

THE LA PIETRA REPORT

The Organization of American Historians-New York University
Project on Internationalizing the Study of American History
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A Report to the Profession

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PREFACE

This report reflects the work of many historians over a period of four years. The actual writing was done by Thomas Bender, but it seeks to represent the views of the project as a whole. Drafts have been discussed with and circulated to all the participants.

Not every participant will agree with every point or phrasing, but there is a general concurrence on the general orientation of its phrasing of the issues and its recommendations.

The title is taken from the Villa La Pietra, where the international body of historians who participated in the project met. It was thought appropriate, given the theme of the project, to meet abroad, and the availability of meeting facilities at Villa La Pietra, New York University's magnificent center in Florence, Italy, made that possible. In fact the recent history of the villa illustrates in its own way the transnational theme of the conferences. The villa was given to NYU by Sir Harold Acton, whose father had purchased it after marrying an American woman from Cleveland who brought to the marriage the resources that made the purchase possible. And it was this American connection that prompted Sir Harold Acton to offer the villa to an American university, which dedicated it in part to be a center for international academic conferences.

The cover illustration shows the approach to the main villa at La Pietra.

I. RETHINKING AMERICAN HISTORY IN A GLOBAL AGE

History is a contextualizing discipline; it explains social change by reference to temporal and spatial contexts. Since the professionalization of the discipline in the nineteenth century, the nation has been treated as both the principal

object and the context for historical inquiry. Study of the United States offers no exception to this generalization. Its historiography may even offer a particularly strong example of this approach.

At present, however, intellectual trends in the general culture are pointing in a different direction. Recent discussions of "globalization," for example, may be uninformed by history, but they have nonetheless promoted important thinking about the historicity of the nation itself. These new understandings of the nation-state invite more complex understandings of the American nation's relation to a world that is at once self-consciously global and highly pluralized.

If historians have often treated the nation as self-contained and undifferentiated, it is increasingly clear that this assumption is true in neither the present nor the past. A history that recognizes the historicity of different forms of solidarity and the historical character of the project of nation-making promises to better prepare students and the public to understand and to be effective in the world we live in and will live in. A more limited history, one insensitive to a multiplicity of contexts and scales of experience would be a partial and inadequate history, telling far less than the history of the United States.

Both the nation and the other historical phenomena we examine must be resituated in larger contexts because the movements of people, money, knowledges, and things are not contained by single political units. The lived and experienced connections in transnational space need to be explored—both the channels that facilitate movement and the ruptures, discontinuities, and disarticulations that structure inequalities and constitute the basis for national and other forms of differentiation.

Not all historically significant forms of power are coterminous with nations. Historical inquiry must be more sensitive to the relevance of historical processes larger than the nation. Under the inspiration of social history, historians have in the past generation become aware of the importance of solidarities and processes smaller than the nation. Now we must extend our analysis of those histories to incorporate an awareness of larger, transnational contexts, processes, and identities. Many contemporary

theories converge with this project, but it is not motivated by theoretical considerations. Its inspiration is empirical, the quest for verisimilitude.

This approach builds upon comparative history, a method of historical inquiry that has been developed by Americanists in the past generation. Yet what we propose here is a different project. Rather than comparing two national experiences, it relates national experiences to larger processes and local resolutions. The approach of this project is closer to and extends recent work in the study of the African diaspora, the creation of the Atlantic world, diplomatic history, the history of migration, environmental history, the study of gender, and intellectual history. One could extend the list of examples. Economic history, for example, is vital to this work, yet in recent years the number of its practitioners have declined. We hope that the historiography we propose will prompt renewed engagement with such essential fields and encourage work in some of the newer fields just mentioned. But our point here is to call attention to the evidence of an emerging trend in historiography. This developing work, which we seek to advance, promises to enhance our capacity to explain past and present social change.

That the nation is historically made, not a natural or socially inherent unit, is today easily grasped by historians as well as by our students and the public. Boundaries are increasingly understood as being relatively permeable, more like "zones of contact" than firm lines of division. There is a greater awareness that the people, institutions, and cultures of America are entangled in multiple narratives both larger (e.g., migration systems or capitalism or democratic revolutions) and smaller than the nation (e.g., local, regional, and sometimes ethnic).

An internationalized history will, we think, make students and the public more fully aware of the presence in their lives of histories larger than the nation and smaller than the nation. It will also reveal various Americans being participants and even agents in a world larger than the United States. By recognizing the complexity of American relations and identities both within the bounds of the nation and beyond it, one is better able to understand the lines of division or dimensions of otherness within and

beyond the nation, as well as the sources of solidarities within and beyond the nation.

