

**Jon E Taylor, Ph.D.**

Professor of History, University of Central Missouri

In 2021 the National Park Service and the National Council on Public History selected me to draft three historical context statements on "Armed Forces Camps," "Defense Manufacturing in World War II, and "American Armed Forces in World War II" for the American World War II Heritage Cities project. I hope these context statements have been useful to those in this Working Group and would be pleased to lend any expertise to the group that the facilitators and discussants might find useful.

In addition to my tenure as a professor of history at the University of Central Missouri from 2004 to the present, I served as historian at Harry S Truman National Historic Site from 1993 to 1998. I can definitely bring an understanding of the National Park Service and some of the challenges that one might encounter in incorporating "new" history into park interpretive programs.

The one question that I have is how will the work of this group be incorporated into the Interpretive plans of each respective WW II site that is participating in the discussions? Persuading Chiefs of Interpretation and Superintendents to pursue new narratives can sometimes be just as challenging as managing audience expectations about these new narratives.

**Eric Faeder**

Park Guide

Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites

World War II is arguably the most widely known and discussed event and period in American history, as well as world history. The average American most likely knows about Pearl Harbor and D-Day. In the field of historical interpretation this topic can be both easy and difficult to discuss. All this I confront while working in the National Park Service. My name is Eric Faeder. I am a GS-05 Park Guide at the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, and Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site. All three are in Hyde Park, New York as units of the National Park Service. The two Roosevelt sites see their share of visitors visiting with a World War II context. Considering both Roosevelts are some of, if not the most, prolific American figures of World War II, this is expected. But it does present challenges. Challenges I hope to address during my time in the World War II home front working group. By figuring out proper methods to discuss World War II and Roosevelt contextually can improve my abilities as a guide in the National Park Service and improve the visitors' experience.

The World War II home front working group's relevancy to my field of work is what drew me to the group. I feel this group will give me the resources and tools that will give me better understanding on how to intertwine and interpret the Roosevelts' place in World War II to facilitate dialogue with the average visitor. Also, to add to offerings to the park sites I work at to widen our programming appeal based on various topics related to the larger topic at hand. That is why I participated in the seminar of the World War II home front hosted by the Gilder Lehrman Institute this past November in Salt Lake City, Utah. The group is a continuation of the work I have started, and I hope it leads me to developing programming and skills in the future. The group may also highlight new areas of discussion I am unaware of, which in turn I can share with coworkers, which can lead to further developments.

I hope to acquire skills to address issues I feel are present in discussion World War II and the Roosevelts. Upfront, I feel the biggest challenge is talking about World War II in a professional unbiased manner. World War II in the popular American historical memory is the "best part" of which. It is a period when the United States of America was one of the "Good Guys." It was a just and righteous cause against tyranny and evil, so goes the narrative. Which it is, but it is a historical injustice to water down all that historical context and content to a simple comic book-style narrative. To "go against"

this way of thinking, lack of better term, may be considered sacrilege; to question or clarify America's history of the "good war". This applies to Franklin Roosevelt too. He's the man who led us to victory, who won the war. Again, not false, but not completely true. I feel the group will help me achieve my goals. But it does go deeper. Due to Franklin Roosevelt's place in WWII history, visitors visiting his home occasionally come with preconceived notions about certain topics. The most notable of which is the interment of Japanese Americans. This is a topic I wish to discuss more, but I want to find a balance that is neither sugar coating nor overtly condemning Roosevelt's role in the greatest civil rights violation in American history. The same is true for Roosevelt's role regarding Jewish refugees in the lead up to and during WWII and the holocaust. I want to know how to create dialogue without coming across as confrontational. In addition to topic discussion, I also want to address how to interpret without an artifact to "point". Neither the home of FDR or Eleanor's place have a WWII related item to anchor a WWII home front program. I hope the group can address this, because I feel my park sites are not alone in this issue.

The WWII home front working group will improve my skills in discussing the home front as a National Park Service employee. I will be able to address sensitive topics in a professional manner and increase offerings at the historic sites I work at. What I learn will improve the experience for visitors and coworkers.

**Tom Leatherman, Superintendent**

## Pearl Harbor National Memorial

In 2005, when I started working at Manzanar NHS, I had the opportunity to work closely with individuals from the Japanese American community who had been incarcerated at the site during WWII. Hearing their first-person narratives was powerful and watching them interact with visitors created inspiring and meaningful connections with the past. Even in my time at that site, I experienced the passing of some of these powerful voices and began to wonder what an experience at the site would be like in the future.

