

Historiography

in Mass Communication



Volume 6 (2020). Number 2

Historiography in Mass Communication

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Essays

This journal invites historians to submit essays. They may be original ones written specifically for this journal, or they may be from material that the authors already have (such as classroom lectures, AJHA presidential addresses, etc.).

Essay length may vary from 500 to 5,000 words.

To submit an essay for consideration, email a Word file to the editor at wmdsloan@gmail.com

We place importance on the credentials of authors and normally expect an author to have published at least one history book. As you consider submitting an essay, please note that *Historiography* does not go through multiple “revise-and-resubmit” stages. In essence, we expect authors to have an expertise and to “get it right” from the beginning.

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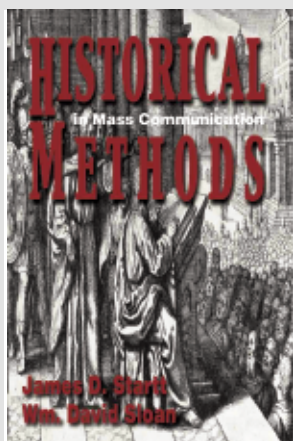
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Pretenders and Pros

By Wm. David Sloan ©



Sloan

My brother was a student of the game of baseball. He learned to hit — and very well, I will add — by studying Hank Aaron. “David,” he advised me when I was thirteen, “if you want to be a good hitter, imitate Aaron.” Then he pointed out how Aaron positioned his feet parallel to home plate, how he held his bat straight up in order to shorten his swing, how he stepped into pitches, how he kept his head still, and how he snapped his wrists. But I never got to the point that I could hit like Aaron — or even like my brother. I was more a pretend-hitter.

What does all this have to do with history? It may not be a perfect analogy, but the answer is that our field has many excellent historians, but it also has some pretenders.

Consider this: The level of scholarship in JMC history is higher today than at any time in the past. We have more good historians than ever before. We have more who understand the principles of historical research and who are rigorous in following them. We have more who

David Sloan, a professor emeritus from the University of Alabama, is the author/editor of more than forty books and is a recipient of the American Journalism Historians Association’s Kobre Award for lifetime achievement and of a variety of other awards.

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perform by the highest standards.

But also consider this: While overall the work being done in JMC history is good, Deconstruction, Cultural Studies, Critical Theory, and other such ahistorical, assertive mindsets have made their way into the field. They have come not mainly through history but through such academic disciplines as communication studies — which, by the way, is not the most likely place to go if one is looking for an understanding of the past or for sound historical methods, even though some professors residing there claim to be writing history.

With non-historical approaches making intrusions into JMC history, it's a good idea periodically to review the fundamental principles of historical study.

In that vein, what outstanding historians say can be instructive. In the field of JMC history, some of the very best historians are those who have received the Kobre Award for Lifetime Achievement. The American Journalism Historians Association first gave the award in 1985 and has now recognized twenty-eight historians with the honor.

In previous issues of our journal, we have asked Kobre winners to share their philosophy of history. What they've said can provide a primer on how we should approach the study of history. Here are some of their observations:

Jim Startt: “Remember that history at its best is a narrative about life, that it should *conform to the canons of historical inquiry*, and that every past has an inner logic that can never be recaptured in full.”

Debbie van Tuyl: “Eschew present-mindedness. Nothing annoys me more than listening to someone opine about those who lived in earlier times while holding them to contemporary standards. Historians must take their subjects as they were — warts and all. Or no warts and all. This is especially relevant for those of us who work in the area of

Confederate journalism history.... Many of our readers — many other scholars even — like to think of the Confederacy as a monolith. It was anything but that.”

Pat Washburn: “You must put yourself back into the time period that you are studying, and look at it as people at the time saw things, instead of looking at history through today’s rose-colored glasses; study history in the order that things happened because only then will you understand why things occurred; and work hard to avoid bias. Finally, you must tell not only *what* happened but *why* things occurred because asking *why* will take you to new areas of understanding in history that you would never get to otherwise.”

Kitty Endres: “My historical research has been shaped by two things — curiosity (a characteristic nurtured in my journalism career) and research principles I learned in graduate school. I begin with an idea that I find personally interesting. How can you spend hours studying a subject unless you are interested in it? I always start with secondary research from many different disciplines. Sometimes that narrows my focus; other times it makes me rethink my idea. Then I go into the primary sources. These may be sources no other scholar has ever touched. (And how exciting is that?) I spend hours, weeks, months, sometimes a year or more with these primary sources. I also question my work as I do research, as I write, as I rewrite. Is present-mindedness making its way into my work? Does the evidence support my conclusions? Why/how is all this happening? It’s a complex, intense, exciting, frustrating experience.”

Hazel Dicken-Garcia: “Investigating what others have written and concluded about a subject of study is vital. What information have others already told us about the subject? The degree to which this process informs the true scholar cannot be over-stated, for it enables one to per-

ceive, access, assess, digest, and dissect intellectual trends and ways of approaching subjects — and their various contributions to understanding. It spurs an intellectual growth, depth, and vision achievable only through engaging with deeply considered work of great historian-thinkers.”

Leonard Teel: “If I have a ‘philosophy’ of history, the closest to that would involve pragmatism. In practice, I am a searcher, suspending disbelief and seeking to learn enough about my subject so that I can ask the right questions and discover what I might otherwise not have known. I am often surprised by unfolding stories and evolving discoveries that reveal more than I imagined.”

Mike Murray: “When we honored Sid [Kobre] with the first Kobre Award, he stressed how the best journalism historians really needed to be great reporters first. It’s an obvious analogy, making comparisons in terms of the importance of the goal of objectivity, offering as much context and perspective as possible. Easier said than done. But a great goal.”

Maurine Beasley: “I think the most important principle is eagerness to learn — and to pass on to others what you have learned. The journalist is busy trying to find out what is happening. The historian tries to find out why it happened. If you want to be an historian, you have to love what you are doing and think it is important to tell others what you have learned. There is no particular right or wrong in history, barring false facts, blatant misinterpretations, fraudulent theories, sloppy writing, etc.”

David Copeland: “History, especially the history of the media, is not a passive study of the past. It is active because people have actively used the media to affect each other, culture, social institutions, and government for more than three hundred years.... [W]e need to ... use our skills as media practitioners to deliver in the most compelling and accu-

rate way we can because people from every element and strata of society turned to the media because of their reach and power.”

To sum it up: Historical study is a field with centuries of practice and yet has rigorous standards that today are very modern. The main thing we in JMC history need to do is understand and practice them. JMC historians must perform by the highest principles of good history. That means they must understand the methods of historical research and adhere to them. They cannot be pretenders. JMC historians need to be *serious* about history!

In this issue of *Historiography*, John Ferré leads off with an account of his work to compile a bibliography of secondary sources for a project on documentary films. In the process, he explains approaches that all JMC historians should find helpful. For our Q&A with a historian, Erika Pribanic-Smith graciously agreed to do an interview. Not only is she an excellent historian, but she has been a leader in our field’s academic organizations. It is always with sorrow when we must publish a memorial tribute to a historian who has recently died. That is the case with the late Mike Farrell of the University of Kentucky. In remembrance of him, we’ve included a column written by one of his students, Bailey Vandiver. For our Q&A with the author of an award-winning book, Rob Parkinson discusses his book *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution*. It received the 2017 Best Journalism and Mass Communication History Book Award from the AEJMC’s History Division. Finally, for our Roundtable, Tom Mascaro leads a panel of four other historians in a discussion of documentary journalism. As they emphasize, historiography in the field “requires a layered, multi-faceted approach.”

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How to Handle a Fruitless Search for Secondary Sources

By John P. Ferré ©



Ferré

Beginning a research project on media history is typically a matter of finding secondary sources to read. What have others had to say about the topic? The “quick search” function on the Library of Congress website will likely yield dozens of book titles. Database searches through a university library’s website will typically result in a list of popular and scholarly articles, most of which are immediately available online. If there is a problem with starting a research project this way, it is that the searches will likely identify an overwhelming number of secondary sources, an embarrassment of riches that requires the researcher to narrow the subject to make the secondary reading manageable.

But what if there are no secondary sources — no classic book, no illuminating chapter, no go-to article? What then? A paucity of secondary literature may be the dream of a graduate student in search of a thesis topic or of a more seasoned researcher looking to make a contribu-

John P. Ferré is a professor of communication at the University of Louisville. A former president of the American Journalism Historians Association, he served on an ecumenical jury at the Montréal World Film Festival.

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tion to the field, but staring into a void is disconcerting nonetheless. It leaves the researcher alone, without the perspectives of others to suggest ways to interpret historical artifacts.

This is the situation I find myself in now. I have been looking for a history of documentary films about religion and have come up empty-handed.

Some Background

This subject is not as arbitrary as it might sound at first. I've been teaching a course for the past few years called Faith and Film, which examines the history of movies about religion from the silent era until today. We consider classic films mostly, critically acclaimed movies that endure today through such channels as Amazon.com and Netflix. Early on we discuss Dreyer's silent masterpiece, *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, and the first talkie, *The Jazz Singer*. We watch Cecil B. DeMille's salacious spectacle, *The Sign of the Cross*, which helped convince concerned Roman Catholics to form The Legion of Decency, and we watch Roberto Rossellini's *The Miracle*, the attempted suppression of which led the Supreme Court in 1952 to bring motion pictures under the umbrella of the First Amendment in *Joseph Burstyn v. Wilson*. Subsequent films about religion in the course highlight issues in the experience of Judaism (e.g., *The Pawnbroker*), Christianity (e.g., *Doubt*), and Islam (e.g., *Wadjda*).

But after a few years of concentrating on important feature films about religion, I became bothered that an entire genre of films was missing: documentaries. Beginning with the Holocaust film *Night and Fog* in 1956, compelling documentaries have examined religion. *A Time for Burning* examined church segregation in 1967. *Salesman* followed door-

to-door Bible selling in 1969. The eponymous *Marjoe* won an Academy Award in 1972 for its examination of faith healing. More recent documentaries have taken on Hasidism (*One of Us*, 2017), homosexuality (*A Jihad for Love*, 2007), and indoctrination (*Jesus Camp*, 2006).

