



Newsletter

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Women's History Month

Laura Briggs

After almost three decades of activism to promote women's history in schools and communities, the National Women's History Project (NWHF) is experiencing serious budget shortfalls and staff cutbacks. Ironically, it is their success that is hurting them—the widespread celebration of Women's History Month has turned it into a niche market. Where once NWHF was the primary source for posters and curricular materials, now many commercial websites compete to “sell” Women's History Month.

NWHF has asked the OAH's Committee on the Status of Women in the Historical Profession to urge professional historians to support it, by reminding OAH members of the crucial role NWHF has played in the founding of community celebrations of women's history in March and including a consciousness of race and multiculturalism in the celebration. NWHF would like to encourage those who teach (or know teachers) at the K-12 level and in higher education to buy posters and other materials directly from NWHF, and even consider a direct donation (at <http://www.nwhp.org>).

This year, the NWHF will be co-hosting a Women's Arts Weekend with A.I.R. gallery, the oldest women's gallery in the country, in conjunction with the OAH Annual Meeting in New York City in honor of this year's Women's History Month theme, “Women's Art, Women's Vision.” The events will begin on Friday, March 28, at the Puck Building in New York City with a High Tea to honor the 2008 honorees to be followed by a dinner honoring New York's women's art community. On Saturday, March 29, there will be a bus tour to the Brooklyn Museum to view a mounting of Judy Chicago's pathbreaking exhibit, The Dinner Party. More information about cost, package deals, and registration is available on their website.

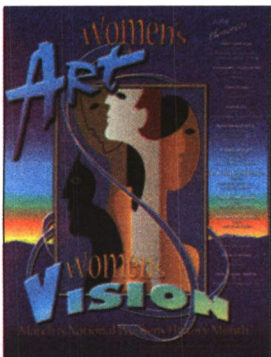
Molly Murphy MacGregor, the executive director of the National Women's History Project and one of its founders, argues that despite considerable victories in changing the representations of women in the teaching of history,

in this era of Brittany Spears and the ascendancy of a pop culture world where women are valued above all for their appearance, girls and young women need women's history more than ever. “Words like ‘self-esteem’ and ‘role model’

may seem to be over used until we read the journals and biographies of girls and women,” she says. “In a world that continues to define women by the way we look, having a variety of role models who have successfully challenged cultural assumptions is critical. The unrelenting courage to believe in ourselves is the essence of women's history.”

In the 1960s, an upstart group of young (and not-so-young) scholars began to teach—and research—women's history. Emerging out of the impulse to do “history from below,” Women's history was closely tied to the emerging Women's Liberation Movement and other social movements, addressing a need to give something as outlandish as a movement for women a past, and inspiration for a different kind of future for women and girls. Initially, women's history was taken up at least as much outside of higher education as within

it. In 1978, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County (California) Commission on the Status of Women initiated a “Women's History Week” celebration, choosing the week of March 8 to coincide with International Women's



“Women's Art: Women's Vision” is the theme for the 2008 National Women's History Month. (Courtesy National Women's History Project, <<http://www.nwhp.org>>.)

From the OAH President

High School and Community College Historians and the OAH

Nell Irvin Painter

It's all too easy to assume the Organization of American Historians' constituency is entirely collegiate, but that is not the case. Of our approximately 9,100 members 5,400 teach in four-year colleges and universities, 1,600 in high schools, and 400 in community colleges. In recent years high school historians have been among the fastest growing and most active of our members. One facet of the 2002-2003 Strategic Plan addressed the needs of historians in community colleges.

I want to begin by stressing the overlapping nature of the work of all historians: whether we work in high schools, community colleges, colleges, or research institutions, we all teach youngish people, and most of us feel some kind of pressure or influence from the public sector, whether through compulsory testing, legislative mandates, or attention paid to enrollment numbers and teaching evaluations. Even the most dedicated research historians also function as teaching-historians. At all levels of our profession, moreover, lack of tenure—experienced as part-time and contingent employment—aggravate the pressures on our work.

High school and community college historians, however, are seldom required to produce original scholarship as a job qualification, and, consequently, they usually lack support for their research. The ambitious among them do

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OAH will host its convention in New York City this year for the first time in more than twenty years. Much has changed in the profession since 1986, but in 2008 we are “Bringing Us All Together”—across subfields and specialization, in an expansive spirit of unity.

For details, turn to the CONVENTION SUPPLEMENT inside. / A1 ▶

OAH promotes excellence in the scholarship, teaching, and presentation of American history, and encourages wide discussion of historical questions and equitable treatment of all practitioners of history.

Day, that early twentieth-century Socialist day of protest to mark the oppression of women.

The celebration of Women's History Week was a success, and other schools began to host their own Women's History Week programs. In 1979, leaders from the California group shared their project at a Women's History Institute at Sarah Lawrence College. Other participants not only became determined to begin their own local Women's History Week projects but also agreed to support an effort to organize national Women's History Week. Thus, in 1980, a small group of women led a coalition—called the National Women's History Project—to lobby Congress on behalf of the project. The grassroots group launched a study of school textbooks, and found that less than three percent of the content was devoted to women.

In 1981, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Rep. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) cosponsored the first Joint Congressional Resolution proclaiming "Women's History Week." In 1987, the National Women's History Project petitioned Congress to expand the celebration to the entire month of March. Since then, the National Women's History Month Resolu-

Women's Art, Women's Vision: 2008 Honorees

2008 Honorees were selected based on their amazing art and their extraordinary vision. To ensure diversity, considerations were also given to their art form, their cultural background, the region in which they live, and the quality and passion of the nomination submitted.

