

# HISTORY HAPPENINGS

A newsletter published by the Department of History at the University of Memphis

Editors: Guiomar Duenas-Vargas and Caroline Peyton



Photographs from the Graduate Association for African-American History's 22nd Annual Graduate Conference in African American History held at the University of Memphis on February 16-17, 2023. Dr. Tamika Nunley (Cornell University) gave the keynote address: "Archives and Erasure: Searching for Justice in the Lives of Enslaved Women," Photo credits: Guiomar Duenas-Vargas and Aniya Gold

# The perils and rewards of convincing students that History Matters

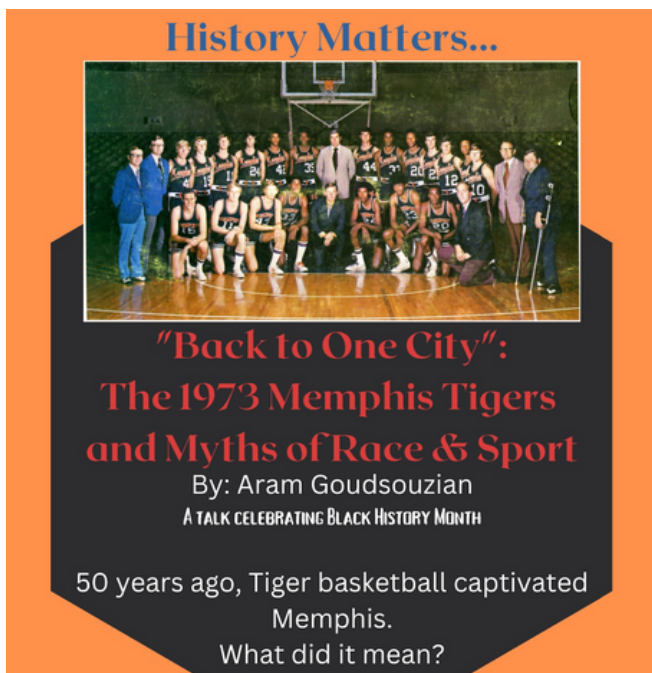
by Professor Benjamin Graham

In more contexts than professional historians wish to admit, the notion of obtaining a bachelor's degree in History is the start of a joke or the lead-up to a stern talking-to from parents. The crux of that joke or uncomfortable lecture is a question: "what can you do with a History degree?" The implied answer, of course, is "nothing worth value" and "no job that justifies the expenses of obtaining a bachelor's degree."

History professors have rebutted bravely that our discipline will "teach students to think," an honest abstraction with good intentions, but one that has almost no purchase with college freshmen or their parents. Most students come to college believing that their brains already have the capacity to produce thoughts. Or, reading the threadbare mantra in a more ideological way, most students come to college now with political acuity and a sense of social justice and do not see the value in harmonizing their thinking with a bunch of professors. While I think the notion that we "teach students to think" is meant to reflect the value of a thoughtful, humanistic perspective applied to a range of real-world problems, it just doesn't land forcefully in the context of recruiting undergraduate majors in 2023.



The Department of History at the University of Memphis has already developed a range of ways to demonstrate the value of choosing History. From the HERC to developmental advising to internships to department-led social initiatives like Cleo's Closet, the department has a reputation as a place that cares for their students, guides them smartly, and plugs them into meaningful opportunities around the city. To these, the Undergraduate Studies committee has added a recruiting strategy and lecture series called "History Matters" which highlights local historians engaging with real-world problems and demonstrating how people with history degrees impact their community.



In spring 2022, the History Matters series kicked off with two talks centered on the War in Ukraine. Professor Caroline Peyton, an expert of nuclear waste in the American South, contextualized the importance of nuclear power to Russian identity and the dangers of fighting around Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. Professor Steve Stein, a specialist in American war history, situated the Ukraine War within the development of NATO and invocation of article 5. Together, these talks demonstrated the transferability of historical knowledge and its application to a critical question about the present.

The History Matters talks, then, have explicitly provided space for historians to engage and illuminate the most important problems of the present. Through these talks, undergraduates and the public can see what “history thinking” looks like in action, and how it works when applied to matters they think and care about. Giving an audience a chance to see how this thinking unlocks problems of the present then allows them to see the discipline and its practitioners as a font of possible solutions. History students begin to see themselves as agents of change in their community. The lecture program has, so far, been impressive and well received.

Making the merits of a history degree concrete through History Matters has also included a recruiting strategy that rebuts the economic arguments against the discipline. For, the truth is, History majors do well compared even to majors linked to economic success, like business and the sciences. While we can’t point to a terminal position at the end of the History degree (like, say, nursing or elementary education), we can show them that lots of different institutions like to hire people with history skills. And when students see that the average median income for History majors is above several other, ostensibly more viable majors, it disarms the myth of economic implosion that has deterred people from entering our discipline for several decades.

By attacking some common tropes about the History major with direct engagement, both in the form of public-facing talks and strategic recruiting tools, History Matters has attempted to clear a path for students to become majors and minors. With an open mind, History is a compelling tool that students can use to further their own success, of course, but also to engage the world and impact their community.

As a representative of the Undergraduate Studies committee, the group leading the History Matters charge, I ask that recipients of this newsletter—friends of the Department of History—contemplate how you might help participate in this conversation. Please email me if you have any ideas for future speakers, people we should highlight, or events that would help to show our undergraduates how History Matters. Thanks for your help.

Please contact Dr. Graham at [bjgraham@memphis.edu](mailto:bjgraham@memphis.edu).

## Engaging Women's History Month

By Professor Cookie Woolner

For Women's History Month, the History Department at the University of Memphis invited a guest lecturer to shed historical light on the contemporary moment: the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in the summer of 2022. Dr. Lauren MacIvor Thompson, Assistant Professor of History at Kennesaw State University, is an expert on legal and reproductive history, so she was an ideal guest to help us understand how we ended up here, despite the success of multiple waves of feminist movements. Her hybrid lecture, "Reproductive Law and Reform Before *Roe v. Wade*" was well attended and capped off by a lively Q&A.

Dr. Thompson opened her talk with the rolling back of *Roe*, reminding us that progress is not a linear march forward. She noted that the 2022 *Dobbs* decision was an example of how the past century's fight for women's rights has been filled with similar incomplete gains and setbacks.

