. In History Studio, they saw an opportunity for historians, led mostly by women, “to have a seat at the table, and no longer in a haphazard way.” A lot is at stake. As Dunbar explained, “The entertainment industry is the most critical space in which the public sees, understands, and gets their history. That’s how they understand America as a nation, or even the world.”

History Studio relies on a database of hundreds of scholars whose expertise

spans the globe and various time periods. Depending on the client's request—which can range from a sensitivity read to a comprehensive film project—History Studio connects the client to scholars with relevant expertise. Dunbar added, “We are trying to create a change in the industry, to make certain that we are not brought to the table later on but are involved from the beginning to help construct these worlds.” Their team believes that historical scholarship should be more than a last-minute fact check; it should instead help shape the ideas that will eventually appear on screens.

History Studio's work captures the relationship between historical scholarship and popular entertainment. Hollywood directors and screenwriters remain predominantly white and male, but the stories they tell, and the actors who portray their stories on our screens, have diversified in recent years. Audiences have also diversified, and the entertainment industry is becoming more accountable to its viewers. As Burnside put it, “People catch inaccuracies all the time, those little details connected to community stories that locals are familiar with. Missing the mark in that regard makes people feel like their histories aren't important enough to get right.” At best, inaccuracies are a distraction for those who notice them. At worst, such mistakes potentially reflect a degree of ignorance that viewers may read as derogatory. With streaming platforms adding to the massive amount of entertainment produced each year and social media allowing commentary from the masses, these inaccuracies can be identified at any time and shared on an enormous scale. For a story to click with an audience, it must *at least* get the facts straight. Producing a project for a hyperconnected world can seem daunting, but historians know that authentic storytelling is possible and that inaccuracies are avoidable.

*Soul* was originally scheduled to hit theaters in June 2021. Due to COVID-19, the

Walt Disney Company pushed the release date up by six months and made the film available on the Disney+ streaming app. As the pandemic kept viewers inside, it became clear that film and television became a go-to place for the public to engage with historical content. As Dunbar remarked, it's precisely because of that ease of accessibility that “we need the same engaged presence that's present in the museum world. This is the next frontier.” **P**

*Karen Lou is editorial assistant at the AHA.*

DANA SCHAFFER

## ADVOCACY BRIEFS

*AHA Stands Up for Tenure, Archives, and Historian's Role in Policymaking*

**The AHA issued a record number of statements and letters in March, from protesting the elimination of tenure and violations of academic freedom to promoting the importance of the role of historians in policymaking and ensuring archival access to researchers.**

### AHA Signs onto ACLS Letter Urging Iowa Legislature to Vote against Bill Eliminating Tenure

On March 4, the AHA signed onto a letter sent by the American Council of Learned Societies to members of the Iowa legislature and Governor Kim Reynolds. The letter strongly encouraged lawmakers to oppose House File 496 and Senate File 41, “which would remove the status of tenure for professors and discontinue the practice at Iowa’s three public universities.”

### AHA Expresses Concern over John Carroll University Policy Permitting Elimination of Tenure

On March 9, the AHA issued a letter to leaders of John Carroll University expressing “grave concern about the recent approval by [the] Board of Directors of a ‘budgetary hardship’ amendment to the university’s Faculty Handbook,” noting that “both faculty governance and the integrity of tenure seem to be hanging by a thread.” The AHA urged the board “to

reconsider the threat to tenure protections” that the amendment represents.

### AHA Wins Lawsuit Challenging ICE Records Disposition

On March 12, the AHA joined co-plaintiffs Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington and the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations in sharing the success of our lawsuit against the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The lawsuit challenged NARA’s approval of ICE’s records disposition, which would have authorized ICE to destroy several categories of records documenting mistreatment of immigrants detained in ICE custody.

### AHA Expresses Support for the New Orleans City Council Street Renaming Commission

In a letter to the City Council of New Orleans on March 18, the AHA expressed enthusiastic support for the work of the New Orleans City Council Street Renaming Commission and its final report, “a remarkable document of collaborative historical research.” The letter praises the process undertaken by the Renaming Commission and its consultation with historians, including many members of the AHA. See pages 5 and 6 for the letter.

### AHA Protests Imprisonment of Moroccan Historian

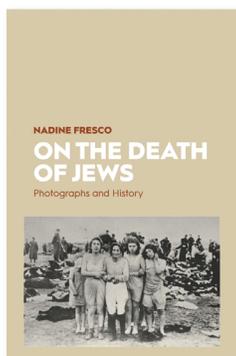
On March 18, the AHA sent a letter to King Mohamed VI and Prime Minister Saadeddine Othmani of Morocco protesting the imprisonment of Maâti Monjib, a historian at the University of Mohammed V in Rabat. Monjib was sentenced to a year in prison for charges that appeared to be “baseless, levied more in the interest of a political agenda than honest law enforcement,” and was on a hunger strike. Monjib was granted provisional release from prison on March 23.

### AHA Issues Statement on Violence against Asians and Asian Americans

On March 22, the AHA issued a statement deploring the recent incidents of violence and harassment aimed at Asians and Asian Americans. “This hostility against particular groups because of their ethnic origins—expressed via cultural stereotypes, scapegoating, physical aggression, and bloodshed—has deep roots in our nation’s past,” the AHA writes. “The murder in Atlanta of eight people on March 16, including six women of Asian descent, suggests that we have not transcended this history.” As of April 1, 43 organizations have signed onto the statement. See pages 7 and 8 for the full statement. **P**

*Dana Schaffer is deputy director of the AHA.*

# Essential reading in history from berghahn

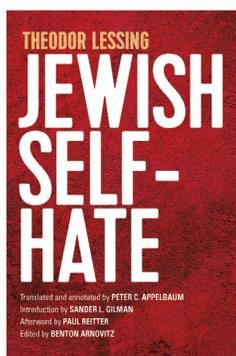


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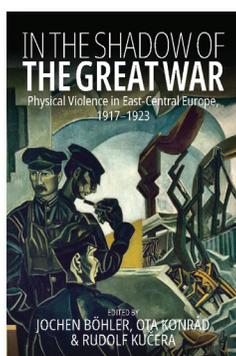


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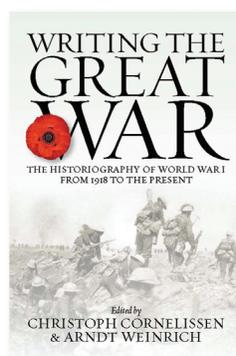
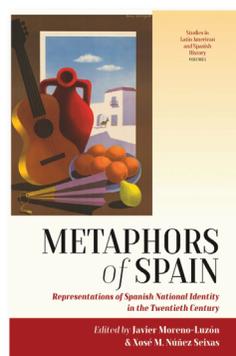
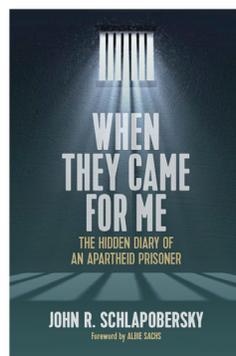


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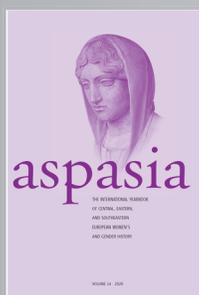
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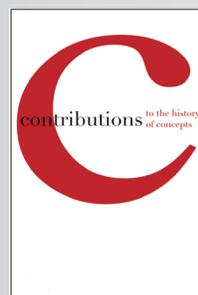
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# LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION AND OPEN RECORDS LEGISLATION

## *A Conundrum*

Writing letters of recommendation is a core responsibility of professional historians. We assume this obligation on behalf of students who apply for fellowships or jobs, as well as colleagues who are being considered for fellowships, grants, jobs, tenure, and promotion. Over the years, many established scholars have offered advice for discharging this duty. They have ruminated on a central dilemma of writing in this mode—namely, as Robert Darnton (Harvard Univ.) explained in a 2007 *Perspectives on History* article, the competing tasks (some might say responsibilities) of advancing the candidate’s career and providing an objective evaluation. In 2018, Suzanne Marchand (Louisiana State Univ.) used this very column to call for a “modern upgrade” to the “ancient genre” of letters of recommendation, suggesting that we emphasize the quality of a candidate’s research and focus on things that a candidate can’t say themselves.

Given Marchand’s eloquent summary of the form’s history and her eminently sensible suggestions for improving our professional practice, why do we need another discussion of letters of recommendation? The answer has to do with three developments that at first glance seem far removed from the discipline of history: local open records laws, increased scrutiny of public higher education institutions by state legislatures, and the rapid—even viral—dissemination of information through social media. Recently, these largely separate developments have converged in ways that affect the conditions under which we write letters for potential hires, tenure, and promotion addressed to public universities. We must consider how these intersecting developments require us to be more self-conscious and deliberative about requests to provide letters of evaluation for institutions subject to broad open records laws.

These new issues became particularly germane when an AHA member shared concerns about one such letter they had written. Our colleague was informed that a letter submitted six years ago was being released in response to a large-scale request for all promotion and tenure files within a specific

date range from the history department of a public university, which had been made under the state’s open records legislation. When our colleague had agreed to undertake this tenure evaluation, they understood that the letter would be read by members of the history faculty and was subject to disclosure to the candidate or other university faculty and administrators. They had assumed—not unreasonably—that their letter would have otherwise broad protection because it was part of a confidential personnel file. What our colleague had not considered was the possibility that a third party, even someone with no direct stake in the case, could request the file, gain access to the letter, and make it publicly available.

Open records laws have been on the books in virtually every state for at least three decades.

