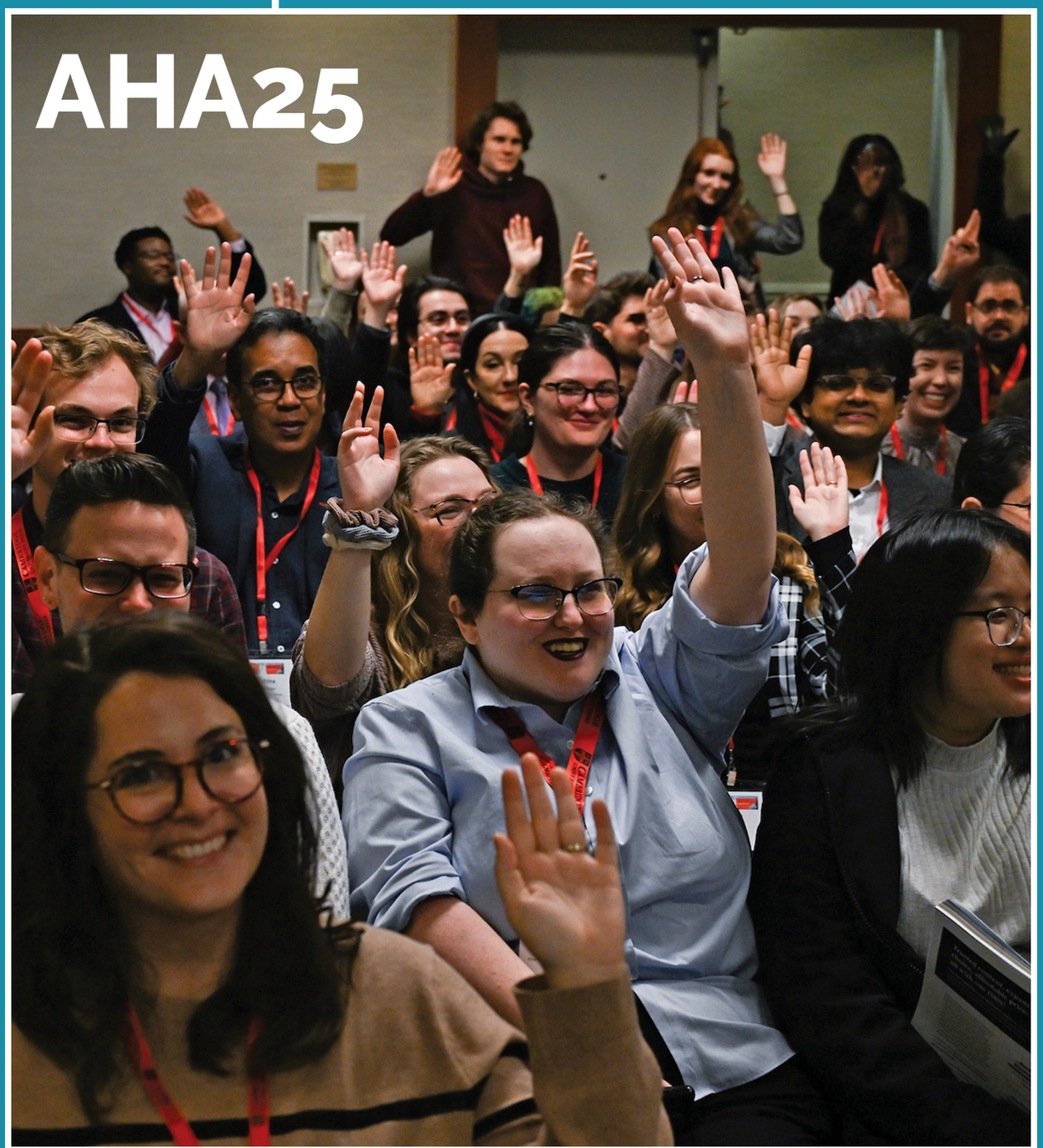
The newsmagazine of the American Historical Association

PERSPECTIVES ON HISTORY

Volume 63: 2
March 2025



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FEATURES

ON THE COVER

Attending an event as large as the AHA annual meeting for the first time can be intimidating, regardless of your career stage. Facing a few hundred sessions, thousands of historians, and multiple hotels to navigate, such feelings are understandable. But the conference orientation, pictured here, always seems to help put attendees' minds at ease and jumpstart their enthusiasm for the fun weekend ahead.

Photo: Marc Monaghan

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Newsmagazine of the

AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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

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

Articles, letters to the editor, and other items intended for publication should be emailed to **perspectives@historians.org**. Manuscripts accepted for publication will be edited to conform to ***Perspectives on History*** style, space limitations, and other requirements. Prospective authors should consult the guidelines available at **historians.org/write-for-us**. Accuracy in articles and other editorial material is the responsibility of the author(s) and contributor(s). ***Perspectives on History*** and the American Historical Association disclaim responsibility for statements of fact, interpretation, or opinion made in this publication by authors and contributors.

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

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

DEBBIE ANN DOYLE

RECHARGING YOUR DISCIPLINARY BATTERY

Connecting at the Annual Meeting

Marc Monaghan

At the 2025 annual meeting in New York, I sat down with fellow historians and needlecrafters at likely the first-ever AHA fiber arts circle. As we discussed the history of needlework, teaching with material culture, and the conference, I thought to myself, *This* is why we do this.

I have been involved in planning 26 AHA annual meetings, and I still have a moment like that every year. Sometimes at a particularly inspiring session. Sometimes during a lively and productive conversation with people I usually see on Zoom. Sometimes just watching others happily chatting at receptions. Something reminds me why it is still important for historians to gather, in person, to discuss our work, build connections, and inspire each other.

I have seen how the atmosphere of the meeting changed for the better since we stopped hosting job interviews. That change was part of an ongoing evaluation of the purpose and goals of the meeting. Throughout the multiyear planning process that goes into organizing each conference, the Program Committee, the Council, and other AHA committees ask: What should the meeting of a professional association look like in the 21st century? What kinds of programming will best enable our members to learn from one another? What will they enjoy?

That doesn't mean abandoning research panels. In fact, we had more of those in 2025 than ever before. It means reframing those sessions as a conversation among the presenters, as well as between the presenters and the audience. The best AHA sessions create a dialogue between scholars whose research focuses on different times, places, and aspects of the past. As the nation's largest annual gathering of historians, this event convenes a broader range of historians than any other.

Not all of our ideas have worked. Experiments with precirculated papers, unconferences, and informal meetups didn't gain much traction. (But the latter did inspire the fiber arts circle.) Lightning rounds, roundtables, and multiple sessions organized around one topic have been more successful. The Program Committee is now experimenting with seminar sessions, in which facilitators lead discussions around a particular topic or theme with a small group of attendees who sign up in advance. The Teaching Division tried a related new idea at the 2025 meeting, a content cohort, which brought 25 educators from secondary schools, colleges, universities, and museums together for a series of discussions about the implications of new research for the classroom. Cohort members met early in the meeting, fanned out to attend sessions on a common theme, and came back together to discuss new classroom ideas sparked by the sessions.

There are many ways to learn from fellow historians at the conference. Professional development at the New York meeting included activities and workshops about managing career transitions ranging from first jobs to retirement, leaving the professoriate, teaching writing, working at a small liberal arts college, podcasting, writing op-eds and pitching them to a magazine, and incorporating new research into the K–12 classroom. Historians could learn from their peers about working at a two-year college, moving into administration, and navigating the current political environment. Groups of podcasters, digital historians, journal editors, and teachers offered to share their expertise with fellow historians.

The deadline for submitting proposals for the 2026 annual meeting in Chicago will have passed by the time you read this article. But it will not be too late to participate in workshops, seminars, and other opportunities—not to mention the informal conversations in hotel hallways. We will even be accepting ideas for gatherings like the fiber arts circle. Don't hesitate to reach out to annualmeeting@historians.org if you have ideas about ways to keep the conversations going. After 26 years, I can say with confidence that the annual meeting is always evolving, and it never hurts to try something new to bring historians together. P

Debbie Ann Doyle is director of meetings at the AHA.

TO THE EDITOR

I enjoyed "What Is Scholarship Today?" (January 2025), about the variety of work done by historians. I especially liked the essay about historical markers, which sounded like a fun job, and I empathized with those who write textbooks, as I am the author of one myself.

I have worked on another historical enterprise for much of my career as an independent historian: writing for and editing encyclopedias and other reference works. My first published book, co-authored with Elizabeth H. Oakes when we were still graduate students, was *A Guide to Social Science Resources in Women's Studies* (1978). I have contributed articles to and served on editorial boards for several encyclopedias since then, including my soon-to-end tenure of a decade on the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* editorial board. And I have written a reference work, *Historical Dictionary of Women in Sub-Saharan Africa* (2005; 2nd ed., 2016). I have thought a lot about why I enjoy what is for many historians a difficult and demanding task, and I wrote a brief article about it some years ago.

My most recent publication is a memoir, *The Mackerel Years: A Memoir of War, Hunger, and Women's History in 1980s Mozambique* (2024). I invite more historians to write about their lives. Compared to anthropologists, we are much less apt to turn our historical gaze to ourselves, and it is yet another way to take history to new audiences.

We are all making contributions to historical understanding, and it is heartening to see the wide range of projects that increase knowledge on all kinds of historical topics.

KATHLEEN SHELDON
Santa Monica, California

AHA–OAH STATEMENT ON EXECUTIVE ORDER "ENDING RADICAL INDOCTRINATION IN K–12 SCHOOLING"

The presidential executive order "Ending Radical Indoctrination in K–12 Schooling," signed on January 29, 2025, grossly mischaracterizes history education across the United States, alleging educational malpractice—teachers supposedly "[i]mprinting anti-American, subversive, harmful, and false ideologies on our Nation's children." The order uses this caricature to justify sweeping and unprecedented federal interventions in public education.

This inflammatory rhetoric is not new. For the past four years, the same largely fabricated accusations have provided justification for efforts by some state legislatures to prohibit "divisive concepts" in history and social studies education, along with other extreme restrictions that the Organization of American Historians (OAH) and American Historical Association (AHA) have separately and jointly opposed.

Taken together, this state legislation and executive order not only disregard the training, ethics, and lifelong work of history teachers; they also demean American students by assuming that patriotism can be ignited only by triumphal stories and that our students are incapable of forming complex opinions about their nation's past.

The sweeping claims of "radical indoctrination," moreover, are almost entirely unmoored from the reality of history education in thousands of classrooms across the United States. The AHA recently published *American Lesson Plan*, the most comprehensive study of secondary US history education undertaken in the 21st century. The AHA surveyed over 3,000 middle and high school US history educators, conducted hundreds of interviews, and analyzed thousands of pages of instructional materials from geographically diverse school districts of all shapes and sizes. The report delineates what is actually taught in secondary school history classes.

This careful research revealed a landscape of public education dramatically different from the "indoctrination" alleged in this executive order and "divisive concepts" state legislation. AHA researchers found dedicated history teachers, professionals who are primarily concerned with helping their students learn central elements of our nation's history. Nearly 100 percent of the teachers surveyed rated "developing informed citizens for participation in a democratic society" as a goal for their history courses, and 94 percent identified this as an important or very important outcome. This examination of the lesson plans and materials they use in the classroom corroborates these findings. Developing critically informed citizens to participate in our democracy is the opposite of indoctrination.

> The sweeping claims of "radical indoctrination" are almost entirely unmoored from the reality of history education.

This executive order, however, mandates ideological instruction and the politicization of history grounded in ahistorical thinking. The order draws upon the deeply flawed and roundly debunked 2021 report of the "President's Advisory 1776 Commission"—a panel devoid of experts in the history of the United States—which the OAH characterized in 2020 as a partisan attempt to "restrict historical pedagogy, stifle deliberative discussion, and take us back to an earlier era characterized by a limited vision of the US past."

The executive order's narrow conception of patriotism and patriotic education does more than deny the actual history of American democracy; it also undermines its own goals of a rigorous education and merit-based society.

This is neither history nor patriotism. An uncomplicated celebration of American greatness flattens the past into a parade of platitudes devoid of the context, conflict, contingency, and change over time that are central to historical thinking. We instead support our nation's educators as they help students

learn how past generations fought to make the United States a "more perfect union," in the words of our Constitution. As they teach the history of how people in the past chose to devote, risk, and in some cases even lose their lives challenging our nation's most glaring imperfections, they teach our youth resilience, courage, and pride. They also teach them history.

> We support our nation's educators as they help students learn how past generations fought to make the United States a "more perfect union."

We reject the premise that it is "anti-American" or "subversive" to learn the full history of the United States with its rich and dramatic contradictions, challenges, and conflicts alongside its achievements, innovations, and opportunities. History education that is rooted in professional expertise and integrity can inspire patriotism in American students through deep and honest engagement with our nation's past and prepare them for informed civic engagement. Teachers want students to grapple with complex history. This history includes the rich legacy of freedom and democracy built into the nation's foundation. It also includes legacies of contradictions to those principles present at the nation's founding and beyond. It includes the struggles of Americans across nearly 250 years to enlarge that legacy—to end slavery, to end prejudice against immigrants from across the world, to end poverty, to build a nation where everyone has the freedom to pursue their dreams.

The AHA and the OAH advocate for the importance of history in American public life and for education that prepares our nation's students for informed citizenship and work. Like all histories, American history is complicated and fascinating; learning about our past should stimulate discussion and debate rooted in evidence and professional scholarship. For that to happen, we must let our teachers do what they do best: teach without interference or ideological tests. And let our students learn *how* to think, rather than *what* to think. P

Approved by the AHA Council on February 3, 2025. For a full list of signatories, please see the online version of this statement.

