

## PLUGGING IN TO PUBLIC HISTORY IN LAS VEGAS

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The annual conference for the National Council on Public History always plays a critical role in taking stock and setting the tone for the field throughout the year. Sessions, tours, and after-hours conversations add up to a whole bigger than its parts—a fresh understanding of the challenges of the moment and a shared sense of purpose in addressing them. When NCPH approached us to be co-chairs of the Program Committee, we both understood that our job was to develop a conference program that met the needs of the public history community today.



And so it should be no surprise that the theme of this conference, “Power Lines,” emerged shortly after the November 2016 US election.

It felt like the world had been jolted and bruised by the campaigns and that the very notion of “public” had fissured. In the aftermath, we asked ourselves: What is a public historian’s role in this fractured landscape? Do we aspire to be healers or unmaskers, conveners or resisters, truth-tellers or facilitators, or, likely, some mix of all of these?

Of course no theme (or conference) can fully encompass these questions, but we aimed for a metaphor that would do justice to our moment of uncertainty—one that would leave room for participants to lay bare what divides us and, potentially, to offer visions for stitching “us” back together.

The notion of “lines” seems to fit the moment and public historians’ place within it. Lines can divide and demarcate; they cut boundaries and leave scars. But lines can nurture, too, creating a sense of belonging and delineating community (that longtime touchstone for our field). As well, the idea of lines of communication seems appropriate to our field, where so many of us spend our days penning or pitching lines and wondering where they lead.

“Power” conveys the stakes in this work. Who’s in, who’s out, who’s on which side of the line matters. Mindful of that power, in



The Neon Museum, host of a nighttime tour at NCPH 2018. Photo courtesy of the Las Vegas News Bureau.

planning a slate of sessions and events, this year’s Program Committee aimed for inclusion and intersectionality, determined to fight the tendency to fall back on the same old lines: we wanted to clear room for new ideas to unspool and crisscross in fresh ways. The preliminary *Program* is now available for your perusal at [ncph.org](http://ncph.org), and we hope you will find these efforts successful. We thank our colleagues on the committee for all their hard work and thoughtful contributions to the effort.

When the proposals for the conference came in, we saw that many hinged on examining,

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## ALTERNATIVE PUBLIC HISTORY: WHAT WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY “THE FIELD”

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The *States of Incarceration* exhibition was one of the first ways in which I learned that public history has the potential to tell meaningful, painful, and even controversial stories. Organized by the Humanities Action Lab, currently hosted at Rutgers University–Newark and formerly at The New School, this project was a part of my graduate work at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Shining a light on the human costs of mass incarceration, stories that don’t often fit into traditional museum spaces or exhibition contexts, I discovered the radical practice possibilities of public history. Public history has always represented, to me, the opportunity to counter traditional narratives

often perpetuated by archives, universities, museums, national parks, and other historic sites. Many of the public historians I learn from and am mentored by have upheld an inclusive approach to a field that, unfortunately, can still be difficult to access. In the same way that museums and historic sites can represent and contextualize history that academia often cannot, I think of alternative public history as a way to consider history and engage the public outside the scope of museums and historic spaces.

Currently, I’m the Communications and Community Engagement Coordinator for the BOOM!Health harm reduction center in the South Bronx. Though technically outside the “field,” I still very much consider



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- Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation – Historical Archives Department
- Rincon Tribal Museum
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NCPH inspires public engagement with the past and serves the needs of practitioners in putting history to work in the world by building community among historians, expanding professional skills and tools, fostering critical reflection on historical practice, and publicly advocating for history and historians. *Public History News* is published in March, June, September, and December. NCPH reserves the right to reject material that is not consistent with the goals and purposes of the organization. Individual membership orders, changes of address, and business and editorial correspondence should be addressed to NCPH, 127 Cavanaugh Hall – IUPUI, 425 University Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46202-5140. E-mail: [ncph@iupui.edu](mailto:ncph@iupui.edu). Tel: 317-274-2716. Join online or renew at [www.ncph.org](http://www.ncph.org). Headquartered on the campus of IUPUI, NCPH is grateful for the generous support of the IU School of Liberal Arts and the Department of History.

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# CANDIDATES FOR THE 2018 NCPH ELECTION

Full candidate info at [bit.ly/NCPH2018Slate](http://bit.ly/NCPH2018Slate)

Current board and committee members are listed at [ncph.org/about/governance-committees/](http://ncph.org/about/governance-committees/)

## Vice President/President Elect (one candidate)

Gregory Smoak, American West Center, University of Utah

## Board of Directors (six candidates for three positions)

Kristen Baldwin Deathridge, Appalachian State University

Briann Greenfield, New Jersey Council for the Humanities

Krista McCracken, Algoma University

Jay Price, Wichita State University

Kimberly Springle, Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives

William Stoutamire, G.W. Frank Museum of History and Culture (UNK)

## Nominating Committee (four candidates for two positions)

Jackie Barton, Ohio History Connection

Julia Brock, West Georgia University

Tatiana Daguillard, Florida Department of Transportation

Christopher Graham, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Ballots and candidate biographical information were distributed by email to members in late-November. Please contact [ncph@iupui.edu](mailto:ncph@iupui.edu) if you are a member and did not receive an electronic ballot. The election closes **January 22, 2018**. Your vote counts!



