

*The newsmagazine of the American Historical Association*

# PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

Volume 60: 5  
May 2022





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## ON THE COVER

The process of becoming someone other than who we once were is usually slow, almost unnoticeable. But whether deliberate and long planned or sudden and unwilling, the act of retiring is one which can profoundly shift one's identity and sense of self. This issue records the thoughts, experiences, and even a bit of advice from seven historians who have retired, or will shortly, on how to use the transition to stop, take stock, and even perhaps relax before looking to new horizons.

*Evan Williams, PureADK.com*

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LELAND RENATO GRIGOLI

## TOWNHOUSE NOTES

### *Periodic Themes and Ghostly Threads*



**P***erspectives on History's* recent thematic issues, for which staff solicited articles on a precise topic, have prompted positive responses from our readers. They start conversations. But every issue can't have a theme—there are too many articles that we wouldn't be able to publish. A theme can just as easily exclude as it can include.

From September 2022 to May 2023, *Perspectives* will begin an experiment to find a middle ground between inclusivity and structure. This publication year will be loosely organized around two words, or threads. A thread is light and often tenuous, a concept or topic that can be used to relate ideas rather than bind them. A thread is intended to prompt a reader to ponder the scope of an idea, rather than to mark its borders. Threads are words that are good to think with. For the next year, *Perspectives* is especially (but not exclusively) interested in pitches for 1,500-word articles with something to say about periodization, ghosts, or both, insofar as these words pertain to the study and practice of history. These threads were chosen with care and a concern for the interests of our discipline, but they were also imagined capaciously. We want authors to play with their definitions and explore their limits. Here are some starting thoughts:

Periodization is so ubiquitous to the practice of history that we often forget to notice it. Periodization divides history from the present. And periodization divides history itself at singular, atomic instants, dates fixed in collective memory that have come to mark transitions from before to after: 476, 732 (or was it 733?), 1492, 1776, 08:16:02 on August 6, and 9/11. Periods are an organizational tool, true only insofar as they are useful, but they are not merely convenient. They have their own rules: the Meiji Restoration cannot be medieval, and Viking raiders cannot be modern. Historians use periods to define and delineate their work, and periods come to delineate and define historians. But at what cost?

Ghosts are historical specters, uncomfortable legacies that haunt the present. We are all haunted to some degree by our

ghostly pasts, and it won't do to run screaming—there are too many around. Spirits can inhabit battlefields, statues, and museums. But co-existing with those legacies, some dressed in white sheets, is not simple. How and when should children be taught about historical horrors? How do institutions move from an acknowledgment of a problematic past to incorporating its legacies into present actions? Can they? Or should they? How, in short, do we live with our ghosts?

These are not riddles. There is no fixed answer to the meaning of either word; their meaning can only exist with respect to *your* answer. They are, as I said, good for thinking with. Send us the thoughts they help inspire.

Two themed issues will show our own interpretations of “periodization” and “ghosts,” for which we also seek pitches for 1,500-word articles. The December issue looks at an unusual historical period—one that has not in fact occurred. “Histories of the Future” will focus on science fiction and fantasy, which are deeply connected to history. J. R. R. Tolkien wrote *The Lord of the Rings* as a “feigned” history, and Octavia Butler's *Kindred* linked present and past with a skip back in time. Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* and Frank Herbert's *Dune* used the fall of Rome (as related by Edward Gibbon) to describe the future. These and other works still loom large in popular media and popular consciousness. How does history relate to our imagination of what has not yet come to pass, and why?

In March, we consider “Ghosts of the Past.” Teaching divisive concepts—engaging with uncomfortable aspects of the past—has been in the news recently, but there are other discomfiting legacies with which historians must grapple. Certain voices, long dead, still whisper within our historiographies. Sometimes, entire fields have been framed in opposition to the work of a single scholar. What legacies dominate your area of interest, and are you in need of an exorcist? **P**

*Leland Renato Grigoli is editor of Perspectives on History. He tweets @mapper\_mundi.*

## Recently Published Online in *Perspectives Daily*



Marc Monaghan

### Activism on Screen

Laura Ansley

Two film screenings at AHA22 Online were part of the AHA's 16th annual film festival.

### Teaching Historiography in the K–12 Classroom

Emily Swafford

A series of three sessions at AHA22 highlighted ways to bring historiographic thinking into the classroom.

### The Academic Press Editor and You

Brian Quinn

Two sessions at AHA22 gathered book editors to offer advice on academic publishing.

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JAMES H. SWEET

## PROFESSOR COACH

*Lessons from the Football Field*



As we break for summer, some of us will be heading off to conduct archival research for the first time in several years. I plan to travel to England and Portugal in June to put the finishing touches on a book project, but once August rolls around, my life takes on a rhythm unfamiliar to most academics. From August until October, I will be on a football field every afternoon coaching high schoolers.

I have performed this transformation from academic to football coach for more than 10 years, often literally changing out of my teaching clothes into T-shirt, cleats, clipboard, and whistle out of the back of my car. Why expend so much time and effort coaching a game that is widely maligned as dangerous? Football is hard work. Setting aside the risks of injuries and concussions, few teenagers want to put on 20 pounds of hot, sweaty equipment and grind for three hours in the scorching sun. The kids who come out for football are almost all working class, minority, or otherwise marginalized. Over the years, I have had girls on my team; gay and trans boys; boys with learning disabilities; and first-generation immigrants from Brazil, Jamaica, Germany, and Ivory Coast. In my experience, most of the kids who come out for football just want a place to belong, a place to be seen. In Wisconsin's second-largest high school—a school that also serves the children of the city's doctors, lawyers, and professors—being seen is no small feat.

My primary job as a coach is to try to see each and every athlete who steps on the field not simply as a football player but as a whole person. I make a point of asking about their school work, their part-time jobs, and their families. I want to know their long-term aspirations. By building personal relationships beyond the football field, I provide our student athletes with a resource that they can carry into the future. I write letters of recommendation for college for many of my former players. I put others in touch with friends in the building trades, the police and fire departments, and with military recruiters.

These bonds with my players are a constant reminder that I need to try to see each student in my classroom in much the same way as I do on the football field. As an educator, I teach, impart knowledge, and inspire curiosity as part of my job. I like to think that I do so effectively in a range of classroom settings, from large undergraduate lectures to small graduate seminars. However, no amount of charisma or trendy pedagogical methods can substitute for human interaction. Learning is not mere data exchange; it's fundamentally a social process. At a big public university like Wisconsin, many students find themselves isolated and socially alienated, albeit in ways different from those of high school kids. I can't connect individually to even a fraction of these students, but I do my best to demystify the gap between professor and student by sharing information about my background, my family, and my high school coaching. In my large lectures, I publicly perform an awareness of students' lives outside my classroom by playfully calling on the student wearing "that horrible Yankees hat" or by asking someone in the front row reading *The Communist Manifesto* why they're reading "radical" politics. When I am open and vulnerable and show a sense of humor in the classroom, my students feel seen, individually and collectively. I believe that the sense of community building that evolves over the course of the semester ultimately makes me a more effective teacher, in much the same way the season-long process of trust building with my players makes me a better football coach.

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social process.

My second priority as a coach, after cultivating personal relationships with each of my players, is to try to mold a motley crew of 25 to 30 teenagers into a competitive team. This process requires patience, trust, and respect much like the experience of community building in the classroom.

It also runs headlong into the desire of each individual to be recognized. One of the reasons I love football above other sports is because it is choreographed in such a way that each of the 11 players on the field must perform their specific assignment in order for the team to have success. The majority never get near the football, let alone have an opportunity to score. Instead, they block and tackle in the trenches, grinding away in anonymity play after play.

In the era of single-player video games, social media self-promotion, and boastful projections of “dripped out” style, it might seem a fool’s errand trying to convince a teenage boy that moving the ball three yards, down after down, will result in victory. Instilling in my players the desire to win every play, most often with no fanfare or recognition, is one of my greatest challenges. Paradoxically, being seen on the football field requires sacrificing one’s individuality for the greater good of the team. In fact, individual creativity and improvisation can result in the team’s failure. Hence, I tend to highlight the hard, dirty work of my offensive and defensive linemen. I give the highest praise for the mundane: doing one’s job correctly and with consistency.

## Being on winning teams catalyzes opportunity.

The lessons of team building, while applicable in the classroom, came to bear most forcefully for me when I became chair of my department. Academics, even more so than teenage boys, demand to be seen. We are conditioned to define success by the books and articles we write, mostly in solitude. We expect recognition in the form of public praise, prizes, research fellowships, and salary increases. But who provides that recognition? Who is your team, and what sacrifices have you made to demonstrate that you belong? As chair, I hailed the successes of faculty as broadly and widely as possible. I advocated salary increases, even for those who would not participate in the university’s merit process. I raised money from donors to create endowed professorships and faculty research funds. And I worked hard to build personal relationships with the department’s most alienated members. I especially went out of my way to reward those faculty members who performed service-oriented tasks that so often distract from individual advancement. In short, I tried to see everyone without regard for personal animus or affection.

Ultimately, my job as chair, like that of coach, was to build a team by celebrating the achievements of each individual while emphasizing the imperative of our collective success.

Because nearly every faculty member committed to teaching large undergraduate lecture courses, we satisfied enrollment metrics imposed by our administration. Thanks to faculty participation in a career diversity initiative aimed at making our majors more marketable, we gained recognition across our college and the university when our graduates landed jobs in consulting, finance, and tech companies. After a series of strategic hires agreed on collectively by our faculty, we improved our position in the rankings of graduate programs. As a result of the *collective* buy-in and labor on the part of faculty, greater institutional resources flowed the department’s way, thereby creating new opportunities for *individual* advancement. Being on winning teams catalyzes opportunity: the department’s 16,000 living alums donated more and more money to the department, celebrating not only our most recent achievements but also the department’s long legacy of excellence and even the very brand of the University of Wisconsin. To think that our individual achievements as scholars are somehow divorced from the labor and largesse of others is simply ludicrous.

