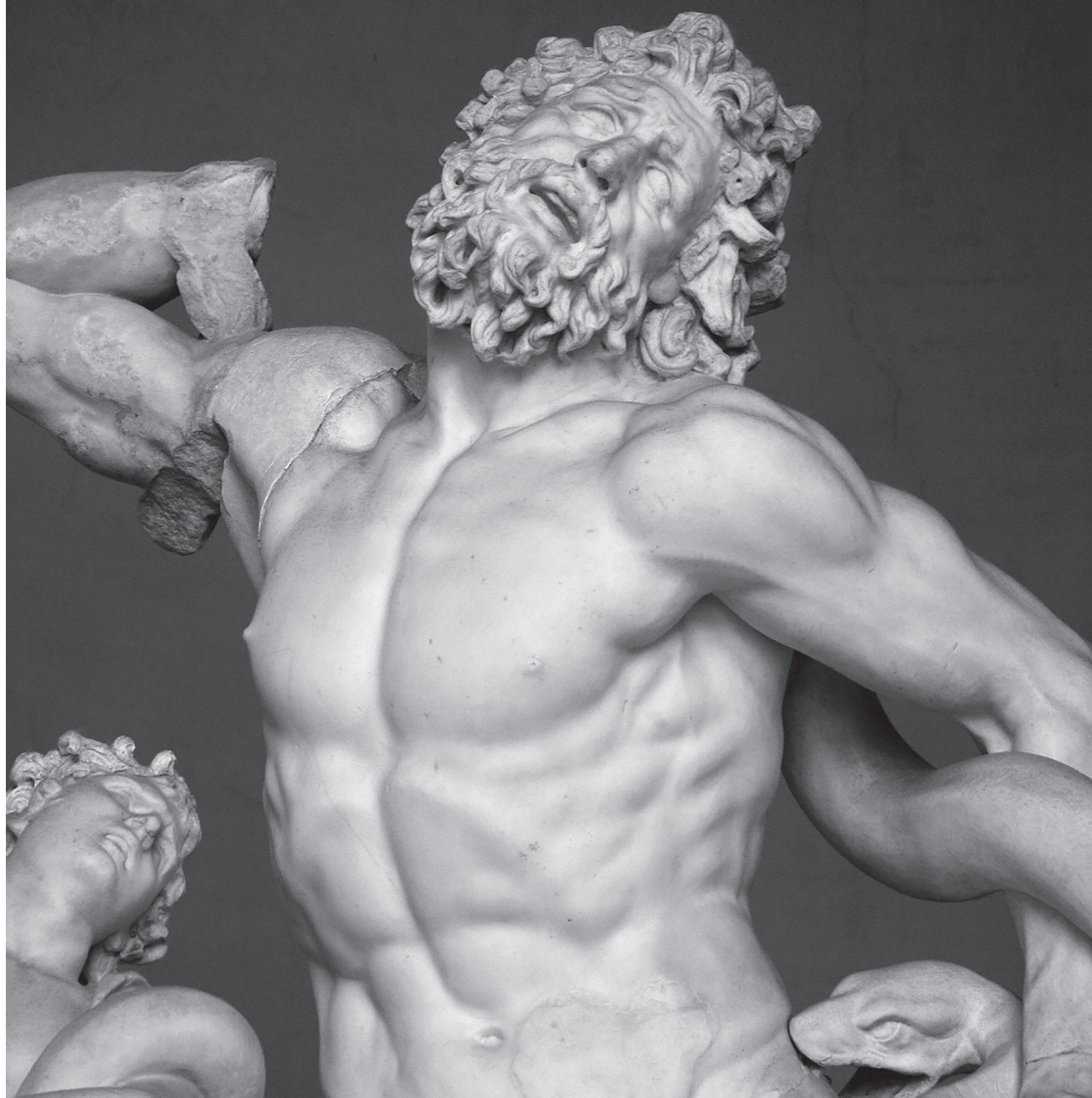


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PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

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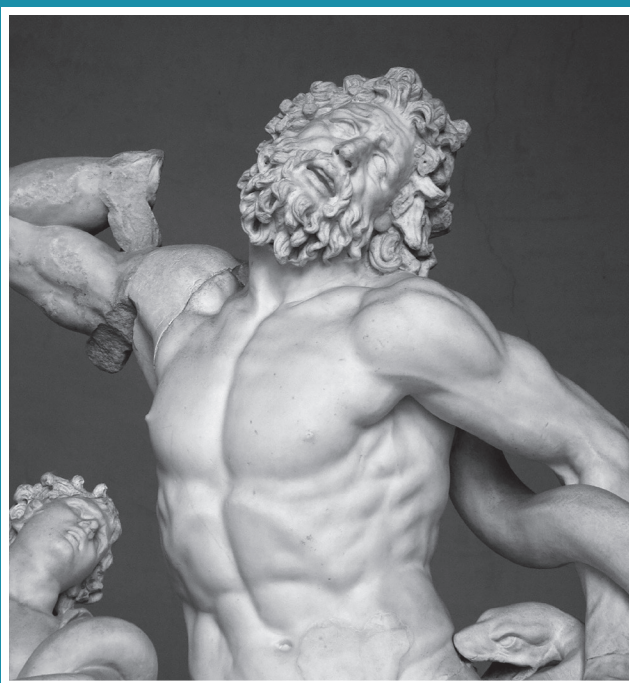
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FPO

L. RENATO GRIGOLI

HAVE ETYMOLOGY—WILL TRAVEL

The Philologist's Gig Economy

While editing Thavolia Glymph's column for this issue, I found myself pausing over the word *freelancer*. It's a word with a clear medieval connotation—has lance, will travel—but subtly different from a *knight-errant*, which suggests the temporary wandering associated with a noble quest. A freelancer is a knight for hire. Its semantic range cannot now be separated from Akira Kurosawa's stories of ronin and the Hollywood Western's gunslinger. Both are linked to medieval knighthood, the former through a false equivalence between medieval Europe and "feudal" Japan and the latter more explicitly. Take, for example, Paladin, the protagonist of the television series *Have Gun—Will Travel* (1957–63). Paladin, from the Latin *palatinus*, "of the palace," literally means "knight," though it's taken on more of a flavor of "righteous hero." The word *freelancer* thus suggests an antiquity to contract labor, as well as a nobility. Sir DoorDasher, if you will.

There's only the usual problem: *freelancer* was coined by Sir Walter Scott, first appearing in *Ivanhoe* (1820). For those of us who study the 19th-century reception of the Middle Ages, this discovery elicits not surprise but a rueful chuckle. Scott's depiction of the medieval is supposedly responsible for everything from the modern Renaissance faire (when his contemporaries enthusiastically re-created *Ivanhoe*'s depiction of a medieval tournament) to the self-conceptions of Southern gentry in the United States (at least according to Mark Twain, who subsequently went to war with the Romantic memory of the medieval). In fact, there's no good culturally equivalent term in premodernity. The closest medieval version of the freelancer was perhaps the condottieri of the Italian city-states, but these were, as their name suggests, contracted mercenary bands (*condotta* means "contract"). That term describes a collective and still carries a very medieval sense of mutual obligation. It has little relationship to individuals working odd jobs. *Freelancing* is a word created in a capitalist, industrializing era to describe a capitalist, industrial approach to labor. It is neither ancient nor particularly noble; it has no actual association with any knightly practice.

People often like to believe that identities with which they associate are older than they generally are. I have written about the 19th-century desire to establish—via academic arguments, folklore, and monumental architecture—a pre-Columbian European history in North America. Most of these efforts are ill-disguised racism. The insistence that Vikings discovered Massachusetts Bay, or even more southern parts of the Atlantic coast, was in large part due to the disquiet over the fact that Christopher Columbus was, by 19th-century standards, not white. But some of the insistence that things have more of a depth to their history than they actually do is an attempt to give the United States the authorizing length and richness of history enjoyed by European states.

But although it fits into the usual pattern, the popular adoption of *freelancer* is something unusual: it makes a *labor model* older than it seems through its relationship to the medieval. When it comes to economics and political systems, the pre-modern is much more typically seen as reviled past rather than hallowed origin. There is a strong argument that the very idea of a "feudal system" in the Anglophone world stemmed from attempts in the 17th century to differentiate parliamentary democracy and nascent capitalist labor practices from royal absolutism and serfdom.

In popular media, the Middle Ages are poorly understood and often conflated with the fantastic. As such, they make an excellent, fact-free medium for exploring and defining one's own identity. This is how white supremacists could unironically carry the flag of a Black saint to riot in Charlottesville in 2017; it's also one of the reasons why *Dungeons and Dragons* is popular in LGBTQ+ spaces. Romanticism has always been a means to escape the modern. It is not surprising that those being ground to dust under the iron heel of exploitative hedge funds and the gig economy might want to find something noble and ancient in their day-to-day experience of late-stage capitalism. **P**

L. Renato Grigoli is editor of Perspectives on History.

LISTENING TO OUR SUBJECTS AND OURSELVES



I had a feeling that I belonged
I had a feeling I could be someone.

— Tracy Chapman, “Fast Car”

The space allotted to the presidents in *Perspectives* is a precious thing. We can write about whatever is on our minds, limited only by a word count of 1,400 or so. Past presidents have written compellingly about the myriad and difficult challenges the discipline faces, the richness of the intellectual world we inhabit, and the joys and difficulties of research and writing. My columns touch on these matters too, but I focus mainly on the thing that keeps me attached to the work even as we collectively mourn the loss of life and horrible conditions of life that people across the globe suffer. They are the intellectual puzzles I have written about in previous columns that force reckonings with how history is made and how historians tell the story of history’s making.

