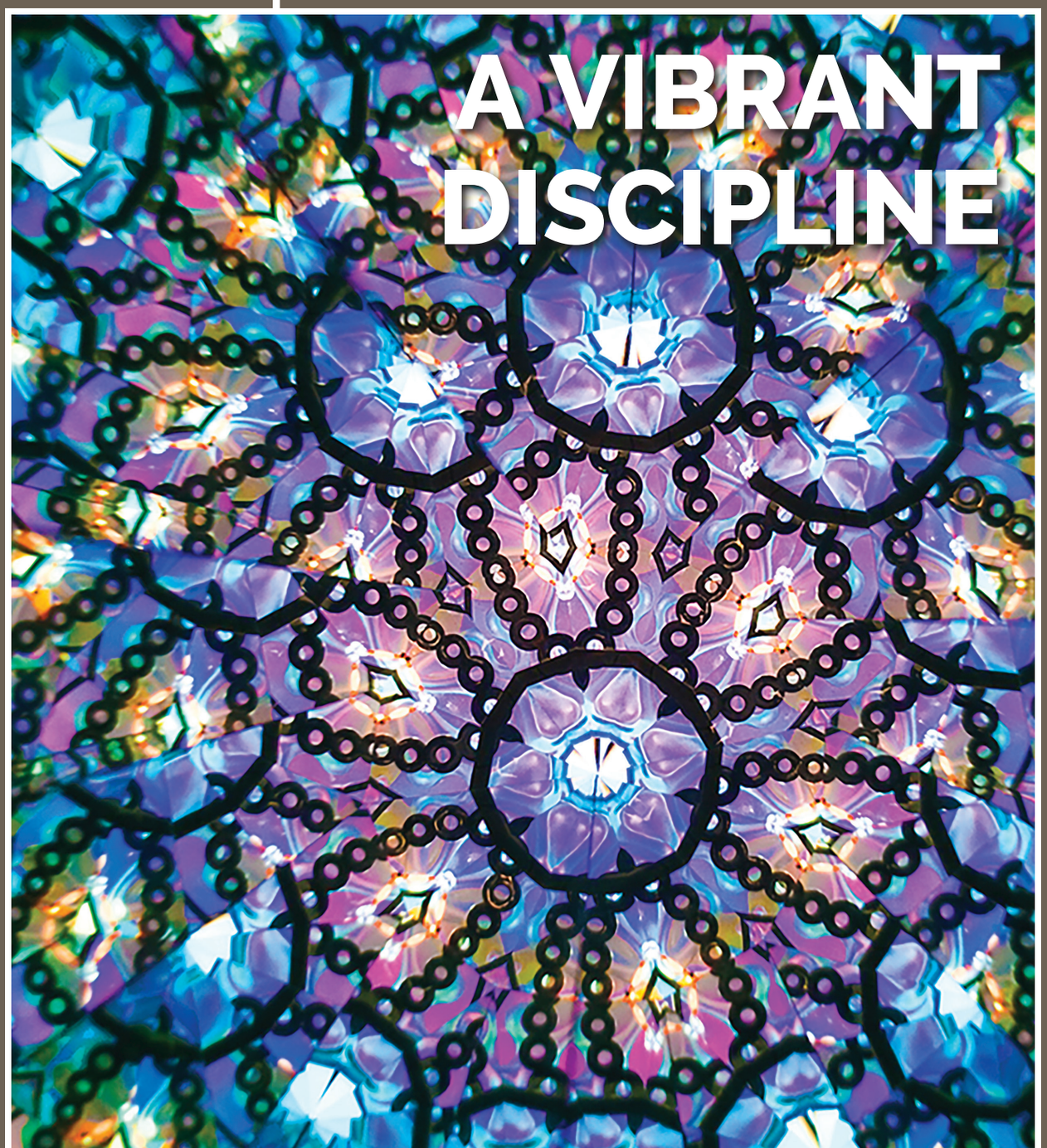
*The newsmagazine of the American Historical Association*

# PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

Volume 63: 1
January 2025



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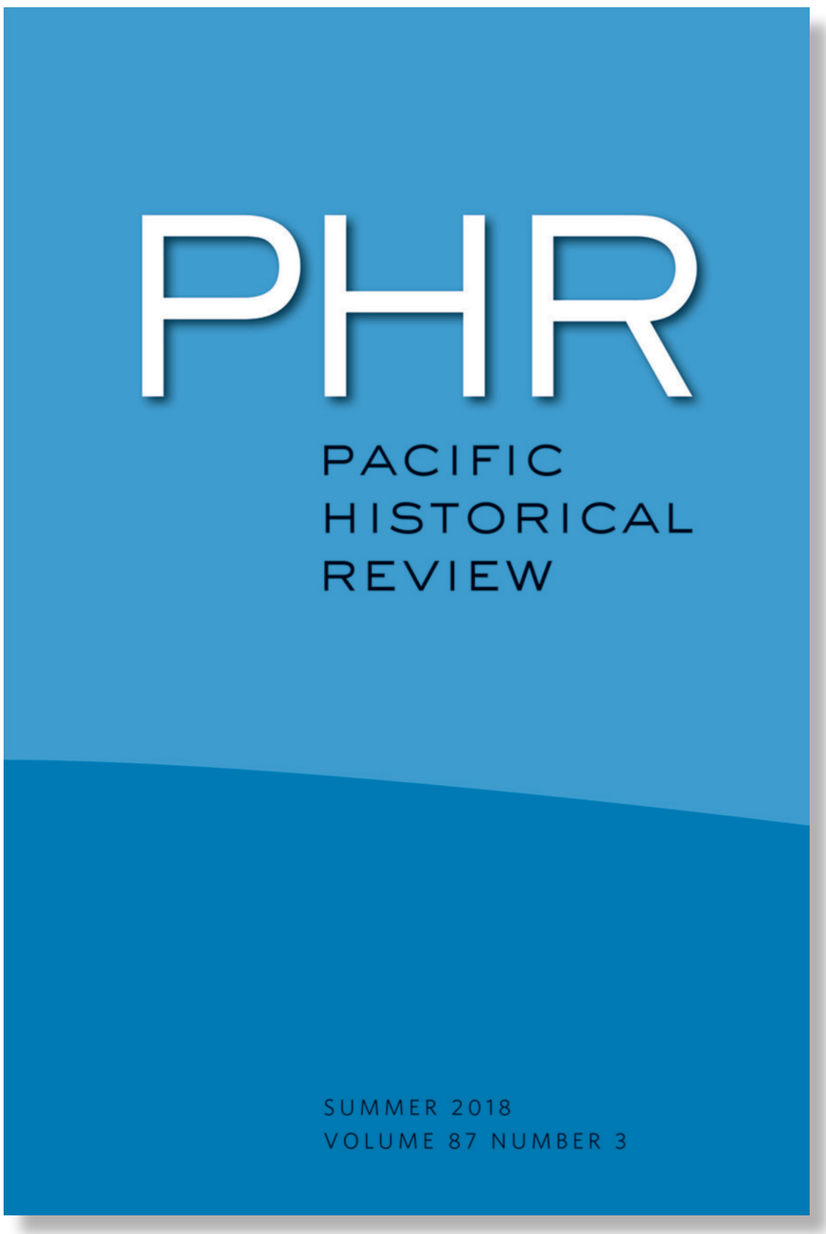


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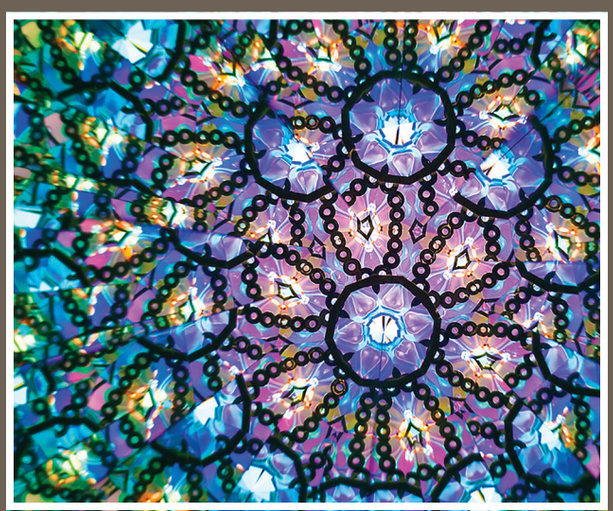
# FEATURES





## ON THE COVER

With each turn of a kaleidoscope, what you see completely changes. New colors and shapes and combinations appear before your eyes. In this issue, focused on the "broadening the definition of scholarship," we want readers to see the countless possibilities for how we do history today. Like that twist of the kaleidoscope, shifts in our thinking, our methods, and ultimately the resulting products can open up vibrant possibilities for our discipline.

*Rex Boggs/Flickr/CC BY-ND 2.0. Image cropped.*

*Newsmagazine of the*

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***Perspectives on History*** (ISSN 1940-8048) is published five times a year, bimonthly September through May, by the American Historical Association, 400 A St. SE, Washington, DC 20003-3889. Phone: 202.544.2422. Fax: 202.544.8307. Web: **historians.org/perspectives**. Email: **perspectives@historians.org** (editorial issues) or **members@historians.org** (membership and subscription issues). Material from ***Perspectives on History*** may be published in ***Perspectives Daily*** (ISSN 1556-8563), published by the American Historical Association at **historians.org/perspectives**.

***Perspectives on History*** is distributed to Association members. Institutional subscriptions are also available. For details, contact **members@historians.org** or visit **historians.org/get-perspectives**. Single copies of ***Perspectives on History***—if available—can be obtained for $8 each.

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

SARAH WEICKSEL

# BEYOND "THE OLDEN TIMES"

*The Vibrant Possibilities of Being a Historian*

How come you don't act like a historian much anymore?" asked my seven-year-old daughter as we walked on the Assateague Island National Seashore. It wasn't a complete non sequitur. I can never let a good material culture moment slip by, so we had been discussing Indigenous peoples' use of quahog shells like the one she had just found. But this question made me stop short.

At that moment, I was feeling very much like my historian self, having spent the week on the final edits to my book on the American Civil War, meeting with the National Archives' FOIA Advisory Committee on which I serve, editing *Perspectives* articles, corresponding with potential authors for an *American Historical Review* special issue, and finalizing details for an upcoming NEH teacher institute.

"What do you mean? Why don't you think I act like a historian?" I asked. "Oh, never mind," she said. Earlier in the day, she had asked if I was like a substitute teacher because I taught a course at American University that semester. Then it hit me: "Do you mean why don't I teach anymore?" "Well, yeah," she replied hesitantly. "Don't historians have to teach?"

I don't know where she got this idea. She has stood in exhibits that I co-curated at the National Museum of American History. She knows that I talk to congressional staff, that I guide teachers on using material culture, that I write about my research, that I work on the magazine that arrives in our mailbox, that I volunteer on a local historic house's board. She tells people, "My mom is a historian." In fact, last I'd heard her describe it, my job is "investigating the mysteries of the olden times."

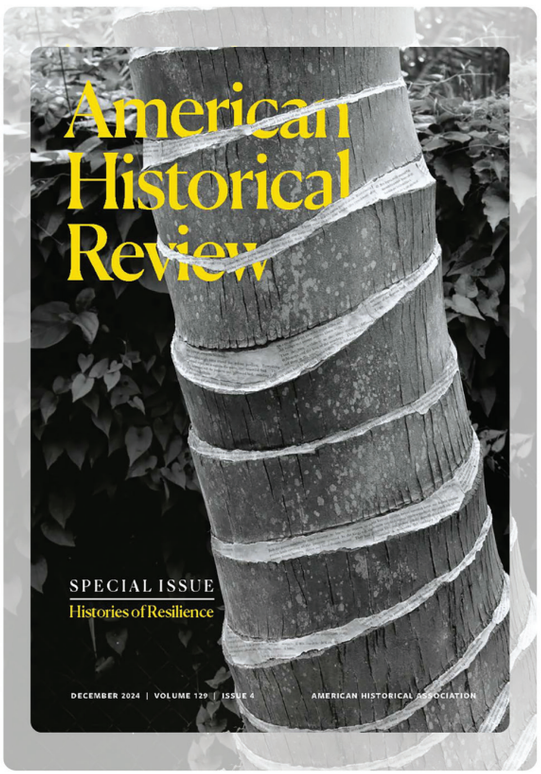
But she now has other historians in her daily life, who are indeed full-time teachers. Her second-grade teacher has excited her about the history of ancient Greece, China, and India. Two of her Girl Scout troop leaders are middle and high school social studies teachers. She has discovered that history is something that is taught. Still, I thought that my daughter would have an expansive idea of what being a historian can entail because she saw me doing so many different things—teaching, talking, writing, curating, advocating, volunteering.

Her question was an important reminder: Our idea of what a historian is—of what a historian *can be*—and what their work looks like begins to be formulated at an early age. But how do you explain broadening the definitions of historians' work and scholarship to a child? Tell them that "historians do lots of things and have different kinds of jobs"? We could, but the real work must begin with ourselves. The takeaways from the AHA's Career Diversity initiative or the *Guidelines for Broadening the Definition of Historical Scholarship* will not be part of how younger generations understand the work of historians unless we actively value the diversity of historians and their work. Factoring that work into promotion and tenure decisions, as the guidelines emphasize, is only a start.

We must value that work as a community of historians inclusive of people employed in a wide range of professions. Our discipline cannot be a closed community to which one must gain acceptance. It has to be a space of welcome—a means of connecting people who care about learning about and from the past. Only by embracing the vibrance and possibilities of historical work will rising generations see us living out the reality that being a historian requires no single kind of job, that a historian's scholarship takes no single form.

It turned out that my daughter was actually relieved that not all historians have to be teachers. "Well, I want to be a historian too," she said. "So what kinds of things do historians get to do?" This *Perspectives* issue, in which 12 historians reflect on their wide-ranging work as scholarship, begins to answer that question. While some historians get their start intrigued by "mysteries of the olden times," the variety of careers and ways of creating and disseminating scholarship presented here offer an exciting sampling of the richness of the ever-expanding ways that historians do history today. P

*Sarah Weicksel is director of research and publications at the AHA.*




# Now Available Online

## December 2024 Issue of the *American Historical Review*

Contributions to our inaugural special issue explore how resilience has been expressed historically in various cultural contexts and how communities have fostered resilience while negotiating conditions provoked by chronic adversity, catastrophes, and structural economic and racial inequalities. Access the issue at **historians.org/american-historical-review**.

AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The AHA is pleased to announce the

# LGBTQ History Research Grant

Each year, the American Historical Association awards several research grants with the aim of advancing the study and exploration of history in a variety of subject areas. See details about the eligibility and application process for each grant on our website. Open to AHA members only.

The AHA will annually award grants of up to $500 to support new and continuing research in LGBTQ history, available to scholars working in all temporal and geographic fields. Details about the LGBTQ History Research Grants as well as the AHA's four other research grants, covering work in a range of historical fields, can be found on our website.

Applications for all 2025 research grants are now open. **The deadline for applications is February 15.**

Please direct questions to awards@historians.org.

**Visit historians.org/grants for more info.**

AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

# ENDLESS INSPIRATION

*Conversations with Historians*

Among the interactions that I have deeply valued and treasured most over the years have been the conversations I've had with our professional colleagues. The topics we've discussed together, combined with the insights and perspectives we've gleaned, have been a source of endless inspiration, motivation, and energy. Indeed, I believe that our ability to convene and converse has long been a distinguishing hallmark of the AHA. From the Association's founding in 1884, the true spirit of our organization has perhaps been best manifested in the consistent sharing of experiences, knowledge, and camaraderie at annual meetings and other events, in publications including the *American Historical Review* and *Perspectives on History*, and the countless other activities the AHA offers.

As I reflected upon the nature of the columns that I would write during my tenure as president, I found it fitting to conceive of the column's format as an ongoing "conversation." Across 2025, my column will pursue this approach by engaging in dialogue with historians on key topics that we face. How is the discipline changing, and what are our grand challenges? What stands out as the most interesting aspects of our field and subfields? What is the role of technology in our discipline? How do we conduct research effectively today? How do we teach history? How do we articulate our value and utility amid the challenges confronting higher education and the humanities?

I will seek to explore these, and related questions, by speaking with several of you—across fields, professions, and career stages. I'm excited about what this format may yield. I invite you to embark with me on this journey in the *Perspectives* issues to come, as we engage in an extended conversation about history.

To begin this dialogue, Laura Ansley, the AHA's senior managing editor, interviewed me about my career, my goals for my presidential term, and what I've been reading.—*BVIII*

## Looking for a Narrative Arc: Ben Vinson III

Ben Vinson III, president of Howard University and historian of Latin America, takes on a second presidency when he accepts the AHA gavel on January 5, 2025.

A scholar of the African diaspora, Vinson earned his PhD from Columbia University. While he currently resides in Washington, DC, and was born in South Dakota, his childhood experiences living on military bases in Italy and his studies in South America have shaped his approaches to both the study of the past and service as a leader. Vinson has served on the AHA Council previously as vice president of the Research Division (2021–24).

Vinson's research focuses on the development of race in Latin America. His book *Before Mestizaje: The Frontiers of Race and Caste in Colonial Mexico* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2017) won the Howard F. Cline Book Prize in Mexican History from the Latin American Studies Association. His latest book project is about the jazz musician Frank Etheridge.

Nearly 20 years in higher education administration gives Vinson a unique viewpoint on the historical discipline. Before joining Howard University in 2023, he was provost and executive vice president of Case Western Reserve University, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at George Washington University, and a vice-dean of interdisciplinary programs and graduate education at Johns Hopkins University. In combination with his faculty positions at Barnard College, Penn State University, Hopkins, and GW, Vinson's experiences have laid the foundation for his presidency at one of the nation's leading private historically Black universities.

**How did you first become interested in history?**

I first became interested in history through my mom, who was an elementary school teacher. When I was growing up, she used to make sure that when I went to school every day,

I knew the significance of the day, what it meant, and what happened in history. That's something that never left me. I was always curious about what happened in the past to get us where we are, and that gave me an extra perspective on the times we were in. I found that very meaningful.

Because of my dad's military career, I also grew up partly in Vicenza, Italy, where I was surrounded by history. Castles, battlefields—every building seemed to be far more than a building, in that it was really a window into the past, living in the present.

So, when I think about why I loved history and why it became my favorite subject in school, it's those deep ties and my upbringing. Inspired by my mom, I would always lean toward reading biographies. As a kid, some of the first big books that I read on my own were the histories of the lives of Alexander the Great, Napoleon, and Julius Caesar. Those three individuals and their lives made a deep impression upon me as a child. It was all history from there, as they say.

**You have called yourself a "living Diasporan," after a childhood spent living abroad on military bases. How did those experiences influence your scholarly trajectory?**

It inspired my passion for history—being in and living in Italy but also growing up Black in Europe, especially in the 1970s, coming right on the heels of the civil rights movement. As a Black child in a foreign, largely white society, there are a lot of questions that you have about differences, and you learn a lot about how you and your family are being treated. We seemed always welcomed in Europe. In our small town, Sovizzo, we were the only Blacks around. I was struck when we came back to the United States over the summers, and my aunt would whisper to me, "You know, we don't talk to those individuals, we have to be careful, don't ask to play with those children." I remember being puzzled; why do we have to be careful? Understanding race on two continents through traveling from one to the other and being raised in one and connected in the Deep South—it raised questions about race, race relations, and identity that have lingered with me. So it was all formed by those early experiences about what it was like to be Black living in Europe and juxtaposed against the United States.

**What first interested you in the African diaspora and Latin America?**

What first interested me was one of my professors during my undergraduate studies at Dartmouth College. I'll never forget Professor Raúl Bueno Chávez, who was from Peru. I took Spanish as an undergraduate student, and he inspired me to keep up my Spanish language skills by traveling to Latin America. It helped that he had ties in Venezuela. I applied for a Dartmouth research grant that allowed me to do research on the Afro-Venezuelan religious festival for Saint John the Baptist in the region of Barlovento. And so really, it was traveling to Venezuela and understanding the arc of history of people of African descent in Latin America, outside of the United States, and seeing the concentration of people of African descent and how they transformed their society. This made me so curious that I just couldn't stop wanting to know more, and it was so different than anything I had ever seen. Beyond anything I'd seen in the United States, anything that I'd seen in Europe. That was the catalyst. It was the early research projects on Venezuela that inspired me to think about the African diaspora and consider it as a field of study.

**How does your scholarship influence your administrative work?**

As a historian, you learn certain critical skills. You learn a lot about using a variety of sources to pull together a narrative. You become a real listener and a deep observer of people. Those are skills that are extremely useful as an administrator. Because historians use an incredibly broad set of evidence to make decisions and to think about the world, and to think about their environment, I look for inputs everywhere, as I think about administrative decisions. I pay a lot of attention to the histories of certain constituencies, units, and organizations while pondering how to arrive at more effective ways to shape an institution. I also think about how historians craft and deploy narrative—you have to make sense out of what might be construed by others as disparate and unintelligible. You appreciate ambiguity. You look for a narrative arc to tell a story based on evidence that can make sense to a variety of audiences. You condense information in intelligible ways to prompt understanding and action. These are some of the calling cards of historians and also help make very complex institutions make sense to the various stakeholders and audiences of the institution. Therefore, I use my historian's craft every single day.