Additionally, some of the narratives that were being shared did not fit the stereotypical story that is told about the hardship and negative impact of incarceration. One former incarcerated explained to me that he came from a poor family and coming to “camp” was a great equalizer, erasing class barriers that he and his family had experienced even within the Japanese American community from where they were removed. He was embarrassed to share his story because he did not think anyone wanted to hear “the good” that came from it for him and his family. Although stories like this are less common, they are important aspects of the story that are often not shared, and these lesser-known stories help to tell a more complete picture of the overall experience.

In 2008, when I moved to the Bay Area to work at Rosie the Riveter and Port Chicago, I experienced similar situations with Rosies and survivors of the Port Chicago disaster. It became even more clear to me that we are at a turning point in the way that we share this history with the public. I also think that in this transition there is an underlying opportunity to explore many of these issues simultaneously. As we find new ways to share first person accounts and make connections with the public in the absence of the people who lived the experience, we can use this same method to explore and share lesser-known aspects of this history. Now at Pearl Harbor, overseeing the USS Arizona Memorial, there are only 2 remaining survivors from the ship. The narratives shared at this site for the last 80 years have revolved around memorializing those who died, but more centrally, on the survivors of the disaster and what they accomplished in their life after December 7.

At this critical transition in how we interpret and share this history with the public, we must not only find a way to continue to connect with survivors and their stories, but I think it is imperative that we find a way to broaden the stories we share to include voices that have largely been forgotten or ignored in the past. As an example, Native Hawaiian narratives at the site have never been a part of the history shared, yet the colonization of the islands and the establishment of the strategic Naval base on Hawaii is critical to understanding the events that led to the bombing on December 7. In some

ways, the absence of individuals sharing their first person accounts, frees us to find ways to include voices from people who never had the opportunity to share their stories themselves. Whether these voices were purposefully excluded or were not available or willing to share, the future provides an opportunity to share a more complete history of these historic events – unbound by those remaining voices.

Over the last year in our WWII network conversations, it was helpful to learn from other NPS and non-NPS organizations about some of their shared challenges and some of the things they are doing to address them. In the coming years I would like to discuss ways that we share strategies to broaden the stories we are telling and start including untold narratives. In these conversations I hope we can address how to most effectively address the resistance that we will encounter and strategies for helping folks involved in the dominant narrative to not feel like we are “rewriting history” or trying to dishonor those who served or whose lives were lost. I also think we need to develop a strong community of practice around some of these issues instead of relying on formal agreements or structures adopted by our agencies and organizations. In this way we can continue to learn and grow without the restrictions that might be imposed around firewalls and legal limitations on written formal agreements.

## **McKenna Crews**

Ball State University 2021

American University | MA Public History Candidate '22

National Parks Service | History Intern

Lake Braddock Secondary School | 7th Grade US II

In the second semester of my graduate degree program I learned I had been chosen to intern with the National Parks Service to work on the updated World War II Home Front theme study for the summer of 2022. I was shocked, beyond excited and ready to start diving in to all things home front related. During this same semester I was exposed to a text entitled *We Are Not Slaves: State Violence, Coerced Labor, and Prisoners' Rights in Post War America* by Robert T. Chase. I had never in my life been more moved by a piece of academic writing for its shocking content and laid awake at night thinking about it as I continued to read. With news of my upcoming internship and the very influential text I had just read, I began to wonder about why every carceral studies book I read was about the postwar years and not the war years themselves. I later learned that this was a virtually untouched topic by historians and decided to dive in.

While doing research and writing for my internship I kept coming up short handed on secondary sources for the idea of the carceral state and its impact during the war years. There were books on draft dodgers who went to prison, but not on their experiences in prison. There were articles about science experiments on prisoners, but very scarcely. Since no one had written about prisons during this time period, I decided I needed to do it and chose to write both of my graduate research papers on the very subject to give the prisoners who worked in the home front effort to contribute to an Allied Powers and United States victory. To do this, I had to find a primary source base.

My main questions during my research became, "how and/or did prisoners' efforts during the war years have any impact on the home front war effort?" and "what was life like inside of the prisons during the war years?" To answer these questions I turned to prisoner produced newspapers, specifically *The Ohio Penitentiary News*, a state prison based out of Columbus, Ohio. While the papers have some bias, they are one of the only primary sources available in archives about prisons during the time period. I made it my mission to use the sources to tell the story of the war years and the prisoners at the Ohio Penitentiary. With such a complex primary source base, it made me wonder why other historians had not yet attempted to look at state and federal prisons and their impact on the home front war effort.