I have found significant documentaries about religion. What I haven't found is a source that provides a framework to interpret their history.

The Search

The Library of Congress lists more than 200 books about documentaries, but not one is a history of documentaries about religion. *Activist Documentary Film in Pakistan: The Emergence of a Cinema of Accountability* by Rahat Imran is close, but none of the films she discusses had much impact outside of Pakistan.¹ Likewise, *The Amish and the Media* includes a chapter on documentaries, but its tight focus doesn't leave room for explaining documentary films about religion beyond the Amish experience.² Standard treatments of documentaries such as Erik Barnouw's *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*,³ Patricia Aufderheide's *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction*,⁴ and Bill Nichols' *Introduction to Documentary* say nothing about religion.⁵ *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film* says nothing about documentaries.⁶ *The Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film* summarizes some recent documentaries about Jewish, Christian, and Muslim subjects, but without historical perspective.⁷ Daniel Einstein of the UCLA Film & Television Archive compiled two thick compendiums of network television documentaries that include scores of episodes about religion, but these are bibliographies, not histories.⁸ Most books about religion and film – and there are another 200 of these – concern feature

films, not documentaries. The most I could find were books like *Religion and Film: Cinema and the Re-Creation of the World* by S. Brent Plate.⁹ They mention documentaries here and there, but not systematically, certainly not historically.

Database searches for histories of documentaries about religion are no more productive. Articles available from Communication and Mass Media Complete, EBSCO Academic, ProQuest, and other databases concern contemporary analyses of individual documentaries including *Into Great Silence* (2005), *Religulous* (2008), *Where in the World is Osama Bin Laden?* (2008). These articles about particular documentaries may come in handy, but they do not address the broader history of documentaries about religion. Occasionally an article will explore issues in the production of documentaries about religion. That's what Sandi Simcha DuBowski, Lucy Walker, and Carey Monserrate did in their conversation in *CrossCurrents*, "Trembling Playground: Two Young Directors Discuss Film, Faith, and the Challenges of Documenting Religion."¹⁰ Again, enlightening, but not historical.

When all else fails, I seek the assistance of a reference librarian. In this case, a reference librarian turned up the 2015 *Companion to Contemporary Documentary Film*. Part 6 has an introduction and three chapters: one on documentaries about Buddhism, another about Israeli documentaries, and a third on the 1987 Vietnamese documentary, *The Story of Kindness or How to Behave*. They don't address my subject exactly, but they could prove helpful for a literature review. In their section introduction, coeditors Alexandra Juhasz and Alisa Lebow say, "Religion is not the first theme that comes to mind when thinking about documentary film or, for that matter, scholarship about documentary."¹¹ Their observation about the absence of scholarship on religion and documentary film is both on the mark and quotable, something else

for the literature review.

Next Steps

For the historical roundtable in the last issue of *Historiography in Mass Communication*, Civil War scholar Debra Reddin van Tuyl asked, “How do you find sources for an under-covered topic?” Five journalism historians gave their answers. Michael Fuhlhage identifies disciplines related to the topic so that he can search databases most relevant to those disciplines. Bill Huntzicker applies geographic, intellectual, and economic levers in order to pry open the topic. Mary Lamonica described her “badger-like database searches” that take up to half as long as her reading. Katrina Quinn examines contemporary analyses of the subject and then applies these approaches to historical sources. Jennifer Moore starts alone with online searches, then asks research librarians for help, and finally involves journalism historians by discussing her project in a research-in-progress session of an annual scholarly meeting. All the while, these researchers look at their primary material imagining what it meant in its day.¹²

Having done my own badger-like search for secondary material, I am now ready to examine my primary sources. What subjects did enduring documentaries about religion address? Did the voice of these documentaries change through the decades? How did contemporaries respond to enduring documentaries about religion? What documentaries about religion have been forgotten? Why do viewers today watch yesterday’s documentaries about religion? As I sketch out answers to these questions, I will keep one more question in mind: What will my colleagues at an annual meeting have to say at the end of a research-in-progress session?

NOTES

¹ Rahat Imran, *Activist Documentary Film in Pakistan: The Emergence of a Cinema of Accountability* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

² Diana Zimmerman Umble and David L. Weaver-Zercher, eds., *The Amish and the Media* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

³ Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁴ Patricia Aufderheide, *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁵ Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017).

⁶ John Lyden, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Film* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁷ William L. Blizек, ed., *The Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

⁸ Daniel Einstein, *Special Edition: A Guide to Network Television Documentary Series and Special News Reports, 1955-1979* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1987); Daniel Einstein, *Special Edition: A Guide to Network Television Documentary Series and Special News Reports, 1980-1989* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1997).

⁹ S. Brent Plate, *Religion and Film: Cinema and the Re-Creation of the World*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

¹⁰ Sandi Simcha DuBowski, Lucy Walker, and Carey Monserrate, "Trembling Playground: Two Young Directors Discuss Film, Faith, and the Challenges of Documenting Religion," *CrossCurrents*, 54:1 (Spring 2004): 84-95.

¹¹ Alexandra Juhasz and Alisa Lebow, "Introduction: Religion," in Alexandra Juhasz and Alisa Lebow, eds., *A Companion to Contemporary Documentary Film* (Malden, Mass.: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), p. 337.

¹² Debra Reddin van Tuyll, Michael Fuhlhage, Bill Huntzicker, Mary Lamonica, Jennifer Moore, and Katrina Quinn, "Historical Roundtable: Opening New Doors: Researching Unfamiliar or Under-studied Areas of Journalism History," *Historiography in Mass Communication*, 6:1 (2020): 14-16.

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Historian Interview

Erika Pribanic-Smith ©



Pribanic-Smith

Erika Pribanic-Smith, an associate professor of journalism at the University of Texas at Arlington, is the co-author of *Emma Goldman's No-Conscription League and the First Amendment*. She has written a number of book chapters, and her articles have been published in *American Journalism*, *American Periodicals*, *Journalism History*, *Kansas History*, and *Media History Monographs*. She has served as president of the American Journalism Historians Association and chair of the AEJMC's History Division. Currently, she is the AJHA's administrative secretary. She also is web content coordinator for *Journalism History*. She has served as editor of two academic newsletters: the AJHA's *Intelligencer* and the AEJMC History Division's *Clio*. She has received multiple research paper awards from the AEJMC History Division and the AJHA, including the AJHA's Wm. David Sloan Award for Outstanding Faculty Paper and its Maurine Beasley Award for Outstanding Paper on Women's History. She also has received the AJHA's President's Award for Meritorious Service two times, as well as research grants from the AJHA and Kappa Tau Alpha, the mass communication honor society. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Alabama, where she specialized in journalism history.

Q: Tell us a little about your family background — where you were born

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and grew up, your education, and so forth.

Pribanic-Smith: I was born and raised in the Cleveland, Ohio, area and received my master's degree from Mount Union College (now the University of Mount Union) — a liberal arts college near Canton, Ohio. Although I received both my master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Alabama, I spent five years between them back in Cleveland, working for a chain of community newspapers.

Q: What did you do professionally before going into teaching?

Pribanic-Smith: My undergraduate degree was in Communication with emphases in journalism and public relations, and I dabbled in both, though a majority of my professional career was as a reporter. At the community newspaper where I worked the longest, I had a small city, a school district, and a county government as my beats. It involved attending a lot of government meetings but also being out in the community, talking to people and finding interesting stories to tell, and it involved digging into documents to be sure my reporting was accurate. It was good training for journalism history research.

Q: Where, and what courses, have you taught?

Pribanic-Smith: I taught as an adjunct at the University of Alabama for several years while I worked on my Ph.D. there, teaching courses in media history, news reporting, depth reporting, and “new media,” as we called the multimedia class back in the early 2000s. For the past 10 years, I've been at the University of Texas at Arlington, where I primarily teach digital storytelling, public affairs reporting, and communica-

tion theory (both grad and undergrad). I've also taught feature writing, publication design, and graduate seminars in historical methods and public opinion.

Q: Tell us about your background in history: When did you first get interested in historical research? How did your education prepare you to be a historian?

Pribanic-Smith: I've always been fascinated with the past and read a lot of historical fiction growing up. My first forays into historical research were in high school. One teacher had us write a paper on anything mentioned in Billy Joel's song "We Didn't Start the Fire"; I chose James Dean. Another assigned a research project that involved studying anything we wanted and then presenting our findings in something other than research paper form. I researched the Salem witch trials and created my own newspaper front page with stories I wrote about what happened, as if I were a contemporary. I wanted to minor in history at Mount Union, but a professor talked me out of it because he said I should choose a major "more useful to a future journalist." Then, by a stroke of amazing luck, I was assigned as David Sloan's research assistant during my first semester as a master's student at the University of Alabama, and he taught me just how useful — in fact, how vital — historical knowledge is to journalists. By another stroke of luck, the AJHA convention was in Mobile, Alabama, that year, so I was introduced to a community of journalism historians less than two months into my master's program. I felt completely at home and have considered myself an historian ever since.

Q: Who or what have been the major influences on your historical outlook

and work?

Pribanic-Smith: Nearly every journalism historian I've met has influenced me in some way. My Alabama family were my initial influences: my professors in communication (David Sloan, Caryl Cooper, Karla Gower, Meg Lamme, Cully Clark) and history (Kari Frederickson, Lawrence Kohl), as well as my fellow alums — especially those who study similar topics (Debbie van Tuyll, Susan Thompson, Julie Williams, Bernell Tripp, Dianne Bragg). Hazel Dicken-Garcia, Carol Sue Humphrey, David Bulla, Greg Borchard, Gerald Baldasty, Ford Risley, and Bill Huntzicker also have been major influences on my work on the nineteenth-century press. Linda Lumsden has been my greatest influence as I've turned my attention to the dissident press. Aimee Edmondson and my frequent co-author Jared Schroeder have influenced the way I look at legal issues. Mike Sweeney and Jean Palmegiano have influenced my passion for and devotion to the field. The energy, creativity, and work ethic of scholars like Teri Finneman, Candi Carter Olson, Will Mari, and Nick Hirshon also have been a helpful influence in recent years. I could name a lot more, but I only have so much space here.