Chris Hardy/Unsplash

BEN VINSON III

HISTORY ENMESHED

In Conversation with Pragya Kaul

One of my favorite aspects of our vocation is being able to discuss history with colleagues. Each unique subfield illuminates and informs the saga of the human odyssey. At the same time, our diverse experiences as professional historians condition our working environment, while sharpening our social impact and our craft itself. Over the months to come, I'll be using this column to engage in dialogue with a few AHA members to help generate insights into the status of our discipline, while taking stock of where we might be headed.

For this month's interview, I had the pleasure of speaking with Pragya Kaul, a member of the AHA Council and a PhD candidate at the University of Michigan. Kaul holds a bachelor's degree in history and politics from the University of Edinburgh as well as a master's degree in history from the University of Toronto. Her studies blend the Holocaust with refugee studies and the British Empire, with a dissertation focused on Holocaust refugees who fled primarily to British India during World War II and the Third Reich (1933–45).

Kaul and I discussed technology's role in how we research and teach history today, some of history's grand challenges moving forward, and what excites her about the current state of the field:

Technology has become such an important part of our lives and increasingly a part of the role of a historian. I would love to get your perspective, especially as a graduate student and an aspiring professor: What is the role of technology now in history? How do you use it, and how do you think about using it in the future?

At the University of Michigan, we have a course that every first-year cohort takes together. We read Arlette Farge's *The Allure of the Archives*, which talks about the experience of the archive, what it is to go into it and sit among rows of desks with materials from which you're often inhaling old, toxic fumes—but also the experience of combing through these centuries-old papers and what that's like.

I was struck how different archival experiences are now from what Farge was writing about. If I'm going to the National Archives, for example, the predominant experience is watching everybody stand up or sit down with their phone taking pictures. (That's not as common when I go to India, where they still use some older methods and transcribing is much more common.)

> For modernists, the volume of our material naturally increases—and hopefully the depth of our analysis doesn't decrease.

I don't think we've reckoned with how that's changing what it means to do historical research, and how different our experiences are now of the archive and of flipping through our materials and beginning our analysis. We might not get that depth straight on because we're not sitting with our documents and trying to decide which one we are going to write out in its entirety and which one is important to read right in that moment. We're taking it home, and then hopefully we will get to the thousands of images that we have. Especially for modernists, the volume of our material naturally increases—and hopefully the depth of our analysis doesn't decrease—but I do wonder how our process has changed.

Of course, there's a large conversation about artificial intelligence (AI), which is a subset of technology in general. It is so fast paced and fast changing that it's hard to keep up with. No AI crash course is going to truly be helpful figuring out how we're going to engage with it.

Pragya Kaul, PhD candidate at the University of Michigan and at-large Council member, is writing a dissertation focused on Holocaust refugees who fled to British India.

But what bothers me is AI summaries. In Google searches, the first thing we see now is an AI summary. There's already something doing the summarizing for you. But that's *our* work. That's the work of reviewing the documents, analyzing them, and then summarizing with narrative.

Having worked with a lot of people for whom English is not their first language, using AI for grammar and editing seems like not as big a deal to me. Technology has been part of our editing process anyway. Microsoft Word has done its little squiggles for ages. But when it comes to writing a whole piece? That's a whole other ball game. That is when we really need to have ground rules; we need to really have standards.

Yet still, I'm excited to see what comes out of it. Technology, we can't run away from it. We need better systems of knowing what we're dealing with and how we should address it.

Let me broaden out just a little bit. As an emerging scholar, what are you seeing right now as some of the grand challenges for the broader field of history? How are you seeing the field change? We've talked about one element of that with technology, but what else are you seeing as you review the literature, as you conduct research, and as you teach?

It's hard to not separate grand challenges from our current moment. Part of it is because of my Council position—over the last two years, I've been exposed to the scale of administrative and government interference in teaching and in historical research, and to the broad category of the "culture wars" and how history is enmeshed in it—whether history likes it or not.

It's something I never expected coming into the field. Having to think so much about what a certain government in a certain state would like to be taught versus not, and how that trickles down into the kind of knowledge that our students have or don't have when they enter our classrooms. If you teach at an R1 university with students from all over the country, then your students don't have the same base level of knowledge. We then have to do far more work to bring them up to a certain level, let alone start challenging and doing that history classroom experience of productive discomfort. The scales of discomfort can be vastly different based on what education system they've come from; that's specific to the United States in many ways.

Given my field, it's also really changed since October 7, 2023. Holocaust studies has been upended and divided ever since. The challenge is definitions, and who gets to define these critical definitions that we work with in our field. It's just the times. History isn't history, it's not in the past. It's very much alive—it's alive in the narratives that people have been taught and brought up with and are now facing an enormous amount of dissonance and discomfort over. We are going to be reckoning with that for a long time to come.

One thing that I think about in that same vein is diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The cohorts that have come after me—and that I am myself a part of—are a product of an embrace of and a push for DEI in our historical communities and in the discipline. I don't think that I would have been in this profession this long if it had not been for those efforts, and there would be far fewer scholars like me who come from marginalized backgrounds and are working from marginalized positions in our fields doing the kind of work that we do.

But there has been a bit of a gap between bringing in a more diverse graduate student body and colleagues and addressing their needs. It's not enough that our disciplines and our colleagues are a more diverse bunch. They have different needs. It's not enough to have a diverse discipline. We now need to address the needs of that diversity to make sure that it stays diverse even under the different political pressures

> What really excites me is fascinating approaches to thinking in more in-depth ways about nonhuman subjects and interactors.

One final question: What stands out as some of the more interesting aspects of our field and subfields right now? When you step back, what excites you about history and us as historians?

This is an interesting question, because we stay so siloed within our own subfields that stepping back and discussing history as a whole is an interesting ask.

What really excites me is we're getting more students and historians now who are taking fascinating approaches to thinking in more in-depth ways about nonhuman subjects and interactors. I think about Bathsheba Demuth's *Floating Coast*, and how she made whales active agents in historical research. This has been done by Fernand Braudel, who made the Mediterranean Sea an agent on its own. But that kind of thinking—of what else can be an agent and how we talk about that—is something I don't know how to do myself. So it's fascinating to me, but it is also an incredibly rich way of thinking about everything that makes up a historical event and a historical narrative. How we should be paying attention to those things that we have left intangible, in many ways.

Whether that is the environment, whether that's animals, whether that's food. All those things that make up a culture, make up our lives—that's really, really fascinating to me. I love reading it because it's opening a world that I never understood before. I love that.

This interview has been edited for volume and clarity.

Ben Vinson III is president of the AHA.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARC MONAGHAN

LIVE FROM NEW YORK, IT'S AHA25

From publishers to education groups, poster sessions to the headshot booth, the Exhibit Hall was the place to be at AHA25.

THE AHA ANNUAL meetings held in New York City are always well attended. Whether due to the large regional population, the ease of travel from other cities on the East Coast, or the many attractions the city has to offer, a NYC conference offers an experience like no other.

The AHA returned to the city this year for the first time since the pandemic. The meeting itself felt like a return to form, reaching nearly 4,000 attendees, a level unseen since 2020. And the AHA meeting continues to evolve, with its organizers on staff, committees, and Council looking for new ways to inject fun into the proceedings. With meetups of board game lovers, knitters, and readers; tours featuring queer history and "sinister secrets"; and more sessions on the program than ever before, there was a renewed energy in the conference hotels. We can recap only a handful of the weekend's goings-on below, but these sessions and events reflect the excitement that infuses the historical discipline today.

—Laura Ansley, Whitney E. Barringer, Lauren Brand, Brendan Gillis, Lizzy Meggyesy, and Hope J. Shannon

EVER BROADER

Two years after the AHA issued the *Guidelines for Broadening the Definition of Historical Scholarship*, AHA25 included a number of sessions that highlighted the many ways that historians are continuing to answer that call.

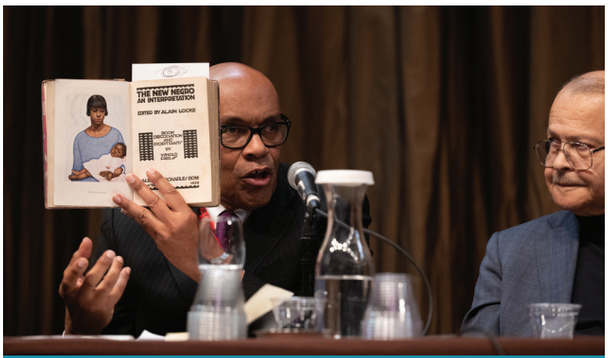
Pulse Check: A Roundtable on the AHA's Guidelines for Broadening the Definition of Historical Scholarship, sponsored by the AHA Council's Research Division, acted as a check-in for historians to "reflect on the impacts and challenges of working within and implementing" the guidelines. These guidelines were "intended to encourage tenure and promotion committees to think beyond the creation of 'new knowledge' (i.e., monographs and journal articles) as the only viable category of historical scholarship," and endorsed other forms of knowledge diffusion, such as textbook editing, amicus briefs, documentaries, exhibitions, op-eds, and more. Session chair Andrew McMichael (Auburn Univ., Montgomery) and panelists Steven W. Hackel (Univ. of California, Riverside), Jessica Marie Johnson (Johns Hopkins Univ.), and Lauren MacIvor Thompson (Kennesaw State Univ.) shared their experiences working within broader categories of scholarship and grappled with how they have incorporated the guidelines at the department or institutional level.

Hackel introduced the guidelines and acknowledged the difficulty of implementing the kind of change they call for. But UC Riverside has taken steps toward redefining success at the department level. Hackel assisted in creating his department's document of what counts as scholarship and hoped that "all colleagues could see some aspect of themself in this document." Rather than see it as a binding policy, he suggested instead that it be viewed as a consensus document of what should be valued. As *Broadening* becomes more widely used, the strengths and challenges have become evident. Yet Hackel shared some positive changes, such as colleagues having confidence that they can take on "untraditional" projects for which they would receive credit and that could lead to more grant funding, promotions, and other benefits. On the other hand, Hackel questioned the time it would take departments to create a post hoc peer review process and the logistics of applying the guidelines consistently.

Johnson had similar questions when she first read the guidelines. She was intrigued by the suggested categories of evaluation but was wary of the extra labor required for candidates to explain why what they do is scholarship, in some ways asking them to go above and beyond to legitimize themselves as scholars. She warned that this burden often falls heavier on people of color and those outside of traditional institutions. McMichael concurred, noting that the guidelines introduce unstated expectations between colleagues, and often "there is an inverse relationship between impact and credit." The *Broadening* guidelines are a useful start, but flaws still exist in how they are practiced at the departmental level.

MacIvor Thompson, who recently completed her third-year review, spoke from experience on how *Broadening* has assisted her. Her review portfolio included traditional scholarship as well as contributions to the blog *Nursing Clio*, op-eds in popular news outlets, and amicus briefs. MacIvor Thompson was steadfast in asserting that this public-facing scholarship should be counted as research, rather than service. *Broadening* allowed her to frame these projects as having a noteworthy impact by elevating the status of her university with the public. This value of public-facing scholarship threaded throughout the discussion, as panelists acknowledged the need for historians' work to go beyond the academy.

McMichael brought up more forms of potential scholarship to which the *Broadening* guidelines can apply, mentioning the AskHistorians community on Reddit. From the audience, a moderator of that forum, which has over two million users, explained the peer review process that their team uses to ensure that the historians who answer questions there are legitimate. Nontraditional scholarship such as this are exceedingly important in an age of disinformation.



At the plenary commemorating the 100th anniversary of Alain Locke's *The New Negro*, Jeffrey Stewart (Univ. of California, Santa Barbara) discusses the book.

Although the *Broadening* guidelines urge the inclusion of less traditional scholarship in the tenure process, the way in which departments value such scholarship remains uneven. Panelists agreed that there is still a generational divide among colleagues in evaluating what scholarship is most valuable, which creates challenges for incorporating the guidelines in departments. Hackel saw a consensus on recognizing untraditional scholarship dissolve when put into practice in evaluating untenured scholars doing nontraditional scholarship *instead of*, rather than *in addition to*, traditional publications. This divide allows senior scholars and more well-funded scholars to explore this new work, while junior scholars still feel required to produce traditional scholarship to advance in their careers.

> There is still a generational divide among colleagues in evaluating what scholarship is most valuable.

Other sessions highlighted the diverse kinds of work historians are doing across the discipline today. At *Historians Engaged in Public Policy*, attendees heard from historians who have worked in the halls of Congress, for the Congressional Research Service, in a public relations firm, for the American Institute of Physics, and with the Department of Defense.

John Lawrence, a congressional staffer for 35 years, took a long view of how history and public policy have influenced each other. Across his career, he found that "one of the things you can do is integrate history into the work of the Congress," something he said he thought was "one of the most satisfactory aspects of [his] career." Ty Seidule (Hamilton Coll.) spent the majority of his career in the US Army as a member of the West Point faculty. He has been out of uniform for only the last five years, but most of his career was on the end of "executing policy, rather than making it." Since his retirement, he has been able to be more honest, which he has applied to his diligent work in advocating for the removal of more than one thousand Confederate commemorations from military installations, from the names of forts and buildings to memorials.

Both William Thomas (American Institute of Physics, AIP) and Emily Blevins (Congressional Research Service, CRS) came to their current work because of their expertise in the history of science. Thomas, who is AIP's director of research in history, policy, and culture, said that his role is new in the organization despite the existence of their history program for 60 years. This role allows him to work specifically on recognizing the diversity of the scientific community in the broadest sense, including examining disparities in science education between urban and rural communities. Blevins, on the other hand, began her nonacademic career at the National Science Foundation, where she was hired to write a book manuscript. She eventually worked her way up to the director's office, where she contributed by writing speeches and op-eds. She then transitioned to the CRS, where, she said, "our main goal is to provide authoritative, nonpartisan research and analysis," a unique position in the world of policymaking, since the researchers are not pursuing a particular outcome.

