Spring 2024: “If there is no struggle, there is no progress”

Welcome to the Spring issue of Digging Up the Past. As we now start the Spring semester here in Pullman, and across the campuses of the WSU system, I find it an exciting time as we commemorate three very important months during the semester: Black History Month in February, Women’s History Month in March, and Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month in April. On campus students brace the frigid temperatures to continue their empowering education, all while engaging and participating in exciting cultural and social events here at WSU. The main mission of Digging Up the Past is to invite our student community, and the community at large, to think about History in their daily lives and to consider the ways by which History has transformed their understanding of the world around them. As such, when we “dig up the past” we can begin to have a transformative and completely new perspective of our individual, and collective, histories and the impact these have on the world today.

The Spring semester is also a joyous time that sees not only the graduation of bright minds, but also multitude of visits from prospective students to campus. If you are interested in History, rest assured that the Department of History at WSU has plenty of information on the field and on the exciting opportunities and possibilities that a degree in History can bring! Please refer to page 10 for a list of exciting events happening at WSU during the Spring 2024 semester.

As we commemorate Black History month in February, this issue contains a special page on the History and legacy of Frederick Douglas, one of this country’s earliest freedom fighters and fiercest advocates of equality across racial lines. Matter of fact, the quote that opens this issue, “If there is no struggle, there is no progress,” is perhaps one of Douglas’s most enduring quotes, one that still has tremendous relevance to this day. While Douglas is often relegated to events of the nineteenth century such as the Civil War and emancipation, it is key that we build on the actions he took to seek a more equitable American society. Also, in commemoration of Women’s History Month, this issue dedicates most of the “Digging this Day” section to celebrate African American, Native American, and Latinx women that have been instrumental to the fight of civil rights and equality in this country. This issue also celebrates the important contributions of Latinx Transgender women like Sylvia Rivera, showcasing a student-crafted essay on Rivera that explores her legacy.

I wish everyone a productive semester, and for those of you graduating this Spring 2024, ¡Felicidades!

Sincerely,

Alan Alexander Malfavon, Ph.D
Born enslaved in 1817, Frederick Douglas escaped from bondage in Maryland in 1838, travelling north, and eventually becoming a national speaker and leader of the abolitionist movement in both Massachusetts and New York. Considered by many to be one of the most prominent U.S. abolitionists of the nineteenth-century, Douglas became an avid writer and fierce orator whose work was always aimed towards the eradication of slavery in the United States, and later, with the coming of emancipation for most African-Americans, dedicated to achieve equal social and political rights. Douglas wrote three essential autobiographies that described life as an enslaved person of African descent in the United States: Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, an American Slave (1845), My Bondage and My Freedom (1855), and Life and Times of Frederick Douglas (1881).

One of his most memorable quotations is: “What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim.”

A powerful question that opened his July 4th speech in 1852 remains a testament of the heightened disparities between the promises of equal rights proclaimed by the United States’ founding fathers, and the failure of granting rights to enslaved, and free, African Americans as the country still thrived from the toil, enslavement, and oppression of African descendants. While the nineteenth-century might seem like a very long time ago, it was the work of abolitionists like Douglas that highly influenced the actions, ideologies, techniques of resistance, and intellectual frameworks, that Civil Rights leaders in the 1960s built upon. May his legacy never be forgotten. Learn more at the National Museum of African American History and Culture: https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/nations-story-what-slave-fourth-july

Learn More

Books:
Here you have a sampling of the many history projects completed by undergraduate students at Washington State University in Fall of 2023.