While this approach seeks to contextualize United States on a global scale in so far as such a scale is pertinent to the questions at hand, it does not propose to subsume United States history under the umbrella of world or global history. We would not have United States history thus erased; rather the aim is to deepen its contextualization and to extend the transnational relations of American history.

We are therefore urging historians self-consciously to rethink the scales, temporalities, and networks of historical transformation. For this work, the revitalized discipline of geography, once a close partner of history, will no doubt be valuable, and we urge a renewal of that collaboration.

The modern, professional discipline of history, reflecting the larger cultural assumptions of the nineteenth century, initially excluded large parts of the world from its purview. The study of these non-western "peoples without history" was relegated to the discipline of anthropology. Today, however, that divide has largely dissolved, and the discipline of history has incorporated the whole globe into historiography. This expansion of the territory of history not only demands inquiry into many more nations and cultures, but it enables history to make available as a human resource the whole of human cultures. History thus has the capacity vastly to enlarge the meaning of a liberal arts education and to provide students with richer access to a living culture, a resource that will sustain their own future cultural creativity and social invention.

To make these much enlarged cultural resources part of the working knowledge of American students and the public at large, it is essential that we not isolate the knowledge we acquire about the rest of the world. Our offer of the gift of cosmopolitanism depends upon our capacity in our teaching and research to connect a more extensive and worldly knowledge to our particular history and everyday life. Connections and comparisons in our thinking about nations and cultures beyond the borders of the United States are essential. American history, so often sharply distinguished from the histories of the wider world, must

be connected to that world, as the experiences of Americans have been for centuries.

Caution is in order here. By simply extending the domain of American history one might unthinkingly produce a form of historiographical imperialism or an ideological justification for globalization and American hegemony. We must resist the error of making world history a mere extension of a triumphalist narrative of the American experience. The point of the project is to produce a much more nuanced understanding of the place of the United States in the world in all periods of its history. Such a history must attend to the complexity and contexts of relations and interactions, including the ways in which they are infused with a variety of forms of power that both define and result from the interconnections of distinct but related histories.

As they grasp the relevance of widening the lens of social analysis, students and the public should better understand the processes, the possibilities, and the limits of social change. Such a reframing of American history invites a welcome sense of defamiliarization that will, in turn, prompt a new and more inquiring curiosity about the American past. There is thus something vital to be gained in the acquisition of the cosmopolitan feeling once described by Williams James as a sense that "one's native land seems foreign."

Much that previously has been assumed about the nation thus becomes the subject of historical curiosity and inquiry: not only the American project of nation-making, but as well the analysis of identity formation, the sources and conditions of multiple identities and solidarities, the role of various heritages in institutions and everyday life, the sources and consequences of power and privilege, and much else. By contextualizing the nation and comparing it with other nations, one may better appraise the nature of its particular, even exceptional qualities, while avoiding simplistic assertions of American exceptionalism.

One cannot claim a master narrative for American history, but there are a series of themes and issues that are especially pertinent and likely to be illuminated by the study of the United States in a context larger than itself. The U.S. has been, as Alexis deTocqueville proposed, a site for the study of historical phenomena that have a

significance beyond itself. In many cases, the United States has a role in either extending or limiting the transnational significance or success of some of these phenomena, and relations with the larger world often serve to modify them within the United States. Besides democracy, we note such historical phenomena as Christianity and/or religious pluralism, modernization and modernity, racial hierarchy, migration, environmental change, capitalism, slavery and freedom, technology, community formation, empire and colonialism, cultural modernism, identity formation and others that could be added to a longer list.

National history remains important, and will of course continue to be so in the future. But the national history we are describing resituates the nation as one of many scales, foci, and themes of historical analysis. Our students and public audiences will gain a heightened sense of nation-making. And they will be invited to consider in a more acute way the relations of underlying structures and processes, human agency, and contingency in historical change. The history curriculum, individual courses, and historical writing we anticipate, the exhibits we envision, the films that will be produced, will all be marked by the recognition of a plurality of narratives, as well as the contingency, incompleteness, and interdependence characteristic of any social practice at whatever scale of analysis, even at the level of the individual.

Such a history will also connect the United States and United States history to other histories, making it a part of world history. Broader-gauged historical training, at the undergraduate and graduate levels, will, we hope, better prepare students to understand not only American relations to the rest of the world, but it ought to enable them better to understand the nature of American nation-building and the everyday life of Americans within the borders of the United States, past and present.

