



NCPH Annual Meeting  
September 16-19, 2026  
Providence, Rhode Island, United States

## 2026 NCPH Awards

Please join us in congratulating this year's award winners for outstanding achievement in a variety of public history formats. We hope you will help us celebrate during the 2026 NCPH-AASLH Joint Meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, United States during the NCPH Awards Breakfast on Saturday, September 19.

### **Robert Kelley Memorial Award**

*This award honors distinguished achievements by individuals, institutions, or nonprofit or corporate entities for making history relevant to the individual lives of ordinary people outside of academia. Award committee members: Sharon Babaian, Marla Miller (Chair), and Bill Willingham.*

#### Award Winner

#### **Humanities Action Lab**

Represented by **Liz Ševčenko** and **Regina Campbell**

The Humanities Action Lab (HAL) is a coalition of universities, issue organizations, and public spaces in 40 cities, led from Hunter College in New York City, that collaborate to produce community-curated public humanities projects on urgent social issues. Students and stakeholders in each city develop local chapters of international traveling exhibits, web projects, public programs, and other platforms for civic engagement. Projects travel nationally and internationally to museums, public libraries, cultural centers, and other spaces in each of the communities that helped create them.

HAL consists of over 1,000 collaborators and has produced five national projects. Rather than treating public history as something delivered to communities, HAL treats it as something created with communities. Through this philosophy, HAL has developed powerful exhibitions on urgent social issues—from mass incarceration to the climate crisis—as well as multiple digital public humanities platforms offering open-access archives, exhibitions, lesson plans, and toolkits for national and international audiences. Its translocal learning exchanges among students, faculty, and community organizers working on shared projects has pioneered a model of mutual aid within the public history and humanities space, enabling participants across the HAL coalition to connect, share struggles and strategies, and exchange resources.

Through this work, HAL has brought history to life for numerous and diverse audiences—and in doing so, has embodied precisely the vision at the heart of the Robert Kelley Memorial Award, which honors "distinguished achievement in making history relevant to the individual lives of ordinary people outside of academia." HAL's entire mission is grounded in that principle. It is our great pleasure to recognize them with this year's award.

### **Outstanding Public History Project Award**

*These awards are presented for work completed within the previous two calendar years that contribute to broader public reflection and appreciation of the past or that serve as a model of professional public history practice. NCPH acknowledges the generous support of Stevie and Ted Wolf that makes this award possible. Award committee members: Amy Durrell (chair), Callie Hawkins, and Cheryl Jimenez Frei.*

#### Large Institution Award Winner

##### ***Sakoonet History Project***

**Marjory O'Toole**, Little Compton Historical Society

This outstanding exhibit included multiple innovative elements and illustrates new possibilities for historic sites to raise up the stories of previously marginalized communities. The exhibit celebrates the Wampanoag community, past and present, including elements ranging from a permanent sculpture park, an artist in residency program, and community programming, all based on a foundation in building relationships with and sharing authority with the local Wampanoag community.

#### Large Institution Honorable Mention

##### ***The Pussy Palace Oral History Project***

**Elspeeth H. Brown, Alisha Stranges, Elio Colavito, Ayo Tsalithaba, and Emily Mastragostino**, University of Toronto

This joint venture between the LGBTQ Oral History Digital Collaboratory and the ArQuives: Canada's LGBTQ2+ Archives creates accessible resources for community and educational audiences, sharing a history that has not been documented in the past. The project is an excellent example of the rich use of oral histories to create a website that offers an integrated ecosystem of interviews, digital platforms, exhibitions, and public programs.

#### Small Institution Award Winner

##### ***Badge Of Pride: From Silence...To Celebration!***

**Adrian Cardwell**, Badge of Pride

The Badge Of Pride project illustrates the potential for a small, community-rooted independent nonprofit to empower a volunteer-led team to build and activate an archive of more than 10,000 objects into a powerful exhibition and a sequence of public programming. Developed in partnership with the Irving Archives and Museum in the DFW Metroplex, the exhibition demonstrates how an organization that uses non-traditional pathways can conduct rigorous public history work.