**Racism and Social Class: The Casta system of Latin America, by Joey Saparto, History 230**

The *casta* system was one of the most, if not the most important aspect of the colonial period in Latin America, which continues to affect the social landscape today. The *casta* system was an incredibly complicated system of racial classification that was created by Spanish and Portuguese colonizers, creating a social and political order based on a person's heritage, placing white Europeans at the top and placing Africans and Indigenous people at the bottom. The *casta* system was based on an individual's heritage. An example of this would be that under this system a mulatto (someone mixed with European and African blood) was considered higher in the social order than compared to a native African, due to them having more European blood. Even after the Latin American Wars of Independence when the *casta* system was officially removed the revolutionaries would continue to herald specific races over others, with the mestizo, people with European and Indigenous heritage as the new preferred identity. The sources used for this research were from the primary source collection from John Charles Chasteen called “Born in Blood and Fire: Latin American Voices”. This book has accounts from some of the most influential people in Latin American history such as “The Angostura Address”, by Simón Bolívar, The Liberator, “Travels in Brazil” by Henry Koster, and “A Guide for Inexperienced Travelers”, by Alonso Carrió de la Vandera. Using these sources along with many others this paper serves a window into the past that analyzes consistent ideas of racial identity and inequality in Latin America. I argue that the *casta* system is the most important aspect of the Latin American colonial period, which allows racism to plague Latin America even to this day.

“How the Conservative Christian Right Used Intellectual Discourse to Justify and Reinforce Bigotry: Studying Opposition to Same-Sex Marriage, 1996-2015,” by Trevor Bolin, for History 469

In the United States, between 1995 and 2015, conservative pundits and the Republican party altered how they discussed same-sex marriage and the LGBT+ community. Sourced from articles and videos available from conservative news, magazines, and advocacy groups between 1995 and 2015 and then using the citations within those articles to discover the sources for their claims, I compared those sources with other research from contemporary scholars. Three questions guided the research: What were common conclusions among conservative news sources and advocacy groups in their arguments against same-sex marriage? What were the sources that conservative writers used to make those arguments? Finally, were the sources biased, misquoted, or used out of context? My paper contends that between 1995 and 2015, conservative writers who argued against same-sex marriage did so under the guise of intellectual authority by removing context, citing biased sources, and misquoting others to cultivate panic about dangers to children and the undermining of American values. This fear-mongering technique continues today with panic about transgender issues. Inhibiting trans-youth access to quality-of-life improvements such as gender-affirming medical care, using their pronouns, and education about gender can cause immense emotional distress and other problems. The ACLU, as of April 2023, is tracking 452 different bills across the United States that would harm the LGBTQ+ community. This research is significant because when discriminatory language towards marginalized groups becomes normalized within the United States, Americans take a hop, skip, and a goose step away from democracy.
History Haiku: Get Published (college and high school students)!

**Haiku:** Poems that have five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third (a total of seventeen syllables). Their lines do not rhyme. *They recreate a single image/moment in time.*

Haiku is a form of poetry that uses few words to create a vivid image of a snapshot in time. It was popularized by Matsuo Basho in seventeenth-century Japan. In History classes at WSU, students sometimes write “history haiku,” short poems of three lines, capturing a specific moment/historical event from the past, or celebrating the power of history.

While “American haiku” sometimes plays lose and free with the number of syllables in each line of poetry, in Dr. H’s classes students adhere to the traditional 5-7-5 standard: line one of the haiku must be five syllables, line two seven and, and line three five.

**A method for crafting history haiku:**

- Sit and reflect on a specific moment in history, picture that moment in your mind. What does it feel like to be in that moment? What do you see?
- Pick up your pen and write three lines to paint the image. Do not worry about syllables, simply write three lines that capture that moment in time.
- Edit each line for syllables and imagery. Is there a word that brings out your image more vividly than the words in your draft? If so, bring those words into your poem. Does your poem have 10 syllables in line two? Then you must find synonyms for some of your words that have fewer syllables or delete some words.
- While editing, be sure to keep the image fresh and vivid in your mind. Enjoy!

Below are two poems by WSU history students. Mila Montoya’s poem addresses the power of history, while John Hentges’ work focuses his readers on a specific struggle for freedom.

