

# History Happenings

*A newsletter published by the Department of History at the University of Memphis*

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In Spring 2019, the Department of History hosted its first undergraduate research forum, "HURC in the HERC"  
From left to right: Konrad Hughes, Grant Wells, Mandy Campbell, Claire Khokhar



Editor: Guiomar Duenas-Vargas

Assistant: Aram Goudsouzian

# Letter from the Chair

By Daniel Unowsky

I am truly honored and humbled to serve as chair following such active and consequential department leaders as Aram Goudsouzian and Janann Sherman. We face the great challenges confronting history and other humanities departments all over the United States. With our vibrant undergraduate and graduate online programs, our award-winning classroom teachers, our amazing and devoted advisors, and our most excellent office staff, we have been successful in drawing undergraduate students to see the study of history as we see it.

The study of history hones the skills in demand in today's job market. History majors learn to see the world from a multitude of perspectives. They learn to write and argue effectively, to research, to communicate, and to sift fact from fiction. At the same time, history is in and of itself endlessly gratifying. The fascinating exploration of the great variety of human experience in the past is a worthwhile endeavor that excites every historian. The faculty of the Department of History at the University of Memphis brings this excitement to our students and to the greater university community, but we also share what we do with academic and public audiences far beyond the confines of our campus.



Take, for one example, Andrei Znamenski, recipient of the 2019 Alumni Association Distinguished Research in the Humanities award, who in the past few months published an article in a French journal, delivered a paper at a Russian and East European Studies conference in Estonia, gave a talk at the European University in St. Petersburg, and lectured at the St. Petersburg Museum of Anthropology. Or consider Peter Brand, who gave talks on the Hypostyle Hall Project at Karnak and his book project about the pharaoh Ramesses at the Department of Classics and Ancient History at Auckland University and the Australian Centre for Egyptology at MacQuire University in Sydney. Or how about Susan O'Donovan? The Association of British American Nineteenth-Century Historians invited Professor O'Donovan to deliver the prestigious Peter Parish Lecture on the opening night of the organization's annual conference in Edinburgh, Scotland this October. There, Dr. O'Donovan will speak about her evolving book manuscript, *Becoming Citizens: The Political Lives of Slaves*, which will be published by Metropolitan Books.

Of course, our faculty is very active on campus and in Memphis. Let me spotlight one special faculty member: Beverly Bond, who is widely regarded as the leading historian of black women in our city, a fact recognized by her recent and well-deserved promotion to Full Professor. Professor Bond recently published a piece co-authored with Janann Sherman, our former chair, in the new collection *Memphis 200 Years Together*. She also contributed to *No Straight Path: Becoming Women Historians*, edited by Elizabeth Jacoway. Her contribution is one of ten autobiographical essays by female historians "who came of age in an era when it was unusual for women to pursue careers in academia, especially in the field of history." Dr. Bond recently gave interview on WMC Action News about Memphis's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday and made an appearance on Nashville Public Television's documentary on women's suffrage in the south.

These professors are just a few representatives of our department's excellence. None of us are prisoners of the Ivory Tower. We all write for and speak to a multitude of audiences: our own students, the university community, the broader Memphis population, and those far from Tennessee who share our love of history.

Best wishes for an exciting 2019-2020 academic year!

## Alumni Spotlight: Allie Prescott

Allie Prescott is sitting at a career peak. He has just finished his short, effective tenure as Interim Athletic Director at the University of Memphis. It is a capstone, of sorts, on a career that has included a successful law practice, the administration of various Memphis sports franchises, and positions of great civic service. And yet, he reflects, “there was never a happier time in my life than when I was in college.”

Prescott credits not only his stint as a pitcher on the Memphis State baseball team, but also his choice of History as a major. He arrived on campus in the fall of 1965, after graduating from Kingsbury High School. He wanted to be a lawyer, and he figured that studying history would teach him the skills to thrive in law school. He got more than he bargained for.

“I loved the professors,” recalls Prescott. He fondly remembers his course on Tennessee History with Charles Crawford – a course that Dr. Crawford still teaches today! He also studied under David Tucker, the author of important books on local history including *Memphis Since Crump*, *Black Pastors and Leaders: Memphis, 1819-1972*, and *Lieutenant Lee of Beale Street*. Though Prescott never took a course with Marcus Orr, that legendary professor served as his academic adviser, guiding him with kindness. Dr. Orr even attended some of his baseball games, a gesture that Prescott never stopped appreciating.



As he expected, Prescott read and wrote a lot as a History major, developing the skills of critical analysis and clear expression that would serve him well as an attorney. “It taught me how to think,” he says. “It also taught me how to relate to people.” The more he learned about the experiences of people beyond his locality and time, the more he appreciated other perspectives. If Prescott has one great talent, it is his ability to connect with a huge range of people, creating opportunities for them to mutually thrive. His historical education honed that talent. Studying history created “an understanding of the different kind of people in this world.”

Prescott was a junior in April of 1968, when Martin Luther King was assassinated. He was with the Memphis State baseball team, which canceled a game against Southern Illinois University and headed home. At the border of Shelby County, he recalls, tanks were on patrol, and the city was under curfew. That tumultuous time had a profound effect upon him. After graduating from law school at Memphis State, he not only practiced law, but served in various civic leadership roles. From 1989 to 1996 he was the executive director of the Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association (MIFA), a social service organization that formed in the wake of the King assassination. While developing programs such as food banks, meal-delivery systems, and housing for the homeless, he read deeply in the history of the civil rights movement, realizing that a historical perspective would make him a better, more understanding leader.

