

# History Happenings

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*Cover Image: a wall scene from the Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak depicting Pharaoh Ramesses II offering to the god Amun-Re*

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**Editor: Guiomar Duenas-Vargas**



**Layout Assistant: A.L. Savage**

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# Imagining Ramesses II

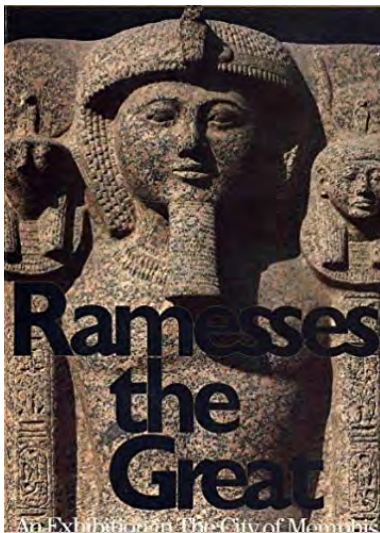
By Peter J. Brand



*Dr. Peter J. Brand,  
Professor of Egyptology*

This article is based on parts of chapter twelve of the author's current book project: *Ramesses II: Egypt's Ultimate Pharaoh*, to be published by Lockwood Press

Back in 1987, Memphis hosted a distinguished visitor, a royal celebrity names Ramesses the Great. Dozens of priceless artifacts came to the convention center, including a massive granite statue brought from the ruins of ancient Memphis to its namesake on the Mississippi. As a young undergraduate at the University of Texas at Arlington, I had to wait another two years, until the pharaoh made a stop in Dallas to pay my respects, but as the local “baby Egyptologist” on campus—that Egypt kid—the campus press interviewed me and asked all the important questions. Did he really have 200 children? Did he really marry his own daughter? Eeeww! Was he the Pharaoh of the Exodus? Was he black or white? Didn't he have slaves? Wasn't he a dictator? Cited by the campus newspaper as an “expert” on incest in Ancient Egypt, I learned a valuable lesson about speaking cautiously to the press! Meanwhile, Ramesses II's reputation preceded him from Memphis Egypt, 1250 BCE, and Memphis, Tennessee, 1987. Today, as I am researching and writing a new historical biography of the king, I have been drawn into modern history, examining our cultural memory of pharaonic Egypt during the past two centuries as we imagine Ramesses II.



*The King comes to Memphis: souvenir catalog (left) and Coke bottle (middle) from the 1987 exhibition Ramesses the Great. Big man on campus: full sized replica of a colossal statue of Ramesses II from ancient Memphis at the Central Avenue entrance to the University of Memphis. The original was restored and brought to Memphis, Tennessee from the ruins of ancient Memphis for the exhibit. The Egyptian government authorized the city to make the replica and display it.*

The second in a line of eleven pharaohs bearing this name, Ramesses the Great ruled Egypt between 1279 to 1212 BCE, a sixty-seven year stretch that even the United Kingdom's Queen Elizabeth II has still not yet matched. Today he might not be quite as famous as Queen Nefertiti or King Tutankhamun, but his modern afterlife stretches back into the early nineteenth century, decades before most had ever heard of the “Beauty-Queen Nefertiti” or the “Golden-Boy, King Tut.”





The Italian explorer Giovanni Belzoni moved a colossal bust of Ramesses II from the ruins of Thebes to England in the early 1820s, inspiring Shelley's famous poem "Ozymandias" (left); The bust in the main Egyptian gallery of the British Museum in London. It is also known as "the Younger Memnon."

One of the first royal names Egyptologist ever deciphered was Ramesses II's. He became a sensation in Great Britain in the early 1820s when the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley composed his famous sonnet *Ozymandias* on a colossal bust of the king then making its way to the British Museum from the ruins of ancient Thebes. By the mid nineteenth century, as discovery after sensational discovery emerged from the sands of Egypt, Ramesses the Great's vast monuments loomed large in the European imagination. He was not merely the most famous of pharaohs, he was also the most notorious. By the middle of the nineteenth century, scholars often pegged him as *The Pharaoh of the Exodus*. A noted biblical historian Christian Charles Bunsen castigated him as an oriental despot:

*Not the slightest doubt, however, can be entertained as to his harsh and cruel disposition, by any one who feels bound to come to the conclusion that Ramses II...and no other, is the Pharaoh who drove the Israelites to desperation by his inhuman oppression...*

In the second half of the Victorian age, popular interest in the lands of the Bible combined with a new art movement called Egyptomania, fueling an insatiable public thirst for knowledge about the land of the Nile. Ramesses now became a paragon of oriental despotism and European fantasies about the "decadent Orient." As the reputed father of a hundred or more children, and husband of at least a dozen wives, Ramesses stood out among the crowded field of Egypt's monarchs. Orientalizing works like the 1886 painting *Ramses in his Harem* by the French artist Jean Jules Antoine Lecomte Du Noüy conjured up every fantasy about the corrupting luxury of the Orient.