To be clear, faculty participation in departmental, university, and disciplinary teamwork is extremely uneven and often dismissed derisively as “service.” For a group that so often likes to tout its communitarian—or even socialist—politics, academics sometimes demonstrate a paltry understanding of the mutually reinforcing benefits of individual success and teamwork. If our running back breaks an 80-yard touchdown run, he’d better not be jumping up and down in the end zone, beating his chest, inviting the crowd to rain cheers down on him, unless he is surrounded by five very large offensive linemen celebrating *their* achievement. Teamwork matters, in academia as in football. We should honor the sacrifices of those who make our success possible—family, friends, colleagues, university administrators, alums, and funding agencies—and not simply as “acknowledgments.”

As August rolls around, my fellow coaches and I will once again face the challenge of building a new team from a group of diverse, talented young people. COVID willing, my book will be done. I eagerly look forward to plenty of committee service and administrative work in the coming years. I do so with deep gratitude and appreciation for the colleagues who carried my workload while I was on sabbatical and teaching leave. Ultimately, being a good teammate always matters more to me than wins and losses. But if everyone is a good teammate, touchdowns usually follow. P

*James H. Sweet is president of the AHA.*

JAMES GROSSMAN

## STEPPING AWAY FROM THE JOB

*The Privilege of Scholarly Retirement*



Photo: Sophia Germer

“I might be retired, but I’m not tired.” With this, my friend Timuel Black, then in his late 80s, summarized his commitment to continued vigorous civic participation. When he could no longer comfortably take the bus to meetings, someone would give him a ride. If they didn’t, he’d take the bus anyway, so friends and former colleagues made sure that a ride was forthcoming. He also didn’t stop smoking, telling me in his late 90s that there was no longer any reason to deny himself such pleasures.

Richard Brown, my former colleague at the Newberry Library, 10 years Tim’s junior, took a different tack. For a while, Dick went to the library every day and, like so many other historians, turned to “that book that I’d been meaning to write for years but I’ve been too busy working.” Then he stopped writing altogether and turned to painting instead. Still in his 80s, he was indeed tired, so he sought out something relaxing but still intriguing and creative. I doubt he attended many meetings.

This issue includes six short essays by historians reflecting on their retirement, and a seventh focused on its approach. It offers different angles, different perspectives, but just like any attempt to explain or describe the human condition, it cannot comprehensively cover even part of the spectrum of “retirement.” There are just too many different experiences, different ways of living a life as a historian and then stepping away from the job, not to mention that most historians in a position to write about their retirement have had the privilege of a full career spent in (or very near) their chosen vocation.

“Stepping away from the job.” I use that phrase because the one thing all the retired historians in this issue have in common is that they have left institutional employment, the source of their regular paycheck. At that point, they might be divided into one of three crude categories: entering a new stage of life with another focus, whether painting, gardening, travel, or activism; retaining an engagement with

history but largely as a reader and perhaps a visitor to historical sites; or not really retiring at all but leaving the classroom or public history appointment to write that elusive book, whether a magnum opus or a “side project,” while in some cases continuing to earn lecture and consulting fees. As Jim Gardner puts it in his reflection after a long career in the federal government, “Retirement would give me the opportunity to finish some projects and start others that always seemed to be out of reach because of the long hours I invested in my job.”

The one thing all the retired historians in this issue have in common is that they have left institutional employment, the source of their regular paycheck.

It is this last pathway that characterizes the unusual nature of scholarly retirement, symbolized by the honorific “emerita/us” status—a practice that occasionally extends beyond academia. A historian can continue to be a historian, to practice historical work for years after leaving their job. Emerita/us status might not seem like much (I once described it to a curious nonacademic as a library card and the right to teach without compensation), especially at institutions where the memo to clear out the office follows closely on the heels of the final submission of grades and loss of travel and research funding. But the title keeps some doors open and enables retention of identity and status. “Hi, I’m Rebecca Smith, professor emerita of history” is just not the same as “Hi, I’m Rebecca Smith, former business executive/lawyer/schoolteacher/engineer.” For most professionals, retirement means one is a “former” something or other; historians, no matter where they do historical work, can still call themselves “historians” long after their official retirement. Even without the formal title and fancy Latin, historians

employed in higher education often retain library privileges and an email address. This is a remarkable privilege, even with all the qualifications and exceptions that readers no doubt will identify.

This issue of identity varies with the way historians attach meaning to their research vis-à-vis the everyday practices for which they receive a salary. For college faculty, this refers to the way many refer to “my own work” after responding to the standard “What do you do?” query with “I’m a history professor at Ohio University. I teach Latin American history, and my own work is on . . .” Many public historians use the same framework (“I’m the executive director of the American Historical Association, and my own work is on . . .”). If “my own work” is “who I am professionally,” then retirement offers the opportunity to finally come into one’s own.

## Sounds like a good deal. So why are so many of our colleagues hanging around for so long?

It also offers opportunities for new ways to enjoy *being* a historian. As we stood perusing books in a publisher’s booth at a recent conference, recently retired Randall Miller told me that he was looking forward to “just reading—not taking notes.” I have similar thoughts as I sit amid shelves filled with books I haven’t had time to open, and will no doubt enjoy “just reading.” If my interest flags, I’ll have the luxury of simply putting down one volume and reaching for the next.

Sounds like a good deal. So why are so many of our colleagues hanging around for so long? One reason is straightforward: we like our jobs. We enjoy engaging—bringing our insights and way of thinking to the public, whether that means students, readers, museumgoers, government officials, or any of the many other stakeholders in our work. And for some, it’s even a bully pulpit. Our institutions are platforms and sources of legitimacy, as well as providers of resources and a locus of community.

Other reasons for avoiding retirement are less idyllic. Many historians have told me that they would step down tomorrow to make way for the next generation but have reason to believe that their department would lose the faculty line. This sense of responsibility to the community is complemented by the value of the community itself. In many places, retirement means deletion from the invitation list for department receptions, events, and other gatherings. I’ve

even heard of people, faced with the decision to retire, admitting (albeit grudgingly and with sometimes twisted logic) that they *enjoy* department meetings. For many, the loss of an office is no trivial matter, not only in terms of space to work but also as a place to interact with colleagues and an implied connection between office and status. It’s not enough to remain a historian or even to be honored as emerita/us. It’s the underlying fear “out of sight, out of mind.”

And then there’s that retirement event. I’ve been to my fair share, and while the compliments and fond memories may be satisfying for some retirees to hear, more than one has confided that the heartfelt tributes can sound like eulogies. “Out of mind” indeed.

Financial concerns can generate a different kind of anxiety. Life without a paycheck can be a bit terrifying, even if one has had the good fortune to accumulate savings. The structure of retirement policies over the past half century has shifted from defined benefit plans to defined contributions, especially in the public sector. A steadily decreasing number of historians, like Americans in other occupations, can count on a pension as a fixed percentage of their salary depending on longevity; we depend instead on the fragile balance of growth and security in investment markets.

Risk aside, however, many historians *can* afford to step away from both job and paycheck, given the impact of a rising stock market on defined-contribution retirement accounts. And increasing numbers of our colleagues apparently *want* to retire. Changes roiling the landscape of higher education and other institutional settings—including the implications of COVID protocols—are providing further incentive to some colleagues: “This isn’t the job I signed up for.”

I’m grateful to our colleagues who have shared with us their reflections on retirement, the past, and the future. Stepping away, even optimistically, is still a transition into the unknown. **P**

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

REBECCA L. WEST

## ADVOCACY BRIEFS

### *AHA Condemns Discrimination and Supports Effective Program Funding*

**In March, the AHA joined other organizations in condemning the treatment of Africans fleeing Ukraine, opposing discrimination against Russian and Belarusian scholars, and in support of Title VI program funding, and sent a letter addressing the planned budget cuts to the Iowa State University Department of History.**

#### **AHA Signs On to African Studies Association Statement on Discriminatory Treatment of Africans Fleeing War in Ukraine**

On March 10, the AHA signed on to a statement from the African Studies Association (ASA), which condemns the “discriminatory, inhumane, and racist treatment of Africans fleeing Ukraine, which clearly violates international law,” and “call[s] on Ukrainian and authorities in neighboring countries to treat all those fleeing the conflict equally, with dignity, and without discrimination based on race or status.”

#### **AHA Signs On to Coalition for International Education Letter Urging Reauthorization of Key Title VI Programs**

On March 10, the AHA signed on to a letter from the Coalition for International Education calling on congressional leaders to support the reauthorization of key programs under Title VI of the Higher Education Act. The letter states, “The

USICA and COMPETE Act bills reauthorize the key Title VI foundational programs that address the nation’s critical and expanding needs for expertise in foreign languages, world regions, and international business, to be available whenever an international or global crisis erupt.”

#### **AHA Sends Letter to Iowa State University Urging Reconsideration of Planned Budget Cuts**

On March 16, the AHA sent a letter to the leadership of Iowa State University expressing concern about “a cumulative 34% cut to the Department of History’s already lean operating budget.” “[W]e are mystified by the logic of a budget that will so dramatically diminish the presence of a department that has performed well, operated efficiently, and plays a central role in the university’s historic roots as a land grant institution dedicated to the role of higher education in public culture,” the AHA wrote. The letter emphasized that the Department of History is a “positive good to the budget, the university, and the citizens of Iowa.”

#### **AHA Signs On to Joint Statement of Opposition to Banning Scholars Based on Citizenship**

On March 17, the AHA signed on to a joint statement from the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies; the British Association for Slavonic and East

European Studies; and the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages on “the vilification and exclusion of our Russian and Belarusian students and colleagues.” Sanctions banning Russians and Belarusians “have the potential to harm those living in authoritarian regimes who are opposed to the war. We encourage all members of our community who stand against the war in Ukraine to come together and support our students and colleagues,” says the statement.

