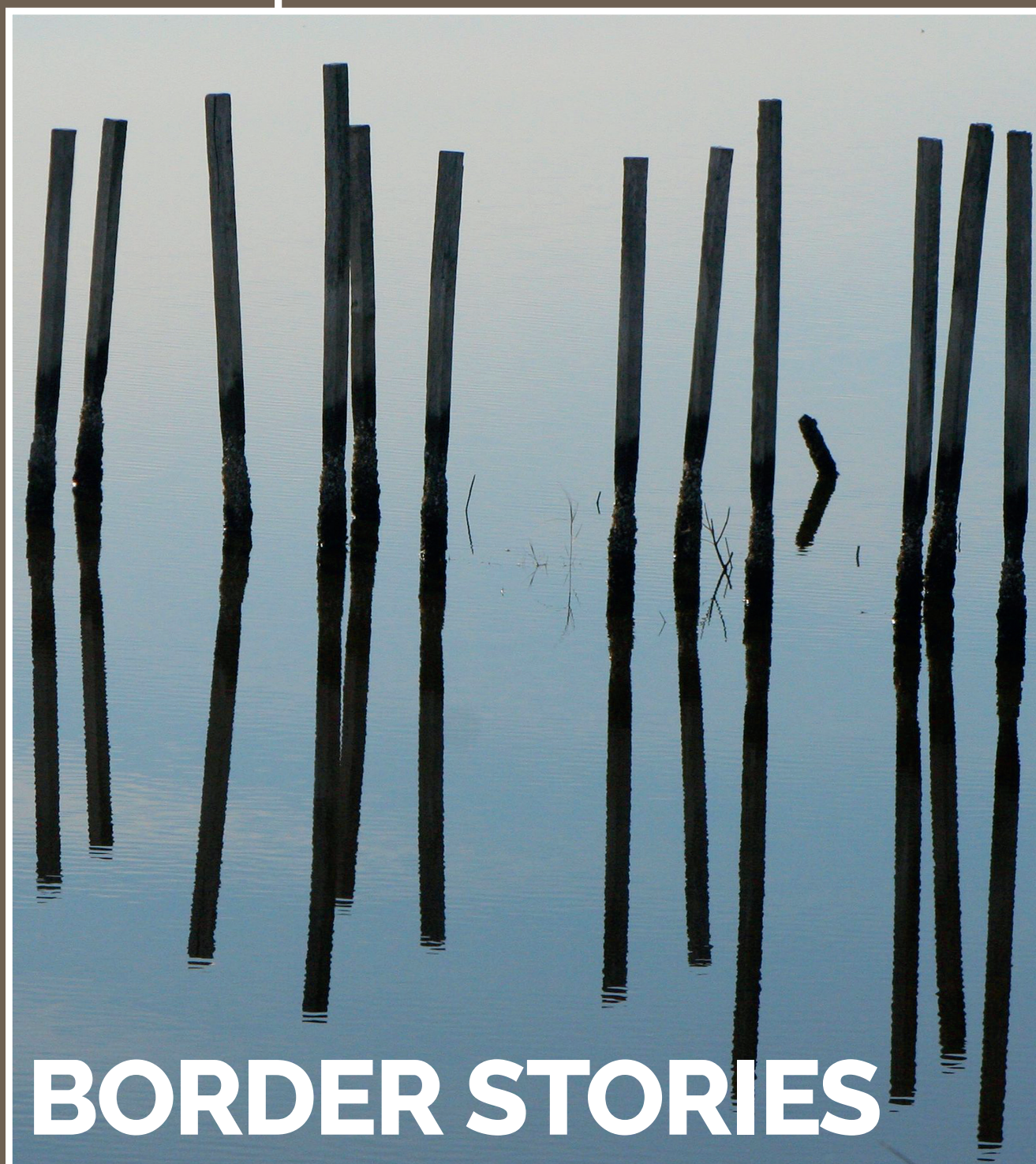


*The newsmagazine of the American Historical Association*

# PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

Volume 61: 8  
November 2023



## BORDER STORIES

## Call for Proposals for the 138th Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association

**The AHA's annual meeting is the largest yearly gathering of historians in the United States.**

All historians are welcome and encouraged to submit proposals. The AHA also invites historically focused proposals from colleagues in related disciplines and from AHA affiliated societies. The Program Committee will consider all proposals that advance the study, teaching, and public presentation of history.

The Association seeks submissions on the histories of all places, periods, people, and topics; on the uses of diverse sources and methods, including digital history; and on theory and the uses of history itself in a wide variety of venues.

**We invite proposals for sessions in a variety of formats and encourage lively interaction among presenters and with the audience.**

### Session Proposals

Sessions last for 90 minutes. Most sessions will be limited to four speakers plus a chair. The Program Committee will accept proposals for complete sessions only. We encourage organizers to build sessions that bring together diverse perspectives.

### Poster Proposals

The meeting will feature a poster session to allow historians to share their research through visual materials. Proposals for single, individual presentations may be submitted as posters.

.....

The Program Committee welcomes proposals from all historians, whatever their institutional affiliation or status, and historians working outside the United States. With the exception of foreign scholars and those from other disciplines, all persons appearing on the program must be members of the AHA, although membership is not required to submit a proposal. All participants must register for the meeting when registration opens. The Association aspires to represent the full diversity of its membership at the annual meeting.

**Electronic submission only, by midnight PST on February 15, 2024**

Before applying, please review the annual meeting guidelines and more information at [historians.org/proposals](https://historians.org/proposals).

**Questions about policies, modes of presentation, and the electronic submission process?**

Contact [annualmeeting@historians.org](mailto:annualmeeting@historians.org).

**Questions about the content of proposals?**

Contact Program Committee chair **Tamika Nunley, Cornell University** ([tnunley@cornell.edu](mailto:tnunley@cornell.edu)) and co-chair **Gabriel Paquette, University of Maine** ([gabriel.paquette@maine.edu](mailto:gabriel.paquette@maine.edu)).

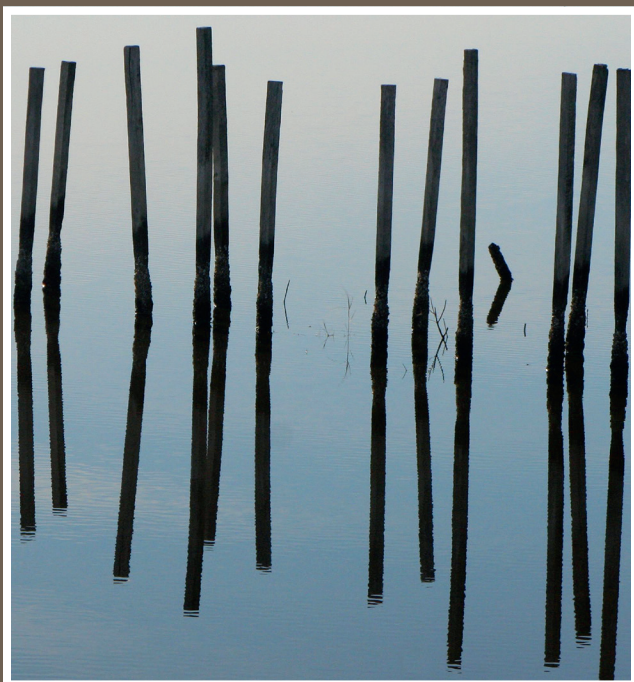


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*Three International Students' Journeys*

VICKY SHEN, ARKO DASGUPTA, AND ELOY ROMERO BLANCO



### ON THE COVER

For some people, crossing international borders is an adventure, while for others it can be a matter of life and death. As poet Warsan Shire has written, “you have to understand/that no one puts their children on a boat/unless the water is safer than the land.” From crossing between empires to immigration policy to the dwindling number of safe harbors available to those seeking refuge, histories of boundaries and borders circumscribe our everyday lives in ways so ubiquitous that they often become hard to notice.

*Photo: Scott Robinson/CC BY 2.0. Image cropped.*

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*From September 2023 to May 2024, Perspectives will feature a thread on urbanism and rurality. Look for this icon to find articles in the thread.*

News magazine of the  
**AMERICAN  
HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION**

400 A Street, SE  
Washington, DC 20003-3889

PHONE: 202.544.2422

FAX: 202.544.8307

EMAIL: [perspectives@historians.org](mailto:perspectives@historians.org)

WEB PAGE: [historians.org/perspectives](http://historians.org/perspectives)



**PERSPECTIVES  
ON HISTORY**

*Editor*

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*Senior Managing Editor*

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*Research and Publications  
Assistant*

LIZZY MEGGYESY

*Communications Manager*

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SCOT MCFARLANE

*Perspectives on History* (ISSN 1940-8048) is published nine times a year, monthly September through May, by the American Historical Association, 400 A St., SE, Washington, DC 20003-3889. 202.544.2422. Fax 202.544.8307. World Wide Web: [www.historians.org/perspectives](http://www.historians.org/perspectives). Email: [perspectives@historians.org](mailto:perspectives@historians.org) (editorial issues) or [ppinkney@historians.org](mailto:ppinkney@historians.org) (membership and subscription issues). *Perspectives on History* is distributed to members of the Association. Individual membership subscriptions include an amount of \$7.04 to cover the cost of *Perspectives on History*. Institutional subscriptions are also available. For details, contact the membership department of the AHA. Single copies of *Perspectives on History*—if available—can be obtained for \$8 each. Material from *Perspectives on History* may be published in *Perspectives Daily* (ISSN: 1556-8563), published by the American Historical Association at [www.historians.org/perspectives](http://www.historians.org/perspectives). For information about institutional subscriptions, see [www.historians.org/members/subscriptions](http://www.historians.org/members/subscriptions).

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Periodicals class postage paid at Washington, DC, and at additional mailing offices.

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Postmaster: Send change of address to *Perspectives on History*, Membership Department, AHA, 400 A St., SE, Washington, DC 20003-3889.

**PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT**

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FPO



LAURA ANSLEY

# PLAYING TOURIST AT HOME

*An AHA Field Trip to the National Mall*



Laura Ansley

When *Beyond Granite: Pulling Together* arrived for just a month this summer on the National Mall, I was determined to see it. Curated by the Monument Lab's Paul Farber and Salamishah Tillet, the exhibition included six projects by artists of color responding to the question "What stories remain untold on the National Mall?"

On Wednesday, September 13, the oppressive heat of summer had not yet left DC, but seven AHA staff members nonetheless took the Metro to the Smithsonian / National Mall station. As we came up the escalators, we could hear the bells ringing from the closest installation. Paul Ramírez Jonas's *Let Freedom Ring*, an interactive bell tower, was surrounded by children waiting their turn to ring a bell in place of the final note of "My Country 'Tis of Thee." The children were excited to play their part in completing this song, which has had such significance in the mall's historic events, from Marian Anderson's notable 1939 performance of it to its incorporation in Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech.

As we followed the mall's gravel pathways west, we encountered five more installations that were striking in different ways. Next to the Washington Monument, we experienced Ashon T. Crawley's audiovisual *Homegoing*, a low blue structure that played a three-movement composition invoking Black religious observance and honoring those lost to the AIDS epidemic. Across 17th Street, *America's Playground: DC* highlighted the end of school (and playground) segregation in DC; artist Derrick Adams centered a photograph taken in a formerly whites-only park only days after school segregation ended by court ruling. On one side, photograph and playground equipment were in muted black and white; on the other, both burst with bright colors.

The exhibition route took us to an area of the mall I'd never visited before. Rather than walking past the World War II Memorial, along the reflecting pool, until you reach the Lincoln Memorial—the straight path—we headed north through Constitution Gardens until we reached Signers' Island, which honors the 56 white men who signed the Declaration of

Independence. There, with the Washington Monument in the distance, Wendy Red Star (Apsáalooke [Crow]) used her own thumbprint as the basis for *The Soil You See . . .* In its red whorls are the names of 50 Apsáalooke men who signed treaties with the United States between 1825 and 1880, often using a thumbprint or an X to indicate their agreement. Going off the beaten path to a much quieter part of the mall made this installation even more affecting. With the signers' names listed nearby and the Washington Monument in the background, Red Star inspired us to contemplate the many others we could consider "Founders" of this nation, if we only expanded our viewpoint beyond the names we know so well.

Two final installations—Tiffany Chung's *For the Living*, a world map crisscrossed with the migration routes of Southeast Asians placed near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (which will be featured in the December *American Historical Review*), and vanessa german's *Of Thee We Sing*, a depiction of Marian Anderson performing in front of the Lincoln Memorial—pushed us to think of the stories surrounding our national monuments. Chung honored those who fled Vietnam and neighboring nations alongside those Americans who fought in the Vietnam War. Anderson's arms opened to her audience, and at the statue's base were historic images of Black audience members at her 1939 concert. Seeing these faces in front of the Lincoln Memorial, where just 24 years later 250,000 people would gather for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, was yet another reminder of how the National Mall belongs to all Americans, not just those carved in stone.

Seeing the Washington Monument or the US Capitol so frequently, it's easy to take this place where we live for granted. I can't speak for my colleagues, but I returned to the office that day grateful for this city and all it offers. But it's also fun to spend a day playing tourist in our own hometown—especially when doing so helps you to see that city and its memorial landscape from a new perspective. **P**

*Laura Ansley is senior managing editor at the AHA.*



## TO THE EDITOR

I was very pleased to read Bryan A. Banks's "The Unessay: A Creative and Audience-Focused Assignment" (September 2023) on innovative projects students can create to communicate their knowledge of a particular topic in history to audiences that otherwise would not read an essay on the same topic.

However, I was dismayed as I read the article to see that one of the projects that was discussed and illustrated was based on the very contested theory, first published in 1999 in Jacqueline L. Tobin and Raymond G. Dobard's *Hidden in Plain View: A Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad*, that antebellum quilts made by the enslaved contained coded messages that would point those escaping slavery to freedom. A simple internet search for "quilt code" will bring up many websites and articles that discuss the quilt-code theory as accurate history, as oral history, and as fake history. There is no indication in Banks's article that this particular student's project is based on a controversial book and idea.

Every February, the quilt-code story makes its way into classrooms, students' projects, and Black History Month features. We cannot discount the value of oral history and its importance in telling the stories of those who had no other way to record and remember their own histories. But with a topic like the quilt code, it is important for authors to note that this is a topic that still—after almost 25 years—is as controversial now as it was then.

I do think that students' unessays can be useful in presenting topics that are controversial or have been shown to be wrong. But they need to be identified as such, and this student's unessay project was not.

 MARTHA KATZ-HYMAN  
Independent Curator




## TO THE EDITOR

L. Renato Grigoli's "The 2023 AHA Academic Jobs Report" (September 2023) provides much useful data, but it leaves out a vital aspect of the current reality for those of us on the academic job market: the dismal state of adjunct/non-tenure-track pay rates and benefits compared to the cost of living.

For example, I was hired for two adjunct teaching positions that offered \$4,500 and \$6,000 per class, respectively, with each requiring a 3-3 teaching load of the 75+ person US History since 1865 survey course. These positions were not benefits eligible, meaning I could not participate in the university's health care or 401(k) retirement plan. Even the slightly higher-paying position would still put me nearly \$10,000 below the \$44,000 minimum annual income required to survive in Massachusetts (as calculated by the MIT Living Wage Project).