*Ramses in his Harem (1886) by Jean Jules Antoine Lecomte Du Noüy. Depicting the pharaoh surrounded by his many women, the scene provokes every European fantasy about the exotic, luxurious, and decadent Orient and its inferiority to the morally superior Occident, the Christian West.*

Not everyone disapproved of Ramesses II as thoroughly as Bunsen. The noted British traveler and pioneering Egyptologist Amelia B. Edwards took a more charitable view in her great travelogue *A Thousand Miles up the Nile*:

*The interest that one takes in Rameses II begins at Memphis and goes on increasing all the way up the river. It is a purely living, a purely personal interest; such as one feels in Athens for Pericles, or in Florence for Lorenzo the Magnificent. Other Pharaohs but languidly affect the imagination...But with the second Rameses we are on terms of respectful intimacy. We seem to know the man—to feel his presence—to hear his name in the air.*

Yet Edwards did not let this blind her to the pharaoh's foibles:

*For the rest, it is safe to conclude that he was neither better nor worse than the general run of oriental despots—that he was ruthless in war, prodigal in peace, rapacious of booty and unsparing in the exercise of almost boundless power...The Egyptians would seem beyond all doubt to have believed that their king was always in some sense divine...Even his wives, who ought to have known better, are represented in the performance of acts of religious adoration before him. What wonder, then, if the man so deified believed himself a god?*

Between the 1880s and the 1920s, fresh discoveries about the so-called monotheist Pharaoh Akhenaten and his wife Nefertiti upstaged Ramesses II. Egyptomania reached a fever pitch when the golden tomb treasures of Tutankhamun came to light in 1922.

Ramesses took a back seat to these “new” pharaohs during the first half of the twentieth century, until he got his big break in the 1950s as the Star of in his own Hollywood movie: Cecil B. DeMille’s 1956 epic, *The Ten Commandments*. Cast as the arrogant Ramesses, actor Yul Brynner gave an incomparable performance as the arrogant, brooding “Ramses,” step brother to Charlston



Heston as the biblical prophet “Moses,” and the vampish Anne Baxter’s “Nefertiry.” Caught up in a love triangle, Heston’s square Moses was completely upstaged by Brynner’s elegant swagger and Baxter’s regal cattiness. The costumes and sets are spectacular, having been vetted by Egyptologists at the University of Chicago. Yet most of the screen time is devoted to a campy pharaonic “soap opera” that has little to do with Ancient Egypt.



*Larger than Life: Yul Brynner’s iconic scowl as Ramses in The Ten Commandments (1956) (left); Brynner and co-star Anne Baxter as Nefirtiry*

At the height of the Cold War, just a decade after World War II, DeMille’s masterpiece also “updated” the Victorian image of Ramesses the Great as an “oriental despot” to a twentieth century “dictator.” In his unusual onstage introduction to the theatrical release, DeMille, a fierce anti-communist, calls the pharaoh out as nothing less:

*The theme of this picture is whether man ought to be ruled by God’s laws or whether they are to be ruled by the whims of a dictator like Ramesses. Are men the property of the state or are they free souls under God? This same battle continues throughout the world today.*

But in his homeland, the modern, secular regime of President Gamal Abdul Nasser latched on to Ramesses II as a symbol of Egypt’s ancient glory and of its bright future. Nasser erected a huge colossal statue of the pharaoh in front of Cairo’s central railway station, naming it “Ramesses Square.” Nasser also marshaled the country’s ancient heritage in his diplomatic agenda to set a newly independent Egypt on the world stage. Playing east against west, he gained Soviet financial and technical backing to build the Aswan High Dam in Egypt’s south.

The project created a huge lake that threatened to drown thousands of years of Egyptian and Nubian heritage, including a pair of highly photogenic temples of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel. Nasser then called on western nations to rescue the cultural treasures of ancient Nubia under the auspices of the United Nations Cultural Organization, UNESCO. The colossal statues of Ramesses II and his favored Queen Nefertari carved into the cliff face at Abu Simbel became the face of this international rescue campaign. Bold—and mostly impractical—schemes were offered to save the temples, until Sweden proposed slicing them up into over a thousand giant pieces and reassembling them on higher ground above the rising waters of Lake Nasser. Along with the Aswan Dam itself,

the Nubian rescue campaign under the auspices of the United Nations symbolized mid twentieth century notions of progress.



*Rescuing Ramesses: Dismantling the great temple of Abu Simbel during the UNESCO campaign in the 1960s (Left); the reconstructed temple in its new location today (right).*

In his homeland, Egyptian presidents came and went, but Ramesses II remained. In the 1970s, President Anwar Sadat sent the decaying mummy of the great pharaoh from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo on a “state visit” to France. French scientists cured the Pharaoh’s ancient corpse of microbial infections that were gradually destroying it, and gave him a state-of-the-art post mortem exam, diagnosing him with modern sounding diseases like arthritis and hardening of the arteries. As a symbol of Egyptian pride, Sadat insisted that Ramesses must have a twenty-one-gun salute upon his arrival in Paris. A minister of the French government and military honor guard turned out to receive him. He even brought his own passport, which listed his occupation as “King (deceased).”