She then went back to early America to underscore that the contemporary associations of immorality and criminality with abortion and even birth control have not always existed, indeed, they did not coalesce until the nineteenth century. Before then, women were often the unofficial family physicians, and/or they used the services of female midwives. Together, women managed their bodies and reproduction without interference from the state.

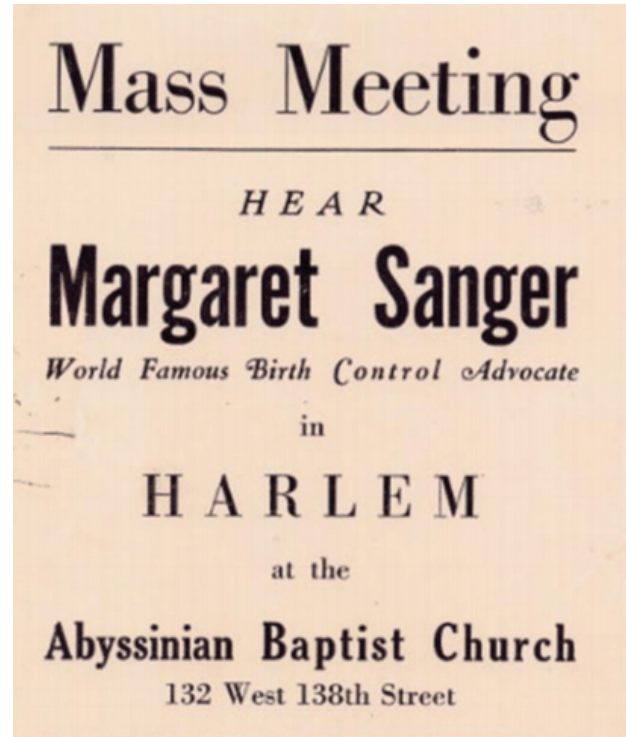


As Thompson noted, the nation's first very law to govern abortion, which was passed in 1821 Connecticut, was created out of concern over the dangerous, unregulated medications that women were purchasing for family planning, not over concerns of immorality or obscenity. At the same time, we see the rise of white male doctors, who were organizing to professionalize medicine and gatekeep medical authority by the mid nineteenth-century. They even started a campaign to refer to themselves as "regulars" and midwives and other non-white male medical school trained practitioners as "irregulars."

As more women sought to sell reproductive aids through the mail, by the 1870s the Comstock Act opened abortion and birth control up to federal regulation as forms of “obscenity.” This placed women’s reproductive health in the same category as pornography. By the turn of the twentieth century, every state in the US had criminalized abortion in some form, however, the laws almost always contained exceptions for physicians—who were overwhelmingly white and male—to perform the procedure when they saw fit.

Thompson then turned to the entwined histories of abortion and birth control, featuring the two women who are the central figures in her forthcoming book, Margaret Sanger and the lesser-known Mary Dennett. Sanger, a trained nurse, opened her first New York City clinic in 1916 with the belief that access to birth control would improve the lives of working-class women and would curb their need for abortions. Dennett saw the birth control question as one of civil liberties and free speech. She devoted her work to ensuring that other couples could receive information about birth control. A 1930 federal court case against her, *United States v. Dennett*, opened the door to widespread distribution of birth control information in the US.

Thompson then turned to the shift from reproductive rights to reproductive justice, which focuses on not just helping women access services to prevent pregnancy, but also on helping women have as many children as they want.

