

*The newsmagazine of the American Historical Association*

# PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

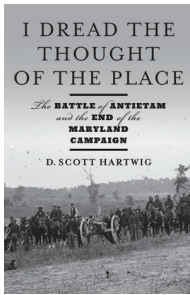
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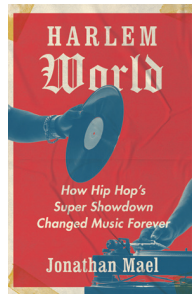


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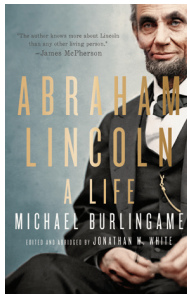
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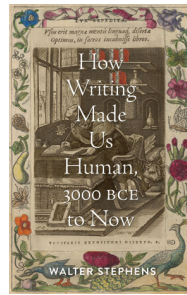
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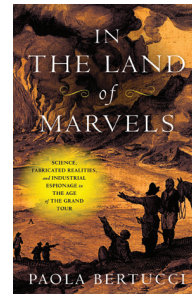
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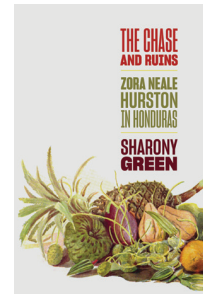
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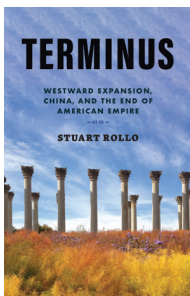
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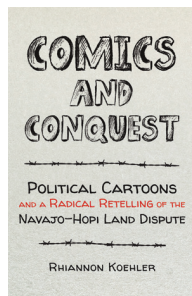
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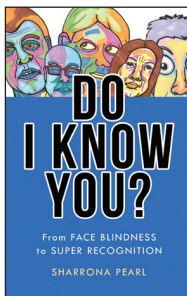
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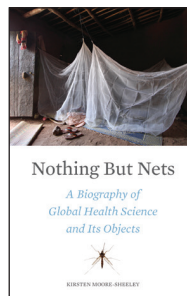
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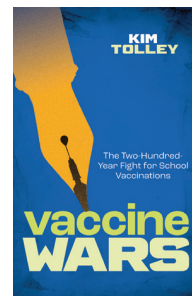
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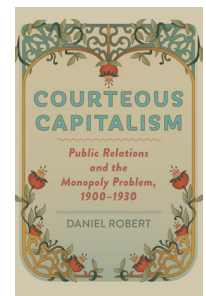
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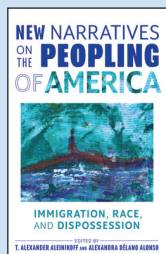


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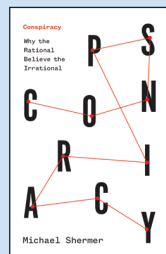


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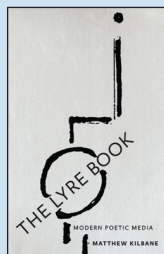
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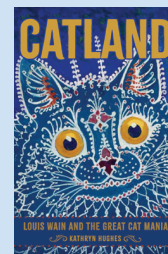
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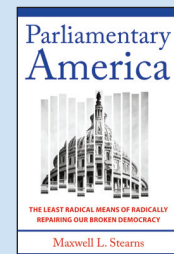
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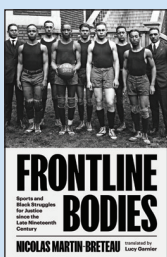
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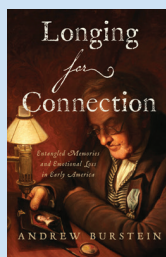
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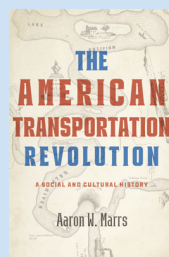
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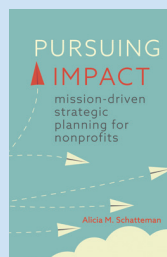
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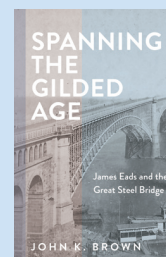
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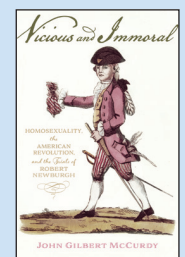
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### ON THE COVER

In the Chinese zodiac, 2024 is the Year of the Dragon, and this month's *Perspectives* is bookended by an advertisement for the San Francisco Chinese New Year Parade and a parade dragon head, both from the collections of the Chinese Historical Society of America. San Francisco's celebration is the oldest such event held outside Asia, developing from a small community affair into one of the city's most notable annual events. Along with the parade, the 2024 New Year celebrations in February will include a flower market fair, a street fair, a basketball tournament, the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. pageant and coronation ball, and the Chinatown YMCA Run/Walk. With our members gathering in San Francisco this month for AHA24, we are grateful to the Chinese Historical Society of America for sharing this history with our readers.

*Image courtesy Chinese Historical Society of America*

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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.*



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FPO



L. RENATO GRIGOLI

# HUZZAH FOR THE KING!

*A Medievalist at the Renaissance Faire*

Photo: Hope J. Shannon



Everyone assumes that I must despise a Renaissance faire. You know, those things where a bunch of people go into a ramshackle pseudotown in the forest somewhere to dress in a variety of historical or fantasy clothes, guzzle mead, and abuse the English language. Huzzah!

They assume this because I am a medievalist, but even more so because I am a medieval *historian*, and historians (as it is well known) are Ruiners of Fun. We rampage through everyone's favorite book or movie or whatever, pointing out all the historical inaccuracies and destroying one's immersion in the story with a well-timed "well, actually."

This perception, we must all admit, is not entirely without merit. The professional historian has been trained to interpret the past accurately, precisely, and with lots of footnotes. We are hyperaware of flaws and factual inaccuracies in our own work, and we have learned through long seminar hours the fine art of finding flaws in the work of others. And let's be frank: it's annoying when a celebrity gets paid millions of dollars to misrepresent one's life's work. Actually, let's be frank and honest: it's annoying that they've never read our life's work and wouldn't be interested in doing so if ever provided with the opportunity.

Renaissance faires *are* inaccurate. The dress is a mishmash of historical periods, when it's not an outright fabric fabrication—though I do love those who dress up in *Star Trek* uniforms and pretend to examine a primitive culture. None of the early modern English spoken is grammatically correct; often it's barely intelligible. The ubiquitous mead attracts swarms of bees eager to reclaim their honey and angry it was stolen in the first place. All the food is, inexplicably, served on a stick, and one cannot avoid the wandering minstrels.

I love them. I trekked to the Maryland Renaissance Festival near Annapolis twice this fall, wearing my mishmash of fantasy leather and Etsy linen. My key lime pie on a stick (!) was

delicious, and I got a remarkably small number of beestings. I cheered "my" knight in the joust (the state sport of Maryland), booed his antagonist, and stood aside respectfully for King Henry VIII and his retinue.

I love the Renaissance faire because of its historical inaccuracies, not despite them. Because history isn't the point, which is why historians' critiques of Ren faires (or any other bit of history in popular media or culture) come across as irritating rather than helpful. Premodernity, the temporal space a faire supposedly occupies, is a periodization defined by its opposition to everything we currently are as "moderns." It's a space that's simultaneously historically grounded and entirely fictional. Whether fantastical or historical, the premodern is that which is not modern, and it is therefore a uniquely easy place to play with one's identity.

More darkly, the premodern can be a space where white supremacists create their fiction of a preracial past. The shopkeeper selling Futhark necklaces at the Maryland festival told me that his bestseller was the othala rune (ᚠ), a letter beloved by the Waffen-SS and the Conservative Political Action Conference. These days, I view anyone at the faire dressed as a Knight Templar (a white mantle with a big red cross on it) with deep suspicion due to the role the memory of that order plays in current white supremacist narratives and neofascist ideologies.

"The past is never dead," Faulkner once wrote. "It's not even past." Nowhere is the idea of the premodern as both reviled origin and privileged past more on display than a Renaissance faire, and that is why it is so attractive to me as a student of the past. And for the historian still seeking historical fidelity, I suggest you take some inspiration from the *American Historical Review's* recent series of articles on historical smells. Where but a Renaissance faire could you find the authentic smell of a medieval pit latrine? **P**

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



## TO THE EDITOR

I greatly appreciated “My Libraries: Finding a Third Place” (October 2023). As a writer and editor, in addition to being a historian, I have found that libraries can be places of refuge and discovery. From 1986 to 2005, I worked as the assistant editor of *Libraries and Culture* (formerly the *Journal of Library History*) published at the University of Texas at Austin, where I was also working on my doctorate in European history. Working at the journal raised my awareness of the importance of libraries throughout history in all parts of the world. Then, when I began my research on the French Revolution, I was privileged to be able to work in the Bibliothèque nationale–Richelieu (BN) in Paris, where I passed many rewarding hours. That was my “third place” for about 25 years, as I visited twice a year to continue my research.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I made good use of past research to write two “memoirs” (dedicated to “librarians everywhere”), narrated by a fictional librarian, who worked at the BN during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire.

Thank you for calling attention to the importance of libraries, especially ones that still contain actual books.

BETTE OLIVER  
Austin, Texas

## CORRECTION

The title of “In the December Issue of the *American Historical Review*” (December 2023) has been updated to “Medicalized Enslavement, Disability, and Southeast Asian Art” to better reflect its content. *Perspectives* regrets any confusion about the issue’s contents.



## Now Available Online

### December 2023 Issue of the *American Historical Review*

The *American Historical Review* continues to celebrate a new look and feel to the journal with its first major redesign in 50 years. In addition to a new cover design and typography, this update rethinks how the journal presents historical scholarship. Check out the latest issues online at [historians.org/american-historical-review](https://historians.org/american-historical-review).

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THAVOLIA GLYMPH

## THE IRRETRIEVABLE PAST?

*Tracks and Residues, Imagined Sources, and the Writing of History*



I have fond memories of childhood summers spent with my maternal grandparents in their home in the rural South. Among the most vivid of those memories is my introduction to the *Montgomery Ward and Co. Catalogue and Buyers' Guide*, the first mail-order catalog in the United States. I first encountered the catalog in the home of a family who lived nearby. The children my age were summertime playmates, and their teenage sisters were enthusiastic consumers of the catalog's offerings. They delighted in slowly perusing its pages, "trying on" dresses, and getting a long-awaited purchase in the mail. It was easy to appreciate its treasures, from the everyday to the mysterious.

From a catalog that had begun as a single sheet of paper in 1872 and grown within 10 years to 240 pages and 10,000 items, one could order clothing, dressmaking patterns and trimming notions, sewing machines, Lincoln Logs, farming equipment, and even a house or the drawings for one. By the 1960s, most mail-order catalog customers no longer lived in rural America, and both Montgomery Ward and its primary competitor, Sears and Roebuck, had opened retail outlet stores decades before. But the mail-order business remained an important feature of Black rural life in the segregated South. How much of one I do not yet know.