Q: *What are the main areas or ideas on which you concentrate your historical work?*

Pribanic-Smith: One area developed from my research at Alabama. I spent my doctoral program focusing on the Southern partisan press during the antebellum era, and most of my research pre-tenure at UTA continued that research agenda. Though I still sometimes look at antebellum politics and newspaper partisanship in the South, my focus has shifted more to the dissident press and free press issues in the early to

mid-twentieth century.

Q: *Summarize for us the body of work — books, journal articles, organizational activities, and so forth — that you have done related to history.*

Pribanic-Smith: Last year I published my first book, co-authored with Jared Schroeder at Southern Methodist University, on the World War I-era First Amendment struggles of anarchist speaker, author, and magazine editor Emma Goldman. I've had a number of conference papers, journal articles, and book chapters on topics related to nineteenth-century newspapers and magazines. I've also recently become co-editor, with David Sloan and Tracy Lucht, of the textbook *The Media in America*.

I've done a lot of work for both the AJHA and the AEJMC History Division. Currently, I'm the secretary of the AJHA. I have been president, vice president, newsletter editor, and web editor. (I built the current website, though I don't maintain it anymore.) I served a term on the board of directors, I chaired the PR and long-range planning committees, and I have been a member of multiple other committees. In the AEJMC History Division, I have been chair, vice-chair, and secretary/newsletter editor. Now, I'm the web content coordinator for the History Division's academic journal, *Journalism History*.

Q: *Of the books and articles you have written, from which ones did you get the most satisfaction?*

Pribanic-Smith: The Emma Goldman book would top the list of most satisfying. I went in a research direction that was completely different from anything I've done before, and I had to learn a lot to do the topic

justice, but I feel that Jared and I came up with a quality book that made an important contribution.

I also was excited to get my first publication in a history journal outside the field of journalism history. I had a research semester in my fourth year at UTA and spent it researching Kansas newspaper editor Jason Clarke Swayze, including some time at archives in Topeka. His death at the hands of another newsman gave me a bit of a mystery to unravel and a fascinating story to tell, and the journal *Kansas History* eagerly accepted it. After a few rejections from “big H” history journals, that acceptance felt validating as an historian.

Q: We realize that it is difficult to judge one’s own work — and that the most accomplished people are often the most modest — but if you had to summarize your most important contributions to the field of JMC history, what would they be?

Pribanic-Smith: I think my most significant contribution to the field has been my service to it. Nearly every day, I contribute something — large or small — to help the AJHA run smoothly. The positions I’ve held in both the AJHA and the AEJMC History Division have given me opportunities to work with fellow leaders on initiatives that engage and support scholars at all stages of their careers. I was able to aid in the transition of *Journalism History* from an independent journal to the official journal of the AEJMC History Division and helped secure a publisher; I also built its new website and post weekly content intended to promote the journal and its authors. I worked on the AJHA’s History in the Curriculum report to help promote the teaching of journalism history at the undergraduate and graduate levels. That work is important to me.

Historian Interview

Q: As you look back over your career, if you could do anything differently, what would it be?

Pribanic-Smith: Knowing what I know now, I would have ignored that professor back in undergrad and minored in history.

Q: Tell us about your “philosophy of history” (of historical study in general or of JMC history in particular) or what you think are the most important principles for studying history.

Pribanic-Smith: I’ve always considered myself a cultural scholar. I feel that journalism is inextricably intertwined with the political, social, and economic environment in which it exists, so I feel it is important to understand that environment before you can fully understand the journalism produced within it. I start every study with a thorough review of what was happening in that time and place, whether it’s 1830s South Carolina or 1950s Chicago. Then I learn everything I can about the people involved. Only after I’ve gained those insights do I attempt to analyze the media itself.

Q: How would you evaluate the quality of work being done today in JMC history — its strengths and weaknesses?

Pribanic-Smith: We have excellent scholars at every career stage doing excellent work. With so much historical material available online, it would be easy to fall into the trap of lazy scholarship. But, as I review books, conference papers, and journal manuscripts, I’m constantly coming across topics I wish I had thought of myself — topics that are important and interesting, and that require hefty research. Scholars still

are doing rigorous and meticulous work, visiting archives, conducting interviews (if first-hand sources still are living), and poring over hundreds of documents. Furthermore, many historical authors are great storytellers. It's a joy to read a lot of what's out there, and to see it presented at conferences. I believe that journalism historians are a dedicated and passionate bunch. They care deeply about the field as a whole and their particular interest areas, and it shows in the work they produce. Just as importantly, they share their passion with their students, so we're seeing graduate and even undergraduate students doing great history.

Q: What do you think we in JMC history need to be doing to improve the status of JMC history in (1) JMC education and (2) the wider field of history in general?

Pribanic-Smith: We need to be fearless and persistent. It's easy to be passionate about journalism history in the company of journalism historians, but we need to carry that zeal over into the promotion of our field to a wider audience. We need to be vocal about the worth of journalism history courses in our academic units; the History in the Curriculum report the AJHA recently released is a great means to do that. We need to move outside our comfort zones and submit to history journals and conferences that don't focus solely on media history. We need to engage more with the media and with the general public. We need to show that we are "real historians" with valuable knowledge and expertise. The media history organizations have initiatives in all of these areas that we can be involved in, but we also need to do these things on our own.

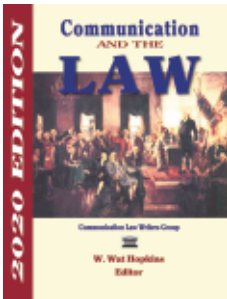
Q: What challenges do you think JMC history faces in the future?

Roundtable: Documentary Journalism Historiography

Pribanic-Smith: Especially in academic environments, the push to focus on what's new crowds out what's viewed as old. People who aren't historians tend not to recognize the need for historical context. If our field is to survive, we need to garner the interest of young scholars and instruct them on the proper methods to conduct historical research. We have to work harder to do that if we don't have a captive audience of students in historical courses, but it's not impossible.

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Mike Farrell

(1949-2019)



Farrell

Mike Farrell, a professor of journalism at the University of Kentucky, died August 28, 2019. He suffered from a long illness and medical problems and had been in hospice care. He taught both media law and history, as well as a variety of other courses. After a long career as a working journalist, he studied for and received his Ph.D. in communication at the University of Kentucky. He “was incredible in his graciousness and kindness and compassion, but also in his deep knowledge and love for journalism and for students,” said Jay Blanton, UK’s director for public relations and marketing. The NKyTribune (*Northern Kentucky Tribune*) has established the Michael Farrell Memorial Scholarship Fund to provide scholarships for students at the University of Kentucky and Northern Kentucky University. Among the many tributes given in memory of Prof. Farrell, the following was written by one of his former students, Bailey Vandiver, a recent editor of the campus newspaper at Kentucky.

A Student, Former Kernel Editor Remembers Mike Farrell

By Bailey Vandiver
Kentucky Kernel
August 29, 2019

“I think I might go to law school,” I said, and braced myself for Dr. Farrell’s reaction.

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On Sept. 4, 2018, Dr. Farrell and I were both guests at a dinner hosted by UK Libraries with Sid Davis, a longtime White House correspondent who had spoken at UK earlier that evening.

Dr. Mike Farrell was then the interim director of the School of Journalism and Media, and I had taken his media law class that spring.

He had said it a million times: Talented journalism majors should not go to law school. Going to law school is abandoning the profession of journalism.

But my mom is a lawyer, and for a brief period last fall, I thought I might follow in her footsteps. I told this to whomever I was sitting next to at this dinner, knowing what Dr. Farrell's reaction would be if he heard from a few seats down.

He did hear me, and I think his jaw actually dropped as he looked at me in disbelief. I don't remember exactly what he said, but it was something along the lines of what I had heard him say before.

I do remember, and will always remember, the email he sent me the next morning.

In the hours after we learned the devastating news that Dr. Farrell had passed away, many people took to social media to praise their teacher, colleague, mentor and friend. Scrolling through these heartwarming but heartbreaking posts eventually made me cry.

Then I remembered this email, and I knew it would be something I could read that would make me smile.

On Sept. 5, the morning after he "chastised" me about going to law school, Dr. Farrell sent me this email:

"You do realize this is all an act. It is your life and you have to be happy with it. I didn't tell my own sons what course they should follow, and I would never tell a student.

"Follow your heart and meditate on Prov. 3:5-6. My life has taken many turns but God has been in all of them."

Mike Farrell (1949-2019)

Proverbs 3:5-6 is a piece of Scripture that many turn to for guidance and wisdom: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

After losing someone like Dr. Farrell, we cannot lean on our own understanding, because we cannot understand why we lost him so soon. He still had children and grandchildren to love. He still had students to teach and colleagues to mentor. And Lord knows he still had government officials to hold accountable.

But we lost him, and we can't change that. But we can remember him, and we can honor him.

I'm not going to law school, but if I did, I would think of Dr. Farrell every time I learned something new about Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes or censorship or statutory law. I will think of him every time I read another book about the history of journalism. I will think of him every time I see someone offer someone else a tissue, because there were many times that Dr. Farrell left the classroom unexpectedly just to return with a box of tissues and cough drops for a sniffing student.

Most of all, I know that my classmates and I will think of him every time we practice our First Amendment freedoms as journalists, following in the footsteps of an incredible man and journalist.

And that is truly the best tribute we can give him.

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The Professional



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Book Award Interview

By Robert G. Parkinson ©



Parkinson

Robert Parkinson received the 2017 Best Journalism and Mass Communication History Book Award from the AEJMC's History Division for *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution*. He teaches at Binghamton University in the Department of History, where he specializes in early American history, especially the American Revolution. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Virginia and has held fellowships with a number of history organizations.