Washington votes, 1938. LC-DIG-hec-24529, Harris & Ewing Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

## Welcome New Members!

Jennifer Anderson  
Stony Brook, NY

Haley Antell  
Kent, OH

Aimee Bachari  
Pearland, TX

Mark Bassett  
Ely, NV

Mark Belloni  
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Alanna Casey  
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Margaret Goddard  
Cleveland Heights, OH

Alexander Goodrich  
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Alexandra Gradwohl  
Chicago, IL

James Grant  
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A. Page Harrington  
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Seal Beach, CA

Cheryl Hawkins  
Washington, DC

Benjamin Hayes  
Skagway, AK

Taura Helms  
Poulsbo, WA

Corinna Hill  
Rochester, NY

Elayne Hinsch  
Milton, FL

Ashley Hollinshead  
Mount Pleasant, SC

Andrea Holm  
Tucson, AZ

Caroline Hopkins  
Chevy Chase, MD

Ethan Howes  
Richmond, VA

Brandon Jackson  
Farmington Hills, MI

Sean Jacobson  
Chicago, IL

Melissa Jasper  
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Hasan Jeffries  
Columbus, OH

Ashley Jones  
Washington, DC

Jonathan Kalish  
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Elle Kaplan  
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Adam Kloppe  
Maplewood, MO

Rachel Lambert  
Murfreesboro, TN

Ahenebah Lane  
Leicester, MA

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Goleta, CA

Alexis Laubscher  
Rockville, MD

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Maureen Litchfield  
Los Angeles, CA

Keegan Martin  
Centennial, CO

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John Mckiernan-Gonzalez  
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Bryan Morey  
Chicago, IL

Kathryn Oberdeck  
Urbana, IL

Megan Ockerman  
Olympia, WA

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Chicago, IL

Peter Walsh  
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Celeste Wiley  
Charleston, SC

Rachael Woody  
Tigard, OR

Mike Woolley  
Evergreen Park, IL

Mary Worrall  
East Lansing, MI

Amir Zelingner  
Boston, MA

**NCPH would like to extend a special thanks to our new Partner members:**

Boston African American National Historic Site  
Boston, MA

Gerald Zahavi  
Elizabethtown, NY

The National Parks of Boston  
Boston, MA

Meijer Heritage Center  
Grand Rapids, MI

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# PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS



ALEXANDRA LORD  
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It had been a long flight and I wondered if I was jet-lagged as I listened to the conversation swirling around me.

“Our academic colleagues need to re-think how we approach tenure and promotion for people doing public history.”

“We need to respect the public. They are interested in history and we must share our research with them—we must make it more accessible.”

“Academic writing handicaps us. At times, I find myself struggling to read work by academic colleagues because it is so dense and...well...poorly written.”

“How do we re-think national narratives to ensure that they address difficult histories? Can they truly be inclusive and reflective of multiple perspectives?”

I may have been the only American historian at a public history conference in China, but the discussion was eerily familiar. I had traveled nearly 7,000 miles to hear conversations I



Statue of Captain James Cook erected in Hyde Park, Sydney, Australia in 1879. The statue has recently been a center of debate for crediting Cook with the “discovery” of Australia and perpetuating colonial narratives. Photo by Flickr user Stephen Kelly.

had already heard in places ranging from Monterey to Nashville to Providence. In some ways, I should not have been surprised. Having been a non-Americanist historian who lived abroad, I’ve always known that many of the issues and problems historians in America see as fundamental to our field are far from unique.

Still, seeing colleagues from diverse places discuss the same issues Americans have been discussing over the past year was deeply provocative.

Public monuments that reflect a white supremacist past? As an Australian historian reminded me, Australia has its own problems with monuments that glorify its colonial history and the country is engaged in difficult conversations about this.

Encouraging museums to depict the insidious reach of slavery even in regions which claim to have banned slavery? As a British historian reminded me, British academics and museums have been pushing their fellow citizens to see and recognize the ways in which modern Britain is built on the legacy of overseas slavery.

Educating people about atrocities that targeted minorities? As a French historian reminded me, even a task that seems as straightforward as exploring the Reformation and massacres of Protestants can be difficult in a predominantly Catholic nation.

Documenting recent and very painful events? As a Chinese historian reminded me, discussions about relatively recent events such as the Cultural Revolution can be problematic when a government and society are reluctant to engage with this history in an open and candid manner.

What intrigued me the most in these discussions was how cognizant non-American historians were of the issues facing American historians—and how little we American historians have been discussing the global nature of these issues.

Although I was aware of Britain’s increasing push to explore and discuss its role in the global slave trade and although I was aware



In Britain, Liverpool's International Slavery Museum is an example of work being done to tell the global story of slavery. Photo courtesy of Visit Liverpool.

of the difficulties inherent in examining a colonial past, I had never really engaged in discussions about these topics with my non-American colleagues. This was painful to realize, as I like to see myself as a historian who defaults to thinking globally.

In some ways, this failure to engage in conversations with non-American colleagues reflects the intense balkanization of our profession. Historians routinely define ourselves in terms of chronological and geographic divisions as well as in terms of methodological approaches. Within this context, no one sees that a 16<sup>th</sup> century European historian could find an oral history conference provocative, even as that scholar uses religious confessions that have interesting parallels to oral history interviews. Similarly, no one imagines that an intellectual or political historian would benefit from a conference on the history of technology. Boundaries such as these often prevent us from asking very different questions than those we have been trained to ask.

Although we like to see public history as extremely open, these boundaries often define our field as well. They may be subtle, but they are boundaries nonetheless.