All of this brought me to the Working Group. I want to advocate for the prisoners whose war efforts have gone unnoticed and call other home front historians to action. I also want to bring to the table the discussion of why other historians think this subject has not been broached as well as to see if anyone has encountered any other sources about the topic in their own research. Bringing this narrative to the forefront of carceral and World War II home front studies would give a more complex understanding of how the United States dealt with the labor shortage, prison funding, and so much more during the time period.

**Leslie A. Przybylek, Senior Curator, Senator John Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh, Pa.**  
Case Statement  
WWII Homefront Connections

As Senior Curator for the Senator John Heinz History Center, a regional history museum focused on Western Pennsylvania, my role differs from that of colleagues who work at site-specific institutions. The History Center's World War II Homefront connection comes from our extensive holdings related to the city's industrial past, including artifact and archival collections from national corporations such as Westinghouse, United States Steel, Alcoa, and Pittsburgh Plate Glass, collections that document World War II defense activities not only in Western Pennsylvania but in communities across the nation where plants for those these companies were located. Part of my original motivation in joining the group was to explore ways to connect other sites with such collections.

While I worked with WWII stories previously, my current focus came through the History Center's launch of a major exhibition exploring Western Pennsylvania's World War II contributions in 2015, a project that expanded into a traveling exhibit that reached 18 communities in 9 counties across our Affiliate network. Since that time, interest in the topic has remained high. While visitors do not always come to our doorstep seeking World War II topics, we deal with certain Homefront stories of Pittsburgh origin on a nearly continual basis. Now that Pittsburgh has been appointed Pennsylvania's "World War II Heritage City" by the National Park Service, there is an additional onus on the History Center to help visitors explore new perspectives on the Homefront experience, reflect NPS interpretive scholarship, and increase insight here regarding broader narratives that reflect how the war's social and environmental impact resonated long after 1945.

### **Reflections from Round 1**

It's difficult to summarize this, but a couple things stand out. We are all coming from the same desire to amplify a deeper set of narratives that give a fuller picture of World War II's Homefront impact, yet we operate in very different networks. The individual ecosystems of independent museums and National Park Service (NPS) sites can make finding common ground administratively difficult, but there are also complementary opportunities that could allow us to overcome interpretive roadblocks by working together. Non-NPS museums can tackle issues that might be problematic for federal government sites, and vice versa. Additionally, while the History Center collects oral histories, we don't confront the same audience expectations that some NPS sites do



regarding the primacy of lived experience in shaping the arc of content. There are benefits and downsides to this. But coming from a site that doesn't deal with the issue on a regular basis, I found that my understanding (and questioning) of the wider topic was greatly enriched by learning more about the challenge that NPS sites face as the remaining members of the WWII generation pass away and staff grapple with how to face that change.

### **My Concrete Issue**

My challenge relates directly to an upcoming exhibition focused on women's history, scheduled to open in March 2024. As I mentioned, the History Center deals very frequently with certain Homefront-related stories. Foremost among these is the identification of J. Howard Miller's "We Can Do It!" Westinghouse poster with the character of Rosie the Riveter, specifically cast in the guise of female empowerment, a modern interpretation that emerged in the 1990s. The motif appears everywhere in our building—in multiple life figures, a wall of Gift Shop products, web features, and videos. She is prominent elsewhere too. For example, the "Girls of Steel" Robotics Team sponsored by Carnegie-Mellon University uses "Rosie" as their mascot, complete with a robotic arm. (Their team T-shirt, part of a "Rosie"-inspired uniform, is a great piece in our collection; I am working with them on a student oral history project.)

We're now planning a deeper look at the dual history of the motif and the real women workers in a section of the 2024 exhibition. While the primary goal will be to tap into the mountain of scholarship out there that most of our visitors never see and illuminate women's underrepresented Homefront narratives —like labor union resistance, childcare concerns, and postwar job loss—we don't wish to devalue visitor engagement with the popular image that resonates so deeply with people. There is also concern about how new narratives of the WWII Homefront in this area may play into the current polarized cultural climate. (Complicated by the way that multiple political campaigns helped to shape the changing meaning of the "We Can Do It!" image between 1992 and 2008.) I'd love to brainstorm ideas and strategies and explore potential program partnerships with this group that could help us navigate these interpretive challenges.

