



# The CCWH Newsletter

The Newsletter for the Coordinating Council for Women in History

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## WHERE THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL MEET SUSAN WLADAVER-MORGAN

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Not all good questions have equally good answers, but they still bear considering. This past spring, two events prompted me to ponder how much of our personal lives we can or should allow into our professional lives, and in what ways.

Obviously no one can keep the two parts of our lives completely separate, but, especially for women, finding the right balance has historically proved challenging. I can remember a time, for instance, when a proper academic c.v. included your date of birth, marital status, how many children you had, and sometimes even a personal photograph. Was this

information relevant to most academic jobs? Rarely, if ever. Yet institutions routinely, if covertly, used the information to discriminate, sometimes on the basis of age or race, frequently on the basis of gender or sexual orientation. A man with a wife and kids almost automatically appeared serious and stable, an upstanding citizen; not only did he conform to middle-class norms, but, in the days before personal computers, he also had someone to type his work and take care of daily chores. A woman with a husband and kids, however, was not a good prospect. She either would not treat her

work seriously or would constantly have other claims on her time; one way or the other, she would not make a good team player. As for unmarried people of either sex—well, if everyone was supposed to be married, wouldn't you wonder about those who weren't?

Feminists in the 1960s and 1970s worked hard to change that practice so that women scholars are now judged, as men are, on the

basis of their qualifications—their education, work experience, publications, and so on. Changing the way we present ourselves made and still makes an enormous difference in women's professional advancement. Nonetheless, if one of our goals is to make the profession less careerist and more humane, shouldn't we try to figure out ways to think of ourselves and each other as whole human beings whose personal lives continually affect our professional lives? If so, then how do we do it without going back to the bad old days?

The first event that set me pondering was the keynote address at the April conference of the Western Association of Women Historians (WAWH), one of our affiliates. Barbara Young Welke, professor of history and law at the University of Minnesota, gave a talk titled "Telling Stories: A Meditation on Love, Loss, History and Who We Are." With amazing courage, she interwove a terrible personal loss—the sudden death of her teenage daughter less than a year before—with the subject of her latest scholarly work—what she had been calling "the cowboy suit tragedy," which involved a little boy in the 1940s who suffered an agonizing death after his cowboy suit exploded in flames because the manufacturer knowingly sold an unsafe product. (*cont. next page*)

*“Especially for women, negotiating the tricky intersection of the personal and the professional has plenty of challenges.”*

## WHERE THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL MEET

### SUSAN WLADAVER-MORGAN

Barbara had kept a journal in the form of letters to her daughter, parts of which she shared with us, detailing her private grieving, her efforts to return to teaching and research, her transformed understanding of the cowboy suit case. She apologized for not getting any work done in the intervening months (as if grief isn't work!). But surely universities and the profession must find ways to recognize and come to terms with how real-life personal experiences affect our professional lives, both short term (like needing time off or lighter course loads) and long term (like hard-won insights and deeper empathy with the people whose lives we study). Not only did Barbara's talk move us and provide food for thought, but I am convinced that her openness changed the way we spoke and listened to each other during the whole conference, the personal affecting the professional in wonderful ways.

The other event was the arrival of an emailed query about the CCWH's Prelinger Prize. The correspondent suggested that we change the criteria for the award so that it would provide funding not just for works on the history of women but on history more generally; she also suggested that we do away with letters of recommendation because excellent work should speak for itself. The simple answer to her suggestions is that this very generous award (\$20,000) was defined by the anonymous donor for the purpose of rewarding and supporting a woman scholar whose career has not followed a traditional path from secondary and higher education straight through to a tenure-track job and whose work has contributed to women in the historical profession. That is what this award is for, and the executive board cannot modify the criteria even if we wanted to.

The fuller answer has to do with the history of the CCWH, which evolved out of the Coordinating Committee on Women in the Historical Profession and the Conference Group on Women's History. This award, named for Catherine Prelinger, a former CCWH co-president and a non-traditional scholar

herself, honors both parts of our heritage. Few funding sources support research specifically about women's history, and even those that do seem to be moving toward gender studies—worthy in itself but historically not our primary concern.

Just as importantly, excellent work does not always speak for itself—sometimes, owing to personal circumstances in an applicant's life, the work might otherwise never have a chance to speak at all. Interruptions in professional development occur for all sorts of reasons, but many have to do specifically with women's relationships and options. It would be comforting to think that the obstacles that hindered women historians in the past have disappeared, and it's true that many of us now are fortunate to have more options than women before us. My service on the Prelinger committee, however, revealed a range of experiences that I had not anticipated—women putting their lives and careers on hold for years to care for a parent, sibling, or disabled child; women leaving abusive relationships or fighting to recover kidnapped children; women serving the profession as editors or public historians, in jobs with no health insurance and zero security of employment, and yet creatively piecing together projects the way a bird builds its nest; women arriving at their research topics through translating for refugees or talking with people on welfare lines. The experiences of these survivors along their twisting paths have deepened these women and made them even better historians. An inspiring personal story does not substitute for excellent professional work, but the applicants' personal statements and letters of recommendation demonstrate how the personal can enrich the professional in complex ways.

We are professionals but also whole human beings. Especially for women, negotiating the tricky intersection of the personal and the professional has plenty of challenges. I have no answers, just questions, but I hope that we can use this newsletter—and the newsletters of our affiliates too—as forums where we can mull such questions together and share useful approaches. We welcome your ideas.

## NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### SANDRA TRUDGEN DAWSON

Recently, I accidentally ordered the wrong book on Amazon.com. Instead of a novel about a pharmaceutical researcher who sets off for the Amazon jungle to find the remains of her colleague, I received Ann Patchett's *What Now?*—a stirring essay based on the commencement address she gave to Sarah Lawrence College a few years ago. As I leafed through the pages, I came across this: “None of us ever outgrows the need for a teacher” (page 84). As I have been thinking about this more and more over the past week, I started to think about who are the people in my life that serve as teachers. I came up with a long list of names that include my family, students, friends, and colleagues at work and in organizations like the CCWH. My teachers are the people I keep in contact with and the people I listen to. Before the craziness of the fall semester begins, I plan to contact them and let them know how much I have learned from them.

As an organization, one of the things the CCWH does to encourage members to learn and teach is to give \$24,500 each year in awards. This is something that we should all feel very proud of. Please encourage your students to apply for either of the two dissertation awards—the Ida B. Wells and the CCWH/Berks fellowships—and consider giving them a gift membership (\$20) along with the prize information. (*cont. on next page*)

## CCWH MEMBER NEWS

**Sara L. Kimble** is now assistant professor at the School for New Learning at DePaul University in Chicago. She will be teaching history and interdisciplinary courses in one of the best adult and experiential learning institutions in North America.

**Daniella Kostroun**'s book, *Feminism, Absolutism, Jansenism: Louis XIV and the Port Royal Nuns*, was published by Cambridge University Press in June 2011. She was also promoted from assistant to associate professor on July 1, 2011.

