ANNIVERSARIES AND ACTIVISM: SHAPING INCLUSIVE HISTORIES IN BALTIMORE

GREGORY SMOAK / GREG.SMOAK@UTAH.EDU

If you are like me, one of the things that attracted you to public history in the first place was its inclusiveness. Public historians collaborate with community partners to produce meaningful and useful history for the people. Until the mid-20th century, the work of public historians focused on exclusive stories of great men and the preservation of elite spaces. The slow and difficult process of expanding national and global narratives began as historically marginalized communities asserted their place in the political life and civic dialogue of nations. Their actions forced historians to rethink and rewrite their narratives to include people who could no longer be silenced. Because of their collaborative nature and expansive methodological toolkit, public historians were particularly well suited to play a crucial role in this process. We chose the theme “Challenging the Exclusive Past” for the 2016 joint meeting of the National Council on Public History and the Society for History in the Federal Government (SHFG) as a means to critically assess both the successes of public historians as well as the continuing challenges they face in creating truly inclusive history in the 21st century.

Gray’s funeral turned violent, the city was placed under a state of emergency for nearly a week. In response to Gray’s death and the civil unrest that followed, local arrangements co-chairs Denise Meringolo and Elizabeth Nix arranged a public plenary that explores the longer history of racial inequality and protest in the city. “The Uprising in Focus: The Image, Experience, and History of Inequality in Baltimore” brings together community members who experienced both the 1968 Baltimore riots and the unrest of 2015 with a journalist and a community activist to consider the underlying causes and consequences of inequality. The public plenary will take place on Friday, March 18 at the Ebenezer AME Church in Baltimore.

The year 2016 marks two significant anniversaries for public historians – the 100th of the National Park Service (NPS) and the 50th of the National Historic Preservation Act. The NPS centennial will be marked by a half-day symposium, “Challenging the Exclusive Past: Can Federal Agencies Help Reorient and Diversify Public Culture in the 21st Century?” at the Maryland Historical Society on Wednesday, March 16. In addition to the symposium, there will be a number of sessions devoted to NPS history and the historic preservation movement.

Conference attendees will, of course, find the diverse range of sessions, working groups, workshops, and events they expect at every annual meeting. The program committee received a record number of submissions once again this year. We had to make tough decisions and we worked hard

CHECKING IN WITH NCPH’S OCTOBER MINI-CONS

First piloted in 2014, NCPH Mini-Conferences (or mini-cons) are designed to help our members maintain the energy, conviviality, and productivity of the annual meeting year-round, and they’re a great opportunity to get plugged into your local public history community. In October of this year, three NCPH members or member institutions took the reins to organize events in their areas, with support from the NCPH office.

New Directions in Active History mini-con at Huron University College in London, Ontario

DISPATCH FROM ONTARIO, CANADA

Krista McCracken | krista.mccracken@gmail.com

New Directions in Active History: Institutions, Communication and Technologies, an NCPH branded mini-con, took place October 2-4, 2015 at Huron University College in London, Ontario, Canada. We organized this event in the hopes of connecting historians interested in the practice of active history and inviting them to share research, methods, and projects with each other.

The conference built on the work of the website ActiveHistory.ca, founded in 2009 to provide a forum where the work of historians can better reach policy makers, the media, and the public more generally. With 20,000 unique visitors a month, ActiveHistory.ca is one of the best known history-related websites in Canada.

The mini-con branding and funding from NCPH was used as seed money to help attract additional donors and to sponsor a session on public history in Canada. During the planning phase NCPH staff helped by writing a letter of support for the event; promoting
HISTORY supports the NCPH for promoting the value and significance of history every day.