**Adina Jocelyn Langer, Curator**  
Museum of History and Holocaust Education

My name is Adina Langer, and I have been curator of the Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University since 2015. Our museum presents public events, exhibits, educational resources and training rooted in World War II and the Holocaust and the generational shifts that relate to those events. Our goal is to illuminate the role that individuals play in history and the effects of history on individuals.

Over the past year of involvement in this working group, I have enjoyed learning about the different challenges facing NPS sites as well as private and university-based museums. Despite our differing sizes and access to resources, we illuminated common interpretive challenges, especially around defining the “home front” and navigating gaps between audience expectations and our desire as professional public historians to introduce complexity and diversity in the stories that we tell.

The last time my museum undertook a strategic plan for content development was when I started working there in 2015. Looking ahead to the next phase of development, I am seeking to integrate more fully home front and frontline stories through creating new exhibits focused on civil rights and scientific innovations. Rather than telling underrepresented stories through segregated temporary exhibits (for example one on the Tuskegee Airmen and another on Japanese Incarceration during World War II) I’m hoping to integrate these threads together holistically while illuminating the tensions between the narratives that were promoted to encourage patriotic participation in a war abroad and the experiences of people who had to deal with inequality and xenophobia at home. All the while, I need to keep in mind our core mission of Holocaust education and weave in relevant Holocaust themes where appropriate.

I’m also interested in broadening interpretation of certain U.S. World War II experiences to include a more global context. For example, I’m looking to create a temporary and traveling exhibit about the experiences of Indigenous people during World War II with a focus on American Indian stories but also including Indigenous perspectives from around the world (including Moroccan Goumiers, Australian Aboriginal soldiers, British Indian soldiers, etc). This exhibit would also engage with tensions specific to the home front including the acquisition and use of Indian lands for military purposes and for building and testing the atomic bomb. This exhibit in particular is encountering challenges related to our museum’s traditional core audience of 5th grade through middle school students for whom Indigenous history is not part of their core curriculum.

Nowhere in the curriculum does World War II history and Indigenous history overlap, on the home front or abroad. Even an in-depth exploration of the Manhattan Project fails to support the social studies standards directly, because the Manhattan Project is only discussed in relation to the high school standard of developing weapons to end the war in the Pacific.

Across the board, my desire to approach “traditional” World War II topics from a more innovative angle runs into challenges arising from the coverage of these topics in school curricula from 5th grade through college. Unless an exhibit or program relates directly to the core subject matter of a class, it can be very difficult to attract students or to convince teachers to bring their students on field trips or participate in programs. Thus, my desire to innovate, and my sincere belief that these innovations add value and help people think about familiar history in new ways, is curtailed by the same burdensome educational structures that spur me to want to innovate in the first place. When we survey potential adult visitors, they consistently say that they want to learn new things about World War II and the Holocaust, but we have trouble balancing their desires with the pressure to provide teachers with content that reinforces what they are already teaching in school. And given our reliance on high levels of student engagement to justify our grant funding, without high enough engagement from these new or different audiences, it can be very difficult to prioritize new or different content. I would love to hear from members of this working group how they have effectively built audiences for new approaches to familiar topics.

## **Hilary Blum**

Ph.D. Candidate

Claremont Graduate University

Public historians have long discussed the challenges in presenting history that can be challenging for the public to reckon with. These discussions often focus on situations when the historical record as presented by public historians conflict with ideas that have become incorporated in a national identity. Importantly, these ideas are often not related to any personal experience, but rather stem from dominant narratives about the past. The perception of World War II as the “good war,” for example, remains popular and central to how many Americans see their country and themselves despite relatively few people having personal experience during that time period. At the Manhattan Project National Historical Park’s Hanford site, however, the history of the Manhattan Project and the individual sites has become part of many people’s identities in a much more personal way. Thus, while the challenges in presenting public history at Hanford are similar in many ways to those of other situations—the Enola Gay exhibit, for example—there are also distinct and unique factors to consider.

A specific example of this can be found in the substantial influence that former Hanford employees have had on the site. The B Reactor Museum Association (BRMA), which consists primarily of former Hanford employees, has had an enormous influence on the site. BRMA is directly responsible for interpretation in all but two sections of the site and had a significant influence over another. Additionally, while BRMA no longer administers the tour program, the organization established the program which laid the foundation for the current tours and many of the current docents are BRMA members.

