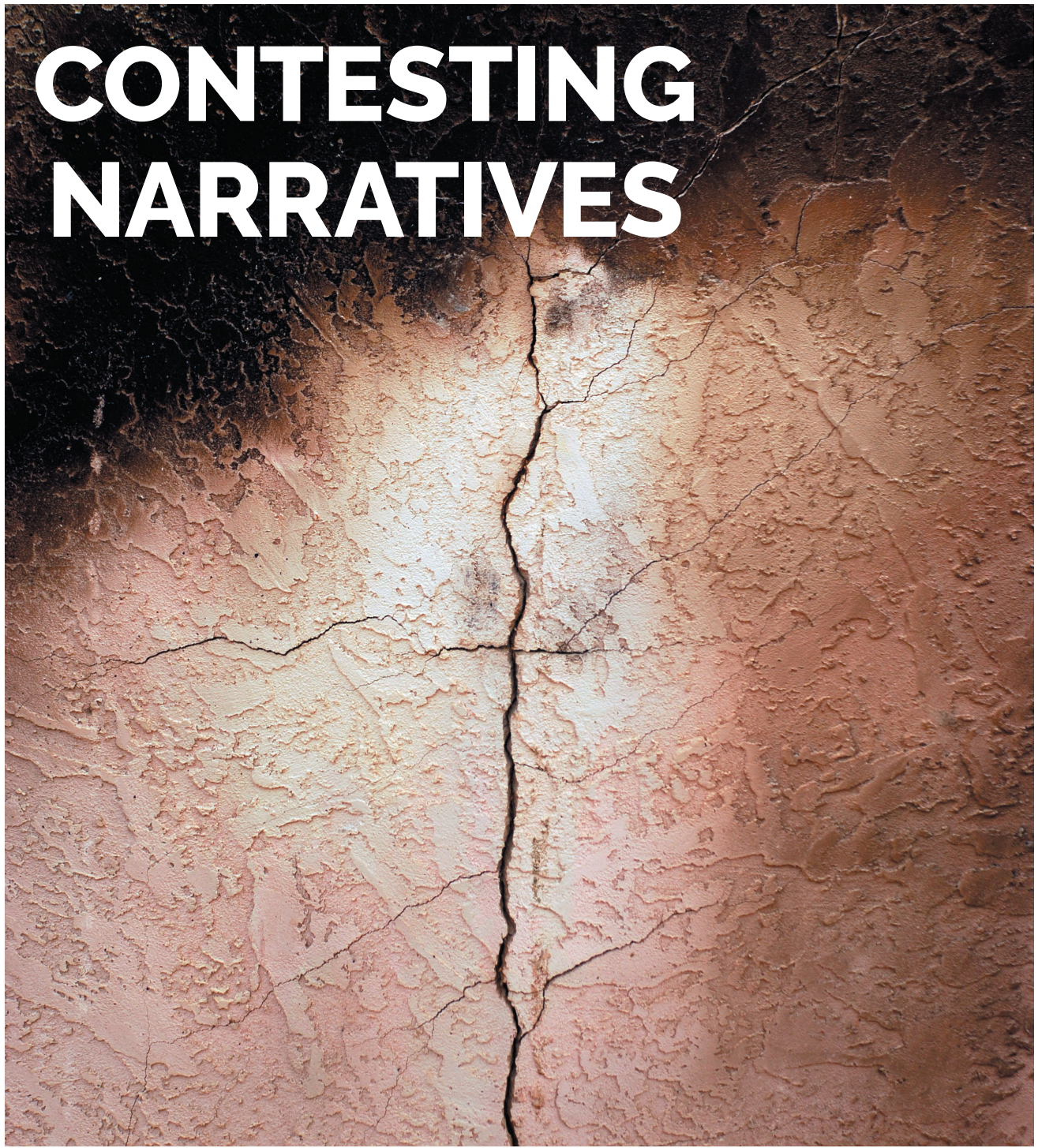


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PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

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CONTESTING NARRATIVES

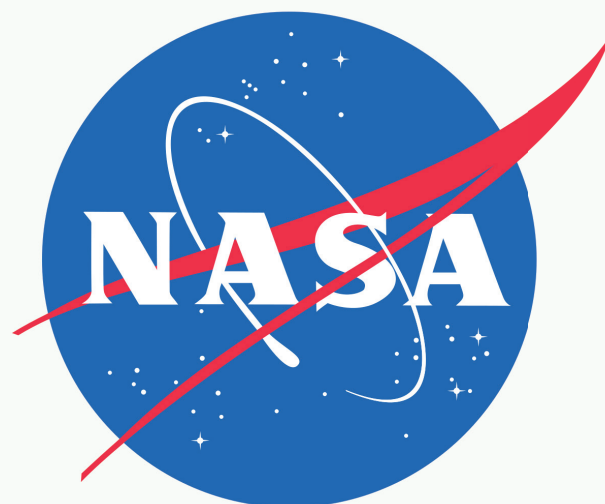


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ON THE COVER

History is always political; recently, historians' involvement in politics feels unavoidable. This issue explores contesting historical narratives in public spaces. Emily Sclafani's "The Danger of a Single Origin Story" and Tina Gross's "Search Terms Up for Debate" discuss the legacy of old narratives, while Victoria Saker Woeste's "The Charlottesville Verdict" weaves together historical and contemporary popular history. In "Trolling History," Alexandra F. Levy examines public blowback against historians, and Alexandra J. Finley's "Joining the Chorus" argues for understanding faculty as political actors. But will the cracks in the foundation identified by these authors be repaired, stabilize, or end up bringing the whole building down?

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LELAND RENATO GRIGOLI

TOWNHOUSE NOTES

Corvus corona, *the Plague Crow*

Plague—that’s something I know a bit about. I’ve studied the science of the human past under Michael McCormick, listened attentively to Monica H. Green’s lectures. I know that the Black Death gets all the attention but that the Plague of Justinian, transmitted, perhaps, across the Roman Empire by its famous roads, is what people should talk more about. I can differentiate plague swellings from owls (that’s a *very* niche joke). I know my bubonic progression of *Y. pestis* (deadly) from the pneumonic (very deadly); I know the etymology of *quarantine*. I know plague doctor masks have nothing to do with the European Middle Ages. In short, in matters endemic, pandemic, and virologic, I am the very model of the relevant historian.

Still, as a historian struggling through life in what often feels like a slow apocalypse, I marvel a bit at the response of my chosen discipline, at our deep-seated need to say, “We’ve been here before!” It is exciting to have one’s work so suddenly and evidently relevant to a current crisis. Hello, topicality, and good riddance to academic obscurity! Finally, no great-aunt will ask me, upon learning at my wedding dinner that I am a medieval historian, “Oh, is there much *call* for that?”

It should already be clear that I am firmly in a camp that thinks history is the use of the past to study the present. Or, in the words of the great philosopher Calvin (of *Calvin and Hobbes*), that “history is the fiction we invent to persuade ourselves that events are knowable and that life has order and direction.” But even given that truth, the reflex to exuberant historicization seems noteworthy, if not downright odd, because of the modern moments we tend to deem most apt to our display of relevance. The pandemic has been a constant topic for historians interested in engaging a broader public, of course, but there are others that keep popping up. When war breaks out in the Middle East, historians spring forth from the shadows to examine the “clash of civilizations” or emphasize the (dis)continuities with the Crusades; historians’ role in the discussion of Confederate statuary surely needs no elaboration here.



Conflict, suffering, and death form the unifying threads that bind together these disparate topics. This should not be a shock or revelation. History, after all, had been the study of power relationships long before Michel Foucault put such a fine and philosophical point on the matter. When studying it, we therefore assume, to some degree or another, conflicts over interests. There is little scholarship on blissful harmony, and that which exists often does so to examine Eden before the fall—because it is the origin point for an inevitable following sequence of persecution and violence. *Convivencia* is simply the precursor to *reconquista*.

This is not a condemnation of the discipline. Blissful harmony makes up very little of recorded human existence, and especially of the *records* of human existence. It certainly is not a prominent part of the study of those records. But it necessarily follows that for historians to see their work become relevant to contemporary events, those events must often be full of upheaval, suffering, violence, and chaos. The relevant historian is, in other words, a species of carrion crow that has found a fresh and juicy eyeball for its dinner.

To relate one’s own historical interests into the conflict and suffering of the broader society is a popular path to relevance, a fact evidenced by the articles in this very issue. But this sort of engagement often toes the line between helpful observation and exploitation, between examining a wound and picking over the corpse. It makes me hesitate, and it sometimes makes me profoundly uncomfortable. Because I don’t know if it’s the best way for historians to engage in the present world, and I certainly don’t want it to be the only way. And so we must keep asking: Have we chosen to relate the present to the past and the past to the present for ourselves, or for others? **P**

Leland Renato Grigoli is editor of Perspectives on History. He tweets @mapper_mundi.



TO THE EDITOR

In her December 2021 column, “Another Digital Revolution,” Jacqueline Jones writes about the digitized wealth of “evidentiary riches” that she was able to tap for her research. But, she writes, “in terms of accessing digital collections that university and other libraries have subscribed to, independent scholars are at a distinct disadvantage here.”

In 2018, I participated in an AHA annual meeting session organized by Becky Nicolaides. The panel accompanied an AHA survey on research access among independent scholars that received more than 1,000 responses and revealed a diverse community of researchers who lacked remote access to electronic databases, among other problems. As Becky commented, the problem “affects faculty as much as independent scholars, and it is a teaching problem as much as a research problem.” Becky later published “Locked Out” in *Perspectives* on these issues.

In addition to barriers hampering their research, independent scholars now face major obstacles to publication as more and more journals impose article publication charges for open access articles. The upshot will be a loss of fresh voices and ideas that might invigorate the profession.

In 2020, the AHA Council issued a *Statement on Research Access*, which encouraged history departments to extend library access to unaffiliated scholars. It recommended that “any PhD program that centers ‘training the producers of new knowledge,’ ought to consider its ethical obligation to provide those scholars with the requisite means.”

However, the AHA itself has taken few concrete steps to support this recommendation. How many institutions have actually changed their practices? How many have even tried? In an email sent to members on December 28, 2021, James Grossman listed the activities of the AHA over the past year, but he did not mention any efforts to address the problems of access or publication charges.

AHA officers should do more than agree that there is a problem—they should be working on solutions.

—MARGARET DELACY

President, Northwest Independent Scholars Association



TO THE EDITOR

After reading “Townhouse Notes: Making a More Readable and Accessible Publication” (January 2022), I applaud the effort to make the print magazine easier to read. I think it’s important to note that “accessibility” is an accommodation for not just those with commonly recognized disabilities but also those of us whose disability is simply reaching middle age.

As I’m a practicing historian, my job, as much as anything, is to read, and yet my 54-year-old eyes do not make that nearly as easy for me as it once was. Even with progressive lenses to treat myopia, I usually take off my glasses and stick a book six inches from my face. Those with presbyopia must do the opposite—their arms are never long enough to get that book far enough away, and reading glasses are a must. For many, this problem becomes intrusive around 45, so a huge chunk of the working historical community copes with it every day.

Old eyes have made me strongly prefer reading on a screen to print, where I can make a document on a monitor as big as I want. I never read print journals if I can read them online. To my mind, any publication that is going to continue in print would do well to make itself as easy to read as possible. So good effort.

—PHILLIP REID

Wilmington, North Carolina



TO THE EDITOR

I applaud Bridget Riley’s initiative and diligence in working with her students to incorporate the experiences of women, including African American women, during the era of the American Revolution, as she describes in “Missing Women: Tackling Gender Imbalance in Social Studies Textbooks” (January 2022).

The main example Riley offers of a student project uncovering a neglected female voice of the revolutionary era is particularly compelling. I was not familiar with Mary Perth, an enslaved woman. A quick internet search revealed not only that she was a lay Methodist preacher but that she escaped from enslavement in Virginia with British forces, going first to Nova Scotia, then to Sierra Leone and England. As a former high school social studies teacher who went on to teach social studies education as part of my career in higher education, I am impressed that Riley’s

seventh-grade students are learning that—as serious scholars of the revolution have long pointed out—some African Americans found the British to facilitate freedom more readily than did the “Patriots.” That insight certainly validates Riley’s comment that in broadening the American historical experience, we must “move beyond the ‘just add women [and racial and ethnic minorities] and stir’ approach.”