Artist	Born	Medium
Judy Chicago	1939	Painter/Printmaker/Needlework
Harmony Hammond	1954	Painter
Edna Hibel	1917	Colorist
Lihua Lei	1966	Multimedia Installation
Rose Cecil O'Neill	1874-1944	Painter, Illustrator, Sculptor
Violet Oakley	1874-1961	Muralist, Stained Glass Artist
Jaune Quick-To-See-Smith	1940	Abstract Painter/Lithographer
Faith Ringgold	1934	Painter/Quilter
Miriam Schapiro	1923	Print/Painter
Lorna Simpson	1960	Photographer
Nancy Spero	1926	Painter
June Claire Wayne	1918	Painter/Lithographer

tion has been approved every year with bipartisan support in both the House and Senate.

In the subsequent two decades, the National Women's History Project (NWHF) has become a national organization and clearinghouse, working with schools, colleges, companies, churches, clubs, communities, government offices, unions, publishers, and the media. Every year, NWHF sends out 100,000 catalogs and distributes tens of thousands of women's history posters, celebratory materials, books, videos, and curriculum resources. In 1997, the group put up their award-winning website, <<http://www.nwhf.org>>, that provides access to countless resources, including biographies, a timeline and history of the women's movement, women's speeches online, and a directory of speakers and performers. NWHF also unifies the annual celebration through the selection of its theme. □

Laura Briggs is associate professor of women's studies at the University of Arizona and chair of the OAH Committee on the Status of Women in the Historical Profession.

produce new scholarship, and they attend OAH annual meetings and read OAH publications to keep in touch with developments in their fields. In concert with the U.S. Department of Education through Teaching American History grants and with the Gilder Lehrman Institute's travel grants, the OAH has sought to sustain these historians. Needless to say, more can be done, much along lines already laid out by the OAH Committee on Teaching.

The OAH Committee on Teaching meets regularly, both face-to-face and by conference call. Its members very graciously invited me to take part in a call last fall, which I found extremely useful. That conversation encouraged me to share some thoughts with you.

Teacher-historians value the OAH in two main ways: attendance at the annual meeting, where they learn about current scholarship and speak with authors whose work they use, and the *OAH Magazine of History*, which specifically addresses issues related to precollegiate teaching. These are not the only OAH activities teacher-historians participate in, of course, but they come up most often in discussions of teacher-historians in the OAH. In our discussions, members of the Committee on Teaching told me they very much miss *Talking History*, which is no longer being broadcast. Committee members also wished program committees would emphasize the existing invitation to take part in annual meetings, to make sure teacher-historians recognize the sincerity of the invitation.

I would add that teacher-historians, by dint of their immersion on the public sphere, are ideally placed to make unique contributions to annual meetings: they can analyze many issues that research-historians often ignore, such as heritage tourism's use of history, the impact of legislative mandates on the presentation of history, the relationship between historical scholarship and testing, and the various topics of National History Day. Teacher-historians are on the front lines of the public's consumption of American history, and research-historians need to know about that as well as the details of their own particular scholarly concentrations.

The interests of teacher-historians and research-historians diverge in a way we need to attend to, particularly in the *OAH Magazine of History*. Whereas recent history attracts dissertation writers and skews research toward the near past, teacher-historians deal with the whole sweep of American history, often without reaching the late twentieth century in survey courses—

and survey courses are what nearly all of us teach. At the same time, the presence of large numbers of immigrants in all levels of education offers a means of bringing research and teaching closer together. Recent immigration interests researchers; teachers deal with immigrants on a daily basis.

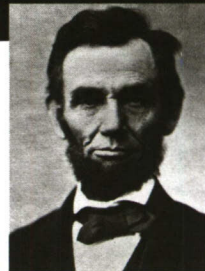
Technology presents ways to bring teacher-historians together with one another and with research historians. The 2008 annual meeting will feature one means for teacher-historians to reach out to one another: At the reception the Gilder Lehrman Institute is sponsoring on Friday, March 28, the Committee on Teaching will be circulating a short survey and collecting email addresses toward the creation of an listserv for OAH teacher-historians. Beyond the annual meeting, and as the OAH gets its finances under control, it should be possible to offer pod casts of presentations by OAH Distinguished Lecturers. Finally, the editorial board of the *OAH Magazine* is being revised to better reflect the interests of people actually teaching history. Crucial to all these endeavors, of course, remains the engagement of the Committee on Teaching and its representation on the OAH Executive Board.

As this is my last message to you as president, I will not be able to speak with you on two matters I had hoped to address: first, a closer rapprochement between the fields of art history and just plain history, second, my experiences as an undergraduate art student, which the super egos in Bloomington judged unrepresentative, as, in fact, they are. □

The Journal of American History

CALL FOR PAPERS

The *Journal of American History* is calling for papers related to any aspect of Abraham Lincoln's life and career. The *JAH* will use the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth to reconsider the sixteenth president in a special issue to appear in September 2009. To be considered for publication in the special issue, manuscripts must be received by **June 2, 2008**, and should not exceed 11,000 words (including notes).



Courtesy Library of Congress,
LC-USZ62-13016 DLC.

Two hard copies should be mailed to: Lincoln Bicentennial, *Journal of American History*, 1215 East Atwater Ave., Bloomington, Indiana 47401-3703, USA. An electronic version should also be sent as a Microsoft Word document via e-mail to JAHMS@indiana.edu. Please indicate in the subject line that it is for the Lincoln Bicentennial.