We know from the work of scholars and autobiographies and biographies that mail-order catalogs like Montgomery Ward's played a transformative role in the lives of rural people. In the South, the catalogs gave Black people greater freedom to choose their purchases and access to goods otherwise unavailable—or only at exorbitant prices at plantation stores or stores in the nearest country town, where buying on credit came with usurious interest rates. Rural dwellers seldom had cash. Montgomery Ward offered more favorable credit terms, and buying on credit did not lead to a lien placed on your crop. Catalog shopping offered freedom from the performance of humiliating rituals of deference to white supremacy that often accompanied in-person shopping in white-owned stores. In the privacy of their homes, Black people were freed

from the surveillance of white storekeepers and their white customers and from interference with a decision to buy a pretty dress or a ribbon to adorn a child's hair. This did not prevent white people from contesting the right of Black people to make such private decisions when they encountered Black people on the streets attired, to their minds, inappropriately. The catalogs also had more practical uses. In *An Hour before Daylight: Memories of a Rural Boyhood* (2001), Jimmy Carter recalled that like many poor rural dwellers, his family repurposed old newspapers and "pages torn from Sears, Roebuck catalogues" as toilet paper.

### Catalogs played a transformative role in the lives of rural people.

My childhood memories of the mail-order catalog are an entry point for thinking about the larger economic and social lives of rural Black Southerners and what they learned from catalogs about the wider world and themselves. Did Black women, for example, imagine that in dressing in the latest fashions—modeled by white women and girls in the catalog—they were engaged in freedom-making? Ready-made clothing, even for urban dwellers, Ruth J. Simmons notes in *Up Home: One Girl's Journey* (2023), symbolized a "freedom and power" that white people claimed exclusively for themselves.

I wonder where Black women documented their desires and sense of freedom and power. Did they take pictures of themselves in a new dress from the catalog, write about their purchases in letters to family or friends, or compare notes in meetings of Black women's clubs? Did they, like the formerly enslaved woman who spoke of her joy in purchasing a blue guinea dress when she became a free woman, speak of their purchases in oral histories? I wonder if evidence might show up in a letter from a wife, sister, or partner to a Black soldier in training camp at Fort Bragg (now Fort Liberty) or in the trenches in Europe during World War II, enclosing a picture of her wearing a new dress from the catalog. Or perhaps in a

photograph mailed to a relative who had joined the migration from the South to Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, for a job at J&L Steel, or enclosed in a letter from a relative in Chicago during the Great Migration touting the city's attractions. I study photographs of rural women in church and at revival meetings as well as urban Black women, like that of a woman on the dance floor of the Big Apple Night Club in Columbia, South Carolina, taken by Richard Samuel Roberts. Did she buy that pretty dress from the catalog?

These questions and musings become fodder for thinking about possible archives that might provide the documentation I seek. My longing for sources is, at base, a longing for documents that can act as moorings for memories seemingly unanchored by the kind of archival evidence I am trained to look for and that it sometimes seems I can only wish for. They help me to imagine archives yet to be uncovered or yet to be seen whether through the fault of the creators or the custodians. A colleague reminds me of Marc Bloch's notion, following François Simiand, of "tracks" and "residues" that can act as guides to sources. Paraphrasing Bloch in *The Historian's Craft* (1954), she notes that while "we cannot reproduce the person or animal or event that left the tracks," the tracks often remain. I consider that my memories and musings—imaginings—may lead to "tracks" and "residues" of the ideal sources I would like to find. That is not promised, but my remembered joy in the Montgomery Ward catalog, the colleague also reminds me, is itself one such track.

Historians recognize that there are limits to what we can know about the past that are attributable in part to how archives and collections of papers were established and maintained for decades. We know that the lives of some are lovingly preserved, while that of others survive despite deliberate or unthinking efforts aimed at their records' destruction, if at all. This matter has been the subject of much scholarly discussion, but I am more interested here in thinking about processes by which we can get to stories that we can imagine exist but seemingly cannot document. How as a historian can I know and not know what happened in the past? How can I move beyond the anecdote—my experience encountering the Montgomery Ward catalog—to writing a history of people for whom my experience was not extraordinary in the sense of rare, but a daily lived one, but now seemingly suffused by silence?

Put differently, how did one explain to a child the everyday indignities of the Jim Crow South? It was that daily lived experience that sent rural people to the refuge of mail-order catalogs. When I was a toddler, my mother would sometimes trace an outline of my feet on a brown paper bag or a

sheet of stationery and take the tracing to the department store downtown to buy my shoes. She did not explain why she did this, nor do I know what thoughts ran through her mind as she performed this task or when the time came to pull out that piece of paper at the store whose white owners saw only the prospect of racial contamination in the actual foot of a Black person. As Traci Parker notes in her book, while department stores signaled equitable access and fair treatment, holding "out tremendous possibilities," they remained "enforcers and symbols of white supremacy." I imagine garbage cans filled with the discarded tracings of the feet of Black people.

## How did one explain to a child the everyday indignities of the Jim Crow South?

The residue and tracks that remain as guideposts in my search for a path forward may be, in the words of Natalie Zemon Davis, "in part my invention," but for me, they are those that must be "held tightly in check by the voices of the past." I will doubtless always feel what James Baldwin termed "something implacable," obstinate, unrelenting, unpacifiable, blocking my efforts to recover the history of the region in which I was born. But it is not an "unspeakable South" to which I turn. Much of what I wish to know is utterable and retrievable, in its ugliness and its beauty. W. E. B. Du Bois taught me that much. **P**

*Thavolia Glymph is president of the AHA.*



JAMES GROSSMAN

## AN EVOLVING EVENT

*The Annual Meeting in 2024*

I enjoy attending academic conferences. It's part of my job description. Both an expectation and a privilege of my position is not only dawn-to-dusk leadership at the AHA annual meeting but participation (even if only as an attentive observer) at gatherings of AHA affiliates and our counterparts in the American Council of Learned Societies (indeed, including the ACLS itself). Perhaps even more important is the pleasure and satisfaction of collaborating with colleagues at the AHA in ongoing and meaningful transformations of our annual gathering, which this year is in San Francisco January 4–7, 2024.

As a graduate student, at least many years ago, one was not supposed to admit such enthusiasm for conferences; it might cast a young scholar as overprofessionalized. To some, the very idea of networking suggested a disinclination to genuine and honest work. At the University of California, Berkeley, without travel funds and generally distant from conference locales, we seldom even had the opportunities to present our research that graduate students in recent years have come to expect. The first time I presented a paper at a conference, it was a disaster: I no doubt framed the argument poorly, and the commentator was not familiar with a particular aspect of recent scholarship in labor history that I took for granted. The criticism stung, to say the least. Fortunately, it was on the UC Berkeley campus, so I had a colleague in the audience who could insist afterward (and report to my advisor) that the commentator was clueless as to the assumptions I was bringing to the table from that historiography. In retrospect, of course, it was my own fault: had I done due diligence, I would have realized that this would be the case and spent a bit more time framing the issues rather than just assuming that “everyone” knew that these were important questions rooted in an established literature in the field.

It got better. I learned from generous senior colleagues and from experience. Speak slowly. Avoid mentioning specific historians in the text, because the people you do not reference inevitably will be in the audience; during the Q&A, they will

inquire (sometimes politely) as to why they were overlooked. Print the paper in a large font; bold or underline words for emphasis. Never speak extemporaneously; almost make it seem like you are speaking extemporaneously (I am obligated to Linda Kerber for that wording). As when giving an undergraduate or public lecture, find a few people in the audience who seem to be paying attention and move your glance from one to another. Generally, a half dozen such people are enough.

Of course, for most of us, the humbling experiences never end. Enthusiasm for our subject leads to tangents, which, even if effective rhetorically, wreak havoc with careful calculations of time (once two and a half minutes per page; now 100 words per minute). We go to a panel on a similar topic just beforehand and realize that something that seemed deeply insightful to us has just been articulated twice—and perhaps even in a more interesting way. Or your curious and proud relatives show up and as you speak give you that “this is a really weird ritual” look. (My mother dutifully trekked into the city the first time I presented at a conference in New York. And never did again.)

For most of us, the humbling  
experiences never end.

My most important asset in those early years, which lasted well into middle age, was sharing a hotel room. I realized early on (after the mistake of staying in a “graduate student hotel” in Philadelphia at \$25 per night) the value of staying in the conference hotel, a luxury usually affordable only by sharing with a friend. Having stayed in anything even resembling a conference hotel only once in my life until I went on the academic job market, I found that the shared experience became as important as the shared invoice. I am still friends with the colleague with whom I most often shared a room in those early years; it remained the best way for us to keep up with each other's personal and professional lives in distant

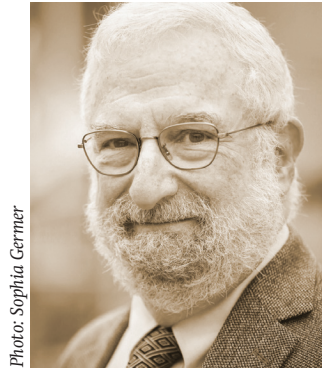


Photo: Sophia Germer

locations. And both of us benefited from learning the culture of academic conferences by being in the building where it happened.

For most of my professional cohort, even four decades beyond our days as students, recollections of the AHA annual meeting are skewed by experiences on the academic job market. I still have friends whose uncomfortable memories of that experience continue to keep them away, however much I tell them the ambiance has been transformed by the AHA's decision in 2019 to cease supporting job interviews at the annual meeting.

The AHA is committed to continuing the process of change in the structure and culture of the annual meeting. We no longer refer to it as a "research meeting" and instead emphasize "professional development" broadly defined. This means that our current task is to reflect on what that means. What kinds of professional development? For whom? Presented by whom? Our move away from the traditional format of three to four papers and a comment has been gradual, because we're well aware that many of our members do want to present their research in this manner. We're equally aware that unless the presenters are highly visible scholars, attendance at such sessions is considerably lower than at roundtables, workshops, lightning rounds, and other innovative formats. The deadline for proposals for the 2025 annual meeting in New York City is February 15, and I strongly encourage our colleagues to be creative in thinking about format. Take risks. If you're worried that what you're contemplating is too outlandish, contact us in advance and ask whether your idea seems reasonable.


Also contact us if you would like to use the meeting for some professional purpose. I recently was discussing a new and interesting scholarly format with two people who were planning to attend our conference in San Francisco and suggested that there are probably eight to ten others who are thinking about what they are trying to do. As I told them, get in touch with us; we should be able to find a space for you to have a conversation.

What we've realized is that the possibilities are endless, subject to the constraints of conference hotels, which are not inconsiderable (don't even ask about the cost of technology or coffee). Our staff attends other conferences not only to present our work and build collaborations but also to get ideas about formats, procedures, and more. Our meetings manager, Debbie Ann Doyle, even goes to a conference focused on innovative meeting ideas. Six of our staff have just returned from the annual meeting of the National Council for the Social

Studies in Nashville, the last of more than a dozen academic conferences attended by AHA staff in 2023.

Like our peer organizations, we also have been attentive to issues of broadening access to our work and communities. The AHA and scholarly associations in other disciplines are often asked why we don't have hybrid annual meetings. One reason is cost, especially when meeting at union hotels (AHA has a policy of a stated preference). But more important is that we have realized that an online gathering is not the same as an in-person meeting. Just as we had to learn that digital publishing didn't mean throwing a PDF onto a screen, we are now learning that online convenings have different purposes, different possibilities. AHA Online programs continue to explore new opportunities for interaction.

We've realized that the possibilities  
are endless.

We're open to ideas. I cannot promise we can embrace all of them. But we are prepared to listen and to think about how we can accomplish the goals of the suggestions our members bring to us. By reconsidering the purposes, nature, and formats of academic convenings, we can broaden and increase participation. Perhaps we may even broaden the definition of "participation." 

