



INSIGHTS

NOTES FROM THE CCWH

53:1 • SPRING 2022



LETTER FROM ABIGAIL ADAMS TO JOHN ADAMS (EXCERPT)

Braintree, Massachusetts
March 31, 1776



"I feel very differently at the approach of spring to what I did a month ago. We knew not then whether we could plant or sow with safety, whether when we had toiled we could reap the fruits of our own industry, whether we could rest in our own Cottages, or whether we should not be driven from the sea coasts to seek shelter in the wilderness, but now we feel as if we might sit under our own vine and eat the good of the land.

I feel a gaiety de Coar to which before I was a stranger. I think the Sun looks brighter, the Birds sing more melodiously, and Nature puts on a more cheerfull countenance. We feel a temporary peace..."

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NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear CCWH Members,

Wishing you all a happy belated new year! I can't be the only one to be wondering where the past two months have gone. It feels like 2022 has certainly started with a bang.

In one significant way, of course, 2022 started out like many other years: with the annual meeting of the American Historical Association. The CCWH had a robust presence at both the in-person meeting in New Orleans in January and the virtual event in February, co-sponsoring eight panels, co-hosting a reception with the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians, and offering a plenary session by Dr. Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers. Speaking on the topic, "'She had...a Womb Subjected to Bondage': Reconsidering the Origins of British Maternal Descent Law," Dr. Jones-Rogers made a compelling case for connecting policies governing enslavement in the British American and Caribbean colonies with legal structures in West Africa. This paper comes from Dr. Jones-Rogers's new book project, "Women, American Slavery, and the Law," and we were very fortunate to get a preview of this work. Recordings of the plenary and other CCWH co-sponsored panels are available on the AHA's website at the following link: [AHA22 Online](#) | AHA (historians.org).



Elizabeth Everton, PhD

We also hosted our annual business meeting at the January meeting, as is the CCWH's tradition. As we did last year, we offered a virtual option for this meeting, and so we were able to convene most of the board and a number of members. As board members presented their annual reports and suggested initiatives for the coming year, a clear theme emerged: how can the CCWH support its members? Or, more broadly, what role can professional organizations like ours play in a rapidly changing academic environment. As increasing numbers of historians leave the academy, as colleges and universities consolidate and even cut history departments and programs, and as content and nature of history teaching and history writing is challenged, the CCWH and its sister organizations must look for new ways to lift up our members and historians more generally. With this goal in mind, I am happy to announce a major initiative to restructure our membership dues. The CCWH has long had tiered membership fees, so that the cost of membership correlates to the member's income.

"The CCWH has always been committed to supporting those who have been marginalized by and even excluded from the academy."

While this sort of fee structure promotes equity, our graduate student representatives made the case at the business meeting that it does not go far enough in alleviating the financial burden faced primarily by graduate students, adjuncts, and others outside of the tenure system. At this moment particularly, with institutions and departments slashing financial support and laying off contract/non-tenure-track (and, let's be frank, tenure-track and even tenured) faculty, membership fees can effectively act as a barrier to entry in the profession.

With this in mind, the Executive Board unanimously voted in support of eliminating membership fees for members in the lowest income bracket. We will also be adjusting our income brackets and fees to reflect the current cost of living and other financial realities faced by historians. These changes will take effect over the course of 2022.

The CCWH has always been committed to supporting those who have been marginalized by and even excluded from the academy. This measure demonstrates our strong support of all our members and our desire for a more equitable reality. I'm very proud to be a member of this organization as we look toward the future.

All the best,
Liz

Call for Award Applications: The Coordinating Council for Women in History Annual Awards 2022



THE COORDINATING COUNCIL FOR WOMEN IN HISTORY OFFERS 6 ANNUAL PRIZES. DETAILS AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS MAY BE FOUND AT [HTTPS://THECCWH.ORG/CCWH-AWARDS](https://theccwh.org/ccwh-awards). THE AWARDS DEADLINE IS MAY 15, 2022.



Awards are open only to CCWH members. To join, visit <https://theccwh.org/membership>. Applicants may apply for one CCWH award per year. Please contact Elizabeth Everton (execdir@theccwh.org) with any questions.

·The Catherine Prelinger Memorial Award is a \$20,000 award given to a scholar who has not followed a traditional academic path of uninterrupted study. The award is open to applicants with a PhD and graduate students advanced to candidacy. For more information, visit <https://theccwh.org/ccwh-awards/catherine-prelinger-award/>.

·The CCWH/Berks Graduate Student Fellowship is a \$1000 award to a graduate student completing a dissertation in history. For more information, visit <https://theccwh.org/ccwh-awards/ccwhberks-graduate-student-fellowship/>.

·The Ida B. Wells Graduate Student Fellowship is a \$1000 award to a graduate student completing a historical dissertation, not necessarily in a history department, that interrogates race and gender. For more information, visit <https://theccwh.org/ccwh-awards/wells-graduate-student-fellowship/>.

·The Nupur Chaudhuri First Article Prize is a \$1000 award that recognizes a superlative first article published in any field of history. For more information, visit <https://theccwh.org/ccwh-awards/chaudhuri-first-article-prize/>.

·The Carol Gold Article Prize is a \$500 award given to a scholar of any rank for a superlative article published in any field of history. For more information, visit <https://theccwh.org/ccwh-awards/carol-gold-article-award/>.

·The Rachel Fuchs Award is a \$500 award that recognizes extraordinary mentorship and service to women and the LGBTQI community in the historical profession. For more information, visit <https://theccwh.org/ccwh-awards/rachel-fuchs-memorial-award/>.



