



Call for Working Group Discussants

NCPH 2020 Annual Meeting

March 18-21, 2020

Atlanta, Georgia

What are NCPH Working Groups?

Working groups, involving up to five facilitators and up to twelve discussants, allow conferees to explore in depth a subject of shared concern before and during the annual meeting. In these seminar-like conversations, participants have a chance to discuss questions raised by specific programs, problems, or initiatives in their own public history practice with peers grappling with similar issues. Working groups articulate a purpose they are working toward or a problem they are actively trying to solve. They aim to create an end product(s), such as a report, article, website, or exhibition.

2020 Working Groups

For 2020, eight working groups are assembling:

1. Challenging White Public History
2. NCPH Green Meetings Report and Recommendations
3. Philanthropy and Public History
4. Preparing a Patchwork Quilt: Best Practices for Consulting Historians
5. Public Historians in Our Climate Emergency
6. Public History Parents: Leaning In, Opting Out, and Finding Work-Life Balance
7. Unsettling the "Nation of Immigrants:" Framing Inclusive Public Histories of Im/migration
8. Working with Descendant Communities at Sites of Slavery

To apply to join one of these working groups, please [fill out the form](#) describing the issues you wish to raise with your peers, together with a one-page resume, CV, or biographical statement, by **October 2, 2019**. We welcome submissions from individuals across a range of professions and career stages. Please see the specific working group descriptions below. Individuals who are selected will be listed as working group discussants in the conference *Program* and will participate in the working group session at the annual meeting.

Expectations

This fall the group facilitators will ask discussants to contribute a 500-1,000-word case statement. The case statement will describe a discussant's particular experience, define the issues this experience raises, and suggest strategies and/or goals for resolution. Case statements will be circulated among participants and posted to the NCPH website. Discussants are expected to read and provide written comments on one another's case statements well before the conference date. Some working groups may also have additional shared background reading materials identified by their facilitators or may choose to open up case statements for wider public input. Discussants are expected to meet in person next March at the National Council on Public History's annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia.

To apply

Please fill out the [discussant application form](#), making sure to select which working group you are applying to join. (You may apply to participate in a working group whether or not you have submitted another presentation or session proposal. You may apply for only one working group.) All working group discussants are expected to register and pay for the annual meeting within six weeks of acceptance.

Apply at <http://ncph.org/conference/working-group-discussant-application/>

About the 2020 Working Groups

Challenging White Public History

Facilitators:

Kristen Baldwin Deathridge, Appalachian State University

Abigail Gautreau, Grand Valley State University

Amanda Higgins, Kentucky Historical Society

lara kelland, University of Missouri St. Louis

Jodi Lewis, Kentucky Historical Society

“One of the most disturbing things about almost all white supporters of the movement has been that they are afraid to go into their own communities—which is where the racism exists—and work to get rid of it.” – Stokely Carmichael

Inspired by critical race theory and social movement practices, we seek to facilitate a working group on dismantling white supremacy within our organizations. Although most public historians understand themselves to be anti-racist, we still inadvertently reproduce white privilege in our daily lives and interactions with each other. Drawing on lessons learned while attempting to decenter whiteness in our own institutions, we know that confronting our own complicity in systems of white supremacy is the bedrock work necessary to create change in predominantly white spaces. Using Layla F. Saad’s *Me and White Supremacy* workbook, as well as facilitation techniques adapted from the Kentucky Historical Society’s ongoing, IMLS-funded “Prioritizing Diversity and Inclusion” initiative, this working group will nurture a reflective space for doing the internal and interpersonal work necessary to dismantle whiteness in our professional shared spaces, including the conference space itself.