One of these is our tendency to believe that public history, at least here in America, is American history. Nothing, as institutions such as the US Holocaust Memorial Museum demonstrate, could be further from the truth. As a nation built on immigration and forced migration, we have an obligation to understand and work with colleagues who do non-American history. We must understand the history, culture, and conflicts of other countries if we are to understand our own. We must also understand emigration from the perspective of the nations that lost people to America and what that has meant for them.

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# CHARTING OUT OUR FUTURE: NCPH LONG RANGE PLAN

JEAN-PIERRE MORIN / JP5MORIN@GMAIL.COM

Over the course of the last year, NCPH has been undertaking a bit of soul searching. As a growing organization seeking to remain relevant to its membership while continuing to promote the field of public history, NCPH needs to be guided with a clear understanding of the needs of members and chart out a way forward. To that end, the Long Range Planning Committee was convened to review past efforts and to develop a new five year plan for the organization.

To ensure the development of a plan responsive to the needs and interests of the organization and the membership, the Long Range Planning Committee engaged with the membership to capture its perspectives and to draft a new plan for consideration by the

Board. This process involved a consultation approach aiming to capture the opinions and comments from the widest possible segment of NCPH, from the Board of Directors, committee chairs, NCPH staff, and regular members to prospective members. To that effect, questionnaires were developed for the Board, committee chairs, and a focus group, while a membership survey was sent to the entire NCPH membership. Response rates for the Board and committee chairs were high, with an over 75% participation rate. The participation rate for the membership survey topped out at 30%, which, while lower than hoped, still provided a significant “snapshot” of the views and perspectives of our public history community. Engagement through a focus group provided interesting commentary, but had a low participation rate of less than 20%.

The Long Range Plan (LRP) consultation process allowed the committee to not only review the effectiveness of the 2012-2017 LRP, but also determine the key priorities of the membership for the coming years:

- Maintaining the high quality of NCPH programs and activities as the organization grows;
- Increasing independence of NCPH, both financially and institutionally;
- Addressing the academic/non-academic divide;
- Creating a more diverse public history community; and,
- Increasing the advocacy role of NCPH in the current political climate.

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## ACTIONS OF THE NCPH BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*After the April 20 meeting of the NCPH Board of Directors in Indianapolis, IN, and prior to the fall meeting in Washington, DC, the Board convened electronically and by telephone and took the following actions:*



Prior to the October meeting of the Board of Directors in Washington, DC, members of the NCPH staff and Board visited the new National Museum of African American History and Culture on the National Mall. Photo courtesy of Marla Miller, NCPH Vice President.

creation of a formal policy about similar translation requests in the near future for foreign language journals.

- Voted to endorse the American Historical Association’s statement on Confederate monuments.
- Issued a statement in response to violence in Charlottesville, Virginia.

*On Friday and Saturday, October 27 and 28, the Board met in Washington, DC and took the following actions:*

- Approved the Minutes of the Spring 2017 Board Meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana.
- Approved the Minutes of the June 2017 Virtual Board Meeting.
- Approved the Minutes of the July 2017 Executive Committee Meeting.
- Approved the Minutes of the August 2017 Virtual Board Meeting.
- Approved the Minutes of the October 2017 Virtual Board Meeting.
- Voted to adopt the recommended revisions to the NCPH Advocacy Policy as submitted by the Advocacy Committee of the Board.
- Voted to amend the by-laws to reduce the number of Directors of the Corporation from seventeen (17) to sixteen (16), and to merge the positions of the Digital Media Editor and *The Public Historian* co-editor into a single Digital Media Editor/*TPH* Co-Editor position.

- Reviewed reports and updates from *The Public Historian* Editor and Digital Media Editor.
- Conducted annual reviews of the Executive Director and *The Public Historian* Editor.
- Reviewed a report of the process of writing the proposed 2017-2022 organizational Long Range Plan and voted to adopt the 2017-2022 Long Range Plan as written.
- Voted to recognize the exceptional hard work and energy of Jean-Pierre Morin, chair of the Long Range Planning Committee.
- Voted to adopt the 2018 Operating Budget.
- Voted to formalize an up to 4.5% draw down from the Endowment Fund for the Operating Budget each year.
- Voted to accept the 2016 Audit of Financial Statements conducted by Barnes Dennig & Co. Ltd.
- Voted to approve the 2018-2020 Endowment Fundraising Campaign Plan to raise \$250,000 to bring the NCPH Endowment over \$1 million submitted by the Development and Finance Committees.
- Voted to create an Endowment Campaign Task Force for the duration of the 2018-2020 Endowment Fundraising Campaign.
- Discussed potential collaborative opportunities with Cambridge University Press (for an “Elements of Public History” series) and the National Park Service.

- Voted to move forward with an affiliation with the Library of Congress’ Radio Preservation Task Force for their 2017 conference.
- Signed onto the American Alliance of Museums’ fieldwide letter to Congress in support of funding for key federal agencies that support museums and the humanities.
- Voted to create a member rate for American Association for State and Local History members for individual subscriptions to *The Public Historian*.
- Voted to approve translations of NCPH content for a new Chinese-language public history journal and to consider

# NCPH COMMITTEE UPDATES

*These updates give a sampling of what NCPH volunteers are doing for the organization and the field of public history. The committees encourage your input throughout the year; contact information for committee chairs and members can be found at: <http://ncph.org/about/governance-committees/>.*



## AASLH-AHA-NCPH-OAH JOINT TASK FORCE ON PUBLIC HISTORY EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

The Joint Task Force has pursued an active agenda for the first ten months of 2017. We wrapped up an extensive survey of employers of Masters-level public history graduates and a companion survey of the alumni of Masters-level public history programs in the US and Canada. We closed the employer survey with 401 responses and wrote an extended assessment of those findings, which is available online at <http://bit.ly/2zjxC5H>. We closed the alumni survey in August 2017, with a total of 1,488 responses. At this point, we need to analyze the raw responses from the alumni.