Co-Presidents' Column

I first met Nupur Chaudhuri in 1995 as the graduate representative on the Coordinating Council for Women in History. I was beginning my professional training as a historian and Nupur was beginning her term as co-chair of CCWH. From the moment we were introduced, she made it clear that I had a role to play on the council and that she would always have my back. Without question, over the course of my career Nupur has guided, supported, and championed me and my work in countless ways. Nupur has been an inspiration and role model.

She is the reason I am currently serving as co-president of the CCWH and it is her honor and with her words that I dedicate my column.



Contributed by Dr.
Crystal Feimster

Except from "Bahupath Perie: The Long Trek," by Nupur Chaudhuri (the full essay can be found in "The Personal, the Political, The Professional," eds. Eileen Boris and Nupur Chaudhuri)

In 1963, when I was twenty years old, I left the shores of India to come to the United States. When I landed, I felt like a fragile plant uprooted and transplanted to a completely alien environment. I am a product of educated, middle-class, nationalist Bengali culture. My own desire to leave Calcutta was at best tepid, but my parents desired to send their daughter to the US for a higher education . . . As it turned out, after completing a master and moving to another part of the country for a doctorate, I did marry an American citizen, also an immigrant from India who came here initially for higher education. After living in this country for over thirty years, I have found that my experiences with emigration, immigration, and racism are the forces that have dominated my life. Feminism, in turn, has shaped my life. Like many foreign students and immigrant feminists, I still continue to negotiate the different cultural values and historical experiences. These have helped to shape my own feminist perspective and influence my academic interests.

After graduating from high school at the age of fifteen, I entered Sri Shikshayatan College and later Jogomaya Devi College with majors in history and Sanskrit literature. I completed my BA degree in history at the age of nineteen. My father had encouraged the study of history, his field. I read Indian, British, and generic modern western European history, but emphasized Indian history. Two teachers in Calcutta were major influences: Nilima Sanyal, a junior and senior high school teacher, and Arnica Ckarvarti, a faculty member in Bengali literature. They taught me to love literature and history and also instilled a willingness to accept the challenges of activism. Interests in history and literature grew together within me and influenced the fields in which I would become an activist.

While studying for an MA in modern Indian history in September 1963, I received a fellowship to Smith College to study for an MA degree in history . . . In 1965, I moved to Manhattan, Kansas to work on a PhD in a young graduate program in history.

A new world opened as I began my academic life in a new institution. I was one of only a few single graduate students in the College of Arts and Sciences. Both professors and peers subjected a single woman, particularly one from a Third World country, to a different kind of scrutiny from that directed at others. Many who had power to exert academic control questioned her motivation. This notion generally complicated my own situation as I strove to earn the ultimate degree. Having extremely limited alternatives, I had to tolerate many slights from professors and colleagues. My academic experiences from my arrival in 1965 until 1974, when I finally received my PhD, are still vivid but remain too painful to narrate. I would rather not have learned all the lessons that I did from the history department, though they did intensify my resolve to reach my own goals.

Continued on next page...

I struggled to understand my relationship to the history department. In 1966, university librarian Pansy Washington, an African American, suggested that my non-European/nonwhite background made me "invisible." She explained that this country practices racism in various forms. Since I had been shielded from exposure to racism during my formative years in postcolonial India, her elaboration raised my consciousness about various expressions of racial attitudes. I discovered another layer to my identity: for others, skin color and national origin had marked me as a person from an inferior race. I became a "nether" person in the College of Arts and Sciences at Kansas State University.

In the early seventies, I inquired about a teaching assistantship in the South Asian Program. The director, a political scientist who later died in the 1980s, explained that since I had not taken an Indian history course in the US, I would be unfit to assist, let alone teach, any course. His denial of the value of my Indian education resembled the attitudes toward India displayed by many nineteenth-century British women travel writers. He not only denied the significance of my degree in history from an Indian university, but also implied that Indians are not capable of teaching their own history to others. My gender also made me invisible. Yet academic pursuits yielded precious rewards in broadening my intellectual horizon and deepening self-definition. While working for a PhD degree, I discovered the academic ground relating to western feminism.

My personal life provided solace to my stressful academic life. In 1969, I got married, and this provided an opportunity to create a home and not to feel so much uprooted. I changed my student status to "alien resident" status. I thus acquired two new identities: I became a faculty wife and an immigrant. I could have had an uncomplicated, less stressful life as a faculty wife, but I do not like to fly on borrowed wings. So, I continued to strive to achieve my goal and create my own identity.

The year 1974 was an important turning point. I had earned freedom from a stifling academic climate. I could now move ahead in search of professional attainments. I never had an illusion that my institutional connection would be of any professional help. This was an unranked history department whose faculty members, with some exceptions, possessed very limited professional connections or reputations. Against such heavy odds, what I could do best was to depend totally on my own drives and abilities. I needed to create a professional world for myself. (My election to the American Historical Association (AHA) Teaching Division in 1997 indicates success in that endeavor.)

At my first AHA conference in 1974, I attended the Coordinating Committee on Women in the Historical Profession (CCWHP) business meeting, where I met a group of activist feminist historians. There I discovered a new confidence in my own professional goals. I felt a sense of belonging to the organization because CCWHP presented an "imagined community" with goals of advancing the field of women's history and dismantling existing barriers to the advancement of women in the historical profession. To share these common objectives, I joined CCWHP. In 1975, I volunteered to give time to its Research Bulletin; the next year I became its editor. That chance marked the beginning of my long association with the organization. Soon, I became the newsletter editor for the Conference Group on Women's History (CGWH), a post I held until 1980. In 1981, I became the executive secretary and treasurer and served in that capacity until 1987. In 1995, I was elected co-president for a three-year term.

