

# Interpreting African American History and Culture Resource Kit

## Introduction

The murder of George Floyd and the wave of protests against racial injustice in the summer of 2020 sparked a national conversation about confronting and dismantling systemic racism in America. As the nation reckons with its inequitable structures of power and privilege, it is imperative to understand the historical roots of these current issues to promote healing and reconciliation. As one of the most trusted sources for learning about history in the country, public history institutions have an obligation to tell the whole story of the nation's past, which includes the dark history of racism, slavery, violence, and discrimination, from new perspectives. This Interpreting African American History and Culture Resource Kit is designed to help public historians fulfill this obligation. The kit is made up of AASLH conference sessions, webinars, History News, technical leaflets, and books that address topics such as working with descendant communities, celebrating Juneteenth, interpreting slavery for a variety of audiences, and the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement on museum practice. Select AASLH award winners are included as case studies for how the contents of this kit can be applied to meaningfully, accurately, and effectively exhibit and interpret African American history and culture.

## Conference Sessions

### **2021 Online Conference - [Saying Their Names: Interpreting Slavery and Shifting the Narrative at 19th Century Historic Sites in Louisville, Kentucky](#)**

Adapted annotation: This session is a discussion with Hannah Zimmerman, Joseph McGill, Kathy Nichols, and Victoria Trice that explores how Historic Locust Grove, Farmington Historic Plantation, and Riverside, the Farnsley-Moremey Landing (all historic sites in Louisville, Kentucky, each with their own unique historical perspective) have banded together with the Slave Dwelling Project for a multi-year project to provide programming that collectively confronts the historical narrative around slavery that informs the modern efforts for social justice locally and beyond. In presentations of their historic sites, panelists share how they have approached and implemented interpreting slavery to trace the historical roots of current social issues, from forming community partnerships to developing first-person historical

interpretation, and offer session attendees suggestions for interpreting the lives of the enslaved at their sites.

Speakers: Hannah Zimmerman, Joseph McGill, Kathy Nichols, and Victoria Trice

**2021 Online Conference - [Memorializing African American History: Cemeteries, Monuments, and Markers](#)**

Adapted annotation: This session overviews projects dedicated to memorializing African American history in New Jersey through the preservation, creation, and restoration of cemeteries, markers, and monuments. In presenting their projects, panelists discuss the forgotten and often obscured story of the African American experience in New Jersey and the importance of honoring and commemorating the lives, presence, and contributions of African Americans who lived in the New Jersey area but were written out of the region's historical memory. The session opening and closing remarks emphasize the significance of these projects in that cemeteries, monuments, markers, and historic sites in general are increasingly understood as manifestations of what should be and is being remembered.

Speakers: Linda Caldwell Epps, Ph.D., Elaine Buck, Beverly Mills, and Shirley Satterfield

**2021 Online Conference - [Initiating Change: Museums, Community, and the Legacy of George Floyd](#)**

Adapted annotation: The murder of George Floyd in 2020 spurred museums to fulfill their roles as forums for civic discourse and trusted truth tellers. In this session, museum staff and community activists share their experiences partnering on exhibitions and collecting initiatives that promote empathy, inclusive dialogue, and the healing of historical conflict. Panelists discuss the importance of committing to ongoing trust building when forming and sustaining community partnerships, how partnerships are most meaningful to the community when museums take a backseat role by providing space and support for the community to express themselves and tell their own stories, and best practices for ongoing and sustainable community engagement, such as honesty, transparency, and commitment to being part of change. Speakers also offer takeaways based on experiences from their respective collaborations.

Speakers: Adam Scher, Carin Adams, Mizan Alkebulan-Abakah, Charles Bethea, and Jowarnise Caston

**2021 Online Conference - [Reckoning with Manisses: Doing Justice to Block Island's Indigenous and African American Legacy](#)**

Adapted annotation: Bringing together historians, social scholars, and residents collaborating on a public memory project in Rhode Island, this panel models a community-based process for reckoning with unjust local histories while doing justice to the present. The goal of this work is to introduce the island of Manisses (Block Island), unearth lost narratives to re-center

Indigenous and African American populations, and make space and a platform for those populations to tell their own stories in a community whose understanding of the past is dominated by the colonizer narrative. The Block Island Historical Society, in collaboration with partners, is sharing these stories through mediums such as programming, exhibitions, and digital content, inspiring community interest in the history of Indigenous people and Black people on Block Island, and working to decolonize the community's understanding of the island's past.

