

FALL, SEPTEMBER 2024

CCWH NEWSLETTER



Co-Presidents' Column

BY JESSICA PLILEY AND NIMISHA BARTON

Since its founding in 1969, the Coordinating Council for Women in History has been a tireless advocate for women working in the historical professions—whether in academia or beyond. We have worked with the American Historical Association to advocate for policies to make the profession more welcoming to women, and we have celebrated the importance of the history of women and gender.

This commitment to the twin goals of professional development for women historians *and* championing the field of women and gender history is evident in our preeminent prize: the Catherine Prelinger Award, which offers \$20,000 to non-traditional scholars of women and gender history. “Kitty” Prelinger, who served as CCWH president from 1980 to 1982, pushed the AHA to recognize independent scholars while continually celebrating non-traditional scholars. Importantly, the prize puts no restrictions on how the money is spent; it offers the flexibility that female scholars need.

The scholars who have won this prize are as diverse as the history of the women they write about. They come from all walks of life and have overcome extraordinary challenges. The impact of the prize on the individual scholars who have been recipients cannot be overstated. Pamela Stewart remembers that as she received news that she had won the prize she “shed tears as the tectonic plates of my future shifted.” The personal struggles experienced by the winners of the Prelinger infuses their research with

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empathy as many of them have been committed to capturing the stories of women ignored by traditional archives by conducting and preserving oral histories. In this way, the Prelinger Prize not only offers the opportunity to bring a project to fruition for an individual historian, it also builds an archive for future scholars.

The collective scholarship of Prelinger Prize winners reminds us of the interconnections between the personal and political and demonstrates the importance, the necessity, the radical implications of investing in the history of women and in women scholars. All of the Prelinger winners speak of the importance of community—to their lives, to professional development, to their research. This generous award, named in honor of Prelinger’s legacy, is funded by an anonymous donor. This year, we are taking the first step toward making this signature prize self-sustaining. In launching our Prelinger Award fundraising campaign this year, we aim to ensure that we will be able to support non-traditional scholars in perpetuity. We ask that you please consider donating here: <https://theccwh.org/donate#/>

One such non-traditional scholar who treasured the Prelinger Award and what it stood for was our own beloved Sandra Trudgen Dawson, whom we lost in May 2024. As you will read in these pages, Sandra’s impact on women’s history organizations and communities in the United States and beyond was immeasurable. She singlehandedly served as a node for networking a number of women’s history organizations together: the Western Association of Women’s History, the Berkshires Conference of Women’s Historians, the International Federation for Research in Women’s History, and, of course, the CCWH. Sandra was a non-traditional scholar who tirelessly fought for the majority of trained historians who, like her, do not have tenure. However, Sandra refused to be defined by what she didn’t have. Instead, her life reminds us of the power of relentless generosity, steadfast curiosity, and resolute commitment to the intellectual pursuit of researching and writing women’s history. To honor Sandra Trudgen Dawson, the CCWH Executive Board has launched the **Sandra Trudgen Dawson Award for Service, Scholarship, and Teaching**. We will start offering this award annually as soon as we have raised the seed funds for the award. To make a donation, please visit:

<https://theccwh.wufoo.com/forms/z1futvs61h6kyt7/>

We will greatly miss sharing a smile, a joke, and a hug with our dear friend, Sandra.



Executive Director Column

BY ELIZABETH EVERTON

An organization like ours is shaped by the remarkable people who are a part of it. This spring, the CCWH lost someone whose gift of her time, work, and talent had a profound impact on CCWH. As you may know, our beloved former executive director, Sandra Trudgen Dawson, passed away on May 18, 2024. Sandra was a guiding light of our organization and a dear colleague and friend to many in the CCWH membership and across the world in the field of women's history. A native of the UK, Sandra worked for many years as a nurse and midwife before entering graduate school at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She earned her PhD in 2007. She was a dynamic scholar who was committed to the field of women and gender history. Sandra, like many in the CCWH, followed a "non-traditional" path in academia. While she was not tenured faculty, she remained incredibly productive, writing seven books, including the just-published *Mothers, Midwives and Reproductive Labor in Interwar and Wartime Britain* (2024), as well as countless articles and book reviews.

Known as a prodigiously generous scholar and friend, Sandra embodied the CCWH's spirit of collaboration, support, and friendship. She was a one-woman node that connected many women's history organizations. She served as the Executive Director of the CCWH from 2010 to 2020. Before that, she had served as a graduate representative, and then secretary, for the Western Association of Women's History and from 2016 onward she worked as the Executive Administrator for the Berkshire's Conference of Women's History. Indeed, Sandra personally connected a huge network of women's and gender scholars from around the world. Her loss is deeply felt by all she touched.

We are proud to announce the launch of an initiative to honor the life of Sandra Trudgen Dawson, the long-time executive director, member, and advocate of the CCWH, with the establishment of the Sandra Trudgen Dawson Award for Service, Scholarship, and Teaching. The award will be open to CCWH members whose career has not followed the traditional tenure-track path. In the spirit of Sandra's pragmatism and her dedication to procuring concrete aid to anyone who asked, we do not envision restricting the use of this award: it can be used for travel costs, necessary materials, research expenses, or care labor. We plan to offer one award up to \$500 a year until we raise \$10,000 for the award. After we reach that benchmark, we will seek to offer more awards each year. More information about this prize and a link for donations can be found at <https://theccwh.org>.



