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PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

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AMERICAN
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Careers for History Majors

A publication from the American Historical Association

We must “uphold at every possible turn the inherent value of studying history.”
Elizabeth Leffelt, former Vice President, AHA Teaching Division, *Perspectives*

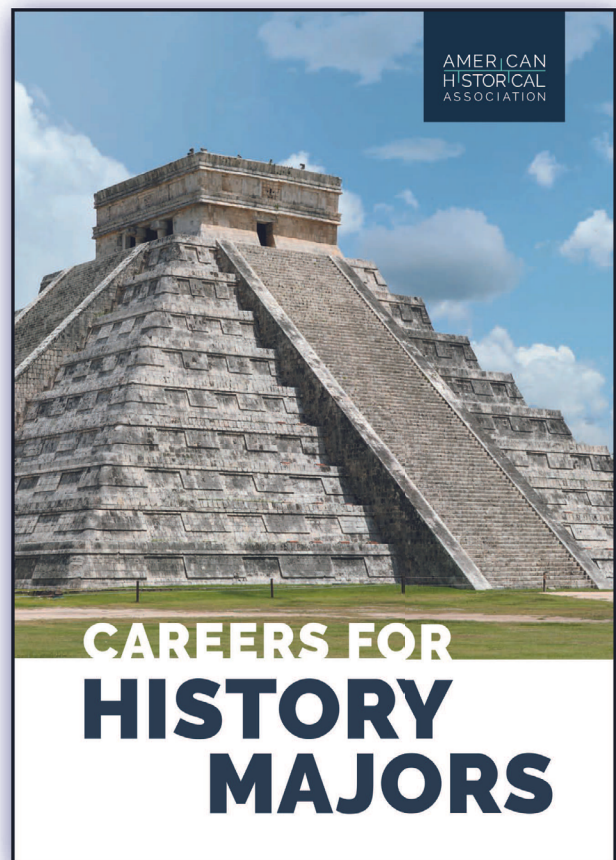
Careers for History Majors conveys the value of the undergraduate study of history through clear graphs and informal prose. Readers will find hard data, practical advice, and answers to common questions for students and their parents.

Contributors explore the breadth of career options available to history majors and provide tools to help students get the most out of their degree.

The booklet also includes the personal stories of history majors who work in a range of occupations, including data analysis, finance, and the law. You'll find out what employers want and learn about the personal transformations that many history majors experience.

Contributors

Loren Collins • John Fea • Anne Hyde
Sarah Olzawski • Johann Neem
Claire Potter • John Rowe • Sarah Shurts
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Reinforcing the value and utility of a history BA, *Careers for History Majors* is perfect for directors of undergraduate studies, career center advisers, prospective majors, and their parents.

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ON THE COVER

It's a common lament from teachers: you spend hours providing specific and actionable feedback on student assignments and then see the same issues in future submitted work. Did the students even read your comments? In wrestling with this perennial problem, Elizabeth George devised an in-class assignment in which students use her immediate feedback to revise their writing by the end of the class period. As she writes in this issue, she can see the learning process play out in front of her, and she no longer has to wonder if they took her feedback.

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WHITNEY E. BARRINGER

INSIGHTS FROM THE ROAD

Seeing Primary Sources in the World Around Us

In March 2025, the AHA began to manage the Mid-Atlantic and US Territories Region for the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) program, which allows us to provide grants of up to \$25,000 to support educational programming for a range of audiences. Our region covers a breathtaking span, stretching from Delaware to North Carolina as well as American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. As we were getting started, an invitation arrived with fortuitous timing: Maritere Cardona Matos (Univ. of Puerto Rico–Humacao) was hosting a conference for her TPS project, PR-LEAPS, in which postsecondary experts worked with K–12 educators on enhancing critical thinking using all kinds of primary sources. Foothold established, I soon traveled to the island, both to witness the fruits of a previous TPS grant and to encourage new applicants to create educational projects rooted in the library’s vast troves.

During my trip, I took stock of my own relationship to primary sources and gained a personal insight. My primary source skills help me navigate more than the archive. They change how I approach new experiences in general. The same questions I ask of primary sources—about authorship and influence, origin and purpose, audience, interpretation, and bias (both my own and that of the source)—apply. And just as in a history classroom, if I want to build trust in my interpretations of evidence, I must engage broader contexts to make proper sense of those primary sources. (For this trip, I prepared with Joshua Jelly-Schapiro’s *Island People* [2016] and Jorell Meléndez-Badillo’s *Puerto Rico: A National History* [2024].)

In San Juan’s Ballajá, a 19th-century Spanish barracks remodeled as office space in the 1990s, I visited Humanidades PR and encountered *La Boriqueña*, a comic book about an Afro–Puerto Rican superheroine and defender of Puerto Rico. The comic’s cover alone is a rich text, beginning first with her name (the Hispanicized feminine form of “Boriken,” the Taino name for Puerto Rico). Her enrollment at Columbia University, New York City’s ivy jewel, is a nod to the Puerto Rican diaspora, which has led to nearly as many Puerto Ricans living in the states as in the territory. Her environmental science major

comments on the challenges Puerto Rico faces from climate change and development while making knowledge of the climate crisis one of her powers.

My further explorations yielded other textured and evocative examples. In Ponce, Puerto Rico’s second-largest city, a crew of wonderful librarians from the Ponce Municipal Library took me to the city’s grandest sights, including the flamboyant Parque de Bombas, Puerto Rico’s first firehouse. Outside, its bold black-and-red Moorish design is preserved; inside is an evolving collection of fire department patches, most donated by firefighters from the states, the Caribbean, and Latin America. The patches reveal at once the different communities in which Puerto Rico holds membership and to whom its ties are constantly being renewed through the unceasing flow of tourists to its shores.

Geography, too, can be read like a primary source, and simply paying attention to place-names can reveal dimensions of the past in plain sight. Take Humacao, a town that sits on the perimeter of the Cordillera Central, Puerto Rico’s only mountain range. Five centuries ago, Taino leader Agüeybaná II led local chiefs, or caciques, including one named Humacao, to fight against early Spanish incursions before retreating to the mountains to preserve what was left of their devastated populations. Once the names reveal their origins, evidence of a vast Indigenous past—in cacique place-names like Arecibo, Dagua, Jayuya, Luquillo—is impossible to miss.

The TPS regional program has a special place in the constellation of humanities funding. It empowers local people by making connections, meaning, challenges, and addendums to the variety of official and competing narratives and sources (or the absence thereof) in institutions like the Library of Congress. The resulting education can shape not only how we interact with the world we know but *how* we encounter what we don’t know along the way. In this way, the skills we teach with primary sources are essential to democracy. To me, that sounds like primary sources are a pretty big deal. **P**

Whitney E. Barringer is program and data analyst at the AHA.



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BEN VINSON III

A LITERACY BEYOND THE PAGE

In Conversation with N. D. B. Connolly



Continuing my conversations with AHA members, I spoke this summer with N. D. B. Connolly (“Nathan” among his friends). Nathan and I share a Johns Hopkins University footprint. We spent five years together on the faculty there, and in 2016, he became the first African American historian of the United States to earn tenure at Johns Hopkins. Today, he is the Herbert Baxter Adams Associate Professor of History.

Connolly’s scholarship exposes the mechanics of power embedded in land, law, and everyday life. His first book, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2014), earned a host of major awards. By framing Greater Miami’s segregation as part of a longer, global history of colonial extraction, Connolly recentered debates about the profitability of racism and unearthed the tense negotiations among Native Americans, Caribbean migrants, working-class whites, landlords, politicians, and the Black poor.

Our conversation ranges from his formative teachers to the stakes of racial literacy, the promise and peril of artificial intelligence, and the enduring power of grassroots storytelling.

Nathan, take us back. How and why did you become a historian?

In middle school and high school, my most interesting teachers were the social studies and history teachers. I did have a real love for math and science that I wasn’t encouraged to pursue. I attribute that to a combination of factors — tracking within public schools in southern Florida, the interests of my own family, how I was identified as a “right-brain kid” (when that was the language of the day). Beyond watching *3-2-1 Contact* or mathematically inclined public television, I never got pushed in the direction of math and sciences to the degree that I was drawn into history and storytelling.

My history teachers were especially colorful characters. My eighth-grade social studies teacher, Mr. Costa, was an

amazing artist. Whenever he talked about different periods of American history, he would draw these incredible cartoon characters, who would be wearing the dress from the time period. That was another one of the ways that I got pulled in.

I always had some sense of storytelling, but also the importance of grounding it in nonfiction and in truth. At St. Thomas University in Miami, I had an inspiring mentor and instructor, Frank Sicius. At the time, he was the youngest of the three history faculty at 50 years old; he had this incredible breadth of knowledge. Another professor, Father James MacDougall, had a briefcase he brought to every class. At the start of each class, he would draw out a simple Styrofoam cup. He’d fill that cup up at a water fountain in the hallway. For the entire four years that I took classes with him, he took nothing else from the briefcase. He would speak without notes on every possible subject.

I became taken by the power of history to decode architecture, urban planning, and government bureaucracy.

I was very impressed with their analytic thinking, historical recall, and mastery of facts, but also of processes and moments — it was magnetic. When I started college, I aspired to be a high school history teacher. By the time I graduated, I had doctoral programs in my sights, and I was off to the races from that point.

How would you characterize your scholarship and the questions that animate it?

I entered the career of professional history writing as someone who wrote urban history and American political history.



N. D. B. Connolly centers his historical work on connecting big, somewhat abstract historical problems to how everyday people live and experience those things.

I was always interested in questions of how geography—and urban, suburban, and even rural space—preconditioned people’s outcomes and experiences. I also became taken by the power of history to decode architecture, urban planning, and the somewhat arcane workings of government bureaucracy. A lot of government documents can be written in an opaque way, but if you learn the vocabulary, it’s almost like speaking a second language.

A few years after I got to Johns Hopkins, I began teaching a graduate course called Racial Literacy in the Archives. It was inspired in part by Lani Guinier’s “From Racial Liberalism to Racial Literacy” (*Journal of American History*, 2004), in which she talked about the importance of racial literacy and understanding the history of educational inequality. I ran with that, thinking about the ways we can understand archival methodologies as requiring a literacy beyond simply being able to read the words on the page. Having “racial literacy,” for me, means having the ability to see race and racism at work in the world and, for historians in particular, to combine race with other categories of analysis (such as gender, class, and sexuality, of course, but also work, faith, family, and/or popular notions of time).

In my work, I am largely trying to think about how big, sometimes impersonal processes like urbanization, capitalism, and nation-building are experienced in people’s everyday lives on a very intimate scale. *A World More Concrete* is about real estate development in the Jim Crow South, but it was grounded in the experiences of Black people from the Caribbean and the United States primarily, their experience of becoming Black, and how the geography and the landscape of an American city governed by practices of legalized

racial segregation made people have a “colored” experience. I’ve since gone on to do some quite personal work that revolves around a multigenerational family history; it historicizes the love and labor migrations of my mother and her three sisters as part of larger processes that cross the Atlantic world.

I’m really interested in operating at high scales of analysis as concerns big, somewhat abstract historical problems—but always connecting it back to how everyday people live and experience those things.

That topic of racial literacy—why is it especially urgent right now?

American universities have to figure out their own relationship to historical processes of racism and domination, and our scholarship is a primary source for the history of the American university. We have an incredible history of people of color beating their way into institutions that we now call historically white or predominantly white institutions. I think, too, about the early foundations of higher education in the late 19th century as it was crafted as a professional vocation, and all the connections that were there to build strong bonds between, say, German or British institutions and American institutions, and how in many cases, people of color were written out of those networks. What we have now is an incredible opportunity to think about the life cycle of what people of color have attempted to do in higher education—whether it’s the same kind of environment and they have the same kind of possibilities.

Today, with the federal government threatening—in some cases directly seizing—federal funds from universities, the Trump administration has behaved, in some ways, as if Uncle Sam is a donor who can decide simply to give or withdraw funds. The seizure of federal monies from higher education, however, is not without precedent. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were efforts to make universities more democratic places by using the seizure of federal funds to coerce institutions to actually hire Black people, to hire people of color generally. Our former colleague Franklin Knight was one of the first Black faculty members hired at Johns Hopkins at a time when the federal government was overtly enforcing antidiscrimination law and threatening the federal funding of universities to make that real. These federal seizures proved to be perhaps the single most effective way to root out Jim Crow in American colleges and universities.

Now we have the inverse effect, where federal funds are threatened for universities advancing antiracist aims. It is a

moment where the soul of higher education is being decided on whether they want to continue to invest in things like racial literacy. The call for racial literacy is more important now than it's ever been, in other words, at least in my lifetime. Whether that call can be answered inside the university's walls is still an open question.

When you reflect on the biggest challenges and opportunities historians face, what do you see in your crystal ball?

It's foggy, to be sure. Number one is the question of scholarly integrity in light of artificial intelligence. To what degree do we defend questions of academic integrity in the classroom?

You and I came of academic age when digital sources were becoming more readily available. The extent to which many of us are still practiced in analog research methods—those methods are going to determine the soul of the discipline. There has always been a pressure to publish and be productive, and sometimes to speed up things that need to be cooked slowly.

The call for racial literacy is more important now than it's ever been.

Second is the role of the historian for the public. We are seeing a battle around the question of history itself. Whose history gets institutionalized? To what degree are we supposed to talk about the founding fathers but not slavery at the foundation of the republic?

Third, we have to think about our relationship to other disciplines. Many history graduate students are reaching for literary studies and other speculative branches of academic inquiry. There is a question about what history uniquely offers and to what degree we still need historians.

That last question is a bit contentious, because I do think that there are certain subfields feeling a bit less connected to the old way of doing archival research, and for reasons that are totally understandable. Still, there are incredible examples of scholars who have shown that even when you're dealing with people who may not have left a robust written record, you can still use rigorous archival methods to reconstruct their experience.

As I hear you reflect on the future, I wonder if one day there will be an AI historian or graduate student in your seminar?

I don't see that as far-fetched, only because I'm looking at the telos of our work. We're teaching in rooms where none of the students have physical books; they're all working from laptops. Today's students do not make photocopies. They don't use pens. I would be foolish to imagine that there won't be an AI student, or at least hybrid programs where students use some listening software to help streamline what the seminar does.

What makes you most optimistic about the future of the discipline?

I do not feel that the craft of history writing is in danger. I'm very optimistic about the creativity of humans to know and connect with their past. People are swept up and drawn into meaning-making when they can understand the origins of things.

The eminent anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot wrote his book *Silencing the Past* while at Johns Hopkins, oftentimes in direct conversation and conflict with some of his colleagues in the Department of History. But I always found Trouillot instructive in helping historians to not take themselves so seriously, as if we're the only ones who own a relationship to the telling of the past. His book shows the broad base that history-making has. "History" doesn't just reside in the ivory tower; it resides in homes and around the dinner table, in churches, in civic groups, in relationships, and in the stories that parents tell children and children tell among themselves. That grassroots relationship to the past will remain strong.

History writing will be an incredible and dynamic thing. If anything can become more democratic about our abilities to narrate the past, I see that as a good thing, even if the cause of it may not have been comfortable at the time.

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

Ben Vinson III is president of the AHA.

STAYING CALM AND HOPEFUL

(Even When “Everything Feels Like It’s on Fire”)



Heckofa time to get the job,” a fellow historian and former student wrote me recently regarding my new job as executive director of the AHA. I’ve heard many iterations of this from colleagues since my appointment was announced in February—that I’m starting this job in a tumultuous time, a difficult and momentous time, perilous times. It is, indeed, quite a time to be a historian.

History—from what is being taught to what is printed on historic markers to whose history is told—is a major flash point in American politics and culture. At stake is the ability of not only historians but also the public to talk about the past in all its complexity, complete with messy narratives and its many twists and turns. At stake is the ability to teach and learn about and commemorate the histories of all people and events, not just those that conveniently fit a more triumphalist narrative of the American past.

These tensions over history and memory make the simultaneous hostility toward higher education all the more intensely felt by our colleagues who teach in colleges and universities. Many are experiencing the effects of declining investment in our discipline. In my conversations over the past month, colleagues have discussed a department’s pause on PhD admissions, the threatened elimination of a history program, and reduced funding for research and travel. I met with some of our earliest career colleagues, MA and PhD students, who expressed wide-ranging concerns, from being able to travel internationally for research to securing internships by which to broaden their skill sets to completing their degrees on time to what comes next.

The tightening of university budgets threatens to further contract an already austere academic job market, putting both new and existing positions at risk. This will only exacerbate the ongoing problem of contingent faculty positions outnumbering permanent job opportunities. And this isn’t happening only in academia. Numerous professions in which historians work—from museums to federal agencies to state humanities councils—have seen budgets cut and are experiencing uncertainty about

their futures. In conversations with colleagues who work at museums, we’ve discussed our concerns about what this means for the broader practice of history in service to the public.

Expertise is being devalued in the public realm, such that what was once historians’ calling card—our deep knowledge and evidence-focused methodological approaches—has become suspect in some circles. The current administration’s directives related to the National Park Service and the Smithsonian Institution impugn the professional integrity and expertise of historians and others tasked with ensuring the accuracy of the historical content at their sites and museums.

We are not alone in caring about these challenges and not alone in our commitment to working to address them head-on.

“Everything feels like it’s on fire,” one person told me. After a month and a half on the job here in the nation’s capital, I can’t say I disagree. But I also have hope.

The enormity of the challenges facing our discipline are real and unrelenting. Some have been percolating for years, shape-shifting along the way and becoming increasingly urgent. Issues that might seem to affect only historians also directly and indirectly affect the public. We are identifying new strategies for engagement, rustling up more public support, and fighting for a reinvestment in our discipline at levels that exceed the function of any individual department, institution, or organization. At the same time, we historians must continue with our daily work—crafting new public programming, refreshing our syllabi, showing up for our students and the public, and attending to our personal lives.

“How do you stay calm?” a colleague asked me at the PCB-AHA annual meeting in July. In the moment, I responded

that I manage to stay calm because I work with the AHA's staff, volunteers, and members. And that I hoped that the knowledge that the AHA is constantly monitoring actions that affect historians and working on our members' behalf might bring her a sense of calm too.

