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PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

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ROUGH DRAFTS

CAREERS FOR HISTORY MAJORS

A publication from the American Historical Association

We must “uphold at every possible turn the inherent value of studying history.”

Elizabeth Lehfelddt, former Vice President, AHA Teaching Division, *Perspectives*

Careers for History Majors conveys the value of the undergraduate study of history through clear graphs and informal prose. Readers will find hard data, practical advice, and answers to common questions for students and their parents.

Contributors explore the breadth of career options available to history majors and provide tools to help students get the most out of their degree.

The booklet also includes the personal stories of history majors who work in a range of occupations, including data analysis, finance, and the law. You'll find out what employers want and learn about the personal transformations that many history majors experience.

Contributors

Loren Collins • John Fea • Anne Hyde • Sarah Olzawski • Johann Neem • Claire Potter • John Rowe • Sarah Shurts • Paul Sturtevant • Frank Valadez

Reinforcing the value and utility of a history BA, *Careers for History Majors* is perfect for directors of undergraduate studies, career center advisers, prospective majors, and their parents.

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ON THE COVER

Stet is a Latin verb—stand firm, remain, rest. As any editor worth their salt knows, in both Latin and English, it usually means “let it be.” Don’t make any changes. It is fine as it is. As graffiti on a concrete wall, it becomes more of a plea than a command: please, let it stay. Don’t erase, don’t overwrite. The artist does not want their work—and their name—to be seen as a first trial which can be discarded, but rather as a final product. It is a plea for permanence in an impermanent medium, for stability in a chaotic world. They want to be history, not its rough draft.

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St. George’s Ribbon
BRANDON SCHECHTER

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L. RENATO GRIGOLI

TOWNHOUSE NOTES

Editorial Oversight

Journalists don't often get the best press from historians, and not without reason. The study and practice of history is built on the particularity and specificity of events, on localized facts that we craft into delicate, nuanced arguments. Our colleagues have an eye for detail, and so every detail must be perfect. Each time a journalist borrows part of an idea from a historian, repeats their argument without attribution, garbles it, or meanders into an unfamiliar historiography, there is a reliable outcry: We already did that, and you got it wrong! But whether such objections have merit, whether historians should just be happy to see their work brought to a public audience (whether or not they're cited!) or have a legitimate professional grievance, the controversies that have arisen between journalists and historians obscure a key player in the drama: the editor.

"Experience," Oscar Wilde said, "is simply the name we give to our mistakes." As an editor, I've certainly made an experience or three. The wisdom that I earned through this process, painful as it was, is that the buck should stop with the editor, because behind each controversial article stands those who shepherded the piece to publication. The responsibility to check the facts and confirm sources, to ensure a piece adheres to the standards and expectations of quality for a given publication, to make sure an author does justice to their subject, is ours. Nor is this truth restricted to spaces outside the academy. If, as happened recently in my field, you see a 46-page review that, among other things, criticizes a book's italicization scheme, you might rightly wonder (as the book's author did) why someone would write it. But the real question is why the journal editor would want to publish it.

Despite the critical oversight an editor provides, we are increasingly viewed as an unnecessary extravagance. The changes to the publishing and print industries in the past three decades, academic or otherwise, have not been kind to editors. After all, we're expensive, sometimes pedantic or annoying, and if we do our jobs right, you'll never know we did anything at all. And I have heard tell that some well-regarded

presses have mostly done away with close editorial oversight. The results haven't been pretty. I remember one book, published by a reputable press, that a reviewer declared should "become the standard, English-language introduction" to the field—if and when its "wealth of copyediting mistakes" were fixed.

This trend is not restricted to academic publishing. As a fan of pulp fantasy, I frequently express my futile frustration as books in the genre grow ever larger—each volume of *A Song of Ice and Fire* (and there are currently five) is only slightly shorter than the entirety of *The Lord of the Rings*—stuffed with unnecessary asides that add nothing to the plot and that any decent editor would have excised. Perhaps printing the extra pages is cheaper than paying someone to edit them down.

Standing outside news media, I can only infer how the loss of editorial expertise and oversight has affected the industry, particularly print media, as publishing speed and click rates have overtaken due diligence and institutional quality as the coin of the realm. After all, a story can always be corrected online after the fact when someone notices a flaw. Or perhaps an error doesn't need to be fixed; any one article is quickly swept away, a minuscule drop in the great ocean of information.

As historians, we know that there is never a way to go back to what once was. After all, any claimed reformation (a word whose conservative etymology—a return to a previous ideal state—is often forgotten) is actually a novelty that its proponents justify through history. And so I am left wondering what the future holds for my necessary, invisible profession. **P**

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





TO THE EDITOR

I started writing this response with the pen I received from the funeral home where we held the celebration of life for my son Albert Jucker-Kiddle in 2019. Albert was seven when he died, and his short life influenced mine, and my historical interests, in ways that I am only beginning to understand.

I read James H. Sweet's article "Remembering Aidan: Grief, Goodness, and History" (December 2022) with tears in my eyes and more understanding than I hope our colleagues will ever have occasion to fathom. To lose a child of any age is one of the most difficult things many of us will ever have to endure.

Sweet's article also occasioned a spark of recognition for me. While he was moved to understand better the historical antecedents of the use of opiates, I have similarly been propelled to begin a research project on disability and historical agency in international relations. My interests lie in the international use and construction of the idea of "free matter for the blind" by and for people with low vision and

blindness, and the evolution of ideas about disability and ability.

In its essence, this is presentism. I am motivated by the ideas that confront me in the present to understand the experience and contributions of those in the past, and how they inform our present concerns. I am also motivated by a political belief that individuals from groups deserving of equity have stories that need to be told—by members of their own community or by allies—and that the historical discipline will be served by attending to these diverse stories, as it will enrich our understanding of historical processes.

Grief is another name for the heavy baggage we all carry when confronting the injustices of the present. We are all conditioned by stories of our present that influence our interpretations of the past. It seems almost too obvious to say it this way, but I know we are all engaged in processes of grieving, whether it is for our children, our parents, or our cultures. And the fact that these are the issues that motivate us makes me hope, through the grief, for our personal and collective futures.

AMELIA M. KIDDLE
University of Calgary

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AHA STATEMENT OPPOSING FLORIDA HB 999

The AHA normally focuses attention on implications for history and the work of historians or on the use and abuse of history in policy formation. The following statement is something of an exception in its broader scope. Hence it took a bit of time to craft and approve: we don't take exceptions lightly, and we articulate them carefully with input from staff and Council.

However, this statement lies very much within the landscape of the AHA's recent advocacy relating to the "divisive concepts" legislation referenced herein. We have opposed this pernicious legislation and will continue to do so. The basic principle is that legislation claiming to preserve national unity by denying the centrality of racism in the evolution of American institutions, culture, and structures instead *perpetuates* division. It is not possible to heal a disease without full medical history. That history must be explored and discussed. AHA members can readily remind their neighbors and legislators that attempting to forge unity by eliminating dissent has never turned out well.

—James Grossman, AHA executive director

HB 999, filed in the Florida House of Representatives on February 21, 2023, merits attention and comment.

The American Historical Association has been monitoring the genre of legislation commonly referred to as "divisive concepts" bills for two years. Normally we do not engage with what gets fed into the hopper; we wait until legislation is viable, generally when a bill emerges from committee. But HB 999 is different, and we consider it imperative to speak out immediately and forcefully. What has previously best been characterized as unwarranted political intervention into public education has now escalated to an attempt at a hostile takeover of a state's system of higher education.

We express horror (not our usual "concern") at the assumptions that lie at the heart of this bill and its blatant and frontal attack on principles of academic freedom and shared

governance central to higher education in the United States. Florida's legislature has on its agenda a dagger to the heart of an American institutional framework that has long been the envy of the world (and a source of billions of dollars in revenue from international students).

What would implementation of this legislation look like? Consider history education.

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HB 999 allows political appointees unprecedented oversight of day-to-day educational decisions. Universities and departments will face consequences should unelected partisan actors decide that any "general education core courses" somehow "suppress or distort significant historical events." All history teachers "suppress" some events; everything has a history, and no course can include all histories. It is up to the teacher, within reasonable state guidelines, to select what is most important and most useful to students in a particular class. All else is "suppressed."

The bill also gives to boards of trustees the authority to determine if and when teachers of a mandated set of core courses have "define[d] American history as contrary to the creation of a new nation based on the universal principles stated in the Declaration of Independence." Is it illegal for a faculty member to suggest that the US Constitution, rather than the Declaration of Independence, created the political framework for the new nation? Given that HB 999 would empower boards of regents to review the tenure status of any faculty member, such legitimate (and pedagogically useful) interpretive disagreements could have dire implications for all instructors, even faculty best protected by traditional norms of governance and procedure.

This is not merely an escalation of the “history wars” that have ebbed and flowed across the American landscape – and indeed, in other nations as well; the United States is hardly exceptional in this regard. Like the proponents of more conventional “divisive concepts” legislation, advocates of this particular assault especially fear the implications of the state’s youth learning that slavery and racism have enduring legacies. The idea that racism is a central aspect of American historical development – and its enduring presence in institutions, cultures, and practices – is well within the mainstream of historical scholarship, however much we might disagree about dynamics, relationships, and models of change. Notably, HB 999 mentions “critical race theory” more often than the words “democracy,” “freedom,” and “liberty” combined. This legislation aims to incite and divide, rather than to establish a healthy foundation for civic understanding.

The AHA does not disagree with HB 999’s premise that the mission of the state university system should be “education for citizenship of the constitutional republic [and] . . . the state’s existing and emerging workforce needs.” Employers look for applicants who have learned *how* to think, rather than *what* to think. Using evidence and deciding what facts matter is vital to being a successful engineer, doctor, or teacher. Would we want heart surgeons whose coursework or choice of tools had been dictated by political appointees? As for the viability of our constitutional republic, it is neither possible nor desirable to forge unity by refusing to acknowledge and understand division; instead, the very language of this legislation sows and perpetuates division. An informed citizenry requires the skills of historical literacy and the ability to test ideas, which is the core of history education.