In her first *Perspectives on History* column in 2015, “A Quest for Balance,” AHA president Vicki L. Ruiz wrote about the importance of listening to stories and how this practice can make us better scholars. Her “public talks on Mexican American teenagers during the 1920s and 1930s,” she told us, “always generated lively audience responses from individuals eager to share family stories.” This was the case, for example, at a talk at the Riverside Historical Museum, where a woman recalled the story of her parents’ elopement and how “in order to do so they had locked her grandmother in the outhouse.” For Ruiz, that conversation led to a greater realization of “the depth of generational tensions over the surveillance of young women’s bodies and behavior.” This way of thinking about and even reconsidering the process by which we engage the past and write history, and about how process can become the ground for analyzing and theorizing about the past and analyzing our findings, is, I think, the thing that continues to excite us as historians and provides pathways for making our discoveries more memorable, relevant, and accessible.

I am particularly attracted to Ruiz’s use of the word “informed” in discussing the intervention of the woman in the audience. She “informed me,” Ruiz writes. In this way, it seems to me, Ruiz witnessed and documented an important transfer of knowledge and way of knowing. The woman in the audience became an informant and intervened to add a bit of history and historical context, reminding Ruiz of how important the skill of listening is to the work we do—no matter the final form the work takes: a monograph, peer-reviewed journal article or essay, film, podcast, newspaper article, letter to the editor, blog, or any of a number of other public-facing venues. Getting to the finished product requires that we rest easy with the process of allowing ourselves to be “informed” by many voices telling stories.

Ruiz witnessed and documented
an important transfer of
knowledge and way of knowing.

A story I heard—listened to—recently reminded me of Ruiz’s column. It is a story I believe will help make me a better scholar. It was an instance of being “informed” and experiencing a transfer of knowledge of a kind I am more accustomed to receiving from documents written hundreds of years ago, unlike oral historians. Yet in both cases—whether to the voice that comes through in a soldier’s letter to a family member or from an interviewee recounting a story about the civil rights movement or concentration camps during World War II—listening is paramount.

I was in a rideshare car on the way to meet a colleague for dinner and realized that we were headed to the wrong address. The driver would have been perfectly within her rights to tell me she could not divert her car to the correct address and potentially lose money in the process by not being as readily available for another ride. She could have dropped me

off where the algorithm indicated she should. Instead, she made a slight detour and took me to the appointed restaurant, for which I was grateful.

Over the course of that relatively short ride, the driver told me a story about herself; her father, whose family had migrated from Tennessee to Pasadena, California, many decades ago; and her Asian American mother. She said she did not know much about either parent, especially her mother; she knows neither her mother's specific Asian nationality or ethnic identity nor when she arrived in Pasadena. She remembered hearing that her mother and her mother's sister were "given" to a woman for whom they were to work. She did not know the details of the arrangement, how much her mother and aunt were paid (if anything), or how long the arrangement lasted. She wished she knew more and seemed as eager to share her story as I was to listen. It struck me that perhaps her mother and aunt had entered a form of bound labor, but I did not venture this notion to her or that I was a historian. She had probably told the story many times and I have heard similar stories before, but it was with Ruiz's admonition in mind that I listened differently.

Anecdotes are tricky things.
They can just as easily
obfuscate as illuminate.

I was reminded once again of why I became a historian and why for many of us the will to do this work persists despite the vagaries and contradictions of the discipline, and, for far too many, often-deplorable working conditions: We do it to tell the driver's story, not as an isolated anecdote but part of a large tapestry constructed of the small stories of other people who migrate in the hope of finding a better life and place of refuge, like the ancient Veneti about whom AHA past president Edward Muir has written about here and elsewhere.

Any of these stories could easily have not been listened to. The work of historians across disparate but inevitably connected fields of study and that of scholars in other disciplines caution against not listening and drawing easy conclusions about anecdotes. Listening, we recognize the rideshare driver's story as a centuries-old story of migrations, of families seeking refuge and families sundered, not unlike in many respects the women and children in the era of the Civil War that I study. Her story is also part of the history of what we have come to call the gig economy and its connections to the history of empire, colonization, bound and waged labor, citizenship, war, and political economy.

Anecdotes are tricky things. They can just as easily obfuscate as illuminate. At their best, they speak to the interconnectedness of lives lived across time and across borders, borders imagined, constructed, and defined by human hands, and by nature — rivers and oceans, mountains and lowlands, islands and continents, swamps, deserts, and forests, themselves constantly changing and, in turn, being shaped by human habitation and interference.

Following Ruiz, I was led by the rideshare driver's story to think about things such as political economy differently. On one level, the anecdotal story the driver shared is a story about migration and refuge. On another, it is about the "gig economy" and "making do." And it is a story of the movement and separation of families across generations — sometimes forcibly and sometimes by decisions of the migrants themselves (though voluntary may not be the best way to describe such decisions), by forces moving across time and space, and of families reconstituted on new ground. There are her father's people who migrated from the rural South and her mother's family from Asia. The father's ancestors would have seen California as a place of refuge from the extreme anti-Black racism, poverty, and violence that characterized much of the South and of hope for a future in which they could freely pursue opportunity and not have to live day to day worried about transgressing the limits imposed by white supremacy. For the mother's people, California may have represented refuge from poverty differently constructed and the opportunity to build stable and prosperous families. In a sense, the driver's ancestors on both sides of the family experienced a variant of the "gig economy."

The term *gig economy* is used today to describe the rise in freelancing work, especially that available through companies like Uber, Lyft, DoorDash, and Instacart. According to a CNN report, these companies' internal data shows a growing number of gig economy participants. It notes, for example, that in February 2023, "Uber reported that its 'earners,' as it calls its drivers and food delivery workers, reached a record high of 5.4 million in the fourth quarter of 2022," and DoorDash had more than two million monthly "active Dashers." To call these "earners" "freelancers," however, seems somewhat akin to calling the driver's mother, bound out as a child, a freelancer. Like her ancestors, the rideshare driver is free to pursue this kind of work. And as it was for them, she does not freely choose. **P**

Thavolia Glymph is president of the AHA.

TRACKING UNDERGRADUATE HISTORY ENROLLMENTS IN 2023

By some metrics, history is trending. Videos shared with the hashtag #HistoryTok have racked up more than six and a half billion views on the social media platform TikTok; in early 2023, a single viral video tagged #HistoryRepeats inspired more than 800,000 users to record their own imagined conversations with distant ancestors. Controversies in the headlines keep sparking vibrant and nuanced public conversation about the historical contexts that shape our contemporary world. And there is much evidence to indicate that students want to know more about the history behind today's headlines.

Compare this public enthusiasm for history with our discipline's shifting status in higher education. Since 2016, the AHA has surveyed history departments across the United States to track the total number of undergraduate students enrolling in history courses at their respective institutions. This data indicates an overall decline in history enrollments but leaves many questions unanswered.

The AHA's 2023 survey of undergraduate history enrollments shows a 2.7 percent decline in the number of enrollments in 2022–23, compared to the previous academic year. The reported decline occurred even as overall

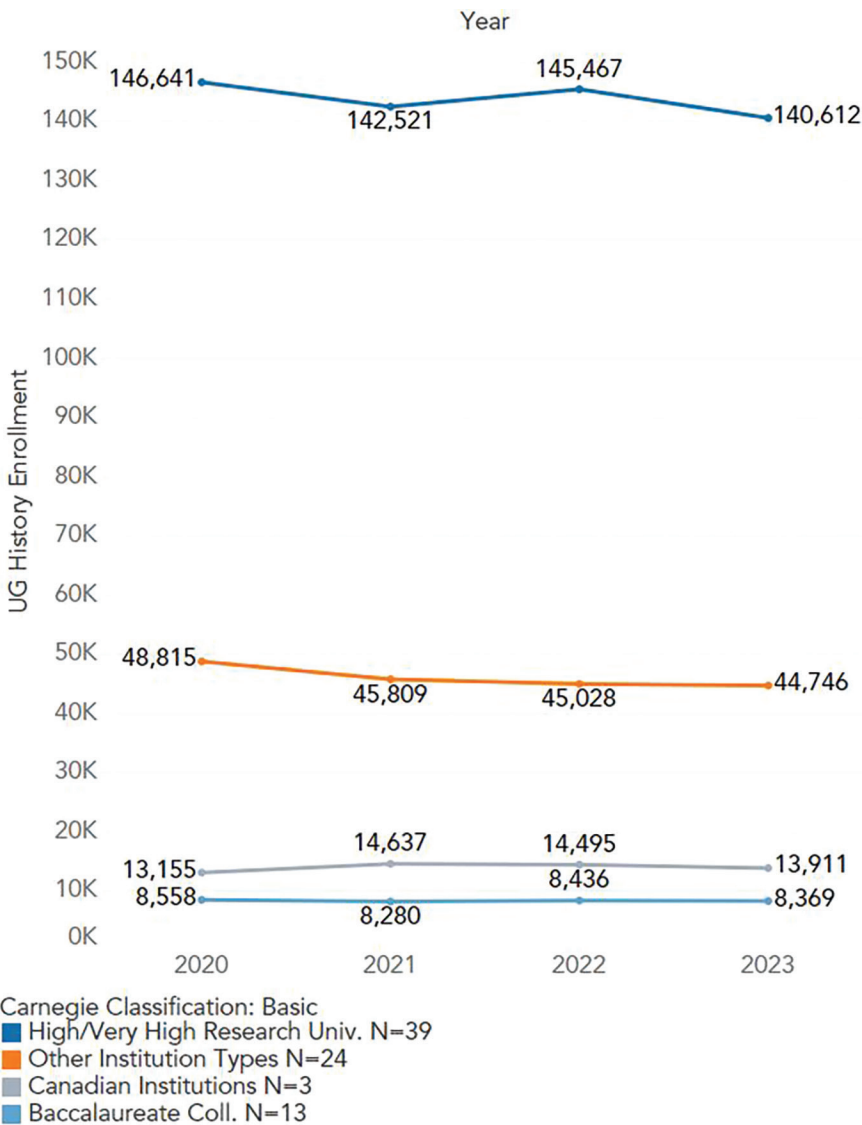


Fig. 1: Undergraduate history enrollment, 2020–23.
AHA internal data

undergraduate enrollment at four-year public and private not-for-profit institutions in the United States increased by 0.6 percent in fall 2023 from the year before, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. This trend is occurring alongside a longer-term decline in undergraduate history degree completions, which the Department of Education reports fell another 6.43 percent in 2022, the most recent year for which data is available.