By looking beyond the official borders of the United States and back again, students, we anticipate, will better understand the emergence of the United States in the world and the significance of its direct power and presence. We expect them to understand the controversial power and presence of the United States as a symbol beyond our borders. We hope students will gain a historical comprehension of the difference between being a peripheral colony and a powerful nation, and they will be introduced

to some of the large historical processes, not all contained within the nation, that might explain such a shift in the geography of global power

An international history not only requires a wider vision by United States historians, it requires in them a firmer knowledge of the histories of other peoples, nations, and transnational regions of the world. It points toward and strongly encourages expanded participation in the substantial international historical scholarship and teaching on the history of the United States. Among U.S.-based historians knowledge of foreign scholarship on the United States is distressingly limited. Ways must be found to extend and expand the international initiatives already undertaken by the Organization of American Historians, the American Studies Association, and various activities already being undertaken at various universities and historical organizations in the U.S. and abroad.

Foreign scholars of the United States are a rich resource for novel and provocative perspectives on American history, interpretations that depend upon the different intellectual traditions out of which they work and the different contexts within which they write and teach American history. It is important that students and faculty have the experience of intellectual engagement with international colleagues and that we develop a genuinely international community of Americanist teachers and scholars. Colleagues teaching in different national contexts might, in fact, be invaluable collaborators in the work of revising the U.S. history survey or the curriculum more generally. Such joint projects should be given serious consideration.

We believe that there is a general societal need for such enlarged historical understanding of the United States. We hope that the history curriculum at all levels, not only in colleges and universities but also in the K-12 levels will address itself to these issues. Indeed in recent years state education departments have mandated world history, and the National History Standards for world history rightly urges the integration of United States history into courses in world history, though of course retaining United States history as a field in its own right. It is essential that college and university departments--which carry the responsibility for training historians who will teach at the K-12 levels--begin this work of integration.

The obligations of a professional discipline are substantial. College and university history departments are responsible for the creation and transmission of the new knowledges not only for the schools but also for museums, historical sites, historical societies, and the media. As professionals, historians have a responsibility to advise state education departments and textbook publishers as well as writing textbooks that reflect the best current historical scholarship.

The more specific recommendations that follow are intended to stimulate a variety of local conversations and varied strategies for addressing these issues. The world and the discipline are changing, and this report seeks to call attention to the implications of these changes for the next generation of scholarship and teaching. In a general way, this report seeks to encourage a particular orientation to these challenges and opportunities. We do not propose another "new history"; nor do we dismiss any existing practices. We wish history to be more inclusive, not less. Such inclusiveness will, we think, eventually result in a substantial reframing of the basic narrative of American history. But we understand the process as incremental and ongoing, working in distinctive ways in different institutions. The specific suggestions elaborated below are not to be taken as a checklist of reform, but rather as a tool kit that may be useful for a variety of local experiments.

II. TEACHING OBJECTIVES

| Better prepare students to understand the contemporary world and its historical development;

| Develop in them a fuller sense of the historicity of nation-making;

| Enable students to recognize the multiple spatial and temporal contexts of American History;

| Help students to understand better the processes of identity formation, exclusions, boundaries, and different forms of solidarity;

| Enrich student understanding of the perceptions and imaginations of America from beyond its borders and promote in students a more informed sense of and commitment to a global human commons;

| Develop in students habits of historical analysis sensitive to context, interrelations and interactions, comparison, and contingency, always with an awareness that such sensitivity might well require rethinking assumed or traditional historical categories.

| Integrate U.S. history more effectively into world history;

| Encourage greater study of languages and foreign study.

III. CURRICULUM

UNDERGRADUATE

Since the recontextualization of the national history of the United States that is envisioned here establishes new relations with other national and regional histories, our proposals about American history invite reconsiderations of the undergraduate history curriculum more generally. If the American nation is understood as one of many forms of solidarity, if the American nation is more extensively contextualized, if transnational courses are conceived as vital to the study of American history, it may be necessary, or at least advisable, to rethink the interrelations of all aspects of the history curriculum and its pedagogical strategy.

Changes may range from the modest to the more substantial. One can encourage revision of the U.S. survey course, and one might provide more room in the curriculum for courses that are transnational and comparative in character. Such self-contained innovations do not disrupt the general organization of the program. Those with a special interest would prepare the courses in question. Departments must, however, be sure that such courses are allowed to fulfill departmental requirements. Many departments require a distribution of courses—for example, a number in American, European, and so-called "other" fields, and a course or more in early history. Either a transnational/international

distribution requirement could be added, or a transnational/international course could fulfill some element of the existing distribution requirement rather than falling between them, as sometimes happens at present.