**Melissa A. McEuen** recently published *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941–1945* (University of Georgia Press, 2011).

After recently joining the CCWH as a post-doctoral fellow at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, **Brooke Newman** will be starting a new position as an assistant professor in the History

Department at Virginia Commonwealth University beginning August 2011. She has also recently published a new article: “Contesting ‘Black’ Liberty and Subjecthood in the Anglophone Caribbean, 1730s-1780s,” in *Slavery and Abolition* 32, no. 2 (June 2011): 169–183.

**Linda Reese** is delighted to announce that, after many interruptions, her book project on Indian Territory freedwomen which won the 2003 Catherine Prelinger Award is complete and now under contract with Texas Tech University Press. The title will be *Trail Sisters: Freedwomen in Indian Territory*. This work would have been impossible without the generous Prelinger award, and Linda is very grateful for the support of the CCWH.

**Carla Gardina Pestana**'s recent publication is “Cruelty and Religious Justifications for Conquest in the Mid-Seventeenth-Century English Atlantic,” in *Empires of God: Religious Encounters in the Early Modern Atlantic World*, edited by Linda Gregerson and Susan Juster, 37–57, 265–70 (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

If you have a new book, article, conference presentation, graduation, recent promotion, service, teaching award, or other professional news to share, send it to [newsletter@theccwh.org](mailto:newsletter@theccwh.org).

## NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### SANDRA TRUDGEN DAWSON

*(cont. from page 3)* Junior faculty should consider applying for the Nupur Chaudhuri First article award or the CCWH/AHA co-sponsored Joan Kelly Book award. If you have had a non-traditional path to graduate study or if you are an independent scholar, you may be eligible for the Prelinger prize. The Catherine Prelinger Award is our most generous award and is funded by an anonymous donor. In the past, the award has allowed scholars to complete their Ph.D., complete a book manuscript, or undertake field research for a number of years. The application deadline for the Ida B. Wells and CCWH/Berks dissertation awards, the Chaudhuri and the Prelinger prizes are all 15 September. Please look at the website for more details: [www.theccwh.org](http://www.theccwh.org). The Board has been busy this summer finalizing the wording of the award bylaws. These will be published in the November newsletter so that members will have time to read them before they are formally discussed at the CCWH business meeting at the AHA in January.

The CCWH also co-sponsors two other awards, the Joan Kelly Memorial Prize in Women's History and the National History Day Prize. The Joan Kelly Memorial Prize is a \$1000 award given to the author of the best book in women's and/or feminist history. The award is administered by the AHA. The National History Day Prize in Women's History, Junior Division,

goes to a pre-collegiate student and is co-sponsored by the CCWH and administered by the NHD.

In July, I received a thank you letter addressed to the CCWH from the young woman who won the National History Day Award this year. Brooke Friday wrote:

Being female, I have always been intrigued by the struggles, triumphs, and contributions of women throughout history.

Because of this, I was motivated to develop my National History Day (NHD) project around the work of a remarkable woman. In researching various notable women, I was simply amazed by the life of Eleanor Roosevelt....

Eleanor Roosevelt is a wonderful model for women everywhere. Compassionate, diligent, and tenacious, Eleanor upheld her convictions and championed the causes of the oppressed and downtrodden. In 1947-1948, at a time when even more of the world's leaders were men, she chaired the United Nations' Human Rights Commission.

"Her leadership and negotiating skills were critical to the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The impact of this document is seen today in the Middle East as people there demand recognition of their human rights. I feel so fortunate to have had the opportunity through this project to discover Eleanor Roosevelt for myself."

Again, thank you so much for all your support of these awards. As you renew your membership later this year, please give generously to any of these awards that assist pre-college students, graduate level students, junior faculty, non-traditional students, and established scholars to continue their research and writing. The CCWH is a registered non-profit organization and so your membership and donations are tax-deductible. You should receive a renewal letter and membership form in your mailbox during the first week of October. If your mailing address has changed since last year, please let Amy Essington know as soon as possible. You can contact her at [membership@theccwh.org](mailto:membership@theccwh.org).

Sara Kimble has been diligently updating the CCWH website. Thank you, Sara! The organization began a conversation about redesigning the website at the business meeting at the January AHA meeting in Boston. I would like to hear from members about their ideas to update and make the website more attractive and useful to members and affiliates. One idea that I think would be extremely beneficial to all our members is to add links to digital archives. Please consider sending either Sara or myself an email with a link to any useful archives you have found. I can be reached at [execdir@theccwh.org](mailto:execdir@theccwh.org) and Sara can be reached at [web@theccwh.org](mailto:web@theccwh.org). *(cont. next page)*



## NOTES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### SANDRA TRUDGEN DAWSON

*(cont. from page 4)* Another idea to make the website more useful to members and affiliates is to post book/media reviews. The organization has a Book/Media Review editor, Whitney Leeson. If you have recently seen a film or documentary or read a book that you think would be of interest to our members, or if you are willing to write a review for the newsletter and/or the website, please contact Whitney at [wleeson@roanoke.edu](mailto:wleeson@roanoke.edu).

Finally, please remember to let us know about any promotions or publications that you have had so that we can celebrate your accomplishments. Please send any news you would like to appear in November's newsletter to Brittany Ferry at [newsletter@theccwh.org](mailto:newsletter@theccwh.org).

## PRELINGER PRIZE WINNER: STEPHANIE MOORE

With the Catherine Prelinger Award, Moore has both completed research for her book project entitled "Dangerous Races: 'Yellow Peril' in Latin America, 1850–1950," as well as discussed "Dangerous Races" in multiple Nikkei community forums. "Dangerous Races" is one of the first studies to analyze how Latin American perceptions of women of Japanese descent played into the policies that culminated in the deportation of approximately 2,200 Japanese Latin Americans to internment camps in the United States during World War II. Moore's research demonstrates how the Latin American eugenics movement and "yellow peril" alarmism contributed to a hyper-focus on Japanese women's sexuality and reproduction that both resonated in Peruvian culture and translated into policies restricting the immigration and activities of Japanese Peruvians. Moore's study fills a void in the literature and community discussion on the history of Asian women in Latin America and demonstrates the centrality of women's sexuality, together with race, in the eugenics-inspired immigration policies of the twentieth century. Moore is presently working on the Dangerous Races manuscript as well as completing an article on a related topic. Moore will be presenting a paper entitled "Eugenics, Gender, and 'Yellow Peril' in Peru, 1920–1945" at the 2012 American Historical Association meeting as part of the panel entitled "Toxic Networks: Science, Eugenics, and Racial Politics in Latin America."

During her award year, Moore presented her research on Japanese Peruvian women to audiences at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles and the Chicago Japanese American Historical Society. Later this year, Moore will travel to Peru to discuss Dangerous Races with Nikkei community organizations and to conduct supplemental research. [Moore's research trip to Peru was delayed due to the Peruvian National Library's six-month closure following the discovery of a massive robbery of historical documents from that institution.]