The downward trend may have paused at some institutions during the pandemic and has now resumed, but less universally.

This eighth annual survey of history enrollment was conducted online from July through mid-October 2023. The AHA solicited voluntary participation from more than 400 departmental chairs and administrative points of contact. The survey prompted respondents to input the number of undergraduate enrollments in their institution's history courses for the past four years (2019–20, 2020–21, 2021–22, and 2022–23). This data (Fig. 1) illustrates one symptom of the many pressures undermining the health of history programs at North American universities, but the small number of responses demands cautious interpretation.

The direction in which history enrollments have trended is clear; the causes for this shift and the most effective strategies for improving recruitment and retention are less straightforward.

It is vital that all undergraduate students continue to have access to high-quality history education as part of a comprehensive college curriculum.

Out of more than 1,300 institutions in the United States and Canada, 79 colleges and universities contributed numerical data to the AHA's 2023 enrollment questionnaire. This total includes 75 four-year colleges and universities and one two-year college in the United States, as well as three Canadian universities. Taken together, the responses showed that history course enrollment had declined 2.7 percent in 2020–21, risen 1 percent in 2021–22, and again declined 2.7 percent in 2022–23. Over the entire period, the number of student enrollments reported in 2022–23 was 4.4 percent lower than those for 2019–20. When public and private institutions

are disaggregated, we see the only annual percentage growth was among public institutions in the 2020–21 school year, presumably related to unusual student course-taking patterns and the easing of pandemic restrictions on many campuses.

Declines led advances throughout the past four years but with wide variation (Fig. 2). Looking at the change in enrollment from the prior year, in 2020–21, 57 institutions saw falling student numbers and just 22 saw gains, while in 2021–22 enrollment fell at 43 institutions but rose at 36. Last year, 50 programs shrank while 29 grew. This suggests that the downward trend may have paused at some institutions during the pandemic and has now resumed, but less universally. Comparing the first and last years of the covered period, 25 of the responding

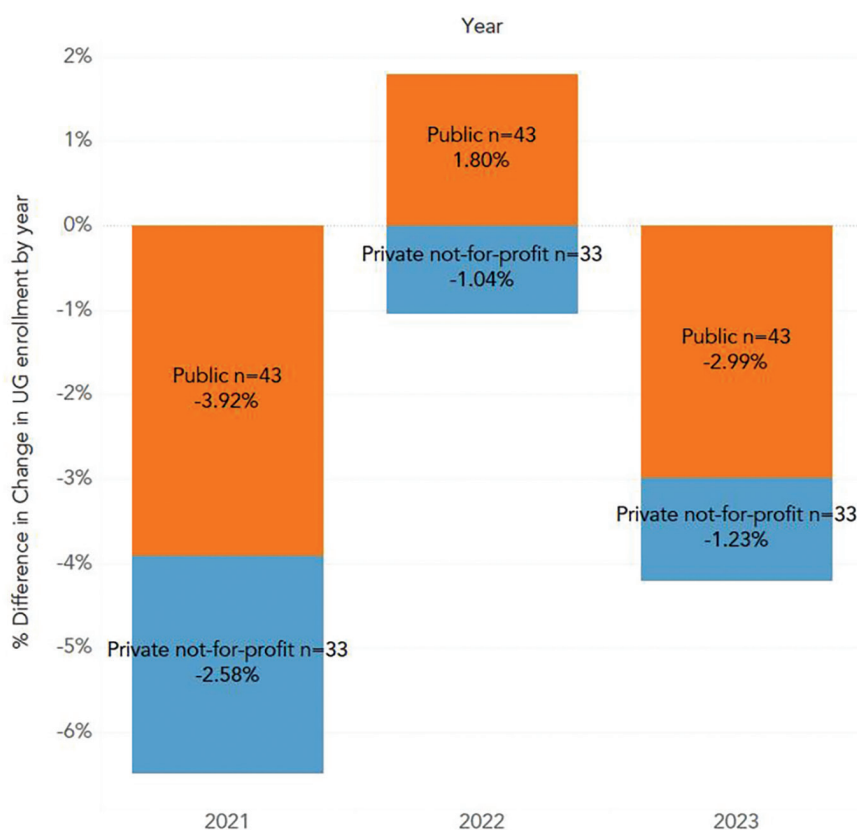


Fig. 2: Change in history enrollment by control and year.
AHA internal data

institutions had higher enrollment in the 2022–23 year than in the 2019–20 year, while 54 served fewer undergraduates last year than they taught three years earlier.

Reports from chairs and other faculty provide insight into how broader national forces have played out in local contexts. The impression among departments where enrollment has declined significantly and consistently is of a landscape where institutional priorities in other fields (preprofessional and/or STEM oriented) have left history departments with shrinking capacity to meet even existing student demand and limited ability to recruit students or market current offerings. One respondent at a midwestern regional public university, where history course enrollment crashed 45 percent over four years, observed that their reduction in enrollment corresponded to a reduction in faculty and thus the inability to offer as many courses. Another regional public institution in the Midwest reported that their total enrollment was down primarily because of lost faculty, but that the number of history majors had rebounded in the past year. One respondent in the Northeast lamented that many faculty expected the already-overworked department chair to address this issue without much buy-in from colleagues. There, enrollment was down more than 13 percent after falling nearly 10 percent the year before.

Based on the survey responses, general education reform has continued to erode mandates for history education, but the pace of such reform initiatives might have slowed. And despite a long-term pattern of contraction due to structural shifts in how and why people go to college, an individual department's strategies can still have an effect. These actions might include things like ensuring that popular

classes are offered to students regularly, supporting first-time history students' learning and progress to degree so that they can return to take another course in the department, and implementing an active recruitment program with marketing on campus and online. Another fruitful avenue for some history departments can be direct communication with academic advisors across campus about the features and benefits of their history offerings for students in other programs and majors.

An individual
department's
strategies can still
have an effect.

These local perceptions of what is happening in history departments are vital to identifying important, larger questions that go beyond just numbers. Local awareness combined with broad-based data can help to reveal promising ways to reverse negative trends and suggest the best places to put limited resources to build on program strengths. The AHA will continue its efforts to support history enrollment by advocating publicly for the value of what students learn, communicating data and information about structural changes that impact history departments, and sharing successful models from individual departments. **P**

Julia Brookins is the senior program analyst, teaching and learning, at the AHA.

ANNE GRAY FISCHER

TEACHING LGBTQ+ HISTORY

A Dispatch from Texas



Students in the course *The Queer South* presented their historical research in a class exhibition, which included creative projects like this painting depicting trans individuals in the 19th century.

Mak Kovar

IN THE EIGHT years since this magazine published a special issue on teaching LGBTQ+ and sexuality history, the political landscape for many history educators has dramatically changed. As of March 1, eight states have passed laws targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) offices and programming at public institutions of higher education, and nearly half of the state legislatures have considered similar bills. Supporters of anti-DEI legislation explicitly argue that these laws sustain broader efforts to “oppose modern feminism and the radical homosexual and transexual rights movements.”

Legislative efforts to silence sexuality—a key engine of historical analysis—threaten to impoverish our history classrooms by narrowing the horizon of what was possible in our riotous, complex past and what is possible in our shared future. As Samantha Rosenthal writes in *Living Queer History: Remembrance and Belonging in a Southern City*, “Through the work of unearthing the city’s queer pasts and staking claims for the survival of our own spaces of belonging, we do the important work of exerting our right to be here, of making and remaking this city as our home.” There is an urgent need—and an inspiring opportunity—for educators to prioritize teaching LGBTQ+ histories that foster community in places that are both hostile and home.

Legislative efforts to silence sexuality threaten to impoverish our history classrooms.

In fall 2023, in the shadow of the passage of Texas Senate Bill 17 (SB 17)—the state’s DEI ban in public higher education that took effect in January 2024—I piloted a new undergraduate public history course, *The Queer South*, at the University of Texas at Dallas. Academic instruction is technically protected from the incursions of SB 17, but this chilling context shaped how I understood the relationship between classroom-based learning and community formation on campus. The students offered a stunning vision of what is possible when they are empowered to study histories that are directly relevant to their worlds and to share those histories with audiences outside the classroom. Across the semester, the students built a warm community through mutual support as they shared books, primary sources, and many pictures of their pets. From this place of collective commitment, they produced remarkable work and organized a final exhibition, *Ecstatic Time: Here in the Queer South*, which was hosted by the Galerstein Gender Center on campus.