A careful look at relevant legislative histories reminds us that the exposure faced by this AHA member is not new. Open records laws—sometimes called “right to know” or “sunshine” laws—have been on the books in virtually every state for at least three decades and in all but four since 1977. Many states initially relied on common law to establish the principle that government and its agencies should be accountable to its citizens. But by the early 20th century, some began to codify this expectation through legislation or constitutions. A steady stream of states adopted public records laws every subsequent decade, peaking around the time that the federal Government in the Sunshine Act was passed in 1976. The records of public schools—including universities and other institutions of higher learning—have typically been covered under this legislation.

In certain respects, though, the application of open records laws has changed since their inception. At least 10 of these long-standing laws were broadened between 2000 and 2008—in some cases allowing people other than a state’s own citizens to submit requests, in other cases making the law more “user

friendly,” in still other cases narrowing the definition of “private information” that would be exempted from release. Because of these changes, it is now easier for people to request and gain access to hiring, tenure, and promotion letters, which had long been understood, at least by letter writers, as confidential.

### Each state applies its open records law differently to its public universities and colleges.

At the same time, we have witnessed an increase in public skepticism about the value of higher education and a certain impatience with the idea of confidentiality itself. A notable rise in hostility to the perceived “liberal culture” of colleges and universities has been fueled by partisan reports of “politically correct” multiculturalism and “deliberately destructive scholarship,” as the 1776 Commission report recently put it. Stoked by political rhetoric and media coverage, these suspicions about higher education have led several state legislatures to assume an oppositional posture toward their local universities and colleges. Some have even considered applying legislative leverage to intervene in academic affairs, from attempting to create funding formulas based on majors and graduation rates, to demanding blanket protection for freedom of speech, to mandating curriculum content. What is especially striking about the open records request involving our colleague’s letter is that it originated from outside the university. Whatever the reason for the request,

it seems to have been part of a fishing expedition by someone with an agenda related to university policies or practices.

One significant concern is that portions of such a letter, removed from context, can quickly find their way to broad distribution via social media. Just as hostility toward higher education has escalated among some segments of the public, so has the speed at which information (and misinformation) moves, particularly through social media. It is now possible for any individual to broadcast opinions via Facebook or Twitter, circulate documents, level accusations, or engage in criticism, all with virtually no accountability for the veracity or authenticity of the claim. If posts gain traction, they are “liked” or retweeted, amplifying their reach and feeding a cycle in which the sheer number of likes and retweets manufactures a sense of authority for the allegation.

Under such potentially fraught circumstances, it might be tempting to decline any review request from a public institution subject to open records laws. Yet this kind of reflexive response seems misguided. For one thing, requests for letters from such institutions almost always include an explanation of how the school handles the law in relation to the reviewer’s identity and evaluation. It is worth stressing that each state applies its open records law differently to its public universities and colleges. How the law is applied, in turn, affects each school’s policy with regard to evaluation letters. Some allow candidates to access letters as part of the review process or upon request; others hold them in strict confidence.



Tenure and promotion letters submitted years ago might be released in response to requests made under open records legislation.

*Kreg Steppel/Flickr/CC BY-NC-SA 2.0*

More importantly, though, a blanket refusal to write such letters would have detrimental effects for the profession as a whole. It would irreparably harm the opportunities of young scholars being considered for appointment or tenure. It would hurt the careers of senior scholars worthy of promotion. And it would do enormous damage to history departments across states with broad open records policies.

For those who work at institutions in this category, navigating the worries of letter writers and the need to obtain expert evaluation of a colleague's scholarship has been an ongoing challenge. Those responsible for soliciting letters might wish for a world in which evaluators simply commit to writing honest, critical assessments, regardless of who sees them. Instead, they often field a higher rate of declines of their requests or must figure out how to handle the informal practices improvised by some colleagues who fear that a reference letter might be made public.

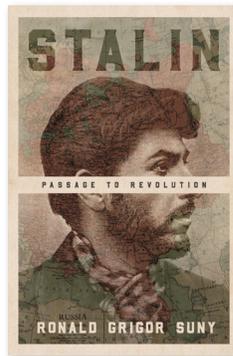
Yet our profession is not devoid of models for open, accessible evaluation. We routinely assess one another's scholarship in book reviews published by journals. The most successful and useful efforts combine a highly rigorous evaluation of the work and its contribution to the field with generosity of spirit. Since we have experience reviewing books in an evenhanded way, this practice can serve as a guide for writing letters of recommendation. Of course, the analogy is not perfect. Most reviews do not require explaining a field or excavating a book's historiographical context, nor do they entail evaluating a scholar's entire body of work. But book reviews underscore that it is possible to be both charitable and critical of a colleague's work, including commentary that appears in public.

Our goal in this article is not to advocate any specific response, but rather to raise awareness of the newly complicated conditions under which many of us are asked to write review letters. It is important for us all to be aware of the developments that can now affect who reads our evaluations and the potential unanticipated uses of these letters. But it is also crucial for us to grasp the unintended consequences of hesitating to participate in the process.

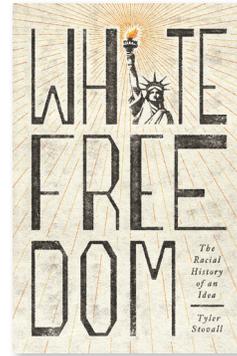
Fully aware of the breadth of the landscape, the Professional Division hopes that each of us can find a way to fulfill our collegial and professional obligations without putting ourselves at undue risk. It seems incumbent upon us all to balance fairness and objectivity in our evaluations with an understanding that some states believe our assessments ought to be accessible to anyone who wants to read them. **P**

*Rita Chin is professor of history at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the AHA's vice president, Professional Division.*

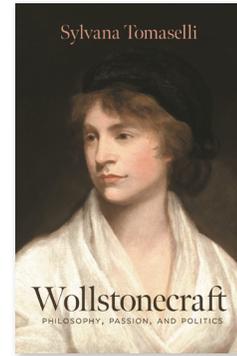
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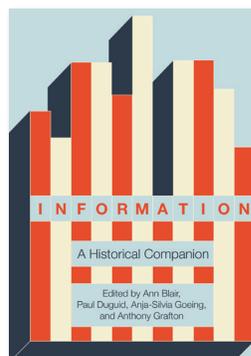
"In highly readable prose Mr. Suny... tells the story of the young Stalin's rise."  
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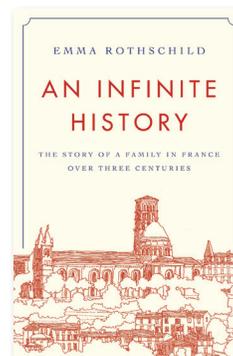
"Extremely convincing."  
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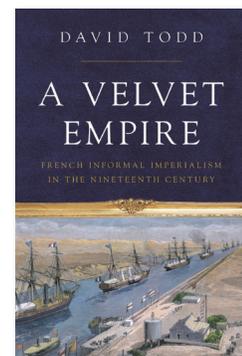
"Sylvana Tomaselli's book moves dexterously between her feelings and reasonings, producing a portrait that is both fresh and compelling."  
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"This rich tapestry of a book will become a classic of historical writing for years to come."  
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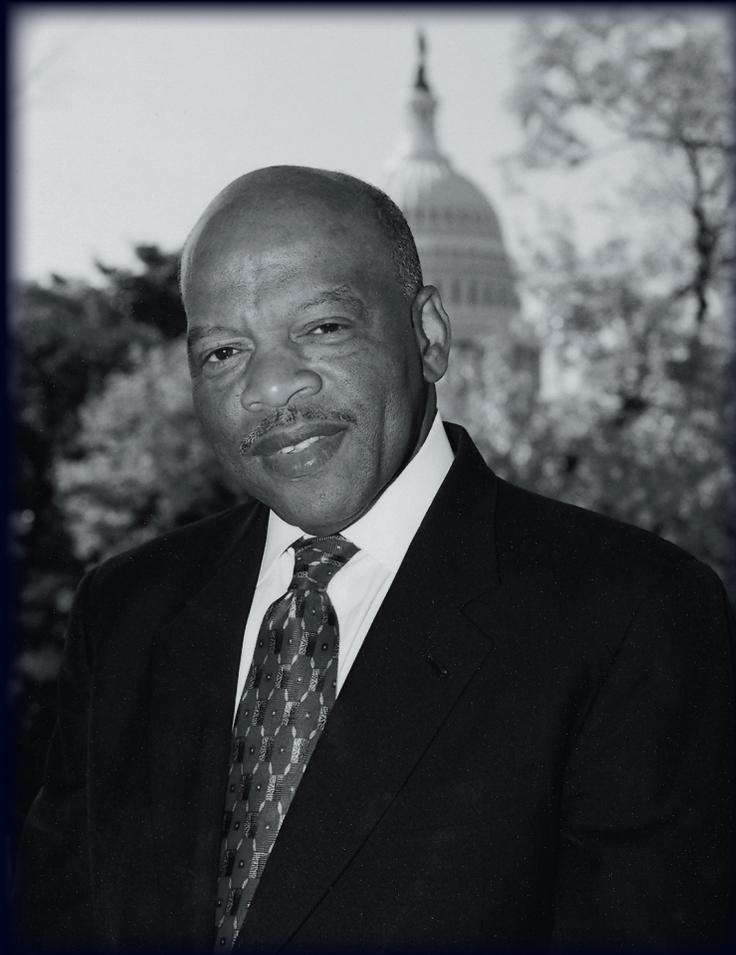


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Nominations must be submitted by April 1, 2021.

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Nominations must be submitted by May 15, 2021.

For more information, visit [historians.org/prizes](https://historians.org/prizes)

LAUREN BRAUN-STRUMFELS AND TIM HERBERT

# TERMINAL DOES NOT MEAN DEAD

*Why the History MA Deserves Our Attention*



Not just a step on the way to a PhD, the terminal history MA deserves more attention.  
*Lindsay Henwood/Unsplash*

**THE HISTORY MA** demands our attention. From 2002 to 2018, federal data and the Survey of Earned Doctorates show that universities conferred, on average, 10 master's degrees in history for every three PhDs granted. Students in high schools, colleges, and universities, as well as the broader public, are far more likely to interact with a historian who holds an MA than one with a PhD. Yet there is little consensus about the degree and almost no broader conversations taking place about the MA, despite its clear significance to the field. Terminal MA students report feeling unseen, while faculty focused on the MA degree in PhD-granting departments similarly feel ignored. After graduation, MA holders struggle to connect to the discipline, even though they are often on the front lines of teaching and learning history. Why is there such a disconnect between students, departments, employers, and the discipline at large when it comes to the master's degree? Are we pretending that the terminal MA is a dead end?