Now the vice president of a bipartisan public relations firm in Washington, DC, Mary Werden got her start in politics working for congressional races. She eventually became a communications director, managing the staff and candidate in a high-profile race. In 2016, she joined a congressional staff, then spent five years working in the personal office of the chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee. In this role, she assisted the legislative staff in talking about legislation and policy debates. During the pandemic, she said, "my job was to communicate to constituents not only how we could help them during a public health crisis but what we were doing in Washington."

In these arenas, historians' training gives them essential skills. As Seidule said, "History is storytelling with a purpose, using evidence. And that works everywhere." Werden explained, "We know how to formulate arguments based on evidence, which you can do with any subject matter. And you can make it understandable to the less knowledgeable and the public." Yet politicization can make this work difficult. Lawrence discussed how disagreements over basic facts—he pointed to the ways the events of January 6, 2021, have been manipulated and reshaped—make all policy work more

difficult. And as Werden added, "We've entered an age of forgetting," especially on issues like vaccines and infant mortality. But as Blevins argued, it can be important to think about why myths are persistent and why they are useful for those who repeat them. Rather than attacking myths head-on, she asks, "What small things around the edges can I tweak?" Such myths are "really good stories. So if you want to counter a myth, you need to think of a really good story that can go toe to toe." Seidule's position allows him to take an opposite stance. Since he is no longer in government, and never will be again, he can and will fight the Lost Cause mythology "until [his] last breath."

Historians engaged with the US court system also find themselves working to correct the historical record. At *How Historians Can Respond to the US Supreme Court's Originalist Turn*, chair Thomas Wolf (Brennan Center for Justice) and panelists Tomiko Brown-Nagin (Harvard Univ.), Jane Manners (Temple Univ.), Jack N. Rakove (Stanford Univ.), and Jennifer Tucker (Wesleyan Univ.) discussed historians' case against the "originalist" interpretation of the Constitution that dominates much of our current legal landscape.

As Tucker said, "a lot of bad history" ends up in court cases today. The Brennan Center's historians' council has helped to organize amicus briefs and other legal work that can help to combat these ideas. Each panelist has contributed in different ways. Rakove, an expert on constitutional history and the founding of the United States, has focused on amicus briefs; he argued, "It's our obligation as citizen-scholars to take this work upon ourselves." Brown-Nagin said that she "brings to [her] work dual identities" as both a historian and a lawyer and law professor. She has learned through her focus on the Reconstruction amendments that "the conservative majority just doesn't like the history so much." Tucker, an expert on the history of guns in America, has cultivated a community of scholars interested in the Second Amendment in several venues, including a center for research on firearms, conferences, and even her course offerings, which are completely full, with long waitlists.

To Manners, this work goes beyond engaging with the judicial system. "Our discipline is facing a crisis. At the same time, there is a heightened interest in history from lawyers," she said. "We should embrace this moment rather than shying away from it." It's a good reminder for historians in all fields that our work matters and, as Tucker said, it could be time to "seize the moment to apply some of our training to these questions."

—LA and LM

At the annual K–16 Workshop, Lee Ann Potter (Library of Congress) introduced participants to an array of primary sources ideal for classroom use.

HISTORICAL DETECTIVE WORK

Meticulous historical detective work was the theme of the session *The Digital Florentine Codex (DFC): An Illustrated, Multilingual Encyclopedia of Indigenous Knowledge from 16th-Century Mexico*. Although the codex contains thousands of pages of text and images, the audience learned how even the smallest differences in the ways the authors slanted the text or how the artists represented speech scrolls reveal stunning new insights.

Kim Richter and Alicia Maria Houtrouw (Getty Research Inst.) introduced the Digital Florentine Codex project. An encyclopedia made up of 12 books, the codex recounts all aspects of life in 16th-century Mexico in both the Spanish and Nahuatl languages. Richter and Houtrouw explained how new text and audio translations from Spanish and Nahuatl were produced. The audio Nahuatl translations are significant, as this Indigenous language still has modern speakers but is endangered. Altogether, the DFC contains more than 200 audio files, 10,000 plain text files, 2,300 vocabulary entries in four languages, 15,000 multilingual terms and orthographies, and 25,000 image tags.

These image tags are particularly important, as previous printed editions of the codex reproduced only the text. But as Kevin Terraciano (Univ. of California, Los Angeles) argued, the images are crucial to understanding the text as a whole. Terraciano gave an example from his own research on the Nahuatl words *teutul* and *teotl*, and other words meaning "gods" or "word of god." Before the DFC project, he said that it could take months, or even years, to comb through the entire codex and find the variations in spelling, meaning, and

context for these words. But now that the codex has been digitized, much of this work could be condensed into hours and is more comprehensive, because researchers can connect the words directly to the illustrations.

Roxanne Valle (Univ. of California, Los Angeles), a first-year doctoral student, discussed the codex's authorship. Spanish friar Bernardino de Sahagún is usually cited as the sole author of the codex, but many Nahua scholars contributed to these volumes. Some of these Indigenous contributors are known by name, but they remain largely uncredited in today's scholarly literature. Valle and other scholars have used a three-step method to meticulously analyze each folio, uncovering variations in writing and illustration that revealed the distinct work of nine Indigenous writers and 21 Indigenous artists.

A large digital project such as the DFC provides many opportunities for classroom use. Lisa Sousa (Occidental Coll.) focused on possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration. She has co-taught a course with the zoology department that used the codex as a primary text for learning about animals in Indigenous Mexico. She also has used the DFC in survey courses on colonial Latin America to build a digital pictorial manuscript about the conquest of Mexico. Sousa demonstrated how this project helped students think about how both historians and the authors of the codex created historical narratives. She also highlighted how this kind of digital humanities work can give students important skills for future careers.

Together, these presentations showed the breadth of research and teaching opportunities provided by the DFC. Seeing such a range of projects emerge from even very small parts of the vast codex left no doubt about the exciting opportunities for further research.

—LB

BUSY TEACHERS, BIG CONTINENT

Across state academic standards for history, K–12 curriculum, and college world history classrooms, Africa is largely invisible. Egypt, the only part of the continent to receive regular and consistent coverage, is often associated with the Mediterranean or the Middle East. In *State of the Field for Busy Teachers: Africa in World History*, panelists faced a monumental question: How can we find room in world history classrooms for Africa, a place full of so many vast, rich, diverse, and vitally important histories?

Inspired simultaneously by both the needs of African nationalist movements who sought a "usable past" and the "persistent denial that Africa had a history before Europeans," Jennifer Hart (Virginia Tech) said that historians have attempted to "write the history of Africa on its own terms" since African history emerged as a professional field of study in the 1950s. While African history is often disconnected from broader conversations in the discipline, there has been a "dynamic conversation" over the past generation of historians, notably within the World History Association, about how to move "the field of world history away from Eurocentric or Western-centric" histories. While the field has existed for over 70 years, the content is only now starting to filter into textbooks. Coverage of African topics is still "very incomplete and uneven." The most successful attempts place Africa "at the center of global networks and processes and include African examples, like that of state formation, right alongside Europe and America."

Hart and Sandra Greene (Cornell Univ.) explored new and exciting work on the histories of slavery and the slave trade as well as the history of development (a term that has economic, technological, scientific, and humanitarian dimensions). Research on these topics is doing "a lot of work to directly challenge conceptual assumptions," Greene said, showing through comparative example that Western ideas of modernity and epistemology are not universal. Greene explained that there has been "tremendous work on where people came from and under what circumstances," which have added the complexity of "African participation as partners" to histories of the African slave trade.

When audience members asked how to better integrate African history into the curriculum, and how to defend its essential place there, the panelists encouraged the audience to build footholds in existing curriculum by simply making the presence of Africa more visible. Greene suggested using food history, particularly rice, as a way to instantly connect with students on Africa's relevance in their daily lives. Relating regional struggles, such as water shortages, to students' own experiences and environments could also help. Hart offered that "without African participation" in the production of gold, "European exploration would not have happened." She also argued that classical Greek and Roman texts consistently document and acknowledge their own societies' connections to the African continent. John Terry (Paideia School)

pointed to religious history, saying that Africa is inextricably tied to the history of Christianity and noting Ethiopians' influential involvement in the early church.

According to Hart, calls to "decolonize the curriculum" often stop with representation. But decolonizing the curriculum requires "conceptual work" and understanding more about "the way that our concepts are formed, where they come from, what baggage they're carrying with them, and what they impose on others when we use them uncritically." The panel prompted the audience to move away from framing Africa as a collection of political states, which encourages direct comparison with Western states, and instead engage with "small-scale societies," some of which rejected state structure because it required "this massive hierarchy."

> Food history is a way to instantly connect with students on Africa's relevance in their daily lives.

These teachers admitted it is a "daunting task" to integrate Africa into world history, both on its own terms and in its importance in traditional Western histories, but the speakers urged consistent, relevant, and thoughtful coverage as a matter of human necessity. Hart said the exclusion of Africa from classroom content allows assumptions to thrive that "actively harm people on the continent," as they "inform political conversations and policies and all sorts of other things." Hart emphasized, "The evidence is on our side when we include these examples. Not including them is a political act."

As a starting place, Greene encouraged teachers to first explore their interests on the continent: "Choose a topic you're excited about, and it will grow from there." Gesturing to the panel, Greene said, "We all pick different case studies and different exercises" in syllabi and classrooms," but "skills development and historical awareness are the important parts." Hart argued that teachers "can't be an expert on everything" and to remember the goal is to get the students to "ask good historical questions" and help develop students' understanding of context. As moderator Kyra Dezjot (Fordham Univ.) said in closing the session, "The first step is asking these questions yourself as educators."

The session barely scratched the surface, but the conversation will continue at this summer's NEH-funded Africa in World History Teacher Institute. With 15 faculty (including the *State of the Field* panelists) and 30 K–12 educators from around the country, the institute will culminate in the production of a free, digital sourcebook with accompanying lessons tailored to the needs of students in busy classrooms.

—WB

Executive director James Grossman, who retires in July, was honored with a session about his career as a historian and AHA leader.

THE HISTORY MA TODAY

At *The Worth of the History MA*, three faculty members and one recent MA graduate convened to discuss "the place of the MA in university history education today." Chaired by AHA Teaching Division vice president Kathleen M. Hilliard (Iowa State Univ.), the panel addressed the ways two institutions have tried to make their MA programs work for students.

Caitlin E. Murdock (California State Univ., Long Beach) led off the session by arguing, "We can sustain graduate education, but precisely because we should be emphasizing PhDs less and MAs more." Those with history MAs "play a more direct role in interpreting history to the public"—as teachers, podcasters, museum professionals—"than those of us at universities do." She posed three essential questions: What is the history MA for? What should the degree program require? And how do we recruit and sustain a diverse graduate student body?

Despite the MA degree often being seen as a stepping stone to a PhD program, the majority of MA students do not go on to complete a doctorate. Though there has been criticism of inconsistent career pathways, Murdock believes that this heterogeneity should be "a feature, not a bug." Because of this, an MA degree should "give everyone a solid grounding in what we consider the essential skills" of a historian:

historical thinking, historiography, content knowledge, and an ability to communicate. "We have a common project, whether you're teaching, or at a museum, or a university," Murdock said. "There is a common discipline, not just these separate silos."

CSULB's history MA program has therefore focused on making students of history into historians, and it has been fortunate in its enrollments. Its students include people from underserved backgrounds and nontraditional students, and it provides course schedules that are accessible for working people. This has required the department to institute "proactive, student-centered advising" and to work on creating community among its students.

Both aspects were part of what made Victoria Gray's (Los Angeles Unified School District) recent experience at CSULB so rewarding. A full-time high school teacher, she "was looking for ways to get more content knowledge," and the CSULB MA track for teachers offers the same coursework but with a capstone option that includes lesson plans and student research. Participating in this MA program gave her "a cohort of like-minded teachers interested in advancing their content knowledge as historians."

Eileen S. Luhr (CSULB) went into more depth about how the program fosters these communities. Early writing assignments help to identify which students may need additional help, and faculty can pair graduate writing tutors with MA students in their first semester. Such peer relationships "have proven to be really valuable" over the decade of this practice. Peer writing tutors help to position writing as "something we are all working on" and trying to improve. While teacher-students like Gray want to learn about pedagogy, their colleagues in the regular MA track are encouraged to take pedagogy courses too. "It allows students in the regular program to see their teacher peers as experts," Luhr explained.

As director of an MA program at a PhD-granting institution, Leslie Waters (Univ. of Texas at El Paso) also finds that MAs often get overlooked compared to PhDs, not least because only the number of PhDs completed factors into a university's Carnegie classification. She suggests making the MA program of study distinct from being an extension of or preparation for a PhD program. For students who may have transferred from a community college to BA institutions, they may have taken very few history courses. An MA can "serve to reinforce people's interest in the subject matter for those who felt like they didn't get what they wanted from the BA." The MA program should offer different classes and assignments from PhD coursework—for example, not every class should end with a long historiographic paper assignment. Starting in fall 2025, UTEP has expanded options for a thesis, a comprehensive exam, or a public history project at the culminating experience of the program.

A robust Q&A session brought questions from audience members about how to expand their own institutions' offerings. For faculty without K–12 teaching experience, how do they approach the pedagogy lessons? Luhr recommended that they be open with students that they might know more about K–12 teaching than the professor does, but she probably knows more about historiography. "If you are open to that, you can create something special." Beyond the classroom, do these universities offer internships or other practical experiences? UTEP offers certificates in oral and public history, Waters explained, while Murdock said that they have an internship with *The History Teacher* journal, in addition to relationships built with local historical societies.

While much has changed in the discipline, higher education, and the world in the years since the AHA issued its landmark report on the MA degree 20 years ago, the questions from that study remain relevant. These institutions—and those represented in the audience—are thinking creatively to better equip MA students as historians, teachers, and citizens of the world.

—LA

MID-CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Professional development for academic historians doesn't stop after finishing graduate school or achieving tenure. Two sessions this year focused on mid-career historians, allowing them to reflect on their careers thus far and discuss how they see the challenges within the discipline.