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Oklahoma State University, Dept. of History
Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation-Historical Archives Department
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University of California at Riverside
University of Northern Iowa
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Western Michigan University, Dept. of History
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www.ncph.org/about/patrons-partners/
CANDIDATES FOR THE 2016 NCPH ELECTION


Current Board and Committee members are listed at ncp Programm/about/governance-committees/

Vice President/President Elect (one candidate)

Marla Miller, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Board of Directors (six candidates for three positions)

Larry Celuba, Washington State Archives and Eastern Washington University

Yolanda Chávez Leyva, The University of Texas at El Paso

Modupe Labode, Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis

Adina Jocelyn Langer, Museum of History and Holocaust Education, Kennesaw State University

Troy Reeves, University of Wisconsin – Madison Oral History Program

John H. Sprinkle, Jr., National Park Service

Nominating Committee (four candidates for two positions)

Aleia Brown, Michigan State University Museum

Tim Grove, Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum

Joel Ralph, Director of Programs, Canada’s History

Daniel Vivian, University of Louisville

Ballots and candidate biographical information were distributed by email to members in mid-November. Please contact ncp@iupui.edu if you are a member and did not receive an electronic ballot. The election closes January 15, 2016. Your vote counts!

Welcome New Members!!

Michael Allen
St Louis, MO

Alexandra Andrioli
Gettysburg, PA

Ming Bae
Philadelphia, PA

Nicole Belotan
Newark, DE

Padraic Benson
Westminster, CO

Camille Bethune-Brown
Odenton, MD

Aiden Bettine
Chicago, IL

Ronald Black
Windham, CT

Melissa Blair
Baltimore, MD

Philip Bland
Kansas City, KS

Kevin Borg
Harrisonburg, VA

George Boudreau
Philadelphia, PA

Katherine Bowers
Raleigh, NC

Betsy Bradley
Saint Louis, MO

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Even before the Inner Harbor’s renaissance, I was enthralled with the city’s history and cultural complexity. Perhaps it was the naivety of a young westerner visiting a quintessential industrial urban setting, but the fond memories of Bicentennial patriotism, the Tall Ships framed by Fort McHenry, and people-watching while traversing the suburban streets to old Memorial Stadium – all under the subtle guise of Poe’s macabre worldview – created a persistent love affair with this city.

I encourage you to embrace Baltimore and all it has to offer. Denise Meringolo, Elizabeth Nix, and the Local Arrangements Committee have done a brilliant job of putting together an almost perfect range of tours, workshops, and activities that will enrich you both personally and intellectually (sadly, the O’s opening day at Camden Yards is just days away...). This year’s program, reflecting our joint conference between NCPH and the Society for History in the Federal Government, will be dynamic and engaging, as we have set another record for proposal submissions. The arduous process of carefully selecting the best of the best becomes more intense each year, and we extend our deepest thanks to our Program Committee co-chairs Gregory Smoak and Carl Ashley and to their entire committee for bringing the remarkable meeting content together. Finally, please join me in a huge show of appreciation for Stephanie Rowe and the NCPH professional staff.

I couldn’t be more excited to have my final conference as President of this great organization held in a city I hold so dear. Looking forward to seeing you all there!

PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS

PATRICK MOORE
PMOORE@UWF.EDU

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COMMITTEES ON THE GO

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 officers, committee chairs, committee members, and information about serving on a committee can be found at http://ncph.org/about/governance-committees/. Most committee meetings are open to visitors during the annual meeting.

COUNCIL OF PAST PRESIDENTS
The Council of Past Presidents bestowed its inaugural Founder’s Award on Wes Johnson and Bob Pomeroy at our Nashville conference last spring, and we intend to recognize other members of the founding generation at our Baltimore meeting in March. In addition, we expect that the Baltimore conference—to be held in conjunction with the Society for History in the Federal Government—will provide an exceptional opportunity to continue conducting interviews with colleagues who were involved in the early history of NCPH, the emergence of the public history movement, and the development of public history as an academic discipline. – Bob Weyeneth

CONSULTANTS COMMITTEE
The Consultants Committee is excited to formally announce the upgrade of the Consultants Directory on the NCPh website. Committee members have worked closely with NCPH to implement changes to the directory functionality based on feedback from the 2013 Consultants Survey. Open only to NCPH members, but visible to all, the directory enables search by name, years of experience, degree, regions, and areas of expertise. If you are a consultant and haven’t yet added your name to the directory, or if you would like to update your existing listing, please visit http://ncph.org/consultant-submissions/. Once you’ve explored the new directory, please let us know if you have any suggestions for further improvement. The Consultants Committee will compile suggestions and submit them to NCPH after the Baltimore conference. Feel free to tweet suggestions @NCPHconsultants!