Speakers: Maryann Govern Mathews (Manissean Tribe), Amelia Moore, Ph.D., Pamela Littlefield Gasner, Susan Hagedorn, Ph.D., and Marcus Nevius, Ph.D.

### **2020 Online Conference - [Ancestors Who Talked to the Descendants of Their Ancestors](#)**

Adapted annotation: Does your museum have meaningful relationships with descendants of the enslaved people associated with it? Representatives of the Rubric for Engaging Descendant Communities will discuss how the rubric was created and its three principles: sound research, positive relationships, and integrated interpretation. Panelists present the methodology of how their museums applied the rubric to tell the stories of the enslaved at their sites by incorporating the authentic perspectives and voices of descendant communities through meaningful, collaborative, and authentic engagement. In their presentations, speakers have an honest discussion about the process and challenges of committing to implementing the rubric and its three principles, as well as the importance of an institution's growth in following the rubric.

Speakers: Brenda Tindall, Christian Cotz, Shawn Halifax, and Ahmad Ward

### **2020 Annual Meeting - [#MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter: Black Women Leaders Overcoming the Double Burden](#)**

Adapted annotation: Only 4% of top leadership in museums, from Executive Directors to CEOs, are women of color. As a woman of color, how do you enter the exclusive space that is museum leadership when hiring practices more often than not guarantee that the person selected will be a white man? And once you're in a leadership position, how do you navigate and thrive in that limited space while trying to educate others that this exclusive, limited environment cannot be the way forward? In this session, Black women leaders engage in a conversation about overcoming the double burden of being African American and being a woman in museum leadership. Among the topics discussed are coping strategies, equitable hiring and operating models, how to support women of color on staff, and mentorship.

Speakers: Christy S. Coleman, Melanie A. Adams, LaNesha DeBardelaben, and Dr. Joy G. Kinard

### **2020 Annual Meeting - [Black Museums Matter: Agents of Change through Storytelling as Places of Healing](#)**

Adapted annotation: The conference theme ‘What Kind of Ancestor Will You Be?’ challenges the role of historic sites and museums. This session discusses a unique sector of African American museums and historic sites that address the unheard, unseen, and underrepresented nestled in historically African American communities serving as agents of change. In a powerful conversation, panelists respond to questions about the historic role African American museums and cultural spaces have played as sites of healing, responsibilities Black museums should assume in the wake of the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and the nationwide protests against systemic racism, how to address community needs and build partnerships, and ways to get predominantly white institutions to recognize shortcomings and work towards being equitable and inclusive institutions. The session closes with speakers sharing the type of change they are hoping to make in the field for those that follow.

Speakers: Brian Carter, Melanie Adams, Ph.D., Felicia Bell, Ph.D., Ashley Jordan, Ph.D., and Joy Kinard, Ph.D.

### **2020 Annual Meeting - [#Boards So White: Interrupting White Culture in History Organizations](#)**

Adapted annotation: Non-profit boards of museums, historical societies, and other organizations engaged in historic interpretation are steeped in white culture. This contributes to maintaining the status quo in board recruitment and retention. Session panelists engage in a collective discussion of how to problem solve this field wide issue at this incredibly opportune time as protests against racial injustice sweep the nation. They address a variety of pressing topics in their conversation, such as the meaning and applications of diversity, inclusion, transactional equity, and transformative equity; the violence of white fragility and the barriers it poses to making change; values conversations; and the systemic power hoarding of white supremacy.

Speakers: Lindsey Baker, Adar Ayira, Chanel Compton, and Dennis A. Doster, Ph.D.

### **2020 Annual Meeting - [Collaborate, Collect, Curate: Challenging Narratives and Constructing Coalitions](#)**

Adapted annotation: In this panel, hear museum and library professionals who challenge existing narratives in history through art, exhibitions, literature, and object collecting discuss the complexities of recent and developing projects that are creating new experiences from varying perspectives while constructing coalitions to preserve African American history. In presentations of their projects, speakers also touch upon issues such as the erasure of Black history from American history, museums as codified white and colonized spaces, racial justice and healing, and the importance of visitors from historically oppressed communities seeing themselves represented in museum collections, exhibitions, and programming. Panelists also address how their work shapes the type of ancestor they will be, the theme of the AASLH 2020 Annual Meeting.