Moore is a Visiting Assistant Professor of History at Salisbury University in Maryland.



From left: CCWH co-president Susan Wladaver-Morgan, Stephanie Moore, and Moore's children, Ixchel and Adrián.

## NEW OAH DISTINGUISHED LECTURERS ANNOUNCED

The following women have just joined the OAH Distinguished Lectureship Program (<http://lectures.oah.org>), now in its 30th year:

- Daina Ramey Berry, University of Texas at Austin
- Karen J. Blair, Central Washington University
- Janet Farrell Brodie, Claremont Graduate University
- Victoria Bissell Brown, Grinnell College
- Cornelia H. Dayton, University of Connecticut
- Nan Enstad, University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Sharla Fett, Occidental College
- Jill Fields, California State University, Fresno
- Susan A. Glenn, University of Washington
- Thavolia Glymph, Duke University
- Cheryl Greenberg, Trinity College
- Gayle Gullett, Arizona State University
- Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, University of California, Davis
- Madeline Y. Hsu, University of Texas at Austin
- Jan Ellen Lewis, Rutgers University, Newark
- Karen Lystra, California State University, Fullerton
- Kelly Lytle Hernandez, University of California, Los Angeles
- Barbara Molony, Santa Clara University
- Anne Sarah Rubin, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
- Jennifer Scanlon, Bowdoin College
- Donna Schuele, University of California, Irvine
- Suzanne E. Smith, George Mason University
- Terri L. Snyder, California State University, Fullerton
- Carole Srole, California State University, Los Angeles
- Carmen Teresa Whalen, Williams College
- Deborah Gray White, Rutgers University
- Barbara Winslow, Brooklyn College, City University of New York
- Rosemarie Zagari, George Mason University

Created in 1981 by OAH president Gerda Lerner, the OAH Distinguished Lectureship Program is a speakers bureau dedicated to American history. More than 400 historians currently participate as OAH Distinguished Lecturers. OAH Distinguished Lecturers speak around the country every year, not only visiting college campuses and addressing undergraduate and graduate student conferences but also leading teacher seminars and engaging general audiences at public events sponsored by historical societies, museums, libraries, and humanities councils.

### CALL FOR REVIEWERS

We would like submissions of book and media reviewers for sources relevant to women's history and women historians! Please consider telling us about a new source you've recently discovered, both its usefulness and its limitations, for future publication. Our book and media review editor, Whitney Leeson, can be reached at [wleeson@roanoke.edu](mailto:wleeson@roanoke.edu).

## GOODBYE TO A NATIONAL TREASURE

### JEANNE FARR McDONNELL

Here is a bit of bad news. Two opinions prevail: the destruction of the most important women's history site of Hispanic times in California was a disaster. To others, they preferred to see it gone because they believe women have no right to a place in history. One blogger put it simply—it should have been destroyed because it was Hispanic and feminist.

The house, constructed in 1844 by Juana Briones, certainly the most historic structure in California in regard to women's history, was torn down in June and July, and was put up for sale as lumber.

My knowledge of the building began in 1986. That began my quest for public education in the life of a spectacular woman who negotiated a positive life for herself and her children within a changing culture. She was revered as a healer and was highly successful in managing property and business during times that tended to place Hispanic people at a disadvantage.

That building and that history inspired me to write a biography of Briones. I also made a connection with the owner in ways that should have assured preservation. Our agreement allowed for school and general public tours. I worked with several organizations over the years to protect the building with the goal of even-

tually purchasing it. I wrote the application by which the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2010 named the Juana Briones House one of the nation's Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places.

A study, called a Historic Architecture Building Survey, has been made that will be submitted to the National Archives when it is completed. Local people are working to purchase exterior walls of the rare crib-and-wattle type, of which few remain in the state. The plan is to place them in a city park. For those of us who care about the continuity of history that this house represented from Indian times to the present, such an outcome is painfully minor. The owner now plans to construct a sizeable house on the site, in an elegant Palo Alto, California neighborhood.

From my many years in the field of women's history, I am convinced that the house would have been preserved if it had been owned by a man of equal stature to Juana Briones. She was a daughter of the first Hispanic settlers of California and died at age 87, having owned and successfully managed many properties during nearly 40 years of American rule, a time when most of her compatriots were unable to hold onto their land under that new legal system.



## LIFE IN THE ARCHIVES

### CORNELIA MAUDE SPELMAN

*Cornelia Maude Spelman (www.corneliaspelman.com) is the author of a memoir, Missing (Northwestern University Press), and ten picture books for young children. She has won Illinois Arts Council awards for her nonfiction, and was awarded a Fellowship at Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. She is at work on a nonfiction book linked to her memoir and based on her diaries.*

I take my favorite place—a chair at the long wooden table that is closest to the tall windows—and wait. Soon a librarian rolls to my table a beige metal cart whose three shelves are loaded with boxes of my archived diaries—spiral-bound notebooks in which I have recorded, daily, much of the past thirty years of my life. I've traveled from my home in Chicago to the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to visit my past.

I need to come more than once a year or I will never catch up, because I'm only up to 1996, and I keep writing them. Keeping a daily diary has long been a necessary habit for me—writing with a fountain pen on lined pages every morning, accompanied by a cup, saucer, and thermos of tea on a battered tin tray. When I finish a year's worth, I send the notebooks to the library, which, at my request, will not permit them to be read for many years. I offered them, along with my mother's girlhood diaries, because I felt her story and mine matched the library's interest in women's personal papers. I was so pleased that the library wanted them.

This autumn I stay for four days, in a tiny room with shared baths at a guesthouse that is a fifteen-minute walk away across Harvard Yard. My room is just big enough for a single bed and a small desk. I feel cozy in it, like a puppy in its crate, and I, and the other guests—mostly solitary, purposeful-looking women—slip quietly in and out of our rooms, the baths, and the common breakfast area, the same way I slip in and out of the past in my days at the library. I sleep happy, for this while away, to be alone, silent, in my narrow bed by an open window, outside of which is a blazing orange maple, and I wake, stretch, to a day which is just for me, in which I will travel back in my life, to the years when, as mother, I woke always into others' needs.

In the library, hours pass; the sun fades and clouds move in. In my diaries I see how moods, upsets, and happinesses change, too, and then change again. I find a lot of entries that interest me personally; the few that might interest others, I transcribe into my laptop. Pressed between the pages of my spiral notebooks I find not only—yes, a flower—but also an admonition to myself that I've forgotten: “Keep your mouth shut and remember to think before you speak”; a visit to my son's first, tidy apartment, where he tells me sunset, when his cat sits and blinks in a single spot of light, is his favorite time of day; a phone call that brought news of the death of a friend in a car accident; a description of two silhouetted ducks at twilight on a mauve and

“Reading about the dear, ordinary days—which Time strings together like beads to form a life—makes me remember to value each present day.”

turquoise bay in Wisconsin.