**Increasing diversity in higher education has been a through line of your work at multiple universities. How does that experience influence your AHA work?**

We live in a diverse world. It is important for us to remember that plurality really enhances institutions, and it has the potential to enhance society. In thinking about my work in the AHA, it's making sure we have forums that allow for those multiple voices to breathe. We want to ensure there is

AHA president Ben Vinson III has described himself as a "living Diasporan."
*Office of University Communications, Howard University*

opportunity to provide their contributions so that we can be a fully productive field. That's really the essence of it.

**What goals do you have for your term as AHA president?**

Well, first of all, I want to represent our constituency to the best of my ability. I want to make sure that I am helping advocate for the role and value of history, and that I am facilitating our constituency's voice amid other fields in higher education. I also believe that in my role, both as a historian and as a university administrator, I'll be able to bring those insights into our professional organization.

I hope to help bridge the divides that some see between administration and faculty. And I want to leverage my experiences to the benefit of our organization and help bring more light to our members and their efforts to address the big questions that we as historians are trying to answer for the benefit of society.

**Finally, what can't you get enough of? Any books, hobbies, or other pop culture that you're turning to right now?**

I can't get enough of biographies, and I've been rereading certain books. David Blight's history about Frederick Douglass, for instance, is a monumental masterpiece. I've also been working through the new biography of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by Jonathan Eig. I'm looking forward to reading Coretta Scott King's autobiography, which I hear is a page-turner. But I confess that I also indulge some more popular books. I have been reading Walter Isaacson's book on Elon Musk. I have been working through the memoirs of Prince Harry and Paris Hilton, as well as an intriguing book called *Red Helicopter* about leadership and the turnaround of the Ashley Stewart clothing company. I have always enjoyed learning about the lives of others, because there is so much to learn about making one's own life more meaningful and fulfilling, while also learning from the mistakes of others. I find biography and autobiography to be one of the most reflective forms of narrative that tap into the soul of the human experience.

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.* P

JAMES GROSSMAN

# THE BATTLEGROUND OF 1776

*A Paradox, Revisited*

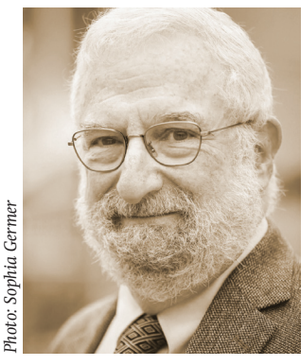


Photo: Sophia Germer

I've never reprinted a *Perspectives* column. And with only three issues remaining before my retirement, it is perhaps a foolish squandering of additional opportunities to offer my perspective on the wide array of historical issues that we engage at the AHA. Family, friends, and colleagues are likely to express surprise that I would forgo *any* occasion to articulate an opinion. There are, however, important reasons to set precedent aside and republish my March 2021 column on the Trump administration's "1776 Report." At the time, I warned that although President Biden withdrew the report and disbanded the commission that had created it, we were not yet finished with this misguided adventure into "history without historians." The AHA, supported by 47 organizations, condemned the report for what it was: a document whose "authors call for a form of government indoctrination of American students, and in the process elevate ignorance about the past to a civic virtue."

> We *must* confront our past if we are to learn from it.

This was, according to a recent commentary in *The Federalist*, "the unkindest cut of all." Calling for the report to be reissued, its defender blasted the report's critics ("the usual suspects") as subversive, unpatriotic, and uninformed. As is so often the case with criticism of the AHA's work on social media and elsewhere, I not only stand by our words but am proud to be the target of whatever vitriol our carefully crafted and historically informed statements attract.

Moreover, because the 2024 Republican platform pledges to "reinstate the 1776 Commission" as we approach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, I don't take lightly the pleas from *The Federalist* and others for a revival of that deeply flawed report. What I said four years ago remains the central issue for historians: "[Its authors] want neither to confront our past nor to learn from it."

And that lies at the heart of the matter. I predicted correctly that the 1776 Report would insinuate its way into what was just beginning to emerge at the time as state legislative initiatives to limit teaching of "divisive concepts" such as critical race theory. The AHA has written to legislators across the country with the same message: We *must* confront our past if we are to learn from it.

## A Paradox (March 2021)

I'm wrestling with a dilemma, a paradox. Media, social and otherwise, want to know why history has seemingly lost status in higher education. Majors are declining; enrollments have stabilized unevenly across institutions. Departments are being consolidated and losing positions as chairs are told to tighten their belts.

At the same time, history itself—along with history education and the public commemoration of historical events—pervades these same media, the focus of battles over the very essence and future of the United States. The already iconic photographs from the January 6 insurrection at the US Capitol reek of history: medieval imagery, the 1775 Gadsden flag, abundant Confederate emblems. Reporters ask historians whether 1619 or 1776 holds the key to our national identity, or why state legislators have disparaged a particular set of curricula and introduced bills that list forbidden concepts, topics, and perspectives.

The controversy generating the most attention of late is the already infamous report from "The President's Advisory 1776 Commission," issued on the last full day of the Trump administration. After President Biden quickly withdrew the report and disbanded the commission, many journalists and historians breathed sighs of relief; surely this was the end of the matter. But the report lives on, not only in the National Archives as an official document but also on the Heritage Foundation website as part of an attack on academic historians and *The New York Times* and Pulitzer Center's 1619 Project

Curriculum. As one journalist told me, one commission member has made it clear that she "wants school boards and students to read the report," and that "the deactivated commission still plans to meet and rework the report."

The 1776 Commission is not yet dead. I fear seeing the report put to use, zombielike, to delegitimate the work of professional historians, while activists and legislators work—as boosters or propagandists, *not* as historians—to influence local history education. This is already brewing in at least three state legislatures (Arkansas, Iowa, and Oklahoma), with bills in the hopper that aim to purge teaching materials of "divisive concepts." Consider proposed legislation in Arkansas:

> A public school shall not allow a course, class, event, or activity within its program of instruction that: Promotes the overthrow of the United States Government; Promotes division between, resentment of, or social justice for a: (A) Race; (B) Gender; (C) Political affiliation; (D) Social class; or (E) Particular class of people.

The broader and more enduring goal is to perpetuate celebratory myths of a nation whose essence lies in extremely limited government and cultural homogeneity.

The AHA's statement on the 1776 Commission report articulates what is at stake. Although the immediate target of the commission, the president who appointed it, and its allies in state legislatures is the 1619 Project, the broader and more enduring goal is to perpetuate celebratory myths of a nation whose essence lies in extremely limited government and cultural homogeneity. They want neither to confront our past nor to learn from it.

In the context of the current fixation on the 1619 Project, it is not merely the question of whether 1619 or 1776 represents the nation's "founding." It is a matter of whether one can understand documents written by slaveholders in the late 18th century without understanding their world—one in which humans had owned, bought, and sold other humans for nearly two centuries.

Historians know this, including those who have identified flaws in the 1619 Project. But the proponents of a history that marginalizes slavery and its aftermath while denying the deep and continuing impact of racism on nearly all aspects of American life would rather not have historians at the table. There were no professional historians of the United States on the 1776 Commission. Nor were any historians consulted by the San Francisco Board of Education in advance of its recent decision to rename 44 public schools. The chair of the school "renaming committee" believes historians themselves to be both troublesome (here's that paradox again) and irrelevant. "What would be the point?" in consulting a historian, he asked. "History is written and documented pretty well across the board. And so, we don't need to belabor history in that regard. . . . Based on our criteria, it's a very straightforward conversation. And so, no need to bring historians forward to say—they either pontificate and list a bunch of reasons why, or [say] they had great qualities. Neither are necessary in this discussion."

These controversies are by no means equivalent. What happened in San Francisco is unusual, an extreme case, in the battles over naming. But in its details can be found a call to action for historians, to be aware of what is happening not only in our state legislatures but in our communities and school boards—indeed all those civic associations that Alexis de Tocqueville so admired—and to show up, perhaps even to join the table without a special invitation. We cannot heal this nation without accurately understanding its pathologies, which are by their very nature historical.

*To read the* AHA Statement Condemning Report of the Advisory 1776 Commission*, visit historians.org/1776-commission-report.*

*James Grossman is executive director of the AHA.*

# AHA Awards

## Know a great historian who deserves to be recognized?

Every year the AHA honors distinguished historical work with dozens of awards and prizes for books, articles, teaching, mentoring, public history, digital history, and more.

**Nominations are due May 15**

Learn more about past winners, how to submit a nomination, and how you can support prize endowments at historians.org/prizes.

# Do you know a historian who's a great **instructor** or **mentor**?

## Nominate them today for the AHA's teaching awards!

The AHA annually awards the following prizes to history teachers and mentors:

- **Eugene Asher Distinguished Teaching Award**
- **Beveridge Family Teaching Prize**
- **Nancy Lyman Roelker Mentorship Award**

Full details for each award are available on the AHA website.

AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

**Nominations are due by May 15.**

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

REBECCA L. WEST

# ADVOCACY BRIEFS

*NIH, Civil Rights Cold Case Records, and Historians at Risk*

**In the fall of 2024, the AHA advocated for the History of Medicine Division at the National Library of Medicine by writing a letter in support of the division as an important part of the library's mission. The Association also wrote to the president of Azerbaijan in support of a historian at risk. After advocacy efforts from the National Coalition for History, which includes the AHA, the Civil Rights Cold Case Records Review Board announced the release of records regarding the 1945 killing of Hattie DeBardelaben.**

## AHA Letter Regarding Elimination of NLM's History of Medicine Division

On October 9, the AHA sent a letter to National Institutes of Health (NIH) director Dr. Monica Bertagnolli and National Library of Medicine (NLM) acting director Dr. Steve Sherry expressing "concern regarding the recent reorganization of the National Library of Medicine, which has resulted in the elimination of the History of Medicine Division and signals a departure from the library's previous commitments to collection, preservation, and study of materials related to the history of medicine." The current NLM strategic plan, the AHA wrote, "suggests that the NLM is no longer dedicated to maintaining, preserving, and making accessible the nation's historical efforts in advancing biomedical research and medicine [and] is setting aside its commitment to being a vital national resource that supports scholarship, education, and public knowledge of medicine and public health issues, both historical and contemporary."

## Civil Rights Cold Case Records Review Board Releases Records on the Killing of Hattie DeBardelaben

On November 4, the Civil Rights Cold Case Records Review Board announced the release of FBI and Department of Justice records regarding Hattie DeBardelaben, an African American woman beaten to death by law enforcement authorities in Autauga County, Alabama, in 1945. The records are available on the National Archives website. Margaret Burnham, co-chair of the review board, stated, "But as was too often the case involving the death of a Black person at the hands of white men, no one was ever indicted. Still, while the perpetrators may have escaped judgment in a court of law, the judgment of history has no expiration date." The review board was created as part of the Civil Rights Cold Case Records Collection Act of 2018. The National Coalition for History (of which the AHA is a member) advocated for the creation of the board, adequate funding, and related efforts to support its ongoing work. Everything has a history, and "the judgment of history has no expiration date" indeed.

## AHA Sends Letter to the President of Azerbaijan Expressing Concern for Jailed Historian

On November 24, the AHA wrote to President Ilham Aliyev of the Republic of Azerbaijan expressing "grave concern for the personal safety and freedom of Igbal Abilov," an ethnic Talysh scholar who was arrested while visiting Azerbaijan in July 2024. "Abilov has been charged and remanded to pretrial detention in Baku for his peaceful exercise of the right to academic freedom—conduct that is expressly protected under international human rights instruments," the AHA wrote. "We demand the release of Igbal Abilov and others arbitrarily detained or imprisoned for their dissenting or critical views in Azerbaijan." P

*Rebecca L. West is marketing and operations associate at the AHA.*

## CORRECTION

In the November 2024 issue, the In Memoriam essay honoring Gwendolyn Midlo Hall stated that she earned her doctorate from Rutgers University. In fact, she earned her doctorate from the University of Michigan, then taught at Rutgers University for over two decades.

ALICIA GUTIERREZ-ROMINE

# HER "HEALTH AND THUS HER LIFE"

*Abortion Exceptions in Legal History*

**It may be well to say at the outset in this case that a great deal of misunderstanding would be avoided in abortion matters if they were considered in the light of the fact that an abortion is not necessarily, in and of itself, an illegal procedure or act," stated the California Court of Appeals decision in *People v. Ballard* in 1959. "In other words, not all abortions are illegal."**

Sixty-five years later, in the wake of *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022), 14 states have banned abortion, while others have imposed early, previability gestational bans that prohibit abortion before many even know they're pregnant. In the wake of the 2024 election, more bans may follow.

While these antiabortion laws include legal exceptions designed to protect pregnant people's health and safety, they have actually led us through a minefield of legal wrangling. Rather than clarifying the law to leave room for lifesaving measures, the distinct interpretations of legislators, law enforcement, and physicians and their confusion over where the line between preserving health ends and preserving life begins have complicated medical care and put pregnant people at greater risk.

This isn't the first time this has happened. In 1850, the same year it was admitted as the 31st state, California criminalized abortion. The act punished anyone who "procure[d] the miscarriage of any woman then being with child" through the use of any medicine or instrument. However, the law did not apply to any physician "who in the discharge of his professional duties" saw it necessary to induce a miscarriage to save a patient's life. In 1935, the law was amended to punish anyone who induced a miscarriage of a pregnant woman "unless the same is necessary to preserve her life."

While the laws differ slightly, both indicate that abortions were permissible to save the pregnant woman's life. Furthermore, the 1850 California law was unique in its provision exempting physicians. Ostensibly, these two laws are antiabortion; however, the original could also be read as a law concerned with protecting patients' safety in an era when the medical field was organizing and professionalizing and California was far from the epicenter of professional medicine on the East Coast.

Today, similar exceptions are often included in abortion legislation. For example, Texas's abortion law provides an exception to the total ban when a licensed physician, "in the exercise of reasonable medical judgment," believes that the pregnancy "places the female at risk of death or poses a serious risk of substantial impairment of a major bodily function." On the surface, these exceptions seem reasonable and simple enough. If fact, in the wake of *Dobbs*, antiabortion conservatives have bristled at commentary on abortion "bans" and have pointed to exceptions written into the law to indicate that abortions are still legal in the event of life-threatening emergencies. However, history shows that, in practice, the line between protecting a pregnant person's life and protecting a pregnant person's health has not always been clear.

> There was no uniformity across hospitals in terms of how they applied state abortion law.

In 1938, a British trial captured the attention of physicians on both sides of the Atlantic. Licensed physician Alec Bourne performed an abortion on a 14-year-old rape victim because he believed that "the continuance of the pregnancy would seriously damage—possibly irreparably damage—the girl's health *and thus her life*" (emphasis mine), violating the law that banned all abortions with no exceptions. During his trial, Bourne justified the procedure based not on a direct physical threat to the girl's life but rather on an assessment of the quality of life that she would have as a rape survivor and teenage mother of an illegitimate child.

When the jury found Bourne not guilty, other places with abortion laws that provided exceptions only in relation to *life*, like California, also began allowing abortions for looser justifications based on *health*.

As historian Leslie J. Reagan has explained, legal abortions based on *health* were an area where women of means had some room for, and power to, negotiate their "legal" abortions. Women would approach their private physicians and express their desire to terminate the pregnancy, and the physician would perform that procedure in their own medical office or—increasingly after the 1930s—in a hospital. Excessive vomiting, suicidal ideation, and excessive nervousness were all justifications that physicians used for terminating a pregnancy. From the 1930s onward, this was a valuable loophole that gave women of means some agency, and for years, this practice worked well enough. Yet, as I argue in my book, a belief that therapeutic abortion exceptions were being "exploited" during the 1930s and 1940s led to the creation of new hospital committees to oversee therapeutic abortion decisions in the 1950s and 1960s.

The rise of these committees changed the procedures surrounding legal abortions dramatically. Rather than an individual physician deciding whether their patient needed an abortion, a hospital committee would decide. Other scholars of abortion, like Carole Joffe, have found "inherent unfairness" in therapeutic abortion committees' decisions. Committees, usually composed of physicians and psychiatrists who practiced at that hospital, tended to rule in favor of well-connected women or denied requests to save spots for their own patients in their hospitals' unofficial quotas. Aside from internal hospital machinations, there was also no uniformity across hospitals in terms of how they applied state abortion law.

When rubella swept across California from 1963 to 1965, for example, the state board of medical examiners investigated three separate hospitals for their handling of rubella-related abortion cases. Though rubella isn't fatal, it has devasting effects in utero. A rubella infection during pregnancy can cause miscarriage. A successful birth can result in a baby born with congenital rubella syndrome, which can cause cataracts, blindness, deafness, heart defects, or intellectual disabilities. In providing abortions to pregnant women who contracted rubella, staff and physicians at hospitals at this time knew that they were technically violating the law in their handling of these cases but explained they were following the recommendations of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

The shifts in abortion law from justifications for life, to health, and back to life illustrate a blurry line and gray area that physicians exploited for their own purposes, and for their patients.

In June 1957, a woman approached Dr. Francis Edgar Ballard for an abortion at his office in Reseda, California. According to the trial documents, she was desperate for an abortion because her husband "had no access to her" in the preceding months and could not have been the father of her child. Ballard—a well-regarded and highly trained physician—performed her abortion, and later, one for another woman. He was found guilty of performing an illegal abortion on both counts.

In appealing the judgment and denial of a new trial, Ballard's counsel claimed that there was insufficient evidence to prove that the abortion was illegal, as


Abortion laws that allowed for therapeutic exceptions to preserve the life or health of the mother led to legal wrangling across the 20th century.
*U.S. News & World Report Magazine Photograph Collection/Library of Congress/public domain. Image cropped.*

the prosecution had failed to prove that the abortion *was not* necessary to preserve the woman's life. If the prosecution could not prove that the abortion was not necessary, then Ballard could not be found guilty of violating the law. The court agreed, deferring to physicians' expertise and recognizing that appearances of health did not mean that someone could not be in danger. They wrote: "Many people walk, without assistance, into hospitals and doctors' offices to have operations performed that are necessary to preserve and save life. Further, it is not a rare occurrence for a person who has gone to a doctor's office in apparently reasonably good health, only to learn from the doctor that he is afflicted with a fatal disease." In a later discussion of the law itself, the court of appeals further stated, "Surely, the abortion statute does not mean by the words 'unless the same is necessary to preserve her life' that the peril to life be imminent."

A decade after Ballard's appeal, in 1969, abortion came before the California Supreme Court in *People v. Belous*. Here, too, the case hinged on the meaning of the phrase "necessary to preserve life," but the court found no clarification in common law. Contrary to Justice Samuel Alito and his attempt to write history in the *Dobbs* decision, abortion has been practiced in the United States since the colonial period—yet in our common law, "abortion before quickening [when a woman felt fetal movement] was not a crime."

In looking at previous abortion cases, such as *People v. Ballard*, the court found that "our courts . . . have rejected an interpretation of 'necessary to preserve' which requires certainty or immediacy of death." The court also was reluctant to hold the law to such a high standard considering that "a definition requiring certainty of death would work an invalid abridgment of the woman's constitutional rights," specifically "the woman's rights to life and to choose whether to bear children." Ultimately, the court sided with a humane, rights-focused jurisprudential tradition that recognized that pregnancy was not a health-neutral event but rather one that had dramatic implications for a woman's life, health, and future childbearing.

In *Belous*, the California Supreme Court found the state's abortion law "void for vagueness" and highlighted some of the problems with how these laws have been structured. Beyond the vagueness and slippery slope between *life* and *health*, the court recognized a problem with physicians being responsible for deciding when abortions were legal but also being punished if their decision was found to be "wrong." According to the court, "the doctor is . . . delegated the duty to determine whether a pregnant woman has the right to an abortion and the physician acts at his peril if he determines that the woman *is* entitled to an abortion." If the physician's decision to terminate the pregnancy is found to have been in error, it is the physician who is subject to criminal prosecution. Under the structure of this law, the physician is not impartial. Rather, the physician has "a direct, personal, substantial, [and] pecuniary interest" to deny the procedure.

The problem with this law, according to the court, was the potential for complete deprivation of a woman's right to abortion since the state "in delegating the power to decide when an abortion is necessary, has skewed the penalties in one direction: no criminal penalties are imposed where the doctor refuses to perform a necessary operation, even if the woman should in fact die because the operation was not performed."

As a historian of public health and law, I find reading the court's 1969 rationale for *Belous* today eerie, unsettling, and prescient of the abortion cases now coming before the courts. In *Zurawski v. State of Texas* (2024), the plaintiffs' complaint argued that they and "countless other pregnant people have been denied necessary and potentially life-saving obstetrical care because medical professionals throughout the state fear liability under Texas's abortion bans." Given the hostile antiabortion landscape, it isn't surprising that physicians and hospitals are afraid of providing abortions in Texas. Should these hospitals or medical professionals decide that a woman is entitled to an abortion, they, in the words of the California Supreme Court in *Belous*, "act at [their] peril" and potentially open themselves up to criminal or civil action.

I find reading the court's 1969 rationale for *Belous* today eerie, unsettling, and prescient.

