

*The newsmagazine of the American Historical Association*

# PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

Volume 61: 5  
May 2023

## HONEST HISTORY





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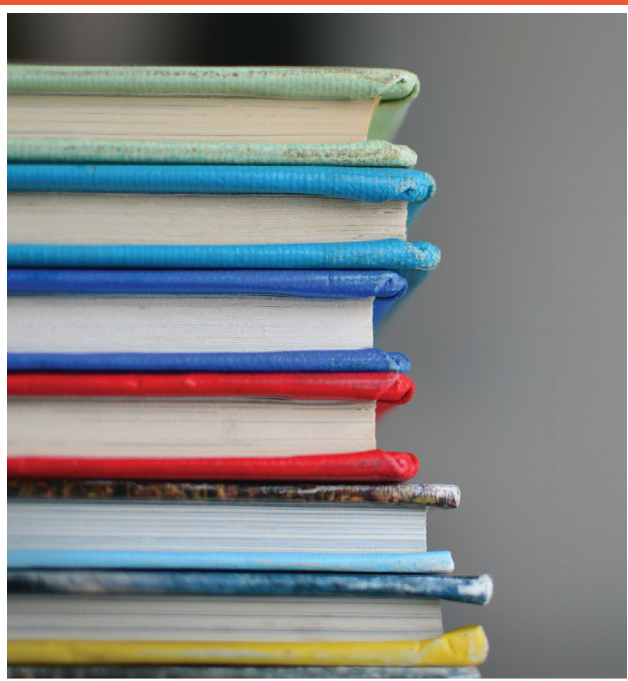
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## ON THE COVER

Honesty, so the saying goes, is the best policy. Telling the truth is always better than lying. When Leopold von Ranke declared he wanted to describe the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen* — as it essentially happened — he articulated this as a principle which historians have since embraced, though there has been no little debate as to the practicalities of its execution. The recent resurgence of authoritarian, nationalist movements across the globe have added a new flavor and urgency to the discussion. Now more than ever, the United States and the world need historians and the honest history we provide.

*Photo: Kimberly Farmer/Unsplash*

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**FPO**



L. RENATO GRIGOLI

## TOWNHOUSE NOTES

### *Dreaming Cities*

Since September, *Perspectives on History* issues have been linked by two threads: periodization and ghosts. These words were suggestions that prompted the reader to ponder the scope of an idea, rather than to mark its borders. They were words that were good to think with. We are continuing this experiment with the 2023–24 issues and one single uniting thread. Over the next year, *Perspectives* is especially (but not exclusively) interested in pitches for articles with something to say about **urbanism and rurality**.

One unexpected outcome of the COVID-19 lockdowns is that cities were suddenly quiet. It's cars that make them noisy, it turns out. Unable to socialize indoors, city dwellers began exploring the urban outdoors and found them enjoyable, much to their surprise. Local governments leaned in, setting up street closures, outdoor dining, and pop-up parks. Many residents began to see the possibilities of urban spaces designed around people, rather than vehicles.

Since the end of the lockdowns, and intensified by a nationwide housing crisis, there has been a renewed interest in and vigor for developing cities into places for humans. Public transit and multimodal commuting are now subjects of general interest, as is the "15-minute city"—an urban space where all of one's needs (housing, work, groceries, childcare) are within a 15-minute walk. Perhaps the clearest sign of this idea's reach is that right-wing conspiracy theorists have derided the 15-minute city as a government-orchestrated panoptic trap.

All this has a history, of course. US cities were designed for people until urban planners in the 1950s and '60s drove highways into their hearts in the name of "urban renewal," frequently targeting minority communities in the process. But even such a villain as Robert Moses has a legacy both good and ill—much of the change urban visionaries now wish to see realized seems impossible without Moses's casual disdain for both the law and the people his plans affected. And cities are not merely recent developments. Urban environments

with hundreds of thousands of people existed in antiquity in Egypt, the Fertile Crescent, and China. Rome, Constantinople, Chang'an, Tenochtitlan, and Baghdad featured many aspects of urban planning we now assume are modern. The Romans, for example, employed modal filtering—physical impediments for certain vehicles—to ensure carts stayed in certain parts of their cities. The geometric perfection of Pierre L'Enfant, which snarls traffic daily in Washington, DC, has a genealogy that reaches back to the gridded, planned, and fortified bastide towns of medieval Europe. And so on.

Nor is the history of cities confined to areas of high population density. Cities, after all, can rarely feed themselves, and before modern medicine, they required an influx of immigrants from the countryside to sustain their populations. The tensions between urban and rural are as old as Gilgamesh; the Latin *rusticus* means "idiot." In between the country and the city stand the suburbs—a term that once referred to buildings outside a European city's wall but now conjures racially homogenous communities sprawling across America, composed of single-family homes with chemically enhanced lawns and two-car garages. Cities, their suburbs, and the countryside are all entangled in an interrelated web that reaches both forward and backward in time.

I hope that, as a thread, urbanism and rurality generate the mix of academic subject matter and popular appeal that produces the ideal *Perspectives* piece, whether in the form of a 1,500-word article, a 600-word Everything Has a History piece, or something else entirely. But these words are not riddles. There is no fixed answer to the meaning of either lurking in my brain—their meaning can only exist with respect to your answer. They are, as I said, good for thinking with. I have given you some of my thoughts; send us the thoughts they help inspire in you. **P**

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



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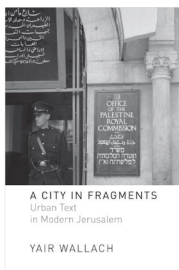
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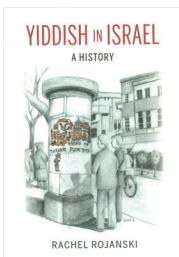
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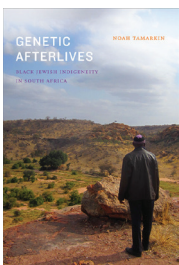
### **MODERN JEWISH HISTORY AND CULTURE: EUROPE AND ISRAEL**

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**RACHEL ROJANSKI**

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Princeton University Press

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This book award program has been made possible by  
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EDWARD MUIR

## THE UNITED STATES NEEDS HISTORIANS

*One Teacher-President on Another*

In the Ukrainian television series (2015–19) and film (2016) *Servant of the People*, comedian Volodymyr Zelenskyy played a high school history teacher named Vasily Petrovych Goloborodko. When the school principal orders Goloborodko to dismiss his students from his history class (rather than from mathematics) so that they can help set up voting booths for the forthcoming election, Goloborodko rants to a colleague about corruption and incompetence in the government. During his obscenity-laced tirade, Goloborodko laments that the politicians know nothing of history, only mathematics: they can “multiply and divide,” that is, figure out their corrupt finances. Math receives respect because it is a science, but history, in contrast, is “dog shit.” His colleague replies that math and history, that’s like comparing a “prick to a finger.” A student secretly films this rant and posts it on YouTube. The video goes viral, leading the students to crowdsource his presidential candidacy, and Goloborodko is elected. Goloborodko then ends the episode proclaiming his straightforward truth: “Have a simple teacher live like a president, and a president live like a teacher. . . . I tell you this as a teacher of history.”

Never has a fictional historian gone so far.

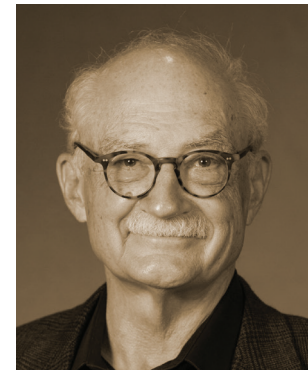
*Servant of the People* was fiction so powerful that the people of Ukraine went on to elect the writer/producer/star Zelenskyy the actual president of Ukraine. The truth of a teacher of history, apparently, was what the people of Ukraine needed. Never has a fictional historian gone so far. As a real historian, I am fascinated that Zelenskyy made the comic decision to transform an absent-minded, bicycle-riding, divorced history teacher who lives with his parents into a national hero because he speaks the truth. Fictional historians in the anglophone world do not usually come off that well. Think of the pedantic Rev. Edward Casaubon in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* or the bitter, passive-aggressive,

alcoholic associate professor of history George in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by Edward Albee. In creating Goloborodko, Zelenskyy transformed a simple teacher of history into a truth-telling hero.

My grandfather began his career as a high school teacher, then a high school principal, and later the superintendent of schools. During the 1950s, a vocal chapter of the John Birch Society, a radical, ultraconservative anticommunist group, infected the semirural district he superintended. Their presence kept my grandfather in a defensive position about the school curriculum and his advocacy for the only substantial minority in the district, Mexican migrant workers who had found a home there. As a boy, I remember listening to him discussing politics with my father, both of whom thought the Birchers were a menace. But such was the Bircher clamor that I assumed they were a major political movement for a long time, and even as young as I was, I could see they were a bit cracked. By virtue of his position in the community, my grandfather had to listen to all sides, including the Birchers and the businesspeople who did not want to pay taxes. What he wanted was to listen to the students, honor their achievements, and prepare them for their futures, not haggle with ideologues or the selfish. But without giving in to fringe radicals, he still had to listen. He listened because the community and its children needed him, and he took satisfaction from meeting that need.

Now our country needs historians. I tell you this as a teacher of history.

Our culture needs historians who can look behind today’s headlines and the latest “fake news” to think about longer patterns in the past, even as they engage in current struggles over interpreting it. What I recognize from my grandfather’s times to ours is not that there are still those willing to exploit the paranoid style and blind ignorance of the Birchers and the like for their own purposes, but that those who fought them in word and deed had to keep at it. That which they





fought against is still with us, after all. Wayne LaPierre, CEO and executive vice president of the National Rifle Association, began his career as a John Birch Society fellow traveler rallying against alleged communists in American government, but since ideological communism has faded, he and his ilk have had to shift the object of their paranoia. That shift has not eliminated historical absurdities, such as LaPierre's claim that the constitutional right to bear arms "is not bestowed by man, but granted by God to all Americans as our American birthright." We need historians to remind our fellow citizens that it was not God who wrote the Constitution and its amendments but mere politicians meeting in committees.

Today, many historical absurdities come from those who want to suppress the study of slavery and racism in schools. Historians tend to begin their analysis of these topics with the proposition that there was a historical confluence between the 18th-century slave trade and the success of global capitalism. Trading in African slaves was enormously profitable, which led to unprecedented capital accumulation. Capitalism's ideological companion, classical liberalism, so privileged the sanctity of property rights that its definition of liberty ignored the individual human liberty of whole classes of people—Indigenous people, the enslaved, women, and everyone else except for property-holding white males. Well-to-do entities from French banks and British corporations to American universities have benefited to this day from the profits of slave trading and slaveholding.

Those are simple facts that have constituted persistent historical structures. How these structures might contribute to ongoing patterns of racism requires interpretation, but there can be no interpretation if the facts are denied because they might offend some people. In addition, no one knows whether and how much history that echoes or derives from critical race theory (CRT) is being taught in K–12 schools. The rabid critics of CRT have not bothered to find out, because that would take some serious work, which they are unwilling and probably unable to do. To establish a factual basis for this controversy, the AHA's Mapping the Landscape of Secondary US History Education project is researching what is being taught in public high schools about slavery, Reconstruction, and the history of race across all 50 states and Washington, DC.

Our country needs historians, and being needed has its satisfactions and obligations. There are innumerable mundane moments of being needed: driving a child to school, walking the dog, or helping students decide their future after they have discovered that medical school is unlikely to be part of it. The culture's looming need for historians might seem less

pressing than these repetitive needs of daily life, but the need is there, and some of the same satisfactions are in the offing.

In the fictional *Servant of the People*, a self-satisfied bureaucrat came for the history class; in the real Ukraine, Russia came for the whole country. In the United States, critics of honest history are coming for history teachers, as they already have in Turkey, Hungary, Poland, India, and Hong Kong. They come for us because they need us, even though they are unable or unwilling to recognize the need. We don't know how this will end for America's history teachers. Perhaps it will simply waste lots of precious time that could be devoted to educating students, or worse, some may lose jobs. The consequences of these fights probably will not match what has already happened abroad. But from Austin to Tallahassee, American culture needs history teachers.

In the United States, critics of honest history are coming for history teachers, as they already have in Turkey, Hungary, Poland, India, and Hong Kong.

As the *Washington Post*'s slogan states, "democracy dies in darkness." We must not let that darkness fall over the truths of history. What is happening in some dark places to the teaching of history exhibits the costs of ignoring what an honest education can provide to a society and its citizens. Some of the critics of honest history might come in hate, but they all come in ignorance and with an unwillingness to recognize that history can never be reduced to a few simplistic pieties.

That is why historians are needed. I tell you this as a teacher of history. **P**

*Edward Muir is president of the AHA.*

JAMES GROSSMAN AND ANNE HYDE

## HISTORY AT A CROSSROADS

*The AHA Responds to Attacks on Honest History*

Much of my time lately, in collaboration with colleagues among the AHA staff and Council, has focused on what we refer to as “divisive concepts” legislation—so called because of that term’s popularity among state legislators driven by an urge to unravel the integrity of public education. Over the past two years, we’ve written letters to legislators and school boards in 20 states, directed especially to the implications of this legislation for history education.

Initially, these bills focused especially on race, and more specifically on how the history of racism in the United States is taught in K–12 classrooms. The authors of these pieces of legislation were apparently obsessed with what they were calling “critical race theory,” the 1619 Project, and alleged widespread practices whereby history teachers somehow made students feel responsible for racism practiced by their ancestors. This original focus remains in what has evolved since, but it is now complemented by references to LGBTQ+ issues, hiring practices, tenure, diversity training in just about any form, university governance, and more. There’s a bit of an “if you’ve seen one, you’ve seen them all” element to this legislation because much of it is crafted from templates provided by right-wing think tanks and journalists.

We are committed in this work to focusing on what we know: history and history education, and maintaining its integrity.

This recent legislative activity is itself complemented by similarly radical activism in the arena of state standards for K–12 social studies instruction. This is an important landscape, even in those states that do not assess student performance or where only a few grade levels have testing tied to the standards. Teachers who appropriately include controversial (but professionally respectable) materials, especially relating



Photo: Sophia Germer



Photo: Ashley Porton

to race and gender, can invoke well-designed standards in response when encountering criticism from parents, local media, or school boards. Teachers with whom the AHA has been working have encountered this pushback in states and even communities with diverse political profiles. It most often comes from the right, but orthodoxy and parental pressures have many political valences.