I read about how my daughter, at nine, described a woman as looking “like a mom—friendly but kind of tired out.” For that

moment, I have my nine-year-old, careless of her hair, wearing her Smurf glasses, again within my arms. My cell phone vibrates and it is a text from that daughter, not nine, but, somehow, thirty-two, and in the time I am texting her back, I step out of the past into the present. When I return to reading, I find my mock obituary: “After a long battle with clutter, Spelman finally passed away in her sleep.”

By four o'clock, I've had enough for the day, and joke to the librarian, “Take the baby back to the nursery!” She smiles as she rolls the cart with my boxes of diaries back into the library office. I am remembering the two times a nurse rolled a cart to me with a newborn, wrapped in a flannel blanket, to be breastfed.

I pack up my things and leave the library for that



**LIFE IN THE ARCHIVES**  
**CORNELIA MAUDE SPELMAN**

day. I leave my past behind and walk home in my present, a grandmother now, stopping at a campus student center to buy a fruit cup and roll for my dinner, which I will eat, with tea, in the guest house common area, reading the newspaper. I will shower before the other guests return, and retreat to my room to lie in my pajamas, and read, to call my husband, and to listen to Debussy on my iPhone. I am perfectly happy. Reading my own life has offered me perspective again, the same feeling I get when I walk along Lake Michigan and gaze out at the horizon. Reading about the dear, ordinary days—which Time strings together like beads to form a life—makes me remember to value each present day. Even though, of course, I will, once again, forget.

**THE CANADIAN COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S HISTORY/COMITÉ  
CANADIEN DE L'HISTOIRE DE FEMMES (CCWH/CCHF)**  
**CATHERINE CARSTAIRS**

Welcome to your Canadian counterpart! The Canadian Committee on Women's History/Comité canadien de l'histoire de femmes was formed in 1975 at a meeting of the Canadian Historical Association. At that point, it had just 17 members; now it has over 200. We are the largest affiliated committee of the Canadian Historical Association.

The goals of the CCWH include promoting teaching and research in the field of women's history; disseminating information about sources, current research and publications; encouraging the preservation of archival sources in women's history; linking researchers, professors, teachers and students with each other and with other similar organizations in other countries; and monitoring the status of women in the historical profession and working to raise that status.

Every year, we sponsor very popular reception at the Canadian Historical Association Annual meeting. The reception brings together graduate students, faculty members, and postdoctoral fellows in an informal setting. To save funds, the reception is often held at the home of a nearby faculty member. The reception provides a wonderful opportunity for making new friends and contacts.

In 2010, we hosted our first stand-alone conference in Vancouver. This very successful event attracted more than a hundred delegates for four lively days of conference presentations, art, theatre, wine and conversation. The conference paid tribute to several of the pioneers of women's history in Canada, discussed the links between feminist history and activism, and explored new methodologies and topics in feminist history. Some of the papers from

this conference will be published in *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal*, while others will appear in an edited collection with UBC Press entitled *Writing Feminist History: Productive Pasts and New Directions*. We are currently in the preliminary stages of planning a second conference in Prince Edward Island in August 2013. Americans are welcome—keep your eyes posted for the call for papers.

We are also very excited about Berks coming to Canada. One of our longstanding members, Franca Iacovetta, is currently president of the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians and will be hosting the Berkshire at the University of Toronto in 2014. The Canadian Committee on Women's History is one of the co-sponsors of this initiative, and we have embarked on a special fundraising initiative to support the conference. (*cont. next page*)

## THE CANADIAN COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S HISTORY/COMITÉ CANADIEN DE L'HISTOIRE DE FEMMES (CCWH/CCHF)

(*cont. from page 9*) We also sponsor sessions at the meetings of the Canadian Historical Association. In 2010, these included Writing the History of Second-Wave Feminism in Canada and Here and There: Travel, Access and Abortion.

In addition, we host at least one roundtable which deals with issues of concern to women's historians—in 2011, the panel focused on achieving equity within the historical profession. This followed a report by the Canadian Historical Association's Equity Committee which is beginning the process of accumulating data about the number of women, visible minorities, peoples with disabilities, aboriginal persons, francophones, and LGBTTQ in the profession. Panelists described ongoing problems of racism and homophobia within the academy, the difficulties of carrying out equity surveys, and drew attention to the lack of visible minorities and especially aboriginal people within history departments. Other roundtables have discussed the challenges of balancing childrearing and academia and explored new directions in the historiography. Next year, we plan to focus the roundtable on encouraging dialogue between anglophone and francophone historians.

Additionally, we publish a yearly newsletter (recently redesigned) that provides important updates on the organization as well as on members and their activities.

We also award yearly prizes, the Hilda Neatby Prize (named after one of Canada's first professional female historians), to the best articles published on women's history in French and in English. This year's winners were Heidi MacDonald. "Who Counts? Nuns, Work and the Census of Canada", *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 43, no. 86 (November 2010): 369–391; and Marie Emmanuelle Lambert, «Québécoises et Ontariennes en voiture! L'expérience culturelle et spatiale de l'automobile au féminin (1910–1945)», *La Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 63 nos. 2–3 (automne 2009–hiver 2010).

We maintain a webpage: <http://www.chashcacommittees-comitesa.ca/ccwh-cchf/en/>, which includes an extensive bibliography, syllabi, our newsletter, profiles of our prizewinners, and the history of the organization. We also have our own listserve (<https://lists.uvic.ca/mailman/listinfo/linkccwh>) and Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2406519996&ref=ts>).

We look forward to building links between our two organizations and especially the possibility of sponsoring joint panels at the American Historical Association and the Canadian Historical Association annual meetings.

## CONFERENCE REPORT: ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN SLAVIC STUDIES BIENNIAL CONFERENCE: "GENDER IN CONFLICT," APRIL 2011

The fifth biennial conference for the Association for Women in Slavic Studies took place April 1 and 2 on the campus of University of Texas, Austin. Framed by the approaching twentieth anniversaries of collapse of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, the conference was dedicated to the gender analysis of conflict—economic, political, social, military, cultural—in the origins, experiences, and legacies of the communist experiments in the former "Eastern bloc" states and the USSR.

Conference organizers Mary Neuburger (University of Texas) and Maria Bucur (Indiana University) brought together an impressive number of participants from disciplines across the general field of Slavic, Eastern European, and Eurasian studies. Twenty-seven scholars from seventeen universities and five countries represented eleven disciplinary (and interdisciplinary) fields, including history, literature, law, journalism, public policy, anthropology, psychology; in their collective scope, the papers presented addressed over twelve countries and regions, including Albania, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Russia, and the Balkans. (*cont. next page*)

## CONFERENCE REPORT: ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN SLAVIC STUDIES BIENNIAL CONFERENCE: "GENDER IN CONFLICT," APRIL 2011

Conference goals included consideration of the usefulness of gender as a lens through which to examine conflict in the region; the degree to which "women's issues" remain as such, or whether there has been a scholarly shift in agenda and perspective in the last two decades to consider them more generally as "human issues"; and the ways in which women's (and men's) experiences might be nuanced so that they are seen as agents of transformation or even destruction, rather than "revictimizing" them as mere objects.