The result of this heavy influence of former employees on the site is that visitors are presented with the history of Hanford as former employees believe it to be, or perhaps as they wish it to be. When I visited, there were multiple occasions when docents spoke about their own experiences working at Hanford and implied that those experiences in the 1970s-1990s were representative of the WWII and the Cold War periods. In particular, one docent, while trying to emphasize the site’s safety, provided inaccurate information about radiation levels in cooling water, pollution, safety standards, and secrecy protocol. Importantly, I resolutely believe that this docent was not lying or in any way trying to mislead visitors. He seemed genuinely motivated to educate the public about what he saw as a critical piece of US history. Importantly, though, Hanford was also very clearly a pivotal piece of his own personal history. The result was that he presented the site’s history to the public through the filter of his own experiences and perceptions of the site.

While the docents have a significant impact on what information visitors take away from their visit, their influence over the narratives at the site are less permanent and consistent than the narratives presented by panels and exhibitions. This information too, though, presents a skewed history of the site. While there are allusions to the fact that the effluent contained radiation, for example, contradicting one of the docent's claims, there is no discussion of the extent or the effects of this contamination. Nor is there any acknowledgement of any other form of pollution or waste disposal. These topics complicate the firmly held beliefs about Hanford that many employees held and incorporated into their identity—that the site was safe, that it was proof of American technological exceptionalism, and that it was critical to national security. As such, they are not included in the narrative of the site.

I was drawn to this working group because of my dissertation research on Hanford and my hope to explore the unique challenges and opportunities in presenting the history of the WWII home front with others in the field. In particular, I look forward to joining the discussion on generative tensions that began during the first year of this working group's collaboration and hope to explore how we may best address a situation in which volunteers, contractors, guests, or other interested groups have particularly strong personal ties to a site.

**Daniel Blier**

## Fort Hunt Park

I am the park ranger primarily responsible for taking care of a National Park Service site called Fort Hunt Park. Fort Hunt is now surrounded by a suburban Virginia neighborhood; it is best known for the recreational amenities it provides to its community.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, however, Fort Hunt played a fascinating role in seminal world events and national movements. During the Second World War, Fort Hunt was the site of recently declassified clandestine Military Intelligence Service (MIS) operations that helped the United States win the war and prepare for the onset of the Cold War. One of the Military Intelligence Service operations at Fort Hunt—MIS-X—aided the escape of hundreds of American prisoners of war from Axis captivity in Europe. The other—MIS-Y—entailed the detention, processing and interrogation of Germans captured by the United States during the war.

The stories of Fort Hunt remain obscure in the American public's memory of the Second World War. The entire infrastructure of MIS-X and MIS-Y was demolished after the war ended, leaving few tangible resources from that time to interpret for visitors. The building where MIS-X was headquartered is instead now the location of a large pavilion reserved for recreational events. Fort Hunt's most prominent cultural resources—four coastal artillery batteries constructed in the late nineteenth century—bear no historical relationship to MIS-X or Y, which is confusing and disappointing to visitors, some of whom mistake the batteries' caged enclosures (designed for munitions storage) to have been prison cells for incarcerated Germans.

Recently, there are indications that Fort Hunt's national profile is rising. In 2005, the National Park Service researched declassified documents related to MIS-Y and conducted an oral history featuring interviews with surviving interrogators who served at Fort Hunt during the war. The oral history has recently been the subject of a new book about Fort Hunt as well as an Academy Award nominated Netflix documentary, both released within just the past year.

I applied to join this Working Group because the challenges I face in caring for Fort Hunt and promoting its historical importance square perfectly with all three themes that will guide our work this year. The public is fascinated by the MIS-Y oral history conducted by the National Park Service and its unique relationship to the World War II home front; MIS-Y's relationship to Operation Paperclip—a secret intelligence program that extradited thousands of former Nazi scientists to the United States to work for the

American government during the Cold War—complicates celebratory narratives of scientific innovation on the World War II home front; and collaborating with communities of practice and other NPS sites featuring relevant World War II history is absolutely crucial to raising the national profile of Fort Hunt and its history. By working with this group, I hope to facilitate communication between staff responsible for interpreting Fort Hunt and interpreters of different World War II home front sites to connect our stories and share best practices with one another.