In 1969, four years before *Roe v. Wade*, and 55 years before I write this, the California Supreme Court foresaw what we're witnessing in places like Texas today. Bans don't prevent abortions. They dehumanize those seeking the procedure by forcing them to procure them illicitly, in less-than-safe-or-ideal conditions, or they subject these persons to the indignity of begging for medical care at their most vulnerable moments. Nevertheless, when it comes to abortion, it seems like we continuously refuse to learn from lessons of the past. P

*Alicia Gutierrez-Romine is associate professor of history at California State University, San Bernardino, and the author of* From Back Alley to the Border: Criminal Abortion in California, 1920–1969 *(Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2023).*

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

## June 9–27, 2025

*Applications Due February 1, 2025*

Funded by the Mellon Foundation, this three-week residential fellowship program supports four (4) graduate students in Summer 2025 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), Donna Doan Anderson (History), 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.

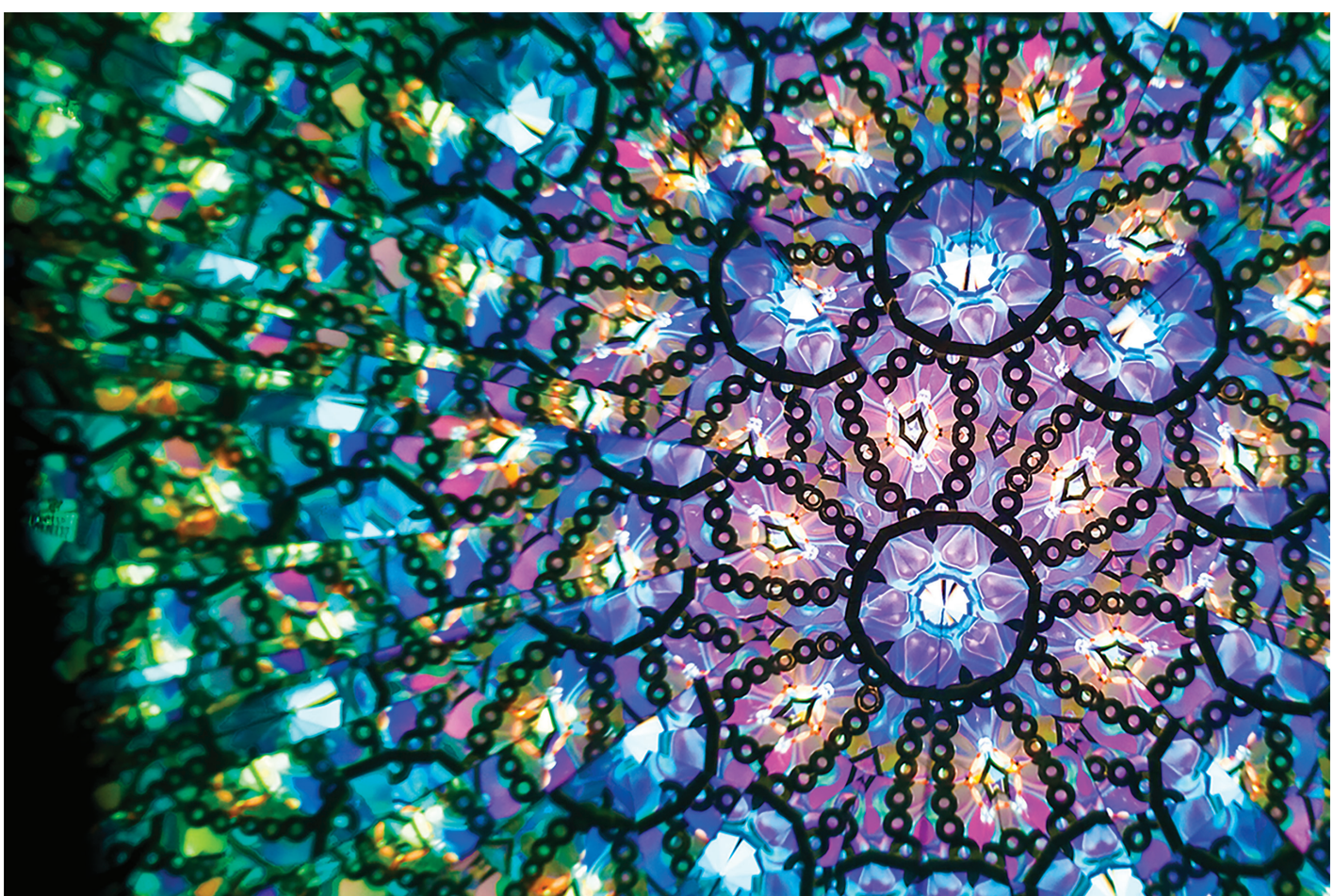
***Eligibility:*** We seek Graduate Fellows researching topics broadly related to U.S. law and race. We are not able to accept proposals that are solely quantitative social science research. Fellows must be from Ph.D. programs in History or relevant humanities or humanistic social science disciplines, 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 your research project, the writing you propose to workshop 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 with the subject line "Mellon Graduate Fellows". For questions contact Jeannette E. Jones (jjones11@unl.edu). For more on the fellowship program go to: https://uslawandrace.unl.edu/mellon-graduate-fellows/.

University of Nebraska Lincoln

# WHAT IS SCHOLARSHIP TODAY?

*12 Historians Share How They Do History*



The scholarship produced by today's historians comes in a kaleidoscope of formats and media.
*Rex Boggs/Flickr/CC BY-ND 2.0*

IN JANUARY 2023, the AHA Council approved the *Guidelines for Broadening the Definition of Historical Scholarship*. Taking inspiration from the Smithsonian Institution, whose mission includes "the increase and diffusion of knowledge," the document was written to "lay the foundation for a broad expansion of what constitutes historical scholarship" and to create guidelines for evaluating its many formats.

The backbone of academic historical scholarship has long focused on the creation of "new knowledge." For many, this work has manifested in single-authored books, journal articles, and book chapters. Yet how historians communicate narratives and arguments about the past extends far beyond these traditionally valued models of scholarship. From museum exhibits to documentary films to podcasts, historians reach the public in many ways. Our scholarship has a public impact when included in amicus briefs or newspaper op-eds. You'll find historians' scholarship in classroom textbooks, document collections, and countless other formats. By broadening how we define the scholarship of our discipline, we open up a world of possibilities of what history is, how we disseminate it, and the future of the discipline.

We gain much by valuing the broad range of historians' scholarship—and we lose much if we do not. Indeed, the guidelines make clear that "remain[ing] wedded to conventional boundaries of scholarship and methods of evaluation" puts history at risk of "losing ground as a discipline in an environment with so many venues for intellectual and civic contribution." It also risks, the guidelines state, "undervaluing important work being done within our discipline."

Here we have gathered accounts from 12 historians about why the kind of work they do is historical scholarship. Neither these examples nor the guidelines themselves can be comprehensive. There are dozens of other approaches that our colleagues take to the work they do, and we hope to continue sharing history's multitudes in future issues of *Perspectives*.

# ON THE POWER OF OP-EDS

KEISHA N. BLAIN

We are in a moment of great uncertainty. National and global developments force us, as historians, to think critically and creatively about the kind of work we want to produce, and just as significantly, we must carefully consider the mediums we will use.

Perhaps it's my personal background as a first-generation college student that drives my deep concern about accessibility. As a graduate student, I made a vow never to publish anything that my mother could not read and understand. If my work could resonate with someone with limited formal education (and a marginal interest in history), then I knew that it would be meaningful indeed.

I can't say for certain that I've always succeeded, but I do know that writing op-eds and blog posts has brought me much closer to my goal. Those pieces—and the ideas within them—have traveled to places I've never been and landed in the hands of people I could not otherwise reach.

> I made a vow never to publish anything that my mother could not read and understand.

While we should not romanticize public writing—the brief word count runs counter to the historian's preference for nuance—op-ed writing can be a powerful form of historical scholarship. The academic books and articles I have produced would have little reach were it not for how public writing has brought diverse audiences, far beyond the ivory tower, to my work.

This is not a trivial matter in a world rife with disinformation and misinformation. Writing op-eds based on scholarly research—and incorporating archival research—is one effective way that historians can challenge and refute how misconceptions about the past, deliberate or otherwise, inform some of the most pressing topics of the day. As a discipline, we should recognize how contributing to the public debate is as valuable as the work we do in classrooms, at academic conferences, and in academic journals. And it extends our voice beyond those who share our interests and professional training.

What is historical scholarship if not the production of new knowledge that can enrich our individual and collective lives while deepening our understanding of each other? Op-eds and other short writings can serve this function just as well as books and journal articles.

An op-ed may not require as much time as longer forms of writing, but it can better respond to a moment. In 2020, as a wave of protests against state-sanctioned violence erupted around the world, I drew on my research on Black women's transnational activism to contextualize contemporary developments in a series of op-eds. Some of these articles have

been cited in law journals, have influenced policy organizations and think tanks, and have been used to develop content for museum exhibits. The accessibility of the op-ed—its style, length, structure, and, in many cases, existence on the free internet (without a subscription)—made this possible.

While some may dismiss the op-ed as scholarship, skeptics should recognize that it often represents the beginning, not the end, of deep scholarly engagement. Writing op-eds has sparked my production of journal articles and books—those projects favored by tenure and promotion committees. My book on Fannie Lou Hamer is a case in point. *Until I Am Free* began as an op-ed for *Time* magazine, and I had no intention of writing a book at the time. But the article opened a public dialogue that led to a presidential candidate sharing it on social media, and it even caught the eye of a relative of Hamer who then reached out to me. The conversations the op-ed inspired helped me realize that it was only the beginning. And it blossomed into a book project.

These experiences underscore the need to view historical scholarship in expansive ways. It takes on various forms. Each form serves unique—yet deeply intertwined—functions. Though short in its form, the op-ed is a powerful tool for historians to sharpen their ideas and engage the broader public. As the publishing industry and the discipline evolve, we must open our minds to recognize the value of op-eds, podcasts, blogs, video essays, and other forms of historical scholarship. They each have a role to play—especially in these challenging times.

*Keisha N. Blain is professor of Africana studies and history at Brown University.*

# BECOMING A FRIEND OF THE COURT

HOLLY BREWER

My involvement with amicus briefs for the Supreme Court began 10 years ago, with a request to review a brief written by other historians on an issue I study. An amicus curiae is a "friend-of-the-court" brief composed by specialists who are not directly involved in a case but have the relevant expertise to help inform judges' decisions. It may seem strange that my knowledge of 17th-, 18th-, and early 19th-century legal history is relevant to cases under review in a 21st-century courtroom, but "history and tradition" are increasingly invoked to

By submitting amicus briefs, historians can bring the latest research to the courts.
*Carol M. Highsmith/Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division*

both shape and overrule US law and policy. It turns out that knowledge of the past is central to many cases in the present. Historians thus find themselves in a strange and dangerous moment: Far from going unnoticed or ignored, the past is being selectively ransacked for ideological ends.

The US Supreme Court (SCOTUS), circuit courts, and appeals courts at all levels of our judicial system run the grave risk of misrepresenting legal history, conjuring a past that never existed or relying on poorly understood principles and policies to reshape existing law. Their attempt brings to mind Sir Henry Spelman, an early 17th-century legal antiquary appointed by Charles I to write charters for the colonies based on his idealized understanding of medieval law and practice. Which is to say: Wielding the past to shape the future has a long history.

The first amicus I contributed was to *Tuaua v. United States*, a 2015 case concerning the question of whether children born to noncitizens in US territories could earn US citizenship. The others have ranged across a spectrum of issues connected to the legal history of the founding era, from the practice of gerrymandering in a democracy to the question of whether 18-year-olds have a constitutional right to purchase assault weapons. Is a man with a restraining order against him for attempting to shoot his girlfriend and mother of his child entitled to purchase another gun regardless? The answer to this question, articulated in *United States v. Rahimi* (2024), relied on an amicus I contributed to (along with 17 other historians and the law firm WilmerHale). It showed the parallels between judicial orders for sureties of the peace in the 1790s and today's restraining orders, and was cited by the court in

their final decision. I was proud to read that decision, which emphasized interventions that Laura F. Edwards and I had introduced into the brief.

Historical research is often key to oral arguments, as they were in *Trump v. United States*, the 2024 presidential immunity case. With the help of the Brennan Center for Justice and historian Rosemarie Zagarri (with whom I serve on the center's historians' council), I began drafting a brief even before SCOTUS accepted the case. I was alarmed by a pattern of recent decisions in which SCOTUS majorities cited case law from 17th-century England comparing the powers and prerogatives of presidents to those of prerevolutionary "chief executives under the common law" (i.e., kings). These cases include *Seila Law LLC v. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau* (2020), wherein SCOTUS ruled that a president could ignore federal law and fire an agency head without cause, essentially because James II once had that power.

Researching and crafting our amicus brief in the immunity case was a complex process that involved excavating relevant constitutional and ratifying debates as well as legal treatises from before and after the revolution. The issues raised in our brief were brought up frequently during oral argument. We targeted a key claim laid out by President Trump's lawyers: "Chief executives" under the common law before the revolution had prerogatives that included immunity; because common law continued to be used after the revolution, they argued, presidents still had such prerogatives. In fact, common law guides published after the revolution, such as that by justice St. George Tucker in 1803, explicitly repudiated such claims. In their final decision, the SCOTUS majority not only ignored the conclusions of our brief; they also ignored the Constitution itself. But our brief was cited by the minority, who wrote powerfully about how the decision undermined constitutional norms of balanced power.

It is overwhelming to be involved in something so crucial. But such cases make clear how relevant history is. Moreover, they make clear that historians' engagement is essential to a justice's ability to make informed judgments. Historians' work can help derail misinformed arguments and make other arguments more subtle. (It can also be frustrating when we cannot raise broader historical questions and must work within legal frameworks.) Writing such briefs is always a team effort, a true peer review process: A well-crafted brief is a thing of beauty. But we need more historians who are willing to do this work. The shape of the future depends at least partly on understanding the past, both its principles and its practices. Bringing our skills and knowledge to the table via amicus briefs not only broadens historical scholarship but helps safeguard our democracy.

*Holly Brewer is Burke Professor of American History and associate professor at the University of Maryland.*

# EXPANDING HORIZONS

JOHN BEZÍS-SELFA

In 2007, I was invited to co-author a US history textbook for introductory college courses that became *American Horizons: U.S. History in a Global Context*. The opportunity to rethink US history by foregrounding the movement of people, goods, and ideas across borders dovetailed with how I teach and how I think about our nation's past. I knew as I was writing that I was doing historical scholarship, though I couldn't easily articulate why to fellow historians. Now I can.

Most monographs and articles privilege primary sources as evidence, while synthesizing historiography is how textbooks get constructed. For my chapters of *American Horizons*, which covered ancestral Indigenous peoples to the Seven Years' War, I read deeply in the historiography and paid close attention to book reviews to guide me toward more recently published works. As I prepared for my oral exams in graduate school, someone remarked that I would never again be so current in my field. So true. But textbook writing brought me closer to catching up than at any other time since I earned my PhD.

> Far more experts read and critiqued my work on the textbook.

This project was reviewed more closely than any other academic writing I've done, and it altered how I saw the value of peer review. My chapters went through two drafts, on which my six co-authors, editors, and reviewers (usually potential adoptees) commented. That meant that far more experts read and critiqued my work for *American Horizons* than my first monograph. Our publisher asked reviewers to comment on chapter content and organization, as well as on how we might reach their students more easily. Like critiques generally, theirs were not always constructive, especially concerning content. But I marveled at how many I had to work with

and how much they helped me write better for our target audience.

The best historical scholarship strikes a balance between complexity and accessibility. So must textbooks, though audience and the production process make achieving that balance trickier. Textbooks have two principal constituencies, the instructors who assign them and the students who get assigned them. Publishers must be particularly attuned to instructors, who often see complexity as the enemy of accessibility. Some reviewers remarked, "That's way too difficult for my students" or "My students would get lost in all those names." Many comments centered on my commitment to incorporate insights from Atlantic history while presenting Indigenous peoples and Indigenous polities as key actors and agents of change through all my chapters. This entailed presenting names of many distinct Indigenous peoples—about which certain reviewers complained. Why couldn't I just say "Native Americans"? I also pushed back repeatedly at the publisher's naming conventions, which referred to "the Iroquois" or "the Comanches" as if they were European-style centralized polities rather than decentralized Indigenous ones. The distinctions were, in my judgment, significant enough to keep.

Indeed, I found that textbook writing required making constant judgments about what to include and what to exclude, decisions that invariably hinged on assessments of significance. This owed partly to length restrictions—a chapter could not exceed 80,000 characters. Once I had a full draft, inclusion of or more attention to one topic meant that something else had to be trimmed or excised. I used two criteria to determine what should stay or go: (1) the duty to present North America's precontact and colonial past accurately and (2) the need to highlight and drive home the textbook's central concept—the importance of the movement of people, goods, and ideas across borders. Both meant that I had to define significance in ways that clashed with some reviewers' suggestions. By my criteria, Indigenous peoples had to be key actors in every chapter. When it came time to discuss and explain the Great Awakening, so did Moravians. There were so few of them, one reviewer commented, do they really need that much attention? Yes, because no 18th-century religious group better illustrated the core concept of *American Horizons* than Moravians, who evangelized on four continents and pioneered conversion techniques among Indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans and their descendants in British North America and the Caribbean.

Textbooks are a valuable form of historical scholarship, one that far more people read—or, to extrapolate from the habits of many of my students, don't read—than peer-reviewed original research. For someone like me, who teaches at a small residential liberal arts college, they have offered a way to bring what I do in the classroom into my scholarship and to, I hope, help students on other campuses see the US past differently and perhaps a bit more clearly.

*John Bezís-Selfa is professor of history at Wheaton College.*

# DOCUMENTARY EDITING BUILDS SCHOLARLY FOUNDATIONS

WILLIAM M. FERRARO

Documentary editors—those who gather, arrange, transcribe, annotate, index, and publish editions of writing created by an individual, group, or organization (often in multiple volumes or on an expansive digital scale)—have been stigmatized as second-class scholars who perform a vital but essentially clerical function. Keying texts for easier access is our principal accomplishment; it is work that demands diligence more than brilliance. Such views must be revised. When *The Papers of George Washington* is completed in an anticipated 94 volumes in 2028 after 60 years of effort, it will be an immense scholarly achievement.

I began on this project in 2006 and came to it after prior experience at *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (1992–2006) and *The Salmon P. Chase Papers* (1989–92). My current responsibilities as research associate professor and managing editor of *The Papers of George Washington* at the University of Virginia call for curiosity and a range of expertise. The documents that we edit cover politics, economics, diplomacy, the military, family relations, gender roles, slavery and race, material culture, art, theater, literature, agriculture, disease, transportation, and pretty much any field that has drawn scholarly endeavor. Providing accurate transcription and meaningful contextual annotation necessitates engagement with many sources—manuscript, printed primary and secondary, newspapers, journals, and genealogical records the most obvious. Accessing these sources efficiently requires familiarity with archival collections, books and databases, and material in the increasingly arcane realm of microformats (microfilm, microfiche, etc.). Another skill is evaluating maps, both for extracting relevant information

and for aiding the project's cartographer in drawing original maps for the volumes that blend documentary evidence with what is seen on those surviving from the past.

The basic work of a modern documentary editor puts a premium on discipline. We follow guidelines for selection, arrangement, transcription, annotation, cross-referencing, and indexing to retain cohesion across individual volumes and the entire edition. In my work on Washington's documentary record, I take reading cursive handwriting for granted, but that ability no longer can be assumed, and there is much debate as to whether artificial intelligence will sooner or later perform transcription with the same nuance and insight as a talented documentary editor. (I'm not optimistic.) Another scholarly attribute of many documentary editors is fluency in languages other than English. I lament that this is not among my competencies, and highly appreciate the help I have received from colleagues and students when confronted with non-English documents or sources.

> Editors gain both broad and deep knowledge of the archival record from the period.

A foremost goal of documentary editors is conveying findings from extensive research, especially through annotations. Annotation, in which we provide explanations for the content of the documents, reveals context and allows new perspectives. Editors must get to know the individuals who corresponded with their subjects and gain both broad and deep knowledge of the archival record from the period. For instance, George Washington's few surviving letters written during the siege of Yorktown in the fall of 1781 give no sense of the sounds, smells, gore, emotions, and agony that were daily constants, or that the battleground included Black people, women, children, and the aged. Annotation with these letters from the documentary records of other officers (including Continental, French, British, and German), soldiers in the ranks, government officials, and civilians offers a fuller view of the environment and raises the question of why Washington chose to omit so much from his communications. In short, annotation tests an editor's historical sensibilities and wherewithal.

Presenting a documentary record in a judiciously contextualized manner supplies a foundation for further research. Historians and biographers are only the most evident among those who use *The Papers of George Washington*. This project has informed documentary and popular films, news articles, opinion pieces, blog posts, and podcasts. The free accessibility of edited documents on Founders Online has promoted awareness and deployment, as has their availability on other digital platforms, notably Rotunda (the electronic imprint of the University of Virginia Press). The costs of letterpress publication and the need for a long-term institutional commitment, combined with the ready accessibility of digital formats, mean that *The Papers of George Washington* likely will be among the last comprehensive book editions initiated and completed on a large scale. The editors take seriously our commission to approach its creation as a scholarly work meant to benefit all interested in George Washington and his world for generations to come.