We need to recognize that not only is the number of positions important, but so is the compensation that those positions are (or, in most cases, are not) offering. The opportunities available in our profession are continually decreasing; it seems clear that even these opportunities are increasingly available only to those with enough personal wealth to support themselves in spite of—rather than because of—their PhD.

 JEANNA L. KINNEBREW  
Boston, Massachusetts

## THE AHA RESPONDS

Salaries and compensation are indeed of vital importance to understanding the dynamics of academic hiring. Unfortunately, a lack of the necessary robust datasets makes it difficult to reach any definitive conclusions at this time.

EDWARD MUIR

## ON REFUGE

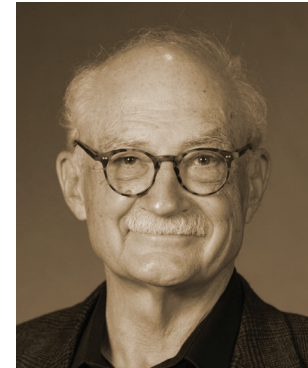
*Seeking a Safe Place across History*

*Editor's Note: This column was written in September before recent events in the Middle East.*

My earliest understanding of the word *refuge* came from a bird refuge. Twice a year during the migratory season, my grandmother took my brothers and me to Utah's Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, where the cool, clear Bear River flows through a marshy delta into the dead sea of the Great Salt Lake. The birds found there a feeding ground and shelter on their long flights north or south. I learned to identify a white-faced ibis and thrilled at the occasional tundra swan. For thousands of years, the fresh waters of the Bear River delta also have been a human refuge from the surrounding deserts of the Great Basin for the Shoshone, Paiute, Bannock, and Ute peoples and is now a psychological refuge for urbanites from the exploding population along the Wasatch Front region.

As an adult historian, I have come to understand the word *refuge* quite differently from a rest stop for traveling birds or stressed city dwellers. The words *refuge* and *migration* go together, speaking to past histories and to our own moment of mass human migrations forced by climate change, economic deprivation, and political strife. Much of history consists of narratives about people migrating to find a refuge, a safe place to survive, live, and prosper, to escape slavery, starvation, or persecution.

The Western urtext about migration and refuge is Exodus, the biblical story about how the ancient Israelites fled slavery in Egypt and found the Promised Land. The Exodus narrative is everywhere in Western civilization, from messianic cults and the sermons of Martin Luther King Jr. to, as Michael Walzer has argued, secular revolutionaries including Lenin. The Exodus narrative suggests the opportunity to fashion society anew, to make what had been unbearable better. The Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge fits well into this narrative tradition: after escaping from religious harassment and murderous mobs in Missouri and Illinois, emigrating Mormons, too, found a refuge among the tributaries of the Great Salt Lake.



Migration and refuge are everywhere in American history. The Pilgrims sought in Massachusetts a religious refuge from the Anglican establishment, and then the Puritan establishment forced Quaker and Baptist nonconformists to migrate to Rhode Island. Refugee narratives such as those about the Underground Railroad for self-emancipating enslaved people from the US South abound with attempts to find freedom. On and on across the history of America to the current moment, when the governors of Texas and Florida have forced migrants to find refuges in New York, Chicago, and Martha's Vineyard.

Ubiquitous repetitions rule  
out such revealing but  
inconvenient truths.

Other narratives, however, have blinded people about the plight of those already on the land of refuge. One group's liberation story is another's tale of loss. The conquest narrative about Utah pretends that before the Mormons arrived, the land was empty, ripe for hardy white Americans to make the desert blossom as a rose. Jared Farmer's fascinating book *On Zion's Mount* explores how Mormon messianism made it necessary to hide the reality that northern Utah had been a thriving hub of Indigenous peoples' activity, especially around Utah Lake, which was a major source of dried fish for as far away as the pueblos in New Mexico. The ubiquitous repetitions of the Exodus narrative rule out such revealing but inconvenient truths. As a bright student once asked a colleague about the biblical narrative, "So what happened to the Canaanites?"

For most of my life as a historian, I have studied the republic of Venice, whose chroniclers and early historians imbibed at the fountain of Exodus and other ancient texts of liberation when it came to explain the origins of their singular city—singular because of its water-bound site and because of its medieval and Renaissance institutions that guaranteed republican liberty. Until modern archaeology offered real



evidence, Venetians did not know how their ancestors had come to settle in such an unusual place. In absence of a history, flattering fictions sprang up, one after another, most sharing the leitmotifs of migration and refuge. Building on the *Aeneid*, medieval and Renaissance writers imagined that after the destruction of Troy, its defeated nobility escaped to Italy, with some settling in the vicinity of Padua, which the Venetians conquered in the 15th century, allowing them to share fully in the Trojan foundation myth. The Trojans were a people who in the ancient world had refused to pay tribute to anyone and who even abandoned their homes to preserve their liberty from the Greek victors. The Trojan myth granted the Venetians primacy in the Mediterranean, the pure blood of the Trojan nobility, and exemption from the unseemly taint of the barbarian influences of late antiquity.

Myths, of course, need not be mutually consistent, and the Trojan myth was often subsumed into another refugee story about how the proto-Venetians abandoned the fertile mainland for the lagoons to escape Attila the Hun. As Sir Henry Wotton, the English ambassador to Venice in the early 17th century, put it, “True it is, that as all things savour of their first principles, so doth the said Republic.” The progenitors of the Venetians “were not of the meanest and basest quality,” and “they were timely instructed with temperance and penury (the nurses of moderation).” Many other migration myths have echoed these first principles that guiltless refugees can claim moral authority as a result of their suffering. What is left out of the Venetian narrative is the reality that immigration displaced the Indigenous population, the ancient Veneti, just as the Israelites displaced the Canaanites, the Pilgrims the Wampanoag and Massachusett, and the Mormons the Shoshone and Utes.

Now and in the future, hiding places from climate change, the newest source of migration, will be harder and harder to find.

The etymology of *refuge* links to shelter, retreat, and sanctuary. For centuries in Christian countries, churches were sanctuaries, hiding places from punishment or arrest, a concept that has been lost in such militantly Christian countries such as Hungary. Now and in the future, hiding places from climate change, the newest source of migration, will be harder and harder to find. “We hardly have a vocabulary for the extreme version of heat and drought we are now living

through,” Terry Tempest Williams wrote in her recent essay in the *New York Times* about living in the Southwest through 47 straight days over 100 degrees Fahrenheit with an average daily high of 107. “The heat bears down on our shoulders with the weight of a burning world. . . . You lose your mind.” As the climate apocalypse arrives, will we all lose our minds? An exodus may become necessary for millions, but where will they find a refuge?

The descendants of migrants clustered around the Great Salt Lake tributaries may soon need to find a new refuge and invent a new narrative. The lake is disappearing, leaving the dry lake bed strewn with the bodies of dead pelicans. The historic lake, which has existed for 13,000 years in its current form, has shrunk since 1987 by two-thirds. A Brigham Young University study reports that without extreme measures, the lake will disappear in five years. In the meantime, the 2.6 million people who live nearby will face swirling storms of mercury- and arsenic-laced dust from the desiccated lake bed. The airborne poisons will sicken many before migration becomes an option.

The birds in the refuge are already disappearing, and there are fewer havens for people too. Without refuges, there can be no refugees, but only permanent migrants roaming the world in a futile search for safety. **P**

*Edward Muir is president of the AHA.*

REBECCA L. WEST

## ADVOCACY BRIEFS

*AHA Releases Statement on Florida Standards, Supports Title VI Funding, Opposes WVU Program Cuts*

**A**mid the ongoing state-level battles over so-called “divisive concepts” and in public education, the AHA released a statement addressing the Florida Department of Education’s new African American history standards, which strip the context of racism from US history lessons. The AHA also signed on to a letter from the Coalition for International Education urging federal funding for HEA–Title VI programs, as well as a statement from the American Council of Learned Societies expressing concern over proposed major cuts to programs at West Virginia University.

### AHA Statement on Florida’s African American History Standards

On August 21, the AHA released a statement on the Florida Department of Education’s new African American history standards, based on an op-ed by executive director James Grossman that was published in the *Miami Herald* on August 14. “What is the purpose of denying young people as comprehensive a history as possible?” the statement reads. “[T]he remedy for discomfort is not to marginalize the lasting effects of legal, economic, social, and cultural institutions that condoned the buying and selling of other humans for nearly 250 years. Our work

as historians is chock-full of stories that can inspire students and readers without obscuring essential concepts. All facts and narratives require context; in the United States, slavery and racism are contexts that cannot be dismissed as ‘mere deviations.’”

### AHA Signs On to CIE Letter Urging HEA–Title VI Funding for FY 2024

On September 13, the AHA signed on to a letter from the Coalition for International Education (CIE) to leaders in the US House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations expressing “concern over reported deep reductions to the US Department of Education’s International Education and Foreign Language Studies account in the Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill approved by the Subcommittee before the recess.” The letter urges the committee to fund HEA–Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs to at least the same amount that that was provided in FY 2023. “The economic well-being and national security of the United States depend substantially on its citizens’ ability to communicate and compete by knowing the languages and cultures of other countries,” the CIE wrote. “[T]his funding is crucial for our nation’s prosperity and safety.”

### AHA Signs On to ACLS Statement Opposing Major Cuts to WVU Programs

On September 14, the AHA signed on to a statement from the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) opposing proposed major cuts to West Virginia University (WVU) undergraduate and graduate programs across multiple departments. “By proposing [these] cuts . . . the university is denying its students and the people of West Virginia access to the wide range of knowledge necessary to fulfill that mission,” the ACLS wrote. “The path WVU is treading is unprecedented for a public flagship and dangerous for American higher education and society.” **P**

*Rebecca L. West is operations and communications assistant at the AHA. Find her on X (formerly Twitter) @rebeckawest.*

CARLOS KEVIN BLANTON

# TROUBLE IN TEXAS

*Culture Wars, the Meaning of History, and Academic Freedom*

**The Texas State Historical Association (TSHA), an organization that has nurtured and enriched the study of Texas history for 126 years, is in trouble.**

In recent months, the TSHA has been rocked by a shocking lawsuit from within its own ranks. This suit is primarily about who controls the organization and the narrative of Texas history, a manifestation of a highly political rift within the Texas history community that has been brewing for years. It presents a new front in the national culture wars and a danger to academic freedom.

This tale begins with the TSHA's unique public orientation. Founded in 1897, the TSHA publishes one of the oldest continuously running state history journals in the nation, the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*; puts on a large and energetic annual meeting; and compiles a massive online encyclopedia, the *Handbook of Texas*, offered freely to the public. Notably, this association has long mixed academics and nonacademics into its governance out of a desire to popularize and broaden the subject of Texas history. In fact, the organization's bylaws (the entry point of the recent litigation) broadly

indicate this arrangement under Article XII:

For many years, there has been an established custom that the presidency of the Association be alternated from year to year between academic and nonacademic members and that the membership of the Board of Directors likewise be balanced substantially between these two groups. An academic member is described as an active or retired employee of an accredited academic institution whose



Texas historians are weathering a political storm as the Texas State Historical Association becomes a front in the culture wars.  
Kelly DeLay/Flickr/CC BY-NC 2.0. Image cropped.



position at that institution materially involves (or involved) the teaching and/or research of history.

## Tensions over the meaning of history have finally exploded.

That leadership mix has been the subject of internal veneration. For example, in a 2010 *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* essay, Walter L. Buenger, the current TSHA chief historian and holder of the Summerlee Foundation Chair in Texas History and the Barbara Stuart Centennial Professorship in Texas History at the University of Texas at Austin, extolled the virtues of such a balanced leadership in order to maintain a more vigorous and impactful history of the changing state.

Tensions over the meaning of history—inquiry versus celebration, critique versus memorialization—have been building for years within the association and have finally exploded, though the political fault lines do not always neatly align along the vague academic and nonacademic categories. In the fall of 2022, wealthy oilman J. P. Bryan, former CEO of Torch Energy Advisors, was appointed the TSHA's executive director after promising to use his business acumen to stabilize the association's shaky finances. In the spring of 2023, Bryan sued the TSHA president, the respected historian Nancy Baker Jones of the Ruthe Winegarten Memorial Foundation for Texas Women's History, for up to \$1 million in damages because of her allegedly conducting her presidential duties in a manner he viewed as personally adverse and for having an alleged "thirst for power." While the civil suit was active, Bryan obtained an injunction from a state court based in

his hometown to keep the TSHA's board from exercising oversight over his management of the large nonprofit organization. The TSHA exerts real influence over what constitutes Texas history and how that history is taught at the university and K–12 levels, making this immediate accumulation of power quite a coup. This litigation limbo with a trial date set for the fall effectively hamstrung Jones's presidency by allowing Bryan unchecked control of the organization. In August, Bryan agreed to drop the lawsuit provided that Jones voluntarily resign and that one academic board member be purged. As of the writing of this essay, this agreed-on settlement remains to be fulfilled.

Bryan's lawsuit stems from a conflict at the TSHA annual meeting in El Paso last March. Bryan called a floor vote seeking to override the organization's Nominating Committee with his

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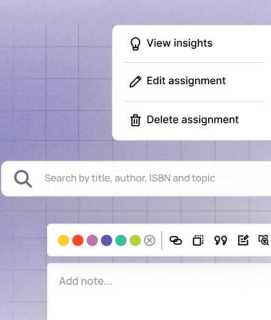


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handpicked candidate for a nonacademic board slot. He lost. Bryan's request was out of the ordinary; attendees of the business meeting, open to all TSHA members, are usually quite deferential to the wishes of the Nominating Committee. When TSHA members at the meeting openly questioned whether this sudden, alternative nominee, a former state supreme court justice, was actually a member of the organization, the executive director could not definitively answer. Losing his composure, Bryan descended into the crowd to exchange heated remarks with those who demanded answers, wrongfully berated a trio of Latino scholars, and stormed out of the meeting. Because of complaints about this lack of professionalism and other concerns, brand-new TSHA president Nancy Baker Jones called a May board meeting to discuss removing Bryan from his position. Bryan then quickly obtained a court injunction to prevent the board from meeting and firing him. This injunction lasted several months until the settlement of late August.

The reason for this injunction rested on a debatable interpretation of Article XII of the TSHA bylaws—the executive director's legal team in the 10th Judicial District Court of Galveston County alleged the board was improperly tilted toward academics—but this conflict is really about the culture wars that are erupting in many parts of the nation. Indeed, Bryan has not been shy about telling the media what the real basis for his lawsuit is. To one newspaper, he held that “the way the history of Texas is written” is in fact what his effort “is all about.” To another, Bryan stated flatly of academics, “I don't like their history, and I don't believe their history.” Specifically, Bryan believes that westward Anglo expansion and the founding of Texas had the effect of “spreading freedoms for all.” This claim was rebutted in an open letter by 10

past TSHA presidents, who asked how Bryan, a proud descendant of foundational Texan Stephen F. Austin through a nephew, can “seriously contend that his pioneer great-great-grandfather settled on his Brazoria County plantation with his thirty-eight slaves in order to secure ‘freedoms for all.’” These outdated understandings of the past resonate with Bryan's public espousal of widespread conspiracy theories, such as his conviction that former President Barack Obama is a Muslim.

For our explorations  
to have intellectual  
rigor, no part of the  
past can be exempt  
from scrutiny.