In 2005, an AHA committee headed by David Trask investigated the state of the MA. The committee reported that the degree, after over a century of conferral by American universities, “remains ill-defined” in its purpose, scope, and impact. While the discipline has carefully studied BA, PhD-track MA, and PhD programs, students, and graduates, we contend that inattention to the terminal MA has worsened over the last 15 years. At a time when historical thinking is essential to public life, how MA historians understand the habits of mind and use the tools of our field undoubtedly influences who studies history and the reach of the usable past. The lack of consensus on how to train the large terminal MA cohort threatens to undermine the work that all historians do and to erode further a stable future for our discipline.

While the AHA and organizations such as Lumina Foundation and the Mellon Foundation have focused their resources on innovative projects to clearly articulate the value of a history BA and encourage career diversity among recent PhDs, the unique needs and skills of the terminal MA have too often been deemphasized. The AHA's significant efforts in professional development and curricular design, primarily through the Career Diversity for Historians initiative and the Tuning Project, do not focus on the master's degree, with a few notable exceptions. Inspired by the influence of Tuning on undergraduate history education, we suggest solutions to questions vital to the significant population of historians with MAs, the faculty who train them, and the colleagues who hire them.

Our interest in the terminal MA comes from our own professional and personal experiences. Braun-Strumfels works as the adjunct coordinator responsible for hiring and mentoring in the history department at Raritan Valley Community

College. She has found that historians with a terminal MA tend to struggle to articulate their understanding of and orientation to the field in job documents, which can limit their prospects and constrain their effectiveness as teachers. Herbert served as a Career Diversity fellow at the University of Illinois at Chicago with a large Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) cohort, and he himself has started a career in K–12 education. His Career Diversity work has shown him how important it is to include all graduate students—including MAT students—in a department's graduate culture.

What we know and don't know about this cohort demonstrates why historians must focus on terminal MA degree holders as part of the larger work of professional development and advocacy. Despite the fact that US universities grant three times as many MAs as PhDs, large gaps exist in the data about outcomes among terminal MAs because departments are not collecting it. Not knowing outcomes for terminal MAs compounds the precarious position these historians occupy, starting in their graduate programs.

The needs of the terminal MA have  
too often been deemphasized.

We should collect better and more detailed data about MA students and the professional trajectory of degree holders. Who earns a terminal MA, and how do they use the degree? While the most common career trajectory for historians continues to be an academic path, terminal MAs on US campuses remain obscure to the discipline at large. Existing data does not clearly differentiate between terminal and PhD tracks. Identifying terminal MAs within the larger pool of all master's degree holders is a place to start.

Who we count reflects our priorities; at the same time, the future of our discipline fundamentally depends on the effectiveness of historians with a terminal MA, to whom we pay the least attention. The reach of terminal MAs extends deep into the next generation: perhaps the largest percentage of degree holders teach in postsecondary classrooms. Their training and professionalization are crucial to the health of the discipline at large. When MA students and degree holders feel like part of the discipline, they become critical allies to support a diverse pipeline of history majors, historians, and historically literate citizens.

While Career Diversity has focused on PhD programs, faculty and students at participating institutions have learned lessons that also apply to terminal MA programs. Departments should assess the pathways MA students take into, through,

and out of their programs. The path to a terminal MA should link to the work historians do and can create durable connections to the discipline that outlast graduate school. Learning from and with students, departments can create experiences for MAs to prepare them to enter the world as historians, rather than as historians-in-waiting. Likewise, students need to be intentional about how they want to carry their identity as historians into the next phase of their careers. From a career diversity perspective, all degree holders in history should take charge of our trajectories—academic and otherwise—and boldly, aggressively articulate the skills we possess.

### The future of our discipline depends on the effectiveness of historians with a terminal MA.

Working more inclusively, departments should consider how they might improve or rethink their MA programs in creative ways that better serve students. With new and better data, how can programs reimagine the terminal MA as a distinctive degree that makes an important contribution to the profession? How can programs highlight the crucial work their MA graduates are already doing? We call on colleges, universities, and institutions that employ historians to feature their contributions in public-facing ways. We call on degree programs to center their master's candidates and graduates and to see these students as adding to the department and the discipline. Once we know who holds a terminal MA and what they do with it, we can better promote and honor their contributions, and keep them connected to the discipline as it continues to evolve.

Why take the time to do this difficult work? Reassessing the place of terminal MA students and the degree within departments and the discipline will help historians respond to several interrelated challenges. First, MAs are a vital link in the K–16 chain, and both the link and the chain require strengthening. Many MA students are, or want to become, K–12 teachers. All historians, especially those who teach in higher education, should want more trained historians teaching younger students, where dynamic high school history teachers can inspire students to major in history at the college level.

Second, reconsidering the terminal MA might help to address diversity, equity, and inclusion goals in history. A recent *Perspectives* editor's column (November 2019) pointed to an “existential” problem: the overwhelming whiteness of our field. At a time when undergraduate student populations are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, departments can do better in recruiting those students into the history

major and graduate programs. Furthermore, while a focus on the terminal MA could help increase representation and visibility for underrepresented groups in the field, terminal MAs are less frequently funded by their program, contributing to unequal access to the degree. Because funding for terminal MAs could positively impact the field overall and build a more expansive pipeline starting at K–16 and extending into graduate programs, departments and institutions should consider support for terminal MAs in their long-term fundraising and funding distribution plans.

Last, tracking down existing MAs and focusing more intentionally on current MA students can strengthen the entire discipline by embedding historians in a range of positions and highlighting their contributions. If we're serious about the power of historical thinking, then we need to demonstrate how those skills translate into careers outside (and even some within) the academy. To do that, we need models. MAs wind up in interesting places, and the health of the profession depends on perpetuating that broad reach. In short, the terminal MA degree offers the discipline a strong opportunity to develop and strengthen connections within and beyond its ranks.

We must provide more resources for professional development and networking from academic departments, the AHA, and other allied organizations. The AHA's listserv for MAs is a valuable resource but is not enough. Valuing the terminal history MA should lead to an intentional broadening of these networking spaces and tools. How can established networks to seek, secure, and grow in a job become more inclusive and embracing of terminal MA degree holders?

This personal and department-level work should support a broader reimagining: The historical discipline must recognize that history MAs are historians. They have advanced degrees, and they're doing historical work already, just not always in academic settings. Embracing them as historians would reveal the work they do as ambassadors to the public and enrich the profession with their knowledge and experience. We need to find these people, count them, and learn from them. We would all benefit, in the words of the 2005 report, from “retrieving the master's degree from the dustbin of history.” **P**

*Lauren Braun-Strumfels is an associate professor of history at Raritan Valley Community College; she tweets @braun\_strumfels. Tim Herbert is a PhD candidate at the University of Illinois at Chicago and a history teacher at Proviso West High School; he tweets @HerbsinHorto.*

JAKE WYNN

# MAKING THE BEST OF THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO

*How One Museum Navigated COVID-19*



After temporarily closing in March 2020, the National Museum of Civil War Medicine has managed staged reopening plans.  
*Jake Wynn*

**W**ELL, HERE we go,” I thought on the night of March 11, 2020. Alerts and notifications poured onto my phone screen after the NBA decided to suspend its season. In the days that followed, it became clear that the entire world was heading for a similar suspension.

At the National Museum of Civil War Medicine (NMCWM) in Frederick, Maryland, we were uniquely positioned to contextualize this new global health emergency. Because the American Civil War was one of the worst health emergencies in United States history, the NMCWM embraces opportunities to connect the past to the present, especially around issues of health, medicine, and conflict.

Growing concerns about a pandemic served as the backdrop for a controversy closer to home. In January 2020, while we read about the new virus in Wuhan, China, the NMCWM launched a new logo and brand identity. This is always a momentous task for a cultural organization, but in our case, it was particularly controversial. The previous logo included the American flag and a Confederate battle flag, with a Rod of Asclepius between them and our name below. This logo, which appeared on everything from T-shirts to our front door, stoked intense debate, excluded some visitors, and attracted press attention, all of which distracted from our mission. We spent 2019 working with a graphic design consultant to obtain public comments and poll our audience about a new, more inclusive identity for the museum.

On January 15, we released the new logo design to a torrent of abuse on our social media channels. This new logo, a blue, red, and gray shield emblazoned with the Rod of Asclepius above three stars, emphasizes the medical history we share, while embracing a more contemporary look. However, quite quickly, the negativity subsided, and we believe that this rebranding proved crucial in some of our 2020 successes. Instead of visitors—in-person or online—being introduced to the museum with an image of a Confederate battle flag, they encountered an organization focused on the crucial lifesaving innovations that emerged from the Civil War.

As we responded to the roiling online debate over our new branding, events around the world and in the United States quickly spun out of control. In February 2020, despite balancing numerous regular responsibilities, the museum’s six-person education team began discussing what would happen if the shutdowns taking place first in China, and then in Italy, became necessary in the United States. This seemed alarmist at the time, but a gnawing sense of dread hung over these conversations as February crept toward March. We focused our planning conversations on one

question: How could the NMCWM provide understanding and context for a health crisis in our own era while protecting our staff? As we thought about the worst-case scenario—a forced shutdown of our three locations—we homed in on our digital presence as the best way we could communicate with our audience and fulfill our mission. Although the museum has prioritized social media since 2015, during the pandemic it became our primary focus. Even before Maryland ordered museums and cultural sites to close, we shifted our digital strategy to focus on how Civil War medicine could help make sense of the current moment.