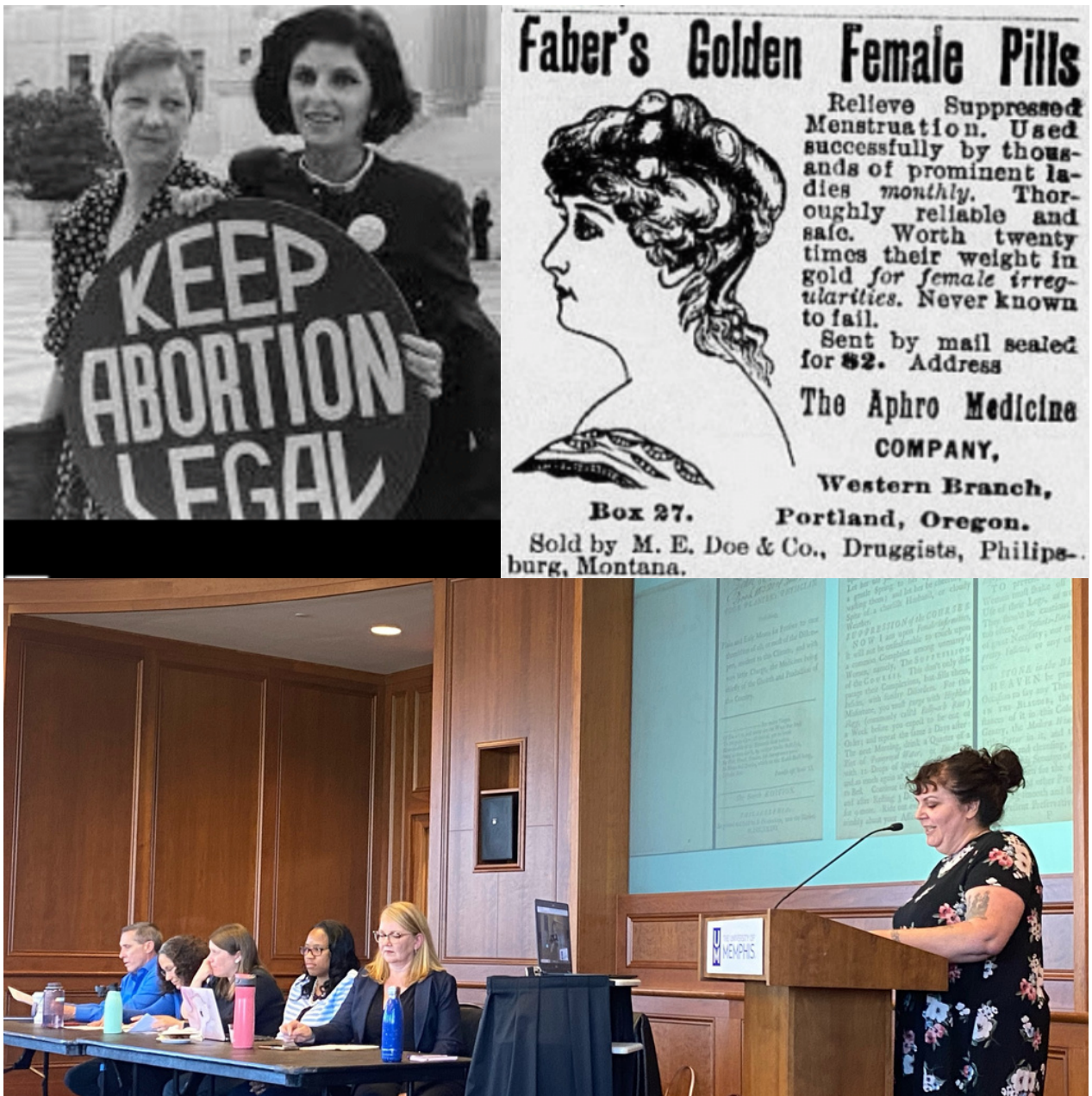


She briefly discussed the historical connection between birth control and eugenics, touching on multiple experiments in which women of color were sterilized and otherwise medically treated without their consent, in contexts from Puerto Rico to the Antebellum and Jim Crow South.

Dr. Thompson ended her lecture with the 1965 *Griswold v. Connecticut* case, in which birth control became legal for married couples only. In *Griswold*, the courts were swayed by arguments regarding doctor expertise, not the civil liberties of married couples, and she pointed out that the language of *Roe v. Wade* also contained no feminist element at all but seemed intent on growing the power of doctors by championing their constitutional rights as professionals.

Thus, Dr. Thompson argued, more feminist arguments calling for equal rights, the type demanded by the still unpassed Equal Rights Amendment, might be a more successful future avenue to secure full reproductive rights in America.

As this summary shows, Dr. Lauren MacIvor Thompson's Women's History Month lecture gave our community much important historical context to help us make sense of how we have ended up in our current moment.



In October 2022, as part of the History Matters series, Cookie Woolner, Sarah Potter, Scott Marler, Beverly Tsacoyianis, Christine Eisel, Dianna Watkins-Dickerson participated in "The End of Roe? Histories of Reproduction, Rights, and Freedom."

## Ramesses II, Egypt's Ultimate Pharaoh: An Interview with Professor Peter Brand

*Beautifully written, and fully documented, this book is an interpretation of the larger-than-life Pharaoh, Ramesses II. Supported by years of field work, Professor Peter Brand revisited the conceptual underpinnings of the monumental art and ancient texts, offering a new interpretation of the Pharaoh -a living god, Sun God of kings for some- and a despotic tyrant for others.*

**Guiomar Duenas-Vargas:** Ramesses II remains a fascinating historical character. Would you briefly, tell us what were the King's main accomplishments once he became the supreme ruler of Egypt? What made him the object of such attention by scholars, film makers, pop culture etc.?

**Peter Brand-**The reason I titled my book *Ramesses II: Egypt's Ultimate Pharaoh* was... well, Egypt's Greatest Pharaoh was already taken but, Ramesses epitomizes everything a pharaoh should be, a great builder, a warrior, he ruled for several decades, he became a god-king, dedicated numerous giant statues of himself, had numerous wives and children, and was remembered and imitated by his successors for centuries thereafter. Later generations referred to him as Ramesses-the-Great-God or the Great Ancestor, and nine more kings, Ramesses III – XI, took his name, making “Ramesses” one of the most common royal names in Egyptian history.

Two main threads of his career as ruler that I follow in the book examine how he established his authority as king and his dealings with the Hittite Empire. Ramesses was in his early 20s when he became pharaoh, and his dynasty was even younger. He had great success in establishing his authority and legitimacy through his building program, aggressive wars, and by promoting the ideology of divine kingship.



*Ramesses the Great Colossal Statue*

He fought against the Hittite empire in Syria for several years including the famous Battle of Kadesh, but with limited success and no permanent gains. These wars ended in stalemate, but Ramesses then made peace.

**Guiomar Duenas-Vargas**-The emperor was surrounded by women. He had more than a dozen wives and one hundred children; two women were, if I can say, close to his heart. Tuya his mother and Nefertari, his first wife. Would you want to tell us more about the role of women in his life and the Imperial world?

**Peter Brand**-Ramesses II is exceptional for giving his family visibility on his royal monuments, especially his most favored wife Nefertari. She likely gained this status by giving Ramesses his first-born son and heir. Ramesses' mother, the dowager queen Tuya, played a key role in the ideology of kingship. She was entitled "Mother of the God." According to the doctrine of the king's divine birth, she was said to have been impregnated by the god Amun-Re himself, who disguised himself as the previous king and seduced the queen. Therefore, Ramesses was the son both of his father the king and his father the god Amun-Re and the Queen Mother Tuya was also the god's wife.

The king's mother Tuya and Queen Nefertari overshadowed all the other wives of Ramesses II, and we don't even know the names of most of them. A second wife of the king was also prominent. Her name was Isetnofret and she gave Ramesses II his second born son named Ramesses, whom I call Ramesses "Junior." After these two senior queens had died, Ramesses married five of his daughters born to these two women as his ceremonial consorts. It is not clear that he ever had children by them.



*Nefertari*

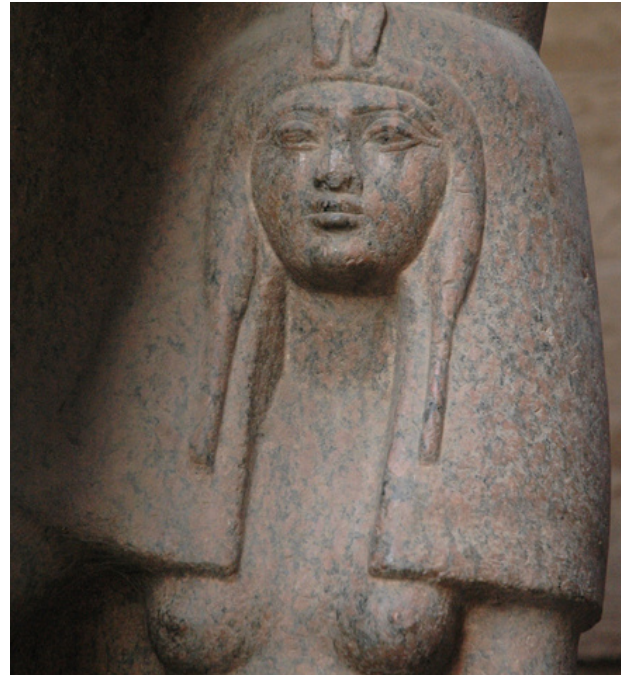
**Guiomar Duenas-Vargas**-The main role of royal wives was to produce children; they "ensured the renewal of kingship." On the other hand, women's job was to contribute with their bodies, health, and exhaustion to the glory of the Empire. Chapter, 7, All the King's Wives is a wonderful description/analysis of the sex imbalances in Ramesses' Egypt. Please, tell us more about this fascinating chapter.

