

**Condition Report: The State of Public History in the South
National Council on Public History Mini-Con
The University of Louisiana at Lafayette | Lafayette, LA
October 5-6, 2024**

Preliminary Conference Program

Saturday, October 5

8:00 - 8:30 am **Coffee**

8:30 - 10:15 am **Session 1: Concurrent Panels**

Environment, Agriculture, and Cultural Landscapes at Southern Sites of Public Humanities

Panelists: Jack Carey, Ryan Fletcher, Katie Boatner

This panel illuminates layers of complexity in southern agricultural and environmental history and facilitates discussion of the role public history plays in the realization of the southern landscape's past and present. Fletcher examines the agrarian commune that Shaker monastics created around South Union, Kentucky, and how the complicated Shaker history of agricultural production masoned a foundation for the public history that occurs at South Union today. Carey's paper reflects on teaching public humanities through southern landscapes through the ways students have complicated the environmental concept of invasive species through their treatments of two iconic sites of the southern landscape: the plantation and the kudzu ravine. Boatner's paper examines the rich public history evident in the cemeteries of the South. Boatner used ground penetrating radar to locate and identify unmarked sites of burial in Southern cemeteries, focusing on identifying unmarked sites of burial in Raleigh, Charleston, and New Orleans, as well as using archives to place markers on those sites.

Displacement and Erasure in African American Public History

Panelists: Vanessa Hines, Rebecca Speas, T. DeWayne Moore

This panel highlights the ways that white supremacy, working through gentrification, erasure of history, and other forms of displacement has shaped African American public history representations in the South. Hines' paper will discuss the efforts of The Stagville Memorial Project to uplift stories of

descendant communities from Stagville plantation, displacement, and their legacy and their contributions to modern day Durham - through public art, in an effort to inspire folks to think contextually about modern day issues. Speas uses research in Durham, North Carolina, to illustrate how public history may be utilized to resist the multi-headed hydra of unchecked gentrification and empower BIPOC and working-class community members to resist displacement efforts. Moore examines the most recent grant projects of the Mt. Zion Memorial Fund (MZMF) as well as the underlying motives behind their work in Mississippi in the context of the state's failure to implement ethical public history practices.

Access is Power: Breaking Down Barriers in Libraries and Archives

Panelists: Christina Thomas, Adam Beauchamp, Bernadette Birzer

Since 1965, civil rights veteran Jan Hillegas has curated a private collection of materials documenting the Mississippi Movement. Valuing the importance of community archives, Hillegas decided not to donate this collection to the state archive or a university's special collection. Thomas' work with Ms. Hillegas and others in Mississippi in preserving the Movement's history on their own terms and through community efforts drives the paper's discussion of work in community archiving and the future of such collections as people age and the growing financial burden in keeping history— what are the futures of these grassroots archives, and what should we as public historians do to support their work? Beauchamp's paper also challenges ideas of archives and libraries by examining activism surrounding banned books through an analysis of an exhibit hosted at FSU Libraries, "Against Liberty: A History of Banning Books in Florida."

10:30 am - 12:15 pm Session 2: Concurrent Panels

Local History as National History

Participants: Nancy Young, Debbie Harwell, Todd Romero

Our slogan at Center for Public History (CPH) at University of Houston is, "Making history matter in Houston, where the local is global." Panelists explicate CPH projects that tell southern stories and national stories. Harwell and Romero explore the Houston History magazine and oral history project that address climate events, like Hurricane Harvey, healthcare access for low-income families, and UH's transition from a segregated school to one of the nation's most diverse urban universities. Young discusses the Sharing Stories from 1977 digital humanities project, which analyzes the National Women's Conference and how diverse women deliberated the controversial—reproductive freedom—and the unexpected—statistics—to learn what women wanted from

government and produce a 26-plank agenda for President Jimmy Carter. All of this takes place as Texas lawmakers attack climate, healthcare, gender equality and women's independence, and DEI policies.

Embedded in the University, Serving the Community: Public History in the South Carolina Lowcountry

Participants: Leah Worthington, Alexis Johnson, Erica Veal

In a region where historic and contemporary dominant voices attempt to erase the experiences of marginalized communities, three College of Charleston faculty work to elevate the voices of Black and Brown people, bridging the divide between academia and the public. Alexis Johnson will discuss her experience training local community organizations how to conduct oral histories, empowering them to be stewards and sharers of their stories. Erica Veal, founder of the Black and Brown Interpreters Network, will share how she leveraged her role in an archive and museum to expand access to heritage interpretation. Leah Worthington will describe how digitized archival materials and digital exhibits serve the needs and illuminate the experiences of Black people with Lowcountry roots. As South Carolina's state and local governance continues to vilify Black history education, panelists will share the challenges, realities, and strategies for success of their new or well-established projects.

Frenchmen Notes

Participants: Hannah Krieger-Benson, Jessica Dauterive, Laura DeFazio, Dr. Denise Frazier

The public digital humanities project Frenchmen Notes chronicles the history of Frenchmen Street—a popular music scene in New Orleans' Marigny neighborhood—over four decades of zoning policy changes, social and cultural shifts, and environmental threats. This project was launched by musician and activist Hannah Kreiger-Benson with bartender and journalist Laura DeFazio, now working in collaboration with digital historian Jessica Dauterive and musician and arts administrator Denise Frazier. Although supported by the Music & Culture Coalition of New Orleans and the Midlo Center for New Orleans Studies, Frenchmen Notes is managed independently through the efforts of scholars, activist and cultural organizations, musicians/wage-earners, and community members. This roundtable will delineate how this digital project documents and digitizes the stories and cultural economy data of one street as a musical incubator and economic engine and will shed light on multimodal strategies to advocate for Frenchmen Street's artists, workers, and historians today.

