

# Call for Working Group Discussants

## NCPH 2021 Annual Meeting

### Convening Virtually

#### 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. Ordinarily these working groups would meet onsite at our annual meeting to present their work to the NCPH community; this year the working groups will be completing all their work virtually, with a virtual session during NCPH 2021.

#### 2021 Working Groups

For 2021, six working groups are seeking discussants:

1. Building Equitable Remote Internships
2. Challenging White Public History From Within Ourselves
3. Developing Best Practices Guidelines for Consulting Historians
4. Foregrounding Questions of Citizenship in Public History
5. Keeping the Faith!: Sustaining Black Public History in Historically White Institutions
6. “Nevertheless, She Persisted”: Preserving Local Women’s History in the Wake of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment Centennial

To apply to join one of these working groups, please [fill out this form](#) describing the issues you wish to raise with your peers, together with a one-page resume, CV, or biographical statement, by **November 20, 2020**. 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 conference materials and the official *Program*, will register for the virtual conference, and will participate in the virtual working group session during 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 participate in a virtual session as part of the National Council on Public History’s 2021 Annual Meeting.

## 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 2021 Working Groups

### Building Equitable Remote Internships

#### **Facilitators:**

Elyssa Ford, Northwest Missouri State University

Sarah Phalen, West Chicago City Museum

Laura Schiavo, The George Washington University

Gretchen Sorin, Cooperstown Graduate Program/SUNY Oneonta

In response to COVID-19, public history programs and cultural institutions were forced to adjust their approaches to internships. This working group will focus on the potential and pitfalls of remote internships and will encourage public historians to think more creatively about internship design. Can remote internships integrate students into institutions in the same way as on-site experiences? Are remote opportunities able to provide a more diverse set of students with a broader array of internship possibilities? As museums further tighten their budgets and emerging professionals seek experience, this working group will outline best practices for virtual internships that help advance issues of equity, accessibility, and mutually beneficial structures.

We want to think broadly about these issues, engage in an open debate about both the potential and pitfalls embedded in virtual internships, and offer guidance for faculty, students, institutions, and working professionals as they address innovative internship design for their own programs and communities. We welcome and encourage participation from (1) public history/museum studies faculty who supervise internships, (2) individuals and organizations who have been involved in on-site internships and/or remote internships, and (3) students/emerging professionals who have completed internships and can discuss the advantages and drawbacks they see in both on-site and remote options.

### Challenging White Public History From Within Ourselves

#### **Facilitators:**

Kristen Baldwin Deathridge, Appalachian State University

Abigail Gautreau, Grand Valley State University

Amanda Higgins, Kentucky Historical Society

Iara Kelland, University of Missouri – St. Louis

Jodi Lewis, Kentucky Historical Society

Inspired by critical race theory and social movement practices, this working group seeks to dismantle white supremacy and white privilege in our own organizations and increase our own anti-racist work. While we welcome public historians of color to join us, we center the burden of undoing whiteness on white public historians, seeking participants who are ready and willing to dismantle white supremacy in their own lives and institutions. Prior to meeting, we will work in small groups, continue this work

throughout the conference, then have an opportunity to share our experiences through *History@Work* posts.

We began this work in fall 2019 after being accepted as a working group for the 2020 annual meeting. We built trust through confidential case statement exchanges and discussion, but the pandemic prevented us from having the kind of meaningful interpersonal conversations we planned for the conference. We nevertheless produced a *History@Work* post, had a Zoom meeting, and began working on how to move forward. In light of the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, and the ensuing protests, we feel compelled to continue this work. While many cultural organizations have issued statements, few have taken on their own institutional histories and cultures to do the reflective work necessary for eradicating white supremacy. We hope our working group will be a starting point for these institutions.

While we expect that the majority of the participants in our original group will rejoin us, we welcome others to join the group. New members should expect to work through the resources and submit case statements.

### Developing Best Practices Guidelines 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 Szcodronski, Firefly Preservation Consulting

In early 2020 a group of public history consultants began work on developing guidelines describing best practices for consulting historians. We began discussing issues such as, “How do we maintain and further our commitment . . . for inclusive, community-engaged, and collaborative public history practice . . . and balance them with the requirements of consulting work?”; and “How do we build professional development and skill training in our practices?” We wish to invite additional participants as we resume the task in 2020–2021 leading up to NCPH 2021. Participants could include individuals doing consulting work in architectural history, curation projects, interpretive planning, exhibit design, litigation support, oral history projects, web development, writing narrative histories, etc. Much of the work will take place via email and video-conference.

Obviously, a lot has changed in our world in the past six months, and accordingly the group’s development of best-practices principles will include how public history consultants can expand their efforts and effectiveness to give voice and support to underserved groups and minority populations while also staying employed and earning a living wage in an altered economy. Determining best practices for consultants will likely include discussion of the following: (1) ethical practices such as confidentiality and sensitivity to stakeholder interests; (2) professional standards in the quality of consultants’ research, writing, and publishing; (3) facilitating community agency and ownership of their own history; (3) incorporating diverse sources and perspectives; (4) respectful and safe research practices (particularly in field work); (5) commitment to ongoing training and professional development to sharpen skillsets and fund of knowledge, for ourselves and for the others in the profession (sharing via blogs, publications, conferences, etc.); and (6) professional integrity in issues such as billing practices, contractual requirements, and establishing a living wage. Finally, we will want to address the importance of collaboration in consulting work—with communities, clients, workers in other disciplines, and among public historians.