While we encourage any participation and welcome public historians of color to join us, we are centering the burden of undoing whiteness on white public historians. As a recent example, during a panel in Hartford led by people of color, a number of white participants used Q&A time to center their own work in a manner that made some participants uncomfortable in non-productive ways. A number of these responses focused on the diversity work within their respective organizations, while others seemed to pose very broad and complex questions about institutional challenges. We seek to reframe this; rather than seeking “cookies” from our colleagues of color, or putting the burden of solving issues of diversity and inclusion on marginalized communities, we intend to cultivate awareness of our own racial blind spots and develop a set of tools for addressing such in the larger organization and in the conference space in particular.

We seek participants who are ready and willing to begin understanding and dismantling white supremacy in their own lives and institutions. Prior to the annual meeting, we will work in small groups

to identify and discuss the ways in which white supremacy informs our work. After reflecting as a group before the conference, we will briefly present our findings to audience members in the working group session. Then we will break into small groups, each working on one element and producing a list of best practices. After reconvening, we will discuss which of these might be useful in the space of the conference center, then ask working group and audience members to embrace these practices going forward.

NCPH Green Meetings Report and Recommendations

Facilitators:

Philip Levy, University of South Florida
Alena Pirok, Georgia Southern University

An increasing number of academic and professional societies are looking at ways that they can reduce the carbon footprint of their meetings. From airplane travel to hotel dining, attending meetings takes a toll on the planet's ecosystem. One response to this problem has been the Green Meetings Movement, which seeks ways to reduce the environmental impact of conferences and meetings. Over the past few years a growing literature on Green Meetings has begun to emerge, and with it some ideas and even best practices are taking shape.

The National Council on Public History's Environmental Sustainability Committee is tasked with helping the NCPH reduce the carbon footprint of its meetings. Towards that end, we are preparing a report which reviews the Green Meeting literature and offers a set of recommendations for the NCPH's board, staff, committees, and members. A draft of that report will be in circulation well before the 2020 meeting. But the challenge of carbon footprint reduction is an ongoing one taking shape on an ever changing terrain—even a final report represents only one step in changing meeting practices. Change requires both collective and individual action, and new options, technologies, and approaches are emerging daily. In order to widen the discussion, we would like to use this working group to bring together interested NCPH members and conference attendees who were not part of the drafting but nevertheless have valuable ideas, experience, and input about how to confront the many challenges in reducing the environmental harm caused by conferences and similar meetings. This working group therefore is open to anyone interested in these issues or has experience or ideas to bring to the discussion. Input from this working group will inform changes to the final recommendations to the NCPH Board. *This working group is sponsored by NCPH's Environmental Sustainability Committee.*

Philanthropy and Public History

Facilitator:

Abby Teare, Grants Plus

In the 2017 Public History Employer Survey, practitioners noted that philanthropy is one of the biggest economic factors impacting the field of public history.

However, few resources exist to help public historians navigate the ins and outs of developing sustainable fundraising strategy, communicating the value of history to funders, and dealing with how the interests of funders impact the collection, preservation, and interpretation of history. This working group will map out best practices for fundraising and grant seeking as they apply to the work of public historians with a goal of developing a public historian's field guide to philanthropy.

This working group will bring together public historians and individuals with expertise or experience in fundraising/philanthropy. Specifically, working group discussants will be willing to share case studies/experiences related to fundraising and public history practice; discuss how organizations are navigating these challenges; share how philanthropic trends have impacted specific projects, programs, or overall organizational planning; and discuss how funders respond to requests for financial support for public history institutions. Participants might have experience as grant writers, program managers on grant-funded initiatives, or as program officers for foundations or government agencies. All ranges of experience are encouraged!

In the context of this year's conference theme, "Threads of Change," this working group will explore these issues by asking questions such as:

- How do philanthropic trends impact our ability to develop and sustain healthy partnerships and collaborative work?
- Philanthropy, civic engagement, and activism are all related. Are public historians forced into a specific model of activism based on who has and is providing the funding?
- When is philanthropy a boon to public history? When does it limit the profession?
- How do public historians respond to the changing philanthropic landscape?
- How do we articulate the return on investment of public history work to funders?
- How does philanthropy impact who public historians collaborate with and how we collaborate with them?
- How can public historians make the case for history relevance and historical thinking in the quest for funding?
- How have public historians collaborated with philanthropic and charitable institutions, and what impact have these collaborations had on the field?