My long trek to the United States — family heritage, experiences with immigration and racism, and my own political beliefs — firmly instilled a respect for all people and the need to know, understand, and record a history that affirms one's own identity.

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EAGER TO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT CALLS FOR PAPERS, PRIZES, FELLOWSHIP APPLICATIONS, JOB POSTINGS, AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES?

EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE YOUR BOOK, ARTICLE, OR AWARD?

Email execdir@theccwh.org to have your announcement published in the newsletter, on the CCWH website, or on our social media!



HISTORY ON DISPLAY: BRINGING PUBLIC HISTORY INTO THE CLASSROOM FOR NON-PUBLIC HISTORIANS

DR. ELYSSA FORD

Public history is its own distinctive field within the larger history discipline, and it comes with its own theoretical discussions, scholarship, and ethical considerations. All historians can engage in work in and with the public, and all history classrooms and students can benefit from this type of training. Just as with any discipline, it makes sense that trained public historians (whether in an academic sense or through professional experience) familiar with the historiography, scholarship, and ethics of the field should lead public history programs and teach public history classes. However, it is possible for non-public historians to engage in work that embeds themselves and their students within the local communities.

Not all public history is local history, but local history projects allow students to engage with their surrounding community, forge relationships with local institutions and individuals, and dive into primary source documents (that they can touch, in person!). It can make history feel more real and more relevant to them, and they can feel a purpose in what they are doing if they know that someone beyond their instructor is going to see their work. Additionally, these projects help create collaborative partnerships between universities and the communities. This hopefully will benefit the individual academic program, the university as a whole, the partnering institution, and the wider community.

Smaller projects, like photo restoration, website design, podcasts, video tours, oral interviews, and re-photography projects can be used at all levels of history courses, and they are fairly easy ways for those new to public history to introduce this kind of work into their classrooms, find new ways to engage students, and create visible products that can benefit the students, the university, and the community. As you select projects, consider the interest and skill level of your students but also your own skills.

Are you excited by websites? You can partner with a small museum, easily set up a Wix account, and provide that log in information to students. You can do this with the museum's email address and provide them with the access at the end of the semester. I would recommend providing them with a brief overview of the site, its editing functions, and the saving and publishing process, if this is new technology to them, and then they can take ownership of the sites and update them as needed.

One website idea is to have students create virtual exhibits or companion websites to provide more information on topics related to exhibits already on display. Examples of student-designed websites can be found [here](#). These websites can be made on the free version of Wix and then linked to the museum's existing website.

Would you like to work with your university archives or a local museum to build a set of oral histories that help document regional history? An oral history project requires much more work for the instructor to identify and contact interviewees ahead of time, complete the IRB process if required by your university, create the agreement forms, etc. However, if you already are familiar with oral history collection and transcription for your own scholarship, it is something you can bring to your classes. I have had classes complete interviews with long-time university employees, older farmers in the region, and current or former university students, faculty, or staff in the military. The agreement forms, audio files, and transcripts were donated to either the university archives or a local museum to help build their collections, and they have been used for exhibits at both places.

Are you comfortable with Photoshop, and do you have access to a computer lab with this software? If so, you may want to consider a photo restoration project or a re-photography project. For photo restoration, reach out to a library, archives, or museum and ask for scans of damaged photographs - tears, writing, blotches, discoloration, etc. With high resolution TIF files, you can provide enough training to students in a single fifty-minute class for them to restore these images. I would recommend setting aside some class time for this week as it likely will be new technology for them, and they will have questions about how to approach various issues and may have a hard time knowing when their photograph is restored, as they may aim for unattainable perfection. To take this project a step further, it is fun to have the students colorize the photos as a second assignment. The final versions of all completed images should be given to the partnering institution. If time allows, it can be possible to arrange for an exhibit to feature both sets of images. Students can help to install and market the exhibit, and this experience makes their work feel useful. The exhibit opening also provides an important moment of public celebration for them.

All of these projects require additional skills and training on your end as the instructor, and invariably they will require additional time on your end as you establish these partnerships, train yourself in the needed skills and then train the students, and finesse the students' final products for public display. Students also may be initially resistive of these projects as the work tackled and the skills required are new to them. This will push them outside of their comfort zones, and they may want to write the traditional research papers instead, but they also will be excited to leave your class with clear deliverables for a professional client and will be enthused in a more intimate way about the history that surrounds them.

Time to Renew!



DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2022

Renewing allows you to continue to be part of this vibrant community and enjoy the initiative and programs we are offering.

Renew your membership at <http://theccwh.org/membership/>

If you have questions, please contact membership@theccwh.org.

As always, spread the word to friends, colleagues, and students who may be interested in our organization and its mission.

From The Grad Reps

It is the nature of a graduate education that everyone who undergoes one must eventually seek employment elsewhere. With a dwindling number of tenure-track jobs, many history graduate students find themselves pondering so-called “alt-ac” career paths. For some, this is out of sheer necessity; for others, non-tenure track careers are genuinely more appealing than the traditional academic route, for myriad reasons. Others still fall somewhere in between those two positions. In my capacity as a graduate student representative, I try to use this column to share insights about various alt-ac career paths pursued by history PhDs. My friend and former Duke History Department graduate student colleague Dr. Ashton Merck is currently a postdoctoral researcher at North Carolina State University. She agreed to speak to me about her career path. The following is a short interview I conducted with her.

JA: What brought you to your current position?