Mila Montoya, History 369, Spring 2023

Yo soy un libro
of histories and mysteries a
sacred scripture

John Hentges, History 369, Spring 2023

Harsh desert winds blow,
North Stars guide a mother home
Journey to new hope

Would you like to see your creative work in print? Craft a haiku for a project you are researching and send your polished work to Dr. Heidenreich Zuñiga at [Lheidenr@wsu.edu](mailto:Lheidenr@wsu.edu). In the subject line, be sure to write “history haiku.” Our editing team will pick the top submissions to publish in the winter edition of *Digging up the Past* (the themes of the Spring edition are African American and Black history and Women’s History Month). High school students are welcome to submit!
LGBTQ historians often cite Sylvia Rivera as one of the most prominent Latinx transgender activists of her time. While Rivera is most praised for her involvement with the Stonewall Riots of 1969, her influence reaches far beyond the riots, with years dedicated to activism and social justice. Rivera is primarily known for her work in gay, trans, and women’s liberation struggles, but she was also involved with many other significant political movements in New York; some examples include the anti-Vietnam War movements, Black liberation movements, and the Puerto Rican liberation movements. [1] Her activism helped bring attention to many important civil rights and social justice issues. Understanding the life and impact of Sylvia Rivera is important because it helps us understand the political and intersectional structures of race, gender, and class in the America of her time. At a time when LGBTQ+ rights and politics were often dominated by white LGBTQ+ people, many of the strides and improvements made for our communities were because of Sylvia Rivera’s commitment and activism.

Much of Sylvia Rivera’s fame and impact on U.S history came from her participation and role during the Stonewall riot of June 28, 1969. During the summer of 1969, police hostility and brutality to the LGBTQ+ communities of New York were at an all-time high. This was a systemic effort to police sexualities and identities. Tensions increased as those from marginalized and criminalized groups grew tired of police violence. The Stonewall Inn was a gay establishment in Greenwich Village, and it was raided on numerous occasions. However, on this specific June night, there was a large group of onlookers—primarily oppressed and marginalized LGBTQ+ people—gathered around the bar. As they had in the past, police loaded their wagons with gay, trans, and queer individuals on falsified and exaggerated charges. The crowd grew angry; they were tired of the brutal oppression and policing of gender and sexuality. [2]

Enraged by police violence and oppressive actions, the onlookers rose in protest and defense of the victims of the police raid. Rivera is often credited at throwing the first bottle, but she herself asserts that she was not the first, but the second person to throw a Molotov cocktail. Whether she was the first or the second, her actions were among those that triggered a historical event, causing others in the crowd to launch into a strong and violent resistance to the police. They pushed the police back. Rivera was instrumental as a transgender Latinx woman in causing the uprising, which was a major step for gay and trans rights.

Street named for Sylvia Rivera. Photo by Gotty. Wikimedia Commons

After the Stonewall Riots, Sylvia Rivera became very involved with the struggle for gay and transgender rights and liberation. She was a part of the Gay Activist Alliance, as well as a founding member of the Gay Liberation Front, attending marches and protests. With the help of Rivera’s friend and fellow Stonewall veteran, Marsha P. Johnson, she helped establish the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) program. STAR was created to help at-risk trans and other LGBTQ+ youth on the streets and give them opportunities and protections that Rivera herself and many others did not have access to. STAR’s manifesto read:

We want a revolutionary peoples’ government, where transvestites, street people, women, homosexuals, Puerto Ricans, Indians, and all oppressed people are free, and not f*#d over by this government who … kills us off like flies, one by one, and throws us into jail to rot. This government who spends millions of dollars to go to the moon, and lets the poor Americans starve to death.

Rivera also advocated abolishing discrimination against trans individuals in employment, housing, and healthcare.

Rivera’s activism extended to the rights of multiple communities. She was an activist for women’s liberation, attending and spearheading protests for women’s rights. She networked with the Young Lords and with Black liberation movements. Many of the strides made for LGBTQ+ individuals can be attributed to the way she was able to see the big picture and make connections between different kinds of discrimination.

Sylvia Rivera’s actions and activism were catalysts for a better future for LGBTQ+ youth and adults. Today her legacy and sacrifices are celebrated across the country, inspiring organizations such as the Sylvia Rivera Project, which works to ensure that people are free to their self-expression and identity, without discrimination or oppression. For we who dream and work for a more just society, Rivera provided a firm foundation on which to build.