In advance of the working group convening at the conference, discussants will share case studies, stories of successes and challenges related to fundraising for public history, knowledge of philanthropic trends that impact the field, and/or ideas for sustainable funding models that can apply to our work. This work will help us narrow our discussion during the conference so that we might focus on the issues and best practices practitioners find most relevant to the field.

Preparing a Patchwork Quilt: Best Practices for Consulting Historians

Facilitators:

Heather Carpini, S&ME

Kathleen Conti, HHM & Associates/University of Texas School of Architecture

Jackie Gonzales, Historical Research Associates, Inc.

Paul Sadin, Historical Research Associates, Inc.

Cheri Szcondronski, Firefly Preservation Consulting

At the 2019 annual conference in Hartford, the NCPH Consultants Committee determined that the time was ripe for developing "best practices" guidelines for consulting historians. This working group will be the first step in that process, with the objective of drafting a set of best practices recommendations that will become the basis for the final document. The current NCPH "Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct" for public historians will serve as one possible model, as it includes many elements that are central to consulting practices.

Best practices guidelines for consultants might also include some or all of the following:

- Ethical practices for working with clients that represent local communities, organizations, and government agencies
- Professional standards in the quality of consultants' research, writing, and publishing
- Facilitating community agency and community ownership of their own history
- Incorporating diverse sources and perspectives, by documenting all the stories related to a project
- Respectful and safe research practices (particularly in field work)
- Commitment to ongoing training and professional development to sharpen skillsets and fund of knowledge (sharing via blogs, publications, conferences, etc.)
- Professional integrity in issues such as billing practices, fair wages, and legal confidentiality
- Collaboration in consulting work—with communities, clients, workers in other disciplines, and among public historians.

In order to gain a broad range of input and diverse perspectives, we invite other conference attendees who have some level of experience in consulting work to participate in the working group. This could include individuals doing consulting work in architectural history, curation projects, digital history, interpretive planning, exhibit design, litigation support, oral history projects, web development, writing narrative histories, etc. The first phase of the “work” will take place via email and document-sharing prior to the conference. The end goal (post-conference) will be to produce a thoughtfully written guide based on the input of a group of people from a variety of professional practices and disciplines, who are invested in creating and maintaining ethical and high-quality professional work.

Public Historians in Our Climate Emergency

Facilitators:

David Glassberg, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Donna Graves, Donna Graves Heritage, Arts and Cultural Planning

Climate scientists, journalists, social psychologists, and others debate the most effective ways to convey the scale and urgency of the challenge posed by global warming. We believe that public historians have an important role in this effort. We invite colleagues working in a variety of venues to join this discussion about how we can interpret history in ways that inspire the public to take action on climate change, even in the face of despair.

The narratives we craft can reveal histories of loss and resilience, deepen understanding of and connections to places undergoing dramatic (and subtle) change, and reinforce the importance of understanding legacies of environmental injustice in addressing the effects of our climate emergency. In addition to making the impact of climate change clear, interpretation can provide historic examples of instances, such as WWII “total mobilization,” where society reorganized to face immense challenges. Such narratives can also allow visitors to envision their own roles in addressing our climate emergency with the knowledge, urgency, and hope required.

The goal of this working group is to share stories and foster discussion about our work as public historians in this realm. We are looking for participants who have developed interpretive projects that address climate change, as well as practitioners who are beginning to explore how their site can engage more fully and substantively with this topic.