AM: Currently, I’m a Postdoctoral Researcher at NC State University. I work with a team of scientists on a few different interdisciplinary projects on new technologies in food and agriculture - I have worked on everything from nanotechnology to phosphorus to optical scanning of sweet potatoes. I use my historical skills every day, especially my capacity to absorb information in large quantities and to write a lot, very quickly.

I probably wouldn’t have this job if I had only worked on my dissertation and not done any side projects. While I was in graduate school, I participated in several interdisciplinary teams where I worked alongside social scientists, lawyers, and economists. Those experiences really refined my ability to work across disciplines and taught me how to communicate the value of what I did as a historian to non-humanists. I also took advantage of a few new initiatives at my institution, such as summer short courses and managing student research projects.

I defended my dissertation in spring 2020, which, as you can imagine, was not a good time to be looking for a job as a recent PhD. Because of the experiences I mentioned above, I never really envisioned myself in a traditional tenure-track role.

In the years leading up to my defense, I had planned to look into think tank and government jobs, which would have most likely required us to move to D.C. After some reflection, my partner and I decided that we wanted to stay where we were (I live in Durham, NC). This actually helped me with my job search, because I spent more time networking locally, rather than trying to connect with the big national firms. And that’s how I ultimately got this job - the classic “friend of a friend” referral that initially put me in contact with the person who is now my supervisor.

JA: What are some things you've found enjoyable, unexpected, or interesting about your job?

AM: I went into this role with some previous experience working in teams and writing collaboratively. But now that I’m really living in that world, it’s been really fascinating to see how scientists think and how they approach problems. Everything is a collaboration when it comes to research and writing. The idea that you would have “your” research agenda that no one else works on, or that might not be funded by a larger project, is a pretty unfamiliar concept. It’s also weird and funny to me to get back manuscript revisions to find my active voice has been “corrected” to passive voice!

I also find myself in a very familiar position of having to communicate the value of social-scientific inquiry on a regular basis. I’ve been pleasantly surprised by the genuine interest most of my colleagues have in the historical perspective I bring to these projects. Increasingly, major funders are requiring scientists and engineers to attend to the social and ethical dimensions of problems, but I also see that many of them are genuinely interested in hearing about these issues and they want to do work that will benefit society and address major problems of the world.

From The Grad Reps

I've also found smaller communities who are really passionate about addressing structural inequities in the sciences, but they don't always have the conceptual tools from the humanities to make those conversations as productive as they could be. That experience has really shown me how much I took for granted the idea that everyone has this baseline knowledge about the social construction of race, class, and gender. I believe there is a real need for more people who are willing to cross disciplinary lines and join these conversations.

"I'll be honest, I've never liked the term alt-ac, because I think it really holds us back from having more robust conversations about career paths for PhDs."

JA: Have you noticed attitudes toward "alt-ac" careers changing since you entered grad school?

AM: I'll be honest, I've never liked the term alt-ac, because I think it really holds us back from having more robust conversations about career paths for PhDs. "Alt-ac" was once used to highlight how a subset of administrative jobs in higher education should be considered "academic" jobs, and I think it can still be productive for some individuals to define their work using that term. But I notice that graduate students who are just beginning to explore career paths tend to use it in ways that can actually narrow their vision for potential job prospects, in part because everything is implicitly framed in comparison to the gold standard of a tenure-track job.

I also rarely see "alt-ac" used in ways that promote solidarity between tenure-track and contingent workers, so I think it prevents us from reckoning with the changes in the material conditions of labor in higher education, particularly when it comes to adjunctification and unionization drives on campus.

I think if we can get to the point where we talk about jobs and careers without attaching a label ("tenure-track," "academic," "non-academic") that would be ideal.

One thing that I have noticed in the last few years is that I am seeing more and more people who are finding ways to stay engaged with the field without having a tenure-track job in their field of study, and most of this is happening outside of the discourse around alt-ac.

I think this is certainly enabled by social media like Twitter, but it's also reflected in the number of people with an "independent scholar" or non-academic affiliation who are still researching, publishing, and speaking at conferences. It has always been true that some people who earn history PhDs have pursued careers outside academia, either by choice or necessity, it's just that now they are doing so in a way that remains much more visible to the field. In my field of business history, there are also some fairly advanced scholars who have returned to an academic role after working in industry, and those folks have been great mentors for people like me. I think that shift in perspective about what counts as "success" speaks volumes for graduate students and early-career scholars trying to find their place in the field.

JA: Do you have any closing thoughts or anything else you'd like to share?

AM: I think my experience speaks to the value of understanding the PhD as an opportunity to develop your interests rather than build some nebulous set of skills. In my case, it helped that I had some experience working in teams and managing projects, but I think I was a much more appealing candidate because of the substance of my research (I worked on risk and food safety) and my capacity to work across disciplinary lines - both of which were things I enjoyed the most about my time in graduate school. I think it would have been foolish to have tried to tailor my historical training to give me the exact set of skills I needed to do my job, but I also can't imagine a role that's a better fit for my interests and strengths.



Jacqueline Allain

News and Updates

In February 2022, Lynnette Overby joined the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)'s advisory board, the National Council on the Humanities.

Read more about this exciting announcement at <https://www.neh.gov/news/lynnette-overby-joins-national-council-humanities>.

Congratulations to Dr. Overby!

Some of the United States' most prominent historical and cultural organizations have come together to **celebrate Women's History Month**, which dates back to the 1980s!

Explore resources and learn more at womenshistorymonth.gov/about



"Nicola Sturgeon, the first minister of Scotland, apologized on behalf of the government for the killing and vilification of thousands of people accused of witchcraft between the 16th and 18th centuries."