Further Reading


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January 7, 1955: Marian Anderson is the first African American women to sing at the Metropolitan Opera (TMWH).

January 15  Martin Luther King, Jr., civil rights leader, born, 1929 – 1968

January 25  Sojourner Truth addressed the first Black Women's Rights Convention, Akron Ohio, 1851

February 4, 1913 Birthday of Rosa Parks, “Mother of the Civil Rights Movement,” her arrest after refusing to give up her seat on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama, sparked a boycott of the bus system, which eventually led to the Supreme Court decision to integrate buses (NWHA)
February 22, 1876 (1938) – Gertrude Bonnin (Zitkala-Sha), writer; Sioux Indian activist, founded the National Council of American Indians (1926)(NWHA)

March 12, 1929 – Birthday of Lupe Anguiano, Mexican-American civil rights activist known for her work on women’s rights, the rights of the poor, and the protection of the environment, served in the California Department of Health, Education and Welfare (1965), worked with Cesar Chavez, national organizer for the United Farm Workers and founded the National Women’s Employment & Education Inc., founding member of the National Women’s Political Caucus (NWHA).

March 27, 1950 – Birthday of Julia Alvarez, Dominican-American poet, novelist, and essayist, her first novel *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991) was highly acclaimed for its portrayal of the integration of Latina immigrants into the U.S. mainstream (NWHA).
WSU Spring Events!

The following is a short list compiling exciting events and opportunities happening at the Pullman campus and online this Spring 2024 semester!

- Caring Coug Cards- Systemwide MLK Service Project- Friday, January 12th, @12pm- Online
- National Day of Racial Healing: Creative Writing & Mindfulness Workshop- Tuesday January 16th @10:30am- Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
- National Day of Racial Healing: Faculty Panel “Tell the Story, Heal the Heart”- Tuesday January 16th @ 9:10am- Online
- Writers Give Voice: Reading and Open Mic- Tuesday January 16th @ 1:45pm- Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art
- African American Student Center MLK/ Marc Robinson Welcome Back Reception- Wednesday January 17th @4pm- The Great Hall in the Lewis Alumni Center
- Black History Month Celebration (February)
- 2024 Health Justice & Belonging Conference- Wednesday, February 7th @10am- Online
- Experience WSU- Saturday February 10th @8am to 5pm- CUB
- Experience WSU- Saturday February 24th @8am to 5pm- CUB
- Women’s History Month (March)
- Experience WSU- Saturday March 9th @8am to 5pm- CUB
- Title IX- Know your Rights- Wednesday, March 20th @3pm- Online
- Experience WSU- Saturday March 23rd @8am to 5pm- CUB
- Disability Awareness Symposium- April- CUB
- Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month (April)
- Spring Preview 2024- Saturday April 13th @8am to noon- Beasley Coliseum
- Experience WSU- Saturday April 20th @8am to 5pm- CUB
Spring History Quiz (all answers can be found in this edition of Digging up the Past)

Writer and Sioux Indian activist, founded the National Council of American Indians (1926)(NWHA).

Quotable Past
One of the fiercest abolitionists in 19th Century U.S. also considered one of the earliest Civil Rights activists in our country. He was born on February 14th 1817.

Addressed the first Black Women's Rights Convention, Akron Ohio, 1851.

Mexican-American civil rights activist known for her work on women’s rights, the rights of the poor, and the protection of the environment.

Bring your answers to the Department of History Wilson-Short 301 for your LOADED HISTORY MUG!

How many syllables are in a History Haiku?
“History is instructive. What it suggests to people is that even if they do little things, if they walk on the picket line, if they join a vigil, if they write a letter to their local newspaper... Anything they do, however small, becomes part of a much larger sort of flow of energy. And when enough people do enough things, however small they are, then change takes place.”

Howard Zinn, American historian (1922-2010)