Speaking of the conference, please save the date for the 2016 Consultants Reception in Baltimore. It will take place concurrently with the Poster Session, from 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm on Thursday, March 17. We’re looking forward to seeing you in Baltimore! – Adina Langer and Morgen Young

CURRICULUM AND TRAINING COMMITTEE
The committee recently finalized a new best practices document, “Best Practices for Establishing and Developing a Public History Program,” and has submitted it to the NCPH Board of Directors for review. Three other documents, “Best Practices for Working with Community Partners,” “Best Practices for Integrating Technology into the Public History Classroom,” and “Public History Across the Curriculum,” are under development. Committee members are also making plans for the annual public history educator’s breakfast and a workshop, “Teaching Public History,” to be held at the joint NCPH-Society for History in the Federal Government meeting in Baltimore in March. In addition, the committee anticipates making additions to the teaching and learning pages of the NCPH website and updating the list of program reviewers before the annual meeting. – Daniel Vivian

GOVERNMENT HISTORIANS COMMITTEE
The newly-formed Government Historians Committee, co-chaired by Jean-Pierre Morin and Katherine Scott, is presently developing a mission statement. In addition to exploring issues of interest to NCPH members doing history work within governments at the local, municipal, state, and federal levels, it is planning social activities for the 2016 annual meeting, including a Dine Around for government historians and special tours of government history offices in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan region. – Jean-Pierre Morin and Katherine Scott

JOINT TASK FORCE ON PUBLIC HISTORY EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT
The Public History Education and Employment Task Force continues to gather basic information about trends in the field. It recently completed an online survey of public history employers that generated nearly 400 responses. Analysis of the data will begin immediately. The task force is now developing a survey for alumni of public history M.A programs in an effort to obtain information about post-graduation experiences. It will be distributed early in 2016. – Daniel Vivian

NOMINATING COMMITTEE UPDATE
In the last six months the Nominating Committee has been hard at work putting together the slate for the upcoming election. We believe that every individual on the ballot will be an excellent addition to the team, as each brings a variety of expertise and experience to the table. We’d also like to remind members that if they ever have suggestions for future elections for the Board and Nominating Committee, they should contact committee members.

Don’t forget to vote! Your ballot should have arrived in your email on November 16. Deadline for voting is January 15, 2016. – Priya Chhaya

NEW PROFESSIONAL AND GRADUATE STUDENT COMMITTEE
The New Professional and Graduate Student Committee is currently focused on establishing a new series on the History@Work blog called “Ask a Historian.” The series is aimed at providing down-to-earth, concrete advice, and insight into careers in public history. There are several authors in the pipeline, and our first post by Anne Whisnant was well received. In addition, the committee is looking into creating a blog guide for Baltimore and is also hosting a social event for the 2016 Annual Meeting on Wednesday night at 8:00 pm after the opening reception. We welcome other committee members to attend. We continue to increase our social media presence with our Twitter content and are looking for ways to update or add to the Public History Navigator for this coming year. Suggestions are welcome. – Kristen Baldwin Deathridge and Theresa Koenigsknecht

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
The Professional Development Committee has just begun to recruit public historians to serve as experts for the 2016 Speed Networking session in Baltimore. If you are interested in participating as an expert, please email mhamilt3@uwo.ca. We also assisted in the selection of the upcoming annual meeting workshops. Earlier this year, the committee asked for opinions on professional development outside of our annual conference. We have begun discussing how to provide additional opportunities, particularly online. If you have ideas to share, please contact the chair, Michelle Hamilton. – Michelle Hamilton

Joint Meeting of the NCPH Board of Directors and TPH Editorial Board, 2013.

the event to Canadian NCPH members; advertising the event in the PHNU; and finding speakers for a public history panel. This support was easy to access and allowed us to introduce our student employees to new parts of NCPH.