*William M. Ferraro is research associate professor and managing editor of* The Papers of George Washington *at the University of Virginia.*

# HISTORY IN TRANSLATION

JAMES SMITH ALLEN

Éliane Brault's *À l'ombre de la croix gammée* (*In the Shadow of the Swastika*) is a striking account of 1940, when Germany defeated France and French defeatists created the Vichy regime. A journalist, *Résistante*, and Jew, Brault escaped prison and her occupied homeland to join the Free French Forces in London. From there, she coordinated the health and welfare of wartime refugees for when the First French Army moved into Italy, France, and Germany. Brault's book was published in 1943 by the Fighting French Forces on flimsy newsprint, and what few copies have survived are crumbling on the shelves.

I was moved by this engaging work and began working on a full translation into English to share this well-informed narrative of France's tragic defeat and occupation, along with annotations and a substantial introduction. The entire process produced considerably more than theorist Walter Benjamin's "echo" of the original; it also revealed to me the interplay of language and history.

I use the word "interplay" here deliberately. The relationship between language and history is critical to a competent rendering of text from one language to another. As André Lefevere states in *Translating Literature*, "Translators do not just translate words; they also translate a universe of discourse,

a poetics, and an ideology," much of which is germane to understanding the past.

Historians, especially intellectual historians, specialize in analyzing discursive practices over time. "Poetics" may seem an odd term in history, but it entails much besides poetry; it studies language use in all genres of writing. Colleagues will have less difficulty understanding ideologies beyond the much better known ones in politics. Translation thus subsumes critical elements of the historical discipline's distinct manner of knowing, as Nile Green pointed out recently in "Translating: In Search of the Global Public" (*AHR*, June 2024).

> Translating primary sources requires more than language comprehension.

Historians tend to regard translation as merely a technical skill. Articles in historical publications that address translation practices are rare. Most other remarks are cursory and concern editorial corrections, not substantive issues of fidelity to the original text or its interpretation. Yet translating primary sources requires more than language comprehension. To render Brault's book for a non-Francophone audience, I have used my knowledge of the historiography of France's defeat and occupation. Also important is understanding the coordination of conflicting German military, administrative, and Nazi Party imperatives to contend with the French Resistance and to extort resources for Germany's pending invasion of Soviet Russia. Otherwise, the history gets lost in translation no matter how clear the words.

Similarly, the translation process resorts to historical practices in linguistic decisions related to people, places, and events in the text. Brault had too little time to revise, and so that task is left to me, an American and nonnative speaker of French. I must address more than the misspellings, errors of detail, illogic, and ambiguous passages that, with more time, the author and her editor would certainly have corrected. To verify the accuracy of both substance and style, I lean on other primary sources, the stock and trade of every historian.

All the same, historians rarely learn (or teach) this important craft. It is relegated to specialists in foreign languages, and all too often, translators of our sources go unidentified, much less their practices discussed. Still further afield are translation studies in both theory and practice, not necessarily in any one language. Yet assessing a translation's quality, if it occurs at all, demands a fully informed evaluation. Otherwise, malpractice can be egregious, like the inexplicable omission of 10 percent of Simone de Beauvoir's *Le deuxième sexe* (*The Second Sex*) by its first American translator, who happened to be a biologist.

When evaluating such work as scholarship, the solution seems obvious. Why not include a reviewer with experience in translation from the relevant language? Many historians have rendered excerpts of their sources. Compared with modernists working in Western languages in the United States, ancient, medieval, and non-Western historians attend to these matters with more alacrity. Still better are colleagues who have published in the appropriate language.

Scholars, I wager, would welcome such peer review and its validation of their work. My book project is much better for engaging this expertise, and so would be the comparable efforts of other historians. For the sake of the general reader, however, let us also consider the implications of closely related fields of inquiry. I'm thinking here of the humanities like literary theory and of the social sciences like historical linguistics, among others. These interdisciplinary collaborations represent the future of historical practice, and they will help us all understand better *both* history in translation *and* translation in history.

*James Smith Allen is professor emeritus of history at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.*

# PUTTING HISTORY ON A STICK

JAMES B. SEAVER

I think my hand might have trembled slightly when I clicked the Submit button on my first state historical marker order two years ago. Before that moment, each fact in the drafted text had been painstakingly verified. Every word had been selected to ensure that it helped convey a full story while also complying with the foundry's formatting guidelines. Dates and the correct spellings of names and places had been triple-checked. Nevertheless, I still feared the possibility that an error might have slipped through.

After all, when the words you write will be cast in metal to be placed on the physical landscape for decades to come, the publishing stakes are raised. Passersby and even other historians will look to your historical marker for official confirmation of


James B. Seaver inspects a state historical marker on the grounds of Maker's Mark Distillery near Loretto, Kentucky.
*Courtesy James B. Seaver*

key dates, notable figures, and significant events in state or local history. It's only fair that the anonymous authors and editors of this unconventional publication should approach that work with humility and deliberation.

As coordinator of the Historical Marker Program of the Kentucky Historical Society (KHS), I am the commonwealth's official custodian of over 2,400 state historical markers that span all 120 counties. The oldest date to 1936. Many of the markers are weathered and leaning after decades of standing along the state's roadways. Quite a few reflect the eras of historical scholarship and popular thinking about the past during which they were erected. And some, we now know after further scrutiny, fall short of the standards to which we hold ourselves today. My colleagues and I aim to do better as we add new historical markers to the landscape each year.

Kentucky's Historical Marker Program is community driven, meaning that citizens nominate topics for consideration for new markers that seek, above all, to educate Kentuckians and visitors about all aspects of the state's history. In this way, markers differ from monuments and memorials, which have the added intention of inspiring an emotional reaction from the reader. When a constituent submits their nomination, they must demonstrate that their topic rises to the level of state or national significance and enjoys broad community support. If an external committee of historians approves the nomination, public funding covers the cost of the marker's creation.

Drafting the text of a new historical marker is a collaborative endeavor between KHS staff and our community partners. Historians at KHS take the lead on writing and editing the short narratives that will later be cast into metal. In recent years, they have taken great care in condensing stories about important and sometimes complicated topics in our state's history. Among these are the surrender of the last band of Confederate guerrillas on Kentucky soil in July 1865 (some of whom went on to form the notorious James–Younger Gang); the life of Nancy Green, a formerly enslaved woman who became the first brand ambassador for Aunt Jemima Pancake Flour; and the formation of the Louisville Gay Liberation Front in July 1970 after the denial of a marriage license to a lesbian couple.

With a maximum word count of only about 125 words per marker and 33 characters per line of text, the placement of every letter, number, and punctuation mark matters. For the sake of space, much is sheared away during the editing process, which involves discussions with our local project partners. The tightly constructed narratives that are placed in close proximity to where historic events happened do their jobs best when they serve as the inspiration for longer conversations about, and deeper explorations of, those topics within their respective communities.

There is no byline on a Kentucky state historical marker. Privately, I take pride in the dozens of marker projects for which I have also served as the primary author during my tenure as program coordinator. But as I'm an employee of KHS, my authorial voice is subsumed within the voice of the state government I serve (as it should be). Even so, I have great satisfaction knowing that my words—and those of my colleagues, collaborators, and predecessors—are read by hundreds, if not thousands, of people every day as they move about the commonwealth. I hope every marker they encounter gives those readers a better sense of Kentucky's history and their places within it.

*James B. Seaver is the community engagement coordinator at the Kentucky Historical Society.*

# COMMUNITY RESEARCH AT A MUSEUM

KATE STEIR

When I became the curator of Gunston Hall in Lorton, Virginia, the conventional wisdom among my colleagues was that

At Gunston Hall in Virginia, community partnerships have enriched the staff's research.
*Courtesy Board of Regents of Gunston Hall Inc.*

we were not aware of anyone descended from the hundreds of people that constitutional framer George Mason (1725–92) had enslaved at the site. However, after a single community meeting, I realized how wrong that wisdom was. Two people in attendance self-identified as descendants of people held in slavery at Gunston Hall; one of them agreed to walk the 550 acres of the property with me, identifying sites associated with his family history. Many of the locations he showed me were ones I had heard were "lost" or "unknown." These descendants have provided locations for future archaeological investigation and suggested new archives to consult, vastly increasingly the resources I have to research Gunston Hall's history. As one descendant told me, "You can know a lot more when you simply ask."

Among my proudest achievements at Gunston Hall have been the partnerships I have developed. Part of this work is community outreach; for the first time, we have begun working with local tribal citizens and are convening a new Descendants Advisory Board that will incorporate the genealogy and research of people whose ancestors were enslaved by the Mason family. I have also worked closely with scholars at other museums and universities, including George Mason University and the University of Maryland. We are drafting a research project proposal focused on searching for records of the people enslaved by Ann (1734–73) and Sarah Mason (c. 1730–c. 1805), George Mason's wives, both of whom grew up on Maryland plantations. This research agenda was informed by recent scholarship on the role of white women as slaveholders; the excellent research of historian Greta Swain, whom I met while she researched her dissertation in the Gunston Hall archives; and informal conversations I've had with Gunston Hall descendant communities about their family histories.

Historians know that even when a single author's name appears on a book, every research project is a collaborative effort. Countless colleagues read drafts, suggest sources, and add to the historiographical conversation. Working in a museum, however, particularly in a relatively small museum, as the only full-time curator, has challenged and expanded the ways I think about collaborative research and the scholarship it produces. While I find deep satisfaction in writing an exhibit label, publishing an article, or giving a public talk, a huge part of my job—the part that has yielded the newest insights about our collection, historic landscapes, and buildings—is talking with people and, perhaps more importantly, asking them questions.

These conversations can be a form of research, but they also allow me and our partners to co-create new research plans to dig even deeper into the history of the site. I have spent much less time in the archives during my museum career than I did during graduate school, but my methods of gathering historical information have broadened. The ability to combine formal academic research with anecdotes and conversations to create a compelling story relevant to the lives of museum visitors is one of the great opportunities for history work in a museum context and one classroom teachers could employ as well.

These collaborative projects take time. Building trust within local communities to the point that neighbors want to participate in historical work can take years. Maintaining networks within the academic community, keeping up with historiography, and publishing or attending conferences also take time. Community-based work does not necessarily immediately translate into an exhibition. But much like archival research for a book, the acts of building trust and convening different communities that might not otherwise be in conversation expand the boundaries of knowledge about our collection, the themes relevant to our mission, and our methods of knowing the past.

Many museum professionals speak about museums having the responsibility of disseminating cutting-edge research to the public. But I also see an opportunity for innovating community-driven research agendas to contribute to that scholarship through conversations that are distinct from formal oral histories or interdisciplinary papers. I hope one day to be able to share the findings of this research with both the public and other historians. In the meantime, as many of my friends working in universities face questions about the boundaries between disciplines and departments, I would encourage us all to think about the different ways that we glean historical knowledge and what research looks like in the 21st century.

Our community stakeholders do not have to come to the museum only to be the recipients of information. They can also be co-investigators, helping us to frame questions, set research agendas, examine sources, and provide peer feedback on the scholarship we produce together.

*Kate Steir is senior curator and head of collections at Gunston Hall.*

# DOCUMENTING UNRECOGNIZED LOCAL HISTORIES

ANNA BOOKER

Connecting and listening to practitioners in place has proven to be one of the most effective ways to bridge disciplines, build trust, and further my goals as a local historian in Bellingham, Washington. Through these relationships, I introduce students to the diverse communities who are working and caring for our city, especially its waterfront on Bellingham Bay. It's my hope that this scholarship offers a model for how to establish protective relationships between people and institutions, inviting vulnerable communities to set the parameters for documenting and sharing unrecognized local histories.

I began my career at an environmental consulting firm researching land use history. When I began teaching at a community college, I knew I wanted to apply those skills to my introductory regional and oral history courses. I wanted to continue sharing local histories with the public in imaginative and engaging ways, and I wanted students to learn how to locate sources from archival collections, public agencies, and historical societies. It wasn't clear to me how that would look, and yet, steadily, I have incorporated pedagogy that awakens students' curiosity about their surroundings by investigating past environmental efforts and inviting them to use historical thinking to document waterfront revitalization.

Bellingham is a port city where the industrial and resource-based waterfront is being redefined. The waterfront was built first on pilings, and then on top of fill, much of it on waste from the pulp and timber mills that came to dominate the area through the 19th century and well into the 20th. The city is now redeveloping this area with a new park, road, light industry, and housing. The ongoing coordinated effort to clean up contamination and restore the natural habitat, while maintaining a working waterfront, inspired my first effort to merge research, teaching, and the digital humanities. In 2016, a grant enabled two of my students to create a visualization of Bellingham's 150-year evolution by overlaying historical maps showing the tidal flats as they existed for most of human history with plat maps and surveys conveying how the shoreline was reshaped and filled. The Bellingham Working Waterfront project was unveiled at SeaFeast, an annual celebration of Bellingham's maritime heritage. A captivated audience heard the story of our waterfront's transformation from the city's backyard—the place where we would dump things and bury them—to downtown's welcoming entry.

It's been a long and messy process—and we're still experiencing it. But the takeaway for my students, and the community, has been that civic engagement takes time. It requires empathy for the people who lived through it. One student created a map, revealing that the current salmon hatchery tanks, located at the mouth of the creek that runs through town, were the site of a sewage treatment plant and the city dump until the 1970s. Today, we see the removal of concrete culverts, streambank revegetation, and construction of a public park with wood pulp digesters repurposed as artwork. After interviewing her grandma, who had worked at what was once the biggest salmon cannery in the world (now the location of a popular beach), my student explained to our class in her final presentation that the creation of the map was an opportunity to recognize her own experience as part of history.

More recently, my delving into place-based, experiential learning led to the development of a community-based participatory history of Lummi Aquaculture. Over two years, in collaboration with historian Daniel Chard at Western Washington University, the Lummi Cultural Commission, and the Northwest Indian College (NWIC) Internal Review Board, we created a 45-page lesson plan that explores archival sources about the construction of North America's largest human-made sea pond for shellfish cultivation. Interpreted and told from the perspective of Lummi elders, the lesson includes the building of a technical fisheries school that evolved into what is now NWIC, the only tribal college in the Pacific Northwest. For students, the emotional impact comes from hearing directly from Lummi elders and reading primary sources about Indigenous communities, frequently framed as existing only in the past, revitalizing traditional food sources and management practices. On a personal note, my work with Lummi elders has reinforced my belief in the transformative potential of research conducted through sustained, evolving relationships.

A black-and-white postcard of a group of bathers on the beach in Bellingham Bay is the only image on my course

home page. Taken in 1924, it captures a rare sunny day in the Pacific Northwest, with bare-chested kids frolicking and posing for the camera, in what we now know was highly contaminated water. This image reminds me that the past is messy just like the present. Researching that complexity with my students, documenting unrecognized local histories, is how I have come to love a people and a place.

*Anna Booker is a local historian and instructor at Whatcom Community College.*

# ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

HOLLY SCOTT

Since leaving full-time contingent faculty life for secure employment in academic administration, I've wondered, Am I still a historian, or just someone who trained as a historian years ago? I no longer spend time in archives or publish scholarly writing. But I do create inquiry-based curricular materials for my courses, work that requires many of the skills of historical scholarship.

In addition to my administrative work, I teach as an adjunct at a community college, where I've centered my US history survey classes on inquiries, usually five each semester. It's an approach I learned during a brief stint as a high school history teacher. Inquiries are unit lessons grouped around an interpretive question, often called the compelling question. Students use primary sources to answer a series of supporting questions that lead up to the main one. Inquiries do not create new knowledge but rather reframe content for students to encourage new insights.

Creating a good compelling question starts with the same things that are important when starting academic research: familiarity with scholarly literature and a sense of which questions matter most. Materials I saved from preparing for my comprehensive exams have been invaluable. I use them to refresh my memory of scholarly conversations and to identify books to revisit, both for understanding the questions asked and arguments made and to mine the footnotes for

Anna Booker speaks with students on the Bellingham waterfront in 2019.
*Anita Harker*

primary sources. Inquiries require subquestions, helping students break the main interpretive task into smaller steps. Scholarly work often follows a similar pattern. Experience analyzing an author's main argument, secondary arguments, and use of evidence helps in building solid inquiries. It turns out that preparing for comprehensive exams was one of the most useful parts of my graduate education.

It's hard to get inquiry design right, and it's exhilarating when you do. As Whitney E. Barringer, Lauren Brand, and Nicholas Kryczka pointed out in "No Such Thing as a Bad Question?" (*Perspectives*, September 2023), some compelling questions promote binary thinking, abstract philosophizing, or a sense of moral superiority to the past. Instead, I aim to use inquiries that balance complexity and clarity. There's a reason many inquiries have a black-and-white compelling question. Sometimes nuanced questions need refining to land well in the classroom. When I asked students to evaluate how abolitionists drew on and challenged the context of their times, they got lost. Asking instead whether abolitionists were smart strategists provides better focus, with the subquestions and our discussion of the sources providing more complexity. Likewise, more philosophical questions can work with the right guidance. "Was 'revolution' an appropriate label for the protest movements of the 1960s?" risks abstraction but remains grounded in historical context when we seek to understand why the term appealed to certain people in a certain time.

> Inquiries do not create new knowledge but rather reframe content for students to encourage new insights.

Both scholarship and inquiry design can be solitary endeavors, but both are richer with collaboration. I'm most confident in my inquiries on mid-20th-century American topics because that is the period I know best. It's harder for me to create inquiries on topics outside my areas of expertise. In those cases, I do a lot more reading and a lot more digging through footnotes to find potential primary sources. Then comes the search for accessible digitized sources and the risk of getting stuck in endless internet search mode. Unfortunately, when teaching is a side job, there are fewer opportunities to collaborate more directly with others.

I've often wished for a forum where I could seek advice from historians with expertise in other areas about the ideal sources to use or ways to reframe my questions. Better yet would be more historians creating and sharing inquiries with each other, perhaps even peer-reviewing each other's work. Websites like C3 Teachers are a start but are geared to the K–12 classroom. We need collaborative spaces for those teaching at the college level. But we're unlikely to get this until we recognize teaching for what it is: scholarship.

*Holly Scott is an adjunct assistant professor at Piedmont Virginia Community College and preadmission and academic program advisor at the University of Virginia.*

# REACHING A DIFFERENT, SHARED AUDIENCE

SHU WAN

*Why do you want to recommend my book?* As a podcast host on the New Books Network's Disability Studies channel, I often face this question from historians invited to the show. Part of the podcast network founded and managed by historian Marshall Poe, the channel aims to introduce newly published books in the field of disability studies to a general audience. Every week, I spend a few hours scanning social media posts, email lists, and H-Disability reviews in search of the right book. I send an invitation to the authors and in most cases respond to their question with "I enjoy reading your books and want to share them with my listeners!" Beyond enjoyment, my passion for promoting books stems from my desire to expand the audience for academic history. Podcasting is one way to achieve that goal.

*Shamelessly promoting my book . . .* If you happen to spend time scrolling through historians' social media feeds, you'll likely recognize this phrase. I myself am a shameless advocate for other historians' work, promoting books to a shared audience that includes academics and amateurs. My use of the term "shared audience" is inspired by the historian Michael Frisch's argument for "shared authority" in the creation and representation of historical knowledge. The work of British historian Lawrence Stone, who identified a "revival of narrative" in the 1970s, has shaped my thinking as well. "Historians have always told stories," Stone insisted. "From Thucydides and Tacitus to Gibbon and Macaulay." Stone regarded storytelling as the historian's essential craft; still, four decades following his manifesto, popular history books are still written predominantly by nonacademic historians. Podcasts

that invite historians for rigorous but accessible conversation can reach potential readers where they are: in their kitchens or cars, walking the dog or folding laundry. An effective podcast host—one trained as a historian but dedicated to helping important research to reach an audience who might otherwise be denied its insights—can establish a bridge between scholars and nonacademic audiences, providing a vital service to both sides of that exchange.

*Why don't you introduce historical knowledge directly rather than through books?* my wife asked after listening to my first few episodes. I sighed but understood the point of her question. What she had in mind is public history, and there are many great public history projects. My contribution is different: I promote academic history books to nonacademic readers. Every time I stop by a large bookstore, I am frustrated to find that most prominently displayed histories recount the familiar deeds of powerful men—Napoleon Bonaparte, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt—or return to subjects of wars and violence. Military historians might rue declining college course offerings, but military history is still welcome in US bookstores. By contrast, while environmental, LGBTQ+, and disability history are popular among historians, they scarcely cross the average reader's horizon. Those of us working on the Disability Studies channel have made progress promoting academic writing, as reflected in the following metrics: 140 episodes and 116,947 downloads in two years.

> Podcasts that invite historians for rigorous but accessible conversation can reach potential readers in their kitchens or cars, walking the dog or folding laundry.