Obituary: Sandra Trudgen Dawson (1960 – 2024)

BY EILEEN BORIS, HULL PROFESSOR OF FEMINIST STUDIES AT UCSB & FORMER CCWH PRESIDENT

I met Sandra Trudgen Dawson in January 2002 when she took my graduate seminar on Women's History and Feminist Theory at the University of California, Santa Barbara, which I like to think helped spark her interest in the field. She received her Ph.D. from UCSB, Department of History, with Erika Rappaport as her chair and myself on her committee. But Sandra, who was born in the UK, already had pursued a career as a midwife; she continued to practice during her graduate school days. She joined her husband Patrick with their child, AJ, first to Northern Illinois University, where he worked as a librarian and then to University of Maryland, Baltimore County, when he became the head librarian there. Along the way Sandra taught as an adjunct at Northern Illinois in History and Women's Studies. While in Illinois, she became disgusted with the working conditions of contingent faculty and sought change. The SEIU Local 73, its public employee local in Chicago, hired Sandra part-time to research and work on its emerging adjunct organizing campaign. Moving to Maryland, she would go on to teach in the Baltimore area as an adjunct and in the public schools. Sandra's involvement with CCWH and then the Berks was a way for her to maintain professional status while advancing the status of women, transgender and gender queer people in the profession. All the while, she managed a steady output of published work, including two monographs, edited collections, and articles. For the CCWH, and other women's history organizations, Sandra was more than an administrator. She was essential to putting together the program for the International Federation for Research in Women's History held in 2018 in Vancouver. She gave intellectual as well as practice guidance to us all. Warm, sharp, dedicated, Sandra maintained and expanded the community of scholars/activists, for whom she tirelessly labored.

The link for the memorial service that was held June 14, 2024 in Columbia, MD, can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/live/EfE5tIF7VsM>.



Remembrances: Sandra Trudgen Dawson

Erika Rappoport, University of California-Santa Barbara

Sandra Dawson was my first PhD student at UCSB but outside the classroom she became my teacher. Sandra told fascinating stories about her lower middle-class family living through the economic struggles of 1970s England. She also talked about the strict “Victorian” training she received in the 1980s - Florence Nightingale still loomed large when Sandra became a nurse and midwife. Sandra built a new life when she emigrated to California, but she did not leave her past behind. Her dissertation, for example, began by asking why her mother had warned her that “good girls” did not hang out at the holiday camps that were her childhood home. The dissertation and the book that it was based on, *Holiday Camps in Twentieth Century Britain: Packaging Pleasure* (Manchester UP, 2011), took her mother’s warning and the need for pleasure seriously. Sandra showed how the camps succeeded because exhausted working-class mothers really needed and enjoyed a week off once a year from housework, childcare and the other burdens which they shouldered. The laboring mum was even more central to Sandra’s next book, *Mothers, Midwives, and Reproductive Labor in Interwar and Wartime Britain* (Lexington Books, 2024). This book shows how both midwives and pregnant women created demands on the state that truly improved women’s lives for decades to come. Whether delivering babies, writing and editing books and articles, or organizing the Berkshire Conference, Sandra cared for people. Her caring was heartfelt and brought pleasure to everyone who knew her.

Pamela Stewart, Western Association of Women's Historian & ActivistHistorian.com

In a pre-historian life, I worked with midwives at home deliveries, taught childbirth preparation classes, and birthed a few children of my own. That personal history was how I first met Sandra when I attended a Western Association of Women Historians (WAWH) panel featuring her scholarship. She had this whole life before joining forces with other feminist historians and her publications serve as a reminder that our past can affect our careers in significant ways. I just loved her range, her humor, and her flat-out competency.

We both served on the WAWH board, but it was a few years later when I became CCWH Treasurer and she was Executive Director that our rapport became consistent. I have been fortunate always to have enjoyed and respected the ED’s I’ve worked with, and each one remains important to me. I hope in my current role as WAWH ED that a bit of the practicality, humor, consistency, and devotion to an organization that Sandra demonstrated imprints my work.

Sandra is one reason feminist-rooted organizations promoting the work of traditionally marginalized scholars have sustained themselves and allowed them to find spaces of support and collegiality. She was the very definition of a networker—a nexus of knowledge and relationships so many of us have benefited from.

A lot of what she did that mattered most was likely not visible beyond where it counted. Sandra was a personal comfort when a few months in 2016-2017 led me to feel I had lost my bearings in big ways and small. My indomitable mentor and past CCWH Co-President, Rachel Fuchs, unexpectedly died within days of my oldest daughter, although I wouldn’t know that until Beth’s body was found months later in February 2017. I later told a bit of that story in an homage to Rachel, but Sandra was a cushion when I didn’t know how I’d land.



But there is so much more. Sandra was willing, often virtually invisibly, to do whatever someone needed to make things just a bit easier for them. Behind the scenes of conferences, CCWH events, organizational fundraising, and in other ways big and small, Sandra's personal willingness to help people as individuals mattered most, I think. She must have been an amazing midwife! Her ability to keep perspective was a huge help during challenging moments. I'm sure she had her struggles but she nonetheless reminds me of a swan in a storm, looking comfortable to the observer but paddling like hell under the water.

The academic world is not set up as expansively or imaginatively as it needs to be to fully embrace the Sandras of our world. I really hope we can earnestly find ways to do better. I know she wants us to try.

Ilaria Scaglia, Ashton University

For Sandra, feminism was a concrete set of practices. It was real. It was tangible. It was a fast, competent, and kind reply no matter what. It was sharing a room at the AHA so that a colleague could save money and feel included, welcomed as a friend. It was opening her home in Baltimore and offering a ride so that one—chronically scant in research funding—could finish her research in DC to submit a manuscript on time without accruing debts. It was the spunk to show all that as an adjunct who followed a non-traditional path she could nonetheless lead not only in crafting excellent scholarship but also in making academia a better place for all. It was the unmatched humour, the sincere and open smile—just at the right moment—with which she did it all.

Mark J Crowley, University of Utah

Meeting Sandra proved fortuitous for me as a researcher and a person. I quickly realized that she would be not only a colleague or a co-author, but also a mentor whom I could trust. It was for this reason that I asked her to be the proofreader for my forthcoming monograph. Every time we spoke, I was struck by both her depth and breadth of knowledge, by her strong sense of justice and fairness, and by her selflessness and willingness to give her time to others. Her generosity, both professionally and personally, certainly catapulted my career and visibility on the academic stage in the USA – a boost after spending over eight years working at a Chinese university. She opened doors for me to scholarly societies that I would otherwise have assumed would be shut to a male scholar actively researching in the field of women's history. I know that I was not the only recipient of her generosity and warmth. It was through Sandra I was introduced to, and became friends with, many outstanding scholars in the Coordinating Council for Women in History, the Berkshire Society of Women Historians, and the Western Association of Women Historians, to name but a few. When introducing me to some of the world-leading scholars in the field of women's history, Sandra called me 'her Feminist friend Mark' – an identity I have treasured ever since, and one that was accompanied by her giving me a rosette to wear at the Big Berks conference at Hofstra University. It is through Sandra I met the powerhouses in the field, including (but not limited to) Eileen Boris, Nupur Chaudhuri, Barbara Molony, Karen Offen, Erika Rappaport and Ilaria Scaglia. I know I am lucky to be able to call these scholars not only colleagues, but friends and advocates.