This is not only about Florida. It is about the heart and soul of public higher education in the United States and about the role of history, historians, and historical thinking in the lives of the next generation of Americans. **P**

Approved by the AHA Council on March 3, 2023. The following organizations signed on to this statement as of March 8, 2023:

African American Intellectual History Society
 Agricultural History Association
 American Anthropological Association
 American Association for the History of Medicine
 American Association of University Professors
 American Folklore Society
 American Philosophical Association
 American Society for Environmental History
 American Sociological Association
 Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies

Association for the Study of African American Life and History
 Association for Women in Slavic Studies
 Association of Ancient Historians
 Association of University Presses
 Berkshire Conference of Women Historians
 Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire
 Central European History Society
 College Art Association
 Committee on LGBT History
 Conference on Latin American History
 Executive Committee of the Czechoslovak Studies Association
 Florida Freedom to Read Project
 French Colonial Historical Society
 German Studies Association
 H-France
 Historians for Peace and Democracy
 Immigration and Ethnic History Society
 Kurt Vonnegut Museum and Library
 Labor and Working-Class History Association
 LGBTQ History Museum of Central Florida
 Linguistic Society of America
 Medieval Academy of America
 National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education
 National Council on Public History
 National Council of Teachers of English
 NCF Students for Educational Freedom
 New England Historical Association
 North American Conference on British Studies
 North American Society for Oceanic History
 Organization of American Historians
 PEN America
 Polish American Historical Association
 Radical History Review
 Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media
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 Society for Austrian and Habsburg History
 Society for French Historical Studies
 Society for Historians of the Early American Republic
 Society for Historians of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era
 Society for Textual Scholarship
 Society for the History of Technology
 Society for US Intellectual History
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 Southern Historical Association
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 World History Association

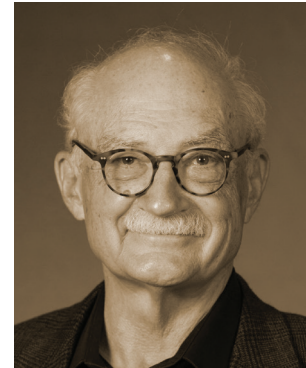
EDWARD MUIR

JOURNALISTS AND HISTORIANS

Journalists write the first draft of history, or so the cliché goes, and I must admit to a long-standing addiction to professional print (and now online) journalism and an allergy to television news, even the responsible sort found on PBS. Television narration moves too slowly, advertisements interrupt the story and turn everything into short clips, and the sensational supplants analysis. At best, I find television news boring. At worst, I find it irresponsible, utterly incapable of nuance, complexity, and context—the very things I love about reading good history—and producers know very well that for the next program they will need to find more “shocking” news to hook viewers who will have forgotten the car crash or store robbery from the day before.

Television’s great achievement of supplying images is its strength but also its weakness. The image can obfuscate even more effectively than the most notorious cable news personalities. By reading prose, in contrast, I am in charge—especially online. I can skim, skip, ignore, reread, take notes, follow links, look up more, and criticize, all the peculiar activities of the historian and the very skills necessary for controlling the source rather than allowing it to control me. Nevertheless, my killjoy complaints about television news are most likely passé, since now most Americans receive their news from social media, which anyone can manipulate—and many do—to serve tendentious purposes.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I taught an honors thesis seminar for undergraduates on Zoom. In previous incarnations of the seminar, I had students go into archives for their research, but the closing of public archives and libraries forced the COVID generation to look for nontraditional sources. For most students, that meant old newspapers that they could find in online collections. They quickly became adept at picking up the clues to journalistic inaccuracy and bias. As fledgling historians, they already knew what happened in the end and could see how a journalist’s appreciation for significance and context was at best limited. A nifty thesis by



Chayda Harding (BA, Northwestern, 2022) on the contrasting attitudes of Italian Americans and African Americans toward Mussolini’s unprovoked invasion of Ethiopia in 1935–36 had to rely on the newspapers of these two communities, demonstrating how the parochial concerns of both sides had little to do with what was actually happening in North Africa.

I can skim, skip, ignore, reread, take notes, look up more, and criticize—the very skills necessary for controlling the source rather than allowing it to control me.

As a first draft of the Italo-Abyssinian War, these newspapers were quite inadequate, especially since the absence of a free press in Italy or Ethiopia at the time left few alternatives outside government sources, which had their own biases. The Italian American newspapers split along ideological lines with the well-established ones proclaiming the glory of Fascism and the wisdom of Mussolini. In contrast, the socialist newspapers, several of which were run by exiles from Fascism, took the predictable opposite track. Although some prominent African American papers, such as the *Chicago Defender*, called for solidarity with the Black victims of Mussolini, most focused on the struggles closer to home.

Musing about these newspapers as sources brought me back to my own period of early modern Italian history, when the first versions of what we might call newspapers, the *avvisi*, appeared. Written by diplomats, travelers, and international merchants, these late 16th- and 17th-century papers printed useful information about European events, but the *avvisi* quickly became a source for entertainment, gossip, and political discussion. They met the demands of readers. The product of a competitive market, as is modern journalism, they

found a place by the 18th century in the bourgeois public sphere. Their origins in Venice took advantage of the republic's sophisticated diplomatic culture that produced dispatches and reports read in the Venetian Senate, which were often copied or quoted for broader distribution. When the AHA's first honorary foreign member, Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), sought original sources close to events themselves, he packed off to Venice in the 1820s when the republic had disappeared, leaving no successor state to protect its precious diplomatic archives, and at a time when newly impoverished nobles were eager to monetize their ancestors' private papers and collections of old *avvisi* by selling them to a German professor of history. As my students discovered, history cannot escape from journalism's influence.

While historians naturally focus on the problems that beset the historical discipline, we must acknowledge that the crisis in journalism is just as bad, if not worse. Local newspapers are disappearing, and partisans push onto the internet and Twitter whatever fantasies promote their cause. As Jill Lepore noted in a recent *New Yorker* review of the January 6th report, many journalists and academics “appear to have so wholly given themselves over to Twitter—knowing the world through it, reporting from it, being ruled by it.” Often scandalous and sometimes mendacious, old-fashioned capitalist journalism nevertheless became a profession that tried to uphold certain standards of evidence and a commitment to truth. At my own university, the Medill School of Journalism and Media has added the designation of Integrated Marketing Communications to its name, making the selling of products companion to telling the truth. Can the two ever be reconciled? Can the necessary ambiguity of good journalism or good history be subservient to convincing consumers how to spend their money? In other countries, political parties have subsidized friendly newspapers, which does not seem a desirable alternative means for telling the truth.

As the Medill report on “The State of Local News in 2022” noted, two newspapers disappear in the United States every week and are seldom replaced in either print or digital form, creating news deserts and a crisis for democracy. Since 2005, America has lost one-fourth of its newspapers, leaving seven percent of US counties without a single local paper. In communities without local journalism, corruption thrives, voter participation thins, and misinformation spreads like COVID. The gaps in local news coverage help explain some of our deep social and political cleavages, and those holes could create a lasting loss for historical researchers.

That is not to say that journalism is a lost cause. Because of the internet, I can skim four or five newspapers a day and

read several weeklies and monthlies without cutting down any trees. In at least a few distinguished newspapers, good evocative prose survives, especially in those sections where the end of the story is clear—the sports pages and obituaries. Games played and lives lived have a narrative structure that invites historical comparison, contemplation, and consequence. But even in the cosmopolitan region of Chicago, our best investigative and iconoclastic local, the *Chicago Reader*, has suffered bankruptcy and a 90 percent decline in advertising revenue. The newsroom of the grand old *Chicago Tribune*, once so powerful that it practically invented the Republican Party and put Abraham Lincoln in the White House, no longer braves large-scale investigations and manages to make even the sports pages dull—though my local teams could perhaps be more exciting.

Good evocative prose still survives,
especially in those sections where
the end of the story is clear.

Where does all this leave future historians of our era? As Gerhard Weinberg warned us decades ago, the digital revolution will leave future historians of our present thirsty for information in a historical desert, as fragile media such as computer tapes and floppy disks (remember those?) degenerate and as computer programs become obsolete and unreadable. As a historian of medieval and Renaissance Europe, I began to suffer from the thirst of a historical desert early in my career. Reading the faded handwriting on vellum and early cloth paper was hard enough, but when I turned to 19th-century editions of old texts, the industrial paper on which they were printed disintegrated in my hands, leaving me with flecks rather than pages. There seems a certain historical law at play here: the more records we generate, the less likely we will be able to read them in the future. The decline in local newspapers just magnifies this problem. Even as these inadequate first drafts of history disappear, future historians will be left with a few random tweets that someone managed to preserve. Both text and context will be gone. Historians need that first draft. **P**

Edward Muir is president of the AHA.

VANESSA R. CORCORAN

WHAT THE RENAISSANCE GOT WRONG

Rethinking Sprezzatura in the Workplace

In my junior year of college, I sat in the dark lecture hall of my High Renaissance Art course at the College of the Holy Cross. The slide projector hummed with a dull whir as Professor Alison Fleming narrated. She moved acrobatically from slide to slide, describing the artistic, historical, and cultural significance of each image. I furiously took down notes, hanging on her every word. With a shutter of the slide carousel, she revealed Raphael's 1504 *Marriage of the Virgin*, which depicted a young Joseph standing in an unassuming, nonchalant posture—quite the shift from the more rigid portrayals of the stiff, older Joseph that dominated medieval art. “Class, this painting is the embodiment of *sprezzatura*,” Fleming said, slipping into an Italian accent, and the word bounced around the room.