*James Grossman is executive director of the AHA. Find him on X (formerly Twitter) @JimGrossmanAHA.*



GARY G. GIBBS, KAREN F. HARRIS, WHITNEY A. M. LEESON, AND JAMES M. OGIER

## ON THE POTENTIAL OF BOOK REVIEWS

*Building a More Inclusive and Cohesive Community*

**N**umerous reasons motivate academics to review books for professional journals, perhaps as many reasons as there are reviewers.

The process keeps individuals contributing to a larger discourse, maintains professional development, and fosters a coherent, inclusive academic culture. And yet reviewers are geographically,

professionally, politically, and generationally diverse, meaning they engage in academic criticism with different perspectives. But with the myriad tasks that historians face at all levels of their careers, book reviews are often seen as a burden rather than an opportunity. Book reviews are essential components of historical inquiry, and the discipline, professional organizations, and institutions of higher education must

recognize them as the essential publishing standard—as the one task most likely achievable by the greatest number of historians.

Book reviews express all the tools of historical analysis, and they are an important genre of publication. Book reviewing provides professors and graduate students the opportunity to engage with new scholarship, contribute to



The Point Bonita Lighthouse (1855) once helped ships' crews steer clear of the shore prior to the development of computerized navigational systems. Technology changes, but the need for reliable direction remains—in all areas of life.

Karen F. Harris

ongoing conversations and debates in the field, and demonstrate specialized expertise. Published book reviews form a point in the triangular relationship among reviewers, authors, and editors that offers scholars the opportunity to shape, challenge, and influence the production and reception of new arguments. The book reviewer is a counterpart to anonymous readers employed by the press as part of the publication process. Therefore, book reviews should be referenced in any discussion addressing the scope and inclusivity of the process of peer-reviewing books.

The book reviewer is a counterpart to anonymous readers employed by the press as part of the publication process.

Reviewing a book requires numerous skills central to historical methods. Critiquing and criticizing research are skills cultivated in graduate school and central to historical inquiry. Other methods involved in book reviewing are inherent in pedagogy and indispensable in higher education. Evaluating sources and methods, assessing the logic inherent in an argument, and judging the quality of writing all benefit from constant practice and refinement. An academic review provides a sense of where a book fits into a field, which is also a task required in college-level courses.

Two recent events influenced the academic pursuit of reviewing books. First, the economic crisis of 2008–09 disrupted the delivery of books to book review editors, while offers of electronic PDFs became more common; the COVID-19 pandemic made the acquisition of books

even more challenging. Several academic presses closed their warehouses for months, while journal editors struggled to place the few books they acquired for review with professors who were focused instead on implementing distance learning strategies. Nearly four years after the pandemic began, keeping the review process functioning remains a challenge, to the detriment of our collective knowledge.

When some folks continue to miss out on the opportunities offered by reviewing books, the book review sections of journals suffer from a lack of specialized expertise and viewpoints. An increase in authorship not only will lead to a more equitable distribution of scholarly contributions; it also will invigorate our collective scholarship as new voices join ongoing conversations. These diverse perspectives constitute a powerful attribute of academic discourse and provide a mentoring quality to the world of criticism that values perspectives of junior colleagues while providing space for maturation.

Reviewing is also an integrated part of a whole: a career-long cultivation of an authoritative and insightful voice that is capable of quickly perceiving an argument, contextualizing it, and offering a pertinent critique. Scholars at the top of their field enjoy a gravitas that can be marshaled in support of the genre's importance. The discipline needs to hear critiques informed by those who have achieved the widest recognition in their careers of reading, writing, teaching, and mentoring. Critiquing newly published books for a learned audience is the best method for acquiring a normative understanding of the spirit and nature of interactive academic discourse.

A scholarly exchange of ideas also requires quality book reviews. Reviewers

need not hesitate to offer criticism of an author's work if it is delivered with civility and anchored in close reading and thoughtful consideration. A strong, critical voice will be discerned by one's peers, so a serious, analytical, and respectful approach to the task will serve everyone's best interests.

Book reviews need to be recognized as important work because they epitomize the culture of criticism and guide historians through contributions and challenges to prevailing orthodoxies. Colleagues, department chairs, deans, and university presidents should appreciate the importance of book reviews as faculty publications. And yet surprisingly many guidelines for tenure and promotion do not esteem reviews as valuable publications. In our experience, we encountered numerous academics reluctant to take on a review precisely because they felt pressured to publish a larger project prior to a tenure or promotion decision and thus could not prioritize reviewing over their own research.

No part of the academy can unilaterally conjure a new valuation of scholarly publication, but a dedicated effort by historians might persuade others to engage with the idea of a more fair and realistic framing of the subject. Given the number of tenured historians who serve in faculty governance and on executive councils in some capacity, there is ample opportunity to explain the need to recognize the importance of writing and publishing book reviews. In brief, old-fashioned consciousness raising may prompt a reconsideration of the status quo.

The vital role book reviews play in academic discourse is a timely topic given the issuance of the AHA's *Guidelines for Broadening the Definition of Historical Scholarship* in January 2023. The guidelines create an opportunity to expand



who gets to be considered an engaged historian. Recognition of the importance of book reviews also connects to the topic of job equity. Issues of job security, teaching workloads, and the demands of life influence decisions about the feasibility of potential writing projects. Many historians are not empowered to write an article or a monograph, but book reviews are achievable, especially if valued on annual reports and applications for fellowships, jobs, and tenure and promotion.

Until we rethink these processes, the major criteria in judging academic worthiness will remain based on some formulaic expression of measurable productivity wherein certain tasks matter more and others less—criteria that invariably values book reviews much less. A scheme that celebrates only the publication of books and journal articles expresses a system that marginalizes many historians. A more just and accurate approach to ascertaining merit would emphasize the idea that all scholarly production is enmeshed in a connected whole. Academics should be recognized for their participation in all aspects of that discourse.

Problems with job equity in the academy are not new, but they have become worse in recent years. Greater participation from everyone across all ranks will strengthen professional unity and have the greatest benefit to those at the margins. Adjuncts, postdocs, and visiting professors also face demanding time constraints augmented by uncertain futures, which is why their successful publication of a book review deserves appropriate recognition.

The culture of criticism benefits if book reviews become a more celebrated attribute of academic publishing. They are typically presented as a lesser part of a publication, appearing in a journal after the articles and afforded limited

word counts. We encourage journals whose review sections contribute to academic discourse and research to consider some of the innovative changes that could be of benefit to professional discourse. In this day of easy digitization, the posting of a thoughtful recorded discussion between two or three experts may be more appropriate than the publication of 800 words by one. Linking written or audio files online can be accomplished with ease. Those journals that have begun to reimagine their platforms with new ways of promoting criticism offer inspiration and direction.

Ending the misguided judgment of what matters as a worthy publication is requisite for a more just professional culture.

Book reviews permit scholars of all ranks to demonstrate disciplinary expertise to their peers, which lays the groundwork for collaboration among colleagues and new avenues for research. Respect for this process may encourage our most professionally at risk colleagues by nurturing a more inclusive culture of book reviews and by recognizing the added value reviews bring to the discipline. Thus those who find themselves marginalized by an unfriendly job market still have access to significant professional discourse. Likewise, a more supportive environment is even more critical given gender and racial inequities, especially those combined with the obligations of childcare, eldercare, departmental duties, and demanding institutional service that often falls unevenly on women and

minority colleagues. Ending the misguided judgment of what matters as a worthy professional publication is requisite for a more just professional culture and a stronger sense of community.

We have identified several ways the discipline may encourage individuals to write book reviews, with internal rewards remaining the strongest motivator—thus the focus on empowerment. We also encourage the discipline writ large to celebrate the potential of book reviews as a publishing standard capable of uniting all those assembled under the big tent of history. Book reviewing requires knowledge, wisdom, and insight. The more historians write, publish, and esteem book reviews, the more they promote scholarly debate, academic publishing, and the recent publications of colleagues. Recognized and rewarded as they ought to be, book reviews possess the potential to connect individuals to a more vibrant academic discourse—a distinct benefit for everyone. **P**

*Gary G. Gibbs is a professor of history, Whitney A. M. Leeson is a professor of anthropology and history, and James M. Ogier is a professor emeritus of German and linguistics at Roanoke College. Karen F. Harris is the retired book review office manager for the Sixteenth Century Journal. The authors thank Tom Carter for copyediting this essay, and James Amelang, Kathleen Comerford, Katherine French, Audrey Kerr, Meeta Mehrotra, Allyson Poska, Lucius Wedge, and Merry Wiesner-Hanks for their comments.*

MICHAEL ANDOSCIA

## A SCHOOL WITHOUT BOOKS

*The State of Censorship and Classroom Libraries in Florida*

**I did not know how to take the news. My internal dialogue was struck dumb as I checked my district-approved “classroom library” app for an updated list of vetted and approved books. *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury’s acclaimed novel written as a rebuke of McCarthyism and censorship, was approved. I could allow my students to read it.**

I have been teaching in Florida for the last 30 years. For almost a quarter of a

century, I have been dedicated to teaching social studies and history at the secondary and college levels. My classroom library is vast, having been collected over the course of my career. Many of the books I purchased because they were relevant to the subjects I was teaching. Some were donated by retired teachers. Others were gathered from boxes of discarded books as school libraries were transformed into “media centers.” My classroom library is the centerpiece of how I approach my subject area—usually history, but

currently sociology, economics, and philosophy.

I abandoned a singular dependence on the state-approved textbook early in my teaching career. Yes, that textbook with its supplemental materials made lesson planning much easier. It was not, however, worth the cost of teaching students that history was nothing more than what was found in the textbook. I wanted my students to learn that history is a process, that historians did not find truth on page 50 of some



As calls for book bans become widespread around the United States, teachers like Michael Andoscia are navigating difficult terrain in their classrooms.

Timberland Regional Library/Flickr/CC BY-NC-ND 2.0. Image cropped.

prescribed text. Instead of a textbook that my students could skim mindlessly to find the “right answer,” I direct my students to bookshelves to do the far more complex work of parsing the intricacies of history, society, and the human condition. Free and ready access to a wide range of books is foundational to my curriculum.

Of course, libraries offer students access to books. My county has a great public library system, but the best way to get books in student hands is to have books on hand. Like many districts across the nation, our schools’ so-called media centers have a smattering of books and reference materials but hardly anything inspiring. Furthermore, these media centers are closed to students much of the year while they are used for Florida’s endless litany of standardized tests. The most immediate place for students to have access to books is the classrooms they inhabit five days a week.

### The best way to get books in student hands is to have books on hand.

The very existence of a state vetting process for books is anathema to the values that I as a historian, bibliophile, and teacher hold sacred—even if the censors could approve every book that I submitted. As Bradbury warned, “There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches.” Here in Florida, the match was struck by our state legislature with the passage of House Bill 1467. Educators are left trying to keep the flames from spreading while trying not to get burned. How do we integrate the notion of free inquiry and critical thinking in our

teaching while protecting ourselves from arsonists empowered by law to light matches?

The fire begins when law is translated into local policy. In my experience, it is hard to find anyone within my school district who wants to withhold books from students. Our chief academic officer is a case in point. He was tasked by the school board to chair a committee assigned to bring the district into compliance with the law. I know him. I worked for him when he was a principal and an advocate for what he called “reading-rich classrooms.” He used to advocate for having as many books on classroom shelves as possible so as to inspire a student to read. His goal was to instill in students a love for reading for the sake of reading. Yet as chief academic officer, he bears the burden of shaping a policy that undermines everything he stands for. During the public workshop announcing the new policy, he was clear about their motives. He said, “The lens in which we look is through the legislative requirements.”