Mid-Career Transitions was the second of four sessions in the Career Transitions discussion series, which invited attendees to reflect on "their own professional experiences and shared advice and insights on navigating pivotal career shifts." Tony Frazier (Pennsylvania State Univ. and AHA Council) and Susan Gaunt Stearns (Univ. of Mississippi) facilitated the session, at which attendees discussed topics of concern for those both within and outside the professoriate.

Conversations abounded across the weekend's three poster sessions.

Though organized for mid-career historians, attendees also included graduate students, early career professionals, and historians nearing retirement interested in learning about opportunities and challenges faced by their mid-career colleagues. Attendees did not define mid-career but agreed implicitly that it begins post-tenure for historians working in the professoriate, with a slightly more nebulous definition for historians working in other settings.

No matter the professional setting, however, attendees agreed that mid-career falls at the point at which historians have enough experience to step back and take stock, assess contentment, and clarify future goals. One attendee shared that she happily accepted a position as an assistant professor of history, but that the position had been a poor fit for her professionally and ill suited to her family's needs. She is now actively searching for new employment either within or outside the professoriate. In her words, "Just because you got an academic job doesn't mean you want to keep it."

Another assistant professor also shared that his mid-career reflections led him to search for new employment. He wanted a change in location, and his position included a heavy teaching and service load, leaving little time for research. He now teaches in a history department at a more research-focused university with a better balance of teaching, research, and service responsibilities.

The group discussed the need for historians in any job to continue to build diverse skill sets, both to secure promotions with current employers and to prepare for possible jumps to new jobs or career paths. Doing so, they noted, can require a significant expenditure of time on top of existing professional and personal obligations. Another attendee described how she applied for professional development opportunities in teaching and learning in higher education to learn more about settings where historians can engage with pedagogy outside the professoriate.

Ultimately, the conversation emphasized the importance of assessment at mid-career and some of the ways mid-career professionals can use their professional knowledge to, if needed, adjust course. One attendee noted, "Don't let your education interfere with your thinking . . . you can do a

whole host of things"—an important message for historians at any career stage.

Conversations about challenges at mid-career also played out in the session *Marginalized Scholars at Mid-Career*. As panelists noted, there is no one experience of a marginalized scholar. The history discipline has increasingly but unevenly diversified, and the structures that shape the tenure process, history pedagogy, support for research, and even faculty governance and accountability have been exposed as glaringly deficient in keeping up with the breadth of historians' current work and labor. Jointly organized by the AHA Committees on LGBTQ Status in the Profession, Gender Equity, and Racial and Ethnic Equity, the session provided space for panelists to discuss the particular challenges of being a marginalized scholar at mid-career, beyond the more common early career focus.

> Mid-career is when historians have enough experience to step back and take stock, assess contentment, and clarify future goals.

Session chair Farina King (Univ. of Oklahoma) began by asking panelists to reflect on where the current generation of marginalized scholars maturing into mid-career (defined by the panel as just before, at, or after tenure review) experience particular challenges. Time and time again, student evaluations loomed large, frequently described as a space for a handful of students, protected by anonymity, to voice criticism that is implicitly or explicitly judgmental of professors' identities. The panelists reported that students have criticized them outright for speaking too much about marginalized groups, particularly when the students project those marginalized identities onto the professor. Joshua L. Reid (Univ. of Washington), a registered member of the Snohomish Indian Nation who studies Native American history in the Pacific Northwest, quoted from one evaluation, "You just talk about Indians all the time." As Ren Pepitone (New York Univ.) recounted of their first job at the University of Arkansas, students pushed back on reading "so many women" in a British survey course, of which Pepitone said, "Midway through the semester, we had only read two." Dan Royles (Binghamton Univ., SUNY) said students accuse him of teaching "too much about civil rights," or in one instance of being "too easy on gays." But whereas the negative comments are memorable, panelists also spoke of students using course offerings to find community. Pepitone, who teaches "almost exclusively the history of gender and sexuality," has students who "use my classes and my identity to find kindred spirits."

The panelists demonstrated repeatedly that the modern academic historian has one foot in the archive and one in service of their institutional and local communities. Across the board, panelists are deeply engaged with community work but experiences varied in whether their institutions respected community work as professional work. Elizabeth Ellis (Princeton Univ.) recently became the history liaison for her own tribe, the Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, and has found that "collaborative work really hard to quantify" by the most widely accepted rubrics for the tenure process. Royles said that at his previous institution, community-engaged work became hijacked by "perverse incentives" for a "hustle mentality" where professors were pushed to pursue specific projects to "work with minoritized communities" but the work itself "wasn't necessarily helpful to those communities." Pepitone said their department was having conversations about how to count public history work for tenure and promotion and a general uncertainty around how to do so. Reid pointed out, "If you have an institution or department that hasn't figured out how to count it, most professional organizations have done so"—including the AHA. Erika Edwards (Univ. of Texas at El Paso) said her university has made great steps forward as an "open-access R1" and is "very much community engaged" and even offers a certificate "that allows professors to make their classes more community engaged."

As their faculty have diversified, educational institutions have begun to see marginalized scholars as resources to utilize for service. From faculty governance to administrative positions overseeing diversity initiatives, grad programs to university commissions tasked with major reform, panelists reported feeling pulled in too many directions in early career—asked to take on too much, too quickly, and feeling unable to say no in their junior position. Reid encouraged that "no" can create space for someone else who needs to be present for hard conversations, rather than creating "bigger burdens on scholars of color" who "end up talking to each other" rather than the broader community. Edwards warned that institutions use younger faculty to do work for free that their predecessors were paid to do. Taking load-bearing positions within departments, as Royles did when he became graduate program director, revealed to him how gender dynamics in his department created more work, particularly for women, as older male colleagues unshouldered responsibility. Ellis, who ran an entire program pretenure,

was unprepared for how many of her Indigenous students would ultimately turn to her when in crisis. Because the university lagged to provide sufficient support for vulnerable students, she faced a growing list of responsibilities to them, including making late-night calls for emergency housing. She also criticized institutions' post–affirmative action shift to "trauma and perseverance" narratives as some sort of performance indicator for the academy, and how this translates to an "expectat[ion of] trauma from minoritized scholars."

The historical discipline is evolving, and how it defines itself is expanding. While there is no longer any one typical way for an academic historian's career to unfold, sessions like these reveal vital perspectives and strategies on how historians can continue doing good work and good history, wherever—and whenever—they are.

—WB and HS

AMERICA 250 IS HERE. ARE WE READY?

Across the United States, preparations are underway to commemorate the 250th anniversary of independence in 2026. Yet Americans remain deeply divided about the history and memory of the founding era. We're all asking: What are the enduring legacies of the American Revolution? And is it possible to shift public debates about how we tell the story of the revolutionary era in more productive directions?

The Sunday-evening plenary wrestled with these questions during an event focused on the forthcoming documentary series *The American Revolution*, which will premiere on PBS in fall 2025. Filmmakers Ken Burns and Sarah Botstein joined screenwriter Geoffrey Ward and historical advisors Christopher L. Brown (Columbia Univ.), Kathleen DuVal (Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), and Alan Taylor (Univ. of Virginia) for a conversation about the many steps involved in creating the six-part film.

The session afforded attendees the first public sneak peek of clips from the new film, still in production. Its style and aesthetic fit within Burns's iconic oeuvre—even the soundtrack echoes Jay Ungar's "Ashokan Farewell," a song now firmly associated with the Civil War in the minds of many Americans. Interviews offer insightful commentary interspersed between scenes that pair stock footage with dramatic voice-over narration.

The history presented on-screen grapples with some of the big questions surrounding the semiquincentennial, and the conversation onstage presented a welcome opportunity to learn more about the kinds of collaboration between filmmakers and historians that are creating a high-profile, new synthetic narrative of the revolution to engage the widest possible audience.

Burns and Botstein emphasized that this is a film, first and foremost, about the Revolutionary War, following the military campaigns across the continent. But, as the material screened at the conference made clear, its narrative engages with wider social, cultural, and intellectual implications of the political revolution that inspired the war in the first place.

A documentary film, of course, differs from other genres of historical narrative. Ward explained that, unlike books, film scripts do not use topic sentences, and the two directors offered insight into the challenges of crafting a visually stimulating documentary about a period before photography.

> The film is forthright about the frequent and brutal violence of this conflict.

Careful historical research and writing informs every scene. One excerpt they screened, for instance, dwells on questions about what it meant for those who benefited from slavery to articulate universal ideals of freedom and equality, quoting from iconic documents penned by Phillis Wheatley Peters, Prince Hall, and others. Another clip—including commentary from DuVal—offered viewers glimpses of Native perspectives. In line with recent historiography, the film is forthright about the frequent and brutal violence of this conflict, so much so that Brown noted that he and other historians had even encouraged the directors to tone down some of the most excessive episodes.

Balancing careful history with compelling storytelling, this film, Burns and Botstein insist, seems poised to make an ambitious gamble that television audiences will welcome: an account of the revolution that embraces the complexity, contingency, and nuance of a period rife with contradictions. In thinking about an overarching thesis, Burns quoted a line

Lonnie Bunch (Smithsonian Inst.) shares his insights on the founding of the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

from Wynton Marsalis in his earlier film *Jazz* (2001): "Sometimes a thing and the opposite of a thing are true at the same time." *The American Revolution*, he explained, knocks down some of the more persistent myths of the era (think Betsy Ross and "the whites of their eyes") while inviting audiences to ponder the messy ambiguities.

If the excerpts screened in New York (about 2 percent of the film's total run time) provide any indication, the finished film will foreground some of the most innovative and accomplished scholars of the revolutionary era. "It's going to be interesting to see what the reactions will be like," noted Brown, a historian of slavery and abolition in the British Atlantic world. "We live in a bitterly polarized time, and this is a film about a bitterly polarized time. In that respect, it's a film for our time."

Polarized, yes, but perhaps not yet irredeemably so. The panelists agreed that there may be hope for the future. Botstein explained that she and her colleagues make films knowing that they will live on in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms, as well as a variety of other venues: colleges and universities, adult education, civic institutions, online, and in the reactions of audiences across the country and around the world.

In their concluding remarks, Botstein and Burns both emphasized their hope that historians—including the many different constituencies in attendance at AHA25—will have a role in shifting public discourse. "We want to work with you," Botstein affirmed, "to make sure that as many people as possible can have a civilized conversation" about this often contentious history.

—BG

"YOU HAVE TO HAVE A VISION"

Four well-known founders of major history museums in the United States gathered on the third morning of the conference to discuss "their motivations, challenges, and accomplishments in shaping institutions that preserve and narrate our collective past." They included Ruth Abram, founder of the Tenement Museum; Lonnie Bunch, founding director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) and current secretary of the Smithsonian Institution; Alice Greenwald, founding president and CEO of the 9/11 Memorial and Museum; and Nick Mueller, founding president and CEO of the National World War II Museum. Annie Polland, president of the Tenement Museum, chaired the session.

The panelists began by sharing their museums' origin stories. Abram explained that she wanted the Tenement Museum to both highlight immigrants' experiences of living in New York City in the 19th and 20th centuries and demonstrate the important role stories about ordinary people can play in our collective understanding of the historical record. Nick Mueller shared that the creation of the World War II Museum actually stemmed from the founding of the D-Day museum, in which he was also involved. When they heard "You left out my part of the war" from veterans who did not take part in D-Day, they realized the need for another museum that could tell a broader story. Building the 9/11 Memorial and Museum, Alice Greenwald explained, began only five years after the events of September 11, 2001. It was "a time when families were still in the midst of intense grief. The city was traumatized. The war on terror was ongoing. Bin Laden hadn't yet been found. That was the moment. No history was written yet." Their job, they decided, "was to tell the story of this place." And when describing the moment he was approached about taking charge of what would become the NMAAHC, Lonnie Bunch said he first turned them down, "because the idea of an African American museum on the mall goes back to 1915" and had never come to fruition. When he eventually agreed, he was hopeful that the millions of people who now visit the Smithsonian every year would flock to its newest addition. And so "why not," he thought, "embrace the notion of expanding what America is by creating this museum?"

In the years of work that followed those first moments, each grappled with the same questions: How did they define the museum's mission and scope? Who did the museum serve? Where would they open the physical buildings? And how

would they pay for it? Each panelist emphasized the central role that audience engagement played in defining their museum's essential purpose. Abram wanted visitors to feel a deep emotional connection to the people whose stories they learned about at the Tenement Museum, and so its tours and storytelling focus on provoking an "emotional experience" in visitors. Mueller's and Greenwald's institutions needed to navigate a careful line between sharing truthful history with people who did not witness the historical events interpreted in their museums and holding space for remembrance, where eyewitnesses could share their stories, remember their own experience, and grieve for those they lost. And Bunch knew the NMAAHC would succeed only if visitors understood that "this story is for all of us, and [this story] profoundly shaped all Americans.'"

A Chicago-themed puzzle at the AHA's booth in the Exhibit Hall reminded attendees of where we'll be next year.

Those critical years between founding and opening brought numerous challenges. Bunch recalled searching far and wide for an engineering solution that would allow the NMAAHC to build lower levels into the earth without disturbing the groundwater, and with it the physical integrity of the terrain, which could impact the neighboring Washington Monument. The 9/11 Museum, too, faced issues with water—during construction, Hurricane Sandy flooded the museum with more than seven feet of water, damaging artifacts and causing months of delays. They also faced ideological challenges. Greenwald shared how "the tension inherent in museums of memory, which have to be both commemorative and documentary," created issues. "Some families felt angry because they felt like the museum was usurping what was a battleground, a site of trauma," she said. "One wrote an op-ed, and the next day [Governor] Pataki pulled the plug on the project." It took five years of dogged work for Abram to secure the building where the Tenement Museum now resides; in the interim, they rented space and worked in a cramped and unheated basement. And Mueller recounted several instances when the World War II Museum ran out of money entirely, putting the project's future in jeopardy.