Nevertheless, I was disappointed that Riley chose not to name the textbook in question, which she asserts includes only a single paragraph about women (along with similar paragraphs about African Americans and American Indians) only toward the end of a 55-page chapter. Aside from the resulting inability of readers to verify Riley’s critique, this nonspecific reference lets the textbook author(s) and publisher off the hook with regard to the need for revisions.

Singling out such publishers for precise, evidence-based critique is extremely important. As I have recently argued elsewhere, there is an unfortunate and inaccurate tendency among the educated public and even among some scholars to assume that history textbooks (especially those designed for

secondary schools) are unchanging, failing to incorporate the insights of decades of scholarship on race, gender, and other topics. Textbook critiques are essential, but they must be grounded in specific evidence, and the improvements that have been made in some textbooks should be credited.

ROBERT SHAFFER
Shippensburg University (emeritus)

CORRECTION

“The Ohio River” (February 2022) misidentified the origin of the name for Cincinnati. Ohio, not Cincinnati, is “named for an Iroquoian word translated as ‘beautiful river’ or ‘great river.’”

Recently Published Online in *Perspectives Daily*



Rebecca Brenner Graham

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Rebecca Brenner Graham

After working 15 side gigs during her six years of graduate school, Rebecca Brenner Graham advocates for the importance of a living wage.

How Well Do You Know Your Students?

Trinidad Gonzales

Asking students about their lives can help instructors better accommodate their circumstances.

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Charles Steinman

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JAMES H. SWEET

MARCH MADNESS

The Recruitment Arms Race

This coming month is recruiting season for history graduate programs across the country. During the second weekend of March, COVID willing, the University of Wisconsin–Madison Department of History welcomes to its campus prospective graduate students who have been admitted for the following year. Like many of our peers, we fly 20 to 25 recruits to Madison and try to sell them on the virtues of our PhD program. They attend graduate seminars, meet with potential mentors, and socialize with current students and faculty. Faculty are expected to woo them with promises of intellectual growth, engaged mentorship, and, increasingly, financial emoluments. During the recruitment process, if we learn that a student has an offer at a competing university, we can appeal to our graduate school to sweeten the student's financial package with extra summer research money or even a substantial cash welcome bonus. This arms race at elite universities is a relatively recent phenomenon, at odds with broader professional trends toward democratizing the history PhD.

When I first began teaching at UW in 2004, we typically admitted upward of 100 students. The result was a consistently robust graduate cohort across multiple fields, adequately enrolled graduate seminars, and the prospect of discovering “diamonds in the rough”—highly motivated students whose undergraduate records and GRE scores might be less than stellar in a traditional sense but whose additional intellectual assets and life experiences suggested that they might develop into good historians.

This democracy of academic opportunity had a cost. As late as 2010, UW History admitted 90 graduate students, 39 of whom eventually matriculated. None received guaranteed financial aid packages. Rather, the department cobbled together individually tailored packages from a variety of funding sources—internal and external fellowships, Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowships, but mostly teaching assistant positions with differential appointments. This funding rarely covered living expenses. In 2013, teaching

assistants earned an average of around \$12,000, while living expenses in Madison totaled around \$15,000 (not including essentials like clothing and transportation). In addition to their stipends, the vast majority of TAs received out-of-state tuition waivers that were valued at \$25,000, plus health insurance. Thus, most students could earn their PhDs for roughly \$5,000 to \$10,000 out-of-pocket expenses yearly. The majority hustled side jobs or took out student loans, although there were always a few who were independently wealthy.

This admissions and funding model remained in place for many years. However, as TA stipends became stagnant and the number of academic jobs plummeted in 2008–09, we could no longer justify admitting so many students, plunging them into debt, and sending them out into the world with only limited job prospects. Many faculty still rejected the idea that a history PhD could be useful for anything other than the professoriate, despite the fact that our students increasingly found positions in publishing, government, the private sector, and higher education administration.

When I first began teaching at UW
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In 2014, the department voted to move to a fully funded model in which every student would receive five years of guaranteed funding with stipends above the minimum cost of living. To achieve this goal, we would need to limit the number of yearly matriculants to somewhere around 17. The majority of faculty endorsed these changes, but a significant minority expressed opposition. Some worried that we would no longer have enough students to conduct graduate seminars. Others expressed concern that our graduate cohort would become narrow and elite, defying our charge as a “public” institution. When we polled students, they also expressed ambivalence about changing the funding model. On the one hand, they



appreciated a larger cohort and “having more brains to think with.” On the other, they loathed the uncertainty of year-to-year funding, as well as the “class divide” that resulted from differential TA appointments. Nevertheless, nearly all of our students believed they were vying for positions in the professoriate, and they were willing to accept the financial risk that they would make it.

Even as the profession should be diversifying its admissions and training to accommodate career diversity, it has further narrowed.

We were not alone in the transformation of our graduate program. Other history departments made similar changes, reducing cohort size and increasing stipends. Between 2011 and 2017, aggregate graduate enrollment across Big Ten university history departments dropped 25 percent, while stipends rose by an average of 17 percent. Today, the yearly stipend at UW Madison is \$23,000, which just meets MIT’s calculation for a living wage. However, according to self-reported stipend data, there are still prestigious public universities that routinely pay graduate students less than \$20,000, well below a local living wage. Crucially, students at public schools are funded mostly through teaching assistantships. Meanwhile, elite private universities typically pay guaranteed stipends in excess of \$30,000 with far fewer teaching responsibilities. In short, these schools offer stipends that are 50 percent higher (and with fewer implied labor requirements) than those at public universities.

Some might argue that this public/private division was always thus. And perhaps it was. However, in the past, public universities could spread their financial risk across a broader, more diverse cohort of students. At the same moment public universities moved toward smaller, fully funded graduate cohorts, the number of applications for graduate school in history fell precipitously. Between 2011 and 2017, aggregate graduate school applications in Big Ten history departments dropped 46 percent, a number that has remained stagnant ever since. The combination of shrinking admissions pools, alongside the constraints of a limited number of funding packages, results in greater competition for the most sought-after students. In my experience, these are almost always the students who express the greatest interest in joining the professoriate.

Of the two dozen or so prospective graduate students who fly to Madison for recruitment weekend (with all expenses paid), most are entertaining offers from other universities. Many of them

have traveled together, junket-style, from school to school, getting to know one another and comparing notes as they cross the country. It is a relatively small and aspirationally homogenous group. There aren’t very many “diamonds in the rough,” let alone ones willing to admit they wish to pursue nonacademic jobs. We try our best to recruit for intellectual “fit,” but we now offer essentially the same product as our private peers, just for far less money and with a more time-consuming labor requirement that poses as an apprenticeship to the professoriate. We rarely win recruiting wars against private universities, but, quixotically, we keep trying. Even as the profession should be diversifying its admissions and training to accommodate career and other forms of diversity, it has further narrowed.

To their credit, today’s prospective students know the ins and outs of negotiating their recruitment. I applaud their efforts to improve their financial packages. However, the graduate admissions and funding arms race seems to me counterproductive and out of step with broader democratizing trends in the profession. At the very moment academic jobs are most scarce, elite programs send the message that they not only embrace student efforts to join the professoriate; they fly, wine, dine, and pay them to do so. This recruitment process cultivates a sense of expectation that ultimately can’t match the dim academic job prospects that most face. Meanwhile, some of the most creative, eclectic, or downright iconoclastic don’t even seem to apply for graduate school in history anymore. Or perhaps they just aren’t applying to those programs perceived as elite. If so, we have done this to ourselves.

I will repeat what AHA presidents have stated many times before: The profession has changed, irrevocably. The AHA’s research indicates that 50 percent of those earning PhDs between 2004 and 2013 were employed in tenure-track jobs in two- or four-year institutions by 2017. PhD students at Big Ten schools fared better, with 57 percent earning tenure-track positions. Since 2014, fewer than 25 percent of history PhDs from Big Ten history departments have received tenure-track offers in their initial year on the academic job market, according to internal data. If these statistics are any kind of bellwether (the AHA will update its career findings later this year), history departments in large state universities must rethink our programs from the ground up, paying greater attention to pedagogy, public history, digital media, and the promising career paths history PhDs might follow. With that change, we can better fulfill our roles as public educators, training a more eclectic, intellectually diverse cohort of graduate students who imagine new, innovative applications and broader daily relevance for history. **P**

James H. Sweet is president of the AHA.

JAMES GROSSMAN

THE FUTURE OF AHA ONLINE PROGRAMMING



Photo: Sophia Germer

How did it go in New Orleans?" I've been asked that a lot recently, during breaks in Zoom meetings, via email, and in the occasional in-person gatherings that have started to dot my calendar. I am pleased to report that *it*—the 2022 annual meeting—went well. But what does that mean, and what does it imply for the future?

It does not mean that our attendance was anything close to normal. At the end of December, registration stood at 1,854, but actual attendance in New Orleans came in at 908 (based on the number of badges picked up). Approximately 1,000 historians changed their minds, and based on the timing of email requests to move panels online, along with data on hotel cancellations, we can confidently surmise that the Omicron variant outbreak in December tipped the scales, quite reasonably, for many of our colleagues.

So why do I say it went well? With full information about health and safety conditions, policies, and practices—which included proof of vaccination, required masking, and a testing station on the premises—908 historians decided they wanted to convene in person. Through conversations on the final day and subsequent email, we can readily infer that people enjoyed the conference and found it professionally rewarding as well.

This was clearly a self-selecting group, akin perhaps to people who decide to eat indoors at restaurants in Washington, DC (with proof of vaccination required, as in New Orleans restaurants), or who take trains or airplanes to destinations far from home. After attending a few conferences last fall, I wrote in the AHA's *Fortnightly News*, "Attendance at each meeting was skewed towards people who thrive in conference environments. The generally high levels of enthusiasm, and the extraordinarily positive subsequent commentaries must be understood with that skewed sample in mind. Nevertheless, I was struck by the levels of energy, collegiality, and generosity at both conferences. 'Generosity' in the sense that people were

patient, readily understanding that association and hotel staff were doing their best in a different environment." This was precisely what I observed in New Orleans as well. At the orientation sessions for students, I suggested they might have a unique opportunity: the annual meeting has a reputation for being large and impersonal, the flip side of the coin that gives our discipline topical breadth and professional diversity; this would be a chance to take advantage of those virtues without the intimidation factor of vast numbers. On Sunday, more than a few students caught me to observe that this was exactly their experience.

People enjoyed the conference
and found it professionally
rewarding as well.

Do I wish attendance had been larger? Of course, and I'm sure our exhibitors did as well. No doubt panelists on the 165 sessions would have preferred more intimate settings that didn't install them on platforms at a distance from an audience seated farther apart from one another than usual and wearing masks. The plenaries and presidential address drew respectable audiences, but with only one-fourth the normal turnout. Receptions were well attended, especially the graduate student gathering, but there were fewer such events than usual. Diminished attendance and hotel-room bookings have financial implications, of course, though negotiations with the hotels were able to mitigate those somewhat. (We approached the hotels as business partners and were able to share the COVID-induced damage, as have other effective collaborators in various environments over the past two years.)

An equally important mitigation piece of this puzzle relates to the program itself. While the rapid entrance and spread of Omicron upset our appletart rather quickly, it was hardly a surprise. We had already arranged online opportunities for

participants wary of travel, and while expanding that online component on short notice required heroic staff effort led by meetings manager Debbie Ann Doyle, the capacity existed. AHA22 Online on February 21 to 27 includes 209 sessions and 19 posters, along with a “virtual exhibit hall.” Sessions are recorded and available through June, and registrations will be accepted until the recordings are removed. But making things work in New Orleans and providing participation opportunities for colleagues unable to attend in person compose only two-thirds of the equation occupying our thoughts now. We also must consider what we’ve learned over the past two years and what that means going forward, for both in-person meetings and online programming.

The question is not whether to continue online programming but what meets the needs of our members, what we can provide, and how it will work.

As everyone reading this publication knows, learning requires gathering information, reflecting on it, and drawing conclusions after careful consideration. We’ve been experimenting; like many other organizations, we’ve discovered that we have an audience for online programming. We’ve also learned a bit about what works and what doesn’t work online, as well as what kinds of questions to ask in making those assessments. While it’s not clear how much time historians—or anyone else—will want to spend watching people speak from squares on a screen, or participating in conversations under such conditions once they can freely interact face-to-face, we can surmise that many people have found such events rewarding and even enjoyable. Some people even prefer them, for reasons that include requisite factors of time, money, and accessibility. So the question is not whether to continue online programming but what meets the needs of our members, what we can provide, and how it will work.