For professional historians who have benefited from the stimulating, supportive space created by the TSHA, these events are most distressing. This organization has given us crucial feedback on our work, mentorship in our careers, connections to a wider community of historians, and venues in which to develop new research and teaching practices. Indeed, this entire situation exposes a fundamental disconnect about what history is, what it does, and who it is for. Bryan and his enablers allege Texas history is under attack by revisionists; most historians would regard revisionism as the normal push and pull of academic debate. What seems to historians like a healthy process of rethinking old ideas and proposing new ones is to Bryan and his supporters questioning deeply held, fragile identities. These traditionalists conflate folklore and myth with history; they project their own inflexibility onto professional historians for our unwillingness to guarantee that the reputations of mythic heroes and

events of the past will be given a free pass in our studies. This gulf over the meaning of Texas history is rapidly widening.

What are historians of Texas to do? We must continue our work of telling the truth about the past with compelling evidence and interpretations. We need academic freedom to do this, an impossibility in the current context of frivolous million-dollar lawsuits that enable Machiavellian power grabs. For our explorations to have intellectual rigor, no part of the past can be exempt from scrutiny. And we have an obligation to engage the public, a goal admirably pursued by the TSHA in its storied career. To continue to do so, however, professional historians need to meaningfully share in the TSHA's governance or consider other options, a likely possibility at the writing of this essay. Some TSHA members (including the author) have formed a group, Concerned TSHA Members, to communicate these concerns more widely. Texas is a state in which wealthy, motivated persons can buy any number of things. History and academic integrity should not be among them. Navigating the present and future depends on an honest, free, and open evaluation of our past—the central issue of this latest trouble in Texas. **P**

*Carlos Kevin Blanton is a professor of history at Texas A&M University, College Station.*





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2024  
127<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING  
JANUARY 4-7  
SAN FRANCISCO

[historians.org/annual-meeting](https://historians.org/annual-meeting)

Artwork by Usha Venkat



VICKY SHEN, ARKO DASGUPTA, AND ELOY ROMERO BLANCO

# EXPERIENCING THE TRANSIMPERIAL WHILE RESEARCHING IT

*Three International Students' Journeys*



Kisaburō Ohara, *A Humorous Diplomatic Atlas of Europe and Asia* (1904)  
Cornell University, PJ Mode Collection of Persuasive Cartography

AS HISTORIANS OF empire, we write histories that transcend imperial and national borders using a transimperial methodological approach. Emerging out of the long lineage of the transnational turn and building on frameworks like the interimperial, “entangled empires,” and other comparative methods, this approach shifts historians’ focus to spaces between empires and beyond imperial metropolises. Its eclectic nature can offer scholars of non-European empires and other imperial margins a methodological grounding to consider imperialism—and anti-imperialism—as a project shared across empires and colonies.

We were drawn to the transimperial approach because it offers exciting ways of rethinking and reframing conventional narratives on empires. But practically speaking, it presents challenges for us as international history graduate students. In sharing our research journeys, we look to start a conversation about the bureaucratic, methodological, and logistical challenges of exploring transimperial history in a world divided by national borders.

Each of us was drawn to the transimperial for different reasons. A resident of Hong Kong, Vicky moved among southern China, Singapore, and the United States, an experience that sparked an interest in how the Japanese and US empires collaborated and competed in a shared project of ecological domination and extraction. Inspired by his birthplace of Huelva, Spain—where Columbus set sail for the Americas—Eloy explores anticolonialism and imperialism in the Atlantic world, with a focus on Latin Americans who used US expansion to contest Spanish dominion over Cuba in the mid-19th century. Arko was born and raised in India, though his ancestral home is in present-day Bangladesh, an outcome resulting from the partition of the Indian subcontinent following colonial rule. His project explores race in the context of the British Empire and early Indian migration in the United States, particularly along the Pacific Seaboard.

Researching and writing transimperial history has meant not only crossing the imperial boundaries of the past but also negotiating their legacies in the present as we cross international borders and navigate complicated bureaucracies. Through conversations about the practicalities of transimperial research, we have realized that the transimperial is not simply about new methodologies or approaches, but is often tied to our identities and experiences, both professional and personal. As we’re international students pursuing our PhDs in the United States, our visa status, funding eligibility, and diplomatic ties between the United States and countries where we conduct research were deciding factors in our transimperial projects. None of these issues were made more

accessible by the pandemic or the constantly unfolding events that transform global politics.

Our conversation on the transimperial began during a time of isolation. When the COVID-19 pandemic ended in-person seminars and halted research travels, many turned to the digital world for a sense of intellectual community. In the fall of 2021, Vicky started a working group on studies of trans- and anti-imperialism with three faculty and graduate students at the University of Pittsburgh, which Eloy and Arko joined. The working group’s goal was not only to provide a space for scholars interested in multiple empires but also to serve as an experiment in collaborative scholarship among graduate students and between graduate students and faculty. As COVID restrictions eased in early 2022, our engagement with the transimperial also shifted from the conceptual to the methodological, when we embarked on our research travels. As Vicky began her fieldwork in Japan, Arko departed for India and the West Coast of the United States, and Eloy went to Spain. When we reconvened online later in the year, we were surprised to learn that many of the struggles we faced on our archival trips were similar despite the different geographical locations of our collections.

The transimperial is not simply about new methodologies or approaches, but is often tied to our identities and experiences, both professional and personal.

To cross imperial boundaries both intellectually and historically, we first learned to navigate how nation-states marked their legacies. Historically, as the empires we study came undone, the records and memories of the imperial past also became nationalized. Vicky found that informal colonies like Hawai’i and Okinawa, because of their location, are often omitted from organized collections of the US and Japanese empires. As Vicky constructed her own archive from records located across institutions, she had to navigate national spaces that were almost always organized to demonstrate integration—rather than separation—before any transimperial connections could be made. Such challenges can arise even when researching a single empire. Eloy has examined the correspondence of the imperial bureaucracy to see how Cuban rebels in places such as La Habana, New Orleans, and Kingston worked to challenge the Spanish Empire. Each set of records offered its own vision of how the Cuban network worked, depending mainly on the location of its authors and their

imperial role. For example, even though the Spanish consul in Veracruz and the governor of Puerto Principe (present-day Camagüey) were part of the same empire, their analyses of the Cuban transimperial network differed significantly. In California, Arko encountered an archive of Indian anticolonial resistance to the British Empire. Documents, mainly undigitized, revealed the extent to which a largely working-class migrant population along the Pacific coast mobilized to form “trouble” in the country of their birth. It was evidence of resistance to colonial authority being shaped in and executed from a foreign setting, across national and imperial boundaries. This past summer in Delhi, Arko came across documentary evidence that, while not novel, reassured him that Indian anticolonialism had an ethic that transcended the confines of the subcontinent.

There are particular overlapping challenges for all scholars doing research internationally. Yet, as holders of foreign passports, we have found that traveling across national borders and in and out of the United States brings unique anxieties. The amount of time we have at the archives is determined by the type of visa we can acquire for our destination and that we hold in the United States. For instance, Eloy’s J-1 visa forbids him from being outside the United States for more than a month, severely limiting the time he can put into archival research. Similarly, Vicky’s F-1 status only grants her the right to a single-entry visa to Japan. Arko has not faced visa challenges so far, but his F-1 visa makes him mindful of time he spends at the archives and devoted to writing. Strict semester-by-semester program deadlines that might seem reasonable for domestic students have the potential to complicate the PhD journeys of international ones.

As a result of these issues, planning every trip becomes a long and draining process of visa applications laden with additional fees and paperwork. Seemingly minor restrictions on photography and the quantity of material that can be requested per day become crucial factors in determining the extent and possibilities of research. Every single day at the archive thus becomes exacting and strenuous as one tries to maximize one’s time in it. In addition to the usual constraints of time and funding faced by all historians, the likelihood of being unable to make a return trip is very real.

International politics and the relationships between and among our home countries, countries of research, and the United States also influence our research plans. Unsurprisingly, traveling to Cuba as an international student in the United States has not been easy for Eloy, and he carried the risk of jeopardizing his visa status. This drove him to design two different dissertation projects tailored according to the

possibility of visiting the island. Eloy engaged in countless communications with US representatives here and in Spain, his university, and numerous colleagues to gain the necessary authorizations to conduct research as an international student in Cuba. After months of back and forth, he finally went to Cuba. In Japan, Vicky experienced prolonged interrogations at the port of entry in Okinawa. That led her to change her dissertation from the contentious topic of anti-military-base movements and Indigenous land rights to the transpacific environmental history of sugar. Ideally, Arko would like to study archival material in British Columbia, Canada, but that means applying for a Canadian visa; his F-1 visa on an Indian passport permits him short-term visa-free travel to, say, Mexico but does not grant him the same right north of the US border.

Planning every trip becomes a long and draining process of visa applications laden with additional fees and paperwork.

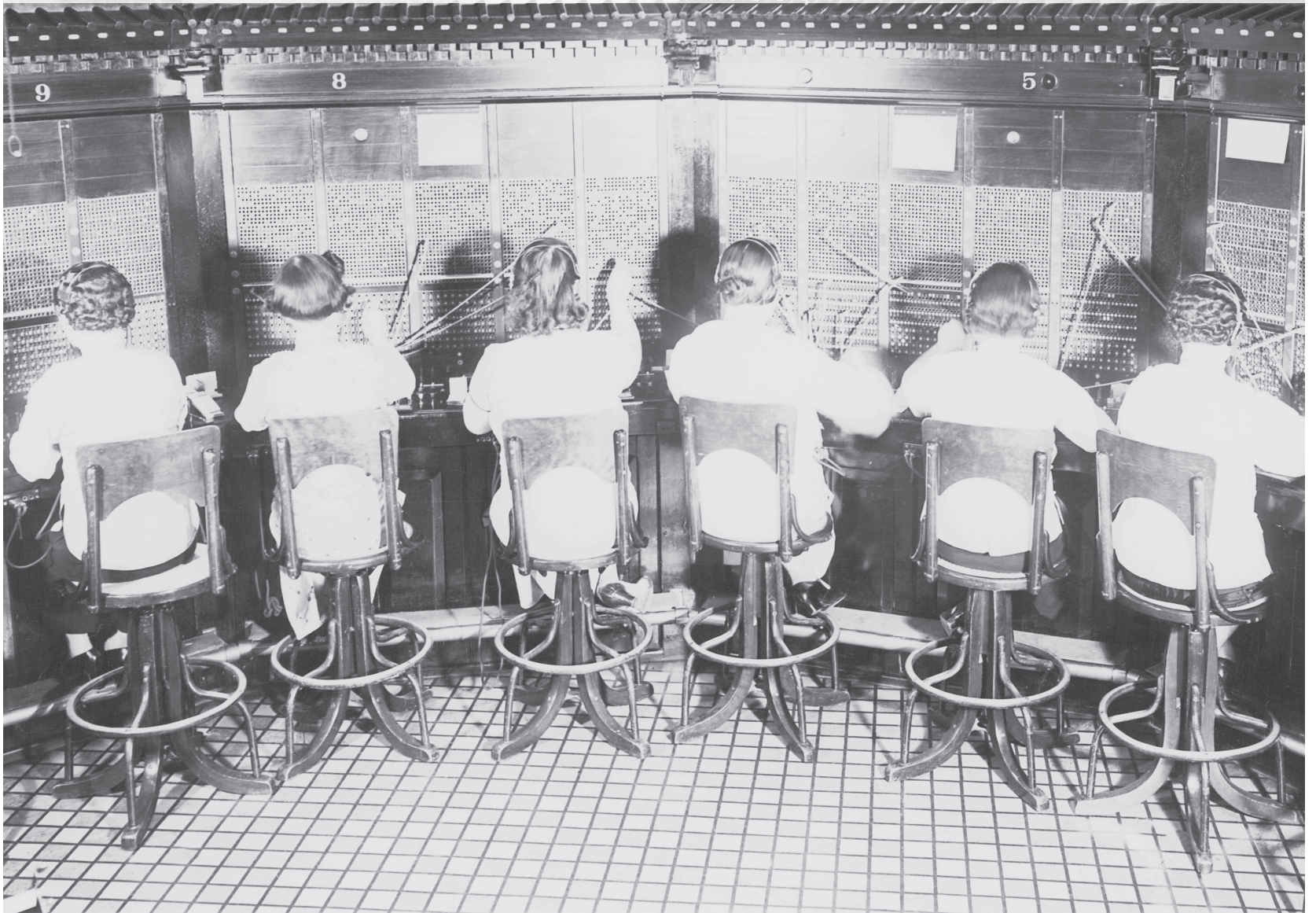
Our research journeys illustrate the need to discuss the logistical, bureaucratic, and methodological challenges of conducting transimperial research. While this approach opened up novel insights into imperial history, our research experiences in different geographies demonstrate that transregional research cannot be separated from our personal circumstances as international students traversing a world bounded by national units. As transregional and global histories continue to grow and attract young researchers from all over the world, we hope to further conversations about the intersections of research, scholarship, and our own identity as global historians in a world of nation-states. **P**

*Vicky Shen and Eloy Romero Blanco are PhD candidates at the University of Pittsburgh. Arko Dasgupta is a PhD candidate at Carnegie Mellon University.*

*The authors thank the members of the Empires Cluster in the Department of History at the University of Pittsburgh and the Doshisha Center for Transimperial History for facilitating conversations on this subject. We also extend our appreciation to Pernille Røge and Michel Gobat for their useful insights on an early draft of this article.*



# 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).

## SPOILED FRUITS

### *Environmental Inequality in Silicon Valley*

When Wallace Stegner arrived in Palo Alto, California, in 1945, he wrote a friend with his first impressions of his new home. The novelist and new Stanford faculty member found the Santa Clara Valley to be “very pleasant country” of “golden wild-oat hills dotted with marvelous old liveoaks and bay trees, with a dark pine-covered ridge of the coast ridge behind, and in front the hills dropping down over orchards and towns to the bay. . . . There are views to knock your eye out all over these hills.” Two decades later, Stegner’s celebration became a lament. “The orchards that used to be a spring garden of bloom down the long trough of the Santa Clara Valley,” he wrote in 1965, “have gone under so fast that a person absent for five years could return and think himself in another country. . . . The once-lovely coast hills reaching down the Peninsula below San Francisco have been crusted with houses in half a lifetime, the hilltops flattened, whole hills carried off to fill the bay, the creeks turned into concrete storm drains.” Employment in high-tech companies drove massive migrations to the valley that, in turn, led to sprawling cities who competed with one another over land.

The farmlands, so attractive to new homeowners who wished for a countryside experience, quickly gave way to subdivisions.