Learn more in the [New York Times'](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/09/world/europe/scotland-nicola-sturgeon-apologizes-witches.html) article, "Scotland Apologizes for History of Witchcraft Persecution" at [nytimes.com/2022/03/09/world/europe/scotland-nicola-sturgeon-apologizes-witches.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/09/world/europe/scotland-nicola-sturgeon-apologizes-witches.html).

Ilaria Scaglia, CCWH Connections Coordinator

With 244 likes, 41 retweets, and 143 replies, here is the first tweet of mine that went viral (at least for my standards!): “Someone just asked me if it is really true that there are historians who pitch in their own money (if/when they have them) to complete more/better/easier research, acquire skills, and/or go to conferences. What would you reply?” For this CCWH Connections column, I would like to share some of what I have learned from the responses to my 227-character query:

1. All of the replies were in the affirmative (of course, you readers are yelling!), some in the present, some in the past, and many in a continuous tense.
2. Some people (especially contingent faculty and independent scholars) declared self-funding as their only way to conduct research; others (including some quite famous tenured professors) described it—without defending it—as an essential way to supplement some other form of support.
3. Many condemned the fact that this is the norm and denounced it as the root of inequality in the historical profession; others presented it as yet another reflection of broader injustices within societies; others still stated it as a fact of life, the way things are.
4. Quite a few replied sarcastically, shared funny GIFs, and/or expressed surprise—if not irritation—at the question I had been posed. Having just completed my first research trip in two years (and being now in the midst of calculating the extent of its hit on my personal finances), my own reaction could only be a sigh.

Yet, at least two further questions are worth posing. First, shouldn't the fact that this is the norm be known and broadcast as loud as possible? If no further funds or mitigation measures can be found, at least this might stimulate conference organizers to keep prices as low as possible and the broader public to appreciate that much peer-reviewed historical research is conducted at a loss for its author. Second, shouldn't we have an open discussion about who pays for what when the researching and writing of history is concerned? This issue is much larger than covering flights, conference fees, or accommodations. A fellow-historian once incredulously asked me “do you really write your own footnotes?!?” (rather than paying someone to do it, with or without institutional support, she then explained).

Once again, my first reaction was a sigh. Of course, I did; while busy trying to cover unavoidable expenses, it never even occurred to me to spend money on such an option! Yet, within our profession, we all know there is an underworld of research assistants, copy-editors, indexers, etc. whose work is often underpaid and whose names remain unmentioned, but this is seldom discussed in public. In a pinch, and during periods when I was able to afford it, I have occasionally used their services.

Indeed, money does not buy happiness but can pay for childcare, faster and comfortable travel, and the countless little things that can make one's personal and professional life easier to bear, more pleasant, and thus more productive. In recent years, there has been a growing movement to acknowledge the inequalities that inevitably affect all people in history, and especially women. The sooner the complexity of this whole reality is brought out in the open, the sooner we can create mechanisms to mitigate the effect of the thousand inequalities that surround us, the sooner we—as a group—might receive some acknowledgment of our tremendous personal and financial sacrifices—and, with it, perhaps more respect—for the service many of us provide—often at a loss—for society at large.

MEMBERSHIP COLUMN

Dr. Einav Rabinovitch-Fox

Dear members,

This last January, at the midst of the Omicron surge I decided to take the risk and to go on a plane to New Orleans for the annual meeting of the AHA. In what sometimes felt like a surreal experience, reminiscent of earlier times, I got a chance to hang out with old friends and new acquaintances, to present my work, to learn about the work of others, and also to do some CCWH work.

While the pandemic has taught us that we can do conferencing online, and there is much merit to the argument of the inaccessibility of an in-person conference, there is something unique, and I would also argue—irreplaceable—in the real-life encounters that in-person conferences bring. The ability to stroll through the book exhibit and maybe to have an informal chat with an editor, or to go for drinks or lunch with a friend or a scholar you just met are the sort of things that I really missed doing during the last two years.

Being a historian, going to the archives (when they are open), doing research, and especially writing, are very lonesome and sometimes even isolating experiences. So it is the few times of year that we get to see each other, and get to exchange ideas and laughs, that are so needed to sustain the scholarly work we do all year. Not to mention that for parents of young children, the ability to take a weekend off is often a much needed breath of fresh air.

We are lucky that at the CCWH, even before the pandemic, we have adjusted to the reality of online events. Our e-mentorship sessions offer a variety of stimulating advice and conversation on topics ranging from the job market, publishing, public history, navigating academia, and non-academic work. You are welcome to join these sessions – look out for announcements, but you can also ask for notes if you missed them.

There is a list of past sessions on our website, and you can ask for notes by contacting Stefanie at mentorship@theccwh.org. The CCWH also organizes other online events, and the mentorship committee also have a virtual writing group you can join (register here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1OMTdZ-1KlrTAOJKrOqiCEleNX3Vqu0_HEtZBxbvuQ1I/edit?ts=60a28fdf), just keep your eyes open for announcements.

We are happy that we can offer those experiences to our members, and thankful for the technology that enables us to meet across borders and time zones. But I am for one also hope to see many of you in person in the future—whether in sponsored panels of the CCWH at the AHA, receptions, or other conferences and gatherings which I hope we all will start going to soon.



The last two years pushed us to be innovative in the ways we build our community, and I hope that this will continue even after we return to some semblance of normalcy. But I also hope that we have not completely lost our ability to connect in real life and to enjoy the informal conversations, hugs, and comradery that in-person interactions bring.

So next time you see me in a conference, don't hesitate to come by and say hi and chat, but also remember that you can also reach me virtually, at membership@theccwh.org

Take care everybody, it is almost spring.