As Fleming explained, in his 1528 treatise *The Book of the Courtier*, Baldassare Castiglione defined *sprezzatura* as “a certain nonchalance, so as to conceal all art and make whatever one does or says appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it.” In short, *sprezzatura* is making the difficult look easy. The ability to portray nonchalance was an essential quality for a Renaissance courtier who sought to impress his audience through his grace and excellence. Fleming went on



Raphael's *Marriage of the Virgin* (1504) provided an unforgettable example of *sprezzatura* when Vanessa R. Corcoran was an undergraduate student.

©Pinacoteca di Brera, Milano

to explain that this was a significant characteristic of Renaissance art and literature.

I immediately loved this concept. To me, Fleming personified this idea too: she was always put together, wearing bright dresses accessorized with delicate scarves. While some professors droned on in their lectures, she told illuminating stories, from memory, about artists and images that I can still recall nearly 20 years later.

Sprezzatura is making the difficult look easy.

For years after that class, sprezzatura stayed with me, along with my fascination with the Middle Ages and Renaissance. I went to graduate school at the Catholic University of America, where I pursued a PhD in medieval history and embraced sprezzatura. During those years, I got into marathon running, and qualifying for the Boston Marathon on only my second attempt, I was told, “You must be a natural.”

But despite finding success in my new hobby, I felt I was failing. The dissertation process was a bumpy one, filled with challenges that brought me to the height (or low) of anxiety. But my professors had no idea that my mind was filled with intrusive thoughts and self-doubt. On the surface, it seemed my life was going well. I was newly married, we got a dog, and distance running was an enjoyable hobby. “Running really seems to keep you on track (pun intended),” my professors said. “Keep doing what you’re doing—it’s working. You have it figured out.” But underneath the seemingly put together exterior, I was a mess.

Only recently did I learn how well I had covered up my mental health struggles

behind the illusion of sprezzatura. In my memoir, *It’s a Marathon, Not a Sprint: My Road to the Marathon and PhD* (2022), I offered explicit details about my anxiety that I had kept largely to myself. My loved ones had been left largely in the dark. “We didn’t know it was *that* bad,” they all said, clearly hurt that they were finding out from a book instead of while I struggled years ago. But I just couldn’t say it when I was in my dark place. I had wanted everyone to think that these difficult things were somehow easy to me.

Once I completed my dissertation and graduated, I regained my confidence. Chalking it up to “grad school problems,” I thought I had figured out how to manage my anxiety and be more open about when I was struggling. Yet the last few years showed me I hadn’t gotten past sprezzatura.

I gave birth to my daughter Lucy in May 2020, during that first uncertain and scary wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other than the fear that I’d contract this unknown disease, I was fortunate to have a smooth pregnancy and delivery, even during lockdown. I returned to work 10 weeks later at Georgetown University, working remotely as an advising dean in our living room with Lucy on my lap. Eager to prove that I could work while caring for an infant, I smiled through Zoom meetings, highlighting Lucy’s cute moments while I advised students on managing remote learning during a global pandemic and racial reckoning. My appointment calendar quickly filled up with student meetings: my advisees were so lost during the pandemic and wanted not just guidance but virtual companionship. I raced to be fast with emails, showing that I was able to keep up with the relentless pace of my inbox. While breastfeeding, I gripped my phone, typing out emails. Using dictation tools, I could play with Lucy

on the floor and respond to students at the same time. On runs, I brought Lucy in the jogging stroller and took phone calls on my earbuds, desperate to get outside but also to keep up with the high volume of work requests. As much as I was trying to soak up the extra time with my new daughter, I was often distracted: one eye on Lucy and the other on the computer. I had become hyper-optimized to a fault, to my own detriment.

This unhealthy pace continued throughout my daughter’s first year. When spring came in 2021, I often brought a large blanket to the open field across the street from our house. A few blocks and the clouds in the sky were enough to captivate 10-month-old Lucy’s attention. The vaccine was on its way, and with fresh air, the promise of normalcy loomed. But I wasn’t just sitting with Lucy. Using my phone as a hot spot, I tried to knock out projects on my laptop while Lucy was occupied. One of my closest friends, whom I’ll call Ana, often said, “You’re making this all look so easy—how are you doing this?” I always thanked her for the compliment but shrugged off the question. My husband (whose job remained in person), often said proudly, “You’re showing that you really can do it all.” And it became my mantra—*I can do it all*. Or at least that’s how it appeared. I had happy moments with Lucy, but under the surface, my mind was constantly spinning.

What I wasn’t telling anyone about, or showing on Zoom calls, was the exhaustion. And it was a pandemic—everyone was exhausted and working around the clock. Emails poured in at all hours of the day (and night), and colleagues’ quick replies made me want to try to keep up. I was grateful that my colleagues had covered my work while I was on maternity leave, but I didn’t want them to think I wasn’t able to

manage the workload as a new mom. I was determined to look as if this was totally normal: working from home, caring for a newborn, and navigating the pandemic, all without losing my mind. Yet the facade was cracking and I was barely staying afloat.

Then it was Ana's turn to have a baby, and she asked me how I managed to do it all. The truth was: I wasn't. By using sprezzatura — by acting as if I was managing this high-wire balancing act without a safety net — I had failed Ana as a friend. I had misrepresented what it meant to be a working mother. My facade made it so that when her daughter arrived, Ana had a false sense of what to expect, all because I had concealed how much I was struggling and instead pretended to be “doing it all.”

Instead of chasing
effortlessness, now
I'm pursuing grit.

I needed to be more honest with my friends and family, especially when I was struggling. How could I do better? When someone asked how everything was going, was I going to politely respond “fine” and smile, lying through my teeth? No. Parenting, working, living through these “uncertain times” (at this point, the only certainty is the relentless unpredictability) is unmistakably difficult. To pretend otherwise would be disingenuous not to just myself but to all those who are also stuck in a spiral of self-doubt and insecurity.

So I have decided to ditch sprezzatura for another aspirational goal. Instead of chasing effortlessness, now I'm pursuing grit. I found inspiration in psychologist Angela Duckworth's 2018 book, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. Duckworth has spent her aca-

demic career researching resilience, and in discussing how grit can be a positive component of one's ethos, Duckworth noted, “Nobody wants to show you the hours and hours of becoming. They'd rather show the highlight of what they've become.”

Don't tell that to Emil Zátopek, the 1952 Czech Olympian who competed in the 5,000-meter, 10,000-meter, and marathon events. The greatest runners are usually lauded for graceful technique, with loping styles like a gazelle, but not Zátopek. His running style was distinct not for its beauty but for how painful it looked. He breathed heavily, and his face was often twisted in pain. When asked about why he looked so miserable, he said, “It isn't gymnastics or figure skating, you know” — alluding to the fact that form is not judged, just the ability to finish first. He was physically and mentally gritty, and that perseverance earned him the extraordinary hat trick of three gold medals in a single Olympic Game: the only distance runner to accomplish such a feat.

Zátopek never hesitated to reveal his discomfort, supporting Duckworth's idea that “being gritty doesn't mean not showing pain or pretending everything is OK. In fact, when you look at healthy and successful and giving people, they are extraordinarily meta-cognitive. . . . That ability to reflect on yourself is signature to grit.”

Like Zátopek, I'm a gritty runner. My breathing is often labored (certainly compared to my running partner — I always say she's the pretty one and I'm the gritty one), and my stride doesn't look effortless. But my grittiness gets me to the finish line and reminds me that this isn't always easy to do.

In the filtered world of social media, where images are posed and edited to

the extent that they no longer reflect reality, it's easy to see how sprezzatura can flourish today. But as a parent, adviser, and teacher, I'd rather show my grit and be authentic in the moments of difficulty.

There is still a lot I find fascinating about the Renaissance. But sprezzatura is no longer something I aspire to. In the classroom, on my runs, and at home, I'm chasing grit. **P**

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WORKING WHILE FOREIGN

An Ongoing Journey

In early December 2022, I was listening to NPR's *Morning Edition* over breakfast, a ritual of mine for 15 years since moving to the United States to pursue graduate school. A segment caught my ear: ominous layoffs in big tech suddenly imperiled the legal residency of affected foreign workers on H-1B status.

The story was too familiar. In 2020–21, I had faced exactly the same situation as a tenure-track faculty member in history at a small university, but there had been little mainstream media coverage of this issue. A historian of modern China born and raised in China and trained in the United States, I have been forced to navigate my job searches as a foreign national mostly on my own. I hope sharing my personal experiences here can be a first step in raising awareness about the compounded challenges of seeking employment and maintaining immigration status for noncitizen historians.

I came to the United States in 2007 for a PhD in education, but I gradually found my passion for history instead. I started anew as a doctoral student in modern Chinese history at another university in 2011 and completed my degree in six years. In spring 2017, I accepted a lecturer position in the United States over a postdoctoral fellowship overseas, fearing that it would be difficult to return under the Trump admin-

istration's hard-line immigration policies. Thanks to my first university job, my visa category changed from F-1 for students to H-1B for professional workers without my having to enter the lottery mandated for those in the private sector. One year later, I accepted a tenure-track job across the country. Teaching East Asian and world history in a small school would at least be a stable job, or so I thought.

Born and raised in China and trained in the United States, I have been forced to navigate my job searches as a foreign national mostly on my own.

Stability is often believed to be a perk of an academic job, but for those on H-1B, the employer's sponsorship of legal permanent residency (also known as a green card) is an indispensable yet precarious component. Though my first job was not tenure track, the university actually filed the first paperwork of my green card petition in the beginning of my second semester. A few weeks later, I was offered the tenure-track job. I hardly had time to cele-

brate my professional advancement before learning that changing jobs while on H-1B had serious implications for my immigration status.