On the morning of the exhibit’s launch, our university president announced the enforcement of SB 17 and the elimination of all DEI offices, including our beloved Gender Center. That

evening, 130 community elders, faculty, staff, parents, kids, and students packed the center’s rooms and hallways, exploring the students’ projects and chatting with new friends about enduring struggles. Historical research had made possible the learning—and the love—in the Gender Center that night.

Ecstatic Time was my last programming partnership with the Gender Center, which has since closed. Staff can no longer generously fund books for students, host future exhibitions of student work, or provide space for students marginalized by their sexual or gender identities. As historians know, specificity matters: to help build community on campus, we must attend to the distinct identities that shape our histories and lived experiences. Below, I offer three lessons I learned during my *Queer South* semester for educators who want to strengthen the community and connection on public campuses that legislatures are actively trying to dismantle.

Building Community in the Classroom

Power dynamics are built into the classroom, with an educator as authority figure who has an institutional mandate to enter grades for the students’ permanent transcripts. In this way, the classroom cannot replace a site like our former Gender Center, which was designed intentionally so that students could relax in a protected (and ungraded) space of love and care. For educators seeking to repair legislative harm and build community in the classroom, it is important to design a course that gets students talking to each other and promotes students’ sense of ownership over the outcome of the class.

Throughout the semester, I tested strategies to decentralize my authority in the classroom. I invited students to make collaborative decisions on the exhibit planning and the rubric to evaluate a successful project. They decided which guest speaker to invite to our class, what food we served at *Ecstatic Time*, and how the event would be set up. By giving them ownership over the course, students were motivated to offer their time, resources, and labor. One volunteered to serve as “exhibit coordinator,” and another recruited his father, a theater set designer, to help us stage *Ecstatic Time*. Through their planning deliberations, the students decided to create a website to house digital versions of their projects, and one student—a double major in history and computer science—volunteered to develop the site. The students’ shared authority in the classroom strengthened their community. “I appreciate how we make decisions together as a class because it gives us more collective autonomy,” one student wrote in their course evaluation. Ultimately, as the students glowed in the triumph of *Ecstatic Time*, the event was more meaningful because they knew that, together, they had made history.

Teach the Local

Amid rising attacks on queer life, history provides a clear message that LGBTQ+ students are not alone, especially when educators spotlight local stories from their region. The history of sexuality in the United States overwhelmingly focuses on the urban North and West, and many students outside coastal cities are still shocked—and energized—to learn that queer people have existed for centuries in the places they live, work, and play. I organized this course around our region, where a surge of scholarship has restored queer southerners to the historical record. In a shared resource document, I linked to every Texas and southern digital queer archive I could find online, as well as broader local and regional databases that contain queer sources (such as the *Dallas Morning News* archive) and large nonsouthern queer archives that include Texas or southern sources.

By keeping the course's scope regional, students searching for elusive sources on gender nonconforming people in the 19th century, queer zines, LGBTQ+ civil rights activists, or lesbian mothers' custody battles could cast a wider research net. At the same time, the geographic focus enabled students to find meaning and purpose by merging their interests with their city. For their projects, students created liner notes for a compilation album of women's music presented by Little Feather Productions, a volunteer-run concert promotion group in Dallas from 1979 to 1992; a documentary about the gay Dallas activists who waged a successful battle to expand care at a local hospital for people living with AIDS; and two exhaustive maps, both digital and hand-drawn, of lesbian bars in Austin, which are now extinct in the city so famous for its inclusive vibe. The key takeaway is to strike a balance in the research scope for students: broad enough to ensure availability of historiography and primary sources, while offering a frame tight enough to encourage students to start where they are in their search for as-yet-untold queer pasts.

The Power of Public History

I am not a public historian by training, but the thrilling field of queer public history inspired me to experiment with this class. Queer public history is specifically designed to promote community through engaging, accessible, and interactive projects. By providing access points to the past, queer public history ignites new connections in the present that can change our future. Southern queer public history specifically is a vibrant and growing field of study, and southern scholars of sexuality have tapped into the power of public history to bring their research to wider audiences.

Through scaffolded assignments that broke down each step of the research and production process—identifying a research topic, finding and analyzing a primary and a secondary source, and writing and workshopping a final project proposal—the students prepared all semester for the public exhibition of their work. They took great pride in creating *Ecstatic Time* and directly experienced the bridge-building work of public history in action. For example, the students presenting their project on the Dallas 1992 Lesbian and Gay Film Festival were delighted to meet a visitor who had acted in a queer movie from that period. As another student walked new users through “GayOS,” a web program that mimics the 1990s-era Windows operating system to narrate how queer workers shaped the southern tech industry, he met a queer elder who had worked in tech during that time and had stories to share.

Students directly experienced the bridge-building work of public history in action.

One group in particular showcased the power of queer public history to forge community: they recorded an oral history with Chwee-Lye Chng, the founder of the Dragonflies, Dallas's first organization for gay Asian men. The Dragonflies hosted potlucks and pageants through the 1990s. Many of the original Dragonflies and their friends came to *Ecstatic Time*, where they munched on Asian snacks the students offered in the spirit of the original potlucks; pored over the photograph gallery the students had curated from Chng's archive; and read the students' special November 2023 issue of the Dragonflies' newsletter, the *Buzz*, which included a transcript of the students' conversation with Chng.

We face an uncertain future for LGBTQ+ life at public schools across the country. Precisely because of this context, students are determined to dig deep into the archives and responsibly interpret queer histories in order to claim belonging in their institutions, towns, and regions. As the exhibit coordinator wrote in the *Ecstatic Time* welcome pamphlet, “Queer people have a past, a present, and they *will* have a future in the South.” When students are equipped with the research skills, analytical tools, and educational space to study the LGBTQ+ histories that surround us, they are inspired to see themselves in a larger genealogy of struggle and to affirm their commitment to each other. **P**

Anne Gray Fischer is an assistant professor at the University of Texas at Dallas.

LAUREN MANCIA

EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE

Lessons from My Seven-Year-Old Daughter



Ellie becomes "part of the story." Note how close her left foot is to the art, aching to be as much a part of the scene as possible.
Lauren Mancía

THIS SUMMER, my daughter met Jesus. It was not a religious conversion — she's still 100 percent Jewish. But for me, a historian of medieval Christianity, the qualities of her encounter were remarkable, providing me with new insight into how scholars can uncover medieval historical experience.

When I married my husband in 2011, I made a commitment to our rabbi (and, importantly, to my mother-in-law) that I would create a Jewish home and raise our future children Jewish. My husband and I began to celebrate Jewish holidays exclusively, and when our daughter Ellie was born in 2015, we took the necessary steps to make sure to honor our commitment. She could celebrate a secular version of Christmas at my parents' house (with a tree, songs, presents, no talk of Jesus), but there would be no Christmas in our apartment. The Easter honey cakes that I had grown up making with my Italian grandmother were easily transformed into Rosh Hashanah sweets. Even though I studied medieval Christianity and had written books on medieval monastic devotion, my child was as exposed to Christian art and stories as much as she was to any other culture's.

So on her first trip to Europe in the summer of 2023, Ellie arrived with no extra preparation for what we might see, and I was trying to lower my own expectations for how willing my rising third grader might be to look at the zillions of cathedrals and monasteries whose glorious architecture I hoped to visit in our time there.

It was our second day in Paris. We were in the Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine, a museum filled with plaster casts of historical building facades and monumental sculptures. We had ended up there because the Eiffel Tower, just across the Seine, was unexpectedly closed because of a strike. We needed an easy alternative for our seven-year-old kiddo. Because there was no way an architecture museum could stand a chance against the Eiffel Tower in the mind of a seven-year-old, I tentatively led us into the medieval galleries assuring everyone that we could leave as soon as we wanted. To my shock, Ellie entered the space with widening eyes, slowly walking around, taking it all in silently. Finally, she stopped at a cast of a life-size 16th-century deposition group by Ligier Richier from Église Saint-Étienne in Saint-Mihiel, turned to my husband, and said, "Can you tell me this story? Why is everyone so sad?"

My Jewish husband began to tell Ellie the story of Jesus — his birth, his death, and how Christians believe he is God. She listened attentively and then once again approached the sculpture: "There's so much emotion," she said. And then

she asked, "Can you take a picture of me, as if I were a part of the story?"

Scholars have long argued that medieval Christian art and rituals aimed at incorporating their viewers into the stories they depicted: in the 14th century, plays cast lay members of craft guilds as biblical characters; in the 12th century, Palm Sunday processions invited lay onlookers to wave palms at processed statues of Christ. I myself have written on how prayer texts helped medieval Christians imagine themselves at the foot of Christ's cross, for example, thus allowing them to better empathize with Christ's suffering and pain. But here I was, watching my child physically encounter Christian art for the first time with an untaught, visceral, emotional, embodied reaction. The immersive medieval art sparked in Ellie a deep, physical empathy with the images of a dying, suffering man and his mourning friends. In every Parisian museum we went to thereafter, Ellie did a scavenger hunt for images of a dying Jesus, frequently stopping to adopt the contorted postures of the characters depicted. When we attempted to fill in narrative or analyze details, she would shoo us away. She just wanted to dramatically, corporeally feel along with the images.