Q: Give us a brief summary of your book.

Parkinson: *The Common Cause* focuses on how slim the chances were that the thirteen mainland American colonies would ever stick together. When the Revolutionary War began, the odds of a united, continental effort to resist the British seemed nearly impossible. Very few observers on either side of the Atlantic expected American colonies to create a durable union in a war against their cultural cousins. Yet, they did. So, how did they do it? *The Common Cause* argues that the answer lies in patriot political and communications leaders linking British tyranny to colonial prejudices, stereotypes, and fears about rebellious slaves and

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hostile Indians. Using newspaper networks, Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, and other patriot political and military leaders broadcast stories of British agents “instigating,” “encouraging,” and “tampering with” slaves and Indians to take up arms against the American rebellion. In order to achieve the essential task of unity, therefore, the Founding Fathers made racial prejudice a cornerstone of the new republic. *The Common Cause* interrogates the Founders’ extensive and widespread sponsorship of images about people whom Jefferson referred to at the heart of the Declaration as “domestic insurrectionists” and “merciless savages” serving as proxies of King George and, by extension, as enemies of the American union. The residue of these stories cemented a national narrative, crafted at the founding itself, that African Americans and Indians were unfit to deserve American citizenship.

Q: How did you get the idea for your book?

Parkinson: This was the interpretation of the American Revolution and the founding I mulled over from 2001 until the publication of *The Common Cause* in 2016. So, naturally, when I began to talk about what I had found (at conference receptions or job interviews), listeners were quick to say that this was sheer presentism. The events of the fifteen years in which I researched and wrote that book witnessed repeated instances of politicians using fear to stoke racial prejudice. I first heard how my project was really all about the September 11, 2001, attacks and their aftermath, including the demonization of Muslim peoples and the passage of the Patriot Act. Then, I heard how it was really a project about how the U.S. government sold, justified, and prosecuted the war against Iraq. Then, I heard how these themes were really about the backlash to the election of Barack Obama, especially the rise of the Tea Party

Book Award Interview

in 2010 and the public's willingness to tolerate divisive, racist rhetoric about immigrants and people of color that in part led to the presidency of Donald Trump and the terrible, deadly white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. It was about none of those things. My interpretation had one source of inspiration: the squeaky microfilm reader [described in the next answer].

Q: *Tell us about the research you did for your book: What were your sources, how did you research your book, how long did you spend, and so forth?*

Parkinson: I began work on the project that would become *The Common Cause* in 2001. I knew I wanted to work on race and the American Revolution, but had no real sense of where I was going, so I figured I'd begin where so many others had, with the newspapers. I had no idea what I would actually find there. For more than a year, I sat in front of a microfilm reader in a corner of Alderman Library at the University of Virginia turning squeaky wheels to look at colonial newspapers page-by-page, frame-by-frame. I started with the news of Lexington and Concord in 1775 and went through each of the dozens of American newspapers serially, taking detailed notes on each one through the end of 1783. A few months into my research, I developed the ability to predict what I was going to see next. This was an unanticipated, and somewhat baffling new skill. After I had studied several titles, I began to wonder why I was able to know what was coming next — and, more importantly, what that experience of reading the same story, whether the paper was published in Connecticut or Carolina, might mean for the patriots' mobilization campaign. It took me a while to understand it, but I had stumbled across the political power of the newspaper exchanges. Once I began to grasp its importance, I began to wonder

whether I had actually discovered the Revolutionaries' secret. The interpretation developed from the sources themselves.

Q: Besides the sources you used, were there any others you wish you had been able to examine?

Parkinson: I benefitted from the vast amount of materials about the American Revolution that remain intact. The American Revolution has the kind of archive that allows for immersion; it's been deemed as "important" by cultural and political power brokers over the centuries and therefore every scrap of paper relating to it has been preserved. This certainly isn't the case for most events or for most people. On the other hand, the depth and breadth of that archive can also lead to paralysis, brought on by the idea that we KNOW everything about the American Revolution — what new is there to find?!? That is something else we should resist; there are still loads we don't know about even something as well-covered as the founding of the American republic.

Q: Based on your research for the book, what would you advise other historians about working with sources?

Parkinson: You have to put in the work. History takes hours and hours and hours and hours and hours of poring over sources. There are no shortcuts. Digital databases are great resources, but they have deep flaws. If I had just dipped into digital sources via word searches instead of reading straight through, frame after frame, I would have never grasped my argument. It took immersing myself in this material to uncover the Revolutionaries' secret of the newspaper exchanges and what implications they had for not only the mobilization movement but the

creation of a national sense of inclusion/exclusion.

Q: What were the challenges you faced in researching your book?

Parkinson: Because there is so much preserved about the American Revolution, it can trick the historian into thinking they can know much more about the 1770s than they actually can. For example, I came across a subscription list of one newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Journal*, from the mid 1760s through 1777. One list had about 1,700 names on it and I had thought for a bit that I would try to track down each and every person on this list. This was quite foolish. What became the first chapter of *The Common Cause*, which deals with the newspaper networks and culture of the Revolutionary era, took me about a decade to write. I began in 2005 to try to locate all the places named in the *Journal* subscription book, and at that time in the history of the Internet, there were lots of places that I couldn't find. I laid that chapter aside and revised others, returning to it occasionally over 2005-2015. Over that decade, so many more local history societies and sites had popped up that I was able to dissect that list and plot out almost exact delivery routes. It took some maturation of the world wide web to get that research accomplished!

Q: Is it possible to get too close to a research subject? How do historians maintain their neutrality of viewpoint when conducting and interpreting research?

Parkinson: For me, the best way is to ask lots and lots of questions from several angles. If you are researching something like the Wyoming "Massacre" that is loaded with patriotic overtones and historical myths,

you have to question everything you know, actively, in the front of your brain. Why does this person say this? What do they stand to gain? What if I approach it from the other side? What would a loyalist think about this event or this phrasing or even this word? Turn things around and see them from several different perspectives: this helps you maintain your critical distance.

Q: What new insights does your book provide?

Parkinson: *The Common Cause* is a book about process, about how abstract things that seem like they are just “in the air” become real. It is about how ideas that float like clouds actually get tethered to the ground and become fixtures of cultural discourse. Racism seems an especially difficult cloud. We know it is out there somewhere, but many people complain it is difficult to find, because it is either everywhere — perpetual, permanent, and ubiquitous in current American life and throughout its history — or nowhere — a figment of imagination. There is a notion that pervades American society, yesterday and today. It is an impression, a nagging sense, a feeling: some people belong in this country and some people don't. No matter what their birth certificates say. But what is that notion? What is it based on? Where did it come from? Why is it so powerful?

The Common Cause is about the origins of this particular ideological cloud, this shapeless feeling, and how it came to be anchored at the heart of the American republic at the very moment of its founding. It seeks to understand how abstract ideas such as these are made concrete. By examining the historical development and use of tangible things (like the exchanging of news stories through communications networks), we can see how things that seem intangible — and therefore

intractable — got that way. And, perhaps, by uncovering how these things got buried we can face the task of dealing with them.

Q: *What findings most surprised you?*

Parkinson: My mind also reeled at all the material I was finding in the middle pages of those newspapers about enslaved and native peoples. How many other people had started their research on the Revolution with the newspapers? Dozens? Hundreds? Why was I so surprised at the tremendous amount of evidence I was finding? The thickness of the archive still astounds me. One of the main reasons why *The Common Cause* is 700 pages long is I believed it was the best way to honor and convey the sheer size — the amount, the bulk — of the stories I had found in the papers. The leaders of the American Revolution thought about enslaved and native people *all the time*. When they weren't working daily in assembly halls trying to formulate policy about them, they were working closely with publicists in print shops to broadcast any news, whether rumored or real, about British agents whispering to African Americans, Indians, and (at first) German mercenaries to subvert the Revolution. This ubiquity surprised me.

Q: *You said the book is 700 pages long. Have you thought about doing an abridgement?*

Parkinson: Yes! An abridged version (of sorts) that focuses on the period from the start of the Revolution through the Declaration of Independence (1775-76) will be out later in 2020 from the University of North Carolina Press. It is titled *Thirteen Clocks: How Race Made America Independent* and is pitched to an undergraduate audience.

Q: What advice would you give to people who are considering doing a book in JMC history?

Parkinson: There are still things we need to know about how political movements happen, how they come about, and how they gain traction among the public. We need to understand how some political ideas are sold and therefore bought by the public much better than we do. Process is an essential component of understanding how and why people made the choices they did in the past — this is of increasingly important moment in the present.

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Historical Roundtable: The Personal and Professional in Documentary Journalism Historiography

By Thomas A. Mascaro, Mike Conway, Cristina Mislán,
Mary Ann Watson, and Denitsa Yotova ©



Mascaro

We often approach documentary journalism from singular or narrow perspectives, when in fact we need to engage this aspect of journalism history from multiple angles, to push down walls that obscure larger conclusions. As Mike Conway explains, this is what it takes to understand how *The Tunnel* led NBC News producer Reuven Frank to define a critical juncture for television news through his “transmission of experience” memo. As Mary Ann Watson writes, we need to engage the documentary process to appreciate how television journalism in the early 1960s brought the presidency into American living rooms with deeply moving personal stories. And as Denitsa Yotova tells us, Jacob Riis combined investigative journalism with the visual impact of “magic lantern” photographic exhibitions to move people to *act*. The

Thomas A. Mascaro recently retired from Bowling Green State University as a professor in the School of Media & Communication. He co-founded the Documentary Division of the Broadcast Education Association and is the author of Into the Fray: How NBC’s Washington Documentary Unit Reinvented the News (2012). He is at work on the sequel, “Hard Truths: The Documentary Odyssey of Bob Rogers and Rhonda Schwartz.”