Sandra’s impact on numerous people’s lives has been transformative. When I was given sabbatical leave in 2018 from my former employers in China to work at Harvard for a year, Sandra sent me several packages of essentials—including pots, pans, plates, and a toaster—to my apartment in Cambridge. When I called her to thank her, she told me she hoped this would be the start of the rest of my life in the US, and subsequently planned a grand networking tour for me in my sabbatical year, which included presenting at the women’s history conferences mentioned above. While I never made it a secret that my sabbatical year was primarily aimed at getting me into the US university system, Sandra was also rooting for me, and told me I needed to achieve it since it would be easier to meet up and collaborate with her. With her belief and enthusiasm behind me, I landed a job at the University of Utah in 2019, and I have been happy there ever since. It is thanks to the work with Sandra that I was promoted to full professor. Indeed, it is thanks to her that I still have this job. I know very few people who would put so much energy into helping others. Her drive has not only transformed my life, but it has also helped my daughter settle in a place where she is happy and in a good school, and my wife to settle in a place where she has the opportunity for her career to bloom. Sandra enabled others to be active and thrive within our often-unforgiving profession, and our research and learning landscape is therefore more diverse and richer as a result.

“Her caring was heartfelt and brought pleasure to everyone who knew her.”

ERIKA RAPPOPORT

“ Sandra’s impact on numerous people’s lives has been transformative.”

MARK J. CROWLEY



A tribute to Sandra Dawson's Scholarship

BY MARK J. CROWLEY, UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

In a short tribute such as this, Sandra Dawson's scholarly accomplishments are too numerous to mention and too rich to be analyzed in depth. I will focus here only on her main contributions and on their direct links with her life and overall worldview.

Sandra grew up in the UK, first on Hayling Island close to England's south coast before moving to the mainland. She spoke fondly of her family, and of the immense pain she experienced losing her father to a heart attack when she was a child. "Life was tough, but we did ok" was what she would always say when thinking about her childhood. Circumstances meant that her mother now needed to take on the dual roles of both caregiver and breadwinner. This reinforced to Sandra from a young age the importance and vital role of a matriarch, and the fact that a woman (despite what had been fed into the national narrative by the male-dominated media and governments) could do everything just as well, if not better, than a man. Furthermore, with the 'British experience' being very much grounded in the social class to which you were born, Sandra's upbringing in a working-class community would shape her world view and subsequent activism. This also informed her research, all of which shed new light on the experience of the working-class population in Britain, particularly the lives of women.

I met Sandra in 2008 when she responded to a call for papers that I put out for participants on a panel at the Western Conference on British Studies in San Antonio, Texas. We were both PhD students at the time, with Sandra being an ABD under the supervision of Erika Rappaport at the University of California, Santa Barbara, while I was working on my PhD at the University of London under the supervision of Pat Thane. Her topic, which focused on holiday camps in Britain - an idea pioneered by Billy Butlin and Jack Warner - was grounded in a distinctly 'working-class experience' of leisure. I was fascinated by Sandra's topic, having holidayed with my family in these camps in the late 1980s. These venues were provided as both an affordable holiday experience for Britain's blue-collar workers, and a 'thank you' gift from a husband to the wife and mother for their contribution in bringing up the children - an approach that served to solidify in the national consciousness the gendered roles in working-class families. Her research illuminated not only distinct working-class experiences and consumption of leisure, but also the perception of women within this space. The significance of her work was such that it was awarded the Duncan Tanner prize in the journal *Twentieth Century British History* (now *Modern History*) for the best article submitted by a graduate student. The transition from a thesis into a book came within two years of the PhD being awarded: *Holiday Camps in Twentieth Century Britain: Packaging Pleasure* (Manchester University Press, 2011). The volume demonstrated Sandra's drive, determination, and enthusiasm to contribute cutting-edge research to the field.

Sandra came to graduate school after having had an established career in midwifery in both the UK and the USA. This experience became the subject of what would be her last book: *Mothers, Midwives, and Reproductive Labor in Interwar and Wartime Britain* (Lexington Books, 2024). This study illuminates many areas of British society hitherto unexplored in historiography. In examining women's experiences



of childbirth—together with the life of those who cared for them—Sandra’s research demonstrates how a lack of funding left women, both as midwives and expectant mothers, with a raw deal. The country expected so much from them, but was seemingly giving very little in return, often justifying the lack of maternity care with strains on public finances during war. As Sandra notes, the midwives were the nurses that suffered disproportionately from a lack of resources, oftentimes needing to re-use items normally only permitted for single use, such as latex gloves. The low pay received by midwives, together with the dangerous conditions and lack of resources, was further evidence of women’s poor treatment in the labor market while undertaking essential work (albeit not classified as such by the government in wartime). Furthermore, pregnant women’s access to healthcare was often also constrained by a lack of midwives and, among the working class in particular, an inability to pay for these services. This situation added further thrust to the debate for a publicly funded health system, which became a reality in Britain after the Second World War following the recommendations of the Beveridge Report during the war, and the reforms introduced by the postwar Attlee Labour Government. The uniqueness of this work is how women’s voices are brought to the forefront. Primary sources provide first-hand testimonies of women in this period, both as nurses and expectant mothers, to reveal the nature of the struggles experienced by both the workers in the sector, and the women bringing children into the world during wartime.