#### Small Institution Honorable Mention

##### ***Voices Revealed: Porter Talk***

**Stacey Zembrzycki**, Dawson College; **Tom Thompson** and **Jennifer Woodley**, Library and Archives Canada

This effort by Library and Archives Canada (LAC) features the work of a three-person-team, which created a podcast to amplify the lived experiences of Black men who worked as sleeping car porters in Canada during the twentieth century. Using interviews conducted in the late 1980s, the team developed an engaging interpretation of these experiences for modern audiences. This bilingual mini-series offers a model for others who seek to elevate the stories of marginalized communities through the use of archived interviews.

## **NCPH Book Award**

*The NCPH Book Award recognizes outstanding scholarship that addresses the theory and/or practice of public history or that includes the products of public history work. Award committee members: M.J. Rymysz-Pawlowska, Donna Sack, and Jessica Taylor (Chair).*

### Award Winner

***Worldly Afterlives: Tracing Family Trails Between India and Empire***

(Princeton University Press, 2025)

**Julia Stephens**, Rutgers University

We are thrilled to announce the winner and honorable mentions for the NCPH Book Award. Over eighty submissions for the award, from the United States and abroad, represent the best and most innovative books in global public history practice. The winner of the book award, Julia Stephens's *Worldly Afterlives: Tracing Family Trails Between India and Empire*, brings together far-flung archives and interviews, heirlooms passed down between generations and social media posts, to tell stories of Indian global migration. It is a difficult book to characterize—intimate, beautiful, methodologically innovative, and theoretically sophisticated. It reframes how we think about diaspora, mobility, and the legacy of empire; it takes seriously people grappling with these concepts as they research their families or preserve their archives. In many ways, Stephens expands possibilities for what an academic public history monograph can look like, and how community and family archives can fit in.

As a weathervane indicating the direction of the field, the body of work submitted for this book award shows that public historians assert the role of the individual historical actor, archivist, and writer in illuminating complex, global issues and blazing shared paths forward. We are proud to be part of this community with you.

### Honorable Mention

***Captive State: Louisiana and the Making of Mass Incarceration***

(The Historic New Orleans Collection, 2025)

**Katherine Jolliff Dunn, Kevin T. Harrell, Eric Seiferth, and Nick Weldon**, Historic New Orleans Collection

We are pleased to see a substantial number of submissions from museums and archives professionals, including catalogs and peer-reviewed publications co-written with community members. Eric Seiferth, Katherine Jolliff Dunn, Kevin T. Harrell, and Nick Weldon's *Captive State: Louisiana and the Making of Mass Incarceration*, adapted from the exhibition of the same name curated by the Historic New Orleans Collection, documents how Louisiana's rise as the national leader in mass incarceration is rooted in slavery. Like many of the submissions from museums and archives, the book meets the challenge of bringing the power of exhibited objects, witnessed in person by visitors, to the page for readers.

### Honorable Mention

***Prisoners after War: Veterans in the Age of Mass Incarceration***

(University of Massachusetts Press, 2024)

**Jason A. Higgins**, Virginia Tech

In *Prisoners After War: Veterans in the Age of Mass Incarceration*, Jason A. Higgins documents the stories of veterans incarcerated after military service to explore how the effects of national policy like the War on Crime and, in particular, the Vietnam War have placed young people of color on a conveyor belt taking them from enlistment to war to incarceration. Higgins also points to veteran organizing and advocacy as a way forward, exploring many of the same themes as Stephens: how documenting often

obscured, difficult-to-access stories of marginalized individuals can change how historians think about individual entanglement with nationalism and imperial systems.