"There's so much emotion,"
my daughter said.

The pièce de résistance of our trip happened at the medieval cathedral of Autun in Burgundy, where Ellie encountered the Stations of the Cross, a series of images depicting Jesus on the day of his crucifixion, for the first time. We didn't point them out to her: she found them herself. As a reader of graphic novels, Ellie was immediately drawn to these panels that told a story, and much to our shock, she was moved to physically enact each scene as she walked along the church ambulatory in solemn procession. Casting herself as Jesus, Ellie followed the tale of Christ's trials and tribulations, eventually pantomiming carrying a cross and then entombing herself on the church floor at the end of the sequence. I stared in wonder as I watched my child teach herself the story, interpreting through embodiment the emotional cues from the art. My daughter was enacting the very process that I had studied, written about, and taught, but had never before witnessed, and had never before experienced myself.

These days, my daughter avoids the nonfiction section of the public library, and she refuses to let us read the stories from the Hebrew Bible to her. A text-based delivery of history and religion was not her way into this material: the visual, spatial, multimedia, emotional depictions drew her in. Standing in Autun, I was reminded as both a history teacher and a parent

that expository language is not always the best way to engage audiences; moreover, Ellie didn't need a 21st-century solution like a video game to imagine herself immersed in these stories. There are different entry points to the past, and some of them are a lot more ancient (or medieval) than computers, virtual reality, or even printed history books.

Ellie's behavior taught me something as a professional historian too. Almost all my knowledge of medieval Christianity comes from book learning, manuscript study, and the processes of rational inquiry sanctioned by our field. Monographs, not belief or experience, have taught me about medieval embodied responses to life-size deposition groups and the Stations of the Cross. Some of these have been written by monks and nuns who have an affective attachment to the history of the church that I do not. But watching Ellie allowed me to feel what it might have been like to be a medieval person encountering the story of Jesus for the first time through the drama of art and architecture. I realized there was a parallel between Ellie's affective interaction with these sources and medieval Christians': I saw that while affective, emotional, embodied engagement with historical sources is often dismissed as a method of research by modern, secular scholars, it might actually be a valid way of doing history. I want to emphasize here that I am not just talking about doing this in the classroom — so often we see experiential learning as something to use when we need to get our Gen Z students' attention, but not as something appropriate for scholarly conferences or lectures. I am saying that by inviting *scholarly* audiences to inhabit and embody, for example, monastic texts, *historians* can understand not just what medieval monks thought but also what they felt — and that this, when paired with historical training, can be a legitimate method of scholarly inquiry.

I was particularly well primed to see Ellie's actions as a way of doing scholarship because of my current work, which marries medieval history to performance studies. In order to understand the beliefs of medieval people, we disembodied scholars do not *do* — instead, we read. This is a problem, because our very process makes us immune to the effects of affective doing so as not to bias our "objective" analyses; often, secular "nonbiased" historians think that the attachments that monk-historians have to their histories of the church are inappropriate, and that our analyses are therefore superior. (Affect studies, a scholarly field separate from the history of emotion, is slowly becoming interested in embodied engagement; see, for example, Donovan Schaefer's *Wild Experiment: Feeling Science and Secularism after Darwin*.) But Ellie's actions should remind all of us that such detached investigations are in fact the opposite of the mode invited by medieval artworks.

Scholars must recognize that we can use our bodily experience to accompany our textual readings. Embodied epistemology can allow us to probe differently by activating the past in its complexity, rather than simply describing it. For instance, what happens when we enact medieval monastic sign language, instead of just translating the Latin text of the sign language lexicon? We need rigorous archival research to reveal these practices, of course. But if we don't attempt to understand our sources in the embodied ways they were engaged in the past, do we ever really understand what we're reading?

We disembodied scholars do not *do*—instead, ironically, we read.

In *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory*, Tavia Nyong'o talks about creative anachronism as repellent to many historians because we deeply believe in the virtues of our professionalism and believe that amateurs — like imaginative seven-year-olds — don't "get history right." But Nyong'o provocatively asks, Why don't we worry about the ethics of the chance that our professionalism gets it wrong? Isn't the risk of romanticization involved in Ellie's performance-exercise worth it, if it means we won't neglect the medieval history of affective experience? Today a scholarship of doubt, unease, trouble, and alarm seems more acceptable than the earnest approach of a child to a life-size diorama from the past. The cleric-scholars who once played an important role in medieval scholarship are often dismissed today. But if we scholars dropped all our learning and defenses, and if we allowed ourselves to be perforated, taken in by an embodied witnessing of the objects of the past, how might our understanding of historical experience transform? What historical discoveries can we make by *doing*? **P**

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KARIN WULF

ARCHIVAL SHOUTING

Silence and Volume in Collections and Institutions



Some archives and collections have an outsize presence as sources for the historical record. Others, like this one that doesn't yet have an online finding aid, are harder to hear.

Karin Wulf

AT THE John Carter Brown Library (JCB), it can sometimes seem like the entire collection is shouting. Some of this noise, particularly the dominance of European male voices, is unsurprising. John Carter Brown (1797–1874) was one of the first collectors of “Americana,” amassing a library of printed materials about the Americas from the late 15th century to the early 19th century. The collection’s silences are also unsurprising; among them, it can be challenging to find women authors or creators, or even subjects, in our collections.

“Archival silence” has become a shorthand for absences in archival records. It also refers to biases in collections, collecting habits, and institutions that occlude people and their histories, and the power dynamics that are as present in the materials and the institutions as they are in the economic, social, political, and other relationships and structures they document. Archives can and do, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot put it, silence the past.

A keyword search for “woman” or “women” in the JCB catalog, for example, will return only hundreds of items, with a 1799 Philadelphia imprint of William Godwin’s *Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, author of “A vindication of the rights of woman”* leading them, and a 1792 Boston imprint of Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication* itself coming in only at number 5. A simple search for “Sor Juana” will turn up dozens of volumes, some by but mostly about Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651–95), the Mexican writer, poet, and nun, but also referencing other nuns. Neither Wollstonecraft nor Sor Juana is included in the little-used subject category “women authors.” Even these two extraordinary women are quieted, not because we haven’t collected examples of their work but because of the way that work was cataloged and the way the search sorts it.

Archives are full of materials and collections that have clamored for our attention. Naming the shouting is an explicit acknowledgment that some archives or sections of archives have long garnered outsize focus, and it attunes us to how their volume has shaped our histories. As more archivists, librarians, and scholars are offering analyses of archives as active interpretive agents, it also suggests an approach to the role of institutions in the silence and shouting alike.

What is a shouty archive? Historical materials that shout at us dominate collections in different ways. They can be extensive, literally taking up a lot of space. The scale of a collection can drive its use, and also the attention and prominence it receives from the institution. For institutions with a specific purpose and focus, some of these large-scale collections have a transparent logic. Presidential libraries in the United States may be the most straightforward example. The US National

Archives oversees a system of presidential libraries that hold millions of items created by presidents and their staff in the course of their official work—and often much more, including materials generated before and after their time in office. But these archives are centered on an individual, a man (all men, thus far). The LBJ Presidential Library, for example, holds “more than 45 million pages of historical documents,” as well as extensive photos, audio, and more relating to Lyndon Baines Johnson. There is no mistaking who is at the center of a presidential library.

In institutions with a more diffuse collecting remit and large collections, the shouting reflects priorities and assumptions. Institutions have collecting priorities, and cataloging, curatorial, preservation, and other practices for describing, interpreting, and making materials accessible that then amplify some materials over others. Leaders of the many library and archival institutions founded in the 19th-century United States, for example, prioritized their own backgrounds and culturally dominant ideas about historical significance. That so many archival collections amplify the collected and preserved materials of white men, often engaged in politics and economics—and sometimes religion—reflects a pervasive bias about who and what had and has historical merit.

John Adams was always a
shouter, but his archives have
been given a sound system.

For the oldest historical society in the United States, the papers of president John Adams and his family are described as “the most important manuscript collection owned by the Massachusetts Historical Society [MHS].” The society has invested in an expert documentary edition (also funded by grants), a separate online search capability and digital access for Adams materials. Though the Adams Papers and related materials comprise over 100,000 items, which is an extraordinary collection by any measure, the MHS holds millions of items documenting mostly Massachusetts but much more across centuries, including more than 3,500 collections of manuscripts, diaries, photographs, and more. John Adams was always a shouter, but his archives have been given a mic and a sophisticated sound system.

Archival institutions, funders, and scholars inside and outside of archives have been launching a host of methods and projects to handle the different challenges of archival noise. One is to help certain collections shout more loudly—to find ways to amplify materials from within institutions. The Prize

Papers Project, for example, explores the hundreds of thousands of items intercepted by the British admiralty in the course of taking “prizes” (i.e., ships in a legal capture between 1652 and 1815). Held at the UK’s National Archives, most of these multilingual materials had remained unexamined, with over 160,000 mostly unopened letters as well as books, accounts, and some personal objects.