Einav Rabinovitch-Fox

Membership Outreach Committee Chair



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Learn more here:

<https://theccwh.org/ccwh-resources/mentorship-program/>

Book Review

Reviewed by Mary M. Báthory Vidaver,
University of Mississippi.

In the 1930s, leaders and organizers claimed that the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) offered a union home for industrial workers of any race, gender, ethnicity, or skill. Sadly, as Jenny Carson describes in this thorough examination of workers in New York City's commercial and industrial laundries, the rhetoric concealed a caveat. The CIO and its affiliates (in this case, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America or ACWA) might offer a universal home, but control would remain almost exclusively with white men. Black women made up the majority of workers in the city's laundries, initiated activism, organized employees, and maintained union loyalty. Still, white male laundry owners, workers, and union staff minimized the women's participation in contract negotiation and strategic decision-making. As a result, Black laundry workers remained underpaid, membership in the union declined, and labor leaders appeared increasingly ineffectual. The story is familiar to readers of labor history, yet Carson insists on optimism. A scholar-activist, she presents not just a scholarly monograph but a cautionary tale of lessons learned and mistakes to avoid for current union organizers and leaders.

In many ways, *A Matter of Moral Justice* greatly resembles Vicki Ruíz's ground-breaking *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*. Like Ruíz, Carson provides the reader with a detailed account of the industry, factory processes, positions, and worker characteristics. And the specifics of the laundry business described by Carson bears more than a passing resemblance to the canning business described by Ruíz: a workforce numerically dominated by women of color but in which the minority white women receive the better paying, less onerous job assignments; white male managers demanding sexual favors; uneven workflows.

Jenny Carson, *A Matter of Moral Justice: Black Women Laundry Workers and the Fight for Justice*.

Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021. 289 pp.

The narrative conveyed by Carson is also similar to that described by Ruíz: the bridging of cultural differences by the employees, the partnership with radical leftists, the creation of a democratic unionism that offers leadership roles to women of color, and the undermining of that success by bureaucratic and hierarchical union executives. Even the Teamsters make a repeat performance.



A photograph of an African American woman doing laundry at a wash tub, in either Washington, D.C. or New York. Dated circa 1909 to 1932. Source: The Library of Congress.

Yet, despite the similarities, *A Matter of Moral Justice* is more than a reiteration of the 1987 classic. Instead, it details a series of small but significant interventions. For example, Carson rejects the assumptions of "passivity and victimization" made by both contemporaries and later scholars about the employment opportunities for Black women who migrated to northern cities (3).

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Book Review, Continued

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Jenny Carson, [A Matter of Moral Justice: Black Women Laundry Workers and the Fight for Justice](#).
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While ceding the limited options open to these women and the persistence of occupational typing by race and gender (in the North and South, white women delegated the washing of clothes to African American women), she argues for their agency. In choosing between cotton fields, domestic service, and the rugged, dangerous industrial laundries, Black women chose the latter. The laundry industry “served as the vehicle through which African American women first escaped domestic service and entered the industrial workplace” (4). It was also the vehicle, beginning in 1924, through which they first entered the union movement.

Through her choice of primary protagonists, Carson also unpacks the diversity within New York’s African-American worker community. The migration of Blacks to New York City in the 1920s was not a monolithic transfer of former agricultural workers from the U.S. South. Dollie Robinson came from North Carolina in 1930, but Charlotte Adelmond arrived from Trinidad in 1924. They arrived in New York with different expectations, cultural norms, and styles which impacted their opportunities within ACWA and their interactions with its white, mostly male leadership. Robinson’s mother brought her north to escape the underfunded schools and ever-present violence in the Jim Crow South; Adelmond grew up on a Black-majority island with a history of militant, left-leaning racial and economic activism. Interviews with several laundry veterans recalled that the Caribbean migrants “arrived here very politicized...with socialistic ideas” and that they were often at the forefront of union campaigns (200). While both women were fierce advocates for their race and their workers, Robinson focused on facilitation and conciliation. Adelmond, on the other hand, was known for knocking recalcitrant laundry owners and managers to the ground with head butts. They brought these same approaches to their interactions with white men who formed the ACWA leadership team.

And here is the one issue I have with this well-researched, well-argued, and well-written book. While Carson explores some of the diversity amongst the Black laundry workers, she does not undertake a similar explication of the majority Jewish and Italian ACWA leadership team. In her argument, they are all white. However, in the decades covered in Carson’s book, Jewish identity was more fluid. In debates over a Jewish home-state, in the language of U.S. immigration law, and, of course, most tragically, in the rhetoric of Hitler’s Germany, racial constructions dominated those of religion or ethnicity. While never subjected to chattel slavery, American Jews also faced social ostracism, segregation of facilities, and institutional quotas from the dominant white culture.

It seems from Carson’s research the Black laundry workers perceived the union leaders as white. Yet, it is not clear that the leaders shared this racial understanding. For example, she quotes from a 1940 article in Harlem’s Amsterdam News reporting that union placement offices prioritized “refugee whites” over Black union members (147). Given the timing, it seems likely that these were Jews fleeing Hitler. Was this a question of white racism towards Blacks or a Jewish response to white racism in the form of restrictive visa requirements in one nation and genocide in another? How might differing definitions of whiteness and race have complicated union relationships?

Yet, this complaint does not take away from the strengths of Carson’s book and her contribution to conversations about race, gender, and organized labor in the United States. She provides a detailed foundation on which scholars can build and expand and grants Black women laundry workers the voice and respect so long denied them.

Hannah Barker, [That Most Precious Merchandise: The Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260-1500](#). Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2018. 328 pp.