Throughout the next year, through discussions with the AHA Council and committees, surveys of members, continuing conversations with other historians and various vendors, and consultation with peer associations, AHA staff will gather information about what historians would like to see available online, and then explore logistical feasibility, cost, staff time, and other variables to create new programming that builds on 2020–21’s Virtual AHA and on this year’s in-person and online conferences. We welcome all

suggestions by email to AHAOnline@historians.org but cannot guarantee implementation: many good, creative ideas are just not possible given limitations of cost, staffing, and technology. What is possible for a small organization might not be workable for the AHA. What works well for a much larger or better-resourced organization is not always possible for us. We cannot satisfy everyone. What we *can* do is to welcome and consider opportunities to increase access to conversation, collaboration, communication, and community. Online programming invites participation from people who cannot travel to our annual meeting for reasons of time, money, physical restrictions, family constraints, and other concerns.

We will begin with an online event in summer 2023 to complement our annual meeting in Philadelphia from January 5 to 8. We don’t yet know precisely how it will work; we’ve learned that it is neither possible nor desirable to replicate an in-person gathering in an online space. Not only do some things not translate, but there are also opportunities online that are impossible in person. A digital publication has all sorts of capabilities well beyond a simple PDF version of printed text—different epistemological potential as well as bells and whistles. So, too, an online conference vis-à-vis an in-person gathering: different notions of time, space, communication, and more. Let’s begin to experiment with how we might take advantage of those differences. Given our resources and time frames, we might start modestly and then expand, keeping in mind how this new programming can interact with the in-person annual meeting. The AHA annual meeting itself already looks very different from meetings convened a decade ago. We expect it will continue a gradual transformation, taking into consideration complementary online gatherings, changes in institutional travel funding, and ecological commitments. The two gatherings will be different but related events, with different purposes, different application calendars, and different program committees.

Later this year, we will announce a call for proposals for the summer 2023 online event. Until then, we welcome your input and thank our members for their patience as we consider how best to take advantage of new opportunities. **P**

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

ALEXANDRA F. LEVY

TROLLING HISTORY

Social Media Harassment from Abroad

The harassment takes many forms: threatening phone calls, texts with graphic images, emails and petitions sent to employers, threats of rape and murder.

Many historians have become uncomfortably aware—or targets themselves—of coordinated harassment on Twitter and other platforms. The harassers attack not just historians but scholars from other fields who write about everything from sports, to LGBTQ+ issues, to medieval history and literature. Scholars who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color or who identify with other minoritized communities, along with women, often face the most vicious abuse. A single harasser with a large platform can quickly mobilize their followers to attack a scholar whose work they feel threatens their worldview—and the onslaught can go on for months or even years.

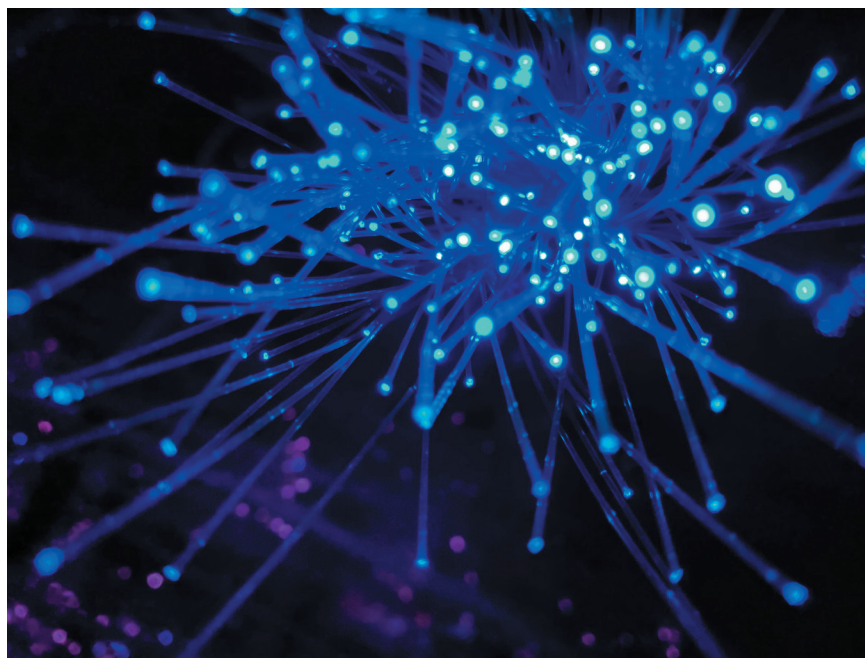
Perspectives recently spoke with historians who have been targeted by neonationalists abroad, eliciting responses by scholarly associations defending academic integrity and freedom. But there are many others—in the United States and in other countries—who could share similar stories. This article sheds a light on the experiences of a few, in the hope that the community may better understand what colleagues who experience such attacks are going through and how best to support them.

Dealing with vicious harassment takes a huge toll on a person, professionally and personally. “Most of us who chose this profession never dreamed that our jobs might entail this,” said Ananya Chakravarti (Georgetown Univ.). “Contemplating the hatred and violent language by these harassers can cause real harm.”

It’s not simply the rise in social media use that has led to such attacks. Right-wing politics across the globe have empowered neonationalists who feel threatened by scholars whose work

shatters the national myths they promote. Those they attack often focus on historical violence against minorities, aligning with the neonationalists’ own prejudices. Scholars in countries governed by neonationalists, and those who travel to them, can face physical and legal harassment—even imprisonment—for pursuing responsible historical inquiry. When neonationalists can’t physically intimidate scholars, they resort to online threats.

The situation for Polish historians, especially those working on World War II



While many have found community online, some historians experience endless harassment on social media.

JJ Ying/Unsplash

and the Holocaust, has steadily worsened as Polish nationalists have taken the reins of governmental power and weaponized it against scholars since 2015. For Jan Grabowski (Univ. of Ottawa), the social media harassment he has experienced is part and parcel of broader physical and legal harassment. Grabowski's assailants dismiss Polish participation in violence against Jews during and after World War II and promote other Holocaust denialist myths. His harassers have "quite clearly been steered, controlled, and orchestrated by institutions of the Polish state or NGOs funded by the government." He explained, "In normal democratic countries, these haters don't have the institutional power of the state giving them a green light. Here, they do."

In a similar vein, the rise of Hindu nationalists in the government in India have emboldened those who espouse the ideology known as Hindutva. These Hindu nationalists "are highly sensitive about a range of topics in South Asian history, especially caste-based discrimination, Indo-Muslim rule, and the internal diversity of Hinduism," explained Audrey Truschke (Rutgers Univ., Newark).

Japanese neonationalists seize on issues that "are politically sensitive within Japan, and certain historical topics that the Japanese neonationalist right-wing is particularly invested in," said Amy Stanley (Northwestern Univ.). The harassers use social media to boost their message and coordinate attacks against scholars. "Some with large followings specifically tweet at right-wing politicians in an attempt to gain their ear, and have even had their content promoted by them," noted Paula R. Curtis (Univ. of California, Los Angeles).

Historians of Japan have joined together to combat online harassment, in Japan and abroad. "Historians in Japan have

often been our best allies and partners, because this issue affects them even more than it affects us," said Stanley. "The harassment is not coming from within the academic community. Japanese historians have also been very concerned about this and have made their own efforts to get their scholarly and academic institutions to address it."

When neonationalists can't physically intimidate scholars, they resort to online threats.

In other cases, fear of government reprisals has successfully chilled academic solidarity with historians being harassed or prosecuted. In February 2021, Grabowski and Barbara Engelking were convicted for libel in Poland regarding their co-edited book, *Night without End: The Fate of Jews in German-Occupied Poland* (Polish Center for Holocaust Research, 2018). Their convictions were overturned on appeal, but Grabowski has seen diminished support from Polish colleagues and institutions. "Until two years ago, I was very much solicited as a speaker at Polish universities." But since the trial began, his invitations have dried up: "People are afraid, and institutions are afraid." The AHA's letter to Polish government officials in support of Grabowski and Engelking emphasized the right of historians to conduct impartial research "that reveals uncomfortable facts about a nation's history." But neonationalists frequently view "uncomfortable" history as directly threatening the myths they promote.

Debates that begin in academia can spiral on social media and draw in neonationalists and harassers. The history of

"comfort women," women the Japanese military forced into sexual slavery during World War II, is a lightning rod on social media. In December 2020, law professor J. Mark Ramseyer (Harvard Univ.) published an article in the *International Review of Law and Economics* claiming that the comfort women were well paid and voluntarily performed sex work for the Japanese army via a system of contracts. In March 2021, Stanley, Hannah Shepherd, Sayaka Chatani, David Ambaras, and Chelsea Szendi Schieder published one of the first scholarly refutations, "Contracting for Sex in the Pacific War": The Case for Retraction on Grounds of Academic Misconduct" (*Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 2021). They laid "out the distortions and misrepresentations of sources that we have found in Ramseyer's article" and urged it be retracted, arguing that "its inaccuracies are more than superficial errors; they completely undermine the article's claims."

Ramseyer's article and scholars' critical responses to it have received international attention in the media and from politicians in the United States, Japan, China, and South Korea. Praising Ramseyer's article are neonationalists who have long tried to bury the stories of the comfort women and felt legitimized by a Harvard professor's article and his continued defense of it. For over a year, they have viciously harassed the authors of "The Case for Retraction," scholars who published related articles in other media, and even others who simply tweeted praise of the refutation. The harassment has included coordinated social media attacks, emails to their institutions, and other threats, with the worst of the harassment directed against women and Japanese scholars. In November 2021, the Association for Asian Studies issued a statement denouncing "the harassment of Asian Studies specialists, especially regarding recent online targeting of historians

who are contributing to our understanding of WWII-era Japan.” But it has continued unabated.

In addition to targeting individuals, harassers have launched coordinated attacks against conferences and organizations. The scholars and university sponsors of Dismantling Global Hindutva, an online conference in September 2021, received death threats against themselves and family members. “One-click emails were generated to bombard university servers with nearly a million letters to stop the conference,” said Chakravarti. “There is nothing spontaneous or organic about such organized harassment.” The AHA released a statement condemning the harassment and intimidation of those involved in the conference, stressing that “disruptions to a conference represent an assault on the principle of academic freedom.”

Harassers also target the institutions that support or employ those they disagree with, often accusing historians of racism. “They co-opt the language of social justice,” said Stanley. “They’ll write that criticizing the Japanese empire is racist toward the Japanese people. Because universities are set up to be very sensitive—and rightly so—to accusations about racism, the harassers have decided this is a very good way to get institutions’ attention.” Hindu nationalists, too, have “leveraged the conversation around social justice in academia to silence academic scrutiny of their ideology or of the current regime in India,” said Chakravarti.

Once harassers target a historian, they’ll attack anything the historian shares online. “It seems that I first caught their attention for my work around the comfort women issue, but it quickly snowballed as they found other things I had said that they wanted to be offended by,” related Stanley. Grabowski knows that

every word he writes on social media—even on his friends-only Facebook page—is likely shared with the Polish government. The tension of wanting to share your scholarship and interests on social media, while knowing that your accounts are monitored by those who mean you harm, is stressful and draining.

What can be done in the face of online harassment? Institutional support can be key, for scholars who have the benefit of such backing. “It’s essential that institutions take a public stance against online forms of harassment and fully investigate and educate themselves on the nature of the issue at hand when it does happen,” said Curtis. Violent threats should be reported to one’s institution and campus or local police. Scholarly associations can also provide public support or assistance behind the scenes. In 2022, the Association for Asian Studies will provide a platform for a three-part series of online events on digital harassment of scholars and activists in Asian contexts, organized by Curtis and several other scholars.

Solidarity among the historical community is more vital than ever.

A sense of solidarity is also crucial, both professionally and personally, especially for those who lack institutional support. “Much as the harassment elicited by the conference was utterly appalling, I was heartened by how quickly and effectively academics came together to stand firm in its face,” said Chakravarti. Reaching out to a scholar’s institution—explaining that a colleague has been targeted by politically motivated harassers—can provide important support, particularly if the colleague is contingently employed or up for promotion. “One common response that is unhelpful is

silence,” said Truschke. “We stand stronger when we stand together.”