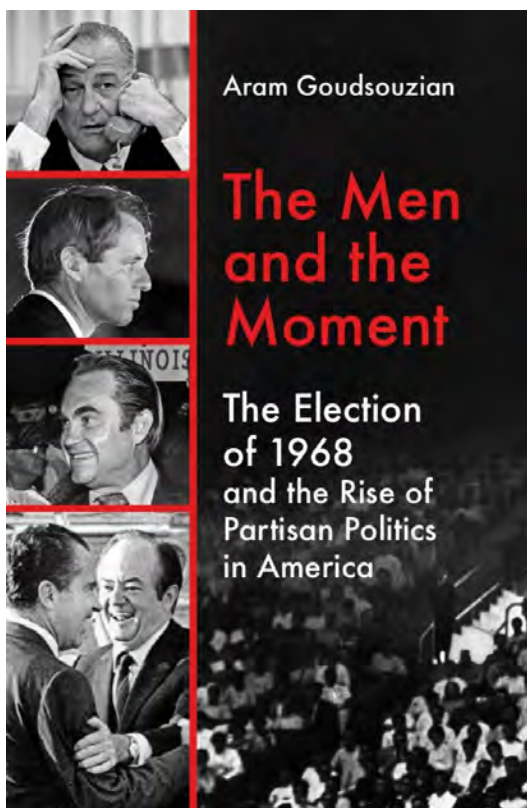
Unsurprisingly for an Athletic Director, Prescott is also passionate about sports. Prescott was the General Manager of one minor league baseball team, the Memphis Chicks, and was the president and general manager of another, the Memphis Redbirds. He was also a college basketball referee who officiated in five NCAA tournaments. Again, the study of history has shaped his career. He reads deeply in the history of sports, and he sees it as a lens into the major issues of society.

Prescott had long harbored an ambition to be the Athletic Director at the University of Memphis, though at this stage in his life, he is happy to be handing the job over to the new hire, Laird Veatch. As he will still advise President David Rudd, Prescott will continue a journey that began in classes in Mitchell Hall. His professors, according to Prescott, “challenged you to think in a broader way.” That challenge influenced him as he has served the city and the university in so many capacities, and in such generous ways.

## Book Talk: *The Men and the Moment*

*The Men and the Moment. The Election of 1968 and the Rise of Partisan Politics in America*, the latest book by professor Aram Goudsouzian, is a fascinating account of the political events related to the presidential election in the year in which the old forms of American politics changed forever. Here, Guiomar Duenas-Vargas interviews her colleague.

**Guiomar Duenas-Vargas:** The year of 1968 was tumultuous around the world: it began with the “Prague Spring,” a mass protest against Communism in early January; the Tet Offensive into South Vietnam began in February; in May, a volatile student revolt erupted in France; students protesting in Mexico were victims of the armed forces during the massacre of Tlatelolco. In the book you skillfully capture the turbulence of the period in the United States. Would you want to elaborate on this?



**Aram Goudsouzian:** Similarly, in the United States, the atmosphere was tumultuous. At the end of March, Lyndon Johnson shocked the nation by announcing that he would not seek re-election. Days later, Martin Luther King was assassinated here in Memphis, igniting rage and despair over the nation’s climate. Later in April, student protesters at Columbia University occupied campus buildings, leading the New York City police to forcibly remove them, widening cultural divides between young radicals and the staid middle class. In June, Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated after winning the Democratic primary in California. And then in August, Chicago police and anti-war demonstrators clashed outside the Democratic National Convention, heightening the sense that the party – and perhaps the nation at large – had descended into chaos.

This backdrop of protest, violence, and confusion helped shape the political mood that informed the presidential election of 1968.

**GDV:** Your focus is on the presidential campaign of 1968, and specifically, on the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates. What were the issues at stake? How did the top candidates approach them?

**AG:** On the Democratic side, the defining issues were the Vietnam War and the crisis of race, poverty, and violence that plagued many American cities. Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who ultimately captured the Democratic nomination, campaigned on the record of Lyndon Johnson. By contrast, the upstart candidates Eugene McCarthy and Robert F. Kennedy both called for more aggressive responses to the urban crisis – Kennedy, in particular, sought to reorient the party around class issues – and more concessions to North Vietnam as a means of achieving peace.

On the Republican side, there were two main factions. The “progressive” Republicans, represented by New York governor Nelson Rockefeller, sought the political center by combining fiscal restraint, Cold War credibility, and social programs that helped the vulnerable. The right-wing faction, led by California governor Ronald Reagan, decried government bureaucracy and radical protest. Richard Nixon won his party’s nomination by shrewdly positioning himself between these two wings.



The interviewer

**GDV:** What made this group of candidates different from those of the previous generations?

**AG:** The challengers vying for the nomination helped determine the identities of both major parties for the era to follow. The McCarthy and Kennedy candidacies foreshadowed how the Democrats would come to be driven by liberals and “conscience” issues. The Republicans, meanwhile, were becoming more uniformly conservative. Nelson Rockefeller was popular on a national scale, for instance, but Ronald Reagan was the darling of the party rank-and-file.

Perhaps the most influential losing candidate, however, stood outside the two parties. Alabama governor George Wallace ran a third-party campaign through the American Independent Party, sending a grassroots “law and order” message that blamed the nation’s problems on liberal bureaucrats, dirty hippies, and racial unrest. Wallace won states in the Deep South and made inroads among white working-class voters in the North. These were voters who had traditionally voted Democrat in the past, but whom the Republican Party aggressively and successfully pursued going forward.

**GDV:** An interesting aspect of your book is the candidates’ greater attention to the constituency atop the political machinery. Why and how did this shift define the election?