#### Honorable Mention

##### ***Memoria en movimiento: Lorca y el archivo / Memory in Motion: Lorca and the Archive***

(Granada: Consorcio Centro Federico García Lorca, 2025)

**Andrew A. Anderson**, University of Virginia; **Melissa Dinverno**, Indiana University; **Christopher Maurer**, Boston University

Melissa Dinverno, Andrew A. Anderson and Christopher Maurer's *Memoria en movimiento: Lorca y el archivo / Memory in Motion: Lorca and the Archive* brings exhibit to page to tell a sweeping, powerful story: the preservation and rediscovery of the archives of Federico García Lorca, compiled from 47 institutions and collections. This beautiful and bilingual book documents Lorca, the twentieth-century Spanish poet and playwright, whose life was cut short and whose work was obscured by fascists in postwar Spain. The book lays open new possibilities for research into Lorca's life and context, and like *Worldly Afterlives* provides a model for how international collaboration can counter state repression and the effects of war and exile on our shared heritage.

#### **Grassroots Public History Award – Providence**

*This award recognizes an individual or community organization doing important public history work in their community. For the 2025-2026 awards cycle, the Grassroots Public History Award – Providence was open to any project completed within the state of Rhode Island. Award committee members: Mariana Brandman, Jenn Edginton (Co-Chair), Andrea Manolov, Lauren O'Brien, and Marcus Smith (Co-Chair).*

#### Award Winner

##### **The Heart of Wattayai**

**Vimala Phongsavanh**, National Coalition For Asian Pacific American Community Development

The National Council on Public History's Grassroots Public History Award Committee is pleased to recognize The Heart of Wattayai as this year's recipient of the Grassroots Public History Award. Presented at the Museum of Work & Culture, the project was selected for the strength of its historical grounding, clarity of narrative, and sustained commitment to community-centered practice.

The project is both intimate and expansive, using one family's journey from Laos to Rhode Island to connect personal memory to broader histories of French colonialism, the US Secret War in Laos, and refugee resettlement in the United States. Through this approach, oral histories are shaped into a cohesive and accessible narrative that organizes intergenerational memory within a clear historical frame, showing how individual lives are shaped by larger political and historical forces, demonstrating both creative storytelling and careful historical interpretation.

Developed through close collaboration with family and community members, the project keeps those voices at the center of the work. It reflects sustained community involvement through participation in the development process and public programming, including strong attendance and continued engagement with local audiences. The exhibit also broadens the interpretive scope of the site by bringing forward Lao American history in a context where it has often been absent. Its impact is evident in both reach and recognition. For many Lao American visitors, the exhibit offers a rare moment of visibility, where family histories, cultural practices, and lived realities are presented with care, dignity, and weight.

## **Excellence in Consulting Awards**

*These awards recognize outstanding contributions to the field of public history through consulting or contract work. Award committee members: Taylor Brookins, Rory Krupp, Richard Josey (Chair), and Ivy Weingram.*

### Group Award Winner

#### **Community Planning Collaborative**

Represented by **Adrienne Burke** and **Ennis Davis**

Community Planning Collaborative's project, *LaVilla: Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing Heritage Trail: Vision & Implementation Strategy*, rose to the top for the committee because of both its breadth and its cohesion. What stood out most was how the team used *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing*, the National Black Anthem, as a throughline. It was not just a reference point, but a framework that helped weave together multiple sites, stories, and experiences into something that felt whole. There was also a strong appreciation for how the project connected local history to larger movements, particularly the Great Migration, while still remaining rooted in place.

### Group Honorable Mention

#### **Institute for Cacao and Chocolate Research**

Represented by **Caitlin DeAngelis** and **Carla Martin**

The work on the *Black History at the Vassall Estate* project stood out for its intentionality, especially in its engagement with descendant communities. There was a clear sense that this was not surface-level inclusion, but sustained, thoughtful collaboration. The project also demonstrated how research can move into multiple forms of public engagement, which the group found meaningful.