Committee members have been engaged in communicating the results of our surveys to our partner organizations, making presentations at NCPH conference in Indianapolis in April and American Association for State and Local History conference in Austin in September. We have panels accepted and prepared to make presentations at the upcoming meetings of the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians.

As a result of the employer survey and the alumni survey we have for the first time a body of evidence drawn from US and Canadian experience that will provide guidance to those who run programs and to students who are searching for programs that are a good fit for their interests and needs.

## ADVOCACY COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD

The Advocacy Committee spent the summer and fall months reviewing the organization's Advocacy Policy at the request of the Board, to make sure that the document stands up to the current climate. The revised policy has been posted to the NCPH website at <http://ncph.org/what-is-public-history/advocacy/>. In July, the group discussed and voted to support the American Alliance of Museums' fieldwide letter to Congress to support funding to key federal agencies that support museums and the humanities. In late summer the group also crafted a statement in response to violence in Charlottesville, VA and voted to endorse the American Historical Association's statement on Confederate monuments.

## CURRICULUM AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

The committee is organized into five teams to broadly advance the strategic goals of NCPH. The first team will review and update best practices documents on the website, with committee veteran



The 2017 Public History Educators' Forum in Indianapolis.

Dan Vivian helping to build on past work. The second team will review and update public history educators' pages on the website. The third will plan the Public History Educators' Forum to be held in April at the annual meeting. The fourth team will explore how to work on a jointly developed webinar with the Professional Development Committee. And finally, a two-member team will explore ways to promote the public history educators' listserv.

## DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Development Committee kicked off its fall with two conference calls in October. The committee's main focus has been to seek Board approval for a new NCPH Endowment Fundraising Campaign, initially proposed by the Development and Finance Committees at the 2017 Annual Meeting in Indianapolis.

Together with the Finance Committee, the Development Committee wrote an Endowment Campaign Fundraising Plan with the goal to raise \$250,000 through a three-year campaign from 2018-2020. This would bring the current NCPH endowment up over one million dollars, thus ensuring future growth for the organization. The committee submitted this plan to the Board, which was approved at the Board's October meeting, along with a request to create an Endowment Campaign Fundraising Task Force to assist in the fundraising efforts. The committee and Board members will also be participating in fundraising training in December to prepare for the campaign. Currently, the committee is working to develop a campaign case statement that informs potential donors about the goals and benefits of the campaign.

## DIGITAL MEDIA GROUP

The Digital Media Group has been preparing for the transition of Cathy Stanton out of the role as volunteer Digital Media Editor for the organization. Cathy will officially step down in April 2018 after building the entire digital editorial structure for the organization and the *History@Work* blog over the last decade. Cathy, the NCPH staff, and Board worked with our partners at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Center for the Humanities at Rutgers University-Camden to allow Tammy Gaskell to take over the role of Digital Media Editor, merging it with her existing role as co-editor of *The Public Historian*. Laura Miller, who has served on the Digital Media Group (DMG) since 2012 will begin a new volunteer role as chair of the DMG coordinating the social media volunteers and managing terms for all members of the group. The editorial structure of *History@Work* was

also adjusted to allow for succession planning, to bring in new authors and potential editors, and to recognize the expanded role of the blog in our publications work. The DMG also worked to wrap up our longtime involvement in editing the H-Public listserv. We continue to send out announcements in the "Around the Field" listing on *History@Work*, and have recently launched a members-only Facebook group for discussions. Visit NCPH's Facebook page to request access.



Committee on Environmental Sustainability member Nancy Germano led an urban clean-up service trip at the 2017 Indianapolis conference.

## COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Our goal remains to keep environmental sustainability at the forefront of the profession's discussions. The committee sponsored two sessions at the 2017 conference and will sponsor two this coming year in Las Vegas. The 2017 panel "Engaging Neighborhoods in Climate Change Planning with Public History" described efforts to use public history to engage residents, enhance climate change preparedness at the neighborhood level, and ensure inclusion in the planning process. In addition, committee member Melinda Jetté, along with Andrew Kirk, facilitated a working group titled "Public History Education and Environmental Sustainability" with the aim of promoting the integration of environmental sustainability into public history education and training. There will be a follow-up session titled "Resources and Best Practices for Public History Education and Training and Environmental Sustainability" (Melinda Jetté, facilitator) at the 2018 conference. David Glassberg will facilitate a 2018 roundtable session titled "Cultural Resources, Community Engagement, and Climate Change."

The committee is currently exploring ways to help NCPH become a model of sustainable practice and self-auditing. We recently drafted a statement on environmental sustainability related to our committee, which is available at <http://ncph.org/about/governance-committees/>. We are currently reviewing an environmental sustainability checklist for future conference vendors developed by Will Ippen and Maren Bzdek and hope to collect data in the near future to identify impact areas shaping the conference footprint and use them to inform a questionnaire or checklist.

## FINANCE COMMITTEE

During the Finance Committee's October 4<sup>th</sup> meeting via conference call, the committee reviewed and discussed the 2018 draft NCPH budget

# NCPH COMMITTEE UPDATES

and draft 2016 audit of financial statements, which were both forwarded to the Board for approval. The committee approved a motion to ask the Board to formalize a 4.5% draw down from the endowment for the operating budget each year, which the Board approved at its October meeting.