The cluster of connections that emerged among the papers made clear that the questions above remain vital ones, and fertile ground for continuing scholarship: from the move from victimization to agency (Bucur, West, Ghodsee, Hashamova, Azhgikhina); the recuperation of the legacies of progressive women (Ghodsee, Heczkova, Saburova, Stoff, Azhgikhina, Harris); changing (and unchanging) gender roles in families and couples (Kuzmic and Huston, Lostrioscio and Malbasa,

Wise, Musliu, Duda, Kolchevska and Bokovoj); identity formation (Linhardt, McCullough, Bucur, Saburova); politics and the body (Lalo, Brown, Neuburger, Severson, Chamberlin, Musliu); and gender and wartime experience (Stoff, Dzyadevych, Jug, Hashamova). In the keynote address, "Suffering and Survival: Gender in the Balkans Beyond State and Religion," Yana Hashamova (Ohio State University) masterfully wove all of these themes into her discussion of the changing image of ethnic, gender, and family conflict as projected in Balkan film of the socialist and post-socialist periods.

The organizers and AWSS would like to thank once again conference sponsors University of Texas (Austin); the Center for European Studies at UT, Indiana University (Bloomington) and Ohio State University (Columbus) for their generous support. For more information on AWSS's activities and membership, visit <http://www.awsshome.org>

## WOMEN'S HISTORY RESOURCES

The Listening to Louisiana Women Oral History Project has been collecting oral histories from Louisiana women since 2009. Originating in a service-learning history of sexuality course taught by Professor Alecia Long at Louisiana State University, the Listening to Louisiana Women Oral History Project currently includes the oral histories of nearly fifty Louisiana women, ranging in age from 22 to 92, who were interviewed by Long and her students with regard to how they felt their gender affected them economically, civically, legally and socially. This benchmark study creates an oral history archive that honors the diverse experiences of Louisiana women. The interviews will be housed at the LSU T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History so others may access it for educational efforts. On May 25, 2011, the project hosted a dynamic symposium at the Louisiana State Museum in Baton Rouge. The symposium featured four panels that explored the past, present, and future of Louisiana women. The keynote address was delivered by Louisiana native Donna Brazile, the vice chair of the Democratic National Committee and managing director of Brazile and Associates. The funding for this project was provided through a Ford Foundation grant and additional support from the following entities: LSU, Louisiana State Museum, LSU College of Humanities & Social Sciences, LSU Department of History, the T. Harry Williams Oral History Center, and Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast. The Listening to Louisiana Women Oral History Project was realized through the generosity of the Louisiana women who shared their stories and the LSU students who worked diligently to listen and co-create the oral histories that are the heart of this endeavor. The Listening to Louisiana Women Oral History Project is ongoing. If you would like to participate or know someone who would, please contact us at: [lisentolouisianawomen@gmail.com](mailto:lisentolouisianawomen@gmail.com).

## CALLS FOR CONFERENCES AND ARTICLES

### **History of Women's Health Conference, Pennsylvania Hospital**

The Pennsylvania Hospital, Philadelphia, will host its seventh annual History of Women's Health Conference on either Wednesday, April 11, or Wednesday, April 18, 2012 (keynote speaker TBD). We invite interested persons to send a one- to two-page proposal or abstract of your topic by Friday, November 4, 2011, for consideration. The History of Women's Health Conference focuses on women's health issues from the late eighteenth century to the present. This conference encourages interdisciplinary work. Topics of interest include, but are not limited to, obstetric and gynecology issues (fertility, infertility, birth control methods, menopause), adolescence (health, cultural influences, body image, puberty, eating disorders), mental health topics, geriatric concerns, overall women's health, access to health care, minority health, nursing, midwifery, female healers, and more. The History of Women's Health Conference began in 2006 as part of the Pennsylvania Hospital's celebration of co-founder Benjamin Franklin's tercentenary. Each year since, scholars from the humanities and health care professionals gather to discuss the past, present, and future state of women's health. The conference is jointly sponsored by the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department and the Pennsylvania Hospital Historic Collection. Pennsylvania Hospital, the nation's first hospital, is a 515-bed acute care facility that provides a full range of diagnostic and therapeutic medical services and functions as a major teaching and clinical research institution. For more information, please visit our website at <http://pennhealth.com/pahosp/>. For more on our collections or the history of Pennsylvania Hospital, please visit <http://www.uphs.upenn.edu/paharc/>. Please email your one- to two-page proposals to: Stacey C. Peeples, Curator-Lead Archivist, Pennsylvania Hospital, [peepless@pahosp.com](mailto:peepless@pahosp.com). Please call (215-829-5434) or email with any questions or for more information.

### ***JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies***

*JENdA* was recently selected by the New York Public Library as the Best of Web for Social Sciences and Women's Studies by its librarians in 2011. *JENdA* was the only African feminist/women's studies journal to be included. *JENdA* is an award-winning peer-reviewed journal that focuses on social, political, economic, and cultural concepts and categories that shape the lives of women in different African societies. It examines the strategies women have utilized to grapple with global, regional and local economic constraints; and how they have negotiated global boundaries in the context of work, trade, immigration, and identity formation as they sought a better life for their families. *JENdA* initiates and responds to debates on and about women in social, cultural, political, and economic systems. It creates a forum for African women scholars, analysts and activists to participate on an equal footing with their contemporaries worldwide in debates, exchanges of ideas, and the creation and documentation of knowledge. *JENdA*'s archives are available online via the Africa Knowledge Project, at <http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/jenda/issue/archive>.

*JENdA* currently is seeking submissions for the following issues:

- African and African Diasporan Women: Navigating the Perilous Journeys of Migration (<http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/jenda/announcement/view/26>)
- Celebrating Women's Legacies: African Women and Social Transformation in a Global Context (<http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/jenda/announcement/view/25>)
- Special Issue on Education in Africa (<http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/jenda/announcement/view/21>)
- Breaking the Stained Glass Ceiling (<http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/index.php/jenda/announcement/view/24>)



## CALLS FOR CONFERENCES AND ARTICLES

### **Southern Association for Women Historians**

The ninth SAWH conference will be held June 6–9, 2012, at Texas Christian University. The conference theme is “Women at the Borders of Southern History.” Conference information can be found online at [www.h-net.org/~sawh/sawh.htm](http://www.h-net.org/~sawh/sawh.htm).