Book Review

Reviewed by Mary M. Báthory Vidaver,
University of Mississippi.

Historians can trace human enslavement as early as the civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia. Yet, until roughly the second half of the twentieth century, scholars often overlooked ample evidence for slavery in medieval Europe. Hannah Barker is already known to specialists as a co-architect of the spectacular digital resource [Teaching Medieval Slavery and Captivity](#). Her latest book, organized into seven chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion, provides the most comprehensive study produced in English of the extensive medieval Mediterranean market for enslaved peoples from Central Asia and the Caucasus. Concentrated through the Black Sea ports of Caffa, a Genoese colony, and Tana, ruled by the Mongol Khanate of the Golden Horde but managed by Genoa's rival, Venice, this trade flourished between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. As Blumenthal, Brodman, and Rodriguez have shown, the victories of the Reconquista and raiding along the North African coast sustained a brisk slave trade in the Christian Iberian kingdoms of this period. But Barker asserts, "the late medieval Mediterranean slave trade cannot be understood independently of its Black Sea context" (150). The same might be said of Barker's study, which is a substantive revision of her Columbia dissertation and finally answered the call made by Benjamin Kedar in 1976 for a multi-lingual approach to the history of medieval Mediterranean slavery. It earned the [Paul E. Lovejoy Prize by the Journal of Global Slavery](#) for the best academic work on slavery published in 2019.

While one reviewer has noted a few missing Mamluk histories, the critical value of Barker's study derives from how she mines the rich holdings of the Genoese and Venetian notarial archives and Arabic sources for the traffic in enslaved people from the Black Sea to Mamluk Egypt. These records, Barker's study demonstrates, substantively complement one another. The Latin notarial archives (especially Genoa's) yield a wealth of practical information about demographics, terms of sale, and the trade volume. The Arabic *ḥisba*, or slave-buying manuals (which represented an Islamic elaboration of a classical Greek genre), offer a window into the process of the sale of enslaved people in the medieval markets of Cairo and Alexandria that reflect commonalities in both practice and perception. [That Most Precious Merchandise](#) combines these sources with a spectrum of legal records, travel narratives, and religious texts to expose what Barker terms a "common culture of slavery" in the late medieval Mediterranean (3). "Christians and Muslims shared three fundamental assumptions about slavery," Barker writes: "that it was legal, that it was based on religious difference, and that it was a universal threat" (13).

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Hannah Barker, [That Most Precious Merchandise: The Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260-1500](#). Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2018. 328 pp.

Book Review, Continued

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CCWH members may be most interested in Barker's discussion of enslaved women, who represented the majority of the Mediterranean slave population, even in Egypt, where Mamluk warriors were critical to the protection of the state. Barker's study is rich in comparative information in this regard: in Genoa and Venice, enslaved women were the most expensive, while in Mamluk Egypt, it was enslaved men who cost more (107-108). Both Christian Europe and the dar-al-Islam (Islamic world) prized enslaved women who were "subject to sexual and reproductive demands (as concubines, mothers, and wet-nurses) as well as demands on their physical labor" (61, 77-84, 108-113). Barker draws upon notarial evidence to show that the median age of these women fell between 15 and 22 years, although girls as young as 12 and 13 were preferred (68).

Although most scholars emphasize their exploitation in Islamic contexts, enslaved women had a few protections in the dar-al-Islam. For instance, if her owner impregnated her, an enslaved woman became an umm walad (mother of a child) and could not be sold during a master's lifetime. The enslaver would manumit an umm walad, and her children would be free, even if she might not be allowed to raise them (80). Christian Europe resisted attempts by enslaved people to invoke the status of umm walad. Still, some male owners did emancipate the children of slave concubines and mistresses and even designated some of them as heirs (83). Twelve to eighteen percent of enslavers in the Christian West were, meanwhile, women. In at least one case Barker discusses, such owners might reverse an absent husband's disposition to manumit (36-37, 84).

Throughout her study, Barker is legitimately critical of "Christian amelioration narratives," "Marxist narratives of modern production," or "generational chauvinism"-- all of which, she argues, have led scholars to variously underestimate the ubiquitousness of the slave trade in the medieval Mediterranean, or imagine that it engendered a level of moral censure for which there would be no evidence until centuries later (5-13, 209-212). This book is missing a more explicit link to the work of scholars like Hartman and Paton, who have studied the enslavement of women during the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Atlantic. They, and others, discuss parallels between this later era and many of the circumstances Barker describes, including the shaming women faced in the marketplace and the possibility of rape, torture, or even murder at a master's hands (74-84, 88-90, 98-104, 108-113). Nevertheless, if it is left to the reader to make these connections, [That Most Precious Merchandise](#) is no less valuable for illuminating a lesser-known period in a long and tragic history.

END

BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

By Karla J. Strand, Reviews Editor

There are many books available for our members to review! Reviews are usually 800 to 1000 words, deadlines are flexible, and the book will be provided to you. Reviews are published in the upcoming newsletter and online.

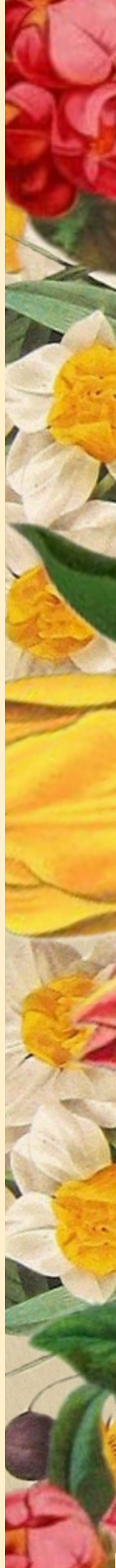
This month, I'd like to call attention to several books recently published by members of The CCWH that we'd love to get reviewed:

- *Gender, Separatist Politics, and Embodied Nationalism in Cameroon* by Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta Mougoue, University of Michigan Press, 2020.
- *Music for the Kingdom of Shadows: Cinema Accompaniment in the Age of Spiritualism* by Kendra Preston Leonard, 2019. (e-book)
- *Sylvia Pankhurst: Sexual Politics and Political Activism* by Barbara Winslow, Verso, 2021.