Another structural response to the overwhelming representation of elites within traditional archival sources is to help us hear better with digital projects that provide either new aggregations or new search capabilities. If marginalized people have been marginalized in the archives, aggregating the available evidence helps make the loudest materials speak more fully to their lives and experiences. Researchers can use Founders Online, the aggregator of early presidential and other documentary editions sponsored by the US National Archives, to research questions that were at the margins of these men’s interests—or, as in the case of slavery, at the very center of their interests while the individual people they enslaved remained marginal in the documentary record. In this context, the expert work of documentary editors has put the Adams Papers investment at the MHS, for example, to newly expansive uses.

Enslaved: Peoples of the Historical Slave Trade takes the same approach of aggregating multiple types of records from a wide range of locations, but with the particular goal of reconstructing “the lives of individuals who were enslaved, owned slaves, or participated in the historical trade.” Similarly, Keywords for Black Louisiana is building “a digital documentary edition of transcribed and translated documents that tell the story of enslaved and free Black communities.” Moving outside of traditional collections creates new aggregations based on multi-institutional source materials and new forms of amplification.

A powerful aggregating movement that has taken advantage of one of the noisiest features of traditional archival collections, colonial, state, and private institutions alike, is genealogy. The profusion of genealogy in archival records and as a priority of institutions has never been a secret, though only more recently the object of historians’ concerted attention. From the Mormon church–sponsored projects such as FamilySearch to transcription projects geared toward genealogists at archival institutions large and small, local and national, to the 10 Million Names Project helmed by historian Kendra Field at the venerable New England Historic and Genealogical Society, genealogical research takes full advantage of some of the highest volume of archival materials.

What all these approaches to shouting have in common is a basic recognition that context is key. The context for the materials that sit in a collecting institution was shaped by the perceived needs and interests of their creators as well as those who acquired, cataloged, curated, and preserved them. All these contexts come to bear on how we understand the materials from which we work. For institutions, recovering the context can require a fresh commitment to institutional transparency. It might mean a change in collecting priorities; my colleagues at the Brown University Library, for example, have made carceral collections one of their collecting areas. Or it might mean a slow coming to terms with the nature of the institution itself. At the JCB, understanding that we document the history of colonialism means a responsibility to that history. As a library of colonialism, we hold materials of extraordinary cultural and political and physical violence; we also hold materials that attest to humanity’s more noble ambitions. The noise within the walls, in other words, matters a great deal. How we hear it and what we make of it is as important as how we adduce the silences.

Archives have facilitated some histories while impeding others.

Like any metaphor, archival silence and shouting can only take us so far. For one thing, leaning on hearing as a historical practice or noise as an archival privilege evokes ableist assumptions. The larger point, though, that archives—aggregated material remnants of the past, and the institutions that hold them—have facilitated some histories while impeding others remains an important one. Cataloging is only one example of distributing our institutional resources. But as my colleagues and I have worked to expand our cataloging and metadata creation capacity, we are hyperaware of how important that information infrastructure is to how we know about our collection and how others come to know it. That neither Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz nor Mary Wollstonecraft was cataloged, long ago when their works were acquired, among “women authors” tells us something about what was valued at the time. Yes, there is a dearth of women authors and creators at our library. And yes, it can take several efforts to locate even the most celebrated among them. But some of Sor Juana’s compelling work sits on our shelves nonetheless, waiting. **P**

Karin Wulf is the Beatrice and Julio Mario Santo Domingo Director and Librarian of the John Carter Brown Library and a professor of history at Brown University.



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WHO IS IN CHARGE OF HISTORY CURRICULA?

Some Findings from the AHA's Research

Media accounts of a politically charged war for the soul of social studies are overblown. However, no one knows what actually is being taught in classrooms across the United States. In response, the AHA has undertaken a national empirical study on the current state of secondary US history education. This article includes some of the project's findings.

When we asked social studies educators across the country how administrators viewed history curriculum, teachers told us a consistent story: “Afterthought.” “Back burner.” “Short end of the stick.” Teachers have long sensed the gradual sidelining of their subject—in attention, resources, and respect—in service of subjects regularly covered by state-mandated standardized tests. More recently, partisan culture wars have revived social studies’ role as a political football, with activists accusing teachers of pushing distorted history into K–12 classrooms. If this is what attention to social studies looks like, many teachers might prefer neglect.

Over the past two years, the AHA’s Mapping the Landscape of Secondary US History Education project has been cutting through the noise to assemble an empirical picture of what gets taught in US history classes. Over the course of interviewing hundreds of teachers and administrators, surveying more than 3,000 teachers, and collecting troves of curriculum from across the United States, we’ve caught a glimpse of the diverse but consistent challenges that teachers face as they try to keep their spirits up. Most teachers are neither completely ignored nor openly attacked. Instead, they navigate a diffuse and complex set of pressures and incentives around a perennial question: Who is in charge of curriculum?

This is a question with a long history. Between the 1980s and the 2010s, so-called “accountability movement” boosters had the answer: the bosses are in charge. State, district, and schoolhouse administrators had a duty to align curriculum with state-adopted standards and to align teachers with one another. State education agencies used statewide common assessment to enforce alignment and accountability.

Reinforced by federal mandates, these standardized tests were aimed at core skills in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics—not social studies. Today, only 20 states require assessment of US history content, with stakes varying dramatically. In some states with a history assessment mandate, much of the design, scoring, reporting, and consequences of testing are left up to local discretion.

When history does land on statewide exams, the effects on instruction are clear. In Texas, exceptional among our surveyed states with its state-designed, state-scored, standards-aligned exams for K–12 US history, the effects on grade-level course team alignment are clear: 74 percent of Texas teachers we surveyed report that they and their department colleagues give a common test at the end of every curricular unit, compared to only 33 percent in other surveyed states. Testing at the state level trickles down to the local. Teachers in assessment-heavy contexts voiced mixed feelings. One teacher likened their school to “a factory” where they’re “turning out a product.” Others appreciate a view of clear results and the chance to compete with their peers.

Veteran teachers report a clear trend away from autonomy and idiosyncrasy.

While standardized assessment may be the exception rather than the rule for social studies, three decades of accountability initiatives have nonetheless left their mark on the management of teachers. Large districts tend to grow heavier bureaucracies—and in some cases an ambition for more top-down control. Looking across their careers, veteran teachers report a clear trend away from autonomy and idiosyncrasy and toward course team alignment and common assessment. Commenting on the decrease in teacher autonomy, one Pennsylvania administrator admitted that, while he appreciated



History teachers are balancing their own expertise with the shifting demands of administrators.

Elena Mozhvilov/Unsplash

having oversight as an administrator, “as a teacher, I would have hated it.”

Even as state agencies, curriculum coordinators, and school principals seek to synchronize and discipline instruction, many administrators confessed that history teachers, especially at the high school level, feel at liberty to resist directives that they find burdensome or intrusive—even in right-to-work states. For their part, teachers often described a whiplash effect over the course of their careers; one administrator might assist their course team’s continual improvement with helpful resources, while the next simply pushes the latest trend, requiring paperwork rituals that teachers comply with in a perfunctory way. Ultimately, teachers ride these waves of attention and neglect, while retaining substantial discretion in deciding what they teach, how they teach it, and what materials they use.

The tug-of-war between management and labor reveals a deeper contest over the purpose of teaching history. Among district administrators, an emphasis on developing skills of nonfiction literacy, inquiry, and argumentation prevails. The stress on skills reflects profession-wide trends in curriculum and instruction—and, again, the ongoing pressures of standardized ELA assessment. Districts tend to organize professional development that reflects managerial priorities, leaving teachers on their own to develop their historical expertise.

Administrators often express frustration with teachers they see as too focused on content (names, dates, stories, and concepts) rather than skills. At the same time, teachers typically define their expertise in terms of knowing their content. As one Connecticut administrator complained, he would prefer a focus on “transferable history skills” but instead gets stuck working “with history teachers [who] love their content.” In fact, history teachers have no objections to transferable skills: 97 percent of teachers we surveyed cited critical thinking and informed citizenship as *the* top learning goals for their students. They are far less enthused when they perceive that an administrator sees their social studies classes as an extra period of “nonfiction literacy” training for the next ELA exam.

Alongside the pressures of accountability is the current culture war over history education. Only 2 percent of the teachers we surveyed say they regularly face criticism related to the way they teach topics in US history. Forty percent say they’ve probably encountered an objection only once or twice in their career. Forty-four percent have *never* encountered an objection to anything they’ve taught. This data is good news, but it is little comfort to teachers who find themselves working in a hot spot. The stories teachers reported to us were highly contingent on local contexts, with teachers who work mere blocks away from each other sometimes reporting radically different experiences.

Political extremes—whether conservative state legislators or progressive district administrators—do not represent the average experience of most teachers. Outside of more affluent corridors where some parents have the time to devote themselves to one side or another of the culture war, most parents are too busy or uninterested to hammer history teachers with objections. Public apathy can be no less damaging to teacher morale, with some teachers wishing that parents had the time and energy to care more about what happened in their classrooms—even if the parents centered their attention on controversial topics. When controversy does strike, teachers point to a shared lodestar of political neutrality. K–12 classrooms contain a wide range of ideological perspectives. Even when they find themselves personally out of step with the dominant views in their community, teachers tend to hold firm to a sense of themselves as neutral arbiters and truth tellers. As one Pennsylvania teacher put the common refrain, “it’s not my job to tell your kids what to think but how to think.”