To satisfy these requirements, his committee developed a process by which secondary teachers are required to scan classroom books into a database and to submit that file to state-appointed media specialists. Books do not have to be removed from the classroom itself, but they must be reviewed and approved before they can be accessed by students. As books are approved, the lists for each school are made available to the public.

As professionals, teachers understand that our classroom libraries are subject to scrutiny. Academic freedom is predicated on professional responsibility. We are not offering our students access to *Fifty Shades of Grey* or *The Anarchist Cookbook*. The books on my shelf have already been vetted—by me. A parent has never come to me

with a complaint about a book in my classroom. Should such a complaint arise, however, that is a conversation between myself and the parent, and perhaps my administrator. Vetting books should not be the role of the state, particularly when so many people seem intent on playing with matches.

Any bookshelf with more than three titles is certain to contain a book that is in some way offensive to someone. Many of my peers are intimidated by the hazard of submitting their libraries to state and public scrutiny. Despite reassurances that my school district’s vetting process protects them, they are pulling books from their shelves that they fear might get them into trouble.

What books are being pulled? The focus of such laws and policies is no secret. The district is focusing on “sexually inappropriate” content without literary merit. LGBTQ+ themes are the first to go. Teachers understand that “sexually inappropriate” means “gay.” Plotlines around racial and ethnic injustice are also suspect. According to Florida Administrative Code rule 6A-1.094124, any reference to systemic or cultural racism is critical race theory and is banned from classroom discussion. Walter Dean Myers’s book *Monster*, about a black teen accused of a crime, was rejected from my library (a decision I have appealed). The convergence of sex and race is, presumably, why the media specialists rejected Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Regardless of local policy, the law coerces teachers into quiet compliance. Scanning books into the database is just one more mindless mandate that we must satisfy to do our jobs. Many teachers in social studies, literature, and the arts are self-censoring. I saw one of my peers with a box of books she



was donating to the library. She told me, “There’s just no way these books are going to be approved. I just can’t take the chance.”

What does she fear? The relevant laws are vague; consequently, the local policies become reactionary. My peers fear parental lawsuits for trying to indoctrinate their children into “woke” ideology. They fear the possibility of a third-degree felony, including prison time, if a book happens to include a scene that could be considered pornographic. They fear losing their jobs. Nobody knows whether these fears are legitimate, but we have mortgages to pay and our own children to raise. For many of us, it is not worth the risk to submit potentially problematic books to a state database and to public scrutiny.

Many teachers in social studies, literature, and the arts are self-censoring.

Other teachers are taking a more militant stand. The most common strategy is to remove all books from their classrooms. Some teachers have even removed posters, leaving blank walls around their barren bookshelves. A colleague I talked to at a state union caucus summarized this strategy: “I want [parents] to be outraged. [Policymakers] won’t listen to us, but they’ll listen to the parents.”

I do not have the same faith in parental outrage.

At our August open house, our principal informed us that any books not vetted, which at this point was almost all of them, had to be covered or taped off to ensure that students did not have

access to them. I was outraged. I wanted to inspire the same outrage from the visiting parents. I covered all my bookshelves with deep red paper. I then placed a sign on each explaining that “These BOOKS have not been VETTED by the STATE. They may contain DANGEROUS KNOWLEDGE.”

The results were disappointing. Most families simply ignored the obvious absurdity of bookshelves covered in red paper. A handful expressed disgust as well as support for my message. To my knowledge, none of them carried that outrage with them when they left the room. I doubt that my colleagues’ empty bookshelves elicited a better response.

So I chose a different strategy. I added books to my library. I chose to overwhelm the censors with malicious compliance. I increased my library from around 500 books to 700. If they wanted to vet my books, I was going to submit a monster list and challenge all rejections. But policy confounds this strategy, since unvetted books cannot be released to students. After six months, only 34 of my 700 books have been vetted. This constitutes a de facto ban without the inconvenience of having to actively reject a book. The censors are in no hurry.

We have reached a point where trying to find ways to skirt the letter of the law while undermining its match-wielding authoritarian intent is simply not enough. In my many years of teaching history, whenever my lesson revolves around the challenge of authoritarianism, there is always an underlying question: Why did so many people comply with authoritarian regimes? And what I always want my students to learn from my class is that the only morally legitimate response is disobedience. As always, the best way to teach is through example.

After that disappointing open house, I ripped the red paper down. I’m not pulling a single book from my shelves, I’m not telling a single child they can’t read a book, and I’m not submitting any more books to be vetted. I’ve complied as much as I plan to. **P**

*Michael Andoscia is a high school history teacher in Florida, a proud union rep, and an advocate for teachers and students.*



# GRADUATE FELLOWS SUMMER RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN U.S. LAW AND RACE

June 10 -28, 2024

*Applications Due February 1, 2024*

Funded by the Mellon Foundation, this three-week residential fellowship program supports four (4) graduate students in Summer 2024 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's U.S. Law and Race Initiative with the Digital Legal Research Lab. We seek proposals addressing race and racialization in U.S. law and history broadly, aiming to understand racialized people's use of the law to advance personhood, citizenship, rights, and sovereignty throughout American history.

**The Fellowship:** Fellows will workshop their research and writing, receive training in digital methods to support data structuring and analysis, contribute to an Open Educational Resource, and enjoy seminar-style discussion of shared readings. The 3-week program features tailored mentoring with U.S. Law & Race affiliate faculty and staff, along with opportunities to meet and network with UNL's History & Digital Humanities communities. Faculty mentors include William G. Thomas III (History), Katrina Jagodinsky (History and Women's and Gender Studies), Jeannette Eileen Jones (History and Ethnic Studies), Genesis Agosto (Law), Eric Berger (Law), Danielle Jefferis (Law), Laura Muñoz (History and Ethnic Studies), Jessica Shoemaker (Law), and Catherine Wilson (Law).

**Benefits:** \$4,000 stipend; all housing and meals provided; and all travel costs are covered.

**Eligibility:** We seek Graduate Fellows researching topics broadly related to U.S. Law and Race. We are not able to accept proposals that are solely quantitative social science research. Fellows must be from Ph.D. programs in History or relevant humanities or humanistic social science disciplines, including joint J.D./Ph.D. programs. We are especially interested in applications from scholars who identify with traditionally underrepresented groups or attend Minority Serving Institutions.

**How to Apply:** To be considered for the fellowship, you should send 1.) a letter of interest describing both your research project and how you would contribute to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Initiative, 2.) a CV, and 3.) a list of two references the committee may contact. Please send materials to [uslawandrace@unl.edu](mailto:uslawandrace@unl.edu) with the subject line "Mellon Graduate Fellows". For questions contact William G. Thomas III ([wthomas4@unl.edu](mailto:wthomas4@unl.edu)). For more on the fellowship program go to:



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AUSTIN MCCOY

# YOU MUST LEARN

*Teaching 50 Years of Hip-Hop History*



Using sources including rap lyrics, albums, and music videos and visual art like graffiti, one historian pushes his students to think historically about hip-hop culture.

*Austin McCoy. Image cropped.*



**FIFTY YEARS AFTER** Cindy Campbell threw a party on August 11, 1973, featuring the first documented elements of what became known as hip hop, many of us take the culture for granted. We hear the music while shopping at grocery stores, sitting in coffee shops, or watching TV commercials. Rap music is the soundtrack to everything from sporting events to feature films, and hip-hop sounds infuse many other genres of music, including pop and country. Graffiti artists, once the targets of law enforcement and politicians, are now celebrated as their work is featured in some of the biggest art museums. Hip-hop artists such as Dr. Dre, Jay-Z, and Diddy have entered the upper echelons of society, with a few finding themselves on *Forbes*'s millionaire and billionaire lists. Now breakdancing is even an Olympic sport. As cultural critic Wesley Morris declared in the *New York Times* in 2023, hip hop “conquered the world.”

While I trained as a historian of politics and social movements in African American history, I have been a student of hip-hop culture (the assemblage of rapping, deejaying, graffiti art, breakdancing, and knowledge production) since I was a teenager. I woke up many Saturday mornings in the 1990s to watch *Rap City*'s Top Ten on BET. My friends and I passed around the latest hip-hop tapes and CDs, copied them, and then crafted mixtapes. We became critics as together we listened and debated the qualities of a good or “classic” album. As we listened more deeply to rap music, we learned how rappers and producers sampled certain jazz, soul, rock, disco, and R&B records of the past, leading us to pick up the music of our parents—James Brown; Parliament-Funkadelic; Earth, Wind & Fire; and Stevie Wonder. I read about hip-hop culture as much as possible, saving up to buy the latest hip-hop CDs and the *Source* magazine, which served as a repository for all the hip-hop history we missed. I so immersed myself in hip-hop culture that friends asked whether I planned to go into music.

Little did I know my professional relationship with hip-hop culture would be in the history classroom. As KRS-One rapped in “You Must Learn” in 1989, “I believe that if you’re teaching history/Filled with straight-up facts no mystery/ Teach the student what needs to be taught.” After lecturing about rap music at public events and in my classes, I finally designed a full course on hip hop in the spring of 2019. At predominantly white institutions (first Auburn University, then West Virginia University), these classes have not been racially diverse. But my latest iteration included some regional and class diversity, with students from West Virginia itself, as well as Cleveland, Detroit, and even England.

In attempting to think historically about hip-hop culture, I share several objectives with my students. First, we think of

ways to complicate our understandings of hip hop’s origins. The accepted narrative is that hip-hop culture began with Cindy Campbell’s “back-to-school” party on August 11, 1973, in the Bronx, yet many scholars and artists have traced its elements to earlier folk traditions, including jive talking, boasting, and toasting of the 1940s; gospel music; and radio deejaying.

Rather than considering the emergence of rap in California as derivative of New York City’s scene, Felicia Viator explains the importance of analyzing how Los Angeles’s deejay and gang culture helped shape rap on the West Coast. This provokes a question for our class: Should we tell multiple origin stories? Los Angeles, Atlanta, Houston, New Orleans, Detroit, and Chicago (among others) developed influential hip-hop scenes after the mid-1970s. How do we incorporate hip hop’s rise into the histories of these metropolitan areas, particularly in places like Atlanta, where hip-hop culture was essential to the city’s emergence as a center of cultural power?

## Should we tell multiple origin stories?

We also consider the roles that work and labor played in hip hop’s development. Scholars such as Robin D. G. Kelley, Matthew Birkhold, and Viator, and journalists like Dan Charnas, demonstrate how hip hop emerged not just as a cultural phenomenon but as an entrepreneurial one as well. Hip hop became a source of income, if not a nascent economy, in the 1970s after the flight of industrial work from the Northeast and Midwest and in response to the uneven gains that Black Americans, especially those in the middle class, enjoyed after the civil rights and Black Power movements. While deejays and emcees often reaped much of the earnings from performing at parties and selling recorded tapes of their shows, these authors also highlight the other labor involved—who worked as security, taped the shows, and distributed flyers, as well as how proceeds were distributed among those laborers.