First, the petition filed by my first job would not be portable, meaning that I had to start the process all over again at my next job. As reasonable as this sounds, it puts some immigrants at additional disadvantage. Generally speaking, a foreign national with an advanced degree and their employer need to file three steps of paperwork with different US government agencies before they can receive a green card. Each step involves considerable filing fees and attorney fees and takes from months to years to process, all without the guarantee of approval. Because of the limited annual quota for such green cards, additional criteria restrict the filing of the final-step paperwork. It depends on the preference category, the priority date (when the government receives the employer's filing of the first-step paperwork), and the foreign national's country of birth – only seven percent of one year's quota can come from any one country. Those who happen to be born in India and China, the world's two most populous countries, are usually stuck in limbo for years unless they are married to someone born in other countries. In my case, losing the petition by my first employer meant that my spot in an already depressingly long line would be pushed back to a future unknown date.

Moreover, an H-1B holder has 60 days between jobs to sort out their legal status, or they risk overstaying the visa. The grace period was a new benefit that took effect in the last days of the Obama administration. But the faculty contract that runs alongside the academic year usually has a gap of more than 60 days in summer, and

I was unable to negotiate flexible contract dates with either university. As a result, I had to cancel a conference trip to China scheduled in mid-May right after the spring semester and void the nonrefundable ticket. I had agreed to participate before knowing my career change. Instead, I packed up my belongings, drove to a

friend's place along the way to my next job to drop them off, and flew back to China before the end of the grace period to apply for an H-1B visa tied to my new employer. That visa allowed me to come back to the United States in early August 2018, and I then drove across several states to start my new job.



For academics working in the United States on temporary visas, losing a job may also mean having to abandon their entire adult lives.

Javier Rodríguez/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0

I thought having a tenure-track job would entail a smoother path to a green card. Although I heard about possibilities of self-petitioning, I never seriously considered those options. The university promised to sponsor my green card in the offer letter, and there was indeed some action from its retained law firm in the first semester. But things quickly stalled. As I pleaded with my department chair and dean throughout 2019 to talk to the provost about my predicament, news of the coronavirus started to trickle in. The university went fully remote in late March 2020, and rumors of faculty layoffs soon swirled.

During the lockdown, I realized that I could no longer rely on my employer to sponsor my permanent residency. That summer, I started doing homework about self-petitioning while continuing my scholarly writing. I paid a small law firm out of pocket and worked with an immigration attorney with a BA in the humanities. I compiled a large packet of relevant documents, and went back and forth many times with professional contacts to review and finalize a particular genre of recommendation letters drafted by the attorney and me. On October 5, 2020, the government received the petition filed by my attorney as a “national interest waiver” case. It was fortunately approved almost a year later, which made the date of receipt, my priority date, not tied to any employer. I finally had my place in line, though I still need to wait for my turn to submit the final-step paperwork for the green card. As of March 2023, those born in China in my preference category are only able to do that if their priority date was June 8, 2019, or earlier. For those born in India, the cutoff was October 8, 2011. The monthly updated priority date does not simply inch forward; it often stalls months on end and even backslides.

A few weeks after filing, and right after the 2020 election, the university informed me and a dozen or so other junior faculty that it would not renew our contracts beyond spring 2021. The university never filed any immigration paperwork on my behalf. Rather than feeling bitter, I had to focus on solving the entangled problems of finding a job during the pandemic and maintaining my status, as the 60-day rule would kick in once my contract ended. In the remainder of that academic year, I sent out almost 100 applications for university faculty positions, postdocs, and private high school teaching jobs. Former professors and colleagues also kindly offered leads on other possibilities. But they did not know that many jobs would not sponsor or qualify for the H-1B status. In spring 2021, I was offered an instructor position once again across the country, which would sponsor my H-1B. Only after it was approved by the government in early summer did I tell my parents that I would move across the United States again to pursue “a better career opportunity.” Despite the 20 percent pay cut and long-distance move, I was grateful to be able to stay in the country where I had spent the majority of my adulthood.

The university never filed any immigration paperwork on my behalf.

As my scramble for jobs gradually settled, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* fortuitously published a series titled “Forced Out,” stories of those who lost jobs in higher education during the pandemic. None of those featured, however, had to juggle job loss and immigration status. In the same issue, the only coverage about international actors in American higher education was

the financial implications of the dwindling enrollment of international students, many from China. The series introduction solicited more stories from readers, and I wrote back to offer my own. What I got was just a message from a junior editor who promised to forward my story to the senior editors.

Shortly before moving for the instructor position, I applied for my current job in New York without much expectation. Yet their initial interview email came as I drove to Montana. Eventually I was offered the job but had to face the uncertainty of the transfer of my H-1B, which was finally approved five months after I started working in October 2021. In anticipation of international travel for work, I decided to apply for a new H-1B visa in Canada in October 2022. It was impossible to get it done in the United States, and there were still many restrictions on returning to China. As I could not know in advance how long the visa application would take, I only got a one-way ticket to Ottawa to be on the safe side.

Despite all such inconveniences, I learned a lot from the unexpected turns in my career. As I had taken the risk of leaving the education PhD program for history a decade earlier, I took another one in 2021 on an at-will position that could make a bigger impact on the ecology of social scientific research. In the meantime, I won the bragging right of moving across the United States twice in a year. **P**

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CLAY RISEN

PROFESSIONAL CRAFTS

The Fuzzy Border between History and Journalism



Is the link between history and journalism as strong as some seem to think?
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In 1963, *Newsweek* publisher Phil Graham traveled to London to meet with the magazine's ranks of foreign correspondents. In a speech he prepared for the occasion that might have otherwise been almost immediately forgotten, he lauded his audience for writing "the first rough draft of history." The reporters, knowing a good quote when they heard one, were soon repeating it to their colleagues across the Atlantic.

The phrase, often minus the "rough," helped cement a relationship between journalism and history, two professions that have traditionally trod alongside each other, stepping in each other's paths as they went. Jon Meacham and Robert Caro built noteworthy careers as reporters before becoming Pulitzer Prize-winning historians despite their lack of advanced degrees, while Arthur Schlesinger Jr. blamed his failure to complete his multivolume history of the New Deal on his weakness for writing political dispatches for newsmagazines.

Such blurred borders are a part of any pursuit that aspires to be a profession but can't escape being a craft, and all in all, that's a good thing. Journalists benefit from thinking historically, and historians benefit from learning to write for general readers. But there are risks, too, when journalists and historians fail to appreciate the strengths and limits of each other's endeavors, and end up abusing them—and dis-serving the public.

Blurred borders are a part of any pursuit that aspires to be a profession but can't escape being a craft. That's a good thing.

The origins of Graham's phrase are murkier than he might have admitted. Jack Shafer, writing in *Slate* in 2010, traced it to another journalist, Alan Barth, writing in the *New Republic* in 1943. Barry Popik, a linguist, found it in use as early as 1905. It seems possible that Graham, who was also publisher of the *Washington Post*, cribbed the phrase from one of the newspaper's reporters, who had used a version of the phrase in an article years before Graham adopted it as his own.

The murkiness, as Shafer notes, is the point: The phrase has many parents because almost every journalist wants to believe it. We journalists hope that someday, some historian will resurrect our transitory, daily scribbles in the service of some masterpiece, perhaps even cite us in their text. Offering this small service to future scholars is our contribution to civilization—a bid for immortality cloaked in modesty, a claim by a much-derided profession on one more highly esteemed.

And just as journalists hope that historians will use our work, we also rely heavily on theirs. Many, perhaps most, journalists consider themselves amateur historians. I've worked in many newsrooms where potted histories outnumber potted plants. Journalists pile their desks with biographies and historical surveys and fill their prose with knowing name-checks to some obscure politician or pivotal battle. On a rare occasion, a journalist might even visit an archive. Meanwhile, many historians wait eagerly for a reporter to cite their latest book or even interview them for a quotation. If journalists fear their writing is ephemeral, at least they can enjoy knowing that many people encounter their work, if only briefly. Most historians can't say that.

Then there are the historians who, like Schlesinger, become addicted to the sugar-rush high of daily journalism, to watching their writing fly into the world without having to slog through the peer-review swamp. Some even learn how to hack the system by packaging the past in tidy quick takes fashioned for the news of the day: what Ukraine can learn from Napoleon's invasion of Russia, the lessons of Watergate for whatever happens to be the political scandal of the moment. Editors adore these sorts of articles, if only because readers do too.

There is a problem, though, with this symbiotic relationship. Too many journalists misunderstand the uses of history. They take as gospel another chestnut about history—how it doesn't repeat itself but it often rhymes—which is clever and true, except for all the cases when it is neither. And too many historians are happy to oblige them, or are at least unwilling to correct them, perhaps out of fear they won't get quoted.

Such abuse matters. Giving the past undue weight can skew the way journalists interpret the present, especially if they misunderstand the past, reduce it to simplistic bits, or fail to account for advances in historiography. And because journalism is often the only way that many readers engage with historical research, this abuse should be of concern to anyone committed to writing serious history.

Journalists too often tend toward uncritical presentism. Like most people, they figure that drawing useful lessons from the past to aid the present is what the study of history is there for. Like most people, they lack the tools to do this well. There is of course nothing wrong with looking to the past to see how it informs the present. But journalists often look to the past from the present, directly exporting their mores and assumptions to a time that in fact looks nothing like our current moment, taking superficial similarities as dispositive instead of looking under the hood to see all the differences.

Journalists too rarely ask whether the evidence fits the claim. They cherry-pick material. They accept assertions of varying levels of quality; if a historian can be found to support a claim, a journalist won't look too far to see how other historians assess their work.

In the early 2000s, journalists who favored the invasion of Iraq drew on the postwar occupations of Germany and Japan to find comforting parallels, noting that in those earlier cases, the vanquished passed easily into peace, and that the people eagerly accepted the victors' mandate. But these cases were not so simple, and historians have argued for decades over the details of the post-World War II occupations. Grappling with that debate, let alone recognizing all the differences between then and now, was too much to ask of journalists under pressure to offer readers relatively simple arguments and story lines.