Recognizing the significance of academic freedom on social media is also important. Curtis noted, “Many people do not fully understand the importance of digital spaces in the work of historians. These are the people who say, ‘Why don’t you just turn it off?’ or ‘Why don’t you just log out?’ But to do so would only invigorate those who would misuse the past and leave them and their mobilization of false narratives unchecked.” Stanley agreed that advising scholars to stay off Twitter or close their account is “profoundly misguided, because it blames the victim. Scholars need to be on Twitter to promote their work and engage in scholarly discussions. This is a public sphere.”

With the rise of right-wing nationalism around the world—including in the United States—online harassment is likely to escalate, with harassers targeting those who promote fact over nationalist myths. Solidarity among the historical community is more vital than ever. Defending academic freedom and integrity and dismantling historical myths has long been the calling of many historians. Now the community faces such tests on new platforms across the globe. **P**

If you or a colleague is being harassed on social media, some resources that offer guidance include the AHA’s Guide for Dealing with Online Harassment, PEN America’s Online Harassment Field Manual, and the South Asia Scholar Activist Collective’s Hindutva Harassment Field Manual.

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ALEXANDRA J. FINLEY

JOINING THE CHORUS

Forming a Faculty Union

The 21st century is deficient in many things, not least of all the opportunity to join together joyously and genuinely in song, free of guile and cynicism.

My initial experience with such a collaborative chorus came during my first semester at the University of Pittsburgh in the fall of 2019. I sat in a circle with my colleagues from across job

classes, departments, and schools. We shared perspectives, listened to one another's problems, and considered how we could collectively address our issues. At the end of our discussion, we sang, a cappella, "Solidarity Forever," Ralph Chaplin's 1915 labor anthem. And as I sang, somewhat abashedly, I looked around at these new friends I was making, and my voice grew louder. I felt growing confidence in my heart

that "we can break their haughty power" and gain our freedom now that we'd learned that the "union makes us strong."

Being an academic historian has been in many ways an isolating existence for me. Many of my professional tasks are solitary. I read books. I prepare lectures and PowerPoint presentations. I request archival documents. Even when



Faculty members from across the University of Pittsburgh joined together to form a United Steelworkers local.
Courtesy United Steelworkers

collaborating on research and writing, I perform much of the actual work in the company of only myself. The constant dislocations of the academic job market—moving among postdoctoral fellowships, one-year positions, and other temporary work—leave little time for socializing and building lasting friendships. Teaching responsibilities and publishing requirements allow scant free time to forge connections in other departments or build broad campus communities. In other ways, academics are in constant competition for a diminishing number of jobs, for fellowships, for space in publications, and for research money. We are constantly reminded of and divided by our status, which allocates both resources and respect. Universities attempt to remedy inequalities linguistically rather than structurally, as though renaming “non-tenure track” as “appointment stream” or “clinical” faculty will address the material basis of the hierarchy.

But I will not expand here on grievances with the system—those have been well established. There is no shortage of criticism of the ways in which the university is increasingly a moneymaking machine rather than a center of teaching and intellectual inquiry working for the public good. I have spent hours hearing, reading, and speaking about these concerns, bemoaning the fate of our profession. This is not to say that critiques are not valid or worthwhile—they are. We must identify the problem before we can solve it, and criticism is a necessary first step. The problem lies in doing nothing tangible to move beyond criticism.

Working collectively to establish a union showed me concrete ways to move forward. The effort began in 2015, when a group of Pitt faculty decided to work with the United Steelworkers, an international union based out of Pittsburgh with several

academic locals, on a unionization campaign. Our faculty joined a wave of unionization efforts among faculty and graduate students in the past 10 years at universities across the country. Despite laws in many states that limit the power of public employees to unionize, faculty have worked with a variety of international unions to form locals. Though faculty unions date back to the early 20th century, their numbers are increasing and their functions are changing as faculty face the corporatization of the university system and widespread funding cuts. This trend suggests that higher education is a key sector for new labor organizing. Through unions, faculty want the power of collective bargaining to improve their working conditions and students’ learning conditions. Through collective bargaining and a legally enforceable contract, they can address both local issues, such as pay, and the broader concerns of many in higher education, such as academic freedom and precarious employment contracts.

*We are the union, we
told our colleagues.*

I became involved with the Union of Pitt Faculty Organizing Committee when, on my first day of teaching, a labor organizer and a gender studies professor visited my office and asked whether I would be interested in learning more about the efforts to form a union. They explained that the union, which included faculty of all job classes, had already collected authorization cards. By the time I arrived in 2019, they were just waiting on a faculty-wide vote on whether to unionize. As they waited for the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board to set a date for the vote, organizers continued to reach out to colleagues to hear their points of view.

Before I knew it, I had signed up to go and speak with my new coworkers about the union campaign. Despite being a naturally reticent person, my long family history of union membership pushed me into action. I found myself knocking on office doors, flagging folks down after their classes, and calling coworkers on the phone. I learned my way around campus through this process. I had to find Benedum Hall so I could visit a class there. I learned that I share a building with the political science department after speaking to faculty in their offices. I met chemists, linguists, astronomers, engineers, and psychologists. I listened to the experiences of longtime adjuncts, distinguished professors, and first-time lecturers. These new ties helped break through the typical isolation of academic work.

By and large, what I found through these discussions was commonality. Most faculty worried about job security, lack of administrative transparency, the need for greater shared governance, academic freedom, growing workloads, and funding. These worries played out differently in different job classes and departments. Adjuncts had to prepare syllabi on the day the semester began, as they had not been informed of their teaching responsibilities until that very morning. Assistant professors worried about increasing research requirements for tenure. Tenured faculty had witnessed a decline in shared governance. Part-time faculty hated to tell inquiring students that they didn’t know when or whether they would be teaching next semester. When the COVID-19 pandemic started in the winter of 2020, three new concerns came to the fore: health and safety, family and dependent care, and intellectual property rights for online teaching material. Some faculty felt completely out of touch with the university; they hadn’t spoken to a

colleague in months, even before the pandemic limited campus visits.

Rather than our fretting aimlessly, unionization gave us a route to having our needs addressed. We are the union, we told our colleagues. The union isn't an outside party or an administrator; the union is us. When we have a union, our voices have to be heard; the administration has to offer us a seat at the bargaining table. When negotiating a union contract, we can introduce legally enforceable language that addresses job security, academic freedom, intellectual property rights, equity, pay, and family leave, among other key issues.

Overall, the faculty at Pitt saw the positive change that could come from forming a union. We realized that, regardless of job class or department, we had a great deal in common—we all labor in the same ecosystem. In October 2021, 71 percent of faculty voted in favor of a union. The outside support we received from the greater Pittsburgh community,

local politicians, and the Pitt student body made the decision that much clearer. At the time of writing, the Pitt faculty are in the process of electing a Committee of Representatives and a Bargaining Committee. These individuals will represent faculty proportionally, according to school, division, and job class. They will be assisted by a Communications and Actions Team, which acts as a resource for their colleagues, conveying information back and forth from representatives to faculty throughout the negotiation process. The Bargaining Committee, with the legal support of United Steelworkers, will meet with administration representatives and begin to bargain a contract in the spring term of 2022. It is a democratic process throughout; the resulting contract must be approved by faculty vote. The University of Pittsburgh faculty were the largest new faculty union to form in 2021, so the negotiations will take longer than on a smaller campus, but we look forward to bargaining a contract that will best serve all of those represented.

I would like to suggest that inclusive faculty unions are academic historians' best hope for remedying the many ills we see in our professional lives. As academics, we excel at identifying problems, pushing back on ideas, and critiquing everything around us, but we often stumble when asked to find workable solutions or to apply those same analyses of power to ourselves. Unionization is a way to take the genuine despair and anger behind our grievances and turn them into something positive. It is not a magic fix but a powerful way for faculty to fight for the changes we want to see.

Unionization takes the genuine despair and anger behind our grievances and turns them into something positive.

We write alone, we read alone, and we research alone. But we don't have to fight alone. It's time to fight not just for our own interests but for those of all our colleagues and, in turn, our students, nonfaculty employees, and our broader communities. Without faculty, there would be no universities, but we must come together for our influence to be felt. One voice singing alone will not draw as much attention as a chorus of many. Singing "Solidarity Forever" to myself, I feel inspired but not particularly powerful. Surrounded by colleagues, our voices blending in a resounding chorus, I feel like change is possible. As part of a union, I feel the alienation and the cynicism fade away, and as naive as it may sound, I truly believe that "we can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old." **P**

Alexandra J. Finley is an assistant professor at the University of Pittsburgh.



In joining the Pitt Faculty Union, Alexandra J. Finley becomes a fourth-generation union member.

Alexandra J. Finley

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EMILY SCLAFANI

THE DANGER OF A SINGLE ORIGIN STORY

The 1619 Project and Contested Foundings



Disputes over America's foundation myth are dividing the nation, but the effect on teaching these debates to students gives hope for the future.

Lisa Brewster/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0

THE UNITED STATES is a nation in search of a usable past. How much of that project will be entrusted to politicians and how much to scholars remains to be seen, but righting the balance will determine whether our secondary school curricula inculcate a national mythology or impart a nuanced understanding of the past. The AHA and partner organizations like Learn from History are rightfully concerned that “divisive concepts” laws such as Texas’s HB 3979 seek to “replace evidence-based history instruction with a whitewashed version of patriotism” that stifles meaningful discussion of the centrality of racism in US history.

As an ideological endeavor, the promulgation of a national mythology serves the interests of those in power and does far more to entrench division than any honest, critical assessment of historical injustice ever could. But the search for a usable past can also be what the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs calls “an expression of communal aspiration,” one that “aims at creating a better world by incorporating achievements as well as regrets, pride as well as disappointment, into our historical accounts.” Resolving these apparent contradictions into a synthesis that better serves the needs of a pluralistic democracy is manifestly the work of historians.

I write this as a secondary school teacher who has watched uneasily as the culture wars playing out in school boards and statehouses nationwide foster a false dichotomy between 1619 and 1776 as “foundings” of the United States. For at least 50 years, scholars have embraced what Edmund Morgan termed “the central paradox of American history”: the rise of liberty in this country can be fully understood only alongside the rise of slavery. To insist, as the state of Texas does, that we teach our students to see slavery and racism as “deviations from, betrayals of, or failures to live up to, the authentic founding principles of the United States” is to reject what is, at this point, sound historical consensus. Morgan abjured the notion that we should see our founding as one thing and one thing only, an admonition that cuts both ways: even while he insisted “that one fifth of the American population at the time of the Revolution is too many people to be treated as an exception,” he cautioned against dismissing narratives of liberty and equality in favor of the argument “that slavery and oppression were the dominant features of American history.” It seems fair to read HB 3979’s prohibition against “requiring an understanding of the 1619 Project” as a sign that the activists behind such laws believe our teaching has swung too far in the latter direction. Implicit in this belief is a misguided assumption that because a teacher introduces a concept or thesis into a course, she obliges her students to accept it as a singular truth.

The 1619 Project — conceived by the journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones — inspired much-needed public discourse about the long reach of slavery and its pernicious legitimizing ideologies, popularizing a critical stance that I believe should inform our teaching. I hesitate, though, to characterize the arrival of the first unfree Africans in Point Comfort, Virginia, as a moment of original sin that ossified our nation’s character and fate. If we look back over the span of four hundred years, the forced migration of those 20 or so Angolans is surely a defining moment. But there is a rich, ongoing scholarly debate about the fluidity among categories of unfree labor during the 17th century. Nell Irvin Painter has argued that “how we think about the term ‘enslaved’ matters.” If we overlook the fact that the first Black Virginians were indentured in this country alongside poor white Europeans, then we skip past the process by which colonial authorities constructed the social and legal apparatuses of racialized slavery; if we do not understand how those systems came to be, then we are unlikely to perceive their lasting impact. I want my students to appreciate that the choices historians make about periodization affect our ability to discern contingency and change over time. If we scale time differently — if we focus, say, on the period between 1619 and the mid-1600s (when racialized categories for bonded labor emerged) or 1676 (when Bacon’s Rebellion accelerated the process of giving those categories legal power) — then we see that another world might have been possible.

The promulgation of a national mythology serves the interests of those in power.