Obviously it is disingenuous to say that the AHA is “staying out of politics” in this work. We’re diving deeply (and putting a lot of staff time) into processes that are political by their nature. But we are committed in this work to focusing on what we know: history and history education, and maintaining its integrity.

For the most recent (as of this writing in early April) versions of this increasingly broad legislation, look to the AHA’s *Statement Opposing Florida House Bill 999*, endorsed by 84 other organizations, and to the following op-ed published in the *Columbus Dispatch* on April 4, 2023, that I co-authored with Anne Hyde, vice president of the AHA Professional Division.

—JG

### Unwieldy Bill Would Destroy Higher Education in Ohio

The people of Ohio can take pride in a public university system that offers a high-quality education at campuses spread widely across the state. Some members of the state legislature, however, seem prepared to sacrifice this asset to ideological special interests undermining both educational content and the institutions themselves. Ohio Senate Bill 83, perhaps best summarized as an unwieldy omnibus of contradictory mandates, would not only enable but even *require* classroom-level intervention by state officials. To ensure that faculty “not seek to inculcate any social, political, or religious point of view,” Senate Bill 83 requires all course syllabi to be reviewed for keyword searches and content management.

We agree that classrooms must be spaces where students can experiment with ideas without worrying about ideological boundaries, places where teachers stimulate students to explore freely without “inculcating” anything other than the value of intellectual curiosity and disciplinary rigor and ethics. But oversight of this kind, scrutinizing content at the microscopic level of keywords, smacks not of guaranteeing the ideological diversity cited in the legislation but of the government surveillance more closely resembling the Soviet Union or Communist China than a public university system in the United States.

One wonders what the overseers will be looking for. Any respectable course in US history will be chock-full of references to racism, white supremacy, nativism, second-class citizenship, class conflict, forced migrations, and other terms likely to raise eyebrows of guardians of a version of history devoid of conflict and division. Freedom, innovation, liberty, democracy, dissent, markets, and other concepts that characterize admirable aspects of our national past would also be part of that course.

Senate Bill 83 focuses especially on required US history courses, claiming legislative intent merely to prohibit “requiring” or “encouraging” students to endorse a particular ideology. However, the law requires teaching only six particular political documents in all US history courses. Such narrowness, without comparing those documents to a wider range of what Americans have read, discussed, and debated, is the very definition of teaching “ideology.”

American history is steeped in divisions and conflicts shaped by ideas about race and by cultures and institutional structures that perpetuate those divisions. This is fact, not theory or ideology. To ignore, or even minimize, those divisions renders it impossible to create the bridges and shared understanding necessary to maintain national unity. To heal wounds requires acknowledging, locating, and understanding them.

Healing, however, is not the purpose of this legislation. Couched in barely concealed euphemisms, the bill enforces an education that whitewashes the history of our nation and its people. Keeping to the margins such central issues as slavery; forced removals of Native Americans; and inequalities based on race, ethnicity, gender, and other characteristics excludes material likely to inspire the vigorous discussion that characterizes a good history class. If a college instructor cannot assign material that will make students “feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race or sex,” as Senate Bill 83 dictates, how are students to understand what it meant for some

people to own, buy, and sell human property and others to experience enslavement, commodification, and everyday violations of their humanity? The past is filled with decisions, relationships, and events that can easily make us feel uncomfortable about our predecessors. A good history instructor makes it clear that nobody in the class should feel responsible for what their ancestors did. But only by understanding what happened in the past can the students work to shape a better future.

Though this legislation might appear to respond to public concerns about history education, it does not. Professional, nonpartisan survey data indicates overwhelming and bipartisan public support for what the vast majority of history educators actually teach on this subject: that slavery and racism have played a key role in shaping American history, and that their influence reverberates into the present. According to a recent national survey conducted by the American Historical Association and Fairleigh Dickinson University, three-quarters of both Republicans and Democrats support teaching history about “harm that some groups did to others” even if it causes students some discomfort. Surveys by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (and others) indicate that employers look for critical thinkers who know how to ask questions rather than memorize answers.

## Senate Bill 83 poses a threat to public higher education itself.

Senate Bill 83 is not only a danger to the quality of history education. It poses a threat to public higher education itself. It would inappropriately inject university boards of trustees into decisions about faculty hiring and work responsibilities—an intrusion across the boundary of governance and management in any nonprofit entity. Similarly, the bill would replace evidence-based locally designed teaching and research evaluations with procedures and rubrics created by state officials, raising additional concerns about political intrusions on academic freedom.

Everything has a history. What is really at stake with Senate Bill 83 is the quality of preparation of Ohio university graduates. If passed, this bill would undermine education in Ohio by preventing qualified instructors from teaching honest and accurate history. **P**

*James Grossman is executive director of the AHA; he tweets @JimGrossmanAHA. Anne Hyde is professor of history at the University of Oklahoma and the AHA Council's vice president, Professional Division.*



LAURA ANSLEY

## WRITING HISTORY WHILE LIVING THROUGH IT

*Scholars Tackle the Pandemic Era*

**A**s so many ideas do these days, this one started on social media.

Ahead of the 2020 election, Rhae Lynn Barnes (Princeton Univ.) shared on Twitter her thoughts about how she felt facing this moment in relation to the specter of mass death. “There was a haunting of the political discourse,” she told *Perspectives*. To Barnes, thinking of the casualties

of the Civil War and World War II; the politicization of funerals in the civil rights movement; and even presidential candidate Joe Biden’s personal losses of his first wife, Neilia, and daughter Naomi in a 1972 car crash, as well as the 2015 death of his son Beau to cancer, “The dead were framing the conversation.”

Yohuru Williams (Univ. of St. Thomas) reached out to her. “This sounds like a

book project,” he told Barnes. They began talking about what such a project could look like, and contacted Keri Leigh Merritt, a historian based in Atlanta. Together, the three created *After Life: A Collective History of Loss and Redemption in Pandemic America* (Haymarket Books, 2022), a book, Barnes describes, “that could start out as a secondary source and ultimately become a primary source of prevaccination pandemic America.”



After the disruptions of 2020, three historians worked quickly to document them in a new volume.  
Stephanie Martin/Unsplash

They call *After Life* a “collective history” that focuses on the events of 2020, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the uprisings that followed the murder of George Floyd, and the presidential election. The story concludes with the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the US Capitol. As the editors wrote in the book’s introduction, they were trying “to understand America in a moment that seemed at once to be both rapidly descending into something long-feared and simultaneously rebirthing into something wondrous at all costs. . . . We envisioned a book that gave historians and legal experts a chance to write about their present as long as they meditated on the long 2020 through the prism of American history.”

According to Williams, this project builds on the work of “those individuals who have chronicled historical events as eyewitnesses to their history and active participants in it.” He was inspired by a number of points in US history: “I think specifically of Howard Zinn and his work with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, or the work of the army of artists, academics, and reporters employed by the Works Progress Administration [WPA], as well as the countless state and local historians whose volumes adorn local archives and remain important sources upon which we are now quite dependent.” In working on *After Life*, Williams “wanted to be a part of a project that would serve the same purpose of helping scholars—one day—make meaning of this historical moment.” Despite the pressures of navigating lockdown, educating their kids at home, and even contending with personal health issues, all three co-editors, Merritt said, “knew how essential it was to document what it was like to live through the most surreal, tragic time in our entire lives.”

Williams’s comparison to the WPA is apt, as the editors took direct inspiration from that federal project. During the Great Depression, the WPA program employed 8.5 million Americans to work in spaces including the national parks, the arts, and history. Looking around during the pandemic, as a public health event led to economic depression and rising unemployment, Barnes wondered, “Why is nobody documenting this historically? Why is nobody bringing everyone together?” She saw museums on both national and local levels collecting and preserving material culture and stories, but there was no organized national effort like the WPA. Maybe she, Merritt, and Williams could bring back something like the “historian wing” of the WPA.

It was essential “to document what it was like to live through the most surreal, tragic time in our entire lives.”

Committed to building a diverse group of scholars, they prioritized what voices they wanted to include over specific topic assignments. “We tried to pick people we admired as *writers* and essentially gave them carte blanche to write about whatever they desired,” Merritt said. “We wanted to let them be as creative as possible, because often legal and historical writing can be formulaic.” For Barnes, this choice made the project unique: “I feel like I got to take a one-on-one writing tutorial with some of my favorite authors—Martha Hodes, Robin D. G. Kelley, Philip J. Deloria—and get inside their writing process and see how they create moving and powerful stories from shards of archival evidence. It was buoying to

experience this teamwork and artistic inspiration.”

For this, they turned to experts across the fields of American history and legal studies. Along with writings by the three editors, 16 historians and legal scholars contributed essays that range from personal reflections to more typical historical work. The editors’ frame makes the book a unique and wide-ranging compilation. Contributor Tera W. Hunter, for example, terms COVID-19 “a new Negro servants’ disease,” comparing it with tuberculosis in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Hodes writes about the pandemic and the Lincoln assassination, “two catastrophes, a century and a half apart.” Heather Ann Thompson focuses on how the pandemic affected the already inhumane experience of mass incarceration. In more personal essays, Ula Y. Taylor writes about how her daily Starbucks routine was disrupted, while Kelley relates his struggles writing an obituary for his estranged father, who died in February 2020.

For a project centered on illness and death, Barnes said, “I vividly remember writing in our introduction that not all of the authors might survive. That sadly came true.” The groundbreaking historian Gwendolyn Midlo Hall contributed an essay connecting the Colfax massacre in Louisiana during the Reconstruction era to the violence of January 6. Her contribution to the volume was her last history publication before her death in September 2022 from a recurrence of breast cancer and a stroke. For Barnes, it was a “privilege to work one-on-one and line-by-line” with Hall during her final illness. A month after the book’s release, she visited Whitney Plantation during her first trip to New Orleans when she “suddenly heard a familiar voice.” Hall was featured in

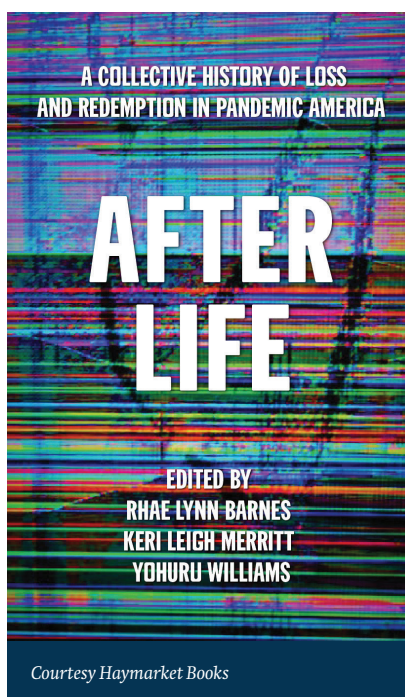


the prerecorded tour discussing her life's work. "As I stood and watched, I realized I was seeing the long and profound reach of her tireless research from decades before. It made a difference. And working with her in her last days and seeing her work in that public history exhibit was a tremendous gift."

Working with a large team of writers during an ongoing pandemic means that Hall's was not the only illness, even if she is the only who has died. We now know COVID had medical effects beyond the virus itself, as health-care appointments and diagnoses were delayed or missed. As Barnes told us, at different times, "medical crises struck the editors, our families, the authors, and their families. I can't list how many hospitalizations there were." All three editors lost loved ones or people close to them during the process. Near the completion of the volume, Merritt came down with COVID and Williams had a cardiac procedure. Throughout the book's creation, they had to rethink and rewrite to incorporate the pandemic's ever-growing toll in the United States in real time.

"Pandemics and epidemics tear off the lid of American society and allow you to peer in at the wiring."

To all three editors, the pandemic, racial reckoning, and electoral politics cannot be disentangled in discussing 2020. As a resident of the Twin Cities, Williams was particularly close to the actions protesting George Floyd's murder on May 25, 2020, which influenced his perspective on the events as they unfolded. For



Merritt, these events show that wealth and power continued to coalesce among the elite: "They're expanding military-armed police forces, who brutalize and kill our loved ones with near impunity. They've closed hospitals during a pandemic, while building even more prisons." To Barnes, "Pandemics and epidemics tear off the lid of American society and allow you to peer in at the wiring. Inequality becomes more exacerbated and clearer. You can't separate the history of the body from politics or culture."

And the events of 2020 affected people across the entire country. While death tolls rose in big cities on the East Coast, notably New York, the story doesn't end there. Barnes, who was in New York City and New Jersey during the first six months of the pandemic, knows it would have been easy to write from that perspective. Yet if we consider the first epidemics that touched American soil, we must consider the impact on Indigenous populations. So the book begins among citizens of the Navajo Nation, where both personal narratives and per

capita death rates show a major crisis in the community.

Though the book was only just released in the fall of 2022, the editors have already identified things they wish could have been done differently. With the *Dobbs* decision and the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, medical historians who had committed to writing for the book had to withdraw in order to focus their energies on other work, but as Barnes says, "They were serving a higher good." Williams wishes they had also included an essay on mental health after traumatic historical moments. Each editor contributed their own pieces to the volume, and Barnes has already rethought what her piece could be if written today. "My personal essay was about my experience driving across country in pre-vaccination America," she said, "but if I was asked to write an essay now, it would be about my three history professor friends and colleagues who lost their lives to women's reproductive health issues within a few months of each other in 2021 and 2022." The pandemic means that many did not receive the usual preventive or acute medical care when it was needed, with especially dire outcomes for maternal mortality in 2021. Thus, today her contribution "would be about what happened to Maya Peterson and her daughter Priya Luna, Philippa Hetherington, and Kathryn Schwartz."

According to Merritt, "Art is never finished. I look forward to seeing how others will interpret this project and build upon it. I simply hope we've inspired others, or at least provided solace and comfort to someone in need. Ultimately art is about two main things: joy and healing. And we, as a nation, desperately need both." **P**

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



## ADVOCACY BRIEFS

*AHA Supports Academic Freedom and Honest History, Opposes Cutting of Humanities Majors*

**T**hroughout February and March, the AHA has continued our commitment to opposing attacks on academic freedom in Florida, issuing statements about Governor Ron DeSantis's political takeover of New College and the harmful higher education bill HB 999. In Virginia, AHA staff provided testimony on proposed learning standards, provided advocacy information to Virginia historians, and partnered with the National Council for the Social Studies and four Virginia educational organizations to provide a thorough review of the current proposed standards. The AHA also wrote to Marymount University president Irma Becerra about the university's proposed elimination of humanities majors and to US secretary of state Antony J. Blinken in support of a history teacher imprisoned in Russia.