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dominant theme popping up several times in this roundtable reflects a belief that documentary historiography requires a layered, multi-faceted approach — to burst through the “silos,” to look past “the text,” to

*Mike Conway, an associate professor in the Media School at Indiana University, recently published **Contested Ground: The Tunnel and the Struggle over Television News in Cold War America**. His first book, **The Origins of Television News in America: The Visualizers of CBS in the 1940s**, uncovered a mostly unknown period of important work in the early establishment of the newscast format. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Texas at Austin after a career as a broadcast journalist and news director.*



Conway

Cristina Mislán received the AJHA’s Rising Scholar Award in 2019. She is an assistant professor at the University of Missouri, where she teaches cross-cultural journalism, gender and media, critical theory, and qualitative research. She received her Ph.D., with a minor in Latin American Studies, from Pennsylvania State University. Her research has focused on how overlooked minority journalists effect change. She is writing a book on how the black press covered the Cuban Revolution from 1959 until Barack Obama’s presidency.



Mislán

*Mary Ann Watson, a retired professor from Eastern Michigan University, is the author of several books on television history, including **The Expanding Vista: American Television in the Kennedy Years**. She has appeared in several documentaries dealing with broadcast history and has consulted on many museum exhibition programs and academic retrospectives. Her book **Defining Visions: Television and the American Experience in the 20th Century** typifies her faceted approach to media history.*



Watson

Denitsa Yotova is completing her Ph.D. in journalism at the University of Maryland and is a part-time instructor at both Maryland and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She has a particular interest in the psychological elements of visual images, their historic development, and social effects they produce across cultures.



Yotova

examine “ideology, technology, journalism, and documentary photography as necessary ingredients for social change.” In every case, the comments below reflect a deep intellectual and personal connection in the scholar’s approach and motivation to conduct documentary journalism historiography. With the editor’s permission, I invited a Ph.D. candidate to join this roundtable, Denitsa Yotova, because of her writing on pre-documentary, the magic lantern as a precursor to moving-image journalism. And I specifically asked rising scholar Cristina Mislán to broaden documentary journalism historiography in terms of media representation. Dr. Mislán asks us to add another layer to our investigations, by considering the effects on and voices of documentary subjects and to proactively examine dialogues around race, class, and gender politics — which have always resided at the core of documentary journalism.

Mascaro: *What was the triggering moment in recognizing the unique importance of your subject and/or moving from preliminary investigation to active research?*

Yotova: When I began looking into visual journalism, I found there wasn’t enough scholarship. The literature I was running into was focused on journalistic text and writing, not so much on images, and that bothered me. During my [master’s] graduate studies at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, a journalism history course piqued my interest in the muckrakers and journalism of the Progressive Era. I also took a sociology class about social movements and social change. While I was moved by the writings of famous muckrakers, like Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, and Lincoln Steffens, I was even more inspired by the documentary photography of Jacob Riis. It was not just the contents of his powerful images that moved me, but also the fact that they actually triggered social change. During the crucial period of expansion and reform at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries,

Riis photographed the poor, disadvantaged people living on the streets of New York's destitute Five Points area — a central location for millions of newly arrived immigrants faced with enormous social and economic challenges. His images not only served as the groundwork for his famous 1890 book, *How the Other Half Lives*, but it also led to the renovation of Mulberry Bend, one of the worst slum areas of the city.

While studying Riis and early 1900s American journalism in depth, I also ran into some powerful civil rights movement photographs from the later decades of the twentieth century. At that moment, I strongly felt there is a need for deeper investigation of the history of documentary image use as a form of visual journalism, to not just report on existing social conditions or problems, but also to promote social change and/or infuse an ideology. In a nutshell, I put “images” and “social change” together and began my journey into documentary photography and film. Thus, Riis's work not only introduced the educational power of photography, but it also served as one of the first examples of documentary in the history of visual media. I became deeply convinced that documentary images and later films, could be used as powerful political statements, meaning they could demonstrate both a social problem and a solution. This principle, among others, lies in the heart of the documentary tradition.

My “active research” phase emerged when I learned about Riis's unique approach to educate his audience about the poor living conditions in Mulberry Bend's tenements during the late 1800s and early 1900s. While researching my master's thesis on Riis, I noticed scholars had studied his work mostly in terms of artistic or journalistic objectivity, or lack thereof, as well as the idea that the photographer's personal account in taking audiences on a visual journey through the New York slums had negatively affected his journalistic credibility. I disagreed

with some of those findings, as I have always felt that journalistic objectivity cannot be achieved because we are human beings with subjective viewpoints. My thesis, part of which became a journal article published in *Visual Communication Quarterly* years later, looked precisely at the significance of creating “subjective,” yet factual, images of society and the impact of the unique “framing” of one’s personal observations necessary to create social awareness. This is a key feature we find in many documentary films. The reproduction of images in newspapers in Riis’s time was still laborious and expensive and most photographs did not reach wide circulation in newspapers. Instead reformers and educators used lantern slide projection devices to draw crowds into churches and schools. The intentional sequencing of photographic images accompanied by powerful rhetoric “told” the story and helped the crowd understand the issues — just as “moving pictures,” or film, would in later decades. As I read more and more about the magic lantern and the way it was used, I began seeing a connection with documentary film and felt the roots of the form actually began much earlier than the official establishment of the term “documentary” by Grierson back in the 1920s. And here I speak of documentary films that serve as visual rhetoric, rather than the actuality cinema of the Lumière brothers in the late 1800s. I found that documentary photography and film have much in common, with both being historically related to exploration, society, and social reform. Riis’s carefully sequenced lectures, accompanied by colorful vocabulary and rhetoric, offered interpretive frameworks for viewers while persuading them to carry his message — the need for social reform. A decade after these triggering moments I remain infatuated with the history of documentary visuals, still and moving, and the way they impact society.

Conway: I had the privilege of conducting oral history interviews with NBC's Reuven Frank (producer of the 1962 documentary *The Tunnel*) a few years before he died [in 2006]. While his career was peripheral to the project I was working on at the time, I knew that I wanted to work on a book-length study about his work at some point. I struggled with the proper way to investigate, research, and analyze his role in the development of television news in the United States. I wanted to analyze the early years of *The Huntley-Brinkley Report*, the nightly newscast that Frank created in 1956 and that ran until 1970. A few years of digging revealed NBC had never archived that broadcast, so few complete newscasts remain. To keep the project moving forward, I decided to focus on *The Tunnel*, figuring it could be a chapter of my yet-unrealized book, since it was one of Frank's proudest and most controversial productions. I also knew I could get access to the documentary itself. *The Tunnel* is mostly recognized as a documentary, but it is also television news and it is journalism. Reuven Frank was a documentary producer but not a filmmaker. He had worked in print journalism before transitioning to television. Traditional academic research silos reinforce the separation of these areas. Fellow historian Dr. Michael Stamm watched me try to explain these differences in a conference presentation and came up with the idea of embracing disparate research areas as the focus of the project. The making of and reaction to *The Tunnel* is an interesting story in itself, but you have to know the divisions between documentary filmmaking, television, journalism, and government-press relationships to begin to understand why Reuven Frank produced *The Tunnel* the way he did and why different groups responded so strongly to the project. I realized the only way to understand the production and reception of *The Tunnel* is to bring it all together.

Watson: I became acquainted with the *cinéma vérité* work of Drew Associates while researching a book on television in the Kennedy years [*The Expanding Vista: American Television in the Kennedy Years*, 1990], and I took special interest in Drew films that were broadcast on ABC. They were unlike any documentaries that had come before. *Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment* particularly riveted me. It underscored my research premise that television provided the American public a nearness to John Kennedy that would redefine our relationship with the chief executive. After reading all I could find on the film and events it chronicled — both contemporaneous reporting and academic analysis — I located the people who produced what I considered a critical document of American history. My biggest curiosity was how Drew Associates developed such a trusting relationship with John and Robert Kennedy, who both appeared in the *Crisis*. Drew's 1960 film *Primary*, which covered the 1960 Wisconsin contest between JFK and Hubert Humphrey, was generating great interest as an innovative style of news-gathering. Also, in March 1961 ABC's *Bell & Howell Close-Up!* broadcast the behind-the-scenes documentary "Adventures on the New Frontier," also produced by Drew Associates. So before I could begin to understand the unselfconsciousness of the president and the attorney general during the June 1963 filming of *Crisis*, there was a great deal I needed to find out about Drew's earlier projects.

My interviews with producers offered a patchwork of stories about how the Kennedys had become aware of and impressed with the work of Drew Associates. After the presidential election Bob Drew visited the president-elect and Mrs. Kennedy in Palm Beach, Florida. He showed them *Primary*, which they both loved. The next night John Kennedy viewed *Yanki, No!*, an examination of the abject poverty of Latin America, the lure of communism, and the magnetism of Fidel Castro. Afterward, JFK and Drew discussed how the candid techniques of *cinéma*

vérité could facilitate a new form of history.

The question about why the White House and Justice Department granted such unprecedented access to Drew Associates to film *Crisis* does not have a short or simple answer. Part of my active investigation involved an interview with Drew's producer Greg Shuker. Shuker recalled that Robert Kennedy "was a little suspicious" when he was asked to cooperate in the film documentation of the integration of the University of Alabama. Robert Kennedy's press secretary asked Shuker to show him the 1962 documentary *The Chair*, which chronicled a Chicago lawyer's struggle to save his client from the electric chair. As Shuker explained, when the program ended, Bob Kennedy was grinning and said, "Gee, I really like that guy," the young aggressive lawyer Don Moore. Shuker told me Kennedy obviously identified with him. The next day Robert Kennedy called and invited Shuker to come in and talk about the documentary about Alabama.

George Wallace's participation has a simpler explanation. Jim Lipscomb, another member of the production team, waited three days outside Wallace's office without being granted a meeting. Lipscomb slipped a note to Wallace's secretary telling the governor that the Kennedys had agreed to participate and the film was going to be made. Lipscomb told me how he advised Wallace, "If you want your side of the story told, you ought to talk to me." The filmmaker was invited in and Wallace agreed to participate. The governor did not want to be upstaged by the Kennedys and felt he could use the opportunity to convince his own constituency of the depth of his commitment to segregation.