**Hannah Palsa**

Ph.D. Candidate

Kansas State University

Originally, what drew my interest to the World War II Home Front working group was simply its existence. As a World War II home front scholar, I often feel disillusioned by the amount of military history that is bolstered within museums, archives, or academic conferences. Repeated focus on military history during World War II has me frequently questioning whether I should call myself a scholar of World War II since I do not focus on any type of military operations, military figures, etc. Of course, I know this attitude is silly but it is frustrating for a young academic to see one area of a war put on a pedestal while other areas languish or are ignored because there are no guns, bombs, or tanks. As a Ph.D. Candidate studying Dogs for Defense, I am often frustrated by the public's response when I am invited for talks. I focus specifically on Dogs for Defense and the American public during America's involvement in World War II. Yet, I often feel invalidated because any questions or comments from audience members frequently circle back to the military operations of dogs during the war. It makes me feel like my work is of a lesser quality because I am choosing not to focus on the Pacific Theater and the dogs of the United States Marine Corps, and instead focus on how children interacted with Dogs for Defense through published children's literature written during the war and other avenues of that nature.

I think the biggest issue that I struggle with, besides finding archival material related to my dissertation, circles back to the divide that exists between military operations and home front operations in the United States during World War II. Of course, those who study the war in any capacity know that both operations were interlinked. However, visitors to museums and historic sites continue to possess a view that, compared to the battlefield, life on the home front was idyllic and without tension. Though aware of rationing and victory gardens, the public seem oblivious to the fact that citizens on the home front experienced violence and discrimination based on skin color, gender, work status, and views on the war itself. Scholarship including *Taking Leave, Taking Liberties: American Troops on the World War II Home Front* by Aaron Hiltner, *Women Against the Good War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the American Home Front, 1941-1947* by Rachel Walter Goossen, and *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945* by Melissa A. McEuen allow for greater understandings of how home front citizens lived and worked during the war. Yet, these texts and others, remain ignored or dismissed by the public to bolster the view of a more idyllic American home front.



My hope is that the World War II Home Front group can bring together volunteers, scholars, and the public who are interested in World War II history to help shed light on the sacrifices made on American home front during World War II. The narrative that the military campaigns of World War II are dominant, and that the home front is not important will hopefully fade away with due time as the public begins to understand the exact importance of the contributions that Americans made on the home front.

**Megan Woods**

National Parks of Boston

As a previous Student Conservation Association (SCA) Public History Intern and now a Visual Information Specialist at National Parks of Boston, I have created both in-person and digital engagements related to the Charlestown Navy Yard's 176-year history. My specific area of interest has focused on the Great Migration's connection to the Navy Yard, which primarily occurred before and during World War II (WWII). As I researched and developed public-facing engagements based on these stories, I faced several challenges, some of which are reflected in the tensions identified in last year's WWII Home Front Working Group (i.e. expectation of a positive, inspiring story v. more complex story; boundaries of home front stories). Learning about these previous discussions sparked my interest in applying to join this Working Group.

As a Public History intern from June 2019 – May 2020, I drew connections between the Great Migration and the Charlestown Navy Yard to help incorporate more diverse experiences into the site's interpretation. My goals were two-fold: uncover how the Charlestown Navy Yard fit into the larger historical context of the Great Migration's effect on Boston, and then highlight the stories and experiences of specific workers. Faced with limited secondary sources, I conducted primary source research by looking through Census Records, local Black newspapers, Navy Yard archival materials, Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) Case Files, pension records, and Navy Yard and local oral histories. These resources allowed me to not only consider the effect of the Great Migration on the Charlestown Navy Yard, but also gain insight into the experience of Black workers at the Navy Yard during World War II in general. Achieving both of my goals proved challenging. I had to learn to grapple with the complexity of the connections I was trying to understand from piecing together primary sources. I found uncovering stories of individual workers particularly difficult. While I could dive into genealogical records and newspaper articles, many gaps remained. Also absent were the voices of the individuals. I frequently debated: what are best practices and considerations for ethically conducting primary source and genealogical research to broaden the narratives of the home front? How do we appropriately address gaps in our interpretation?

The FEPC case files served as one source in which workers' voices were both present and in direct contradiction to the celebratory and positive narrative of the home front. These files allow us to shed light on experiences of discrimination, as well as have relevant conversations that examine how investigators and Navy Yard officials

addressed these cases. As an intern, I shared some of these stories through in-person programs and digital content [Stories of the Great Migration; Discrimination and African American Women at Charlestown Navy Yard].