Over 100 attendees participated in the three-day event. Participants included academic scholars, students, private and public sector workers, local community members, archivists, and others.

One of the weekend’s highlights was the “Future of Public History Programs in Canada” panel, organized with help from NCPH. It featured a discussion of public history in Canada with an emphasis on education and the role of NCPH and public history organizations. A video recording of this panel will be made available on the Activehistory.ca YouTube channel.

Branding the event as an NCPH mini-con allowed us to reach out to Canadian audiences who may be unable to attend NCPH’s annual meeting. Throughout the event, NCPH members promoted NCPH to active historians and public history professionals who were not previously aware of the organization. The mini-con also saw informal discussions of what could be done to raise the profile of NCPH in Canada. The event was filled with enthusiasm for future partnerships and the development of active history in Canada. We plan to foster the new relationships, energy, and projects discovered at this NCPH mini-con. And hopefully we’ll see some new Canadian faces in Baltimore as a result!

Krista McCracken is a Researcher/Curator at Algoma University’s Arthur A. Wishart Library and Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre. She is currently serving on the NCPH Membership Committee.

SPOTLIGHT ON SAN MARCOS, TEXAS

Nancy K. Berlage | nkb11@txstate.edu

On October 10, 2015, NCPH Membership Committee members Nancy K. Berlage and Megan Blair hosted Immigration, Migration, Memory, and Public History at Texas State University in San Marcos. This mini-conference was sponsored and funded by NCPH and Texas State University. Attendees (approximately 70 over the course of the day) included graduate students; new public history practitioners; seasoned oral historians; and educators of public history, oral history, geography, anthropology, and other specialties.

The conference brought together individuals working on this topic within and outside public history and promoted more awareness of NCPH and public history in general. It generated multi-disciplinary discussions about public history approaches to immigration history and encouraged attendees to think more about community engagement. The conference also sought to heighten awareness of the connections between public history programs and projects and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant programs: to this end, several participants were fellows of the NEH Summer Institute America’s East Central Europeans: Migration and Memory, held at Columbia University in 2014.

An informal Friday night reception allowed for conversation in a casual setting. Saturday’s early morning registration and continental breakfast was followed by a diverse array of presentations, illustrating the richness of this topic for public history. Individual panels included “Heritage, Identity, Collective Memory”; “Memory, Place, Dissonance, Oral History”; “Nation and the Production of Migration Narratives”; and “Refugees, Immigration Experiences, Empowerment.”

Texas State University’s Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Dr. Michael J. Hennessy, joined the conference for a working lunch with two keynote talks followed by a Q&A session. The first keynote speaker was Dr. Yadira Perez Hazel (Center of Ethnic Studies, Borough of Manhattan Community College—CUNY), who gave a presentation entitled “When History Meets Humanity: Oral History and the New Exhibits at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, NYC.” She described her work as an oral history manager for the museum and her role in expanding communication channels with surrounding communities.

The second keynote speaker, Dr. Yolanda Chávez Leyva (Department of History, University of Texas-El Paso), offered a presentation entitled “Traspassando Fronteras con Museo Urbano: Engaging Immigrant Communities in a Transnational Narrative.” Leyva discussed how she and her students were giving voice to the histories of under-represented groups who live on the Texas-Mexico border.

(Note: A full program with a list of presenters can be found on the website of the Public History Program at Texas State University. Anyone interested in developing follow-up discussions and events on this topic should contact Nancy Berlage at nkb11@txstate.edu).

Nancy Berlage is an assistant professor in the history department at Texas State University and a faculty member of the Center for Texas Public History.
During NCPH’s Annual Meeting in Baltimore, you can challenge the exclusive past by taking advantage of tours and special events organized by the 2016 Local Arrangements Committee. Many of our walking tours will offer you a glimpse of often-overlooked histories of the city. On the Mount Vernon Pride tour, Dr. Kate Drabinski will reveal the origins of local LGBT activism in one of the city’s most popular neighborhoods. Lisa Keir from the Maryland Humanities Council will introduce you to literary Baltimore, highlighting a rich tradition of literature and scholarship that includes Edgar Allan Poe and F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. Johns Hopkins from Baltimore Heritage will challenge what you think you know about the Civil Rights Movement, drawing your attention to the site of the first lunch counter sit-in in the heart of downtown.