*Why do I rarely see books about American deaf history?* A few years ago, a colleague studying Chinese educational policy asked me this question, which encouraged me to propose a disability studies channel to the New Books Network. Every year, thousands of academic histories are published, but most remain invisible to a general audience. "If it be true that good wine needs no bush" (as Shakespeare's *As You Like It* has it), books need advocates: Historians should take pride in promoting their work on social media, podcasts, and other venues. As a historian and podcaster, I aim to facilitate the translation of academic books to an amateur audience.

*What is the difference between other book podcasts and mine?* I asked myself while preparing my first episode, an interview with Bruce J. Dierenfield and David A. Gerber on their book *Disability Rights and Religious Liberty in Education*. The answer is that I am a disability scholar, and I know the history and historiography better than amateur and academic podcasters outside the field. Aside from anchoring my podcast, I also serve as a commentator and critic by contributing my thoughts to scholarly discussions (sometimes with reference to my own research). These efforts make my podcast an alternative medium for academic production and situate my work within a conversation among historians looking to broaden the meaning of and mediums for their scholarship.

*Shu Wan is a PhD candidate at the University at Buffalo.*

# HISTORY, SCIENCE, AND PROPHECY?

MARK ORSAG

Science deeply informs my analysis of history. Yet history also crucially validates and informs science. Such symbiosis can lead to historical scholarship that provides timely warnings that hopefully inspire necessary adaptation, innovation, and survival in light of the threats that our species and planet currently face.

My scholarship is now almost always done as part of interdisciplinary teams. At its core is the nexus of history, complex systems theory, and science (particularly medicine). The heart and soul of what I study is the historical past—but recast as comparative analogy, revelatory filter, comparative prophecy, and advocacy. I came to this point in my career by relative happenstance, the how and why of it discernible only in retrospect. I graduated with a degree from Carnegie Mellon University, a school with a strong science influence across its undergraduate curriculum. My later PhD dissertation research at Michigan State University, rather unexpectedly, required me to draw heavily on that prior scientific background. I indirectly received a further interdisciplinary push from my current institution, Doane University. Faculty at our small liberal arts university are encouraged to teach broadly. We also know, grow to respect, and sometimes befriend colleagues in quite different disciplines.

In the spring of 2020, I co-taught an upper-level interdisciplinary seminar titled Apocalypse: How Societies Survive and Fail to Survive Existential Threats with physician Amanda McKinney. We had been eager to apply the holistic work of

complex systems theorists and historians such as Joseph Tainter, Kyle Harper, and Ugo Bardi to current problems, which we predicted would lurk, in even more virulent forms, in the near future. (Little did we realize . . .) Teaching this particular course, as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded around the world, was a surreal experience. The class began in person and ended on Zoom. Our bridge from real-world and classroom inspiration to detailed interdisciplinary research was often initially envisioned by our curious and engaged students—in their questions and surmises.

> Over time, how have humans conceptualized and wrestled with these complex challenges?

Subsequently, Amanda and I collaborated on a study of the Plague of Cyprian pandemic in the third century CE. We were joined by biologist DeeAnn M. Reeder (Bucknell Univ. and Smithsonian Inst.) in writing *Interdisciplinary Insights from the Plague of Cyprian: Pathology, Epidemiology, Ecology and History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023). Using a combination of ancient and modern evidence, our team's interdisciplinary approach alternated between analyzing ancient texts (for example, Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* and Cyprian's "On Mortality") and applying modern epidemiology, molecular phylogenetics, and virology. We also holistically examined the issue of pandemics and their impacts in the past, present, and (possible) future.

Later, through the lens of lifestyle medicine, Amanda and I explored intertwined issues of human and planetary health at three different stages (prehistoric hunter-gatherer societies and ancient and modern forms of civilization) related to diet, disease, and agricultural production. The resulting article and two book chapters detail potentially prophetic historical lessons regarding civilizational collapse for our 21st-century globalized planet. With this project, we have been asking multiple questions. In an era of concern about climate change, chronic and pandemic disease, environmental degradation, political and economic upheaval, and military conflict, what can we learn from past civilizations that failed to live within planetary limits? For those that collapsed, what were the broader implications? Over time, how have humans conceptualized and wrestled with these complex challenges? Our analysis leads us back (ouroboros-style) to historical lessons for our globalized planet of societal reactions to existential threats such as "the Mother of All Collapses," as Ugo Bardi termed it: the "fall" of the interconnected Mediterranean world of the Roman Empire—a topic that was central to our 2020 course.

Our latest project, as part of a larger interdisciplinary team, is to apply some of the lessons we have learned in a way that is, essentially, prophetic. Can interdisciplinary historical scholarship regarding infectious disease outbreaks not only help elucidate the mysteries of the past but also help predict the evolution of near-future epidemic or pandemic threats against the backdrop of climate change; environmental disruption; and ever-evolving patterns of human behavior, movement, and interaction? We believe that it can. Interestingly, we will be presenting our research at a major medical, as opposed to a history, conference. For us, disciplinary boundaries continue to blur, but history loses none of its relevance or potential to inform.

*Mark Orsag is professor of history at Doane University.*

# REACHING THE DIGITAL GENERATION

TORE C. OLSSON

In 2018, "The History BA Since the Great Recession" identified the history major as the single biggest loser in undergraduate degrees produced nationally between 2011 and 2017, with a drop of more than 30 percent. Computer science, in contrast, grew by more than 50 percent in that period, claiming the spot as the second most rapidly growing major.

There is little doubt that the meteoric rise of computer science as an undergraduate major is linked to an extracurricular hobby that has grown even more rapidly: video gaming. In 2003, Americans spent $11.2 billion on digital games. By 2023, they spent $57.2 billion, eclipsing the revenue of the film and music industries combined. The astronomical growth of video gaming has funneled thousands of college students into STEM fields, eager to create the next generation of games.

But could video gaming also turn students toward the humanities? After all, many of the most popular game franchises are historical in nature, time-warping players into ancient Egypt, feudal Japan, or medieval Europe.

The best-selling historical video game of all time, with more than 60 million units sold, is *Red Dead Redemption II* (Rockstar Games, 2018). The game depicts a fictional outlaw, Arthur Morgan, and his gangmates as they flee authority across the American landscape of 1899. (The original *Red Dead*

Actors Roger Clark (*center*) and Rob Wiethoff (*right*) visit Tore C. Olsson's (*left*) class at the University of Tennessee to discuss their involvement in *Red Dead Redemption*.
*Austin Orr/Lumos Media*

*Redemption*, released in 2010, is set in the US West and northern Mexico in 1911, with a similar outlaw focus.) I began playing *Red Dead Redemption II* during pandemic lockdowns, and as a specialist on post–Civil War America, I found myself surprised by the game's nuance and frequent allusion to major historical topics. So I decided to try an experiment. In 2021, I taught the first-ever college history class using the *Red Dead* games as a window to understand broader dilemmas of Gilded Age and Progressive Era America. The course, which I've also written about in the *American Historical Review*, has seen both robust enrollments and unprecedented (at least for me) student enthusiasm for discussing historical content.

The course's success convinced me to attempt this experiment on a larger scale, with a book that repackaged our class's journey for gamers and history buffs alike. As with the class, *Red Dead's History: A Video Game, an Obsession, and America's Violent Past* (St. Martin's Press, 2024) uses the fictional plot and characters of the *Red Dead* games as an introductory hook. But the heart of *Red Dead's History* is a synthesis of scholarly literature on the late 19th-century US West, South, and Appalachia. I use the games to explore topics ranging from the corporate cattle industry to the Lost Cause to the social construction of race.

*Red Dead's History* is the first book about video games for a popular audience written by a professional historian. Its reception over the past months suggests that it might be scratching an itch we didn't know existed. IGN, the world's most-read gaming news website, featured multiple stories about the book, including a video that has received millions of views on TikTok and Instagram. Particularly appealing to digital natives is the audiobook, narrated by actor Roger Clark, who played Arthur Morgan. For many gamers, appointing "Arthur" as their new history teacher is an alluring proposition. The book has also granted me unexpected opportunities to address new audiences. This past summer, I spoke to a crowded auditorium at San Diego Comic-Con, the nation's premier pop-culture exposition, and I have given more than two dozen interviews to journalists, podcasters, and media outlets, including the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, BBC America, and the History Channel.

Standing alongside the research monographs that constitute our discipline's primary output, *Red Dead's History* is an admittedly unusual work. It's a work of synthesis, yet equally a work of public translation, engaging a pop-culture medium that few have taken seriously. But it responds to needs that are both timely and pressing, and it might be one way—of many—to prove the relevance of serious history to new generations in the digital age.

*Tore C. Olsson is associate professor of history and director of graduate studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.*

MOU BANERJEE

# LEARNING NONVIOLENCE IN ACTION AND THOUGHT

## *UW-Madison's Nonviolence Project*


In the 1960s, CORE activists marched in Madison, Wisconsin, in support of racial equality.
*Gerald Marwell/University of Wisconsin–Madison Archives Collections*

GIVEN OUR INHERITANCE of a "mutilated world," as poet Adam Zagajewski so evocatively invoked, the idea of nonviolence and its practical uses continue to fascinate, intrigue, influence, inspire, and encourage across age, race, and political demographics. As an educator, a historian, a person of South Asian origin, and an immigrant in the United States, I have always been deeply interested in the study of nonviolence as an intellectual, political, and historical idea. The driving force behind my pedagogy is to teach and learn about nonviolence in the context of a world in crisis and how to navigate this world and meet it with compassion and care. That there might be a gentler and more ethical approach to our lives and to our world, and that it might be achieved through nonviolent action, seems to be a vital question that needs to be urgently and comprehensively debated and answered.

Since coming to the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 2019, I have therefore focused my pedagogy on how to effectively teach the histories of diverse nonviolent ideologies in the American classroom. Both educators and students engage with these issues in and outside the classroom, and they have questions that need to be answered from a global historical perspective. It is with this need in mind that I proposed a comprehensive digital repository in 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, for which I received generous support from the Board of Visitors of the UW-Madison Department of History. This became the Nonviolence Project (NVP).

An example of what bell hooks called "engaged pedagogy," the NVP uses the tools of public history and digital humanities to prioritize student learning and research through internships. For teachers, our engagement with students begins with reflection: Who makes history? What are the perspectives that shape our understanding of our past? Today, history, memory, and mythmaking about nonviolence are in contest with one another worldwide, in the public sphere and in academia. What students lack is an understanding of the contexts of such resistance, the ethical debates surrounding such action, and the political controversies engendered by these ideologies. I teach them that history is fundamentally an act of reckoning with the past, of questioning the structural nature of inequities, and of engaging critically with the contexts of power relations through which knowledge is generated. The NVP was created, in part, to highlight how nonviolence has remained one of the most popular, important, and effective weapons of political resistance for those who are underrepresented, minoritized, and oppressed.

I designed the NVP in keeping with the Wisconsin Idea, that UW-Madison and its students work to benefit every person associated with the state of Wisconsin. Since the civil rights era, UW-Madison has been a significant space for civil disobedience and nonviolent protest. Unfortunately, over the last decade, there have been concerted efforts to erase this history and mission. The NVP therefore consciously revives this memory and carries forward this legacy, training students to be active collaborators in shaping the future of democracy in the United States and the world. Given the university's diversity, the concerns of the NVP are global as well. I am keenly aware, however, that UW-Madison is a Research 1 university with all the resources that make an experimental pedagogical project like the NVP possible, and my students and I are conscious about navigating our privilege in this regard with all due care.

History, memory, and mythmaking about nonviolence are in contest with one another worldwide.

In order to engage a wider audience in keeping with the Wisconsin Idea, students needed a platform to communicate academic research in a public-facing manner. The form that the NVP takes, as a digital repository of research articles, biographies, and social network mapping, helps us to disseminate in an accessible and legible manner information about how the intellectual concept of nonviolence spread from South Asia to the United States to South Africa. Student interns create self-directed scholarly works, discovering the history of nonviolent activism for themselves and then sharing their rigorous academic research with a nonacademic audience via the website. So far, 24 undergraduate students and three graduate students have worked with NVP, and six new undergraduate interns joined us in the fall, producing fantastic scholarship on civil rights activism in diverse areas such as law, public policy, environmentalism, antiwar demonstrations, and gender rights in a global context.

These student interns receive from librarians, archivists, public historians, and oral historians professional training in archival research techniques, public-facing scholarship, and writing. They learn to use UW-Madison's libraries and their extensive holdings and gain experience working with the university's treasure trove of oral history interviews. Some work for the groundbreaking Center for Campus History. The essays students produce are academically rigorous but written in jargon-free and accessible prose. Interns also consult regularly with archivists at the Wisconsin Historical Society, producing important research on topics including CORE and women's activism.

Students learn to form opinions based on rigorous archival work and to combat misinformation. Their research helps them to develop an empathetic relationship with the world, based on collaboration and intercultural understanding. They learn to envision themselves as creators of narratives that can lead to consequential political, social, and legal changes in the world. And from an educational point of view, they actively develop a particular kind of critical understanding of the many ways that history can be made and articulated from archival sources.

They communicate that history across many topics and using many mediums. Students have produced a Spotify playlist of protest songs; a syllabus for learning about nonviolence; an Instagram account that highlights civil resistance movements; and a GIS map of Madison, highlighting the locations of some of the most famous civil disobedience events student researchers have worked on. Others have produced wonderfully detailed research on civil resistance in Hong Kong and written biographies of activists in Latin America, using untranslated records and documents. There has also been a series of articles on the uses of nonviolent civil activism by students on UW-Madison's campus, including protests of the Vietnam War, LGBTQ+ activism, and the gay purges in 1962. Students have also written about environmentalism, Earth Day, and the activism of Aldo Leopold and Senator Gaylord Nelson. There are now multiple digital projects that K–12 educators might use on our website. Such research, based on local events with global significance, grounds our students' understanding of nonviolence within their experiences at UW-Madison and within their own world.

As an educator, I hope that this engagement also creates cultural competency, enhances compassion and empathy, and teaches them to be inclusive and socially conscious and ethical in their worldview. And in fact, my colleagues and I have noticed that NVP student interns emerge with better research and writing skills, better critical understanding of complex historical processes globally, and, ultimately, a more empathetic understanding of suffering and resilience.

Students bring their own perspectives and interests to the NVP and integrate them in their research. One researcher focused on the development of harm reduction and strategies like hunger strikes in US prisons. Another explored how Indigenous and Afro-Caribbean communities in Latin America have resisted human rights abuses. As a third student intern graduated and headed to law school, he said that this research had been "uniquely inspiring and even life-changing. . . . Nonviolence is not merely a source of pacifism but can be a profoundly strategic and impactful tool."

Above all, students have conveyed that participating in the NVP changes their perception of nonviolence from an abstract concept to a conscientious practice often performed daily. As one of our student interns said, "This project encourages people who may feel helpless in matters happening worldwide feel as if they have a voice and feel empowered. Understanding that there is power in knowledge, power in empathy and understanding, as well as in solidarity." Another student commented, "It's heartening to see how many people care about nonviolence . . . it gives them hope for the future and what the future can be!"

NVP student interns emerge with a more empathetic understanding of suffering and resilience.

The NVP is a pedagogical model that can be adapted at other institutions that want to combine history education with practical training for students in research, writing, and digital content creation. Such training enables students to demonstrate that their liberal arts education is adaptable to a wide range of practical uses. Our project, by practicing connective and collaborative research, trains students to develop civic responsibility toward the communities they inhabit. We welcome other institutions to use our modules for resources and syllabi, and we would be happy to help others develop similar programs.

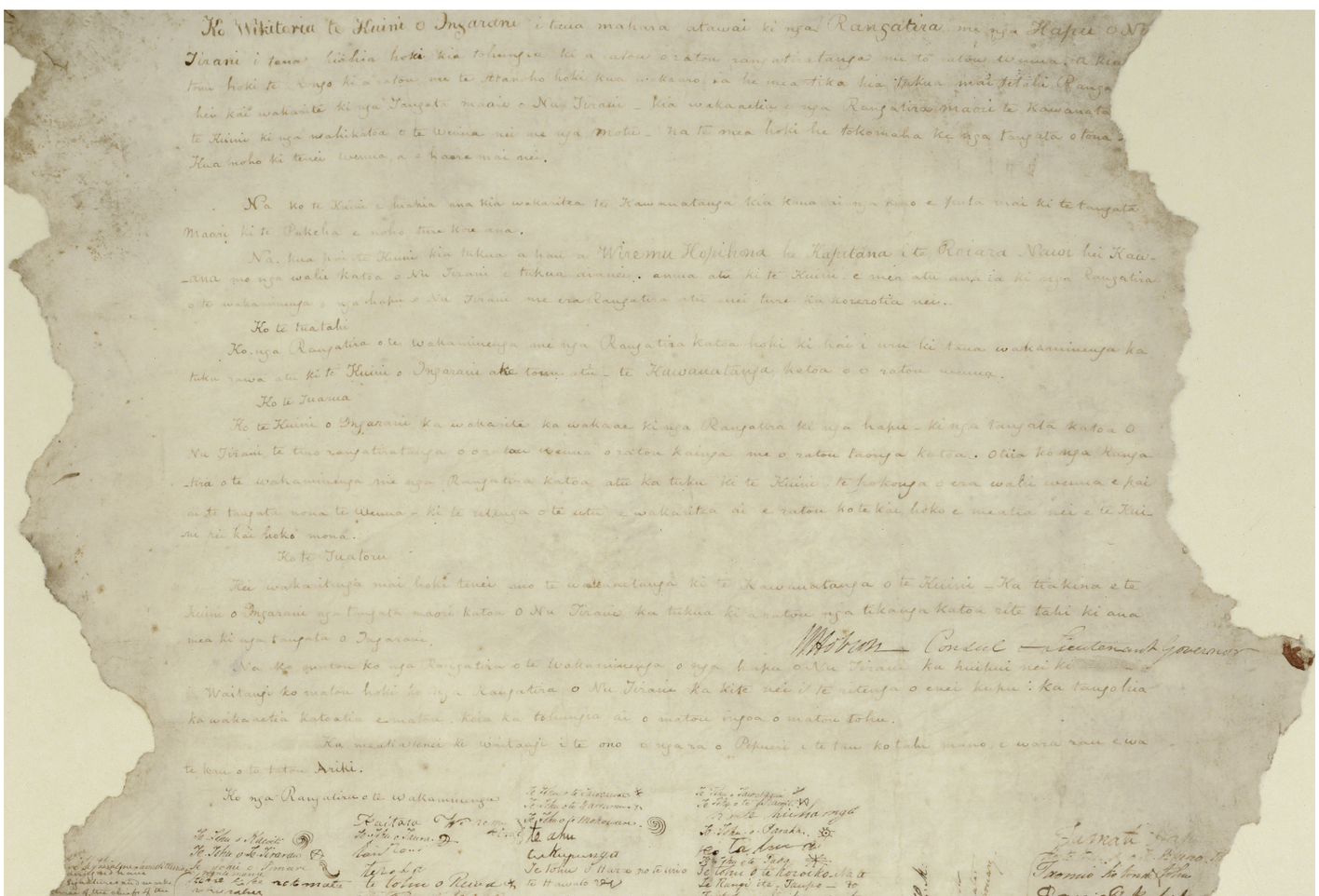
When I teach my students about the civil rights movement, we often discuss Martin Luther King Jr.'s poignant piece "Unfulfilled Dreams." There is enduring tragedy and discord in our world, and yet there is also an element of indomitable faith and hope that we can contribute to building a better future. Whether we live to see that future realized or not is perhaps immaterial, but the will to do so is profoundly necessary. King said, "We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope." Infinite hope and empathy are radical political actions, and the most important components of nonviolent action. Cultivating these attributes in the face of setbacks requires patience and perseverance, and an understanding of the political genealogies of global civil rights activism. The NVP trains students to understand, research, practice, and disseminate this history in the world beyond the university for the hopes of a more just society.

*Mou Banerjee is assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and director of the Nonviolence Project.*

SARA BUTTSWORTH

# UNSETTLING CLASSROOMS IN AOTEAROA

## *Teaching the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti o Waitangi with Role-Play*



The Treaty of Waitangi is made up of seven sheets of paper and two sheets of parchment, including this document signed by Māori chiefs.
*Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga Archives New Zealand. Image cropped.*

TEACHING CAN FEEL like acrobatics, as critically reflective teaching requires constant attention and balance as well as adaptability. Contriving a new approach to immersing students in important material produces a rush of adrenaline: Will it work or fall flat? There can be breathtaking views, even applause—it worked! But did it work for everyone? And if not, why not? The risks and rewards can be immense for staff and students alike, but the vertigo can be dizzying and the falls shattering. Abrupt changes in methods, mediums, and sometimes messages may be required—heartbreaking adjustments that can also serve as opportunities to put critical reflection into practice.

I teach New Zealand history in the Tertiary Foundation Certificate program at Waipapa Taumata Rau (the University of Auckland), a bridge for students traditionally excluded from postsecondary education. The program includes students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, many of them Māori and Pasifika, refugees, members of the LGBTQ+ community, or students with special learning needs or health issues. Though pastoral care is a huge part of this program, the history I teach also requires sitting with discomfort. The often-murky line between being uncomfortable and being unsafe becomes even harder to distinguish when teaching colonial content at a Eurocentric institution, in a settler colonial society, to students who live with the ongoing legacies of colonization every day.