**AG:** One media buzzword during 1968 was the “New Politics.” It was a vague term with no single meaning, but it essentially meant bypassing the traditional party machinery and taking the case for the nomination directly to the people. McCarthy accomplished this with his army of college-age volunteers, which helped him perform well in primaries in New Hampshire and Wisconsin. Kennedy and Rockefeller practiced their own versions of the New Politics through media blitzes and elaborate rallies, which stimulated mass enthusiasm and looked great on the evening news.

It is important to remember, though, that the “Old Politics” still prevailed in 1968. Few states had binding primary elections. Most chose delegates for the national convention via state meetings, which were populated by loyal party workers. Nixon ran unopposed in most primaries, but won the Republican nomination because he had earned so many political favors from state officials over the years. Humphrey did not campaign in any primaries – as LBJ’s vice president, he was the Democrats’ “establishment” candidate.



The interviewee

**GDV:** How did Richard Nixon, described in the second chapter as “The Loser,” become the winner?

**AG:** In 1962, during a press conference after losing the race for governor of California, Nixon famously declared that “you don’t have Richard Nixon to kick around anymore.” He had already lost the 1960 presidential campaign to John F. Kennedy, and he looked like damaged goods.

What followed is one of the greatest comebacks in American political history. Nixon campaigned tirelessly for Republican candidates around the country in both 1964 and 1966. He consciously sought to position himself in the party’s center, appealing to both the progressive and conservative wings. He also established a reputation as a statesman, meeting with world officials and crafting a vision for foreign policy. Though he inspired little passion, the party rank-and-file considered him eminently acceptable.

Nixon won the general election by reading the prevailing winds and shifting to the right. Against that backdrop of chaos, he called for “law and order,” a shorthand for firm responses to student protestors, black radicals, and criminals. He remained intentionally vague about Vietnam, knowing that any specific policy could be dissected and criticized.



**GDV:** Did the Vietnam War define the election of 1968?

**AG:** If the war did not define the election, it certainly hovered over it, influencing every candidate’s quest for the presidency. It is critical to note that in 1968, the anti-war movement was still the province, for the most part, of the young and radical. Only in the coming years would that viewpoint hit the political mainstream. At the time, most Americans did not want to simply withdraw from Vietnam. Those same Americans, however, questioned why the United States military was there in the first place.

The Vietnam War shaped the general election in two important ways. First, at the end of September, Hubert Humphrey articulated a policy that was independent of Lyndon Johnson, stating that he would cease bombing North Vietnam to advance the peace process. Now, finally, Humphrey seemed like “his own man,” not just a toady of LBJ; it allowed him to make a credible comeback, making the election much closer than anticipated.

Second, as Election Day neared, peace talks in Paris were moving forward, which would have helped Humphrey, portraying the Democrats as the party that achieved peace. But South Vietnamese leader Nguyen Van Thieu refused to participate in the talks, derailing the negotiations right before the U.S. election. Evidence has since come to light that the Nixon campaign was in contact with South Vietnam, urging Thieu to hold off on a cease-fire until Nixon won the election. There is no definitive piece of evidence that ties Nixon himself to this effort, but there is speculation that in his quest for the presidency, Nixon committed treason.

# The Drama of History

By Andrew Daily



Last February, I traveled to Martinique to complete research and work on my forthcoming translation and critical edition of *Histoire de Nègre* (*Tale of Black Histories*), a unique play written by the Martinican philosopher and poet Edouard Glissant and performed by the students and professors of the Institute of Martinican Studies (IME). While working in archives in Martinique in 2008, I discovered this text in a long-forgotten journal, and it has since become a major focus of my research. The translation that I am preparing with my collaborator, Dr. Emily Sahakian (University of Georgia), for Caribbean Studies Press will represent its first appearance in English and its first republication in French. For our edition, we have worked to recover the original context of its composition and performance. As we were completing our notes and introduction last summer, we realized that we still had questions that could only be answered by the students and professors