More ambitious revisions of the history curriculum are imaginable. One might, for example, move away from the usual organization of the departmental "map." Most departments organize the courses around nations and regions, with a progression from broad or "survey" courses to more specialized ones. As well there is usually an implicit, if not explicit, division between U.S. (or U.S. and Europe) and the rest of the world. In recent years, the development of thematic courses has begun to confuse the legibility of this map--a sign that perhaps it is time to redraw the map. There have been surprisingly few efforts to consider a different presentation of the divisions and genres of historical inquiry. The following alternative map is offered as an example. Its purpose is not prescriptive, and adoption is not the object intended. Rather it aims to stimulate a critical conversation about existing organizations of the field of historical knowledge and to prompt still more alternative conceptions.

This proposal divides the field into four rubrics, and students would be required to take at least one course in each division, one of which must be before 1500 AD.

I. Nations and Empires

II. Multi-sited histories (transnational, comparative or international)

III. Themes, Groups, and Institutions

IV. Periods: Early (before 500 AD); Middle (500-1500); Late (1500-)

A department could decline to demand a specific distribution, though there are probably reasons for some distribution. Or one could reduce the organization to three rubrics, with an additional requirement that at least one course be taken in each of the three periods, whatever the rubric.

The point here, again, is neither the precise structure nor the distribution, but rather the way the field of history

is represented. It is not nation-centered. The nation is one of the units of history or approaches to the study of change over time rather than the "natural" unit for historical concern. By getting outside of the nation in this fashion, students will in fact better understand the nation.

Inquiry will replace unstated premises. The result will encourage more reflexivity about the object of inquiry, about spatial relations, scales of time and space, the uses and rigor of categories and concepts, and the connections between different histories. Emphasis is on a multi-faceted approach to history that stresses various transnational and international connections and comparisons.

Such an internationalist approach will encourage study abroad, even for students especially interested in American history. Likewise, history teachers, even those in the American field, would become strong advocates for serious language study.

Such a history curriculum as is being suggested here, whether in its modest or more ambitious version, contributes more broadly to education in the liberal arts by locating American history in its largest historical and geographical settings. Indeed, it would give American history a larger place in liberal arts education, both for its temporal and geographical contextualization and for its greatly enhanced contextualist interpretations of culture and explanations of social change, an approach less and less available in the social sciences generally.

The U.S. History Survey Course. The United States history survey course is properly a focal point for the creation of an internationalized American history. If in the survey course one embraces the simple advice to follow the people, the money, the knowledges, and the things, one would quite easily--on the basis of pure empiricism--find oneself internationalizing the study of American history. One might reasonably anticipate that constructing and teaching such survey courses would stimulate new research and interpretations, as has happened with world history.

A variety of approaches might be pursued to connect American history more strongly to historical themes that are not exclusively American. Some examples:

British America can be located within the context of other world-wide colonial empires and native Americans. It can also be understood in relation to the Pacific Rim, for the social groupings that became the United States were formed by more than westward movements. There were also southern, eastern, and northern migrations of peoples, elaborations of labor systems, and movements of culture and capital.

The early history of the Americas can be analyzed as part of an Atlantic-wide contest over the control of labor, a complex bundle of histories involving migration, enslavement, and the historical fusing of notions of free labor, freedom, and capitalism.

The American Revolution and its aftermath need not be treated as a singular event, but a part of a global system of empires that over the next two centuries would be challenged by democratic revolutions. The American Revolution in this context was the initiating event of that age of revolutions, and the United States was an actor—on various sides—in many of the later revolutions.

The Civil War can be examined as an episode in an international process of consolidating national territories and empires, all of which was entangled with the reorganization of systems of labor on a global scale.

The industrial revolution was not local, or even Anglo-American. It was sustained by the emergence of a global economy, significantly dependent on New World slavery and world-wide colonial systems. In time industrialism was itself a global phenomenon.

The Progressive Movement and New Deal might be contextualized as part of an international age of social politics.

One could explore even larger categories: modernity, for example, of which the United States was early recognized as

a prominent and influential example; or democracy, capitalism, or nation-making. One might, to take a different kind of example, explore the proposition that the transnational African diaspora provided the foundation for American nation-making and national identity or nationality. Or one might frame the historical development of the United States within the context of global systems of trade, both before and after European arrival in the Americas. The point, again, is not to push any of these points of view in particular, but rather to suggest the richness of possibilities as one extends and rethinks the contexts of American history.

MASTER'S DEGREE

In recent years, particularly at research universities, the M.A. degree has been undervalued. In fact, it deserves our fullest attention. It is mostly at the level of the Master's Degree that History Departments perform their work of training K-12 history teachers, one of the discipline's most important responsibilities. The M.A. degree is also pursued by students pursuing a variety of public history careers.