Speakers: Kisha Tandy, Susan L. Hall Dotson, Kelli Morgan, Ph.D., and Nichelle Hayes

## Webinars

### [Juneteenth: Celebrating Freedom at Historic Sites in the Age of Black Lives Matter \(2021\)](#)

Annotation: As the importance of learning more about African American history has grown over the last decade, the popularity and knowledge of Juneteenth, or Freedom Day, has spread widely and rapidly throughout the United States. Amber Mitchell, Director of Education at the Whitney Plantation, will discuss how your organization can join in the celebration in ways that are appropriate and respectful to the history of African Americans, from slavery to modern interpretations, and elevating to the communities you are trying to reach all year-round. Learning outcomes for this webinar are: learn the history of Juneteenth and why it's important to today and how to create opportunities for community rooted programming and commemorations.

Speaker: Amber Mitchell

### [Book Talk: Interpreting Slavery with Children and Teens \(2021\)](#)

Annotation: Kristin Gallas, co-editor of *Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites* (2014), discusses her new book *Interpreting Slavery with Children and Teens* (2021) and the importance of creating appropriate programming for all ages on this essential topic. Developing successful experiences—school programs, field trips, family tours—about slavery is more than just historical research and some hands-on activities. It requires empathy, respect, and willingness to engage in dialogue with young learners. Join the author as she shares findings from her research and answers questions about creating brave spaces for interpretation. Learning outcomes for this webinar are: understand why interpreting slavery with young audiences is appropriate and necessary, and how it differs from adult programming; understand how physical, emotional, intellectual, and social engagement are all integral to the learning experience; and learn how to discuss implementing interpretation at your site with other staff and board.

Speaker: Kristin Gallas

### [250th Anniversary and African American Museums: A Listening Session \(2020\)](#)

Adapted annotation: How should the community of African American museums and other history organizations engage with the upcoming commemoration of the United States 250th anniversary? In this listening session, panelists Vedet Coleman-Robinson, Sylvia Y. Cyrus, John Fleming, and John Dichtl offer their insight. Their discussion provides a plethora of thought-provoking answers to the posed question and engages topics such as community partnerships and impact, the legacy of and what we can learn from the Bicentennial, the Semiquincentennial as the chance of a lifetime to tell the whole and true story of the past 250 years, funding and grant opportunities, and federal and state planning commissions. Panelists also emphasize the importance of putting the stories of African Americans at the forefront of 250th planning,

research, and celebrations to interrogate and fulfill the ideals of the nation's founding, honor ancestors who endured centuries of slavery, and help the United States acknowledge, learn, and understand this history in the wake of the transformative present moment, from protests against racial injustice to the 1619 Project.

Speakers: Vedet Coleman-Robinson, Sylvia Y. Cyrus, John Fleming, and John Dichtl

### **Black Lives Matter and (the American) Revolution (2020)**

Adapted annotation: The wave of anti-racist protests since the killing of George Floyd has propelled issues of discrimination, police violence, and social justice into the national spotlight. Demands for the removal of monuments commemorating people and events rooted in the repugnant ideology of white supremacy are on the rise, and many history institutions are engaged in the painful but essential process of reckoning with the role racism played in their own individual histories.

These developments have prompted compelling questions as preparations for marking the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution continue. How will this renewed social justice movement impact the way history organizations commemorate this anniversary? What are the opportunities for transformative engagement with audiences who seem eager to understand the past in more inclusive ways? How can traditional history organizations reshape themselves to meet the interests and needs of audiences now, in 2026, and beyond? And what will the legacy of the Semiquincentennial be?

A series of two webinars will consider practical strategies for developing programs and initiatives that move history organizations and their audiences into an understanding of the past that will better prepare us for the future. In this first webinar, Michelle Lanier, Noelle Trent, and Steve Murray will consider the big issues of inclusive history and the Semiquincentennial.

Speakers: Michelle Lanier, Dr. Noelle Trent, and Steve Murray

### **History Check-In: African American Women's Suffrage (2020)**

Adapted annotation: This webinar, presented by Professor Martha S. Jones, asks how we can better incorporate African American women into our histories of women's suffrage and voting rights. The presentation outlines opportunities for telling the history of women's politics and power in 2020, the troubled memories of women's suffrage as embodied by monuments, how we've told the story of women's suffrage in historiography, framing women's suffrage versus women's voting rights, periodizing where to begin and where to end in the study of women's rights and suffrage, the amendments in 1870 and 1920, issues of the right to bodily integrity and the right to ride, and how African American women have been and remain at the forefront in the struggle over women's voting rights.