Other tours will ask you to confront challenging questions about the role public history can play in addressing pressing social problems. A walking tour led by Dr. Nicole King will bring you into the city’s arts district and ask you to consider whether or not the arts can save a city like Baltimore, which has been devastated by decades of deindustrialization and disinvestment. Eric Holcomb’s walking tour of South Baltimore will illustrate the ways in which urban renewal and other development programs altered the fabric of the city, obscuring or obliterating sites shaped by immigrant and African American communities. The bus tour to Hampton National Historic Site will allow participants to explore the long and challenging process of moving site interpretation away from a focus on the “mansion house” and toward a focus on the practice of industrial slavery at the plantation.

Two additional bus tours offer a direct challenge to the exclusivity of the past—and of public history—by highlighting the role that local community activists can play in shaping an understanding of Baltimore’s past. Glenn Lowell Ross, a self-described “urban environmentalist,” has been conducting his “Toxic Tour” of Baltimore city for about a decade, showing public health officials, medical students, and others how inequality manifests in dirt, disease, and other forms of environmental injustice. For public historians celebrating 50 years of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Toxic Tour will spark important conversations about the roles we might play in connecting preservation and sanitation. Louis Diggs, a U.S. Army Veteran and former Military Instructor in the District of Columbia Public School system, has become a well-known and trusted resource on the history of the African American community in Baltimore. He will lead a bus tour through Baltimore County and treat participants to a behind-the-scenes tour of the Diggs-Johnson Museum, located in the recently restored historic Cherry Hill African United Methodist Protestant Church. These tours remind us that the history of our field includes the work of many dedicated individuals who have worked without pay and with long-delayed recognition to challenge the exclusive past. Both the Toxic Tour and the Baltimore County African American History tour encourage us to recognize the important work city residents have undertaken to counter injustice in all its forms.

The public plenary, to be held at the Ebenezer AME church on Friday, March 18, is an opportunity for us to see the themes of the conference in action. The history of poverty, racial injustice, and inequality in Baltimore has long been left out of conversations about persistent social and economic problems in the city. At the same time, Baltimore’s reputation for grittiness and violence has been a staple of media and popular culture. The plenary will engage locals and conference attendees alike in a facilitated discussion about the historical roots and public image of the city. Panelists—a historian, activists, and a photographer—will talk about the historical conditions that fueled the protest and civil disobedience that took place after death of Freddie Gray in police custody last April. They will also raise questions about how those events have been used to reinforce a particular image of the city. We hope this discussion will contribute to a broader effort to build trust between public historians and underserved publics.

Denise Meringolo is the 2016 NCPH Annual Meeting Co-Chair, and is Associate Professor and Director of Public History at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

The event’s conference room had a capacity of 50 people (plus our speakers). This presented a challenge, as the registration was filled within two weeks and a waiting list had to be developed. Attendees came primarily from universities in the Baltimore-Washington DC area: American University, Catholic University, George Washington University, Georgetown University, Howard University, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Maryland. Other attendees also came from universities as far afield as Temple University, the College of William and Mary, West Virginia University, and the University of Virginia.

Branding the event as an NCPH mini-con enabled students who may not always be able to travel to and attend NCPH’s annual meeting to become familiar with an NCPH event. It also helped to introduce students and colleagues in the Washington, D.C. area to NCPH – just a few months before the annual conference is held in Baltimore. You will probably get the chance to meet many of the students who attended the mini-con next year in Baltimore!

Alexandra Lord is the Chair and Curator of the Division of Medicine and Science at the National Museum of American History. She is currently serving as NCPH Vice President and is a member of NCPH’s Board of Directors.
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