#### **AHA Writes to State Legislators in Support of Honest History Education**

In March, as part of the ongoing Freedom to Learn initiative, the AHA sent letters to state legislators in Alabama, Alaska, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, and West Virginia opposing bills that would limit history education in ways that would make it virtually impossible for teachers to help students understand the continuing impact of slavery and racism in American history. Freedom to Learn is part of the AHA’s efforts to combat attempts by legislators to minimize or even exclude from classrooms critical elements of the American past. **P**

*Rebecca L. West is operations and communications assistant at the AHA. She tweets @rebeckawest.*



NATIONAL  
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AMERICAN  
HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION

# Grants to Sustain and Advance the Work of Historical Organizations

The American Historical Association has awarded \$2.5 million to small history-related organizations nationwide, part of a grants program to deliver relief to institutions adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, the grant recipients, which include site-based organizations, membership associations, and history departments at historically Black colleges and universities, will use funds to support short-term projects that explore new ideas or build on experiments initiated during the pandemic—from online programming or publications to using new technologies or expanding audiences and accessibility.

Fifty organizations will receive grants ranging from \$12,000 to \$75,000 each through AHA's Grants to Sustain and Advance the Work of Historical Organizations Program.

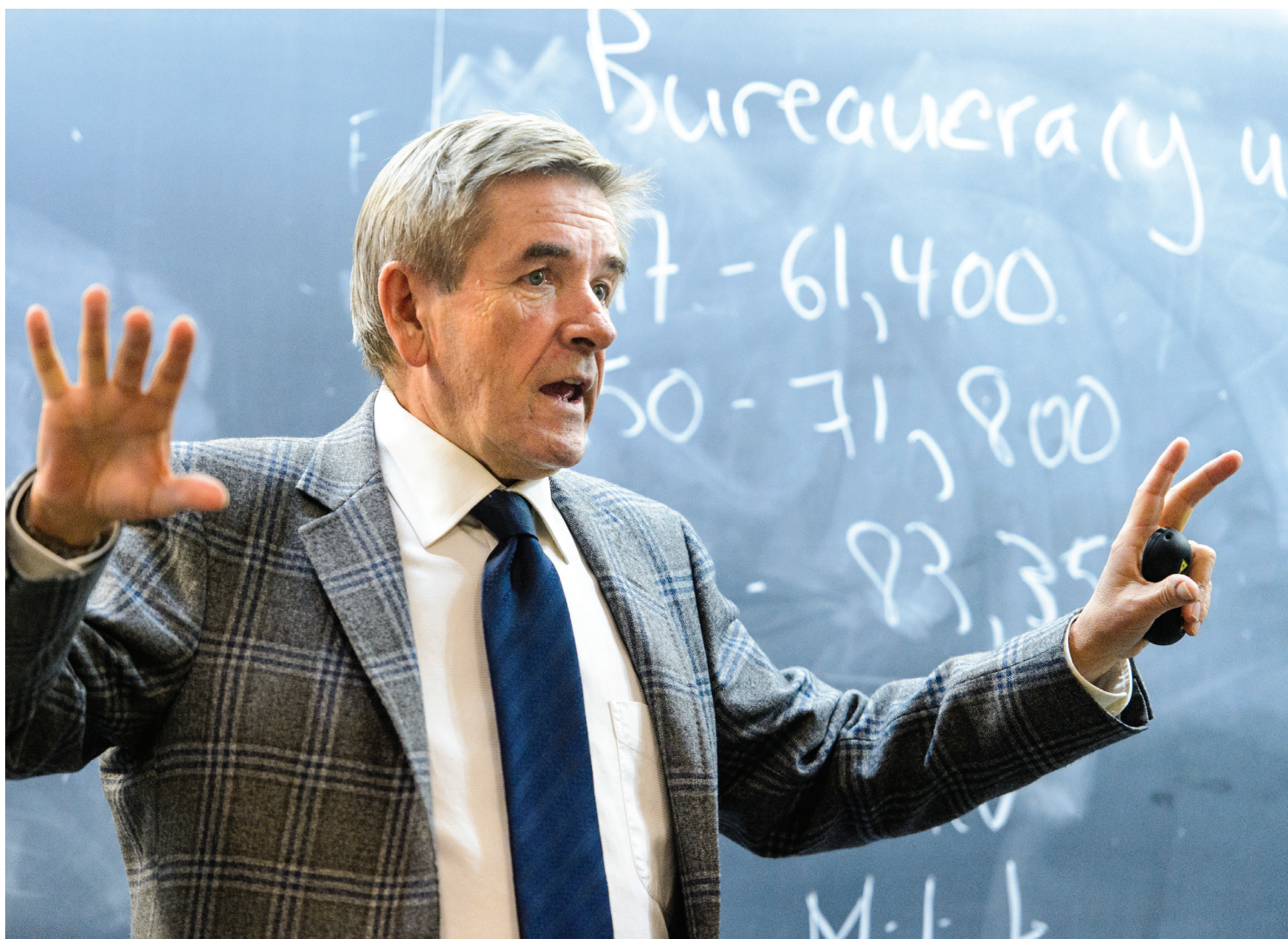
## Grants to Sustain and Advance the Work of Historical Organizations Program Recipients

- Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society (VA)
- Amelia Island Museum of History (FL)
- American Catholic Historical Association (MD)
- The American LGBTQ+ Museum (NY)
- American Social History Productions, Inc. (NY)
- American Society for Environmental History (IL)
- Association culturelle et historique du Mont-Carmel (ME)
- Baptist History and Heritage Society (GA)
- Berkshire Conference of Women Historians (MD)
- Black Archives of Mid-America in Kansas City (MO)
- Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire (NH)
- Buena Vista Historical Society (IA)
- Cayuga Museum of History and Art (NY)
- Charnley-Persky House (IL)
- Clinton Church Restoration, Inc. (MA)
- Collections & Stories of American Muslims, Inc. (America's Islamic Heritage Museum) (DC)
- Coordinating Council for Women in History (NC)
- Dennys River Historical Society (ME)
- Elizabeth City State University History Program (NC)
- Gaston County Museum of Art & History (NC)
- Hiram Historical Society (ME)
- Historical Society of Cheshire County (NH)
- History Center in Tompkins County (NY)
- History Center of Lake Forest Lake Bluff (IL)
- International Big History Association (MI)
- Island County Historical Society Museum (WA)
- Lane County History Museum (OR)
- Madison County Historical Society, Inc. (IL)
- Moravian Historical Society (PA)
- The Mt. Zion Memorial Fund for Blues, Music, and Justice (MS)
- New York State Association of European Historians (NY)
- Over-the-Rhine Museum (OH)
- The Peale Center for Baltimore History and Architecture, Inc. (MD)
- Putnam History Museum (NY)
- Reckoning, Inc. (KY)
- Refusing to Forget (IL)
- Roebling Museum (NJ)
- Sing Sing Prison Museum (NY)
- Society for History Education (CA)
- Society for the History of Children and Youth (PA)
- Society for the History of Technology (MO)
- South Asian American Digital Archive (PA)
- South End Historical Society (MA)
- Southeastern Council of Latin American Studies (NC)
- Tennessee State University History Program (TN)
- Urban History Association (MI)
- Vermont Granite Museum of Barre (VT)
- Walker County African American Historical and Alumni Association, Inc. (GA)
- Western Association of Women Historians (CA)
- Window Seat Media (WA)

DAVID MACLAREN MCDONALD

# ON THE ORDERING OF AFFAIRS

*A Professor's Approaching Retirement*



For David MacLaren McDonald, the decision to retire while he was at the top of his game was an easy one.  
*Bryce Richter, University of Wisconsin–Madison*

**DURING THE SUMMER** of 2021, I came to the decision that it was time to retire. At a series of the now-familiar Zoom-borne committee meetings during the run-up to the fall semester, I informed colleagues that I intended to retire at a date to be determined in the 2022–23 academic year. Of course, I also shared this news with my department chair. When I had first revealed my intention to the colleague with whom I work most closely, I told her that it had been the second-easiest decision I had ever made. The easiest? Proposing to the woman to whom I'm still married. In both moments, my choice appeared overwhelmingly self-evident – it was time.

Like many of my friends and colleagues, I had regarded retirement as a distant prospect. Even with the passage of time from my mid-30s into my 50s, retirement seemed somehow to recede, like the shiny patch at the junction of road and sky on the horizon of the Canadian prairie highways that I have driven since my teens. However, I noticed that as I passed into the mid-60s, that prospect morphed into an increasingly imminent fact, one for which I was well prepared. Having watched two generations of colleagues retire out of our department, I had come to learn the rites of this passage. Given our generous and, thankfully, solvent state pension fund, supplemented by tax-deferred annuity accounts and Social Security, financial planning was relatively simple.

For my professional obligations, I had to stop accepting graduate advisees. I did so four years ago while still uncertain as to the actual timing of the next step, and I remain engaged in the training of those admitted by my colleague in Soviet history, as well as serving on the committee of the odd dissertation by graduate students in Russian literature. My current advisees have passed their preliminary examinations and are embarked on their dissertations. Under our university's rules, I will be able to serve on dissertation committees at the request of colleagues or students. I also hope to maintain some active connection in my university's innovative partnership with a fledgling university in central Asia, whose leaders seek to emulate the ethos and mission of North American research universities. Thus far, it has proven a bold experiment that has succeeded admirably, despite the new instability stalking the region. Both the advising and the partnership remain unfulfilled commitments but have finite end dates within the next three years or so. I also had to start wrapping up certain work while consigning other research projects to the "retirement" files on my computer. In an illustration of the proverb "It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good," the semiseclusion imposed by the COVID pandemic allowed a British colleague and me to vet and submit for production six or seven book manuscripts that form part of a

large international publication project in which we serve as general editors with another American colleague. There now remain two books to complete in what has become a 22-volume series on Russia's experience of wars and revolutions in 1914–22. And so, by the spring of 2021, the editing done and the pandemic showing signs – illusory, as we now know – of dissipating, I started to face the question of *when* to retire.

If the initial decision had come surprisingly easily, in the spirit of our discipline, one might also call it overdetermined. As I reflected on colleagues' retirements over the last 25 years, I realized that, like Tolstoy's unhappy families, each colleague had retired in their own way. Some avidly anticipated and embraced it. Others found themselves obliged by illness to retire against their preference. And yet some, to put it cryptically, stayed in their positions longer than they should. I hasten to add that there were still others, including my current more senior colleagues, who maintained or continue to achieve enviable levels of performance into their 70s. Ultimately, I chose to leave, in the old sporting cliché, near the top of my game. I also knew from experience that my colleagues deserved fair and timely warning for planning future staffing priorities.