On further reflection, it's not only that. Staying calm and identifying rational, evidence-based approaches is essential to making meaningful progress on resolving the problems our discipline faces. And I stay calm by reminding myself that I'm not alone—that we are not alone. We are not alone in caring about these challenges and not alone in our commitment to working to address them head-on. It is my privilege to work with the AHA Council, committees, and members who volunteer their time and expertise in support of the work of historians. And I am fortunate to lead a professional staff of 19 people who work in support of an expansive historical discipline, advocate for the importance of history, and promote collaboration and innovation that brings historians' work into more aspects of public life. Our collective work is crucial in this challenging landscape.

Now, for what no one wants to hear: These challenges are bigger than the AHA—or any scholarly association—can resolve on its own. And that is precisely the point. A multifront attack on history, higher education, and expertise requires a multi-pronged response from an AHA that does not work alone. We cannot raise the drawbridges; rather, we must work collaboratively and play an active role in building effective coalitions.

That's precisely what I and the AHA staff do on behalf of our members and our discipline every day. We are active participants in a larger ecosystem of associations and organizations with varied missions, disciplines, and kinds of expertise (from ethics and legal aid to publishing and academic freedom). Each organization takes the lead when something aligns with their specific mission, while supporting and supplementing others' work through consultation and collaboration, not needing any acknowledgment other than to know that we have been helpful.

For every widely publicized action, there are several others on which the AHA is at work. In August alone, the AHA has worked on leading professional development programming for DC public school teachers; furthering our collaboration with local PBS stations; planning a free conference for history educators in Texas; analyzing data from two recent surveys, on non-tenure-track faculty and the readership of the *American Historical Review*; planning our next Congressional Briefing for congressional staff and others in the policy community; administering a Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources grant program as its Mid-Atlantic and US Territories

regional partner; shepherding historians' research and viewpoints into publication in the *American Historical Review* and *Perspectives*; editing a new edition of *Careers for History Majors*; mounting a new multiyear Doctoral Futures project in collaboration with the American Council of Learned Societies, the Modern Language Association, and the Society of Biblical Literature; and proceeding with a lawsuit to stop the dismantling of the National Endowment for the Humanities. This and more, with just 20 people on staff.

We must embrace that original charge and continue to open the AHA's doors more widely to the larger community of those who work in history.

Given the enormity and pressing nature of our work, there is one question in my conversations that has usually (but not always) remained unspoken: “Why would you want to do this job?”

Simply put, I believe in the work of the AHA and in the work of historians. I take seriously my responsibility to shepherd this 141-year-old organization into its next chapter. As I wrote in a letter to members on my first day, when I look to the future, I am guided by the AHA's 1889 Congressional Charter and its charge to work for the “promotion of historical studies” writ large. We must embrace that original charge and continue to open the AHA's doors more widely to the larger community of those who work in history, those who were trained as historians and work elsewhere, and those who simply love learning about the past. That means fostering an environment where people with diverse experiences and backgrounds can engage, disagree, and learn from one another.

To effectively tackle the many issues that face the historical discipline, we have to be able to remain in sustained, productive dialogue with one another, to engage in reasonable, respectful professional debates. That is difficult to do in the highly polarized context in which we currently work, but it is essential that we try, even in our most challenging moments.

We have to advocate for a discipline that is committed to building a collaborative space of welcome and support, making it a means of connecting people who care about learning from, and about, the past. We have a shared mission to advance the historical discipline—and we can only achieve that together. **P**

Sarah Weicksel is executive director of the AHA.

ADVOCACY BRIEFS

April to July 2025

Since April, the AHA has worked to combat broad-ranging federal efforts to censor and defund history and state legislatures' efforts to reshape education.

The Association released statements condemning the targeting of foreign scholars through immigration enforcement as well as the removal of books from the US Naval Academy's library and signed on to a letter from the Coalition for International Education urging lawmakers to protect funding for federal international education and foreign language study programs. Following the abrupt dismissal of all members of the State Department's Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation (HAC), the AHA sent a letter to the department seeking clarification on the impact on the HAC's statutory authority.

Addressing the impact of the dismantling of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) remains a priority. This effort is anchored by a lawsuit brought by the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), the AHA, and the Modern Language Association (MLA) seeking to reverse recent actions to devastate the NEH, including the elimination of grant programs, staff, and entire divisions and programs. The AHA has also issued or signed on to statements condemning the attempt to shutter the agency permanently.

At the state level, the AHA sent letters to the Alabama and Texas legislatures regarding bills that would require the text of the Ten Commandments to be displayed on the walls of public school classrooms. Texas legislators received an additional letter, urging them to oppose a bill that would place curricular control with university governing boards over instructors. AHA staff member Julia Brookins testified against this bill before the Texas House Committee on Higher Education. The AHA also sent an action alert to Oklahomans asking them to call on their state legislators to oppose the state's new social studies education standards.

AHA's Defense of the National Endowment for the Humanities

The AHA released a statement on April 4 condemning the evisceration of the NEH, during which the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) terminated more than 1,400 grants and placed 75 percent of staff on leave.

The AHA signed on to the National Humanities Alliance's statement opposing DOGE's threats to cut the funding and staff of the NEH. "Cutting NEH funding directly harms communities in every state and contributes to the destruction of our shared cultural heritage," the statement reads. "Cutting NEH staff who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to their positions guts the NEH itself."

On April 30, the AHA with the Association for Computers and the Humanities and the MLA convened an Information Exchange webinar about the NEH appeal process for scholars whose grants had been abruptly terminated.

On May 1, the ACLS, AHA, and MLA filed a lawsuit in federal district court, seeking to reverse actions including the elimination of NEH grant programs, staff, and entire divisions and programs. On July 25, the court denied our motion for a preliminary injunction, while granting a preliminary injunction for the Authors Guild, which ensures that funds for terminated NEH grants cannot be reallocated while the case is being tried. We are encouraged that the judge rejected the government's motion to dismiss our claim that DOGE was responsible for the terminations and our First Amendment claims. While it is disappointing that our request for a preliminary injunction was not granted and that some claims in our suit have been dismissed, we have appealed the decision, continue with the case, and remain steadfast in our efforts.

AHA Condemns Targeting of Foreign Scholars

On April 21, the AHA released a statement condemning the administration's immigration policies and practices, which "threaten the vitality of historical work through the targeting of international scholars for increased scrutiny

and legal action.” The statement goes on: “We deplore the atmosphere of fear and repression created by the harassment of foreign-born students and scholars by government agencies.” As of July 31, 32 organizations have signed on to this statement.

AHA Opposes Requirements to Display Ten Commandments

On April 24, the AHA sent a letter to members of the Alabama State Senate opposing SB 166/HB 178, which would require Alabama public schools to display the Ten Commandments in US history classrooms. This legislation would “promote an oversimplified account of the American founding that does considerable disservice to the rich and compelling history of religion in our country,” the letter states. “The lawyers’ fees sure to result from passage of this bill would be much better invested in instructional materials and professional development opportunities for history and social studies educators.” As of July, the bill is indefinitely postponed in the state senate.

On May 14, the AHA sent a letter opposing Texas Senate Bill 10, which would require classrooms to display the Ten Commandments. “SB 10 serves no clear educational purpose,” wrote the AHA. “The lawyers’ fees sure to result from passage of this bill would be much better invested in instructional materials and professional development opportunities for history and social studies educators across the state.” The bill passed the state legislature on May 28 and was signed by the governor on June 21.

AHA Opposes Texas SB 37 in Letter and Testimony

On May 2, the AHA sent a letter to members of the Texas House Committee on Higher Education opposing the engrossed version of Senate Bill 37 as it

has been received in the House of Representatives. The bill takes authority to control curriculum and instruction from Texas university professors and places it with governing boards.

On May 6, Julia Brookins, AHA senior program analyst, teaching and learning, testified before the Texas House Committee on Higher Education. “This bill places politics before the educational needs of students,” Brookins stated, “undermining the affordability, quality, and integrity of general education requirements in Texas.”

AHA Sends Letter Regarding Abrupt Dismissal of State Department Historical Advisory Committee

On May 12, the AHA sent a letter to Ambassador Maria Brewer, acting director of the State Department’s Foreign Service Institute, regarding the abrupt dismissal of the members of the Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation of the State Department, including the AHA’s representative on the committee. We have since been notified that the committee will be reconstituted, according to statute.

AHA Statement on Military Libraries, Censorship, and History


On May 19, the AHA released a statement condemning “the removal of 381 books, including acclaimed historical works and widely used primary sources, from the United States Naval Academy’s Nimitz Library,” as well as “what appears to be the expansion of this censorship policy to the full universe of military academies and other education institutions.” “Removing books that are based on careful historical research won’t make the facts of our nation’s history go away,” the statement

reads. “But it will render the military unprepared to face their legacies and our future.” As of July 31, 13 organizations have signed on to this statement.

AHA Sends Letter Opposing Texas Bill to Eliminate History Education Requirements

On May 22, the AHA sent a letter to the Texas Senate Committee on Education K–16 objecting to provisions in the engrossed version of House Bill 4 that “would eliminate existing requirements for state assessments in both US history and social studies, removing any incentive for schools and districts to invest in these foundational subjects.” “All students deserve the right to learn history; all communities benefit from historically literate citizens,” the letter states. “The educational consequences of eliminating the end-of-course assessment in US history would not end with high school graduation.”

AHA Signs On to CIE Letter Urging Protection of Title VI Programs in FY26

On July 16, the AHA signed on to a letter from the Coalition for International Education (CIE) urging lawmakers to protect and fund HEA–Title VI International Education and Foreign Language Studies programs in FY 2026, including Fulbright–Hays programs. “The Administration’s budget claim that these programs ‘do not advance American interests or values’ and are not a federal responsibility is mistaken,” the letter states. “Defunding these programs would deal a severe blow to the pipeline of globally competent professionals, undercutting the ability of American institutions to compete on the world stage.” 

Ben Rosenbaum is public affairs associate at the AHA.

UNDERGRADUATES AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

The AHA invites undergraduate students to present at the 2026 annual meeting.

Submissions for the **Undergraduate Poster Sessions** are due **October 15**.

Submissions for the **Undergraduate Lightning Rounds** are due **November 15**.

The annual meeting will take place January 8–11, 2026 in Chicago.

Visit historians.org/annual-meeting for more information.

Kenneth Tompkins Bainbridge

GAME CHANGER

WORLD WAR II has been called the “physicist’s war” because physics underpinned the development of both radar and the atomic bomb. Talented but unpretentious, physicist Kenneth Tompkins Bainbridge had a remarkable career while playing a crucial role in ending WWII. He was the first physicist recruited for the radar lab at MIT and one of the research project team said Ken was a central figure in the development of radar that could detect the deadly German submarines.

Ken was then chosen to work on atomic bomb development at Los Alamos. He and his team had to select the test site, develop the site and then all the instrumentation and details for the test. This was a success, on July 16, 1945.



Talented but unpretentious, Ken had a remarkable career while playing a crucial role in ending WWII. Throughout his career he was credited with not only exceptional skill and successful development of complex projects, but also his effective but kind and gentle management.

As Nobel Prize nominee A.O.C. Bier put it, “Bainbridge was one of those wonderful people that you wish you could meet all the time.”

David A. Bainbridge has written many books and 300 articles and research papers. He’s won multiple awards, including the American Solar Energy Society’s Passive Solar Pioneer Award. He taught management, economics, ethics and resource management courses.

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JOHANN NEEM

BRINGING AMERICAN HISTORY BACK HOME FOR THE 250TH

Challenges, Opportunities, Stakes

After years of globalization, the so-called “Washington Consensus” is no more. Today, we are witnessing a revival of nationalism globally in response to the economic and cultural impact of trade and migration. In a new age of nations, how we tell national stories will become more important than ever. This is especially true for democracies. As Richard Slotkin has recently written, national stories enable “a diverse and contentious population, dispersed over a vast and varied country, to think of itself as a community and form a broad political consensus.” Absent that consensus, Americans are less likely to see their political opponents as fellow citizens and more likely to treat them as outsiders and enemies.

Despite the importance and need for national history right now, historians disagree profoundly on the narratives to offer Americans. Much like other Americans, historians are divided by politics and culture. In recent synthetic works, we find historians offering three distinct narratives, each with its own politics and each providing Americans a different civic story.

The first, perhaps the dominant, paradigm among professional historians is what I refer to as the “post-American” turn in US history, a turn that reflects

some progressive historians’ deep frustration with Americans’ unwillingness to confront the ongoing legacies of racism and other forms of inequality. I call these historians “post-American” because their narratives paint a stark and dark picture of American history in which the past—both the actual past and historical writing about it—must be overcome to clear space for something better.

For example, in *The Rediscovery of America: Native Peoples and the Unmaking of U.S. History* (2023), Ned Blackhawk argues that because “American democracy arose from the dispossession of American Indians,” its history cannot be a resource for “the challenges of our time—racial strife, climate crisis, and domestic and global inequities, among others.” Americans must instead start “building an alternate American story.” To Blackhawk, the American past is usable only to the extent that it provides a list of wrongs that current and future generations must learn from and overcome.

In *Illiberal America: A History* (2024), Steven Hahn argues that illiberalism—racism, sexism, other forms of exclusion—are the defining elements of American history, while American liberalism is an invented tradition. In American history, illiberal ideas and practices serve as the “central fields of political and cultural force.” Illiberalism thus becomes, for Hahn, the constitutive

feature of American history. “That is our history rather than its inventions, which we ignore at our peril,” Hahn concludes. For historians who rely on a similar framing, the American past, rather than being a resource for the country today, stands in the way of the United States becoming a more egalitarian and just society.

Numerous conservative historians highlight the radical implications of such a turn. For example, Allen C. Guelzo criticizes historians “whose ideology leads them to cast the American experiment in as grim a shade as possible, so that the way can be made over the ruins of the republic for some imagined new order which, in the end, turns out to be only a new tribalism.” In response, conservatives instead offer what I call a “hyper-American” counternarrative in which the country’s best qualities become its constitutive features while its wrongs—including slavery and racial inequality—are contingent and secondary. While conservative historians are a minority within the discipline, given their influence among movement conservatives and Republican Party leaders, their influence greatly exceeds their number.

Wilfred M. McClay offers a detailed analysis of some of the aspirations of hyper-American historians in *Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story* (2019). To McClay, one purpose of history is to offer Americans a story of

themselves. Because Americans are not bound by blood, language, or religion, it is essential that they have a “a shared story, a shared history” to sustain “national identity.” Such a history must cultivate patriotism and thus must balance teaching about America’s wrongs with stories that inspire love. McClay rejects progressive historians’ premise that the country’s flaws are its defining features. All human beings and all countries “are flawed,” which is why we must approach people in the past with “criticism” but also “generosity.” Too often, he writes, generosity is missing, leading contemporaries “to condescend toward the past.” Writing the history of one’s nation, he argues, is “a patriotic endeavor as well as a scholarly one.”

In recent synthetic works, we find historians offering three distinct narratives.

Some hyper-American historians question the epistemological assumptions of modern historiography. Influenced both by classical ideas of history as exemplary and edifying (rather than explanatory) and by Leo Strauss’s rejection of historicism in favor of natural law, these historians emphasize the constant over the contingent. Guelzo believes that historians have not fully recognized the “rejection of natural rights constitutionalism as Progressivism’s master flaw” and calls for “natural law history.” Richard Samuelson asks whether historians’ assumptions about change over time overlook what history might really teach us: “To accept that the American Right is arguing in good faith is to admit that human nature is rather more robust than the Left can allow, and hence, that not all

that much change is possible, or at least, that that is a quite plausible way of making sense of the human condition.”

The hyper-American commitment to natural law history makes controversies over America’s founding fraught. In the introduction to Hillsdale College’s 1776 Curriculum, the college’s president, political scientist Larry P. Arnn, writes that because the Declaration of Independence asserts that “human equality is grounded in the nature of things . . . a controversy about the founding is a controversy about our understanding of ourselves and nature and therefore of everything.” (Arnn reiterated these claims in the first of a series of videos that Hillsdale is making in partnership with the White House to recognize America’s 250th anniversary.)

Between the post-American and hyper-American paradigms is what I call “mainstream” American history because it reflects the historical sensibility of most Americans regardless of race, ethnicity, or party affiliation. It emerged in the wake of earlier history

culture wars following the 1960s. It combines a narrative of progress with acknowledgments of America’s wrongs and an emphasis on struggles for justice and equality. To mainstream historians, the story of America is that of an unfinished experiment. Unlike post-American historians, mainstream historians see the past as a resource; unlike hyper-American historians, they offer a story of progress through struggle.

Jill Lepore offers a mainstream story in her synthesis *These Truths* (2018). Since the revolution, Lepore argues, the story of America has been about debates over equality, rights, and popular sovereignty. Her narrative chronicles how Americans have sought—and failed—to achieve these ideals and how our understanding of them changed over time. American history includes “a great deal of anguish . . . and more hypocrisy” but is not reducible to it. “Some American history books fail to criticize the United States; others do nothing but,” she writes. Instead, she urges Americans to see the past as composed of shared “truths” that are



Johann Neem delivered the inaugural James M. Banner, Jr., Lecture on the State of the Discipline of History on January 4, 2025.

Marc Monaghan

neither an “act of God” nor “lies.” She considers American history “an uneasy path,” but she believes that if we learn from the past, we can continue down a path to bring the country closer to its founding ideals.

Political scientist and intellectual historian Melvin L. Rogers offers a similar account in *The Darkened Light of Faith: Race, Democracy, and Freedom in African American Political Thought* (2023). All political entities, including the United States, are, Rogers writes, “ethical ventures. Contained within them are traditions and ways of being, sometimes at odds, which not only reflect the standing of persons but also guide how to treat others with whom we share society.” Unlike post-American historians, Rogers emphasizes Black writers who believed that the quest for racial equality “must belong to a familiar horizon,” so that the transformation of society can be understood by both Black and white Americans as emerging from within a shared world rather than “at odds with the culture at large.”

Most Americans still see the past through the lens of mainstream history, but that could change under the second Trump administration. Trump is deploying state power to impose an extreme version of the conservative, hyper-American narrative. On January 29, 2025, Trump issued an executive order on “Ending Radical Indoctrination in K–12 Schooling.” In that same order, Trump reestablished the 1776 Commission to promote “patriotic education.” In another executive order on March 27, Trump accused historians of “a concerted and widespread effort to rewrite our Nation’s history, replacing objective facts with a distorted narrative driven by ideology rather than truth” and required the Smithsonian Institution and all Department of the Interior historical sites to avoid “descriptions, depictions, or other content

that inappropriately disparage Americans past or living” and “instead focus on the greatness of the achievements and progress of the American people.”