*King (Deceased): Ramesses II's Egyptian Passport for his state visit to France in 1976 (left); The mummy of Ramesses II in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (right).*

Sadat soon discovered that appeals to Egypt’s ancient past cut both ways among the country’s conservative Muslim majority. Pan-Arabic identity trumped appeals to the pharaonic past, even among more secular and nationalist Egyptians. In the 1970s, Sadat used the pharaohs as cultural bargaining chips in diplomacy with the west, sending the famous treasures of Tutankhamun across



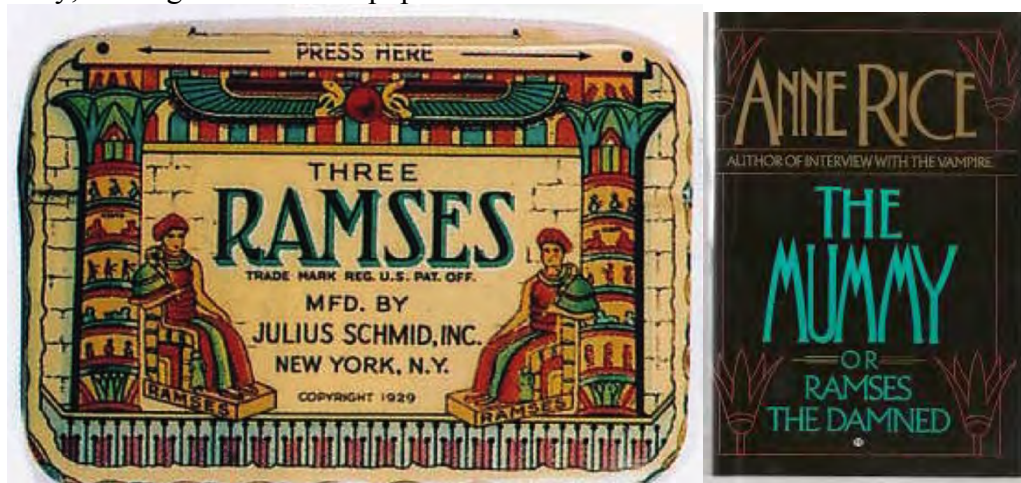
the world, and other spectacular artifacts of Ramesses to France. But when Ramesses II's mummy returned to Cairo, Sadat closed the royal mummy room in the Egyptian museum.

After the Camp David Peace Accords with Israel, the charming and media savvy Sadat was hailed as a hero in the West, but to many of his own people, and to other Arab nations, he was a traitor. When Islamic militants assassinated him in 1982, they declared: "we have killed the Pharaoh!" In modern Egypt, "pharaoh" remains a political slur that opponents hurl to attack Sadat's successors. In the Quran, as in the Bible, Pharaoh is the tyrannical oppressor of Moses and the Hebrews, whom God himself punished. So far as Ramesses II stands out among Egypt's crowd of ancient kings, especially as *The Pharaoh*, modern Egyptians are as likely to view him with hostility as they are to admire him as a symbol of Egyptian greatness.

But for one notable Egyptian, the Nobel Prize winning author Naguib Mahfouz, Ramesses served as a "character witness" for Anwar Sadat. In his brilliant historical parable *Before the Throne*, published shortly after Sadat's death, Osiris, the Egyptian god of the Underworld, puts a line of Egyptian rulers beginning with the earliest pharaohs down to Nasser and Sadat on trial, judging their worthiness as stewards and champions of the Egyptian nation.

When Ramesses II comes before the tribunal, earlier pharaohs criticize him for making peace with Egypt's ancient enemy, the Hittite Empire. Yet Ramesses passes the test and joins the ranks of Egypt's noble rulers in paradise. After many pharaohs, pashas, and presidents come and go, Sadat himself finally arrives to face judgement. Some pharaohs condemn Sadat for making peace with Israel, modern Egypt's unnamed enemy, but Ramesses II speaks up in his defense. Osiris judges Sadat as worthy to stand among his forbearers. Mahfouz, an ardent Egyptian nationalist and amateur Egyptologist, reimagines Ramesses as a statesman and Egyptian patriot, marshalling the pharaoh's prestige as a nationalist symbol to defend Sadat's peace policy.

Two centuries after the European rediscovery of pharaonic Egypt, Ramesses II remains one of its most potent symbols. In the "Ancient Egypt" of our collective and individual imaginations, we each create our own fantasy image and backstory for Ramesses the Great, or in Anne Rice's take, "Ramses the Dammed"! With his many wives and scores of children, he was a potent symbol of masculine virility, lending his name to a popular brand of condoms for several decades.



Pop culture icon: vintage tin container for Ramses brand condoms (left); Anne Rice's *The Mummy, or Ramses the Dammed* (right).