### AHA Manager of Teaching and Learning Testifies before Virginia Board of Education

On February 2, Brendan Gillis, AHA manager of teaching and learning, testified at the Virginia Board of Education's hearing on the history and social studies standards revisions process. He spoke in support of the collaborative Combined History and Social Science Standards for Virginia developed by the AHA, the Virginia Social Studies

Leaders Consortium (VSSLC), and the Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (VASCD). Gillis reported on the AHA's involvement in "The Uncertain Future of Social Studies in Virginia" in *Perspectives Daily*. The AHA has also shared action alerts with Virginia members encouraging in-person testimony and written comments on the draft standards.

### AHA Signs On to ACLS Statement in Support of Academic Freedom and New College of Florida

On February 14, the AHA signed on to a statement from the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) "in support of ex-President [Patricia] Okker, the New College community, and faculty and students at institutions of higher education around the country" following Florida governor Ron DeSantis's politically motivated "overhaul" of New College of Florida. "Their attacks threaten public understanding of our nation's history and culture, and they undermine key principles of academic freedom and faculty governance," the ACLS wrote.

### AHA Sends Letter to Marymount University Opposing Proposed Elimination of History Major

On February 16, the AHA sent a letter to Marymount University president Irma Becerra opposing the "short-sighted

decision to propose to Marymount University's governing board the elimination of history and other humanities majors" at the university. "We urge Marymount University to reconsider this decision, which undermines the university's commitment to 'intellectual curiosity, service to others, and a global perspective,'" the AHA wrote. The Marymount board of trustees voted on February 24 to eliminate the history major, along with eight other majors and one graduate program, most of them in the humanities.

### AHA Letter Expressing Concern for US Citizen and History Teacher Imprisoned in Russia

On March 2, the AHA sent a letter to US secretary of state Antony J. Blinken expressing "grave concern" for Marc Fogel, a US citizen and history teacher currently imprisoned in Russia, and urging that he be designated as "wrongfully detained" under the Robert Levinson Hostage Recovery and Hostage-Taking Accountability Act. "We respectfully urge the reclassification of Mr. Fogel and the respect of his civil and legal rights," the AHA wrote. "We ask for immediate attention to this matter to ensure Mr. Fogel's health and well-being."

### AHA Statement Opposing Florida House Bill 999

On March 3, the AHA released a statement on Florida House Bill 999,

“express[ing] horror ... 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.” “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,” the AHA wrote. “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.” As of April 12, 84 organizations had signed on to the statement; it was printed in the April issue of *Perspectives*.

### AHA Signs On to ACLS Statement Opposing Florida House Bill 999

On March 6, the AHA signed on to a statement from the ACLS opposing

Florida House Bill 999, “protest[ing] this proposed legislation and call[ing] on citizens to recognize the danger it poses to higher education in this country.” If HB 999 passes, the ACLS wrote, “it ends academic freedom in the state’s public colleges and universities, with dire consequences for their teaching, research, and financial well-being. . . . Academic freedom means freedom of thought, not the state-mandated production of histories edited to suit one party’s agenda in the current culture wars.”

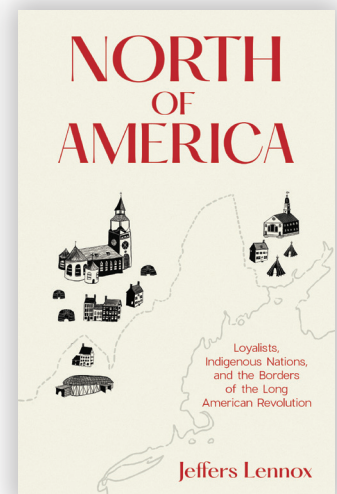
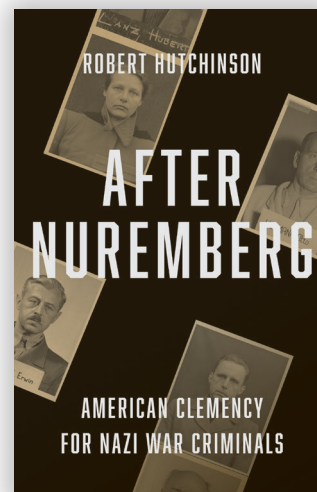
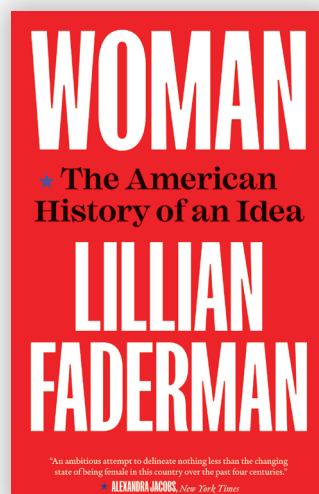
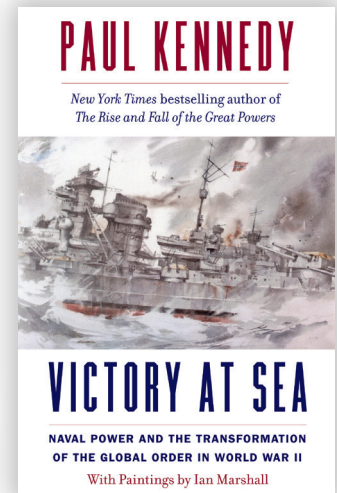
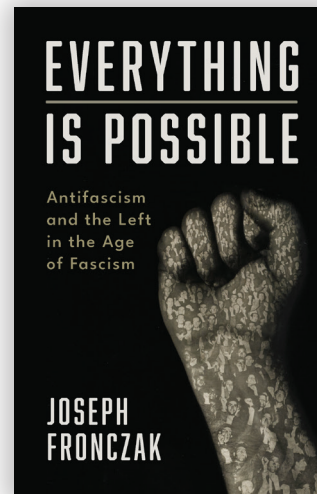
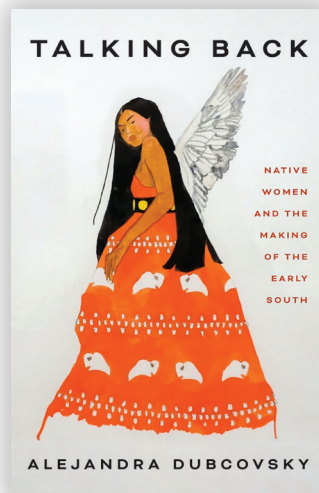
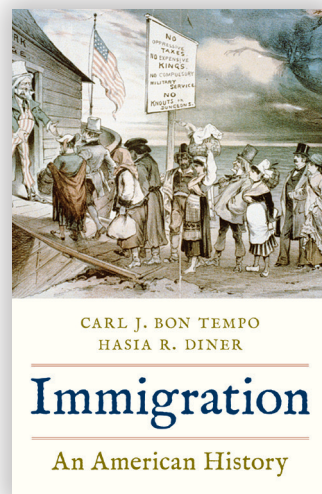
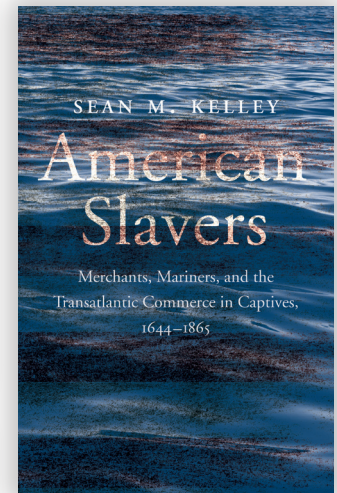
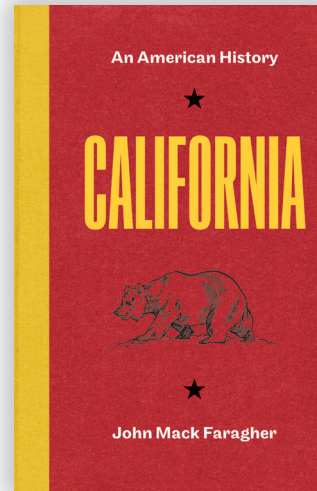
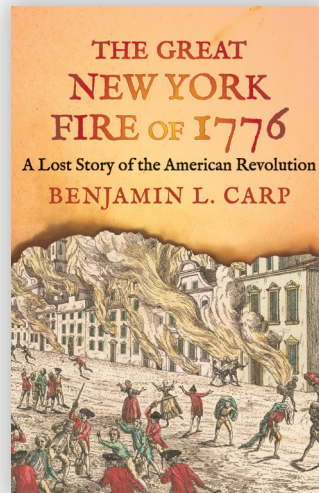
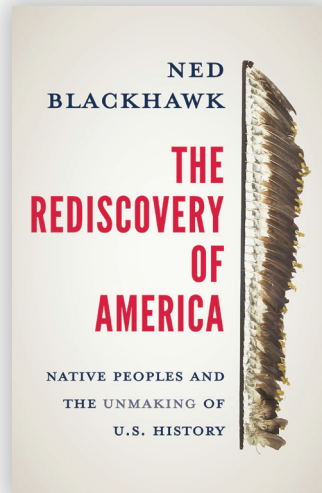
### AHA, NCSS, and Virginia Educational Organizations Release Collaborative Strikethrough and Review of Proposed Draft Standards

On March 13, the AHA, the National Council for the Social Studies, the Virginia Council for the Social Studies, the VSSLC, the VASCD, and the Virginia Geographical Alliance released a Collaborative Strikethrough and Review proposing revisions to the

History and Social Science Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools. This document suggested specific changes to improve draft standards as the Virginia Department of Education prepared for a final round of edits before anticipated adoption in April. The AHA encouraged Virginians to attend public hearings and provide written comments on the proposed standards, and developed an action alert, including a briefing memo, to help Virginians navigate the public review process. **P**

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

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MEGAN THRELKELD

# TEACHING THE HISTORY WARS



In a seminar on the history wars, Megan Threlkeld provides students with a strong foundation for understanding the stakes of battles over history and the humanities.

Ted Eytan/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0

**F**OR MORE THAN a century, academics, policymakers, politicians, and pundits have waged the seemingly endless “history wars” over what students should learn about our nation’s past. But students themselves have been largely absent from these debates. While William Randolph Hearst’s newspapers criticized textbook publishers in the 1920s for their sympathetic portrayals of Benedict Arnold, or Lynne Cheney and Gary B. Nash battled over the National History Standards in the 1990s, most students likely remained unaware that such battles were even happening.

My own anecdotal evidence suggests this is still the case. For the past eight years, I have taught a course on the history wars for first-year undergraduates. At Denison University, located outside Columbus, Ohio, first-year seminars serve primarily as an introduction to college-level writing, but instructors choose the class’s focus. I thought the history wars would be an engaging topic for students to read and think about as they wrestled with genre, argument, revision, and other elements of first-year composition.

It turned out to be much more. Teaching the history wars, I’ve discovered, is a fantastic way to introduce students both to the contingent and contested nature of historical practice and to current efforts to restrict the history they and their peers can learn.

My simple goal is to help students understand that the past is contested terrain.

Because most of my students have never heard of the history wars (every year a few think they’ve registered for a class on wars in history), my first task is always to explain what they are. We start with some introductory readings. I’ve had great success with Alia Wong’s “History Class and the Fictions about Race in America” and Michael Conway’s “The Problem with History Classes,” both published in 2015 in the *Atlantic*; David W. Blight’s “The Fog of History Wars” (*New Yorker*, 2021); and the introduction to Sam Wineburg’s *Why Learn History (When It’s Already on Your Phone)* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2018). My simple goal is to help students understand that the past is contested terrain. There is no “one true story,” both knowable and unchanging, of what happened long ago—hence the seemingly endless battles over what students should learn.

To reinforce this idea, we turn to textbooks. In 20 years of teaching, I’ve found comparing textbooks is the most direct and effective way to show students the contingent and

contested nature of the past. And textbook exercises can be adapted for different grade levels and integrated into lessons on related content.

I use Kyle Ward’s *History in the Making: An Absorbing Look at How American History Has Changed in the Telling over the Last 200 Years* (New Press, 2007) to identify both topics and specific excerpts. My students read chapters of Ward’s book, but I also dig up some of the originals. Many textbooks out of copyright are available open access on HathiTrust, and more recent ones have been digitized by the Internet Archive. I also haul in a box of old textbooks I’ve found online for a few dollars each; students love digging through them and sharing what they find. Slavery, for instance, is always a conversation starter. We compare short passages from books published in 1889, 1933, 1974, and 1995, discussing how and why treatments of slavery have changed over time and what a textbook’s publication date can tell us.

This exercise never fails to open students’ eyes. “I always thought history was one singular story,” Mark reflected. “I didn’t realize it was so chaotic and messy.” Another student came to the class thinking “everyone learned a similar history, so finding out just how different they are was super fascinating.” And they’re even more shocked to learn how widely current textbooks can vary. We read a 2020 *New York Times* article comparing different versions of the same book used in California and Texas and discuss how politics and state standards shape textbook content. “How can the same book look so different with so many little changes?” Carrie exclaimed. “You’re learning different versions of history depending on where you live. That’s bizarre.”

We devote the remaining units of the class to discussing specific skirmishes. In the past, I’ve used the 1990s-era controversies over the National History Standards and the Smithsonian’s *Enola Gay* exhibit, the debates over social studies standards and textbooks waged in Texas throughout the 2010s, and the 2014–15 revisions to the AP US History framework. In fall 2022, we focused on the 1619 Project and the spread of educational gag orders, including “divisive concepts” bills. (I’m grateful to my fall 2022 students for allowing me to share their experiences. The syllabus for this iteration of the course is available on my website.)

My approach to these units follows the same general pattern: an introduction to the issue, commentary from both sides of the debate, lots of in-class discussion and informal writing to help students understand others’ views and develop their own, and a capstone assignment such as an op-ed or position paper. Our best discussions often center on students’ reflections about their own experiences, not just in school but at

museums, historic sites and public monuments, and other public history spaces.