**Peter Brand**-In many ancient cultures, kings had multiple wives and numerous children as an expression of their power and prestige. In Egypt, Pharaoh's fertility was linked to the fertility of the Nile Valley itself. Egyptian art idealizes the appearance of women, especially royal women.





First four princes (L), Standing Colossi  
Forecourt Luxor (R)



(We should be careful not to glamorize them or take these lovely images literally. Queen Nefertari had at least eight children but may have had more. Infant and child mortality in ancient times reached 50 percent by age five and the rates of miscarriages, still births, and women dying in childbirth were also horrific. Ramesses had at least 45 sons and 53 daughters and likely even more. The evidence for these children is fragmentary, as are so many sources for history 3300 years ago. Some of his children are only a name to us, and some names are even incomplete.

The pharaoh did not have so many children simply to ensure he would have an heir. They were tangible symbols of his fertility and his glory. There was a strict hierarchy among the wives and the children, with only the most favored women and children gaining prominence.

Most of the wives are completely unknown to us. We know they existed only because there are so many children.

**Guiomar Duenas-Vargas**-Gender counted in the royal court. First Ramesses wanted to fill out the public space with his prole. Scenes of royal children became a temple decoration. It seems that the king's plans were gender specific. Would you want to elaborate on this?

**Peter Brand**-As with his wives, the roughly 100 known royal sons and daughters of Ramesses II played a prominent role in his ideological program. Unlike their mothers, all the royal children were visible on the king's monuments from the beginning of his reign. He created visual parades of children on the walls of the temples he built segregated by gender.

**(PB)** The sons were listed in the order of their birth, since the eldest son was heir to the throne. The order of the daughters varied from temple to temple, but the daughters of the two senior queens Nefertari and Isetnofret always appear in the first ten or so places in the lists. The daughters also play a key role in temple and festival ceremonies as chantresses who sing and play a musical instrument called the sistrum during religious rituals.

**Guiomar Duenas-Vargas**-Would you want to tell us what do you think are the main contributions of your book to your field?

**Peter Brand**-A key theme of the book is the role that Egyptian ideology and world view play in the ancient sources. What I call the “ideological filter” colors all the primary sources, works of art, texts, architecture, etc., that we use to reconstruct the history and culture of ancient Egypt during Ramesses II’s time. Understanding their world view and ideological mindset helps us to assess the sources when they tell us things that are counterfactual, such as the supernatural abilities of the pharaoh, for example, or the claim that Ramesses defeated all his enemies in battle single handedly without the aid of his army. By studying ideology, we can also gain insight into the Egyptian mentality for its own sake, and not just to get past the ideological filter to figure out “what really happened” in ancient times.



Nebettawy (top),  
Costumes of royal sons and  
daughters

## A Year as Scholar in Residence at the Schomburg Center

by Professor Brian W. Kwoba

Hubert Henry Harrison (1883-1927) did not keep his genius-level intellect to himself. Instead, he spoke and wrote for a popular audience on a staggering array of subjects, including theological criticism and comparative religion, economics, Black arts and culture, anthropology, scientific racism, international geopolitics, sexuality, English literature, African history, and evolutionary biology. But he was not merely a brilliant and organic intellectual. During the height of the Jim Crow era of racial oppression, Harrison spearheaded the “New Negro” movement in Harlem by leading its first organization, newspaper, and political party. Harrison’s Liberty League of Negro-Americans recruited a young Marcus Garvey, who would make use of Harrison’s grassroots social movement building strategy and ‘race first’ ideology to build the largest international organization of Black people in modern history. In addition, Harrison cultivated the tradition of street-corner speaking in Harlem, through which he helped stimulate the critical intellectual culture that fertilized the rich, dark soil in which the “Harlem Renaissance” would take root.

Last year, I completed a year-long Scholars-in-Residence Fellowship at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The Schomburg Center is a world-renowned repository of sources on every facet of the African diasporic experience, including numerous unique manuscript and archival collections as well as a vast collection of photographs, films, audio recordings, and visual art.



As a scholar-in-residence at the Schomburg, I received not just a grant of \$35,000 for my year-long residency, but also an individual office and computer, some research assistance, and a weekly works-in-progress seminar with my cohort of fellows to share work, give and receive feedback, and engage in interdisciplinary cross-fertilization of ideas. My work on Harrison thus opens a door to rethink multiple historiographies that have marginalized him.

One of Harrison's key mentors was Arturo Alfonso Schomburg (1874-1938). Schomburg was born January 24, 1874, in Puerto Rico to a Black Barbadian mother and a white German father. His politicization began in the late nineteenth century as an activist in the struggle for Cuban and Puerto Rican independence, and he even served as the secretary of Cuban independence fighter Jose Martí's newspaper *Patria*. In 1898 he left the Cuban and Puerto Rican independence movements due to sectarian infighting and came to identify more strongly with the Black struggle in the Americas and his own African roots. Alongside the journalist John E. Bruce, who was a kind of surrogate father figure for Harrison, Schomburg founded the Negro Society for Historical Research (NSHR) in 1911, bringing African, Caribbean, and African American historical scholars into a common organization for the first time. Harrison served as secretary of the organization. In his words, the NSHR "was organized to collect and preserve the memorials of Negro achievement, and to diffuse among the descendants of the Africans in this land of their dispersion some knowledge of their nobler past."

Harrison grew closer to Schomburg as he moved closer towards a 'race first' and 'Africa first' political outlook after his break with the Socialist Party in 1914. In March of 1918, for example, Harrison recorded in his diary that he met up with Schomburg at 135th and Lenox, and that they "had a long talk on books relating to the Negro and African affairs, lasting till one o'clock."



*Arturo Alfonso Schomburg*

He has a private library which has become famous as the best public or private collection of books on the Negro that there is in the United States. And he has read more widely on Negro History than any man whom I have met."