Like much of the rest of the country, we shut our doors on March 17, 2020, unsure when we would be able to reopen and in what capacity we would be able to host visitors. In the meantime, our team continued to ramp up our digital programming, social media presence, and newsletter use.

### Growing concerns about a pandemic served as the backdrop for a controversy closer to home.

While the NMCWM and our two satellite sites—the Pry House Field Hospital Museum on Antietam National Battlefield and the Clara Barton Missing Soldiers Office Museum in Washington, DC—were closed, we found one way to continue with our team’s work: livestreaming. We had used Facebook Live and YouTube in the past but had never truly harnessed the ability to livestream. Our digital offerings quickly grew from a video or two per week to a regular programming schedule, broadcast on Facebook Live and later uploaded to YouTube.

We decided on a two-part strategy in our video offerings. One group of videos would mirror the programs we typically held in our museum spaces. These included conversations with historians and authors, museum tours, and conversations with the education staff. We reimagined them for video, and with that confronted the growing pains of livestreaming—bad WiFi connections, sound and lighting issues, and more.

Additionally, NMCWM executive director David Price began hosting events called “Hope Through History,” which drew on our network of supporters to have conversations about medical history informed by the present. Via Zoom and Facebook Live, we hosted conversations with a retired infectious disease doctor turned living historian, the owner of a Maryland distillery who began making hand sanitizer for first responders, and others.

Although we initially planned these videos as a stopgap measure, we were amazed to see a dramatic increase in membership and donations to the museum. Early in this process, we created consistent messaging about how viewers watching our free online programming could assist in our efforts and support us through the shutdown. Our viewership for these video programs grew as we maintained a regular schedule and made content relevant to events in 2020; for example, we held presentations about Civil War field hospitals the same week that several American cities announced the construction of temporary hospitals in April. These programs connected with our audience, and the questions they asked highlighted how well we demonstrated that Civil War medical care had become relevant in our own time.

We were amazed to see a dramatic increase in membership and donations to the museum.

We maintained a robust digital programming schedule through early summer as the shutdown continued, and our digital platforms have experienced sustained growth since we closed last March. The museum's social media accounts have seen a 20 percent growth in followers, and the videos we have produced have been viewed more than 200,000 times. A handful have even aired on C-SPAN's American History TV.

In mid-June, with guidance from local and state health authorities, we began taking steps toward reopening. As we prepared, we recognized that the safety of staff and the public was paramount. Comfort levels among the staff and volunteers, many of whom are over age 65, varied widely. However, we found these transitions possible to navigate with transparent communications among the small and close-knit staff. We stocked vast quantities of hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies, installed plexiglass to protect museum staff, drafted schedules for regular thorough cleaning, and required that visitors wear masks in accordance with Maryland health restrictions. Staff expressed concern about the mask mandate, especially when videos and social media posts emerged of mask requirements leading to arguments and confrontations. Our organization's leadership developed a plan should a visitor become aggressive or violent as a result of this mask mandate. Fortunately, visitors have almost universally accepted this requirement, and no major issues have arisen.

Our initial plan was to open the museum on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays for walk-in tours. We also allowed

groups to schedule appointments on days when we were not open to the public. During the summer of 2020, we saw a return to about 40 percent of our pre-pandemic attendance. This schedule served us well until cases and deaths spiked in the fall of 2020. At that time, we began to roll back our reopening and eventually closed again just before the holiday season. In January 2021, we reopened for appointments at the NMCWM, but our two satellite locations remained closed, as neither allows for easy social distancing. We anticipate moving again toward an advanced reopening plan in spring 2021.

The NMCWM did none of this work in isolation. Throughout the year, we paid close attention to what our colleagues at other institutions created and how they navigated reopening their sites. Among the museums we worked closest with during the year was the Seminary Ridge Museum in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, which also highlights the intersection of emergency medicine and Civil War history and is located less than 50 miles away. We cohosted programs, kept each other apprised of reopening strategies, and maintained an open channel of communication on a variety of pandemic-related issues. Out of a terrible situation, our two institutions and staffs forged a close bond that will carry forward.

The pandemic slowed the NMCWM's momentum on major projects. We could not, for example, move forward with planning an update to the museum's exhibit spaces. However, we are still implementing changes to our museum's interpretation of Civil War medical history, many informed by lessons from 2020.

All told, the National Museum of Civil War Medicine has weathered the storm. We escaped the worst of the layoffs that hit many museums and were able to expand our audience. Our unique mission and collections meant that we were well positioned to pivot to pandemic-related programming at a moment when the public was hungry for just such history. The growth of our digital programming has been a net positive, expanding our reach and the public's awareness of our institution. As we grieve for all that we have lost, personally and as a field, I am confident that the NMCWM will move forward better prepared to respond to our audience and adapt to a rapidly changing world. **P**

*Jake Wynn is director of interpretation at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine. He tweets @JayQuinn1993.*

# Virtual | AHA

**Virtual AHA** is 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. We are creating various kinds of content to help historians connect, while helping us learn more about what our members want and need.

Virtual AHA runs through June 2021. These programs are free, and AHA membership is not required to register.

See [historians.org/VirtualAHA](https://historians.org/VirtualAHA) for details. Download the Virtual AHA app at [guidebook.com/g/virtualaha](https://guidebook.com/g/virtualaha) for the latest schedule updates and links.

## Virtual Exhibit Hall

The AHA Virtual Exhibit Hall is 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](https://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. Visit [historians.org/Colloquium](https://historians.org/Colloquium) for a full list of staff- and participant-produced content.

- **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.
- **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.
- **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.

## In Case You Missed It

The following recordings are available on the AHA's YouTube channel at [youtube.com/historiansorg](https://youtube.com/historiansorg).

### Online Teaching Forum

- History TAs in the Time of COVID
- The Role of Higher Ed in AP History Courses and Exams

### Career Development

- Historical Research Beyond the Professoriate
- Careers for Historians in the Tech Industry
- Making the Most of Your Postdoc

### AHA Colloquium

- Reevaluating the Impact of the “Conquest of Mexico” at 500 Years

## Upcoming Events

Visit [historians.org/VirtualAHA](https://historians.org/VirtualAHA) for details on these and other events.

<b>May 3</b>	Washington History Seminar— <i>The Ever-Changing Past: Why All History is Revisionist History</i>
<b>May 4</b>	AHA Colloquium—Integrating Environmental History into the Curriculum: A Roundtable Discussion
<b>May 10</b>	Washington History Seminar— <i>Restricted Data: The History of Nuclear Secrecy in the United States</i>
<b>May 11</b>	AHA Colloquium—New Diplomatic History
<b>May 12</b>	AHA Colloquium—The Challenges of Climate History: A Roundtable Discussion
<b>May 17</b>	Washington History Seminar— <i>A War on Global Poverty: The Lost Promise of Redistribution and the Rise of Microcredit</i>
<b>May 18</b>	AHA Colloquium—Real Hatred: Exploring the Most Vehemently Despised Presidents in American History
<b>May 20</b>	AHA Colloquium—Global Visions of Freedom: A Roundtable Discussion on Radical Black Internationalism
<b>May 24</b>	Washington History Seminar— <i>The Free World: Art and Thought in the Cold War</i>
<b>May 25</b>	AHA Colloquium—Undergraduate Lightning Round
<b>May 27</b>	AHA Colloquium—Sexuality and Slavery: Reclaiming Intimate Histories in the Americas
<b>May 28</b>	AHA Colloquium—Gay Liberation, Solidarity, and Identities across the Americas, 1940–2000
<b>June 1</b>	AHA Colloquium—Women’s Activism in Historical Perspective: Labor, Feminism, and Organizing in the European and American 20th Century
<b>June 1</b>	Washington History Seminar— <i>June Fourth: The Tiananmen Protests and Beijing Massacre of 1989</i>
<b>June 7</b>	Washington History Seminar— <i>The Columnist: Leaks, Lies, and Libel in Drew Pearson’s Washington</i>
<b>June 8</b>	AHA Colloquium—Artificial Intelligence and Its Implications for the Present and Future of Historical Research
<b>June 14</b>	Washington History Seminar— <i>For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality</i>
<b>June 15</b>	AHA Colloquium—Occupation/Education
<b>June 17</b>	AHA Colloquium—Histories of Resistance, Histories of Survivance, Hidden Text: Indigenous Responses to Colonialism
<b>June 21</b>	Washington History Seminar— <i>Operation Moonglow: A Political History of Project Apollo</i>
<b>June 28</b>	Washington History Seminar— <i>Justice Rising: Robert Kennedy’s America in Black and White</i>

- Slavery and Space: Interdisciplinary and International Perspectives
- *AHR* Conversation: Black Internationalism
- History Gateways: What I’m Doing Differently in My History Introductory Course
- “Our Country Is Full”: Roots and Consequences of America’s 1921 Immigration Act 100 Years Later
- Future Directions in Research and Training for Digital History

### **History Behind the Headlines**

- Presidential Debates in Historical Perspective
- Historians Reflect on the 2020 Election

- Preserving Records: Archives and Presidential Transitions

### **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**

A PDF program, documenting all sessions accepted by the AHA Program Committee and the affiliated societies, is posted on the AHA website at [historians.org/program](https://historians.org/program) so that participants can validate their expected participation for their CVs. 

## WRAPPING IT UP

*In the June Issue of the American Historical Review*

The June issue of the *AHR* is the last that will appear under my editorship, as my term ends August 1. There is no obvious theme in this issue, other than the ongoing effort to publish history in a wide variety of registers and on a broad range of topics.

The issue features three History Unclassified essays, all of which speak to the problem of “silenced” histories. In “On Silence and History,” **Lilia Topouzova** (Univ. of Toronto) explores the challenges of working with a purged archive and fragmented oral histories to reconstruct the little-known story of the Bulgarian gulag. In grappling with these limits, she considers the multiplicity of the lived experience of 20th-century eastern European communism and its contradicting realities, emancipatory and repressive at once.