As tasked by the Board last spring, the Finance Committee worked with the Development Committee to draft an Endowment Campaign Fundraising Plan to raise \$250,000 over the next three years. Our committee discussed the plan with an eye toward insuring there will be adequate resources in the budget to help carry out the fundraising plan. The Finance Committee, together with the Development Committee, submitted this plan to the Board, which was approved at the October board meeting. The Development Committee, along with a newly established Endowment Campaign Fundraising Task Force, will take the lead in carrying out this fundraising plan.



2017's New Professional and Graduate Student Social was held at the Slippery Noodle in Indianapolis.

## GRADUATE STUDENT AND NEW PROFESSIONAL COMMITTEE

The Graduate Student and New Professional Committee has been hard at work planning a new kind of mixer for our members in Las Vegas. Stay tuned for more details!

We have also been active in the planning of NCPH's new member welcome program; we're looking forward to implementing the pilot shortly. We hope this program will help us to reach even more new professional and graduate students, and help us continue to be both an advocate and resource for them. As always, the committee has been maintaining *The Public History Navigator*, our helpful guide for prospective and current graduate students. The second edition of this series is just beginning to take shape. Look out for the upcoming navigator, which will focus on professional life—finding a job and growing a career. We are still in the early stages of the project, but we are looking forward to the many collaborations we have planned that will make this guide a useful tool for all public historians.

The committee is also committed to continuing our presence on *History@Work*. Our "Ask a Public Historian" series continues to do well, and we are drafting other potential posts and series.



The Sedan Crater at the Nevada Test Site. Attendees to NCPH 2018 will have a chance to visit this and other areas of the Test Site as part of a daylong trip. Photo courtesy of Jarek Tuszynski and shared via Wikimedia Commons.

## 2018 LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

The Las Vegas behind the headlines is an expansive and multifaceted community steeped in historical complexity. For the 2018 NCPH meeting, the Local Arrangements Committee has assembled a wide array of exciting local tours, field sessions, and special events that will provide the opportunity to explore this unique global destination while gaining insights into challenges confronting public historians everywhere. Guided tours will illuminate the dynamic history of the Las Vegas Strip, the glitzy vintage signage of the Neon Boneyard, and the eclectic residential architecture of the newly-registered Beverly Green Historic District. Field sessions will explore multifaceted approaches toward telling the story of Las Vegas' African American Community as well as the diverse archivally-based community documentation projects and digitization and preservation labs at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Library. Further afield, participants can explore the historic and archaeological landscapes of the Lake Mead Recreation Area and discuss strategies for strengthening public engagement at a trio of historic state parks. Finally, a limited number of participants (register now!) will have the rare opportunity to visit the Nevada Nuclear Test Site and the closed testing town of Mercury. Before your trip, get a map and zoom out from Las Vegas to see or remember how this city is an island in a vast sea of public lands and cultural/natural resources of great interest and importance to public historians. We hope that you will get a chance to see at least a little bit of this vastness and history beyond the neon!

## MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

This year the Membership Committee is continuing to work on programming to expand membership benefits and better serve the diverse needs of NCPH constituents. Current committee projects include developing a new member welcome program that will launch as a pilot project this year, developing a streamlined mini-con application process, and evaluating the long-standing resume review program. The committee also has a new outreach event planned for the 2018 Annual Meeting—stay tuned for more details!

Have ideas about NCPH membership benefits or questions about membership? Get in touch with co-chairs Andy Mach and Krista McCracken. We look forward to seeing new and returning members in Vegas!

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee had a great year developing the slate for the upcoming elections. Among the committee's tasks this year was selecting the next Vice President for the organization by finding someone who would be willing and able to serve for six years as they transition from Vice President, to President, to Immediate Past President.

While in past years we have struggled to secure candidates for the elections, this year, after implementing a few changes and recommendations from last year's committee, we were able to get a very solid slate of candidates who not only are excited to serve the organization in a larger capacity, but who are dedicated to NCPH and ready to take us forward.



The 2017 Speed Networking event was a success!

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The NCPH Professional Development Committee has been working towards a number of important goals in preparation of next year's annual meeting in Las Vegas. During the summer the committee reviewed workshop proposals and discussed strategies for revising the submission guidelines for future meetings. This work will continue into 2018 with the hope of having new guidelines in place for the 2019 Annual Meeting. We also collaborated with the Committee for Government Historians and the Consultants Committee to craft workshops at the Las Vegas meeting geared towards public historians looking to pursue work in those fields.

The committee continues to work on revisions for making the Speed Networking session at the conference a more user-friendly experience. The committee plans to have an increased number of members at the event who will be on the ground helping with the logistics. We also created a FAQ document that helps established professionals, new professionals, and graduate students understand how the session works. Finally, we created an accessible sign-up form for recruiting more participants into the experience. In the future the committee plans to help with designing mini-con sessions throughout North America and assisting with other professional development initiatives.

## NEWS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP



Monica Perales.

Monica Perales has been named the new director of the Center for Public History at the University of Houston as of Fall 2017. She succeeds Martin Melosi, who served as the founding director beginning in 1984 and retired from the university. Melosi served on the NCPH Board of Directors from 1985-1988 and as President of the organization from 1992-1993. Perales has a PhD from Stanford University, is the author of the prize-winning *Smelertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (2010), and is the co-founder of the Gulf Coast Food Project with new CPH Associate Director Todd Romero. Her teaching and research interests include Chicana/o labor and social history, immigration, American West, Borderlands and oral history.