Given the dramatic spread of educational gag orders in the last few years, I adjusted the most recent syllabus to spend more time on this final unit. I shared with them a copy of HB 616, a bill proposed in April 2022 to eliminate “any divisive or inherently racist concepts” from K–12 curricula in Ohio. It would have banned the teaching of critical race theory, intersectional theory, and the 1619 Project; eliminated learning outcomes related to diversity, equity, and inclusion; and prohibited any DEI-related training or professional development. I wanted to give students a tangible sense of the current history wars and help them see what’s at stake in the struggle. It worked; they quickly grasped not only the extent to which a bill like this would limit what they and their peers could learn but also its dangerous imprecision with regard to scope and enforcement.

Other phenomena that often emerge in this class did so more urgently last fall. Students always develop a new appreciation for their previous history and social studies teachers and the struggles they face, like trying to cover a long list of state-mandated content or coaching students to score highly on standardized tests and AP exams. But having to navigate restrictive and punitive gag orders inspired a new level of sympathy. “Lawmakers are so separated from classrooms, and these laws are being put into place without talking to teachers,” Kate observed. Louis agreed: “[Gag orders] take a lot of power away from our teachers, but they’re the professionals in this. Like, you don’t tell a plumber how to fix your pipes.”

The perspectives of international students—especially those from countries where the state has long restricted what its citizens learn in school—also resonated in new ways. “My education was in a world where gag orders like this already exist,” one student explained. “We only learn about Vietnam as an amazing, strong country, and then my friends and I find things about our dark past on the internet and we don’t know if they’re true. I just wish we could study these things in school so we could have a better understanding.” I can feel the impact in the room of a statement like this as students realize that gag orders are already a way of life in some countries.

Over the last several weeks of the semester, we used the CRT Forward Tracking Project and PEN America’s Index of Educational Gag Orders to identify and track legislation, school board resolutions, and executive orders. I taught them how to use Google to search for local news coverage of and reactions to gag orders. I brought in a member of the Ohio State Board of Education to talk about how measures like these work in practice. And I showed them how organizations like the AHA


have fought back against efforts to restrict what students learn.

For their final project, students researched a gag order—several chose one from their home state—and wrote a position paper explaining their views. (They were not required to oppose the order, but all of them did.) Many articulated thoughtful, impassioned, well-informed positions, and I encouraged them to send their papers to appropriate state and local officials. This is another task that can be scaled and adapted for different contexts. Students can read a proposed bill or policy statement, formulate a response, and contact their representatives to share their views.

Students can read a proposed bill or policy statement, formulate a response, and contact their representatives.

According to surveys by both the AHA and More in Common in 2021, a majority of Americans believe schools should teach difficult histories of racism and other “divisive” topics. Many, if not most, of our students likely agree—or would, if they understood what gag orders are and the threats they pose. As teachers, we can bring this issue to students’ attention. We can show them what’s happening across the country and in their own communities. We can model historical thinking and civic engagement simultaneously—not to “indoctrinate” students but to foster the kind of independent thinking many proponents of restrictive legislation claim to promote.

The landscape in 2023 is not encouraging. Legislators continue to propose educational gag orders, and more of these bills are targeting and impacting higher education. I am teaching History Wars again this fall, and my list of bookmarked articles grows daily.

But I take heart from my students’ end-of-semester reflections last December. They left the class not only with a better understanding of history and its complexities but with a clearer sense of how public education works, how state and local government works, and how politics impacts their lives. “After doing this research . . . I feel very adamant against these bills,” one student told me, “and it has made me want to help get rid of them.” 

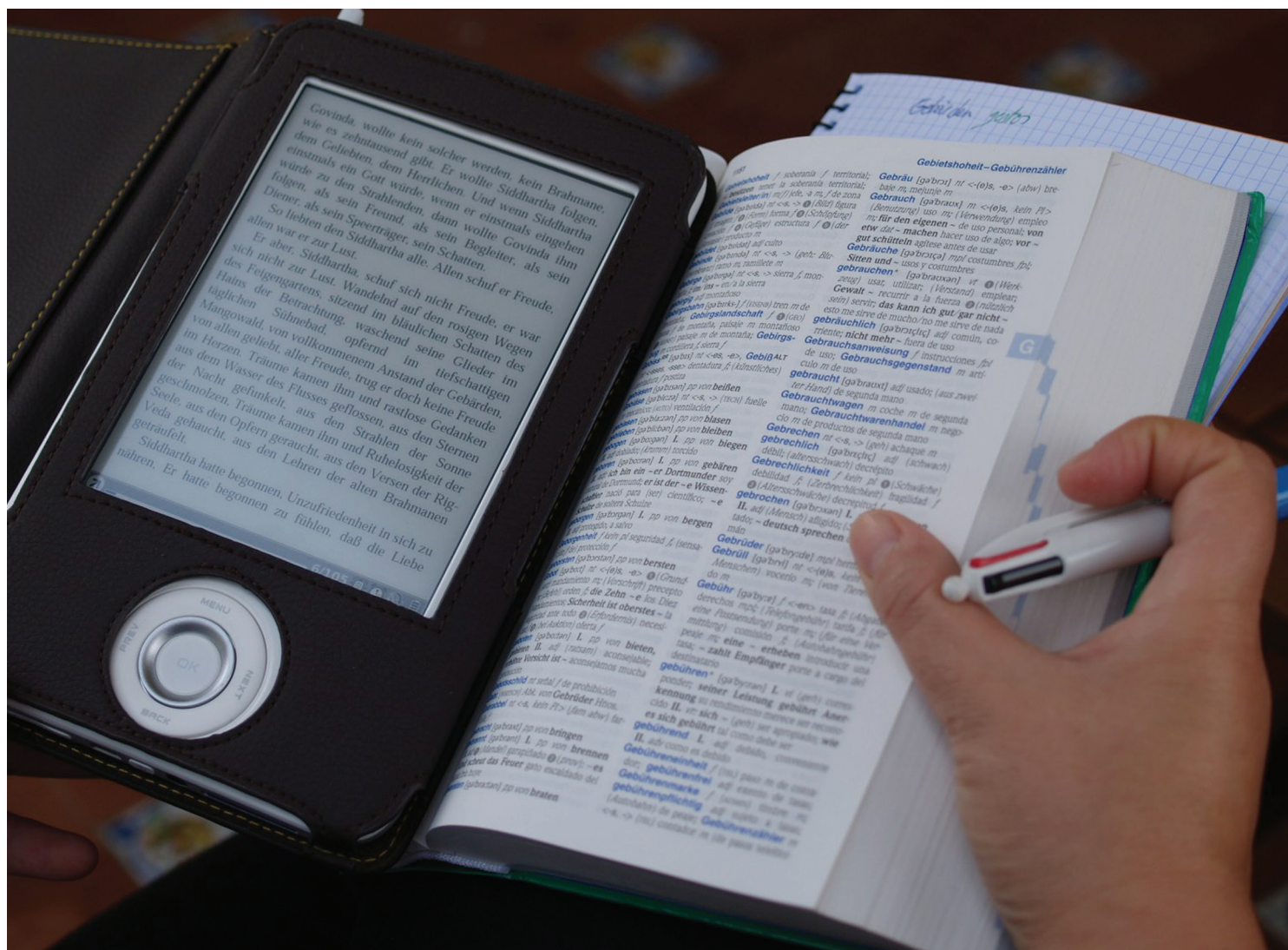
*Megan Threlkeld is the Michael G. and Barbara W. Rahal Professor of History at Denison University. She tweets @MeganThrelkeld.*



CARLA GARDINA PESTANA

# WHAT USE IS A BOOK?

Teaching Students to Look beyond Their Screens



As the medium through which information is delivered changes, teachers need to realize that their students may not be understanding their texts in the same way.

Daniel Sancho/Flickr/CC BY 2.0

**OVER THE LAST** few decades, the AHA has hosted many discussions about the changing place of the book in our discipline, from its declining importance vis-à-vis other forms for communicating historical ideas to instructors' disinclination to assign entire books to undergraduate students. However such arguments resolve, the book remains central to our work as historians, an extended form of writing that permits us to pursue complex and detailed arguments about the past.

Amid these changes, a more fundamental transformation has been overlooked: our students no longer perceive the materials that we assign in the same light that we do, as they now inhabit a largely digital world. Professional historians understand the internal workings of the discipline as only members of a guild can, and students have to take up a more in-depth study in order to come to a similar understanding. The new situation differs, however, in that students do not necessarily recognize what were once the most basic components of the history student's study. Forget comprehending the processes of research, writing, and publishing that go into academic work—our students may not even perceive a book to be a book.

There is an exercise I have frequently performed with students in seminars. When I conceived of this activity, I hoped to get students to think about the secret codes that go into constructing footnotes. I wanted them to see that different sorts of publications were each rendered in a specific format that revealed much to the informed. An essay from a collection, for example, could be readily distinguished from the article in a journal by the way a note was constructed. To illustrate this point and to create a hands-on activity that would break up our class time, I carried an armload of volumes to our meeting. With an eclectic mix of monographs, both singly and co-authored; edited collections, with essays by one author and by multiple authors; issues of journals; editions of a single primary source; and compilations of multiple primary sources, I toted a smattering of the volumes we all have lining our office shelves.

In class, I passed out the volumes, one to each student, asking them to take 10 minutes to consider what they held in their hands and then explain it to their classmates. When it came time to go around the room for their reports, the first students spoke hesitantly: Did I want to know about the content of the work or something else? After a few false starts, they each described the nature of their tome, presenting authorship, provenance, and purpose.

Such a simple exercise, yet I have heard repeatedly about this 30-minute activity from my students. They described them-

selves as "blown away" that day, they referred to the activity occasionally over the course of the term, and a number praised it in the end-of-term evaluations. Having spent far longer on the other aspects of the course, I felt a bit let down that they thought the course's best component was a simple activity offered on the spur of the moment. Yet I realized that their reactions exposed a difference between where my students and I begin our engagement with the receptacles of historical content. Separate from any discussion of the esoteric code behind note formatting, students proved eager to explore the physical object and to consider why it had been assembled and by whom.

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different sorts of publications were  
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that revealed much to the  
informed.

I see a downloaded book or article as a physical object that has been rendered in digital form. I do this unconsciously, often longing for the book in my hand to avoid reading it on a screen. My graduate students at least pretend to understand my hesitation, although they praise the easy searchability of an ebook. My undergraduate students do not think at all about a physical book, article, or essay behind the words on the page. If they have a measure of internet literacy, history undergraduates check the platform on which a source is posted, aware that they need to distinguish an actual academic resource from the posted claims of some ideologue. While they navigate the digital world with these skills, they have little sense of the concrete nature of the objects that they use. When I teach secondary sources, I perceive them to have a nature that is fundamental to their existence, but my students see only words on a screen, separated from any larger context. Understandably, they do not recognize that the words have a history, a setting, and a larger purpose. That disparity explained why my impromptu lesson proved a revelation.

This disconnect from the material reality of the book means that when history teachers think or speak about our assigned secondary sources, we assume knowledge our students do not possess. What we envision differs from what they perceive. When students read only on electronic devices, the source becomes disconnected from any concrete existence outside the words on a screen. We may be simply witnessing the effects of the digitization of knowledge, and this disconnect

between what the teacher and the student perceive may pass with time as we all — both teachers and students — become digital natives. Yet the fact that they cannot envision the container holding the words they read matters, and not just to us but to them.

If the reception of writing, academic or otherwise, is changed in this way, what does that mean for the future of the book and the discipline? History is dedicated to understanding context and change over time. Much as some of us enjoy contesting intellectual concerns in short, cutting insights conveyed in a tweet, I trust we all recognize the limits of the form for conveying sophisticated historical reasoning. We know we need the book or other long-form platforms to communicate larger arguments made based on our in-depth work in the archives. In addition, books themselves have a history and a historical importance that students are less equipped to understand if the book as a physical object is not part of their experience.


Our students, interacting with content only in disembodied forms — often in small and unconnected increments — do not perceive the details behind the text. It was for this reason that my students found struggling over the nature of the physical volumes so intriguing. They praised the “What do you have in your hand?” exercise for exposing them to the object itself. Until that exercise, their sense of a book/article/essay as such was attenuated. Their relationship to the content they absorbed as students was fragmentary — they collected bits, using search functions that navigated their way through larger documents. They could not make out the parameters containing the information they used toward their learning.

Do our students need this awareness of a book? Or is it simply enough that teachers recognize that they live in a world where bits are fragmented and without larger purpose? Information on the internet gives the impression of being infinite. Early heralds of our new digital age praised its prospects for democratizing knowledge and making information widely available. Its accessibility is a clear benefit, although we have come to lament the fact that its reliability is uncertain. With seemingly limitless information — in contrast to the constraints imposed by the covers of a book, which places parameters around the extent of the information they contain — the internet demands that users search out what they seek to know. This new world of a seeming infinity of information untethered to physical objects or specific intellectual arguments creates in our students a new mindset, one foreign to my generation’s perceptions but basic to their own.

If we want our students to think deeply about the past, we must figure out how to give them a better sense of our efforts to do that thinking. Otherwise, books are in danger of disappearing into the cybersphere, artifacts of the past that have no relationship to the work we undertake with our students. Our students (indeed the larger public) need to know that historical arguments amount to more than isolated facts and disembodied fragments.

This new world of information untethered to physical objects or specific arguments creates in our students a new mindset.

I fear this loss of the sense of a book is only the first step toward a fully digital future. At my most apocalyptic, I envision a future in which we cannot sustain the computer technology on which we rely. Like fossil fuels, the rare materials that go into the manufacture of our myriad devices are finite. The triumph of the digital will eventually strain the available resources no matter how carefully they are marshaled. There’s a reason why science fiction often features the mining of rare materials on some distant planet: we will not be able to fill our demand indefinitely. In our deep dependence on technology, we behave as if the electricity and the precious metals needed to keep our digital world going will always be available. The days of computer technology may stretch before us into the distant future, but they must necessarily be numbered. When the digital inevitably crashes, we won’t be able to find a specific book in our libraries because all the card catalogs are gone. Perhaps we won’t have libraries with physical stacks to trawl for books anyway. By then, readers will have entirely lost the sense of the book as distinct from other ways of putting together words to convey ideas.