Like Tolstoy's unhappy families, each colleague had retired in their own way.

Two examples lurked at the edges of my thinking during the last three or four years: one an encounter with my predecessor, the other my own father, himself an academic in a very different field. First, my predecessor told me in a conversation during my on-campus interview that despite a sterling reputation as an innovative teacher and with a book in progress, he had decided, after 35 years in harness, to make way for someone new, given the inevitable changes in the field, but was also mindful that, even then (as I have to remind my own graduate students), there was an alarming lack of openings for recent PhDs in Russian history. I have continued to reflect on that conversation and the professional generosity that had informed *his* decision.

In the case of my father, a highly accomplished and respected professor of medicine whose work had helped shape provincial health care and national legislation, I greatly admired and looked to him as an example. He continued to practice and teach until the age of 80, when his dean persuaded him to retire. In a process he could have predicted from his own research, my father seemed bereft and sometimes angry at

the loss of a position and role he had filled for 50 years; he had really enjoyed being “Dr. McDonald” and felt the loss of it very acutely. Within a year, he suffered a serious stroke, which brought in its train a protracted decline, leading to his death four years later. His almost visceral attachment to his professional persona was something I wanted to avoid in myself.

The end of my academic career seems to be occurring at the same time as the closing of a circle that opened at its beginning.

And so it came to pass that in the summer of 2021, having long discussed the issue with my wife, I decided the time had come to step down. As I say, the decision came almost unbidden but was obvious; I haven’t regretted it since. I have had a full and, dare I say, fun career. I have spent my entire professional life in an excellent department that has proven a stimulating intellectual home, all the more since my colleagues have consistently excelled in finding exciting scholars to join and enrich our ranks. My closest disciplinary colleague has been an exemplary friend and partner in our shared educational endeavors. I have benefited from holding a generously endowed chair that has supported research travel, lectures and conferences, and student fellowships. As much or more, I have loved teaching undergraduate students and training a cohort of graduate students who have all found their ways into interesting callings, including outside the academy. Following an unconventional path, I have played many roles in the department but also on our campus at large, ranging from the *cursus honorum* of curricular, search, and tenure committees to a four-year term as chair, then chairing searches for a provost and our incumbent chancellor. I’ve also served as an administrative troubleshooter, a duty that has taken me far afield, including four years as a senior administrator in our university’s athletic department.

In the context of my specialization, this seems a strangely appropriate time to leave. I started my career just as the Soviet Union had embarked on an accelerating process of disaggregation and collapse. The following decades saw a welcome reorientation of our field and its parameters. No longer trampled by 1917 as a glaring telos, and, ironically, divested of the federal grants that had fueled our rise as the resident experts on the Great Other, we got to reimagine Russian and, as the archives opened, Soviet history. Questions of empire, religion, nationalism, sexuality, and gender, among many others, took root and began to flourish. Our notions of

periodization altered, while the immediate prerevolutionary years now became terrain for reexamining late imperial society, its binding ties, and the better-known forces that modernity and crash industrialization had released. Above all, our colleagues in the erstwhile USSR now rode their own impressive surge in innovative historical scholarship, slipping the surly bonds of dialectical materialism for the exploration of new Western theories and methods that they adapted to understanding their country’s past. Happily, many of them have joined the North American and European academies, enriching our field with their knowledge and perspectives. As important, over the last three decades, a true scholarly and social exchange has evolved between two large communities that had regarded each other with a mutual suspicion. In that vein, the international project that I helped oversee offered an excellent example of the sorts of collaboration possible after 1991.

And yet, as I write these lines, the armed forces of the Russian Federation, in a seeming fever dream of imperial revanche, have invaded the territory of a Ukraine that has enjoyed the longest stretch of sovereignty – more than 30 years – in that nation’s troubled history. In tandem with that aggression, the Russian government has reinstated controls over public speech and freedom of inquiry and publication in a step-by-step process that seems to presage a great turning back of the clock to the Soviet years of the governing generation’s childhood.

From that point of view, the end of my academic career seems to be occurring at the same time as the closing of a circle that opened at its beginning. The immediate future looks dire, although the middle and longer terms inspire more confidence, given the cruel consistency of actuarial statistics and the relative liberalism of Russians who have come of age in the last 25 years. All of this is occurring at a time when Russian history is less and less represented in North American history departments and Cold War stereotypes have begun to revive. Ironically, just at those moments when Russia is discounted as “irrelevant,” its leaders find ways to challenge that assumption. The consolation I take in the face of these prospects is that my colleagues have made their own not-so-easy decision: to search for a historian of imperial Russia. I look forward to meeting that person. **P**

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ALLISON BLAKELY, JIM GARDNER, LINDA K. KERBER, ASUNCIÓN LAVRIN,  
JOANNE REITANO, AND RICHARD WHITE

# WHAT'S NEXT?

*Six Reflections on Retirement*



Some might expect a slower life during retirement, but these six historians haven't rested on their laurels.  
*Evan Williams, PureADK.com*

**J**UST AS THERE is no one career path for historians, there is no one retirement at the end of a historian's career. *Perspectives* invited six historians to share their own tales of retirement. From new research to travel, personal health issues to spousal deaths, these writers discuss their lives after retirement. While the job has ended, for most, the historian's work isn't done.

## IN RETIREMENT, BUT "I DON'T FEEL NOWAYS TIRED"

Eight years into my retirement, I have learned that, at least for me, retirement is a process and a state of mind, not a fixed status. After 30 years of teaching courses on Russian and European history and world civilizations at Howard University, followed by 13 years at Boston University teaching others on modern revolutions, the history of racial thought, and Blacks in modern Europe, the specific activities I had thought I was retiring to pursue remain elusive.

The pandemic impeded my short bucket list of must-visit places, but the alluring features of their past glories had already been sullied anyway by the impact of environmental crises and political and cultural turmoil. What has most caused my failure to advance my retirement plans is the second lesson I have learned about my relationship to the concept of retirement: old habits die hard, and I have never become good at saying no to worthy projects. That played a role in my accepting this essay assignment—that, and constant reminders from my 94-year-old mother-in-law, Maudie, that it is healthy for the aging to keep the mind and body as active as possible. This leads me to repeatedly break my resolution to once and for all stop living under deadlines set by others. I have kept a lower profile sufficiently well to have an admirer of my work politely confess that he had thought I was deceased, but I still rarely experience a period without at least one manuscript review, conference paper, or guest lecture deadline. I also continue to serve on the National Council on the Humanities, to which I was appointed by President Obama in 2011, keeping me connected to the teaching, research, and writing in the academic world. The virtual parallel reality fostered by COVID has made these activities even more feasible. So another lesson learned for me is that assumptions made about freedom in retirement are often illusory.

In retirement, I hoped to turn to projects that I hadn't had time for during my teaching career, both personal and academic. I wanted to write various types of songs and



Allison and Shirley Blakely at the 2018 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities.  
*Courtesy National Endowment for the Humanities*

strengthen my rudimentary skills on the guitar and piano. I also wanted to try my hand at writing children's stories. As a college teacher, I've long desired to reach students earlier in their lives, when they may be more receptive to the multicultural messages I have to offer. I have also regretted seemingly always being the bearer of bad news, never having history to teach or stories to tell in my courses that have happy endings. The current resurgence of evidence that the American Civil War has never really been settled is just one reminder of this. What might I achieve with stories on an elementary level that accentuate the positive and highlight human potential for shaping a better world? Another pet project I have envisioned for decades is to translate into English poems of Alexander Pushkin that treat cultural diversity. The single most revered figure in Russian cultural history, Pushkin was of Black African ancestry through his maternal great-grandfather Abram Hannibal, who rose from enslavement to Peter the Great to mathematician and major general as an engineer in the Russian army. Current developments in Russia have reminded me that Abram's son Ivan Hannibal, a general and admiral, founded the city of Kherson during the expansion of Russia under Catherine the Great, which, as I write, is a fiercely contested city in Vladimir Putin's current attempt at Russian expansion. As if these projects were not enough, an unanticipated Berlin Prize fellowship from the American Academy in Berlin for the spring of 2021 prompted me to resume work on an interpretive history of the Black diaspora in modern Europe that I have started and put aside numerous times over the past two decades.

One unwelcome development I did not plan on during retirement is waning health—in my case, pinched nerves in the lower back that decrease leg performance, as well as replacement of both hips in 2018. I had neglected to think about aging issues because, although some related symptoms had emerged during my last decade of teaching, my body has been very resilient throughout my life, notwithstanding minor leg and head injuries in Vietnam at the onset of the Tet Offensive in 1968. Meanwhile, the pandemic has raised my awareness of public health in general, augmenting my over-50-year marriage to a commissioned officer in the US Public Health Service. Most of our medical care comes at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, where any self-pity I might have felt was quelled forever the first time a young soldier with an artificial limb held a door open for me. Since my wife, Shirley, is also a consummate seamstress and quilter, the early stages of the pandemic saw us making nearly 200 two-ply face masks to donate to local hospitals and nursing homes, with me measuring, cutting, and trimming fabric and pinning together pieces for her to sew.

In retrospect, what in the world ever led me to suppose that I would have any greater control over my retirement than I have had over the pattern of my entire career? That has been from the start a classic example of the ancient expression in several world cultures that “men plan, and the gods laugh.” Sputnik went up during my junior year in high school, so I planned to become an engineer to help make certain Russia was not going to be ahead of us. Instead, Russian history and literature became my focus by the end of my formal studies, later joined by my deep interest in European dimensions of the Black diaspora. Retire? How can I when history keeps coming alive all around me and just won't leave me alone?