Our mutual interest in the Second World War, in particular women’s experiences on the home front during the conflict, led to multiple co-authored publications over the years. The first was an edited volume entitled *Consuming Behaviours: Identity, Politics and Pleasure in Twentieth Century Britain* (Bloomsbury, 2015), co-authored also with Erika Rappaport. This book examined consumer culture in Britain in the twentieth century, revealing how numerous dynamics were at play in influencing the products that people consumed, and how and why these were consumed. The difficulties brought about by both the First and Second World wars led to direct appeals being made to women to consume and spend wisely (a situation that was, in many cases, enforced by rationing and controlled by the British government). The aftermath of the war led to changes in attitudes towards spending and opened British consumer culture to the influence of America, as exemplified by music and coffee culture.

Sandra and I would edit another two books together. *Home Fronts: Britain and the Empire at War, 1939-45* (2017) was an examination of the contribution made by citizens on the home front in the Second World War in Britain and its empire territories. It revealed how countries experienced the war in different ways, but that they were all united by one common experience: sacrifice. Drawing on experts in their respective fields, this book focused on the experiences of citizens, placing their voices at the forefront and demonstrating how respective government policies, together with the expectations of a dominant imperial power, affected not only the prosecution of the war but also the human experience of the war. *Women’s Wartime Experience: Exile, Survival and Everyday Life, 1939-45* (Boydell, 2021) examined the war from a global perspective but focusing on women’s experiences both on the home and military fronts. Numerous topics were examined, including their work as missionaries, experiences of inter-racial marriage in occupied Japan, Jewish women in occupied Paris, together with their work as Army Nurses and members of the armed forces, and in so doing, increases our understanding of women’s vital contribution to the Second World War.



I In addition to these editorial collaborations, I was also honored to be part of Sandra's most recent edited collection (with Nupur Chaudhuri) *Women, Children, and the Collective Face of Conflict in Europe, 1900-1950* (Vernon Press, 2023). This volume is a collection of essays examining the war from a global perspective that places women and children front and center. From efforts made to provide financial assistance to women and children displaced by the war, to overt propaganda targeting women and children on the home front, this volume covers women and children's experiences of war from numerous angles, and areas that have, until now, received less attention in the historiography. While copious studies exist on the history of the Second World War, studies such as these reveal that while we already have learned a lot about the conflict, there is still a lot left to examine.

These books come in addition to numerous others in which Sandra was deeply involved, including a co-edited collection with Eileen Boris and Barbara Molony, *Engendering Transnational Transgressions: From the Intimate to the Global* (Routledge, 2020). This book tackled major issues such as discrimination in the realms of race, gender, patriarchy, and marriage, through the lens of transnational history. By doing so, it revealed the depth and breadth of discrimination against women, and the different forms in which it took place across the world. It also revealed how women, and the international feminist movement more broadly, were united in helping women exposed to such discrimination and treatment, and how a distinctly global women's movement had emerged in the twentieth century.

At the time of Sandra's death, we were planning another volume on women and charitable organizations during the Second World War, which would take the research in *Engendering Transnational Transgressions* a little further to explore how women united during the Second World War to help those disproportionately affected by occupations and bombings. This research was to focus on how women not only worked to keep the home front functioning in their respective countries, but also to help fellow women in other countries experiencing the worst effect of enemy bombings - an initiative that would also help children, many of whom were displaced and/or orphaned by the war. While demonstrating that women still performed a caregiving role in the war, this research would also show that they played a pivotal role in cooperative movements, charities, and fundraising - aspects that have received less attention in the historiography, and have often been credited to male politicians at the time (who, in the case of Britain at least, were heavily assisted by their wives and female colleagues in these ventures). I feel that I owe it to Sandra to finish this work in the form of a collection of essays and implore anyone interested in contributing to this project to contact me.

Sandra's gift to the research community went beyond her publications. Meeting Sandra proved fortuitous many in our field and beyond. Because of her openness and generosity, many others were able to be included in important historiographical debates, and our knowledge of the times and issues they explored is much stronger—and indeed also much fairer—as a result.



Announcements continued

Association for Women in Slavic Studies

The Association's newsletter for Spring 2024 is now available:

<https://mailchi.mp/ac29e784d54b/news-from-awss-vol-11-issue-1-spring-16061551?e=c265d27250>

Berkshire Conference of Women Historians

Mark your calendars:

Big Berks News: the Big Berks 2026 will be held at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. The call for papers will be posted in September 2024.

In June 2024, members met at Western Kentucky University for the Little Berks and enjoyed vigorous discussions of issues facing our field, learned how to pitch print media outlets, and enjoyed games and coming together.

The Article Prize committee has announced the winners of the 2023 article prizes:

For an article in the field of the history of women, gender and/or sexualities:

Sara Balakrishnan, "Prison of the Womb: Gender, Incarceration, and Capitalism on the Gold Coast of West Africa, c. 1500-1957," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, April 2003, 65-2:296-320.

Honorable Mention: Sharon Block, "Rewriting the Rape of Rachel: Historical Methods, Historical Justice." *The William and Mary Quarterly*. October 2023. Volume 80, Number 4. pp. 649-676.

For an article in any field of history other than the history of women, gender, and/or sexuality:

Jennifer Robin Terry, "Niños por la causa: Child Activists and the United Farm Workers Movement, 1965-1975," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 92, Number 2, 227-259.

The Coalition for Western Women's History

Mark your calendars:

The 62nd Annual Western History Association Conference will be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico on October 14-17, 2025. For more updates about this year's conference be sure to check out their newest newsletter here: <https://www.westernhistory.org/2025>

The CFP deadline is **December 5, 2024**. Guidelines for submitting full sessions (preferred) are available at www.westernhistory.org/2025.



Announcements continued

The National Collaborative for Women's History Sites

The National Collaborative won a grant from the National Trust. You can read about it here: <https://ncwhs.org/news/ncwhs-wins-grant-from-the-national-trust/>

Rural Women's Studies Association

The Rural Women's Studies Association will hold its triennial conference in 2027 at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND, USA. It will be a joint conference with the [Agricultural History Society](#). Stay tuned for more information.