Wrestling with a different kind of silence entangled with trauma, **Joy Neumeyer** (European Univ. Institute) writes about her experience as a survivor of domestic abuse while pursuing a PhD. In “Darkness at Noon: On History, Narrative, and Domestic Violence,” Neumeyer explores her dawning recognition that while she could produce evidence about her experience, other judges—including fellow students, faculty, and her university’s Title IX office—would weave that evidence together to make their own meaning. Her essay attempts to reconcile the conception of history as narrative with the pressing need to seek truth and justice.

A third essay examines the long silence surrounding the Tulsa massacre of June 1921. On the 100th anniversary of the deadly white rampage in the vibrant Black neighborhood of Greenwood, **Karlos Hill** (Univ. of Oklahoma) describes his efforts to align his scholarly expertise with addressing the polarizing legacies—and continued silences—of the 1921 violence. His essay encourages other historians to pursue such “community-engaged history.”

Seven full-length articles range from the nature of policing in colonial Guatemala to dissident art movements in late-socialist

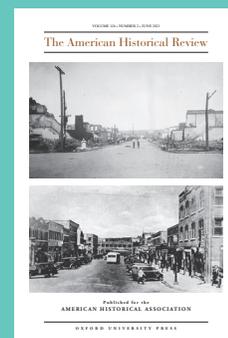
East Germany. In “Walking While Indian, Walking While Black: Policing in a Colonial City,” **Sylvia Sellers-Garcia** (Boston Coll.) focuses on policing reforms that took place during the last decades of colonial rule in Guatemala City in the late 18th century. Based on her examination of criminal cases and legislation, she argues that these reforms prompted the arrests of non-European men for vagrancy and carrying weapons. The result of this targeted policing was the creation of a criminal profile inflected by race, gender, and class. These police methods and mindsets have created a legacy of colonial policing into the present, Sellers-Garcia suggests.

The issue features three essays  
which speak to the problem of  
“silenced” histories.

A second article examines the nature of governmentality in the long 19th century. In “The Unexceptional State: Rethinking the State in the Nineteenth Century,” **Nicolas Barreyre** (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales) and **Claire Lemercier** (French National Center for Scientific Research) compare the historiographies of state formation and function in the postrevolutionary era in the US and France. Their article recovers a common repertoire of statecraft that hinged on fostering consent of key segments of the population, and the organization of the work of the state into nonbureaucratic forms, a particular enmeshing of public and private initiatives that reconfigures what we mean by “the state.”

The remaining five articles focus on various dimensions of the 20th century. Two consider social upheavals associated with World War II and its immediate aftermath. In “Europe’s Forgotten Unfinished Revolution: Peasant Power, Social Mobilization, and Communism in the Southern Italian Countryside, 1943–1945,” **Rosario Forlenza** (Libera Univ. Internazionale degli Studi Sociali) draws on anthropological theory to reconstruct the revolutionary experiments that burst out in the Italian

May 31 and June 1, 2021, mark the centenary of one of the worst outbreaks of anti-Black violence in American history, when thousands of whites attacked Tulsa's vibrant Black community, Greenwood. In the aftermath of the violence and destruction, reports estimated that as many as 300 Black people had been killed and every significant structure in Greenwood had been destroyed or severely damaged. The top photo illustrates this devastation from Greenwood Avenue and Archer Street. The lower photo shows the same intersection less than two decades later. As Karlos Hill points out in his essay about ongoing efforts to memorialize the massacre, survivors and their descendants remain resilient. Top photo: "After the race riots, June 1st, 1921, Tulsa, Okla.," American National Red Cross photograph collection, Library of Congress; bottom photo: with permission of the Greenwood Cultural Center, Tulsa.



countryside in the latter days of the war, as groups of peasants took over dozens of villages in the Mezzogiorno. Forlenza uses these forgotten peasant republics to consider how social revolutions can unfold without the decisive leadership of a pre-existing vanguard whose ideas and expectations can overdetermine patterns of revolt. Similarly, by looking at postwar Japan under US occupation, **Deokhyo Choi** (Univ. of Sheffield) asks what decolonization looks like on an empire's home front. In "The Empire Strikes Back from Within: Colonial Liberation and the Korean Minority Question at the Birth of Postwar Japan, 1945–1947," Choi argues that the "liberation" of Korean imperial subjects living in Japan after the war became a critical locus of US-led democratization and Japan's transition from a multi-ethnic empire to a so-called "mono-ethnic nation," shaping Japan's postwar order. Choi's article offers a new vantage point for considering decolonization's impact on metropolitan societies.

A second article on postwar Japan, "'Toilet Paper Panic': Uncertainty and Insecurity in Early 1970s Japan," looks at the nature of anxieties around consumption and middle-class status during the 1970s. Deconstructing the nature of a 1973 so-called "panic" over the disappearance of toilet paper from Japanese shelves, **Eiko Maruko Siniawer** (Williams Coll.) treats consumer anxiety as a response to sweeping economic challenges that destabilized daily life and threatened to upend middle-class lifestyles after a period of sustained high growth. Buffeted by insecurity and uncertainty, she argues, the Japanese middle class had never seemed as vulnerable as it did in the early 1970s.

If the articles on Italy and Japan stay fixed in place, **Benjamin A. Lawrance** (Univ. of Arizona) and **Vusi Khumalo** (Nelson Mandela Univ.) examine a far more peripatetic aspect of the decolonial moment. In "'A Genius without Direction': The Abortive Exile of Dugmore Boetie and the Fate of Southern African Refugees in a Decolonizing Africa," they zero in on the experience of a South African writer and apartheid expatriate to interrogate the distinction between exiles and refugees. Cases like that of the relatively obscure Dugmore Boetie shift

attention away from refugee reception and toward motives for flight, speaking to ad hoc strategies of escape and survival characteristics of those without privileged networks prior to the formation of global antiapartheid activist networks.

The final article in the June issue examines how experimental art staged in East Berlin galleries and streets from the mid-1970s until 1989 was used to reconstitute the relationship between art, social life, and citizenship under socialism. In "Grassroots Glasnost: Experimental Art, Participation, and Civic Life in 1980s East Berlin," **Briana J. Smith** (Harvard Univ.) shows how experimental artists took advantage of the gaps in party control in order to access—and construct—a second public sphere in which open communication, imagination, and critique proved possible. These artists, she claims, helped ignite a grassroots glasnost parallel to top-down reforms emanating from the USSR, contributing to a spirit of political ferment across East-Central Europe in which more expansive forms of socialist citizenship could be tested.

Two other features round out this very full issue: a critical reappraisal of Jackson Lears's classic of post-New Left cultural history, *No Place of Grace* (1981) by **Andrew Seal** (Univ. of New Hampshire) and a cluster of reviews of seven short biographies of African leaders, all published in Ohio University Press's Short History of Africa series.

It has been an honor and a pleasure to edit the *American Historical Review* and to work with the many staff members at both the *AHR* and the AHA who make the journal what it is. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to editorial board members, manuscript readers, and book reviewers. Editing and publishing an academic journal is nothing if not a collective endeavor. I am confident that I am handing over the helm to a worthy navigator in **Mark Philip Bradley** (Univ. of Chicago), who begins his own journey as editor in August and will oversee the September issue. **P**

*Alex Lichtenstein is editor of the American Historical Review.*

CAROLINE MORRIS AND JACK FIORINI

## THE BUSINESS OF APPLIED HISTORY

### *What Brand Historians Do*

When the coronavirus pandemic struck in 2020, some companies were well-equipped to make the necessary adaptations. They had contingency plans, emergency response teams, and a readiness to put resources where they needed to go. But as with any undertaking of such high stakes and such a vast scale, planners and executors needed as much information as they could get to make their efforts as effective as possible. Given the lack of present-day examples or templates through which to understand what

was happening, any historical precedents that could help companies navigate the challenges of the pandemic were valuable beyond measure.

Enter us, the brand historians of Heritage Werks, a heritage agency firm for Dow 30 corporations and major sports franchises. We specialize in the business of applied history, and while the pandemic necessitated some rapid adjustments, we provided our clients essentially the same service



As brand historians, Caroline Morris and Jack Fiorini help companies to understand their past and produce content to be shared with employees, stakeholders, and the public.

*Charles Forerunner/Unsplash*

we always do: interpreting their pasts to help them with the present and future. We marshaled history into service for the present emergency in a number of ways. In some cases, we could tell clients how they'd weathered pandemics in the past. Many of our clients are old enough that we were able to tell them how they handled the 1918 influenza epidemic; a few are old enough that we researched how they handled cholera outbreaks in the 19th century. For clients who hadn't experienced those obvious precedents, we explored their histories dealing with other forms of large-scale disruption and humanitarian crisis, such as natural disasters or wars, to provide examples of adaptation and resilience that had clear applicability to their present circumstances.

Many of our clients had a sudden need for content about anything *other* than the pandemic, as well. When sports seasons were abruptly canceled, teams scrambled for historical content to keep the attention of tens of thousands of fans who were just getting ready to watch a 162-game season and now needed alternative entertainment. We rushed to support alternatives to gameday programming that included (among other things) curated digital exhibits, trivia games, classic archival footage, virtual classes, and general support for any topic they cared to delve into now that they and their fans had some unexpected downtime for reflection on the history of the team or the sport. Historians are storytellers, after all, and the world had an insatiable demand for stories in 2020.