Perales is responsible for managing the Welcome Wilson Houston History Collaborative (which includes Houston History, the Houston Oral History Program, the Houston History Archives, and Houston Memories), the CPH Distinguished Lecture Series, and the Public History Program.



## GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

Looking for ways to support a budding public historian? Want to reward a graduating or new student for his or her hard work? Consider giving the gift of an NCPH membership! Available in the Student, New Professional, Retired, and Individual categories, a gift membership in NCPH offers important professional benefits and connections for new and established practitioners.

<http://bit.ly/joinNCPH>

# THE ORAL HISTORY REVIEW

## Announcing a new *OHR* Virtual Issue: Oral History & Public History

*The Oral History Review's* second virtual issue takes up the theme of the 2017 OHA Annual Meeting, *Engaging Audiences: Oral History and the Public*. It brings together content in which oral historians grapple with their interactions with various publics, asking what roles we can play in both interpreting the past and shaping the present. This virtual issue republishes a number of articles on the theme of oral history and public history from the *OHR's* archive and will be available for a limited time.

Start reading at [bit.ly/OHRpublic](http://bit.ly/OHRpublic)



# ALTERNATIVE PUBLIC HISTORY: WHAT WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY

## “THE FIELD” // CONT'D. FROM PAGE 1

myself a public historian. Harm reduction is a practice and theory for helping people who are impacted by drug use. It's a set of strategies and approaches to meet people where they are in order to minimize the harmful effects of drug use. This includes needle exchange, testing, management, and treatment for HIV and Hepatitis C, education about hygiene, and access to overdose prevention drugs like Narcan. Harm reduction advocates understand that people will use drugs, whether they are legal or not, and that users deserve respect and dignity, as well as access to services that will literally keep them alive.

This work builds on my summer fellowship at the Smithsonian's Latino Museum Studies Program, where I spent six weeks in the medicine and science division at the National Museum of American History working with Dr. Katherine Ott. The Latino Museum Studies Program aims to give graduate students and new professionals the opportunity to advance projects and dissertations around Latinx history. My project was to develop a collections plan to document the history around opioid use, harm reduction, and drug policy reform within New York City's Puerto Rican and Latinx communities. Now in my role at BOOM!Health, I am using my public history skills to make information available and accessible to our participants, and help represent them and the work done here to the wider public.

To fully embrace our past, we must embrace nontraditional narratives in all their complexity. This means more diverse practitioners. People of color; LGBTQ folks; women; those with disabilities; economically disadvantaged; those outside of academic or museum spaces: all need representation, not only within exhibitions, but as curators and practitioners of public history. It also means telling stories that are sometimes messy and that don't have a happy ending. NCPH Inclusion, also known as the NCPH Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, is dedicated to making sure our field and our professional organization honors and upholds diversity in the field. To this end, we make recommendations to NCPH leadership, host sessions to solicit public feedback, and support the work of inclusive practitioners. I am proud to be a co-facilitator of the NCPH 2018 conference working group, "Insider/Outsider: Racial Bias and Positionality in Interpretation."



The Indianapolis opening of the Humanities Action Lab's *States of Incarceration* traveling exhibit in April 2017

Along with GVGK Tang of Temple University, Patrice Green of the University of South Carolina, and a number of participants involved with NCPH Inclusion, we will try to tackle what it means to be a public history practitioner working with and/or from a marginalized community.

Working with community activists for *States of Incarceration* and conducting research at the National Museum of American History as a fellow were both very different than actually working within a harm reduction center. We need different kinds of public historians for different kinds of public history work. I encourage public historians to embrace alternative ways of practicing public history with and for communities that are outside the traditional scope of museums and historic sites. Museum settings and academic contexts, even at their best, are very different than other kinds of community spaces. The best way to understand people is to meet them where they are.

*Shakti Castro is the Communications and Community Engagement Coordinator for the BOOM!Health and a member of the NCPH Diversity and Inclusion Task Force.*

## PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS // CONT'D. FROM PAGE 4

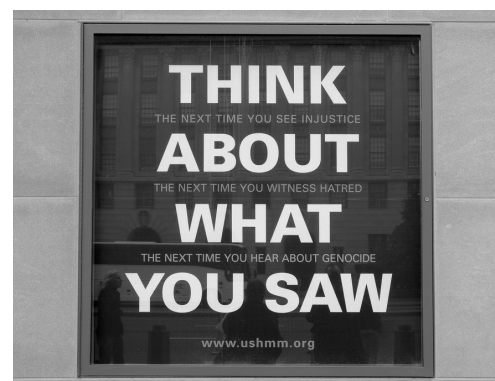
We need, in other words, to take a global approach to public history—even when we are doing American history.

But the need to hear non-American voices is important for other, deeper, reasons.

The ugly and highly pervasive stereotype is that of the American who knows little to nothing of other cultures. We may (and do!) protest this stereotype yet it is not without some truth. At a conference I attended nearly fifteen years ago, a Canadian pulled out American and Canadian currency. The Canadians could identify all of the figures on American currency; none of the Americans could identify any of the Canadian figures. I suspect many of us would do as poorly identifying national figures from Mexican

history. And yet the fate of both these countries has been deeply intertwined with ours for centuries.