Most Americans still
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In response to Trump’s orders, executive agencies have rewritten public interpretations of the past, even when doing so erases historical facts. The administration has encouraged removing references to the history of Black Americans, women, and other minorities, even when those references have nothing to do with so-called “woke” interpretations of the past. It has ordered the National Park Service to put up signs asking park visitors to report information that portrays American history negatively. As Heather Cox Richardson wrote about Trump’s approach to history, “The idea that we had a perfect past that needs to be recovered is an ideology in service to an authoritarian, strongman, and one of the things you see with the rise of a strongman is the attempt to destroy real history.”

The mainstream story also depends on America being considered an unfinished experiment in self-government, but Trump has undermined the rule of law and embraced violence and cruelty as political tools. If American democracy today is not a living tradition but a historical artifact, the underlying assumptions for the mainstream story no longer hold. In response to Trump’s actions, we can imagine that post-American historians will double down on their interpretation of American

history. The result may be culture wars like we have never seen, leaving less room for mainstream historians and teachers.

We thus enter a new age of nations deeply divided, making it difficult to cultivate the cultural solidarity necessary for democratic politics and to resist efforts to overturn the Constitution. The stakes are immense. Trump’s autocratic aspirations are not the only threat to American democracy. As Quinn Slobodian argues, many of America’s wealthiest cheer on the effort of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to incapacitate the American state in order to liberate “a ‘patchwork’ of private entities ... governed by ... technomonarchies.” In both cases, powerful actors are seeking to transform popular sovereignty into private power. To sustain democracy, we need to be a people, and to be a people, we need to share not just the present but also the past. **P**

Johann Neem is professor of history at Western Washington University. This essay is adapted and updated from the inaugural James M. Banner, Jr., Lecture on the State of the Discipline of History, delivered at the 2025 AHA annual meeting. A fuller articulation of his argument is forthcoming in the journal Critical Historical Studies.

HOW GIVING UP TENURE MADE ME A LESS DISTINGUISHED AND MORE INFLUENTIAL PROFESSOR

A quarter century ago, I torpedoed my academic career by resigning from a tenured position with no prospect of another one. My ostensible justification was that my family would be much happier in Portland, Oregon, than in Prince George, British Columbia. But there was a part of me that wondered whether moving to the margins of academia might also benefit me, perhaps in ways I could not then foresee. Today, as I retire, I am convinced that giving up tenure made me, eventually, a much more effective, if less eminent, professor.

I was a model scholar for one decade. I finished my PhD at the University of Oregon in four years while publishing several journal articles and winning a Charlotte Newcombe Dissertation Fellowship. I accepted a job as the US historian at the brand-new University of Northern British Columbia. Harvard University Press soon published my first book, and I received a grant from the Canadian government to fund my second. I was promoted to associate professor three years after arriving and received tenure two years later.

But at this stage, I was wondering whether being a tenured professor would be as satisfying as I had assumed. The immense time and care I poured into my publications seemed completely out of proportion with their

miniscule readership. Though I enjoyed teaching, it increasingly felt like a third priority behind research and university service. Perhaps giving up my tenured job would free me to write for a broader audience and explore other, as yet ill-defined, possibilities. I made the leap, quit my job, and moved to Portland.

I would write five books over the next 15 years, none of them widely read. But one made a big impact, though not to my writing career or scholarly reputation. The Boys and Girls Aid Society of Portland offered me \$10,000 to write a history of their organization — more than the rest of my books had earned added together. It was not a book I would put on my CV, and it would not attract many readers. But, freed from the pressure of making an original scholarly argument, I found myself drawn to and inspired by the remarkable staff and volunteers I was interviewing, people deeply devoted to caring for traumatized children. And the book generated a great deal of enthusiasm — albeit from one person, a retired social worker whom I had interviewed. Every few months, she called to tell me how much she loved the book. Then she stopped calling. Years later, I learned that the book had brought her back to the organization, and that she left them a million dollars when she passed away. The only nonscholarly book I had written had evidently been the most consequential, funding

programs that supported untold numbers of vulnerable Oregonians.

The only nonscholarly book I had written had evidently been the most consequential.

Moving to Portland also brought volunteer opportunities that involved more listening and engaging. I co-facilitated small groups with Oregon Uniting, a nonprofit devoted to furthering racial reconciliation through dialogue. A trip to Ghana prompted me to initiate a program of letter exchanges between schools there and in the Pacific Northwest. I co-founded the 501(c)(3) nonprofit Yo Ghana! with a high school student, and although I became the organization's president and director, I quickly learned that doing more good than harm required deferring to a board of directors dominated by people in and from Ghana. We facilitated some 50,000 letters and supported 60 school-improvement projects. Yo Ghana! prompted me to volunteer with English-language learners, assisting highly dedicated high school teachers in their classrooms. This work was at times tedious, frustrating, and certainly humbling. But I enjoyed being stretched and, especially, collaborating with people I deeply admired.

My academic training was useful in these activities. Being able to absorb and interpret a great deal of evidence quickly was helpful, as was a historian's habit of empathy, of understanding people from cultures very different from my own—whether a daunting headmistress in Ghana or a disengaged student in the local high school. My historical training also had taught me to write quickly and clearly and to not give up easily when projects did not go smoothly.

But I had to unlearn my habit of working independently and minimizing the time I spent helping others. Facilitating difficult conversations about race and racism, persuading teachers to add a program of letter exchanges to their packed schedules, cajoling alienated teens into caring about school—all this work required me to act as if I had nothing better to do than to be with these people. We were accomplishing a lot, but the accomplishments were often difficult to quantify or add to my CV, in part because they were the work of many hands, not just mine.

I was teaching as a nontenured professor all this time, usually at two or more universities simultaneously, and making a surprisingly good living at it. I had mastered the art of being a “good enough” teacher: civil, organized, able to lecture on a wide range of subjects, and willing to grade papers and answer emails promptly. That, certainly for the public research universities that I worked for, was more than adequate. No one seemed to expect more of me.

Then my department chair at Portland State University hopefully wondered whether I would take on a course that “no one wants to teach”: Freshman Inquiry. Persuading someone to teach that class was his “biggest headache.” It lasted the entire academic year, was required of most

first-year undergraduates, and came with the assistance of a peer mentor, a slightly older undergraduate who led smaller class sections. Hungry for a more intense and meaningful teaching experience, perhaps something like I had found volunteering at the local high school, I decided to give the class a try.

It was my academic priorities that had changed the most.

It was in fact a difficult class to teach. I was assigned a course with the theme of Immigration, Migration, and Belonging, and the great majority of the students were from immigrant families. Most seemed anxious, certainly shy. I had researched and written about the history of immigration, but University Studies, the entity that oversaw our

general education program, discouraged lecturing. So, for the first few weeks, I felt as awkward as most of the students seemed to be, so many of us wrestling with our own version of imposter syndrome.

Instead of lecturing, I tried a variety of new activities, including inviting students to share a meaningful story about their lives. And that changed everything. The students astonished me. I knew that many came from challenging backgrounds. But their particular stories—of missing large swaths of high school to earn money so their mother could make rent, having family conversations about which siblings they would be responsible for raising if the parents were deported, and even variations of “the dumbest thing I did in high school”—drew us into one another's lives in a way that had never happened before in any of my classes. The compassion and encouragement



Freed from the strictures of tenure, David Peterson del Mar eventually focused on teaching first-year students and supporting them through graduation.
Courtesy David Peterson del Mar

they offered one another and the trust they had in me and our peer mentor also moved me. They were showing what sort of classroom they wanted, one suffused with care and collaboration: “like a family,” as some class members have put it.

At last I experienced in an academic setting the sort of community I found so often in my volunteer activities. And the more I focused on deepening my relationships with these students, the harder they worked. I required weekly personal reflections that I read closely and responded to at length, and several one-to-one meetings in which I invited them to talk about whatever they wished. Their attendance, performance, and retention levels rose. I was soon spending about three times as much time on the class as I was accustomed to.

Nearly 20 years after giving up my tenured position, I was again consumed by an academic job. But it seemed completely different. I worked largely with first-year students in general education, rather than history majors and graduate students. I had less job security, an inferior office, and, despite and because of my heavy teaching load, a smaller voice in departmental affairs. My closest colleagues were no longer ambitious scholars but rather university employees on the margins: peer mentors and contingent faculty who focused on students rather than research.


But it was my academic priorities that had changed the most. Rather than organizing my work around reserving as much time as possible for research and writing, I was now determined to devote as much time as I could to educating and supporting students whose prospects and, at times, lives seemed precarious. It was an easy choice; teaching and encouraging these young

adults was by far the most important and joyful work I had ever done.

One of my young friends from Ghana, Dorcas Mensah, observed at the Skoll World Forum of Emerging Leaders in 2017 that “the idea of sharing your vulnerability or sharing your privilege with others has become inherently difficult in modern days.” As a white male academic, I think I understand what she means. My life circumstances gave me a big head start, but becoming a successful academic still required, I thought, a relentless focus on individual achievement and distinction. Research universities especially are organized around this assumption. Professors are therefore essentially rewarded for minimizing time with students, particularly struggling undergraduates. Only by stepping outside that environment for many years was I able to return to it with the intention and the capacity to see and support such students.

My opportunity to apply what I had learned outside the university to how I taught at university lasted only seven years. Along with nearly 100 other untenured full-time Portland State faculty, I received official notice in fall 2024 that my job was at risk. Many department chairs responded to declining enrollment by advocating that University Studies, our distinguished general education program, be phased out. So even if my position survived, the community that had nurtured my focus on serving underserved undergraduates might not. I chose to resign.

A quarter century ago, when I resigned from my tenured position, a colleague observed that it would be easier for me to find another spouse than another tenure-stream job. I suppose that he was right, and that my leaving academia prematurely now is a direct, if delayed, consequence of having put my

family ahead of my career. Yet if surrendering tenure shortened my career, it also increased its impact, inside and outside academia. 

After writing six academic books, David Peterson del Mar has collaborated with some fifty Portland State University students in publications about New Majority college students, including, with Alejandra Vazquez, Culture Clash (PDXOpen, forthcoming). He is grateful to Laura Ansley, Tim Garrison, Maurice Hamington, Kelly Nguyen, Emili Ortiz Villanueva, Estefani Reyes Moreno, and Alejandra Vazquez for their help with this piece.

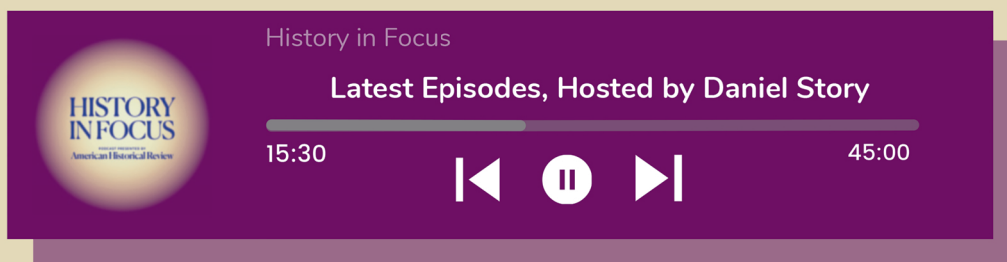


Teaching/Fellowship Opportunity for a Distinguished Historian of the United States/the Americas, Occidental College History Department

We seek a distinguished historian of the United States/the Americas who will split the 2026–2027 academic year between Occidental College and the Huntington Library. Scholars working in comparative and transnational frameworks are welcome to apply. In addition to researching the Huntington's collections, the Ray Allen Billington Professor teaches one intermediate or advanced class per semester in the Occidental History Department (ideally courses that complement existing course offerings) and delivers the Billington lecture. Associate and Full Professors from any college or university (excepting those in the greater Los Angeles area) are invited to apply. The position includes a stipend of between \$100,000–\$120,000 (depending on rank), \$10,000 in research funds, \$8,000 in moving expense reimbursement, \$10,000 in housing allowance, and office space at both the Huntington Library and Occidental College. Full details of the position can be found at: <https://www.oxy.edu/working-oxy/faculty-positions>

Applicants should submit a letter of interest, curriculum vitae, research proposal for the Huntington, at least two course proposals for Occidental courses, at least two sets of course evaluations of undergraduate teaching, and two confidential letters of recommendation. Please submit application materials via Interfolio: <https://apply.interfolio.com/170199>. All materials are due no later than 9:00 pm Pacific Time (midnight Eastern Time) Monday, November 3. For more information about the Billington Professorship, please contact Search Chair, Dr. Sharla Fett (sfett@oxy.edu) or visit our website at: <https://www.oxy.edu/academics/areas-study/history/billington-visiting-professorship-us-history>

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A S ONE OF my senior history majors was working on his capstone thesis paper, he shared with me that he never felt comfortable writing an argument. He could easily research and write on a topic, but he still felt intimidated by asserting an interpretation of the sources and committing to a claim. He is not alone. I have often seen advanced undergraduate students struggle with this limitation. They understood how to find and analyze sources but were daunted by the prospect of asserting a clear argument and carrying it through the research and revising process.

I recognized that the time to address this student's concern was not senior year but in lower-level classes where there was more room to fail. Of course, students in my survey classes make arguments on exams or in papers, but they don't have the pressure of sticking with and developing an argument over the course of repeated revisions and additional research like seniors do with a capstone. A student in a survey class might lose points for a weak argument, but do I require them to revise a midterm exam for another round of feedback? No.

I wanted to move even one step further back from the comprehensive assessment of an essay or paper and help my students become comfortable with wandering an archive—as ShawnaKim Lowey-Ball explains in “History by Text and Thing” (*Perspectives on History*, March 2020)—developing an argument, and then receiving critical feedback and revising, all in a low-stakes setting. I therefore developed an in-class activity and process for giving immediate feedback. Not only did this increase active learning in class, but it had the added benefit of reducing my grading load.

I targeted in-class assignments where students wrote paragraph-length responses that included an argument and a brief analysis of evidence. These writing assignments were short enough that I could give feedback immediately, especially if students worked in groups. Image analyses or comparisons, evaluations of grouped thematic sources, film or museum exhibit responses, and similar evidence analysis assignments all worked well. As Alison Burke has recommended, students work in groups of three or four, with clearly defined group roles such as leader, writer, and researcher, before digging into the sources. The assignment instructions outlined several clear steps in the research process and then provided a prompt to make an argument derived from the investigation. Typically, this assignment would take about 20 minutes for a group to complete.

As students completed the prompt, I circulated the room to read their draft responses on the group leader's computer screen. These drafts needed to include a clear argument and

brief analytical discussion of either specific sources or groups of sources. I read the paragraphs quickly, focusing on the argument's clarity and persuasiveness, and how effectively students supported arguments with robust source analysis. I then would talk through specific feedback with the group, without assigning a grade. I could push them to develop the argument by making it more specific or significant or by connecting it more closely to their source analysis. Students would then revise their answers. I might ask them to show it to me again for another round of feedback if the original was particularly weak. Finally, the group would submit their final response for a grade. Usually, I could complete the grading in just a few minutes, with most groups receiving full credit.

Image analyses or comparisons,
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exhibit responses all worked well.

As I developed this assignment, I realized several parameters were necessary for the immediate feedback approach to run smoothly. First, the prompt must be both clear and thorough. This would allow me to evaluate the response quickly and focus only on the effectiveness of the argument and evidence, not on whether students understood the task. The prompt also needed specific instructions about using sources to support the claim.

For example, in a lower-level class that examined the journals of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark's Corps of Discovery (1804–06), the prompt could be “Read all the journal entries for one month of the expedition. Based on the journal entries, to what extent was the expedition an assertion of power over the new territories?” In a more advanced class, the prompt might be more open-ended, such as “Read all the journal entries for one month of the expedition. Based on the journal entries, how did the members of the corps interpret their mission? Support your response through an analysis of the journals.”

With immediate feedback, I observe in real time as my students move from simply trying to complete the assignment with little care for the quality to realizing that a successful argument convinces the reader. I could show students why their argument wasn't convincing and allow them to reframe or search for new evidence. As we worked through these immediate feedback sessions, students were excited to see whether their initial argument would make the cut. As they watched me reading their answers on their computer screen,

they would read along and sometimes try to make changes further along in the paragraph as they spotted potential weaknesses. Often there would be high fives among the group when their argument was accepted. The process was enriching for students as they worked to fully complete the assignment, and it was revitalizing for me as the instructor as I could see students responding to my feedback.

While there are useful benefits to this approach, there are also potential drawbacks. Positively, I found this method easy to deploy for single assignments or in classes for which I did not want to overhaul the whole course's grading structure. In addition, as students saw that their responses were evaluated in real time and as they perceived my method in evaluating their work, they took the assignment more seriously. In the past, I gave feedback through the learning management system that students might never look at. With immediate feedback, I could see right away how well students achieved the learning goal, and I could redirect and reteach in class as needed. I found that more students received full credit for the assignment and that the grade reflected the reworking and communicating that happened in class. Finally, I enjoyed the opportunity for direct, in-class instruction with individuals or groups. These types of low-stakes interactions helped me build rapport with my students and helped them become comfortable with seeking and receiving feedback.

Students were excited to see whether their initial argument would make the cut.

However, though immediate feedback moves quickly, especially with clear instructions, I learned that there was a limit to how many responses I could evaluate. In a 50-minute class session, it was best if there were no more than 8 to 10 groups. If I had a teaching assistant, that would have easily doubled the number of evaluations I could give. I found that this approach works best in multistep assignments, so that all groups do not seek evaluation at the same time. This process also required substantial energy from me. The flurry of giving a lot of feedback in a short period of time may not work well with some teachers' styles, although others will feel supremely energized.

Giving immediate feedback is more difficult in classes larger than 35 students but not impossible. In larger classes, the instructor could lead the whole class through a review and evaluation of several samples, perhaps with a rubric. Then teachers could outline a process for either peer or individual

feedback, with the goal of rewriting. In this case, students might submit both their original and revised answers. However, while students would have the benefit of feedback and revision, the goal of reducing instructor grading might not be fully achieved in a larger class.