12:30 - 1:30 pm

Lunch

1:30 - 4:30 pm

Concurrent Discussion Groups

LGBTQIA Louisiana

Convener: Marissa Petrou

Policy, Law, and Public History in the South

Convener: Julia Brock

4:30 - 5:00 pm

Refreshments

5:00 - 6:30 pm

Plenary: "Telling Stories, Is Not Telling Lies"

Speaker: Kathe Hambrick, Amistad Research Center, Tulane University

Research for Public History projects and programs sometimes includes reading dozens of obituaries, conducting oral histories, and traveling down dusty roads in lonely rural places. It may include a ghost story here and there, but the "truth be told" in the written records of churches, dusty attics, and archives. From Pointe Coupee to Iberville and Ascension parishes, I've led the efforts to save buildings, installed markers and built memorials. Public History is the purpose of my journey.



Kathe Hambrick is a non-profit executive, preservationist, public historian, museologist, and public speaker. She currently serves as the Executive Director of the Amistad Research Center located at Tulane University. She is the Founder of the River Road African American Museum, River Road African Burial Grounds Coalition, and 2PRESERVE Consulting LLC. For the past thirty years, her research has led to the preservation of five historic buildings and three historic burial grounds.

She is experienced in community relations and is a liaison to corporations, museums, governmental agencies, community leaders, and faith-based organizations. Hambrick is considered an expert on slavery in rural south Louisiana. She has been interviewed by local, national, and international media in United Kingdom, France, and Japan.

Hambrick previously served as President of the Association of African American Museums (AAAM). In addition, she served as the Chief Curator and Director of Interpretation for the West Baton Rouge Museum for four years. Throughout her 30-year career, she has curated over 100 exhibits, including *The Rural Roots of Jazz*, *Rural Black Doctors*, and Louisiana's first permanent exhibit about the GU272 enslaved people sold by the Jesuits of Georgetown University.

Kathe Hambrick is the author and co-author of several books: *Juke Joint Men*, *Oh Say Can You See: Flag Paintings of Malaika Favorite*, *Our Roots Run Deep: History of the River Road African American Museum*, and a curriculum guide entitled, *Freedom's Journey: Understanding the Underground Railroad in South Louisiana*. Hambrick received a Master of Arts in Museums Studies in 2012, where she later became adjunct professor.

6:30 pm

Dinner on your own

Sunday, October 6

9:00 - 11:00 am

Session 3: Concurrent Panels

Enduring Public History: The View from South Carolina

Participants: Jill Found, Rebekah Turnmire

In South Carolina, as in localities across the country, the state government has worked persistently over the past several years to restrict the content and materials available in public schools. This has included not allowing the Advanced Placement African American Studies course and issuing restrictions on the content of books available in school libraries. Similarly, the cutting of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs has raised concerns that programs connected to telling stories outside a dominant narrative will be met with backlash. However, many public history organizations across the state have continued to carry out the important work of highlighting South Carolina's diverse and complex history. With a focus on African American history, panelists from a range of public history organizations, including state-funded ones, will explore how they have endeavored to engage community members and utilize available resources to continue interpret South Carolina's history.

Public History in Practice: Navigating Community Engagement and Archiving in Louisiana's Academic Institutions

Participants: Cheylon Woods, Dr. Zachary G. Stein, Jennifer A. Cramer, Melissa Smith, Dr. Kent Peacock

This roundtable brings together individuals with experience at institutions of higher education in Louisiana whose positions contain a central responsibility of engaging with the public. Participants come from a variety of academic backgrounds and places within their institutions, including libraries and archives, research centers, and academic departments. Participants will discuss the joys and challenges of their positions, particularly regarding often differing expectations from university administration, colleagues, and the communities with which they engage; as well as how they define being in service to communities and examples of their successes and failures while doing public history in the South. Our hope is audience members leave the session with examples of projects, tools, and methods they can use or replicate to be in service to and dialog with their local communities so we can all continue to create accessible history that equitably values and incorporates all its participants.

Repatriation and Reinterpretation: Indigenizing Public History in the South

Chair: TBD

Panelists: Ariana Persico, Cole Wicker

In the age of DEI restrictions, public historians face significant challenges interpreting the complex narratives of the United States' racialized past. However, in the South, a Black-white binary flattens the intersectional histories many public historians interpret. This roundtable "confounds the color line" and explores the challenges of interpreting Native American histories across the South. As practitioner-scholars, we wrestle with challenges related to repatriation, recognition, and reinterpretation within and outside the academy. The discussion will examine how tribal communities and institutions support repatriation efforts but face challenges in defining "who is Native" in the South. This conversation will continue with a broader discussion exploring Southern space-making and the tensions that arise when Native histories confound a color line already in contrast with predominant white narratives. Together, this roundtable illuminates how public historians in the South must engage with Native history directly to interpret a thorough, intersectional, and empowered past.

Optional Afternoon Tours

11:30 am – 6:00 pm

Whitney Plantation Tour

Facilitator: Dr. Ibrahima Seck, Director of Research

\$10/person, space is limited

Time covers bus to and from Whitney Plantation

12:00 – 4:00 pm

**Iberia African American Historical Society Center for Research and Learning
Tour**

Facilitator: TBD

Free, space is limited

Time covers bus to and from Whitney Plantation

Be on the lookout for a possible third tour!