*Allison Blakely retired in 2014 from Boston University, where he was professor of European and comparative history and the George and Joyce Wein Professor of African American Studies. This essay's title draws on the title of a traditional Negro spiritual.*

## TIME TO PICK AND CHOOSE

I retired just over five years ago, earlier than I had planned. I knew that I did not really need to work any longer for financial reasons, but what pushed me to retire early was the 2016 presidential election. As an executive at the National Archives, an executive-branch agency, I oversaw the liaison

office responsible for working with the incumbent president, and I realized that if I did not retire, I would spend my last work years struggling with the incoming Trump White House. I also knew retirement would give me the opportunity to finish some projects and start others that had always seemed to be out of reach because of the long hours I invested in my job.

I went to graduate school expecting to enter the academy as my father had, but my career took a different path. Two weeks after my dissertation defense, I started work as staff historian at the American Association for State and Local History, an AHA affiliated society known for its engagement with history at the grassroots level. After eight years, I jumped (literally over a weekend) to the discipline's senior learned society to serve as deputy executive director of the AHA. After a decade there, I shifted away from professional associations and into senior management in the federal government, racking up over a decade at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History and then a bit over five years at the National Archives. What connects these positions was long hours with little time for my own research and writing.

Ethics has probably been the one constant from my career into retirement.

So retirement for me meant getting back to the actual substance of history instead of facilitating the work of others. And it meant that I no longer had to shift focus as I changed employers. Those of us working outside the academy often do not have the opportunities to pursue our own scholarly interests in new posts but instead must be prepared to leave projects behind or at least put them on the back burner. Now I can pick and choose what interests me most.

While I started out as a historian of post-World War II US politics, I'm now building on what has engaged me as a practicing public historian. My first challenge was finishing *The Oxford Handbook of Public History*, a massive undertaking that involved recruiting and working with an international roster of public historians. I had recklessly agreed to be co-editor while at the Smithsonian, and the work proved nearly impossible while I was still attending to my responsibilities there and then at the Archives—my only time off to work on it had come during the 2013 government shutdown.

I then shifted to more personal projects, particularly writing and speaking on museums and trauma, a topic that arguably found me rather than the other way around. Beginning with September 11 and continuing through traumatic events such as Hurricane Katrina, the National Museum of American History took a lead role in shaping discussion within the museum community about dealing with distress and loss, and I was asked repeatedly to write and speak on the tensions that arose between theory and practice—requests that continue today, a decade after I left the museum. Thus, while some colleagues found things slowing down during the pandemic, I was suddenly more in demand. For example, I was invited to give a Zoom lecture to a group in Israel on museums, trauma, and loss, and asked by colleagues in Greece and Australia, who were developing a new book on museums and trauma, to contribute an essay on the historical roots of and the contemporary ethics of collecting trauma. While this work was rooted in my experiences at the Smithsonian and had already yielded several scholarly articles, I've now been able to read more broadly, engage more fully in emerging theory in different contexts and disciplines, and dig deeper into some of the knottier issues of practice that public historians and museum professionals are confronting in the stressful context of contemporary life.

That work on the ethics of collecting trauma and loss is rooted in a larger long-standing interest in ethics, going back to my years working with the AHA's Professional Division. When I look back, ethics has probably been the one constant from my career into retirement. After I left the AHA, I chaired another organization's ethics-and-standards committee, including revising their ethics statement and developing position papers on unfolding issues; served as founding chair of the Smithsonian Ethics Advisory Board; published on various aspects of ethics; and taught ethics for 20 years in a multidisciplinary museum management program, building on my experiences and helping midcareer colleagues sort out the complexities of professional ethics.

Otherwise, retirement has encompassed what you might expect for any retiree—I do what suits me when I want to. I continue to appear on professional programs and serve on committees when the fit is good, agree to write book reviews when the books engage me, accept invitations to write guest blogs when the subjects are provocative, mentor graduate students embarking on careers, and consult with a variety of museums and archives in the United States and internationally. Just as my career has followed a trajectory very different from that of most historians, I suspect many of my choices in retirement have been different as well.

Finally, to be completely honest, one reason I retired when I did was that my first (and probably only) grandchild was on the way, and within a few months, I became a very proud grandfather. Retirement has given me the flexibility to pursue what engages me intellectually and still have plenty of time to be a doting grandparent, without worrying about the management responsibilities—from budgets and personnel issues to schedules and deadlines—that marked decades of relentless but nevertheless very rewarding work life.

*Jim Gardner is a former executive at the National Archives, the National Museum of American History, and the AHA and a past president of the National Council on Public History.*

## ADVICE FROM THE FIRST RETIREMENT DECADE

I taught my last class at the University of Iowa 10 years ago. A few months later, former students, colleagues, and friends celebrated in a remarkable symposium during which I sometimes felt that I was listening to eulogies at my own funeral. A decade later, I find I have some recommendations for others thinking about their own retirement.

This is a time to negotiate for what you will need to remain productive in retirement.

The smartest thing I did—and I strongly recommend it to other faculty—was to embrace the three-year phased retirement offered by my university. (And if they don't have one in place, negotiate!) At half time during those years, I slowly detached. Some students scrambled to enroll in my classes, knowing I would not be around much longer; newer graduate students kept their distance, hesitant to develop a relationship. I attended department meetings but refrained from voting on matters that would affect colleagues in the future; it was clear to all that I should not be asked to serve on searches, for the same reason. This is also a time to negotiate for what you will need to remain productive in retirement, such as your email address, library carrel, and parking privileges. In some institutions, this will be easier than at others. I took these privileges for granted until, during the three years, I encountered an old friend who had simply

retired, cold turkey. My story brought her close to tears. Once she had announced her retirement, there followed six months of farewells, dinners, celebrations – and a short time to empty her office. After that, she felt herself suddenly invisible, and it hurt.

You should also start now in preparing your own archives. We are ourselves, all of us, historical artifacts. We have made our careers, such as they are, in a certain time and place. The papers that fill our filing cabinets are our archives, and they should be treated with respect. Because I have been part of the revitalization of women’s history in the last 50 years, the Schlesinger Library asked for my papers; others will find that other specialized libraries or their own institutions’ manuscript collections will welcome all or part of their own materials. Gathering my papers, I was shocked at the mess. There are syllabi with no dates. There are talks that I don’t remember giving, at places not clearly identified. There are op-ed drafts that were rejected, but I don’t know by whom. Most archives will not accept letters of recommendation – Anne Firor Scott sent them to their subjects, warming their hearts. Start now, however far you are from retirement, by scheduling a conversation with your own institution’s archivist to clarify your understanding of what to keep and in what order.

After you’ve settled all that business, you are left to face blank paper and a blank computer screen. This is hard, of



Linda K. Kerber (center) with colleagues at the Peace Palace in The Hague.

Courtesy Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion

course, for those of us who require hands-on archival research in distant locations, denied to us by the increasing infirmities of aging and now by the barriers set by the pandemic. A successful novelist friend once observed, “Every new page I write is the hardest thing I’ve ever written.” She confesses that she turns to anything easier – a letter of recommendation, a memo to a dean – to keep from facing the creative challenge of the blank page.

I’m lucky to be deeply engaged in a book, *Legal Ghosts: Statelessness in a Nation of Citizens*, which bounced off my 2007 AHA presidential address. When I began my inquiries, the books I borrowed from the library had last been checked out in the 1950s. Now statelessness has become an urgent global matter. My work has propelled me into a community of scholars and activists and onto the inaugural board of a remarkable new NGO. The Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, based in The Hague, is dedicated to promoting and protecting the human right to a nationality and the rights of stateless people generally. The institute keeps me deeply engaged with colleagues in Europe and the Americas and in the issues that make the headlines – not only in pre-pandemic meetings in London or The Hague, now in Zoom meetings, but in reviewing articles for our journal, commissioning research studies, and other practical work.

Before I retired, I took for granted that when I entered my library carrel my brain would switch its focus onto my historical research and writing. But then COVID deprived me of access to my carrel, and while writing at home, I am assailed by competing signals – “run the clothes in the washing machine, deposit the checks at the bank, did I buy more milk?” I had not appreciated how the serendipity of the day – teaching classes, consulting with students, random encounters with colleagues, attendance at talks by visiting scholars – oiled the gears in my brain. I am, however, sustained by Zoom. I’m a member of several groups of friends and colleagues who meet roughly every six weeks to schmooze and a larger writing group that meets every weekday morning. It is a strategy I heartily recommend.

Finally, I recommend looking for ways to make the world better. Since my retirement, my husband, Dick Kerber, died; his absence still haunts me. I’ve found great consolation in a project established in his memory by former patients and colleagues. Dick was a cardiologist whose research focused on cardiac resuscitation, and the goal of the Rotary-Kerber HeartSafe Community Campaign is to increase the survival rate of sudden cardiac arrest victims in our county by training laypersons to intervene effectively using CPR and an automatic electronic defibrillator. Learn CPR. The life you save

may be your partner's or your friend's. To paraphrase the Talmud, "Who saves a life saves the world."

*Linda K. Kerber is May Brodbeck Professor in the Liberal Arts and Professor of History and Lecturer in Law Emerita at the University of Iowa.*

## TRAVELING NEW PATHS ALONE

Retirement came abruptly to me in 2008. My husband died three months after an esophageal cancer diagnosis, placing me in a brutal reality of widowhood I had imagined I would reach someday but not necessarily under such conditions. We had planned to retire together, but contemplating the path ahead alone certainly changed the nature of my future.

I decided to close my office at Arizona State University, say goodbye to colleagues, and move back to Maryland to be closer to my two children. They were now the only family I had. I had completed a book recently, but there was no joyful celebration when I received finished copies in the mail.

*My skills and experience were not retired to a closet like an antique.*

Facing me was the decision of how to reshape my life based on my academic experience. I did not want to garden or take up public service or any of those choices offered to retired people by well-meaning advisers. I wanted to remain a historian. My skills and experience were not retired to a closet, like an antique that one treasures because of its value but remains an object outside oneself.

I had no intention to disengage from the topics that had defined me as a historian, and ahead of me remained some issues that were worthwhile to study. Since I had already begun collecting materials for a new project on the men of the mendicant orders in colonial Mexico, I had only one choice: to move on. I began attending conferences and writing again. My career had been devoted to women's history, but I was ready to explore the other side of the fence. It was an invigorating challenge: Could I really see through men's eyes? Working on men's history also gave me further understanding of what I had written in the past about women. I must confess, however, that this new project was almost like being a novice again. The advantage was that I was not breaking into the field, as I was when I began writing on women. There were plenty of



*In her retirement, Asunción Lavrin has found great joy in world travel.*

*Courtesy Asunción Lavrin*

publications and theories of masculinity to make the experience of plunging into a new field more comfortable. I am still working at it, and a book on mendicant friars is almost finished.