Until last year, the heart of my course lay in historicizing the Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the founding documents of Aotearoa / New Zealand that continue to delineate political debates and social outcomes in the present. Since Europeans arrived in the 18th century, relationships between Māori and Europeans have been multifaceted, but it was very clear with whom authority lay—Māori. There was little appetite for formal acts of colonization by the British until the mid-1830s. In this period, factors including the unregulated activities of an unsanctioned immigration company led to a rapid and official annexation. The result was a hastily drafted set of documents presented by a representative of the British Crown to a large group of Māori leaders at Waitangi in the north in February 1840; copies of these documents were then taken around the coastline over subsequent months.

Māori had varied reasons for signing the treaty, often connected to local concerns and politics. Just as crucially, there were many groups who did not sign—because of active opposition, lack of opportunity, or a combination of the two. The English version, the Treaty of Waitangi, appears to make cession of sovereignty to the British Crown clear. But Te Tiriti o Waitangi, which most Māori signed, is not a simple translation—it is a *different* document. Te Tiriti indicates that while the British Crown would hold governorship, authority over the land remains with Māori. Many Māori interpreted this as a clear signal of dual authority and that the British would regulate the activity of their own while leaving Māori to continue to exert their own laws over their own people and lands. These documents are hugely important in Aotearoa. Their terms and applications remain contested, and debates around the Treaty / Te Tiriti are everywhere, so overcoming students' misconceptions that they already know this history is a consistent challenge.

From 2019 to 2022, in the spirit of battling "myth" conceptions and Treaty fatigue in my Foundations history class on Aotearoa / New Zealand, I enthusiastically adopted the Reacting to the Past pedagogy. RTTP, which originated in the United States, is a game-based approach that turns the classroom into a historical event, allowing students to portray historical actors, debate each other in character, and cast votes to determine the outcome of their proceedings.

> The real-world applicability of skills enhances the relevance for students whose backgrounds have made education a struggle.

A small group of department faculty and I designed and developed a role-playing game on the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi / the Treaty of Waitangi. Initially, we saw outstanding results. Students listened to lectures and researched the historical context. In small groups, they were randomly assigned a "role" and were responsible for investigating their historical actor's beliefs, positions, and relationships—including if they had been for, against, or undecided on the Treaty's passage. Each group then strategized, negotiated, and attempted to persuade others to achieve their assigned objectives. Using small groups both assisted students who might lack confidence and reflected the collective decision-making processes that are at the heart of Māori communities and tīkanga (protocol). Finally, the students decided: to sign or not to sign.

Student agency distinguishes this pedagogy. The real-world applicability of skills learned in an activity like this—such as how to persuade and negotiate—enhances the relevance for students whose backgrounds have made education a struggle. Rather than start from a deficit model, we worked to convince a diverse body of students that education is a journey, using Kevin Gannon's adaptation of Amy Collier and Jen Ross's concept of "not-yetness." RTTP provides a way to invite critical

engagement from where students are, a pedagogy that aligns with Stephen Brookfield's concept of the "disorienting dilemma," which occurs "any time a case study looks familiar to the student but the outcome of the case study is completely unexpected." Brookfield suggests that a "disorienting dilemma . . . has to be unsettling enough to shake students out of their comfort zone, but not so discomforting that those students will do their best to avoid dealing with it." This is an arena of risk for both students and teachers.

> Students need to understand the difference between uncomfortable and unsafe.

The game was afoot in my class in four iterations (in person, online, and hybrid) between 2019 and 2022. The first in 2019 demonstrated one of the key principles of this approach: historical contingency. The positive outcomes students experienced were many, with high levels of engagement and excitement spilling outside our class sessions. In a math class, which included several of my history students, the friendliest possible threats whispered by one faction to another became the stuff of legend. Tumultuous debates on governance versus sovereignty erupted. In the end, Māori retained sovereignty, the French were declared winners after wrangling a free trade agreement out of the discussions, and the British, who barely phoned it in, found themselves sidelined as a result.

Each subsequent iteration had different results. The 2020 game was rapidly rushed online during the first COVID-19 lockdown and discussion boards replaced speeches. Queen Victoria threw a text-based tantrum, followed by Lord Bunbury threatening to "clickety clack" anyone who wasted his time. Behind the scenes, Tangata Whenua (the original people of the land) colluded with sympathetic missionaries, the original Treaty mysteriously caught fire, and my class drew up an entirely new Treaty reinforcing the primacy of Tangata Whenua. In 2021, the game took place as a hybrid of in-person and discussion board activity. With threat of force again a catalyst, the outcome—no agreement was reached—highlighted the Crown's desire to avoid armed conflict. A treaty was reached in principle in 2022 but with vastly different wording.

Despite our successes, the spotlight of these theoretical ideas about contingency and agency cast new shadows. In both 2021 and 2022, student objections raised important questions that required serious consideration. Was "changing" or gamifying history devaluing or trivializing the lived experiences of students—and their ancestors—who had already lost so much? This is a crucial question for those of us invested in "decolonizing" or "unsettling" the classroom. In 2022, a related issue was raised: Students playing a particular role did not represent another student's ancestor the way he thought they should, and he considered the discrepancy disrespectful. This feedback required more than just a pause for thought; they presented us with our own disorienting, unsettling dilemma. I could ignore the concerns as coming from a small number of students, shut the course down, and move on, or use the experience as a teachable moment to reconsider my practice for the future. After the 2022 iteration, I decided to change approach again, and I suspended the game as I took stock of its lessons to aid future classes.

I carry with me the ghosts of classrooms past. But I firmly believe that students need to understand the difference between uncomfortable and unsafe: Studying history requires sitting with discomfort. As I redesign this course, I am building on John Palfrey's notion of "brave" and "safe" spaces in my approach. However, as a Pākehā (someone not of Māori descent), middle-class educator in an institution on colonized land, my own perspective is not free from the fetters of privilege and power. In a recent article, Holly Bodman pointed out the unconscious bias that many of us bring to our classrooms. Perhaps I had not sufficiently considered how, as Bodman wrote, "Māori conceive their tīpuna [ancestors] as being kua muri (in front) . . . This contrasts my experience as a Pākehā . . . taught to conceive of my ancestors as behind me and largely disconnected from my present." We undertook this project with the support and input of Māori colleagues, and many Māori students enjoyed this approach to history. Yet their engagement and improved academic outcomes may have kept me from considering core sensitivities. I cannot ignore the possibility that my enthusiasm for this pedagogy comes in part from my own position; perhaps the concerns of a few had to outweigh the rewards of the many.

I have learned that I need to keep a close eye on the nuances of context in the implementation of pedagogical approaches. We must prioritize student contexts and the spaces in which these pedagogies play out if we are to successfully "unsettle" our institutions and classrooms. These lessons now inform my quest to develop different forms of assessment that harness the positives of my RTTP experience. Now I ask, How might I pivot to positively implement performative and creative pedagogies while maintaining the right balance between risk and reward? P

*Sara Buttsworth is the convenor of two Tertiary Foundation Certificate arts courses and stage one Arts Scholars at Waipapa Taumata Rau / the University of Auckland.*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REBECCA L. WEST

# AWARDS, PRIZES, AND HONORS CONFERRED AT THE 138TH ANNUAL MEETING

The following is a list of recipients of the various awards, prizes, and honors presented during the 138th annual meeting of the American Historical Association on Friday, January 3, 2025, in the Sheraton New York's Metropolitan Ballroom East.

## 2024 AWARDS FOR SCHOLARLY AND PROFESSIONAL DISTINCTION

### AWARDS FOR SCHOLARLY DISTINCTION

**Barbara J. Fields**, Columbia University

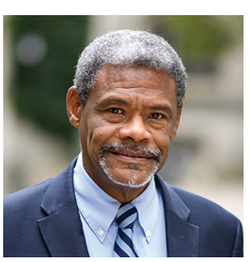
Barbara J. Fields, the William R. Shepherd Professor of History at Columbia University, is a preeminent historian of 19th-century American Southern and social history.

Fields's numerous publications include "Ideology and Race in American History," her incisive and well-known scholarly intervention published in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction* (1982), a volume honoring her mentor, C. Vann Woodward. A radical intervention in the early 1980s, it shredded conventional thinking about race as a concept and a force shaping American history. The article's core thesis—that race is a product of history and not of nature—was a sharp critique of some of the major, celebrated historical work of that era. Its core themes would be elaborated further in *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (2012), the acclaimed work Fields co-authored with her sister, Karen E. Fields, an anthropologist of West Africa.

In 1984, Fields published *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century*, which won the AHA's John H. Dunning Prize and a special citation from the Association of Black Women Historians. This deeply empirical study of an understudied border slave state would elevate and reframe such core themes in the emerging treatments of Reconstruction as the transition from slavery to free labor and the class dimensions of post–Civil War developments. In addition to numerous other influential articles and essays, Fields's body of scholarship includes *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861–1867*, ser. 1, vol. 1, *The Destruction of Slavery* (1985), which won the Thomas Jefferson Prize; *Free at Last: A Documentary History of Slavery, Freedom, and the Civil War* (1992), which won the Lincoln Prize; and *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War* (1992), a co-authored and co-edited volume in the acclaimed Freedmen and Southern Society documentary history project based at the University of Maryland.

Fields's numerous honors include an honorary doctorate from Bard College, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship, the Award for Distinguished Literary Achievement from the Philolexian Society at Columbia University, a Presidential Award for Outstanding Teaching, and a Woodrow Wilson Center Fellowship. She is a long-standing member of the Advisory Committee for the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and former president of the Southern Historical Association.

**William Chester Jordan**, Princeton University



William Chester Jordan is the Dayton-Stockton Professor of History, director of the Program in Medieval Studies, former director of the Humanities Council's Program in Medieval Studies, former chair of the Department of History, and former executive director of the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies, all at Princeton University. Those titles testify to the exceptional quality and influence of his scholarship in medieval history and studies. He has been elected as a fellow of the Medieval Academy of America, the American Philosophical Society, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He

has served as the president of the American Catholic Historical Association and the Medieval Academy of America. On top of all this, he has received honorary degrees from his alma mater Ripon College and from Bard College, Catholic University of America, Harvard University, and Oxford University.

Among these many accomplishments is the long list of PhD students he has directed. The current count is 40, which probably makes him the principal trainer of medievalist graduate students in the United States.

He is especially known for his studies of the reign of Louis IX of France and the Crusades, manumission from servitude, medieval Jews, converts from Islam, monastic culture, medieval women, and rulership. His book *The Great Famine: Northern Europe in the Early Fourteenth Century* (1996) has likely brought him the most acclaim, leading to the award of the Haskins Medal of the Medieval Academy. In the book, he was especially adept at incorporating modern scientific findings into discussions of weather and the effects of hunger on human health. A reviewer in the principal journal for medievalists, *Speculum*, noted that "Jordan's outstanding book is . . . ambitious because it considers every aspect of a very important subsistence crisis: physical, social, even mental. . . . In many respects Jordan's book is an example of a historian's finest achievement. The chosen subject is original; but above all, the author has taken every possible step to achieve a great historical study. The quantity and diversity of his sources, and the apparatus of more than fourteen hundred footnotes, are impressive. Furthermore, many of these notes go deeper than references: they are lessons in historical method. Finally, I wish to praise the great lucidity of Professor Jordan's writing, which lends precision and credibility to his argument."

Gabrielle Spiegel, the doyenne of medieval studies in the United States and former president of the AHA, reviewed in a prescient way Jordan's first book, *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade* (1979), noting that his decision to focus on the Crusade "serves brilliantly to highlight the main lineaments of Louis's rule. . . . Indisputably, Professor Jordan's work has brought new coherence and intelligibility to the holy king's reign. He has successfully fulfilled his aim of providing a 'satisfying synthetic history.'" This is very high praise for what was then a promising career, a career that has become a golden one.

**Franklin W. Knight**, Johns Hopkins University

Franklin W. Knight is known for creativity, integrity, high standards, capacity to shape a field in enduring ways, and exemplary mentorship of both students and colleagues.

Born in Jamaica, Knight earned a BA in history from the University of the West Indies and a PhD in history from the University of Wisconsin. He taught at Stony Brook University, State University of New York, before joining Johns Hopkins University in 1973, only the second Black faculty member in the history of the university. Knight would go on to become the first Black faculty member to earn tenure at Hopkins in 1978.

Knight's many monographs, edited volumes, and scholarly articles helped chart new directions in Latin American, Caribbean, Atlantic, and African diasporic history. As co-editor of the Johns Hopkins University Press series in Atlantic History and Culture, he ushered into print numerous key works in Atlantic history. He also worked to ensure the release of Walter Rodney's posthumous published classic, *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881–1905*. Knight's book on Cuban slavery set the standard of social/economic history; his synthesis of Caribbean history remains virtually unmatched.

Knight mentored graduate students not only at Hopkins but also at Howard University and Morgan State University, and postdoctoral fellows through the Ford Foundation program. He was director of the Program in Latin American Studies at Hopkins as well as the Center for Africana Studies. He is past president of the Latin American Studies Association, and was a founding member of the Asociación de Historiadores de América Latina y el Caribe, the Asociación de Historiadores Latinoamericanos, and the Asociación de Historia Económica del Caribe. He has been a frequent guest on news programs discussing Latin American and Caribbean history and contemporary politics and has served as a consultant to many television programs. Amid all this, he somehow found time to write a weekly column in one of Jamaica's most important newspapers.

Franklin W. Knight's work as a scholar and teacher has had deep and broad influence on what we know and think about a wide swath of the Atlantic world. He also has helped a stream of Black intellectuals to imagine a future history.

## HONORARY FOREIGN MEMBER

**Catherine Hall**, University College London

Catherine Hall, emerita professor of modern British social and cultural history at University College London, is a preeminent historian of Britain and its empire.

Hall's most recent book, *Lucky Valley: Edward Long and the History of Racial Capitalism* (2024), joins an influential body of work that centers on the impact of empire on metropolitan and colonial life. It includes *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (1987), co-authored with Leonore Davidoff; *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (2002), which won the AHA's Morris D. Forkosch Prize; *Macaulay and Son: Architects of Imperial Britain* (2012); two co-edited volumes, *Race, Nation and Empire: Making Histories, 1750 to the Present* (2010) with Keith McClelland and *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (2006) with Sonya O. Rose; and numerous articles and essays.

Hall also has been a leading figure in the fields of public history and digital scholarship with work that brought unprecedented public attention to the part Britain played in maintaining the institution of slavery and how it profited. From 2009 to 2012, Hall was principal investigator of the acclaimed Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project and, from 2013 to 2016, the Structure and Significance of British-Caribbean Slave-Ownership, 1763–1833. A major product of this research, based at the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, is the Legacies of British Slavery Database, a free, publicly accessible, and widely used database that is a critical resource for understanding the extent of slavery's impact on the development of modern Britain. *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain* (2014), which Hall co-authored with four University College London colleagues, draws on this data.

Hall is the recipient of numerous honors. In 2021, she received the prestigious Leverhulme Medal and Prize, awarded by the British Academy in recognition of her particular contribution "in the fields of class, gender, empire, and postcolonial history" and her place "among the most methodologically innovative researchers in the fields of social and cultural history worldwide." In 2021, she delivered the James Ford Special Lectures at Oxford University, inaugurated in 1896–97 and considered the most prestigious series at Oxford.

## TROYER STEELE ANDERSON PRIZE

Chris McNickle

The AHA honors Chris McNickle in recognition of his role in transforming the Association's investment and financial structures. As late as 2012, the AHA's finances were overseen by a Finance Committee chair who often had no training in finance, money management, or accounting. Reforms in the early 2000s had brought professional expertise to advise on our investment practices, but still no one on the Council or Finance Committee had experience in the actual financial practices of a nonprofit.

McNickle brought to the table the unusual combination of a PhD in history and substantial published scholarship, along with a successful career in business and finance. As chair of a new investment committee, he oversaw revision and codification of our investment goals and policies and reoriented our relationships with portfolio managers at TIAA-CREF. He then helped the executive director define and develop a new Council position, a treasurer, who could professionalize the work of the Finance Committee and oversee the operations of the business office. For the first time, the AHA Council included someone with these important responsibilities essential to the efficient operation of any nonprofit.

McNickle's influence has been wide and deep. Where once the AHA's financial practices and policies were overseen by academics, they are now under the watchful eye of individuals who have appropriate experience. Both our current treasurer and our Investment Committee chair were recruited to those positions by McNickle, who left in 2017 but who remains actively helpful to the Association's leadership.

Chris McNickle never charged the AHA for professional advice that would have cost thousands of dollars on the open market; he also has been a generous donor and active participant in the Association's Career Diversity initiative. We are grateful for his leadership, good judgment, integrity, and generosity.

## EUGENE ASHER DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD

**Andria Crosson,** University of Texas at San Antonio

Andria Crosson's teaching journey has led her from lecturer I to professor of practice at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Her syllabi showcase a variety of tasks meant to support her student population—often first-generation and bilingual college students—in understanding not just the content of history but how to be a historian. In teaching the capstone course to preservice teachers, Crosson has sought to help her department—and her students—by seeking additional certifications that expand course delivery modality. Moreover, the websites and materials Crosson collaborated on in the Seeds of Texas project further emphasize the skills and modalities she brings to the work of teaching history. Andria Crosson is truly deserving of recognition as a distinguished teacher.

## EQUITY AWARD (INSTITUTIONAL)

Grambling State University Department of History

We commend Grambling State University's Department of History for initiating a department-wide program that pairs digital humanities and African American studies to impact the wider community. Because of extramural funding, Grambling has secured equipment to teach its students archival, library, and oral history skills alongside digital technologies. This initiative also led to new secondary concentrations to meet student demand for additional vocational skills and pathways that complement the history major. Since 2020, Grambling has witnessed a 300 percent increase in history graduates.

## HERBERT FEIS AWARD IN PUBLIC HISTORY

**Erin Kimmerle**, University of South Florida

Erin Kimmerle makes an impressive contribution to public history through the What Lies Beneath project. Using interdisciplinary methods, she uncovered 45 burial grounds, half African American, that had been lost to memory. A museum exhibit, to which her students contributed, told the story of these cemeteries to community members, connecting her discoveries to intimate familial stories. She provides a model for other communities seeking to tell the story of predatory land practices while providing a way to honor a community's ancestors.

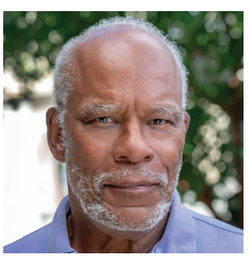
## JOHN LEWIS AWARD FOR HISTORY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

**James N. Gregory,** University of Washington

James N. Gregory's scholarship in labor and migration history, his prolific public history work, his co-founding of the Civil Rights and Labor History Consortium, and his nearly 20 years of leadership in building out this latter project have helped to illustrate the kinds of profoundly productive connections possible for scholars to make among historical inquiry, civil society, and public policy. In one of the signal accomplishments of his work, Gregory's leadership in documenting the scope and impact of racial covenants and discriminatory housing practices in the Pacific Northwest helped lead to legislation in Washington state aimed at compensating victims of racist housing policies and customs in the region. His work demonstrates how a historian can inform a public debate and enter it with a researcher's tools and insights. Gregory's scholarship, teaching, public history, and deep public engagement in important urban and national policy questions highlight how rigorous history and its powerful presentation can help lead to justice.

## JOHN LEWIS AWARD FOR PUBLIC SERVICE TO THE DISCIPLINE OF HISTORY

**Stanley Nelson**, Firelight Media



The breadth and depth of Stanley Nelson's vast corpus of documentary films is stunning. He easily ranks among the most influential documentary filmmakers in the United States. Few others match his intellectual breath and vision. Those who have viewed all or even a substantial portion of these films would hardly be surprised that he has won a National Humanities Medal, five Emmys, two Peabodys, two awards each from the Sundance Film Festival and International Documentary Association, the Directors Guild Award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Documentary, and a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship.

Nelson's most acclaimed work has focused on a wide scope of aspects of African American history and life. He has made films on the Black press, Marcus Garvey, the murder of Emmett Till, the Freedom Riders, Freedom Summer, the Black Panthers, Attica, historically Black colleges and universities, Miles Davis, and, more recently, the contested issues of policing in Black communities.

Nelson has not limited himself to African American history, however. He also has produced films on the current crisis in immigration, Wounded Knee, and the Jonestown cult suicides.

The careful and extensive historical grounding of these films has led American historians to bring this work to their classrooms. They challenge students to consider the complexities of social movements and expose them to hard truths about the American criminal justice system, while at the same time exposing students to contributions of African Americans to broad currents of American history.

The AHA especially appreciates Nelson's ability to create films that translate often difficult and painful historical issues into a medium accessible to broad audiences. It seems fitting to honor him with an award named for John Lewis, who devoted his life to the social movement that Nelson has so brilliantly and sensitively portrayed. Like Lewis, Nelson brings to his work respect for the courage and humanity of those who have struggled to confront this country's difficult past and to make it a more just and egalitarian society.