Or consider the cottage industry that emerged in the late 2010s around comparing the Trump presidency to the rise of Nazism in 1930s Germany. Both historians and journalists jumped on this analogy, arguing, even on the eve of the 2022 midterms, that American democracy was a latter-day Weimar and just as likely to collapse under pressure by the Far Right. Books like Timothy Snyder's best-selling *On Tyranny* fed scores of historical analyses, including in the *New York Times*, endorsing the notion that the darkest moment in modern history was about to repeat itself.

Too few stopped to examine all the ways such an analogy might not apply. While anything could happen, and no democracy lasts forever, after the 2022 midterms, it seems that America's Weimar turn is a long way off, and that the easy analogies fall apart in the face of much more significant differences. The Far Right is less powerful than journalists imagined, and less attractive to mainstream voters. American voters do not, by and large, believe the conspiracy theories at the heart of Trumpism. The center was always going to hold.

Nor did many journalists consider whether telling readers that the worst is coming might obscure all the ways that something less worse, but still pretty bad, is more likely at hand. We were probably never at risk of becoming another Germany. But the slow, unprecedented erosion of democratic norms doesn't need to end in crisis for it to be a worrying development.

It's easy to excuse such malfeasance by citing deadlines. We don't expect journalists to take deep dives in the archives when their editor is screaming for copy. Then again, we do expect them to get the details right when they're dealing

with issues like interest rates or climate science. Journalists can get away with abusing history in a way they could never do if they were covering economics or global warming.

Not all journalists are guilty of these crimes. Peter Baker, my colleague at the *Times*, does a noteworthy job of deploying history as a reference point without drawing analogies or causalities. And there are many admirable journalists turned historians: Meacham, Caro, Mark Bowden, Isabel Wilkerson.

But they are exceptions, and there are few incentives for others to follow them. It is up to historians to change that.

One great contribution historians can make is to engage more fully with journalists, to show how history rarely offers neat analogies, and to show how to be more careful in attempting to deploy them. In response to journalists who come looking for the easy sound bite, historians need to take the less alluring, less quotable road, explaining the dangerous difficulty of historical analogy. It might not get them cited in the *New York Times*, but it will go a long way toward making for better journalism.

Historians need to take the less
alluring, less quotable road,
explaining the dangerous difficulty
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Journalists have a role to play as well. They need to understand that history is more than just a kit of parts to add color or rhetorical oomph to an argument. They need to understand the weirdness of the past, that even recent history is a distant country, and that what happened then very rarely offers bright illumination onto the present.

Historians must show journalists how their scholarship is less useful to journalists than they might think. And journalists need to see the value in such advice, even if it means they don't get the quote they were looking for. **P**

Clay Risen is a reporter for the New York Times and the author, most recently, of The Crowded Hour: Theodore Roosevelt, the Rough Riders, and the Dawn of the American Century. He is currently writing a history of the Second Red Scare.

LAUREN MACIVOR THOMPSON

HELD

Legal Authority and the Abuse of History



In discussing and deciding abortion-related cases, judges and journalists have both shown a recent disregard for historical nuance.

ABORTION HAS always been a great legal and social paradox: the most intimate of bodily experiences, yet subject to the most acute public scrutiny. Between 1973 (when *Roe v. Wade* was decided) and 2022, Americans had the constitutional right to an abortion, upending a century of restrictive laws in every state that punished women, their families, and their doctors in different combinations and to varying degrees.

Yet this past June, the US Supreme Court delivered a new verdict on abortion law. The landmark case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* detonated nearly 50 years of *Roe*'s precedent and has rained down confusion on an already chaotic landscape of existing state-level abortion law and policy. As the decision read, "Held: The Constitution does not confer a right to an abortion."

History as legal authority appears in the core evidence Justice Samuel Alito cited in his majority opinion. *Dobbs*, of course, is not the first time that historical scholarship has been applied in court. Major legal questions, including the right to same-sex marriage, gun rights, and gender equality cases, have relied on historians as experts. Similarly, in *Dobbs*, historians helpfully contributed an amicus curiae brief that distilled decades of scholarship for the court's edification, but Alito summarily dismissed this work in the opinion, noting it provided "no persuasive answer" to the question of abortion as a constitutional right. Instead, he used the same kind of rationales that have appeared in the media and shaped our public discourse on abortion. Using only English legal history sources and case law, plus records of white male physicians and white male lawmakers, Alito concluded that these documents show that abortion has always been a crime and has never been common or a deeply rooted constitutional right. In the court's estimation, the important men who advocated for the first abortion restrictions in the 19th century were never motivated by anything but a concern for life. Alito then cited the racial abuses of forced abortions and sterilization of Native American, Latinx, and Black women as justification for the other half of his argument – that feminists and abortion rights proponents in the 20th century had only racist and eugenic motives. Finally, he contended that returning the issue of abortion to the states to be voted on will restore it to its rightful place in the democratic process, magnanimously noting that women certainly have the ability to vote on the issue as they choose. Interestingly, he somehow failed to mention the fact that women didn't have the right to vote when state legislatures first began making abortion law.

Historians including Leslie J. Reagan, James Mohr, Janet Farrell Brodie, Susan E. Klepp and Leslie Gordon have worked for

decades to uncover the multifaceted origins of abortion law and the stories of the people impacted and punished. They have examined the historical concept of quickening and its legal meanings in the prosecution of historic abortion cases. They have illustrated with ample primary source evidence how the passage of abortion laws in the 19th century was rooted in a variety of motivations. Unlike the court's assertion that these early laws were rooted solely in a sincerely held belief that abortion is murder, historians have shown that actually a variety of factors drove legislators and doctors to work together to make abortion illegal beginning in the 1820s. Rationales included white supremacy and nativism, a desire by the medical profession to eliminate their professional competition like midwives (who often performed abortions), and backlash against the century's robust female reform movements. The simplicity of the court's holding has elided much of that complex historical work, even as it has also wielded parts of it as a blunt cudgel to cut down rights in the present day. The court's conclusion? There has never been an explicit constitutional right to terminate a pregnancy in the past; therefore, there shouldn't be one now.

Expert historians helpfully contributed an amicus curiae brief that distilled decades of scholarship for the court's edification, but Justice Alito summarily dismissed them.

The court and now some states have decided to use the existence of harsh abortion laws in the past as the basis for reinstating them. This kind of circular reasoning presents a strange paradigm in the making of new abortion law. But what happens when the history our lawmakers use to justify their rationales is (if we are aiming to be generous about their knowledge) incomplete?

Worse, what happens when those tasked with informing the public similarly propagate historical misconceptions based on simplistic or cherry-picked readings of sources? A *Wall Street Journal* editorial in the summer of 2022, for example, was titled "Yes, Susan B. Anthony Was Pro-Life." Authored by two board members of the Anthony birthplace museum, the piece used selective evidence to claim that suffragists like Anthony openly lobbied for strict abortion laws in the 1870s and were on the record as antiabortion. Neither is true. There are no records from Anthony herself on abortion that we know

of, and several articles about abortion (falsely attributed to her authorship) in her newspaper, the *Revolution*, actually make a much different case for reform. These editorials, which historians have determined were unlikely to have been written by Anthony or her co-editor Elizabeth Cady Stanton, instead argued that harsh abortion laws unfairly punished women and children and failed to deter the practice. The editorial's message nonetheless boiled down to something like "feminists in the past didn't like abortion, so we should stop equating it now with women's rights!" The historical relationship between suffrage and reproductive rights is complex, but what is clear here is that history—at least some interpretation of it—is being employed as authority.

Other messaging in our public discussions of abortion has centered on the idea that women rarely sought abortions in the past and that modern women who do so today have been haplessly manipulated by a radical feminist movement. In 2019, journalist Cokie Roberts claimed on NPR's *Morning Edition* that abortion was uncommon in the past when answering a listener's question. She told the caller, "The history of [abortion] is as fraught as the politics. There are many articles by abortion rights proponents who claim the procedure was so common that newspapers advertised providers. Look, I did a search of 19th-century newspapers and couldn't find them."

Lawyers choose the evidence that best wins the argument, regardless of what it leaves out or disproportionately magnifies.

Roberts was technically right about the newspapers. If you type the word "abortion" into a database of 19th-century newspapers and periodicals, you might not find much, except perhaps sensationalized reports on legal cases. These news stories frequently included gruesome accounts of botched surgical abortions that resulted in women's deaths and rabid speculation about whether the doctor performing the abortion had sought to conceal the evidence.

However, historians know to turn the page and look at the hundreds of advertisements selling "Female pills to regulate the menses" or announcing the opening of offices for a "Female Doctress. Treats Diseases of her Sex." We know that the coded language used in these ads, like "mother's friend" or "womb regulation," reveals just how common it was for women to actively manage their menstrual cycles and induce

abortions on their own using patent medicines, or with the help of an abortionist. Historians have also learned to read meaning in what others might dismiss as vague, inconsequential, or even absent—a passing reference to a miscarriage in a letter or diary, or a woman's oblique reference to a mysterious pregnancy while enslaved or confined in a state-run institution. Legislative session texts or medical journals also have their own importance as primary documents, but good historical work on abortion actively questions whose records were important enough to save and interrogates the contexts of the people who made the records in the first place.