When we imagine Ramesses II, do we see the face of the Ozymandias statue in London's British Museum and the towering colossi of the temples of Abu Simbel? Or is it the menacing scowl of Yul Brynner? Is the pharaoh a symbol of pride, as he is for people of African descent throughout the African diaspora—one of Egypt's great black pharaohs? Or do we prefer to "white wash" him in the manner of Victorian orientalist paintings; illustrations in old issues of National Geographic Magazine from the 1930s; or Hollywood movies from DeMille's *Ten Commandments* to Ridley Scott's recent, and awful, *Exodus: Gods and Kings*? Is he a noble symbol of a glorious past; a great African king; an ancient "dictator" and slave master; an oppressor of women; the benighted Pharaoh of the Exodus tradition? However we view him, he is a "Ramesses" of our own imaginations. I have studied him for three decades. I've visited his temples and copied and translated his hieroglyphic inscriptions. I've seen hundreds of artifacts from his reign throughout Egypt and in museums around the world. I like to think that I "know" him better than most people. My "Ramesses II" is more complex, but really, your guess is as good as mine!



# Rhodes Must Fall

By Brian Kwoba



*Dr. Brian Kwoba, Assistant Professor, African-American History*

Rhodes Must Fall Movement, Oxford, *Rhodes Must Fall. The Struggle to Decolonise the Racist Heart of the Empire* Oxford, 2018

Written by members of a group of Oxford's students that organized themselves to remove the statue of Cecil Rhodes, symbol of British imperialism and colonialism. Tearing down the emblem of colonialism was as a powerful representation that gave visibility to the multiple acts of violence peoples have been suffering in the hands of imperial and colonizing nations.

Professor Brian Kwoba is one of the three editors of the recently published, *Rhodes Must Fall: The Struggle to decolonize the Racist heart of Empire*. The book is about the movement called, “Rhodes Must Fall” at Oxford, England, organized by students to remove the statue of Cecil Rhodes, symbol of British imperialism, and promoter of colonialism that still “hang[s] in Oxford’s halls and infuse[s] its institutional cultures.” The radical student’s determination raises a myriad of issues connected to racism and colonialism around the world.



*Students at the University of Cape Town celebrate their victory in winning their demand that the university remove of the statue of Cecil Rhodes*

**Guiomar Duenas-Vargas:** While studying at Oxford you were and active participant of the movement that promoted the fall of Cecil Rhodes' Statue. Tell us what motivated you, and describe for us the process of the movement's formation.

**Brian Kwoba:** I knew that Cecil Rhodes was a notorious symbol of British colonialism. But in terms of resisting him and his legacy, I was motivated by watching the Black students at the University of Cape Town, who created a mass movement to decolonize their university under the banner "Rhodes Must Fall!" They made the large statue of Cecil Rhodes on their campus the focal point of a larger call to decolonize the university's iconography, curriculum, treatment of university workers, and the demographic representation of Black students and faculty. The students at UCT had mass meetings, daily protests, a takeover of the administration building, and a list of 27 demands that cut to the core of the coloniality of the institution. A week or two after that movement emerged in South Africa, I called for a meeting amongst members of the Oxford Pan-African Forum to discuss what was happening and from there we organized the banner drop action under the Rhodes statue on the High Street in Oxford. Initially, that action was meant to express and show solidarity with the Black students at UCT, but the energy of our solidarity action soon morphed into the idea that we should build a "Rhodes Must Fall" campaign of our own to challenge colonialism at Oxford. We started by intervening on a debate at the Oxford Union about whether Britain should pay reparations to her colonies, and then things expanded from there.

**Guiomar Duenas-Vargas:** The book is divided in three parts, each including several essays. Three of those raise issues such as Reparations, Decolonizing Whiteness, and



*Students at the University of Oxford show solidarity with Black students at the University of Cape Town against colonial education.*

People of Color Politics. Do you want to expand on these themes?

**Brian Kwoba:** If experience is the best teacher, then organizing and building the Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford (RMFO) movement provided an invaluable set of experiences with which to grapple with these questions. Having invaded 9 out of 10 countries in the world, Britain remains one of the most vicious colonizing powers in world history. However, unlike the US or apartheid South Africa, its domestic population is over 90% white. People of color in Britain are small in demographic numbers, but most are recent, post-WWII immigrants or their descendants. Therefore, the country has been able, historically at least, to sell its population on the notion that 'race is an American problem; we don't have that here.' So in RMFO we found that most of the white people in the movement were from just about everywhere *except* for Britain itself. Meanwhile another section of the movement

was non-Black people of color, some of whom identified as ‘politically Black’ to the chagrin of some of the racially black students of African and Caribbean backgrounds. These students argued that Asian and Arab students who identified this way—as a strategy of solidarity amongst people of color against white supremacy—were appropriating Blackness despite not being treated as Black in the same way by the police etc. and thereby perpetuating anti-Blackness. As mentioned, the movement was founded and led by Black students, particularly southern Africans from lands that Cecil Rhodes colonized. However, these students at times found their voices questioned within their own movement. Not to mention that even Black students in the movement, who came mostly from Britain, the US, and Southern Africa, naturally brought to the movement their own notions and paradigms regarding the nature of Blackness, intersectionality, and the relationship of racial oppression to colonialism. So it was a complex environment, but one in which our unified commitment to decolonization offered us a richly-textured set of experiences with which to re-think our assumptions about reparations, racial identity, and the effects of colonial oppression. Not to mention questions of gender, class, and representation.