What else could a retired historian do? I began editing manuscripts and organizing a book of readings on a topic for which I only recently discovered I had some affinity: theater and performance within women's cloisters. It really sounds as if I had had a sort of strange turn in my head; I had to choose between literature and history long ago. But this was history but with a literary turn, an opportunity to study how a text could be used as a medium to entertain and at the same time release the meaning of an enclosed way of life. Performance for nuns and performing nuns? The exterior made interior on a stage? Most definitely a discovery for me and one that strengthened my resolve to never give up on the archives.

Is retirement only about discovering what are the outer stretches of one's field and writing until the inkwell is dry? I also turned to traveling. Relieved from the ties to semesters, quarters, departmental meetings, and, yes, grading, retirement gave me the freedom to engage in travel and explore the world, a metaphor that I often used in my writing. I have traveled to places that are beyond the comfort zone of many American tourists, including New Zealand, India, the Andean glaciers, and Tierra del Fuego, as well as to some that are more within the scope of organized tours, such as eastern

Europe, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. While not being a flaneur, I returned to Paris and visited Berlin for the first time. It is not simply a commonplace to say that traveling opens the mind. Travel has renewed my intellectual and aesthetic horizons. It has been a pleasure of old age and retirement to experience the calm and beauty of mountain landscapes in the Chilean Andes and the human density of the streets of Jaipur or Delhi. On learning about the mosaics of Byzantium in childhood and how they were found in churches in Ravenna, I wrote on my copybook, "Travel to Ravenna." And I did! And when I was there, I was in awe about having fulfilled a dream. Do we have a tool in history to measure the experience of converting dreams into realities? Well, one wonders if there is any reality to being "retired." No, retirement is not being shelved or being out of circulation. It is another form of engaging with oneself and the world.

*Asunción Lavrin is professor emerita at Arizona State University.*

## SAME CALLING, NEW CHALLENGES

*Sic transit gloria?* That is the ultimate, painful question for all retirees, and in 2016, I had to face what comes next. After 50 years connected with LaGuardia Community College and the City University of New York (CUNY), it was time to begin breaking away.

I softened the blow by taking advantage of CUNY's three-year phased retirement program, which enabled me to teach half my workload while keeping my benefits. In addition, I received reassigned time to work with the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives. These arrangements enabled me to stay involved with the college while slowly severing connections with it. A mild stroke underlined the need to reassess. So did the increasing difficulty of traveling by subway and bus to the college. Nonetheless, I still had trouble parting and continued to adjunct one course a term for three more years. Finally, COVID-19 and the prospect of remote teaching drove me out of the classroom altogether. However, I still miss it.

The advantage of teaching at a community college is working with highly motivated students, most of whom are the first in their families to attend college and who appreciate the opportunity to learn. Because they embody untapped potential just waiting for recognition and encouragement, it is a perpetually rewarding environment in which to teach. So, too, the faculty are delightful to work with because they are so committed to the mission of serving the underserved. But the disadvantages

become strikingly evident with age. As a remnant of early 20th-century biases against what were then called junior colleges, the assumption persists that community college faculty lack academic credentials and do not need time for research because they do not publish. (Note that almost all of LaGuardia's full-time faculty have terminal degrees and many publish.) This stereotype translates into heavy course loads with high enrollments. In fact, our 10-course requirement was only recently reduced to nine a year. Multiply that by the standard three teaching hours per course per week; plus preparing classes, holding office hours, and correcting writing assignments and essay exams; plus committee work and other college activities. It's no wonder I was exhausted.

Even so, it was hard to give up my office and my routine. I regretted losing contact with most of the colleagues whom I had known for decades. However, I gained precious time for research and writing. Thus, I was able to complete the third edition of my history of New York City, and I agreed to do a second edition of my history of New York State. Most importantly, I could finally focus on a biography of Charles Evans Hughes that I had been researching and writing in fits and starts during and between terms. After the pandemic closed the libraries, I bought books and learned how to obtain material online. Further microfilm manuscript research was impossible. Difficulties notwithstanding, the work provided a solid bridge to full retirement. At the same time, it became clear that this is my last major book.

This balance of work and leisure  
provides continuity between  
past and present.

Lest I seem like a total nerd, know that I garden in summer, feed birds in winter, swim five mornings a week, take walks in the afternoons, and visit the Brooklyn Botanical Garden frequently. I took advantage of NYC's rich cultural resources pre-pandemic and look forward to better times. Nonetheless, this balance of work and leisure suits me just fine because it provides continuity between past and present while allowing me to write unencumbered by teaching.

My grandchildren have been a source of joy mixed with worry over their vulnerability to COVID. They opened new avenues of inquiry for me. When schools closed, I sought interesting workbooks for typically uninteresting topics, like penmanship. Much to my surprise, there are many such resources for basic skills as well as hands-on activities like science experiments and crafts. In addition, I rediscovered children's books, which I always enjoyed reading to my



Writing a history of California with his photographer son was one of the most satisfying books Richard White has written.  
*Jesse Amble White*

children and now share with my grandchildren. (My eight-year-old grandson recommends books for me to read.) Perhaps I could even write short children's biographies based on material in my histories of New York City and New York State. My older son is beginning a photography project related to my first book, *Work and Society*, so perhaps I can be helpful (albeit discreetly). After I finish my current projects, these would be more modest, less pressured ways to continue writing history – same calling, different audiences, new challenges.

The pandemic itself has highlighted the bad and good aspects of retirement for me. I never considered myself old before being inundated by horrific mortality statistics and constant warnings for people over 65. They clarified the fact that I really have had my day in the sun, that success was truly fleeting. It was humbling to see how quickly I could be replaced and my office reassigned. However, because security and exhaustion can stifle creativity, retirement has been liberating. It enabled me to address unfinished agendas, get my affairs in order, and pursue interests lurking in the background or long starved by immediate demands. If nothing else, COVID-19 made it all the more important to appreciate what I have now and maximize whatever time I have left.

*Joanne Reitano is professor emerita at LaGuardia Community College, City University of New York.*

## WHAT YOU CAN CARRY WITH YOU

Two weeks before my scheduled retirement in the winter of 2020, COVID-19 shoved me out the door. It canceled the last weeks of classes and banished me from campus. I cannot say I left Stanford University unwillingly – every cloud has a silver lining – but I did not expect to have my retirement coincide with such a sudden narrowing of the world.

I had always supposed that the great advantage of academic life was that the best parts of it were portable. You leave behind what you no longer (or never) wanted to do but keep what you like and can still do well. I can still research, and I probably write better than when I was younger. I no longer teach, but I have come to believe that professors teach best in their 30s, 40s, and 50s. The United States too often seems a gerontocracy, and I do not want to be a guy in his 70s explaining the world to teenagers.

I knew that in retirement I could no longer undertake the kind of books I once did, which take a decade or more to conceive, research, and write. I still have the interest, but only fools start something in their 70s that they cannot complete until well into their 80s, if at all. COVID only reinforced my

convictions, when the archives were neither open nor accessible.

I have always been intellectually restless, more interested in what I have not yet done than in what I have already explored. My son, Jesse, is a photographer, and in his landscape photographs I was astonished to see things that I missed in traveling the same places. His photographs gave the California landscape new meanings for me. The book we did together, *California Exposures: Envisioning Myth and History*, began as a wager. I bet I could turn his photographs into a history of California. I lost the bet – the book was too partial to be a complete history of California – but it is still one of the most satisfying books that I have ever written. It came out after I retired, and like so much during the pandemic, which was also when American racism once again became so glaringly visible, it got lost in larger events.

Like a detective, I sifted scattered sources to determine not only who killed Jane Stanford but how and why.

Still, the book created a mold for what I want to do: write books that absorb me but that depart from the kind of work that makes academic reputations. If I am curious, if I can use skills that I already possess, if the project can be finished in a few years, and if it is not something I have succeeded at before, then I am game.

For several years, I taught a class on the death of Jane Stanford, who died of strychnine poisoning in 1905 “at the hands of person or persons unknown.” I used her poisoning as a way of getting students in the archives to work with original sources. But we could only scratch the surface in 10-week classes. I had already done a big book on the Gilded Age, and I thought that writing a book on her death could reveal the politics, power struggles, and scandals of Gilded Age San Francisco. Her life and death were inseparable from Leland Stanford Jr. University, American capitalism, Boss Ruel’s San Francisco, Chinatown, the urban underworld, 19th-century spiritualism, and the people – upstairs and downstairs – of the Stanford mansions.

But *Who Killed Jane Stanford?*, as my books usually do, surprised me. As a story of Gilded Age privilege, inequality, corruption, politics, and the press, it resonates with the present. In an age of surreal conspiracy theories, it is a reminder that conspiracies can be quite real. In an age of staggering

inequality, it is set in another age of staggering inequality. Its main characters are rich people who created monuments to themselves and whose lives are reminders that the problem with philanthropy is very often philanthropists. We live in a world where murderers walk free and powerful people go to great lengths to preserve secrets. Such things are not unique to our time.

The second surprise is that I wrote not only a history but also a detective story that could fit in the true crime genre. I was not a reader of mysteries or crime fiction before retirement, but I sought the advice of my brother, Stephen, a crime writer. He taught me how to create a plot. Like a detective, I sifted scattered sources to determine not only who killed Jane Stanford but how and why. My reading changed with my writing. I read Dashiell Hammett, many of whose stories are set in San Francisco. He might as well be a historian when he opens *The Maltese Falcon* with Sam Spade instructing his client, “Suppose you tell me about it, from the beginning, and then we’ll know what needs doing. Better begin as far back as you can.”