Receiving the Schomburg Center fellowship comprised a poignant intellectual and spiritual blessing for my book from an institution that Harrison worked so hard to cultivate. I am also proud of receiving this fellowship because it represents recognition and support for my research by an institutional 'brand name' that has—for a century—distinguished itself as one of the top repositories for the preservation of Black history in the world.

## Man on a Mission

By Professor Aram Goudsouzian

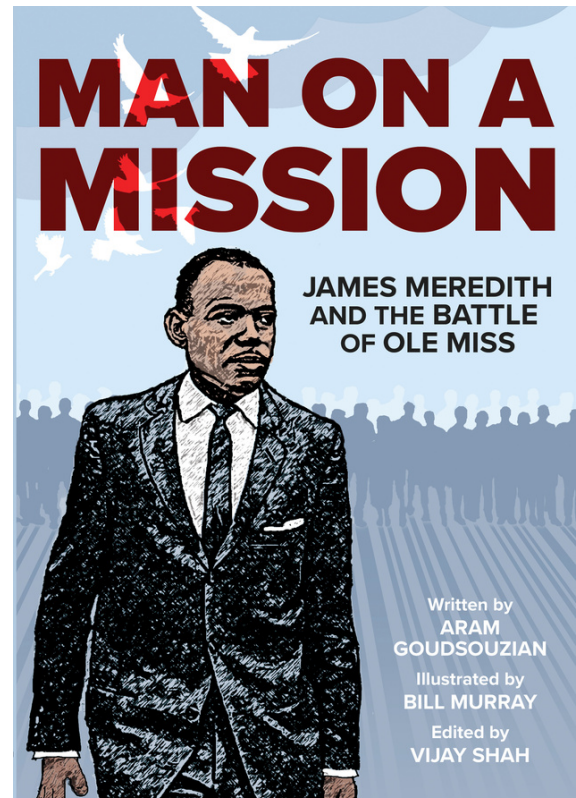
On September 30, 1962, James Meredith arrived in Oxford, Mississippi. After a prolonged legal challenge, he was about to become the first Black student to register at the University of Mississippi. The campus resembled a war zone. There were rows of Air Force planes, hundreds of US marshals, and banks of floodlights. Meredith needed a military escort to Baxter Hall, where he was under constant watch.

At the other end of campus, a mob of 3000 had gathered. They chanted: “2-4-1-3, we hate Kennedy . . . We want Meredith! . . . Get a rope!” The crowd included students, locals, and extreme right-wingers from beyond Mississippi. They brandished shotguns, tossed bottles and bricks, made Molotov cocktails, and hoisted a Confederate flag atop the pole in the Lyceum Circle. In the nearby Lyceum Building, federal marshals were under siege.

Chaos and violence ensued. Governor Ross Barnett had promised order, but he actually stoked the mob’s passions with speeches demanding resistance to racial integration. One hundred and sixty marshals were wounded by gunfire, makeshift missiles, and tear gas inhalation. Two people died: a bystander hit by a stray bullet, and a French reporter killed under mysterious circumstances.

When James Meredith woke up the next morning and peered out his window, he saw a campus in turmoil, with wafts of tear gas still hanging in the air.

This dramatic moment occupies a central place in *Man on a Mission*, a new graphic novel about James Meredith and the “Ole Miss Crisis.”



I researched and wrote the script for this book, which was illustrated by Bill Murray and edited by Vijay Shah.

Mr. Meredith, who is now 89 years old and lives in Jackson, Mississippi, supported the project from the beginning. I first met him in 2009, when I interviewed him for my book *Down to the Crossroads*, about the Meredith March Against Fear, a three-week civil rights demonstration in Mississippi that spawned the cry of “Black Power.” The march began as a solo trek by Meredith, who was shot and wounded on the second day, leading to a mass march that featured thousands of participants, including Martin Luther King and Stokely Carmichael.

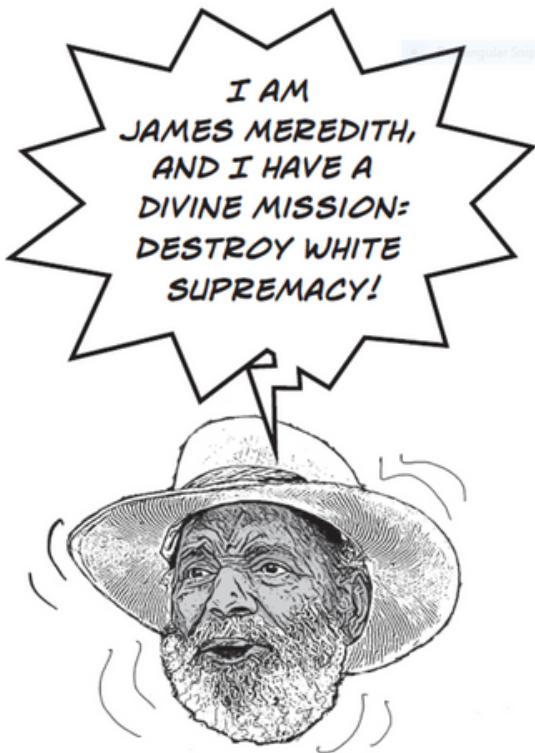


*Professor Goudsouzian with James Meredith*

It was an interesting challenge to learn how to tell a story visually. As a historian, I am accustomed to using words! While figuring out what images would translate Meredith's ideas, I had to keep cutting my text to the bone. But I did a lot of research in photographs, especially from the substantial online collection through Special Collections at the University of Mississippi. Over time, moreover, I learned how to play to Bill's strengths as an illustrator. He is excellent at adapting photographs with artistic flourishes and visual trademarks. His talents give the book its distinctive look.

We sought to create a book that would appeal to a wide variety of readers, including younger ones. (One of my sons, a fourth grader, gave me a one-word review: "Good.") Yet we also believe that *Man on a Mission* could serve any reader who wants to understand one distinctive individual and this key moment in the history of the civil rights movement. In the back section, we include discussion questions for students and a longer bibliographic essay. Most important, we had to convey what makes James Meredith special.