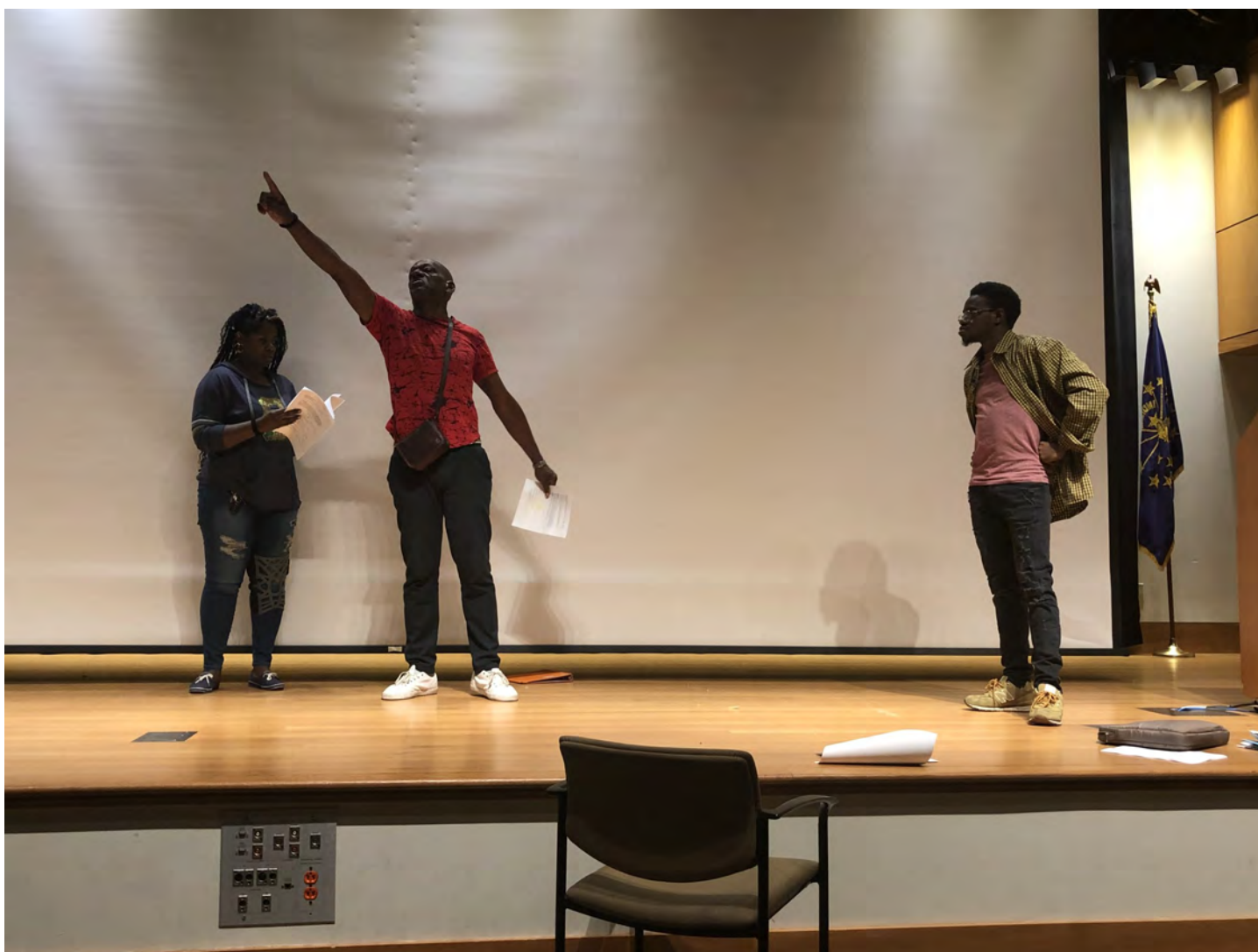
who had been part of the original production. As such, we decided we needed to return to Martinique to conduct interviews and conduct a last round of archival research. Tropical sun in the middle of winter was also very welcome.\

During our visit, we met with Juliette Eloi-Blézès, a former instructor at the Institute and a member of the original group that wrote and performed the play. We also arranged to visit the site of the now-closed Institute, still a school, in a suburb of Martinique's capital Fort-de-France. The tree under which Edouard Glissant used to teach his philosophy classes still stands in the courtyard, and the library still features copies of his books. Our meetings with Professor Eloi-Blézès were a profoundly important experience. As historians, we frequently write about things long past and people long dead. One of the pleasures of writing 20<sup>th</sup> century history is being able to discuss events with those that helped make them. Eloi-Blézès was a fount of knowledge about the play, the Institute, and the history of Martinique in the early 1970s. In addition to her reminiscences, she shared her personal papers and arranged for us to speak with two other surviving members of the play's original performance, Henri Psyche and Raymond Sardaby. Beyond that, however, Dr. Sahakian and I were both moved by how much our work meant to Professor Eloi-Blézès and the other members of the Institute. They were pleased to hear that the play had taken on a second life and they enjoyed watching video of its performance that we arranged at the University of Georgia in 2018. Writing history is the struggle against forgetting, and it was moving to see how much that work could mean to those who made that history.



The zamana tree in the front yard of the Institut Martiniquais d'Etudes

After our return, we worked to polish our translation and notes in preparation for a full production of *Histoire de Nègre* at the April 2019 meeting of the Society for French Historical Studies in Indianapolis. Danna Kostroun (IUPUI), the conference organizer, invited us to stage the play as part of the conference theme, “History and its Publics: Doing Things Differently.” She helped us secure a grant to bring in our longtime collaborator, the Guadeloupean director Gilbert Laumord of the Siyaj Company, to work with actors from Indianapolis’ Asante Children’s Theatre. The Asante Children’s Theatre, founded by Deborah Asante and directed by Keesha Dixon, is a company that draws on “African-American performing arts to create inspiring performances which educate and promote themes that speak to a global community.” Gilbert Laumord worked with three actors from the company to learn the Caribbean storytelling tradition and the Creole songs and gestures that he has invaluable contributed to our restaging. On the last night of the conference, despite an unfortunate fire alarm interruption, the play was performed in front of over 100 French historians and scholars and members of the Indianapolis community. Following the performance, and despite the late hour, the director and actors answered questions and discussed the performance with members of the community for more than an hour.



Rehearsals in Indianapolis. Director Gilbert Laumond at center

Working on this unique document has been an education and the best sort of interdisciplinary study. From my collaborators Dr. Sahakian and Gilbert Laumord I have learned so much about theatre, dramaturgy, performance, and the Creole storytelling and song traditions. At present, I am at work organizing a performance of *Histoire de Nègre* in Memphis.



## Welcome to New Faculty!

*The Department of History has two new faculty members this year: Dr. Brad Dixon, Assistant Professor with specialties in Early American and Native American history, and Dr. Caroline Peyton, Instructor, with specialties in the US South, environment and energy, and science and technology. Here, the new professors tell us about themselves and their journeys as historians.*

### **Brad Dixon:**

I grew up in Tuscarora country—that is, eastern North Carolina and not upstate New York. Until the 1710s, the Tuscaroras dominated what is now the central part of eastern North Carolina, including the Neuse River basin. By 1710, the Tuscaroras felt the brunt of colonialism. Colonial slavers caught Tuscaroras, including young children, snatching them in the woods, and selling them to New England and the West Indies. Colonists took up land within Tuscarora territory without permission. The pressure from an expanding North Carolina colony drove the Tuscaroras to petition Pennsylvania authorities to relocate in the territory of the Five Nations of the Haudenosaunee. Without the required good-conduct certificate from North Carolina, however, the Tuscarora's plan for migration fell through as Pennsylvania's colonial government would not agree to it without one. In 1711, the Tuscaroras went to war with the North Carolina colony in a conflict that lasted for several years. Five miles from my house, the Tuscaroras and their allies dug in at Fort Neoheroka. From January to March 1713, South Carolina militia and hundreds of that colony's Native allies laid siege, digging a snaking trench-line to the fort's walls. On March 20<sup>th</sup>, they stormed the fort and set fire to it, eventually killing or enslaving more than 1,000 men, women, and children. Archaeologists were excavating the site in the 1990s and I can remember seeing some of the first 3D reconstructions of the fort and learning about the artifacts they had recovered.