*March 9, 2016: Students at the University of Oxford lead the lively and upbeat "March for Decolonization" through Oxford*

**Guiomar Duenas-Vargas:** Your essay is about the Rhodes scholarship, the legacy of Cecil Rhodes. Would you want to tell us about the origin and nature of the famous scholarship?

**Brian Kwoba:** One of the most common defenses of Cecil Rhodes is to say ‘well, okay he did terrible things to Africans, BUT he created a great scholarship for students.’ People who make this argument often lack information about the purpose and politics of the Rhodes scholarship. Rhodes did not mince words and he was crystal clear in the initial iterations of his will about the purpose of the scholarship. He basically said that the point of his scholarship was to teach young white male colonists the ‘advantages’ of extending and perpetuating the British Empire. That is why the scholarship was restricted to elites from Britain, the US, Australia, and other white colonial countries. It is also why the scholarship prohibited women until 1977. Not only that, but the wealth used to endow the scholarship was ruthlessly exploited from the lands and labors of Black Southern African mine workers. So the effect of the scholarship, historically, was to give recipients the prestige of a blood-soaked “Rhodes” brand and money to reach positions of authority that would allow them to administer legal, commercial, and political institutions of global white supremacy. As Rhodes put it, “I contend that we are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race.” So it is not that Rhodes’ deeds were bad and the scholarship good. On the contrary, apart from a few notable exceptions, the scholarship remains an example of how global elites can steal land, labor, and diamonds from Black Africans, but also funding for their own pro-colonial education.



**Guiomar Duenas-Vargas:** The movement that you and your colleagues started in Oxford resonated around the world, and the book is a magnificent window to see the myriad of paths the claims against racism has taken. What do you have to say about the repercussion of your concerns around the world?

**Brian Kwoba:** I was really happy to see how our actions reverberated internationally with people challenging racism and colonialism in places like Ghana, India, West Papua, and all across the UK. But we must emphasize that our name and inspiration came from Black students in South Africa. It is difficult sometimes, but all the more important, for those of us living in imperialist countries to show respect and humility for the struggles of the colonized in the so-called "Third World." In other words, the economic winds of capitalism swept from North to South, with dreadfully devastating effects on the whole world. But the political winds of decolonization will continue to sweep from South to North, with hopefully liberating effects on the whole world. After all, the economic system that the colonizers imposed is by now threatening the fundamental health of Mother Earth herself and the sustainability of various forms of life on the planet.

**Guiomar Duenas-Vargas:** Collective actions seem to be the backbone to a successful denunciation of anti-black sentiment, and decolonization. I would like your opinion in this subject.

**Brian Kwoba:** All problems have solutions, and the best solutions respond directly to the problem. We are oppressed collectively, so the most effective and potent resistance also must be collective. This is something previous generations, in the civil rights, Black Power, and anti-colonial generation of the 1960s came to understand. Unfortunately, this consciousness was in large part destroyed due to the terror of assassination (from Patrice Lumumba and Amilcar Cabral to Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X), and also co-optation and incorporation of anti-colonial and anti-racist activists into neo-colonial governments and mainstream political parties the world over. Therefore, it falls to a new generation, particularly the youth, to learn what it means to take collective action and move history forward. That is what is so important and inspiring about movements like Rhodes Must Fall, so if our book makes even a small contribution to that process, then it will have been successful.



*Image above is also from the demonstration on March 9, 2016: Students at the University of Oxford lead the lively and unbeat "March for Decolonization" through Oxford*

# Gender Non-conformism

By Rebekkah Mulholland



*Rebekkah Mulholland is a PdD candidate in the Department of History*

Based on research conducted at numerous libraries, archives, and historical societies throughout the country, my dissertation, “Walking While Trans: The Lives and Experiences of Black Transgender Women and Gender Nonconforming Individuals of Color in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries,” examines the effects of respectability politics within the black community and racism and transphobia within the LGBT community in the lives of twelve individuals. My dissertation consists of four chapters, each dedicated to a specific theme discussed in the lived experiences of three figures. I begin each chapter discussing a figure or issue during the 21<sup>st</sup> century then trace the topic in the historiography of that particular discipline. This work is situated within the history of black women’s activism and transgender history- both of which have historically excluded black transgender and gender nonconforming women of color. I chart the social, cultural, political, and economic barriers for black transgender and gender nonconforming women. I examine how they circumvented marginalization in both movements by employing radical tools of resistance to create and carve out their own spaces, which allowed them to (re)present and express themselves when, where, and how they saw fit. I argue that black transgender and gender nonconforming women of color represented everything respectable blacks in the Long Civil Rights Movement, assimilationist whites in the Gay and Lesbian Movement felt restricted from access to full citizenship rights and as a result, not only were they effectively erased, they had to confront interlocking systems of oppressions, based on gender, race, class, and labor. Through the utilization of court records, ephemera, photographs, newspaper accounts, police records, magazine articles, film, and interviews, this study challenges historiographical and traditional understandings of black womanhood, activism, resistance, and labor while making a larger disciplinary contribution in affirming that black transgender and gender nonconforming women of color are fundamental to the study of modern African American history, women’s history, transgender history, and LGBT history- before, during, and after the Stonewall Rebellion.