Mascaro: Here we are skirting any differences between cinéma vérité or "film truth," actively engaging subjects responding spontaneously while being filmed, versus direct cinema or observational film, which is more akin to Drew's approach and involves filming without direction or pro-

vocation by the filmmaker. Drew's work has been widely linked to both camps, but in the present context is referred to as *cinéma vérité*, as it was in the early 1960s.

Mascaro: *In what ways was it necessary to understand the production technology of your documentary, and how did/does research technology inform your approach to the history?*

Watson: Production technology is at the heart of understanding the significance of *Crisis*. In early 1960, with the support of the Time-Life Company, Robert Drew was able to develop more mobile, lightweight film equipment patched to a one-quarter inch sound tape recorder.¹ Ricky Leacock, a member of the Drew Associates, recalled: "Everyone else was working with cameras stuck on tripods and all those goddam cables and things. We could go running and jumping and wiggling all over the place." Truly unscripted documentary was possible.

Since the 1980s when I researched *Crisis*, the velocity of change in information technology has been dizzying. I spent hours at the library consulting the well-worn green-covered *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature*. Then it was off to the periodical stacks and photocopy machines. The worst-case scenario was when the article in question was only available on microfiche (a pain in the derriere!, but far better than no article). Researchers couldn't watch films on YouTube or order DVDs from Amazon. Viewing programs from the 1950s and 1960s usually meant travel to archival collections, often threading 16 mm film projectors. I came to know — and deeply appreciate — the staffs at several repositories, including the University of Wisconsin Historical Society, The UCLA Film and Television Archive, and The Broadcast Pioneers Library (now the Special Collections in Mass Media and Cul-

ture, University of Maryland). There were many trips to the JFK Presidential Library where the A-V Department offered help and support as I viewed programs and searched through file cabinets full of photos. Transcribing audiotaped interviews was an enormous chore... but you get the idea, everything was more complicated. Yet, I feel nostalgic about that era. It's almost as if the physical effort in the research phase added something extra to the writing phase — the desire to display the spoils of the hunt in the most beautiful way.

Yotova: To better understand the impact of documentary images and film, we have to first consider the technologies that made these visuals possible. During my research, I found that social documentaries were produced long before they were part of the genres of photography and film, thanks to the rapid development of (photographic and projection) technologies. To build a strong connection between technology and social awareness, I had to look not only into the aesthetics and composition of photographs, but also to study the equipment that produced these visuals at the time. In fact, the aesthetics and composition of images and films change over time *precisely* because of the changing technologies. Understanding the historical development of these “tools” can help build a stronger understanding of the present use and effectiveness of documentary images and films too. For example, at the turn of the twentieth century, Riis's images required wood engravings or blurry halftones for mass production in newspapers. His work failed to attract the attention of major publishers, but with the help of what I see as an early precursor to film projection — the magic lantern — Riis was able to get society's attention.

The magic lantern was used to project images painted on glass plates using an oil lamp as a light source. The images were often present-

ed in a show format with a narrator, or a lecturer. Riis employed the magic lantern for all of his public showings. His effective use of the device and his powerful rhetoric successfully set the stage for later developments in documentary filmmaking. The social circumstances of the era and the available technology at the time were key elements that made it possible for him to reach larger audiences and advocate for social reform, which is why studying technological developments and their history can help build a better understanding about the ways in which the documentary genre has evolved. Like today's "moving pictures" experience, the magic lantern of the late nineteenth century was one of the first projection devices able to communicate visually to larger audiences, allowing the presenter to build an argument, show a problem and possibly a solution, make people think about an existing social condition or issue, and manipulate that audience by both telling and showing the story.

Conway: A basic knowledge of the production technology and practice was key for me to understand why *The Tunnel* was such a ground-breaking production for Reuven Frank's vision of television news as a "transmission of experience." I have found over the years that my background as a television photojournalist, producer, and reporter has often opened doors with sources because I understand the work involved in visual storytelling. In my career, I was part of the group of television journalists who adhered to the storytelling model of television news, which I believe helped me understand what Frank was trying to accomplish.

Mascaro: *What process did you use to research and develop a new take on the subject?*

Conway: The key for me was coming up with the structure of the book [*Contested Ground: The Tunnel and the Struggle over Television News in Cold War America*, 2019], explained above. Once I had a general outline, then the process was the same one I use for all of my media history projects. I had to track down as much primary material as possible and then try to make sense of it. Because I had contacts at NBC who knew about my project, I was one of the first historians to get access to Reuven Frank's archives at Tufts University. I had already been collecting material from archive trips in previous years and then supplemented it with more targeted archive work.

One of the more time-consuming aspects of this project involved pulling together the research from a variety of academic disciplines. I needed to understand the histories of journalism, broadcasting, television, television news, press-government relations, and documentary films. Even though each of these areas would only involve a chapter, I needed my analysis to be strong enough to stand up to the scrutiny of scholars who only work in that one area. In addition, the publisher of *Contested Ground*, University of Massachusetts Press, has a strong Cold War series. When I received the contract, I was told they would decide when I finished if it could be included in that series. They wanted to know if it would be a media history or Cold War book. I wanted it to be both. In the end, I was very happy I spent the time placing the media history as deep within the Cold War context as possible.

Watson: My goal was to get on record how the documentary came together through the perspective of the creators. This meant talking to those who were behind the cameras and at the editing bench. I was able to do phone interviews with Bob Drew and Jim Lipscomb. I invited Ricky Leacock to attend a documentary conference I was organizing

and I had the chance to probe his recollections. Greg Shuker accepted a short stint as a visiting professor in Ann Arbor and that gave me the opportunity for many in-depth discussions. There is a charming scene in *Crisis* in which Robert Kennedy's three-year-old daughter Kerry wants to get on the telephone as her father talks to the deputy attorney general, Nicholas Katzenbach. Shuker was filming in the Attorney General's office in Washington, D.C. Jim Lipscomb was filming in Alabama, and out of the blue he heard Katzenbach raise the pitch of his voice and say, "Hi Kerry, how are you dear?" and then he chatted playfully for a moment, until in Washington Robert Kennedy took the phone from the child. It was not until the footage from both ends was viewed in New York that anyone realized the whole conversation had been preserved. It was an inspiring instance of *cinéma vérité*.

Yotova: My approach was also a multifold one. In order to establish a connection between Riis's work and the visual documentary genre, I first had to dig into historical archives and investigate documents, such as Riis's writings and autobiography, his lecture narratives and lantern slides, newspaper and magazine articles and advertisements for upcoming lectures, audience and publisher reviews and critiques of his lantern shows, among other primary sources that offered insights about Riis's reform work. This approach helped not only to immerse myself into the technological, political, cultural, and social contexts of Riis's time, but also to better understand the point of view depicted in his photographs and lantern slides. I then looked closely at the contents of the actual images and performed a visual discourse analysis, which is a great way to build a connection between an image, the ideology "hidden" within it, and that image's context of production. As visual communication scholar Gillian Rose suggests, such analysis is concerned with the way

discourse is articulated through visual images and verbal text or, in this case, a combination of 1), the image content, including its caption; 2), the image context, including its production, distribution, reception; and 3), the way the image constructs the social reality and represents the ideology at the time.² Finally, I studied the historical developments of documentary filmmaking, technologies, and styles. For example, I took into account some of the key elements that define a documentary movie, such as presence of real people vs. actors, location shooting vs. production stage, existing artifacts vs. set decor, informative language vs. fictional script, etc., and connected them to Riis's rhetoric and strategies, which were highlighted in his narrative and visuals as presented during his illustrated lectures.

While I mostly focused on the distant past and Riis's time, to further build a connection between Riis's illustrated lectures and documentary film, I chose to emphasize a more "contemporary" idea about "documenting" society — the concept of "documentary modes of representation" introduced by cinema studies scholar Bill Nichols.³ As Nichols put it, these modes are basic ways of organizing texts in relation to recurrent features and conventions. The four dominant modes of representation in documentary film are: expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive. Although not all elements pertinent to those modes applied in Riis's case, the broader idea of each mode was very much exemplified by his work and magic lantern slide show presentations.

Mascaro: *What are your guidelines or values regarding interviews?*

Conway: I consider oral history interviews as one of the tools I can use depending on the project. In my work on 1940s television, I relied heavily on oral history interviews, because few other primary sources

existed and many of those people had never told their stories. So I felt an obligation to record their memories for my work and for future historians. For *Contested Ground*, I already had my oral history interviews with Reuven Frank. Since he passed away in 2006, I could not go back and ask more detailed questions as I got deep into the project. I did an extensive oral history interview with NBC correspondent Bob Dotson, though, because he had worked with Frank later in his career and practiced Frank's video storytelling model.

Watson: Respecting the time of the interviewee is key. Do all the homework you can on the documentary and have it nearby during the conversation. In the case of my *Crisis* research, I was interviewing people a little more than twenty-five years after the fact. I found the more specificity with which I could set the scene, the more thoughtful response I'd get. For instance, I had the chance to interview President Kennedy's press secretary Pierre Salinger. Instead of asking a general question about the criticism *Crisis* received after it aired, I reminded him about the controversy the film raised with print journalists, and I had direct quotations at hand from critical editorials. Through his expression I could almost see his recollection come into focus as I read the words of Jack Gould in the *New York Times* faulting the Kennedys for "demeaning government through a careless flirtation with the entertainment business." It opened up a whole vein of memory about JFK's uncertainty about whether he had done the right thing. It was clear to Salinger that another such project would not likely be sanctioned again. Then, remembering that the program had aired just a month before Dallas, he added, "We wouldn't have a chance to do it again."