It’s revelatory for students to learn that early in our nation’s history, Black colonists drew on talents they honed as participants in a broader Atlantic system to obtain freedom, accumulate property, and demand the full recognition of their rights as citizens. Reading historians’ work on this subject was a formative experience in my own training. There, I found accounts of men like Anthony Johnson. Captured in Portuguese Angola, Johnson survived servitude in 1620s Virginia and went on to compete freely and successfully with his white neighbors. Johnson’s story dissuaded me from equating early Black American history exclusively with the experience of enslavement and reminded me that historical progress is not always linear. Of course, it’s fair to ask whether focusing on such a narrow sliver of time distracts from the more salient fact that systems of inequality would ultimately and irreparably curtail Black opportunity, and it behooves us to remind our students that history is infinitely

more complex than the anecdotal evidence of one man's biography might suggest. The racist ideas that permeated the Atlantic world surely existed in the minds of white colonists long before they acquired the legal force that would rob Johnson's descendants of his hard-earned gains. But if we don't trust our students to handle nuance—to talk through it and argue with the sources and with one another—then they are far more likely to believe the political commentators who have misappropriated Johnson's biography as a part of a campaign to discredit efforts at historical accountability.

The racist ideas that permeated the Atlantic world surely existed in the minds of white colonists long before they acquired legal force.

It's vital for our students to know that men like Anthony Johnson existed. In her 2020 book, *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*, Ghoddy Muhammad argues that fostering positive identity construction in our students, especially those from marginalized backgrounds is an important learning goal. Along with skills development and content mastery, identity development cultivates "criticality," a practice through which students understand power, privilege, and injustice and "develop the agency to build a better world." We are not just historians. Many of us are also teachers of history to young people still making sense of who they are; we should be wary of presenting 1619 as an essentializing moment. Painter warns that "seeing the 1619 Africans and their descendants as slaves seals them within the permanent identity of enslavement," while Annette Gordon-Reed calls us to abandon our "nationalist-oriented" lens, zoom out from Point Comfort, and capture stories of "African people who predated plantation slavery in the Americas, and had stories and legacies outside that institution." Historical figures like Anthony Johnson, or the Black conquistador Estebanico, and intricately drawn literary characters like Toni Morrison's blacksmith introduce students to narratives of Black autonomy and capability. These characters need not be perfect heroes, and they would hardly be human if they were. The crucial point is that they push back against what Gordon-Reed calls a "highly edited origin story [that] winds the Black experience tight, limiting the imaginative possibilities of Blackness—what could be done by people in that skin."

A usable past for this nation has to be at once "more beautiful and terrible" than the 1619/1776 dichotomy allows. It's hard to imagine that this reductive framing would be finding quite so much traction in public discourse if more Americans experienced and recalled their history education according to the terms by which we conceive of it. Recent polling by the AHA shows that most people want to reckon honestly with the injustices of the past. How can they do so with a history they see as "little more than an assemblage of names, dates, and events?" To shift this debate away from an assumption that one "correct" answer can address complex historical questions would be a powerful achievement. Kenneth Pomeranz once entreated us in these pages to remember that no historian has the "full" story, and that knowing "how to simplify . . . without oversimplifying" in order to create a comprehensible narrative of the past is one of the most valuable and transferable "real world" skills we teach. Simplifying responsibly requires us to avoid both mythologizing and essentializing, an approach we need to teach our students as well. Their future civic engagement depends on it. As Jane Kamensky recently reminded us, they are rising voters inheriting a fragile democracy at a moment when their education leaves them either "frozen with shame" or "prostrate in awe." These are "but opposite sides of the same coin," Kamensky writes; "neither cultivates action, which lies at the core of democratic citizenship." Offering our students a history that shakes them out of complacency while inspiring hope for a better future—what could be more useful than that? **P**

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TINA GROSS

SEARCH TERMS UP FOR DEBATE

The Politics and Purpose of Library Subject Headings



The Library of Congress sets the standards for subject headings used by most libraries in the United States—which leads to issues of gatekeeping not easily resolved.

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HISTORICAL RESEARCH ALMOST always starts with words. When you search in a library catalog, databases, or even Google, the words you use to describe your topic determine what you'll find. These words can also reinforce assumptions, exclude people, or perpetuate stigma. Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), "a list of words and phrases – called headings – that are used to indicate the topics of library resources," are used by most libraries in the United States to help users find resources in their collections. For the last century, librarians have worked to make LCSH more inclusive and accurate by replacing offensive or racist terms with language that more fully reflects the identities and experiences of diverse populations.

Started in 1898, with the first edition coming out in parts from 1909 to 1914, LCSH were widely adopted by the 1930s. They rely on modern, user-friendly, and accurate language to connect library users to resources. Keeping subject headings up to date is a gargantuan task, which is one of the reasons individual libraries stopped maintaining local lists and adopted LCSH.

Subject headings remain essential to the research process even as it becomes possible to quickly search the full text of digitized items. For example, if someone searches for "World War I" and "post-traumatic stress disorder" in a database of digitized primary sources, full-text keyword searching will fail. Those phrases did not appear in texts from the period. Subject headings accommodate variations in terminology over time and ensure that users will locate the sources they need.

Subject headings make it easy to distinguish between Mercury the element, the planet, the car, and the Roman god and to get search results for just one and exclude the others. Librarians create them to facilitate searching by subject around the pitfalls of synonyms, homographs, and other variations. They designate one word or phrase as the official subject heading to be used consistently, allowing human searchers and automated systems to identify resources on a topic regardless of words used in the resources themselves or what language they're in.

To remain effective, headings must be regularly updated to reflect current usage. Today's LCSH *People with disabilities* used to be *Handicapped* and, before that, *Cripples*. Additionally, new concepts require new headings, such as the recently created *Social distancing (Public health)*, *Neurodiversity*, and *Say Her Name movement*. The process of determining which word or phrase to use as the subject heading for a given topic is inevitably fraught and can never be free of bias. The choice of terms embodies various perspectives, whether they are intentional and acknowledged or not. In the case of LCSH, the dominant perspective has been that of the US government. Where its laws

and policies have enacted oppression, discrimination, marginalization, or erasure, LCSH have reflected that.

The terms selected for LCSH are the focus of intense debate in the library world, and these decisions affect scholars and educators. Library users often think of libraries as authoritative and neutral. When they encounter problematic or pejorative subject headings while conducting research, libraries are falling short of their commitment to provide "accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests."

Concerns about LCSH are not new. Librarians have called attention to such issues and pushed for change for nearly a century. In the 1930s, Dorothy Porter (Howard Univ.), Catherine Latimer (135th Street branch of the New York Public Library, which became the Schomburg Center), and Frances Lydia Yocom (Fisk Univ.) grappled with the inadequacies of LCSH for describing resources by and about African Americans and Black people around the world. They developed local "unauthorized" subject headings to provide better access to their institutions' materials than the white-centric, racist, colonial-minded treatment afforded by LCSH.

Headings must be regularly updated to reflect current usage.

A generation later, Sandy Berman emerged as the most prominent librarian in efforts to garner public pressure to change LCSH. His influential 1971 book, *Prejudices and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People*, marked the beginning of the contemporary movement to overhaul and modernize LCSH. As the head of cataloging at the Hennepin County Library in Minnesota from 1973 to 1999, he created an independent subject headings system based on LCSH, but with a more responsive approach to creating new headings and dispensing with oppressive and outdated terminology. Berman's efforts encompassed both working to reform LCSH and asserting libraries' autonomy to move beyond its limitations.

Although it can be difficult to draw a direct line between the work of activists and librarians and LCSH changes, LC has addressed many of the problematic subject headings to which Berman and others drew attention. Overtly racist terms like *Yellow peril* and *Jewish question* were deleted in the 1980s. *Gypsies* is now *Romanies*, and "conflict" has been changed to "war" in *Vietnam War, 1961–1975*. In 2006, a parenthetical was added to make the heading for the Christian deity like the headings for those of other religions. It is now *God (Christianity)* rather than simply *God*. *Asexuality (Sexual orientation)* was added in 2016.

LCSH can become politicized in ways that go far beyond libraries. Long-time advocates for changing the heading *Armenian massacres, 1915–1923* renewed their push after both houses of Congress passed resolutions recognizing the Armenian genocide in June 2020. LC responded to the Armenian National Committee’s letter requesting that the subject heading be changed by explaining that it would not do so because it “defers to the President and the State Department on the terminology and refrains from using the word genocide in the official subject heading.” After the Congressional Armenian Caucus requested it, LC reversed its position and the heading was changed to *Armenian Genocide, 1915–1923*.

The most well-known effort to update LCSH terms today centers on *Illegal aliens*.

Many other long-criticized LCSH have been changed in just the past two years. The benign-sounding middle part of *Japanese Americans—Evacuation and relocation, 1942–1945* was changed to *Forced removal and internment*. The word “riot” was replaced to make *Tulsa Race Massacre, Tulsa, Okla., 1921* after this was proposed by the University of Oklahoma Libraries based on the recognition that “naming matters: the words used to describe people and events affect perceptions and, in turn, those perceptions have concrete implications for social justice.”

Controversial LCSH still in use include *Sexual minorities* (a strange collective term for LGBTQ+ people) and *Indians of North America*, which has the lamentable corollary *East Indians* (for people from India, with that modifier because of how “Indians” is used in headings for Indigenous peoples).

The most well-known effort to update LCSH terms today centers on *Illegal aliens*. Featured in the documentary film *Change the Subject*, the campaign to get LC to “drop the I-word” began in 2014 at Dartmouth College after undocumented students were troubled that their library’s online catalog used that term and demanded that it be replaced. The library responded by inviting students to collaborate with them on an official proposal to change the heading. The proposal was submitted in July 2014 and rejected by LC that December.

In 2016, a resolution by the American Library Association (ALA) said the phrase “illegal aliens” has “undergone pejoration and acquired derogatory connotations, becoming increasingly associated with nativist and racist sentiments” (full disclosure: I drafted that ALA resolution). Shortly thereafter, LC announced that it would discontinue *Illegal aliens*,

replacing it not with *Undocumented immigrants* but with a combination of *Noncitizens* and *Unauthorized immigration*.

The news was greeted with elation but also concern that the replacement terms would make it harder to find resources. That discussion was quickly sidelined by GOP backlash, with Rep. Diane Black (R-TN) introducing HR 4926, “Stopping Partisan Policy at the Library of Congress Act,” and Republicans on the House Appropriations Subcommittee including an instruction in a subcommittee report that LC should “maintain certain subject headings that reflect terminology used in title 8, United States Code.” Black’s bill did not pass, and no provision calling for *Illegal aliens* to be retained made it into the appropriations bill. Nevertheless, LC backed down. In May 2016, the Library announced that it would conduct a survey and study the issue.

LC made no further public comments until November 2021, when it announced that *Illegal aliens* would be replaced with a combination of *Noncitizens* and *Illegal immigration*. In the meantime, dozens of libraries diverged from LCSH to change the heading in their own online catalogs. Many librarians are dismayed that LC has decided to adopt *Illegal immigration*, apparently a concession to forces in Congress that seek to scapegoat and criminalize the undocumented. It’s an improvement that “the I-word” refers to actions rather than people, but library users will still be subjected to the vilification it conveys.

LC welcomes public comments, and feedback from subject matter experts is particularly valuable. A crowdsourced list of many “problem LCSH” can be found (and added to) on the Cataloging Lab wiki. Those who want to provide feedback to LC on proposals being considered can follow what new and changed subject headings are under discussion on LC’s “Tentative Monthly Lists.” LC’s monthly online editorial meetings, at which select subject heading proposals are discussed, are open to the public. Information on how to “request to attend a subject editorial meeting” is available in the Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Directorate section of the Library of Congress website. Another good option for historians looking to get involved in this work is to connect with cataloging staff at their institutions’ libraries. Together, you can propose solutions to LC or devise local alternatives.

Inaccurate or pejorative subject headings can replicate and reinforce broader social injustices. By working to improve LCSH, librarians, historians, and advocates strive to make it possible for all library users to have a positive, productive experience. **P**

Tina Gross is the metadata and cataloging librarian at North Dakota State University. She tweets at @aboutness.

VICTORIA SAKER WOESTE

THE CHARLOTTESVILLE VERDICT

American Antisemitism and Resurgent Nationalisms



Resurgent nationalism in the United States has strained the legal system's ability to protect free speech while providing justice to communities devastated by racialized violence like the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh.

