

What are the challenges in international collaborations?***How do we overcome them?***

This piece draws on my experience attending a public history seminar/academic exchange at Shanghai Normal University last summer. (Lina organized the event.) My thoughts on teaching public history through international collaboration largely derive from that seminar. I will focus on university-to-university collaboration, the area with which I am most familiar. My thoughts emphasize collaboration more than pedagogy because I have little experience with the teaching side of public history.

The Shanghai seminar brought scholars from across China together with a group of 19 Princeton undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff with at least some background in public history. The Chinese participants attended a week of introductory workshops, after which the Princeton contingent arrived for an additional week of site visits and presentations about public history practice. The seminar goals, at least on Princeton's end, were to compare the interpretive challenges for practitioners in the U.S. and China; to share with our Chinese hosts the lessons we had learned through our own public history experiences; and to see what possibilities existed for future collaboration.

The major challenges, as I see them, are as follows:

1) Cultural differences

This point is obvious but nonetheless crucial. Participants bring culturally specific perspectives and expectations to the project. Far from fatal, these differences are often productive and enriching. They can nonetheless generate misunderstandings and slow down a project. One minor example: the Princeton group and our Chinese hosts displayed distinct customs of interaction between faculty and students. On a larger, ongoing collaboration, the teams would likely have their own notions about how to establish project goals and timelines, share information, and complete tasks. (My spouse has

encountered a similar dynamic since moving to the United Arab Emirates to work for an international market research firm. She and her colleagues of diverse national origins constantly reconcile divergent cultural expectations between themselves and with their clients.)

What's the solution? First, recognize that cultural differences will pervade *any* collaborative project, international or not. Institutions have their own norms and imperatives. Different stakeholders always need to establish common priorities and approaches to a project. Perhaps international initiatives are only unique in that the cultural differences—and thus the logistical challenges—tend to be greater and to require yeoman work on the front end in order to construct a useful collaborative framework. The individuals organizing and facilitating collaborative projects must take pains to raise questions and articulate their own institutional needs and limitations at the outset.

2) Resources and Institutional Capacities

In planning and facilitating the Shanghai seminar, I found that cultural differences mostly generated prosaic logistical challenges that we could easily resolve. Yet logistics related to resources and institutional capacities bled into more delicate territory. For example, Princeton paid all travel expenses for its participants in the Shanghai seminar, while our Chinese colleagues paid their own way. This led to awkward moments when we found ourselves at restaurants that only fit Princeton's budget or when we traveled uncomfortably by bus to Nanjing rather than taking the much faster, but more expensive bullet train. Here again, good planning and communication helps minimize these problems, but I imagine asymmetrical resources and capacities could complicate longer-term collaborations. A financially blessed institution needs to be cognizant of the tendency to run roughshod over a project, even unintentionally. An ideal solution would be to make a virtue out of the imbalance—perhaps by pairing a team possessing more resources with a team possessing superior local knowledge and connections. I might overemphasize this point because of the gratuitous wealth at my own institution; however, the

question of resources strikes me as one facet of the Ugly American phenomenon that could burden any international collaboration.

3) **Scholarly Norms and Ideology**

Speaking of the Ugly American, the Shanghai seminar revealed just how tempting it is to claim the moral, ethical, and professional high ground for one's own beliefs about public history theory and practice. I did not arrive in China convinced that I had all the answers. Yet my Princeton colleagues and I quickly developed the habit of critiquing what we perceived as the unwillingness of our Chinese counterparts to question official narratives or engage in history-from-below. In so doing, we exacerbated the inevitable divide between the groups. For example, very tense discussions resulted from our visit to the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall. Several Princeton participants criticized aspects of the site's interpretive program during a talkback session. Many of the Chinese scholars took umbrage. They read our comments as diminishing the gravity of the Nanjing massacre and dismissing a central piece of Chinese national identity. We just viewed the criticisms as standard practice. I later told one Chinese professor that we regretted giving offense. "That's what you Americans always do," she said, laughing. "You always think you're right." I could not disagree.

The problem was that we Americans, ostensibly in Shanghai to learn, struggled to shed our belief in the superiority of the academic and professional milieus in which we trained. We assumed that we possessed appropriate scholarly detachment while our counterparts remained blinkered by ideology. Yet our own confidence betrayed an ideology (call it American or "western" superiority) of its own. Thinking back, my colleagues and I suffered from unwillingness to share authority. Ironically, my presentation during the seminar framed public history as an explicitly political act that demands sharing authority. Yet, I failed to ask the Chinese scholars what sharing authority would look like for them or how they see the role of political activism and history. I am not naïve about the constraints faced by Chinese academics or museum professionals. Several Chinese participants privately lamented the heavy

hand of the state in Chinese museums and universities. Nonetheless, we made no progress toward sustained collaboration during the seminar in part because of both groups' *shared resistance* to adjusting their perspectives.