Many administrators agree, backing up teachers when they face unfair critiques. In other cases, they issue vague directives, telling teachers to “be careful.” Such hazy management creates what a Washington state teacher described as

“eggshell time.” Ironically, administrators have found that politicized challenges can be effective tools to encourage alignment with their expectations. A Virginia administrator told his teachers that in “this world of controversy . . . if you want to ensure we’re on your side, always use our materials.” In states with testing and top-down standards, this is even more evident. As one Texas administrator put it, teach to the standards “and don’t get on the news.” In Iowa, state guidance made clear that teachers should not interpret their state’s divisive concepts law as prohibiting any teaching or discussion of the history of slavery, racism, or segregation. But a chill had already set in, with some local administrators encouraging their teachers to use primary documents or student discussion in place of their own professional voice when covering so-called “difficult” subject matter. In Washington state, teachers interpreted a widely used antibias rubric as prohibiting them from covering material from the 19th century unless they were constantly and explicitly “calling out” the injustices of the era. Without administrative support, and unsure of what they can say, some social studies teachers feel like they cannot engage their students in the honest conversations that generate insight, curiosity, and trust.

Most parents are too busy or uninterested to hammer history teachers with objections.

Within the seeds of the culture war is an affirmation that history matters, in contrast to the testing trends that have made social studies an “afterthought.” A healthy public school system requires public deliberation and administrative oversight over what American schoolchildren should know and be able to do. But overbearing standardization — whether undertaken in the name of test prep, racial equity, or patriotism — runs counter to the long-standing and widely embraced goal of social studies: to foster new generations of independent-thinking, self-governing citizens. If teachers are too scared or too regimented to enact these habits as professionals, they will have little hope of modeling them for their students. Crisis and panic generate energy around education reform; they are also poisonous. The antidote is a slower, more deliberate, more mundane process: restore, reinforce, and reinvest in teachers’ confidence as authentic experts in their subject matter.

Historians, even those who do not work in secondary school classrooms, are not bystanders to these efforts. Whether advocating for more class time for social studies, supporting content-rich professional development opportunities, or

standing up to those who seek to degrade the integrity of history, historians have ample opportunities to contribute. Our full research report, to be released this fall, will be useful for anyone with a stake in history and history education to understand this context and draw conclusions about the best approaches to making productive change. **P**

Whitney E. Barringer and Scot McFarlane are researchers and Nicholas Kryczka is research coordinator at the AHA.

The Mapping the Landscape research team presented a summary of their broader findings in March 2024 at American Lesson Plan, an AHA Online event. A recording can be found on the AHA’s YouTube channel.

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LIZZY MEGGYESY

A NEW FACE AT THE AHA

Meet Maria Zavarello

The AHA is pleased to welcome Maria Zavarello as director of finance. Maria oversees the day-to-day workings of the business office, financial reporting and analysis, budgeting, and compliance.

Maria has a BA in English writing from the University of Pittsburgh and an MS in accounting from American University. She started her career in broadcasting, managing the finances for local, cable, and network TV. Maria was the first financial manager for News Channel 8, which at that time was a start-up 24-hour local news cable channel in Washington, DC. As she told *Perspectives*, she joined the channel so early that “my employee number was 3!”

Maria went on to work behind the scenes in network television as director of network accounting for the ABC-TV Washington News Bureau. ABC had 500 people working out of a building on DeSales Street in Washington, DC, broadcasting *Nightline* with Ted Koppel live five nights a week and *This Week* on Sunday mornings. Maria recalled, “Once I was returning to the bureau from lunch, and I saw a handsome man I thought I might know but couldn’t place, walk out of the building. It took me a moment to realize it was Peter Jennings.”

In 2008, Maria wanted to try something different and joined the Brookings Institution as associate controller. She told *Perspectives*, “It was thrilling to walk down the hallway in the building that Richard Nixon had wanted to firebomb in order to retrieve what he believed were secret files Brookings had stored in a safe.” Maria found she greatly enjoyed working for nonprofit organizations, where her financial management skills could support important mission work. Before coming to the AHA, she was the chief financial officer for the American Association of Immunologists (AAI). This organization can claim such early scientists as Albert B. Sabin and Jonas Salk, and, more recently, Nobel laureate James Allison and Anthony Fauci. AAI has two historians on staff, who regularly publish articles that mine the rich past of immunology. It was this historical reporting at AAI that attracted Maria to the AHA.



Maria Zavarello

Maria has two rescue dogs, a corgi and a shih tzu, and she enjoys daily walks with them and taking them to the park. She is also an avid reader. About reading, she said, “I remember once being in an elevator, holding *The Perfect Storm* by Sebastian Junger. A coworker spotted the book and asked, ‘Do you know what the worst part of that book is? That it had to end.’ Thus a true reader speaks to another.”

Maria comes from a musical family. In college, she sang with a choir that performed with the symphony orchestra. “Aretha Franklin left us in 2018,” Maria recalls, “but for years it was my fond career goal to abandon accounting and be a backup singer for Miss Franklin. Alas, her people never called.”

The AHA is excited to welcome Maria to the townhouse. **P**

Lizzy Meggyesy is research and publications assistant at the AHA.

2024 AHA NOMINATIONS

The Nominating Committee for 2024–25, chaired by Lisa Leff (US Holocaust Memorial Museum and American Univ.), met in February and offers the following candidates for offices of the Association that are to be filled in the election this year. Voting by AHA members will begin June 1.

President

Ben Vinson III, Howard University (president; African diaspora, colonial Mexico)

President-elect

Philippa Levine, University of Texas at Austin (professor emerita; British Empire, race and sexuality)

Suzanne Marchand, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge (Boyd Professor; European intellectual, history of humanities/material culture/arts, Germany and Austria 1700–1945)

Teaching Division

Vice President

Jennifer Hart, Virginia Tech (professor and chair; mobility/technology/infrastructure/urban space in Ghana)

Serena Zabin, Carleton College (professor; early America, American Revolution)

Council Member

Erik Ching, Furman University (Walter Kenneth Mattison Professor and interim associate provost for engaged learning; modern Latin America, 20th-century El Salvador)

Edward Cohn, Grinnell College (professor; Soviet Union/Russia/central Europe, policing and surveillance)

Professional Division

Council Member

Amy Froide, University of Maryland, Baltimore County (professor and chair; female investors and single women, Britain 1500–1800)

Jennifer McNabb, University of Northern Iowa (professor and head; social and legal, medieval and early modern Europe)

Research Division

Council Member

Cemil Aydin, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (professor; global, modern Asia and Middle East)

Peter Sigal, Duke University (professor; sexuality/race/coloniality, 16th- and 17th-century Indigenous Nahua and Maya societies of Mexico)

Committee on Committees

Slot 1

Carol Harrison, University of South Carolina (professor; religion, gender, France 1750–1914)

Jacob Soll, University of Southern California (University Professor; economic, political, intellectual)

Slot 2

Margaret Mih Tillman, Purdue University (associate professor; modern China, childhood and family)

Linh Vu, Arizona State University (associate professor; war dead in 20th-century China, virtue and citizenship)

Nominations Are Open for the AHA's Professional Awards

The AHA annually awards the following awards for professional accomplishment:

- **Equity Award** for recruiting and retaining underrepresented racial and ethnic groups into the history discipline
- **Herbert Feis Award** for distinguished contributions to public history
- **John Lewis Award for History and Social Justice** for leadership and sustained engagement at the intersection of historical work and social justice

Full details for each award are available on the AHA website. Recognize a colleague's work by nominating them today!



Nominations are due by May 15.

Visit historians.org or scan the QR code for more information.

Nominating Committee

Slot 1

Miriam Kingsberg Kadia, University of Colorado Boulder (professor; modern Japan and East Asia, imperialism, Cold War)

Hiromi Mizuno, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities (associate professor; cultural history of science in Japan, colonialism, environmental)

Slot 2

Hilary Green, Davidson College (James B. Duke Professor; Black education in Reconstruction, Civil War memory)

William Sturkey, University of Pennsylvania (associate professor; post-1865 US, race in American South)

Slot 3

Dana Rabin, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (professor and chair; Great Britain, race, 18th-century empire)

Christopher Tounsel, University of Washington (associate professor; modern Sudan, race and religion)

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

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



Daniel F. Callahan

1939–2024

Historian of Medieval Europe; AHA Life Member

Daniel F. Callahan, historian of medieval Europe, passed away on January 25, 2024. Until his retirement in 2019, he was a longtime professor of history (then professor emeritus) at the University of Delaware. More than that, he was a thoughtful scholar, a dedicated teacher, and an exceedingly generous colleague.

Born in Boston in 1939, he attended Saint John's Seminary in Brighton, Massachusetts, then moved to Boston College and received his MA in 1965. He earned his PhD in 1968 at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, advised by David Herlihy.

Beginning with his dissertation, Dan's research revolved around a mercurial 11th-century monk from southern France named Ademar of Chabannes. Through the lens of Ademar and Aquitaine, Dan's research illuminated aspects of the utility of sermons as sources, the cult of the saints, how apocalyptic expectation shaped lived experience in the 11th century, the power of medieval forgery, the roots of European anti-Jewish violence, the legacy of Charlemagne in the centuries after his death, and the rebirth of heresy in the West. Dan's monograph, *Jerusalem and the Cross in the Life and Writings of Ademar of Chabannes* (Brill, 2016), was the culmination of a life's work. Reviewed as "thoughtful and deeply learned," it threaded so many disparate strands into a compelling analysis of the pull that the terrestrial Jerusalem had on the monks of medieval Europe.