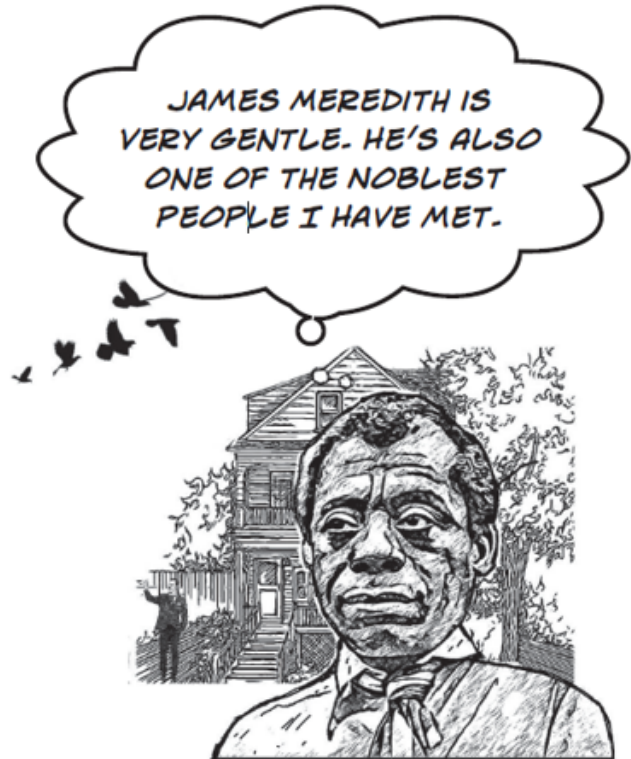
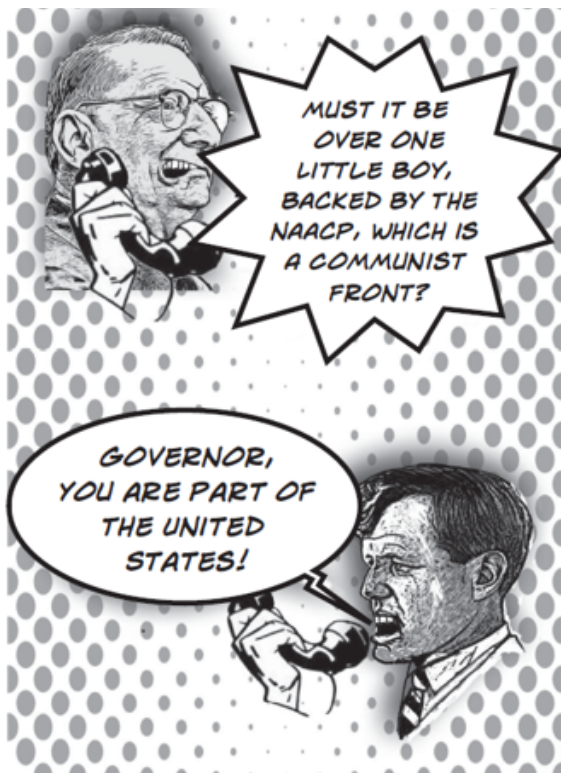
Even now, he marches to the beat of his own drummer. He is in some ways a radical, as he wants to crush the system of white supremacy. In other ways, he is a conservative, as he espouses values of self-reliance, discipline, and traditional manhood.



He has never worked well with others, and his life has taken plenty of left turns. But he is also a man who – thanks to his courage, ambition, and intelligence – placed himself into the center of action, with enduring consequences for American history.

With Man on a Mission, we hope that we have done him justice.

ON NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1963, THE WRITER JAMES BALDWIN CAME TO VISIT. HE WAS ALWAYS OBSERVING, SOMETIMES ASKING A PROBING QUESTION. HE HAD A SHARP MIND AND A KEEN SENSE OF FEELING.



# Translation of Garveyism: The Politics of Diaspora, Language and Gender

By Kiana Knight, Brown University

The following is an abridged version of Kiana Knight's presentation from the 22nd Annual Graduate Conference in African American History.

What enabled the transnational popularity of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) to spread throughout the U.S. and Great Caribbean? How was the racially unifying message of Garveyism mobilized in distinct social, political, and cultural contexts? Central to Garveyism was an adherence to the ideas of black nationalism—the idea that African descendants constitute a separate group or nationality on account of their African heritage, shared historical experiences, and distinct cultures.[1] As an organization founded by British West Indians who crafted a race first philosophy to be shared throughout the African diaspora, the UNIA had to be dynamic in appealing to different cultures.

The orally communicated narrative by Afro-Cuban woman Maria de los Reyes Castillo Bueno that was rendered into the testimonial biography *Reyita: The Life of a Black Cuban Woman in the Twentieth Century* accentuates the cultural diversity embedded in local UNIA events. In the biography, Maria de los Reyes Castillo Bueno, better known as Reyita, discusses her involvement in the Garvey movement in the Oriente province during the late 1910s to early 1920s.



In discussing the character of fundraisers for the steamship enterprise Reyita mentions, “The music they played to liven up the atmosphere was from both countries; for this they had to reach an agreement: as the Cubans wanted their music and the Jamaicans wanted theirs, they decided to draw lots and play the music of winners.”[2] What Reyita illuminates is the way in which music was used to mediate the cultural diversity of UNIA events.

## The Politics of Diaspora and Language

To better understand the role of Garveyism and its appeal to African descendants in the Hispanophone Caribbean, it is important to recognize the racial and social context in which they lived. Emancipation throughout the British Empire in 1834 created a need for labor and propelled migrations throughout the Greater Caribbean primarily from Jamaica and to a lesser extent Barbados throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. West Indians were migrating to work on sugar estates in Cuba; on banana plantations and the rail system in Costa Rica; and on the building of the Panama Canal.[3]



As larger numbers of West Indians migrated for economic opportunity, they found themselves at odds with the white settler origin myths of Hispanic society. In addition, the labor conditions of these economic projects were harrowing as disease, low pay, and death were frequent occurrences. As disgruntled migrants and victims of deceit, West Indian laborers and their families needed a channel through which they could navigate the challenges of being black in Hispanic society.[4]