Our paths to Heritage Werks wound through the academy. We both entered the history doctoral program at the College of William & Mary in 2003, worked with the same adviser (the wonderful Leisa Meyer), and graduated and hit the academic job market at roughly the same time. We both had vague but persistent visions of a life spent working in universities, pursuing knowledge and imparting it to eager students. Alas, though we both cobbled together part-time and one-year positions for several years, our stamina eventually ran out. Even the good jobs weren't permanent and barely paid a livable wage, and the grind of continually finding and relocating for new fixed-term positions lost its glamour as we advanced deeper into our 30s. The lack of healthcare and other benefits *particularly* lost its glamour, as complications such as age and children came along. We wanted to spare our respective families the annual stresses of looming unemployment and relocation. And so, having lived in the world of academia for our entire adult lives, we came (at different times) to the same conclusion: if we wanted a living wage, benefits, and a measure of stability (both personal and professional), we had to leave.

That was a daunting realization, but it would have been easier if we had known then what we know now: the rest of the world values what we do, and it is entirely possible to pursue history for a living without connection to an academic institution or nonprofit. The world has an unceasing desire for content, and historians really know how to deliver it. The communications platforms of the 21st century require a never-ending stream of videos, data, images, thoughts, quotations, anecdotes, and jokes. Major companies, brands, sports teams, and businesses have to supply that material to participate in the modern marketplace. The best ones do so strategically, using content to tell their stories in ways that are true and relevant. And who better to identify and tell a true story than a historian?

We found the transformation from history professor to historical consultant to be surprisingly straightforward.

We both ultimately secured positions as brand historians at Heritage Werks, which specialized in providing such content. With the guidance of our supervisor, another former William & Mary history graduate student who had forged her career outside of higher education, we found the transformation from history professor to historical consultant to be a surprisingly straightforward affair. To be honest, some days it's pretty similar to building a lecture, running a discussion, or even advising students.

We work in a department called Content and Communications, where most of our work is less dramatic, but no less interesting, than the special projects prompted by the coronavirus. These projects can cover any number of topics, from general to specific. We can research and write broad company histories designed as internal reference guides on the whole of the company's history. Or perhaps a company wants to know about something narrower, like the origins of its slogan or the truth behind a popular bit of corporate lore about its founding. We can write focused research reports on those questions. We prepare briefs for CEOs to use in high-level discussions and produce e-learning experiences for new employee orientations. We build digital museums that any internet user can access and create social media content to drive public engagement. We give in-person and virtual presentations to help corporate teams brainstorm and make appearances in documentary videos. As varied as our work can be, however, most of it is basically a niche subset of public history. We conduct research using our cli-

ents' private archives and publicly available sources, analyze those materials to create a useful, engaging, and accurate understanding of the past, and share our findings in a clear, accessible manner to an audience of nonhistorians—the same kind of work that historians do in classrooms, museums, and other spaces around the world.

There is one big difference from academia that we had to get used to. Rather than toiling individually and autonomously on research or teaching, our work nowadays is often heavily collaborative. Within the company, a team of archivists helps us find relevant materials, a team of research assistants helps us glean the useful information from those materials (many of our projects turn over too quickly for one person to do it all), a digitization team photographs or scans any archival materials the client might want a copy of, a platform team maintains the secure websites that hold those scans for us and our clients, and a client services team liaises with our clients about all of this. Writing documentary scripts or building websites or generating reports that would take years if undertaken by a solitary academic are produced in weeks or months in collaboration.

### In the private sector, a very specific audience has already found the scholar.

And then, of course, there are the clients themselves, who are *really* paying attention. Unlike those poor students taking required courses at 8:00 a.m., our clients have sought us out, engaged us for specific projects, and intend to translate our findings into thoughtful components of internally focused policies or public-facing projects. We need to make sure that our work meets their needs, and we have to be able to explain to them how it does so. In academic scholarship, solid work can travel a bit until it finds its audience in the right journal or publisher. In the private sector, a very specific audience has already found the scholar, and solid work that doesn't satisfy that audience is not sufficient. The process requires much more communication and coordination than the largely solitary rhythms of academia, where one presents one's findings only at precise and carefully designated times.

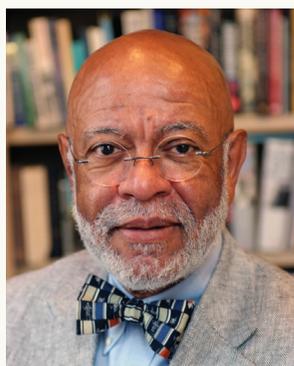
While we never envisioned a life as anything but academic historians, the rewards of leaving that career track have been more than worth the sacrifices. We no longer have the stimulation of classroom engagement, but we get the satisfaction of applying our skills to create something of

immediate service to another party, and with it a reassurance of the importance of history on a daily basis. We no longer have the joy of choosing our own subject matter, but we get unfettered access to exclusive archival materials scholars can usually only dream of, and we are able to cultivate expertise in many and disparate subjects. (Jack is now an expert in the history of high technology, the financial sector, life insurance, prepared food brands, and several live family entertainment brands. Caroline is an expert in the histories of sports teams that span 150 years and four professional sports leagues, as well as the fascinating history of middle-class men's footwear and the role of candy in the Space Race.)

But perhaps the most important tradeoff is that, though we've lost the oft-cited "flexibility" of the academic lifestyle, we've achieved a healthier work-life balance than we ever managed in academia. In a position where clients are paying directly for our services, no task is considered "off the books" or unpaid, and our workload adapts to our schedule rather than vice versa. Our working hours are set to a very reasonable 40 hours a week, plus the very rare night or weekend. If a new project falls from the sky, the expectation is that we'll shift one task to accommodate another—not that we'll just somehow get it all done. That dynamic makes our work feel simultaneously more manageable *and* more valued. We now have the peace of mind that comes with knowing where our next paycheck is coming from, having steady access to affordable healthcare, and not needing to disturb our families with endless moves, even as we gain the satisfaction of having roles that make use of our skills and contribute to the public good.

A career in brand history wasn't the dream either of us took to grad school in 2003, but maybe it should have been. **P**

*Caroline Morris and Jack Fiorini are brand historians at Heritage Werks.*



## Theodore Carter DeLaney Jr.

1943–2020

Historian of the  
American South and  
African American History

Theodore Carter DeLaney Jr., “Ted,” had an almost Dickensian life. Born poor and Black in Lexington, Virginia, during the waning Jim Crow era, he became the first African American to head the history department and a revered member of the faculty of Washington and Lee University (W&L).

Looking back, Ted emphasized that, despite segregation, Black people lived meaningful lives and took pride in their communities. Ted frequented race-neutral spaces in Lexington like the public library and served as an altar boy at St. Patrick Catholic Church. Offered a scholarship to attend Morehouse College, Ted declined out of deference to his mother, who feared he might fall in with the “freedom riders” and suffer the fate of Emmett Till. After various modest jobs and a brief stint at a Catholic monastery, in 1963 he took a position as custodian in W&L’s biology department. The following year he was promoted to lab technician, a position he held for the next 19 years.

Ted turned to activism, organizing Black voters to secure representation on the city council. It was then that he met Patricia Ann (“Pat”) Scott. They married in 1973; their son, Damien, was born in 1977. With Pat’s encouragement, Ted enrolled in an evening course on US history taught by John Barrett at the Virginia Military Institute. There he first encountered a view of southern history unvarnished by the myths surrounding Robert E. Lee and the great “Lost Cause.” It was a revelation.

In 1979, Ted began enrolling in one course per term at W&L. In 1983, with the dean’s encouragement and Pat’s support, he enrolled full time, graduating *cum laude* in history in 1985. After teaching for three years at a prep school and prompted by his W&L history advisor, J. Holt Merchant, he enrolled in the doctoral program at the College of William and Mary (W&M), where he studied with Eugene Genovese. From 1991 to 1993, he held an ABD fellowship at W&L. From 1993 to 1995, he taught at the State University of

New York College at Geneseo before being recalled to W&L by history department head Bob McAhren.

Ted’s scholarly interests were broad. Genovese recommended Julia Gardiner Tyler, President John Tyler’s second wife, as a dissertation topic that a mature student could complete quickly using W&M’s collection of her letters. Ted produced a subtly nuanced study of this complex northern woman who embraced southern culture and championed slavery on the eve of the Civil War. He published it in a series of articles while turning to what became his career project, recovering Black voices in an oral history of desegregation in the “white belt” of southwestern Virginia. White resistance was predictable. But Black nostalgia for a lost sense of community, towns eager to integrate and stop funding dual school systems, and the chilling impact of “massive resistance” on northern investment in the South were not.

Ted always put students first. In 2005, he founded the African American (later, Africana) studies program. He attracted students with his empathy, as well as his many innovative courses and their contemporary relevance. When he took a (successful) public stand opposing a proposal to move the Museum of the Confederacy to Lexington, he modeled the role of a public intellectual; when he took students on tours of the major sites of the Civil Rights Movement, he changed lives.

Besides heading Africana studies (2005–07, 2013–17) and the history department (2007–13), Ted served on virtually every committee at W&L, particularly those devoted to confronting its history and reconciling its lineage with its quest for a more diverse student body. He was the conscience of the institution. He likewise held important positions in numerous scholarly associations. He regularly guest-lectured for colleagues, at alumni gatherings and local historical societies, and for media such as NPR and PBS.

Ted has been honored with an array of awards from W&L, the NAACP, and many others. He succumbed to pancreatic cancer on December 18, 2020, leaving behind Pat, Damien, two grandchildren, and three sisters. He is buried in the traditionally African American Evergreen Cemetery of Lexington.

David S. Peterson  
*Washington and Lee University*

*Photo courtesy Washington and Lee University*



## Sharon Gillerman

1960–2020

Scholar of Modern German and Jewish History; AHA Member

Sharon Gillerman, a scholar of modern German and Jewish history, died on November 20, 2020. She held the Kutz Chair in Jewish History at the Los Angeles Skirball Campus of the Hebrew Union College (HUC)–Jewish Institute of Religion, as well as an affiliate teaching position in the University of Southern California (USC) history department. She had served as the chair of HUC’s Los Angeles campus faculty since 2018.