Next, we seek to understand how Black, Brown, and white youth used record turntables, mixers, samplers, microphones, cardboard, and spray cans to forge new identities as hip-hop deejays, rappers, breakdancers, and graffiti artists. This requires studying the gendered history of hip-hop culture. A common criticism of hip hop is that much of the culture is structured around masculine and sexist understandings of society. Since the beginning, sexism has shaped labor practices and limited opportunities for women hip-hop artists. Women artists in the 1970s confronted party promoters who refused to pay them for performances, and women were

paid less than men. But students also learn how women were present and important since hip hop's early days.

Through songs, we interrogate the meanings of authenticity, gender, and race at a time when these ideas were changing in scholarship and public discourse. Black feminism surged into the 1980s with literary, theoretical, and popular culture innovations writers including bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison. In 1989, Queen Latifah released the album *All Hail the Queen*, which featured hip hop's first Black feminist anthem, "Ladies First," with Black British rapper Monie Love in the same year that Kimberlé Crenshaw outlined the concept of "intersectionality."

I incorporate visual art to encourage students to think of how graffiti artists harnessed antiauthoritarian and entrepreneurial impulses to challenge antiurban, anti-working-class, anti-poor, and racist and sexist narratives about themselves that circulated in social sciences and in public discourse and policy. Students consider debates around graffiti art that transpired amid New York City mayor Ed Koch's war on graffiti during the 1980s. Graffiti artists such as Taki 183, Skeme, and Dondi painted on trains in a bid to go "all city" (have their tags seen on trains that traveled throughout NYC) to secure status among their peers. However, Koch and law enforcement adopted the "broken windows" theory of policing in their attempts to curb graffiti art. Students learn how broken-windows policing contributed to 25-year-old artist Michael Stewart's death after NYPD officers beat up the artist after catching him tagging a subway wall in 1983.

We also spend time investigating the relationship between hip-hop culture and the war on drugs. After discussing Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign, including a series of ads and public service announcements from Clint Eastwood and the Los Angeles Lakers, the students learn about impact of the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act on the expansion of incarcerations rates, the Los Angeles Police Department's creation of DARE, and the LAPD's raids of Black communities during the late 1980s. We then discuss hip hop's critiques of the drug war, such as Toddy Tee's "Batterram," and music from contemporary artists like Killer Mike and Kendrick Lamar who look back at the decade. We analyze hip-hop artists' critiques of drug use, contrasting De La Soul's antidrug song, "Say No Go," with "Just Say No" ads and analyzing Public Enemy's horror-inspired music video, "Night of the Living Baseheads."

An overarching goal of the semester is reconsidering the definition of "the archive." I encourage students to think about the archive broadly to include recorded music, visual art, song lyrics, and interviews and podcasts as oral history. We look at

music videos as texts and construct playlists in an effort to provide an interpretation of a particular time period. We analyze albums as repositories of cultural history, from the covers and album inserts to the liner notes. Looking at De La Soul's *3 Feet High and Rising*, Public Enemy's *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, the Beastie Boys' *Paul's Boutique*, and Queen Latifah's *All Hail the Queen*, among others, shows how influential artists sampled music from different genres to produce records that resemble audio collages more than albums featuring more coherent soundscapes. In these albums, we also encounter the recordings of Johnny Cash, James Brown, Parliament-Funkadelic, David Bowie, and the Beatles. As hip-hop scholar and musician Questlove declared in a 2016 Instagram post, "Sampling is an education AND it gives back."

We analyze albums as  
repositories of cultural history,  
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Teaching the history of hip hop pushes us to think about how culture intersects with many topics we cover in our modern US history courses—including immigration, globalization, law, policing, the transformation of cities and suburbs, politics, business and capitalism, and youth culture. And, ultimately, investigating the history of hip-hop culture encourages us to think broadly about the archive. In addition to the primary sources most historians of the modern United States already seek, we deconstruct visual art, whether graffiti or album covers. We search for clues in liner notes and lyrics. We use the various artistic forms of hip hop to examine how artists forged new identities amid social, political, and economic transformations after the 1960s. And while many hip-hop artists used their cultural tools to critique power, we also interrogate the ways many others perpetuated harmful ideas like sexism and homophobia. By constructing and engaging this archive, we encourage students to analyze how practitioners of hip hop reshaped US and global culture. **P**

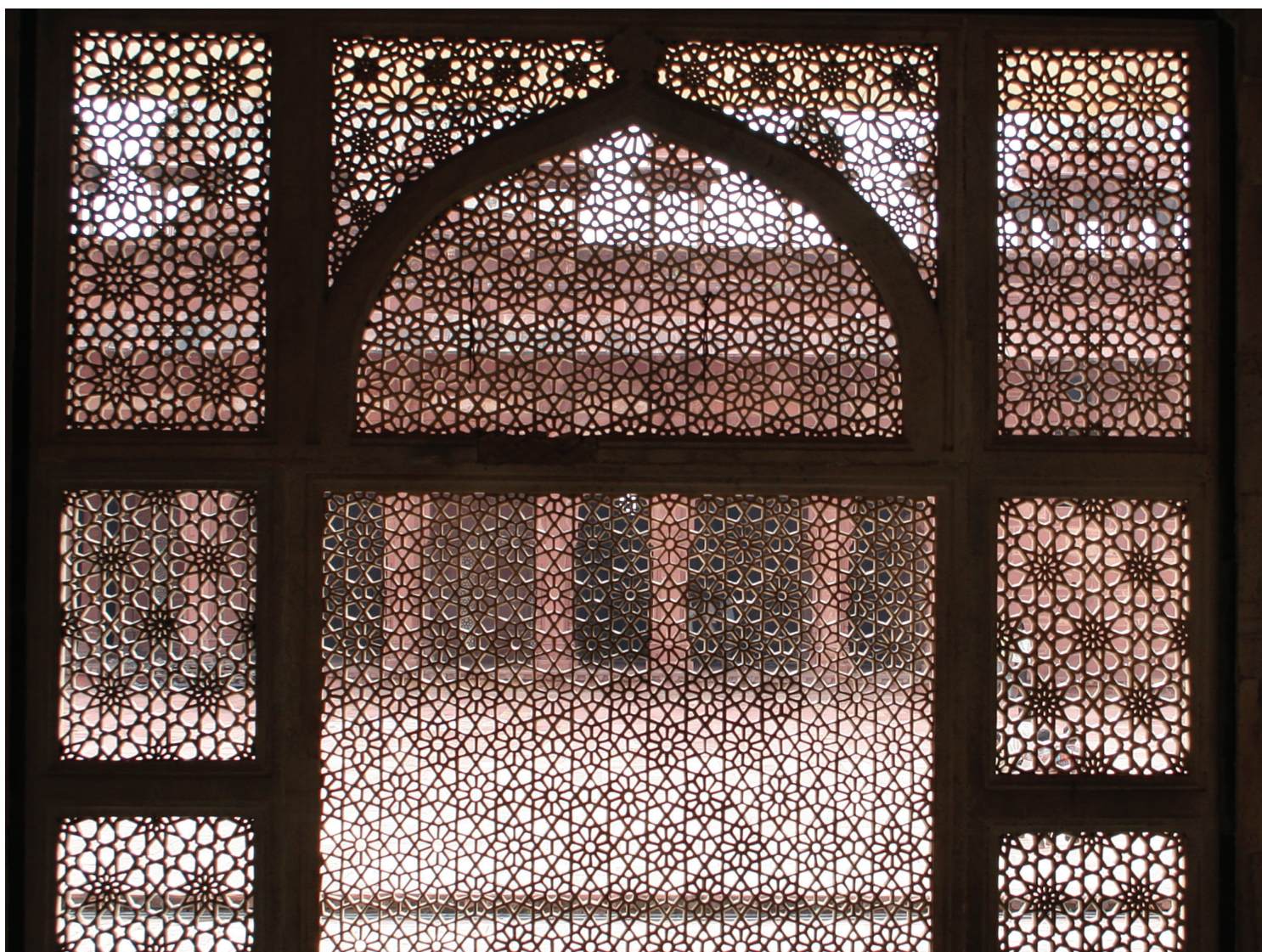
Austin McCoy is an assistant professor at West Virginia University.



HAMAAD HABIBULLAH

# ERASING THE PAST

*The Indian Government's Dishonest History*



In India, the Bharatiya Janata Party is attempting to rewrite history, one censored textbook at a time.  
Dcastor/Wikimedia Commons/public domain



**IN APRIL 2023**, authorities in India took the significant step of withdrawing a number of chapters pertaining to the Mughal Empire from the textbooks used across the nation.

A significant and prominent Muslim kingdom that ruled from the 15th century to almost the mid-19th century, the empire extended to nearly the whole of the subcontinent, accounting for almost 25 percent of the world's gross domestic product at the time. Many of the prominent architectural marvels in India, including the famous Taj Mahal, are remnants of Mughal rule in India.

Now, information on the Mughal Empire is extremely limited in the classroom for grades 7–12. Students will study little about the 235 years of Mughal history, including renowned emperors like Akbar, Jahangir, and Humayun, and hardly will be exposed to materials related to Mughal rule chronicles like *Badshah Nama*, *Akbarnama*, and other textual and judicial compositions. And this applies not only in history classrooms. Textbook chapters on the theory of evolution, the periodic table, environmental sustainability, and energy sources, among other topics, have been entirely removed from the respective class curricula.

Although textbook revisions have always been an important part of the education system, the tenor of this political interference is both novel and recent.

This move has received a strong backlash from international educators and scientists. Education professor Jonathan Osborne (Stanford Univ.) expressed his grave concern over the elimination of topics like evolution, saying, “Anybody who’s trying to teach biology without dealing with evolution is not teaching biology as we currently understand it.” The political manipulation of school curricula and textbooks in India has thus become a grave concern for educators around the world.

The origins of this erasure come from both national and state levels of India’s federated government. Although textbook revisions have always been an important part of the education system, the tenor of this political interference is both novel and recent. In 2017, textbooks underwent their first major revision in nearly 15 years, facilitated by the proposals of parents, students, educators, and others. These revisions had a hint of political interference, most notably in the inclusion of policy initiatives by the administration of Prime Minister

Narendra Modi. This revision also entailed the introduction of Indian philosophy, Yoga, and Maharana Pratap (a 16th-century Hindu regional ruler) to the curriculum.

More recently, under the guise of reforming the curriculum to reduce repetition, remove irrelevant information, and aid students’ understanding, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), which designs the textbook curriculum in the country, has become an easy yet powerful weapon for controlling the historical narrative. Deepak Kumar, the additional chief secretary for basic and secondary education, said, “The content of the textbooks has been rationalized for various reasons, including overlapping with similar content in other subject areas in the same class, similar content included in the lower or higher classes on the same subject.” The NCERT has constantly denied the political motivation behind dropping historically relevant and important topics, but the reasons they provide for such changes often seem weak.

The current Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in India has promoted a fabricated narrative about the history of the country, as the right-wing Hindu nationalist party bases its support on Hindu majoritarianism, accompanied by hatred and villainization of Muslims who represent almost 15 percent of the country. One such step in this process has been the radical manipulation and selective elimination of historical topics such as the Mughal Empire and themes that contradict the present government’s narratives, alongside demonization of the Muslim rulers of India whom the BJP equates with the current Muslim population. Elsewhere, the NCERT has strategically removed subtopics, paragraphs, lines, and words to negate the impact of Muslim rule and territories. The grade 7 history textbook, which was previously dedicated to the history of Mughal rulers, has faced large-scale censorship, with pages excised on the regime of Muslim rulers like Khiljis, Lodis, Mamluks, and more. A two-page historical monument to Mughal leaders has been struck off. If it doesn’t suit the BJP’s narrative, it is to be removed.