College teachers have long noted the benefits of providing feedback for the purpose of revision, as well as of inviting students to join both the research and assessment process. In *Super Courses*, Ken Bain discusses the benefits of peer instruction in group problem-solving, while Carla Vecchiola's "Digging in the Digital Archives" examines how giving students freedom in archival research at the introductory survey level results in deeper student engagement. Other instructors might opt for an "ungrading" system, giving students the option to revise and resubmit tests or paper drafts; specifications grading, in which students work to meet certain thresholds; or specific tools such as the Immediate Feedback Assessment Technique, used for objective assessments. The development of various AI-enhanced grading tools might alleviate the grading load; however, in my experience, the mere presence of the feedback does not necessarily mean students will look at it, reflect on it, and adjust their future work. Using immediate feedback a few times each semester brought the proven benefits of revision or of proficiency-based grading to lower-stakes assessments. I hope that these early interventions will help students feel more confident in their argumentative skills as they progress through the curriculum.

While student learning improved, so did my own satisfaction with the lesson's effectiveness. I felt more fulfilled when I spent my time giving feedback that students actively responded to. I left the room feeling confident that I had communicated well with my students and guided them toward deeper understanding, with the added bonus of leaving with very little to grade. I enjoyed creating meaningful connections with my students as we went back and forth over their responses, and especially valued the opportunity to connect with students who might not otherwise speak up. And when these students reach their senior capstone thesis, I hope they feel better prepared to make their own intervention in their field of choice. **P**

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ANDREW HARDY

NEW CAMPUS CARTOGRAPHIES

The University as Public History Site



Infusing historical research into walking tours has helped Andrew Hardy and his fellow graduate students remake their campus into a public history site.

Yvonne Lin

AT THE UNIVERSITY of California (UC), Berkeley, there is a glade studded with statues, plaques, and memorial benches—all the familiar memory-making devices of a university. A host of honored figures are remembered there, from football legend Pappy Waldorf to Gilded Age patron Phoebe Apperson Hearst. Nowhere is it noted that in 1925, construction workers on these grounds unearthed the remains of an elderly Indigenous man. The remains were removed to the Hearst Museum of Anthropology along with more than a dozen skeletons that had been found in the glade and along the banks of an adjacent creek. The density of remains suggests that the area was once a burial ground, a site of memory long effaced by the campus and its pantheon of patrons.

Lissett Bastidas, a history PhD candidate who studies California Indigenous peoples during the Spanish period, recently led a group to this spot to explain its unmarked history and the university's current efforts to repatriate Indigenous remains. This was one stop on "Glimpses of Native American History at Cal," a campus walking tour exploring the university's fraught historical relations with Indigenous communities and current efforts to redress past harm.

Lissett's tour is part of a larger project, designed and run by graduate students (including me), to create public walking tours of the university based on original historical research. The project grew from the history department's career development program, initially funded by an AHA Career Diversity Implementation Grant. Many students in our department have strong interests in public history but few opportunities to develop them. The walking tours project enables us to use our own immediate environment to nurture these skills. With financial support from the department, around 10 of us began connecting with local historians and organizations to seek advice on crafting stories about our campus that nonacademics can find compelling.

We aim to reimagine the Berkeley campus as a public history site where all people, connected to the campus or not, can learn about the complex stories left out of the university's typical celebratory narratives. To reach a wide audience, we have advertised at public libraries and historical societies and on social media. Using our training in critical analysis and storytelling, we hope to make these stories accessible while providing an alternative to the campus's culture of commemoration.

One challenge is that much of a university's past is typically classified as intellectual history, featuring important books and scientific breakthroughs by towering figures. To capture such a history, a walking tour might easily become a walking

lecture with only tenuous connections to the spatial environment, or even risk recapitulating the hagiographic approach already inherent in campus memorialization. The university needs no help producing a hagiographic cartography of itself.

But a university is more than a site for thinking great thoughts. The UC, as one of the top public universities in the world, has served the public good as an engine of social mobility. Yet it is also one of California's largest landlords and its third-largest employer, with an operating budget larger than 27 US states and an investment portfolio of \$180 billion. It is a land grant university, a beneficiary of the Morrill Act of 1862, which granted federal public lands to state governments to fund higher education. A vast amount of Morrill Act scrip came from California, where lands plundered from Indigenous communities were sold to fund what one scholar termed "democracy's colleges." And UC Berkeley has famously been a major site of social protest. In short, it has had enormous power in shaping the social and physical environment of its surrounding community. Because this university sits at the nexus of public good, profit, and plunder, our project is history not only *for* the public but also *of* the public.

A university is more than a site for thinking great thoughts.

Our challenge is to use the built environment creatively to weave together and make visible these threads. Sometimes, we recover forgotten meanings. On my tour, "Beyond the Golden Gate: Asia Pacific and the Berkeley Campus," we stop at an architectural axis designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in 1866 that aligns with the Golden Gate, offering a stunning view of the gateway to the Pacific. That axis, I explain, reflected the founders' wish for the university to promote transpacific economic links between California and Asia, which led to UC Berkeley becoming in 1872 the first North American institution to fund a professorship in East Asian languages. The name Berkeley encapsulates these ambitions: It was selected because of a line from a 1726 poem by the philosopher George Berkeley—"Westward the course of empire takes its way"—that celebrated the expansion of Western civilization across the Atlantic to the Americas. By the 1840s, it had become a slogan of transcontinental expansion under Manifest Destiny. The UC's founders, situated on California's newly conquered Pacific coast, envisioned the ocean as a frontier for the extension of Manifest Destiny to Asia, and thus chose the name Berkeley for the new college town. Few today are aware of the name's implications, and for many, the Golden Gate axis is simply a nice view. But the underlying imperial

ideology was meant to be easily legible in the university's early days. My task as the tour guide is to restore this legibility while applying a critical lens.

Other campus spaces have been the setting for events worth remembering that have left no mark. Another stop on my tour is Durant Hall, an administrative office building that once housed the Department of Oriental Languages (now East Asian Languages and Cultures). In 1970, graduate students occupied Durant as part of the national student strike against the Vietnam War. Using old photographs, news clippings, and oral histories taken from participants in these events (now respected scholars themselves), I describe this moment as part of a major transition in Asian studies.

Our tours also reveal hidden spatial logics that shape campus life. A forthcoming tour by Sarah Lee and Emma Bates will trace the history of campus policing, weaving together the university's role in developing modern policing techniques and criminology with the formation of the campus police force (UCPD). One stop will focus on Sproul Plaza, the current UCPD headquarters, where a student's arrest in 1964 sparked the Free Speech Movement. Sproul's history as a locus of student protest is well known, making it one of the most highly policed zones on campus today. Less known is that third-party police contractors use the roof of the MLK Student Center, overlooking the plaza, to surveil protest activities today. Sarah and Emma will discuss how the campus acquired its own police force and how intersecting jurisdictional zones shape students' interactions with law enforcement—a pressing concern given recent incursions onto university campuses across the country by immigration enforcement. And Alexandra Coakley will build on these stories in her tour on the history of campus protest, launching in the fall semester.

As employment opportunities in the professoriate have decreased, it has become urgent to imagine different ways of being a historian. The walking tours project has challenged us to adapt to different forms of storytelling. In an article or lecture, we can structure narratives as we wish, footnote, and use visual aids. But a walking tour is constrained by what is visible on a walkable route. One cannot linger too long on any stop, and the script cannot stray too far from things that one can point at.

On my tour, I wanted to discuss Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979), both as a grounding concept and as it relates to the 1960s and '70s reckoning within Asian studies. But, as it turns out, few people want to listen to a literature review while standing in the midday sun. I had to rethink my usual practices. I decided to write my script while walking the tour

route, tapping it out on my phone and reading it aloud. This earned me a few quizzical looks, but it was immensely productive. Besides keeping my script within bounds (my *Said spiel* was reduced to three sentences), this helped me think creatively about how I might integrate campus spaces into the narrative. Learning to adapt to unfamiliar modes of history writing ended up being a chief benefit of the project, since careers outside the academy could require us to apply our skills flexibly to new contexts.

I also have found myself acquiring skills that are basic for my colleagues who study North America. Because I am a scholar of early Chinese empires, my usual work involves 2,000-year-old administrative documents in an ancient language. But research for my tour led me into local archives and history centers, requiring me to work with newspapers, maps, tax records, and oral histories. Such training has been hugely beneficial to those of us who do not study America. The tours' focus on the university makes it possible to bridge our specialized knowledge with stories of local significance, which can uncover unexpected ties between the American campus and distant times and places. Imagine, for example, a tour of Berkeley's Beaux-Arts campus and Greco-Roman artifacts led by a student of the ancient Mediterranean, who can weave together classical studies and 19th-century neoclassicism in California.

Tour research led me into local archives and history centers to work with newspapers, maps, tax records, and oral histories.

This project began as an experiment, but it has made apparent the infinite potential for using the campus as a canvas for rigorously researched, critical, and engaging historical narratives. It has allowed us to make professional contacts with the wider local history community, who have helped with both tour design and promotion. Most importantly, the project highlights the university's relevance as a multifaceted institution deeply interconnected with social and political life at local, national, and global levels. Our critical approach to university history reveals the power of this institution in its full complexity. Only with such a clear-eyed reckoning will the humanistic mission of the university be able to withstand the forces that wish to dismantle it, both within and beyond the ivory tower. **P**

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TOM VANCE

TAPPING A STRATEGIC RESOURCE

The Value of Organizational History



Tom Vance has worked on histories of Kalamazoo organizations, including the Department of Military Science and Leadership at Western Michigan University.
Courtesy Western Michigan University Archives and Regional History Collections

EVERY ORGANIZATION has a history. I've had the privilege of writing two such histories and co-authoring a third, one as a full-time assignment and two as a volunteer (and retiree). All three projects featured organizations in Kalamazoo County, in southwest Michigan, and benefited from Western Michigan University's Archives and Regional History Collections. These experiences reinforced my belief that organizational history is not merely an antiquarian exercise; it is also a strategic resource for leadership and management looking to recognize past achievements and plan future objectives.

In 2020, during the last six months of a 42-year career in public relations, I researched the history of my employer—the Kalamazoo Community Foundation (KZCF)—in preparation for its 2025 centennial. Though I was never a professional historian, a sense of history informed my working life. KZCF, a grantmaking organization, had abundant files documenting a century-long commitment to marshaling resources that support community nonprofits, including board minutes, booklets, and annual reports dating back to 1925—but no formal history. After consulting other community foundations that had celebrated their 100th year, I began conducting oral histories with 11 current and former presidents/CEOs and board chairs. Another 22 people outside KZCF provided information that augmented my research.

My aha moment came upon the discovery of Grace Thomas. A chamber of commerce volunteer, single mother, and insurance company employee, Thomas began researching the emergence of community trusts in 1924. (The first such trust, launched in Cleveland in 1914, aimed to become a “community savings account” by pooling resources from local philanthropists “for the mental, moral and physical improvements of the inhabitants of Cleveland.”) In August 1925, Thomas drafted the report that resulted in creation of the Kalamazoo Foundation. She went on to become Michigan's first licensed female life insurance counselor.

Over time, the Kalamazoo Foundation's name and mission changed with community needs, and the philanthropic model shifted from a small number of estate bequests to thousands of donors at all giving levels. From its origins in the research carried out by one determined volunteer, KZCF grew to become the most trusted philanthropic institution in Kalamazoo County and one of the largest community foundations in the nation.

A century after Thomas's inquiry, my research resulted in a 48,000-word narrative accompanied by an appendix that includes the first 50 donors and grantees, a timeline, historical listings of trustees and staff, endnotes, and numerous photographs. KZCF featured my work online in a visual timeline, and I shared what I'd learned with the Council of Michigan

Foundations in a virtual presentation titled “Enhance Your Anniversary Celebration with History.” The benefits of this work could be felt immediately: During the research phase, when staff proposed a new way to award grants, I could reveal that this was in fact how early grants were awarded.

The benefits of this work could be felt immediately.

This was not my first experience with organizational history. Prior to working for KZCF, I served as the community relations manager at Portage Public Schools (PPS) while pursuing a master's in history. To fulfill the professional field requirement for my degree, I conducted oral histories with 11 former superintendents and board chairs. I returned to this project in 2019, joining the PPS centennial committee alongside representatives from the community, faculty, staff, and students. Portage District Library's local historian Steve Rossio provided guidance on available resources, and we benefited from an illustrated booklet published for the school district's 75th anniversary.

Western State Normal School (later Western Michigan University) was instrumental in turning PPS (founded in 1922) into a training site, providing a superintendent and faculty while the township provided facilities and supplies. Cleora Skinner—whom we believe was the first woman K–12 superintendent in Michigan—led the district for 17 years. Another surprise was the discovery of two Black student teachers (then called “practice teachers”) at a time when the district served a largely white, rural farming community. One student teacher, Merze Tate, became the first Black woman to graduate with a bachelor's degree from Western State Normal School and went on to a distinguished career as a diplomatic historian. In 2021, WMU named one of its colleges after her.

PPS began its centennial observance with a series of short articles published in the district's monthly newsletter from August 2021 through December 2022. The 10,000-word history was completed in time to share with the graduating class of 2022 as a 28-page booklet. Additionally, a collection of three new oral histories, newspaper reprints, and the 17 monthly articles became *The Centennial Anthology: Portage Public Schools, 1922–2022*, edited by Nicholas Meyle, a commissioner of the Portage Historic District.

That same year, in fall 2022, the Department of Military Science and Leadership at WMU began planning for its 75th anniversary, which would take place in 2025. A fellow alumnus, Mike Evans—retired from a career in banking with a master's in history—and I volunteered to produce a history. Commissioned as second lieutenants in 1978 from the Army's Reserve Officers'

Training Corps (ROTC) at WMU, we both serve on the Department of History's Alumni Advisory Council. Though a total of 1,720 lieutenants have been commissioned from WMU since 1950, the only published record of this history was a brief posting on the school's website. We began our search in WMU's archives, which house yearbooks, commencement programs, undergraduate catalogs, university publications, news releases, photo files, and student newspapers. Thanks to WMU's ScholarWorks digital repository, we could do much of it virtually.

Evans developed a comprehensive alumni database, while the ROTC hosted an online form for alumni to submit information. Within two years, he had made contact with 83 percent of graduates, and had researched, written, or edited 1,144 one-page biographies of former cadets and department heads accompanied by more than 2,000 photos. Evans created graphs tracking demographics such as the impact of the draft on ROTC enrollment during the Vietnam War and the number of female cadets and seniors in the program each year. His work also includes an alphabetical listing of all WMU ROTC graduates.

Meanwhile, I conducted 12 oral histories with alumni from different decades and three department heads. The 12,900-word narrative includes 22 photos, citations, and a brief chronology; sections on each decade describing curriculum, school-year field training, summer training camps, and alumni memories; and a From the Archives section with a variety of documents. The appendix features a detailed timeline, a listing of professors and instructors, cadet commanders, Wall of Fame recipients, a glossary, sources, and a selection of Evans's graphs. Together, the biographies and narrative constitute the "75th Anniversary History of WMU Army ROTC," a project completed in time for the anniversary event, which included 300 attendees from across the country. A set of nine binders was donated to the ROTC, another set to the university archives, and PDFs of the work will be posted on the program's website.

Two examples illustrate the early impact of the WMU ROTC project. Almost immediately, historic information about the program's rappelling towers helped the Department of Military Science and Leadership gain support for a new tower. A long-term benefit came after the family of a 1954 alum who responded to our outreach effort — but died shortly thereafter — made a substantial gift to the department based on their gratitude for this reconnection. Numerous other alumni have expressed their appreciation for being included.

All three projects described here set aside adequate time for thoughtful research. I began the history of KZCF five years ahead of the organization's 2025 centennial. I had two years to prepare for the PPS centennial and three years for our account of the WMU ROTC. Each project involved a review process:

KZCF drafts went through a cross-functional team, PPS drafts were shared with the centennial committee and ultimately approved by the superintendent, and the ROTC biographies and program history were shared on a regular basis with a monthly alumni group and the department. Two key takeaways from these experiences stand out. First, oral histories are vital. While time-consuming, these conversations provide rich details for building a narrative and strengthen an organization's connection with the individuals who have both contributed to and benefited from its mission. Second, deciding how to arrange each narrative was a significant consideration: The KZCF and PPS projects were organized along their stages of development, while the ROTC narrative was structured simply by decade, since that is how alumni would use the information.

Oral histories provide rich details
for building a narrative and
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connection with individuals.

All three organizations believe the histories served their purpose. KZCF's narrative facilitates donor and grantee communications. In addition to being a souvenir for the class of 2022, the PPS narrative instills pride within the school community alongside appreciation among taxpayers and voters. The ROTC research conducted with Mike Evans helped build morale among the cadets, cadre, and alumni; it could also serve as a case study in ROTC training. Making these histories available strengthens the identities of the organizations while providing context for how they fit into the history of a community — in this case, Kalamazoo County.

Historical scholarship was not necessarily part of these organizational cultures (apart from the PPS history faculty), but all three provided enthusiastic support. And though research methods for each project met scholarship standards, some readers may question the objectivity of organizational history. Especially in the case of milestone anniversaries, frank narrative must be balanced by the aspirational intent of the end product, which seeks to both commemorate and celebrate an organization's vision and mission. This is precisely the value proposition for public and private sector leaders: Knowing an organization's history can help achieve its mission and vision. Since all organizations have a history, learning from that history should become organizational best practice. **P**

Tom Vance is a retired lieutenant colonel in the US Army Reserve. The author thanks Lynn Houghton, regional history curator, and John Winchell, archives curator, at Western Michigan University's Archives and Regional History Collections.

BRUCE W. DEARSTYNE

THE PROGRESSIVE PRESIDENT AND THE AHA

Theodore Roosevelt and the Historical Discipline



In his AHA presidential address in 1912, Theodore Roosevelt encouraged professional historians to write for the public.
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division/public domain

THE 1912 AHA annual meeting in Boston was unique: A political celebrity delivered the presidential address. Former US President Theodore Roosevelt served that year as the Association's president. Only a month before, he had been defeated for reelection in one of the most spirited presidential campaigns in US history. Roosevelt was known for his unvarnished opinions, and he did not hold back. In his two-hour address, he lectured the gathered scholars on the need to reach multiple audiences through more engaging writing. That challenge still reverberates, as our discipline continues to struggle to deliver history to the public.