Gillerman was born and raised in Los Angeles and earned her PhD in history from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). She taught as a visiting professor at Brandeis University, UCLA, the University of Hamburg, and Harvard University. An avid swimmer and cook who hosted countless joyful Shabbat dinners, she was devoted to her family—her daughter, Maya Gillerman; her husband, Mark Quigley, an English professor; and her parents, brother, and nieces. Both her life and work were deeply committed to Judaism, in particular to progressive, feminist, and egalitarian interpretations of the faith.

Gillerman was the author of *Germans into Jews: Remaking the Jewish Social Body in the Weimar Republic* (Stanford Univ. Press, 2009), which won the 2010 book award of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association. This beautifully written work brings together Jewish history, gender history, and the history of the welfare state to provide a path-breaking analysis of German-Jewish culture, identity, and community in the Weimar Republic. In examining the areas of family, reproduction, education, juvenile delinquency, sexuality, and the roles of women, she uncovered the development of a kind of parallel Jewish version of Weimar social reform discourses and practices. This “increasingly separate sphere of Jewish social, philanthropic, and educational engagement” both drew from and diverged from its liberal-progressive, middle-class German context, “forging a synthesis of Jewishness and Germanness.” It derived from reformist German discourses while building a distinctly Jewish identity reconstituted along new secular-biological lines.

Along with journal articles and book chapters, Gillerman was also co-editor, with Benjamin Maria Baader and Paul Lerner, of *Jewish Masculinities: German Jews, Gender, and History* (Indiana Univ. Press, 2012), a breakthrough volume of essays that spearheaded the new multidisciplinary study of Jewish masculinity. The work evolved from a 2005 conference at the University of California, San Diego, itself the product of an ongoing international working group on gender and German Jewish history; Gillerman was instrumental in both. At the time of her death, she was at work on an international cultural history about the life, politics, and popular reception of the Polish Jewish strongman Siegmund Breitbart (1883–1925).

At Hebrew Union College, Gillerman taught courses on modern Jewish history and gender and Judaism, and specialized courses on the Holocaust, including Anti-Semitism, Racism and Other Hatreds. She was a dedicated, effective, and well-liked teacher, who pushed students to think critically and to develop their own interpretations in a nonjudgmental, supportive environment. Her favorite course, the first-year general education class *Representing the Holocaust*, wove together history with testimony, narrative, and theory, using an array of sources from autobiography to graphic novels and films. At USC, Gillerman taught a large survey lecture course on the Holocaust. She approached the course’s often difficult and disturbing topics with, as one colleague put it, “a gentle yet firm” hand, emphasizing nuance and the complexity of the topics. Gillerman had a large and devoted student following; students regularly were inspired by her Holocaust survey to take further courses in Jewish studies.

Gillerman was cherished and much sought out by many colleagues, students, and friends not only for her acute intelligence and knowledge, but also for her warmth, kindness, integrity, and empathy. We mourn her loss.

Ann Goldberg  
*University of California, Riverside (emerita)*

*Photo courtesy Hebrew Union College*



## Sonya Orleans Rose

1935–2020

Historian of Britain and  
Empire; AHA Member

Sonya Orleans Rose, distinguished historian of modern Britain and the British Empire, passed away at her home in Sarasota, Florida, on October 15, 2020. Sonya was professor emerita at the University of Michigan, having previously been the Natalie Zemon Davis Collegiate Professor of History, Sociology, and Women's Studies. As a scholar, she transformed the fields of British history, women's and gender history, and military history. She was also a dedicated teacher and graduate mentor, and a famously generous supporter of other historians—especially women and junior scholars—at her home institutions and across the transatlantic British history community.

Sonya grew up in New York and Ohio, and completed a BA at Antioch College in 1958 before pursuing graduate study in sociology at Northwestern University, where she earned an MA in 1962 and a PhD in 1974. She began her academic career at Colby College, from 1977 to 1992, before joining the faculty at the University of Michigan in 1993. In addition to appointments in history, sociology, and women's studies, she served as associate chair and chair of the history department. She was a widely beloved leader, guiding and fiercely advocating for her colleagues with genuine warmth and kindness.

Sonya's scholarship was at the forefront of the evolution from women's to gender history. Her 1992 monograph, *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England* (Univ. of California Press), explored a range of Victorian industries to argue for the central role of gender in the development of capitalism. She also co-edited two important collections, *Gender and Class in Modern Europe* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1996) with Laura L. Frader and *Gender, Citizenship and Subjectivities* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002) with Kathleen Canning. The latter book redefined citizenship as not simply political rights or national belonging, but as a claims-making activity. It also grew partly out of discussions among Michigan faculty and graduate students, in which Sonya always clearly delighted, and which were a testament to her collegiality and engaged mentorship.

Sonya's work on gender and citizenship, including a 1998 article in the *American Historical Review*, formed the foundation for her second monograph, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain, 1939–1945* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2003). The book was first inspired by papers left by her father from his military service in World War II Britain. It is a comprehensive account of how discourses surrounding a “people's war,” such as national unity, social leveling, and equality of sacrifice, powerfully shaped ideas about duty, citizenship, and national identity, even as the war produced new fissures of gender, class, race, and region within the national community. Nearly 20 years after its publication, it remains one of the key interventions in the history of wartime Britain.

Writing *Which People's War?* also led Sonya more deeply into the history of the British Empire. She was a leading voice in early discussions associated with the “imperial turn,” and she ultimately co-edited *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006) with Catherine Hall. Sonya then brought together decades of field-defining work as author of *What Is Gender History?* (Polity, 2010) and as co-editor, with Karen Hagemann and Stefan Dudink, of *The Oxford Handbook of Gender, War, and the Western World since 1600* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2020).

Upon her retirement, Sonya and her husband, Guenter, spent a decade living in London, where she maintained an incredible garden and enjoyed the city's museums, theaters, and musical offerings. She also became a visiting research fellow at Birkbeck, University of London, and continued—with unfailing wisdom, encouragement, and good cheer—to mentor Michigan graduate students such as myself from the café at the British Library.

Throughout her illustrious academic career, Sonya was also a devoted wife, mother, stepmother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. She loved music, was an excellent cook and dinner party host, and was politically active throughout her life, casting a vote in the 2020 presidential election just days before her death. Sonya will be very fondly remembered by family, friends, colleagues, and students for her boundless energy, generosity of spirit, and warm smile.

Allison Abra  
*University of Southern Mississippi*

*Photo courtesy Laura Orleans*



## Mack Walker

1929–2021

Historian of Germany

Mack Walker, one of the most distinguished German historians in the postwar era, died of complications from COVID-19 on February 10, 2021.

Born in 1929 near Springfield, Massachusetts, Walker had the persona of a no-nonsense New Englander. His liberal arts education at Bowdoin College gave his scholarly writing a rich literary quality and a vigorous personal voice. Earning his BA in 1950, he enlisted the next year in the US Army. A tour of duty in southern Germany was a hinge in his life. He began thinking there about the themes of his later scholarship, and he pondered the question that has baffled so many Americans: How could the country with the legacy of Goethe and Schiller, Bach and Beethoven, also have produced the Nazis? In Germany, he also met his beloved wife, Irma.

After returning to the United States, Walker earned a PhD in 1959 at Harvard University, where he worked with William L. Langer and Franklin Ford. He taught at the Rhode Island School of Design for two years, before returning to teach at Harvard. In 1966, he joined the history department at Cornell University. His respect for skilled manual labor found expression in the hard work he and Irma devoted to turning a neglected farmhouse outside Ithaca into a lovely home. In 1969, under the combined heat of antiwar protests and the Civil Rights Movement, Cornell nearly boiled over into a major scene of violence. Mack was one of the few who tried to mediate between the hardline majority among his history colleagues who opposed the students' actions and the progressive minority. It was a thankless task.

In 1974, Walker moved to Johns Hopkins University. There he was among a cohort of early modern Europeanists who shaped generations of graduate students. He was a model of constructive engagement with students' research and writing, taking their ideas seriously while pushing them to refine arguments and keep details in focus. He retired in 1999.

Walker's scholarship approached major issues in German history from a variety of productive angles. His first book, *Germany and the Emigration, 1816–1885* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1964), anticipated the current emphasis on transnational history by exploring the impact of emigration on German politics. Walker then turned his attention to the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, which sprawled across western and central Europe until 1806. Arguably, he was unrivaled in his mastery of the political culture and the institutional and legal intricacies of the empire. His second book, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648–1871* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1971), was hailed immediately as a classic. It told the story of the guild artisans, at once democratic, hierarchical, and fiercely exclusive, who operated under the umbrella of a federally constituted empire. His next book, *Johann Jakob Moser and the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1981), used the career of one bureaucrat and jurist to map the empire with unprecedented density. *Moser* anticipated recent trends in biography, using the life as a point of radiation out into an entire world. *The Salzburg Transaction: Expulsion and Redemption in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1992) completed Walker's trilogy on the empire.

Through his work with the AHA's Conference Group for (now Central European History Society), the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC, the Johns Hopkins graduate student exchange program with the University of Bielefeld, and fellowships at the Max Planck Institute for History in Göttingen and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Walker contributed to the evolution of history as a discipline in West Germany and to transatlantic cooperation among historians. He was quick to spot academic sham and pretense, perhaps because integrity seemed to have been hewn into him, although it was casual, without self-righteousness. Despite his brusque Yankee manner, he was caring and kind to students and colleagues.

Mack Walker was not simply a uniquely gifted scholar; he was a person of singular character. In addition to his wife Irma, his children Barbara, Gilbert, and Benjamin and five grandchildren survive him.