The book becoming digital gives us the convenience of portability and searchability. It frees library space, as we can all appreciate. But it also changes the way we relate to the presentation of ideas and information. The implications of that shift are subtle, far reaching, and barely explored. 

*Carla Gardina Pestana is Distinguished Professor of History and Joyce Appleby Endowed Chair of America in the World at the University of California, Los Angeles.*



JORDAN THOMAS MURSINNA

# THE BERKELEY PIPELINE PROGRAM

*Demystifying the History PhD for Students from Historically Excluded Backgrounds*



For undergraduates who do not already have familiarity with graduate education, applying to and succeeding in PhD programs is a daunting task. Pipeline programs like the one at the University of California, Berkeley, seek to close the information gap.

*Brian Cantoni/Flickr/CC BY 2.0*

**SUCCESSFULLY ENTERING** a history PhD program requires a breadth of institutional knowledge that privileged applicants easily accumulate from connections, mentorship, and support. Students without those opportunities often face significant barriers to entry, not just during the application process but for years following enrollment. While history departments cannot change the historical and contemporary circumstances from whence the relative lack of diversity in history graduate programs emerges, they can identify and target specific hurdles that students of such backgrounds face at all phases of graduate school. One such effort is the pipeline program—a short, funded seminar series that provides training and guidance to PhD hopefuls who might otherwise lack the privileges that help many applicants succeed. Although the basic outline of a pipeline program is fairly simple, building one has proven to be nuanced and complex.

Since the spring of 2021, the history department at the University of California, Berkeley, has been hosting such a program. Now entering its third year, our program annually admits 15 students from across the country to a 10-week sequence of weekly remote seminars. These meetings cover a variety of topics regarding entering graduate school and succeeding within it. It concludes with a one-on-one mentorship phase in which fellows are paired with graduate students and faculty to workshop application materials or discuss their plans in more detail. While we continue to iterate and improve the program, what follows are some of the major design goals and challenges we faced in its inaugural run.

We needed to be careful not to replicate in our selection process those same barriers to entry the program was designed to diminish.

For a program intended to mentor students on successfully entering graduate school, the first challenge lay, somewhat ironically, in its own applications and admissions processes. Considering resource constraints and the importance of providing ample space for participants' voices, we needed to limit the number of students in the program—but we also needed to be careful not to replicate in our selection process those same barriers to entry the program was designed to diminish. After extensive outreach to diverse colleges and universities across the country, we settled on the following requested materials: a writing sample, a statement of

personal history, and a short piece on books or courses that had inspired them. The intention was to first establish an applicant's potential for graduate admission, and then to determine the depth and earnestness of their interest in it. The goal throughout was to find an ideal middle ground—regrettably, we could not accommodate many capable students who didn't seem to have given sufficiently serious thought to a history PhD, or some of the most impressive applicants, those who seemed motivated to take every possible opportunity to increase their chances of admission but were already well prepared.

In the end, we were overwhelmed by the response. The program had just 15 positions—a number that we felt would both enable a sense of community to emerge and assure participants the individual attention they deserved—but received 74 applications. Although the volume of applications was in part a result of our commitment to keeping the process accessible and undemanding, it serves dually as a testament to the demand for such programs that exists today.

The unanticipated need to select just one in five applicants presented another host of challenges. After an initial vetting, a committee of history faculty and graduate students made the final determinations. These were extraordinarily tough choices; our committee came to the selection meeting with independent rankings of the applicants, and some varied widely. There is no best practice here, but we think that pipeline programs run best with motivated students who readily demonstrate transparency in their uncertainties. Our priority thus lay in admitting sensitive, reflective, and passionate aspiring historians who showed both deep interest in pursuing graduate school and some form of trepidation about the process.

Those selected found that the pipeline program curriculum covers a wide variety of important topics. Some sessions focus on the more strategic elements of constructing a personal statement, requesting letters of recommendation, and introducing oneself to potential advisers, while others emphasize the importance of managing one's mental health as a graduate student and developing techniques for dealing with imposter syndrome. This balance between guidance on entering graduate school and guidance on success following enrollment was crucial to our design team. The seminars are led by a rotating cohort of department faculty, staff, and graduate students, based on their expertise in each facet of the curriculum. The program is necessarily a collective effort of our entire department community.


This brief survey of our program's design and aspirations understates the impact that working with our cohorts of fellows

had on us in the past two years. Learning was not unidirectional. The team learned from weekly interactions with these aspiring historians, many of whom faculty usually only get the chance to meet through application packets that don't always do justice to the sophistication of their historical voices. It's been an enriching and humbling experience, one that program co-lead Waldo Martin perhaps best relayed by regularly referring to our Saturday-morning sessions as "going to church."

This balance between guidance on entering graduate school and guidance on success following enrollment was crucial to our design team.

Feedback via anonymous surveys provides a measure of our success. Our fellows found the program to be an "invaluable experience" that "answered so many questions and relieved many anxieties" about the prospect of graduate school. Two other fellows independently described Saturday sessions as "something to look forward to each week" and as "the highlight of [their] week over the last few months." Those words

helped to strengthen our resolve to follow another fellow's simple suggestion: "do not stop doing this program."

Though fellows from our inaugural cohort have since enrolled in PhD programs at institutions including Princeton University, Stanford University, Brown University, and Northwestern University, we're dually proud that the program has helped other students pursue a wide variety of career paths. More still have yet to apply: some of you serving on graduate admissions committees may see our fellows among your applicants this year. We here at Berkeley hope to see fellows from your undergraduate programs in the future. 

*Jordan Thomas Mursinna is a PhD candidate at the University of California, Berkeley. He has served as a program coordinator for the Berkeley History PhD Pipeline Program since 2020.*

The Berkeley History PhD Pipeline Program is one of many approaches to invigorating the historical discipline. Does your department or institution have a program that you think *Perspectives* readers might want to hear about? We welcome pitches on all aspects of the practice of history. Email [perspectives@historians.org](mailto:perspectives@historians.org) with your ideas and questions.

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## MAINTAINING STANDARDS

### *Recent AHA Contributions to the Fight for Honest History Education*

In the late summer of 2022, the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) rejected its own procedures, established under state law, for developing History and Social Science Standards of Learning. On August 17, the board tabled a draft, which had been developed over two years with input from hundreds of Virginians, so that the standards could “undergo further development and public engagement.” Instead, the VBOE worked hastily and behind closed doors to completely overhaul the framework for history education in the state’s public schools.

The VBOE published a radically reconceptualized new draft on November 11, 2022, the eve of a holiday weekend and less than a week before the document would be considered for approval at a public meeting in Richmond. In place of portable skills, habits of mind, and hands-on analysis, the November standards substituted rote memorization and a triumphalist narrative of American exceptionalism that could have been lifted directly from the discredited works of historians like Frederick Jackson Turner and William Archibald Dunning. Among its many misguided revisions, the draft deleted references to Juneteenth, rejected almost all suggestions made by a committee on African American history, watered down discussions of the Holocaust, and referred to Indigenous peoples of North America as “first ‘immigrants.’”

Since 2021, a new front has opened in the history wars as lobbyists and politicians target state educational guidelines as a vehicle for defining – and often limiting – what teachers can address in their classrooms. There is considerable irony in this outcome. From its inception, the campaign to rewrite state education policy has embraced rhetoric about preventing political indoctrination in the classroom. The draft and model standards that have come out of this movement, however, themselves treat history education as a form of indoctrination. They target potentially controversial topics and ideas for elimination and reproduce a stilted caricature of history teaching and learning that harks back to a mid-20th century that never was. States like Virginia have explicitly cut

references to disciplinary and transferable thinking skills, inquiry, analysis, and civic engagement, while dramatically increasing the number of names, dates, and facts that students must memorize. Carried out with little or no transparency, these efforts endanger students’ education and undermine the very notion of informed civic participation.

Carried out with little or no transparency, these efforts endanger students’ education and undermine the very notion of informed civic participation.

In the last two years, efforts to preserve the quality and integrity of state standards have emerged as a key focus of the American Historical Association. In Virginia, the AHA lent its voice to a chorus of individuals and organizations challenging the VBOE’s bald attempt to hijack and politicize history education at the state level. Within days of releasing the draft standards, the Virginia Department of Education – whose career staff answers to the politically appointed members of the VBOE and is led by a superintendent appointed by the governor – quietly walked back some of the most egregious changes, notably restoring references to Martin Luther King Jr., who had been cut entirely from elementary courses. Bowing to public pressure, the VBOE opted to set aside the November draft and allow for a substantial rewrite. The story of the Virginia standards was far from over. But prompt intervention from concerned historians, including higher education and secondary school educators, averted a campaign to overhaul history education for political ends.

### What’s in a Standard

With a few exceptions prior to 2020, standards of learning and curricular materials have remained insulated from the

most extreme political pressures. Many states follow clearly defined procedures by which committees of academics, educators, administrators, and parents deliberate publicly for many months to establish a basic outline of learning outcomes and agreed-on content. This approach, which is consistent with the AHA's Criteria for Standards in History/Social Studies/Social Sciences, can be inefficient, but it prioritizes both democratic participation and compromise.

Beginning in 2020, conservative activists identified history education as a cultural flash point that could be exploited to mobilize political energy. Most obviously, President Donald Trump anchored his reelection campaign in hyperbolic assertions that “our children are taught in school to hate their own country.” This message inspired, among other outcomes, the 1776 Commission for “patriotic education,” “divisive concepts” legislation, and political strategies employed in gubernatorial elections in Florida and Virginia.

The early results of these efforts are alarming. A recent study by the RAND Corporation found that social studies teachers and school administrators across the country are now

confused about what they can and cannot legally teach. A report from the Civil Engagement Research Group at the University of California, Riverside, reinforced this conclusion, observing that many schools have retreated from topics related to civic participation, LGBTQ+ issues, and histories of race in the face of public anger that spills over into outright aggression.

State standards of learning offer another vehicle to radically reorient the goals and content of public education across the United States through national lobbying campaigns and direct local intervention. A handful of politically motivated organizations, including Hillsdale College, Civics Alliance, the National Association of Scholars, and 1776 Unites, have each published their own model frameworks that adopt an approach grounded in rote memorization. In place of historical inquiry, these materials rest on the foundation of a singular message about how students should think and feel about the past.

This interference is rapidly reshaping state education policy across the United States. In 2022, political appointees in Virginia, South Dakota, and Colorado worked to subvert or reject



Protecting the integrity of state standards for social studies education has become a major focus of the AHA's advocacy work.  
Nicola Tolini/Unsplash

the established democratic procedures for standards creation, while in Texas the standards revision process ground to a halt after conservative outrage. The Colorado State BOE, for instance, voted narrowly along partisan lines to reject an effort to adopt the radical American Birthright standards in place of the state's own framework.

Organizations who have supported breaking the established norms and procedures to capture social studies standards for their own agendas have publicized their strategy. Civics Alliance promises to lobby nationwide for "good ol' fashioned civic standards"; its list of targets includes 10 states in which standards revisions are currently in progress, with 20 more scheduled for review in the next three years alone. If you live in the United States, your state's history standards are a target too.

State standards do not always determine what happens in the classroom. Nevertheless, these documents guide decisions about course content and structure. In the current political climate, reasonably good state standards can provide some measure of protection for teachers who recognize that students need to discuss difficult or controversial topics at school.

## The AHA's Response

Few organizations have resources that can rival lobbyists and politically aligned special interest groups. Fewer still can marshal the historical expertise and educational experience necessary to craft, evaluate, and review history standards of learning and other state policy documents. As part of a broad commitment to Teaching History with Integrity, the AHA has penned letters to more than a dozen state legislatures, plus the state boards of education in Virginia and South Dakota.

The AHA is uniquely situated to respond to such challenges. Our members include historians with expertise in every corner of the globe across the entirety of recorded history. The AHA's Mapping the Landscape of Secondary US History Education project is conducting research to develop an unprecedented understanding of the content and strategies teachers are applying in classrooms across the country. This will allow us to advise, support, and collaborate with state and local stakeholders to draft, revise, vet, and refine standards to bring them into accordance with the latest scholarship and established education practices.

As the scope of these efforts to remake history education has become clear, we've also branched out into the collaborative work of developing, vetting, and endorsing standards drafts in partnership with educators and other advocacy organizations in multiple states. In each case, the needs, process, and context

are different, and the AHA prioritizes aligning its members' contributions with local procedures for standards revision.

In Texas, an elected member of the state BOE approached the AHA requesting to have qualified historians engage with the public process at each stage, and to help monitor what would have been final edits and adoption of revised standards in the fall of 2022. The AHA issued an immediate call for all members in Texas to consider applying to be on the state's revision work groups. Over the spring and summer, AHA staff member Julia Brookins recruited and coordinated with about two dozen historians with a range of field specializations and experience, almost all based in Texas. She reached out to several BOE members, talked with people experienced with the board, and attended BOE meetings when social studies was on the agenda. She held several online briefings for the historian volunteers about the process and the kind of written feedback that the Texas Education Agency (TEA) said would be most useful; she updated volunteers regularly by email; and she encouraged them to submit detailed feedback to the TEA on each version of draft standards.

If you live in the United States,  
your state's history standards are  
a target too.

In South Dakota, AHA member Stephen Jackson served alongside educators and other professionals on the 2021 work group that developed a draft set of revised standards through the usual procedures and under the oversight of the state's education department. Concerned with what was happening in his state, Jackson asked the AHA to review what had happened to the South Dakota standards revision and write a letter of objection to the department and the members of the state board. He went on to write a *Perspectives* article, "Standards of Revision" (January 2023), that discussed his involvement.

The AHA's engagement in the review and revision of Virginia's standards features a dense collaboration with local teachers and educational organizations. In response to widespread criticism, the VBOE promised to merge the controversial November draft with the original August standards to create a compromise proposal. The Virginia Social Studies Leaders Consortium (VSSLC) and the Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (VASCD) invited the AHA to participate in drafting a collaborative standards document in hopes that the VBOE would consider input from educators.

AHA staff members Lauren Brand and Brendan Gillis traveled to Richmond for a two-day summit, at which representatives and



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members of all three organizations went line by line through each of the standards, weaving together, revising, and polishing these curricular materials to produce a strong framework for learning that reflected best practices in history and social studies education. Our staff provided guidance, encouragement, and support as classroom educators rebuilt a set of educational standards that improved on an already strong foundation. Once the initial draft was complete, we also arranged for teachers and subject-matter experts to review and vet the changes.