The nation was in the midst of the Progressive Era, a time of change and reform. As president from 1901 to 1909, Roosevelt enacted progressive measures to regulate railroads and protect the nation's food supply. After he failed to capture the Republican Party's nomination in 1912, he led the formation of a new Progressive Party. He campaigned on the Progressive ticket for women's suffrage, an eight-hour workday, direct primaries, and national health insurance, all leading-edge notions.

The historical discipline was facing its own progressive moment. "From its inception, the American Historical Association contained . . . tensions between the past and future of history," writes Robert B. Townsend in his history of the Association, *History's Babel*. That was very evident by 1912. In the closing years of the 19th century, the field had included what Townsend calls "gentlemen or amateur historians," who were not trained as historians but were skilled in the art of engaging writing. In the opening years of the 20th century, younger historians, many trained in recently established PhD programs, researched extensively in archives and other primary sources and wrote well-documented analytical, but not always publicly engaging, history. By 1912, they were called "progressive historians," which aligned them with the era.

The AHA encouraged this professionalization, including the development of history PhD programs, more research in primary sources, and more history teaching in the schools. In 1912, the Association was facing a changing discipline: founded in the waning years of the "old" history but also reacting to and supporting the transition to newer methodologies.

The Association was also campaigning to raise its public profile. In its first two decades, most of its presidents had been history professors and scholars, but recent presidents included well-known politicians, businessmen, naval officers, and others who had also written some respectable history. Roosevelt fit well in that distinguished queue. A historian of some note, his books included *The Naval War of 1812* (1882);

the six-volume *The Winning of the West* (1889–96); and others on New York City, Thomas Hart Benton, and his own adventures as an army officer in the Spanish-American War.

Therefore, late in 1910, the AHA approached Roosevelt to serve as vice president in 1911, which would mean automatic promotion to president in 1912. Roosevelt accepted. The AHA presidency would provide an acknowledgment of his own historical works by the historical discipline and provide a platform to expound on two of his beliefs: that good history should be eminently readable and that history should promote good citizenship.

In 1912, the Association was facing a changing discipline.

Roosevelt's presence made the 1912 AHA meeting a high-visibility event. Eight scholarly organizations—including the Mississippi Valley Historical Association (now the Organization of American Historians), the American Economic Association, the American Political Science Association, and the American Sociological Society—were also meeting in Boston. Attendance at the address ballooned to 450 people. Yet in retrospect, it is abundantly clear that the audience was circumscribed: The memberships of the AHA and its fellow societies were overwhelmingly male and white. In fact, the early 20th-century professionalization of the discipline had made it harder for women and for Black scholars to attain history teaching positions and publish scholarly books and articles.

Nevertheless, the crowd erupted in cheers as the ex-president entered the lecture hall. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* wrote that the scene resembled a political convention. "It is not very often that a historical society is enriched by a man who has not only written history but has also made history," said A. Lawrence Lowell, the president of Harvard University (Roosevelt's alma mater), in his introduction. Roosevelt's address, "History as Literature," was provocative and far ranging, showing TR's deep mastery of history from the ancient to the modern United States.

Roosevelt hit on several themes. He argued that history needs breadth and depth but also color. "Full knowledge of a mass of dry facts and gray details" is essential, he said, but "the dryness and the grayness" are not nearly enough. Historians need to achieve "complete truthfulness" while still writing in an engaging manner. He acknowledged the work of the newer progressive historians, particularly their strategy of digging into primary sources. He insisted, however, that good history can and should also be good literature.

According to Roosevelt, history should relate to great leaders and events and mighty deeds, not “the drab monotony of the ordinary.” At the same time, the historian must “interest us in the gray tints of the general landscape no less than in the flame hues of the jutting peaks”; and “while doing full justice to the importance of the usual, of the commonplace, the great historian will not lose sight of the importance of the heroic.” Great historians, through vivid writing, should make readers feel like eyewitnesses. A good historian, he said, “will make us see as living men the hard-faced archers of Agincourt, and the war-worn spearmen who followed Alexander down beyond the rim of the known world.”

Roosevelt argued that it was essential for historians to present the great, heroic American story, highlighting “the change from a nation of farmers to a nation of business men and artisans, and all the far-reaching consequences of the rise of the new industrialism.” These histories should feature heroic figures. “A people whose heroes are Washington and Lincoln, a peaceful people who fought to a finish one of the bloodiest of wars, waged solely for the sake of a great principle and a noble idea” expect and deserve a noble history. He ended on a laudatory note. “When the tale is finally told, I believe that it will show that the forces working for good in our national life outweigh the forces working for evil, and that, with many blunders and shortcomings, with much halting and turning aside from the path, we shall yet in the end prove . . . that righteousness exalteth a nation.”

An enthusiastic reception in Roosevelt’s honor followed his speech, and commentary on the address soon ensued. James Ford Rhodes (AHA president in 1899) called it “a masterpiece.” J. Franklin Jameson, editor of the *American Historical Review*, which printed the speech in its April 1913 issue, commended the “political and literary fame” of the speaker and the “power and charm” of his address. Roosevelt himself considered it one of his best and included it in a book of essays.

Yet the wider response from professional historians was mixed. A few conservatives disagreed with someone other than a professional historian serving as AHA president. Others found the speech preachy. Here was a politician instructing the nation’s leading historical association on what sort of history they should be writing.

In the longer term, Roosevelt’s address contributed to the emerging discussion of the purposes and audiences of history. In the coming decades, he was cited as a pioneer in a new approach to history and “catching the trend of opinion,” as Homer C. Hockett wrote in a 1926 essay in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*. In the address, Roosevelt “uttered an

eloquent plea in [sic] behalf of a movement which was already stirring the ranks of the historical guild.” In 1948, Samuel Eliot Morison wrote in *History as a Literary Art: An Appeal to Young Historians* that unfortunately “Roosevelt’s trumpet call fell largely on deaf ears, at least in the academic historical profession.”

But eventually the discipline saw the value in TR’s call for more engaging writing. In his 1938 book, *The Gateway to History*, Allan Nevins insisted that “the world at large will sooner forgive lack of scientific solidity than lack of literary charm. The great preservative in history, as in all else, is style.” In his 1959 AHA presidential address, Nevins lamented that “with the demise of the romantic, unscientific, and eloquent school of writers, our history ceased to be literature.” He cited and endorsed TR’s verdict from 1912: “Scholarship that consists in mere learning, but finds no expression in production, may be of interest or value to the individual” but not to society, “unless it finds expression in achievement” — “when the scholar not merely receives or acquires, but gives” to a broad public audience.

What is the role of historians in educating citizens?

Roosevelt in 1912 raised issues that Hockett, Morison, Nevins, and many other historians have wrestled with since: What is the purpose of history? How can history be more widely known and influential? How can we reach multiple audiences? What is the role of historians in educating citizens? Those questions are still essential, as Jacqueline Jones reminded us in her 2021 AHA presidential address, “Historians and Their Publics, Then and Now.” “By making stories about the past available to all sorts of publics,” she noted, “scholars seek to counter mythmaking and contribute to a broader educational enterprise — one that is essential to the future of history and, indeed, democracy itself.” Returning to Roosevelt’s address just might help historians of the 21st century think about how to approach the public today. **P**

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ONCE YOU GO BLACK, YOU NEVER GO BACK: The National and International Impact of African American Cuisine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (2025).

Available in hardcover, paperback, and ebook from Amazon.

The demise of the Reconstruction years could not stop it. *Plessy v. Ferguson* and the ensuing laws put into effect into the twentieth century did not curtail it. Even the rise in the elite status of European cuisine could not overpower it. Despite hundreds of years of slavery and oppression, institutionalized and legitimized by racist city ordinances and federal legislation, African Americans developed Black owned businesses and continued to retain a dominant presence in every venue of food service.

Once You Go Black, You Never Go Back not only showcases African American caterers, restaurateurs, hotel owners, and others in food service who became successful in the United States and Europe, it is a cookbook containing archival recipes from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many attributed to the Black cooks and chefs of some this country's most famous authors, as well as recipes of my own creation. It is also a culinary and social history presenting correctives such as attributing the "Schomburg" cookbook proposal to its true author, Walter F. White, former Executive Secretary of the NAACP. Relying on primary and archival research and documentation and secondary sources, *Once You Go Black* offers a focus on the national, as well as the international interplay between African Americans and the dynamics of American (and European) culture, politics, and cuisine.

Diane M. Spivey is a culinary historian who has devoted forty-five years to the study and recording of African American food traditions and cooking. Her previous books include the much heralded *At the Table of Power: Food and Cuisine in the African American Struggle for Freedom, Justice, and Equality* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022), and the pathbreaking *The Peppers, Cracklings, and Knots of Wool Cookbook: The Global Migration of African Cuisine* (State University of New York Press, 1999).

JOIN US IN CHICAGO

The 2026 Annual Meeting at a Glance

The 139th annual meeting of the American Historical Association will be held Thursday through Sunday, January 8–11, 2026, in Chicago, Illinois. The online program will be posted on the AHA website in mid-September, and members can look forward to receiving the printed program in mid-November. A meeting app will also be available for smartphones and tablets. Annual meeting sessions and events are scheduled at the Hilton Chicago Hotel and the Palmer House, a Hilton Hotel. Rooms will also be available at the Blackstone Hotel (Marriott Autograph Collection). Registration includes free bus transportation between the hotels.

Preregistration begins in late September. The lower preregistration rates will be in effect through December 15; after that, the higher on-site rates apply. Registration will be available online from September 22 until the end of the meeting, and in person beginning at 11:00 a.m. on January 8 in Salon B at the Hilton Chicago.

Admission to the Exhibit Hall requires a 2026 meeting registration badge.

Hotel reservations: Attendees will make hotel reservations through the AHA's housing service, Maritz. Reservations can be made online or by calling a toll-free number, beginning September 15. AHA rates are available three days before and after the meeting dates, depending on availability. See the AHA website for detailed information.

The last day to make or change reservations through the housing service is December 17, 2025. After that date, rooms will be available at the AHA's convention rates on a space-available basis, and all reservations, changes, and cancellations must be made directly with the hotels. Hotel no-show policies will apply for reservations not canceled at least 72 hours before the first night's stay.

Health and safety: The AHA and our meeting hotels are working together to follow public health best practices to

make meeting attendance as safe as possible. We expect that all attendees will be vaccinated for COVID-19 at the time of the meeting. Attendees should comply with all health and safety rules and guidelines established by the AHA, the CDC, the conference hotels, and the local government.

Group meetings and reunions: Societies and groups that have not already made arrangements to hold receptions or other meetings should send requests for room space as soon as possible to annualmeeting@historians.org.

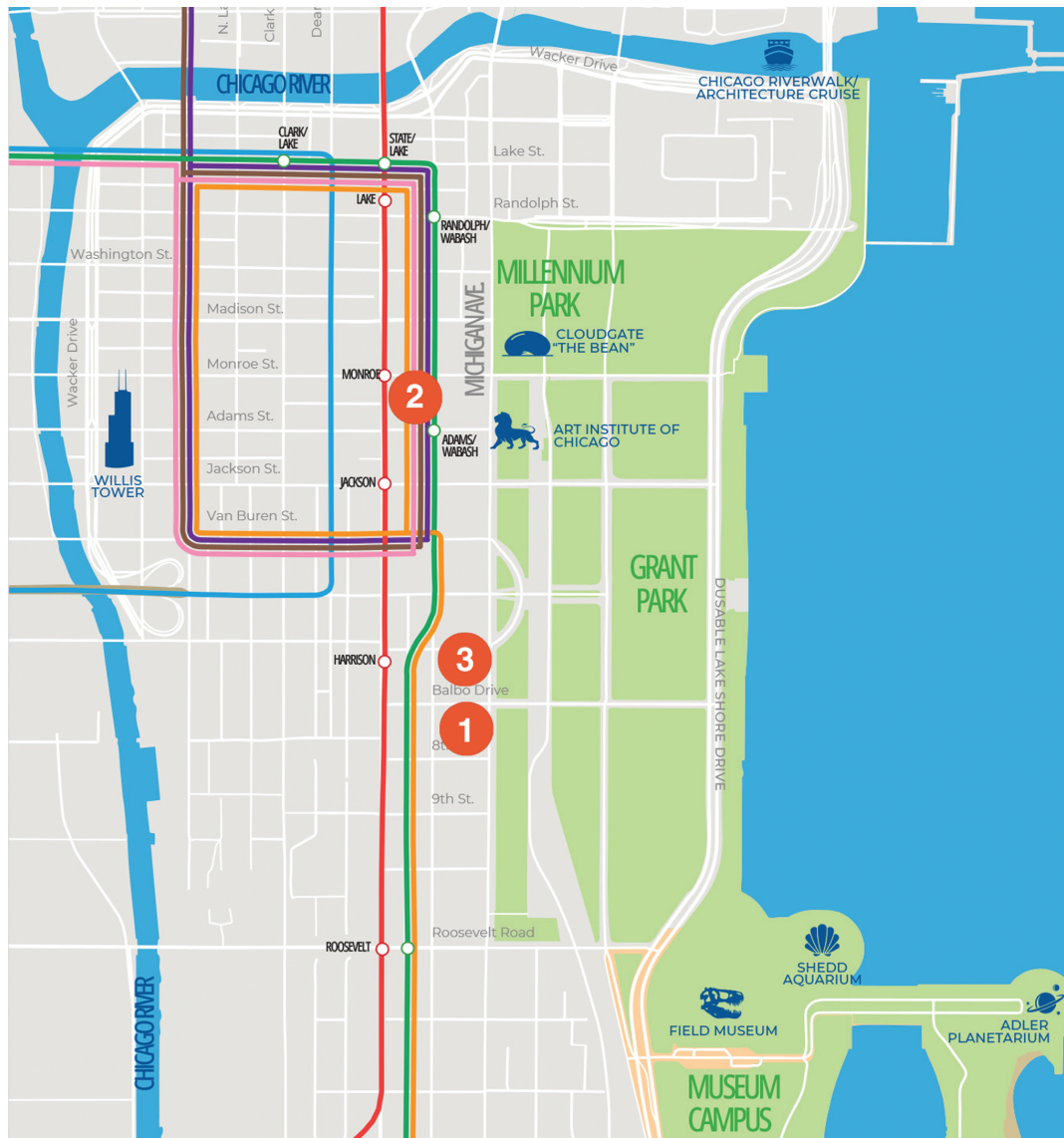
Resolutions for the business meeting must be submitted to the office of the executive director by October 1, to allow time for publication. They must be in proper parliamentary form; must be signed by members of the Association in good standing at the time of submission, and by at least 2 percent of the total Association membership as of the end of the previous fiscal year (213 people); must not be more than 300 words in length, including any introductory material; and must deal with a matter of concern to the Association or to the discipline of history. Such resolutions must be in accord with the Association's *Guiding Principles on Taking a Public Stance* at historians.org/public-stance. Signatures in support of such resolutions must be collected no earlier than January 1, 2025. Resolutions submitted by the deadline, and meeting the criteria for consideration, shall be published in the November issue of *Perspectives on History*. For complete information about business resolutions, please consult the AHA Bylaws at historians.org/constitution.

ASL interpretation: The AHA offers complimentary sign-interpreting service upon request to our attendees. Please notify the AHA of the sessions you plan to attend and register for the meeting by November 1, 2025. This service is also available upon request for the presidential address and business meeting. Please submit requests to annualmeeting@historians.org by November 1, 2025.

Hotel and Rate Information

		SINGLE	DOUBLE	TRIPLE	QUADRUPLE
1	Hilton Chicago (co-hdqrs.) 720 S. Michigan Ave.	\$129	\$129	\$154	\$179
2	Palmer House Hilton (co-hdqrs.) 17 E. Monroe St.	\$129	\$129	\$154	\$179
3	Blackstone Hotel 636 S. Michigan Ave.	\$129	\$129	\$149	\$169

Rates are subject to hotel occupancy tax and will be honored three days before and three days after the official meeting dates of January 8–11 based on availability. No additional destination fee will be charged. Information on booking a room at the discounted rate is available at historians.org/hotels.



Dates and Deadlines

SEPTEMBER 15	Housing opens.
SEPTEMBER 22	Preregistration opens.
SEPTEMBER 30	Deadline to submit membership dues and address changes in order to receive the program in the mail.
NOVEMBER 5	Program mailed to members.
DECEMBER 15	Last day for preregistration pricing.
DECEMBER 15	Deadline to submit registration refund requests.
DECEMBER 17	Last day to make hotel reservations through the housing service. Subsequent reservations taken on a space-available basis at the convention rate.
JANUARY 8, 2026	Annual meeting opens at 11:00 a.m. Exhibit Hall opens January 9, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in Salon A at the Hilton Chicago.

Meeting Registration

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

	MEMBER		NONMEMBER	
	PREREGISTRATION	AFTER DEC. 15	PREREGISTRATION	AFTER DEC. 15
Attendee	\$269	\$312	\$404	\$476
Speaker	\$269	\$312	\$269	\$312
Student	\$126	\$145	\$177	\$209
Un-/Underemployed	\$79	\$92	\$192	\$224
Retired	\$155	\$177	\$229	\$266
K–12 Teacher	\$133	\$149	\$199	\$229
Bring your Graduate/ Undergraduate/K–12 student discount	For members only. Add students to your registration for only \$25 each (\$35 on-site). Bring as many high school, undergraduate, and graduate students as you want for only \$25 each!			

Advance registration must be completed by midnight EST on December 15, 2025. Thereafter, on-site rates will apply. Everyone attending the meeting is expected to register. Admission to the Exhibit Hall requires a registration badge. **Special note for speakers: All US-based historians presenting on AHA sessions must be AHA members, and all participants must register.**

Advance registrants who are unable to attend the meeting may request a refund of their registration fee. Refund requests must be emailed to ltownsend@historians.org by December 15, 2025, and will incur a \$20 fee. Refunds will not be processed after that date.

Book a Room and Save \$50

Reserve a hotel room in the AHA block through the AHA housing service, Maritz, before registering for the meeting and receive a \$50 discount off meeting registration. (You will not receive a discount refund if you register before booking a room.)



The 139th Annual Meeting of the
American Historical Association

CHICAGO

January 8–11, 2026

*Registration
opens Sept. 22!*



historians.org/annual-meeting

REBECCA L. WEST

CREATING THE ARTWORK FOR AHA26

Behind the Scenes at the AHA

For each department at the AHA, planning for the next annual meeting kicks off at a different time of the year. For the marketing department, it begins with the creation of the next meeting's artwork, a process that often starts more than a year in advance. The annual meeting artwork is featured on just about everything AHA from the time registration opens in September to when the meeting wraps in January, so getting it in hand is an exciting moment that makes the upcoming meeting start to feel real.