Official White House Photo by Andrea Hanks. Public domain

ON NOVEMBER 23, 2021, a federal jury in Charlottesville, Virginia, held five organizers of the 2017 Unite the Right march responsible for injuries inflicted on nine people when the march turned violent. The jury awarded the plaintiffs in *Sines v. Kessler* more than \$25 million. Many Americans greeted the verdict as a clear condemnation of hate speech.

This civil case stood in for criminal prosecutions that fizzled when judges held the relevant statutes unconstitutional. The sole criminal prosecution was of the man who drove his car into a crowd of counterprotesters, killing Heather Heyer. Thus, even though the *Sines* verdict came as a relief, it served only partial justice. The financial penalty seems insufficient, and the defendants are pleading poverty. Further, those responsible for the protest raise and launder their money online, making it much more difficult for the courts to strip them of physical assets, an approach used against the Ku Klux Klan as recently as 2008. If the defendants are eventually made to pay, nothing stops them from continuing to raise money in the shadow of the law; they prefer contributions in untraceable Bitcoin. Meanwhile, counterprotesters will cope with physical and psychological injuries for years, if not for the rest of their lives.

A marriage of racism, white Christian nationalism, and antisemitism fueled the violence in Virginia. The rioters came to Charlottesville to protest the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee from a city park. As they invaded the University of Virginia grounds the night before, however, they chanted “Jews will not replace us.” Their antisemitism was not ancillary to their racism. Rather, it was a cornerstone of their plans to upend American society to, among other things, prevent the Jewish takeover they fear—baselessly—is coming.

Sines v. Kessler rings the same bells we have often heard in the past century when victims used the legal system to confront hate-mongering. This is in part because US law has a strange relationship to speech. We prefer a hands-off approach up to the moment speech incites violence or property damage. But once it crosses that boundary, once it is clear that a particular utterance or protest has become actionable before the law, the legal remedies available don’t sufficiently address the injuries to individuals and society alike. Despite guilty verdicts in these cases, the incentive for those who would espouse hate to weaponize speech remains.

The popular optimism generated by the Charlottesville verdict will probably give way to old frustrations. One defendant, Andrew Anglin, owner of the neo-Nazi website the Daily Stormer, left the country in 2018 to avoid paying millions for online harassment and has not been seen since. Two others, Richard Spencer and Jason Kessler, while representing

themselves in the civil case, ran podcasts after each day’s proceedings to rally supporters and raise more money.

None of these tactics are new. During World War I, noted anti-semitic Henry Ford criticized the press for filtering his public statements, just as many of today’s right-wing pundits complain (on cable news!) about being “canceled.” Lacking a podcast or a YouTube channel, Ford purchased the *Dearborn Independent* in the 1920s, filling its weekly issues with antisemitic screeds loosely based on the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

The *Protocols* purports to be the records of a Jewish conspiracy to take over world governments and financial systems. Despite the ludicrous premise, during the decade prior to World War I, the *Protocols* inspired pogroms in Russia and swiftly spread across Europe. The text confirmed Ford’s beliefs about Jews’ responsibility for the war and their ulterior motives for serving in President Wilson’s administration. The *Protocols* remains a touchstone for antisemites everywhere, from the shooter who attacked the Poway, California, synagogue in 2019 to the QAnon imagining of a deep state.

Their antisemitism was not ancillary to their racism.

Ford’s career as a hate speech publisher was short lived. Facing a federal libel suit, Ford positioned himself as the victim of unscrupulous, profiteering Jews. But the trial revealed that his newspaper was riddled with errors, undermining his defense. To avoid an adverse verdict, he secured the declaration of a mistrial. First, he staged a car accident, supposedly with himself at the wheel, that the press immediately concluded was an assassination attempt. Then he planted an interview in a newspaper in which a juror asserted that Ford was disrupting the trial. The judge promptly ended the proceedings, but before a new trial could begin, Ford publicly apologized. The articles, he said, were the work of employees who published without his knowledge. That assertion was untrue. Trial testimony had established that Ford was not only aware of what they contained, but he personally ordered the attacks on plaintiff Aaron Sapiro.

The outcome deprived Sapiro, who had nearly bankrupted himself in suing Ford, of the satisfaction of a guilty verdict. But the apology made it impolitic to continue, and Sapiro chose to accept an out-of-court settlement that included money damages and Ford’s pledge to close the newspaper. Ford’s hateful words, however, far outlasted the lawsuit’s power to constrain him. Published as a book under the title *The International Jew: The World’s Foremost Problem*, the *Independent’s* articles swiftly spread to all corners of the earth. Like

the *Protocols*, *The International Jew* still enjoys a prolonged literary half-life, both in print and on the internet.

Thus, the antisemitism of czarist Russia, filtered through the cultural imprimatur of America's foremost industrial king, supplied the canon of later antisemites. Though Ford was eventually stripped of his media platform, other politicians soon adopted his message. Gerald L. K. Smith, an avowed Nazi supporter and a founder of the America First Party, was a Ford confidant beginning in the 1930s. During World War II, Smith proclaimed the existence of an international Jewish conspiracy, and he published his own version of *The International Jew* in the 1950s. Alabama governor George C. Wallace blamed Jews for stirring up Black agitators during the 1960s. Richard Nixon and the Reverend Billy Graham were recorded in the Oval Office in 1972 affirming each other's suspicions about Jews' control of Hollywood and the media. The Charlottesville defendants, who host their websites on the dark web and use encrypted apps to communicate with their alt-right followers, are merely the most recent links in the chain.

The verdict in Charlottesville is more of a challenge than a victory.


If Ford's trial and its aftermath provide a lesson, it is that the verdict in the Charlottesville case is more of a challenge than a victory. On one level, the victims deserve justice. They deserve to be made whole, or as close as practicable. That will require substantial effort before the court can issue asset forfeiture orders; the burden of investigating the money trail falls on the plaintiffs. On another level, the injury to us as a society remains an open wound. The legal paradigm that has governed hate speech regulation for more than a century was the brainchild of Justice Louis Brandeis, the first Jew to sit on the US Supreme Court. Brandeis's answer to speech one disagrees with or condemns was more and better speech. His model teaches that in the marketplace of ideas, facts and truth will conquer hate, conspiracy theories, and fascism.

They haven't. The fight is ongoing, and a single verdict, even one worth \$25 million, will not be enough to cripple the movement that the defendants represent. Indeed, our legal system is not only ill equipped to heal this wound; it often leaves it to fester. One unavoidable consequence of trials adjudicating hate speech is that these ideas continue to gain historical permanence; they exist in the discourse as a reference point for everyone, and that means we are continually refighting the last war. Charlottesville and the *Sines* trial returned ideas we thought discredited to the national stage, with bloody results. In the decades before Charlottesville, antisemitic acts consisted

almost entirely of vandalism, such as the painting of antisemitic slogans on park equipment, leafleting at colleges and universities, and damage to synagogues. Then, in October 2018, a shooter killed 11 and wounded six at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. That shooter, who had no criminal record, asserted that Jews were "the enemy of white people." The Poway attack happened six months later.

After Charlottesville, American neo-Nazis became less centrally organized; many lost their jobs after being identified as participants. But their radicalization continues to spread. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) has alleged that Jews use "space lasers" to attack their enemies. An obscure CEO opined that Jews intend to use the COVID vaccine to "euthanize Americans." Antisemites on both sides of the Atlantic blame George Soros for all manner of political manipulations. And the Charlottesville verdict came too late to discourage the Capitol rioters in January 2021, where antisemitism was once again a driving force behind the violence: a participant wore a T-shirt that day depicting Auschwitz as a summer camp.

As with Charlottesville, concerns continue to build that the organizers of the Capitol riot will evade punishment and that this lack of accountability will embolden others to violence. Ultimately, the issue is whether a legal verdict—the judgment of a court of law—can discredit the antisemitic convictions that are antithetical to our democracy. If Justice Brandeis's model of a free market in ideas is to remain the cornerstone to interpreting the First Amendment, the penalties for crossing from words into violence must be clear and severe. We need to prosecute criminal conspiracy, terrorism, and racism-fueled violence consistently and forcefully, and we need better protections for peaceful protesters exercising their First Amendment rights. Instead, since 2017 36 states have passed laws making it easier to arrest protestors and immunizing those who run them down with automobiles. Such a statute would have made it impossible to hold the driver who killed Heather Heyer financially responsible for her death, much less convict him of her murder.

Giving white nationalists license to kill is not the answer. Well-meaning popular and academic attempts to counter hate speech in the marketplace of ideas have failed to disarm it. To fulfill the law's promise to people harmed by this kind of violence and to end this age-old cycle, the legal system must make jury verdicts meaningful and not just an empty letter. 

Victoria Saker Woeste is the author of Henry Ford's War on Jews and the Legal Battle against Hate Speech. She tweets @VictoriaSWoeste.



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NEW YEAR, FRESH LOOK

In the March Issue of the American Historical Review

The March 2022 issue of the *AHR* brings a completely new look to the journal in what marks its first major redesign in 50 years. Readers will see a variety of changes in the print journal and its digital platforms, including a new cover design; new typography; a refresh of our website and social media platforms; the launch of a rebranded and expanded podcast, *History in Focus*; and a fundamental reconceptualization of how we present articles and reviews.

Most notably, this redesign establishes the *AHR* History Lab, a new experimental space in the middle of the journal. The lab is driven by a single question: How can the *AHR* help reimagine the practice of history in the 21st century? This space will provide a highly visible site to rethink historical content, form, and method. Over the next five years, the lab will invite teams to develop projects around pressing historical issues that make original interventions into research and teaching while at the same time speak to expansive audiences. Projects will involve practitioners of history from across the discipline, including academics, teachers, digital humanists, archivists, community activists, museum curators, documentarians and filmmakers, writers, poets, musicians, composers, and visual artists. Their results will appear in the pages of the *AHR* and in new digital platforms designed to reach wider audiences. The History Lab is intended to open up the pages of the journal and the discipline to the diverse work of practicing historians today.

This issue will be the first to include the lab, presenting two projects at the cutting edge of the discipline. **William Tullett** (Anglia Ruskin Univ. Cambridge) and **Inger Leemans** (Vrije Univ. Amsterdam) lead an expansive interdisciplinary conversation on approaches and methods in smell history, part of the lab's yearlong project on historical smells with the Odeuropa research group. Gathering historians, chemists, curators, and digital humanists with expertise in sensory mining and olfactory heritage, Odeuropa aims to develop novel methods for collecting data about historical smells from text and image collections and to foster their dissemination

through olfactory research and public exhibitions. Additionally, the lab showcases a forum curated by **Michael Goebel** (Freie Univ. Berlin) that brings together 12 historians who draw on their own areas of specialization to rethink how we conceptualize the history of nationalism in our present moment of reactivated and often militant nationalist rhetoric.

How can the *AHR* help reimagine the practice of history in the 21st century?

The lab is also the new home for the *AHR*'s popular History Unclassified feature. In March, we include two essays about discoveries and dead ends in the archives. In "The Book as Archive," **Alex Hidalgo** (Texas Christian Univ.) shares his research into a handwritten account of a stillbirth of conjoined twins in 18th-century Mexico that was stitched into a book of natural history. Hidalgo uses this material to contemplate how curatorial acts challenge our ideas about archives, the materiality of books, and the preservation of memory. **Jennifer Lambe's** (Brown Univ.) "Christine Jorgensen in Cuba: On Dormant Leads and Archival Dead Ends" demonstrates how apparent archival dead ends can lead to new questions, actors, and subjects through the story of the world's first transgender celebrity and her performances in 1950s Havana.

In addition to the new History Lab, the *AHR* redesign changes how the journal presents book reviews. Some of these changes are simple. For example, the "Reviews of Books" is now simply "Reviews." Others are more radical. While the journal will continue to publish book reviews, it will also regularly review other forms of historical scholarship, including digital humanities projects, exhibitions, and podcasts, as well as films, television, and literature.

Finally, the *AHR* is launching an expanded Featured Reviews section that will be guided by these new selection criteria.