Yet the status of history and social studies education in Virginia remained in flux. In early 2023, the VBOE produced a fourth draft, which it subsequently approved for public review and final revision. At each stage in the process, the AHA joined with other organizations, including the VSSLC, VASCD, the Virginia Council for the Social Studies, and the National Council for the Social Studies, to issue statements and coordinate public feedback. The AHA has also encouraged members in Virginia to participate in the period for public comment and attend the six public hearings.

## The Future of History Education

The AHA has committed to protecting history and social studies standards wherever they are targeted for political

interference, responding quickly and comprehensively to this threat. This kind of on-the-ground advocacy work requires a considerable investment of time and attention. But history and social studies education is far too valuable to cede its integrity and quality to those who wish to promote a partisan agenda.

Like the majority of parents and educators, the AHA prioritizes the interests of students over any other consideration. In light of mounting pressures that threaten K–12 education and educators, the AHA has significantly broadened its investment in state-level advocacy on behalf of its members and the communities in which we live.

Moving forward, the AHA will be able to serve as a resource and, with deference to state and local decision makers, build stronger foundations for history education designed to prepare students for a lifetime of civic engagement and success in their future endeavors. **P**

*Brendan Gillis is manager of teaching and learning at the AHA; he tweets @Gillis\_BJ. Julia Brookins is special projects coordinator at the AHA.*

## ADVOCATING FOR HISTORIANS

- Sent letters to 19 states or school districts opposing restrictions on history education that inhibit the ability of faculty to maintain their professional integrity as educators.
- Co-authored proposed revisions of K–12 history and social studies standards in Virginia and provided public testimony and research for the process in Texas.
- Initiated research on the content of history education in K–12 classrooms to provide an evidence-based landscape for ongoing controversies over “divisive concepts” and related issues.



## ADVOCATING FOR HISTORY IN PUBLIC CULTURE

- Issued statements condemning violations of the Presidential Records Act, historicizing and condemning the 50+ bomb threats received by Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine (the AHA’s webinar about the invasion drew 3,000 viewers).
- Produced videos featuring historians describing how exploring America’s past honestly benefits the nation’s students and civic culture.
- Co-sponsored, with the Organization of American Historians, amicus curiae briefs that provided historical context on major issues before the Supreme Court.
- Sent a letter to the Virginia governor emphasizing the “importance of input from qualified historians” in deliberations about monuments in public spaces, citing the *AHA Statement on Confederate Monuments*.



## HISTORY TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Launched Teaching Things, a program to help teachers bring material culture into history classrooms.
- Published *Guidelines for Online Teaching*.
- Expanded initiatives to support Teaching History with Integrity and students’ Freedom to Learn.
- Continued History Gateways, a major research initiative with history faculty at 11 institutions, to identify and overcome roadblocks to student success in introductory college history courses.
- Published a guide to AHA resources on the histories of Ukraine, Russia, and the Cold War and its legacies.



## BUILDING AND SUSTAINING COMMUNITY AMONG HISTORIANS

- Welcomed thousands of people to online roundtables, workshops, and lectures, including the popular History Behind the Headlines series.
- Hosted the fourth annual Department Chairs' Workshop supplemented by a series of online forums to discuss common issues, share insights and practices, and network with colleagues.
- Organized an online workshop for representatives of History Graduate Student Associations.
- Collaborated with peer organizations to explore the future of academic meetings and conferences.
- Started the AHA summer reading challenge, #AHAReads.
- Launched Expanding Perspectives, a series of online programs delving into special issues of *Perspectives on History*, with a discussion among authors who contributed to an issue on retirement.
- Arranged informational interviews between PhD students and history PhDs employed beyond the professoriate as part of the AHA Career Contacts program.

## PROVIDING LEADERSHIP FOR THE HISTORICAL DISCIPLINE

- Launched retroactive *American Historical Review* (AHR) reviews and *Perspectives on History* Long Overdue obituaries to honor historians denied recognition due to racist practices in our discipline.
- Redesigned the AHR and initiated the AHR History Lab.
- Launched the AHR podcast, *History in Focus*, featuring interviews and immersive storytelling.
- Published the first Fiction Issue of *Perspectives on History*, which included the first piece of fiction published in the magazine's 60-year history.
- Awarded \$2.5 million in National Endowment for the Humanities re grants to 50 history-related organizations adversely affected by the pandemic.
- Published widely used data on undergraduate enrollments and academic jobs.
- Released a major update to Where Historians Work.
- Awarded 36 research grants and 4 fellowships to historians.
- Participated in collaborations with PEN America, New American History, the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education, and the National Council for the Social Studies.
- Maintained leadership roles in the National Coalition for History and the National Humanities Alliance.



*The AHA staff returned to work at the AHA townhouse after two years of working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic and nearly a year of renovation.*

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# ANTIGLOBALISM AND THE TRANSNATIONAL

*In the June Issue of the American Historical Review*

The June issue of the *American Historical Review* contains articles that explore transnational histories of mid and late 20th-century China and Latin America and that reconsider aspects of the early modern world in Europe.

**Denise Y. Ho's** (Yale Univ.) "Oysterman and Refugee: Hong Kong and China between the Tides, 1949–1997," examines the Hong Kong–China maritime border. Ho shows how oystermen in the tidelands of the Pearl River Estuary, some of them refugees, offer a case study in two forms of agricultural production: traditional land and labor relations on the Hong Kong coast and collective agriculture in China's socialist period followed by decollectivization in the reform era. By Mao's death in 1976, China's oyster industry exceeded Hong Kong's, but both were vulnerable to industrial pollution. In the following years, China's oystermen built on persistent networks to navigate their position among Hong Kong, Shenzhen, and the Pearl River Delta. Ho argues that the prosperity of China's oystermen, when compared to that of the Hong Kong refugees, illustrates the inversion of the border's meaning as the region transitioned from a postcolonial past to a postsocialist future.

**Margarita Fajardo** (Sarah Lawrence Coll.) considers the entangled histories of the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America in "CEPAL, the 'International Monetary Fund of the Left'? The Tale of Two Global Institutions." Born of the same global moment, she argues, these institutions have come to represent two opposing visions of world economic order. Yet their mutual antagonism was not a foregone conclusion. While the story of the IMF is often told as one of projection of power and dominance by the Global North and resistance of the South, Fajardo suggests that looking at the two organizations in tandem as they converged, diverged, and shaped each other demonstrates the impact of a southern institution and Latin America in the northern institution and the structure of global governance. In doing so, she advances our understanding of global institutional history and economic

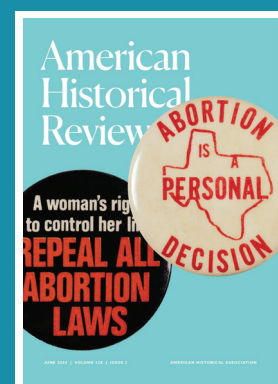
governance at a moment when international institutions have lost prestige and leverage.

Averages, **John E. Crowley** (Dalhousie Univ.) argues in "How Averages Become Normal," became a distinctive form of information in early modern European culture, first in commercial arithmetic, then in natural philosophy, demography, political economy, and eventually eclectic social analysis. Averaging provided an empirical and heuristic resource for understanding everything from planetary orbits to fertility and mortality rates, the return on stock market investments, and the trivia of daily life. Crowley suggests that as natural philosophers turned to quantitative evidence, the finances of the military-fiscal state required administration on a more complex scale, and parliamentary politics increasingly resorted to numerical argument, quantitative capabilities like averages became a respectable and readily deployed form of fact.

"The challenge for historians has recently become not to find a historical subject with agency but a historical subject without it."

In "'Improper and Almost Rebellious Conduct': Enslaved People's Legal Politics and Abolition in the British Empire," **Max Mishler** (Univ. of Toronto) explores the aftermath of early 19th-century British ameliorative statutes and procedural reforms that encouraged slaves to petition magistrates for legal redress. He demonstrates that enslaved people vigorously defended newfound "rights" to bodily protection, sustenance, and family preservation through the instigation of legal complaints against overseers, managers, and slave owners. The judicialization of quotidian battles over the terms of enslavement, he argues, refashioned colonial social relations and eroded slave owners' power in the colonies, eventually prodding Parliament to pass the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act.

The cover of the June *AHR* evokes the nature of abortion politics in Texas during the 1970s by reproducing dueling political buttons of the era. The June History Lab features a collaboration between two podcasts—*Sexing History* and the *AHR*'s *History in Focus*—that tells the story of a former evangelical minister and his wife who have provided abortion care in East Texas since the 1960s. Image: David J. & Janice L. Frent/Corbis via Getty Images.



The History Lab opens with an essay that explores a collaboration between the *AHR*'s podcast, *History in Focus*, and the podcast *Sexing History*. In “Sex with the Sound On,” **Gillian Frank** (Princeton Univ.), **Saniya Lee Ghanoui** (Suffolk Univ.), and **Lauren Jae Gutterman** (Univ. of Texas at Austin) discuss making the episode “A Sacred Calling,” which tells the story of Curtis Boyd and Glenna Halvorson Boyd, a former evangelical minister and his wife, who have provided abortion care in East Texas since the 1960s in the face of increasing violence from the antiabortion movement. Through oral histories with the Boyds, archival sound, and thematic music, the episode uncovers a deep history of faith and love through a complex legal landscape of abortion access. Their essay outlines *Sexing History*'s practices and protocols in their research and production to illustrate the kinds of public-facing historical work podcasts as a genre can do. “We hope that in sharing our work and detailing our processes,” they write, “*Sexing History* can serve as a case study of the ways historians might use digital media to engage with a broad public audience eager to learn more about the historical context of current events, political debates, and cultural trends.”

The lab includes a forum on deglobalization in the two decades after World War I that brings together contributions by 10 historians of Europe. Its conveners **Peter Becker** (Univ. of Vienna) and **Tara Zahra** (Univ. of Chicago) contend “the simultaneity of globalization and antiglobalism was baked into the foundation of internationalist projects and accelerating global connection in the late nineteenth century.” The essays collected in the forum all seek to better understand the ways in which processes of globalization were transformed after 1918. They explore cases at a variety of scales, from governments, banks, and international institutions to small gardens, homes, factories, and farms. Together they suggest that globalism and antiglobalism, like nationalism and internationalism, rose on the same tide. In what is a first for the journal, the *AHR* asked Becker and Zahra to create a video that introduces the various arguments of the

contributors to the forum, which can be found on the *AHR*'s website.

A second lab forum on historical agency opens with a deliberately provocative essay by **Anna Krylova** (Duke Univ.), a historian of Russia. “I wonder,” Krylova writes, “whether the challenge for historians has recently become not to find a historical subject with agency but a historical subject without it. How useful is such an indiscriminately expanded category that no longer asks a historian to make choices in her analysis?” Krylova offers an alternative conception of agency that draws on her own work on shifting gender roles in the Soviet military during World War II, advancing the concept of the “not-knowing actor” as a way out of what she calls the “agency dilemma.” We invited five historians whose work is closely bound up in exploring questions of historical agency to respond to Krylova's essay, including **William H. Sewell Jr.** (Univ. of Chicago), **Judith R. Walkowitz** (Johns Hopkins Univ.), **Geoff Eley** (Univ. of Michigan), **Angela E. Zimmerman** (George Washington Univ.), and **Vivien Rendleman** (Duke Univ.).

The June lab closes with **Lucas Bessire's** (Oklahoma Univ.) History Unclassified essay, “Incident at Antelope Springs.” He experiments with narrative form to describe an encounter with a vanished spring in order to reflect more broadly on the political and ecological temporalities around environmental loss on the American High Plains. **P**

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

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ALEXANDRA F. LEVY

# THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

## *Behind the Scenes at the AHA*

*Behind the Scenes at the AHA is a new series offering insights into the inner workings of the Association. Curious about how the AHA works? Email [perspectives@historians.org](mailto:perspectives@historians.org) with questions that could be addressed in this series.*

When the AHA election begins each June, members often wonder: How is the slate of candidates selected? The Nominating Committee, a group of nine AHA members who are themselves elected, selects those who will stand for election to lead the Association on the Council, the Nominating Committee itself, and the Committee on Committees.

Elections are held annually from June 1 to July 15, so the Nominating Committee's work takes place in January and February. In the fall, the AHA solicits nominations for elected positions on the Council and committees; these must be submitted by early January for consideration. Nominating Committee members consider these nominations and also compile lists of their own. They then meet at AHA headquarters in Washington, DC, along with an AHA staff liaison and the executive director (who serves ex officio on all AHA committees). The committee discusses each position and the historians who might be well suited to serve, and then contacts the potential nominees to see whether they will accept the nomination. "The meetings are a wonderful example of collaboration and goodwill," said Liz Townsend, who staffs the committee and is the AHA's manager, data administration and integrity. "The committee members work hard to present a competitive and diverse ballot that will bring different voices and experiences to the Council and committees."

All those elected serve three-year terms. Annually, the AHA membership elects three Council members, a vice president to lead one of the three divisions, the president-elect, and the president. Every three years, an at-large Council member is also elected. All elections are competitive except for the president, who simply advances from the president-elect position. The slate also includes three slots on the Nominating

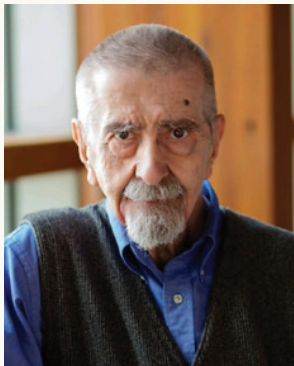
Committee and one to two slots on the Committee on Committees, the body that makes recommendations to Council for members of all appointed AHA committees.

Developing the slate is no easy task—it requires a great deal of balance and thoughtfulness. When considering candidates for elected positions, Nominating Committee members consider criteria including an individual's suitability to the work involved in a position, their track record for conscientious committee work, and their reputation for fairness and open-minded perspectives on historical work.

An essential component of choosing nominees is diversity, including work context (e.g., secondary schools, two-year colleges, four-year colleges, graduate institutions, public history, and independent scholars); employment status; demographics; career stage; regional distribution; and areas of specialization. The committee must consider not only these categories but also how a potential nominee is likely to balance with continuing members of Council and the elected committees. The Council and committees benefit from members who bring a wide range of perspectives and a diversity of experiences, backgrounds, and expertise. In these considerations, the Nominating Committee is guided by the AHA's *Statement on Diversity in AHA Nominations and Appointments*.