Our museums, our historic sites, and even our classrooms will foster deeper and richer conversations if we understand and contextualize our own history within an understanding of other histories. Similarly, we public historians will benefit from hearing the voices of our non-American colleagues as they struggle to address the same questions with which we have struggled for decades. If nothing else, learning and engaging in more discussions with our non-American colleagues will enable us to see America and its history as others see it—and that is necessary if we are to truly understand our history and what is and is not unique about it.



Sign outside the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. Image courtesy of Flickr user Son of Groucho.

From these priorities and another round of consultation with the Board of Directors, staff, and committee chairs, the planning committee developed a final version of the LRP that brings a new approach. While it continues with the goal of directly supporting the NCPH mission statement, the document now also provides clear timelines and indicates roles and responsibilities for its implementation.

The LRP is centered on six pillars, which are interrelated goals and cascading activities designed to build on continuous achievements. Below are the pillars and their respective goals:

- Pillar 1: Developing and sustaining a public history community
  - Nurture a collaborative environment between all members of the broadly defined public history community, (including those who do public history work but do not use the term public history)
  - Create more balanced NCPH activities that better reflect the interests and needs of the organization's many constituent communities
  - Develop new spaces for NCPH members to convene in-person outside of the annual meeting
  - Encourage knowledge-sharing approaches among practitioners in various fields and those in public history training programs
- Pillar 2: Developing the most diverse community of practice, diversity of people, and diversity of activities possible
  - Increase diversity and inclusion of NCPH membership and the profession
  - Increase diversity of NCPH committee members
  - Increase the level of diversity and inclusion in NCPH activities and publications by preparing the current constituency for a more diverse organization and welcoming change
  - Deepen relationships and encourage greater participation from local communities hosting annual meetings and mini-cons
- Pillar 3: Expanding the professional skills and tools of all practitioners of public history

- Engage and sustain members and prospective members at different stages of their training and careers
- Continue to build an environment where professional skills are developed and enhanced
- Increase support for job seekers and new professionals

- Pillar 4: Fostering critical reflection on historical practice
  - Encourage collective national and international conversations about the shape and direction of public history
  - Encourage regional and local conversations on public history among public historians
  - Lead in the professional and academic conversations about digital scholarship and digital public history
- Pillar 5: Publicly advocating for history and historians, and public history as a field
  - Be at the forefront of advocacy for history, historians, and practitioners
  - Be more responsive to the needs and interests of stakeholders (members, partners, supporters)
  - Support the historical and humanities communities in their advocacy efforts
  - Work to raise the profile of public history among potential students, historians, cultural institutions, and other practitioners
- Pillar 6: Ensuring the ongoing stability of NCPH
  - Increase internal capacity of NCPH to pursue its goals
  - Increase financial transparency of NCPH
  - Increase fundraising capacity of NCPH to pursue its goals
  - Continue to develop and refine efforts to retain and recruit members and annual meeting attendees

In the 2012-2017 LRP, there was a noted absence of specific details on the implementation of the plan, nor were there specific assignments to the Board, committees, or NCPH office. The absence of timelines for achieving LRP goals allowed the stated goals to slip from the Board's attention. As a result, it has been difficult to clearly discern

how effective NCPH was in implementing the 2012-2017 plan. Discussions amongst the Board and committee chairs noted the need to assign specific activities to committees and groups and to develop a reporting structure back to the Board to gauge progress.

As a result of these concerns, the approach taken by the current LRP Committee was to ensure that the new plan be based on achievable goals supported by cascading activities being undertaken by specific stakeholders. Activities are tied to timelines centered on the two yearly in-person meetings of the Board. To ensure that committees are aware of this added responsibility, committee chair charge letters include specific mention of the LRP activities. The planning committee will work directly with those assigned activities to ensure adherence to the timelines as well as to address any concerns or questions. Based on these interactions, the committee will report to the Board on a yearly basis. In the past, the planning committee had only been constituted to develop a given plan and then was dormant, the committee will now remain active throughout the LRP cycle to ensure proper implementation through engagement with committees as well as yearly reporting on its progress.

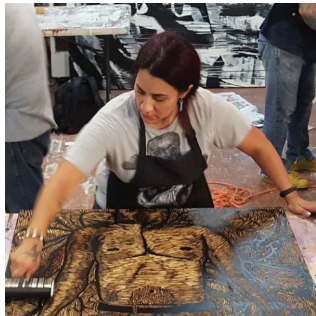
The ever changing nature of an organization's priorities, interests, and needs necessitates that any form of long term planning must be adaptable and flexible. The constant interaction of the planning committee with those with assigned tasks under the current plan will allow it to see where the LRP is ineffective, lacking, or requires modification due to unexpected priorities. Through the yearly reporting structure, the committee will undertake a review of the LRP and propose modification when necessary for the Board's consideration. Proposed recommendations will provide an analysis of why modifications are necessary as well as include new activities and responsibilities to be assigned. The committee will also demonstrate how it consulted with stakeholders (i.e. committees, chairs, members) in developing the recommended changes.

I encourage you to be in touch if you have comments on the Long Range Plan. It can be viewed in its entirety online at: <http://ncph.org/about/governance-committees/long-range-plan-2017-2022/>

*Jean-Pierre Morin is the departmental historian at Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and the chair of the NCPH Long Range Planning Committee.*

# PLUGGING IN TO PUBLIC HISTORY IN LAS VEGAS // CONT'D. FROM PAGE 1

breaking, and rebuilding the usual ways of working. Inspired, we set out to develop a public plenary that took a more intensive look at how multidisciplinary tools (from public art and dance to Instagram) could lead to new ways of doing public history in our present context: a public conversation about how to be inventive as history's storytellers.