Marcus Garvey was a part of the West Indian labor migration trend as in 1910 he went to Costa Rica where he worked as a timekeeper on a United Fruit Company banana plantation and as a laborer at Port Limón. It was in Costa Rica where Garvey earned the title of political agitator as editor of the paper *La Nación*. The British consul accused Garvey of urging British West Indian workers to fight for better conditions and was eventually forced to leave the country. Garvey continued working amongst other West Indian laborers in Panama and agitated workers when in 1912 he addressed the Colón Federal Labor Union as he observed the same horrid working conditions imposed on African descendants. Shortly thereafter, Garvey embarked for Europe, where he noted the workings of the British democracy and its contrast to the autocracy colonizers maintained in their tropical dependencies. Garvey's experiences in Central America and Europe allowed him to see the sufferings of African descendants in a transnational context. Following a tour of the United States, Garvey recognized the appeal of basing his race movement in the Pan African mecca of Harlem and incorporated the Universal Negro Improvement Association with co-founder and first wife, Amy Ashwood under New York law on July 2, 1918.[5]

While some West Indians were moving to hubs in the United States following the completion of imperialist projects like the Panama Canal, second generation Jamaicans, Barbadians and other West Indians on the Caribbean coast of Central America were concerned with racial and national exclusion, community, and cultural survival. As non-citizens, second generation West Indians experienced national exclusion as their parents' presence as laborers was presumed to be temporary and their permanent settlement coupled with nationalist state projects heightened resentment towards people of African descent.[6] The process of becoming Afro-Costa Rican, Afro-Panamanian or Afro-Latin more broadly subjected second-generation West Indians to racial denigration by their Hispanic counterparts as their cultural practices were considered immoral and posed challenges to nationalist projects such as *mestizaje* and *blanqueamiento*.[7] Two generations of West Indian experience in the circum-Caribbean migratory sphere point to the ways in which harsh labor conditions, national exclusion and diasporic connections to Garvey himself led to popularity of the UNIA in the region.

### **Translations of Garveyism**

UNIA appeals to Hispanophone Caribbean cultures through language were reflected in the *Negro World's* Spanish section. Richard Bennett, a member of the Camagüey division, wrote the newspaper's literary editor William Ferris and suggested in 1921 that "a Spanish section be prepared in the *Negro World* so as to facilitate the Cuban element." [8]

Bennett's suggestion was likely in response to the linguistic complications during division meetings resulting from Spanish-speaking listeners using their limited knowledge of English to comprehend West Indian and African American speakers—it is just as likely that West Indians in Cuban divisions had trouble understanding those who delivered addresses in Spanish.

Ultimately, Bennett points to a language and even larger cultural barrier that the UNIA had to grapple with to establish a diasporic connection with Afro-Cubans and maintain its transnational influence. A brief history of the context in which the UNIA emerged in Cuba reveals the ways in which the organization sought to fulfill a transnational diasporic vision of unity amid distinct cultural and national differences.

The UNIA emerged in Cuba amongst a host of other Afro-Cuban societal organizations. Such Afro-Cuban societies were the centers of social life during a time in which most leisure activity in Cuba was racially segregated between white Cubans, and Afro Cubans in addition to Jamaican migrants. The objectives of most Afro-Cuban societies aligned with the UNIA's core tenet of racial uplift and were articulated along the lines of collective improvement through education and uplifting the youth. While there were ideological similarities between Afro-Cuban Societies and the UNIA, there were stark differences as well. The most obvious of these differences was Garvey's transnational race first ideology which foregrounded identity in a common ancestral past rather than nationality. This idea is reflected in the UNIA's Black Star Line enterprise which included steamships named after black revolutionary heroes from throughout the diaspora including, Phyllis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass, and Cuba's own black revolutionary hero, Antonio Maceo. In contrast, members of Afro-Cuban societies centralized their national identity as reflected by the associations named after Afro-Cuban patriots including Antonio Maceo, Juan Gualberto Gómez, and José Antonio Aponte.[9]

What seemed like an ideological rift—or underlying cultural difference—between the UNIA's leadership and its Jamaican followers in Cuba, and the surrounding Afro-Cuban population was actually a space to underscore a diasporic commonality in addition to addressing national interests. The UNIA's parent body used music to reconcile cultural difference in Cuba by employing nationalist discourse through performance. A 1924 UNIA parade held in Camagüey, Cuba concluded with the organization's band playing the Garveyite national anthem in addition to the Cuban national anthem.[10] Thus, the implementation of the Negro World's Spanish section following Bennett's letter to the literary editor was part of the UNIA's larger effort to establish Afro diasporic linkages with Anglophone and Hispanophone African descendants. Frances Sullivan's study of the UNIA in Banes, Cuba illuminates the “international panorama of grassroots Garveyism during the height of the movement's international dynamism in the 1920s and reveals that the organization's remarkable success was due, in part, to its flexibility and adaptability to local circumstances.”[11] The expanding prevalence of the UNIA in Cuba during the 1920s was in part due to the flows of communication enabled by both cultural and language translation which had a regional impact amongst the Spanish Caribbean membership.

## Endnotes

- 1] Michael O. West, “‘Like a River’: The Million Man March and the Black Nationalist Tradition in the United States,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 12, no. 1 (March 1999): 81-100.
- [2] Daisy Rubiera Castillo and Anne McLean, *Reyita: The Life of a Black Cuban Woman in the Twentieth Century*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000) 28.
- [3] For detailed accounts of these migration patterns see Velma Newton, *The Silver Men: West Indian Labour Migration to Panama 1850-1914*, (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies, 1987); Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica, 1870-1940*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996; Lara Putnam, *The Company They Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Tracey E. Graham, “Jamaican Migration to Cuba, 1912-1940” Unpublished Dissertation, (The University of Chicago, 2013).
- [4] Since these economic projects only required and funded the labor of men, West Indian contracted laborers often migrated alone. However, in some cases West Indian women and children funded their own migration to accompany their male partners. For further reading see Joan Flores-Villalobos, “The Silver Women: Gender, Migration, and Labor at the Panama Canal” (unpublished manuscript, September 2021).
- [5] Martin, *Race First*, 4-10.
- [6] For further reading on citizenship debates and rights within empire for British Caribbeans see Lara Putnam, “Citizenship from the Margins: Vernacular Theories of Rights and the State from the Interwar Caribbean,” *Journal of British Studies* 53, no. 1 (2014): 162-91.
- [7] Once Latin American republics gained independence from Spain, they were in search of a national identity. Some nations, such as Mexico, encouraged a process of mestizaje and thought the racially ideal citizen was a mixture of European and Indigenous ancestry. Other nations, such as Costa Rica, promoted blanqueamiento (whitening) and welcomed European immigration to reflect a whiter population. For a hemispheric understanding of twentieth century nation-building race projects and its challenges to Afro-Latin Americans see George Reid Andrews, *Afro-Latin America: Black Lives, 1600-2000*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).
- [8] Hill, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers: The Caribbean Diaspora* vol. 13, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 37-38 [Printed in the *Negro World* October 22, 1921].
- [9] Frank Guridy, “‘Un Dios, Un Fin, Un Destino’: Enacting Diaspora in the Garvey Movement,” *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow*, (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2010) 75-76.
- [10] Guridy, “‘Un Dios, Un Fin, Un Destino’: Enacting Diaspora in the Garvey Movement,” in *Forging Diaspora*, 97.
- [11] Frances Peace Sullivan, “‘Forging Ahead’ in Banes, Cuba: Garveyism in a United Fruit Company Town,” *New West Indian Guide* 88, no. 3/4 (2014): 234.

