



# “Threads of Change”

Call for Proposals  
National Council on Public History  
2020 Annual Meeting  
Atlanta, Georgia | March 18-21, 2020

The raw materials of public history rest in communities, among people and their stories. Public historians encourage people to remember aloud, giving presence to intangibles of cultural memory not always captured or contextualized in formal spaces. From threads, fragments, and disparate materials, public historians create multi-layered quilts of historical meaning that reflect, frame, deconstruct, reassemble, and repurpose narratives. No matter the participants or where they learn their craft, the constant in this work is change.

The celebration of NCPH’s 40<sup>th</sup> year in 2020 offers an ideal moment to recognize the totality of practitioners across the field. Public history work lives in museums, archives, publications, and historic places—but it’s also history as activism, history as storytelling, and history as healing. Our challenge is to reconnect to our local, activist roots, to forge new and stronger partnerships, and to incorporate new fabric into our collective endeavor, one thread at a time.



“A Quilter’s Dream” Quilt by Aisha Lumumba of Atlanta, Georgia. Image used courtesy of the artist.  
[www.obaquilts.com](http://www.obaquilts.com)

**Proposals are due July 15, 2019 via <http://bit.ly/ncph2020>.**

Some topics and questions to consider as you craft your proposal include:

Public history is diverse, by every definition; over its long history, which reaches back far longer than four decades, it has encompassed a broad range of professionals, volunteers, and activists. **What are our common threads, and how can we ensure their strength and durability?**

- How, where, and with whom do public historians work? How do we ensure our community and organizational partnerships are healthy? How do we foster truly collaborative work?
- How do we create sustainable communities of practice? What resources do we need, and how do we gather them?
- How do we steward the stories, material culture, and spaces that we research and interpret?

2020 marks not only the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of NCPH’s founding, but also anniversaries of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> amendments to the US Constitution, the armistice that ended WWI, and other watershed moments. **How are such occasions catalysts for change?**

- How do public historians ensure that our work looks to the future as well as the past? How do we balance tradition with innovation?
- More broadly, how do public historians commemorate? How can we mark the past in ways that are valuable and useful? How can we ensure such markings do no harm?
- How far has NCPH come, and where should we go next? What have we done well, and what can we do better?

As public historians help craft interpretations of the past, we create new understandings and reinvent others, about our nation, our communities, and ourselves. **How does our work support generation and regeneration?**

- How does the city of Atlanta—from its pre-Civil War past to its role in the Civil Rights Movement to its current position as a hub of the travel and entertainment industries—inspire us to think about change?
- How do we care for ourselves? What does self-care look like for those who do public history work?
- What strategies help make the case for history relevance and historical thinking?

NCPH strongly urges participants to dispense with the reading of papers and welcomes a wide variety of session formats. We encourage sessions that push past “show and tell” to share lessons learned, identify implications for future work, and invite substantive exchanges between presenters and audience.

Preference will be given to:

- Sessions that include traditionally underrepresented voices
- Sessions that consider public impact and the points of view of relevant collaborators

#### PRESENTATION FORMATS MAY INCLUDE:

- **ROUNDTABLE (90 mins):** Roundtables are typically limited to 30 minutes of presentation, followed by 60 minutes of discussion and feedback. Presenters should bring targeted questions to pose to others at the table in order to learn from and with those attending.
- **STRUCTURED CONVERSATION (90 mins):** Sparked by a shared interest or need, these facilitated, participant-driven discussions are designed to encourage audience dialogue. Start with a provocative or problem statement and see where the conversation goes.
- **TRADITIONAL PANEL (90 mins):** At least three presenters, chair, and commentator.
- **COMMUNITY VIEWPOINTS (90 mins):** A project showcase that features a variety of stakeholder and collaborator perspectives.
- **EXPERIENTIAL (90 mins):** Participants simulate, role-play, or play games to convey key principles and learning objectives.
- **PECHA KUCHA (90 mins):** Facilitators quickly move the session through a series of images or ideas. Typically a Pecha Kucha is a multiple-presenter activity where each presenter shows 20 slides in 20-second increments. Allow time for debriefing.
- **POINT-COUNTERPOINT (90 mins):** A moderated discussion that offers opposing points of view in a debate format.

- **WORKING GROUPS (2 hrs):** In these seminar-like conversations between facilitators and up to 12 discussants, participants discuss questions raised by specific programs, problems, or initiatives in their own public history practice with peers grappling with similar issues. Before and during the meeting, working groups articulate a purpose they are working toward or a problem they are actively trying to solve and aim to create an end product(s). Proposals are submitted by facilitators; an open call for discussants will be issued in late summer 2019. For more information, see <http://bit.ly/2019workinggroups>.



*“A-T-L” Quilt by Aisha Lumumba of Atlanta, Georgia. Image used courtesy of the artist. [www.obaquilts.com](http://www.obaquilts.com).*

#### HOW TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

See <http://ncph.org/conference/2020-annual-meeting> for details on submitting proposals.

#### EARLY TOPIC PROPOSAL OPTION

Gather suggestions on a topic and look for collaborators/co-panelists by filling out a “topic-only” form online by **June 1, 2019**. Topics will be distributed to NCPH members via email and posted to [ncph.org](http://ncph.org). Respondents will contact the original submitter directly, helping to complete a proposal for the July deadline.

#### FINAL PROPOSAL DEADLINE

Submit your fully formed session, working group, individual paper, or workshop proposal online by **July 15, 2019**.

The Call for Posters and Call for Working Group Discussants will be forthcoming in the summer of 2019.