Few M.A. degree programs have complex requirements, and the M.A. degree usually demands less specialization than the Ph.D. degree. Both structure and purpose, therefore, make the M.A. program a valuable opportunity to develop the broader education in history that we are proposing. Within the framework of the MA degree, a department can mount the courses that will allow for a global contextualization of American history, ideally in conjunction with an M.A. degree or concentration in world history.

At the level of the M.A. degree one cannot, of course, provide in-depth preparation for teaching world history (including U.S. history) or broadly contextual approaches to U.S. History in K-12 or in a museum. But it is both possible and desirable to provide the examples and conceptual formulations for such courses, curricula, and exhibitions.

PH.D. PROGRAM

Enhancing Research and Teaching Capacities. Ph.D. Programs typically have minimal requirements that allow for reasonable flexibility and individual invention. We endorse

that practice; it means that we need not propose major structural changes. Rather we urge mainly that programs be structured in such a way as to allow and encourage wider transnational and international perspectives. Whatever the structure of requirements in a given department, we propose that specialists in American history develop reasonable command of the history of at least one other area, whether a nation or a transnational region or themes. The paths to this competency are various, but the intention is that they be integral to the research agenda or teaching fields of the student, not some added-on set of course requirements or exams.

While it is essential that the structure of Ph.D. requirements not hamper the development of a transnational or comparative study of American history, it is equally vital that some courses be available to engage students in broader conceptions of American history. Most crucial to the work of reorienting the intellectual aspirations of Americanists may be faculty encouragement both by precept and, even more important, by example. In fact, the departmental culture--whether it nourishes and supports the ambition for an enlarged understanding of American history--may be the decisive factor in the success or failure of efforts in this direction. Surely nourishing such a culture is more important than ever more elaborate requirements.

In this spirit, we encourage a methodology or historiography course that considers current historical writing about societies on all continents, representing a good sample of the variety of historiographical traditions being pursued in the department. Both faculty and students will have a richer and more immediate sense of the larger territory of the discipline. Students will recognize one another as colleagues and the various historiographies as a part of their scholarly armamentarium, thus enlarging their sense of the discipline beyond the community of Americanists and the literature of American history alone.

In order to engage this international historiography and scholarly community, students in American history will need greater language proficiency than has usually been required. If they are asked to acquire a reading knowledge of a foreign language, it is essential that they be asked to use that knowledge as part of their training, in course work and in research. Ideally, they might have an opportunity to examine foreign archives as part of their

training or dissertation, which would enrich that specific work and lay a foundation for developing larger perspectives on American history.

The examination structure should not unduly hamper broader exploration of American history. One might even think of alternative forms of examination that at once more effectively broaden historical competencies and strengthen analytical rigor. Are there ways of examining Ph.D. candidates that might better enable them to include transnational and international sites and/or themes in their pre-dissertation preparation? We note, in addition, that courses, examinations, and dissertation research are not the only ways for graduate students to acquire greater knowledge of other histories and connections between them. Their assignments as teaching assistants and, where appropriate, as instructors in their own courses are valuable opportunities--with proper mentoring--to learn precisely the lessons being proposed here.

It is important to emphasize that our recommendation is not to train Americanists as global historians or even comparative historians. Rather it is to help them acquire the capacity to explore the full dimensions of their research and teaching interests, by following them beyond national borders when the question at hand invites or requires it. Studying the international economy and the changing place of the United States in it is one example of the history being proposed here, but so is a narrative history of a community or even that of a single person whose life can be understood only in a context larger than its immediate context, whether a city or nation.

Foreign Experience (Research and Teaching) As in the case of faculty, international research, travel, and professional connections will be important for graduate students. Departments should endeavor to establish bilateral graduate student exchange programs with foreign universities, even including teaching opportunities abroad for the U.S.-based student, and research and, perhaps, teaching opportunities for the foreign-based student. More limited exchange programs and summer institutes should also be considered. They could be sponsored by a specific university or group of universities, a public or private historical organization, or the Organization of American

Historians. We encourage the development of pilot projects under various auspices.

Financial Aid. The history programs being proposed here are ambitious, and they require resources not heretofore available to Americanists. Some dissertations written in the spirit we propose may take longer than the current average time to degree, though probably not substantially. Still, adequate financial aid is crucial. One cannot ask students to take on topics for which it is known in advance that adequate support will not be forthcoming. In addition to time, there are other financial needs: language study and travel to archives, conferences, and institutes abroad.