Historical context from webinar description: As white American women celebrated being granted the vote with the ratification of the 19th Amendment, many black women remained disenfranchised for another 45 years. Southern states used laws and lynching to keep them away from the polls, just as they did their fathers, husbands, and sons. American women appeared to have won a constitutional revolution, but across the South, discrimination rooted in sexism proceeded in lock-step with racism. We will explore this other campaign for women's voting rights – the battle against Jim Crow – waged by black men and women together. Their story began in the early decades of the 19th century, and culminated at last in 1965 with the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

Speaker: Professor Martha S. Jones

### **[History Check-In: Civil Rights and Place \(2019\)](#)**

Adapted annotation: The civil rights movement of the mid-to-late twentieth century remains a focus of popular fascination, yet few audiences are aware of the wide-ranging goals, participations, and geographical settings that made this movement possible. This presentation, given by Clarence Lang, argues that the "classic," post-World War II civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s encompassed local communities outside the regional South — contrary to standard depictions of mid-century black social movements. Further, the presentation discusses how the forms of both white racism and black resistance differed based on the regional battlegrounds of the Midwest, Northeast, West Coast, and Border South. To that end, this webinar revisits certain questions about the civil rights movement, such as: Who were the movement's leaders and participants? When did the movement occur? Where did the movement occur? What were the movement's goals?

Speaker: Clarence Lang

### **[Interpreting Slavery: Building a Theoretical Foundation \(2016\)](#)**

Adapted annotation: This webinar, presented by Kristin Gallas, is about the theoretical underpinnings for interpreting slavery, including how contested narratives and race play a role in the giving/receiving of interpretation. The presentation also addresses why it is difficult to challenge historical narratives and what reconciling the old with new narratives looks like, the learning crisis that can occur when visitors are presented with information that contests the narrative they have been taught, and how to help folks deal with that learning crisis. This webinar will help achieve a greater understanding of the difficult knowledge and complicated emotions surrounding this complex history and how to interpret it at historic sites/museums.

Speaker: Kristin Gallas

## *History News*

All articles can be downloaded [here](#).

**Bethea, Charles E. “Museum Collecting in the Age of Black Lives Matter.” *History News* 77, no. 1 (2022): 12–17.**

Annotation: In this article, Charles E. Bethea, the Andrew W. Mellon Director of Collections and Curatorial Affairs at the Chicago History Museum, calls on museums to fully commit to decolonizing institutional practices. Bethea argues that decolonization has become imperative in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement because if museums, as a microcosm of society, “are to change the way society views itself” and work towards dismantling systemic racism, then museums first “must change how we as staff view ourselves.” He shares the Chicago History Museum’s decolonization efforts as a case study in how museums can “build trust, raise awareness, and create sustainable relationships in the communities it had mistakenly believed it was adequately serving.”

**Fikes, Adrienne. “Joy, Genealogy, and Justice: Connecting to History through Family Research.” *History News* 76, no. 2 (Spring 2021): 20–25.**

Annotation: In this article, Adrienne Fikes presents the joy, genealogy, and justice framework that she developed in her community advocacy work to “increase the number of people who honor the dignity and humanity of Black lives in our communities.” By following the five components of the framework (personal growth, family history, civic engagement, racial justice, and legacy building) and incorporating them into our lives and community relations, “we recognize and are equipped to combat the grisly racial terrorism that structural white nationalist violence is inflicting on our entire country.” She also invites readers to take three bold steps to work towards reconciliation and Black liberation: allow more unspeakable joy to flow through your life, name your sixteen great-great grandparents, and join the principled struggle for Black liberation.

**Alvey, Scott, W. Todd Gross, and Steve Murray. “Making a Statement: History Organizations Speak on Racial Injustice.” *History News* 75, no. 3 (Summer 2020): 14–19.**

Annotation: After George Floyd’s murder in May of 2020, public history organizations took to social media and mailing lists to issue statements of solidarity and institutional commitments to social justice. Some organizations recognized that statements without action would ring hollow and went a step further by putting sentiments expressed in the statements into practice. This article details how the Alabama Department of Archives and History, the Georgia Historical Society, and the Kentucky Historical Society did just that. Leaders of these organizations outline their process in drafting a statement and following up on what those statements promised with action based on considerations of accountability, reconciling, healing, truth-telling, intentionality, and recommitment.