Public History Parents: Leaning In, Opting Out, and Finding Work-Life Balance

Facilitators:

Erin Gregory, Canada Aviation and Space Museum

A. Nicole Hill, Valencia College
Emily McEwen, Independent Consultant
Sue Nguyen, Huntington Beach Historic Resources Board
Ellen Rankin, National Park Service

In this working group we will open a dialogue about the challenges faced by new parents and primary caregivers working in the public history profession and work toward establishing goals/practices for how institutions can support parents and primary caregivers in the field. The American Association for State and Local History began a conversation about these issues in "Baby Boom: Motherhood and Museums," a two-part blog published in 2016 and 2017, which has become one of their most popular blog posts to date. We seek to extend this conversation and begin to work toward tangible goals and solutions that can be used as guidelines for public history institutions of all sizes and at all levels. We welcome all participants who are parents or primary caregivers, regardless of gender, gender identity, or gender presentation.

Topics to address include:

- The push for more advanced education often means delayed parenthood and the need to balance a new career in public history with new parenthood.
- Inadequate parental leave (paid and unpaid) at smaller institutions and for independent consultants.
- Inflexible hours or the need to work nontraditional hours and put in overtime.
- Push/pull factors for "opting out" of the field after having children and how to remain relevant in the field or return to the field after an extended leave rearing children. How can public history institutions support new parents so that they don't "opt out"?
- Struggles of nursing/pumping in the unique work environments of public history jobs, such as historic parks, historic house museums, and small museums that often do not conform to mandated law.
- Lower wages that do not cover childcare costs.
- Does the predominance of women in the public history field have any bearing (positive or negative) on these issues?

Unsettling the "Nation of Immigrants:" Framing Inclusive Public Histories of Im/migration Facilitators:

Veronica Boix-Mansilla, Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education
Kathryn Lloyd, Tenement Museum
Michelle Moon, Tenement Museum
Sara Phalen, West Chicago City Museum
Adam Strom, Reimagining Migration, Inc.

In a climate of intensified hostility toward recent immigrants, public history projects are re-asserting the role of global migrations in populating and shaping the United States. But familiar understandings of America as a "nation of immigrants" are proving inadequate to express the complexity of a nation peopled through numerous, contested processes of human movement. This working group will explore ways public historians might interpret migration and immigration without falling back on narratives that exclude or oversimplify.

Questions we will explore include:

- How can public history work describe the peopling of America without erasing or minimizing indigenous presence?
- How can narratives that explore migration be crafted so as to include refugees, address human trafficking and enslavement, and incorporate internal migrations, forced and voluntary, for escaping violence, seeking work, or being constrained in imprisonment or internment?
- How do the American tendency toward neolocalism and tenuous contemporary relationships to place figure in?
- How can we reframe understandings of movement to address what geographer Harald Bauder calls the "parallax gap" that separates discussions of indigenous issues and immigration issues?

Working with Descendant Communities at Sites of Slavery

Facilitators:

Niya Bates, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello

Kate Schoen, South Carolina State Park Service and South Carolina Collaborative on Race and Reconciliation

Hannah Scruggs, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture

As more plantation museum sites and universities begin working with descendants of enslaved people, we are asking: what does it mean to engage descendants ethically and responsibly? How do we navigate inherently unequal power dynamics between descendants and institutions? Can this work be a step towards restorative justice?

Descendant community work speaks directly to the core issues that the public history field is currently engaging with—especially the need for diverse voices and shared authority at historic sites and the obligation plantation sites have to a racial justice-based interpretation. It is also deeply tied to national debates about reparations and property rights. Yet despite the significance of descendant community work, many sites are under-prepared and lack the resources to actually implement this crucial work. We hope to begin an honest discussion about descendant work, so that we may learn from each other, problem-solve, and with a future-minded focus, lead the way.

We seek discussants who work with descendants at plantation sites (museums or privately owned) or universities or similar settings; have been in these roles in the past; or who have done similar work with or are part of Native and Indigenous communities. We also seek discussants who identify as part of a descendant community, whether that is from a public-facing plantation site or those who know where their ancestors were enslaved and/or grew up in or are familiar with that area.