IV. POSTDOCTORAL TRAINING AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

The extension of historiographical horizons being proposed is a career-long project. For future generations of historians, the Ph.D. program can structure such an orientation, but continuing encouragement and opportunities for professional development will be required to realize the contextual richness being sought. It is hoped that research and teaching opportunities for foreign scholars in the U.S. and for U.S. scholars abroad will be developed to enable junior and senior scholars to resituate and expand their understanding of the contexts of American history and its relations to larger histories. Such programs might be developed both by research and educational institutions and by foundations. National governments, including the U.S. Fulbright Program, and bi-national exchange institutions, it is hoped, might become involved in developing such opportunities.

More modest postdoctoral and general faculty development programs should also be devised. Release time for course development and encouragement of team-teaching would considerably advance faculty capacity for such research and teaching. The development of such courses will not only enrich the teaching curriculum but it will build a foundation for research. We urge both encouragement and the allocation of resources (release time, research assistance, team-teaching) that would enable Americanists to participate more fully in world history courses at the

departmental level or in general education programs. Work on textbooks in the field will contribute both to teaching and to the intellectual foundations of a more international history of the United States, and we urge appropriate professional recognition for such scholarship and for course development as a form of scholarship.

V. THE DEPARTMENT

A history department less tightly organized around the nation as the object and context of inquiry will doubtlessly have a greater sense of shared interests and intellectual connections among its members, which might invite more collaborative research and teaching. It will also exemplify to students the fullness of the discipline, beyond any one specialization or theoretical orientation.

Such a department will, we hope, encourage and sustain work that breaks traditional spatial and temporal boundaries, recognizing that such work often requires more demanding preparation, more complicated and therefore longer research agendas, and more complex historical narratives. To encourage such work, department personnel committees may have to think seriously about reward structures that emphasize "originality," even if of trivial import, and "productivity," even if it confuses quantity with quality. Breadth and significance, even complexity and ambition, reflected in problems addressed (rather than ambition as measured by simple output) must be fairly rewarded. So must experiments in novel forms of historical narratives and types of presentation. There must be recognition of the value of innovative teaching, teaching that moves beyond the comfort zone of specialization and teaches a more extensive, synthetic, and richly contextualized history of the United States.

One might reasonably expect that a department moving in this direction would have a commitment to the teaching of World History. Americanists should be invited into that work, and they should be willing and able to contribute to such courses.

The Department would do well to consider the development of bi-lateral exchange programs for both faculty and students, with selected and familiar counterparts abroad. Specialists

in the American as well as in foreign fields, could, of course, participate. We encourage special efforts to bring foreign visitors to teach American history, whether as visiting professors or on exchange programs. Likewise, an effort can be made to enable Americanists to teach American history abroad, whether with outside funding (as in a Fulbright) or through exchanges.

VI. CAREERS/HISTORICAL WORK

The employment market seems to be increasingly receptive to the broad training of professional historians that we are here proposing. The reasons are various—ranging from a rising interest in global and transnational histories in educational institutions and other historical agencies, to concern about excessive specialization, to the economic benefits of hiring someone who can contribute to more than one special field.

The array of general education programs at American colleges and universities that supply a significant portion of the student's first two years of coursework provide important opportunities for historians with the capacities we are proposing. Such programs often provide alternative or additional employment opportunities outside of the history department or jointly with it. And these required courses provide an important venue for bringing historical knowledge to non-majors, thus making the courses a recruitment ground for the discipline.

Although there are sound historiographical concerns driving our recommendations, it is important that there is evidence that students trained to approach American history from an international perspective may well be more successful on the job market than those trained in more traditional ways. That said, it is essential that such Ph.D. students have the evident capacity to teach both the established curriculum and the developing one.

VI. ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN HISTORIANS

We hope that the Organization of American Historians will continue to promote the internationalization of the study

of American history, including continuing its efforts to incorporate more fully foreign-based historians of the United States into the activities and publications of the organization. We urge the OAH to work for increasingly comprehensive coverage of scholarship on the U.S. published abroad, including the encouragement of participation and integration (by field, method, etc.) of foreign scholars in listings of publications, reviews in the Journal of American History, and in convention programs.

In order to assist the exchange of faculty and students, the OAH might consider undertaking to encourage interdepartmental exchange programs, and it could be a clearinghouse for information on exchanges and international seminars and conferences. The OAH might even seek and administer travel funds for faculty, dissertation students, and pre-dissertation students that will facilitate foreign research and language training. It could use its standing as a major learned society to communicate with and explain to the Fulbright Commission, the federally-funded Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship Program, the Social Science Research Council, which funds various fellowships in international studies, and other organizations and programs the importance of foreign research and language training for Americanists.