In chapter one, I explore the diverse lives of sex workers from prostitutes and brothel owners to adult film actresses- each adapting various modes of survival, rejecting ideological notions of black womanhood, sexuality, labor, performance, and representation. In 2015, the United States Transgender Survey reported that due to discrimination in the workforce, black transgender women are likely to participate in the illegitimate economy, like sex work, to make a living. One of the most interesting lives and careers in this chapter is that of Ajita Wilson. In the August 20, 1981 edition of *Jet* magazine, she was the magazine’s featured beauty of the week. At the time of the feature, it was not known that she was a transgender woman. This was revealed when she died as a result of a brain hemorrhage following a car accident in Rome, Italy in 1987 at the age of 37. Born in Brooklyn, New



*Image courtesy of Jet magazine*



*Image courtesy of the New York Public Library*

York, Wilson underwent gender confirmation surgery before being discovered by a European film producer. In the 70s and 80s, she starred in a string of European sexploitation films in France, Greece, Spain, and Italy mesmerizing European audiences, at the same time Pam Grier starred in and dazzled black American audiences in blaxploitation films.

In chapter two, I explore the social injustices and sexual violence transgender women face. That same survey found that black transgender women are most likely to experience multiple forms of oppression such as homeless, unemployment, and poverty. Two of the three figures I discuss in this chapter are Marsha “Pay it No Mind” Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. In the early 1970s, Johnson and Rivera established the Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.), making it arguably the first group founded by poor transgender women of color, thus setting this group apart from the numerous other groups founded by white- middle class cisgender

LGBT activists of the time. S.T.A.R was created out of the frustration towards the gay liberation movement, which largely ignored poor gender nonconforming people. The organization also sought to bring awareness to and combat issues such as homelessness, unemployment, and poverty.

Incarceration is the topic of my third chapter. Within the last several years scholars have published works on incarceration that have complicated the discourse on mass confinement by tracing the impact of prison on gender nonconforming individuals, while challenging the mainstream LGBT movement’s focus on marriage rights and military inclusion. Such works also challenge the binary that prison studies have adhered to. Through the examination of people like Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, I debunk the assumption that those sentenced to men’s prisons are men; the same can be said for women’s prisons. The presence of people like Griffin-Gracy in men’s prisons makes them vulnerable to violence by the general prison population. As a way to deal with



*Image courtesy of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture*

this issue, gender nonconforming people are frequently placed in the Hole (solitary confinement). Being separate from the rest of the prison population makes them susceptible to harassment and assault by correctional officers. Additionally, being in solitary confinement restricts their access to skill-based programs and medicaments such as hormones, assuming they are allowed to have them in the first place.

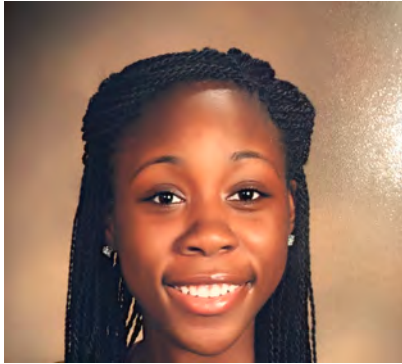
The Colonial Dames of America, I was able to take a research trip to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City. Within the past couple of years, the Schomburg



*2018 Floating Ophelia Productions, LLC*



acquired the personal papers of Stormé DeLarverie, one of the figures I discuss in chapter four and the last figure of my dissertation. This chapter focuses on different aspects of the entertainment industry such as the drag ball scene, vaudeville, nightclub act, and traveling performance troupes through the consideration two female impersonators and one male impersonator, Stormé DeLarverie. It was in these spaces that these individuals were able to carve out spaces for themselves and put on display the very identities that marginalized and erased them.



*Brianna Harrison is a PhD candidate in the Department of History*

## World in Fire: Black Nationalist Women

By Brianna Harrison

The Graduate Association for African American History (GAAAH) held its 19th annual conference this past October 17-19 at the University of Memphis. “Legacies” served as the theme of 19th annual GAAAH Conference. An award-winning historian of race, politics, and gender Dr. Keisha N. Blain delivered a keynote address centered on her most recent book, *Set the World*

on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). The conference welcomed graduate students, historians, and University of Memphis/GAAAH alumni throughout the country to present their research, exchange ideas, and network. Honored guests included Dr. Reginald Ellis from Florida A&M University and Dr. Kofi Baku from the University of Ghana.