## Foregrounding Stories of Citizenship in Public History

### Facilitators:

Patrice Green, University of Georgia

Eric Hung, Music of Asian America Research Center

Mandi Magnusen-Hung, Music of Asian America Research Center

Andrew Urban, Rutgers University

At its most formal, citizenship is a status that a state grants to certain subjects to denote membership and belonging. However, state-granted citizenship often bears very little resemblance to membership and belonging in everyday life, and the social contracts in which we operate allows us to include and exclude others based on that status. This working group aims to help public historians discuss citizenship-related issues that recent events have brought forward, and create nuanced and impactful exhibits, programs, educational materials, and staff training plans. We aim to produce a crowdsourced annotated #Citizenship syllabus and a podcast series featuring interviews with practitioners and theorists who are working on public history projects that deal with citizenship.

Our goal is to develop resources and case studies that can help contribute to the ongoing conversation on how public history institutions can responsibly create exhibits, programs, educational materials, and staff training on issues of citizenship. The core issues are:

- What are the key questions that public history projects about citizenship need to raise? Examples include: what does the term “citizenship” include? Who benefits and is harmed by this concept? What are the different pathways to citizenship? How does the meaning of citizenship vary in different lived environments and for people with different racial, gender, class, and ability identities? How can we discuss citizenship in light of settler colonialism? In what “non-state” ways do we use the word “citizenship?”
- How can institutions influence the way people think about citizenship? What positions, advocacy, and actions should public history institutions take with regard to citizenship, and with civic obligations?
- How do public history institutions help to grant, safeguard, or take away citizenship in everyday life, through creating certain exhibits or programs, through showcasing certain monuments, or by defining membership in certain ways?
- What are useful frameworks for discussing citizenship in public history settings? Can we move beyond nationalist, American-Dream, or feel-good narratives?

In terms of discussants, we are seeking a mixture of scholars and practitioners who are interested in creating public history projects on citizenship. We are particularly interested in including people who are undertaking digital humanities projects, artists and filmmakers, and students.

## Keeping the Faith!: Sustaining Black Public History in Historically White Institutions

### Facilitators:

Fath Davis Ruffins, Smithsonian National Museum of American History

Modupe Labode, Smithsonian National Museum of American History

Crystal Moten, Smithsonian National Museum of American History

Tsione Wolde-Michael, Smithsonian National Museum of American History

Public history practitioners who focus on Black history and culture in “historically white institutions” have worked hard to include Black histories and cultural perspectives where they have been absent, erased, silenced, and otherwise missing. Unfortunately, in many instances, these efforts have been

fragmented, inconsistent, and deprioritized. The purpose of this working group is to gather people who have been doing Black public history in historically white spaces to consider the usable past of Black public history, identify barriers to doing this work, and discuss useful frameworks and practices that can aid us in transforming these historically white institutions into places where Black life, history, and culture are taken seriously. We will consider the following theoretical and practical questions:

- What is the usable past of Black public history for this work? This would involve a consideration of the pioneering efforts of various grassroots, culturally specific institutions whose work has long preceded similar work in historically white institutions. What are the lessons to be learned here?
- What have been the barriers to doing Black public history in historically white institutions? What can we do (now!) to remove, go around, and climb over such obstacles?
- How can intersectional approaches provide an opportunity to foreground and take Black life, histories, and cultures seriously? How can Black theory making inform and challenge how cultural sites do their work?
- How do we infuse Black histories and Black perspectives into the stories we tell at the public history sites where we labor?
- What do we mean by “community engagement,” “co-curation,” and “co-authorship”? In other words, what does it mean to do Black public history with and within communities, collaboratively?

This working group is an opportunity to convene with other Black public history practitioners to think through and imagine a new future for truly inclusive, diverse, and relevant public history sites. We imagine this working group to be the first of a series of conversations meant to explore these and other pressing questions. Those interested in exploring these questions should consider the following prompt: Based on your experiences doing Black public history in a historically white institution, what are the issues you feel will be most important for this initial conversation?

### [“Nevertheless, She Persisted”: Preserving Local Women’s History in the Wake of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment Centennial](#)

#### **Facilitators:**

Jillian Allison, Center for Colorado Women's History at History Colorado

Barbara Batson, Library of Virginia

Kimberly Brown, Florida A&M University

Brandi Burns, Boise City Dept. of Arts & History

Kelly Giles, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Katherine Kitterman, Better Days 2020

Laura Lovett, University of Pittsburgh

Sarah McDonald, Shelby County Historical Museum

Stephanie Milne-Lane, Willamette University

Arlisha R. Norwood, Baruch College

Ashley Robertson Preston, University of Florida

Katie Woods, National Parks of Boston

Commemorations mark significant opportunities to revitalize and transform a field; the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women’s suffrage in 2020 should have been such a moment. The commemoration, however, was disrupted by the worldwide pandemic. In the midst of the pandemic, protests against anti-Black racism swept through the country and a resounding call for social justice was felt across all of our communities. This working group will address the work accomplished before the pandemic hit the US in March, what

work continued, and what stills needs to be done in the aftermath of a sidelined commemoration in a year of historically significant events.

The discussants we hope to engage with are public historians at all levels of the field, from enthusiasts, students, professionals, and university-affiliated individuals. We are looking for active discussants who, after the working group, will begin the work in their communities to bring the stories of women to the forefront, stories from all racial and class backgrounds. After the conference, the working group will come together to create a Best Practices Guide that can be shared as a series of posts on the *History@Work* blog. We expect our collective experience and input will be substantial enough to create a separate best practices monograph based on the original posts that can be presented to a press for publication.