The Embalming of William of Orange is a wax representation created by candlemaker Janie Korn of a 2018 exhibition at the Historisch Museum Den Briel. When William the Silent, Prince of Orange, was killed in 1584, the court physician embalmed his body on the day of his death and aimed to preserve it for eight to ten years. The exhibition's curators invited Caro Verbeek, an art historian and curator, to reconstruct the historical smells of the embalming, which included notes of myrrh, oregano, sage, olibanum, styrax, benzoe, lavender, thyme, rosemary, iris, rose, and musk. Verbeek is a member of the Odeuropa team, whose work on the history of smell is introduced in the inaugural *AHR* History Lab. Photograph courtesy of the *New York Times*.



The March 2022 issue includes a set of reviews about history podcasts introduced by **Daniel Story** (Univ. of California, Santa Cruz), the host of the new *AHR* podcast *History in Focus*. **Christopher Goscha** (Univ. of Montreal) and **Shawn McHale** (George Washington Univ.) review each other's recent monographs; both books address the same foundational moment in postcolonial Vietnamese history from very different perspectives.

The scholarly articles section of the journal remains unchanged. It begins with the AHA presidential address by **Jacqueline Jones** (Univ. of Texas at Austin). Her address, "Historians and Their Publics, Then and Now," looks at past presidential addresses to highlight the AHA leadership's persistent concerns about the future of the profession. At the same time, she captures silences around questions of gender, ethnicity, and race and the ways in which they have distorted our understanding of the past. Jones concludes with a discussion of the public-facing turn in history practice today and the role of historians' advocacy in it.

The issue's seven articles open by examining war and dispossession. **Judd Kinzley's** (Univ. of Wisconsin–Madison) "War-time Dollars and the Crowning of China's Hog-Bristle King: The Dubious Legacies of US Aid, 1938–49" explores how US wartime procurement programs for unusual raw materials like hog bristles created powerful transnational businesses with lasting links to both government and US markets. Next, in "Fiduciary Colonialism: Annuities and Native Dispossession in the Early United States," **Emilie Connolly** (Brandeis Univ.) studies annuities and trust funds established by federal authorities as a critical, understudied feature of Native dispossession in the early United States, focusing on how Native people tried to shape the terms of these fiduciary arrangements.

These pieces are followed by two articles on the history of gender and sexuality. In "'Do You Call Yourself a White Man?' Nationalism, Criminalization of Interracial Sex, and the

Policing of White Male (Hetero)sexuality in South Africa during Apartheid," **Susanne M. Klausen** (Penn State Univ.) analyzes the criminalization of interracial extramarital sex through South Africa's Immorality Act of 1950 to offer new perspectives on the connections between sexual regulation and racial order. **Tamar Herzig's** (Tel-Aviv Univ.) "Slavery and Interethnic Sexual Violence: A Multiple-Perpetrator Rape in Seventeenth-Century Livorno" utilizes a transnational and gendered lens to analyze the public, state-sanctioned rape of enslaved female Jews by Muslim and Catholic men to complicate historiographic notions of early modern religious pluralism and interethnic relations.

Three final articles explore the influence of shifting politics and environments on questions of mobility. **Cian T. McMahon's** (Univ. of Nevada, Las Vegas) "'That City Afloat': Maritime Dimensions of Ireland's Great Famine Migration" offers a social history of 19th-century Irish migrant experiences aboard ships and how they influenced community solidarity within the Irish diaspora. In "Blood and Bone, Tears and Oil: Climate Change, Whaling, and Conflict in the Seventeenth-Century Arctic," **Dagomar Degroot** (Georgetown Univ.) examines the expansion and contraction of ice in the early modern Arctic and the behavioral patterns of polar bears and whales to interweave a discussion of climate and economic history with the animal turn in history. Finally, **Samuel Dolbee's** (Harvard Univ.) "Empire on the Edge: Desert, Nomads, and the Making of Ottoman Provincial Borders" offers an intervention in emerging environmental histories of borderlands by exploring the intersection of politics and the environment in the late 19th-century Ottoman Empire. **P**

Mark Philip Bradley is editor of the AHR. Manuel Martinez Alvarenga, Marlena Boswell, Isti Bhattacharya, Miguel Cruz-Díaz, Justin Hawkins, Brian Quinn, and Thomas Stephens are AHR editorial assistants.



John R. Gillis 1939–2021

Historian of Europe;
AHA 50-Year Member

John R. Gillis, professor emeritus at Rutgers University, died in Berkeley, California, on December 7, 2021. Born in 1939 in Westfield, New Jersey, he graduated with a BA from Amherst College in 1960 and a doctorate from Stanford University in 1965. After serving as an instructor in Stanford's Western Civilization course, John joined the Princeton University history department in 1966. In 1971, he left for a long career at Rutgers, from which he retired in 2004.

Of John's long, productive career, many elements stand out. First is its remarkable variety; few historians have written about so many subjects. His first book, based on his dissertation and his only major work about Germany, was *The Prussian Bureaucracy in Crisis, 1840–1860: Origins of an Administrative Ethos* (Stanford Univ. Press, 1971). When spending the 1969–70 academic year at the University of Oxford, he became attracted to the dawning field of British social history. The result was a series of books and articles on various aspects of family life, including *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770–Present* (Academic Press, 1974) and *For Better, for Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1985). Then, pursuing the growing historical interest in values and cultures, John made his final contribution to family history, *A World of Their Own Making: Myth, Ritual, and the Quest for Family Values* (Basic Books, 1996). During the last two decades of his scholarly life, he turned to the environmental and cultural histories of islands, coastlines, and seafaring. The first product of this body of work was *Islands of the Mind: How the Human Imagination Created the Atlantic World* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), followed by *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2012). His last book, *The Shores around Us* (2015), is a collection of elegiac essays that describe the damage being inflicted on the natural world.

Second was the role that John's intellectual companions played in his life—teachers; colleagues; and formidable models, mentors, and friends, including Lawrence Stone, Edward Thompson, Peter Laslett, and David Lowenthal. Some of these

relationships were the result of fortune, but no less important was what drew others to him: the distinctive features of his mind and character, his openness to new ideas, his generosity of spirit, his acute sense of where the discipline was heading, and his limitless curiosity. With James M. Banner, Jr., John co-edited *Becoming Historians* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2009), a collection of essay-length memoirs that relate the path of each author's development and emergence as a professional historian; John's essay was an atypical instance of his writing about himself. Widely recognized by his peers, John was the recipient of fellowships from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, and the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences. He also held a visiting fellowship at St. Antony's College, Oxford, and was a life member of Clare Hall, Cambridge University.

Third were John's professional commitments. Notable was his remarkable ability to arrange and lead scholarly gatherings, among them a 1990 Rutgers conference on "Public Memory and Collective Identity," which resulted in the edited volume *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1994); a 2004 international gathering on islands, with its papers appearing in a 2007 issue of *Geographical Review*; and, in 2011, another international meeting on "Final Frontiers: Exploring Oceans, Islands, and Coastal Environments." He was also known as a generous mentor of young scholars, principally at Rutgers, then later and informally at the University of California, Berkeley, during his retirement.

Finally was the strength he drew from his personal values and experiences. These included a deep attachment to Great Gott Island, off the Maine coast, where he, his wife Tina, and sons Christopher and Benjamin summered for decades, as well as his outrage at the politics he detested and his work to correct them. While what John wrote was rarely autobiographical, all of it was inspired and animated by what he saw, heard, and felt, especially his travels to the islands and seashores of which he wrote. Nowhere was his experience of present and past more poignantly apparent than in an unfinished essay, "Edges," written as he approached, with great fortitude and courage, the end of his own life.

James M. Banner, Jr.
Washington, DC

James J. Sheehan
Stanford University (emeritus)

Photo courtesy Gillis family



Harry A. Kersey Jr. 1935–2021

Historian of Native
America

Harry A. Kersey Jr., an eminent historian of the modern Florida Seminole and Miccosukee Indians, passed away on November 7, 2021. During his distinguished career at Florida Atlantic University, he wrote six books and dozens of journal articles and book chapters, won five Fulbright fellowships, and repeatedly provided his expert testimony on behalf of the Seminole Tribe of Florida and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida. As one of the first scholars to embrace the new Indian history, through his research, Kersey recast the Seminole and Miccosukee as peoples with history rather than as unchanged relics of the past.

Kersey created a baseline for all subsequent scholarship on the modern Florida Seminole Indians with his unofficial trilogy—*Pelts, Plumes, and Hides: White Traders among the Seminole Indians, 1870–1930* (Univ. Presses of Florida, 1975); *The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal, 1933–1942* (Florida Atlantic Univ. Press, 1989); and *An Assumption of Sovereignty: Social and Political Transformation among the Florida Seminoles, 1953–1979* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1996). These books rewrote the political and economic history of south Florida's Seminole and Miccosukee communities, detailing how they engaged the marketplace, fought off attempts to further dispossess them of their lands, and otherwise successfully won federal recognition in the mid-20th century. Each volume relied heavily on dozens of oral histories that Kersey conducted with tribal members as well as with state and federal officials.

Throughout his career, Kersey practiced what is now called community-engaged scholarship, forging partnerships with the Seminoles and Miccosukees and inviting his Indigenous subjects to serve as co-authors and to be recognized as experts unto themselves. This approach was most evident in *Buffalo Tiger: A Life in the Everglades* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2002), a book he co-wrote with Miccosukee leader Buffalo Tiger. It began as a series of oral interviews and monologues that Buffalo Tiger recorded about his life and his community's history, recordings that Buffalo Tiger recognized were too disjointed to be understood to outsiders. As they wrote in the book, Kersey “cobble[d] together a coherent and historically meaningful narrative while retaining the tenor and

spontaneity of the informant's own words,” as well as Buffalo Tiger's Indigenous logic, explanations, and syntax. The volume received the Florida Historical Society's James J. Horgan Award and Samuel Proctor Prize. Kersey followed up this book with a co-written volume (with Julian M. Pleasants) that similarly privileged Indigenous perspectives. *Seminole Voices: Reflections on Their Changing Society, 1970–2000* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2010) won the silver medal in nonfiction from the 2010 Florida Book Awards, the Florida Historical Society's Harry T and Harriette V. Moore Award, and Kersey's second Proctor Prize.

Additionally, Kersey served as a consultant to the Seminole Tribe in its land claims and water rights cases. The Miccosukee Tribe also engaged him in their efforts to overturn PL 83-280 (a federal law that allowed states to assume jurisdiction over reservation Indians) and secure retrocession of jurisdiction in criminal cases from state to tribal courts. He also appeared as an expert witness in federal court cases involving Indian civil rights issues. From 1978 to 1988, Kersey served as a member of the Florida Governor's Council on Indian Affairs, which advises on policy matters affecting native peoples. By law, the council's membership is comprised of two-thirds Indians and one-third at-large members. At the request of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, three successive governors appointed Kersey as an at-large member.

Kersey was awarded five Fulbright awards over his career. He was a Fulbright senior scholar at the University of Zimbabwe in 1984, the National University of Lesotho in 1988, and the National Library of New Zealand in 2000, where he conducted research for a comparative study of Maori and American Indian sovereignty issues. In 2002 and 2005, he returned to New Zealand as a Fulbright senior specialist, examining the impact of Maori issues in New Zealand politics.

Kersey, who taught generations of undergraduates and graduate students in courses ranging from American Indian history to immigration history, was beloved for his straightforward, no-nonsense approach to teaching, as well as for his dry wit. He was an outstanding mentor to colleagues, eagerly following their progress on their research projects and providing advice on finding the best academic presses and negotiating book contracts. His influence remains strong in the department.

Andrew K. Frank
Florida State University

Patricia Kollander
Florida Atlantic University

Photo courtesy Florida Atlantic University Libraries,
University Archives



Linda Nash

1962–2021

Environmental
Historian

Linda Nash died on October 17, 2021, in Seattle, Washington, from lymphoma. A noted scholar of US environmental history at the University of Washington, Linda is mourned by a wide network of family, friends, and colleagues. She is survived by her partner of 35 years, Jim Hanford; her children, Helen Nash and Peter Hanford; and extended family in California.

Linda made a profound contribution with her book, *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge* (Univ. of California Press, 2006), winner of the AHA's John H. Dunning Prize, the AHA–Pacific Coast Branch Book Award, and the Western Association of Women Historians' Frances Richardson Keller-Sierra Prize. Her insightful reading revealed the changed public awareness of the interconnections among health, human activities, and environmental conditions in the history of California's Central Valley. It laid bare the contradictions between policies that maximized wellness in narrow economic and medicalized modes, even as many residents of the Central Valley saw their physical health and environmental conditions deteriorate as agriculture industrialized.