This manipulation affects students’ understanding of history, and historians from around the globe decried the changes as unnecessary and harmful to younger generations. As one group’s statement said, “We are appalled by the decision of the NCERT to remove chapters and statements from history textbooks and demand that the deletions from the textbooks be immediately withdrawn.”

Many social activists and academics view these changes as part of a broader political agenda. Many believe that the BJP’s “Hindutva” politics, an ideology now almost a century old,

aim to convert India to a Hindu state; Hindus make up approximately 80 percent of India's population. The BJP has long struggled against historical reality in justifying this goal. The convenient elimination of Muslim histories is a major element of this effort to transform India into a Hindu nation. Asaduddin Owaisi, a prominent Muslim leader, has said, "What BJP is doing is in line with other fascist rulers. We have seen in other countries how fascists have played with history to suit their ideology."

The deep-rooted Hindutva (literally Hinduness) ideology behind the textbook manipulation is intended to produce a generation with beliefs and sentiments identical to that of the current government. For example, one sentence was manipulated in a way to reduce the contribution of prominent Muslim freedom fighter Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in the formation of the Indian constitution. According to respected historian S. Irfan Habib, this act is "a major assault, impacting the younger generation," and this revision of history through the textbook alteration aids BJP's Hindu nationalist agenda. In short, the selective deletion of historical events is intended to divide the nation by creating anti-Muslim and pro-Hindu social narratives.

The BJP government is trying to bring back an old anti-Muslim rant, dividing the country once again by alienating a particular community.

The BJP's new biased history is not confined to anti-Muslim thought, although it remains a prioritized narrative; it also edits the legacy of many of the heroes of Indian independence. The 2020–21 edition of a history book included a reference to Nathuram Godse's attempt to kill Mahatma Gandhi in response to Gandhi's constant support of Hindu-Muslim unity. This sentence was removed in the latest edition. In the 2020–21 edition of the 11th grade history textbook, a sentence read "Mahatma Gandhi was convinced that any attempt to make India into a country only for Hindus would destroy India," but this sentence is absent from the revised edition.

Many BJP leaders and supporters have justified this political exploitation of history by the party, calling it a move in favor of an "Indian history" and a "much-needed alteration." "It is a great decision to remove the false history of Mughals from NCERT. Thieves, pickpockets and two-penny road raiders were called the Mughal Sultanate and the emperor of India. Akbar, Babar, Shahjahan, Aurangzeb are not in the history

books, they are in the dustbin," tweeted BJP leader Kapil Mishra.

There is no doubt that centuries of Mughal control over the Indian subcontinent are a challenge for Hindu nationalist ideologies, and this has resulted in right-wing and pro-government targeting of Muslim leaders. By ruling out an "undesired" part of Indian history, the anti-Muslim BJP government is trying to bring back an old anti-Muslim rant, dividing the country once again by alienating a particular community. Aditya Mukherjee (Jawaharlal Nehru Univ.) identifies this attempt to erase a significant part of Indian history as the beginning of a large-scale attack on India's Muslim community. "Whenever we have witnessed the erasure of a particular community from our history," he said, "it is usually followed by a genocide of the community." This is, to say the least, a cause for deep concern. **P**

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## DEEPLY ROOTED

*Meet Thavolia Glymph, the 2024 AHA President*

On Saturday, January 6, 2024, Thavolia Glymph becomes the 140th president of the American Historical Association, the first Black woman to hold that honor. The Peabody Family Distinguished Professor of History and professor of law at Duke University, past president of the Southern Historical Association, and recipient of an abundance of academic awards, she currently holds the 2023–24 Rogers Distinguished Fellowship in 19th-Century American History at the Huntington Library. Glymph takes office at a time when the Association is working to broaden the definitions of historical scholarship, advocating for the teaching of honest history in the K–12 classroom, and more. *Perspectives* recently sat down with her to find out more about the president-elect’s life, career, and priorities for her term as AHA president.

Thavolia’s interest in history is deeply rooted. As she grew up in the South, “history was unavoidable.” She found a love for the subject early, spurred on by her parents, maternal grandparents, a community that valued education and public life, and frequent trips to her local public library. Letters to her maternal grandmother, beginning at the age of four and consisting of two to three sentences each, were her first formal writings. At home and in the public library, she “became a student of history,” reading histories of the United States and African Americans, but more often those of Europe, which were simply more abundant in the library. Kings and queens, peasants, war, and empires became a part of Thavolia’s childhood imagination. But Southern history was always omnipresent—in textbooks, a landscape of monuments to slavery and the Confederacy, the rituals of segregation, school field trips to Charleston and segregated science fairs at South Carolina State College, voter registration drives, and protests against segregation and discrimination.

Attending Hampton University, a historically Black college founded in 1868, was “clarifying” for Thavolia. It was her first encounter with original historical research, archival collections, and the true breadth and depth of historiography, but no less importantly, it’s where she took classes taught by Alice

Davis. Thavolia remembers Davis as a no-nonsense instructor not much older than herself, recently discharged from the military, who introduced her to the joys of research and the work of historian Harold D. Woodman. It was in Davis’s class, Thavolia says, that she first realized what kind of research she wanted to do. The idea that she might have a career as a history teacher may have started there.

How does one write about people  
and events with too-little  
documentation?

Woodman’s work, particularly his journal article “The Profitability of Slavery: A Historical Perennial” (*Journal of Southern History*, 1963), was formative for Thavolia’s conception of what history was and what great historical writing and analysis looked like. The article led her to Woodman’s book *King Cotton and His Retainers: Financing and Marketing the Cotton Crop of the South, 1800–1925* (1968) and a determination to study with him at Purdue University. There, under his guidance, she trained as an economic historian specializing in the 19th-century South and social history. Economic history forms a thread, sometimes subtle, in her work, and she identifies as an economic historian as much as a scholar of slavery and emancipation. Occasionally, this self-identity surprises those familiar with her work, but she insists that “economic history must perforce be about *people*.” After all, telling the story of a person’s history is inevitably telling about how they experience work and about their economic lives, which determine so much of their social lives. Thavolia points out that her primary interest is in telling how economics impacts human lives, and in spaces where we tend less to look for it.

The actual execution of that task is tricky, she admits, whether writing about people many written records or especially those who left few. How does one write about people and events with too-little documentation? How much ambiguity or how





The Hampton University emancipation oak, on the campus where Thavolia Glymph discovered a passion for economic history.  
Erik Soderstrom/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 4.0

many unknowns can historians — particularly those used to an abundance of data — tolerate? These are questions that other scholars have debated and continue to study. Like the vagaries of the archives, categories of analysis can exhibit inexplicable traits. Thavolia also thinks about how categories of analysis can be equally tricky and sometimes overdetermine what and how we write. In writing economic history, she thinks about how “categories of analysis like class and race are sometimes asked to take on more weight than they can bear.” This can happen, she thinks, when the investigation of social class assumes that there is such a thing as “the poor” or “the proletariat,” but these categories — while they may make us more comfortable linking together otherwise unrelated people, or make it easier to do so — are more discrete than we often imagine them to be. Just because two people share impecuniosity does not necessarily mean they share everything. “Once you put people in a class,” Thavolia notes, “they can become easier to study and harder to see.”

Thavolia brings that economic lens to the history of the 19th-century United States, particularly the fields of Southern history, labor history, and women’s history. Her first book, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), reconceptualized the Southern plantation household as a site of gendered production, labor, and racial violence, tracing through the experiences of enslaved women and their female enslavers the

household’s transformation from the antebellum era through the Civil War and into the postwar. Her most recent book, *The Women’s Fight: The Civil War’s Battles for Home, Freedom, and Nation* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2020), won numerous awards, including two AHA prizes: the Albert J. Beveridge Award in the history of the United States, Latin America, or Canada from 1492 to the present and the Joan Kelly Memorial Prize in women’s history and feminist theory.

She wants students to experience  
both the joys and the  
disappointments of research.

At Duke, Thavolia teaches courses on slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, and she enjoys mentoring scholars who are at the start of their professional careers. Her undergraduate students have won prestigious awards and currently are making wonderful contributions through their research and writing to the Duke Institutional History Project that she leads. In her teaching, she emphasizes primary sources and historiography. She wants students to understand through experience both the joys and the disappointments of original research, to understand that writing is hard work that takes practice over time and, for most, longer than a semester. She trains graduate students at Duke and has served on exam-

ination and dissertation committees for students at other institutions, many of whom she continues to work with as they move on to postdoctoral fellowships and first jobs. She considers this work and the conversations she has with junior scholars about their research as some of the exciting and rewarding aspects of her career.

When not at work, these days Thavolia can be found on the tennis court (as her knees allow) or in her garden, which has moved mainly to her patio and focuses now on growing herbs and flowers. Fruits and veggies, she says, take too much careful attention, time she would rather devote to other things now.

Above all else, Thavolia insists that there was no light bulb moment that made her who she is today, and being interested in history as a child does not lead one inevitably to the professoriate. It was and remains “an improbable journey,” not a direct path. As president of the AHA, she will work to support the many important existing initiatives and encourage future efforts that aim to ensure that the work of historians is seen and heard not only by other scholars but by the larger communities we serve and those we still need to serve who are waiting for us to see them.

Our interview concluded with a question that has become a *Perspectives* staple: Which three people, living or dead, would

you most like to have over for a dinner party? Thavolia chose Toni Morrison, Barbara Fields, and Darlene Clark Hine. Hine was integral to the founding and theorization of Black women’s history. Morrison, as novelist, theorist, and student of history, has given us “precise language to understand Black life across time and space,” a “concise evocation” of enslaved and free people’s lives; Thavolia often enjoys rereading her work. Thavolia would invite Fields, who has carved out a path of excellence in her work and whose learned work, like Morrison’s, models clarity and precision in language and thought. She considers Fields one of the nation’s greatest historians. Thavolia often returns to Fields’s *Washington Post* op-ed “So You Want to Be a Historian” (1991) when teaching or writing and to her large body of work on race and ideology. And making room for an extra seat or two at the table, she would invite Gerda Lerner and Nikky Finney. She credits Lerner for her bravery and audacity in promoting women’s history and Finney as one of the most perceptive chroniclers of Black life in the South writing today. Ira Berlin would also be there.

And despite her own achievements, Thavolia remains modest about her career. Her last instruction to this interviewer? “Pretend this never happened.” **P**

*L. Renato Grigoli is editor of Perspectives on History. Find him on Bluesky and Threads @mappermundi.*

# Grants for AHA members

The AHA is pleased to support the study and exploration of history through our annual research grants program.

Learn more at [historians.org/grants](https://historians.org/grants).

The deadline for all research grant applications is February 15.

KATHERINE BRAUSCH AND JULIA BROOKINS

# LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY LETTERS

## *Behind the Scenes at the AHA*

Since 2021, a partisan political campaign to wrest control of American public education from perceived ideological enemies has gained momentum across the nation, with at least 22 states passing laws or issuing executive orders that attempt to limit what public school teachers are permitted to teach. The language of these proposals has changed over time, but most visibly, state legislatures have restricted the teaching of race- and gender-related topics in K–12 schools. Over the last year, this campaign has broadened to include new restrictions on public higher education, targeting tenure protections and imposing new layers of oversight over the content of courses and the structure of curricula. Such laws and policy proposals have made it more difficult for many K–12 history teachers and faculty at public higher education institutions to fulfill their duties with integrity and fidelity to the highest intellectual standards of our discipline.