### Individual Award Winner

#### ***Interpreting Slavery Through Place, Dialogue, and Descendant Engagement***

**Joe McGill Jr.**, The Slave Dwelling Project

One of the things that stood out most in our conversation was the distinction between a project and a practice in Joe McGill Jr.'s work. Many of the submissions reflected strong, well-executed projects. Joe's work reflects something broader. It is sustained, relational, and national in scope. Across institutions, his presence has shifted how stories are told, particularly around the interpretation of slavery, and that impact continues even after his direct involvement ends. There was a shared recognition that this kind of work can be harder to evaluate because it does not always result in a single tangible deliverable. And at the same time, it was clear to the group that the depth, reach, and lasting influence of his practice made it important to recognize.

### Individual Honorable Mention

#### ***White Hair Don't Care: The Visibility Project***

**Keighley Ashlen Gentle**

The film "White Hair Don't Care: A New Era in Beauty" was conceived of, led, and directed by Aishah Iqbal to challenge modern beauty standards and celebrate the beauty of aging. Keighley Ashlen Gentle contributed to the historical and community impact on the film's social campaign, entitled "The Visibility Project." The committee was deeply impressed by how Gentle's contributions, and the project as a whole, moves across formats—exhibition, community engagement, storytelling—and how it centers identity, visibility, and aging in a way that feels both personal and widely resonant. It is creative,

expansive, and grounded in care. The committee appreciated not only the quality of the work, but the way it invited people to see themselves differently.

### **G. Wesley Johnson Award**

*Named in honor of the founding editor of The Public Historian, this award recognizes the most outstanding article appearing in the journal during the previous volume year. NCPH acknowledges the generous support of Stan Hordes of HMS Associates in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and many of his friends for underwriting this award. Award committee members: Jessica Dauterive, Ayanna Goines, and Harvee White (Chair).*

#### Award Winner

**“Grave Matter(s): Flooding Black Cemeteries in the Santee-Cooper Basin”**

*The Public Historian* Vol 47, No 4

**Kelsey Alejandra Moore**

The G. Wesley Johnson Award Committee would like to recognize Kelsey Alejandra Moore as this year’s G. Wesley Johnson award winner for her article: “Grave Matter(s): Flooding Black Cemeteries in the Santee-Cooper Basin.” As more and more cemeteries are being lost and redeveloped, the Award Committee found the article both timely and urgent. With a scholarly yet engaging tone, “Grave Matter(s)” explores the loss of Black burial sites and calls upon historians and institutions to reconsider the ways in which lost sites are commemorated and remembered. Moore’s storytelling, honesty, and commitment to centering descendant voices results in an article that is not afraid to engage with and challenge current systems.

#### Honorable Mention

**“Being like Mayberry: Memory, Landscape, and the White Spatial Imaginary in an Atlanta Suburb”**

*The Public Historian* Vol 47, No 3

**Kathryn E. Wilson**

#### Honorable Mention

**“A Mine and a Massacre Site: Historicizing Violence at Thacker Pass/Peehee Mu’huh”**

*The Public Historian* Vol 47, No 4

**Kelsey R. Hill**

### **Diversity Travel Award**

*Launched in 2024, these travel grants support attendance at the NCPH Annual Meeting for representatives of minority-supporting institutions, including but not limited to universities (including HBCUs, HSIs, etc.), museums, historic sites, and other organizations that base their primary work in supporting marginalized communities through public history, broadly defined. Award committee members: Monique Davila (Chair), Elizabeth DeBord, and Skylee-Storm Hogan Stacey.*

#### Award Winners

**Daisy Ocampo Diaz**, California State University - San Bernardino

**Michael D. Lopez**, University of Colorado - Denver

**Brandon Nightingale**, Howard University, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center

**Elisabeth Ríos-Brooks**, Boulder County Parks & Open Space

### **Student Project Award**

*This award is given to an outstanding public history student project initiated as academic coursework and implemented and recognized beyond the classroom for its contribution to the field of public history.*

*Award committee members: Tamara Feinstein (Chair), LaQuanda Walters Cooper, Monica Mercado, and Craig Stutman.*

#### Award Winner

***An Archive for Activists: Historical Preservation for Environmental Justice in North Carolina***  
**Emma Jo Donnelly**, University of Wisconsin–Madison