Linda's appreciation and skepticism of developmentalism were honed by her cross-training and lived experience with environmental policy. She double majored in civil engineering and history at Stanford University, completing a BS and a BA with distinction in 1984. She later earned an MS from the University of California, Berkeley. Linda worked at an EPA Superfund site and evaluated the impact of dredging for the California State Water Resources Control Board. Later, at the Pacific Institute, her work focused on climate change. Her interest in the past remained. Jim, who she met through an internship during this time, recalled that she continued to slip into history classes at UC Berkeley whenever she could.

She decided to pursue a PhD in history at the University of Washington in 1993 under the supervision of Richard White. Her extraordinary capabilities immediately impressed faculty and fellow graduate students. Her classmate Matthew Klinge

(Bowdoin Coll.) remembers: "I was in awe of her ability to see farther and more clearly than anyone else in our group of aspiring professional historians. Her blend of wit, humor, and a dash of well-intentioned sarcasm always enlivened classroom discussions. She carried those same traits into her work as an accomplished scholar, always willing to make a suggestion, support a colleague, or provide a needed laugh that never came at someone else's expense."

Linda's plainspokenness and intellectually rigorous approach characterized both her teaching and her research. Her work on the transformative impacts of the Cold War and global capitalism revealed how the environmental costs of big science and basic research affected people's lives. Through important essays and articles, she examined how emerging postwar models of risk assessment often compromised on basic public health and caused environmental damage. She boldly questioned the premise of this contrived logic in both her scholarship and her teaching, demonstrating how the desire for economic growth drove investment in infrastructure and development while simultaneously compromising people's actual health and that of the environmental systems on which they depended. In the classroom, the clarity and accessibility of her teaching drew students – she rarely sugar-coated harsher realities.

At the time of her death, Linda was completing work on a book manuscript, "The Materials of Empire: American Engineers in the West and Afghanistan's Helmand Valley," that examines the postcolonial linkages between large-scale engineering projects in Washington's Columbia Basin and Afghanistan's Helmand Valley.

Linda's steadfast commitment to environmental ethics, social justice, and meticulous scholarship won her a devoted following among students. Her memory is cherished by the many colleagues whom she drew into her projects, connecting them with local networks of scholars through the Cascadia Environmental History Collaborative and the Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest. Her colleagues, family, and friends will remember long hikes with Linda and open-air workshops where her lively commentary and banter drew them into new ways of understanding the world around them. Linda leaves behind a considerable legacy.

Purnima Dhavan
University of Washington, Seattle

*Photo courtesy of the Department of History,
University of Washington*



Julius S. Scott

1955–2021

Historian of the Black Atlantic

It is hard to imagine that any historian has ever been more famous for a dissertation.

Julius S. Scott III was born in 1955 in Marshall, Texas. His mother was a librarian, and his father was a Methodist minister and president of Wiley College, an HBCU founded in 1873. Scott graduated from Brown University in 1977 and entered the history PhD program at Duke University in 1978. He worked closely with a group of historians, including his adviser Peter Wood, that was committed to broadening the geography of early American history and expanding its cast of characters.

In his dissertation, “The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution,” completed in 1986 with the support of a fellowship at the Carter G. Woodson Institute for African American and African Studies at the University of Virginia, he wove archival stories together to offer a new vision of how news and ideas coursed from place to place in the 1790s through the movement of Black sailors. Scott’s work revolutionized the study of the Haitian Revolution and the Atlantic world, generating tremendous excitement as it circulated hand to hand like an underground mixtape.

Scott taught at the University of Illinois at Chicago and Rice University before returning to Duke as an assistant professor in 1988. There, he shaped the work of several classes of graduate students who were beginning to contemplate a long Black freedom struggle stretching from the 15th-century beginnings of the transatlantic slave trade through the 1960s-era Black Power Movement. Among them were several scholars who have helped to redefine the study of the African diaspora in early America, a subfield that orbited around Scott’s dissertation and teaching.

Duke students quickly came to understand the high bar that Scott set, and they may well have originated the practice of passing a xeroxed copy of “Common Wind” from student to student. As a teacher, Scott exemplified the balance that only the best historians can muster—understated at the head of

the seminar table, teaching from a space that reflected his deep connection to the Afro-diasporic past. His commitment to careful and archivally rooted thought elicited a striving for care in his students that at times felt daunting. Scott recognized the stakes of racial inequity but required us to support our ideas with archival engagement, which led us to refuse facile notions of Black life in favor of complexity. He also joined us for drinks and conversations, modeling the importance of a life outside the archive. Discussions with Scott could unfold over hours and frequently left one with a renewed clarity concerning all the homework still to be done.

It was perhaps that sense of never having done quite enough research that proved to be a challenge too hard for Scott to overcome himself. Shortly after Scott completed his dissertation, an editor claimed the book was too narrow in its focus to warrant publication. Scott continued his research, which had already surpassed his contemporaries in its archival breadth, but carried a conviction that he had not done enough work to make “Common Wind” into the book that he wanted it to be.

Scott departed from Duke in 1994. After a stint at New York University, he took a position at the University of Michigan in 1997, where he taught popular undergraduate courses and continued mentoring graduate students for the rest of his career. In 2008, his colleagues at the University of Michigan organized a symposium on what was then the still unpublished manuscript. Scholars from around the world gathered to honor his impact on the field and to express their intellectual debts to his scholarship. (Michigan recently created the Julius S. Scott III Fellowship in Caribbean and Atlantic History in his honor.) In 2018, James Dator and Marcus Rediker worked with Verso Press to make *The Common Wind* available in book form. It is now formally recognized as a landmark study of Black revolution in the age of slavery.

If it has lately become common to talk about the afterlife of slavery, we should have just as much appreciation for the afterlife of *antislavery*—passed by word of mouth among contemporaries of the Haitian Revolution and later from hand to hand, inbox to inbox, and platform to platform, by way of Scott’s legendary scholarship.

Vincent Brown
Harvard University

Laurent Dubois
University of Virginia

Jennifer L. Morgan
New York University

Photo courtesy John Zhu, Duke Graduate School



Betty C. Wood

1945–2021

Historian of Early America; AHA Honorary Foreign Member

Betty C. Wood, retired member of the history faculty at the University of Cambridge and an AHA honorary foreign member (elected in 2018), died of lung cancer at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, on September 3, 2021, at age 76.

Wood was born into a working-class family in Norfolk, England, in February 1945. She identified most closely with her family's later residence in Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire, and throughout her adult life remained an avid fan of the Scunthorpe United Football Club. The first in her family to attend college, she earned a BA with first-class honors at Keele University (1967) and an MA from the London School of Economics and Political Science (1968). Interested in studying the history of slavery in the American South, she enrolled at the University of Pennsylvania and earned a PhD in 1975. Appointed a fellow of Girton College, Cambridge, in 1971, she became one of the first women named to the university history faculty three years later, initially as assistant lecturer, then lecturer, and finally as reader in 1999. In the late 1990s, she was a visiting professor at Tulane University.

As a scholar, she focused on early southern and Atlantic history, especially on Georgia. Her pioneering *Slavery in Colonial Georgia, 1730–1775* (Univ. of Georgia Press, 1984) took an expansive view of the economic development of a province ironically founded as one in which slavery was forbidden for its first two decades. Stimulated by scholarship in women's history, she followed up with *Women's Work, Men's Work: The Informal Slave Economies of Lowcountry Georgia* (Univ. of Georgia Press, 1995) and *Gender, Race, and Rank in a Revolutionary Age: The Georgia Lowcountry, 1750–1820* (Univ. of Georgia Press, 2000). For classroom use, she also published in 1997 and 2005 short general histories of slavery in colonial North America. Wood stressed the experience of the enslaved, not their enslavers. Nowhere was that focus clearer than in *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and the British Caribbean to 1830* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1998), co-written with her close friend Sylvia Frey. The two drafted alternate chapters and spent

many hours (and much money) on transatlantic calls while bringing the project to fruition.

Wood's influence on early American and Atlantic history extended far beyond her scholarly contributions. She trained a generation of British scholars of early America who now teach in the United Kingdom and the United States. She was a co-organizer of the British Group of Early American Historians (BGEAH), which holds biannual meetings in the United Kingdom and attracts participants from both sides of the Atlantic. Thanks to Wood, the BGEAH focuses on nurturing graduate students and early career scholars. Her connections to the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, where she served a three-year term on the council (1998–2001), were particularly strong. In Williamsburg, Virginia, she first learned to savor scalloped oysters for breakfast. She was also elected to the council of the Southern Historical Association (2006).

I will end this essay on a personal note. J. R. Pole, the distinguished senior British scholar of American history then at Cambridge, initially introduced me to Betty in the early 1970s while I was doing research in London, and we thereafter saw each other in professional contexts. After the introduction of email, she became a delightfully acerbic correspondent. During the academic year 2005–06, while I served as Pitt Professor of American History and Institutions at Cambridge, I co-taught both a lecture course and a seminar (in Cambridge parlance, a "special subject") with Betty. She gave remarkable lectures and showed herself to be a teacher who cared greatly for her students' success. She and I drank many a pint of Old Speckled Hen at the Granta pub at the end of our days, and we eventually co-hosted an epic end-of-the-year pizza party for our seminar students at the Pitt Professor's residence. It was a pleasure to teach with her.

Betty Wood has left behind many close friends on both sides of the Atlantic and numerous students who count themselves her intellectual descendants. Her brother, Phillip Wood, and his family continue to live in Scunthorpe, where her ashes are buried.

Mary Beth Norton
Cornell University (emeritus)

Photo: Mary Beth Norton

PAULA R. CURTIS

BRONZE BELL

Millions of tourists flock each year to Japan's ancient Tōji temple in Kyoto, most often to see its famous Five-Story Pagoda, originally built in the ninth century. But wandering a bit farther afield in the temple complex, one can find subtler treasures of its rich past. Tucked away in the northwest corner is an unassuming bronze bell, hung in a small tower atop a stone foundation, adorned only by a wooden plaque. The plaque notes that the bell was completed in 1348 and donated to the temple by Ashikaga Takauji, the warrior leader who established Japan's second military government.

Reading closely, one may be disappointed to learn that this bell is not the original. After sustaining damage from 650 years of continuous use, the actual bell is now safely stored in the temple's preservation hall, replaced by a replica created in the early 1990s. The very need to safeguard a well-loved original and install a copy is a compelling reminder of how valuable bells were, and continue to be, to their community.

Large cast bells like this one are common in Japan. Visitors rarely give them a second thought unless they have the chance to pull back the thick wooden strikers to set loose their sonorous tones or view them for public ceremonies. On the eve of the New Year, temple bells are rung 108 times to cast out the desires and defilements of the world, with the most famous bells drawing crowds in the hundreds to pay their respects.

Though they may seem quaint or commonplace today, bells were a crucial part of everyday life in the premodern archipelago. They ornamented temples, shrines, and village halls. They kept time throughout the day, alerted residents to danger, and aided spiritual rituals. Bells were thus fiercely coveted objects; armed forces commandeered them for use in war, thieves whisked them away for their precious metal, and locals buried them in fields to protect them from



invaders. On occasion, bells were even voluntarily tossed into the sea as offerings to the dragon god. People sealed oaths by striking bells and sometimes hired metal casters from distant provinces with advanced skills to ensure their bells were cast properly, able to survive centuries of use.

Inscriptions on bells are a crucial source of information that tell us a great deal about the lives and afterlives of these objects and their makers: when they were created, by whom, who sponsored them, how the bells may have been damaged (such as falling during earthquakes), when they were moved to new locations, or even if they had been recast entirely. Takauji's bell lacks these details, making it, at first glance, frustratingly impenetrable. Yet it is decorated with a Sanskrit character and gentle curved lines that resemble clouds or waves, hinting at its legacy as an object of veneration and ritual use.

Did Takauji's bell endure wear and tear from natural disasters or human intervention after its casting in 1348? For whom did it toll in the medieval period, and how far could it be heard? Replica or not, with its solemn tones echoing through and beyond Tōji, the bell reminds us of the generations its predecessor dutifully served day in and day out for over half a millennium. Though the pagoda draws visitors to be awed by height and splendor, there is much to admire in the past of a largely ordinary bell like this one, quietly sitting in the northwest corner of history waiting for its next ring. **P**

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Photo: Paula R. Curtis



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