Finishing the book, confined by the pandemic, I kept going back over the sources, looking for details that I might have ignored. That search produced another surprise. I had wondered why the police and detectives did not pursue the suspects in Jane Stanford’s death. I ended up thinking that they not only pursued them but found them.

When the book was in press, I had a final surprise, one I wish I could have avoided. My wife, Beverly Purrington, died from an undiagnosed neurological disease. Her death plunged me into a grief that, like Jane Stanford’s anguish over the death of her only child, seems to have no bottom. I found myself lost in a sorrow similar to the mourning that launched the story I tell in the book.

That, too, is part of retirement. **P**

*Richard White is Margaret Byrne Professor of American History, Emeritus, at Stanford University.*

Join us on May 16, 2022, for an AHA Online event, “Expanding Perspectives: Historians in Retirement.” Visit [historians.org/POHEvents](https://historians.org/POHEvents) for details.



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ALANA VENABLE

## NEW FACES AT THE AHA

*Meet Krista Grensavitch, Corinne Kannenberg, and Brandon Schechter*

The AHA welcomes three new staff members, Krista Grensavitch, Corinne Kannenberg, and Brandon Schechter, as teaching resource developers with the AHA's NEH-funded initiative, "Teaching Things: Material Culture in the History Classroom."

**Krista Grensavitch** is a senior lecturer in comparative ethnic studies, history, and women's and gender studies at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. Krista says the position at the AHA "was like I was looking at the ultimate parallel universe—it was precisely what I was looking for."

Krista has always been curious in knowing where things come from, so studying history seemed like an obvious path to exploring her curiosity. She earned her BA in classical studies from Carthage College, where she discovered her strong interest in learning about the lives of women. Krista went on to get her MA in women's and gender studies and her PhD in history from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. She received her PhD in 2019. Her research and teaching focus on the intersection of gender identity, material culture, and the scholarship of teaching and learning.



Krista Grensavitch

Outside of teaching and research, Krista began foraging during the pandemic as she went on daily walks around her neighborhood and has been cultivating an herb garden. She enjoys experiencing the changing seasons and appreciates the subtleties of nature, learning about food and foodways, and has connected with others in her local community to exchange knowledge and ideas. Some of the most memorable exchanges for Krista include when she was taught how to make an Appalachian broom and how to render beef fat into tallow. She used this tallow to bake beef-fat cookies, a recipe she found in Lizzie Black Kander's *Settlement Cook Book*, and gave them to her students as part of her lesson plan.

Krista enjoys experiencing the changing seasons and appreciates the subtleties of nature, learning about food and foodways.

**Corinne Kannenberg** is a college instructor and museum professional. Her research interests include medieval religious practice and devotion, heterodoxy and heresy, and material culture (especially relics and reliquaries). Her interest in history stems from her upbringing in a close-knit community. Corinne credits her uncle, who was her high school teacher, with her early and passionate interest in European history.

Along with her uncle's influence, her interest in history was solidified during an art history class at the University of Colorado Boulder. In her art history class, she was first introduced to the importance of reliquaries and found a passion for material culture, especially objects related to commemorative and devotional practice. Corinne went on to earn a BA in history and studio arts from the University of Colorado Boulder and a PhD in medieval history from Princeton University in 2021. She is excited to work with the AHA to bring material culture into classrooms. When asked what she wants to bring



Corinne Kannenberg

to the project, she says that she hopes to make rich object primary sources more approachable for teachers and students.

In her art history class, Corinne was first introduced to the importance of reliquaries and found a passion for material culture.

In her free time, Corinne enjoys cooking and reading and is a plant parent, a habit she says exploded during quarantine. In addition to some recent deep dives into sci-fi, she is currently rereading *Doomsday Book* by Connie Willis. She enjoyed it as a teenager but is interested to see whether the book still holds up now that she has years of scholarly research under her belt.

Growing up 15 minutes from the Erie Canal, **Brandon Schechter** developed a fascination with old things. He went on to explore this fascination through the material culture of the Red Army in World War II. Schechter received his BA from Vassar College in Russian studies, furthering an interest in the history of communism and socialism that he developed as a teenager. He continued his studies at University of California, Berkeley, where he received his PhD in 2015.

Brandon has lived all over the world, moving frequently for many years. He has studied at universities in the United



Brandon Schechter

States and Russia and has taught at UC Berkeley, Brown, Columbia, New York University, and NYU-Shanghai. His travels have taught him how to quickly orient himself to new places and think more globally. Between his travels and his research, Brandon has become very comfortable with a state of in-betweenness. His research has led him to take on the role of interpreter, “interpreting America for Russians or interpreting Russia for Americans.” He is excited to work with the AHA and to continue to explore the ways objects and the history of socialism intersect.

Brandon's research has led him to take on the role of interpreter, “interpreting America for Russians or interpreting Russia for Americans.”

Brandon has been adjusting to a more settled life in Brooklyn, New York, where his child has become his hobby. Together, they enjoy spending as much time as possible outdoors, biking and exploring the public parks. He also has been dabbling in learning Turkish and Tatar. Brandon is grateful for his neighbors in Flatbush, Brooklyn, whom he credits for still maintaining community even during a pandemic. **P**

*Alana Venable is research and publications assistant at the AHA.*

MARK PHILIP BRADLEY

## EMPIRES, FAMILIES, AND ENGAGED HISTORY

*In the June Issue of the American Historical Review*

The June 2022 issue of the *American Historical Review* examines questions of empire, race, family, and knowledge production along with the nature of contemporary historical practice. As part of this focus, the AHR History Lab features the opening intervention of a collective project, *Monuments and Engaged History*, that brings together historians, curators, artists, architects, community activists, and writers to think through questions of history and memory. Over time, the project will examine sites of commemoration in New Orleans, Okinawa, London, Delhi, Warsaw, and Chicago and involve multimedia content, including the AHR's first graphic novella. The initial installment of the project, "Toward an Archival Reckoning," foregrounds the Blackivists, a collective of Black archivists who prioritize the preservation of Black cultural heritage and memory. Compiled by **Ashley Farmer** (Univ. of Texas at Austin), this three-part collaborative essay includes a conversation with Blackivist members about the challenges and possibilities of the profession and archiving, a case study on their collaboration with the Chicago-based collective Honey Pot Performance, and a Blackivist call to action addressing some of the most pressing issues in archiving and historical preservation today.

The AHR History Lab also features the return of *Odeuropa* and *History Unclassified*. In the second installment of their lab project on historical smells, *Odeuropa* contributors present a smellscape from their research in multiple forms, from thick-description, organic chemistry compound diagrams to a computer-generated synthetic "recipe" and a scratch-and-sniff card. *History Unclassified* includes two essays on writing family histories. **Martha Hodes** (New York Univ.), in "As If I Weren't There: Writing from a Child's Memory," reflects on the dilemmas she faced writing a deeply researched memoir of a childhood event. A complementary article by **Kendra Field** (Tufts Univ.), "The Privilege of Family History," compares the author's own efforts to write family history with the challenges met by African American historians throughout the 20th century, and describes what family history can offer in the face of racialized archival silences.

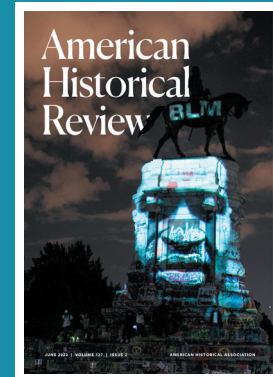
The theme of family likewise informs the featured reviews in the June issue, which focus on memoirs by such historians as Mark Mazower, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Claudio Lomnitz, and a reappraisal of a recently translated classic work by Chinese historian Ying-shih Yü.

### Histories of empire hover over the articles in the June issue.

Histories of empire hover over the articles in the June issue. Two articles describe the processes through which empire is constituted. **Michael Thornton** (Yale Univ.), in "A Capitol Orchard: Botanical Networks and the Creation of a Japanese 'Neo-Europe,'" situates ethnic Japanese colonization of Hokkaido and its Indigenous Ainu population in the broader global wave of 19th-century settler colonialism as a form of ecological imperialism. For Japanese colonial authorities, Thornton argues, Hokkaido's capital, Sapporo, served as a colonial laboratory, importing ideas from Japan and abroad to build what became one of the nation's most important breadbaskets. That knowledge was later exported to Japan's colonies in East Asia. In "Base Money: U.S. Military Payment Certificates and the Transpacific Sexual Economies of the Korean War, 1950–1953," **Jeong Min Kim** (Univ. of Manitoba) discusses how US military payment notes became a commonly used local currency during the Korean War, fueling an economy of illicit and informal transactions. Kim demonstrates that as soldiers, goods, and money moved through the US base network across Korea and Japan during the war, these notes were commonly used as a medium of exchange for sexual transactions between US soldiers and local women in ways that became entangled with US military expansion abroad.

A second set of articles examines global histories of gender, empire, and slavery. **Megan Robb's** (Univ. of Pennsylvania) "Becoming Elizabeth: The Transformation of a Bihari Mughal into an English Lady, 1758–1822" examines the life of an

Artist Dustin Klein projects an image of George Floyd onto the statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee in Richmond, Virginia, on June 18, 2020. Klein also projected the images of notable Black figures, including Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman, Billie Holiday, and W. E. B. DuBois, onto the statue in what he said was an effort to reclaim the meanings of the space. Later in June, Governor Ralph Northam ordered the Lee statue's removal. The monument's defenders went to court to prevent its removal, but their case was dismissed in September 2021 and the statue was removed on September 8. The pedestal with Black Lives Matter slogans and graffiti stayed in place until the end of the 2021, before also being removed. Photo courtesy of Reuters.



Indian woman who lived and had children with a British East India Company supervisor. She would later follow him to Britain, change her name, and convert to Christianity. Robb uses material evidence from a family archive, including paintings, jewelry, textiles, and a penmanship book, to explore the embodied processes of anglicization in this imperial context. **Diana Paton** (Univ. of Edinburgh) unites global and gender history in the study of Atlantic slavery in “Global History, Gender History, and Atlantic Slavery: On Racial Capitalism and Social Reproduction.” Tracing the enduring impact of Roman law in shaping ideas about slavery in the Iberian Peninsula, then the Spanish empire, and finally across the French and British empires, she argues that the cultural understanding of inherited slave status in the Americas was grounded in broader European ideas that subordinated all women, compounding the exploitation of women’s reproductive work on which the generational reproduction of Atlantic slavery depended.