Antiabortion lawyers, judges, and legislators have thus far merely shrugged at historians' urgings to consider what the sources actually tell us about the past or what the future might hold as far as the realities and impacts of harsh abortion laws. Their responses convey a dismissively glib rebuke: "this is how the law works." One chooses the evidence that best wins the argument, regardless of what it leaves out or disproportionately magnifies. What matters in the end is what the statute says and less so the consequences for individuals' lives or public health. The fatuous insistence on formalism and the elevation of "the law" above social context is disingenuous, however. When it comes to abortion laws, the men who made them in the past knew exactly what they were doing and it is no different today. In the meantime, part of the work of historians is to continue to expose the hypocrisy of their most ahistorical arguments. **P**

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Eugen Weber Book Prize

The Department of History at UCLA encourages submissions for the 2024 Eugen Weber Book Prize in French History. A prize for the best book in modern French history (post 1815) over the previous two years, this award is named for eminent French historian Eugen Weber (1925-2007). Professor Weber served on the History faculty at UCLA from 1956 until 1993 and was renowned as a teacher and scholar for being able to bring the French and European past to life.

The Eugen Weber Book Prize in French History brings a cash award of \$15,000 and the winner will be announced at the American Historical Association annual meeting in January 2024. The author will be invited to visit UCLA to speak about his or her work and receive the prize during the spring of 2024.

Books eligible for the 2024 prize are those written in English or French and published in 2021 or 2022.

The deadline for submissions is June 1, 2023. Submission information is available at <https://history.ucla.edu/content/eugen-weber-book-prize>.



The prize has been awarded twice, in 2022 to Judith G. Coffin for *Sex, Love, and Letters: Writing Simone de Beauvoir* (Cornell University Press, 2020) and in 2020 to Christine Haynes, for *Our Friends the Enemies: The Occupation of France After Napoleon* (Harvard University Press, 2018).

For more information, visit <http://history.ucla.edu>.

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COMPILED BY LIZ TOWNSEND

2023 AHA NOMINATIONS

The Nominating Committee for 2023–24, chaired by Sharlene Sinegal-DeCuir (Xavier Univ., La.), met in February and offers the following candidates for offices of the Association that are to be filled in the election this year. Voting by AHA members will begin June 1.

President

Thavolia Glymph, Duke University (Peabody Family Distinguished Professor of History and Professor of Law; slavery, emancipation, plantation societies and economies, gender, women)

President-elect

Lauren Benton, Yale University (Barton M. Biggs Professor; global, comparative European empires, legal)

Ben Vinson III, Case Western Reserve University (Hiram C. Haydn Professor and Provost; African diaspora, colonial Mexico)

Research Division

Vice President

Joseph S. Meisel, Brown University (Joukowsky Family University Librarian and adjunct associate professor, history; British politics and public culture)

William G. Thomas III, University of Nebraska–Lincoln (Angle Chair in the Humanities; American legal, digital scholarship)

Councilor

Andrew L. Johns, Brigham Young University and David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies (professor; US foreign relations, 20th-century US political, executive-legislative relations)

Jana Lipman, Tulane University (professor; 20th-century US, US foreign relations, US immigration, labor)

Professional Division

Councilor

Kristin O’Brassill-Kulfan, Rutgers University (assistant teaching professor and coordinator, public history; 19th-century US, social, public)

Lindsay J. O’Neill, University of Southern California (teaching associate professor; early modern information distribution, Black experience in Britain)

Teaching Division

Councilor

Valencia Abbott, Rockingham Early College High School (social studies/history teacher; local, African American history)

Jennifer Baniewicz, Amos Alonzo Stagg High School (teacher; US, AP US, AP European, Western civilization)

At Large

Councilor

Pragya Kaul, University of Michigan (PhD candidate; Europe, global and world, Asia)

Travis Wright, Indiana University (PhD candidate; modern US)

Committee on Committees

Ernesto Capello, Macalester College (professor; Latin America/Ecuador, urban, mountains, visual culture, transnational imaginaries)

Julio Capó Jr., Florida International University (associate professor; 20th-century queer Miami, transnational Caribbean-US sexuality)

Nominating Committee

Slot 1

Anthony Steinhoff, Université du Québec à Montréal (associate professor; modern Germany/France, modern European religion, Wagner/opera/culture in German-speaking Europe, urban)

Edward Westermann, Texas A&M University–San Antonio (Texas A&M Regents Professor; perpetrator motivation and the Holocaust, comparative genocide)

Slot 2

Matthew Restall, Penn State University (professor; colonial Latin America, Maya history)

Camilo Trumper, University at Buffalo, State University of New York (associate professor; Latin America, urban)

Slot 3

Amanda Moniz, Smithsonian's National Museum of American History (David M. Rubenstein Curator of Philanthropy; early America, humanitarianism)

Brett Rushforth, University of Oregon (associate professor; early American slavery, French Atlantic, Indigenous America)

Nominations may also be made by petition; each petition must carry the signatures of 100 or more members of the Association in good standing and indicate the particular vacancy for which the nomination is intended. Nominations by petition must be in the hands of the Nominating Committee on or before May 1 and should be sent to the AHA office at 400 A St. SE, Washington, DC 20003. All nominations must be accompanied by certification of willingness of the nominee to serve if elected. In distributing the annual ballot to the members of the Association, the Nominating Committee shall present and identify such candidates nominated by petition along with its own candidates. **P**

Liz Townsend is manager, data administration and integrity, at the AHA and the staff member for the Nominating Committee.



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The American Historical Association proudly announces

The Tikkun Olam Prize for Promoting Public Historical Literacy

Tikkun Olam (Hebrew, תִּקּוּן עוֹלָם): "to repair the world"

The Tikkun Olam Prize for Promoting Public Historical Literacy addresses a major problem in American public culture, which inhibits the operation of democratic institutions, and processes: **the breadth and depth of historical illiteracy**. This prize honors individuals whose work has promoted historical literacy in public culture, with the abiding hope that such work will indeed help "to repair the world." **Everything has a history and history can be practiced in all sorts of ways. This prize places no limitations on genre, venue, or topic.**

Nominees will be recommended by the executive director and AHA president for approval by the AHA Council. The inaugural Tikkun Olam prize will be announced this fall and presented at the AHA's 2024 annual meeting in San Francisco.

The Tikkun Olam Prize was established thanks to a generous gift from Jerold Kellman.

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István Deák

1926–2023

Historian of Europe;
AHA 50-Year Member

“I thought my name was Stefano!” was one of the most ridiculous sentences István Deák ever threw at me. About 20 years ago, I forwarded him an email, and being the careful reader he was, he immediately noticed I had written “Deák thinks” instead of “István thinks.” He relished that I, his “Italy student,” usually called him by the Italian version of his name, Stefano. The offense he felt at being referred to as Deák was the flip side of that coin: he felt boxed in to being a figure instead of a person. “I thought we were friends! Am I just politics for you?”

Stefano was not just a friend, and I want to use this space to write an obituary that he would want to read. He hated when academic historians wrote only for academics. He declared many times that he learned his craft not from his beloved dissertation advisor at Columbia University, Fritz Stern, but instead from his *New York Review of Books* editor, Rob Silvers. He thought of history as something that happened in real time. That’s how he taught his graduate classes: Oxford debates that ended with a vote on which historian had been most convincing. (I won three times, lost once.)

Why did so many students at activist Columbia flock to his classes during the 1970s–90s culture wars, even though he taught and wrote almost exclusively about white, mostly male Europe? The answer is simple: Stefano abhorred convenient histories and paid notice to uncomfortable truths. He focused on the human experience and seduced readers to take note through his lively prose. His first book on left-wing Weimar intellectuals was good. Every book thereafter was better, and his last three are masterpieces. I think my favorite is *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848–1918* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), in which he deftly re-created the social, cultural, political, and economic worlds of Habsburg military officers from the Italian Alps to the Carpathian Mountains. I teach his last book, *Europe on Trial: The Story of Collaboration, Resistance, and Retribution during World War II* (Westview Press, 2015), most. In it, Deák pushed for writing carefully researched history that engaged

with the largest of moral questions about personal responsibility, while simultaneously avoiding the pitfalls of heroizing, villainizing, scapegoating, overabstraction, and overindividualization.

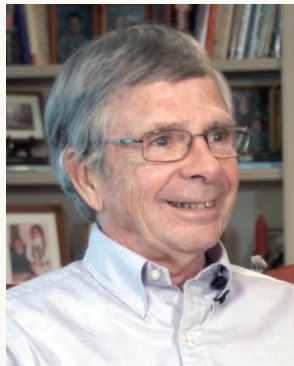
The avalanche of memorials in the works are in part a response to his publications. But I think it was his inclusive sociality that built the broad network so eager to commemorate him. István knit together people of every age, gender, denomination, ethnicity, and standing in formal and informal ways: through collaborative projects like *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2000), co-edited with Tony Judt and Jan T. Gross; his visiting professorship with Norman Naimark at Stanford University; deep engagement with the Central European University; and his always packed, always classy cocktail and dinner parties. His wife, Gloria, once quipped that they had probably hosted half of Hungary and a sizable chunk of eastern Europe in their Riverside apartment. His daughter, Éva, remembers the incessant click-clacking of her parents working away at their respective manuscripts, while a rotating door of kind Europeans sifted through, whispering in a Babylonian collection of languages.

The last time we had lunch together in his kitchen, he said, “I wish I had done what Tony [Judt] did. I failed.” I just laughed, and I argued back in the familiar tones he responded to most, “Babe, you made a world where we don’t need to bow to master narratives. You let us have the oxygen to debate, to wonder, to never take any story as more important than another – and yet to not feel useless in our relativism.” He smiled and then offered me some more horseradish.

There are scores of historians in and outside central Europe who attribute their work to Deák. Many of these acolytes virulently disagree with one another. That’s the horizon he opened: history is about the challenge, the care, the empathy, the fight, and writing so people know that it’s explosive matter. You succeeded too, Stefano. And because of you, our vision of the past and present will never be the same. Stefano was a cherished friend who I mourn – but Deák remains a teacher for us all.

Dominique Kirchner Reill
University of Miami

Photo courtesy Éva Peck



George C. Herring

1936–2022

Historian of US Foreign Relations

George C. Herring, historian of the Vietnam War and US foreign relations, died on November 30, 2022, in Lexington, Kentucky. He was 86 years old. He served as Alumni Professor of History at the University of Kentucky, where he taught from 1969 until his retirement in 2005.