### **The Western Association of Women Historians Conference**

WAWH will hold its forty-fourth annual conference May 3–5, 2012, in Berkeley, California. Vicki Ruiz of the University of California, Irvine, will give the keynote address. There will be a special session to honor the work and activism of Eileen Boris. The deadline to propose papers or panels is September 15, 2011. Submission information can be found online at [www.wawh.org](http://www.wawh.org). The conference program and the registration material will be posted on the organization’s website in early February 2012.

### **The Western Association of Women Historians Awards**

WAWH awards numerous prizes to honor its members’ work. At the forty-third annual conference at the Huntington Library in Pasadena, California, in April, the 2011 award winners were announced. The Gita Chaudhuri Prize in rural women’s history was awarded to Janet Galligani Casey, *A New Heartland: Women, Modernity, and the Agrarian Ideal in America* (Oxford University Press, 2009). The Frances Richardson Keller-Sierra Prize was awarded to Sarah Curtis for her first book, *Civilizing Habits: Women Missionaries and the Revival of the French Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2010). Sarah Keyes was the recipient of the Founders’ Dissertation Prize, and Jennifer Robin Terry’s paper was awarded the Graduate Student Conference Paper Prize. Terri Snyder received the Judith Lee Ridge Prize for her article in the *Journal of American History*, “Suicide, Slavery, and Memory in North America,” and the Barbara “Penny” Kanner Prize for a research guide was awarded to Nupur Chaudhuri, Sherry Katz, and Mary Elizabeth Perry, eds., *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources* (University of Illinois Press, 2010). Applications for the 2012 WAWH awards will be posted on the WAWH website. The deadline for all awards is January 15, 2012. The exception is the Graduate Student Conference Paper Prize, which is due February 24, 2012.

### **Lerner-Scott Prize**

The Lerner-Scott Prize is given annually by the Organization of American Historians for the best doctoral dissertation in U.S. women’s history. The prize is named for Gerda Lerner and Anne Firor Scott, both pioneers in women’s history and past presidents of the OAH. A dissertation must be completed during the period July 1, 2010, through June 30, 2011, to be eligible for the 2012 Lerner-Scott Prize. The prize will be presented at the 2012 OAH Annual Meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, April 19–22.

One copy of each application, clearly labeled “2012 Lerner-Scott Prize Entry,” must be mailed directly to the committee members listed below. Each committee member must receive all applications by October 1, 2011. Each application must contain a letter of support from a faculty member at the degree-granting institution, along with an abstract, a table of contents, and a sample chapter from the dissertation. Please also include email addresses for both the applicant and the adviser, if available. Finalists will be asked to submit a complete copy of the dissertation at a later date.

The Lerner-Scott Prize Committee will make the final decision by February 1, 2012. The winner will be provided with details regarding the OAH Annual Meeting and awards presentation, where s/he will receive a cash award and a plaque. For more information, please visit <http://www.oah.org/awards/awards.lernerscott.index.html>. (*cont. next page*)

## WOMEN'S HISTORY RESOURCES

National Collaborative for Women's History Sites (NCWHS, established in 2003) has recently published *Women's History: Sites and Resources* and *Revealing Women's History: Best Practices at Historic Sites*. NCWHS presented its findings at the annual conference of Organization of American Historians and at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which formed the basis the above mentioned books. NCWHS held a workshop at the 2011 Berkshire Conference entitled "Integrating Women's History at Historic Sites" to ensure that high-quality research is presented and preserved at historic sites. This year NCWHS has established a travel scholarship in Peg (Margaret) Strobel's name (co-editor of *Western Women and Imperialism*) for a public historian to present papers at the future Berkshire history conference on the history of women.

The Women of the Oklahoma Legislature Oral History Project was developed in 2006 and carried out over the course of two years. A goal of the project was to capture and record information about women who have served or are currently serving in the Oklahoma legislature. Between the years of 1907 and 2008, only 77 women were elected to the Oklahoma legislature with the first two women being elected in 1920. Over forty of these remarkable women have shared their stories as part of the project. Along the way, photographs of all 77 women were located and are now included on the website. It is believed this is the first time a complete collection of photographs of all Oklahoma women legislators has existed in one location. To learn more about these women please visit the website at [www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory/wotol](http://www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory/wotol), which includes transcripts, audio excerpts, photographs, and lesson plans.

The Women's Research Institute of Nevada announces the launch of its revitalized website: <http://wrin.unlv.edu>. This website now serves as the central place to access research undertaken by the WRIN. Access was the key to the redesign of the website allowing researchers, students, and interested members of the general public easy ways to find information otherwise unavailable. In particular, our research on women in Las Vegas may be found under the research tab "Our History: Profiles of Nevada Women." Researchers may find women by theme or name (eventually users will access information by dates). In addition, icons by each name indicate if audio, photos, or video are available. Anyone who would like access to more extensive oral interviews of an individual may contact WRIN directly at 702-895-4931. The biographies and interviews have already been used locally as well as nationally. Reporters writing stories, authors writing books, students seeking information on local women, and, in one case, research for the naming of a local school all came to the Women's Research Institute of Nevada website at UNLV in the College of Liberal Arts. Most of the information about how the site has been used has been anecdotal; however, WRIN hopes that individuals will use the "contact us" tab to leave messages and ideas. A generous gift from the Eleanor Kagi Foundation, a Lynn M. Bennett Legacy provided the funding for this online resource.

The Litchfield Historical Society announces the availability of the Ledger, a new online resource funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the Council on Library and Information Resources, the Connecticut Humanities Council, and the Seherr-Thoss Foundation. It can be found at <http://www.litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org/ledger/>. The Ledger presents the stories of the Litchfield Law School and Litchfield Female Academy and the founders and students of these institutions. In 1784 Tapping Reeve opened the first law school in America. It attracted 934 documented students from 13 states and territories to study in Litchfield. Graduates formed a network of leadership and influence that encompassed public service, business, and other areas of American life. In 1792 Sarah Pierce founded a pioneer institution of female education in America. Her innovative curriculum of academic, practical, and ornamental courses expanded the world of the estimated 3,000 girls (1681 are currently known by name) who attended the Litchfield Female Academy over its 41-year history. The

## WOMEN'S HISTORY RESOURCES

words, artwork, and personal belongings of the students and instructors are presented together with biographical and genealogical information. Some documents are displayed individually while others are presented as part of collection level descriptions which link to finding aids. Needlework, portraits, personal effects, and other items associated with the school or its students appear on the pages. The Ledger's studies section contains overviews of Litchfield during this era and histories of each school. The Society will continue to add pertinent essays to this section. Students traveled from around the country and the world to attend these schools. The result is that their records and artifacts are scattered across the nation in various repositories and private collections. The Society's goal was to make this tool available to researchers as soon as possible. Staff members have already identified a number of other collections of papers, portraits, needlework, and other artifacts that will be added to the database in the coming weeks and months. The Society anticipates input and suggestions for improvements, and continues to seek information about any related materials that could be included in the Ledger. For further details about the project or a complete list of students, or to submit information to be included, please contact the curator, Julie Leone, at [curator@litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:curator@litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org), or archivist, Linda Hocking, at [archivist@litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:archivist@litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org).