Southern Association for Women Historians

Mark your calendars:

SAWH Triennial Conference

You're Invited to SAWH's Thirteenth Triennial Conference!

June 19-22, 2025

Bethune-Cookman University, Daytona Beach, FL

<https://thesawh.org/2025-triennial-call-for-proposals/>

The 2025 SAWH Triennial Conference will be held in partnership with the Mary McLeod Bethune Institute for the Study of Women and Girls at Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, Florida. This is an unprecedented opportunity for our organization as 2025 will mark the 150th anniversary of Dr. Bethune's birth (and 2024 is the 120th anniversary of the university). Crystal A. deGregory, associate professor at Bethune-Cookman and director of the Bethune Institute, is the conference coordinator.

Western Association of Women Historians

Mark your calendars:

The Western Association of Women Historians will hold its next conference in Costa Mesa California, April 24-26, 2025.

The call for papers can be found here: <https://wawh.org/2025-conference#9811b675-d11d-406b-ab92-631956d7501f>

Deadline: September 30, 2024



Call for Reviewers and Books for Review

KARLA J. STRAND, REVIEWS EDITOR

Have you been thinking about writing a book review? Now's your chance! The CCWH wants you to contribute a review of a recently published book in women's history.

Reviews are usually 600 to 800 words, and deadlines are flexible. I will provide you with a copy of the book from the publisher. Reviews are published in the upcoming newsletter and online.

I'd like to call attention to several books recently published by members of The CCWH that we'd like to have reviewed:

- *Untold Histories of Nigerian Women: Emerging From the Margins* by Tayo Agunbiade, Cambridge Scholars Press, 2023.
- *Gender, Separatist Politics, and Embodied Nationalism in Cameroon* by Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta Mougoue, University of Michigan Press, 2020.
- *Music for the Kingdom of Shadows: Cinema Accompaniment in the Age of Spiritualism* by Kendra Preston Leonard, 2019.

Additional suggestions of recent books to choose from:

- *Amish Women and the Great Depression* by Katherine Jellison and Steven D. Reschly, Johns Hopkins UP, 2023.
- *At the Threshold of Liberty Women, Slavery, and Shifting Identities in Washington, D.C.* by Tamika Y. Nunley, UNC Press, 2021.
- *Becoming Catawba: Catawba Indian Women and Nation-Building, 1540-1840* by Brooke M. Bauer, University of Alabama Press, 2022.
- *Blackbirds Singing: Inspiring Black Women's Speeches from the Civil War to the Twenty-first Century* by Janet Stewart Bell, The New Press, 2024.
- *Black Woman on Board: Claudia Hampton, the California State University, and the Fight to Save Affirmative Action* by Donna J. Nicol, University of Rochester Press, 2024.
- *Black Women Taught Us: An Intimate History of Black Feminism* by Jenn M. Jackson, Random House, 2024.
- *The Bluestockings: A History of the First Women's Movement* by Susannah Gibson, WW Norton, 2024.
- *A Body of One's Own: A Trans History of Argentina* by Patricio Simonetto, University of Texas Press, 2024.
- *Chicana Liberation: Women and Mexican American Politics in Los Angeles, 1945-1981* by Marisela R Chavez, University of Illinois Press, 2024.
- *Christian Imperial Feminism: White Protestant Women and the Consecration of Empire* by Gale L. Kenny, NYU Press, 2024.
- *Coerced Liberation: Muslim Women in Soviet Tajikistan* by Zamira Abman, University of Toronto Press, 2024.
- *The Colored Conventions Movement: Black Organizing in the Nineteenth Century* by P. Gabrielle Foreman et al., UNC Press, 2021.



- *Consistent Democracy: The "Woman Question" and Self-Government in Nineteenth-Century America* by Leslie Butler, Oxford UP, 2023.
- *Deep Care: The Radical Activists Who Provided Abortions, Defied the Law, and Fought to Keep Clinics Open* by Angela Hume, AK Press, 2023.
- *The Future Is Feminist: Women and Social Change in Interwar Algeria* by Sara Rahnama, Cornell University Press, 2023.
- *Have You Got Good Religion? Black Women's Faith, Courage, and Moral Leadership in the Civil Rights Movement* by Annemarie Mingo, University of Illinois Press, 2024.
- *In the Shadow of Liberty: The Invisible History of Immigrant Detention in the United States* by Ana Raquel Minian, Viking, 2024.
- *Mae Mallory, the Monroe Defense Committee, and World Revolutions: African American Women Radical Activists* by Paula Marie Seniors, University of Georgia Press, 2024.
- *Merze Tate: The Global Odyssey of a Black Woman Scholar* by Barbara D. Savage, Yale University Press, 2023.
- *Night Flyer: Harriet Tubman and the Faith Dreams of a Free People* by Tiya Miles, Penguin, 2024.
- *Normal Women: Nine Hundred Years of Making History* by Philippa Gregory, Harper One, 2023.
- *The Rise and Fall of the Second American Republic: Reconstruction, 1860-1920* by Manisha Sinha, Liveright, 2024.
- *The Rocks Will Echo Our Sorrow: The Forced Displacement of the Northern Sami* by Elin Anna Labba, University of Minnesota Press, 2024.
- *A Short History of Trans Misogyny* by Jules Gill-Peterson, Verso, 2024.
- *Social Justice from Outside the Walls: Catholic Women in Memphis, 1950-1970* by Ann Youngblood Mulhearn, Lexington Books, 2023.
- *Surviving Southampton: African American Women and Resistance in Nat Turner's Community* by Vanessa M. Holden, University of Illinois Press, 2021.
- *To Advance the Race: Black Women's Higher Education From the Antebellum Era to the 1960s* by Linda M. Perkins, University of Illinois Press, 2024.
- *Vagabond Princess: The Great Adventures of Gulbadan* by Ruby Lal, Yale University Press, 2024.
- *Who Is a Worthy Mother?: An Intimate History of Adoption* by Rebecca Wellington, University of Oklahoma Press, 2024.
- *The Women of NOW: How Feminists Built an Organization That Transformed America* by Katherine Turk, FSG, 2023.
- *The Women's Revolution: How We Changed Your Life* by Muriel Fox, New Village Press, 2024.