Stegner arrived at the front edge of a massive migration to the Santa Clara Valley—stretching from San Francisco through San Jose to Hollister—in the immediate postwar era. For the next decade, the landscape of orchards and pleasantness remained a key selling point enticing white-collar workers and high-tech manufacturers. As late as 1953, the San Jose Chamber of Commerce continued organizing blossom tours that gave residents a chance to drive along the county’s highways and witness the seasonal blooming of prune, pear, almond, apricot, and cherry orchards. Yet it was this landscape

that helped lead to the widespread and rapid changes Stegner identified in 1965. The valley’s boosters promised a countryside lifestyle for work and home; city councils smoothed the way for new development; and universities pursued military contracts that funneled billions of dollars into the region. Throughout the valley’s burgeoning office and research parks designed to support the growing electronics industry, one booster promised a “pleasant place” of “broad lawns, employee patios, trees, flowers and shrubs, walls of glass, recreational clubs” instead of the “smokestacks, noise, coal cars, [and] soot” of the Northeast and Midwest. High-tech manufacturing, it seemed, solved two problems: assuring the nation of a new form of industrial work as steel-age industry declined while also being a clean and modern alternative to industrial activity. Such promises ignored the material realities of high-tech research and manufacturing, whose reliance on chemicals and attendant urban growth prompted water pollution, environmental inequality, and farmland reduction that reshaped the landscape into the Silicon Valley we know today.

Until the 1950s, agriculture was the valley’s primary economic activity, earning it the 19th-century nickname “the Garden of the World.” The exceptional climate, fertile soils, and plentiful water allowed farmers to cultivate a wide variety of fruits. The region’s farms led the state in fruit cultivation, drying, canning, and packing, making it a major fruit distributor in the early 20th century. As early as 1895, the *San Francisco Chronicle* estimated nearly 40,000 acres of the valley were devoted to fruit cultivation, reaching a peak of 727,000 acres by the mid-1940s.

After World War II, Santa Clara County’s demographics and economy began to shift. By the 1950s, 4,000 people a month were moving into the county, nearly doubling the prewar population. In 1960, the county surpassed San Francisco as the region’s urban center. San Jose typified the pace and expansion of this period. Contained to just 17 square miles in 1952, the city sprawled outward to encompass 137 square miles by 1965 through an aggressive annexation campaign led by city manager Dutch Hamann and a supportive city council.





The farmlands, so attractive to new homeowners who wished for a countryside experience, quickly gave way to subdivisions. Some farmers saw opportunity in their land used for urban growth as land prices rose dramatically, fetching as much as \$7,000 per acre by the mid-1950s. By the 1970s, agricultural land was selling for upwards of \$18,000 an acre. Local historian Yvonne Jacobson estimates that 77,000 acres of the valley floor left agricultural production between 1950 and 1980. By 1982, 20,000 acres of agricultural land remained in the valley, falling to just 4,500 acres by 2001, mostly near the South Bay cities of Morgan Hill and Gilroy.

Such rapid growth came with consequences, and not just on the surface. Beginning in the 1920s, population growth led to an increase in both private and public wells, which drew down aquifer levels and led to compression of the ground above. In 1921, engineers warned that the valley's falling water tables and subsidence threatened to disrupt farming operations and damage city infrastructure. Postwar urban growth, however,

accelerated the overdrafting of water resources and ground compression. Downtown San Jose sank 14 feet over the course of the 1950s, while Alviso, located at the southern tip of the San Francisco Bay and already below sea level, sank six feet. The shifting ground led rivers and creeks to angle farther downward, allowing them to carry larger and heavier sediment and exacerbating flooding. These altered drainage patterns worsened a massive flood in a Christmas 1955 deluge that overwhelmed Sunnyvale and Alviso.

In response, the county's water conservation district built a new system of dikes and levees in the latter half of the 1950s. But the flood prevention system ended at the Sunnyvale city limits, leaving Alviso, a predominantly Latinx community, threatened by future floods. Town leaders appealed to the Army Corps of Engineers and congressional representatives to find solutions but found themselves in an impossible situation: the corps rejected appeals for new flood control projects because of high costs, and the city could not secure government



The beauty of orchards like this one in the Santa Clara Valley helped drive massive midcentury growth.  
*OSU Special Collections and Archives/Flickr Commons*

grants to pay for the project. Over the next three decades, Alviso would face at least four more city-inundating floods. In addition to the flooding threats, San Jose constructed a sewage processing facility near Alviso's city limits in the mid-1950s, off-loading smells, chemicals, and disposal away from San Jose city limits. Alviso became a dumping ground for the expanding, mostly white communities of San Jose and Sunnyvale.

## Until the 1980s, the primary industrial activity was electronics manufacturing.

Situating the spoils of urban growth away from cities allowed them to prioritize the rural aesthetics that mattered so greatly to the growing white-collar class. Undoubtedly the valley has an undeniable beauty, and nearly year-round pleasant weather factored into selling the valley to potential industrial recruits and white-collar workers. But that very perception of the valley's unique nature helped fuel shifting political attitudes, and voters began questioning the expansion-at-all-costs city councils. Council candidates began running for—and winning—seats by supporting slower growth, opposing higher taxes, and questioning the inability of city services to keep pace with expansion. Again, San Jose typified these changes. Virginia Shaffer's 1962 election to the council drove the first wedge into San Jose's drive at growth, followed over the next decade by other antigrowth council members. In 1974, the election of Mayor Janet Gray Hayes solidified a new environmentalist wing of politicians in city government. Hayes, a self-avowed environmentalist and the city's first female mayor, shifted the city's policies away from expansion and toward improving city services within existing city limits.

While urban growth presented one way of altering the environment, another came from the economic activity of the valley itself. Today, we think of the largely web- and software-based companies of Apple, Facebook, and Google, but until the 1980s, the primary industrial activity was electronics manufacturing. When technology journalist Don Hoefler first printed the name "Silicon Valley" in 1971, thus rendering its nickname as the place name, Hewlett-Packard (HP), Fairchild Semiconductor, Intel, Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), and many other companies employed both white-collar research-and-development engineers and scientists and blue-collar workers, largely people of color and predominantly women, who assembled the chips, circuit boards, and other hardware. While high-tech had sold itself as a cleaner, greener alternative to industrialization, manufacturing electrical components relied on chemicals and gases to give silicon

components their conductive properties. These chemicals often threatened the health of assembly line workers. Reports of chemical burns, asthma, cancer, and a host of other health issues became common over the 1970s. So often did laborers bring forth stories of adverse health effects that Robin Baker, Amanda Hawes, and Pat Lamborn started the Santa Clara Center for Occupational Safety and Health in the late 1970s to represent workers harmed by chip manufacturing.

These chemicals were not widely recognized for their carcinogenic properties, nor were they effectively monitored. In January 1982, readers of the *San Jose Mercury* reported that chemical contaminants had been found in the city's public and private drinking wells. When installing a storage tank at Fairchild in the southern end of the city, workers found that an older tank was leaking chemical solvents into groundwater. For residents of the nearby Los Paseos neighborhood, the stories of miscarriages, strange-tasting water, and childhood health problems suddenly had an explanation. The county began a rapid investigation, drilling testing wells throughout the county and revealing more leaks—not just at Fairchild but at HP, Intel, AMD, and elsewhere. Contaminants, it seemed, had left no part of the county untouched. In the wake of this news, attorney Ted Smith formed the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition to track information about chemical leaks, hold companies accountable, and help draft new pollution ordinances. Within a year, California congressional representatives secured investigations by the Environmental Protection Agency; by 1990, the agency listed 29 Superfund sites in Santa Clara County—24 caused by high-tech companies—making the county among the most contaminated in the nation.

Silicon Valley's relationship to nature was and is cultural and material. The valley's reputation was closely tied to nature—a reputation that persists to this day through its supposed eco-friendly companies, cars, and leisure. Environmental tensions continue and have expanded beyond Northern California through the mining of rare earth metals, cryptomining operations, and server farms that make possible the internet and the laptops, phones, tablets, watches, and other smart devices that power our modern lives. Silicon Valley's environmental history urges us to dwell on failure: beneath the green veneer of high-tech companies lies a past that was anything but its clean image. **P**

*Jason A. Heppler is the senior developer at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University and author of Silicon Valley and the Environmental Inequalities of High-Tech Urbanism (Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2024).*



EDWARD MUIR

## ABSTRACT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT THE 2024 ANNUAL MEETING

### *“Conversations with the Dead”*

The address explores the potential of using the metaphor of “conversations with the dead” as a historical method. Controlled by the documents, imagined conversations between the historian and the dead can capture those few moments of understanding among people, those moments when we appreciate what and who the other was. The method of conversations with the dead is not a form of proof or a demonstration of why one interpretation might be better than another. The dead do not have agency in these conversations. Only the historian does. What the dead represent is not so much their place in some historical

schema as their individuality. The conceit of a conversation helps keep everyone in their proper place—the dead are dead, but the living historian has the voice, the agency, and the opportunity to reanimate the dead as an object of empathy, to give them back their humanity. **P**

The presidential address will take place on Friday, January 5, 2024, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. in Hilton Union Square, Continental Ballroom 5.

Edward Muir is president of the AHA.

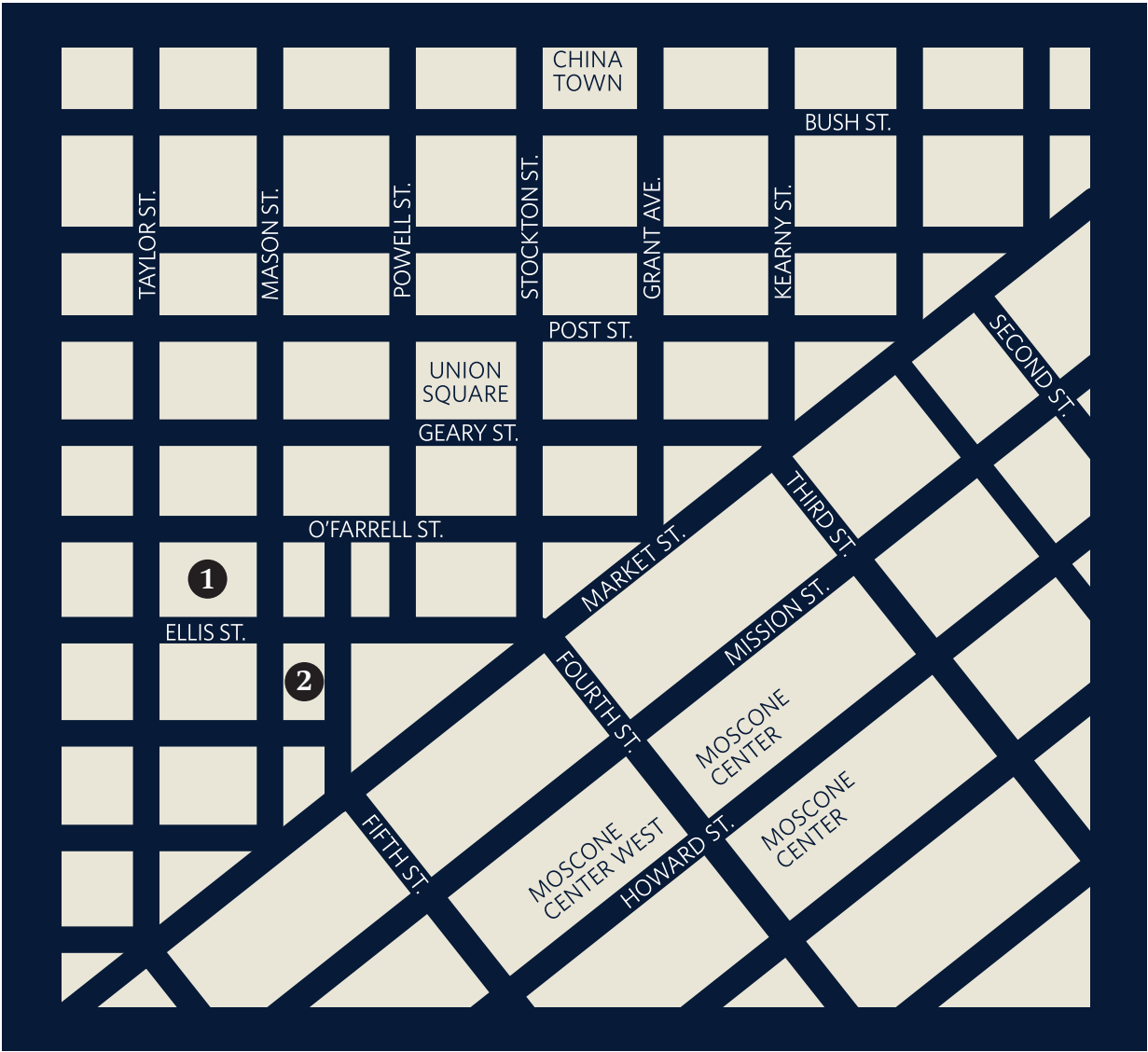


Dante speaks with his childhood friend Forese Donati in Gustave Doré's illustrations of *The Divine Comedy*.

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Hotel and Rate Information				
	SINGLE	DOUBLE	TRIPLE	QUADRUPLE
<b>1</b> Hilton San Francisco Union Square (hdqtrs.) 333 O'Farrell St.	\$179	\$179	\$199	\$219
<b>2</b> Hilton Parc 55 San Francisco 55 Cyril Magnin St.	\$179	\$179	\$199	\$219

Rates are subject to hotel occupancy tax and will be honored three days before and three days after the official meeting dates of January 4–7 based on availability. Information on booking a room at the discounted rate is available at [historians.org/hotels](https://historians.org/hotels).





### Dates and Deadlines

<b>DECEMBER 13</b>	Last day to make hotel reservations through the housing service. Subsequent reservations taken on a space-available basis at the convention rate.
<b>DECEMBER 15</b>	Last day for preregistration pricing.
<b>DECEMBER 15</b>	Deadline to submit registration refund requests.
<b>JANUARY 4, 2024</b>	Annual meeting opens at 11:00 a.m. at the Hilton San Francisco Union Square and Hilton Parc 55 San Francisco. Exhibit Hall opens January 5, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. in Grand Ballroom A&B at the Hilton Union Square.

### Meeting Registration

Take advantage of reduced rates by preregistering for the conference. Make sure your membership is up to date so you can enjoy member pricing at each level. Register online at [historians.org/myaha](https://historians.org/myaha).

	MEMBER		NONMEMBER	
	PREREGISTRATION	AFTER DEC. 15	PREREGISTRATION	AFTER DEC. 15
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Student	\$92	\$110	\$140	\$169
Un-/Underemployed	\$49	\$61	\$153	\$183
Retired	\$95	\$116	\$163	\$197
K–12 Teacher	\$71	\$86	\$137	\$164
Bring your Graduate/Undergraduate/K–12 student discount	<b>For members only.</b> Add students to your registration for only \$15 each (\$30 on-site). Bring as many high school, undergraduate, and graduate students as you want for only \$15 each!			

Advance registration must be completed by midnight ET on December 15, 2023. Thereafter, on-site rates will apply. Everyone attending the meeting is expected to register. Admission to the Exhibit Hall requires a registration badge. **Special note for speakers:** All US-based historians presenting on AHA sessions must be AHA members, and all participants must register.



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## The James G. Stofer Fund for Community College and Public High School Teachers

Established in 2022, the **James G. Stofer Fund for Community College and Public High School Teachers** provides grants to support the participation of community college and public high school teachers in AHA activities and programs. Community college and public high school faculty applicants, who are members of the Association, will be considered for the **Stofer Annual Meeting Travel Grants**, regardless of participation in the program.

The application deadline is November 15. Successful applicants will be awarded travel subsidies of up to \$400 each.