Want to help shape the leadership of the AHA? Make your voice heard by submitting nominations each fall and by voting in the election each summer. Watch your email for voting instructions on June 1. The Council and elected committees are your representatives at the AHA, so be sure to participate in the process. [P](#)

*Alexandra F. Levy is communications manager at the AHA. She tweets @AlexandraFL21.*



## Roger Daniels

1927–2022

Historian of Immigration; AHA 50-Year Member

On December 9, 2022, Roger Daniels died in Seattle, Washington, shortly after his 95th birthday. A towering figure in immigration history and Asian American studies, Daniels catalyzed scholarly interest in the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II and played an influential role in pushing the US government to award redress to Japanese Americans.

Roger was born on December 1, 1927, in New York City. The son of immigrants from the United Kingdom and Hungary, he grew up amid the social upheaval of the Great Depression. He described his youth as “itinerant,” as his family moved across the United States in search of work. His background informed his later worldview and inspired him to study the experiences of working-class families.

After serving in the Merchant Marine during World War II and the US Army during the Korean War, Daniels attended the University of Houston on the GI Bill and then enrolled in the history PhD program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), in 1957. Daniels hoped to write his dissertation on the wartime incarceration of Japanese Americans, but government records on the subject were unavailable to scholars. His mentor Theodore Saloutos suggested instead he study the history of California’s anti-Japanese movements at the turn of the 20th century. His dissertation became his first book, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Univ. of California Press, 1962), which covered the end of the 19th century through passage of the 1913 Alien Land Law. The book remains a key work in immigration studies and has seen multiple editions.

In the following years, Daniels was devoted to documenting the wartime incarceration of Japanese Americans. In 1971, Daniels published *Concentration Camps USA: Japanese Americans and World War II* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston), which challenged the US government’s argument that military necessity justified the incarceration. He followed up with an updated volume, *Concentration Camps North America* (Krieger, 1981), with a chapter on the wartime incarceration of Japanese

Canadians, and *The Decision to Relocate the Japanese Americans* (Lippincott, 1975). He completed his series on wartime incarceration with the capsule history *Prisoners without Trial* (Hill and Wang, 1993). Daniels also published *American Concentration Camps* (Garland, 1989), a nine-volume document collection based chiefly on materials from the National Archives.

Beyond Japanese incarceration, Daniels produced several distinguished historical surveys. They included *The Bonus March* (Greenwood, 1971) on the Depression-era political mobilization; *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Univ. of Washington Press, 1988) on the Asian American experience; *Coming to America* (HarperCollins, 1990) on US immigration history; and *Guarding the Golden Door* (Hill and Wang, 2004) on immigration restriction. He also worked tirelessly as an editor, most notably with the Asian American book series with the University of Illinois Press, through which he published and wrote introductions to dozens of studies.

Where Roger especially distinguished himself was his dedication to public advocacy. In 1967, Daniels and sociologist Harry Kitano organized at UCLA the first academic conference on Japanese Americans’ wartime experiences. The two then produced another with historian Sandra Taylor in Salt Lake City in 1983, which led to the edited volume *Japanese Americans, from Relocation to Redress* (Univ. of Utah Press, 1986). During the redress movement, Roger testified before multiple congressional hearings in support of financial compensation for Japanese Americans.

After a brief stint at UCLA, Daniels left in 1968 to teach at the University of Wyoming. As adviser to the Black Student Alliance, Daniels supported the “Black 14,” 14 football players who were dismissed from the team in 1969 when they protested the racial politics of opponent Brigham Young University. In 1976, Daniels was hired to chair the University of Cincinnati’s Department of History, where he remained until his retirement in 2002.

Retirement did little to hinder Roger’s productivity. He continued lecturing and editing and authored a two-volume biography of Franklin D. Roosevelt. His last book-length contribution on wartime incarceration was *The Japanese American Cases: The Rule of Law in Time of War* (Univ. Press of Kansas, 2013).

He is survived by his wife Judith, son Rick, daughter Sarah, and several grandchildren.

Jonathan van Harmelen  
University of California, Santa Cruz

Photo: Merrill Images, courtesy Daniels family



## Linda B. Hall

1939–2022

Historian of Mexico

Linda B. Hall was a prolific scholar, advancing knowledge of the Mexican Revolution, the history of the US-Mexico border, US-Mexican relations, and the history of women and gender. She died on September 30, 2022.

Linda descended from a family that settled in New Braunfels, Texas, in the 19th century. Her grandfather was a history professor at the University of Texas at Austin. Linda earned an undergraduate degree from that school, and before pursuing graduate work, she lived in Colombia, where she raised her two children, Leslie and Douglas. She returned to Texas for graduate work, earning an MA from Southern Methodist University, and then continued her training at Columbia University, earning an MPhil and a PhD in Latin American history. Linda's first teaching position was at Trinity University in San Antonio, and in 1986, she joined the University of New Mexico (UNM) as a full professor, became distinguished professor in 2008, and retired in 2016.

For much of her academic career, Linda's research reflected her interest in Mexico and the Mexican Revolution. Her early work on Álvaro Obregón became foundational in understanding the process by which a Mexico in the throes of revolutionary violence transitioned to a more stable time. With Don M. Coerver, Linda co-authored *Texas and the Mexican Revolution* (Trinity Univ. Press, 1984) and *Revolution on the Border* (Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1988), contributing to our knowledge of the revolution, borderlands history, and the history of Mexico-US relations. Linda and Don also collaborated on *Tangled Destinies: Latin America and the United States* (Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1999), an authoritative, accessible study of inter-American relations. Linda then turned her attention to the global oil industry and international banking in *Oil, Banks, and Politics: The United States and Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1917–1924* (Univ. of Texas Press, 1995).

Linda was dedicated to the history of women and gender in Latin America, shown in both the classes she offered and the research that occupied the latter part of her career. Reflecting

her devotion to expansive, multidisciplinary research, *Mary, Mother and Warrior: The Virgin in Spain and the Americas* (Univ. of Texas Press, 2004) was an impressive and wide-ranging study of one thousand years of Marian devotion, with an emphasis on visual culture. With her last published work, *Dolores del Río: Beauty in Light and Shade* (Stanford Univ. Press, 2013), Linda returned to a topic initially suggested by the late Luís Martín. In this masterful biography of the iconic actress, Linda revealed del Río and her career in all their complexity, while engaging with themes of gender, sexuality, race, and celebrity in Mexico and the United States.

Toward the end of her life, Linda was engaged in a project on artists of the Mexican Revolution. This took her to Mexico City, where she interviewed Rina Lazo and Arturo García Bustos, who had been students, respectively, of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, and the Novo-Hispanic artist Carmen Parra.

Her colleagues remember Linda as an exceptional teacher and a fierce advocate and mentor of women faculty and students. She directed 24 doctoral dissertations and over 20 MA theses. She served the university as director of the Latin American Studies program (1995–2000) and on committees and boards for the Latin American and Iberian Institute. In 2007, she was president of the AHA's Pacific Coast Branch. Her scholarship was recognized through visiting professorships and fellowships, including two Fulbright Fellowships to Peru and three research awards from the National Endowment for the Humanities. She was also awarded the Medalla de Acero de Mérito Histórico from the Society of History, Geography, and Statistics of Nuevo León, and she was named the 2000 University Research Lecturer at UNM.

Warm, gracious, and quick with a smile and a laugh, Linda approached her work and her life with an infectious joy and sense of fun. She was a talented cook, supported by an impressive personal library of cookbooks. Linda also loved watching sports, and on many a weekend she could be found at her Albuquerque home or in the UNM bleachers cheering on the basketball or football teams. She was cherished by her graduate students, who now teach at a host of universities and schools in the United States and Mexico. Linda's legacy continues with them.

Suzanne Pasztor  
California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt

Melissa Bokovoy  
University of New Mexico

Photo courtesy Hall family





## Kate Holbrook

1972–2022

Historian of Mormon Women

Kate Holbrook, a leading scholar on the history of Latter-day Saint women, died on August 20, 2022, of eye cancer. Since 2011, she had served as managing historian for women's history for the Church History Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) in Salt Lake City. In her final year, she was appointed as the department's inaugural academic collaborations coordinator, where she worked to connect and collaborate with academic researchers, programs, and institutions.

Holbrook was born in 1972 in Santa Barbara, California, to Kathleen Stewart and Robert Holbrook. Raised in Provo, Utah, Kate received her bachelor's in English and Russian literature from Brigham Young University; a master's in theological studies from Harvard Divinity School; and a doctorate in religious studies from Boston University, where she studied comparative religion and foodways. Her work on Mormon women's history followed naturally from her interests in both cooking and religion, as well as everyday ways that faith is expressed in community life.

Holbrook's scholarly output was prodigious and covered a wide range of topics. She was the co-editor of foundational texts in LDS women's history, including *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-day Saint Women's History* (Church Historian's Press, 2016); *Women and Mormonism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Univ. of Utah Press, 2016); and *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women* (Church Historian's Press, 2017). She also oversaw the online publication of *The Diaries of Emmeline B. Wells*, a crucial figure in late 19th- and early 20th-century Mormonism. Her work with documents from the LDS Church archives afforded her a vantage on women's experiences that she used to extraordinary effect, surfacing voices that had long been excluded from institutional histories.

Holbrook also had numerous loves alongside her scholarship, hobbies that she approached as an educator and someone who enjoyed sharing her discoveries. She loved to cook,

a passion that resulted in a cooking blog, *The Away Café*. She authored numerous articles about LDS women's culinary traditions and delivered incisive and entertaining talks about Jell-O, among other memorable delights. At the Church History Library, she created the tradition of an annual women's history luncheon, a ritual that made use of her multiple skills.

One of her mentors, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, noted that Holbrook was a natural bridge builder, mediating between historical perspectives of professional scholars and church leaders, members of other religious communities, and students and senior faculty. As Ulrich put it, she radiated "grace and wisdom" in every setting. Others commented on her incisive intellect, generosity, and deep kindness. According to a former student, Holbrook "had a true gift for highlighting the beautiful and unique characteristics in other people's lives." Even as Kate's energy was failing, she continued her work and displayed her care for others in everything she did.

Holbrook was a beloved colleague and mentor to many. I had the good fortune of working closely with her over the last four years on the Mormon Women's History Consultation. Together we gathered a talented and diverse group of 14 scholars. We mentored them in their research and writing, yes. More than that, Kate *nourished* them. Just as she understood the importance of good food to fellowship and community, she knew that the best scholarship comes when we are fed physically, emotionally, and intellectually. At our first gathering in 2019, she and her family cooked a lovely Indian meal for us, a gesture that set the tone for the years to come. At our yearly meetings, she always managed to find delicious food and foster discussions that ranged well beyond the details of scholarly research. She was a marvelous teacher because she understood that the best kind of support one can offer is the sharing of oneself. She nourished us all through the gift of her luminous, funny, intelligent self.

The philosopher Seneca once said, "Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness." No one lived that precept more fully than Kate Holbrook. Those who knew her were well nourished but left wanting even more.

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Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp  
Washington University in St. Louis

*Photo courtesy Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp*



## Staughton Lynd

1929–2022

Activist, Historian,  
and Lawyer

Legendary activist, historian, and labor lawyer Staughton Lynd died on November 17, 2022, from multiple organ failure. He was only days away from celebrating his 93rd birthday. He is survived by his wife Alice; children Lee, Barbara, and Marta; and grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Lynd was born in Philadelphia on November 22, 1929, the son of arguably the most famous sociologists of the time, Robert and Helen Lynd of *Middletown* fame. He attended the Ethical Cultural Schools in New York City until 1946, when he entered Harvard University. Lynd graduated with a BA in social relations in 1951, the same year that he married Alice Niles, who became his lifelong partner and collaborator.

Lynd's life is a window on recent US history, and he is best known for his activism. He traveled south in 1961 to teach at Spelman College and thrust himself into the civil rights movement. In 1964, he directed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's Mississippi Freedom Schools. He later remembered an activist telling him that white people were better off teaching other white folks about racism. He took this to heart, taking an assistant professorship in history at Yale University in 1964. He would soon be dubbed "the elder statesman of the New Left" in the *New York Times* because of his prominent work in the Vietnam War movement. In April 1965, Lynd chaired the Students for a Democratic Society-sponsored March on Washington, the largest antiwar demonstration in US history to date, and in August, he participated in protests at the US Capitol on the 20th anniversary of the Hiroshima atomic bombing. *Life* magazine featured a full-size photo of Lynd at the demonstration, alongside David Dellinger and Bob Moses, in which they were splattered in red paint. That image unsettled his Yale colleagues, with his department chair complaining that the "photo of Lynd with blood across him and his arm raised really represents the mood he had cultivated in himself." Lynd's arm was not raised, and he was well known for his calm demeanor. A trip to Hanoi in 1965–66 contributed to his dismissal from the university. Subsequent job offers were

rescinded in what many consider a Cold War-era blacklisting from academia.

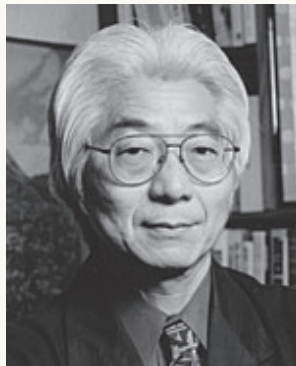
Despite his activism, or, more accurately, because of it, Lynd produced several noteworthy historical studies in this period. His dissertation was published as *Anti-Federalism in Dutchess County, New York: A Study of Democracy and Class Conflict in the Revolutionary Era* (Loyola Univ. Press, 1962). It was followed by *Class Conflict, Slavery, and the United States Constitution: Ten Essays* (Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1967); *Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), co-edited with Alice; and *Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism* (Pantheon Books, 1968), which was reissued by Cambridge University Press in 2009. Outside academia, Lynd continued to practice what he called "guerilla history," having thrown himself into the labor struggles in Youngstown, Ohio, and reinventing himself as a labor lawyer.