## NANCY LYMAN ROELKER MENTORSHIP AWARD

**Susan Pedersen**, Columbia University

Susan Pedersen's graduate students and colleagues agree that she is a gifted, generous, and gracious mentor. A superb undergraduate lecturer who readily offers engaged office hours to freshmen and seniors alike, her originality as a graduate instructor truly sets her apart. She is the moving spirit behind the New York–Cambridge Training Collaboration in Twentieth-Century British History, a program known for its rigor and intellectual openness. Her mentorship of early career scholars has been invaluable, especially since she is especially attuned to their individual needs. Her students seek her advice concerning their forthcoming publications for decades after attending her graduate seminar. In sum, she is an astute presence across their entire careers as historians.

## TIKKUN OLAM PRIZE FOR PROMOTING PUBLIC HISTORICAL LITERACY

**Heather Cox Richardson**, Boston College

In January 2017, Heather Cox Richardson began publishing carefully researched, historically informed daily commentaries on current events, focused especially on government and politics. The initial venue was Facebook, and the audience grew quickly as the posts—also available directly via email—integrated historical context with the application of historical thinking to contemporary issues. Richardson's commitment to crisp, clear prose and disciplined brevity (nearly all posts are 1,200–1,400 words) have enabled her to engage a vast audience in a manner that teaches without being didactic, analyzes without sacrificing narrative, and reminds readers why historical knowledge and thinking are imperative to understanding all aspects of public life.

The impact and reach of Richardson's scholarship reminds all historians how important—and how possible—it is to have a broad public impact. *Letters from an American* reaches more than 1.4 million subscribers; by some metrics, it is the most widely read Substack newsletter in the world, ahead of publications with dozens of staff. Richardson's Facebook page, which still reposts *Letters*, has 1.8 million followers; an unofficial Facebook fan group has nearly 40,000 members. She also produces a daily podcast on each letter, has co-hosted additional podcasts with journalist Ron Suskind and historian Joanne Freeman, and in 2023 published *Democracy Awakening: Notes on the State of America*, a book based on *Letters* that reached number four on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

The Tikkun Olam Prize honors our colleagues who have "sustained historical work that contributes significantly to historical literacy." A through line—and arguably motivation—of Richardson's work is the democratization of historical knowledge and understanding. Each of these short essays, by example, promotes historical method as a model for democratic engagement. Richardson's readers learn that people make history, and that, by carefully examining the historical context and the empirical evidence, anyone can use their knowledge of history to help make history.

## 2024 AWARDS FOR PUBLICATIONS

### HERBERT BAXTER ADAMS PRIZE IN EUROPEAN HISTORY

**Alexander Statman**

*A Global Enlightenment: Western Progress and Chinese Science* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2023)

With elegance, subtlety, rigor, and concision, Alexander Statman tells the unknown story of the European Enlightenment's sustained and shifting engagement with Chinese science. Presenting both a model for and an illustration of global history, Statman focuses on a set of thinkers—whom he calls "orphans of the Enlightenment"—who challenge the idea that the European Enlightenment was essentially European. This book will shift the way we teach global intellectual history.

### AHA PRIZE IN EUROPEAN INTERNATIONAL HISTORY

**Chelsea Schields**, University of California, Irvine

*Offshore Attachments: Oil and Intimacy in the Caribbean* (Univ. of California Press, 2023)

Chelsea Schields's groundbreaking book remaps the history of global capitalism around the 20th-century Dutch Caribbean and in so doing reframes European history. Schields uses sources in five languages to reveal how sex and race organized the production of oil and shaped a dynamic transnational labor market. Bringing together histories of slavery, the environment, and queer life, Schields moves between Europe and the Caribbean to tell a captivating story of imperialism and its legacies.

### AHA PRIZE IN HISTORY PRIOR TO CE 1000

**Julia Kelto Lillis**, Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York

*Virgin Territory: Configuring Female Virginity in Early Christianity* (Univ. of California Press, 2023)

In a sweeping intellectual history of Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian evidence, Julia Kelto Lillis argues that from among numerous Mediterranean understandings of virginity, emphasizing moral or spiritual dimensions, a Christian discourse that focused heavily on the hymen and physiological inspection came to the fore in the late fourth and fifth centuries CE. Mapping this "virgin territory" in the past, she reminds us that such discourses, across their cycles of salience, continue to regulate women's lives today.

### JERRY BENTLEY PRIZE IN WORLD HISTORY

**Sureshkumar Muthukumaran**, National University of Singapore

*The Tropical Turn: Agricultural Innovation in the Ancient Middle East and the Mediterranean* (Univ. of California Press, 2023)

Sureshkumar Muthukumaran's ambitious examination of the multidirectional circulation of crops and fauna from South Asia to the Middle East and Mediterranean offers a groundbreaking environmental history of the long-distance connections that webbed the ancient world. Marshaling an impressive array of archaeological and historical evidence, in a variety of ancient languages, this extraordinary work allows us to reconceptualize antiquity within the framework of world history and pushes us to expand our chronologies of global interconnection.

### BEVERIDGE FAMILY PRIZE IN AMERICAN HISTORY

**Dylan C. Penningroth**, University of California, Berkeley

*Before the Movement: The Hidden History of Black Civil Rights* (Liveright, 2023)

A stunningly transformative book, *Before the Movement* is social history at its best. Scouring long-overlooked archives across the nation, Dylan C. Penningroth transforms our understanding of slavery, Jim Crow, and civil rights—showing how Black Americans took control of their lives through legal privileges. With crisp prose, elegant argumentation, and a clear-eyed view of past humanity on its own terms, he demonstrates how the law became the medium through which Black political and social life was formed.

### PAUL BIRDSALL PRIZE IN EUROPEAN MILITARY AND STRATEGIC HISTORY

**Nicholas Mulder**, Cornell University

*The Economic Weapon: The Rise of Sanctions as a Tool of Modern War* (Yale Univ. Press, 2022)

Drawing on sources from five countries, Nicholas Mulder's *The Economic Weapon* brilliantly weaves together political, economic, and military history to reveal the origins of economic sanctions, a controversial tool of statecraft that remains widely practiced in the 21st century. Mulder's argument that sanctions often had harsh unintended consequences merits the careful attention of scholars in a range of fields. Elegantly written and sharply argued, the book represents international history at its best.

## ALBERT B. COREY PRIZE IN CANADIAN–AMERICAN RELATIONS

**Donald Harman Akenson**, Queen's University
*The Americanization of the Apocalypse: Creating America's Own Bible* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2023)

In a strongly transnational work, Donald Harman Akenson examines the migration of individuals and religious ideas from Britain and Ireland to Canada and the United States, while also paying attention to the significance of topography and geography in the creation of networks that fostered the spread and popular impact of evangelical and apocalyptic Christian ideas. The book is highly readable, even amusing in places. It promises to spark debates about the historical, geographical, and theological shaping of American fundamentalist Christianity.

## RAYMOND J. CUNNINGHAM PRIZE FOR UNDERGRADUATE JOURNAL ARTICLE

**Becca De Los Santos**, Emory University
"Inversion of the Top-Down Operation: Enslaved Voices and French Abolitionism in 1840s Senegal," *Herodotus* 34 (Spring 2024)
Faculty adviser: **Richard Roberts**, Stanford University

Becca De Los Santos's impressive research in Senegal and France provides a nuanced view on the liberation of enslaved people in the French colony of Senegal. Using testimony from an 1844 commission report, De Los Santos puts the previously ignored voices of those enslaved in Senegal at the forefront of abolition. They proved to French authorities that instead of being a "benign" system, enslaved people in Senegal longed for freedom.

## PATRICIA BUCKLEY EBREY PRIZE IN EAST ASIAN HISTORY

**Elad Alyagon**, independent scholar
*Inked: Tattooed Soldiers and the Song Empire's Penal-Military Complex* (Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 2023)

*Inked* tells the story of the millions of soldiers who were conscripted or coerced into the Song military. Setting up tattooed soldiers as the forgotten counterpoint of the officials recruited through the examination system, Elad Alyagon draws new stories out of a historical record dominated by elite voices. His direct and engaging prose guides readers through the social world of Song soldiers, expanding our understanding of a pivotal period of state building and social mobilization in Chinese history.

## JOHN K. FAIRBANK PRIZE IN EAST ASIAN HISTORY

**Tristan G. Brown**, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
*Laws of the Land: Fengshui and the State in Qing Dynasty China* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2023)

*Laws of the Land* is grounded in archival research and beautifully written. By weaving together concepts as seemingly disparate as fengshui and institutional legal history, Tristan G. Brown opens a window on Qing society from the grassroots to halls of power, from practices as mundane as grave digging to as profound as predicting the future. Through local magistrates, powerful gentry, peasants, farmers, and imperial officials, Brown tells a story of how the Qing dynasty moved between tradition and modernity.

## MORRIS D. FORKOSCH PRIZE IN BRITISH HISTORY

**Andrew Seaton**, University College London
*Our NHS: A History of Britain's Best-Loved Institution* (Yale Univ. Press, 2023)

This study is a brilliant, historically astute, and highly readable assessment of how Britain's National Health Service managed to adhere to social democratic principles from the 1950s through the 1970s, then somehow survived the onslaught of privatization during and after Margaret Thatcher's tenure as prime minister. But it's not a rosy hagiography of one ideological victory among losses. As a human-centered account of an institution, it is both nuanced and deeply engaging.

## LEO GERSHOY AWARD IN WESTERN EUROPEAN HISTORY

**Vera Keller**, University of Oregon
*The Interlopers: Early Stuart Projects and the Undisciplining of Knowledge* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2023)

Vera Keller's brilliant and deeply researched work forces us to rethink long-held assumptions about 17th-century science. Focusing on a diverse cast of characters engaged in "interloping"—deftly leaping from one area of study or business activity to another—Keller turns our attention away from a tidy or contained Scientific Revolution and reveals in its place a rambunctious arena of risky and often violent endeavors.

## WILLIAM AND EDWYNA GILBERT AWARD FOR THE BEST ARTICLE ON TEACHING HISTORY

**Jocelyn Isabel Aguilera**, John C. Fremont High School and California State University, Long Beach
"Reclaiming Narratives Through Culturally Sustaining Teaching: Women of Color, Historical Significance, and the Civil Rights Era," *The History Teacher* 56, no. 3 (May 2023)

One obstacle many minoritized and female students face in the secondary school history classroom is the inability to see themselves in history. Jocelyn Isabel Aguilera's article explores an intervention designed to draw students into a deeper historical understanding of the role played by African American women in the Civil Rights Movement. Aguilera's pedagogy was not simply aimed at including new content but in using that content to engage students in deeper historical thinking and to encourage them to take a more activist stance.

## FRIEDRICH KATZ PRIZE IN LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN HISTORY

**Yanna Yannakakis**, Emory University
*Since Time Immemorial: Native Custom and Law in Colonial Mexico* (Duke Univ. Press, 2023)

This sophisticated book investigates how Spanish colonial laws and Indigenous customs informed one another in post-conquest Mexico. Yanna Yannakakis's meticulous reading of primary sources and deft theoretical understanding of legal traditions and procedures allow her to make an eminently persuasive argument about how imperial laws were not imposed from above but (re)built and (re)imagined locally. The productive marriage of legal and social histories in this well-crafted book will significantly influence Latin American history.

## JOAN KELLY MEMORIAL PRIZE IN WOMEN'S HISTORY

**Chelsea Schields**, University of California, Irvine
*Offshore Attachments: Oil and Intimacy in the Caribbean* (Univ. of California Press, 2023)

Chelsea Schields's brilliant debut is a deeply researched and thoughtfully argued examination of the oil industry's profound impact on society in the Dutch islands of Aruba and Curaçao. Her analysis offers a provocative and nuanced discussion of how island women responded to the industry's attempts to influence their home lives, sexuality, and reproductive choices. In exploring this largely untold history, Schields provides critical context for understanding the role of race and gender in the global expansion of international corporations during the 20th century—and how those dynamics continue to play out in our own time.

## MARTIN A. KLEIN PRIZE IN AFRICAN HISTORY

**Rachel Jean-Baptiste**, Stanford University
*Multiracial Identities in Colonial French Africa: Race, Childhood, and Citizenship* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2023)

Rachel Jean-Baptiste's groundbreaking book offers a richly textured exploration of an understudied category of historical actors in colonial French Africa. It examines how race and racial formations were made and reconfigured in the lives of multiracial individuals and groups across a broad spectrum of contested social arenas and geographic spaces. Drawing on a diverse set of archives, this layered and ambitious study offers original insights into identity formation and belonging in African and global history.

## LITTLETON–GRISWOLD PRIZE IN AMERICAN LAW AND SOCIETY

**Dylan C. Penningroth**, University of California, Berkeley
*Before the Movement: The Hidden History of Black Civil Rights* (Liveright, 2023)

This is an epic study that revolutionizes our understanding of how Black Americans interacted with legal institutions from the time of slavery to the 1960s. By revealing civil rights as "rights of everyday use," Dylan C. Penningroth underscores Black Americans' legal savvy while registering the deeply human relations embedded in laws of property, contract, families, and associations. Based on ingenious research in civil court records and written in vibrant prose, this is a path-breaking work.

## J. RUSSELL MAJOR PRIZE IN FRENCH HISTORY

**Sara E. Johnson**, University of California, San Diego
*Encyclopédie Noire: The Making of Moreau de Saint-Méry's Intellectual World* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2023)

Sara E. Johnson's pathbreaking "collective biography" of the enslaved and free people of color surrounding a renowned Saint-Domingue enslaver-intellectual provides an innovative way of approaching Enlightenment-era texts. Deploying experimental methods with extraordinary effect, this deeply researched, magisterial book promises to transform our understanding of early modern intellectual production and our approach to historical sources, while also providing a new template for histories of the Francophone Caribbean and the Age of Revolutions.

## HELEN & HOWARD R. MARRARO PRIZE IN ITALIAN HISTORY

**Massimo Mazzotti**, University of California, Berkeley
*Reactionary Mathematics: A Genealogy of Purity* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2023)

Massimo Mazzotti's work examines how something as "objective" as mathematics can be politicized and reveals, in turn, how political discourse can affect (and be affected by) academic and scholarly debates. His analysis of "Mathematics at the Barricades," for instance, details the intersections of Neapolitan Jacobinism and science. Combining splendid research with lucid presentation, Mazzotti renders a chaotic era and a daunting subject into a marvelously learned yet accessible book.

## GEORGE L. MOSSE PRIZE IN EUROPEAN INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY

**Ari Joskowicz**, Vanderbilt University
*Rain of Ash: Roma, Jews, and the Holocaust* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2023)

Ari Joskowicz compellingly writes about the intertwined histories of Romani and Jewish communities during and after World War II. It is an impressively written book on Hitler's forgotten victims and their relationship with Jews for reparative justice, recognition, and remembrance. Expansive in its scope, the author challenges us to reconsider Romani–Jewish relations and the contours of Holocaust memory in both the past and present.

## JOHN E. O'CONNOR FILM AWARD

***Documentary**: The Lady Bird Diaries*
**Dawn Porter**, director; **Kim Reynolds**, producer (Trilogy Films, 2023)

Presidential spouse Lady Bird Johnson's influence on public life and policy issues in the turbulent 1960s is revealed in Dawn Porter's fascinating documentary. Drawing from Julia Sweig's research into 120 hours of extraordinary audio journals taped by the First Lady to record the Johnsons' years in the White House, Porter uncovers Lady Bird's passion to protect the environment, her tart observations on the Washington scene, and her thoughtful insights as LBJ's closest adviser.

## EUGENIA M. PALMEGIANO PRIZE IN THE HISTORY OF JOURNALISM

**Kathryn Cramer Brownell**, Purdue University
*24/7 Politics: Cable Television and the Fragmenting of America from Watergate to Fox News* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2023)

Kathryn Cramer Brownell offers an important analysis of the origins of our fractured and fractious media environment in her excellent book. She traces television's role in political party strategies from Richard Nixon's understanding of the impact of early cable networks to the politicization of individual news networks that fractured and divided viewing audiences in the 1990s. Brownell deftly shows readers how media companies, politicians, and news celebrities made money and created devoted, cultlike audiences that would challenge decades-old democratic norms in the age of Donald Trump.

## JAMES A. RAWLEY PRIZE IN ATLANTIC HISTORY

**Nicholas Radburn**, Lancaster University
*Traders in Men: Merchants and the Transformation of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Yale Univ. Press, 2023)

By dominating the 18th-century Atlantic slave trade, British merchants traveled from the margins to the center of British society. This meticulously researched and powerfully written book weaves their stories with those of middlemen and the enslaved, moving deftly from Liverpool to West Africa to the Americas. Nicholas Radburn provides an unmatched demonstration of the strategic calculations by which these "traders in men" derived newfound wealth and power from the consignment of Africans to lives of bondage.

## PREMIO DEL REY IN EARLY SPANISH HISTORY

**Abigail Krasner Balbale**, New York University
*The Wolf King: Ibn Mardanīsh and the Construction of Power in al-Andalus* (Cornell Univ. Press, 2023)

Abigail Krasner Balbale's study explores the life and lasting legacy of Andalusī ruler Ibn Mardanīsh. Drawing on Latin and Arabic literary, administrative, and material sources, Balbale demonstrates what his rule and identity signified for medieval Christian and Muslim rulers within the Islamicate world and Iberian borderlands, thereby pushing against past scholarly tendencies to oversimplify the Christian–Muslim divide. Balbale shows how later generations refashioned their accounts of Ibn Mardanīsh to bolster their historical memories of al-Andalus as they grappled with Islam's relation to the West, definitions of race, and models of rulership.

## JOHN F. RICHARDS PRIZE IN SOUTH ASIAN HISTORY

**Divya Cherian**, Princeton University
*Merchants of Virtue: Hindus, Muslims, and Untouchables in Eighteenth-Century South Asia* (Univ. of California Press, 2023)

Divya Cherian persuasively argues that as 18th-century Marwari merchants connected with globalized dynamics of trade and finance, they allied with Marwar/Jodhpur elites to enforce social distinctions of "embodied difference" expressed in dietary and caste terms. An emergent elite "Hinduness" defined itself against an "untouchable" populace that included Muslims, before any later colonial influences. Cherian interprets regional court rulings and orders with sophisticated scholarship to illuminate how power reshaped local social identities, a process that resonates across India today.

## JAMES HARVEY ROBINSON PRIZE FOR TEACHING AIDS

**Bruce Allyn Lesh**, Carroll County Public Schools
*Developing Historical Thinkers: Supporting Historical Inquiry for All Students* (Teachers Coll. Press, 2023)

Complaints abound that history teaching is deadly dull. This book will give it new life. Bruce Allyn Lesh offers ingenious strategies and thoughtful reflections for revitalizing our classes. He shows, for example, how students can study labor history by holding a mock congressional hearing on the Pullman strike of 1894 or discuss queer activism by exploring primary sources on the Lavender Scare of the 1950s. Wise social studies directors will make Lesh's book the focus of professional development, and even college teachers will discover new ways to address hard histories and embrace active learning.

## DOROTHY ROSENBERG PRIZE IN HISTORY OF THE JEWISH DIASPORA

**Rebekka Voß**, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt
*Sons of Saviors: The Red Jews in Yiddish Culture* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2023)

*Sons of Saviors* is masterful in breadth and depth, tracing the evolving versions of the myth of Red Jews over centuries and continents. Yiddish culture reimagined the original anti-Jewish myth as a story of Jewish strength, intellectual superiority, and moral virtue across the Yiddish-speaking world from eastern Europe to Palestine and the United States. This tightly focused, well-written book is a fascinating read on diaspora dynamics with insights on the sensory.

## ROY ROSENZWEIG PRIZE FOR CREATIVITY IN DIGITAL HISTORY

**Christopher Marsh**, Queen's University of Belfast; **Angela McShane**, University of Warwick; **Andy Watts**, Carnival Band; and their technical team, project musicians, and research assistants
*100 Ballads* (Digital Humanities Inst., 2023)

*100 Ballads* collects politically and culturally rich street songs from the 17th century. The easily navigated and unpretentious site presents the lyrics, the accompanying woodcut illustrations, and in many cases the music, sung and accompanied by professional musicians. The transcribed text allows searching by subject, and each song is accompanied by an essay on its origins. The site offers a valuable and evocative resource for scholars and teachers that makes good use of new media.

## SINCLAIR PRIZE FOR HISTORICAL PODCASTS

**Andrew J. Falk**, Christopher Newport University
*Past Is Prologue Podcast*

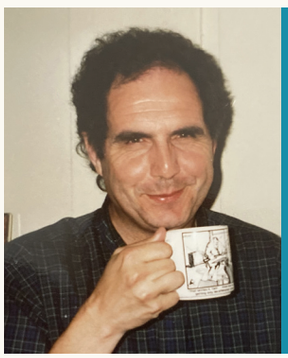
*Past Is Prologue* impressed the committee with its appeal to a nonprofessional audience, its incorporation of historical questions and processes, and its inclusion of topics and approaches that are likely to be new to its listeners. Covering disparate timely topics, this podcast captures the often-enchanting nature of primary sources and is thoroughly grounded in scholarship. It is well produced and an edifying pleasure to hear.