*Only community college or public high school faculty who are members of the AHA are eligible to apply for the Stofer Travel Grants.*

The fund is named in honor of James G. Stofer, who dropped out of a Brooklyn public high school to join the Navy. He entered active duty on December 12, 1940, serving as a Radioman First Class on the USS Portland. While on the "Sweet Pea," he edited the newspaper and served as the ship's historian. He credited his high school teachers for his ability to write and think historically. He was a veteran of the Battles of Coral Sea, Midway, and the Guadalcanal Campaign. When Stofer was honorably discharged from the Navy in 1946, he attended community college at what is now SUNY Plattsburgh, and he finished his education at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

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ALEXANDRA F. LEVY

# PLANNING THE ANNUAL MEETING

## *Behind the Scenes at the AHA*

The AHA annual meeting is the world's largest annual gathering of historians. Its logistics — with thousands of attendees and dozens of simultaneous sessions — takes years of careful planning. "It takes a lot of work on the back end to make a meeting seamless," said Debbie Ann Doyle, meetings manager. "We work hard to ensure everyone has an enjoyable and productive conference."

Conference locations are selected according to the AHA's Annual Meeting Location Policy. The groundwork is laid at the time the AHA signs a hotel contract, often five to seven years in advance. Scheduling meetings this far ahead locks in favorable hotel rates; for example, in San Francisco, where median hotel rates are often north of \$250 per night, ours will be \$179 per night for AHA24. Hotels offer us meeting space, services, and discounted rates in return for filling a certain number of hotel rooms. Filling our room block is crucial to keeping registration costs down and hotel staff employed, which is why the AHA encourages all attendees to stay in the conference hotels. And to support workers' right to organize, the AHA has a union preference in selecting hotels.

Months before a meeting, Doyle visits the hotels to consider the best locations for sessions, workshops, and events. She meets with hotel staff to plan everything from the layout of the registration area to the times during which workers will be able to reset rooms between events. She identifies challenges for attendees with disabilities and develops an accommodations plan. Doyle also scouts the neighborhood for restaurants, public transportation, and other aspects of urban travel.

AHA staff manage hundreds of tasks, big and small, ahead of and during the meeting, from creating signage to ensuring compliance with union rules and the AHA's Code of Professional Conduct. We also stay up to date on recommended health and safety practices for conferences. During the conference, the AHA pays local graduate students to help with on-site duties such as assisting at registration and receptions.

Scheduling 400 sessions over four days is no mean feat. Finalizing the program requires ensuring no participants are scheduled for simultaneous events, and proofing it (multiple times, by multiple staff) for errors.

The AHA does not make money on the meeting; registration fees and other revenues, including sponsorships and exhibitor fees, cover the meeting's many costs. Staying within the projected budget is essential, but conference budgets are an ever-changing target and vary by location. Hotels can charge over \$200 per gallon of coffee — yes, you read that correctly — so determining even coffee orders is a delicate task. The cost of audiovisual equipment averages nearly \$80 per attendee, adding up to hundreds of thousands of dollars for the event.

We want attendees to have fun at the meeting and enjoy the city's sights. Staff arrange for discounts at local museums and historic sites, coordinate with the Local Arrangements Committee to develop lists of attractions and restaurants, and work with the Program Committee to create an inclusive and stimulating program. Our goal is always to create a positive experience for all attendees while keeping costs as low as possible.

Preparing for the conference is Doyle's full-time job, but as January approaches each year, it becomes all hands on deck for the entire AHA staff. Through careful planning and implementation, we hope that running the conference seems effortless to attendees.

So this January, as you applaud a colleague's presentation, think of the effort they put into their research. As you listen to an engaging session, consider the work of the session organizer and the Program Committee. And as you drink that coffee while setting up your PowerPoint, spare a thought for what went into getting you that cup of joe and A/V equipment. There's a lot of work done behind the scenes of the conference that connects our whole community. **P**

*Alexandra F. Levy is communications manager at the AHA.*

## BACK IN SESSION

### *The Return of the Congressional Briefings Program*

With history in the crosshairs of the culture wars, it's hard to imagine that historians would have an opportunity to give nonpartisan briefings to a hyperpartisan Congress. Yet they have done just that as participants in the Congressional Briefings program. Launched by the National History Center in 2005, the program has been supported by the Mellon Foundation since 2014. This funding permitted it to offer nearly 30 briefings in the six years prior to the pandemic-induced closure of Congress to visitors in 2020. The AHA has now revived the program; professional historians are once again bringing their expertise and insights to Capitol Hill.

From 2014 to 2020, the Congressional Briefings program brought over 80 historians from more than 20 states to Capitol Hill. These historians provided insights into a wide range of contemporary issues, introducing audiences to the historical contexts of domestic legislative debates from tax reform to health care, agricultural policy, voting rights, higher education, and infrastructure. They examined the roots of a range of international issues, such as US-China relations, US-Iran relations, the first Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the role of oil in Middle East policy. Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, they placed other public health crises in historical perspective (Ebola, opioids, and Zika), and, fittingly, the last briefing before the program's suspension addressed the history of campaigns to develop vaccines for epidemic diseases. Congress itself was the subject of several briefings, with one on the problem of political partisanship and another on how Congress has reformed itself in the past. The destabilizing impact of the Trump presidency precipitated its share of briefings as well, inspiring sessions on the history of executive orders, civil-military relations, and "congressional oversight of presidential misconduct" (i.e., impeachment). Other hot-button issues that garnered the program's attention included Confederate monuments and gun control.

Everything has a history, as the AHA's signature slogan reminds us, and this most decidedly includes the issues that confront Congress. The Congressional Briefings program is

premised on the conviction that our legislators and their staff will make more informed policy decisions if they have a better understanding of the historical circumstances that have given rise to these issues. Its target audience consists of the staffers who assist and advise the peoples' representatives in Congress. It's hardly a secret that much of Capitol Hill's everyday business is conducted by these unsung and largely anonymous individuals. Consequently, it has been the program's practice to reach out to staffers, especially those with history degrees and those who work on the committees that deal with the issues that are the focus of particular briefings. Often, a congressperson's office will send interns who write reports about the sessions. In addition, the press and the public are welcome to attend, and C-SPAN films and broadcasts many of the briefings, ensuring that the historical perspectives they provide on contemporary issues reach an even wider audience.

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Although it is often impossible to prove that a briefing exerted direct influence on congressional deliberations and decisions, the program spreads the message that history and historians have important insights to offer about the policy issues of the day. It is helpful for those making immigration policy to know, for example, that present concerns about immigration to the United States are nothing new, and that such concerns have centered on different immigrant communities over time, given rise to multiple regulatory measures, and led to a range of results and repercussions—some of them unintended. They also have value for the historians who take part

in the briefings, and indeed for the discipline as a whole. With hostility toward historical knowledge reaching unprecedented heights in certain circles these days, it seems especially important for historians to make their presence felt in our nation's capital. Demonstrating that historians can provide nonpartisan perspectives on the problems that confront our country is one of the most productive ways to counter the malicious misinformation that plagues our political culture.

Almost all the historians invited to participate in the Congressional Briefings program accept with alacrity. They are hungry to share their hard-won knowledge with policymakers and determined to dispel the distortions the polemicists have forged about their profession. Although few of them have ever had an opportunity to appear on Capitol Hill, they are quick to accommodate its distinctive demands, which include fairly brief presentations, accompanied by one-page memos that summarize their main points. If those who attend these briefings acquire a fuller understanding of the uses of history, historians in turn acquire greater appreciation of how to engage a policy-oriented audience. Both political parties benefit from the experience.

The issue of immigration along the US southwestern border was the subject of the first Congressional Briefing when the AHA relaunched the program at the end of July. Since immigration was the focus of one of the very first Congressional Briefings, and subsequent briefings have examined immigrant entrepreneurs and US refugee policy, it seems fitting that the relaunch of the program would start with a briefing on the history of immigration at the US southwestern border. The panelists were Mae Ngai (Columbia Univ.), Geraldo Cadava (Northwestern Univ.), and Nara Milanich (Barnard Coll.). Threading through their remarks was a common theme: the southwestern border may mark the territorial boundary between the United States and Mexico, but it is also a site of continuous movement of goods, cultures, and peoples between the two countries. As Ngai observed, the border had never been entirely impermeable or impregnable.

Ngai opened the session with an overview of US immigration policy, starting with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and continuing through the Immigration Quota Act of 1924, the Immigration Reform Acts of 1965 and 1986, and beyond. At present, the United States limits admission to approximately



As pandemic-related restrictions lapse, historians return to brief policymakers on Capitol Hill.

*Daniel Mennerich/Flickr/CC BY-NC-ND 2.0*

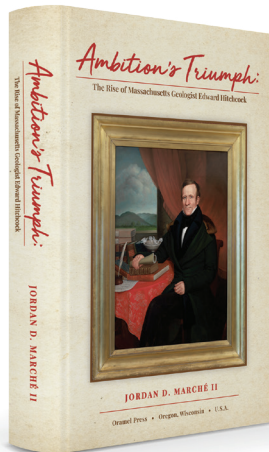


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26,500 immigrants per country per year, not much more than the cap of 20,000 set in 1960. Ngai pointed out that restrictions on legal immigration have led time and again to illegal immigration, and authorities have never found an effective way to prevent it. Today there are some 11 million undocumented migrants in the United States.

The southwestern border is much more than a major conduit for legal and illegal immigration, as Cadava made clear. It is also the main point of passage for goods between the United States and Mexico, which is one of America's biggest trading partners. In addition, plenty of people cross the border every day to shop and go to school. Cross-border cooperation between the two countries is critical to water management, disease prevention, and other matters that transcend political boundaries. And for local Indigenous communities, the border is largely irrelevant and ignored.

For policymakers and the public, however, the southwestern border has become the principal flash point for partisan bickering. Who are the migrants at the center of these debates? Milanich pointed out that in the past, they were mostly adult men from Mexico seeking employment in the United States. Now they consist largely of families fleeing violence in Central America, with a substantial minority coming from more distant lands, often driven by climate change. Though the scale of this influx is less than it was in the recent

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past, the increased proportion of vulnerable women and children among the migrants who struggle to cross the border has helped to give greater public visibility and social valence to the problem.

Overcoming the historical amnesia and social media manipulations that so often afflict our policy debates isn't easy, but the Congressional Briefings program is designed to make a difference. By the time this article appears in print, a second briefing will have been held on the history of another contentious issue, US-China relations. Other sessions are being planned in the coming months on the history of US housing policy, the use of sanctions as an instrument of foreign policy, and historical perspectives on artificial intelligence. We are always on the lookout for timely topics—and historians qualified to discuss them—so please don't hesitate to send the AHA your suggestions. **P**

*Dane Kennedy is a professor emeritus at George Washington University and was director of the National History Center from 2014 to 2020.*

LIZZY MEGGYESY

## NEW FACES AT THE AHA

*Meet Scot McFarlane and Ben Rosenbaum*

The AHA is excited to introduce two new members of our staff. In August, Scot McFarlane joined as a researcher for the Mapping the Landscape of Secondary US History Education team, part of the Teaching History with Integrity initiative. Ben Rosenbaum arrived at the AHA in September as a program assistant.

**Scot McFarlane** graduated from Bowdoin College with a BA in history before teaching high school history in Massachusetts and Oregon. He went on to earn a history PhD from Columbia University with a focus on US history and rivers. During that time, Scot was first introduced to the AHA through a career diversity program called History in Action. Funding from this program allowed him to launch a public history series on rivers with virtual walks, a conference, and the website [riverhistories.org](http://riverhistories.org). Scot told *Perspectives*, “These events encouraged me to map out a nonacademic career in history. So, in a sense, the AHA helped train me to work for them.”

As a river historian, Scot has led river history paddles, collaborated with conservationists, and published portions of his dissertation.

Since earning his PhD, Scot served as an inaugural research scholar for Historic New England’s Recovering New England’s Voices initiative, “collaborating on research and reinterpretation at their 12 properties in Maine and New Hampshire so they could tell more inclusive and compelling stories.” As a river historian, Scot has led river history paddles, collaborated with conservationists, and published portions of his dissertation in *Slavery and Abolition* and other outlets. In 2022, Scot founded a historical consulting firm called Oxbow History Company.



Scot McFarlane

Along with working at the AHA on the Mapping team, Scot is now working on a book about the history of Texas’s most populated river, called *The Forgotten Trinity: A History of the Longest River in Texas*. “The manuscript is based on my research at nearly 50 different archives as well as my personal experience growing up along the Trinity,” Scot explained.

In his free time, Scot enjoys going on adventures big and small with his family, including taking his sons to their neighborhood skate park, camping on Brick Island in Merry-meeting Bay, and returning to their former home in New York City “to take in the sights, sounds, and smells.”

**Ben Rosenbaum** joins the AHA after two years of teaching high school US history and government in Montgomery County, Maryland. Ben earned a dual degree in history and secondary education at the University of Maryland in 2021,



Ben Rosenbaum


where he fostered his passion for education. As a teacher, Ben loved being able to share his research interests of American political history and the local history of Washington, DC, with his students. This fall, Ben decided it was time to pursue different aspects of history education and enrolled in the MA program in public history at American University, “which will prepare [him] to share history with a greater share of the public through a greater variety of media.” Ben chose this program initially because of his interest in museum work but hopes to expand his focus to learn more about the potential career paths of public history.

Ben has had a longtime interest in government and public policy, which he is excited to explore as a program assistant for the Congressional Briefings program.

Along with Ben’s interest in history, he has had a longtime interest in government and public policy, which he is excited to explore as a program assistant whose chief responsibilities

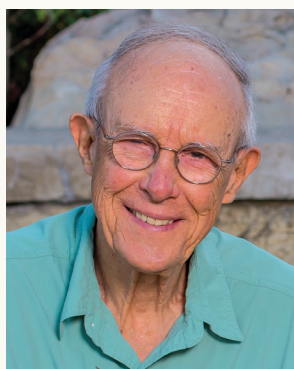
will be with the Congressional Briefings program. “I used to think that I really wanted to work in policy, but over time, I felt it didn’t have the history and research components, or the teaching and learning, that I wanted to spend more time on,” Ben told *Perspectives*. “I think this position combines those in a unique, best-of-both-worlds kind of way.”

When he’s not working, you can find Ben baking and making all kinds of things in the kitchen. Ben bakes some form of bread almost every week, usually challah for Friday-night dinners with friends. He likes the idea of making things from scratch, which, he said, “has translated into attempts to make cheese (broad success), chocolate from a cacao pod I bought on Etsy (valiant effort, but overall failure), and lox from fresh salmon (definite success), among other projects.” Ben also enjoys taking advantage of the DC museum scene; the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the National Building Museum are among his personal favorites. Given his interest in local DC history, Ben especially loves to walk the DC Neighborhood Heritage Trails that showcase local history around the district.

Please give a warm welcome to Scot McFarlane and Ben Rosenbaum! 

*Lizzy Meggyesy is research and publications assistant at the AHA.*





## John Broesamle

1941–2023

Historian of the United States

John Broesamle, professor emeritus of history and noted champion of the wilderness, was born on February 10, 1941, and died at the age of 82 on June 17, 2023, in Ojai, California. A prolific author, university leader, and beloved instructor, Broesamle was professor of 20th-century American history at California State University, Northridge (CSUN), from 1968 until 2002. He was also a leader in developing curriculum and programs, serving three years as associate dean of the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. During his tenure, he supported the creation of the Pan-African studies and women's studies programs. Some university colleagues affectionately called him "Our Red Dean" because of his passion for academic freedom, free speech, and the rights of the disabled.