The conference held six different sessions in the University Center. Themes included Slavery and Anti-Slavery in the Atlantic World; The Longer Movement: 18th and 19th Century Activism; Black Resistance and Urbanization (parts I and II); Intersectional Histories of Sexuality and Race; and African American Women and Intellectual Currents of Resistance. Students, members of GAAAH, and professors from the Department of History served as moderators for each session. Each year the GAAAH Conference awards Memphis State Eight prizes. This year’s winners were Jasmine Daria Cannon from George Washington University, Madison Ogletree from Auburn University, and Laura Sullivan from the University of Memphis.

Special thanks to faculty and staff in the Department of History, the University Bookstore, the Marcus Orr Center, and Registered Student Organizations for the help provided in putting this conference together. Lastly, special thanks to the University of Memphis and GAAAH alum for their continued support.



*Images, L-R: Presenters and Dr. Beverly Bond from the Department of History after session two of the conference; Dr. Beverly Bond, GAAAH Member Heather McNamee, and history professor Cherisee Jones-Branch from Arkansas State University.*



*Konrad Hughes is a senior history major in the Department of History*

## Student Perspective: Rivers of Time with Konrad Hughes

The Scandinavians who travelled down the rivers of Russia and Ukraine from 750 CE to 1050 CE to trade with the Abbasid Caliphate and Byzantine Empire are many times neglected in general history classes, as curriculum tends to focus on the Vikings who raided

and plundered the British Isles and Western Europe. Though the events in the West are important, they are no more so than those of the East. The availability of source material is certainly the reason for this. The historiography behind the availability of this information is muddled in modern Soviet politics, as it is only in the past twenty-five to thirty years that true scholarship has been allowed in certain areas, and many archaeological sites have only been examined nominally in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Dotted across the Russian steppe, the network of Varangian trading posts positioned nearby the major waterways is only now becoming clear to scholars.

For the past few years I have had the privilege to study under several professors at the University of Memphis who have guided me in a field of study which fits between all of their focuses, leading me to create a time-travelling podcast, Pirate News, to synthesize this academic information into an audio, and hopefully soon visual, format accessible to everyone. The first academic series of my podcast will consist of six-hour long episodes covering the historiography and archaeology of the Varangian Rus'.

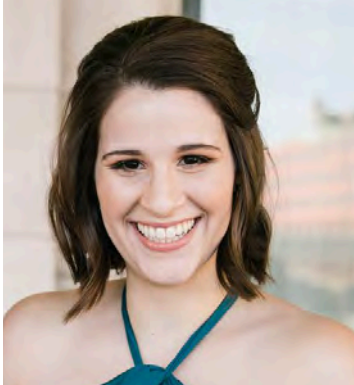
Dr. Andrei Znamenski and I discuss a series of books we put together for a 'Directed Readings' curriculum, which include works spanning a century of scholarship. The central two books for these discussions are "The Islamic World, Russia and the Vikings, 750–900: The Numismatic Evidence" by Thomas S. Noonan and "Viking Rus: Studies on the Presence of Scandinavians in Eastern Europe" by Wladyslaw Duczko, as they are both exhaustive. I understand that everyone does not have time to sit down and read all the amazing books which students and professors make the time to read and write. I spent years listening to audiobooks when I was not in school running my antiques business to keep myself informed on my favorite fields of history, including piracy, Vikings, and Cicero. Though I did not stop reading then, I have many friends in the non-academic world which love to discuss deeply about history and wish for a way to soak up some of the scholarship of academia.



The face of education is rapidly changing. My own mother is a teacher. Growing up, my brother and I watched her adapt quickly to the changing environment with technology. My brother is the lead technical engineer at an educational software company, the Grade Network, while I am trying to find my place within academia itself by creating this podcast and pursuing graduate school programs. We both were instilled with a passion not only to learn but to spread knowledge.

As technology changes the very core of our educational system, just as I have entered back into it, I realize I can not stick to my troglodyte tendencies. Watching and listening to a host of videos and podcasts, I came up with a format which I think is enjoyable and informational. Seemingly to me, most of the historical educational content in audio and video format is either very dry and opinionated or just too goofy and lacking in serious scholarly content. Pirate News is a time-travelling podcast so that I can take my listeners back and forth through time and space covering a plethora of interests, while keeping them interested with some light comedic play upon reality. The first episode, Daily Creatives, is a series of interviews with three Memphis artists, who I have the privilege to be friends with. From writing film scores to abstract painting, from mixed media for kids to punk rock music, and from the Memphis symphony orchestra to dubstep music festivals, they are active in a wide variety of mediums. My next interview in the current time continuum is with the new owners of the historic Lamplighter Lounge here in Midtown in Memphis, which has functioned as a bar since the time of prohibition.