The history of the battle of Neoheroka always lingered in my mind, leaving me with a vague unease about what I'd heard in history classes. But I had no intention whatsoever to be a historian. While working on a museum project, I started taking night classes in public history. The professor happened to be a historian of Native America who was especially interested in the Southeast. One night, she showed us a picture of the Catawba Map of 1721 which a group of Native headmen, probably Nasaws, drew on deerskin to illustrate the political relationships connecting the Natives of the region to each other and to the colonies of Virginia and Carolina. In their map, the emerging Catawbans pushed the Europeans to the margins of a vibrant Native space. The English settlements were blocky figures barely holding onto the map's edges. The map transformed how I viewed my home, its history, and my own place in both. And the map was the starting point for me on the path toward becoming a historian. After earning a master's in history, with the encouragement of my mentors, I went on to pursue a Ph.D. at the University of Texas at Austin.



At the University of Texas, I planned on becoming an early Americanist and Native Americanist focused on the experiences of Native peoples in the era of English colonialism. But the center of gravity at Texas is Latin American history, and inevitably, it pulled me into its orbit. Used to Black Legend accounts of the cruelty of the Spanish conquests in the Americas, I was surprised to learn about Indians in places like Mexico and Peru who were vassals of the Crown, petitioning for relief, suing their Spanish neighbors, with a good number going to Spain to make their cases before the monarch in person. Florida, it turned out, was home to tens of thousands of Indigenous people who lived in mission towns along a royal road that went from modern-day Tallahassee, through Gainesville, on the Saint Augustine, and then north along the coast up into modern Georgia. I started asking new questions. Why did Florida and the English colonies in the Southeast develop the way they did? Did they influence one another and how? And how did Natives adapt and shape the colonial systems that emerged in the Southeast? It turned out that Native Americans petitioned English colonial governments—and occasionally an English monarch—just as they did in Latin America. Traveling to archives in the United States and Britain, I sought those stories and the answers to my bigger questions. Now, I'm working on revising my dissertation into a book.

My book project, *Republic of Indians*, explores Native Americans' experiences fighting for their sovereignty and rights as vassals, tributaries, and subjects in the British and Spanish empires, as well as the legacy of those experiences for the history of the United States. Drawing on original sources, including Indian petitions and European colonial records, the book recovers the role of the "legal Indian" in the Southeast. From the sixteenth through the nineteenth century, southern Indians developed their own political and legal philosophies, helped to build mutual institutions with Europeans for legal enforcement and redress, and remade the British and Spanish empires to render them more responsive to indigenous political aims. The South was a violent "shatter zone" where Indians and Europeans clashed in a geopolitical contest for advantage, employing warfare, trade, and captive-taking as scholars have shown. Yet it was also a world of deep-rooted Native political and legal cultures where law regularly mediated disputes. Indians facing the English and the Spanish pursued politics through litigation, struggling to protect their lands and peoples, and authoring eloquent petitions claiming their liberties under law.

My wife and I are very happy to be in Memphis and look forward to getting to know the area in the years to come.

### **Caroline Peyton:**

As a native-born Memphian and the daughter of two University of Memphis graduates, there's something deeply satisfying about returning home after a decade-long absence to teach at UM. While I spent parts of my childhood elsewhere, Memphis provided a sense of place—a "there" that seemed to offer permanence despite periodic uprooting. Looking back, a particular Memphis comes into view. Some of my first memories include staring out at the still underdeveloped border of Germantown and Cordova, a patch of field and power lines near the Wolf River. Sandwiched between a line of new homes and businesses, the field was strictly off-limits for us as children; it was a no-man's land, where coyotes were rumored to roam. Perhaps that's when I first became interested in a South filled with competing visions: one developed and one untamed. Even after moving away, I relished trips to Memphis because I knew it meant swimming at the Catholic Club, gorging on Gibson's doughnuts, and making pilgrimages to the Pink Palace.



Wherever I went, Memphis remained home, and for me, it's a city that continually proves to be more interesting and more dynamic than many people acknowledge. Memphis embodies so many aspects of the modern South; it's shaped by aspirational visions of metropolitan triumph, while simultaneously faced with the long-simmering reality of poverty and the legacies of Jim Crow segregation. This mid-sized city spawned some of the most important record labels and outfits in American history: Sun Records, Stax Records, Ardent Studios, Three 6 Mafia, and Goner Records. Even as tourists regularly descend upon the city, it's easy for Memphis residents to become numb to its exceptional quality—to lose sight of its essential coolness.

Less widely recognized is how that history has been foundational to the South's subcultural history—the obscure and far weirder threads within southern history. To truly appreciate the complexity of southern history is to recognize that even in the Bible Belt, the better parts of southern culture have been a product of oddballs and dissenters. Memphis has given us some of the great eccentrics and renegades: the wrestler Sputnik Monroe, musicians Isaac Hayes and Alex Chilton, photographer William Eggleston, writer and civil rights activist Ida B. Wells (born in Holly Springs), and the highly subversive women of Memphis rap like Gangsta Boo and La Chat.