After completing his BA at the University of the Pacific, Broesamle earned his MA and PhD from Columbia University, where he studied with Richard Hofstadter, William E. Leuchtenburg, and John A. Garraty. He earned national awards such as the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, the Woodrow Wilson Dissertation Fellowship, and the Danforth Program Associate Award for teaching excellence. Columbia recognized him as a President's Fellow and Honorary Erb Fellow. CSUN recognized Broesamle with the Distinguished Teaching Award and the Scholarly Publication Award for his book *Reform and Reaction in Twentieth Century American Politics* (Greenwood Press, 1990).

Broesamle's impressive academic oeuvre included 10 books and numerous journal articles, book chapters, and reviews. Among his significant books are *William Gibbs McAdoo: A Passion for Change, 1863–1917* (Kennikat Press, 1973); *Clashes of Will: Great Confrontations That Have Shaped Modern America* (Pearson, 2005), with Anthony Arthur; and *How American Presidents Succeed and Why They Fail: From Richard Nixon to Barack Obama* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2014). In 1988, CSUN commissioned Broesamle to write the first published history of the university. *Suddenly a Giant: A History of California State University, Northridge* (1993) was based on hundreds of hours of oral histories, which the university archive houses along with other multimedia sources Broesamle collected for the project. His 10th book, *Transforming Paradise:*

*How Franklin D. Roosevelt and Thousands of Unemployed Americans Created Today's Yosemite National Park*, will be published posthumously by the Press at California State University, Fresno.

Though his scholarship was notable, Broesamle's vocation was engaging with students as lifelong learners. He was beloved by generations of students from diverse backgrounds—including many veterans—who flocked to such classes as his tour de force history of the Vietnam War. His erudite and engaging lectures inspired students, who also found him to be "approachable" and "kind." When protests for civil rights and against the Vietnam War roiled the campus, Broesamle led freewheeling discussions with students during office hours. Although these salons occasionally garnered noise complaints from neighboring faculty, he clearly relished the lively exchange of ideas, and students treasured these experiences long after graduating.

In retirement, Broesamle continued to make remarkable contributions; during this chapter of life, he focused on the environment. He was a passionate outdoorsman who loved hiking and fly-fishing in California's eastern Sierra wilderness, and he shared the joys of that wilderness with his grandchildren. In his beloved Ojai Valley, he became a legendary advocate for wild spaces. He served as president of the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy and led a successful campaign to preserve 1,700 acres of wildlands. He formed the Ojai Valley Defense Fund, a nonprofit community fund of more than one million dollars. Though Broesamle did not seek the limelight, his community activism and tireless leadership were recognized with awards including the 2003 Environmental Defense Center Lifetime Achievement Award, the 2019 Los Padres ForestWatch Wilderness Legacy Award (shared with his wife Kathy), and the 2023 Rotary International Paul Harris Fellowship for "service above self."

Broesamle inspired students and peers alike with his integrity, commitment to civil discourse, and can-do spirit. At CSUN, he served as a gifted history instructor dedicated to the value of liberal education. Then, in a retirement that can only be described as dynamic, Broesamle became an intrepid leader of community-based environmental advocacy. Broesamle's life of service demonstrates how an individual can create impact through what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called an "inescapable network of mutuality."

John is survived by wife Kathy, children Carolyn and Robert, son-in-law Gil, and grandchildren Aiden, Tyler, and Brady.

Carmen Nava  
California State University, San Marcos

Photo: Logan Hall/Sideways 8 Creative



## Francis A. Dutra

1938–2021

Historian of the Lusophone World

Francis A. Dutra, a historian of early modern Portugal and Brazil at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), died in March 2021. Frank was not only a learned and careful scholar but also a superb mentor to generations of graduate students and a kind, gracious, and generous colleague.

Born in 1938 to Francis and Dorothy Dutra in New York City, Frank grew up in Warren, Rhode Island. He earned his BA at St. Bonaventure University in 1960 before entering the interdisciplinary program in Portuguese and Brazilian history at New York University. He was fascinated with early Brazil, and unusual for that time, he was interested in Brazilian Indigenous peoples.

Frank came to UCSB in 1967, shortly before completing his PhD, where he joined the distinguished historian of Mexico Philip Wayne Powell in creating a graduate field in Latin American history. The two also helped found the interdisciplinary BA and MA program in Hispanic civilization, as a collaboration between the Departments of History, and Spanish and Portuguese. When it later became the Latin American and Iberian Studies Program, with a broader interdisciplinary scope, Frank remained a stalwart member and served as interim director.

Frank's scholarly work focused on the imperial, political, and social history of colonial Brazil and early modern Portugal. He focused particularly on the military orders, social mobility, and gender issues. The military orders were founded on the Iberian Peninsula during the lengthy Christian struggle against the Muslims, and they came to be so wealthy and powerful that in Portugal the relatively weak and less wealthy monarchy sought to gain control over them. As Portugal began its age of exploration, major players in that enterprise were members of a military order, including Prince Henry the Navigator and Vasco da Gama. Frank published many essays on the military orders over the years, which were collected in *Military Orders in the Early Modern Portuguese World* (Ashgate, 2006). Although military order membership

was a roster of Portugal's elite men, his research also examined marginalized men of color and men's sexuality. With Harold Johnson, he co-edited *Pelo Vaso Traseiro: Sodomy and Sodomy in Luso-Brazilian History* (Fenestra Books, 2007). Frank contributed a number of articles to flagship journals in his field, along with many articles for reference works such as the *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture*, which offered basic information in short form written for a general readership in the predigital age. Editors could count on Frank to deliver succinct, well-written, signed articles that could answer many readers' questions. He also served his fellow scholars with the publication of *A Guide to the History of Brazil, 1500–1822: The Literature in English* (ABC-Clio, 1980), a comprehensive report on the current scholarship.

In May 2021, an informal memorial session took place at a Zoom conference at UCSB, where many former graduate students shared remembrances of Frank's mentorship. Especially moving were the comments by nontraditional students who earned their doctorates in history. One student recalled, "He had a sly way of asking questions that pushed my understanding without making me think I'd missed the point of something." Another expressed initially feeling like an outsider in academia and that Frank's encouragement in her first year as an MA student was crucial to her thriving in the program. One re-entry student had had a previous career as an electrical engineer and computer scientist. Frank saw that this South Asian man already had a deep connection to Portuguese overseas history because of his family's links to the former Portuguese colony of Goa. Frank recognized the promise and passion in his students and encouraged perseverance and patience.

During his long career, Frank delighted in spending time in Portuguese archives, Lisbon's cafés, and the country's glorious historical sites. A devoted family man, he was survived by his wife, Mary Ann McIntosh (who died in 2022); daughters Barbara (also now deceased), Lissa, and Cristina Dutra; and stepchildren, Kerry, Richard, and Kyle McIntosh. His colleagues and former students are left grateful for his example as a scholar, a colleague, and a mentor.

Sarah Cline  
University of California, Santa Barbara (emerita)

Photo: Lissa Dutra



## Carey H. Latimore IV

1975–2022

Historian of African Americans

On July 26, 2022, our dear colleague Carey Harvey Latimore IV passed away in San Antonio, Texas. Carey was born on October 10, 1975, in Middlesex County, Virginia, to Carey H. Latimore III and Ann B. Stephens Latimore. He attended Rapahannock Community College before earning his bachelor of arts in history from the University of Richmond and his doctorate from Emory University.

Carey joined the history department at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, in 2004. He was a gifted scholar and an award-winning teacher of African American history. His first book, *The Role of Southern Free Blacks during the Civil War Era: The Life of Free African Americans in Richmond, Virginia, 1850 to 1876* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2014), drew on extensive research to chart the evolution of the free Black community in Richmond from the antebellum period through Reconstruction. He published articles on this topic, including “Surviving War and the Underground: Richmond Free Blacks and Criminal Networks during the Civil War” (*Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 2009). He also was a featured historian in a History Channel documentary series on Abraham Lincoln as well as a documentary on Juneteenth.

Carey’s research provided deep insight into the African American experience, which he brought into the classroom, leading rich, engaging discussions with thousands of students over his career. His mentorship was legendary; his office was always open and filled with students, and he served as a trusted advisor to the Black Student Union and as a mentor to several summer undergraduate research fellows. In 2021, Trinity recognized Carey with its most prestigious award, the Z. T. Scott Faculty Fellowship, to celebrate his outstanding teaching and mentorship. Carey mentored numerous students, many of whom have gone on to doctoral studies and into academic positions.

For nine years, Carey served as chair of the history department. He was a leader not only in the department but across the university. He served on numerous committees during

his almost two decades at Trinity. Carey was also instrumental in bringing the Claude and ZerNona Black Papers, 1890–2009, to the Trinity University Archives, which document civil rights activism in San Antonio in the 20th century.

During his time at Trinity, Carey developed his expertise in public and oral history methods and worked with the Bexar County Historical Commission, the Mayor’s Council on Police and Community Relations, the San Antonio African American Community Archive and Museum, and the Alamo Museum Planning Committee. The Alamo Trust and City of San Antonio recognized Carey for his expertise by involving him closely in their efforts to reinterpret the Alamo, commissioning him to write *Civil Rights in San Antonio*, a key report that has shaped discussions about the future of Alamo Plaza. He also drew on this work to spearhead the foundation of a center for African American history and culture in San Antonio; work on this initiative continues. His research for these projects was based in part on the extensive oral history interviews he had been conducting and that he intended to form the basis of a new book, tentatively titled *Neither Quite Southern nor Western: African Americans during the Civil Rights Era in San Antonio, 1937–1978*.

An ordained minister, Carey served as associate pastor at Mt. Zion First Baptist Church in San Antonio. Most recently, Carey published *Unshakable Faith: African American Stories of Redemption, Hope, and Community* (Our Daily Bread Publishing, 2022). The book blends the history of African American activism and faith with Christian devotional lessons, and in many ways, it reflects the facets of Carey’s life and career: a Baptist minister and a historian who committed himself fully and joyfully to his students, colleagues, community, and the public.

A pillar of the Trinity history department and of the broader San Antonio community, Carey is deeply missed. As well as colleagues, friends, and the many students he mentored, he leaves behind his wife, Almie Pachoco Latimore; his father, Carey Latimore III; his sisters, Kim McCarther and Kerri Latimore; his mother-in-law, Milagros Pachoco; and many other family members.

Lauren Turek  
Trinity University

Anene Ejikeme  
Trinity University





## Ronald L. Numbers

1942–2023

Historian of Science,  
Medicine, and Religion;  
AHA 50-Year Member

Renowned historian of science, medicine, and religion Ronald L. Numbers died at age 81 at his home in Madison, Wisconsin, on July 24, 2023. He authored six books and produced some 40 volumes, including edited and translated books; he had an extraordinary scholarly impact.

Born into a strict Seventh-day Adventist family (his father and grandfather were church leaders), he grew up in the United States and Jamaica. He fully expected to remain within that culture, earning his BA in mathematics and physics (1963) at Southern Missionary College (now Southern Adventist University). He had little exposure to the secular world until he went to Florida State University for his MA (1965), and then on to the University of California, Berkeley, from which he received his PhD in history of science in 1969. He remained in the Adventist fold during his early teaching at Andrews University and as an assistant professor of humanities at the School of Medicine at Loma Linda University (1970–74), the flagship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

His first published book was not his dissertation but rather a biography of the founder of Adventism—*Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* (Harper and Row, 1976)—and it marked him as a solid authority on the history of health reform in America and at the same time broke his ties with his religious tradition. Numbers argued that White received her health and dietary teachings not directly from God, as she claimed, but from other health reformers of her era. This work ignited a firestorm of controversy even before publication and led to his forced departure from Loma Linda University and from the church. Numbers's personal journey from faith to agnosticism informed his scholarly approach to the complex intersection of religion and science.

In 1974, Numbers came to the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he held appointments in the history of medicine, history of science, history, and religious studies, and where he remained until his retirement in 2013. He was an inspiring teacher of undergraduates, medical students, and the many

graduate students who carry his influence into the future. He took particular interest and pleasure in challenging students and debunking historical myths. He served two terms as chair of the history of medicine department and held a named professorship.

Numbers received many awards and honors over his career, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Hilldale Award at the University of Wisconsin, the George Sarton Medal from the History of Science Society (HSS), and the Friend of Darwin Award from the National Center for Science Education. He was a fellow of the American Philosophical Society and editor of the journal *Isis* from 1989 to 1993. He served as president of HSS, the American Society of Church History (ASCH), and the International Union of History and Philosophy of Science and Technology.

His major study *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1992) won the ASCH's Albert C. Outler Prize. Other key contributions include *Darwinism Comes to America* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1998), and the magisterial eight-volume *Cambridge History of Science* (2002–20), edited with David C. Lindberg. Throughout his career, he organized conferences that encouraged intellectual interaction of scholars; from their exchanges, he produced books that garnered wide audiences.

His work in the history of medicine included *Almost Persuaded: American Physicians and Compulsory Health Insurance, 1912–1920* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978) and some very influential edited volumes. One especially important and controversial work was *Sickness and Health in America: Readings in the History of Medicine and Public Health* (Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1978; 2nd ed., 1985; 3rd ed., 1997), edited with Judith Walzer Leavitt. This set of readings intended for undergraduate classes did not follow the traditional focus on famous doctors, but instead looked at social and political issues confronting medicine and public health historically. The book raised the hackles of many in the field and became one of the beacons for the new social history of medicine. Generations of students trained with it.

Ron is remembered for his remarkable scholarship, his enormous energy in networking and connecting scholars, his rigorous standards, his love of intellectual debate, his sense of humor, and his generous and encouraging spirit. He is survived by his daughter, granddaughter, and ex-wife.

Judith Walzer Leavitt  
*University of Wisconsin–Madison (emerita)*

*Photo: Robert Streiffer*



## Laurie M. Wood

1985–2023

Historian of Early  
Modern France;  
AHA Member

What to say when someone full of joy and energy and brilliance dies so young? Laurie M. Wood was a prizewinning historian and so much else—an incomparable friend and colleague, an extraordinary archival researcher, a wonderful teacher, a committed advocate of public education, and a beautiful writer, just for starters. A funny, soft-spoken intellectual powerhouse, she aspired to be “maximally helpful,” a principle she applied to everything from historiographic interventions to departmental service.

One of the foremost early modern global historians of her generation, Laurie won the 2021 Boucher Prize from the French Colonial Historical Society for her first book, *Archipelago of Justice: Law in France’s Early Modern Empire* (Yale Univ. Press, 2020). The committee lauded her integrated framing of the Caribbean and Indian Ocean worlds as “a remarkable accomplishment” made possible by “astonishing archival tenacity” and “beautiful” writing. Her focus on both the powerful and the marginalized, the committee wrote, showed how together they created “power, order, and the very nature of French colonialism.” This very human scale reflected a core methodological priority of Laurie’s. As she explained in a New Books Network interview, in *Archipelago of Justice*, she wanted to grapple instead with “the very localized question of what happens when . . . you’re trying to imagine the French empire that rules your life in really tangible ways but is also really hard to wrap your mind around.” The twin priorities of thinking globally and thinking locally drove much of Laurie’s research agenda.