Please contact reviews editor Karla Strand at reviews@theccwh.org if you are interested in reviewing one of the following titles, if you have another book you'd like to review, or if you have written a book that you'd like reviewed.

Here's the remainder of the list of books in hand:

- *The Colored Conventions Movement: Black Organizing in the Nineteenth Century* by P. Gabrielle Foreman, et al., UNC Press, 2021.
- *Defining Girlhood in India: A Transnational History of Sexual Maturity Laws* by Ashwini Tambe, University of Illinois Press, 2019.
- *Degrees of Difficulty: How Women's Gymnastics Rose to Prominence and Fell from Grace* by Georgia Cervin, University of Illinois Press, 2021.
- *The Doctors Blackwell: How Two Pioneering Sisters Brought Medicine to Women and Women to Medicine* by Janice P. Nimura, WW Norton, 2021.
- *Dressing Up: The Women Who Influenced French Fashion* by Elizabeth L. Block, MIT Press, 2021.
- *Emergent Masculinities: Gendered Power and Social Change in the Biafran Atlantic Age* by Ndubueze L. Mbah, Ohio University Press, 2019.
- *Energy Never Dies: Afro-Optimism and Creativity in Chicago* by Ayana Contreras, University of Illinois Press, 2021.
- *For the Many: American Feminists and the Global Fight for Democratic Equality* by Dorothy Sue Cobble, Princeton University Press, 2021.
- *Free Thinker: Sex, Suffrage, and the Extraordinary Life of Helen Hamilton Gardener* by Kimberly A. Hamlin, WW Norton, 2020.
- *The Girl Explorers: The Untold Story of the Globetrotting Women Who Treked, Flew, and Fought Their Way Around the World* by Jayne Zanglein, Sourcebooks, 2021.
- *Good Neighbors, Bad Times Revisited: New Echoes of My Father's German Village* by Mimi Schwartz, University of Nebraska Press, 2021.
- *The Great Cauldron: A History of Southeastern Europe* by Marie-Janine Calic, Harvard University Press, 2019.
- *Half Lives: The Unlikely History of Radium* by Lucy Jane Santos, Pegasus Books, 2021.
- *Hearing happiness: Deafness Cures in History* by Jaipreet Virdi, University of Chicago Press, 2020.
- *Her Cold War: Women in the US Military, 1945-1980* by Tanya L. Roth, UNC Press, 2021.
- *Jewish Radical Feminism: Voices from the Women's Liberation Movement* by Joyce Antler, NYU Press, 2018.
- *Josephine Baker's Cinematic Prism* by Terri Simone Francis, Indiana University Press, 2021.
- *The Lady Swings: Memoirs of a Jazz Drummer* by Dottie Dodgion and Wayne Enstice, University of Illinois Press, 2021.
- *The Lexington Six: Lesbian and Gay Resistance in 1970s America* by Josephine Donovan, University of Massachusetts Press, 2020.
- *Little Wonder: The Fabulous Story of Lottie Dodd* by Sasha Abramsky, Edge of Sports, 2020.
- *Love Lives: From Cinderella to Frozen* by Carol Dyhouse, Oxford University Press, 2021.
- *Money, Marriage and Madness: The Life of Anna Ott* by Kim E. Nielsen, University of Illinois Press, 2020.
- *No Common Ground: Confederate Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Justice* by Karen L. Cox, UNC Press, 2021.
- *No Place for a Woman: The Struggle for Suffrage in the Wild West* by Chris Enss, Two Dot, 2020.
- *Out of the Shadows: Six Visionary Victorian Women in Search of a Public Voice* by Emily Midorikawa, Counterpoint, 2021.
- *Paving the Way: The First American Women Law Professors*, Herma Hill Kay, et al., University of California Press, 2021.
- *Slavery, Fatherhood, and Paternal Duty in African American Communities* by Libra Hilde, UNC Press, 2020.
- *Surviving Southampton: African American Women and Resistance in Nat Turner's Community* by Vanessa M. Holden, University of Illinois Press, 2021.
- *Carbon Queen: The Remarkable Life of Nanoscience Pioneer Mildred Dresselhaus* by Maia Weinstock, MIT Press, 2022.



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NOTE FROM THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR



*Enjoy this first
issue of the year!*

*You can reach me at
newsletter@theccwh.org*

-- Dr. Megan Cullen Tewell

INSIGHTS: Notes From the CCWH



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Insights: Notes from the CCWH is published quarterly, on or around March 1 (Spring), June 1 (Summer), September 1 (Fall), and December 1 (Winter.) We invite CCWH members and affiliates to share professional news, including announcements about recent awards, appointments, achievements, publications, and other news.

If you wish to submit material for inclusion in the newsletter, please send material to the Newsletter Editor or Executive Director no later than two weeks prior to publication (e.g., for the Summer issue, no later than May 15). Material should be sent to newsletter@theccwh.org or execdir@theccwh.org. If you have any questions about whether material is appropriate for the newsletter please contact the Newsletter Editor or the CCWH Executive Director.

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