Though they faced vastly different circumstances, each founder emphasized the centrality of struggle and failure, and the importance of remaining focused and resilient in the face of these challenges. Despite "going broke," Mueller said, the World War II Museum's "scale and size increased immensely over more than 30 years . . . because [of] shifting vision and learning over time and more people becoming interested and wanting some kind of involvement in the story." Abram's team eventually secured the building they needed for their museum site, and Greenwald's pushed through political challenges and the devastation caused by the hurricane. Bunch said, "You start with a couple of staff, no money, and no collections. But what you have is a vision. You have to have a vision." And that vision led to the NMAAHC's opening in 2016, 100 years after the idea of opening an African American history museum on the mall was first floated.

Each founder stressed their belief that museums have a responsibility to help current and future generations better understand the world in which they live. Greenwald explained, "We knew at some point [the events of 9/11] would shift from memory to history. And it has . . . so the museum affirms the eyewitness generation and teaches the new generation so they can be literate about it in the world today." Abram said the Tenement Museum's focus on immigration aims to open the minds of their visitors to immigrants and refugees today. Mueller explained how the World War II Museum highlights the importance of protecting democracy at home and abroad. But Bunch perhaps described it best when he said the NMAAHC works to help "new generations . . . recognize that change is endemic to America and that it's your responsibility to understand that history. The goal of a museum like ours is to make America better. . . . It's about a museum that's as much about today and tomorrow as it is about yesterday."

—HS

ON TO CHICAGO

The 139th annual meeting will be held January 8–11, 2026, in Chicago. While the proposal deadline of February 15 will have passed before you read this, we hope that you will join us next year. Even if you haven't proposed your own session, there will be many opportunities to participate—in workshops, drop-in sessions, and other events. P

ZACHARY M. SCHRAG

URBAN HISTORY FACES A NEW CRISIS

COVID-19 and Remote Work Can Inspire Fresh Questions

Urban historians have told stories of cities, like Camden, New Jersey, whose factory jobs have vanished. With the rise of remote work, they may need to do the same for the disappearance of offices.
Carol M. Highsmith Archive/Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

SOME YEARS BACK, the Society for American City and Regional Planning History invited a provocateur as the lunchtime speaker for its biennial conference, held in my hometown of Arlington, Virginia. A journalist by training, Joel Garreau had made his name in urban history circles with his 1991 book, *Edge City*, a term he coined for a concentrated office district outside of a traditional downtown. But now he saw a new future: the movement of people to places far from traditional cities but blessed with scenery, culture, and, crucially, broadband internet access. "If you can work anywhere," he asked, "why fight the Beltway to get to an office tower?" Why not open your laptop in a gorgeous mountain town, like Santa Fe; Wenatchee, Washington; or South Jordan, Utah? After Garreau finished, the historians in the meeting asked respectful questions, but at my table, I heard some snickering. My own notes bear the comment "Statistical fallacy, law of small numbers."

That was November 2019. Two months later, the *Washington Post* reported on "an outbreak of an unidentified and possibly new viral disease in central China." By late March, I was learning to teach my classes by internet video call, a technology I had used perhaps a dozen times before the pandemic. Rather than luring us with the splendor of the Wasatch Mountains, nature had confined us with the threat of the coronavirus and left us staring at our screens. Garreau had not foreseen these exact circumstances, but now I realized that he had asked the right question: Do we still need office buildings?

Five years since the start of the pandemic, city government officials, developers, bankers, and planners are all asking how cities will function as more knowledge workers work from home, if not from Wenatchee. Urban historians have less urgent responsibilities but may also confront the implications of remote work for the future of cities, and for their past.

COVID-19 challenges the premises of urban life. As geographer Andy Merrifield has noted, we can see in it the echoes of earlier epidemics: the mysterious plague of Pericles's Athens, the Black Death of Boccaccio's Florence, the cholera of Karl Marx's London. Unlike these earlier plagues, COVID-19 did not just make us fear each other's bodies; it also introduced millions of people to the tools of remote work. Video calls and cloud-based shared documents had been around for some time, of course, as had the concept of telework. But the pandemic became the literal "killer app," spurring a critical mass of people to adopt the tools, which in turn spurred software and hardware developers to improve the products.

Five years later, COVID-19 is less of a threat to health, but many Americans, given the choice, still prefer to work remotely, at least part of the week, at least part of the time. As Garreau predicted, some knowledge workers have taken the extra step of moving to "Zoom towns," as the real estate folks now call the Santa Fe–like locales he described in 2019. Even as major employers, such as Amazon and Donald Trump's executive branch, announce "return to office" policies, observers expect determined resistance.

While the flexibility to work from home is a boon to individual workers and their families, remote work as a whole threatens the foundations of urban economies. Office vacancy rates remain high, with individual buildings selling for a small fraction of their prepandemic prices. Without the presence of office workers, retail shops and restaurants lack customers, so that a convenience for the knowledge worker threatens the livelihood of service workers. Mass transit is particularly vulnerable; if on-site work drops by 10 percent, transit agencies stand to lose 27 percent of their fare revenues.

Urban historians may confront the implications of remote work for the future of cities, and for their past.

Urban historians do not have billion-dollar holes to fill, but we, too, must face the implications of remote work. As I write a history of the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project—a transit system conceived in the 1990s but not completed until 2022—I find myself living in both the pre- and post-COVID-19 worlds. When I commune with my historical actors, listening to them debate projected demand for park-and-ride spaces, seats on trains, and office desks, all I can do is whisper, "You have no idea what's coming."

As I struggle with this narrative, I take inspiration from the work of previous generations of urban historians, who have long chronicled the threats to cities. To a large degree, the field of US urban history developed in response to previous catastrophes. "A lot of people moved into this kind of history because of a gut response to the urban crisis, as it was called, in the 1960s," explained urban historian Ray Mohl, when asked about the founding of the *Journal of Urban History* in the early 1970s. "We were looking for an historical dimension to contemporary urban concerns." Fifty years later, the concerns are new, but urban historians are again ready to provide historical perspective. We have already made a start, crafting stories that can be synthesized into a larger narrative about

the changing work of cities, and I expect that changing work patterns will inspire additional research.

One task is to define the scope of the challenge. In 2020, Thomas Campanella suggested that "the current pandemic is just the latest historical pivot to have pundits predicting the death of the city." But the persistence of remote work appears to be less a sudden shock—like the terrorist attacks and natural disasters that have informed Campanella's work—and more of a long-term collapse. Even before COVID-19, historians knew that white-collar downtown was a story with a beginning and a middle, and potentially an end. "The almighty downtown of the past is gone—and gone for good," Robert Fogelson wrote in his 2001 history of the concept. "And it has been gone much longer than most Americans realize."

> Previous generations of urban historians have long chronicled the threats to cities.

Now that the almighty downtown is even *more* gone, we may need to imagine remote work as a new kind of deindustrialization. If so, the future may be bleak. Some histories of cities that lost a major industrial employer (like Howard Gillette's Camden, New Jersey, and Andrew Highsmith's Flint, Michigan) end without stories of recovery. And those that offer more hope for city budgets (such as Guian McKee on Philadelphia, Gabriel Winant on Pittsburgh, and Destin Jenkins on San Francisco) tell us that a rising tide swamps some boats. As Gillette noted in *The Paradox of Urban Revitalization* (published in 2022, but written mostly before the spread of COVID-19), the apparently thriving "comeback cities" of the 1980s and beyond were profoundly divided by race and class, with some families and neighborhoods struggling as others flourished, and poverty rates rising alongside property values and median incomes. We see comparable inequality in the COVID-19-era pattern of exploited gig workers delivering lunches to the homes of comfortable remote workers.

On a more hopeful note, urban history also reminds us that cities are more than job sites. One of the most visible legacies of the pandemic for American cities has been the development of open-air restaurant sections, or "streeteries," many of which remain popular even as the risks of indoor dining fade. Historical works like Robin Bachin's *Building the South Side* stress the importance of such institutions as stadiums, clubs, houses of worship, and other sites of communal delight to the broader life of cities, helping us understand the city beyond the office. Similarly, Alison Isenberg's *Downtown America* is a story of reinvention, as business owners, city officials, and residents fought or cooperated to find new meanings for Main Street. As cities seek to convert office districts to mixed-use sectors, they could learn from Paul Groth's history of people living downtown.

Nor are big cities with identifiable downtowns the only model of urban life. As urban and regional planning scholar Uwe Brandes noted in September 2024, the big winners of the work-from-home movement may be cities such as Boise and Nashville that offer some of the feel of a vacation destination but at a larger scale than Wenatchee. For decades, urban historians have scolded each other for writing only about New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles when we could have been writing about "North Platte, Nebraska or Albany, Georgia." Histories of research parks, such as those by Margaret O'Mara and Alex Sayf Cummings, can help us think beyond the traditional city, and Benjamin Waterhouse has even given us the beginning of a history of working from home. Perhaps the next step is to explore the history of Zoom towns. Garreau suggested Sintra, the summer capital of Portuguese kings, and Matthew Adair has mapped summer residences of the 1920s urban elites.

Most importantly, we can continue to listen to voices, like Garreau's, from outside the historical discipline. They will speculate about the future of climate change, robotaxis, ghost kitchens, colonies of expatriates in other countries or perhaps on the moon or Mars. Some speculations will be baseless; others—like Garreau's pre-COVID-19 ideas about remote work—will be only partially prescient. "The definition of what urban history is is going to change, just like our definition of what cities are is changing," noted Blaine Brownell in 1994. "Probably the research that is done will be, as it probably always has been, a product of or a reflection of the present day concerns that people have, the questions they want to answer, and the problems that they are encountering. So to say that urban history developed out of urban crisis is absolutely normal." As cities seek new roles in the "new normal" of the pandemic world, urban historians will be seeking with them. P

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PATRICIA JUAREZ-DAPPE

A TASTE OF THE PAST

Teaching World History with Chocolate

As chocolate companies have relied on samples to attract new consumers, chocolate tastings can engage students in the food's history.
Advertising cards for H. McCobb's chocolates and cocoa/Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

ON AUGUST 15, 1502, Christopher Columbus's men came across a Chontal Maya trading canoe near Guanaja, an island off the Honduran coast. Describing cargo carried by the native population in his account of the voyage, Columbus's son Ferdinand included "some almonds that the Indians in New Spain used as currency." He seemed mystified that "when some [almonds] fell to the floor, all the Indians scrambled to pick them up as if an eye had fallen out of their heads." Such is the first recorded European mention of cacao, and the only reference in Ferdinand's account. Other European chroniclers paid little to no attention to cacao and chocolate. As a currency, cacao never held the same value as silver and gold. As a cash crop, it was eclipsed by tobacco and, later, by sugar and coffee. And as a food, chocolate could never compete with potatoes, maize, or beans.

Over the last two decades, interest in cacao and chocolate as objects of study has increased significantly. In my world history courses, I present them not only as discrete topics but also in light of their relationship with the societies they came into contact with. The study of ancient Mesoamerican civilizations acquires new meaning when students examine the spiritual and material role of cacao and chocolate among the Maya and the Mexica. Analyzing European discourses as they developed to justify or vilify chocolate consumption helps students understand the intellectual processes around the adoption of new cultural habits. The study of cacao production in Venezuela and Brazil offers valuable insights into the transatlantic slave trade. Focusing on legal and illegal cacao trading systems provides an opportunity to discuss important features of mercantilism. The Industrial Revolution becomes more relevant when students uncover the processes involved in manufacturing the modern chocolate bar. The expansion of cacao production into Africa serves as another example of the profound changes experienced by African societies as a result of European imperialistic aggression.

Cacao and chocolate become starting points to uncover changes and continuities in world history. In addition to lectures and discussion, I have turned an activity that students clearly enjoy—chocolate tasting—into an integral part of the course. The first exercise we do in each class session, sampling chocolate serves as both an icebreaker and a starting point for discussions.

Nothing is simple about transforming cacao beans into chocolate. Although newer technology has taken over the manufacturing side, the principles of chocolate making (fermentation, drying, roasting, grinding, and mixing) remain largely unchanged. As part of our discussion of Mesoamerican civilizations, students sample raw cacao beans, most for the first time. I suggest they focus not only on the taste but also on the bean itself. Students are surprised by the difficult process of peeling the beans and the bitter, gritty taste of the raw cacao. The exercise helps them appreciate the laborious process by which raw materials become edible, the complexities of chocolate making, and the degree of culinary sophistication and ingenuity required from those who "invented" chocolate. The bean and its novel taste prepare students for a discussion of the biology of the crop, the modifications chocolate has undergone to acquire its modern form, and Mesoamerican spiritual and material cultures. In conjunction with the cacao beans, students examine images of archaeological artifacts that depict cacao or chocolate consumption from the Maya period to the 16th-century Florentine Codex.

The first exercise we do in each class session, sampling chocolate serves as both an icebreaker and a starting point for discussions.

Mesoamericans enjoyed their chocolate mixed with water, spices, and sometimes honey. Most discussions of chocolate highlight changes to the beverage once Europeans adopted it, such as the addition of sugar and milk. However, Europeans still used the original chocolate recipe as described in the Florentine Codex more than a century after the conquest. As students sample two spicy dark chocolates, one with chili and one with black peppercorns, I ask them to focus on flavor but also to think about the ingredients and their places of origin. Despite the added spices, students are stunned by the similarities in flavor and surprised to learn that Europeans did not alter the taste of chocolate until much later. Our conversation usually centers on the spice trade and the global exchanges that followed the conquest of the Americas as part of the Columbian exchange. Spicy chocolates provide an opportunity to discuss the diffusion of new cultural habits in the context of imperial expansion and to understand colonization as a dynamic process involving mutual cultural interactions. In conjunction with the spicy chocolate, students compare recipes recorded in the Florentine Codex and those published by Antonio Colmenero de Ledesma in 1631.