The public plenary event, *Breaking Barriers in Public Storytelling*, will be held on Friday, April 20 from 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm at the Renaissance Las Vegas, with the generous support of the IUPUI public history program.

We're pleased to bring together Celeste De Luna, a Tejana painter and printmaker and "daughter of the borderlands" from the Rio Grande Valley, and Adriel Luis, a visionary curator at the "cultural laboratory" of the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, for a moderated conversation. These speakers tell important stories, highlight marginalized communities, and push people to think about themselves and their histories in new ways.

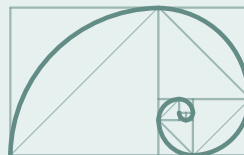
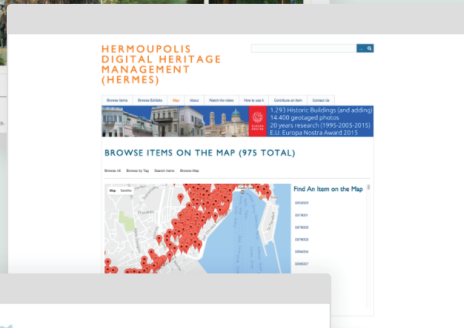
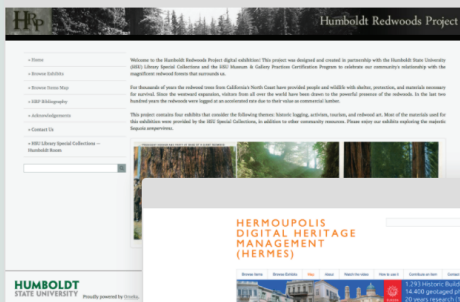


Celeste De Luna (top) and Adriel Luis (bottom), 2018 plenary speakers.

But that's not all. While you're in Las Vegas for the conference, we hope that you will take the time to get to know the city a little better and to push beyond the expected. The 2018 Local Arrangements Committee, led by Andy Kirk (the University of Nevada, Las Vegas) and Alicia Barber (Stories in Place LLC), has brought together organizations doing great public history work across the city: the Mob Museum, the Neon Museum, the Nevada Preservation Foundation, the Nevada State Museum and Springs Preserve, the Nevada state parks, and more. An array of tours and field sessions will let you stretch your legs, see some of the beautiful landscapes of the American southwest, and gain a sense of history deeper than the city's party-town image.

While some of the lessons of this remarkable town are lit in neon and some more subtly drawn, we hope that the conference will become an energizing opportunity for collective reckoning with our moment, the history that fueled it, and our potential as public historians to help illuminate a way forward.

*Priya Chhaya and Benjamine Filene are co-chairs of the 2018 NCPH Annual Meeting Program Committee. Priya Chhaya serves as Manager of Online Content and Products for the National Trust for Historic Preservation; Benjamin Filene is the Director of Public History and Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.*



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# PUBLIC HISTORY NEWS

## National Council on Public History

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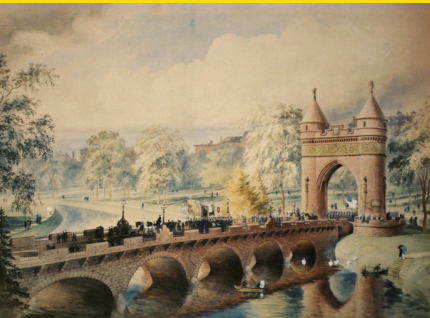
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## Join NCPH Today!



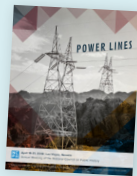
### Upcoming Meetings

Las Vegas, NV  
April 18-21, 2018

Hartford, CT  
March 27-30, 2019

Atlanta, GA  
March 18-21, 2020

Salt Lake City, UT  
March 24-27, 2021



Park River Bridge and Soldiers and Sailors Arch in Hartford, Connecticut, by Theodore Otto Langerfeldt. Photographed by Julie Stagis for *The Hartford Courant*, September 16, 2011. Accessed via Wikimedia Commons.

NCPH inspires public engagement with the past and serves the needs of practitioners in putting history to work in the world. We build community among historians, expand professional skills and tools, foster critical reflection on historical practice, and advocate for history and historians.

### Members of NCPH have access to:

#### **The Public Historian**

- a print and online journal offering the latest original research, case studies, reviews, and coverage of the ever-expanding international field of public history

#### **Professional Development**

- continuing education in workshops, working groups, and critical reflection on practical and theoretical issues

#### **News of the Field**

- *Public History News*, email updates, and other NCPH reports will keep you current

#### **Community**

- connect to thousands of other public historians through our blog *History@Work*, listservs, and the NCPH groups on Facebook and LinkedIn

#### **Discounts on the Annual Meeting**

- Las Vegas 2018, Hartford 2019, Atlanta 2020, Salt Lake City 2021

#### **Leadership Opportunities**

- help to shape the profession and field by serving on committees and task forces

#### **Advocacy Efforts**

- NCPH, with the National Coalition for History, speaks on behalf of the profession and in the public interest on historical issues.

#### **Online Resources**

- Statement on Ethics and Professional Conduct, Tenure & Promotion guidelines, *Guide to Public History Programs*, best practices, consultant listings, weekly job postings, and discounted JPASS access to journals

#### **Membership Dues**

Patron: \$600	Individual: \$74
Partner: \$400	Retired: \$55
Sustaining: \$125	New Professional: \$45
	Student: \$35

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