For previous meetings, we have contracted with an independent artist—a time-consuming process that involves identifying candidates, reviewing pitches, and communicating with the artist at every stage of the design process. This has given us the chance to feature beautiful art at the annual meetings, but sometimes comes with frustrating snags when the artwork isn't quite to the specifications we need, or proves difficult to crop and rearrange into the many variations of graphics we need for the website, emails, social media, physical signage, and more.

To simplify the process, this year we brought the artwork in-house, and I jumped at the opportunity to create something new. In our first brainstorming session, a group of AHA staff members convened in the conference room to get to work. Debbie Ann Doyle, Jake Purcell, Hope Shannon, Liz Townsend, Sarah Weicksel, and I discussed approximately a million different approaches we could take. We threw any Chicago-related thing we could think of into the mix: jazz, baseball, deep-dish pizza, the Willis (née Sears) Tower, Navy Pier, SUE the *T. rex*, elevated trains, the Black press, the city's ethnic neighborhoods, Hull-House, Mrs. O'Leary's apocryphal cow. Because our 2025 artwork had so prominently featured New York's iconic water towers, we considered continuing the theme by focusing on Lake Michigan and Chicago's water cribs. I ran out of room on our brainstorming page, my handwriting getting smaller and smaller as I squeezed ideas into the margins or wrote them sideways along the page edge.

Using this overflow of ideas, I mocked up several rough artwork concepts in Adobe Illustrator, using a variety of the Chicago landmarks, cultural staples, and historical references we'd discussed. Since AHA26 would be Sarah's first annual meeting as executive director, I made sure to include a concept inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright. Sarah, a University of Chicago alumna, is a fan of the Chicago-based architect's work, and we all wanted to celebrate her new role at the AHA.

As a group, we reviewed the concepts and decided to combine two into something new. One was a view of the city from Ohio Street Beach: We would keep the skyline and the water but lose the lifeguard chair and beach umbrellas in the foreground, since a beachy scene might seem like a strange choice for a January event. The other was based on a mural from Midway Gardens, a Hyde Park entertainment venue Wright designed in the early 1910s. The venue lasted only a decade and a half before it closed and was demolished in 1929. Now the artwork Wright created for the project—not just the mural, but the architecture, glasswork, gardens, sculptures, furniture, and countless small ornaments—is preserved only in photographs and reproductions. Drawing inspiration from this mural seemed a fitting tribute to the city's history of public artwork.

Over several months, I brought drafts of the artwork to the group to get fresh eyes on it: How blue should the sky be? Are the city buildings better in brown or navy? Where should the text go? As the design evolved, I incorporated a pattern inspired by Wright's stained glass work into the background—in the AHA's brand colors, of course.

The annual meeting artwork is always a celebration of the city the AHA is visiting. When we finally declared this year's artwork finished, we were so excited to share it with the rest of the staff and our members. We hope to see you in Chicago so we can all explore the city together. **P**

Rebecca L. West is marketing coordinator at the AHA.

BROADENING OUR COLLECTIVE WORK

An Interview with Sarah Weicksel, AHA Executive Director

On July 1, 2025, Sarah Weicksel started a five-year term as executive director of the AHA. She knows the AHA well after serving on the staff since 2020 as a research coordinator and then director of research and publications. Sarah is a historian of material culture in the United States who previously worked in both museums and academic settings; her book, *A Nation Unraveled: Clothing, Culture, and Violence in the American Civil War Era*, will be published in January 2026 by the University of North Carolina Press.

Perspectives sat down with Weicksel to discuss her roots in California, how she navigated academia as a first-generation student, and how her professional experiences across the history discipline have influenced her goals for the AHA.

You grew up on your family's farm in California. How does that influence you?

Growing up in California when I did, it felt like a place that seemingly had no history. In school, we studied things that happened on the East Coast. We learned about the Gold Rush and built missions out of macaroni in elementary school, and that was pretty much it as far as California history was concerned.

But on our farm, I was surrounded by all sorts of old things dating back a hundred years. Our house and barn were built by my great-grandpa in the late 1910s, and our barn still had farm implements that dated back to the early 1900s. We had the wagon that my great-grandpa used to deliver raisins to Sun-Maid, driving a six-horse team; equipment that my grandpa converted from horse-drawn to tractor-pulled in the mid-20th century; all the way up to my dad's cab tractor from the mid-1990s. All these layers of farming equipment and history were in our barn — along with what I often referred to as a thick layer of hundred-year-old dust.

I suppose all those old things have something to do with my interest in material culture, but being from the West Coast

has also resulted in me constantly trying to bring Western history into the way that I look at things. Although my scholarship has not focused on that, I'm constantly trying to think about how we ensure that we're telling the entire nation's story.

And then you went to Yale University as a first-generation college student. That must have been a whole new world!

It was a major culture shock. I went to school in town but spent summers fairly isolated out on our farm. I had summer jobs — I packed tree fruit and helped with my family's grape and almond harvests. At Yale, suddenly I was in a bustling city with a lot of cars and a lot of people, who had experiences that were very different from mine.

I'm very much a historian who follows the sources.

I felt very out of place — everyone seemed more widely read than I was. I distinctly remember sitting in classes on historical and political thought and on literature, having struggled to get through Herodotus and Homer. And there I was listening to some of my classmates debating what the original Greek said. It felt overwhelming.

Then I took a Western history course from John Mack Faragher, whose lecture slides were full of images and objects, another from Ned Cooke on early American decorative arts, and one from Alexander Nemerov on 19th-century politics and art. John Demos brought in objects from his own antiques collection as part of his colonial history class. And I discovered this entirely different way of exploring the past.

So in some ways, it was discovering material culture as a historical source that helped me come into my own in the classroom — it was how I regained my confidence. I've often described it as my academic lifeline. It hooked me on continuing

to be a history major, and ultimately to go on to attend the Winterthur program, so I could develop skills in doing history through objects, then take that on to a history PhD at the University of Chicago.

What was the first object that lit a fire within you about material culture?

You know, I can't really remember a specific object. But I distinctly remember noticing the hats that people were wearing in the paintings we were studying for class. And I realized that how people were dressed, and what their clothes were intended to convey, was something that could be debated. It sparked my interest.

Were those hats the start of your study of clothing as a historical source?

I actually avoided clothing and textiles as a topic of study for much of my career, really—or thought I did. I wasn't interested in the minutiae of textile analysis or fashion history. And yet I have just finished a book on clothing and the American Civil War. I've always been more interested in thinking about combinations of objects within the context of the built environment—a sort of reconstructing how the past looked and felt, and how that influenced people's worldviews. When I started working on my book, I had no intention whatsoever of working on clothes. I was planning a project about Civil War looting that involved all sorts of objects. But I'm very much a historian who follows the sources, and the sources were telling me that there was something about clothing that was extraordinarily important during the war. I found so many references to clothing being stolen, destroyed and ripped up, packaged and sent thousands of miles away. And so much vitriol over clothing. I felt compelled to revise my driving question to figure out just what it was about clothing that was so important to this war and to the people who were living through it.

How did you end up working on the Civil War?

In part, it felt like the next step in the kind of research I had been doing, and it was the period I'd been circling around but never focused on. My master's degree work at the Winterthur Museum focused on 18th- and early 19th-century material culture. My master's thesis there was on the development of shopping destinations in Philadelphia in the first half of the century. At UChicago, I wrote on a range of topics on the 19th century, from women's medical history to church fundraising fairs to the development of tearooms and women's food-related businesses in late 19th-century Chicago. There



Sarah Weicksel worked with a wide range of objects in her time at the National Museum of American History, including this quetzal, collected in 1923.
Courtesy Sarah Weicksel

were books that just opened up so many questions for me, like Thavolia Glymph's *Out of the House of Bondage*, Drew Gilpin Faust's *This Republic of Suffering*, and Stephanie McCurry's *Confederate Reckoning*. The questions these books left me with were so compelling that I wanted to find the answers. Objects and people were in constant motion during the war. I wanted to take my deep understanding of the material world and use it to understand what loss meant—not just in the Confederate context, but the complete disruption of daily life experienced by Black refugees in the South and US soldiers.

After four years at Yale, did you still feel out of place when you started a master's program, and then later an MA-PhD program?

I was the first in my family to earn a bachelor's degree and to attend a four-year school, and I was lucky that my professors helped me to navigate academia. They helped me understand why I would want to go to Winterthur first instead of straight into a PhD program, which was always my intention. And at

Winterthur, I was prepared both for going on to get a PhD and to become a museum professional. Those experiences helped orient me to the types of jobs that might be available. But even though I successfully made it through college and a master's program, a PhD program was entirely different. It required being willing to ask questions to clarify exactly what it was I was supposed to be doing, and to seek out people who would mentor me along the way.

Several people guided me. For example, when I started the program Christine Stansell helped me refine my ability to make a historical argument, while still maintaining my writing style. I spent hours with Kathleen Conzen, talking about our family histories, about historical methods, about trying to uncover the very mundane social history of ordinary people. Leora Auslander helped me to refine my approach as a historian who worked with things and what precisely that meant. Leora and Kathy co-chaired my committee and they were there every step of the way to help me make decisions about my research, as well as my career. For me, there was never going to be a single path after a PhD—I never felt boxed into a single profession. But mentors throughout my education were absolutely critical in helping me navigate academia.

Now you've worked in jobs across the historical discipline—as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Pennsylvania; as a project historian at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History; and as research coordinator and then director of research and publications here at the AHA. What has that breadth of experience taught you about the discipline today?

I've worked in museums from the Menokin Foundation on the Northern Neck of Virginia that, at the time, was a covered ruin of the house, a trailer for an office, and an outhouse, all the way to a large institution like the Smithsonian. I've taught undergraduate and graduate students and worked on exhibitions for the general public. Those experiences have given me a sense of three things: the breadth of the discipline of history, the diversity of people who are working in it, and the multitudes of reasons that people connect with history. They have influenced my desire to see the AHA become a bigger tent organization, and to advocate for a discipline that is not a closed community to which one must gain acceptance, but rather a space of welcome and support that connects historians from all backgrounds and professions.

What were the best parts of those jobs?

At UChicago, I loved advising BA theses and teaching historical methodology seminars. Helping students take an inkling

of an idea and turn it into a full-fledged research project that they could really feel invested in and proud of at the end was something that I enjoyed a lot.

At the Smithsonian, one of my favorite projects was an exhibit that's currently up called *Really BIG Money*, because it was so different from anything I'd done before. It was a curatorial experiment of sorts, co-curated from the beginning by two historians and two museum educators. It's designed for a primary audience of 3rd to 5th graders, while still doing something that is appealing to adults. It allowed me to work with completely different eras and object types, from a quetzal bird to a Roman coin hoard.

At the AHA, Teaching Things has been one of the most fulfilling of my projects. It was designed to help instructors bring material culture into history classrooms and was an opportunity to do—on a large scale—the kind of curriculum development I'd been working on for over a decade, through convening workshops at conferences and through trial and error in my own classroom. Working with a team who is similarly committed to using objects in the classroom has been a highlight of my time at the AHA. I hope that my years of work encouraging the use of objects in history classrooms will in some way contribute to other students finding their path forward, and perhaps even strengthening their academic confidence.

We need to attend to the full ecosystem of the discipline.

Looking forward, what are your priorities for the AHA?

I want to help lead the discipline forward in ways that can unite the different facets of historical work, and the various people who are practicing it, to continue to broaden our definitions of historical scholarship, and to really embrace the vibrancy of our discipline. I want to increase the number of historians who see the AHA as their professional home by fostering a culture that makes trained historians who are working outside academia essential to our collective work.

We need to attend to the full ecosystem of the discipline, from K–12 education to higher ed, and encourage broad public support for history and history education. That's particularly difficult at this moment, because history has become so heavily politicized. The various threats to telling good, evidence-based history have shape-shifted over the last several years, and they continue to build. I want to ensure that the AHA can intervene in those debates, to help the public and policymakers

understand that history, historical evidence, and history education are essential and deserve bipartisan support.

I'm excited to be tackling the current landscape of humanities graduate education through our new collaboration on the Doctoral Futures project with the ACLS, MLA, and Society of Biblical Literature. I also want to better connect history graduate students to the Association by building on our Career Diversity initiative and identifying new ways that we can support them in their professional development and careers. I want to better support both non-tenure-track faculty members and independent scholars without access to a university library system so they can continue pursuing their research-related goals. I personally know the challenge of trying to do scholarship without research access. In recent years, we've added new member benefits proved central to me being able to get my book done, because we as AHA staff don't have access to a university library. There are difficult issues facing our discipline that go beyond what the AHA can address. But that doesn't mean that we should stop trying.

So you left the farm 20 years ago, but you're still putting your hands in the dirt. What's going on in your garden right now?

In general, the chaos of keeping our two dogs out of my plantings. My vegetable garden is starting to produce, and over the last several years, I've been converting our back lawn into a garden full of Maryland native plants. Looking out and seeing the shifting diversity of wildlife over the years has been quite amazing. This year, the plants have started to mature, and there are now several types of butterflies and dragonflies, hummingbirds, toads, gray tree and pickerel frogs, and species of bees I have never seen before. Pairs of cardinals, goldfinches, and other native birds are nesting there. One of the things that I enjoy most is trying out a new plant this year and seeing how it does, and then bringing in another one the next year. Learning to grow produce and flowers in an entirely different climate and gardening zone has been a good challenge. **P**

Laura Ansley is director of publications at the AHA.



The newsmagazine of the American Historical Association
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A DISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO GENERATIVE AI IN THE HISTORY CLASSROOM

Generative AI tools, including large language models (LLMs), are transforming history education. Our rapidly changing relationship with these technologies poses both opportunities and obstacles for educators tasked with teaching history and historical thinking. Skeptics and enthusiasts differ in their predictions for the future of the AI economy, but generative AI is here now with effects both obvious and obscure. Technology companies are integrating AI functions and capabilities into a growing range of the tools and applications we already use to search the internet, communicate, design lessons, grade assignments, and organize courses.

In 2023, the AHA Council established an Ad Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence in History Education to develop guidelines for generative AI in history education at all levels. As staff liaison to this committee, I helped to develop its charge and supported its activities. Our meetings generated vigorous debate, but we quickly agreed that history education has specific needs and challenges that might not be addressed in broader institutional policies. The committee sought input from colleagues through panels and listening sessions at regional and national conferences. In May and June 2024, the committee surveyed AHA members. Of 148 respondents, 68.9 percent had redesigned courses to avoid or minimize potential misuses of generative AI—we suspect the number would be even higher now—and an overwhelming majority (92.6 percent) noted that they would appreciate guidance and sample language to use in creating AI policies for their courses. After nearly two years of discussion and investigation, this committee developed *Guiding Principles for Artificial Intelligence in History Education*, a document formally approved by the AHA Council in July and now available at historians.org/AI-history-education.


Students use AI tools for an array of daily tasks. Some are aware of the ethical, economic, and environmental issues associated with this technology. Even more want to learn about generative AI, how it works, and what it means for privacy, media literacy, our planet, and the future of the workforce. History educators have an opportunity to help students navigate this complex landscape. We also have a responsibility to

develop clear and transparent policies that address the ways in which students might use AI for coursework.

Some technologists predict that AI will revolutionize teaching and learning. Indeed, a charter school network now promises to educate its students without any academic faculty at all. Yet education is—and must remain—a deeply human project. That a school *can* operate without teachers does not mean that this is a worthy endeavor or a reasonable goal. “Our goal is to foster a different trajectory,” the *Guiding Principles* resource asserts, “whereby generative AI is seen as a tool that supports the pursuit of knowledge, not a shortcut that replaces meaningful work.”

The committee identified 14 guiding principles that reinforce five overarching conclusions. Historical thinking, we insist, matters more than ever. It can equip students to thrive in a world awash in AI-generated content, enabling them to understand the capabilities and limitations of this technology. As educators, we can promote AI literacy, but a first step will be to adopt clear and transparent policies that address how many students already use these tools. Generative AI offers shortcuts to accelerate or refine many tasks, but it cannot diminish the value of historical expertise.

The committee’s conclusions are offered with deep respect for the full range of opinions among history educators about the future of AI. The extent of AI’s implications for history education are not yet clear, and we opted to address a discrete subset of concerns. No one-size-fits-all AI policy can meet the needs of every course, department, or institution. As such, the committee developed a sample chart outlining ways that many students may already use generative AI and offering recommendations about what could constitute acceptable use. We envision this as a starting point for conversations about policies at the course and department levels with both students and colleagues.

History invites us to consider what it means to be human. This question takes on new significance in an age of machine learning. The ball is in our court. 

Brendan Gillis is director of teaching and learning at the AHA.

AHR STAFF

MISTAKES MADE, LESSONS LEARNED

In the September 2025 Issue of the American Historical Review

The September 2025 issue of the *American Historical Review* features articles on Korean diasporic atomic bomb survivors, Jamaican activists and socialist internationalism, and naturalized citizens in 19th-century China. The History Lab features a special edition of History Unclassified — “Mistakes I Have Made” — and an #AHRsYllabus module on the history of higher education.

The issue opens with **Naoko Wake** (Michigan State Univ.) and **Michael R. Jin**’s (Univ. of Illinois Chicago) article, “Surviving the Bomb in Diaspora.” Wake and Jin examine the experiences of Korean diasporic atomic bomb survivors (*pihaeja*) who have been deprived of their national right of redress. They argue that the dominant liberation narrative that the atomic bombs delivered Koreans from Japanese imperialism has obscured the continuing hardships of survivors across colonial, national, ethnic, and diasporic boundaries. Survivors’ struggles against US-centric notions of compensatory justice highlight the fundamental limits of the postcolonial discourse on human rights, and offers a critique of the dualistic notion of the war being between Japan and the United States that persists in the bomb’s historiography.

In “Unpaid Debts,” **Giuliana Chamedes** (Univ. of Wisconsin–Madison) provides a novel account of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) from 1974 to 1980, arguing that its failure resulted in part because of the limits of socialist internationalism. Chamedes specifically looks at Jamaican activists and their efforts to redefine “socialism” and “socialist internationalism” on national, regional, and global scales to build support for the NIEO and global wealth redistribution. Centering this struggle and the difficulty of trying to overcome imperial and Cold War logics, Chamedes argues, sheds new light on the world-making visions of the 1970s and their unexpected, enduring afterlives.