## A Success Story: Alumna at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum

By Ashley Foley Dabbraccio

My career path is a bit of an unorthodox one. While I had every intention of joining the ranks of academia, like some of you will, I found that as time went by I was more interested in the power and role public history plays in lives of students, teachers, active learners, and others just looking to be inspired by something new. As a Ph.D. student, I assumed to the position of Assistant District Coordinator for West Tennessee History Day, where I got true hands-on experience in the world of doing history with different learners. It got me on my start into public history initiatives for K-12 teachers and students—programming that I believe is absolutely necessary in today's climate.

Using my skills from planning these events and developing a strong knowledge of the program, I was able to pivot the work I did there to a full-time position at National History Day in College Park, MD. I spent three years there learning about public programming development, from the inception of a project to its final stages. While there I served as an editor on ten to fifteen printed publications, started a successful YouTube series to aid teachers and students in virtual classrooms during the pandemic, co-hosted multiple webinar series, and supported on-site professional development travel programs for teachers and students. All these skills and programs also afforded me the ability to go in search of my next opportunity—a public programming job at a major museum.

About seven months ago, I started at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum. As the program specialist for Adult Learning and Digital Content, my role varies from day to day. The job is to support the museum's mission to educate a twentieth-century audience about both historical and STEM topics. So, what exactly do I do at the museum? In the last seven months, I hit the ground running. I collaborated with different departments to create nine individual lectures that will bring scientists from NASA and Planetary Science Institute, historians, and journalists from across the country to the Museum to discuss a variety of topics for our public audience. 2023 will spotlight lectures on trailblazers, such as Jackie Cochran and her complex history throughout five decades of aviation history—from test pilot to creator of WASP program in WWII, to the moment she became the first woman to break the sound barrier 75 years ago this May. The Museum will also bring back three of the first women astronauts from the class of '78 to discuss their experiences as women in STEM and their role in breaking the gender line in aerospace. I'm also excited to say I helped develop a fall lecture series that explores topics surrounding the culture of the Jet Age in the 1950s and 1960s.

The series explores the role of Congressman Diggs', the first Black congressmen from Michigan, who played a pivotal, but often underdiscussed, role in his pursuit to end segregation of airlines and the role Pan Am stewardesses played in Cold War America (spoiler alert: they were more than just flying hostesses). These lectures will welcome 2,500 people onsite at both the Museum's newly reopened downtown location on the National Mall and the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center (our second location) in Chantilly, VA. They will also be broadcasted to a web audience of 1,000-3,000 people per program.

When I am not working on public lectures for the museum, I support digital programming, including a new joint Education, Curatorial, and Communications initiative that explains historical stories of artifacts in Museum in 90 seconds or less for social media. The initiative is a small way to introduce a digital audience to what the museum has to offer learners of all ages. While some of the artifacts are what you'd traditionally expect to find in the Air & Space Museum—yes, we have aircraft and spacecraft—not all the artifacts are quite so obvious. The audience has truly responded to learning more about those lesser-known artifacts and why we have them in our collections.

Our Reel on the 1970s Cray 1A Supercomputer (the computer of its time) hit 102,000 views in under three days. Even more recently, I was invited to join the AirSpace podcast development team, which explores scientific and historical topics related to space and aviation history for interested listeners.

Other initiatives such as Sally's Night (in honor of the late Sally Ride), where I am supervising the creation of an activity guide for institutions across the United States to use, and Solstice Saturday, a celebration in June that opens all the Smithsonian Museums on the National Mall until midnight, keep me busy as well.

Some of you might ask how I am using my degree in American history at the job like this. It is a completely valid question and, as I mentioned earlier, my career path is a bit more unorthodox. In all honesty, I use it daily—from content creation and development in lectures, Reels, and podcast episodes. I use my knowledge of intersectionality studies to make sure the stories we are telling at the Museum are diverse, transparent, and inclusive. These stories need to be handled with care, but they are also important stories that need to be told. I often take work being done by historians and scientists to create programming that is accessible to a wider public audience.

My time in public history initiatives, like National History Day and at the Smithsonian, have made the gaps in knowledge of historical narratives so glaringly apparent, but it has also revealed that many are interested and invested in learning more, in closing the gap. I use my own skills to provide them a way to close that gap and learn a little something new in the process.



It might be a bit cliché to say, but this job also keeps me guessing in all the best ways. I always knew I needed a job that would help me always keep learning. When I first started at the Museum, I had a cursory knowledge of aviation history (Wright Brothers, Earhart, Lindbergh, etc.). On the space side, I could tell you what Jules Verne discussed in his novels (I am a late nineteenth century historian, I knew my limits). Today, I could tell you about the impact lunar dust has on space suits, while depictions of the asteroid belt are misleading, and why the Museum has an entire gallery that features motorcycles and racecars (none of which fly or leave the atmosphere).

I've had the opportunity to work at or with organizations that strive to make sure the public has access to cultural institutions that encourage the preservation and dissemination of important historical and scientific stories. Those just starting your careers, I encourage you to think about your next steps.

Where do you want to go? What is important to you? What are you hoping to build in the future?

My two biggest pieces of advice—build your skills, even the ones that seem inconsequential at the time and say yes to the unexpected opportunities. Those opportunities tend to be the most influential and impactful ones of career. If you are interested in public history initiatives, I encourage you to explore career options in the federal government, including working as historians for the Department of Defense and US State Department to curators and public programming specialists at cultural institutions, all the way to collections managers and archivists at places like the Library of Congress and the National Archives. Opportunities abound for those interested in exploring an often-under-tapped sector for historians.