Unfailingly kind, Laurie was a no-nonsense intellectual who thrived under pressure. Her work was profoundly collaborative, and she generously exchanged research, writing, and ideas with many peers. Her straightforward pep talks, warm sense of humor, and incisive feedback made her an ideal scholarly interlocutor—and more than that, a true friend who was there for setbacks and successes, both personal and professional. She brought her trademark combination of energetic enthusiasm, seriousness of purpose, and historio-

graphic acumen to her collaborative projects, which included the everyday materials of colonial legal spaces.

Laurie was a native Texan who was proud that every educational institution she was part of was public. She grew up in Abilene, graduated with a BA in history from Texas Tech University, and earned her PhD at the University of Texas at Austin. During an alchemical year as a postdoc at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, she framed her book project, secured a tenure-track job at Florida State University (FSU), and met her partner, Cale Weatherly.

At FSU, Laurie quickly became a dedicated and creative professor. Her innovative and popular courses often dealt with parts of the world students are unfamiliar with. She was as committed to students who would go on to important but ordinary occupations as she was to academic stars, always making her classes accessible to a wide range of undergraduates. She strongly believed that confronting historical truths could have a lasting trickle-down effect that her students would take with them into many parts of their lives. She also turned her determination to be “maximally helpful” toward graduate students. Bubbling over with ideas to help them and the department, she lit up any meeting with characteristic insight and ruthless practicality.

As any of Laurie’s colleagues can testify, her passion for early modern history was endless and infectious. Perhaps nothing better testifies to her intellectual energy than the fact that through two years of intensive treatment for breast cancer before her death at age 38, she continued to find joy and meaning in her research and teaching. She also sustained her connections with students and colleagues. Laurie leaves her two young children, her husband, their families, and a wide circle of friends.

Laurie loved everything about being a professor. Funds have been established in her honor at FSU to support the very undergraduates she cared about so much and at the University of Pennsylvania, where she received her care, to support research on the breast cancer she had (mTNBC), which is the most deadly, the least understood, and the most lacking in targeted treatments.

Julie Hardwick  
University of Texas at Austin

Meghan Roberts  
Bowdoin College

*Photo courtesy Cale Weatherly*



## Natale Zappia

1974–2023

Scholar of  
Environmental and  
Indigenous History

Natale Zappia, who died of a brain tumor on April 27, 2023, at the age of 48, made a career of cultivating gardens, literal and figurative. He planted seeds of community, cared for his students, and nurtured projects to maturity. An outstanding historian, he was also a certified master gardener, a man of action, and profoundly humble. He introduced himself simply as Nat, a straw gardening hat his sartorial signature.

Trained in early American, environmental, and borderlands histories, Nat elucidated patterns of production, trade, and consumption across North America, with an emphasis on the western United States. His research and teaching explored how trade networks, food pathways, and ecologies transformed North America over many centuries. His focus on long-term environmental change intersected with his abiding concern for 21st-century food systems and environmental justice.

Nat became interested in these issues at Cornell University, where he studied with historian Robert Venables, whose work with the Haudenosaunee (or Iroquois) introduced Nat to engaged scholarship. Nat lived and worked on American Indian reservations in New Mexico and North Dakota, establishing a lifelong practice of engagement with Indigenous communities. After earning a BS in 1996, Nat completed an MA in history at Claremont Graduate University in 2003. He then earned his history PhD at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in 2008. Having cultivated his own mind, he dedicated himself to cultivating students, his research projects, community initiatives, and, of course, the land.

Nat understood teaching to be like planting seeds and bringing a crop to maturity. This view sprang from his work growing food alongside his academic pursuits. Nat began teaching at California State University, Northridge, in 2007. Three years later, he joined the Whittier College faculty, eventually becoming the Nadine Austin Wood Chair in American History and co-directing the Integrated Arts and Humanities Program. He also ran Whittier's Sustainable Urban Farm and energetically participated in multiple off-campus community gardens. In

2019, Nat returned to Northridge as professor of history and director of the Institute for Sustainability. Still, he kept his hands in the soil. Nat led the development of the campus food garden, where he worked alongside students, faculty, and staff. He thus continued his unusual career: coaxing food from plants and ideas from minds, not least his own.

Nat was a prolific scholar whose mental garden was an intellectual cornucopia. In addition to a monograph, two co-authored books, and an assortment of book chapters and reviews, he authored or co-authored nine peer-reviewed articles, which appeared in an array of publications, including the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, *California History*, the *CSU Journal of Sustainability and Climate Change*, *Early American Studies*, *Environmental History*, *Pacific Historical Review*, *Southern California Quarterly*, *World History Connected*, and *Nature*.

To read his work is to be awed by Nat's sensitivity to human beings. In *Traders and Raiders: The Indigenous World of the Colorado Basin, 1540–1859* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2014), he explored the complex interactions among Native Americans, colonists, priests, and traders in the Colorado River Basin while asking, What if we think not of a European core and an Indigenous periphery but of an Indigenous core and a European periphery? In a book about the photographs of Edward Sherriff Curtis, he and co-author Steadman Upham asked, How do Native American people understand these famous photos? And in *Rez Metal: Inside the Navajo Nation Heavy Metal Scene* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2020), he and co-author Ashkan Soltani Stone gave voice to Navajo people who express anger and forge community through heavy metal music.

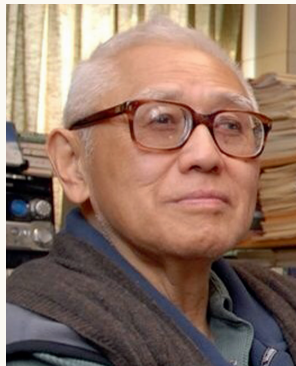
Nat accomplished many things. Above all, he made the world a better place, not least by planting gardens. He loved to sow, tend, and harvest. He relished introducing others to these pleasures. And he saw in gardening a direct way to address hunger and environmental injustice by growing food and sharing it with those in need. Nat was extraordinary: an insightful scholar, a discerning editor, a master gardener, and a treasured friend. He stood up for what he believed. He defended truth and integrity. He sought to heal the world. He was one of the great ones.

Jeffrey Auerbach  
California State University, Northridge

Benjamin Madley  
University of California, Los Angeles

Portrait: Miles Lewis, Nat, 2023, oil on aluminum panel,  
18 × 24 in. Courtesy Miles Lewis, image cropped.





## Him Mark Lai

1925–2009

Historian of Chinese America

The dean of Chinese American history, Him Mark Lai passed away on May 21, 2009. Proud of working outside academic history, Him Mark was prodigious in the recovery and interpretation of primary materials and won the respect, affection, and gratitude of scholars internationally. The archive he collected and donated to the Ethnic Studies Library at the University of California (UC), Berkeley, extends to more than 200 feet.

Him Mark (Mai Liqian 麥禮謙) was born in San Francisco in 1925 to immigrants from Guangdong. His first language was Cantonese, but he eventually mastered English well enough to study mechanical engineering at UC Berkeley. He loved reading history but opted for a safer career route and worked for Bechtel until retiring in 1984.

Him Mark's "nonprofessional" passions also constitute his legacy. In the thick of Cold War anticommunism, he helped lead the left-wing Chinese American Youth Club, Mun Ching, a youth organization fostering interests in the newly founded People's Republic of China. His wife, Laura Yuk-Ying Jung, shared his values, and they remained devoted partners and intellectual collaborators their entire lives.

Him Mark's intellectual curiosity led him to take night classes in the 1960s, when textbooks neglected or distorted Chinese American experiences. Inspired by the people and community he lived among, he began researching Chinese American history. He co-authored the still indispensable *A History of the Chinese in California: A Syllabus* (Chinese Historical Society of America [CHSA], 1969) and after the 1968–69 Third World student strikes at San Francisco State University (SFSU) co-taught the first Chinese American history college course in the country.

Him Mark produced or edited about a dozen books and 200 articles and essays. He and Laura traveled the country visiting university and community libraries and archives, where he uncovered invaluable Chinese-language sources. His fluency in written Chinese and spoken Cantonese opened new vistas into history. This research led to publications like *Chinese*

*Newspapers Published in North America, 1854–1975* (1977, compiled with Karl Lo) and *A History Reclaimed: An Annotated Bibliography of Chinese Language Materials on the Chinese of America* (1986). Many of his interviews with community elders appear in the much-reprinted *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island* (1980, edited with Genny Lim and Judy Yung). Him Mark gained the trust of community members, some of whom granted him unprecedented access to organizational records that enabled him to publish *A History of the Sam Yup Benevolent Association in the United States, 1850–1974* (1975).

Sadly, Him Mark's passing prevented him from completing the translation of his magisterial *Cong Huaqiao dao Huaren: Ershi shiji Meiguo Huaren shehui fazhan shi* (From overseas Chinese to Chinese America: A history of the development of Chinese American society during the twentieth century) (Joint Publishing Company, 1992). Academic presses published his English-language scholarship, including *Becoming Chinese American: A History of Communities and Institutions* (AltaMira Press, 2004); *Chinese American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (Univ. of California Press, 2006, with Yung and Gordon H. Chang); *Chinese American Transnational Politics* (Univ. of Illinois Press, 2010, edited by Madeline Y. Hsu); and an autobiography completed days before his death: *Him Mark Lai: Autobiography of a Chinese American Historian* (UCLA Asian American Studies Center and CHSA, 2011, edited by Yung, Ruthanne Lum McCunn, and Russell C. Leong).

A pillar of the CHSA, he edited its journal, *History and Perspectives*; directed a community radio program; and co-led the In Search of Roots program, which featured genealogical research and visits to ancestral villages in the Pearl River delta for US-born youths. The program remains in operation and shaped many Chinese Americans' understanding of their identities and history.

Although never holding a permanent academic position, he was professionally affiliated with programs at SFSU; UC Berkeley; the University of California, Los Angeles; and several Chinese institutions. He generously shared research materials and his knowledge and wisdom with anyone who sought him out. As he once wrote, Chinese Americans were "part of US history, Chinese history, and world history," as his prodigious scholarly output has irrefutably demonstrated.

Gordon H. Chang  
Stanford University

Madeline Y. Hsu  
University of Maryland, College Park

Photo courtesy Chinese Historical Society of America

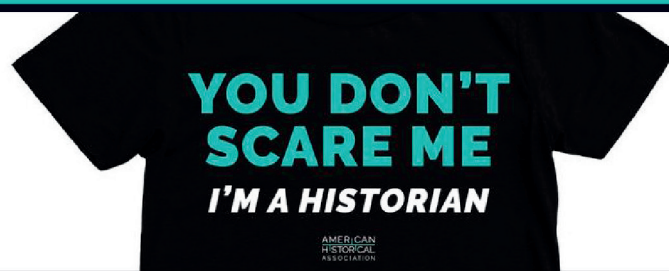
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**SUKUMAR P. DESAI**  
Boston, MA

**Research Associate.** A small team of a physician and an historian seek to collaborate with an additional historian on researching and writing articles for publication in scholarly journals dedicated to history of medicine/science. This is a remote, paid, freelance position appropriate for academically trained historians, including independent scholars, with a strong publication record. Graduate students without a publication history who can provide writing samples of publishable-quality work will also be considered. Strong candidates will have a demonstrated ability to complete work remotely with little direct supervision and a desire to work collaboratively on research and writing. Interested candidates should provide a CV and cover letter, including ideas for research topics to [mvigilfowler@gmail.com](mailto:mvigilfowler@gmail.com).



**NEW JERSEY**

**PRINCETON UNIVERSITY**  
Princeton, NJ

**Byzantine History.** The Department of History and the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies at Princeton University jointly invite applications for the position of assistant professor (tenure-track), associate professor (with tenure), or professor (with tenure) in

Byzantine history. We are especially interested in candidates whose work connects Byzantium to other areas, either geographically, through connections to the Islamic world, the Silk Road (i.e., Caucasus and Central Asia), or Slavic societies; or methodologically, including (but not limited to) environmental history, the study of material culture, or the history of science. The successful candidate will be expected to contribute to the teaching and research mission of the Department and the Seeger Center and participate in the intellectual life of the Hellenic Studies academic community at Princeton. The candidate should be prepared to offer undergraduate lecture courses, as well as upper-level undergraduate courses and graduate seminars. Review of files will begin on October 15, 2023, and continue until the position is filled. Applicants should provide a cover letter, curriculum vitae, and a brief statement (maximum 2 pages) of research interests. At least three names of referees should be entered into the online system. Reference letters and samples of written work will be solicited by the search committee for candidates of interest. For candidates who do not yet have a PhD, the recommendation of the principal advisor must include precise information on the present status of the dissertation and the likelihood of completion by summer 2024. We seek faculty members who will create a climate that embraces excellence and diversity, with a strong commitment to teaching and mentoring that will enhance the work of the Department and the Seeger Center, participate in Hellenic Studies

activities on campus and at the Princeton Athens Center, and attract and retain a diverse student body. Applicants are welcome to include a brief description of how they would contribute to this goal in their cover letter. This position is subject to the university's background check policy. Princeton University is an EOE and complies with applicable EEO and affirmative action regulations. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law. Apply online at <https://www.princeton.edu/acad-positions/position/31761>.

**Soviet and Post-Soviet Union.** The Department of History at Princeton University invites applications from scholars who specialize in the history of the Soviet Union and/or the post-Soviet successor states. The candidate should be prepared to offer an undergraduate lecture course on Soviet and post-Soviet history, as well as upper-level undergraduate courses and graduate courses on the specialized aspects of the history of the USSR and the successor states. Review of files will begin October 15, 2023, and continue until the position is filled. Applicants should provide a cover letter, CV, a research statement outlining the dissertation or book as well as other relevant projects, and a copy of either the dissertation or another substantive writing sample. At least three referees should be entered into the online system, which will automatically generate requests for their

letters. For candidates who do not yet have a PhD, the recommendation of the principal advisor must include precise information on the present status of the dissertation and the likelihood of completion by summer 2024. We seek faculty members who will create a climate that embraces excellence and diversity, with a strong commitment to teaching and mentoring that will enhance the work of the department and attract and retain a diverse student body. Applicants are welcome to include a brief description of how they would contribute to this goal in their cover letter. This position is subject to the university's background check policy. Princeton University is an EOE and complies with applicable equal employment and affirmative action regulations. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law. Apply online at <https://www.princeton.edu/acad-positions/position/31443>.

**Anschutz Distinguished Fellow in American Studies.** The Effron Center for the Study of America at Princeton University works to fulfill Princeton's institutional vision—in the nation's service and the service of humanity—by offering curricula, supporting research and hosting discussion on the evolving experiences and identities of the peoples of the territories known as America. By exploring and relating issues raised separately by the humanities, arts, and social and natural sciences, and by engaging with a wide

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Most job discrimination is illegal, and open hiring on the basis of merit depends on fair practice in recruitment, thereby ensuring that all professionally qualified persons may obtain appropriate opportunities. The AHA will not accept a job listing that (1) contains wording that either directly or indirectly links race, color, national origin, sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, ideology, political affiliation, age, or disability to a specific job offer; or (2) contains wording requiring applicants to submit special materials for the sole purpose of identifying the applicant's race, color, national origin, sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, ideology, political affiliation, veteran status, age, or disability.