In July 2021, the AHA Council, along with the American Association of University Professors, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, and PEN America, approved a *Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism in American History*. Since then, as part of its chartered mission to advance historical understanding and history education in the United States, the AHA's Freedom to Learn initiative has been responding to individual pieces of legislation with letters to state legislators.

You may have wondered, What is the process of putting one of these letters together?

The first step is monitoring. During active legislative sessions, armed with Google Alerts for the most common phrasing, notification emails from legislative monitors, mailing lists from individual committees, updates from AHA members, and regular visits to the websites of organizations including PEN America and Education Week, AHA staff members Katherine Brausch, Julia Brookins, and Brendan Gillis watch for bills to be introduced. From January to March, while most state legislatures are in session, this is a flood; from April to June, more of a trickle.

Once related bills or provisions in larger bills appear, we read them carefully, analyzing the full text to determine whether they are likely to have a significant impact on historians' work and which clauses are most likely to affect the teaching of history. Sometimes, a negative effect on history education or scholarship is obvious; in other cases, the bills' language obscures the potential consequences. Bills prohibiting "divisive concepts" tend to be boilerplate, though the precise wording has evolved over time as legislators respond to criticism; those undercutting academic freedom in universities have been more individualized. When feasible, we reach out to a local contact to understand the bill's context and whether a letter from the AHA might be helpful. If it would, we then decide which elements of the bill to emphasize and when to send the letters—decisions based on the legislative calendar and our estimation of the approaching legislative trajectory, often relying on advice from local members.

The Freedom to Learn initiative has been responding to individual pieces of legislation with letters to state legislators.

State legislative processes do not always make this work easy. Bills often linger for months in a kind of legislative purgatory, only to be rushed through with little debate in the space of 24 to 48 hours. In other cases, legislators add education provisions to seemingly unrelated proposals. In April 2023, the sponsors of North Carolina's House Bill 23 added a rider to a bill focused on local airport administration that authorized the Beaufort County School District to adopt the controversial and untested Hillsdale College K–12 curriculum. In this case, the AHA drafted a statement opposing this attempt to use airports to subvert education policy, only to have the clause removed with little explanation. In November 2023, our team updated the AHA's objections to Ohio's Senate Bill 83,



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because the measure's advocates had already excised or softened many of the passages we quoted in an earlier letter to state senators.

So our work requires that we stay nimble and research each state's specific legislative process: When and where do committees meet? Will they accept written testimony? When will they vote on the bill? When will the bill be read in the full chamber? We try to send the letter as close to a vote as possible, so it will be fresh in legislators' minds, while ensuring they have the time to read it.

To expand their impact, we also share these letters with members and contacts in the state, urging them to contact their legislators, and with local press and media outlets. We can help identify what bills are problematic and explain how and why we oppose them. Citing the authority of the AHA, our words carry weight with legislators, but such statements are always more effective when they are repeated, emphasized, and amplified by local constituents. This is where our members and other proponents of public history education come in. A personal letter, phone call, or email from a concerned constituent can often accomplish more in shaping the decisions of elected officials than any public statement.

Legislators pay attention to the AHA's advocacy, some contacting us to thank us for our comments. The AHA issued a statement opposing Florida's House Bill 999, a comprehensive anti-academic freedom bill in early 2023. However, the final version of HB 999 included none of the language objected to in the AHA's letter. Similarly, many recent "divisive concepts" bills have excluded the prohibition on curriculum that makes students feel "discomfort [or] guilt," which the AHA has repeatedly highlighted as not only deleterious to accurate history education but broadly unpopular.

With no signs of this kind of legislative activity slowing down, the AHA will continue to work to protect all teachers' ability to teach accurate history with integrity. We ask members to join us in contacting your legislators when such bills arise in your state and to donate to the AHA Advocacy Fund to support this work. **P**

*Katherine Brausch is program analyst at the AHA and a PhD candidate at the University of Michigan. Julia Brookins is senior program analyst, teaching and learning, at the AHA.*



## John T. McNay

1957–2023

Historian of US  
Diplomacy;  
AHA Member

John T. McNay, professor of history, passed away on October 27, 2023.

John McNay was a child of Montana's blue skies and rocky ridges. Born in 1957, he attended the University of Montana, launching a career as a journalist addressing community wrongs. He transferred his passion for speaking truth to power to a career in education, earning his PhD at Temple University in 1997. Since 2000, he worked for the University of Cincinnati (UC) Blue Ash College, a regional open-access college. It is not hard to say that he was the best hiring choice we ever made.

John McNay was a scholar of Cold War diplomatic history with an interest in how an individual's background contributed to diplomatic decisions. Starting with a reinterpretation of secretary of state Dean Acheson's career, John illuminated how diplomats created policy. He ultimately authored or contributed to five books, in addition to articles, reviews, and multiple manuscripts still in development at his death. For his research on presidential decisions for peace, he was an invited speaker at the Nobel Institute in Oslo, Norway.

John McNay, born of a union family, was a champion of labor and education. As president of the University of Cincinnati's AAUP chapter, he was sufficiently vocal that administrators visibly sighed when they spotted him and braced to be grilled on budgeting choices. He was four-time president of the state of Ohio's AAUP, then joined the national AAUP governing council. John's advocacy made him a frequent visitor at the statehouse, testifying often against antieducation legislation. He was there when the doors were barred against crowds protesting the union-busting bill SB5, inspiring his book *Collective Bargaining and the Battle of Ohio: The Defeat of Senate Bill 5 and the Struggle to Defend the Middle Class*. For this and throughout his career, he used his journalist background to submit op-eds statewide in support of education. In recent years, John was a central contributor to the AHA's ongoing work promoting the integrity of history education in the Ohio state legislature.

John McNay was a professor who took pride in his students, whom he called his "young scholars." He maintained folders of prized students' past work and postgraduation publications, and he attended their graduations and weddings. He was an enthusiastic proponent of study abroad and would do anything to ensure his students, often new to travel, had a positive experience of the world—even once sharing clothing with a student who lost his luggage. He inspired students to pursue a variety of careers; as one put it, "he's why I'm the teacher I am today."

John McNay was a firm believer in faculty service and never stopped giving to his university. He co-directed UC's Institute for the Advanced Study of Culture and Democracy. He was part of the planning committee for UC's press and chaired its faculty advisory board. Among his lengthy list of service, he was a department chair, a five-time faculty senator, and twice a member of committees vetting provost candidates. (As he said, with mixed regret and pride, he never lost an election.) For all of his work, the UC Board of Trustees voted to grant him the rank of professor emeritus posthumously.

John McNay was the first to invite his colleagues to "seminars" at local pubs and the first to accept similar invitations. (There are many, many stories that start, "I met John over a beer!") His office shelves incorporated the books of younger colleagues, purchased to support their careers; on his desk was a colleague's dissertation that he was reading for the fun of it. Quietly generous, he was swift to pick up the tab for a colleague being honored.

John McNay was a person who maintained active social circles outside of academia—friends who met to discuss current affairs, fellow motorcyclists who rode together (although John hid his motorcycle from his sisters), family from whom he unsuccessfully attempted to hide his uneven housekeeping (and, yes, the motorcycle), and even a black cat who bullied his way into John's home (and stayed, of course). He was a person who found friends wherever he went, bound to others by a mutual curiosity in the world. Whether it was a person in the National Archives or a senior citizen student who became a frequent dinner companion, John was someone who made not acquaintances but friends. (Or, as he would refer to them, "a buddy of mine.") We were all his buddies, and he was ours.

Krista Sigler

University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College

Photo courtesy University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College



## Benjamin Griffith Brawley

1882–1939

Historian, Critic,  
and Poet

Benjamin Griffith Brawley was a leading scholar of African American history and literature in the early 20th century. Although mostly forgotten today, he was well known throughout the country during his lifetime and inspired fellow luminaries such as James Weldon Johnson and George Shepperson. During his nearly four-decade career, Brawley excelled as a historian and literary critic while producing several works that remained influential years after his untimely death in 1939.

Brawley was born in 1882 to Edward McKnight Brawley and Margaret Saphronia Brawley in Columbia, South Carolina. His mother was a Columbia native, and his father, from Charleston, was a Baptist clergyman and university administrator. Benjamin attended school in Petersburg, Virginia, and showed an early affinity for literature and ancient languages. Brawley studied at Atlanta Baptist College (now Morehouse College) before going north to continue his higher education, graduating with a BA from the University of Chicago in 1906 and an MA from Harvard University in 1908; he later received two honorary PhDs. He began writing poetry while still an undergraduate; he wrote his earliest poem, “A Prayer,” in 1899 in response to a Georgia lynching. He was remembered fondly by his professors (all of them white), most notably English professor George Lyman Kittredge.

Following his time at Harvard, Brawley went on to teach at three historically Black colleges and universities from 1910 to 1939. He served as the dean of Atlanta Baptist College/Morehouse College from 1912 to 1920, leading that school through a contentious period. During a two-year break between 1920 and 1922, he traveled to Africa, was ordained, and worked briefly as a minister in Boston. He returned to academia with teaching positions at Shaw University and Howard University. During his time as a professor and administrator, Brawley produced a number of fiction and verse works, including six booklets of poetry as well as dozens of individual poems, stories, and songs.

It was one of his historical works, *A Short History of the American Negro* (1913), for which Brawley perhaps became best

known. This book established Brawley as a noted Black historian at a period known as the nadir of American race relations. A contemporary reviewer wrote that Brawley’s book, “while not the first history of the American Negro written by a man of negro descent, is one of the best, especially for those who desire a brief sketch.” The book was praised for drawing attention to numerous Black men and women of achievement, especially in the literary field. Brawley went on to write several more books of history and literary criticism. For *A Social History of the American Negro* (1921), Lawrence Dunbar Reddick praised him for telling the story of African Americans while also discussing the “development of the Negro within the nation, and a steady improvement in interracial relations and understanding.”

Despite his contributions to multiple learned fields, recognition of Brawley’s talents waxed and waned throughout his career. One reason for this may be Brawley’s greater interest in literature and culture than in political and social activism. Brawley never received the accolades of more race-conscious African American historians such as Carter G. Woodson or literary critics such as Alain Locke. One exception was in 1927, when the William E. Harmon Foundation offered Brawley an honorable mention. He declined, however, believing that he was a first-rate scholar and that accepting an inferior award would be, in the words of his biographer John W. Parker, in “direct contradiction to his ideal of excellence.” Nearly 80 years after his death, Brawley’s work appeared in *Before Harlem*, a 2016 edited collection of Black writers who preceded the Harlem Renaissance.

Brawley was fastidious and high minded in his personal life. In 1910, he married Hilda Damaris Prowd, a Jamaican woman who shared his love of high society, opera, and sonnets. They remained together for the rest of Brawley’s life. Brawley was known for his continued attachment to the study of Greek and Latin long after those subjects had fallen out of academic favor. He extended his demand for excellence and perfection to his students, returning poorly written papers with the statement “too carelessly written to be carefully read.”

Following his death from a stroke at the age of 56, the *New York Times* eulogized Brawley as a “leading scholar of the colored race.” His time at Morehouse College was memorialized by the naming of Brawley Hall, a building that houses the history and English departments.