4) “Us” and “Them”

Transcending scholarly norms and ideology requires significant self-reflection. As long as participants remain divided between “us” and “them,” it will be difficult for practitioners to question their own assumptions about public history. (Even my language in this piece lapses into such oppositions.) I wonder if organizers can encourage participants to approach their work with more flexibility by structuring collaborative projects in a certain way. For example, assigning participants from different countries to work as teams on portions of the project might help breakdown the divide. Any solution to the problem of “us” and “them” is bound to make practitioners slightly uncomfortable, but that might be just what we need to generate productive conversations about history across borders.

Karina Esposito

The Confederate Immigration to Brazil after the Civil War, Diplomacy, and a New Approach to Reconstruction

Throughout the 1860s, increasingly after 1865, Confederate expatriates settled in diverse regions in Brazil in both northern and southern colonies, including Para, Bahia, Pernambuco, Espirito Santo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Parana, and Santa Barbara D'Oeste in Sao Paulo.¹ Although the Confederates immigrated to many different locations in Brazil, this project explores specifically the immigration to Santa Barbara D'Oeste, in Sao Paulo which is unique in that, unlike the other Brazilian colonies Confederates temporarily established, it has persisted as a successful Confederate settlement. Santa Barbara D'Oeste is the only remaining former Confederate colony in Brazil in 2015. Most of the Confederates who immigrated to other regions in Brazil either returned to the United States after the end of the Radical Reconstruction or relocated to the Santa Barbara D'Oeste colony.

In Santa Barbara D'Oeste, the first community of Confederates was founded around the 'machadinho' farm that Colonel William H. Norris from Alabama purchased in 1865. Eventually the 'machadinho' farm and the train station surrounding the area, where most of the American commerce would take place, became the "Vila dos Americanos," or the "Village of Americans" as the locals referred it at the time." The Village of Americans would eventually become the town of "Americana." Today, Americana is about ten minutes by car from Santa Barbara D'Oeste, about thirty minutes from the Campinas metropolis, and a hundred miles west from Sao Paulo city. The Confederate immigrants seemed to have travelled in large groups and most of the time they were acquaintances in the United States prior to immigrating. According to some articles at the town's historical collection, "many immigrants that fought alongside Norris' sons

¹ Judith MacKnight Jones, *Soldado Descansa, Uma Epopeia Norte Americana sob os Ceus do Brasil* (published by the Fraternidade de Descendencia Americana, 1967), 318 (translated by author).

during the war of secession established themselves around the same area.”² Many of their descendents continue to reside in Santa Barbara D’Oeste and Americana today and have formed the “Fraternidade Descendencia Americana” (Fraternity of American Descendents), with the intention of keeping their Southern heritage alive. The Fraternity holds an annual Confederate Party to commemorate their heritage, in which women dress as Southern Belles, and men as Confederate soldiers. They also have bulletins and a website to inform the members across different regions in Brazil of news related to Civil War commemorations in the United States, as well as to educate the members on the history of the Civil War. The fraternity is usually represented by a symbol containing the American, Brazilian, and Confederate flag. Exploring the fraternity’s commemoration efforts, as well as their efforts to preserve their American, Brazilian, and Confederate heritage places this public history project within a cross-cultural context.

In order to understand how the fraternity in Brazil commemorate their heritage, understanding the history of the immigration is crucial. Many southerners, mostly from Alabama and Texas, immigrated to Brazil in the 1860s to find available, cheap land, and rebuild their lives. Such peculiar phenomenon in the late nineteenth century deserves further investigation. Historians whose work addressed Confederate emigration in the past tended to argue that the opportunity to legally own slaves in Brazil and the primarily rural nature of Brazilian society provided former Confederates with a chance to reconstruct their agrarian system of labor and the social hierarchy that had prevailed in the old South.³ While there is evidence to support those claims, this project examines the movement more deeply, arguing that the reasons for and outcomes stemming from this immigration encompass a multitude of factors.