The authors of this piece were fortunate to have had the opportunity to present Dan with a Festschrift celebrating his work in 2014. This collection, filled with essays from admirers, friends, and students, tried to emulate the skill that Dan had in building outward from something (seemingly) small — of finding meaning in a text, of using the paucity of medieval sources to illuminate a much wider, more colorful, more fully human world. As so many of the volume's contributors wrote, the intellectual generosity of Dan's scholarship always opened up more questions, becoming on-ramps to further

research not just for himself but for a wider intellectual community.

This generosity was a consistent theme with Dan. His generosity, his intellectual caritas (if you will), manifested, too, in his teaching. He had an amazing ability, even in a large lecture, to ensure that all his students knew they were being taken seriously, that everyone in that room was on a shared journey, and that the purpose of the classroom was about building knowledge together. That generosity was also manifested in his mentorship and how he steered countless students, including both of us at different stages of our respective careers, through a medieval world that at times both entranced and bedeviled us. He indulged flights of intellectual fancy and gladly took on graduate students working in areas outside his immediate interests. A scholar of the 10th and 11th centuries, in his later years, he nonetheless confessed a secret admiration for the 13th. Once, while admonishing one of us to not just read but rather "savor" the works of Etienne Gilson, he wondered aloud if he had missed his calling; indeed, his Western civilization students sometimes referred to him as "Callahan the Philosopher."

Dan was a fixture of Delaware's history faculty, both inside and outside Munroe Hall. Every morning for 50 years, he walked the short distance from his house to campus, and it was rare not to catch him at his desk. On such occasions, he could likely be found in his small research room at Morris Library (the final migration point for, it seems, all the medieval books it held — or at least the one *you* needed at the moment!), from which he always made time to emerge to answer a query, ask how *your* research was going, and work through a problem with you. After hours, he commonly chatted with students and colleagues at local Newark coffee shops and taverns, always ready to discuss history, politics, the natural wonders of Maine, and his beloved Boston Red Sox.

It's those little moments, those conversations that began small but opened up larger worlds, that we as his colleagues, students, and friends will miss most of all.

Matthew Gabriele
Virginia Tech

John D. Hosler
US Army Command and General Staff College

Photo: Angela Hoseth



William Hansberry

1894–1965

Historian of Africa

William Leo Hansberry, historian of Africa at Howard University, died on November 3, 1965. Despite Hansberry's being one of the most well-respected professors at Howard by students and faculty alike, his work and impact have gone largely unrecognized.

Hansberry was born on February 25, 1894, in Mississippi to Elden and Pauline Hansberry. His father, who taught history at Alcorn A&M College, died when Hansberry was just three years old, so Hansberry was raised by his mother and his stepfather, Elijah Washington. Following in Elden's footsteps, Hansberry studied history at Atlanta University before finishing his undergraduate degree at Harvard University in 1921. He began teaching at Howard University in Washington, DC, in 1922, where his lessons on African history had an indelible impact on many of his students.

Hansberry taught some of the first courses in the United States on African history and is cited by his former students as having inspired them to appreciate and further study the subject. Hansberry taught not one but two future presidents of African countries. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Nigeria's first elected president, noted that Hansberry "opened a new world to [Africans] in medieval history, pinpointing the role of Ghana, Melle, and Songhay in the history of Africa." After Hansberry's death, in *The Crisis*, Azikiwe credited Hansberry with creating his interest in the "research in African history and culture." Despite attending Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first elected president, allegedly found time to travel to DC to sit in on Hansberry's lectures. It has been reported that many other African students referred to him as "father . . . as a mark of respect."

What made Hansberry so well liked? He was the first American professor to accurately tell the rich history of Africa and point out the many advanced civilizations it had. By analyzing ancient Greek and Roman accounts of Africa, his research demonstrated the robust wealth and grandeur of the African continent and the people who inhabited it, especially in

Egypt and Ethiopia. In a time where most historical scholarship dismissed Africa as the "dark continent," Hansberry's scholarship and lectures shed light on the importance of African history. Hansberry was also one of the first historians to challenge notions of the "white man's burden" and argued that progress of African civilizations was not saved by European intervention but instead hindered by it. As other historians labeled Africa as a hopeless continent for its role in the slave trade, Hansberry's histories and classes spoke to the prosperity of African history prior to the arrival of European slave traders and how that prosperity was interrupted by these very slave traders.

Unfortunately, Hansberry died before publishing his work. Although Hansberry completed his master's degree in 1932 at Harvard, he never earned a doctorate. Even though he studied with a Fulbright scholarship at the University of Oxford, Cairo University, and the University of Chicago, his dissertation was never completed—not for lack of trying but because Hansberry became an expert in his area of research before experts in his field existed. According to Hansberry's mentor, Harvard professor Earnest A. Hooton, "he made himself the most competent authority upon his subject" and therefore "was unable to take his PhD degree classes because no school had faculty members qualified to supervise his thesis." His works were only published posthumously after Joseph E. Harris, former chair of the Howard history department, edited and compiled his findings into two scholarly volumes.

Recently, a group of scholars have come to give credit to Hansberry by naming their organization after him. The William Leo Hansberry Society formed in the summer of 2020 with a mission aligned with Hansberry's work: to promote, research, and diversify the study of ancient Africa and Africans. The organization includes a collection of scholars from different disciplines, including Egyptologists and Africanists who study the ancient history, language, and culture of Northeast Africa.

This society begins the work of recognizing Hansberry's importance not just as a trailblazing scholar in African history but as one of the most impactful history educators produced in the United States. As historians, we are more than the histories we write and do or do not publish. More important is the impact our lives, research, and history have on our students and readers. Hansberry's life, research, and impact deserve special praise and recognition.

Mark Lewin
Mount Saint Mary College

DAVID K. WESSEL

A TRADING CARD COLLECTION

Among the objects we found in my father's effects after his death was what seemed to be a photo album. Carefully sealed in a gallon-sized food storage bag was a crisp, clear book filled with trading cards that Dad had collected during his youth. He had obviously stored it away many, many years ago. It did not, however, contain family photos, but rather trading cards and a chilling reminder of his childhood during Adolf Hitler's rise to power.

Trading cards, of course, did not originate in Nazi Germany. As early as the 1860s, candy companies in the United States began putting baseball player photos and biographies in packets of gum. Consumers of the candy sometimes noted the strong taste of cardboard but were not deterred from buying more. In 1886, Allen and Ginter, a US tobacco company, started using trading cards as a stiffener for packets of cigarettes, and by 1900, cigarette companies worldwide were including such cards in their packages. In addition to athletes, they featured popular actors and other social dignitaries. Cigarette manufacturers in the United States abandoned this practice when paper became scarce during World War II, but those in Germany did not.

In the years building up to that conflict, Hitler and Joseph Goebbels used every opportunity to glorify Germany and promote the concepts of "one people" and a "master race." Trading cards represented another avenue by which the Nazi propaganda machine could advance its message. In Dad's footlocker, we found a 1934 publication, *Der Staat der Arbeit und des Friedens* (*The State of Work and Peace*). This 100-page book provided highlights of Hitler's first year as chancellor and gave collectors a place to organize their prized trading cards. Interspersed with Nazi Party messages were blank spaces into which collectors could paste their cards.

Dad was 11 years old at the time of the book's publication; he was most likely given a copy of the book as a gift from his



Photo courtesy Tim Wessel

favorite uncle, Ernst, who supported Hitler and his party. As an ordinary youngster from a working-class family in northern Germany, Dad, like many children, asked his parents and other adults to give him the cards from their cigarette packs to help him with his collection. He then carefully pasted them in his book for safekeeping.

The cards, distributed by popular brands such as Konstantin and Juno, showcased Nazi leaders, crowds at party rallies, images of Hitler Youth members on the march, and, of course, Hitler himself. The most disturbing are those of the German dictator shaking hands with his admirers, delivering fiery speeches, and touring his fiefdom. It gives me chills to think Dad could have been among the boys with whom Hitler so loved to pose. Individually, these 1¾ × 2¼-inch cards serve as reminders of the masterful use of propaganda by the Nazi Party in its heyday, propaganda that facilitated one of the most horrific periods in human history.

My grandparents had the means to leave Germany a year later, in 1935, before the full extent of the Nazi madness was felt in their homeland. This was no longer the place they wanted to call home. One of the few things my father brought with him was this collection of cards from 1934, a chilling piece of ephemera from an era that must never be forgotten or repeated. When my siblings and I discovered it, I was both fascinated and repelled by the strong messages in the booklet. I gained a new level of appreciation for my grandparents' decision to emigrate from Germany—and remove their son from the evils that surrounded his childhood. **P**

David K. Wessel is a retired US diplomat and amateur historian with a lifelong interest in the history of the Weimar Republic and the response of ordinary citizens to the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party.



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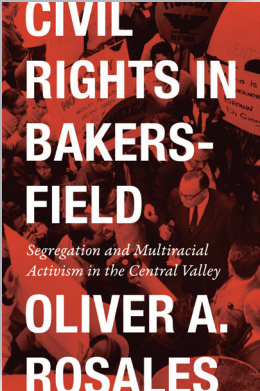
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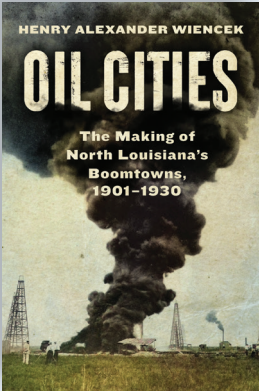
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