## AFFILIATES

Since 1969, the CCWH has endeavored to maintain a network of professional organizations devoted to the needs of women historians or the field of women's history. This year, the CCWH is seeking to strengthen the ties between these various groups by formalizing our relationships. We have contacted all of the groups formerly listed as affiliates and asked them to identify a liaison with whom the Outreach Coordinator can communicate. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. Below is a list of our current affiliate and sister organizations. Some have been affiliated with the CCWH since the very beginning; others are new affiliates this year. We are encouraged by the continuing desire of women historians to support each other professionally and personally. If you belong to an organization that is not listed below but that you think should be an affiliate, please contact the Outreach Coordinator, Carolyn Lewis, at [cflewis@lsu.edu](mailto:cflewis@lsu.edu).

- Africa Knowledge Project, JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies (<http://www.africaknowledgeproject.org/>)
- American Historical Association (<http://historians.org/>)
- Association for Women in Slavic Studies (<http://www.awsshome.org/>)
- Association of Black Women Historians (sister organization to the CCWH) (<http://www.abwh.org/>)
- Coalition for Western Women's History (<http://www.westernwomenshistory.org/>)
- Listening to Louisiana Women Oral History Project ([lisentolouisianawomen@gmail.com](mailto:lisentolouisianawomen@gmail.com))
- National Collaborative for Women's History Sites (<http://www.ncwhs.org/>)
- Oklahoma Oral History Research Program (<http://www.library.okstate.edu/oralhistory/index.htm>)
- Organization of American Historians, Committee on the Status of Women in the Historical Profession (<http://oah.org/>)
- Rural Women's Studies Association (<http://www.uncp.edu/rwsa/>)
- Southern Association of Women Historians (<http://www.h-net.org/~sawh/>)
- Upstate New York Women's History Organization (<http://unywho.org/index.html>)
- Western Association of Women Historians (<http://www.wawh.org/>)
- Women's and Gender Historians of the Midwest (<http://department.monm.edu/wghom/>)

## CALL FOR NEW EDITORS: *FRONTIERS*

*Frontiers: A Journal of Women's History* invites proposals for new editors and a new editorial home for a five-year term beginning July 1, 2012. Founded in 1975, *Frontiers* is one of the oldest and most respected peer-reviewed feminist journals in the United States. This inter- and multi-disciplinary journal has made its mark as the feminist journal that most consistently offers multicultural works in forms accessible to a wide audience within and outside the academy.

The original Editorial Collective (*Frontiers*' advisory board) chose the title "Frontiers" to emphasize that the journal would push the boundaries of feminist scholarship within a national context. *Frontiers* achieved something else as well; the journal, with its interdisciplinary focus on women, gender, race, and ethnicity, has played a leading role in transforming our understanding of the U.S. regional West.

Under the present co-editorship of Susan Gray and Gayle Gullett, who became editors in 2003, the journal shifted its objectives in two important ways. The co-editors, contending that place is a constitutive factor, added it to the list of topics of longstanding concern to *Frontiers*: women, gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. The co-editors also dramatically expanded the focus of the journal from the regional and national to the global and transnational. Today the journal serves a global audience, and its pool of submissions is global as well.

We seek an editorial team that will continue the best of *Frontiers*' traditions and create a new agenda that allows *Frontiers* to continue to expand its intellectual borders and reach new audiences. We strongly encourage openness to innovative, flexible editorial partnerships and technologies. For example, we encourage readers to think not only of forming a co-editorship on a single campus, as per our example, but, of other possible organizational structures, such as a committee of editors on one campus or spread across several universities. Such innovations will strengthen the journal and help ensure the continued prosperity of *Frontiers* in an era of austere university budgets and rapid, cost- and technology-driven changes in scholarly publishing.

Proposals to edit *Frontiers* should include: 1) an editorial mission statement, including an analysis of the place of the journal in feminist scholarship broadly defined; 2) an organizational plan for the editing and administering of the journal; 3) a statement of commitment of institutional support; and 4) curriculum vitae for all members of the editorial team. Proposals that incorporate personnel or support from more than one institution are welcome.

*Frontiers* is published by the University of Nebraska Press, which handles all production, including copyediting and marketing. Proposals should therefore focus on the acquisition, in-house management, and developmental editing of submissions. For a prospectus outlining the journal's current operational structure, please contact the present co-editors, Susan Gray (segray@asu.edu) and Gayle Gullett (Gayle.Gullett@asu.edu).

**Proposals to edit *Frontiers* should be submitted electronically to [frontiers@asu.edu](mailto:frontiers@asu.edu) by January 15, 2012.**



## SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN HISTORIANS

The Southern Association for Women Historians awards several prizes to honor scholars in the fields of Southern and women's history. The 2010 recipient of the Elizabeth Taylor Prize for best article was Tiya Miles for her American Quarterly article, "'Circular Reasoning': Reentering Cherokee Women in the Anti-Removal Campaigns." The SAWH also awards two book prizes. The Willie Lee Rose Prize for Best Book in Southern History was awarded to Hannah Rosen for *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Post-Emancipation South* (University of North Carolina Press, 2008). Katherine Mellen Charron received the Julia Spruill Prize for Best Book in Southern Women's History for *Freedom's Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark* (University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

## CCWH PRIZE INFORMATION

**The CCWH Catherine Prelinger Award** is a \$20,000 award to a scholar whose career has not followed a traditional path through secondary and higher education and whose work has contributed to women in the historical profession. Deadline: September 15, 2011.

**The CCWH Nupur Chaudhuri First Article Prize** is a \$1000 award for the first article published in a referred journal by a CCWH member. The prize was created in 2010. Named to honor long-time CCWH board member, former executive director, and 1995–1998 co-president Nupur Chaudhuri, the article must be published in a refereed journal in one of the two years preceding the prize year. An article may only be submitted once. All fields of history will be considered, and articles must be submitted with full scholarly apparatus. Deadline: September 15, 2011.

**The CCWH/Berkshire Conference of Women Historians Graduate Student Fellowship** is a \$1000 award to a woman graduate student completing a dissertation in a history department. Deadline: September 15, 2011.

**The CCWH Ida B. Wells Graduate Student Fellowship** is a \$1000 award to an ABD female graduate student working on a historical dissertation, not necessarily in a history department. Applicants working on issues of race are particularly welcome. Deadline: September 15, 2011.

### CCWH Sponsored Award

The National History Day Prize in Women's History, Junior Division, goes to a pre-collegiate student participating in the National History Day competition. Please visit <http://www.nationalhistoryday.org/SpecialPrizeinfo.htm> for more information.

The CCWH newsletter will now be published four times a year with the following submission deadlines:

The February issue has a submission deadline of January 15.

The May issue has a submission deadline of April 15.

The August issue has a submission deadline of July 15.