**Cool, Nolan. “Stories Set In Stone: Preserving the Life and Career of a Black Stone Mason in Upstate New York.” *History News* 75, no. 1 (Winter 2020): 14–20.**



Annotation: This article, written by Nolan Cool, the Educational Programs Director at Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH) in Keeseville, New York, tells of how the AARCH uncovered the story of Isaac Johnson, who was forced into enslavement in Kentucky, escaped enslavement to join the Union Army during the Civil War, and made his way to Ontario, Canada, where he became a stone mason. Cool explains how AARCH found Johnson’s story, the process of reconstructing his life, the tour AARCH designed and hosted based on what they had uncovered about Johnson in their research, and the lessons learned from the project. Among the conclusions Cool drew from working with Johnson’s history was that “his story lends us today help to get at the heart of something much larger—that our scope of uncovering underrepresented histories provides a roadmap to better understanding each other’s range of life experiences.”

## Technical Leaflets

### #293 - [\*Interpreting Slavery with Children and Teens\*](#) by Kristin L. Gallas (2021)

\*Note: This Technical Leaflet is excerpted from Kristin L. Gallas, *Interpreting Slavery with Children and Teens at Museums and Historic Sites* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2021). For more about the book, see the annotation from the publisher in the Books section of this Resource Kit.

Adapted annotation: This leaflet includes select content from *Interpreting Slavery with Children and Teens*. Sections from the book printed in the leaflet address race, identity, and historical trauma and how to conscientiously approach those topics; engagement and dialogue techniques, from hands-on learning to role-play simulation; staff training and support to effectively interpret slavery for any audience; and concluding thoughts about the interpretive framework presented.

### #285 - [\*Engaging Descendant Communities in the Interpretation of Slavery: A Rubric of Best Practices\*](#) (2019)

\*Note: This leaflet is included in *History News* 74, no. 1 (Winter 2019). There was also a related session at the 2020 Annual Meeting, *Ancestors Who Talked to the Descendants of Their Ancestors*, which is included in the Conference sessions section of this kit.

Adapted annotation: This leaflet contains a rubric developed by the National Summit on Teaching Slavery to provide institutions with guidance in the meaningful and ethical interpretation of the topic of slavery. The content in this leaflet taken from the rubric overviews the three principles of the rubric: relationship building, research, and interpretation. There are subcategories of each principle with a measurable evaluation scale, descending from 4 being exemplary, 3 being proficient, 2 being developing, 1 being ambivalent, and 0 being unsatisfactory. The principles, subcategories, and scale are meant to be used as “a tool for

structuring change and encouraging honest dialogue” and guide institutions forward “on the path of inclusivity and shared authority.”

**#266 - [Developing Comprehensive Interpretation of Slavery at Historic Sites](#) by Kristin L. Gallas and James DeWolf Perry (2014)**

Adapted annotation: This leaflet tackles the results of a survey by the Tracing Center on Histories and Legacies of Slavery to explore the needs and challenges of interpreting slavery. Kristin L. Gallas and James DeWolf Perry organized the responses from the Tracing Center’s survey into a framework to help structure the creation of a comprehensive and conscientious interpretation of slavery. The six components of the framework broken down in the leaflet are: comprehensive content, race and identity awareness, institutional investment, community involvement, visitor experiences and expectations, and staff training. This leaflet also addresses why sites should interpret the history of slavery, the challenges of that interpretation, and how the field should proceed and includes resources and frequently asked questions.

**#256 - [Documenting Local African American Community History](#) by Lila Teresa Church, Ph.D. (2011)**

Adapted annotation: Documenting local African American history poses both challenges and opportunities for historical institutions that have not traditionally preserved this community's history or engaged and collaborated with the community to tell their story.

In this leaflet, Dr. Lila Teresa Church provides step-by-step guidelines for connecting with African American community members to collect primary resources related to African American history and encourage participation through outreach. She advises that institutions first engage in community outreach, then build trust, and finally work with the community towards documentation initiatives. Other resources on documenting local African American community history are included at the end of the leaflet.

## Books

**Balgooy, Max van, ed. [Interpreting African American History and Culture at Museums and Historic Sites](#). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014.**

Annotation from Rowman and Littlefield: In this landmark guide, nearly two dozen essays by scholars, educators, and museum leaders suggest the next steps in the interpretation of African American history and culture from the colonial period to the twentieth century at history museums and historic sites. This diverse anthology addresses both historical research and interpretive methodologies, including investigating church and legal records, using social media, navigating sensitive or difficult topics, preserving historic places, engaging students and communities, and strengthening connections between local and national history. Case studies of exhibitions, tours, and school programs from around the country provide practical inspiration, including photographs of projects and examples of exhibit label text.