Please contact me at reviews@theccwh.org if you are interested in reviewing one of the titles above. You can also suggest a book you'd like to review if it's not included here. Either way, I hope to hear from you!



Book Reviews

KARLA J. STRAND, REVIEWS EDITOR

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Rosalind Miles, *The Women's History of the Modern World: How Radicals, Rebels, and Everywomen Revolutionized the Last 200 Years*. Harper Collins, 2021. 415 pp.

REVIEWED BY EMILY SOHMER TAI, QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE, CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

A medieval and Renaissance literature specialist, Rosalind Miles has enjoyed a brisk career as a journalist, novelist, and pundit. Accordingly, this book is less a formal work of scholarship than a sequel to Miles's popular history of women and gender, *Who Cooked the Last Supper?*, which appeared in 1988 to positive reviews and has been re-issued in several editions. While Miles offers an occasional reprise of material covered in that first survey, the twelve chapters of *The Woman's History* take up, for the most part, where *Who Cooked the Last Supper?* left off, opening with an evocative consideration of the career and execution of Olympe de Gouges and concluding with such recent events as the Women's March of January 21, 2017.

Alternately celebratory and indignant, Miles is most interested in individuals she terms "heroines:" women who transgressed against traditional gender roles and the legal incapacities that might work to enforce them, and more focused--as she herself concedes--on "the Western world" (x). There is a denunciation of the "despotic" power men exercised over women through the Napoleonic code (50-54) and quotations from various prominent male intellectuals who argued for female inferiority. Miles also includes brief, lively biographical sketches of dozens of women who proved these men wrong, from the astronomer Catherine Herschel to the historian and diplomat Gertrude Bell, and many others. The Anglo-American suffrage and birth-control movements (with a nod to the French *Vésuviennes*), as well as the progress of second-stage feminism in Britain and America, are also treated in detail.

It is to Miles's credit that she endeavors to widen her coverage to accommodate issues of race and class, considering, for example, Indigenous fisherwomen and female convicts corralled into transportation to Australia and the conditions nineteenth-century women faced in mines, factories, and on slave plantations. In a section on women in armed conflicts, Miles considers the women of China's Taiping Rebellion, the battalions of Russian women who fought in World War I and II, and American nurses who served and died in the Vietnam War. Meanwhile, Miles's focus on Anglo-American female political figures occasionally shifts to profile non-Western "heroines" such as Queen Ranavalona of Madagascar or Lakshmi Bai.

Miles's celebration of the various women who could--or can--fight, fly, spy, and lead makes for a lively girl-power narrative, if one that occasionally reads like an annotated list. Making "no pretense to the traditional historical fiction of impartiality" (x), Miles's anecdotal portraits of these women are introduced as evidence to justify a concluding "Manifesto for Equality" (362-363) with which most readers of this publication will be in sympathy. If there is any flaw in this approach, it may be that Miles seldom moves beyond an implied assertion that the only real power is public power and that



the only worthy tasks are those associated with traditional male gender roles. "Equality," in Miles's definition, is about doing what men do, and so her book is a history of women who successfully jettisoned what Elizabeth Cady Stanton termed a "dependent and abject life" (195) to encroach upon male preserves. The women who come off badly in this narrative, such as Queen Victoria or Phyllis Schlafly, are those who opposed this project. Miles has less to say about complicating elements of the empowerment campaigns she traces, such as the possible involvement of Margaret Sanger or Marie Stopes in the eugenics movement. Nevertheless, the rapid pace and jaunty, readable style Miles brings to this book may stimulate an interest that leads students to more nuanced, scholarly treatments.

Amy Murrell Taylor, *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps*. University of North Carolina Press, 2020. 368 pp.

REVIEWED BY EVAN ELIZABETH HART, MISSOURI WESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

As historian Amy Murrell Taylor notes in the introduction to *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps*, throughout the war, approximately 500,000 enslaved people fled to Union lines seeking both protection and freedom (5). While the history of enslaved people as "contraband" has been well covered, the experiences of these individuals - men, women, and children who emancipated themselves in their decisions to flee - have largely been hidden. In her masterful book, Taylor traces the steps of a number of refugees in order to reconstruct the experiences of those in the slave refugee camps. In humanizing the experience of enslaved refugees, Taylor reveals the many ways refugees were able "to begin imagining the future" (4) while grappling with the very real political, social, and material challenges in seeking freedom.

One of the major goals of *Embattled Freedom* is to "reconstruct, from the crumbling pages of military records, newspapers, and missionary reports, the way that the refugee camps looked and were experienced by those who lived there" (7). Taylor does this brilliantly through three case studies: the experiences of Edward and Emma Whitehurst, Eliza Bogan, and Gabriel Burdett. As with all good case studies, Taylor uses these four individuals to personalize the larger picture of the refugee camps and the rocky road to any sense of real freedom for refugees. The Whitehursts became storekeepers in Hampton, Virginia. Eliza Bogan made her way to Arkansas in an attempt to build a new life. Gabriel Burdett, a preacher, forged a path in Camp Nelson, Kentucky. By humanizing the experiences of refugees, Taylor reminds us that refugees were not nameless "contraband" to be used by the Union Army against the Confederacy. They were real people with hopes, dreams, and agendas that often differed from the federal government's vision of their lives post-emancipation.



An important factor in recognizing the humanity of Black men, women, and children fleeing to Union lines is to stop referring to them as contraband. Taylor notes historians “have grown accustomed to calling them ‘contraband,’ a term that, while rooted in General Butler’s original language, succinctly conveys the unique transitional status they assumed during the Civil War. But that was not a term that people tended to use themselves” (9). Instead, she follows the lead of the abolitionist newspaper *Liberator* in referring to these individuals as refugees. In doing so, she ties the experiences of formerly enslaved refugees to the historical experiences of others both within and outside of the United States. While the United Nations currently has a clear definition of refugee, which references crossing national borders to avoid persecution, Taylor notes that there was no clear definition in the 19th century. For her, there is no question that enslaved individuals “faced violent persecution of an all-encompassing sort in the antebellum South and the newly formed Confederate republic. And those in the Union most willing to help them found in “refugee” a term that evoked both their liminal status and their compelling need for protection” (10). Enslaved folks running to Union lines were, indeed, refugees.