## American Families in the Making



*Ashley Foley Dabbraccio is a  
PhD candidate in the  
Department of History*

By Ashley Foley Dabbraccio

My dissertation, “‘They Go Together, As Family, As One:’” The American Family at Home and Abroad, 1870-1912,” seeks to answer a deceptively simple question: why, in a time of social and political upheaval, did Americans constantly question the role of home and family while traveling abroad? Travelogues, letters, and related Americana of the late 1800s and early 1900s offer much material to consider the effect mobility and movement had on Americans. Americans wrote about a number of topics, including politics, food, society, economics and yet—they constantly returned to the question of home and family in their writings. My dissertation tackles the complicated topics of home and family at various levels. For instance, the first chapter sets up who these travelers were, why they traveled, and the climate of the United States at the time. A later chapter digs into how Americans crafted new homes and a national “American family” for themselves both aboard ship and while moving throughout various European countries. Another chapter looks at a much more metaphoric family construction. Americans went out of their way to link themselves to Europe. It explores the familial language Americans used to link themselves to the histories, the regions, the people of different countries and why Americans might have chosen to do so in an imperialistic age. For example, they adopted the Queens of England and Germany as essential ideals of motherhood. They referenced France, Germany, and England as the “land of their ancestors.” The



notion of what we mean by family and home, the role it plays, and why Americans continuously presented questions about family and home requires further examination. When we ask questions about family, we learn that “family” is a contested term: it has no fixed meaning, even to the individuals attempting to define it. Family becomes a situational idea that is not set, but rather mutable based on space and time.

Much of what we know of the family life in the late- nineteenth century, and early-twentieth-century has focused on immigrants. This perspective makes sense since immigration studies allow us to see what happened when Old World familial dynamics collided with much more individualistic American ones. However, if we accept family is situational, it changes our perspective. My dissertation digs into that new perspective. It looks at how Americans traveling to Europe also grappled with those notions of home and family—and used them to create very specific narratives for themselves and their readers. In viewing these debates about family and its meanings through the eyes of those who travel east rather than migrated west, my project allows for new insights in how and why ideas of home and family developed. Mobility had an impact on family, as we know from immigration historiography. When we look at Americans who traveled away from the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it becomes much more apparent that mobility forced Americans to confront and adapt their own ideas of family to fit their new circumstances. Americans, from different backgrounds, regions, ages, ancestries, and sexes, had questions when it came deciding what family meant or what (or where) the home should be. Now, Americans did not cross an ocean and forget everything that they had learned or experienced—absolutely not. Gender, race, and class ideas of the time crop up in Americans’ “traveling” family. But family was not monolithic. Americans were forced to adjust their own understandings of family, which again returns us to my overall questions about “family” as a situational set of relationships. Americans desired a sense of community that a broader definition of family brought.

Americans wrote to each other through published works that appeared as serialized newspaper articles, as full-length books, and even as letters to the editor. These traveling Americans had a lot to say to each other about Europe, about their experiences there, about what they found challenging or what they liked. For instance, many people know that writers like Samuel Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, Henry James, and Edith Wharton traveled abroad and wrote about their experiences. Their popularity often brings their stories to the forefront of the discussion. Other Americans—politicians, businessmen, journalists, women, African Americans, and naturalized citizens all produced works that discussed their experiences while traveling abroad. It is their writings that have driven my questions. For instance, in the late 1800s, Marion Flowers Harmon lost her husband and decided it was the time to make the grand tour. She spent the next year traveling, by herself, throughout Europe. Her book, entitled *One Woman Wandering*, exposed discussions of family, gender, domestic space, and even provided insights into what women addressed and found important during the period. Others, like Franc Bangs Wilkie (from whom the title of my dissertation comes), were fascinated with the way the English family existed as a unit, much different from the American families back in Chicago. Others wrote about how family should be used to order the world. In 1877, James Converse wrote that there should be a confederacy of “Anglo-Saxon countries,” that would serve as a family that monitored disputes or unrest. In his final lines, he wrote that he hoped that this would help to avoid the “mistakes of 1861.” In a completely different perspective, Charles Walker, a black pastor, wrote back to

parishioners that Europeans welcomed him into their homes in ways that white Americans never had in Jim Crow America. Europe further solidified the idea that black Americans were not welcome—even in their own home nor into the American family. Family, once again, seemed to serve many needs. Still, American writers pushed the idea that family was influx idea and one that very much existed outside of the nuclear family.

These travelogues were quite extensive for the period. Wilkie's book was quite popular—going into at least six printings. The Library of Congress boasts 1,500 related materials that deal with travel to and from Europe. Recent research trips highlighted over 150 related materials in the Duke and UNC archives (just about southern travelers). Those hard numbers tell me something important. First, that Americans wanted to read about Europe. Second, they were interested in what travelers had to say about Europe and the world around them. As a result, we begin to see that family and home were important topics especially at a time when the United States was evolving into its own new nation.