That texture, the underbelly of southern history, prompted me to pursue studying history seriously. I realized southern history was more than Lost Cause nostalgia after I took a literature course entitled “Southern Writers and the American West” taught by Robert Brinkmeyer; that’s where I was introduced to Cormac McCarthy and Eudora Welty. The South that came into view through their novels, and others, was one of disconnected modernity; where outsiders like the cave-dwelling, necrophiliac Lester Ballard in *Child of God* embodies a primeval wildness and yet ends up on a cold dissection table at UT’s medical school. McCarthy’s portrayal of the bizarre and subterranean South mirrored my own experiences, where the slickness of the aspirational gave way to those left behind. From the age of nine to sixteen, I lived in East Tennessee, amidst an abundance of poverty and eccentric southerners, which sparked my interest in uncovering lost histories. Moreover, the visible gulf between the haves and the have nots in South Knoxville made me acutely aware of the fractures that continued to exist long-after the South had been “sold.” The post-industrial landscape left economic and social wreckage, which also manifested in southern environments. The strange geography of south Knoxville meant that I swam in abandoned quarries filled with unnatural, milky blue-green water, had daily reminders of the gnawing poverty, and lived less than a mile away from two sites of staggering environmental contamination. From all of these experiences, I embarked upon my first project of extended historical research as an undergraduate, traveling to the National Archives to uncover the history of a little-known New Deal Agency, the Transient Bureau, and its local history in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Once I started graduate school at the University of South Carolina, my interests shifted back to Memphis; my MA thesis examined the killing of Elton Hayes, a seventeen-year old African American youth, in October 1971. Hayes’ story was striking for a number of reasons; among them, I found evidence that police brutality actually intensified after 1968, the way that civil disorder following allegations of improper police conduct fueled an intense debate over policing, and finally, how Stax Records musicians and employees, notably Isaac Hayes, served as critical voices of reason in the disorder that followed, and helped call for constructive reform in police policy.



The cooling tower at Grand Gulf Nuclear Station's cooling tower in Port Gibson, MS

Somehow from that foundation I became interested, perhaps even a little obsessed, with the South’s radioactive waste and nuclear power reactors. The realization that Barnwell, South Carolina contained twenty-seven million cubic feet of so-called low-level nuclear waste surprised me, and after crunching the numbers, it became readily apparent that the South’s nuclear legacy extended beyond the nuclear weapons facilities of Oak Ridge and the Savannah River Site. Far from an accident of history, the nuclearization of the American South occurred as a result of concerted efforts from southern leaders, the nuclear industry, and government officials. Nuclear technology represented the “dreamscapes of modernity,” to borrow scholar Sheila Jasanoff’s phrase, and the South’s nuclear boosters saw these developments as vital to energizing the region’s identity and its economy. For me, the atomic South gave me a chance to think about southern history differently, and it provided the basis for my dissertation and current book project: *Radioactive Dixie: A Nuclear History of the American South*. Moving forward, I’m excited about the teaching and research opportunities that Memphis (truly the *Grind City*), the Department of History, and the University of Memphis have given me, and I’m equally thrilled to share the city I love with my son, Archer, and my husband, Dean. It’s good to be back.

# Romancing Native Americana in Germany: Travel Notes

An interview with Andrei Znamenski

**Guiomar Duenas Vargas:** In recent conversations you have shared with me your reflections and educated interpretations of the so-called Karl May Show – a summer event you have witnessed in Germany. Although it is not directly related to your research, it can be linked to the general theme that you have been interested in: how cultures and traditions borrow from each other.

**Andrei Znamenski:** I have been working on a book that deals with the cultural history of socialism, and spent much of the summer doing research in Russian libraries. I also presented several papers on that topic both in Estonia and Russia. Yet, in July, when I was done with the conferences and my research, I made a short trip to Germany to visit an annual Karl May festival at Bad Sageberg. Essentially, this is a grand re-enactment show performed at a large open-air theater. It samples Native American and American West scenes from the novels of German writer Karl May. At the center is a fictional Native American character named Winnetou. Each summer these shows are visited by more than 350,000 visitors.

**GDV:** To an outside observer this might appear bizarre, or, using a current fancy meme, an act of grand cultural appropriation.

**AZ:** Correct. That is why I decided to share with our readers this experience and my reflections as a historian on the cultural and spiritual implications of this phenomenon. It gives us a glimpse of unpredictable and strange ways cultures and traditions interact and merge with each other. To be honest, I am not a total stranger to the topic. In 2004, I was asked to do a talk on Cold War cultural battles, and I chose to talk about the cinematic tug of war between Western and Eastern German westerns in the 1960s-1980s.



Pierre Brice as Minnetou and Lex Barker as Old Shatterhand

**GDV:** Tell us about those shows and this strange character Winnetou.

**AZ:** Winnetou is a generic Native American who had been immortalized by the German novelist Karl May (1842-1912), the most best-selling author in German history. The combined print run of May's American West novels reached over 200 million copies. The Bible in German was the only book that was able to beat this record. His widely-read books and outdoor performances based on the loose adaptation of their plots laid the ground for the post-war mass appropriation of Native Americana. Moreover, in the 1960s and 1970s, his books were used to produce the whole series of Winnetou westerns. Eleven Winnetou westerns starred French actor Pierre Brice as Winnetou. Lex Barker (American) became his Caucasian side-kick friend named Old Shatterhand. Winnetou is depicted as a generic Indian.

Although he is an “Apache chief,” Winnetou is portrayed as a “multicultural” Indian who wears Plains Indian buckskin clothing and lives in an abode Pueblo-style house.