An Archive for Activists project began the work of building a community-centered archive and a set of oral histories for the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN) to use in current advocacy efforts and as a model for the organization's future historical documentation work. What began initially as a graduate level public history internship, resulting in the creation of a historical exhibit highlighting shared struggles and community voices from primarily Black and marginalized communities at the twenty-fifth annual North Carolina Environmental Justice Summit in 2024, has developed into a successful Mellon Foundation grant to continue this work. Due to the ephemeral nature of nonprofit activist organizing, the committee was particularly impressed by the historical significance of capturing both original materials and new oral histories of this advocacy network. An Archive for Activists has the potential to not only help the advocacy efforts of the network itself in the present day, but also to preserve the memories of its leaders and membership for future generations.

#### **New Professional Travel Awards**

*New Professional Travel Awards are for individuals who are new to the field and practice of public history. These two grants assist new professionals in attending the NCPH conference, helping them connect with other members of the profession early in their careers. NCPH acknowledges the generous support of Historical Research Associates, Inc. (HRA) for underwriting one of these awards. Award committee members: Ann Abney (chair), Susan Asbury, and Stephanie Gray.*

#### HRA Travel Award Winner

**Sara Shaffer-Henry**, Illinois State Museum - Dickson Mounds

#### NCPH Travel Award Winner

**Caroline Hugh**, Georgia Humanities

This year's New Professional Award Winners are Sara Shaffer-Henry and Caroline Hugh. The committee was impressed by Shaffer-Henry's activity in both the history and public history fields. In her current position as Associate Director of the Dickson Mounds Museum in Illinois, she works to de-colonize a sacred Indigenous space, centering and collaborating with Indigenous voices and perspectives. Likewise, the committee appreciated Hugh's work encouraging 6-12th grade students' interest in history through her position at Georgia Humanities. Her work in rural communities throughout Georgia exemplifies her commitment to sharing the stories of all Georgians. The committee thanks everyone for their applications and their commitment to the field.

#### **Graduate Student Travel Awards**

*The Graduate Student Travel Awards provide assistance for conference travel costs for five graduate students who will present a session or poster or will participate in a working group at the NCPH annual meeting. Award committee members: Tamara Feinstein (Chair), LaQuanda Walters Cooper, Monica Mercado, and Craig Stutman.*

#### Award Winners

**Talia Brenner**, North Carolina State University  
**Alyssa Brown**, Syracuse University

**Eleanor Rose Carter**, Loyola University Chicago  
**Britta Lind**, University of Nebraska at Kearney  
**Emma MacDonald**, University of Western Ontario

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**Congratulations to the 2026 award recipients, and thank you award selection committees!**

**Submissions for the 2027 NCPH Book Award, Outstanding Project Award, and Robert Kelley Memorial Award are due November 1, 2026, and all other award submissions are due December 1, 2026. Please see [www.ncph.org](http://www.ncph.org) for details.**

NCPH relies on its endowment to support the awards program and a variety of other programs and projects that fulfill the organization's mission. A primary goal of our *2020 Vision Endowment Campaign* was to "expand travel grants and award offerings to increase diversity and inclusion in the organization and field." The campaign enabled the creation of the Grassroots Public History Award first awarded in 2022 and the Diversity Travel Awards first awarded in 2024. To help continue to grow our future award and travel grant offerings, please consider giving to the NCPH Endowment:

<http://ncph.org/giving/endowment>.

The National Council on Public History (NCPH) is a nonprofit membership association that inspires public engagement with the past and serves the needs of practitioners in putting history to work in the world. NCPH builds community among historians, expands professional skills and tools, fosters critical reflection on historical practice, and publicly advocates for history and historians. Members of the organization include historical consultants, museum professionals, government historians, professors and students, archivists, teachers, cultural resource managers, curators, film and media producers, historical interpreters, policy advisors, and many others. Members confer at the annual meeting each spring and share their expertise in a scholarly journal (*The Public Historian*), quarterly newsletter, and multiple online formats, such as the NCPH blog *History@Work*. Learn more at <http://www.ncph.org>.