Born in southwestern Virginia in 1936, he admitted to being a “poster boy” for the “Silent Generation,” being “apolitical, devoid of ambition and sense of purpose, floating with an uncertain tide.” After graduating from Roanoke College in 1957, he pondered careers in law and journalism but found his way into history after a two-year stint in the US Navy.

While in graduate school at the University of Virginia, he gravitated toward military and diplomatic history despite the department having no specialist. He wrote his dissertation on lend-lease, largely sparked by a fellowship where he organized the papers of Edward Stettinius, the former director of the program. He later admitted that the final product “lacked a strong thesis and placement in the literature.” Herring finished his PhD and began his first faculty position at Ohio University in 1965, the year that President Lyndon Johnson sent the first US combat forces to Vietnam.

Herring published the first of his eight books in 1972, *Aid to Russia, 1941–1946: Strategy, Diplomacy, the Origins of the Cold War* (Columbia Univ. Press). It received good reviews and contributed significantly to the emerging postrevisionist literature on the origins of the Cold War. He noted that his next project “was a product of the events themselves,” which centered on the divisive Vietnam War. His long-standing interest in Southeast Asia led him to teach a course on the war in 1973 that ensured the “more I learned, the more I wanted to know.”

He subsequently published *America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950–1975* (Wiley, 1979; 6th ed. 2019), which remains a standard for understanding US involvement in Vietnam. Herring shaped the field alongside others including Marilyn Young and Lloyd Gardner. Fredrik Logevall

(Harvard Univ.) stressed “it’s a fair guess that it has taught more Americans about the war than any other book.” Herring added more to the scholarly debate on the war in Vietnam with an edited version of the negotiating volumes of the Pentagon Papers and his book *LBJ and Vietnam: A Different Kind of War* (Univ. of Texas Press, 1994).

Herring’s last major work was the magisterial *From Colony to Superpower: US Foreign Relations since 1776* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2008). In a thousand pages, he challenged many preconceptions of the long durée of US foreign policy by showing extensive engagement with the world since the American Revolution. It was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and received strong reviews, including one that noted his “Herculean power of synthesis” that “recaptures a quarter-millennium of American foreign policy with fluidity and felicity.” It is unlikely to be surpassed by any other similar work for many years, educating scholars and the public about the US role in the world since its founding. The book also received the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations’ (SHAFR) 2008 Robert Ferrell Award for the best book in the field.

Herring served as editor of SHAFR’s journal, *Diplomatic History*, and as SHAFR president. He won fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Guggenheim Foundation and was granted membership in the Society of American Historians.

Herring was also a gifted teacher. The University of Kentucky recognized him with its Alumni Association Great Teacher Award and the Sturgill Award for Excellence in Graduate Education. In 2014, he was named to the University of Kentucky’s College of Arts and Sciences Hall of Fame.

But it is perhaps as a mentor that Herring will be most remembered and missed. His patience, kindness, and good humor served generations of graduate students. In Herring, they found a skilled editor and master of the narrative. They also found a good friend.

Robert K. Brigham
Vassar College

Kyle Longley
Chapman University

Photo courtesy University of Kentucky College of Arts and Sciences



Herbert Sloan

1945–2022

Historian of
Thomas Jefferson

In 1975, Herbert Sloan had been well launched on a promising career: in law. Sloan was born in Baltimore on September 27, 1945. His father, Herbert Elias Sloan, gained fame at the University of Michigan as the first surgeon to perform open-heart surgery in the state. Young Sloan grew up as a “faculty brat” in Ann Arbor, where he attended the University High School. He enrolled at Stanford University, graduating Phi Beta Kappa in 1969. Three years later, he earned a law degree from the University of Michigan, winning its celebrated moot court prize. He was immediately snapped up by Hughes Hubbard & Reed, a prestigious New York City law firm, where he specialized in bankruptcy law. But Sloan found the practice of law to be crushingly boring, and he longed to pursue his passion: history.

In 1976, he abandoned the legal profession and enrolled in the history doctoral program at Columbia University. At that time, many historians were eager to explore the lives of those whom the profession had neglected—the enslaved, working-class people, women. But in a pattern that would recur, Sloan went in an opposite direction from most others. He chose to study the most famous of the Founding Fathers—Thomas Jefferson and friends. Sloan was intrigued especially by Jefferson’s anguished relationship to debt. Jefferson had inherited debts, and married into larger ones, which compounded as he spent lavishly on Monticello and on consumer goods—especially books. Hounded by creditors, Jefferson realized he would die bankrupt. Sloan perceived that Jefferson’s fear of debt shaped his thinking about public policy. Government debt resulted in oppressive taxation that inevitably crushed future generations. Jefferson drew more on contemporary political economy than on (classical) republicanism, or so Sloan argued.

Sloan spent nearly two decades on this project—most of his 12 years in the Columbia graduate program, and another seven as an assistant professor at Barnard College, where he was hired in 1986. His book, *Principle and Interest: Thomas Jefferson and the Problem of Debt* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), was a major achievement; Richard John described it as “richly

textured, carefully argued, and extraordinarily learned” (*Journal of Economic History*, 1997).

Sloan’s contrarian perspective was a constant in his professional life. He was overheard asking students in his constitutional history course, “Don’t they teach Latin in high school anymore?” Sloan also shocked students—and some colleagues—by affirming that the American Revolution was a “colossal mistake.” Each year, he gave a talk on Constitution Day to scholars and general audiences, in which he contended that the nation’s founding document was a jerry-built mess of contradictions, culminating in its promise of securing the “blessings of liberty” while building the legal scaffolding of American slavery. Yet he was a fastidious scholar, serving in advisory roles for the Papers of Thomas Jefferson, the Center for Jefferson Studies, and the Papers of John Jay, and he consulted on countless projects in early American history.

He also served in numerous capacities at Barnard and Columbia. He chaired the Barnard history department (2007–10) and Barnard’s First-Year Seminar Program (1998–2005), and he was long affiliated with the Barnard Center for Research on Women, Columbia’s Phi Beta Kappa chapter, and other campus organizations. He also served on nearly 100 dissertation defenses and oral examinations at Columbia.

Despite his contrarianism, which at times edged into proud curmudgeonliness, Sloan was a beloved figure on Morning-side Heights. He won multiple teaching awards. Scores of graduate students, lost in the shuffle of the great university, found in Sloan someone willing to discuss any scholarly issue well into the night. Colleagues cherished Sloan’s astounding erudition—and his generosity in sharing lavish critiques of their manuscripts.

Sloan retired in 2015 but continued to work on his biography of Nancy Randolph, which remained uncompleted at the time of his death. He also taught some courses as an adjunct. When the adjunct faculty at Columbia went out on strike in 2021, Sloan, though hobbled, marched on the picket line.

Sloan died on October 23, 2022. He is survived by his four siblings: Ann Sloan Devlin, Elizabeth Sloan Smith, John K. Sloan, and Robert A. Sloan.

Mark C. Carnes
Barnard College, Columbia University

Photo courtesy Sloan family



Vine Deloria Jr.

1933–2005

Indigenous Scholar

Standing Rock Lakota citizen Vine Deloria Jr. was arguably the most intellectually gifted and articulate spokesperson for Indigenous nationhood in the 20th century. He walked on in 2005 at the age of 72.

Through his prodigious body of work—beginning with his best-selling *Custer Died for Your Sins* (Macmillan, 1969)—Vine sought to improve relationships among Indigenous nations as well as those between Native nations and non-Native governments. He was hailed in 1974 by *Time* magazine as a “Theological Superstar of the Future” and received many accolades from both Native and non-Native organizations throughout his life.

Vine was born into a prominent spiritual family. The anglicized name Deloria dates back to Francois des Lauriers, a French fur trapper who married a Dakota woman, Mazaicunwin (Blackfeet Band of Tetons), around 1800. Many of their descendants were holy people who sought to live amicably with the natural world and serve the community. Vine’s aunt, Ella Deloria, was a groundbreaking anthropologist, while his younger brother Philip (Sam) Deloria, a founding delegate of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, is a towering figure in Native law and politics. He is survived by his wife, Barbara, and children Philip, Daniel, and Jeanne; Philip himself is professor of history at Harvard University.

A prolific scholar, Vine authored or edited 29 books and over 200 articles and delivered countless addresses and testimonials. Perhaps even more impressive was the diverse range of intellectual disciplines he traversed with aplomb, including law, religion, natural and social sciences, literary criticism, and education. Through his historical work, he aimed to expand our understanding of the distinctive power of treaties, with critical analyses of important historical figures like John Collier and the Indian New Deal, and examinations of US constitutional history and its bearing on Native rights.

Early in his career, Vine focused broadly on writing popular political and legal tracts, providing critical terminology,

intellectual substance, and moral and spiritual foundations that inspired and galvanized Native America’s cultural, political, and legal renaissance. He later produced impressive studies, including *The Nations Within* (Pantheon Books, 1984); *Tribes, Treaties, and Constitutional Tribulations* (Univ. of Texas Press, 1999); and *The Legal Universe* (Fulcrum, 2011)—incisive critiques of federal Indian policy, constitutional law, education, and science. Equally important was a set of thematically connected works exploring religion, spirituality, metaphysics, and philosophy: *God Is Red* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1973), *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* (Harper and Row, 1979), and *The World We Used to Live In* (Fulcrum, 2006).

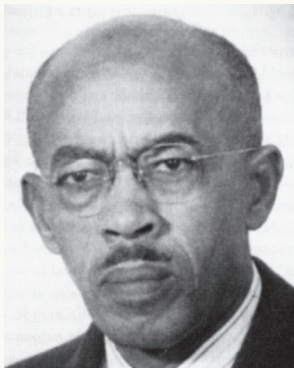
In addition to his academic credentials, he held important leadership positions. In the 1960s, he headed the National Congress of American Indians, the leading intertribal interest organization, and played a critical role in developing bodies such as the Institute for the Development of Indian Law and the National Museum of the American Indian.