Gallas, Kristin L. [\*Interpreting Slavery with Children and Teens at Museums and Historic Sites.\*](#) Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2021.

Annotation from Rowman and Littlefield: *Interpreting Slavery with Children and Teens* offers advice, examples, and replicable practices for the comprehensive development and implementation of slavery-related school and family programs at museums and historic sites. Developing successful experiences—school programs, field trips, family tours—about slavery is more than just historical research and some hands-on activities. Interpreting the history of slavery often requires offering students new historical narratives and helping them to navigate the emotions that arise when new narratives conflict with longstanding beliefs. We must talk with young people about slavery and race, as it is not enough to just talk to them or about the subject. By engaging students in dialogue about slavery and race, they bring their prior knowledge, scaffold new knowledge, and create their own relevance—all while adults hear them and show respect for what they have to say.

The book’s framework aims to move the field forward in its collective conversation about the interpretation of slavery with young audiences, acknowledging the criticism of the past and acting in the present to develop inclusive interpretation of slavery. When an organization commits to doing school and family programs on the topic of slavery, it makes a promise to past and future generations to keep alive the memory of long-silenced millions and to raise awareness of the racist legacies of slavery in our society today.

Gallas, Kristin L., and James DeWolf Perry, eds. [\*Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites.\*](#) Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014.

Annotation from Rowman and Littlefield: *Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites* aims to move the field forward in its collective conversation about the interpretation of slavery—acknowledging the criticism of the past and acting in the present to develop an inclusive interpretation of slavery. Presenting the history of slavery in a comprehensive and conscientious manner is difficult and requires diligence and compassion—for the history itself, for those telling the story, and for those hearing the stories—but it’s a necessary part of our collective narrative about our past, present, and future.

This book features best practices for:

- Interpreting slavery across the country and for many people
- Developing support within an institution for the interpretation of slavery
- Training interpreters in not only a depth of knowledge of the subject but also the confidence to speak on this controversial issue in public and the compassion to handle such a sensitive historical issue

## Award Winners

2022

**Award of Excellence: John Dickinson Plantation, Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs for the [Search, Discovery, and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground at the John Dickinson Plantation](#)**

About from delaware.gov: Archaeological research at the John Dickinson Plantation, Dover, Delaware, has led to the identification of a burial ground at the John Dickinson Plantation. The burial ground was found during archaeological fieldwork on March 9, 2021, and likely holds the enslaved individuals and other African Americans who lived, worked, and died on land owned by the Dickinson family.

For two years the Department of State, Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs has undertaken archaeological investigations on the 450 acres of state property. The work has focused on identifying the burial ground for enslaved individuals that is referenced in primary source documents. “This is sacred ground for Delaware, and we will continue to treat it with the honor and respect it deserves. Our path forward is to protect the site, engage with the community about how to proceed, and continue to learn more through research and dialogue,” says Tim Slavin, Director of the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs.

The Division will continue to undertake additional research to learn more about this burial ground and those interred here and to engage with descendent communities in making important decisions regarding the expansion of the interpretive footprint of this land.

**Award of Excellence: Frazier Kentucky History Museum for [West of Ninth: Race, Reckoning, and Reconciliation](#)**

About from the Frazier Museum: “West of Ninth” is a photography and personal narrative blog that features residents from within the nine neighborhoods that make up West Louisville. These narratives give residents a voice and strive to create a sense of understanding for those within and outside of the West Louisville community.

In partnership with West of Ninth bloggers Walt and Shae Smith, the West of Ninth: Race, Reckoning, & Reconciliation project uses the blog as a jumping-off point to explore the historic roots of Louisville’s Ninth Street divide, delving into issues of race, segregation, and redlining in the city. Originally scheduled to open during the first week of protests that erupted in Louisville over the police killing of Breonna Taylor, West of Ninth: Race, Reckoning, and Reconciliation explores how these historic factors have contributed to the ongoing protests and race relations in Louisville. West of Ninth: Race, Reckoning, & Reconciliation features artifacts excavated in Corn Island Archaeology’s exploration of historic Black neighborhood Beecher Terrace, as well as other objects related to Black history in Louisville and the ongoing protests, alongside selections from the “West of Ninth” blog.

## 2021

**Award of Excellence: Orange County Regional History Center for the exhibit [Yesterday, This Was Home: The Ocoee Massacre of 1920](#)**

About the exhibit from Orange County History Center: The 1920 Ocoee Massacre in Orange County, Florida, remains the largest incident of voting-day violence in United States history.