² A newspaper clip in the “Imigracao Americana” box, undetermined date, translated by author, Centro de Memoria

³ See: Alessandra Zorzetto, “Propostas Imigrantistas em Meados da Decada the 1860: A organizacao de Associacoes de Apoio a imigracao de pequenos proprietarios Norte Americanos-Analise de uma Colonia,” Master’s Thesis, April 2000, UNICAMP, Sao Paulo, Brazil (hereafter translated by author)

In addition to addressing the reasons why thousands of Confederates chose Brazil as their new home after the Civil War, this public history project place the immigration within the framework of international relations. Diplomatic historians examining relations between the United States and Latin America have often referred to the relationship between the United States and Brazil as an “unwritten alliance” during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This particular study of the Confederate immigration to Brazil contributes to the historiography of United States-Brazilian relations by shedding a different light on the relationship between the two countries. Furthermore, this research employs a transnational perspective to help provide a more thorough understanding of the complexity of United States-Brazilian relations. Specifically, an examination of the dynamics of Confederate immigration; both the variety of reasons Confederates immigrated to Brazil and the Brazilian facilitation of the process, suggests that historians cannot reduce the phenomenon to a one-sided imposition of American hegemony. This study argues that Brazilian diplomats, American travel agents, and individual Americans and Brazilians, all pursued their own objectives and that, together, their activities culminated in the massive Confederate migration to Brazil after the American Civil War.

Examining the Confederates’ initial experience and the assimilation process when they arrived in Brazil allows this project to enhance the existing historiography of the Reconstruction period in the United States which focuses on the struggles of African Americans after emancipation and the challenges of Reconstruction in the Southern United States. Historians have typically interpreted Reconstruction in the American south as a failure; however, the Reconstruction period became a story of triumph to the Confederates who refused to accept defeat and chose to migrate to Brazil instead. In exploring how the fraternity in Brazil

commemorate their heritage, it is clear that they view the immigration to Brazil as a story of triumph.

Finally, this project enhances the historiography of United States-Brazilian relations by showing that, when seen through the lenses of cultural, social, and political exchange between Brazilians and Confederates, ordinary citizens consciously acted, and still acts as agents of diplomacy. Despite the appeals of the former Confederate government, which encouraged its citizens to stay in the United States and work together to rebuild their nation, some Confederates went against their former leaders' desire and immigrated out of the southern United States. Rather than re-establish a relationship with the Union, they actively sought to develop ties with Brazil, who's social and cultural ideals more closely mirrored their own.

NCPH Working Group: Teaching Public History Through International Collaborations

Case Statement: Richard J.W. Harker (Ph.D student Public History, Georgia State University)

Theme: Specific public history projects in a cross-cultural context

Established as a reconceptualization of the International Partnership Among Museums (IPAM) program (1980-2007); Museums Connect (known as Museum and Community Collaborations Abroad from 2008-2011) sponsors partnerships between American museums and international museums for a one-year project that is mutually beneficial, reciprocal in nature, and engages new communities for both museums in their respective countries. Administered by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and funded by the United States Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Museums Connect program also has an overt public diplomacy agenda. In connecting two (or more) museums and their shareholders, staff, and communities the State Department hopes to meet its public diplomacy goals by encouraging, as they state on the programs website, "Communities in the U.S. and abroad [to] develop a broader knowledge about and understanding of one another's cultures."⁴

The Museums Connect program by connecting international museums (and their respective communities) provides a new analytical context with which to consider Michael Frisch's original advice: "scholars and designers need better to respect, understand, invoke, and involve the very real authority their audiences bring to a museum exhibit, a popular history book, or a public program."⁵ Thus, while this program and its many projects provides fertile turf for studying Frisch's notion of "shared authority" within an entirely new public history context, it also provoke many new questions: What history is interpreted in these international collaborations? What strategies are employed to ensure that intellectual authority is equally shared? And with sustainability being a very prescient concern for these

⁴ "Museums Connect: Building Global Communities," <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/international/museumsconnect> (accessed 3/1/2014)

⁵ Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), xxii.

single-year grant-funded projects: How can they become sustainable after the initial input of money has left?

Through my research I have focused especially on three projects sponsored by the Museums Connect program between 2008 and 2012. “Being We The People” (2008-2009) was a photography project between The National Museum of Afghanistan and The National Constitution Center in Philadelphia that partnered the two museums with local school children in both countries asking them to consider—through photography—“What it is like living in a Democracy?” The result was a simultaneous photography exhibition in both countries that used the students’ reflections and photographs to provoke dialog in both the local communities and transnationally.

“The International Legacy Youth Leadership Project” (2010-2011) between the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Birmingham, AL and the Nelson Mandela House and the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, South Africa introduced both museums and their surrounding communities to sites across the planet that shared very similar histories. Through an oral history of Anti-Apartheid and Civil Rights movement leaders, the project was intended to explore the parallels and differences between the two movements and connect the two different locales.

“Identities: Understanding Islam in a Cross Cultural Context” (2011-2012) was an online exhibition project between the Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA and the Ben M’sik Community Museum in Casablanca, Morocco. Through the creation of an online exhibition, this project sought to explore different ideas about Islam and Muslim identity in Morocco and the U.S. with students from both museums’ communities contributing content to the exhibition.