Nicholas McGee (Durham Univ.), in “To Change in China,” explores cases of Americans and Europeans who attempted to become naturalized subjects in late 19th-century Qing China. McGee argues that little is known about China’s place in the global debates on naturalization because of deliberate

erasure efforts by Euro-American powers to deny the legitimacy of white naturalization in China. These powers feared that such naturalizations threatened the broader racial hierarchies they were constructing in Asia. McGee reconstructs and contextualizes these naturalization cases to expand the story of modern nationality in China, and to reinsert China into a global history with present-day implications.

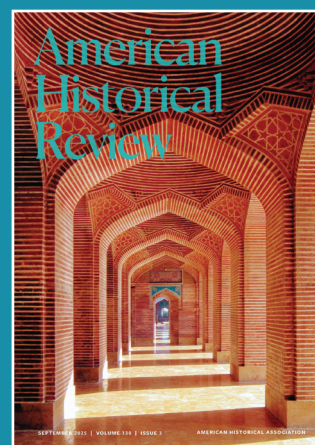
This issue’s History Lab features
a special edition of History
Unclassified.

This issue’s History Lab features a special edition of History Unclassified. The History Unclassified section is “devoted to creative, unconventional, genre-bending modes of historical writing,” and in this special edition, “Mistakes I Have Made,” consulting editors **Kate Brown** (Massachusetts Inst. of Technology) and **Emily Callaci** (Univ. of Wisconsin–Madison) invited historians to “reflect on their missteps and how they reveal insights into historical practice.” As they reflect on the trajectory of History Unclassified, now in its seventh year, Brown and Callaci ask, “What if the imperfect human historian — with their flaws, their biases, their long-entrenched assumptions — is actually the best tool of historical exploration?”

This special edition features six essays. In “Mistakes I Carried,” **Conor Heffernan** (Ulster Univ.) explains how after writing a history of bodybuilding in the 20th century, he realized he had left out a crucial source of knowledge: his own body. An avid bodybuilder, in his teens he had subjected his body to a punishing regime in a pursuit to overcome gendered and racial anxieties during an economic crisis in Ireland. He used that insight as a lens into larger historical processes of capitalism, white supremacy, and masculinity.

In “Whose Revolution?” **Lisa Covert** (Coll. of Charleston) writes about traveling to San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, to

This issue's cover features an image from Taymiya R. Zaman's "Cities, Time, and the Backward Glance" (June 2018), the very first History Unclassified essay. In her essay, Zaman expressed unease with the historical discipline's reliance on a linear sense of time and an assumed, unwavering authorial voice. The photo depicts a 17th-century Mughal mosque in Thatta, Pakistan. In her description of the archways, Zaman wrote, "I walk back across the courtyard, to where I can see arches in a row, and through each arch I see another arch, until I am pulled into an infinity of arches that stretch into the distance and then narrow to a luminous doorway, beyond which the eye cannot see, and language fails." Photo by Taymiya R. Zaman.



write a dissertation about revolutionaries in the Mexican Revolution (1910–20). A conversation with Genaro Almanza Ríos, who had taken part in what she and other historians consider the counterrevolution that followed in the late 1920s and 1930s, led her to understand that “instead of framing San Miguel de Allende as a place left behind in the wake of revolutionary progress,” she might “see it as a place caught between two different ways of imagining the future.”

Claire D. Clark (Univ. of Kentucky) names her mistake as one of misrecognition of the historical subject in “The Battles over Addiction Treatment.” In her book about the controversial drug addiction treatment group Synanon, she had chosen not to include a passage about the well-known and sensational disbanding of the group, when some members planted a rattlesnake in a crusading lawyer’s mailbox. Angry with the omission, the lawyer made a public attempt to discredit Clark that sent her tumbling into a revival of depression and addictive behavior, leading her to question the nature of recovery programs that she had once trusted. Her experience guided her to develop a new research program, rooted in an ethics of care and healing.

Trauma and care are similarly at the heart of **Marius Kothor**’s (Harvard Univ.) essay, “The Rooster Says There Is Life in Fear.” Kothor, a child refugee from Togo, at first carefully ended her history of women textile traders in 1963 to avoid the violence of the Eyadéma presidency that began that year. She did so to skirt the trauma of her own flight from Togo as a child. When she came to see this mistake, she started to better understand the hesitancy she encountered when conducting oral history interviews, and it led her to innovate a new ethos and practice of care in her methodology.

Mistakes and the desire to avoid them occur not just in the research process but in our professional lives as a whole. In a

graphic essay called “Embracing the Untamed Garden,” the mother-daughter team of historian **Claire Schen** (Univ. at Buffalo, SUNY) and artist **Maddy Cherr** explore the mistake of attuning one’s career to productivity metrics that aim toward perfection. In “Slipping from the Podium,” **Michael Kugler** (Northwestern Coll.), **Kelli Y. Nakamura** (Kapi’olani Community Coll.), and **Julie Rancilio** (Kapi’olani Community Coll.)—all first-generation academics—reflect on their mistake: impersonating the expertise and the seemingly omniscient knowledge of their college professors at elite universities, rather than connecting with the goals of their own first-generation students in the small colleges where they teach.

This special edition ends where History Unclassified began. In 2017, Brown submitted her play *The Chernobyl Crucible in Two Acts* to the AHR. It was ultimately rejected for publication, but it started a conversation with then-AHR editor Alex Lichtenstein about creating a space in the journal that encourages authors to think differently about the forms history can take. Ultimately, this led to the launch of the History Unclassified section in the June 2018 issue. This special edition finishes with inclusion of Brown’s original script submission.

The History Lab concludes with the latest #AHRsyllabus module. **Kelly Schrum** (George Mason Univ.), **Nate Sleeter** (George Mason Univ.), **Kevin J. Bazner** (Texas A&M Univ.—Corpus Christi), **D. Chase J. Catalano** (Virginia Tech), **Roman Christiaens** (Univ. of Arizona), **Erin E. Doran** (Univ. of Texas at El Paso), **Katie N. Smith** (Temple Univ.), and **Mary Kate Steinbeck** (Univ. of Georgia) introduce the use of college and university digital archives to capture the rich histories of women’s sports, LGBTQ+ student experiences, and Hispanic-serving institutions. The module includes a classroom teaching activity that uses campus historical markers to help students better understand the processes and contestations of historical commemoration. **P**


ACTIONS BY THE AHA COUNCIL

January to June 2025

Through email communications from January 5 through May 30, 2025; at a teleconference held on March 20, 2025; and at meetings on June 7 and 8, 2025, the Council of the American Historical Association took the following actions:

- Approved a joint statement with the Organization of American Historians opposing the executive order “Ending Radical Indoctrination in K–12 Schooling.”
- Interpreted Article VIII, Section 1(b), of the AHA Constitution to provide that separate petitions shall be required for each nominee to be proposed by petition. Each petition must be signed by no fewer than 100 AHA members. Each member may sign more than one petition to place a nominee on the election ballot.
- Admitted the Center for New Deal Studies as an AHA affiliate.
- Approved a joint statement with the Organization of American Historians condemning “recent efforts to censor historical content on federal government websites, at many public museums, and across a wide swath of government resources that include essential data.”
- Submitted testimony opposing Ohio SB 1, which would eliminate tenure in higher education.
- Sent a letter to the Iowa Senate Education Committee registering strong objection to core provisions of Iowa HF 402/SF 322, which would establish limiting curriculum requirements in community colleges.
- Approved a statement condemning “the dismantling of federal departments and agencies through the indiscriminate termination of federal employees and elimination of programs, including historical offices.”
- Signed on to a joint statement with the American Council of Learned Societies and the Phi Beta Kappa Society opposing the executive order to close the US Department of Education.
- Approved a statement in support of the Smithsonian Institution, the target of the executive order “Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History.”
- Signed on to a letter from a coalition of 13 organizations requesting that the Virginia Board of Education delay implementations of the 2023 History and Social Science Standards of Learning for one year.
- Approved a statement condemning “the evisceration of the National Endowment for the Humanities” and called on its members to contact their congressional representatives and urge them to save the NEH.
- Agreed to collaborate with the American Council of Learned Societies and the Modern Language Association to engage legal counsel to evaluate potential claims to be brought in court regarding the termination of NEH grants and related issues.
- Approved a statement condemning policies and practices that target international scholars in various ways, especially (but not solely) with regard to immigration status.
- Appointed Chad Bryant (Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Laura Edwards (Princeton Univ.), and Christy Pichichero (George Mason Univ.) to three-year terms on the AHR Board of Editors beginning July 1, 2025.
- Appointed Sara Caputo (Univ. of Cambridge), Juan Cobo Betancourt (Univ. of California, Santa Barbara), Esther Liberman Cuenca (Univ. of Houston–Victoria), Heather Murray (Univ. of Ottawa), Matthew Reeder (National Univ. of Singapore), and Penny Sinanoglou (Pomona Coll.) to

three-year terms as AHR associate review editors beginning July 1, 2025.

- Approved a statement condemning censorship at military educational institutions.
- Sent a letter to state legislators urging them to oppose Texas SB 37, a higher education omnibus reform bill, which would strip faculty control over general education requirements and impose new restrictions based on race and gender.
- Sent a letter to state legislators urging them to oppose Alabama SB 166, which would require display of the Ten Commandments in US history classrooms with language about how it is “historical truth” that the Ten Commandments inspired the American founding.
- Sent a letter to state legislators urging them to oppose Texas SB 10, which would require display of the Ten Commandments in public schools.
- Sent a letter to members of the Texas Senate Committee on Education K–16 urging them to reconsider plans to eliminate requirements for state assessment in social studies and history.
- Signed on to a letter encouraging the Virginia Board of Education and Department of Education to invest in history and civics and better integrate it into the state’s system for public school accountability.
- Approved the January 3 and 6, 2025, Council meeting minutes.
- Approved the January 16, 2025, Council meeting minutes.
- Approved the March 20, 2025, Council meeting minutes.
- Approved the interim meeting minutes and ratified Council votes taken from January 8 to May 30, 2025.
- Appointed the following members of the 2027 Annual Meeting Program Committee: Luisa Arrieta Fernandez (Spelman Coll.), BuYun Chen (Swarthmore Coll.), Rowan Dorin (Stanford Univ.), Roy Doron (Winston-Salem State Univ.), Theresa Jach (Houston Community Coll.), Monica Martinez (Univ. of Texas at Austin), Stuart Rockoff (Mississippi Humanities Council), Nerina Rustomji (St. John’s Univ.), Lisa Trivedi (Hamilton Coll.), and Wade Trosclair (Jesuit High School of New Orleans).
- Appointed Ashley Rogers (Whitney Plantation Museum) as co-chair of the Local Arrangements Committee for the 2027 annual meeting.
- Approved adding “+” to the name of the AHA Committee on LGBTQ+ Status in the Profession.
- Approved nominations for the 2025 Awards for Scholarly Distinction, John Lewis Award for Public Service, and Tik-kun Olam Prize, to be announced in October.
- Removed the final sentence in AHA Bylaw 16.3 (pursuant to Article IX, Sections 1–3) stating that “all nominations by petition shall be received by the chair of the Nominating Committee on or before May 15” to resolve a discrepancy with the AHA Constitution.
- Admitted the Consortium on the Revolutionary Era as an AHA affiliate.
- Updated the affiliate application process to include the requirement that a list of members of the applicant’s governing bodies must be publicly available.
- Approved the FY26 budget.
- Established a Development Working Group to be appointed by the AHA president and report to AHA Council.
- Approved updates to the AHA’s *Code of Professional Conduct at Officially Sanctioned AHA Activities*.
- Approved updates to the *Guide for Contending with Online Harassment*, with an addendum allowing staff to update resources as necessary.
- Approved changes to section 5.1(c) of the AHA’s *Annual Meeting Guidelines* to encourage commentators to bring a diversity of perspectives to sessions. 

COMPILED BY LIZ TOWNSEND

2025 AHA ELECTION RESULTS

Bianca Murillo (California State Univ., Dominguez Hills), chair of the Nominating Committee, announces the following results of the 2025 balloting for officers and committee members of the American Historical Association. The committee wishes to thank all candidates who stood for election; their willingness to serve is much appreciated.

President

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Lonnie Bunch III, Smithsonian Institution

Vice President, Professional Division

Karin Wulf, John Carter Brown Library and Brown University

Council Member, Professional Division

M. Raisur Rahman, Wake Forest University

Council Member, Research Division

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Council Member, Teaching Division

Karen Miller, La Guardia Community College, CUNY

Committee on Committees

Laura J. Mitchell, University of California, Irvine

Nominating Committee

Slot 1: Alexander Aviña, Arizona State University

Slot 2: Mariana P. Candido, Emory University

Slot 3: Prasannan Parthasarathi, Boston College 

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

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July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025

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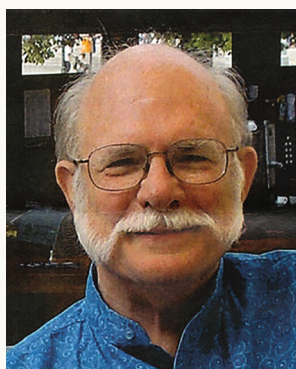
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Thomas A. Brady Jr.

1937–2025

Historian of the
Protestant
Reformation

Thomas A. Brady Jr., Sather Professor emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley, passed away on March 7, 2025, at his home in Berkeley.

Tom was born on November 23, 1937, in Columbia, Missouri, where his father was professor of ancient history, dean, and vice president of the University of Missouri. Tom graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 1959, then served for three years in the US Navy. He earned a master's degree at Columbia University in 1962 and a PhD in 1968 at the University of Chicago, where he studied the era of the Protestant Reformation with Hanna Holborn Gray and Hans Baron.

In 1967, he accepted a position at the University of Oregon. During his 23 years in Eugene, which culminated in his occupying an endowed chair, he became known as a superb teacher and scholar, a man of extraordinary intellectual breadth, whose curiosity matched the generosity with which he shared his knowledge. In this era, he also participated in the international revitalization of scholarship on the Reformation in central Europe. This revitalization featured the integration of theology and history, the study of the social, cultural, and political circumstances in which religious beliefs developed. Tom's first book, *Ruling Class, Regime and Reformation at Strasbourg, 1520–1555* (1978), was a spectacular collective biography of Strasbourg's ruling elites in the era of the Reformation. It deployed neo-Marxist ideas to demonstrate the influence of urban social position on religious inclination. His next book, *Turning Swiss: Cities and Empire, 1450–1550* (1985), studied the role of regional diversity, both rural and urban, in guiding the political reception of reform in the Holy Roman Empire and the doctrinal reception of Protestantism in southern Germany. It was awarded the German Studies Association Book Prize in 1987.

By the time he moved to the University of California, Berkeley, in 1990, Tom had become one of the world's preeminent Reformation scholars. Beyond his formidable published scholarship, his reputation reflected his pivotal place in a

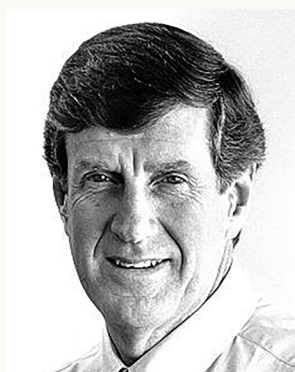
growing international network of scholars. He knew everyone. His collaborators included scores of European scholars. Hundreds of reviews, reports, and bibliographical notices from his pen explored every regional corner of central Europe and illuminated every methodological controversy during these exciting days, whether the subject was communalism, confessionalism, or the intersections of social and cultural history.

One virtue of Tom's move to Berkeley was the greater opportunity to recruit and train a new generation of scholars, dozens of whom now teach in North American universities. Together with fellowships and countless academic honors, two large book projects marked this period as the culmination of his scholarship. The subject of his dissertation and the principal figure in his first book became his biographical subject in *Protestant Politics: Jacob Sturm (1489–1553) and the German Reformation* (1995). Here Sturm figured as a crucial actor in events that brought not only the failure of a Protestant alternative to the Holy Roman Empire but also the survival of Protestantism in Strasbourg. Tom's final volume, a masterful capstone to a distinguished career, was *German Histories in the Age of Reformations, 1400–1650* (2009). Here he linked early modern and modern German historiography in a reprise of Leopold Ranke's history of the Protestant Reformation, in which the great historian had located the founding of a German nation-state in 1871 as the culmination of the Reformation. Tom argued that the abiding achievement of the Reformation era lay instead in the long-enduring political framework that it provided for managing central Europe's complex confessional diversity.

Tom is survived by Katherine Gingrich Brady, his lifelong friend, wife of more than six decades, and, as friends and readers of his books' dedications know, a scholarly collaborator whose importance to his life cannot be overstated. Whether situated in Eugene, Berkeley, Strasbourg, Tübingen, Munich, or elsewhere, the Brady home was the site of an ongoing scholars' feast, where guests, colleagues, and students gathered for good company, good food, and intellectual uplift. "Liberty Hall," as Tom called their home, was a source of joy to them both and to their many, many friends.

Roger Chickering
Georgetown University (emeritus) and University of Oregon

Photo courtesy Brady family



Christopher Ehret

1941–2025

Historian of Early Africa

Christopher Ehret, professor emeritus in the history department of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), died on March 25, 2025. He joined the department in 1968 and rose through the ranks until his retirement as Distinguished Research Professor in 2011.

Chris was a fifth-generation Californian whose forebears arrived during the Gold Rush. Born in San Francisco, he grew up in Santa Paula. He first matriculated at Cal Tech as a math major but decided to pursue his interest in history at the University of Redlands, where he graduated in 1963. Later that year, he entered the history PhD program at Northwestern University, then one of the major centers for African studies.

At Northwestern, he was introduced to East African history by John Rowe and became interested in migration studies with his PhD chair, Franklin Scott. He attended seminars at the University of Wisconsin–Madison with Jan Vansina, who was already integrating linguistic analysis into his own work on early African history. Together with Chris's deep interest in early world history, these mentors helped shape his research trajectory. Chris possessed a singular intelligence and a prodigious mental data bank of African languages. He exhibited a level of confidence in his methods and his evidence that enabled him to think well outside the constraints of evolving parameters of the new Africanist historiography that emerged from the 1970s. This combination of intellectual attributes made him a pioneer in the subfield of deep-time African history.