The November issue has a submission deadline of October 15.

## AN OPEN STATEMENT TO FANS OF *THE HELP*

On behalf of the Association of Black Women Historians (ABWH), this statement provides historical context to address widespread stereotyping presented in both the film and novel version of *The Help*. The book has sold over three million copies, and heavy promotion of the movie will ensure its success at the box office. Despite efforts to market the book and the film as a progressive story of triumph over racial injustice, *The Help* distorts, ignores, and trivializes the experiences of black domestic workers. We are specifically concerned about the representations of black life and the lack of attention given to sexual harassment and civil rights activism.

During the 1960s, legal segregation and economic inequalities limited black women's employment opportunities. *The Help*'s representation of these women is a disappointing resurrection of Mammy—a mythical stereotype of black women who were compelled, either by slavery or segregation, to serve white families. The popularity of this most recent iteration is troubling because it reveals a contemporary nostalgia for the days when a black woman could only hope to clean the White House rather than reside in it.

Both versions of *The Help* also misrepresent African American speech and culture. Set in the South, the appropriate regional accent gives way to a child-like, over-exaggerated “black” dialect. For centuries, black women and men have drawn strength from their community institutions. The black family, in particular, provided support and the validation of personhood necessary to stand against adversity. We do not recognize the black community described in *The Help*, where most of the black male characters are depicted as drunkards, abusive, or absent. Such distorted images are misleading and do not represent the historical realities of black masculinity and manhood.

Furthermore, African American domestic workers often suffered sexual harassment as well as physical and verbal abuse in the homes of white employers.

For example, a recently discovered letter written by Civil Rights activist Rosa Parks indicates that she, like many black domestic workers, lived under the threat and sometimes reality of sexual assault. The film, on the other hand, makes light of black women's fears and vulnerabilities, turning them into moments of comic relief.

Similarly, the film is woefully silent on the rich and vibrant history of black Civil Rights activists in Mississippi. Granted, the assassination of Medgar Evers, the first Mississippi-based field secretary of the NAACP, gets some attention. However, Evers's assassination sends Jackson's black community frantically scurrying into the streets in utter chaos and disorganized confusion—a far cry from the courage demonstrated by the black men and women who continued his fight. Portraying the most dangerous racists in 1960s Mississippi as a group of attractive, well dressed, society women, while ignoring the reign of terror perpetuated by the Ku Klux Klan and the White Citizens Council, limits racial injustice to individual acts of meanness.

We respect the stellar performances of the African American actresses in this film. Indeed, this statement is in no way a criticism of their talent. It is, however, an attempt to provide context for this popular rendition of black life in the Jim Crow South. In the end, *The Help* is not a story about the millions of hardworking and dignified black women who labored in white homes to support their families and communities. Rather, it is the coming-of-age story of a white protagonist, who uses myths about the lives of black women to make sense of her own. The Association of Black Women Historians finds it unacceptable for either this book or this film to strip black women's lives of historical accuracy for the sake of entertainment.

Any questions, comments, or interview requests can be sent to: [ABWHTheHelp@gmail.com](mailto:ABWHTheHelp@gmail.com).

*Ida E. Jones is national director of ABWH and assistant curator at Howard University. Daina Ramey Berry, Tiffany M. Gill, and Kali Nicole Gross are lifetime members of ABWH and associate professors at the University of Texas at Austin. Janice Sumler-Edmond is a lifetime member of ABWH and is a professor at Huston-Tillotson University.*

## CCWH BOARD MEMBERS

**Co-President  
(2010–2013)**

Barbara N. Ramusack  
Department of History  
University of Cincinnati  
P. O. Box 210373  
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0373  
513-556-2140  
barbara.ramusack@uc.edu

**Co-President  
(2011–2014)**

Susan Wladaver-Morgan  
Associate Editor  
Pacific Historical Review  
487 Cramer Hall  
Portland State University  
Portland, OR 97207-0751  
503-725-8230  
phr@pdx.edu

**Executive Director  
(2010–2011)**

Sandra Dawson  
Dept of History and Women's Studies  
715 Zulauf Hall  
Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb, IL 60115  
815-895-2624  
execdir@theccwh.org

**Treasurer  
(2010–2013)**

Kathleen Banks Nutter  
Department of History  
Stony Brook University  
SBS S315  
Stony Brook, NY 11794-4348  
631-632-7498  
kathleen.nutter@sunysb.edu

**Membership Coordinator  
(2010–2013)**

Amy Essington  
California State University, Long Beach  
History Department  
1250 Bellflower Blvd.  
Long Beach, CA 90840  
membership@theccwh.org

**Website Coordinator  
(2010–2013)**

Sara L. Kimble  
Scholar-in-Residence, Newberry Library  
1874 N. Halsted St.  
Chicago, IL 60614  
web@theccwh.org

**Newsletter Editor  
(2011–2012)**

Brittany Ferry  
P. O. Box 634  
Cosmopolis, WA 98537  
newsletter@theccwh.org

**Graduate Student Representative  
(2010–2013)**

Melissa Johnson  
Department of History  
University of Michigan  
1029 Tisch Hall  
435 S. State St.  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1003  
johnsmel@umich.edu

**Graduate Student Representative  
(2011–2014)**

Camesha Scruggs  
Texas Southern University  
6218 Gehring St., Apt 22  
Houston, TX 77021  
came5ha@hotmail.com

**Public History Representative  
(2010–2013)**

Lara Godbille  
Director, U. S. Navy Seabee Museum  
NBVC, Bldg. 99  
Port Hueneme, CA 93043  
805-982-5167  
lara.godbille@navy.mil

**Outreach Coordinator  
(2011-2014)**

Carolyn Herbst Lewis  
Assistant Professor of History  
Louisiana State University  
244 Himes Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
cflewis@lsu.edu  
225-578-2671

**CCWH Catherine Prelinger Award  
Committee Chair  
(2007-2013)**

Nupur Chaudhuri  
2210 Dorrington St., #202  
Houston, TX 77030  
nupurc@earthlink.net

**Graduate Student Awards  
Committee Chair  
(2011–2014)  
and Book/Media Review Editor  
(2011–2014)**

Professor Whitney Leeson  
Department of History  
Roanoke College  
221 College Lane  
Salem, VA 24153-3794  
wleeson@roanoke.edu

**Nupur Chaudhuri First Article Prize  
Committee Chair  
(2010–2013)**

Kathleen Kennedy  
516 High Street  
Department of History  
Western Washington University  
Bellingham, WA 98230  
360-650-3043  
kathleen.kennedy@wwu.edu

**Fundraising Chair  
CCWH Historian**

Nupur Chaudhuri  
Dept. of History, Geography, and Economics  
Texas Southern University  
3100 Cleburne Street  
Houston, TX 77004  
713-313-7814  
nupurc@earthlink.net

**CCWH**

3242 Petaluma Ave.

Long Beach, CA 90808-4249