We urge the OAH to be open to greater institutional collaboration with American studies associations abroad and other international organizations that include as members historians of the United States. Serious consideration might be given to the creation of affiliated memberships. The OAH would do well, we think, to bring itself and its membership into closer relations with the World History Organization. Such collaboration might include the mutual distribution of announcements of conferences, calls for papers, and employment opportunities as well as joint sponsorship of conferences and institutes.

VII. THE LA PIETRA MEETINGS, 1997-2000

In 1996, the Organization of American Historians and New York University's International Center for Advanced Studies jointly established the Project on Internationalizing the Study of American History. This project built upon a series of initiatives developed during the 1990s by the OAH that

aimed to strengthen its relations with foreign scholars of United States history. These efforts included encouraging more participation of foreign scholars in the annual meeting of the OAH and the establishment of funds to facilitate that participation. They also involved the creation of article and book prizes for work published by foreign scholars. The Journal of American History created a board of International Contributing Editors, and it began regularly to review books written by foreign scholars and to publish more work of foreign scholars.

The initial planning for the project was undertaken by Thomas Bender of NYU, David Thelen, editor of the Journal of American History, and Linda Kerber, the President of the OAH. A proposal went before the Executive Board, and it was approved in October, 1996. Bender was designated director of the project, and he undertook to raise funds for it. The International Center for Advanced Studies, NYU's Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and the American Council of Learned Societies provided the funds for a planning meeting, held in NYU's Villa La Pietra in Florence, Italy, in the summer of 1997. The participants, listed at the end of this report, represented all continents, and they developed the plan for the next three conferences. Meanwhile, several major foundations provided the funds necessary for the project to go forward: The Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, The Ford Foundation, and the Mellon Foundation.

The three conferences (1998, 1999, and 2000) were organized in an unusual way. About half of the participants were invited by the director of the Project, and the remainder of the participants were selected by an annual competition administered by the Organization of American Historians. This enabled both a strong focus in the commissioning of papers and an openness that invited new ideas and welcomed self-selected participants. In both the process of commissioning papers and in selecting participants from among those who proposed papers, an effort was made to cover all continents, a variety of historiographical specializations, and a mix of different work settings: research universities, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, high schools, and public history institutions. In total, seventy-eight historians participated, about one-third of whom were foreign scholars of the United States. In order to insure some continuity of discussion from year to year, at least two foreign and two U.S. scholars, plus

the director, were participants in one of the previous conferences, and the final conference, out of which these recommendations emerged, had strong representation by participants in each of the previous conferences, but it too had new voices in the interest of insuring that the project itself did not become self-referential.

Each conference had a special focus. The first, in 1997, was a planning conference that, as has been noted, set the agenda for the project. The second, in 1998, was concerned with the theoretical issues that attended the project's reconsideration of the assumptions that determined the temporal and spatial scales of conventional national historical narratives. It also considered the sociology of the profession--the history of its relation to the making of modern nation-states, its audiences in the academy and in the public realm, the relation of American history to other national histories in U.S. departments, and the moral and civic responsibilities of the historian. The third conference moved to exemplary essays probing either particular themes or reframing conventional historical movements or periods from a more international perspective. The final meeting, in 2000, focused its attention on the practical implications of the intellectual agenda developed by the project, and this report is the product of those discussions. The Report should be understood, however, as a product of the whole project, and it has in fact been reviewed by all participants.

There was an annual report for each conference, and those reports are available on the Web pages of the OAH and the International Center for Advanced Studies at New York University. These are: www.nyu.edu/institutes/nyu and www.aoh.org. A selection of the papers is being published in a book edited by Thomas Bender, Rethinking American History in a Global Age (University of California Press, forthcoming).

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PARTICIPANTS IN THE LA PIETRA MEETINGS

1997-2000

Willi Paul Adams, Freie Universitat (Germany)

Mia Bay, Rutgers University

Tiziana Bonazzi, University of Bologna (Italy)

Thomas Bender, New York University

Philip Bonner, University of Witswatersrand (South Africa)

Charles Bright, University of Michigan

Nicholas Canny, National University of Ireland, Galway (Ireland)

William Chafe, Duke University

Francesca Lopez Civeira, University of Havana (Cuba)

Nancy Cott, Yale University

Alan Dawley, College of New Jersey

Greg Dening, University of Melbourne (Australia)

Prasenjit Duara, University of Chicago

Ellen Carol DuBois, University of California, Los Angeles

Mary Dudziak, University of Southern California

Colleen Dunlavy, University of Wisconsin, Madison

David Engerman, Brandeis University

Elizabeth Esch, New York University

Ferdinando Fasce, University of Bologna (Italy)

Winfried Fluck, Freie Universitat (Germany)

Eric Foner, Columbia University

Dana Frank, University of California, Santa Cruz

George Fredrickson, Stanford University

Fumiko Fujita, Tsuda College (Japan)