Europe's embrace of chocolate did not result in immediate changes to the Mesoamerican recipe. But during the 17th century, as claims of medicinal benefits paved the way for wider acceptance, chocolate became a symbol of status and opulence, and Europeans modified its recipe to suit their palates. For a discussion of preindustrial Europe and colonial

empires, students sample semisweet chocolate with orange, berries, or almonds. I ask them to think about the use of ingredients with long histories in European pantries. They recognize this as the moment that marks Europe's final appropriation of chocolate, thereby dispelling commonly held notions that Europeans rejected native foods or modified them immediately. Our discussion also focuses on the effects that changes in European consumption patterns had for cacao-producing regions. I rely on their knowledge of labor demands for cash crops and remind them of our prior discussions about the cacao bean and its biology, which provides an opportunity to examine colonial trading policies, commodity exchanges in the context of mercantilism, and the role played by stimulants other than coffee and tobacco in the transatlantic system. In conjunction with the semisweet chocolate sample, students watch a short clip about cacao cultivation and examine a series of maps that show environmental characteristics in Venezuela and Brazil, pre-Columbian patters of settlement in South America, cacao-producing areas in both regions, and the routes of the transatlantic slave trade.

Europeans enjoyed their chocolate as a beverage or in creamy desserts for centuries; the now ubiquitous chocolate bar is a modern invention. Chocolate acquired its contemporary solid form in the 19th century, as the Industrial Revolution transformed chocolate manufacturing into the snack we consume today. For our discussion on the Industrial Revolution—from new production methods to the invention of milk chocolate—students taste milk chocolate bars. I ask them to think about the ingredients but also about the food's physical characteristics, which yields a tactile understanding of the changes in consumption patterns that resulted from industrialization. The chocolate bar provides an opportunity to discuss the impact of the Industrial Revolution on the manufacturing of common household foods, the creation of a mass market, and related changes in lifestyle and consumption practices. In conjunction with the chocolate bar, students examine a wide array of 19th-century advertisements as well as some vintage chocolate trading cards and small tin containers I have collected over the years.

The mechanization of chocolate production increased the demand for raw materials. The optimal area for cacao cultivation is 20 degrees north and south of the equator. Because the expansion in production occurred as Latin American nations were gaining independence, European manufacturers turned their attention to Africa. In the discussion around European imperialist expansion, students taste a "Belgian chocolate" bar. I ask them to think about the label. Almost immediately, they realize it refers to the place of manufacturing, as Belgium is located outside the cacao belt. This is usually the most successful discussion of the semester, as students recognize that the so-called "European" chocolates they consume are made with cacao from Africa. Our discussion revolves around the international division of labor propelled by the Industrial Revolution and the search for raw materials that prompted Europe's Scramble for Africa. "Belgian chocolate" gives students an opportunity to see the expansion of cacao production in Africa in the context of European imperialistic aggression, as well as the impact that increased demand for cacao had on African societies in the 19th and 20th centuries. In conjunction with the chocolate bar, students examine images from São Tomé's cacao plantations, excerpts from Henry Wood Nevinson's 1905 report on labor conditions in the area, and newspaper reports on the early 20th-century Cadbury scandal. The sources provide a good foundation for the documentary *The Dark Side of Chocolate* (2010), which I show the week after, as well as our analysis of the 2001 Harkin–Engel Protocol, which aimed to regulate forced-labor practices on West African cacao farms. In fall 2024, I incorporated research conducted by the winners of the 2024 Nobel Prize in economics examining the long-term consequences of colonial institutions in modern societies.

Students recognize that the so-called "European" chocolates they consume are made with cacao from Africa.

Bringing cacao and chocolate front and center in world history is a way to illuminate intersections among American, African, and European societies. This approach forefronts the transformative effects that the crop and food had on the peoples who encountered them as producers and consumers. A commodity as ubiquitous today as chocolate encourages students to engage with the material in a relaxed atmosphere while simultaneously preparing them for the serious discussions ahead. It keeps them engrossed for the entire class session, as discussion questions and primary sources refer them back to their tasting experience, offering an alternative point of access to history by engaging the senses in ways that differ from other classroom activities. Chocolate sampling creates a bridge connecting past to present, brings students closer to the societies they are learning about, and serves as another reminder that history is a discipline that allows individuals and societies to know themselves better. More than anything, chocolate tastings are a fun and tasty way to make history come alive. P

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Eugen Weber Book Prize

The Department of History at UCLA encourages submissions for the 2026 Eugen Weber Book Prize in French History. A prize for the best book in modern French history (post 1815) over the previous four years, this award is named for eminent French historian Eugen Weber (1925-2007). Professor Weber served on the History faculty at UCLA from 1956 until 1993 and was renowned as a teacher and scholar for being able to bring the French and European past to life.

The Eugen Weber Book Prize in French History brings a cash award of $15,000 and the winner will be announced at the American Historical Association annual meeting in January 2026. The author will be invited to visit UCLA to speak about his or her work and receive the prize during the spring of 2026.

Books eligible for the 2026 prize are those written in English or French and published in 2023 or 2024.

The deadline for submissions is June 1, 2025. Submission information is available at https://history.ucla.edu/eugen-weber-book-prize.

The prize was most recently awarded in 2024 to Owen White for The Blood of the Colony: Wine and the Rise and Fall of Algeria (Harvard University Press, 2021) and Marc André for Une prison pour mémoire: Montluc, de 1944 à nos jours (ENS Éditions), in 2022 to Judith G. Coffin for Sex, Love, and Letters: Writing Simone de Beauvoir (Cornell University Press, 2020) and in 2020 to Christine Haynes, for Our Friends the Enemies: The Occupation of France After Napoleon (Harvard University Press, 2018)

For more information, visit http://history.ucla.edu.

UCLA Meyer and Renee Luskin Department of History

AHR STAFF

THE END OF THE AMERICAN WAR IN VIETNAM, 50 YEARS LATER

In the March 2025 Issue of the American Historical Review

The March 2025 issue of the *American Historical Review* begins the new year with contributions that feature histories of medicine, French medieval studies, and statistical practices, and includes collections on peace history, teaching the Vietnam War, and teaching with graphic narratives.

The issue opens with the AHA presidential address given by **Thavolia Glymph** (Duke Univ.). In "Paper Tracings in the Spectacularly Boisterous Archive of Slavery," Glymph "pays homage not to silence but to the spectacular visibility" of the enslaved in the archive. Glymph looks to the 1831 will of Lucy Buchanan, a free Black woman in South Carolina. Her will is a "paper tracing" that speaks to the boisterous voices of the enslaved that "jostle" against the violence of slaveholders in the archive. Glymph writes, "Perhaps in our eagerness to condemn . . . archives in which we have too few documents written by enslaved people or which capture their perspective, we often miss or overlook enslaved people who are visible," and so argues the presence of paper tracings like Buchanan's will make up a loud, noisy archive to which historians would do well to listen.

Taylor M. Moore (Univ. of California, Santa Barbara) traces the scientific afterlife of the mummified body of Queen Henhenit in "Living Fossils." Henhenit's body and story held large implications for the practice of medicine and the production of race science in modern Egypt. The fictive linking of ancient and living women's bodies and their use in scientific observation (largely without their consent) prompts a broader discussion of the human costs and centrality of women's pelvic bones in efforts to solve the "mystery" of Egyptian racial origins and of the imperial biopolitics of motherhood. Moore maps the crossroads at which Henhenit sits in imperial, colonial, and national histories and reflects on the limitations of thinking of women's bodies as material archives of history.

In "Patois of the Parishes," **Sara Ritchey** (Univ. of Tennessee, Knoxville) examines the emergence of French medieval studies in the United States. She traces philologists' efforts to "graft a medieval French heritage onto Louisiana soil" and project the "pure" French of white Creoles as distinguished from the "amputated" French associated with local communities such as freedpeople and Cajuns. Language and history served as tools of social power in postbellum Louisiana, and Ritchey argues that white Creole racialization of dialect—"patois" or nonstandard forms of French—as a vestige of the Middle Ages unsettles the field of French medieval studies and offers fresh possibilities for the meaning and makeup of "the medieval."

The presence of paper tracings make up a loud, noisy archive to which historians would do well to listen.

Casey Marina Lurtz's (Johns Hopkins Univ.) "Challenging Abstraction" encourages readers to consider historical statistics—specifically the "aberration, anomalies, and unruly data" present in them—as a space to see state-making as a multisided process. Lurtz examines agricultural data collected for Mexico's pavilion at the 1900 Paris Exposition. While government officials assumed their carefully formatted columns and rows would represent productive agriculture as large-scale monoculture, she argues that the data made unruly by handwritten elements and additions instead shows a push from local municipalities to remake the representation of their realities and an on-the-ground engagement with state-making. Lurtz challenges historians to embrace a methodology for working with statistics that includes a return to the messy, handwritten original sources.

The History Lab opens with a forum marking the 50th anniversary of the end of the American war in Vietnam, in which ten historians reflect on the single most important work of historical scholarship for their and their students' understanding of the war. **Jana Lipman** (Tulane Univ.), **Edward Miller** (Dartmouth Coll.), **Jessica Chapman** (Williams Coll.), **S. R. Joey Long**

A volunteer group in Vietnam, Team Lee restores, colorizes, and digitally enhances photographs of Vietnamese soldiers who were killed during the American war in Vietnam. Families bring what are often severely damaged photos, made when their loved ones were first inducted into the North Vietnamese army in the 1960s and 1970s, to Team Lee for restoration. This issue's cover illustrates the work of one of those photographic restorations. Team Lee presents the retouched photographs to families in elaborate ceremonies, providing videos that show the transformation of the original photos into retouched versions that highlight the youthful ardor and revolutionary zeal of these fallen soldiers.

(National Univ. of Singapore), **Robert Brigham** (Vassar Coll.), **Thy Phu** (Univ. of Toronto), **Sean Fear** (Leeds Univ.), **David Biggs** (Univ. of California, Riverside), **Wen-Qing Ngoei** (Singapore Management Univ.), and **Phi-Van Nguyễn** (Univ. de Saint-Boniface) discuss memoirs, films, and photography alongside more traditional primary and secondary sources. The forum concludes with two unique contributions: a playlist created by **Jason Gibbs** (San Francisco Public Library) that introduces listeners to Vietnamese wartime soundscapes, and a gallery of Cambodian photographs from April 1975, many never before published, documenting the days before the Khmer Rouge took control of Phnom Penh.

Questions of war and peace infuse a second forum in the Lab. "How to Make Peace with History While Making History with Peace" features essays by **Charles F. Howlett** (Molloy Univ.), **Susanne Schregel** (Univ. of Copenhagen), **Christian Philip Peterson** (Ferris State Univ.), **Michael Goode** (Utah Valley Univ.), **John Smolenski** (Univ. of California, Davis), **Toshihiro Higuchi** (Georgetown Univ.), **David L. Hostetter** (independent scholar), and **Catherine Sameh** (Univ. of California, Irvine) that explore the contours of the field of peace history and its future trajectories. The forum concludes with a collection of reflections on the relationship between peace scholarship and activism by **Margaret Power** (Illinois Inst. of Technology), **Van Gosse** (Franklin & Marshall Coll.), **Lawrence S. Wittner** (Univ. at Albany), **David Cortright** (Univ. of Notre Dame), **Emily Rubino** (Peace Action Fund), and **Shelley E. Rose** (Cleveland State Univ.).

"Graphic Narratives and History in the Americas" is the first in a multipart Lab project that brings together practitioners and scholars for conversations about the kinds of historical work graphic narratives can do and how historians might research, teach, and produce them. Led by **Oleg Benesch** (Univ. of York), **Shaul Mitelpunkt** (Univ. of York), and **Charlotta Salmi** (Queen Mary, Univ. of London), the project aims to create resources that scholars and teachers can use to learn about graphic histories from around the world, identify relevant comics archives in different regions, and gain insights on teaching with and about graphic narratives.

The History Lab and the *AHR*'s podcast, *History in Focus*, are engaged in an ongoing collaboration featuring the work of innovative historical podcasts. For this issue, *History in Focus* producer **Daniel Story** (Univ. of California, Santa Cruz) talks with **Mona Nyambura Muchemi** about the podcast *AfriWetu*.

The latest #AHRSyllabus module returns to Vietnam for a collaborative teaching initiative that foregrounds innovative uses of historical method in the classroom. "Teaching the History of the Vietnam Wars" features the work of high school teachers **Elena Samkin**, **Vincent Pham**, **Duyen Tong**, and **Chris Bunin**. **Christian C. Lentz** (Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) opens the module, and **Andy Mink** (Smithsonian Inst.) closes it with a reflection on the design of inquiry-based practices that foster historical thinking.

Two History Unclassified articles close the Lab. In "Snapshots of Loss, Learning, and Time in the Field," **Lily Pearl Balloffet** (Univ. of California, Santa Cruz) reflects on her fieldwork in Argentina and a friend's death during the COVID-19 pandemic to explore the socioemotional dimensions of conducting historical fieldwork. **Lauren Mancia** (Brooklyn Coll. and Graduate Center, CUNY), in "Strategies for Survival," recounts her experiences working with a group of first-generation undergraduate students to mount an exhibition about women who taught classics and medieval history at Brooklyn College from 1930 to 1980, and reflects on the fate of the humanities today in US public universities.

ACTIONS BY THE AHA COUNCIL

June 2024 to January 2025

Through email communications from July 1 through December 20, 2024; at a teleconference held on October 2, 2024; at meetings on January 3 and 6, 2025; and at a teleconference on January 17, 2025, the Council of the American Historical Association took the following actions:

- Approved a statement condemning the order from Oklahoma State Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters requiring "all Oklahoma schools . . . to incorporate the Bible, which includes the Ten Commandments, as an instructional support into the curriculum." To date, 18 organizations have signed on to the statement.

- Appointed Christine Varga-Harris (Illinois State Univ.) as an *American Historical Review* associate review editor for a three-year term ending in June 2027.