New episodes of *History in Focus* include discussions with authors and a more detailed look at the Monuments and Engaged History project.

Three articles explore colonial and postcolonial knowledge production. In “Linga’s Dream? Interpreters, Entextualization, and Knowledge Production in Central Africa,” **Philip Janzen** (Univ. of Florida) focuses on a young farmer named Linga and his encounter with a water spirit in Oubangui-Chari (present-day Central African Republic) in 1930. Janzen considers the telling and retelling of Linga’s encounter as the story was transcribed into Banda, translated into French, and rewritten as an ethnographic folktale, exploring

how colonial intermediaries used transcription and translation and offering new methods for mapping otherwise invisible constellations of language, meaning, and colonial power. **Leslie James** (Queen Mary Univ. of London) argues in “Fascism Disguised: Colonialism and Fascism as Relation in the Interwar Caribbean and West Africa” that fascism became a critical subject of intellectual debate in British West African and Caribbean colonies in the 1930s. Tracing these debates in the pages of the anticolonial press, James points to the ways in which anticolonialism became central to the construction of antifascist thought and practice.

Finally, in “Making Disappearance Visible: The Realities of Cold War Violence,” **Marco A. Ramos** (Yale Univ.) approaches the question of who has the right to speak for victims who cannot speak for themselves by examining the different meanings conferred on the imprisonment, murder, and torture of thousands of people “disappeared” by Latin American regimes in the 1970s. Using a variety of evidence, from the forensic analysis of gravesites to psychological work with survivors, Ramos argues that material practices along postcolonial networks created layered realities of disappearance across time and place, emerging as a human rights violation in Europe, then as a biomedical syndrome, and finally as a “haunting” in Argentina.

The June issue is complemented by four new episodes of *History in Focus*, the *AHR* podcast hosted by **Daniel Story** (Univ. of California, Santa Cruz), which include discussions with authors of its articles and featured reviews and a more detailed look at the Monuments and Engaged History project. Story offers these interviews along with more immersive storytelling and off-the-cuff banter, pulling back the curtain on the *AHR* and the work of history more broadly. **P**

*Mark Philip Bradley is editor of the American Historical Review.*



## Frank D. McCann Jr.

1938–2021

Historian of Brazil and Latin America; AHA Member

Brazilianistas the world over have lost one of their giants with the spring 2021 passing of Frank D. McCann Jr., professor emeritus in the Department of History at the University of New Hampshire. Frank was one of the originators of the term Brazilianista, which describes students and scholars of Brazilian history. The volume and quality of his scholarly work, and his instrumental role in preparing future Brazilianistas for careers in academia, government, nongovernmental organizations, and private industry, speak to his success in those endeavors.

Frank came to study Brazil through his interactions with fellow graduate students from Indiana University, where he earned his PhD in 1967. He also made lifelong friends with Brazilian Army officers while teaching history at the United States Military Academy at West Point. These experiences and studying under Robert Ferrell led Frank to focus on Brazil-US diplomatic history and Brazilian military history. Out of this came his first book, *The Brazilian-American Alliance, 1937–1945* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1973), which won honorable mention for the Herbert E. Bolton Prize in 1974 and in 1975 received the Stuart L. Bernath Book Prize. Subsequent books, such as *Soldiers of the Pátria: A History of the Brazilian Army, 1889–1937* (Stanford Univ. Press, 2003), plus numerous articles, book chapters, and invitations to present his work in other countries, reflected his high level of scholarship in his field.

While continuing to research the Brazilian military, Frank expanded his efforts into the 1964 revolution and the post-military era from 1985 onward. As a co-editor of the reader *Modern Brazil: Elites and Masses in Historical Perspective* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1989), he helped bring forth the most current research on a variety of topics beyond the military and politics. Frank published the influential *Brazil and the United States during World War II and Its Aftermath: Negotiating Alliance and Balancing Giants* (Springer, 2018), tapping into new resources and archival material in Brazil and the United States. He not only clarified what each of the hemisphere giants brought to and gained from the relationship, but he provided an early

analysis of the direction of relations in the 21st century. His papers, books, and research notes will rest at the Indiana University Lilly Library.

Frank was also interested in the lives and history of Indigenous peoples. He first began exploring the history and culture of the Cayuga and Seneca Nations as a young boy growing up in Upstate New York, and he later became a friend of their members. While serving as a visiting professor at the University of New Mexico, Frank had the opportunity to visit with many members of the Pueblo Nation. He continued to visit New Mexico many times to deepen his understanding of their culture—knowledge he passed on to his students by offering the first course in Native American history ever taught at the University of New Hampshire.

One of Frank's lasting legacies is his preparation of graduate students for careers in history. He went beyond the basic course training in research and writing, teaching students what it meant to be an academic and a historian. Importantly, Frank imprinted on his students the ethics of the craft and career. His success is evident in the scholarly production and career advancement of his former students.

Frank served the discipline in other ways too numerous to mention in this short space. He was on the executive committees of several professional organizations; for many years was a contributing editor for the *Handbook of Latin American Studies*; and was on the editorial committees of national and international professional journals, such as the *Revista militares e politica*.

The field of Latin American studies and history, particularly of Brazil, is a smaller place with Frank's passing, and he leaves a lasting impact on those privileged to learn from him. Frank is survived by his wife, Diane; his daughters Kaydee (Kathleen) and Tibi; and his brother, Bernard.

Sonny B. Davis  
Texas A&M University–Kingsville (emeritus)

*Photo courtesy University of New Hampshire*

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practical experience in the latest conventions of digital humanities and/or historical editing is strongly desired, along with demonstrated experience in working with and publishing historical texts. The editor is also expected to keep abreast of new scholarship in the field, and will work with the Publications Committee to identify new areas for Colonial Society publications, and to enlist volume editors to work on proposed projects. This is a contractual part-time position, on average 10 hours per week, with the possibility for expansion and of a blended remote and onsite work model. Competitive starting salary, commensurate with experience. Interested candidates must provide a cover letter, a CV, a brief example of relevant work, and the names of and contact information for three references by April 29, 2022, to [colonial.society@verizon.net](mailto:colonial.society@verizon.net).

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

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

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

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JEREMY C. YOUNG

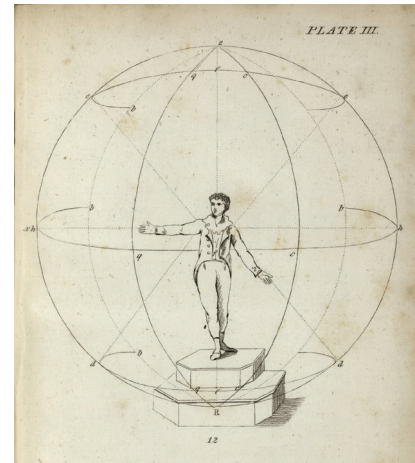
## THE ELOCUTION CAGE

A spherical bamboo cage sat at the center of Jonathan Barber's classroom at Harvard University during the 1830–31 school year. A disreputable English physician turned elocution professor, Barber required his students to stand in the cage and deliver speeches with arms outstretched, touching specific wooden slats as they spoke. This strange apparatus was far more than a teaching tool in a single course, however. Instead, it represented the vanguard of a movement that helped transform the relationship between speakers and their listeners.

Barber modeled his elocution cage on an illustration that first appeared in *Chironomia* (1806), a book on oratorical hand gestures written by Irish clergyman Gilbert Austin. Austin inscribed his speaker in an imaginary sphere and argued that the orator should touch certain points on the sphere to correspond with the specific emotions of a speech. Barber adopted Austin's recommendations wholesale in his own textbook, *A Practical Treatise on Gesture*, first published in 1831.

Barber paired Austin's gestural system with the vocal recommendations of James Rush, a reclusive medical doctor whose father, Benjamin, had signed the Declaration of Independence. Rush frequented stage plays with his theater-loving wife, and he translated the acting techniques of his time into a public-speaking system suitable for politicians and religious leaders. Rush's *The Philosophy of the Human Voice* (1827) recommended three distinct speech characteristics: an expanded pitch range (high highs and low lows), a singsong style, and the "rotund voice," produced by lowering the larynx to enlarge the upper throat, creating a rich, round tone that could be projected at great distances. Rush mastered these features himself, making "queer noises," "yowling and barking" in the dead of night, and even testing vocal techniques on his horses.

Barber's students rebelled against the rigid system symbolized by his elocution cage; once, they hid the bamboo construction atop a tall tree. Barber's appointment at Harvard



was not renewed the following year. His textbooks, though, became surprise best sellers, and the elocution system he championed became the dominant style of American public-speaking instruction into the early 20th century. Abolitionist orators Henry Ward Beecher, Wendell Phillips, and Theodore Weld; revivalist Billy Sunday; and three-time presidential nominee William Jennings Bryan, among many others, studied Barber's system and used his techniques to build powerful political and religious followings.

In so doing, they dispensed with the then-popular notion that leaders should remain emotionally remote from their followers—freeing ordinary citizens from a cage no less rigid than Barber's bamboo sphere. Instead, they forged a new relationship between audience and speaker, citizen and representative, by embracing a strikingly modern expectation: in a democratic society, leaders were responsible for building emotional connections with the people they led.

While this leadership approach remains with us, the speaking style that helped create it does not. In the 1920s, the advent of radio and the emergence of a more understated emotional style drove the elocutionists out of business, and speech instructors began promoting the more conversational approach still taught today. Near the end of that decade, my grandmother, attending Northwestern University, became one of the last students to learn Barber's methods in the classroom. After explaining the techniques, her teacher imparted a warning. "This is the day of the natural conversational manner," my grandmother wrote in her notes. "Elocution out." **P**

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*Image: Jonathan Barber, A Practical Treatise on Gesture (Hilliard and Brown, 1831); originally from Gilbert Austin, Chironomia: Or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery (T. Caddell and W. Davies, 1806)*

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