In studying these three case studies I have been able to draw some tentative conclusions about public history in a cross-cultural/international context through the Museums Connect program:

1) Logistical and time-restraints for community based projects that consistently arise and derail local projects in the U.S. are exacerbated and harder to overcome within an international context. These case studies emphasize that a year is often not long enough to build a robust, strong, and equal partnership and while this is true at a local level, it is especially true at an international level, where language and cultural differences slow down the process and progress even more.

2) National museological cultures matter. With each country possessing unique and diverse museum and public history cultures, problems frequently emanate in Museums Connect projects from cultural differences regarding what constitutes success, what role should museums play within their communities, and how museum work should be conducted. Thus, cultural differences are not only experienced by project participants who travel to other countries and experience “culture shock,” but also between the institutions and the different ways that they envision and enact the day-to-day work of the projects.

3) Sharing intellectual authority in projects sponsored by the U.S. State Department that carry specific public diplomacy goals is particularly challenging and difficult to achieve. The very structure of the Museums Connect program and the presence of State Department dollars ensures that power relationships are inherently unbalanced, which when combined with the grant being framed and formatted within a tradition familiar to American museums, ensures that a truly shared authority is difficult to achieve.

Case statement, Elizabeth Lambert

I am Elizabeth Lambert. I am a Ph.D. candidate in public history at Middle Tennessee State University where I am currently completing a dissertation on riots and memory and serve as an instructor of history and public history. The call for this particular working group welcomed “those who are currently engaged in teaching public history internationally” and I must admit my current work cannot be described as such. However, I hope that my strong interest in exploring comparative and international public history teaching models along with my previous experience in the European heritage sector can contribute to productive discussion.

In surveying the themes and questions issued for discussion, I found myself considering each problem first as a student, and then as an instructor. Ultimately, I decided to share my thoughts with a student’s voice to link my contributions to the broader conversation about the future of public history graduate education. As recent survey results demonstrate, students have highly specific expectations from their graduate programs regarding the nature of the practical and hands-on training they receive.⁶ My contribution below aligns best with the question “what are the challenges in international collaborations, and how to overcome them.”

I am raising two primary concerns with international collaboration: sustainability and access. Public history, both taught and in practice, often goes hand-in-hand with state and local history in the United States and emphasizes the use (and sometimes abuse) of community engagement as growing area of interest. This approach is frequently the path to more easily managed partnerships that translate in to tangible products. Jim Gardener noted in his case statement for the 2010 working group “International Council on Public History? Bringing Global Public History Closer” that international opportunities for both students and practitioners are

⁶ NCPH New Professional and Graduate Student Committee, “Choosing a public history program survey results,” 28 May 2014, *Public History Commons*, available on-line at <<http://publichistorycommons.org/choosing-a-public-history-program-survey-results/>>.

often one-time only partnerships that, while stimulating, have difficulty yielding sustainable projects.⁷

Beyond eye-opening experiences, students need their courses and projects to tick a number of boxes: to provide links to their specific research interests and/or career goals, access to instructors and potential mentors, and connection to a work product that may be used on a C.V. without embellishment. This last requirement is perhaps the most urgent and also the most threatened by unsustainable project goals. As community and institutional partnerships take longer to cultivate in an international context, it is important that students not bear the burden of trial runs and test phases. As the above working group noted, it is common for institutions to spark at the idea of international collaboration and quickly lose interest continuing exchange. How can programs manage the ups and downs of international collaboration without disadvantaging students? How can programs continue the momentum of exchanges at their home institutions?

Next, the question of access. How can programs introduce an international component to its offerings without prioritizing economically and socially privileged students? How does an international exchange look to the student in a primary caretaking role, or to the student working full-time? While international collaborations have the potential to work toward the goal of increasing racial and ethnic diversity within public history, if managed like traditional collegiate exchange programs then these programs might prove exclusionary in the short-term. Studies on international education have shown that participation in study abroad programs is stagnant among Hispanic American, Native American, and African American students. Although a

⁷ See “International Council on Public History? Bringing Global Public History Closer” case statements, available online at <<http://ncph.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/International-Council-compilation1.pdf>>.

program specific graduate experience would be much different than a typical study abroad opportunity, general trends in international education should be noted.

In the remaining space, I'd like to raise the potential of creating global and comparative public history courses as a way to bridge pedagogical training and hands-on experience. Within the context of international collaborations, I would like to ask if it is possible to *do* history abroad without relying on traditional American understandings and frameworks, and if so, how can we liberate public history from its current focus? For those interested, Gerald Zahavi's (University at Albany-SUNY) comparative public history syllabus is an exceptional resource: <http://www.albany.edu/history/comparativepublichistory/>.