- Approved a change to AHA Bylaw 12, pursuant to Article VII, Section 2, to indicate that business meeting resolutions will be published in the November issue of *Perspectives on History*, as there is no longer a December issue.

- Reappointed Noel Salinger to a three-year term on the AHA Finance Committee, beginning July 1, 2024.

- Approved Suzanne Marchand, incoming AHA president-elect, to chair the fall 2024 Committee on Committees meetings in president-elect Ben Vinson's absence.

- Signed on to an amicus curiae brief for the Supreme Court in *United States v. Skrmetti* regarding the court's recent decisions on the diagnosis and treatment of gender dysphoria.

- Approved the fiscal year 2025 budget.

- Approved establishing an AHA Communities online forum to facilitate discussion of the "Resolution to Oppose Scholasticide in Gaza" in advance of the 2025 business meeting.

- Determined that the general procedures for the 2025 business meeting should include slots for preselected speakers chosen by Council to reflect a variety of perspectives, and slots selected by a randomized process for those who sign up to speak at the annual meeting.

- Sent a letter to the leadership of Tarleton State University regarding the nonrenewal of historian Ted Roberts's contract.

- Signed on to a letter from the Coalition for International Education that recommended strong funding for HEA–Title VI programs in FY 2025.

- Sent a letter to Oklahoma Governor J. Kevin Stitt and members of the Oklahoma Board of Education urging the state to retain its current social studies standards.

- Sent a letter to the president of the Republic of Sierra Leone on behalf of Chernoh Alpha M. Bah, who faced threats and harassment for his work on government corruption.

- Appointed the following additional members of the 2026 Annual Meeting Program Committee: Carrie Beneš (New Coll. of Florida), Martin Bunton (Univ. of Victoria), Tabetha Ewing (Bard Coll.), Aston Gonzalez (Salisbury Univ.), Crystal Moten (Obama Presidential Center), M. Raisur Rahman (Wake Forest Univ.), Stacey Randall (Waubonsee Comm. Coll.), Yamali Rodriguez-Gruger (Chicago Public Schools), Brett Rushforth (*Huntington Library Quarterly*), and Marlous van Waijenburg (Harvard Business School).

- Sent a letter to National Institutes of Health director Monica Bertagnolli and National Library of Medicine acting director Steve Sherry expressing "concern regarding the recent reorganization of the National Library of Medicine, which has resulted in the elimination of the History of Medicine Division."

- Approved the rules and procedures for debate at the 2025 AHA business meeting.

- Approved changes to the *Criteria for Standards in History/Social Studies/Social Sciences*.

- Sent a letter to the president of Azerbaijan on behalf of Igbal Abilov, who has been "charged and remanded to pretrial detention in Baku for his peaceful exercise of the right to academic freedom."

- Designated three speakers against the "Resolution to Oppose Scholasticide in Gaza" at the 2025 AHA business meeting. The speakers in favor of the resolution were designated by the resolution's proposers. Two additional speaker slots for each side of the resolution were chosen at random from a sign-up lottery held during the annual meeting.

- Approved the minutes of the June 4 and 5, 2024, Council meetings; the October 2, 2024, Council meeting; and the interim minutes of the Council from June through December 2024.

- Approved the 2025 committee appointments.

- Appointed Alexander Mikaberidze (Louisiana State Univ., Shreveport) as chair and Melissa Stuckey (Univ. of South Carolina) as co-chair of the 2027 Annual Meeting Program Committee.

- Appointed Mimi Cowan (Field Museum) and Amy Powers (Waubonsee Comm. Coll.) as co-chairs of the Local Arrangements Committee for the 2026 annual meeting in Chicago.

- Appointed a slate of candidates to the Small Liberal Arts College Working Group.

- Thanked Leland J. White for his 20 years of service to the National Coalition for History upon his retirement as executive director on December 31, 2024.

- Accepted a proposal from the Albert Lepage Center for History in the Public Interest at Villanova University to establish two internships at the AHA and to fully fund and rename the Herbert Feis Award in Public History. The award will recognize both public history and historical work performed in the public interest.

- Approved the transition of the AHA's 403(b) retirement plan from a legacy plan to one that offers a target-date model with additional Vanguard index funds.

- Approved updates to the charge of the Digital History Working Group.

- Selected the 2025 Honorary Foreign Member (to be announced in fall 2025).

- Postponed a decision on the "Resolution to Oppose Scholasticide in Gaza" to a date determined by the Council.

- Appointed Sarah Weicksel as the next AHA executive director, to begin a five-year term on July 1, 2025, upon the retirement of James Grossman.

- Approved the dissolution of the National History Center.

- Approved updates to the *Guidelines for Racial and Ethnic Equity for Historians in the Academic Workplace*.

- Approved changes to the charge of the Committee on Racial and Ethnic Equity to reflect the updated name of the committee, incorporate the Equity Award, and reflect the committee's recent practice of meeting more than twice a year.

- Vetoed the "Resolution to Oppose Scholasticide in Gaza," which was passed at the 2025 AHA business meeting (with Council voting 11 in favor, 4 opposed, and 1 abstention) and issued the following explanation for the veto (with 10 in favor and 3 abstentions):

  The AHA Council deplores any intentional destruction of Palestinian educational institutions, libraries, universities, and archives in Gaza. The Council considers the "Resolution to Oppose Scholasticide in Gaza," however, to contravene the Association's Constitution and Bylaws, because it lies outside the scope of the Association's mission and purpose, defined in its Constitution as "the promotion of historical studies through the encouragement of research, teaching, and publication; the collection and preservation of historical documents and artifacts; the dissemination of historical records and information; the broadening of historical knowledge among the general public; and the pursuit of kindred activities in the interest of history." After careful deliberation and consideration, the AHA Council vetoes the resolution. The AHA Council appreciates the work of Historians for Peace and Democracy and recognizes the diversity of perspectives, concerns, and commitments among AHA members.

State Standards as Primary Sources

Stephen Jackson

Learn about the history of state history standards in the US and how to use them help students better understand the complexities of official knowledge.

SYLLABUS historians.org/ahrsyllabus

HISTORY IN FOCUS
PODCAST PRESENTED BY American Historical Review

Season 3 | Episode 6

AHA 2025 and History Teachers

Daniel Story talks to high school teachers Katharina Matro and Megan Porter about the AHA 2025 annual meeting sessions geared toward history teaching, as well as the K–16 Content Cohort, which focused on the theme of "Resilience in the History Classroom."

historians.org/history-in-focus

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

Nominate them today for the AHA's teaching awards!

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

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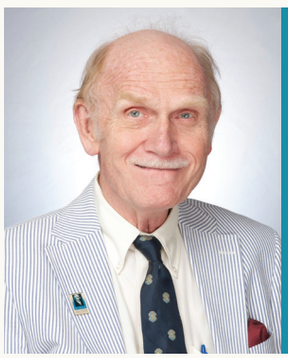


Herman Belz

1937–2024

Historian of the American Constitution

Herman Julius Belz, emeritus professor of history at the University of Maryland, passed away in Rockville, Maryland, at the age of 86.

Belz grew up in Haddon Heights, New Jersey, and in 1959 earned his bachelor's degree from Princeton University, where he was a star baseball and basketball player. While serving as an officer in the navy, he earned a PhD from the University of Washington in 1966 under the supervision of renowned historian Arthur Bestor. He took a position at the University of Maryland, where he taught for over 40 years.

Belz's early work focused on the Civil War and Reconstruction period. His dissertation won the AHA's Beveridge Award and was published as *Reconstructing the Union: Theory and Policy During the Civil War* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1969). His work was part of the "revisionist" school of Reconstruction historiography that accompanied the Second Reconstruction of the civil rights era. He extended his scholarship in this field with *A New Birth of Freedom: The Republican Party and Freedmen's Rights, 1861 to 1866* (Greenwood Press, 1976) and *Emancipation and Equal Rights: Politics and Constitutionalism in the Civil War Era* (W. W. Norton, 1978). His essay collections included *Abraham Lincoln, Constitutionalism, and Equal Rights in the Civil War Era* (Fordham Univ. Press, 1998) and *A Living Constitution or Fundamental Law? American Constitutionalism in Historical Perspective* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).

In the 1970s, Belz became a prominent figure in the conservative intellectual movement. This can be seen most clearly in his revision of Alfred H. Kelly and Winfred A. Harbison's *The American Constitution: Its Origins and Development*—the standard textbook in American constitutional history—first published by Norton in 1948. In 1983, Belz incorporated into its sixth edition a generation's new scholarship. He noted, "Written from the perspective of progressive historiography and the liberal nationalist reform tradition," the previous editions had "reflected the acceptance of and confidence in federal centralization and activist, interventionist government that achieved political and intellectual ascendancy in the New Deal era." The new edition reflected the revival of traditional constitutionalist principles from both ends of the political spectrum. Norton published a seventh edition in 1991.

Belz also worked on the history of affirmative action. His *Equality Transformed: A Quarter-Century of Affirmative Action* (Transaction, 1991) became an essential starting point for subsequent scholarship. He did not shrink from expressing what he believed was affirmative action's incompatibility with traditional American constitutionalism, concluding that "the struggle to define American equality will determine whether the United States will remain a free society."

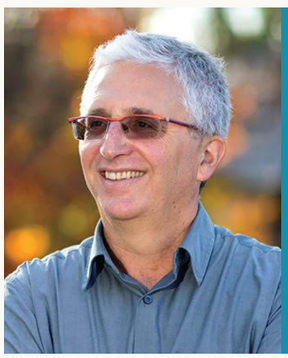
Belz's work spanned the fields of political and constitutional history, political theory, and philosophy more broadly. The American Political Science Association hosted a panel on his work in 2008. Several of the many students and colleagues whom he inspired published a Festschrift for him in 2013, *Constitutionalism in the Approach and Aftermath of the Civil War* (Fordham Univ. Press), edited by Paul D. Moreno and Johnathan O'Neill.

Belz's impact went beyond the academy. Belz promoted the study of American constitutionalism in secondary education as academic director of the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation from 1996 to 2012. He returned to his alma mater Princeton in 2000 as a visiting scholar in the first year of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions. He served on the National Council for the Humanities and the advisory boards of the Supreme Court Historical Society and the National Civic Art Society. He received awards and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Bar Association, and the Earhart Foundation, among others.

Herman Belz is survived by his second wife of 38 years, Valerie, children Aaron and Kristin, stepchildren David and Liz, and four grandchildren.

Paul D. Moreno
Hillsdale College

Photo courtesy Belz family



Alon Confino

1959–2024

Historian of Germany and the Holocaust; AHA Member

Alon Confino, historian of modern Germany, nationalism, collective memory, the Holocaust, Israel/Palestine, and the year 1948, has died. Many have written beautifully about him already. This essay arises from a single hope: to pay public respects to a scholar of astonishing creativity, intellectual courage, and an unremitting curiosity about his fellow human beings and their mysterious affinities. As my PhD advisor, he gave me what Proust called "other eyes" to see with. He changed my life.

Alon's approach to history was methodologically inquisitive and philosophical. He entreated historians to ask themselves, "Why [do] I think the way I do about the past?" A cultural historian, he was less interested in correcting what people in the past got wrong than in understanding what could be learned from how wrong they got it. He was interested in the meaning of things, in all their glory and horror. Of utmost concern was human imagination. "To write a history . . . without an act of imagination," he wrote in 2015 about the Nakba in the Palestinian village of Tantura, "is an intellectual and emotional dead end." To "open our imagination" is to become like "a flower turning to the sun."

Throughout his life, Alon was interested in how people develop feelings of national belonging. There is something inherently ambiguous and enigmatic about how people become national. Alon had a high tolerance for ambiguity and enigma, and did not think that you could do history well if you were strongly attached to particular theories about how it worked. Ultimately, what Alon wanted to capture was what he called "historical sensation," a subtle quality that required the historian to remain attuned to the "total strangeness of the past."

Alon liked the past for its mystique and intangibility. These words, along with strangeness, became in his usage equal parts method and lexicon. Yet his attachment to the word *commingle*—which anyone acquainted with his work will have noticed—was special and told volumes. Commingle connotes lightness and motion. It is not about fixedness or walls or sharp edges or absolute certainty. It is about multiplicity and relationships and freely drifting around.

For Alon liked plurality and the wild and barely explicable unfolding of change. He liked "the infinite diversity of things." Though a voracious reader of historiography, he was not especially interested in the nitty-gritty of specific historiographical questions. His project often involved historicizing historiography, unearthing the unacknowledged or unobserved accretions that went into its production and shaped whole fields.

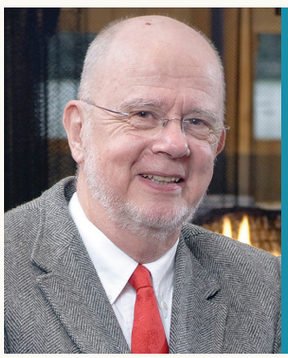
Foundational Pasts: The Holocaust as Historical Understanding (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012) conveys Alon's singular brand of historical thinking as well as anything he wrote. In it, he proposed to read the Holocaust, the foundational event of the 20th century, against the French Revolution, long seen as the inaugurating event of modernity. The revolution became a yardstick against which to assess the relative significance of the arguments, methods, and narratives of an ever-vaster body of Holocaust historiography. It was chilling but true when he wrote, "Whereas once the Revolution was a crucial measure of things human, now it has become the Holocaust."

Truth comes in a lot of flavors, Alon knew: some toothsome, some bland, some completely unpalatable. He insisted that the historian should "cultivat[e] a certain familiarity with [the] tastes, attitudes, mentalities, values, and beliefs" of people in the past. Finding contemporary explanations of the Holocaust "too cerebral, too cautious," he looked for new insights within Nazi fantasies of a "world without Jews." It was an extraordinary demand that he made foremost of himself: that a Jewish scholar of Germany try to imagine things as Nazis did. While the "unbearable closeness" of the Third Reich might encourage the historian's detachment, he wrote, "excessive detachment can deaden historical imagination and block access to . . . [historical] subjectivity." With an unshakable commitment to honesty, Alon stuck to it.