Jun Furuya, Hokkaido University (Japan)

Michael Geyer, University of Chicago

Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, Martin-Luther Universität Halle
Wittenberg (Germany)

Lori Ginzberg, Pennsylvania State University

Michael Gomez, New York University

James Green, University of Massachusetts, Boston

Carl Guarneri, St. Mary's College of California

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Christiane Harzig, University of Bremen (Germany)

Jurgen Herbst, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Martha Hodes, New York University

Dirk Hoerder, University of Bremen (Germany)

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Illinois, Champagne-Urbana

David Hollinger, University of California, Berkeley

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Rob Kroes, University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

Karen Kupperman, New York University

Michael LaCombe, New York University

Lester D. Langley, University of Georgia

Alessandra Lorini, University of Florence (Italy)

Erik McDuffie, New York University

Molly McGarry, New York University, now Bryn Mawr

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James Mohr, University of Oregon

Carl Nightingale, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Mary Nolan, New York University

Thomas Osborne, Santa Ana College

Jacques Revel, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales
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Ron Robin, Haifa University (Israel)

Daniel Rodgers, Princeton University

Roy Rosenzweig, George Mason University

John Rowett, Oxford University

Mary Ryan, University of California, Berkeley

Nayan Shah, University of California, San Diego

Barbara Clark Smith, The Smithsonian Institution

David Stowe, Michigan State University

Victoria Straughn, La Follette High School, Madison,
Wisconsin

Mauricio Tenorio, University of Texas/Centro de
Investigación y Docencia Económicas (Mexico)

David Thelen, Indiana University

Ian Tyrrell, University of New South Wales (Australia)

Josefina Zoraida Vazquez, El Colegio de Mexico (Mexico)

Robert Wiebe, Northwestern University

François Weil, Ecole des Hautes Studes en Sciences Sociales
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Richard White, Stanford University

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Mari Yoshihara, University of Hawaii, Manoa

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Most important of all, this Project is indebted to the wisdom of the international cast of scholars who participated in it. The combination of intelligence and commitment along with a willing capacity to transcend the divisions posed by specialization, different national historiographical traditions, and, sometimes, language bodes well for the Project. Surely such cosmopolitanism is unusual in academe; we propose to do what we can to make certain that it is not unique.

Several administrators at NYU were enormously helpful. In particular, I would like to single out the late Debra James, former Vice-President and Deputy Chancellor; Shirley Riddell, administrator of the Office of the Dean for the Humanities, Tanya Serduik, Sula Haska, and Jeryl Martin-Hannibal of the International Center for Advanced Studies; and Cecilia Guarnaccia, the director of conferences and meetings at Villa La Pietra. Two graduate assistants worked with the project, and I would like to thank Saverio Giovacchini and Mark Elliott. At the office of the Organization of American Historians, Arnita Jones, the

Executive Director, and John Dichl, Assistant Executive Director, provided essential support. I wish to thank Nancy Cott, Christiane Harzig, Linda Kerber, Michael Hogan, and Alan Winkler for serving on the OAH selection committee. In addition, the project benefited from the intellectual and institutional support provided by three distinguished historians who served as president of the Organization of American historians as the Project took shape: Linda Kerber, George Fredrickson, and William Chafe. David Thelen, who had already begun the work of internationalizing the OAH and the discipline and was simultaneously organizing a related project for The Journal of American History, was supportive throughout.

Without the generous multi-year support of several foundations, this Project could not have been launched at all. At the American Council of Learned Societies, the President Stanley N. Katz and Steven Wheatley, the director of the ACLS American Studies Program, made available crucial support that enabled the planning to begin. Patricia LaBalme, one of the Trustees of the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, was persuaded of the significance of the Project for the future of the discipline; her early support and that of the Foundation provided the initial and vital financial underpinnings of the endeavor. I also want to thank her for joining our discussions at the second conference. Lynn Szywaja, Acting Director of the Culture and Creativity Program (formerly Arts and Humanities) of The Rockefeller Foundation and her colleague Tomas Ybarra Frausto, were sympathetic and helpful from the point that the idea was broached to them, and their support and that of The Rockefeller Foundation is much appreciated. Alison Bernstein, Vice President of The Ford Foundation, and Toby Volkman, the program officer directing the efforts of The Ford Foundation to rethink area studies, both recognized the significance of this project for that larger work, and we are grateful for the support from The Ford Foundation. Finally, we must thank Richard Ekman and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation who provided funds to invite as keynote speakers scholars from outside of the field of American history who have been exploring similar questions.

Thomas Bender

New York, September, 2000