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

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

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



range of scholarly methods and theories, we aim to create a generative space for new understandings of—and approaches to—issues that profoundly affect contemporary lives and will profoundly affect future generations. The Anschutz Distinguished Fellowship, created through an endowment by the Anschutz family, will be awarded in the academic year 2024-25 to a distinguished writer, critic, journalist, musician, artist, or other contributor to the arts, letters, public service, or commerce. The fellowship holder need not be an academic scholar. However, the selection committee will place great weight on indications of the candidate's teaching ability as well as the rigor, innovation, and interdisciplinary emphasis of the proposed seminar course. The appointment period will be for either the Fall 2024 or Spring 2025 semester. The person acting as the Anschutz Fellow will teach one interdisciplinary, three credit-hour, undergraduate seminar course for the Program in American Studies with an enrollment cap of 15 students. In addition to teaching and holding weekly office hours to meet with enrolled students, the Fellow will be expected to contribute to the intellectual life of the Efron Center for the Study of America, including participation in a wide range of events and activities on campus. Thus, the Fellow is required to be on campus for at least two to three days per week of appointment. The Fellow will also deliver one public lecture to the University. The Fellow will enjoy full access to Princeton University libraries, a computer-equipped campus office during the appointment period, and access to various University facilities. A Fellow who must relocate to Princeton or the local vicinity will receive a salary of \$90,000, plus benefits-eligibility. A Fellow who commutes to campus will receive a salary of \$60,000, plus benefits-eligibility. This position is subject to the University's background check policy. To apply, please visit <https://www.princeton.edu/acad-positions/position/31402> and submit the following materials by no later than 11:59 p.m. EST on December 1, 2023: A cover letter, a CV, a preliminary syllabus, and a short statement describing your proposed seminar and public lecture. A short list of finalists may be asked to submit further materials later. For additional information, please see our website, <https://ams.princeton.edu/>, or call 609.258.4710.



#### CORNELL UNIVERSITY Ithaca, NY

**Pre-1850 History of Science.** The Department of History at Cornell University seeks applicants for a tenure-track assistant professorship in the history of science, technology, and/or medicine before 1850, region open, to begin (July 1, 2024). We welcome applicants from all areas, including historians of natural philosophy, and those with a non-Western, Western, comparative, international, or global focus. We ask applicants for all faculty positions to share their experiences and/or approaches (past, current, or future) to fostering learning, research service, and/or outreach in a diverse community. Applicants may choose to submit a stand-alone statement or embed the information in other parts of their application materials. Applicants must apply electronically by submitting the following materials to <https://academicjobs.online.org/ajob/jobs/25479> not later than December 1, 2023: Cover letter describing research, teaching, and mentoring experiences and interests; current CV; writing sample (1); letters of recommendation (3).

#### BARNARD COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY New York, NY

**Medieval World.** The Department of History at Barnard College, Columbia University, seeks to appoint a tenure-track assistant professor in the medieval world, any region, with a focus that may include, but is not limited to, Africa, Asia, Eurasia, Europe, the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, or the Middle East. Preference for candidates who explore the interactions between different cultures, polities, economies, religions, and/or ethnicities, and for those who can teach the Global Middle Ages. Applicants should submit a cover letter, CV, and writing sample to <https://careers.barnard.edu/postings/6657>. In the cover letter, applicants should address their ability to work effectively with a student population that is broadly diverse with regard to gender and gender expression, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, and religion. All materials must be submitted by December 1, 2023. The search com-

mittee plans to conduct Zoom interviews with semi-finalists in January. Campus visits will be conducted in February. For questions, contact Professor Nara Milanich ([nmilanich@barnard.edu](mailto:nmilanich@barnard.edu)).



#### APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY Boone, NC

**History/Social Studies Education.** Appalachian State University invites applications for a tenure-track assistant professorship in history/social studies education beginning August 2024. Ability to teach history courses in area of specialization, as well as history/social studies education-preparatory courses, required. PhD in history or a related field, teaching experience in higher education, active research agenda, and years of demonstrated experience teaching history/social studies at the secondary level and/or developing curriculum work in the discipline, expected. In addition to instructional duties, faculty members are expected to conduct field supervision of student teachers as their academic area consultant, participate in service activities that include committee assignments pertinent to the university's teacher preparation program, and support Appalachian State University's Strategic Priorities. Candidates who are ABD will be considered, but the position requires completion of all doctoral requirements by August 2024. Appalachian State University, in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains, prepares students to lead purposeful lives as global citizens who understand and engage their responsibilities in creating a sustainable future for all. The transformational Appalachian experience promotes a spirit of inclusion that brings people together in inspiring ways to acquire and create knowledge, to grow holistically, to act with passion and determination, and embrace diversity and difference. As one of 17 campuses in the University of North Carolina system, Appalachian enrolls about 20,000 students, has a low student-to-faculty ratio and offers more than 150 undergraduate and graduate majors. Appalachian State University is an AA/EOE. Please apply and submit all required documents electronically through Appalachian State University's Job Board at [https://appstate.](https://appstate.peopleadmin.com/postings/41849)

[peopleadmin.com/postings/41849](https://appstate.peopleadmin.com/postings/41849). The initial review of complete applications will begin on November 20, 2023, and continue until the position is filled. Questions can be directed to the Search Committee Chair, Rwany Sibaja, at [sibajaro@appstate.edu](mailto:sibajaro@appstate.edu).



#### LEHIGH UNIVERSITY Bethlehem, PA

**Environmental History.** The Department of History and the Environmental Studies Program at Lehigh University invite applications for a tenure-track faculty position as assistant professor of history with a specialization in environmental history, effective August 15, 2024. Candidates must have an earned PhD in history or a related field by the date of employment. The geographical, thematic, and temporal focus is open. The successful candidate will be expected to teach a 2:2-equivalent load at all levels of the History Department's graduate and undergraduate curricula, as well as at all levels of the Environmental Studies Program's curriculum. This individual will help strengthen the department's and program's profiles in research, scholarship, and graduate studies, while furthering the department's and program's tradition of excellence in both undergraduate teaching and service to the university and the profession. We welcome candidates whose work includes a transnational or global dimension, who demonstrate innovative methodologies of historical research, and who think in an integrated way about environmental history and its place across disciplinary boundaries. The Department of History features a distinctive graduate program focused on transnational history that offers both the MA and PhD degrees. Our faculty pursue interdisciplinary scholarship, and we welcome scholars with international backgrounds. The successful candidate in this search will also have the opportunity to participate in the College of Arts and Sciences' interdisciplinary programs and research centers—specifically the Environmental Studies Program, as well as Global Studies; Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; Latin American and Latino Studies; Asian Studies; and Africana Studies. Founded in 1865, Lehigh University has combined outstanding academic and learning opportunities

with leadership in fostering innovative research. Recognized among the nation's highly ranked research universities, Lehigh offers a rigorous academic community for nearly 7,000 students. Lehigh University has some 5,000 undergraduates, 2,000 graduate students, and about 550 full-time faculty members. Lehigh University is located in Bethlehem, PA, a vibrant and historic area. Over 820,000 people live in the Lehigh Valley, which is in close proximity to New York City and Philadelphia. To apply, please submit a cover letter, CV, an article- or chapter-length piece of scholarship, and contact information for three references by November 1, 2023, to <https://academicjobsonline.org/ajob/jobs/25461>. At a later stage of the search, selected candidates will be asked to submit letters of recommendation, further evidence of scholarship, a teaching portfolio, a research statement, and a statement of contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Review of applications will begin on November 1, 2023, and continue until the position is filled. The Department plans to hold semifinalist interviews via Zoom in early January and on-campus visits for finalists in late January and early February. Questions about the position should be

directed to the search committee chair, Professor Nitzan Lebovic ([nil210@lehigh.edu](mailto:nil210@lehigh.edu)). Lehigh University is an AA/EOE and does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, marital or familial status, national or ethnic origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. We are committed to increasing the diversity of the campus community. Lehigh University is committed to a culturally and intellectually diverse academic community and is especially interested in candidates who can contribute, through their research, teaching and/or service, to this mission.



**UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT**  
Burlington, VT

**Europe and the World, 1400-1700.** The University of Vermont's Department of History in The College of Arts & Sciences invites applications for a full-time, non-tenure-track position in Europe and the World, 1400-1700, at the rank of lecturer. The initial appointment term is for the

2024-25 academic year and is renewable, based on the factors outlined in the current Collective Bargaining Agreement. Candidates should hold a PhD in history or be an advanced ABD in history. Opportunities to participate in a range of interdisciplinary programs exist at the University of Vermont, depending on the successful candidate's teaching interests. The position will start in Fall 2024 (August 19, 2024). The successful candidate will be able and willing to teach HST 1310, Global History to 1500, and HST 2050, History Methods. We seek a committed and creative teacher, with engaging classroom practices that excite and inspire students in the study of history, as well as the ability to teach courses at the introductory and advanced undergraduate levels. Our institution is an educationally purposeful community seeking to prepare students to be accountable leaders in a diverse and changing world. We are especially interested in candidates who can contribute to the diversity and excellence of the academic community through their research, teaching, and/or service. The College of Arts & Sciences has a strong commitment to diversity and inclusive excellence; more information can be

found at [www.uvm.edu/cas](http://www.uvm.edu/cas). The University of Vermont is an AA/EOE. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, protected veteran status, or any other category legally protected by federal or state law. Candidates are asked to apply online at [www.uvmjobs.com](http://www.uvmjobs.com). Candidates will be asked to submit the following: a CV; the names and emails of three referees (who will be contacted for their letters electronically); and a letter of interest that outlines the candidate's teaching and research interests and experience, including a statement on how the candidate plans to contribute to inclusive excellence at UVM. Candidates will be asked to submit writing samples and sample course syllabi following an initial review of applications. The review of applications will begin on November 13, 2023, and continue until the position is filled. For more information on the position, please visit <https://www.uvmjobs.com/postings/66538>, where candidates may view the full job ad and apply for the position.

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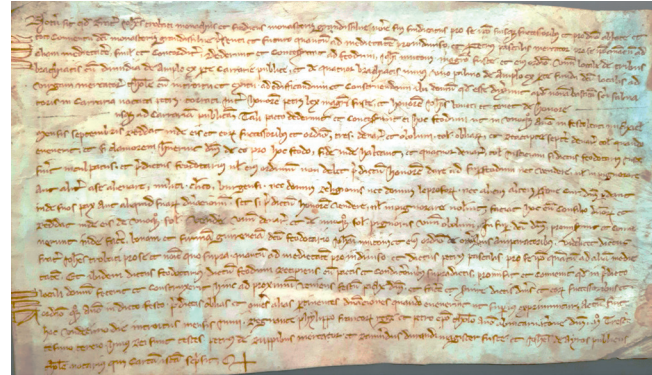
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L. RENATO GRIGOLI

# INCOMPLETE PAPERWORK



At first glance, a document in box 108 H 17 from the Archives départementales de la Haute-Garonne in Toulouse, France, is as boring as its name suggests. An eight-by-five-inch parchment with 21 lines of Latin text written in a neat hand and in a script typical of the early 14th century, it is indistinguishable from millions of items in archives across Europe. Its contents, too, are banal: John Trobati of the monastery of Grandselve and the merchant Peter Paschal Torraci announce that they have given in fief to John Mutton, master builder, an area some three and a half *brachia* wide and four *brachia* and one palm deep in the new planned town of St. Salvator, all for a yearly rent of three *denarii* and one *obolus*. The contract then lays out the stipulations for holding, renting, or selling the property, and concludes with a clause dating it to June 11, 1303, and giving the name of the public notary, John de Ayros, who wrote it.

The oddities in the document appear only by comparison, requiring me to read thousands of others just like it to notice them. Here are some: the plot is being given in fief jointly by two representatives, one clerical and one lay, of the king of France. The town is new, since Mutton must build a house on the plot quickly, by next Easter. He may not sell, rent, or give the plot to anyone with the resources to mount a legal suit: a knight, cleric, town citizen, religious house, or leper house. The yearly rent is cheap, but the price for transferring the land to an heir is high, making the property difficult to inherit or sell to anyone but the original owners. Social relationships in the medieval West that are preserved for posterity in legal contracts were organized around the process of creating ties of mutual obligation, usually through grants of land, a process often (and wrongly) called the feudal system. But here is a legal contract that is more concerned with protecting the grantors' property rights than creating feudal ties, and that inhibits the purchaser from creating such ties himself.

There is another strangeness to note: in the description of the plot's location, the name of one of Mutton's new neighbors is left blank.

The blank space in the contract suggests a final oddity: it's not just a contract but a very early example of a blank form. Medieval legal contracts abhor blank space. A blank space is a space where some clever scribe might insert an additional clause. A good scribe or notary would even put periods on either side of any number—for example, .VI.—to ensure that no one might change it later. If Mutton had no neighbor, the scribe should just omit that clause, since such contracts were drawn up either during or after a transaction. Moreover, several other contracts from St. Salvator also survive, all with the same unusual stipulations and pricing structure, all for plots the right size for a city house, and all issued in a tight two-month window. Thus, the contract was drawn up ahead of time as part of a large set of near-simultaneous sales on a new urban development with the specific names to be filled in as purchases occurred, and no one had yet purchased the neighboring plot.

It is strange to think that something so ordinary as incomplete paperwork could portend the beginnings of modernity. But regular plot sizes and rents on plots that are hard to sell or bequeath in new towns like St. Salvator, combined with generic paperwork drawn up in advance, cannot mark a special, feudal relationship between a vassal and their lord. They are instead a first step in the creation of the abstract, impersonal relationship between a citizen and their state. **P**

L. Renato Grigoli is editor of *Perspectives on History*.

Photo courtesy Archives départementales de la Haute-Garonne



# American Historical Review

## Call for Proposals: "The Mistakes I Have Made"

**The *American Historical Review* seeks proposals for a special issue of the journal on "The Mistakes I Have Made."**

Historians are trained to work carefully to avoid mistakes. With the threat of losing professional credibility, historians rarely admit to their errors, while at the same time, they are trained to expose the errors of others.

In this *AHR* special issue, we invite historians to reflect on their missteps and how they reveal insights into historical practice. We welcome stories that explore mistakes you have made, where they have taken you, and what you have made of them.

### **Procedures for Submission:**

The special issue will be in digital form only. We invite individuals or teams of scholars to propose interventions in a wide variety of textual, digital, and visual forms.

Proposals should be no more than 500 words and submitted via an online submission form.

To read the call for proposals and access the submission form, visit [historians.org/ahr-special-issue](https://historians.org/ahr-special-issue)

## **Proposals are due on December 15, 2023**

History Unclassified consulting editors Kate Brown and Emily Callaci are the editors for this special issue.

**Questions? Email [ahr@historians.org](mailto:ahr@historians.org)**

# AHA Reads

## WINTER READING CHALLENGE

**Join us in celebrating the AHA's 137th annual meeting in San Francisco with a special winter edition of AHA Reads!**

Pick one of the winter reading tasks to complete from November through January and share your reading journey on the AHA Member Forum or on social media using #AHAReads.

- ☐ Read a history of a place on the Pacific Rim
- ☐ Read a history by a presenter you're excited to see on the AHA24 program
- ☐ Read a piece of historical fiction (novel, story, poem, play) set in the American West
- ☐ Read a local history of San Francisco or Northern California

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**Learn more online at [historians.org/aha-reads](https://historians.org/aha-reads).**