Alon Confino loved history and being a historian. Even more, he loved life. Love for life and the living and the once living was the source, I think, of his whole creative endeavor. Because Alon was not just a historian. For him, history provided a creative outlet, dare I say an art form, for exploring life in just a few of the mind-boggling and sublime and terrifying forms it takes.

Monica Black
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Photo courtesy Institute for Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies, University of Massachusetts Amherst



Robert M. Mennel

1938–2024

Historian of Childhood

Robert McKisson (Bob) Mennel died at age 86 at the Edgewood Center in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, on December 26, 2024. He taught American history at the University of New Hampshire for 35 years, starting in 1969. In 1985, he established the Honors Program at UNH and directed it for 20 years. Over the years, he had a particular focus on helping students grapple with and transcend their failures.

Mennel was born in Toledo, Ohio, on October 18, 1938, the son of Robert W. and Jane (Rowland) Mennel. In 1948, his family moved to the Chicago suburb of Winnetka, where he attended New Trier High School. He graduated from Denison University in 1960 and served in the US Marine Corps in the Pacific from 1960 to 1963. In 1969, he earned his PhD in history from Ohio State University, where he studied with Robert H. Bremner.

He worked with Bremner on the Child and the State Project at the Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History at Harvard University from 1967 to 1969, developing the multivolume *Children and Youth in America: A Documentary History* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1970–74). He returned to the Warren Center as a fellow in 1977–78. His dissertation led to his first book, *Thorns and Thistles: Juvenile Delinquents in the United States, 1825–1940* (Univ. Press of New England, 1973). Howard N. Rabinowitz, writing in *Social Service Review*, called it "the best analysis we have of the attitudes toward and the treatment of juvenile delinquents for the period surveyed" and particularly praised Mennel's "thorough research into institutional records, private papers, state laws, and legal cases, as well as a careful perusal of the mushrooming secondary literature." Mennel also served on the editorial board of the *Journal of Urban History* from 1975 to 1980.

Mennel subsequently co-edited, with Christine L. Compston, a volume of the correspondence of Supreme Court justices Felix Frankfurter and Oliver Wendell Holmes (Univ. Press of New England, 1996). Richard A. Posner wrote in the *New York Times Book Review* that "the letters convey a more rounded, a more coherent picture of Holmes than any of the volumes of correspondence published so far, making this the best one to read first." He further wrote that the editors "are to be commended for their informative introduction and their useful annotations of the references in the letters to people, books and cases that the passage of time has made obscure."

As a teacher, Mennel never forgot his own near failure to graduate from Denison, partly because he failed a required course, My Philosophy of Life. Knowing that he owed his later success to overcoming his earlier failures, he was especially devoted to his students when they were feeling discouraged. A typical note from a former student characterized Mennel's guidance "as *therapy* that saved me from shame."

In retirement, Mennel found a trove of diaries and letters in the old house that he and Bremner co-owned in Crousetown, Nova Scotia. These became the archival basis of *Testimonies and Secrets: The Story of a Nova Scotia Family, 1844–1977* (Univ. of Toronto Press, 2013), which relates a social history of Nova Scotia through the lives of several generations in that house. The *Canadian Historical Review* called it a "valuable and rare snapshot of life in rural Nova Scotia," as well as "an important contribution to the field of 'life writing,' accessible to general readers and local history buffs . . . [and] also of interest to various scholarly disciplines, including rural, social, cultural, and economic history, and the history of sexuality."

Mennel served St. John's Episcopal Church in Portsmouth in a number of roles, as senior warden, on the vestry, and as an usher. He lent his research expertise to the preservation of the church's records and artifacts. During his years at the Edgewood Center nursing home, Mennel was especially valued by staff and residents alike for his genealogical skills and knowledge.

He is survived by his wife, two children, two stepchildren, and five grandchildren. His son, Timothy, is executive editor for American history and regional subjects at the University of Chicago Press. His daughter, Tina Schneider, is professor and director of the library at Ohio State University at Lima.

Timothy Mennel
University of Chicago Press

Photo courtesy Mennel family

Lulu Merle Johnson

1907–95

Historian and Higher Education Administrator

When Lulu Merle Johnson received her history PhD from the University of Iowa in 1941, she made newspaper headlines as the first African American woman to earn a doctorate in Iowa and from the University of Iowa. She had already launched her professional career as a professor, but the occasion nonetheless marked a turning point in her intellectual journey.

Born in 1907, she was the fifth of six children born to Richard and Jeannette Johnson, who were but one generation removed from slavery. She grew up in Gravity, a small town in rural southwest Iowa, surrounded by a large extended family. After the Civil War, her grandparents had migrated from Tennessee to Kentucky to Illinois and then to Taylor County, Iowa, where they purchased farmland and put down roots in the early 1880s.

Johnson followed a first cousin and a brother to the University of Iowa, earning her BA and MA in 1930. She then left Iowa for the Deep South, where historically Black colleges and universities would hire Black faculty. After a one-year appointment at Talladega College, she moved to Tougaloo College. While teaching there, she began work on her doctorate, spending 1934–35 in residence at Iowa, and, with the aid of a General Education Board fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation, spent a second year in residence to complete her studies and receive her PhD in August 1941.

During her decade at Tougaloo, and while working on her doctorate, Johnson developed what became her signature course, The Negro in American Life. It represented a remarkable, dramatic departure from the traditional training she received at Iowa. Her dissertation, "The Problem of Slavery in the Old Northwest, 1787–1858," examined the contest between proslavery and antislavery forces in antebellum Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois through a Turnerian lens to argue that the "economics of slavery failed to establish a permanent tie between the Upper South and the frontier democracy of the Old Northwest." Conversely, the detailed course notebook she used for teaching The Negro in American Life reveals a diverging path of intellectual inquiry into what Caroline F. Ware called "the cultural approach to history." The course readings included cultural anthropology, sociology, and political economy, and at least half the authors were African American. Her lecture topics began by examining race and culture concepts and then traced the Black experience in American history from the African slave trade to the mid-20th century. After World War II, she began to examine the postwar Black experience in light of Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, and she asked students to envision a "democratic profile for the future" that fully included African Americans.

In a general sense, development of this course aligned with the flowering of the New Negro movement, but two specific forces seem to have influenced its particular content. One was sociologist Edward Reuter, whose specialty was race relations. Johnson took three of his courses as a graduate student, and his works appear in her course reading lists. The second was moving to the Deep South. While she was adept at managing Iowa's subtle patterns of racial discrimination, she was shocked by the virulent racism of the South, particularly how it strangled the education of African American youth. The latter provoked a streak of anger, and The Negro in American Life seems to have been her counteroffensive: centering the Black experience in American history as a means of instilling race consciousness among her students.

Johnson taught this course throughout her career, thus putting her in the forefront of creating the academic field of Black history/studies. She launched it at Tougaloo in 1941 before moving to West Virginia State College (now West Virginia State University) as an associate professor in 1942. In 1946, she became dean of women at Cheyney State Teachers College (now Cheyney University). Except for a short stint as chair of the history department at Florida A&M University in the late 1940s, she remained at Cheyney until her retirement in 1971. For most of those years, she held a dual post as professor of history and dean of women. In retirement, Johnson traveled extensively and frequently hosted family and friends at her home in Millsboro, Delaware. She died in 1995 at age 88.

In 2021, Johnson County, Iowa, adopted Lulu Merle Johnson as its eponym; she replaced Richard Mentor Johnson, vice president under Martin Van Buren. A statue and permanent interpretive exhibit on Johnson's life is in development in Iowa City.

Rebecca Conard
Middle Tennessee State University (emerita)

Photo: John I. Jackson Family Collection, used with permission

DAVID MARTIN

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, BANGALORE

David Martin

Before the crack of dawn, the floodlights were turned on and the candles lit. Plumes of fragrant smoke drifted through the hot lights as men dressed in white hastily arranged plastic chairs covered in white cotton protectors. The scent of samprani (Indian frankincense) mixed with coconut coir clung to the first drops of dew falling from the pipal, papaya, and pine trees that surrounded the little lawn. Thus began the 152nd Easter Service in 2023 at All Saints' Church, Bangalore, celebrated, as it has been for decades, in the spacious lawns adjoining the Indo-Saracenic sanctum.

Each element of this service betokens a different part of the cosmopolitan past of the Church of South India. The candles come from the Anglican High Church, while the cloth-covered chairs are a colonial remnant, a marker of distinction for the rich and powerful (and white) who attended these churches. Samprani has biblical, kingly connotations, while coconut coir is a home remedy for the mosquito menace. Each tree marks a different aspect of the church's religious and cultural preoccupations. The pipal, or *Ficus religiosa*, has a long connection to India's religions: The Buddha and Mahavira attained enlightenment under them, and Lord Krishna was born under its shade. The papaya grows next to the church's senior residences, and most exotic of all, the pine was planted for European members who wished to experience a more "traditional" Christmas in Bangalore's tropical clime.

All Saints' Church was built in 1870 by the Reverend Samuel Pettigrew, a Cambridge-educated missionary. Pettigrew had already founded two of India's most celebrated schools five years earlier—the twin Bishop Cottons of the South, one for girls and one for boys. He went on to work around South India and traveled as far as Rangoon (in modern-day Myanmar). But the good reverend was no prelate of a golden colonial establishment; in fact, he rarely had many funds and instead relied on the goodwill of local and colonial officials to get his projects off the ground. His original plan was to build the schools and the church simultaneously, but lack of funds delayed the latter. Eventually, the celebrated architect Robert Chisholm (creator of the so-called Indo-Saracenic style of architecture) worked on the church, though with no record of payment, it seems it may have been a charitable endeavor.

The church and its sister institutions were not built on egalitarian values. They served the large cadre of retired European soldiers who could no longer fit into the grander confines of St. Mark's Cathedral (which was designed to be a miniature version of London's St. Paul's). However, the church registers show another side to the story—many of these soldiers had Indian wives, and it was not long before a steady trickle of Indian converts started filing in, remarkably, without much fuss. Perhaps out of sheer necessity, the church, which had always had prestige and penury in equal measure, was forced to crack open their doors to Indians, both Christian and non-Christian. These were the people who looked after the church grounds, and it was thanks in no small part to them that this now centuries-old establishment survived the uproar of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

As "payment" for its "tolerance," the people of Bangalore bequeathed to the church a unique history inscribed on every tree in the garden and every shingle on the roof. It is not the story of a heartwarming egalitarian foundation, or of a glorious revolution to create an inclusive and equal future. Rather, it is a curious, almost quaint tale of a series of socioeconomic accidents that coalesced into a church. P

David Martin is a PhD researcher at the University of Cambridge.

PATRICIA APPELBAUM

A PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Patricia Appelbaum

My late husband, Bill, carried around to every place he lived a battered accordion file marked "Material from Evanston WCC Assembly 1954." He kept it in an old briefcase, separate from his working files. In it are 11 folders of meticulously organized documents from the international meeting of the World Council of Churches (WCC), an organization exploring Christian unity. The documents included his notes, which ranged from brief annotations on preprinted speeches to extensive comments on lectures, liturgies, and sermons. Also in the briefcase was a box of photographic slides from the assembly—some of them officially issued by the WCC, others his own eager snapshots of famous international figures, crowds, and scenes—and a list detailing which were which. What the collection tells us about Bill's responses is limited. But he recorded and remembered; he was not a passive spectator.

The 1954 assembly of the WCC in Evanston, Illinois, was only its second gathering, a big hopeful event in postwar internationalism. The mainline or liberal Protestantism of the mid-20th century is commonly described as "ecumenical," focused on cross-denominational unity and cooperation. Among its institutional expressions were councils of churches, of which the World Council was the global version.

Bill was a young pastor then, serving a pair of small rural congregations, and he was intensely excited about this event. He went to great lengths to be there, traveling from California and sleeping on a friend's sofa. Bill participated in a two-week study institute featuring some assembly luminaries that was attended by a hundred clergy and laypeople, about one-third of them from distant states and countries.

The assembly drew enormous public attention. Newspapers and magazines across the country followed it. One hundred thousand spectators attended its opening ceremony. President Dwight Eisenhower was a guest speaker, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Art Institute of Chicago, and several seminaries hosted complementary programs.

Along with press coverage, the assembly itself had a substantial print output. Mimeographed drafts of all the speeches were issued in advance, in several languages. There were working-group reports, public statements, publicity brochures, and take-home items. Afterward, participants received a book of photos and the set of official slides.

Bill saved most of this material in his accordion file. His annotations indicate that he anticipated applying it in his local work. "Use," he reminded himself, on a mimeographed talk about eschatology. "Use this in PF," he wrote, on a history of the ecumenical movement, thinking of Pilgrim Fellowship, a youth program. He wasn't alone in his intentions: The WCC clearly meant its findings to be disseminated to local churches and communities. It provided study guides and booklets, and a press office prepared news releases for "your hometown paper[s]." A new hymn, the winner of a competition with five hundred entries, was issued in ready-to-use offprints.

This is how movement work gets done on the ground. Many forces made the ecumenical movement, but one of them—as in any social movement—was this band of irregulars. Someone caught a glimpse of the great Toyohiko Kagawa or Martin Niemöller and displayed the snapshots in a community slideshow. Someone took time from a busy career to absorb an intensive lecture series. Someone brought home those statements and study guides to share with small churches in Indiana and Arkansas and California. People sang a new song together.

Bill didn't last much longer as a pastor. The following year, he entered a doctoral program that led to a teaching career in the United States and overseas. One of the things he brought with him—embodied in his accordion file—was this direct encounter with an international, theologically diverse, and emergent postcolonial Christianity. It wasn't his last, or anyone else's. P

Patricia Appelbaum is a historian of American liberal religion.

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