To me, Vine was much more than the sum of all his accomplishments. Our paths first crossed in 1980, when he recruited me to the University of Arizona as part of a radical new MA program in political science. His goal was to train Native students and others in the contradictions and nuances of federal Indian policy, law, and treaty rights. As part of a small cohort of Native students, I was thrilled with the opportunity to study with him. We jokingly called ourselves “Vine’s Disciples,” not because we viewed him as a savior but because we knew we would receive profound lessons in what was required of us as we sought to defend our respective nations’ sovereignty and self-determination.

As Western science finally begins to comprehend (and perhaps even show respect for) the deep knowledges of Indigenous peoples; as there appears to be a dawning, broader understanding that no boundaries exist between us, the earth, and other creatures; as we defend water and life in places like Vine’s home at Standing Rock, I grieve that he is no longer here to guide our actions, to sharpen our minds—I worry we have arrived too late. And yet I still hear his voice—simultaneously mocking and encouraging, hopeful and cynical, caustic and kindly—admonishing me to keep writing. I am reminded that although he has walked on, he’s left a wealth of ideas that can help our world survive these dangerous times.

David E. Wilkins (Lumbee Nation)
University of Richmond

Photo: Christopher Richards



Lewis K. McMillan

1897–1974

Historian of Black
Higher Education

Lewis K. McMillan was the first full-time faculty member with an earned doctorate to teach at South Carolina State College (now South Carolina State University). By law, SC State could only enroll and employ members of the Negro race. Because only small numbers of African Americans earned doctorates in the first half of the 20th century, the college was unable to hire a faculty member with a PhD until McMillan arrived at the Orangeburg institution in 1947—over 50 years after its 1896 founding.

McMillan was born into rural poverty in Allendale, South Carolina, in 1897. He first attended public school at age 11 and attended a high school in Washington, DC, affiliated with Howard University. In 1922, he earned a bachelor's degree in social sciences at Howard, followed by a bachelor's in divinity from Yale University in 1925. McMillan went on to earn a PhD in history and philosophy from the University of Bonn in 1933.

He taught at several historically Black colleges and universities, including Virginia State, Bishop College, and Wilberforce University, before settling in at SC State to teach history and periodically German. McMillan was regarded by students and colleagues as affable but a bit eccentric. He invariably greeted those he encountered on the campus with a friendly “Hi, neighbor.” In one history class, he instructed students to copy the inscriptions on Confederate monuments located in their hometowns, which students considered an odd assignment.

McMillan's academic career ended abruptly in 1953 when he self-published *Negro Higher Education in the State of South Carolina*. Having worked diligently on the manuscript for several years, McMillan regarded his study as a balanced, scholarly, but critical examination of the state's Black colleges. Yet readers were outraged at McMillan's work. Black people complained that he blamed administrators and faculty members for embracing the status quo while detailing the woeful shortcomings of “their” schools. For example, he wrote that Allen University had lofty aims, but that it was “a monstrous bit of empty prattle,” and that its faculty “initiates nothing; it votes on nothing;

it determines nothing.” On Benedict College's preparation of Black teachers, who wrote “these young people will almost never get in trouble, for they are not taught to bother about anything that is substantial.” White people did not appreciate McMillan's condemnation of their neglect, indifference, and outright hostility to Black higher education. He wrote, “Neither the State's educational leadership nor its political leadership has ever placed [SC State] in the equation of the State's scheme of public higher education. Out there to itself, it serves now and always as a mere make-believe, a thing to point to when legal questions of educational equity are raised.” Rather than provoke reforms, as McMillan had hoped, its publication led to his swift dismissal from SC State.

There was no tenure policy in place for college faculty members. McMillan's appeals to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the American Association of University Professors, and the American Civil Liberties Union were greeted with a lack of interest and an unwillingness to intervene. He asked the college's all-white and all-male board of trustees to reinstate him, writing, “The only language I know, or have ever known, is the language of freedom—freedom of existence, freedom of thought, freedom of speech. Freedom, gentlemen, is for me a way of life.” They ignored his plea. In a letter to SC State president Benner C. Turner, historian Howard K. Beale (Univ. of Wisconsin) denounced his termination: “It seems to me that you are unworthy to be a president of a Negro college in the South if you are not, yourself, ashamed of your college and the terrible discrimination against Negroes in South Carolina.” But Beale did not suggest that the University of Wisconsin or any other predominantly white institution might employ McMillan. Turner blacklisted McMillan, and no HBCU would hire him. His career in higher education was over.

Exiled to Connecticut, McMillan taught at Bullard-Havens Technical High School. He also taught part time at the University of Hartford and in the evening program at the University of Bridgeport. He served on the Stratford Board of Education from 1963 to 1965. He was fond of Germany, and he made nostalgic visits in 1949 and 1967.

Lewis K. McMillan died in Stratford on July 7, 1974. He was survived by his wife, Kathryn, who he had married in 1943. She died in 2006. They had three children: Lewis K. McMillan Jr., Benet McMillan, and Elizabeth McMillan Baillergeau.

William C. Hine
South Carolina State University (emeritus)

Photo courtesy Historical Collection, South Carolina State University

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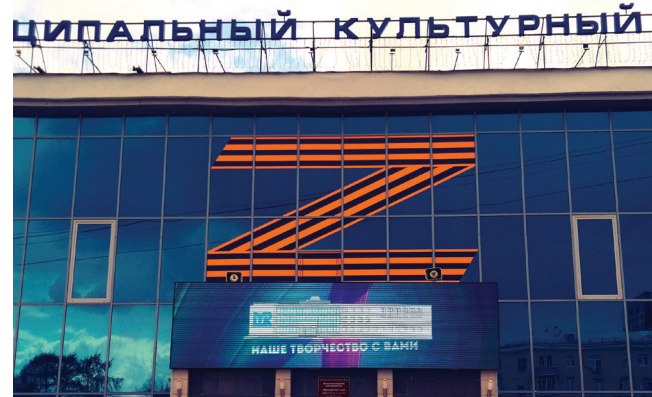
ST. GEORGE'S RIBBON

The Great Patriotic War, as the Soviet Union dubbed its battle with the Third Reich and its European allies from 1941 to 1945, was a life-and-death struggle with a genocidal enemy. Over eight and a half million Red Army soldiers and an estimated 12 to 20 million Soviet civilians died in the conflict. It was also the Soviet Union's greatest victory, providing the regime with a new narrative of legitimacy: the state and people uniting to save the world from fascism.

In Russia today, one of the most ubiquitous embodiments of the cult of the Great Patriotic War is the St. George's Ribbon. These orange-and-black strips of cloth, which vary in quality and size from about a foot in length to the facade of a whole building, have been distributed throughout Russia on the eve of Victory Day (May 9) since the 60th anniversary of World War II in 2005. They were initially an apolitical sign of solidarity with the disappearing generation that fought in World War II and pride in the Red Army's key role in defeating fascism.

The ribbon design contained several layers of meaning. Its striking orange-and-black color scheme—"the colors of smoke and flame"—was used in older Russian and Soviet medals. These colors were used for the Victory over Germany medal, issued in 1945 to all soldiers in the Red Army and featuring Stalin's profile. Prior to that, the same colors appeared on the Order of Glory, a medal supposedly designed by Stalin himself in 1943 to recognize rank-and-file soldiers. The Order of Glory in turn consciously imitated the Order of the Great Martyr and Victorious St. George, instituted by Catherine the Great in 1769 and known colloquially as the St. George's Cross.

The many parallels between the Soviet Order of Glory and the Imperial St. George's Cross were part of a conscious policy to reestablish connections to a romantic past. The Soviet regime publicized the Order of Glory, and after the war, black-and-orange ribbons became a standard decoration on postcards celebrating the victory. Despite regime changes, the color scheme thus celebrated bravery and victory regardless of ideology.



In the 21st century, the ribbon has taken on new ideological meaning. When mass protests broke out in Moscow in 2011–12, regime supporters wore St. George's Ribbons, drawing on Kremlin-based narratives that saw protesters as foreign agents and NATO as the inheritor of the Third Reich. In 2014, Russian-backed separatists in Donbas, declaring the Ukrainian state fascist, used the St. George's Ribbon to identify themselves. Finally, when Russian troops poured over the Ukrainian border in February 2022, turning what had been a limited conflict into a war, slogans such as "За победу!" ("For victory!") and "Задача будет выполнена!" ("The Mission will be fulfilled!") began to appear in the colors of St. George's Ribbon. Eventually the letter Z in this color scheme became a symbol of Russian support of the war, appearing on people's chests and cars and as massive displays on the sides of buildings. The war has elevated the St. George's Ribbon to the status of "symbol of military glory." Insulting or defacing it can lead to fines of up to three million rubles and three years in prison, making the ribbon a legally protected symbol of Russian military glory from time immemorial to the present.

A year into the war in Ukraine, the St. George's Ribbon has become intertwined with the conflict and Putin's interpretation of history. He has posited the West as a continual, existential threat to Russia, of which the Third Reich was simply the most radical, honest version. Russia has been able to mobilize heroes to defend itself in every incarnation—Empire, Soviet Union, or Federation. St. George's Ribbon is part of a continuous narrative that ignores the dramatic ruptures and regime changes since 1917, Ukrainian sovereignty, and many darker moments of the region's history. Instead, this symbol foregrounds battlefield glory over suffering, embodied in a distinctive ribbon that anyone can pin to their chest. **P**

Brandon Schechter is a teaching resource developer at the AHA.

Photo: Alexander Davronov/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 4.0 (image cropped).

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SUMMER 2018
VOLUME 87 NUMBER 3

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