Chris made major contributions not only to our knowledge of early African history but also to African historical linguistics, publishing widely in both fields. Treating language as an archive, he pursued the concept of linguistic stratigraphy as the key to excavating Africa's ancient past. His many publications reveal the extraordinary dialectic between specialized technical methodology and broader historical and theoretical engagement that characterize his scholarship. From tightly focused but wide-ranging technical monographs to more general historical works, Chris was a scholar who tacked between both worlds. Combining his extraordinary specialized knowledge with his

commitment to teaching about early Africa, Chris produced several pathbreaking surveys that have truly transformed how we think about the African past. These most notably include *An African Classical Age: Eastern and Southern Africa in World History, 1000 BC to AD 400* (Univ. of Virginia Press, 1998); *The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800* (Univ. of Virginia Press, 2002; 2nd ed., 2016); and *Ancient Africa: A Global History to 300 CE* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2023). Chris collaborated extensively with scholars in other fields that bear on early African history, including linguistics, archaeology, ethnography, genetics, and demography.

At UCLA, Chris's focus on early African history was complemented after Merrick Posnansky joined the department in 1976. Together they built a miniprogram in African history and anthropology that joined linguistic history with archaeology, mentoring outstanding graduate students who have gone on to important careers of their own. Among those who adopted Chris's methodology in their own research are Cymone Fourshey, Rhonda Gonzales, Kairn Klieman, Christine Saidi, David Schoenbrun, and Constanze Weise. Chris chaired or co-chaired 29 history dissertations and served as a member of countless other PhD committees in history, anthropology, and linguistics. His former graduate students remember him as "an amazing mentor"; they are organizing a set of panels in his memory for the 2026 annual meeting of the African Studies Association. Chris could always be counted on to push his graduate students beyond what they had read for him in preparation for their qualifying exams. A hallmark of his graduate teaching was to involve his students in collaborative research teams to reconstruct some detail of a historical African language history; some of the products of these seminars were jointly published. Both these habits exemplified his own work.

Finally, Chris was a dependable colleague and a good friend. He could always be counted on to pull his weight in our field and within the wider campus network of African studies. Indeed, he was a model departmental and university citizen. In addition to his academic pursuits, Chris enjoyed listening to classical music, following current events and space exploration, reading mysteries, and visiting wineries.

Chris is survived by his wife Patricia Ehret, daughter Susanah Ehret and son-in-law Garrison Tong, grandchildren Samantha and Seth, son Seth Ehret and partner Lindsay Blade, and sister Florence Pierce and brother-in-law Don Pierce. He was one of a kind and will be sorely missed.

Edward A. Alpers
University of California, Los Angeles

Photo courtesy UCLA Department of History



Ann Dexter Gordon

1944–2025

Historian of American Women

Ann Dexter Gordon, a distinguished documentary editor and director of the Stanton–Anthony Papers project, died on March 19, 2025, at the age of 80.

Ann was born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1944. She earned her BA from Smith College in 1966 and attended graduate school at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She was involved, along with other radical student activities of those years, with the formation of the Teaching Assistants Association, the first graduate student labor union in the country. She was also editor of the Madison underground paper *Connections*.

Her dissertation, completed in 1975 under the direction of Stanley Katz, was titled “The College of Philadelphia, 1749–1779: Impact of an Institution.” An article based on that research, “The Young Ladies Academy of Philadelphia,” was included in Carol Berkin and Mary Beth Norton’s *Women of America: A History* (1979). While still a graduate student, Ann also wrote, with Mari Jo Buhle and Nancy Schrom Dye, “Women in American Society: An Historical Contribution,” one of the earliest overviews of the new field of women’s history.

After earning her PhD, Ann taught briefly in the Northwestern School of Education before joining the Jane Addams Papers Project, located at Hull House in Chicago and led by Mary Lynn McCree Bryan. This launched her into her life’s work: documentary editing. From the Addams Papers, she moved to the Woodrow Wilson Papers, where she was mentored by veteran editor Arthur Link.

In the 1970s, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission began to shift its resources from presidential papers to a wider array of historical subjects. Ann and Patricia Holland became editors in 1982 of the Elizabeth Cady Stanton–Susan B. Anthony Papers, housed in the W. E. B. Du Bois Department of Afro-American Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Collecting 14,000 documents by, to, and from Stanton and Anthony from hundreds of repositories, the papers were published in 1993 in 45 microfilm reels by Scholarly Publications.

In 1993, Ann began a second phase of the Stanton–Anthony project. After relocating the work to Rutgers University, she started a six-volume book publication, *The Selected Papers of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony* (Rutgers University Press, 1997–2013). At approximately 3,000 pages, these volumes made available approximately 10 percent of the microfilm selections, carefully selected, transcribed, and annotated. As Ann wrote in 2015, together the microfilm and book projects “transformed histories of women in politics and increased attention to the ideas of its principals.” For the *Selected Papers*, Ann worked with and trained two dozen associate editors and editorial assistants in the highest standards of historical documentary editing. She continued to deliver talks and publish articles and blog posts, sharing her knowledge, analysis, and perspective on these women with insight and humor in equal measure.

Nor did she limit herself to scholarly interventions. Stanton and Anthony, as representatives of the long, rich, and contentious history of the American women’s rights movement, continue to be invoked for contemporary political purposes. Ann particularly challenged the misuse of quotations from their publication, *The Revolution*, by modern antiabortion activists, including those at the Susan B. Anthony List. Ann, working often with journalist and Anthony scholar Lynn Sherr, challenged the political appropriation of her subjects’ words and opinions on a topic that they never openly addressed and that, certainly in Stanton’s case, was completely at odds with her general approach to women’s bodily autonomy. Ann tackled another modern misuse of Susan B. Anthony’s legacy in 2020, when President Donald Trump “pardoned” her for her 1872 arrest on federal charges of illegal voting. As Ann told NPR, “Susan didn’t want a pardon. She wore her conviction as a badge of honor.”

At Rutgers, Ann remained an academic union activist. Although working there for decades, she remained an untenured research professor and fought successfully for the rights of others in that category. The heartfelt obituary from the Rutgers AAUP-AFT chapter reads: “We are a stronger, better union and university for her leadership, scholarship, service, and union activism. We stand on the shoulders of giants like Ann, and we hope to do their legacy justice.”

At times like this, when the integrity of American history in all ways is under assault, historians like Ann Gordon will be sorely missed.

Ellen Carol DuBois
University of California, Los Angeles

Photo courtesy Daniel Marketti



Marysa Navarro-Aranguren

1934–2025

Historian of Women
in Latin America

Marysa Navarro-Aranguren, Charles A. and Elfriede A. Collis Professor emerita of history at Dartmouth College, died on March 2, 2025, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is survived by her daughter, Nina Gerassi-Navarro, King Felipe VI of Spain Professor in Spanish Culture and Civilization at Tufts University; her son-in-law, Ernesto Livon-Grosman; and her beloved grandchildren, Nicolás and Natalia Livon-Navarro.

Marysa was born in Pamplona, Spain, in 1934, and her life was irrevocably shaped by the Spanish Civil War. Her father, Vicente Navarro, was a schoolteacher and union militant, and as the Nationalist forces advanced, the family was forced into exile. Vicente, his wife Luisa Aranguren, and their children Alberto and Marysa fled to France, where Alberto died several years later. A third child, Dora, was evacuated to the Soviet Union, where she lived for 10 years before rejoining the family in France. Owing to those early experiences, and to her later encounters with the Latin American dictatorships of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, Marysa was a fervent and lifelong antifascist.

Eventually recognizing that the Spanish fascists were unlikely to be removed from power, in 1948, the family moved to Uruguay. Marysa flourished in her high school and university studies there, and in 1958, she was awarded a fellowship to attend graduate school at Columbia University. She studied with the legendary Latin Americanists Frank Tannenbaum and Lewis Hanke; her dissertation, on right-wing politics in Argentina, was published in 1969 as *Los nacionalistas*.

In 1968, Marysa accepted a position at Dartmouth College, with at that time an all-male student body. She quickly assumed a high-profile role in campus life as an inspiring classroom instructor and as a vocal advocate of co-education. After the university began admitting women students in 1972, Marysa shifted her focus to welcoming them and female faculty to the college and to expanding their presence. She was the founding director of both the Women's Studies Program—the first established in the Ivy League—and the Latin American, Latino, and Caribbean Studies Program.

Initially trained as a traditional political historian, during the 1970s, Marysa retooled to become a pioneering historian of women and gender in Latin America. From 1979 through her retirement in 2010, she contributed articles to publications including *Signs*, *Debate Feminista*, and *Estudios Feministas* that reported on the state of feminism and women's studies in the region. In 1999, she published *Women in Latin America and the Caribbean*, co-authored with Virginia Sánchez Korrol. She also collaborated with Catharine Stimpson on a four-volume edited collection, *Un nuevo saber* (1999–2002), aimed at introducing Latin American readers to debates and discussions in US and European feminism and women's studies.

Marysa's academic and political passions converged in her magnum opus, a biography of Eva Perón. Written in direct, engaging language, and published in both English (*Eva Perón*, co-authored with Nicholas Fraser, 1981) and Spanish (*Evita*, 1982), the book masterfully demystified Evita's life, situated her in the context of mid-century Argentina, and explored the complexities of her role in Peronist populism. Both versions of the book have gone through multiple reprintings, and it remains the definitive biography of that world-historical figure.

A deeply gregarious person who loved working with others, Marysa served on numerous editorial and philanthropic boards, as president of the New England Council of Latin American Studies (NECLAS), and as president of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA). In 2017, she achieved a trifecta of professional distinctions: LASA gave her its Kalman Silvert Award for her lifetime contributions to the study of Latin America; NECLAS created the Marysa Navarro Best Book Prize, given annually in her honor; and in what was for her probably the most meaningful recognition of all, the Public University of Navarre, in her birthplace of Pamplona, awarded her a doctorate honoris causa.

Marysa was an irrepressible, charismatic, larger-than-life personality. When I first met her at Dartmouth in the late 1960s, she stood out in almost every way: as a cosmopolitan sophisticate in small-town New Hampshire; as a voluble (in five languages!) Latina feminist in a bastion of white male privilege; and as an outspoken emissary of the Global South—a concept that barely existed at that time but that Marysa fully embodied. No one who knew her will ever forget her.

George Reid Andrews
University of Pittsburgh

Photo courtesy Dartmouth College



Mary Elizabeth (Betsy) Perry

1937–2025

Historian of Spain

Mary Elizabeth (Betsy) Perry, historian of Spain with a focus on women and gender, and adjunct professor emerita at Occidental College, died on June 30, 2025.

Betsy Colburn was born in Turlock, California, and grew up in Washington in a family of educators. A gifted student, she attended Washington State University, where her maternal grandfather, Harry Lickey, was a professor of chemical engineering. Betsy majored in general studies and graduated as valedictorian in 1959. In 1960, she returned to California to attend Stanford University, where she completed a master's degree in history and met her future husband, law student Ralph Perry.

After their marriage in 1961, Betsy spent a decade at home raising their two children, Katie and Dan. Then Betsy returned to graduate school, attending the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), to earn a doctorate in history. Her primary area of research was early modern Spain, and she took particular interest in uncovering and interpreting the histories of women, the poor, and other marginalized peoples. In 1975–76, she received a Fulbright scholarship to do research in Seville, Spain, for her doctoral thesis.

This project became her first book, *Crime and Society in Early Modern Seville* (Univ. Press of New England, 1980), later published in Spanish in a beautiful full-color edition. Her other monographs are *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1990), which was also translated into Spanish, and *The Handless Maiden: Moriscos and the Politics of Religion in Early Modern Spain* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2005). In addition, she edited two essay collections with Anne J. Cruz, *Cultural Encounters: The Impact of the Inquisition in Spain and the New World* (Univ. of California Press, 1991) and *Culture and Control in Counter-Reformation Spain* (Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1992). With Nupur Chaudhuri and Sherry J. Katz, Betsy also co-edited *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources* (Univ. of Illinois Press, 2010), a wide-ranging volume that looked at women in the archive from the 16th century to the present.

The collection's contributors, including Betsy, uncovered and analyzed women whose voices and texts were often "obscured or lost altogether" by reading official records "against the grain" and "weaving together many layers of information to reveal complexities." One scholar recently reflected on the "inspiration" Betsy provided in developing methods of writing about "non-elite women who are so often absent from the written records." Another colleague commented on the lasting impact of Betsy's scholarship: "Her own distinguished work, among the first to study Morisca women, continues to set standards for us all." In her final book project, she edited a posthumous collection of essays by Robert I. Burns (one of her UCLA advisors) titled *Warrior Neighbours: Crusader Valencia in Its International Context* (Brepols, 2013). For her scholarship, Betsy won three prizes from the Western Association of Women Historians (WAWH): the Frances Richardson Keller-Sierra Prize in 1982 and 1991 for her first two monographs, and the Barbara "Penny" Kanner Award in 2011 for *Contesting Archives*.

Betsy taught history at several institutions in the Los Angeles area, including UCLA, the University of Southern California, and Occidental College. For decades, she was a research associate with the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies and an active member of WAWH, which she served as president in 1989–91. In 1992–96, Betsy served on the AHA Council and Professional Division.

In addition to her pathbreaking scholarship, Betsy will be remembered as a gifted teacher, mentor, and colleague. She was unfailingly kind and supportive to all, but in particular to graduate students and early career scholars, generously offering her time and feedback on their work and helping to integrate them into professional organizations and other communities of scholars. Because of her passion for and skill at mentoring new scholars, WAWH established the Mary Elizabeth (Betsy) Perry Graduate Student Poster Prize in her honor; it was first awarded in 2015.

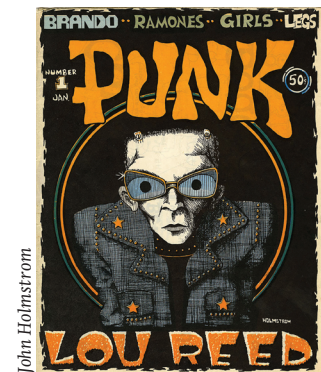
Betsy enjoyed daily walks with her dogs, extensive travel, and music. She played active roles in her church, founding a feminist study group and engaging in efforts to bring together people of all faiths in the service of cross-cultural understanding and social justice. Betsy is survived by her husband of 64 years, Ralph; her children, Katie and Dan; six grandchildren; one great-grandchild; and several nieces and nephews.

Sherry J. Katz
San Francisco State University (emerita)

Photo courtesy Katie Perry

GRANT WONG

PUNK MAGAZINE



In April 1976, in the third issue of *Punk* magazine, John Holmstrom wrote, “Any kid can pick up a guitar and become a rock’n’roll star, despite or because of his lack of ability, talent, intelligence, limitations and/or potential, and usually does so out of frustration, hostility, a lot of nerve and a need for ego fulfilment.” Holmstrom’s editorial evoked the irreverent spirit of New York City’s punk rock scene, centered on CBGB, a club on the Lower East Side—but it also voiced Punk’s guiding philosophy. As a scrappy print publication crafted by amateurs, Punk was the embodiment of punk culture’s do-it-yourself (DIY) ethic: a firm belief that individuals should express themselves by creating their own culture on their own terms.

When Holmstrom and his friends Legs McNeil and Ged Dunn Jr. founded *Punk* in 1975, “punk” didn’t really exist as a describable concept. Rock critics like Lester Bangs of *Creem* had used the term to describe a raw, stripped-down style of rock music. But it was Holmstrom, the publication’s editor, who narrowed the cultural features of New York’s nightlife into something called “punk.” As McNeil recalled in *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk*, “The word ‘punk’ seemed to sum up the thread that connected everything we liked—drunk, obnoxious, smart but not pretentious, absurd, funny, ironic, and things that appealed to the darker side.” With *Punk* magazine, its founders kick-started a publication as creative and zany as the scene they were documenting.

If you were a rock and roll fan living on the Lower East Side in the 1970s, you could have purchased a copy of *Punk* for a dollar or less at CBGB. Flipping through its pages—made of cheap newsprint or glossy paper—you’d find a wide range of coverage. You might have perused a feature proclaiming Marlon Brando to be “the Original Punk” or read a profile that screamed *you just had to be there* when Patti Smith or the Dictators performed at CBGB. You could have been inspired to thrift a leather jacket by Roberta Bayley’s iconic photographs of the Ramones, or laughed at one of Holmstrom’s comic strips, crammed with caricatures and juvenile humor. If you were

lucky, you might have scored a special issue composed of photo comics: stories told through choreographed images of scenesters overlaid with speech and text bubbles. “The Legend of Nick Detroit” was an action-packed detective story starring Richard Hell, while “Mutant Monster Beach Party” featured Debbie Harry and Joey Ramone as its romantic leads. If you had a keen eye, you would have spotted Andy Warhol, Peter Frampton, and Joan Jett making cameo appearances.

Punk wasn’t built to last. As a DIY publication devoted to an underground culture, it had difficulty attracting sponsors, who probably weren’t impressed by its offbeat voice and inconsistent publishing schedule. A single issue was taxing to produce, and it showed. Articles were lettered by hand, as this made them cheaper to print than typewritten ones, and Holmstrom’s bold and comical illustrations—inspired by those of *Mad* magazine founder Harvey Kurtzman, his teacher at the School of Visual Arts—were already time-consuming before the cartoonist took over managing the entire publication’s operations in 1977. *Punk* shuttered in 1979 following the suicide of its primary financial backer, Thomas Forçade of *High Times* magazine.

However, this was far from the end for punk culture—thanks to *Punk* magazine. At its peak circulation, the publication printed up to 23,000 copies an issue, but its reach went far beyond its physical distribution across the United States and the United Kingdom. Because of the magazine’s name, its staff were often the first to be interviewed by mainstream media outlets attempting to understand the culture. *Punk* also inspired a wave of DIY publishing that became the foundation of punk’s rich print culture. As Holmstrom recalls in *The Best of Punk Magazine*, his work directly inspired a boom in DIY punk publications including *Sniffin’ Glue* and *Ripped and Torn* in Britain, alongside *Slash*, *Flipside*, and *Search & Destroy* in California. Punk culture had only just begun. **P**

Grant Wong is a history PhD candidate at the University of South Carolina.



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