Lynd stayed active in the AHA in his later years. At the 2007 annual meeting, he served as a commentator on the session "The Historian in a Time of Crisis: Staughton Lynd, Yale University, and the Vietnam War." The conference was not without controversy. Lynd, as a steering committee member of the group Historians against the War, helped with its resolution on the Iraq War presented at the business meeting. This meeting harked back to 1969, when a group calling themselves the Radical Historians' Caucus attempted to elect Lynd as AHA president and pass a resolution against the Vietnam War. Both actions failed, but their activity, alongside those of the Coordinating Committee on Women in the Historical Profession, set in motion long-overdue reforms in the Association. In contrast to 1969, the 2007 *Resolution on United States Government Practices Inimical to the Values of the Historical Profession* passed overwhelmingly with 75 percent of the vote.

While Lynd's legacy within the historical discipline is noteworthy, his impact in the labor movement and work with prisoners later in his life underscores his passion for activism. His radical historiography was inseparable from the social movements that surrounded him—and in many ways, that activism cost him his career as a historian. "I [may have] lost my livelihood as an academic historian," Lynd explained, but had he not, he "would never have come to know rank-and-file working-class" activists who filled his life with a sense of purpose. Indeed, this radical activist and radical historian lived a life that allowed him to conclude in his characteristically earnest voice, "I have no regrets."

Carl Mirra  
Adelphi University

Photo courtesy Alice Lynd



## Ronald Takaki

1939–2009

Historian, Teacher,  
Public Intellectual

On May 26, 2009, the historical discipline lost Ronald Takaki, one of the most preeminent scholars of American multicultural history. His research and teaching foregrounded the experiences of racial and ethnic groups who had been excluded or marginalized in traditional historical accounts. His lyrical storytelling featured the lives of seemingly ordinary people who made extraordinary contributions to the US economy, politics, and culture. By highlighting their voices in songs, poetry, and oral history, Takaki made US history both readable and relatable.

The grandson of Japanese immigrant plantation laborers in Hawaii, Ronald Toshiyuki Takaki was born in Honolulu. During his youth, he was known as Ten-Toes Takaki for his hang-ten style of surfing. He was the first in his family to attend college, graduating from the College of Wooster, and he earned his PhD in American history from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1967. He taught at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), from 1966 to 1971; he then returned to UC Berkeley, where he remained until his retirement in 2003. Hawaii's ethnically divided plantation system, the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley, and civil rights struggles in the South were major influences on Takaki's career. His dissertation and first book, *A Pro-Slavery Crusade: The Agitation to Reopen the African Slave Trade* (Free Press, 1971), examined efforts in the 1850s to reopen the slave trade.

A pioneering and prolific historian, Takaki authored almost a dozen books between the 1970s and 2000s, including *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th-Century America* (Knopf, 1979); *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835–1920* (Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1983); *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Little, Brown, 1989); *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Little, Brown, 1993); and *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II* (Little, Brown, 2000). *Strangers from a Different Shore* was selected by the *New York Times* as a Notable Book of the Year and by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as one of the 100 best nonfiction books

of the 20th century, while *A Different Mirror* won the American Book Award.

Takaki was a popular teacher who emphasized the potential of critical thinking and writing skills as revolutionary tools. In 1966, he taught UCLA's first Black history course, and in 1971, he became the first full-time teacher in UC Berkeley's Department of Ethnic Studies. His self-effacing humor and down-to-earth laugh, as well as his comparative and relational approach to the study of race and racism, captivated students. He won Berkeley's Distinguished Teaching Award in 1981. In the 1980s, Takaki also helped establish the nation's first doctoral program in ethnic studies, and an undergraduate American cultures requirement to introduce students to the diverse cultures of the United States. Even after his retirement, he delivered guest lectures to standing-room-only audiences.

Takaki was also a formidable public intellectual. He shaped national conversations about multiculturalism, race, and education, appearing on television programs such as NBC's *Today*, ABC's *This Week with David Brinkley*, CNN's *International Hour* and *Crossfire*, and PBS's *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. In the 1980s and 1990s, he debated sociologist Nathan Glazer on the issue of affirmative action at American universities. He also advised President Bill Clinton on his major speech on race in 1997.

Takaki died at his home in Berkeley in 2009 after battling multiple sclerosis for years. Upon his death, Don T. Nakanishi, the director of UCLA's Asian American Studies Center, recalled Takaki's impact: "Ron Takaki elevated and popularized the study of America's multiracial past and present like no other scholar, and in doing so had an indelible impact on a generation of students and researchers across the nation and world."

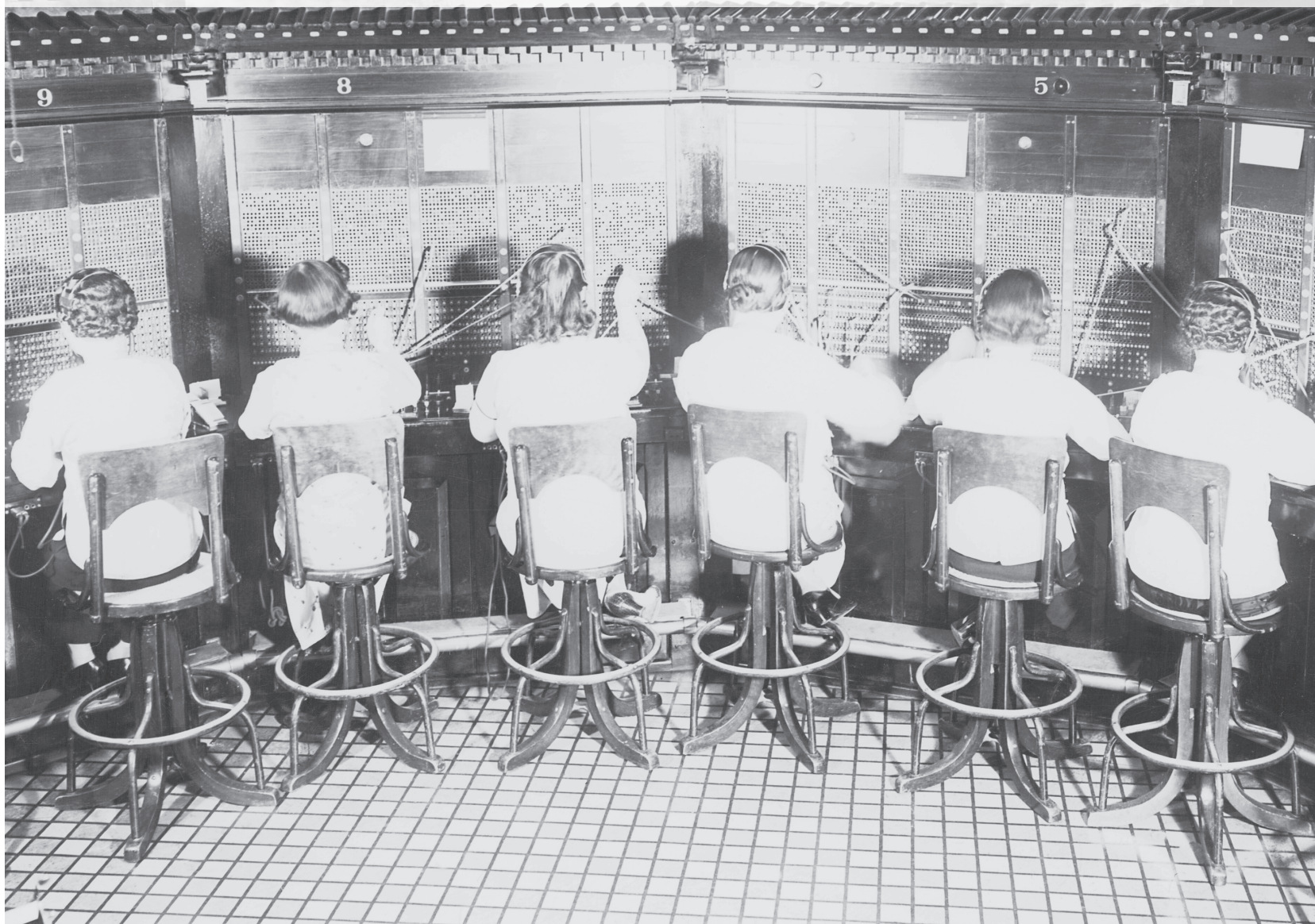
Takaki is survived by his wife, Carol Takaki; their three children; and grandchildren. Before his death, he donated over 40 cartons of his papers, dating from the 1970s to the 1990s, to UC Berkeley's Ethnic Studies Library. The Ronald T. Takaki Papers includes correspondence, teaching material, writing, research files, and personal papers that reflect his commitment to the study of America's multicultural past, present, and future.

Catherine Ceniza Choy  
University of California, Berkeley

Photo: Jane Scherr, courtesy Berkeley News



# CAREER CONTACTS



The AHA Career Contacts program arranges informational interviews between graduate students and early-career scholars and historians employed beyond the professoriate.

Sign up as a junior or senior contact at [historians.org/careercontacts](https://historians.org/careercontacts).



CORINNE KANNENBERG

# POMEGRANATE HUSK RELIQUARY



After 17 men and women were charged with heresy and burned in Lunel, France, in October 1321, an unnamed person gave Berenguier Rocha a small morsel of flesh that survived the flames. Out of the belief that the supposed heretic had lived a saintly life and died unjustly as a martyr, Berenguier took the relic back home and placed it in the husk of a pomegranate on a table in his house. A community venerating one of its members who had been executed for heresy as a saint was not uncommon, but this practice was heterodox in the eyes of the Roman Church, and inquisitors tasked with enforcing orthodoxy and orthopraxy added it to an ever-growing list of dissident behaviors that had reignited their interest in southern France in the late 1310s.

Despite the dangers of extraecclesiastical relic collecting and enshrinement, these religious dissidents, often called “Beguins” by their persecutors, persisted with this practice in distinct ways. Although the church could place relics in crafted artifacts made of precious materials, Beguins had to rely on the objects readily available. Repurposing found objects better suited the community’s ideal of apostolic poverty in contrast to the institutional church’s material splendor, and these makeshift reliquaries served a dual purpose: to contain exalted remains and also to conceal them from inquisitorial surveillance. That Beguins were not always successful in the latter goal is why we know about such objects. Surviving inquisition depositions of accused Beguins detail these humble and often ephemeral objects, which included boxes, walls of homes, textiles, and, perhaps most remarkably, Berenguier’s pomegranate husk.

Through these makeshift reliquaries, Beguins made meaning through matter. Pomegranates were an important piece of Christian iconography. Thanks to the story of Persephone—a goddess condemned to reside for half the year with Hades after eating a pomegranate but released annually in springtime—the fruit had been associated with growing crops and rebirth since antiquity. For Christians, there were additional connotations of renewal and resurrection. Pomegranates are

mentioned several times in the Bible, where they serve as evidence of the bounty of the Promised Land and decorate the pillars of Solomon’s Temple. In the Song of Songs, an erotic love poem in the Old Testament, pomegranates are explicitly connected with love, fertility, and human sexuality as an exploration of the love between God and humanity.

In the Mediterranean world of 14th-century southern France, pomegranates would have been readily available. Of all the mundane household items a Beguin might use as a reliquary, a pomegranate husk perhaps makes the most sense in terms of practicality, secrecy, and significance. Berenguier deliberately placed the martyr’s flesh into the flesh of a fruit so closely associated with divine abundance and eroticism, rebirth, and resurrection.

Berenguier’s pomegranate husk, like all the Beguins’ makeshift reliquaries, is lost to time. As a historian of medieval material culture, I find reports of objects like these to be critical pieces of the historical record. Although easily overlooked, they speak to the variety of consequential objects in the lives of medieval people. Such objects also highlight the significance of texts in the practice of material culture history. A highly ephemeral object such as a pomegranate husk reliquary is accessible to historians only through documentary sources. And although inquisition records are not, generally speaking, ideal sources, they illustrate the diversity of religious expression, understanding of sanctity, and material practice of the medieval period as they extend beyond the limits of orthodoxy. For marginalized groups such as the Beguins, no other extant documentary or object sources exist. Like the sacred flesh of a martyr wrapped in a fruit’s husk, they are all that remain. **P**

*Corinne Kannenberg is a teaching resource developer at the AHA and an ACLS Leading Edge Fellow at Restore Justice in Chicago. She tweets @ckannenberg\_.*

*Photo: Ken Jarvis/Flickr/CC BY-SA 2.0*

The American Historical Association proudly announces

# The James M. Banner, Jr., Lecture on the State of the Discipline of History

The American Historical Association is pleased to announce the creation of the James M. Banner, Jr., Lectureship on the State of the Discipline of History. Those invited to deliver the annual lecture will be asked to address the condition of historians' professional world—either as a whole or with regard to a distinct aspect of it as they understand it—and propose improvements to fundamental areas of the discipline: its structure; the institutions that support, preserve, and convey historical knowledge; the education and preparation of historians; and the links and scope of their varied pursuits. The lectureship encourages the consideration and evaluation of the circumstances under which historians learn and practice their craft throughout the world—a subject distinct from their routine scholarly pursuits and the interpretive debates in which they regularly engage.

The inaugural Banner Lecture will take place at the 2025 AHA annual meeting in New York City. Watch for the announcement of further details in the fall of 2024.

**The AHA is especially grateful to the following donors for their generous contributions toward establishing the Banner Lecture Endowment Fund:**

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# AHA Reads

## 2023 SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

READ A HISTORY

*written for*  
**young  
readers**

READ A HISTORY

*of your local  
community  
or state*

READ A  
**GRAPHIC  
HISTORY**

READ A HISTORY

*written by  
someone with a*  
**DIFFERENT  
BACKGROUND**  
*from your own*

**FREE SPACE**

READ A HISTORY  
THAT'S BEEN ON  
YOUR SHELF FOR  
**TOO LONG**  
(We all have one!)

READ A HISTORY

*published*  
**BEFORE  
2000**

READ A PIECE OF  
**HISTORICAL  
FICTION**

*(novel, story, poem, play)*  
**set in the time or  
place you study**

READ A HISTORY

*that's been*  
**CHALLENGED**  
*or*  
**BANNED**

READ A HISTORY

*of a place  
you know  
little about*

From June 1 to Labor Day, complete three reading tasks and make a BINGO!  
Use #AHAReads on social media or share in the AHA Member Forum.

Want to do AHA Reads with your kids or students?  
A special bingo card for kids is available online!

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[historians.org/aha-reads](https://historians.org/aha-reads)