## WESLEY-LOGAN PRIZE IN AFRICAN DIASPORA HISTORY

**Joan Flores-Villalobos**, University of Southern California
*The Silver Women: How Black Women's Labor Made the Panama Canal* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2023)

*The Silver Women* offers a new interpretation of life within the Panama Canal Zone and its margins through an incisive examination of Black West Indian women's entrepreneurship, community building, and social reproduction. Using a theoretically sophisticated approach, Joan Flores-Villalobos excavates the untold story of historical subjects who have been marginalized in the making of the Panama Canal, moving West Indian women to the core of an enduring central theme in the history of the African diaspora—labor migration. P

*Rebecca L. West is marketing and operations associate at the AHA.*



# Jesse Frank Battan

**1948–2024**

Historian of Gender and Sexuality

Jesse Frank Battan, historian of gender and sexuality in the United States, died April 12, 2024, in Pasadena, California. He was 75 years old.

Born in Burbank on August 4, 1948, to parents Mary and Jesse Marcel Battan, Jesse grew up in Woodland Hills, California. He was an ardent surfer and spent much of his free time as a youth in the Pacific Ocean with his friends. With the help of his immigrant grandfather, Jesse started a small business, Surfboards by Battan, and opened a shop on Ventura Boulevard before graduating from Taft High School in 1966. Following high school, he briefly attended the University of Hawai'i and then transferred to the University of California, Berkeley, where he earned a BA in history in 1970 under the guidance of Robert Middlekauff. Jesse began graduate studies at New York University, working with Frank Manuel, where he completed an MA in history in 1972. He went on to complete a PhD in history at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1988, where his dissertation, directed by Daniel Walker Howe and Stanley Coben, focused on sexual radicalism and social reform in 19th-century America.

For over 40 years, Jesse was a central figure in the Department of American Studies at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF). He joined the department in 1980, first serving as a professor, then leading as department chair and taking on an interim position as associate dean for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Jesse was a passionate and gifted educator who taught a range of introductory and advanced courses on American studies, including on Hollywood, traditions of cultural radicalism, and the history of sexuality and emotions. His dynamic lectures inspired generations of CSUF students, and his Love in America classes were legendary, as was his kindness, humor, and dedication to his students and colleagues. Jesse also taught in an exchange program at the University of Tübingen in Germany.

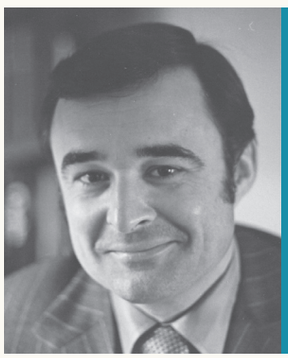
Jesse published widely on 19th- and early 20th-century US sexualities and social revolution. His steady stream of publications on Free Love radical groups analyzed their critiques of traditional marriage, including marital rape, and examined their advocacy for the empowerment and autonomy of women within and outside of marriage. In addition to his work on intimacy and social revolution, he also published work on the leftists, Marxists, and their attitudes toward sexuality and marriage. Jesse was a regular participant in the Socialism and Sexuality Seminar, an international gathering that examined the sexual programs of the Left in the 19th and 20th centuries. He was a frequent contributor to their working papers series and co-editor with Thomas Bouchet and Tania Régin of *Meetings and Alcôves*: *Gauches et Sexualités en Europe et aux Etats-Unis Depuis 1850 / The Left and Sexuality in Europe and the United States Since 1850* (Editions Univ. de Dijon, 2004). More locally, he was a reader at the Huntington Library and for many years a regular presence in their reading rooms. At his death, he was finishing a book manuscript, *Intimate Revolutions: Radical Encounters with Modern Love and Desire in 20th-Century America*.

Jesse leaves behind the many students and colleagues whose lives he touched, as well as devoted family members. These include his sister, Anna Albeck; nieces and nephews, Laura and Brandon Tribble, Max Albeck and Ali Day, and Holly and Herman Baltayan; and his beloved wife and fellow historian, Terri L. Snyder.

Sharon Block
*University of California, Irvine*

Terri L. Snyder
*California State University, Fullerton*

*Photo courtesy Terri L. Snyder*



# Richard S. Kirkendall

**1928–2024**

Political and Agricultural Historian; AHA 50-Year Member

Richard S. Kirkendall, a political and agricultural historian, died August 26, 2024, at the age of 96.

Born in Spokane, Washington, to Roland Peter and Marjorie Delia (Montfort) Kirkendall, Kirkendall discovered his passion for history after enrolling at Gonzaga University. He was surrounded by veterans attending on the GI Bill. Having never been particularly studious in high school, Kirkendall found that he needed to take his studies more seriously. After graduating with his BA in 1950, he served for two years in the US Navy during the Korean War, much of it spent on a destroyer off the coast of North Korea. He then enrolled at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he wrote a dissertation under the guidance of renowned intellectual historian Merle Curti. The book based on that dissertation, *Social Scientists and Farm Politics in the Age of Roosevelt* (Univ. of Missouri Press, 1966), is still cited.

Indicative of the opportunities then available during the golden age of academia, Kirkendall taught for three years at Wesleyan University while he was still ABD. Upon completion of his PhD in 1958, he joined the faculty of the University of Missouri in Columbia. When he reluctantly agreed to take his turn as chair of the department, he handled it well. He excelled at administration, even in the tumultuous times that followed the invasion of Cambodia in 1970. One of his graduate students from those days called him "a great, steadying influence on our history department." Many of his undergraduate students were studying journalism and quoted him so regularly in the daily newspaper that "and Kirkendall says" became a running joke in his family.

During his time in Missouri, Kirkendall developed a fascination with the career of President Harry Truman. By the 1960s, Truman's legacies were recognized as representing both promise (such as his executive order banning discrimination in the armed forces) and peril (including his application of the "containment policy"). Kirkendall developed a lifelong association with the Truman Library, including serving on the Truman Library Institute's board of directors for many years, and he directed many doctoral dissertations on the president and his era. Kirkendall published state-of-the-field books, including two editions of *The Truman Period as a Research Field* (Univ. of Missouri Press, 1967, 1972); a Truman encyclopedia (G. K. Hall, 1990); and *A History of Missouri*, volume 5, *1919–1953* (Univ. of Missouri Press, 1986). He edited *Harry's Farewell: Interpreting and Teaching the Truman Presidency* (Univ. of Missouri Press, 2004) and *The Civil Liberties Legacy of Harry S. Truman* (Truman State Univ. Press, 2013). In his years in a Seattle retirement community, Kirkendall gave more than 40 lectures about Truman. He also wrote two books for classroom use, *The Global Power: The United States Since 1941* (Allyn & Bacon, 1973) and *The United States, 1929–1945: Years of Crisis and Change* (McGraw-Hill, 1974).

In 1973, Kirkendall left Missouri to serve as executive secretary of the Organization of American Historians in Bloomington, Indiana. His dedication to the organization is demonstrated by one of his later edited volumes, *The Organization of American Historians and the Writing and Teaching of American History* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2011).

After eight years as executive secretary, he took on a new challenge, helping establish an agricultural history program as Henry Wallace Professor of History at Iowa State University. Wallace had been a developer and promoter of hybrid corn, served as Franklin Roosevelt's secretary of agriculture and vice president and Truman's secretary of commerce, before challenging Truman in the presidential campaign of 1948. During this period of his career, Kirkendall edited *Uncle Henry: A Documentary Profile of the First Henry Wallace* (Iowa State Univ. Press, 1993), a collection of writings by Wallace's "Uncle Henry," a prominent agricultural journalist, as well as an agricultural history book series. His last job brought him back to his home state as the Scott and Dorothy Bullitt Endowed Chair of American History at the University of Washington in Seattle.

Kirkendall retired in 1998. During his retirement, he traveled widely, and he remained a loyal fan of Seattle Mariners baseball and Gonzaga men's basketball.

Despite his success, he often expressed a wish in his last years that he had written one more book. About Harry Truman, of course.

Andrew J. Kirkendall
*Texas A&M University*

Glennys Young
*University of Washington*

# Patricia Kruppa

**1936–2024**

## Historian of Women

Patricia Stallings Kruppa Savage, longtime faculty member of the history department at the University of Texas at Austin, died on February 5, 2024, in Austin, Texas, after a brief illness.

A lifelong Texan rooted in a seemingly lost Texas liberal tradition, Patricia Stallings was born in Corpus Christi and grew up in Victoria and then Houston. She attended Lamar High School, where she developed a talent for public speaking, and went on to participate in the prizewinning debate team at the University of Houston. In 1957, she was the first woman to win the prize for best individual speaker at the National Debate Tournament. When presented with the award, a man's watch, she demanded that it be replaced with a woman's watch, a harbinger of her future interest in women's issues. Interviewed by the Houston Cougar about her postgraduate plans, Pat said she would go to graduate school to earn an MA and a PhD, and then teach. And she proceeded to do just that.

Awarded a Woodrow Wilson scholarship, she attended graduate school at Columbia University, where she completed her dissertation under the direction of R. K. Webb in 1968. The resulting monograph, Charles Haddon Spurgeon: *A Preacher's Progress* (Garland, 1982), remains the definitive biography. Over the course of her career, Pat's publications expressed her continuing interests in Victorian culture, material culture, the history of childhood, religious history, and women's history. She contributed "'More Sweet and Liquid Than Any Other': Victorian Images of Mary Magdalene" to *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian Society* (1992), a collection published in Webb's honor. Her "The American Woman and the Male Historian" (*Social Science Quarterly*, 1974) was an early call for the historical discipline to open its ranks to women. She also published a wide range of book reviews in *Catholic Historical Review*, *Albion*, and the *American Historical Review*, among other journals. Taken together, her publications embodied her meticulous approach to research and an incisive writing style. In retirement, she was working on a biography of Texas feminist and suffragist Anna Pennybacker.

Pat came to the UT Austin history department in 1965, when her first husband, Joseph Kruppa, joined the English department. Pat quickly made her mark as a skilled and dynamic teacher, offering a wide range of courses in British history and cultural and intellectual history. Later, she pioneered courses in the history of women and the history of childhood. Her 40-year teaching career was primarily focused on undergraduates, particularly those in the Plan II honors program. Innumerable students flourished in her classrooms and under her mentorship, as reflected in her numerous teaching awards. She received the Jean Holloway Award in 1982, the President's Associates Teaching Excellence Award in 1992, and the Chad Oliver Plan II Teaching Award in 1993; became a Phelan Fellow, a recognition of faculty who have taught in the honors Plan II program for 20 or more years; and joined the Academy of Distinguished Teachers in 2000. She was particularly proud of the Holloway Award, as it is the only teaching award at UT Austin chosen exclusively by students.

In the forefront of teaching the history of women, Pat taught UT Austin's first courses on women's history in 1972. She participated in the campaign to establish a women's studies program, and from 1980 to 1982, she served as the second director of the campus's Center for Women's and Gender Studies (founded in 1978). Pat also assumed other leadership roles on campus, serving as AAUP chair during the controversial removal of President Stephen Spurr and his replacement by Lorene Lane Rogers in 1974 and 1975.

Outside of her academic pursuits, Pat enjoyed gardening; collecting art, antiques, and collectibles; cooking; and preparing elaborate holiday feasts with her longtime friend and debate partner, Charles Ledbetter. She also enjoyed travel—as an avid Anglophile to England and later road trips to the national parks.

Pat co-parented her son, Christopher, with former husband Jimmie Savage. Together, they dedicated their joint estate to establishing the Christopher Eden Savage Memorial Endowment for Autism and Related Developmental Disabilities, which supports research at the University of Texas Dell Medical School, the Steve Hicks School of Social Work, and the College of Education.

Gail Savage
*St. Mary's College of Maryland (emerita)*

*Photo courtesy Stallings family*

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# Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. Publication Title: *Perspectives on History*
2. Publication Number: ISSN 1940-8048
3. Date of Filing: September 27, 2024
4. Issue Frequency: September, November, January, March, May
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: Five (5)
6. Annual Subscription Price: $65 (for institutions)
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Publication Office:
   400 A St. SE, Washington, DC 20003-3889
   Contact Person: Laura Ansley (202) 544-2422
8. Complete Mailing Address of the Headquarters or General Business Officer of Publisher: 400 A St. SE Washington, DC 20003-3889
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Address of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher: American Historical Association, 400 A St. SE, Washington, DC 20003-3889; Editor: Laura Ansley, 400 A St. SE, Washington, DC 20003-3889; Managing Editor: Laura Ansley, 400 A St. SE, Washington, DC 20003-3889.
10. Owner: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, its name and address must be stated.)
    American Historical Association, 400 A St. SE, Washington, DC 20003-3889. The American Historical Association has no ownership. It is a nonprofit membership corporation created by an Act of Congress on January 4, 1889, for the promotion of historical studies.
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgages, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1% or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: N/A
12. Tax Status (for completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates): The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization, and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: Has not changed during the preceding 12 months.
13. Publication Title: *Perspectives on History*
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: May 1, 2024

| 15. **Extent and Nature of Circulation** | **Average Number of Copies of Each Issue during Preceding 12 Months** | **Actual Number of Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date** |
|---|---|---|
| a. Total Number Copies (Net press run) | 9,179 | 8,847 |
| b. Paid Circulation (By mail and outside the mail) | | |
| 1. Mailed Outside-County Paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541 | 8,162 | 8,142 |
| 2. Mailed In-County Paid subscriptions | 0 | 0 |
| 3. Paid Distribution through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales and other paid distribution outside USPS | 487 | 150 |
| 4. Other classes mailed through the USPS | 0 | 0 |
| c. Total Paid Distribution | 8,649 | 8,292 |
| d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution by Mail, and Outside the Mail | | |
| 1. Outside-county as stated on PS Form 3541 | 0 | 0 |
| 2. In-county as stated on Form 3541 | 0 | 0 |
| 3. Other classes mailed through the USPS | 0 | 0 |
| 4. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution outside the mail | 150 | 150 |
| e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution | 150 | 150 |
| f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e) | 8,799 | 8,442 |
| g. Copies Not Distributed | 529 | 555 |
| h. Total (Sum of 15f and 15g) | 9,328 | 8,997 |
| i. Percentage Paid | 98.3% | 98.22% |

16. **Publication of Statement of Ownership**: Will be printed in the January 2025 issue of this publication.
17. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subjected to criminal sanctions.

(Signed)
Laura Ansley
Senior Managing Editor, *Perspectives on History*

ELLERY WEIL

# SNAKE BRACELET

*Ellery Weir*

If you visit Athens, you'll find several common items at souvenir shops: bottles of luxury olive oil, olive wood cutting boards, reproductions of ancient pottery, and snake bracelets. One of these last, slender, silver, and meant to be worn midway up the forearm, caught my eye on a vacation, in a shop outside the Acropolis in the Plaka district.

Snake bracelets are one of the oldest forms of representational jewelry, which takes the form of a plant, animal, or other defined being or feature. The oldest snake bracelets date to the eighth century BCE, along with other animal-motif bracelets that archaeologists have found in western Asia. By the fifth century BCE, the snake bracelet had made its way to Greece, where snakes were associated with healing. That association lives on today in the caduceus, a symbol of medicine that appears on modern medical equipment but can be traced to Greek mythology.

While the Egyptian pharaohs famously wore crowns adorned with snakes, snake bracelets from what is now Egypt date back only to the Ptolemaic dynasty (305–30 BCE). The Romans, who maintained close ties to the Ptolemaic pharaohs, too, wore snake bracelets. At this time in Egyptian tradition, snakes were associated with Nehebkau, a magical serpent and companion of Ra, whose name was invoked for protection, or perhaps with the protective serpents that slithered through the Egyptian underworld.

Representational jewelry in Europe was less popular during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, but enjoyed a revival with the Georgians in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, including the return of the snake bracelet. The Victorian era saw another resurgence in snake jewelry, particularly in the form of bracelets. Queen Victoria herself had a serpent engagement ring, which only furthered the trend.

In the 20th century, snake bracelets were considered, erroneously, a trendy piece of "Egyptian revival" jewelry, especially after the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb brought Egyptomania to Britain, the United States, and continental Europe. Worn on the upper arm, wrist, or forearm, a snake bracelet became a mark of sophistication and worldliness.

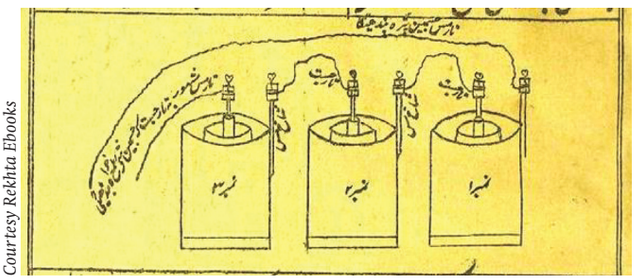
The most daring, and most on trend, took it a step further—the American socialite Jennie Jerome (1854–1921), who later married Lord Randolph Churchill and was the mother of Winston Churchill, had a permanent snake bracelet, in the form of a tattoo on her wrist. She was one of multiple wealthy aristocratic British women with snake tattoos, and while the future Lady Churchill's tattoo was discreet enough to be hidden by a well-placed glove sleeve, railroad heiress Aimée Crocker (1864–1941) had multiple tattooed snakes slithering around her forearm.

Today, you can buy a snake bracelet from an antique dealer or a contemporary jeweler—like the one I bought in Athens. Snake bracelets come in silver, gold, and base metals. Some are beautiful, but they can also be symbolic. For all the negative associations people have with serpents, snake bracelets have meant healing, and love, and eternity. When we look at snake bracelets, modern or historical, and when we wear them, they can remind us of our past—but they, with their changing and surprising meanings, can also be a symbol of things to come. They can be a reminder of how all of us, like a snake shedding its skin, have the power to grow.

*Ellery Weil is a historian and writer who holds a PhD in history from University College London.*

AMANDA LANZILLO

# POETIC BATTERY MANUALS



Courtesy Rekhta Ebooks

The modern battery was invented at the turn of the 19th century and quickly became the power source behind new communications, industrial, and scientific technologies. But the global history of the battery is also a story of how batteries were adapted around the world, how they became part of divergent cultural vocabularies, and how people used knowledge about batteries to demonstrate their command over modern technology.

In late 19th-century British colonial India, batteries became the subject of poetry. Verses about how to make and use a battery were featured in an 1880 Urdu-language manual on electroplating, the practice of coating an object in a layer of metal through an electrical current. Producers of everyday objects like kitchenware, surgical tools, and jewelry used electroplating to coat a base metal with a more precious, attractive, or less corrodible finish. Between the 1870s and 1910s, electroplating became a popular topic in Urdu-language technical writing.

The 1880 manual *Jāmaʿ-yi tarākīb-i talmīʿ* (Collection of techniques of plating) was published in the northern city of Lucknow in 1880. Across 64 pages—written entirely in verse—it described how to create multiple styles of battery and use their electric charge to electroplate. Its rich illustrations explained how to wire together multiple batteries to increase the longevity of their charge. Verses accompanying this image explained: "Connect the zinc wire of the first battery / With the copper node of the second / Oh friend! If it is fastened, then both batteries / Undoubtedly will become joined together." The poem goes on to describe connecting "as many batteries as you wish" and then how to connect the final battery to the object to be plated. The illustration reinforced these steps, depicting three numbered batteries connected by zinc wires attached to copper nodes.

Versified manuals served multiple purposes. Such verse established the author's literary and industrial prowess. The *Jāmaʿ-yi tarākīb-i talmīʿ* was attributed to Jawaharlal, an author who used the pen name Shaida ("lover") for his poetry. Shaida worked for the engineering department of Udaipur state. In the introduction, he portrayed himself as promoting the technical capacities of the state—and of India more widely—while also participating in regional courtly culture by demonstrating his talent for poetic composition using new topics and terms.

Such poetry also promised readers a role in the rapidly shifting systems of authority in colonial India. Urdu electroplating manuals first circulated among middle-class hobbyists and aspiring industrialists, who often came from privileged families. In the 19th century, some caste-dominant communities retrenched their own social positions by demonstrating mastery and authority over technologies associated with the colonial state. But the manuals also became popular among artisan metalsmiths, many from marginalized caste backgrounds and laboring communities. Poems about making and using batteries likely also circulated within artisan communities with varying literacy levels. By reciting and sharing these practical, educational verses, Urdu speakers came to understand a new technology. Some metalsmiths even wrote their own manuals. These positioned electroplating within longer genealogies of regional metal plating techniques, arguing that laborers' forms of material and technical knowledge remained relevant in the colonial economy.

The *Jāmaʿ-yi tarākīb-i talmīʿ* addressed both potential audiences. It celebrated the tacit skills of artisans and their ability to master new techniques with their knowledgeable hands, but it suggested that such skills would be of interest for hobbyists too. Shaida skirted questions of class- and caste-based authority over technology. Instead, he maintained that this knowledge was important for all Indians, in that it could help them challenge the economic and industrial dominance of British colonialism. By adapting knowledge about how to make and use batteries into vernacular poetic traditions, Indian Urdu poets gave the battery new and localized social and political relevance. P

*Amanda Lanzillo is assistant professor in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago and an ACLS Fellow in 2024–25.*

AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

139th ANNUAL MEETING

CHICAGO

JANUARY 8–11, 2026

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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.**

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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.

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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, 2025**

**Before applying, please review the annual meeting guidelines and more information at historians.org/proposals.**

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