While the book focuses on these four refugees, Taylor never loses sight of the broader experiences of others within various camps. The book argues that the transformation from enslavement to freedom was one “embedded in military conflict” and was thus a chaotic process. She notes, “the war effort to which the slaves’ radical cause became fused was a fundamentally conservative one – saving a Union that had long enslaved them – which yielded, almost from the start, an imperfect fit” (11). This helps explain, in part, why “emancipation itself was not a linear story, but instead a fitful journey of forward movement and backward retreats” (17). As Taylor notes, enslaved peoples fled consistently throughout the years leading up to the war. However, the crisis of war opened up new spaces for enslaved refugees to demand freedom, even when these demands butted up against the needs of both the Union army and the federal government.

Nowhere is this more clear than in the many political shifts taking place throughout the war. While historians understand that the Emancipation Proclamation did not end slavery throughout the country, Taylor complicates our understanding by noting that the various exemptions listed in the proclamation meant that “the places where enslaved people could go in the hope of finding freedom . . . would be determined by the perception of political loyalty and disloyalty among the white people living there” (60). This sometimes forced refugees to change direction, move to different locations, or continue following Union troops for protection.

The desires of refugees for more expansive ideas of freedom also came up against those of the white leaders of the camps, and the white philanthropists tasked with providing support to refugees. Strings were attached to relief efforts. “Deeply ingrained expectations about the proper behavior and morals of newly freed people . . . were channeled into nearly everything, from the provision of clothing to the establishment of schools” (14). Taylor’s chapter on clothing is particularly eye-opening in regard to the battles to exert one’s freedom beyond no longer being enslaved. White relief workers had clear ideas on how refugees should be clothed, but so did refugees. One such aid worker, Maria Mann, referred to Black women as “showy” and “wasteful” when they wore donated clothing from white women. She feared refugee women were attempting, in some way, to “be like white women”, which was not the case. Taylor argues, “refugee women were . . . more



concerned with not being a *slave* and not looking the part of a slave” (171, emphasis in original). The dreary, conservative, cheap clothing provided by aid workers was another badge of inferiority, in the eyes of refugees, and limited their ability to separate themselves from their past in bondage.

While many refugees found freedom in their fleeing to Union lines and to camps, Taylor notes that Lincoln’s death and Johnson’s ascension meant backward movement for many. Although the 13th Amendment formally freed enslaved Americans, freedom was always more complex than a shift away from bondage. As Taylor points out, Johnson’s “Amnesty Proclamation, issued on May 29, 1865, promised former Confederates ‘restoration of all rights of property, except as to slaves,’ as long as they took an oath of loyalty to the United States” (214). This began placing control of The South back into the hands of former slaveholders who took control of land refugees worked in order to live out their vision of freedom. And as the federal government became more invested in pushing freedmen and women to work the land and help the southern economy recover, the vision many refugees had of freedom from white control began to disappear.

Embattled Freedom is a masterful book that humanizes the realities of enslaved refugees searching for freedom and a new way of life during the war. In particular, Taylor teaches us how important it is to center Black Americans in the histories of the Civil War if we are to understand the experiences of enslaved individuals. While it may be a painstaking endeavor to reconstruct these forgotten stories, her book shows that it is well worth the effort.

Einav Rabinovitch-Fox, *Dressed for Freedom: The Fashionable Politics of American Feminism*. University of Illinois Press, 2021. 272 pp.

REVIEWED BY JENNIFER LE ZOTTE, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

Is fashion empowering or oppressive? The honest, difficult answer is yes. Einav Rabinovitch-Fox’s *Dressed for Freedom: The Fashionable Politics of American Feminism* centers on the recurrent puzzle of style and social progress by interrogating fashion’s role across the varied landscape of American feminism. Many of the trends examined are familiar, from bloomers to miniskirts, but the author’s assessment of their individual and collective significance is a welcome historical intervention. Well-organized and accessible, *Dressed for Freedom* fills in long-standing gaps in social movement, fashion, and feminist histories for all levels of interested readers.

Relying on industry archives, diverse media sources, activist speeches and letters, and formalized dress codes, the book surveys about eighty years of fashions relevant to American feminism. Rabinovitch-Fox’s primary focus is not on big “P” politics but on the extent to which intentionally liberating styles ripple out into the broader world as trends, carrying with them underpinning ideals. She argues that “fashion became a vehicle for the mainstreaming of feminism in public discourse” (5). Rabinovitch-Fox observes that diverse women’s desires for “fashionability” worked across race



and, to a lesser extent, class more effectively than fashion itself (4). While not stretching historical actors' intentions, the book convincingly shows how fashionable dress expanded civic rights for women.

"Feminism" has never been a singular movement. Therefore, *Dressed for Freedom* covers various sartorial perspectives: Black styles, queer fashions, and labor activist dress included. The author's evidence and analyses are most robust when considering women's fashionable purpose before the 1920s, concurrent with the first wave of feminism. Rabinovitch-Fox's examination of the deceptively simple waist shirt (most popular in the decades before the passage of the 19th Amendment) competently demonstrates how fashion can unintentionally serve as an allying political force across racial and class divides. Though initially linked to the middle-class, white New Woman, the shirtwaist's association with America made the garment a valuable tool of inclusion for immigrant, Black, and laboring women in the U.S.

Many of the fashion examples in *Dressed for Freedom* bear out the argument that liberating ideals piggybacked onto specific trends, such as the dress details of the iconic Gibson Girl and the shortened hemlines of the 1920s. However, this narrative wavers when Rabinovitch-Fox notes that the "mainstream fashion industry" appropriated the bosom-bearing hippie feminist style of the 1970s, "emptying it of any radical meaning" (179). At what point do the mechanisms of capitalism stop benefitting the spread of liberating ideology and start appropriating its aesthetic without the content? A more explicit representation of the changes in the "fashion industry" may be vital to answering this question.