Yotova: I greatly value documentary work, both in the form of films

and still images, and personally consider most documentaries to be an alternative journalistic form, or longform visual journalism. “Is documentary the same as journalism?” however, has been a highly debated question by both journalists and documentarians. As a subjective individual, when talking with someone involved with the topic, I try to direct the conversation towards that question. Ultimately, I want to find out how people feel about it and why, but also to assess what might strengthen that connection. I think studying the significance and impact of documentary work and journalism, side by side, past and present, may give us a more clear-cut answer some day.

Mascaro: *What was the most revelatory phase, source, or artifact in your research?*

Yotova: The discovery of Riis’s unique use of the magic lantern in his reform work. Reading about his illustrated and narrated public lectures was the ultimate eye-opener for me to be convinced of the impact of visual documentary work, and also to put visual documentary and journalism together.

Conway: I decided to approach my research and analysis from Reuven Frank’s work perspective and not within the rigid boundaries of academic research silos. While *The Tunnel* has been studied and analyzed over the years, it was almost always limited to the context of a television documentary. Reuven Frank was not just a documentarian. When he produced *The Tunnel*, he was also executive producer of the NBC nightly newscast, *The Huntley-Brinkley Report*. He didn’t separate his work into different formats. He considered himself a journalist and all work flowed from that sensibility. Using this approach, I realized that

just after *The Tunnel* aired, Frank started work on a famous memo about the strengths and weaknesses of television news as a journalistic platform. This “transmission of experience” memo is a touchstone for generations of television journalists. I wanted to dig into that topic as well. It was only by considering his work *as a whole* that I realized that his successes and frustrations involved in *The Tunnel* helped inform the famous memo that was written the following year [emphasis added]. Those two key documents — *The Tunnel* documentary and the “transmission of experience” memo — became the foundations of my book.

Watson: What surprised me was to learn that Drew Associates did not set out to do a film about the civil rights struggle. In May 1963, Greg Shuker was looking for stories that would lend themselves to the special strengths of *cinéma vérité* — stories with an established beginning and middle but with an unknown outcome. The ideal was to get as close to drama as possible without putting actors in front of the cameras. [See *Contested Ground* for Mike’s explanation of how Frank sought to employ the tools of fiction to enhance storytelling, as echoed here.] While casually reading a newspaper, Shuker spotted a brief article about the upcoming integration at the University of Alabama and Wallace’s opposition to it; Shuker recognized the inherent drama in the conflict. The clash of the protagonist and the antagonist was rich with backstory. Who would prevail — and how — was the essence of the tale.

Crisis profiles a tense constitutional standoff and allows viewers to be privy to strategy sessions at high levels of government. But the heart of the film is a personal story. The portraits of Vivian Malone and James Hood, the students attempting to enroll, was entirely different from what was delivered in standard news footage. Black citizens shown in broadcast news coverage of civil rights demonstrations were men and

women who had already fortified themselves for confrontation. In *Crisis*, these thoroughly appealing young people are seen in the process of finding their inner strength. They wonder about the details of their safe-keeping. They discuss their ambitions. They exchange nervous but determined laughter. It becomes difficult for viewers not to feel a vested interest in their futures. A *New York Herald Tribune* review observed, “The warm breath of human life is felt in every scene of this absorbing document.”

Mascaro: *Looking back on the work, how do you assess its value — to the literature and your development as a historian?*

Watson: In the years since the publication of *The Expanding Vista*, I’ve been contacted by scholars researching cinéma vérité or the history of the civil rights movement. The most important connection for me was with Professor Culpepper Clark of the University of Alabama. He had credited my work in his book *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation’s Last Stand at the University of Alabama*. To commemorate the 40th anniversary of the event, his university hosted a symposium in June 2003 called “Opening Doors.” I was invited to be on the panel “Documenting the Moment” along with Bob Drew and Jim Lipscomb. Those few days in Tuscaloosa were profoundly meaningful to me professionally as well as personally. Among the principals in attendance were Vivian Malone and James Hood, Robert Kennedy’s press secretary Ed Guthman, and George Wallace’s press secretary Bob Jones. One evening at dinner, my spouse and I were seated at a table with Bob Jones and his spouse Vera. Also at the table was a photographer who had covered the story for *Ebony* magazine, Chris McNair. He told us that a little more than three months after Wallace’s stand in the schoolhouse door, his eleven-year-

old daughter, Carol Denise McNair, became the youngest victim of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. Wallace was given a good deal of blame for creating a climate in his state that led to such a tragedy. I was witness to an extraordinary display of reconciliation that night, sitting between forgiveness and shame intermingling with the hope our nation's upward trajectory of social justice would never falter.

Yotova: Scholars have studied Jacob Riis's efforts largely in terms of artistic value, objectivity/journalistic credibility, or lack thereof. I think my work offers a unique look at the mixture of ideology, technology, journalism, and documentary photography as necessary ingredients for social change. In my view, what makes Riis's work unique and suggests that it should be considered as a precursor to documentary film, however, is the fact that the earliest documentary films, though still intended to portray unrehearsed and truthful moments in time, revolved primarily around the notion to entertain and/or educate. Understanding the history of documentary visual media also requires a study of the ways photography, documentary images, and films have been viewed by audiences — doing so allows for a deeper understanding of the overarching role visual media play in informing public opinion and supporting social discourse.

Scholarly reviews of the influence of documentary photography also tend to focus more prominently on the Farm Security Administration, including leading practitioners such as Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, and Gordon Parks. They also often discuss the impact of technological developments and the relationship between cinematic fiction and cinematic realism. My approach, however, helped me gain a more comprehensive interpretation of the differences between a motion picture as a fictional story produced by a screenwriter and social documen-

tary films representing the real stories of actual subjects. Scholars have also often cited Mathew Brady as the inventor of documentary photography because of his work during and after the American Civil War. My study's purpose however was to illustrate a distinction between photojournalism and documentary photography, to demonstrate the latter as a journalistic tool rather than fine art, and to present Jacob Riis as a pioneering documentarian and muckraker. Although Riis shared the ideological sympathies and intense interest in economic issues with investigative pioneers, unlike Upton Sinclair, Ida M. Tarbell, or Lincoln Steffens, Riis's main goal was not to simply expose corrupt politicians and wealthy entrepreneurs and introduce their wrongdoings to the middle and lower social classes. His main purpose was also to awaken the consciousness of the same corrupt politicians and wealthier folk in order to make a social reform. He effectively investigated the lower immigrant class living in New York's tenements and used the more novel, at the time, visual narrative to convince his contemporaries of existing social issues that needed immediate attention. His visual rhetoric, as presented during his magic lantern slide show exhibitions, had greatly influenced not only the field of journalism but also the field of documentary filmmaking.

Finally, the study of Riis's self-reflexive social commentary offers a deeper and a more meaningful understanding of the documentary genre and its influence in society. Riis's photography was largely inspired by his own experiences as an immigrant, and their study in this context — from historical, sociological, journalistic, and artistic perspectives — can further address the way we define documentary today. If such definition is determined by form, content, practice, or distribution, this approach has its roots in the mixture of ideology, technology, and social awareness that grew precisely from Riis's pioneering work.

Roundtable: Documentary Journalism Historiography

Conway: I am still too close to this book [*Contested Ground*] to assess its value. My main hope with all of my media history projects is to help people understand the complexities involved in earlier media transitory periods and also to encourage other historians to take on broadcast history topics.

Mascaro: *Please comment on how this case expands the historiography of documentary journalism.*

Watson: Some people create documentaries and some people analyze them. If it's possible for the analyst to connect with the creators, the analysis will be enriched. I've read some scholarship on TV documentaries of the 1960s that assigned political and philosophical motives to the broadcasts without ever interviewing anyone involved in the production. Articles filled with jargon and assumptions might count as a publication on a faculty annual review but contribute little to a real understanding of the genesis of a documentary record. As historians, we can't be afraid to talk to participants just because they may be self-serving or might challenge our theories of why something happened when and how it did. Investigating the roles of creators and verifying against historical records is far more likely to produce meaningful understanding than relying only on the "text" or one narrow frame in one's approach.

Yotova: Putting the peculiarities of visual/documentary journalism into their appropriate contexts requires a close look into the historical development of visual media and documentary film at large. The historiographical and visual discourse analyses found in my study highlight only a handful of critical developments in both the journalistic profession

(e.g. the integration of visual reportage) and in documentary filmmaking (e.g. moving images with the aid of the magic lantern). So interpreting a documentarian's work in context with the media, technology, and social conditions of their time, helps build an understanding of the developments of the visual documentary genre at large. Although a benchmark in both journalism and documentary photography, Riis's work is still a rather small part of the world's documentary photography archives. It is, however, an important benchmark in history. Studying the work of reform photographers and filmmakers, past and present, locally and globally, can further highlight the power of the visual "story." It would be interesting to see if in today's visually saturated world, documentary photography and/or film are still as effective tools for social change as they were back in Riis's time.

Conway: I would like to see more scholars move beyond the silo of documentary studies and consider a televised documentary within the larger framework of television news and journalism history.

Mislán: This roundtable's discussion reflects how documentary journalism historians find relevance in studying storytellers of our past. They also demonstrate how historians might locate their scholarly voice or positionality in their archival and writing processes. As a respondent, I want to raise additional questions that underscore a critical approach that highlights how we see (or don't see) race, gender, class, and geography shaping documentary scholarship. As a media historian, I am deeply embedded in academic efforts to de-whiten, or some might say de-colonize, our historiographies. I raise questions about power, which are at the center of critical historiographies. Ultimately, what I am asking is how do we (media historians) navigate and historicize power rela-

tions in our knowledge-production processes? Of course, I am far from being the lone scholar in this endeavor; a substantial body of historical scholarship across academic disciplines has taken on the important work of examining and recovering forgotten voices to re-center non-white, non-masculine, and non-western histories. Recovering lesser known voices and historical events or re-writing historical accounts is perhaps one of the most exhilarating acts a historian can do.