Eric Medlin  
Wake Tech Community College

Photo: Wikimedia Commons/public domain



*The Judd A. and Marjorie Weinberg  
College of Arts and Sciences,  
the Nicholas D. Chabraja Center for Historical Studies,  
and the Department of History, Northwestern University  
offer our warmest congratulations to our cherished  
colleague and friend*

## **Professor Ed Muir**

Clarence L. Ver Steeg Professor in  
the Arts and Sciences  
and Professor of History and Italian

**President, American Historical Association, 2023**

*With enormous admiration for his pathbreaking  
scholarship, his dedication to his students, and his  
commitment to advancing and defending the  
historical profession.*



**Northwestern  
University**

# AHA CAREER CENTER

Positions are listed alphabetically: first by country, then state/province, city, institution, and field.

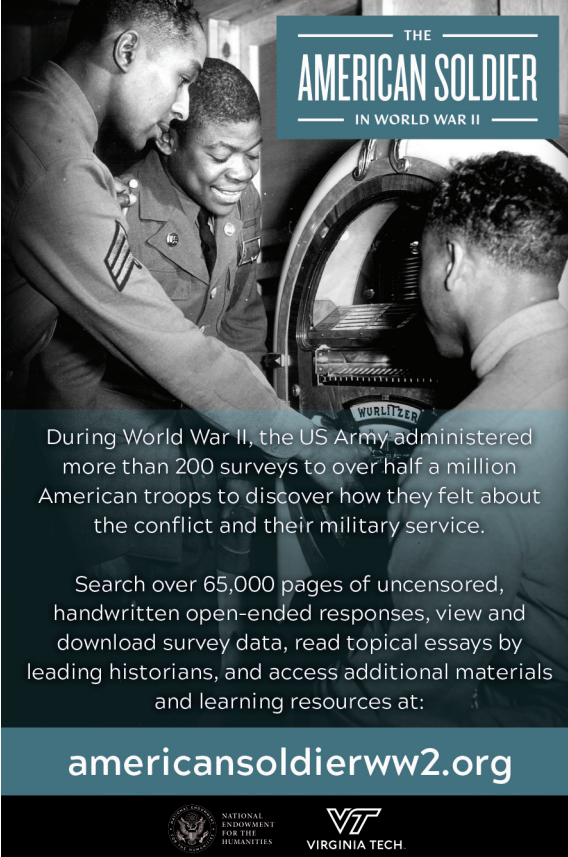
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## INDIANA

### INDIANA UNIVERSITY Bloomington, IN

**Russia.** The Department of History at Indiana University Bloomington invites applications for the newly endowed Stephen F. Cohen Chair. We seek a scholar of Russian history in the long 20th century—including Soviet history, and Russia's Eurasian borderlands and contact zones—committed to excellence in scholarship and teaching at undergraduate and graduate levels. We anticipate that the successful candidate will be hired at full or associate level, but outstanding junior candidates with a proven research record are encouraged to apply. This position is tenured/tenure-track. PhD is required at time of appointment. The College of Arts and Sciences is committed to building and supporting a diverse, inclusive, and equitable community of students and scholars. Applicants should apply online at <http://indiana.peopleadmin.com> and include a cover letter; CV; statement on teaching and a statement on fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion in and out of the classroom; and contact information for three referees. Applications received by January 14 will be assured full consideration. Expected start date is August 1, 2024. Queries can be sent to the chair of the search committee, Prof. Mark Roseman ([marrosem@iu.edu](mailto:marrosem@iu.edu)). Before a conditional offer of employment with tenure is finalized, candidates will be asked to disclose any pending investigations or

previous findings of sexual or professional misconduct. They will also be required to authorize an inquiry by Indiana University Bloomington with all current and former employers along these lines. The relevance of information disclosed or ascertained in the context of this process to a candidate's eligibility for hire will be evaluated by Indiana University Bloomington on a case-by-case basis. Applicants should be aware, however, that Indiana University Bloomington takes the matters of sexual and professional misconduct very seriously. Indiana University is an AA/EEO and a provider of ADA services. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment based on individual qualifications. Indiana University prohibits discrimination based on age, ethnicity, color, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, marital status, national origin, disability status or protected veteran status.



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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

VIRGINIA TECH

### AD POLICY STATEMENT

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).

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(Signed)

Leland Grigoli

Editor, *Perspectives on History*





DOUGLAS S. CHAN AND PALMA J. YOU

## DRAGON HEAD

San Francisco's Chinese New Year Parade, a citywide celebration, is an entirely American creation, analogous to chop suey or fortune cookies. Representative of such community events, the dragon head held by the Chinese Historical Society of America encapsulates a rich and dynamic history of the dragon parade phenomenon and represents a community's will to survive against extreme adversity.

This large, expressive dragon head was salvaged from a street corner after a parade in the late 1980s. Text written on it states that the head was organized by Yonghe Yuan in Hong Kong and manufactured by Wan Xiang Club, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province. Weighing about 35 pounds, the head has a mirrored forehead, blinking eyes with battery-powered bulbs for evening parades, and a manually operated chomping mouth. The head and body drape are made of hand-painted silk, sequins, fur, sisal, and bells over bamboo ribbing and wire. In a performance, one dancer dons and operates the head while the sinuous body is draped over tall staffs held by athletic dancers, and musicians play percussion instruments to create a lively, spectacularly boisterous atmosphere for the audience. During the parade, it follows a round, red object that symbolizes the sun, the moon, and potential. The Chinese dragon is a beneficent creature of strength and goodness.

Colorful costumes traditionally used during Lunar New Year were brought to the United States by Chinese immigrants in the 19th century. San Francisco's first reported Chinese New Year festivities occurred on February 21, 1851, shortly after the first Chinese arrived. What began as a private indoor family celebration migrated outward when early Chinese merchants arranged banquets, decorated stores, and organized colorful performances on Chinatown streets during the Lunar New Year. Newspapers first reported the appearance of large dragon dance ensembles and acrobatic dancers on San Francisco streets in the 1860 Year of the Monkey celebrations. Historical photographs show that by the 1880s, Chinatown processions featured dragons prominently.



Photo courtesy Chinese Historical Society of America

Although the 1882 Exclusion Act brought isolation, discrimination, and uncertainty to Chinatown, the devastating 1906 earthquake created a turning point: Chinatown leaders rebuilt an "Oriental City" with tourism and commerce in mind. In 1909, an elaborate Chinatown dragon joined the parade for the Portola Festival. The parade's positive reception outside Chinatown helped to reshape the neighborhood's reputation of gambling parlors, opium dens, and tong wars. Once a private family and then community celebration, the Chinatown parades evolved into a public event, a tool of civic engagement amplifying the public's curiosity and interest in Chinatown.

In 1953, Chinatown leaders officially established the Chinese New Year Parade. The parade symbolized Chinatown's unique commercial status and the broader narrative of its legitimacy within the greater American society. More than a mere ethnic festival, the parade, its dragon, and dance troupes demonstrated Chinese Americans' allegiance to the United States during the Cold War, their stance against communism in China, and their endeavors to integrate into mainstream American society. Prominently featuring patriotic Chinese American veterans of World War II and the Korean War, this modern parade revived a preexisting strategy of deploying dragons for the community's survival and, equally important, as a teaching tool.

The modern New Year parade and its golden dragon continue to draw crowds to Chinatown and the city at large during cultural celebrations and grace milestone events such as weddings, red-egg-and-ginger parties, business openings, and various festivals. The use and deployment of the large dragon head and troupe attest to the ingenuity, resourcefulness, and endurance of an excluded and segregated community. The iconic dragon expresses Chinese America's history of adaptation and serves as a powerful example of a community's strategic survival against long odds. **P**

*Douglas S. Chan is board president and Palma J. You is collections manager at the Chinese Historical Society of America.*



## Russia and Central Europe National Security Policy (Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor)

**College/School/Unit:** LBJ School of Public Affairs

**Posted:** Nov 17, 2023

**Apply By:** Open until filled

### Description:

The University of Texas at Austin is one of the nation's preeminent academic centers for national security research and policy engagement, exemplified by relevant course offerings across campus and the work of the William P. Clements, Jr. Center for National Security. The Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs now seeks a dynamic scholar to contribute to its curricular offerings on national security and the policy-relevant activities of the Clements Center.

**The LBJ School** in collaboration with the **Clements Center** invites applications for the position of tenure-track **Assistant Professor, tenured Associate Professor, or tenured Full Professor of National Security** to begin in Fall of academic year 2024-25 (with an August 2024 start date). This faculty position will be housed at the LBJ School while serving as a faculty affiliate of the Clements Center.

We seek applications from scholars whose research focuses on modern political, intelligence, national security or military history with a focus on Russia, the former USSR, Central Europe, and nearby states. Ideal applicants will demonstrate the ability to draw on their scholarly research to inform the formulation of contemporary U.S. foreign policy. While we have a preference for applicants with a Ph.D. in history, we will seriously consider applicants with PhDs in political science and interdisciplinary scholars with the requisite foci. Applicants with prior experience in diplomacy, intelligence, or defense are highly encouraged to apply.

The faculty will teach policy-oriented students at the graduate and undergraduate level. The faculty will conduct and publish scholarly research and seek grant opportunities in support of their research. The appointee will participate in faculty governance at the LBJ School.

As a faculty affiliate of the Clements Center for National Security, the appointee will also be expected to mentor students who aspire to careers in these fields; brief and otherwise inform U.S. and allied policymakers; participate in other relevant Clements Center programs on and off campus; and otherwise participate fully in the intellectual life of the Clements Center.

One of the nation's top ten programs in public affairs, the LBJ School comprises more than 40 faculty members and approximately 300 graduate students, and offers multi-disciplinary curricula leading to the degrees of Master of Public Affairs, Master of Global Policy Studies, and Ph.D. in Public Policy. The LBJ School is also currently planning to launch the additional degree program of Master in National Security. The Clements Center is a nonpartisan research and policy center that draws on diplomatic and military history to train the next generation of national security leaders. The Clements Center teaches students how to integrate the wisdom of history with current challenges in national security and prepare for careers as policymakers and scholars; supports research on history, strategy, and national security policy; and convenes scholars and policymakers to improve our understanding of history, statecraft, and national security.

### Qualifications:

Ph.D. in a relevant field and teaching experience is required. ABD candidates will be considered if the doctoral degree will be complete by the time of employment. Experience in college teaching and evidence of scholarship or scholarly potential is preferred. Teaching experience at an institution of professional diplomatic, intelligence, or military education is desirable.

### Application Instructions:

Interested candidates can submit their cover letter, CV, statement of teaching, three years of teaching evaluations (or fewer if unavailable), three letters of reference, and a scholarly writing sample of no more than 30 pages via Interfolio.

Questions about the position can be directed to Dr. Paul Edgar, Interim Executive Director at the Clements Center for National Security, at <mailto:paul.edgar@austin.utexas.edu>.

Questions about the application can be directed to Shannon LaFevers at <mailto:slafevers@austin.utexas.edu>.

If you do not have a Dossier account with Interfolio, you will be prompted to create one prior to applying for the position (Interfolio Customer Support: <mailto:help@interfolio.com> or (877) 997-8807).

The search committee will begin considering applications January 15, 2024. The position will remain open until filled.

### Equal Employment Opportunity Statement:

The University of Texas at Austin, as an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding nondiscrimination and affirmative action. The University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, or veteran status in employment, educational programs and activities, and admissions.

**To Apply, Visit:** <https://apptkr.com/4809373>



AMERICAN  
HISTORICAL  
ASSOCIATION

## 138TH ANNUAL MEETING NEW YORK CITY

January 3–6, 2025

# 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)).