Dressed for Freedom does assess U.S. women's feminist interventions in the field of fashion design and distribution. Beginning in the 1920s, The Fashion Group, with its proponents' skilled networking and lobbying, promoted American design internationally and enabled the individual prosperity of women in the U.S. According to Rabinovitch-Fox, by 1940, "nearly 84 percent of female executives in the United States (218 out of 260) held positions in a fashion-related field" (121). In later chapters, however, the use of "fashion industry" remains oblique. The author cites *Women's Wear Daily* as the source of the controversial push for midi-length skirts in 1970, but the reader gets little idea of how and why individual boosters had the power they did. While investigating the intricacies of an expanding industry is delicate, complex work probably better suited to a stand-alone research project, the omission mystifies significant changes in how fashionability acts in conjunction with feminism after World War II.

As with any book that covers such a necessary and neglected topic as feminist dress in the U.S., Rabinovitch-Fox leaves meat on the table. For example, her riveting discussions of women's wardrobes in wartime stay close to familiar material, such as the opportunities the Nazi occupation of Paris during WWII offered American designers and the expanding use of denim amongst female war workers. Still needing more in-depth consideration is the jumpsuit, a versatile and unisex World War I invention with a fascinating feminist history, as explored in a 2019 episode of the fashion podcast [Dressed: The History of Fashion](#). Considering the role of female zoot suiters' attire during WWII would include Latina dressers or the pachucas who asserted their own patriotic identity by



emulating the pegged-leg and drape-coated vibes of their male counterparts and by wearing sexy styles with short skirts and fishnet pantyhose (Peiss 2014, 72). Ultimately, these further possibilities only underscore the need for the exciting and relevant discourse offered in *Dressed for Freedom*, which is appropriate for survey history courses and imperative for all historians of dress and fashion.

Viviana Beatriz MacManus, *Disruptive Archives: Feminist Memories of Resistance in Latin America's Dirty Wars*. University of Illinois Press, 2020. 196 pp.

REVIEWED BY EMILY SOHMER TAI, QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE, CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

While “archives,” a keyword in the title of this compelling book, evokes dusty records of a distant past, the Latin American “Dirty Wars,”—which claimed the lives of nearly 30,000 victims between the 1960s and 1980s in Argentina alone—have also left behind survivors whose memories of torture and loss constitute a living archive of oral witness. Witnesses who are women, MacManus argues, carry particular potential to disrupt what she terms “masculinist” narratives of struggle or reconciliation that have obscured the full historical record of these campaigns in two Latin American polities on which she focuses as case studies: Mexico and Argentina.

The backbone of *Disruptive Archives* is a series of interviews MacManus conducted with twelve female activists from these two countries. In four chapters, flanked by an introduction and an epilogue, MacManus weaves their oral histories with published government records, documentaries, and fictionalized literary and cinematic narratives to argue that women do not merely tell a different story but tell a story differently—emphasizing female agency “to illuminate the parallel forms of gendered state violence that undergirded the nascent neoliberal modernist projects of Argentina and Mexico” (3). Integrating their testimonies into the historical narrative, contends MacManus, fashions memory into an instrument for achieving what the human rights scholar Wendy Brown has called “comprehensive justice” (4).

MacManus’s introduction is a survey of campaigns against activists inspired by the success of the 1959 Cuban Revolution to resist neoliberal capitalism in both countries. While Mexico’s history has received less attention, MacManus shows that here, too, there was repression. Her examples include the Tlatelolco Massacre on October 2, 1968, when paramilitary forces entered Mexico City’s Plaza de las Tres Culturas and opened fire on 3,000 peaceful protestors; the Corpus Christi massacre of student protestors in 1971; and the murders and disappearances of various known or suspected guerrilla activists.



MacManus compares the experiences of Mexican female activists to those of women in Argentina's more notorious campaign against progressives under the leadership of Jorge Rafael Videla, who took power in a military coup in 1976 and retained it until 1983. "Although the state castigated the 'deviant' bodies of both leftist men and women," writes MacManus, "it was the politically resistant bodies of women" –who joined socialist groups in large numbers—"that provoked anxiety and fear among the capitalist-patriarchal heads of state" (10). For MacManus, the memories these women share challenge the "Two Devils theory" that has posited the violence of the Dirty War period as the equal responsibility of "terrorists" from the left and repressive policing on the right, as well as representations of these women as merely passive victims (12).

Chapter 1 studies discrepancies between the witness of McManus's subjects and representations of women in the records of Argentina's National Commission on the Disappeared (CONADEP), published as the *Nunca Más* (Never Again) Report and Mexico's Office of the Special Prosecutor for Social and Political Movements of the Past (FEMOSPP); Elana Poniatowska's collection of oral histories from witnesses of the Tlatelolco Massacre; Nil el flacon perdón de Dios, an oral history of the Argentinian Dirty Wars; and Nora Strejilevich's *A Single Numberless Death*. Chapter 2 interprets representations of women and gender in two fictional dramatizations of the Dirty War era, Marco Bechis's *Garage Olimpo* and José Revueltas's novel *El apando* (The Hole), through the lens of Achille Mbembé's concept of "necropolitics:" "the subjugation of life to the power of death" (63). Chapter 3 shows how women's memory may complement documentaries such as *Flor en Otomí*, a biography of the murdered Mexican activist Dení Prieto Stock, and *Marta Diana's Mujeres guerrilleras*, an anthology of testimony from women who fought in Argentina. In chapter 4 and the epilogue, MacManus turns to her twelve interview subjects, arguing that their feminist oral histories continue to disrupt dominant narratives, as evidenced by the assassination of Argentinian torture survivor Silvia Suppo after testifying before a human rights commission as recently as 2010 and young female factory workers facing escalating femicide in Mexico. An appendix with transcripts of MacManus's interviews might have been the only improvement made to this powerful book.