Events unfolded on Election Day 1920, when Mose Norman, a Black U.S. citizen, attempted to vote in Ocoee and was turned away from the polls. That evening, a mob of armed white men came to the home of his friend, July Perry, in an effort to locate Norman. Shooting ensued. Perry was captured and eventually lynched. An unknown number of African American citizens were murdered, and their homes and community were burned to the ground. Most of the Black population of Ocoee fled, never to return.

This landmark exhibition by the Orange County Regional History Center marked the 100-year remembrance of the Ocoee Massacre. The exhibition explored not only this horrific time in our community's history but also historical and recent incidents of racism, hatred, and terror, some right here at home. The content encouraged reflection on a century of social transformation, the power of perspective, and the importance of exercising the right to vote, and asked what lessons history can inspire for moving forward.

**Award of Excellence: Cape Fear Museum of History and Science for [Wilmington Massacre and Coup D'État of 1898—Timeline of Events](#)**

About from Cape Fear Museum: In 1897, North Carolina's Democratic Party decided to embark on a white supremacy campaign to try to drive Populist and Republican politicians out of office during the 1898 election. The campaign used speeches, propaganda cartoons, and the threat of violence to create support for white supremacy.

On November 8, 1898, New Hanover County's Democrats used threats and intimidation to stop African Americans from voting. Pro-Democratic Party election officers tampered with the returns. Because of these tactics, Democrats swept the election. On November 10, 1898, two days after the contested election, a mob of armed white men marched to the office of *The Daily Record*, the local African American newspaper, and set it on fire.

After burning *The Daily Record* offices, a violent mob then took to the streets, and on the Northside of town, attacked African Americans. An unknown number of African Americans died. Other people—white and Black—were “banished” from the city. On the same day, local elected officials were forced to resign, and were replaced by white supremacist leaders. Once generally referred to as a “riot,” these events are now more widely understood to have been a white supremacist massacre and a coup d'état.

## 2020

**Award of Excellence: Colchester Historical Society for the exhibit [\*Emerging from the Shadows: The Story of Colchester's School for Colored Children, 1803-1840\*](#)**

About the exhibit from CHS: The goal of *Emerging from the Shadows: The Story of Colchester's School for Colored Children* was to promote and foster conversations in the local and regional population about slavery, equity and race. The story of the school is intended to dispel assumptions about enslaved and free populations in the North and inform visitors how the local town leaders, supporting abolition, found a way to create an opportunity for enslaved and emancipated individuals to improve their lives through education. This is more than a story about Colchester. It is a story about black and white populations striving for a better community outcome and is as relevant today as it was in the early 1800's.

**Award of Excellence: Florida Historical Society for the multimedia project Florida Frontiers Television: ["Free Black Settlements in Spanish Colonial Florida"](#)**

Episode summary from FHS: Free black communities were established in Spanish Colonial Florida as enslaved people escaped from British colonies to the north.

## 2019

**Award of Excellence: Chris Myers Asch and George Derek Musgrove for the publication [\*Chocolate City: A History of Race and Democracy in the Nation's Capital\*](#)**

About the book from publisher (University of NC Press): *Chocolate City* tells the tumultuous, four-century story of race and democracy in our nation's capital. Emblematic of the ongoing tensions between America's expansive democratic promises and its enduring racial realities, Washington often has served as a national battleground for contentious issues, including slavery, segregation, civil rights, the drug war, and gentrification. But D.C. is more than just a seat of government, and authors Chris Myers Asch and George Derek Musgrove also highlight the city's rich history of local activism as Washingtonians of all races have struggled to make their voices heard in an undemocratic city where residents lack full political rights.

Tracing D.C.'s massive transformations—from a sparsely inhabited plantation society into a diverse metropolis, from a center of the slave trade to the nation's first black-majority city, from "Chocolate City" to "Latte City"—Asch and Musgrove offer an engaging narrative peppered with unforgettable characters, a history of deep racial division but also one of hope, resilience, and interracial cooperation.

**Award of Excellence: Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Commission Inc. for the exhibit [\*One More River to Cross\*](#)**

About the exhibit from the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center: The permanent exhibition at the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center, *One More River to Cross*, features the rich stories of the Underground Railroad in Niagara Falls, the crucial role of its location and geography, and the action of its residents – particularly its African American residents. The exhibition highlights modern connections to this history and invites visitors to consider their own choices when faced with present-day limitations on people’s freedoms.