However, one case I uncovered I only shared through in-person programs. This case centers on police brutality, which I felt required a dialogue to fully address the complexity of the story. Yet with such an important and relevant story, I have wondered how or if there is a way to effectively share it through more passive interpretation (ex. exhibit text, online content) to further complicate our understanding of the home front. Since the end of my internship overlapped with the beginning of COVID, the digital engagements I developed allowed for these stories to be shared with a wide virtual audience while the Park was closed for public visitation. However, as the Park has reopened, its priorities remain focused on responding to frontline operation changes, upcoming commemorations, as well as other on-site historical resources (USS Constitution and USS Cassin Young). With these challenges, how might we creatively recognize visitor expectations of what they anticipate experiencing at the Navy Yard, yet also provide opportunities to engage with these Navy Yard stories that expand our understanding of the Home Front? How do we bridge the divide between our digital interpretation and in-person interpretation? Our digital audiences can more readily get access to these diverse Navy Yard and home front stories, whereas in-person visitors have limited or no access to them yet and may not expect to engage with these stories on their visit.

As a member of this working group, I look forward to learning from and with other public history professionals from other institutions and NPS sites on how to address the various challenges we face when interpreting the home front at our sites.

**Stanley Merritt**

National Mall and Memorials Park

Park Guide

Here on the National Mall we represent not just Washington D.C. as a part of the homefront but the entire national homefront as well. We are also a place where we try to make amends for some of the atrocities that went on during that. Between the Japanese American Patriotism During World War 2 memorial, the paneling along the World War 2 memorial showcasing the work done by all to support the war effort. It is this reason and a want for discussion and creative thinking that I was drawn to this Working Group.

Having a group of people who do not already have their own biases about what is appropriate and what stories we should be sharing is crucial in development of new programs and interpretations of sites. While anytime a group of like minded individuals (in this case interpreters of WW2 homefront sites) can lead to some form of an echo chamber a working group like this has not only the ability to prevent that but be a lesson for other such discussion groups on how to create and drive new and open discussion without rehashing the same points. It is my belief as well that we can use these Work Groups to help show our supervisors and management that these new and insightful styles of interpretation are not just a niche interest but have broad appeal and will help to elevate the park and keep us up to date with modern interpretation.

As for issues raised there are many, some that stem from lack of manpower to fully staff sites and allow for interpretation at sites, to what sites receive priority and when. Everyone in and out of DC comments on how beautiful and wonderful the Cherry Blossoms are, their iconography covers the city as much as the blossoms cover the trees, yet during the onset of World War 2, many thought they should be torn down or burned, one such vandal even attempted to burn the trees themselves. We do not discuss how these Japanese Cherry Blossom trees were so more readily accepted and appreciated than the human beings from Japan who also made the United States their home and while they both drew ire only the humans were incarcerated en masse and forced out their homes. We also talk plenty about how the soldiers who came home were treated as heroes and those who did not were seen as martyrs for righteousness and freedom, but not about how only white veterans received that treatment. For most POC veterans they returned to fight another war, one that would last much longer, and could be argued is still being fought to this day. Yet here we are not encouraged to share those stories nearly as much as we are encouraged to share the ones that paint us in a much more favorable light. A light that casts a shadow over all the terrible things done

in the name of the American Way and allows us to hide and forget about them. That is what I wish to do, using the Japanese American Patriotism During World War 2 memorial as a case study on how we do the minimum to acknowledge our mistakes and then pretend that everything is fine. The memorial itself is never staffed, advertised, or even really discussed by the park and has a broken bell that has been sitting that way for over a year. The group that funded and fought for it hosts a yearly march from the memorial to the tidal basin where the largest concentration of cherry blossom trees can be found. I believe this is our best opportunity to highlight and raise awareness of this part of our homefront during World War 2. The usual questions we get at the World War II memorial is "What order are the states arranged in?" or "Why is the Philippines listed here?"

There are no real questions about what happened during the war or on the Homefront. I cannot tell you what questions we get at the Japanese American Patriotism during World War II memorial as we never staff it. During the most recent Cherry Blossom festival I was asked to create a pop up discussing the Cherry Blossom trees and Japanese American Internment. It was finished, reviewed, and approved by supervisors and then I was never allowed to give it. So the real issue is how do I bring up this subject matter naturally and create visitor engagement but also convince upper management that these are conversations we should be having and resources we should be using.