Anthony LaVopa  
*North Carolina State University (emeritus)*

Tanya Kevorkian  
*Millersville University*

*Photo courtesy Walker family*

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## PENNSYLVANIA

### UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia, PA

**Joseph Meyerhoff Chair in Modern Jewish History.** The University of Pennsylvania History Department seeks to fill the Joseph Meyerhoff Chair in Modern Jewish History at the rank of tenured associate or full professor. With this

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open to a wide variety of approaches within the field of Jewish history and is looking for a historian who possesses both a broad conception of the field and a willingness to work closely with colleagues and students in different areas of history. Candidates should apply online at <http://apply.interfolio.com/85637>. Please attach a letter of application, CV, and research and teaching statements of no more than 2,000 words each. The search committee will begin reviewing applications on August 1, 2021, and will

continue until the position is filled. The Department of History is strongly committed to Penn's Action Plan for Faculty Diversity and Excellence and to creating a more diverse and inclusive faculty (for more information, see <http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/volumes/v58/n02/diversityplan.html>). The University of Pennsylvania is an EOE. Minorities, women, individuals with disabilities and protected veterans are encouraged to apply.

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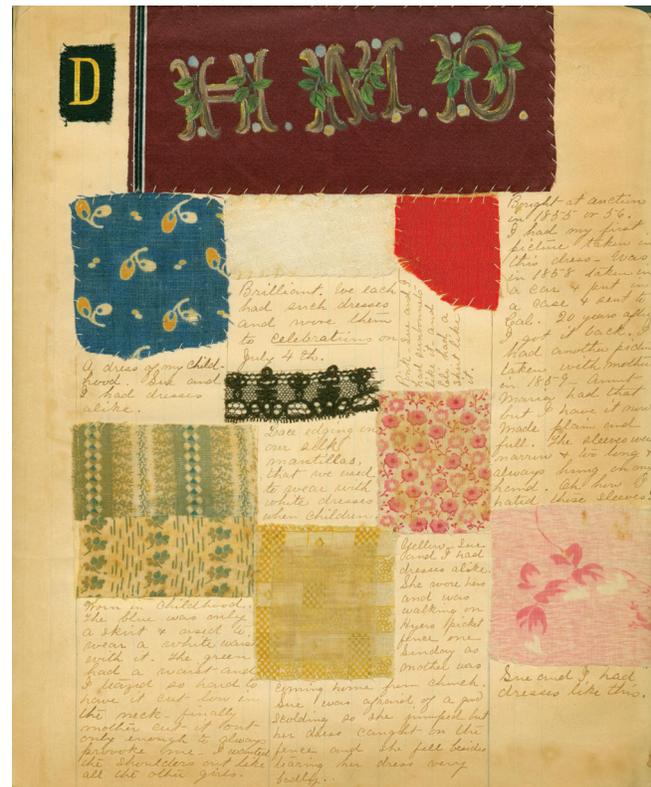
DINA KALMAN SPOERL

## CLOTHING SCRAPBOOK

The book intrigued me as soon as I heard about it. When I was able to see it for myself, I was thrilled. It is one of the most unexpected, astonishing pieces of material history I have ever seen: a collection of hundreds of fabric swatches sewn into a scrapbook, with detailed descriptions noting when each item was worn, for how long, and to what events. It includes drawings, too, some showing the entire outfit, others just details of sleeves or collars, and even some illustrating how the article of clothing evolved over time.

Hannah Ditzler Alspaugh was the daughter of a farmer who moved to Naperville, Illinois, from Pennsylvania. She was not rich or socially prominent, but became an artist, teacher, librarian, and is considered Naperville's first historian. She started the scrapbook in 1887, but the array of fabrics dates from before the Civil War through the 1900s. Although many women kept such scrapbooks in the late 19th century, Alspaugh's is unusual because of the span of time, her meticulous documentation, and the voluminous drawings showing how the material was used. She seems to have had a true historian's desire to record everything that she could recall.

Her notes for many items come with distinct memories. One reads, "Wore it to have group picture taken 1876. In 1883 Jennie helped me make it over again Overskirt drapery and changed Basque. In 1895 had a silk front and made into a tea gown. Silk sleeves. Had many a compliment. Wore out in 1900." Entries like this one give us insight into the preciousness of clothing in an era before "fast fashion." Items were made, remade, treasured, and worn until they wore out. Certain types of precious fabrics were used for changeable parts of the clothing to extend their lifespan. Some fabric pieces eventually made their way into quilts, to be of still further use. This scrapbook reveals a great deal about clothing styles as well the colors and textures available at any given time. As such, it offers insight into 50 years of fashion.



Some entries are more personal: One tells of Alspaugh and her sister excitedly making their "first white dresses," which they worked on "day and night," to wear in a parade. In another instance, she laments, "I tried so hard to have [it] cut low in the neck . . . I wanted the shoulders cut like all the other girls."

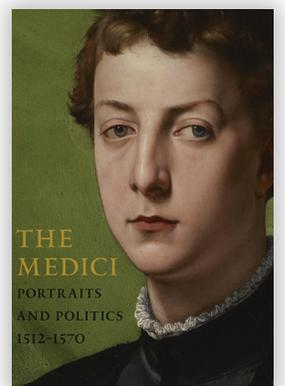
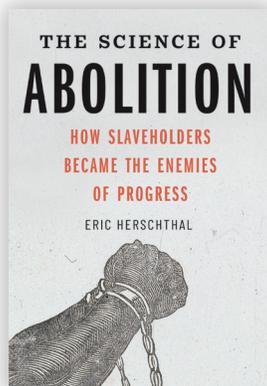
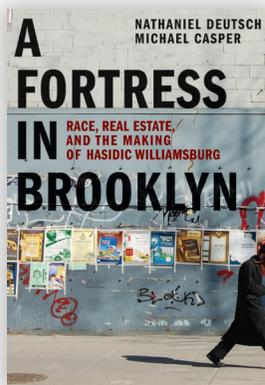
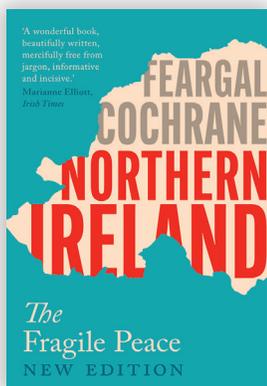
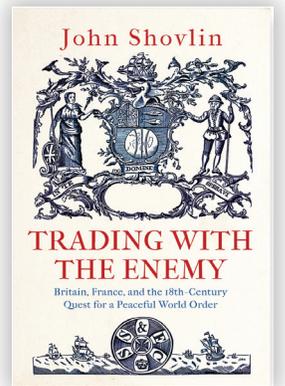
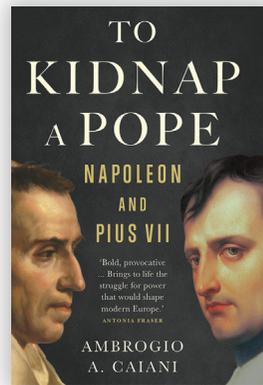
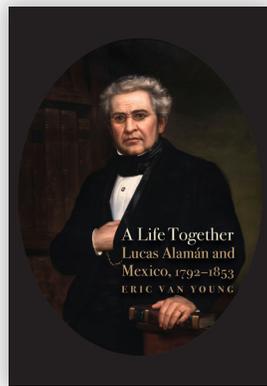
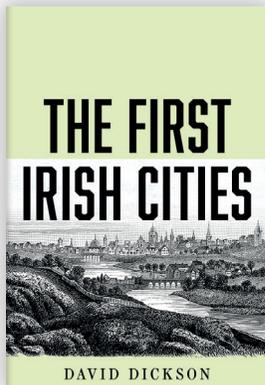
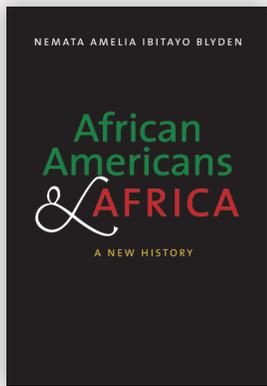
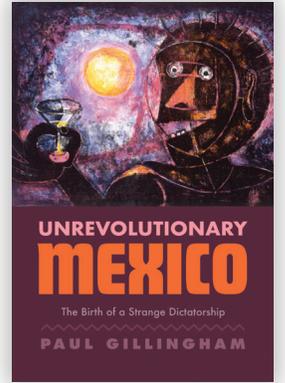
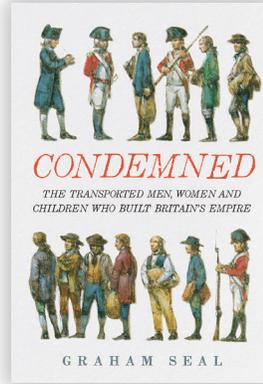
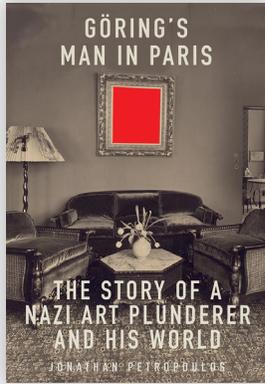
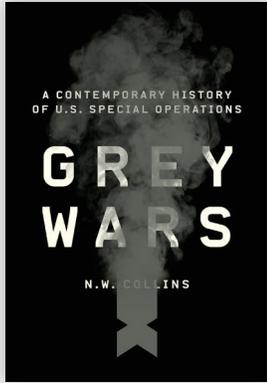
In addition to its contribution to the history of costume and life in the late 19th century, the scrapbook provides a glimpse into the mind of a true storyteller; a woman determined to make her life part of the historical record. Hannah also penned several diaries about life in early Naperville. These are all part of the Naperville Heritage Society collection at Naper Settlement.

Hannah had a remarkably long life, dying at the age of 90 in 1948. She lived through some of the country's most momentous times and, through it all, diligently recorded her world in amazing detail. She has given us an invaluable insight into everyday things that might have otherwise been lost to history. **P**

*Dina Kalman Spoerl is exhibits team leader at Naper Settlement in Naperville, Illinois.*

*Image courtesy of Naperville Heritage Society*

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