The new Heritage Center focuses on stories of courageous self-emancipation by freedom seekers. Throughout the exhibition visitors will experience these stories and hear from individuals past and present with the hope that these stories and connections will allow for deeper engagement, consideration of new or different perspectives, and motivation to action.

## 2018

**Award of Merit: Missouri Historical Society for the project [#1 in Civil Rights: The African American Freedom Struggle in St. Louis](#)**

About the exhibit from MHS: *#1 in Civil Rights: The African American Freedom Struggle* in St. Louis examined the local civil rights movement and the city’s leading role in advancing the cause of racial justice. From ground-level activism to groundbreaking court rulings, St. Louis has long been front and center in contesting racial inequities. *#1 in Civil Rights* uncovered a history that’s compelling and complex, but that all too often has been overlooked in the telling and retelling of the larger national narrative. That narrative includes four precedent-setting Supreme Court civil rights cases that originated in St. Louis—possibly the most to ever reach the High Court from one source. It also included events and battles that had significant and lasting impact, as well as live performances from Missouri History Museum ACTivists.

**Award of Merit: Montana Historical Society for the project [Montana’s African American Heritage Resources](#)**

About the project from AASLH: This collaboration brought together undergraduate interns, local preservation programs, property owners, statewide volunteers, historians, and the dispersed descendants of Montana’s historic African American community to catalogue artifacts, document places, conduct oral histories, and create lesson plans and a website to share these resources and reshape contemporary understanding of the black West. The partnerships and creativity demonstrated by this project are models for others seeking to uncover hidden stories and restore marginalized groups to the historic record.

## 2017

**Award of Merit: Little Compton Historical Society for the project [If Jane Should Want to Be Sold: Stories of Enslavement, Indenture and Freedom in Little Compton, Rhode Island](#)**

About the project from AASLH: This project encompassed an exhibit, book, speakers' series, public programs, museum addition, traveling exhibit, and online database to restore forgotten people of color to Little Compton's history. These powerful stories about the town's overlooked African American and Native American groups and their experiences of enslavement, indenture, new-found freedom, and racism provide new insights into the institution of northern slavery.

**Award of Merit: Mount Vernon Ladies' Association for the exhibit [Lives Bound Together: Slavery at George Washington's Mount Vernon](#)**

About the exhibit from AASLH: This is the first exhibition focused specifically on the topic of slavery at Mount Vernon, the most-visited historic house in the nation. It builds on decades of research to explore the intersecting lives of George and Martha Washington and the more than five hundred men, women, and children enslaved at Mount Vernon during their lifetimes. Lives Bound Together is a model and powerful challenge to historic house museums to interpret all aspects of their history and bring to the forefront the millions of voices that have gone unheard.

## 2016

**Award of Merit: California African American Museum, Stephanie DeLancey, and dewdropstudios for the exhibit [Coloring Independently: 1940s African American Film Stills from the Collection of the California African American Museum](#)**

About the exhibit from CAAM: Coloring Independently: 1940s Film Stills from the Collection of the California African American Museum featured over eighty film stills and related photographs from CAAM's unique collection of African American films from the 1940s — a time of limited character roles and access to the mainstream movie industry. Typically referred to as "Race Films," these independent productions were created with a black cast and for an African American audience. Their distinct imagery and stories, now more than sixty-five years old, form an indelible part of the broader African American filmmaking tradition. Among the films on view were *Beware* (1946), showcasing musical pioneer Louis Jordan; *The Betrayal* (1948), directed and written by Oscar Micheaux; and *I Ain't Gonna Open That Door* (1949), starring Stepin Fetchit.

**Award of Merit: Elgin History Museum, Grindstone Productions, and Ernie Broadnax for the project [Two Boxcars, Three Blocks, One City: A Story of Elgin's African American Heritage](#)**

About the project from AASLH: Project 2-3-1: Two Boxcars, Three Blocks, One City: A Story of Elgin's African-American Heritage is a documentary film and traveling exhibit created in partnership with the Elgin History Museum, Grindstone Productions, and Ernie Broadnax to tell the story of Elgin's black community. On October 15, 1862, two boxcars full of contraband (ex-slaves freed in battle) arrived in Elgin. These 110 refugees, mostly women and children, spent that first night at the Kimball House hotel after a long journey from Alabama. The following day, those who were sympathetic to the Union cause offered the freed slaves a place to live and



work. Project 2-3-1 traces how these ex-slaves created a new life in a city that harbored both abolitionist sentiments and racial intolerance. The story continues through the 1960s Civil Rights era and into today, focusing on the challenges and accomplishments of the community.