Winnetou became a pop culture icon at first in the Western part of Germany and then in the rest of the country. Eventually, this character entered German popular culture and became Paul Bunyan, Abe Lincoln and Elvis rolled into one. In 2006, German magazine *Der Spiegel* published the essay “Land of Winnetou” that stated, “There are German poets and thinkers, the German forest, the German ‘comfortableness,’ German efficiency, the German longing for Italy, and there is Winnetou. Winnetou is the quintessential German national hero, a paragon of virtue, a nature freak, a romantic, a pacifist at heart, but in a world at war he is the best warrior, alert, strong, sure.” Nobody expected that the first Winnetou film *The Treasure of the Silver Lake (Der Schatz in Silbersee)* (1962) would be a great financial success as well as its sequels released in the 1960s-1970s. In fact, these Indian westerns revived the dying German film industry. Winnetou movies celebrated open spaces, organic indigenous cultures, friendship, human bonding irrespective of race and culture

In order to challenge the popularity of Western German “capitalist” westerns, Eastern Germany created her own series that became known as *Indianerfilme*. Until the early 1980s, May was forbidden in communist Eastern Germany because he was the favorite writer of Hitler. The first socialist *Indianer* movie was *Sons of the She-Bear (Die Söhne der Grossen Bärin)* (1966). The task was to create progressive western narrative focused on the exposing of socio-economic evils of American capitalism. Just like in the case of the Winnetou movies, *Die Söhne der Grossen Bärin* became a large financial success against the skepticism of state officials and to the surprise of its own makers. Overall, more than 10 million East German viewers watched it in the country of 17 million. Gojko Mitic, the chief “Indian” who played all major roles in socialist *Indianerfilme*, was a Yugoslavian (Serbian) actor. Note that all the leading actors were non-Germans.

The plot of the first Winnetou movie was about evil white bandits robbing a stage coach and plotting to steal Indian gold and land. With Old Shatterhand, Winnetou disrupts the plans of the evil doers. In contrast, the plot of the *Sons of The Great She Bear* was historically grounded and set in the 1874-1876 Dakota territory that became a battle ground between the Lakota Indians and greedy gold miners backed up by the US Army. Although it was too revolving around the theme of gold, in contrast to the first Winnetou movie, *Sons of The Great She Bear* was set in the socioeconomic and historical context of American capitalism.



**GDV:** What was the explanation for such long-distance fascination of Germans with Native Americana?

**AZ:** It has something to do with social and cultural developments in post-war Germany that, after the brief and destructive period of National Socialism, was looking for ways to link German to the wider multiethnic world and at the same time to preserve herself. After 1945, active pursuits, public displays, and celebrations of German and Nordic folklore, ethnography, and spirituality were frowned upon and even could be criminalized as fascist or Nazi. The imagined Native Americana came to partially fill the cultural void created by the post-war environment.

Since the 1910s, there was a perception among Germans that ancient Teutonic people and Native Americans somehow shared the “same” tribal culture, spirituality, and fate, being overrun by empires. After 1945, this marginal perception turned into a wide appropriation of Native Americana in both parts of the country (books, memorabilia, movies and so forth). Linking themselves to conquered Native Americans, Germans psychologically focused on their own suffering and played down the responsibility for committed crimes. Plus, after 1945, Germans were stripped of their historical and cultural heroes, and they began shopping around for heroes outside of the German realm. As we remember, even such figures as Bismarck and Wagner were under suspicion.

Native Americana, which arrived to post-war Europe along with mass American culture, magazine, books, and cinema, became a convenient material to be used to build up a new German identity. Romanticized Native Americans served as a very attractive resource. Although part of American culture and history, they were nevertheless viewed as historical “others” who were uprooted by the United States of their land and indigenous religion. The German psyche was essentially using the traits of American ethnography, print media, and cinema to challenge the culture of the occupiers. In the Eastern zone the whole thing was complicated and at same time eased by the already existing official requirement to challenge the American culture as an imperialist imposition. There, book and movie Indians were used as cultural props in socialist propaganda against the US. What many film critics did not notice was that, on the surface celebrating Native American struggle against “white” American colonialism, both Eastern and Western German westerns conveyed the notion of divided fatherland (*Heimat*) and how harmful it was for the fate of the people. As one of Mitic characters put it, “Indians of all lands, unite!” [Indianer aller Lander, vereinigt euch). The rephrasing of that household and oft-quoted phrase from the *Communist Manifesto* clearly carried the message of nationalism and traditionalism.

The Winnetou fad was part of the German-wide phenomenon of the fascination with Native Americana, which puzzled many observers and which recently became the object of academic research. By the 1990s, in both parts of Germany there were hundreds of Native Americana fan clubs. Only in Western Germany alone there were more than 40,000 people who belonged to more than 400 *Indianer* clubs. A similar situation existed in Eastern Germany. After the war, one could also see the rising popularity of books on Native Americans and growing mass pilgrimages to open-air shows where hundreds of thousands watched picturesque performances loosely based on May’s books.



The Karl-May-Spiele

**GDV:** When did they start those outdoor performances?

**AZ:** The first Karl-May-Spiele started as early as 1938 in Saxony, the location of the May memorial museum, and continued until 1941. Later, they were revived in Western Germany at Bad Segeberg in 1952 and then spread to other cities. In addition to martial and heroic sentiments, the Winnetou novels drew the Nazi attention because of their very critical attitude toward modern American civilization. May portrayed the profit-hungry, market oriented, materialist, and industrial American civilization that threatened the noble, communitarian, and organic Native American tradition. All this resonated well with the cultural discourse of National Socialism.