I've been particularly interested in recuperating historical figures from the twentieth century whose voices, thoughts, passions, and perspectives have not appeared in mainstream historiographies, or what some refer to as "great [white] man" histories. In my mentorship with graduate students, I encourage them to tell different stories about people whose lives have been forgotten. My own work has featured individuals who dared travel the world only to come back "home" and continue to face U.S. Jim Crowism. Such historiographies not only tell us about the impact and manner in which lesser known figures shaped political, cultural, and social conversations of their times, but these stories also provide insight into our current political and social environments. Any student who shows interest in this endeavor would need to uncover not only people's lived experiences, but also what they represented in their own historical consciousness to the world — to reference historian James Carey here — and how they expressed their consciousness. It is an effort also to capture how people *felt*, and not just what and when people produced their stories.

In thinking about what it means to de-colonize and de-whiten journalism historiographies, we need to take Denitsa Yotova's correct argument that no journalist or historian can undertake the task of objectivity. Objectivity does not exist for any of us. It is key to consider that we all come to knowledge with what feminist scholar Donna Haraway calls

“situated knowledges.” Scholars, generally speaking, arrive at “truth” within our particular historical contexts, identities, and ideologies. These partial perspectives shape what we think we know about the world. This is not to say that there are no objective realities and that everything is relative. Rather, we might acknowledge that historians exist within a particular context. As historians we must also ask the following questions: Who gets to tell stories of people’s pasts? How are these stories told? Who appears in these stories? Through what particular mediums are these stories told? For whom are these stories told? These questions underscore a larger conversation that historians must have about power, including who has the power to tell stories and who has the power to study them?

One of the subjects that emerges in this roundtable discussion, which directly implicates power relations, is technological production. Sometimes, scholarly assumptions on the role that technology plays in mediated society infer that certain tools are either neutral or progressive. But we do not always examine the relationship between power and technology. For instance, Mary Ann Watson’s work on *Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment* highlights what she considers a “critical document of American history” that offered insight into Jim Crowism segregation in Alabama during the early 1960s through a cinéma vérité style. The film primarily expresses the voices of Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and Alabama Governor George Wallace, and to a far lesser extent the voices of the students who were impacted by segregation policies and Wallace’s refusal to integrate Alabama’s institutions of higher education. Regarding the production of technology, this film and the story of how *Crisis* came to be produced is a fascinating one. But we might also ask some additional questions that would examine the power relationship between the filmmakers and the subjects. In

other words, while *cinéma vérité* indeed involves the filming of subjects without direction from the filmmaker, certain power decisions, while not explicitly visible, underline the film's production. In particular, what is happening on screen regarding the Black students who are impacted by Alabama's segregation policies during the 1960s? What was absent? Who was silent? Who had the power to access technological tools — which highlights not only filmmakers but also mainstream media corporations — and make decisions on how the story should be told? Do the means also shape the actual content? And here is a question that I am always asking: did the people at the center of race, class, and gender struggles tell their own stories at the time? The answer is almost always, yes! If so, how and where do we uncover, recover, remember, and document these moments through the voices of the subjugated as part of our documentary histories? How might these alternative stories differ, contradict, amplify, or converge with the stories that appeared in mainstream public spheres? I would take the cue, then, from the scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who asked, "Can (and how does) the subaltern speak?" In these and other cases of documentary journalism history, we can build on existing histories but also take another look, from a different perspective, using a different set of cultural questions, and perhaps searching for primary sources about those affected — the subaltern — that would enrich documentary history with more texture and color.

I ask these questions not to dismiss the groundbreaking nature of *Crisis*; as many historians suggest, it is crucial that we do not examine the past through what some call a "present-minded" perspective. What I am arguing instead is that we consider additional, alternative ways of historiographical analysis to documentary journalism. We might consider nuanced approaches that offer analytical relevance and critique.

The question of channel and technological production plays an important role in Denitsa's analysis of Jacob Riis's images from the Progressive Era, which featured the impoverished lives of newer immigrant communities in New York City. Denitsa makes an interesting point about Riis's muckracking journalistic projects, which sought to promote social change. By this time, though, ethnic communities in urban cities like New York were also printing their own media. I wonder what the leaders of those communities were conveying about their own lives. This is not to diminish Riis's contributions and intentions, but rather to raise additional questions: to what extent did non-Anglo Saxon ethnic communities in New York City play a role in fighting for better living conditions? Additionally, I wonder how such images would be confronted in a contemporary setting or through a critical historical analysis. Critical visual studies scholars have, rightly so, pointed to the harm that certain kinds of public images have evoked. What would a critical analysis of Riis's photographs say about the relevance of "poverty porn," for instance. How might Guy Debord's theoretical contributions from *The Society of Spectacle* change, if at all, this analysis?

In other words, as historians, how can and should we restore agency to oppressed communities as reflected in documentary studies? I am interested in these questions because of my own scholarly positionality. Much of my research has analyzed the role of the Black press, which came into existence before the Civil War of the mid-1800s. In a class I taught in 2019, some students were surprised that formerly enslaved and free-born Black figures wrote, edited, published, and distributed their own newspapers. Some could not imagine that these individuals would have the ability and agency to write. Their surprise emphasized one of the primary issues we find in mainstream journalism histories, the erasure of non-white and non-male voices. In class we discussed

how Black women and men played a direct role in their own emancipation through the act of writing. Thus, I ask how can we restore agency to these ghosts of journalism? Of course, these topics and approaches require us to dig through archives, many that frequently go years unseen.

It is not easy to undertake the processes of recovering lesser known people. Sometimes, public archives do not exist, or records are deeply embedded within other archival papers. Or they may even exist within someone's basement. These challenges can push us to rethink what we consider "the archive." There is a current academic movement composed of Black Studies scholars who are re-shaping archival analysis in an effort to expand how we perceive and write history. As the discussants highlight here, the archival process can be challenging, but it can be rewarding and refreshing to find yourself in a corner of a library engaging microfiche, microfilms, film footage, radio clips, or just old newspapers. But as we work with these materials, we can also broaden our analytical lens by asking ourselves other questions about what we see, feel and hear.

We might even position ourselves within those archives. Some years ago, as I was working on my dissertation, I visited the University of Michigan's Bentley Historical Library to examine the personal papers of North Carolinian self-defense activist and internationalist Robert F. Williams. I found clips from his radio program *Radio Free Dixie*, which aired from Havana, Cuba to the United States. I had already read through the radio transcripts, but to listen was a distinctly different experience. Listening to the voices of Williams, his wife Mabel R. Williams, and other Cuban and non-Cuban voices come in and out of the airwaves provided a different texture. It was an affective moment, where I could *hear* the tone and gravitas of the activists speaking back to the world. I could *feel* the process of resistance [emphasis original].

Mike Conway's analysis of *The Tunnel*, a 1962 documentary that featured an unimaginable tale of West Berlin university students who helped 29 friends and family members escape East Germany by digging a tunnel underneath the Berlin Wall, raises another issue one might find in researching revolutionary historical texts. Mike notes how he grappled with writing about *The Tunnel* in a way that captured three seemingly separate but also intersected areas of study: documentary, television, and journalism production. He decided to embrace "disparate research areas" to write a holistic story about the decisions that led to the making of the film. Mike makes an interesting point here. It is indeed challenging to analyze a historical phenomenon, figure, or text when it intersects with various disciplines. It is not sufficient to embed oneself in a particular body of work; this approach can continuously reinforce "great white men's histories." Frequently, such academic decisions leave out herstories or non-white experiences and subjects. To de-colonize and de-whiten historiography, then, forces us to look elsewhere and make larger connections that move beyond traditional understandings of journalism.

Finally, I would like to close with a documentary example that reflects where we are in terms of documentary expressions compared to, say, the 1960s. Last year, I attended a documentary film festival that screened *The Commons*, a film that captures the toppling of the "Silent Sam" confederate monument at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill through the style of *cinéma vérité*.⁴ After the film ended, I witnessed a line of young people (not the film directors) move to the front of the auditorium. Courtney Symone Staton, a student organizer at UNC, took the stage and read a prepared statement that said the directors (two white documentarians also on stage) had not received the consent of student activists featured in the film. In fact, the audience

quickly learned that student activists also had filmed their own documentary on the movement to topple “Silent Sam.” I was captivated by the live conversation occurring in front of me between film subject and directors. As a media historian, I was ecstatic to see that this moment allowed the audience to hear from an individual — and a group of Brown and Black activists — who was directly impacted by the topic of the film, and hear not just from those who have the power to produce stories. The directors of *The Commons* were granted the power to tell us a story through a particular channel, a well-known and popular film festival where the audience is majority white. If the student activists had not taken to the stage, we would not know that another story exists, one told through the lives of the people who are directly impacted by a racist past that remains present. This public conversation raised several questions that I have attempted to highlight in this response, especially in relation to the subaltern. As we continue to develop more robust documentary journalism historiography, we should remember to ask more questions during our historical research, questions that underscore a larger conversation that historians must have about power, including who has the power to tell stories and who has the power to study them?

Mascaro: The comments above reflect a deep sense of privilege and responsibility to the research, to the documentary creators, and to the subjects of documentary histories. I see examples of how collegial feedback and incubation have influenced my colleagues and enriched their histories. I appreciate the attention to production technologies, which I find so important in my own work. I’m excited about the prospect of going, or sending our academic heirs, to archives to find new veins of documentary history, texture, and especially color. And I look forward to more discussions and critiques of “power” at future

conference panels and papers, journal articles, and book-length studies of documentary journalism in ways that are both professional and personal.

NOTES

¹ The film camera was initially patched to the audio recorder with a cord that carried the sync signal, which permitted the editor to re-sync sound with film. After a production during which the cord pulled loose, the crew developed a wireless sync signal that involved using a Bulova Accutron watch mechanism in the camera and audio recorder, eliminating the cord.

² Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodology: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, 4th ed. (London: Sage, 2016).

³ Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991).

⁴ For one take on the controversy regarding *The Commons*, see: https://www.columbiamissourian.com/news/local/the-commons-receives-backlash-from-student-activists-during-true-false/article_1e907128-3ec5-11e9-8a01-53bf3de04fc3.html

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