**GDV:** Can we also say that those who, after 1945, dubbed into Native American book, performance, and movie culture, came to view all that as their surrogate folklore?

**AZ:** Yes, one can suggest that in the 1950s and the 1960s “Indian” books, performances, and movies channeled forbidden “fruits” of Nordic tradition and folklore in a politically correct wrap. In other words, some Western and Eastern Germans could find their “traditional” culture and their superheroes in multicultural Native Americana.

**GDV:** At the same time, one can say that via this Native Americana Germans became more open to other cultures.

**AZ:** Again, you are absolutely correct! *Winnetou* movies, *Indianerfilme*, and the like contributed to *Multikulti* identity that by now many Germans accepted as their “indigenous” *Heimat*. German Native Americana, which had been originally loaded with the nationalistic and martial themes, was later transformed into a multicultural and transnational enterprise. Thus, German Native Americana played a double role. On the one hand, it fed to the German feelings of loss and channeled nostalgia for Nordic folklore and *Heimat* landscapes. On the other hand, it cultivated internationalist multicultural perspective, opening Germans up to other cultures. In fact, to the present day, self-reflecting German intellectuals still speculate whether May’s *Winnetou*, has inspired more feelings of fraternity or of racial superiority in the country.

In a fascinating ethno-ideological twist, after the reunification of Germany, “socialist” Mitic (Serbian) took over as *Winnetou* (1992-2006) in at the Bad-Sageberg shows. He replaced Brice (French), who retired after performing this role from 1976 to 1986. Later, Mitic was followed by other multicultural *Winnetous*: Okitay Iuanay (Turk/Native American), Erol Sanders (German), and finally Nik Xhelilaj (Albanian). Interestingly, both the first and last *Winnetous* stressed that through their “Indian” career, they learned more about Germany and Germans.



Check out Dr. Znamenski’s interview with “Red Ice Radio” at <https://www.shiftfrequency.com/tag/andrei-znamenski/>

## Tombs and Triumphs

*Two of our Ph.D. students, Taylor Deane and Rebekah Vogel, were recently awarded fellowships from the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE). Rebekah also won the Theodore N. Romanoff Prize, an additional award meant to support the study of Egyptian language and texts. These prestigious grants, funded by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. State Department, will allow them to spend five to six months in Egypt.*

*Under the leadership of Dr. Peter Brand and Dr. Suzanne Onstine, our graduate program in Egyptology is flourishing! Here, Rebekah and Taylor explain their research projects and their upcoming fieldwork in Egypt.*

### Rebekah Vogel:

My dissertation research focuses on New Kingdom Egyptian triumph scenes with topographical lists and the ideologies behind them. In particular, I am studying the discrete iconographic elements and textual elements present in these scenes, as well as their precursors in earlier Egyptian art, architecture, and texts. My goal is to trace the development of these elements over time to determine how and why they were used together to construct meaning within the larger triumph scene motif.



The First Pylon of Medinet Habu, the mortuary temple of Ramesses III.



Rebekah at the mortuary temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari,

The ARCE fellowship provides an incredible opportunity to perform original research and fieldwork at archaeological sites and museums. I will be studying the triumph scenes *in situ* in temples throughout Egypt, including sites such as Karnak Temple, Luxor Temple, the Temples of Seti I and Ramesses II at Abydos, and Abu Simbel. My work will include photographing and recording the content of the scenes, as well as documenting how they fit into the surrounding temple architecture and decorative programs. Where possible, I will use Agisoft Photoscan to create 3D images of the scenes to help with visualization, and to better contextualize them within their architectural framework. I will also be performing research in the cities of Cairo and Luxor, which have extensive museum and archival collections with pertinent artifacts and photographs. By the end of my time in Egypt, I hope to have created a comprehensive catalog of known triumph scenes, as well as an inventory of earlier examples of the discrete elements which compose them. Together, these will serve as the core data set for my dissertation.



### Taylor Deane:

My dissertation examines the phenomenon of memory sanction, in which the tomb owner's contemporary enemies, now unknown to us, purposefully destroyed the painted and carved images and hieroglyphic texts representing the deceased, including his image, name, and titles, in the Theban tomb chapels of Eighteenth Dynasty officials, dating to the reigns of Hatshepsut through the early years of Amenhotep IV (ca. 1479-1342 BCE).

The Ministry of Antiquities granted me permission to examine twenty-four tombs closed to the public in Luxor, Egypt. I will be conducting a systematic study on intentional damage as the result of memory sanction. This opportunity will allow me to document each defaced element in an erasure catalogue, which will record the erasure style, shape, and intensity, as well as measurements, when available, of chisel mark width and depth.

By examining the targeted elements of memory sanction against the tomb owner as archaeological artifacts, I will address the following questions: Were certain techniques of erasure preferred over others and, if so, where and why? Are there similarities in the execution of memory sanction between tombs, in terms of targeted elements and erasure style? Why would agents deface some representations of the tomb owner or his name more thoroughly than others? Why did defacement often-times extend to the official's wife, children, and parents? Are there common social, political, or familial relationships between different individuals suffering memory sanction within tombs dating to the same timeframe? What did this act mean for the tomb owner and his social, political, and legal life as well as his fate in the afterlife?

Through my investigation and analysis of these tomb defacements, I hope to reach a more nuanced understanding of the practice and implications of memory sanction in ancient Egypt and elucidate the historical value of deliberate damage as archaeological artifacts in the analysis of ancient Egyptian monuments.



Abrasion of Rekhmire's figure (Theban tomb 100) and hacked Amarna erasure of goose



Defaced image of Horemheb (Theban tomb 78). Chisel marks also trace the edges of his garment.



Clearly defined chisel marks on the figure of Tjenuna, owner of Theban tomb 76.