The Power of People’s History

If you choose to go to college and major in history, there is one question that will come up a lot, especially when your four years are coming to a close: “So, what are you going to do with history? Teach?” In general, I think that I can safely say that I didn’t study history because of the job opportunities that I would be showered with after graduation. I studied history because, broadly speaking, I want to understand the world we live in. My studies over the past four years have repeatedly reaffirmed the relevance — and power — of people’s history.

That’s why, when I signed up for a public history internship class this semester, I was hoping to intern at the Freedom Archives, a non-profit in the Mission that preserves progressive and radical historical material, especially from the Bay Area. I had previously encountered the archive during another class where we watched “COINTELPRO 101” and had a Q&A with Claude, the archive’s director. I appreciated then, as I appreciate now, the fact that history’s relevance is fundamentally integrated into the mission of the Freedom Archives. What’s the point of historical material if the only people who engage with it are academic historians? I’m not going to answer it, that’s not a rhetorical question — academic historians are important. But the power of historical materials increases exponentially when they are made available to a broader audience. Everything at the Freedom Archives is collected, cataloged, and shared online and at events with its relevance to today’s struggles and today’s youth in mind. As their website states, the material here is meant to “preserve the past, illuminate the present, and shape the future.”

I’m glad that my 100 hours there helped to advance that goal. I’ve spent my time at the Freedom Archives listening to and cataloging a shelf of reel-to-reel audio tapes that deal with the “Little Free Speech Movement” of 1966 and 1967 at UC Berkeley. When I did a little research into this period, I found that not a lot of material is out there right now that deals with the campus uprisings that took place after the better-known Free Speech Movement of 1964. I hope that historians, students, and anybody interested in the nature and value of student movements finds this collection valuable. Although I grew up in the East Bay and encountered the Free Speech Movement a lot (in the form of UC Berkeley’s co-optation of the movement to sell the school, at the campus Free Speech Café, in the movie “Berkeley in the ‘60s,” in classes, in conversation, in modern student movements…), I learned a lot about the experience of campus organizing during that period by listening to these tapes and talking about the subject with Claude, Nathaniel, and my fellow interns.

In a certain sense, I know that I do want to teach history after I graduate, and for the rest of my life, just not necessarily in a classroom and not just to any one age group, but in my daily life: in conversations with strangers on the bus, with friends and family, at marches and demonstrations, in my future workplace, and everywhere else. History can be used to fight racism, sexism, and even the class war. Historical knowledge is power, and it is for everyone.

-Charlotte Perry-Houts, Spring ‘15
Interview with our Newest Full-Time Faculty: Professor Zarsadiaz!

Question 1: How did you decide to study Asian American history?

Professor Zarsadiaz: I’ve always loved history, I always got the history awards at the end of the year at the school assemblies. I decided to study Asian American history when I was in college, largely because it had a lot to do with my upbringing. I am from a predominantly Asian suburb of Los Angeles. When I moved to college, to Washington D.C., I was really struck by how different the racial makeup was of the East Coast, particularly Washington D.C which is a highly segregated city. And so when I was in college I decided I wanted to go to graduate school to pursue the Asian history of the United States, why certain parts of U.S. have higher Asian populations than others and what the experiences are of particularly Asian immigrants to the United States. And again a lot my interest came from living in D.C., for instance how small the Chinatown was. It was seriously just a two by two block, and it was surprising to me.

In a big city like D.C. you expect a large Asian population in Chinatown and most of the faces were not presumably Chinese, most of the businesses were catered for tourism, and to me that was fascinating and this became another motivation to go to graduate school. As a professor, it also allows that kind of time to study these topics.

Q2: When did you know you wanted to be a historian?

Z: I decided I wanted to be a historian my junior year of college. I was not sure what I wanted to do, but I knew I always loved history and in college I was an American Studies major, which is an interdisciplinary field. So you study American culture through literature, sociology, the arts, through history and so forth. I wanted to take that to another level, go to graduate school, and become a college professor to teach these subjects I liked. I liked going into the archive, and doing research, I liked interviewing people. Historians like me that do contemporary history are afforded the opportunity to do oral history and I always thought it one of more of the valuable methods of doing research.

Q3: What do you like best about teaching at USF?

Z: The students are fantastic. I’ve come across a lot of sharp students who are engaged and who seem to be really invested in their classes; I find them to very passionate about the subject matter. A lot of history majors in particular dig it—they get really into it. I also think that USF has a fantastic faculty, not just in history but also in many departments and programs. I myself am affiliated with the Asian Pacific American Studies program, the Philippine Studies program, the Critical Diversity Studies program, and the Urban Studies program.

(continued on page 3)
Continued Interview with Professor Zarsadia

Q4: Can you share a bit about the classes you’re planning to teach in the coming semesters?

Z: This semester I am teaching Asian American History and The City in American History. In the fall I will be teaching Asian American history again. This is an overview course of the history and experiences of Asians in the United States. To clarify we aren’t studying the history of China or India, we’re studying the history of Asians in the U.S. We go from the colonial period through the 21st century. We end the class in very present-day topics. I will also be teaching a 400-level seminar on the American West. It’s about what it means to be a part of the American West, and how we define the American West. When you think of the American West you think of California, Oregon, and Nevada but students who will be taking this class will be pushed to think deeply, philosophically, methodically, and logically about how we define the West. Can we include other parts of the West? Are Hawai‘i and Alaska the West? What about America’s colonial legacies around the world, are those Western expansions? It’s going to be a great class.

Q5: What is the best way to study for you classes?

Z: I’m certain all professors will say this, but doing a very close reading of all the assigned readings. I think it also helps to do a group study. It’s a great way to bounce ideas, and it gives an opportunity to someone who missed a point or a concept and if they talk it through with a peer it may be less threatening and it forces you to keep the conversation going past class time. Also, communicate regularly with the professor especially if it’s a small class, you should definitely take the advantage of the intimacy of that size of class.

Q6: Why do you think students should take your classes?

Z: The entire history faculty has very different teaching styles and personalities. I bring a unique personality to the classroom, particularly because of the field of study I do. I’ve always considered myself an interdisciplinary scholar. So even though this is a history class, and all the courses are rooted in history, often times students dabble in theories of anthropology or sociology. They will read fiction, poetry, and they will watch movies. This kind of crosses intellectual boundaries and my syllabi often reflect that. You will be reading a poem, next to an academic journal article, next to a piece from NPR and I kind of bring that uniqueness to the table. Students should also take my classes because here at our department, I’m the only historian that does Asian American history in particular, in-depth urban history, and also the American West.

Q7: Lastly, what do you like to do for fun?

Z: I love to cook and bake. I have, so ridiculously, probably around 70 cookbooks, which I actually read in my leisure time. I really like to read recipes and food magazines. I have three favorite magazines: Saveur, it’s a kind of food/travel magazine, Food and Wine, and Bon Appetit. Those three I love and in another world, and another life, I was actually going to be a chef and go to culinary school. But I decided my calling was to be a historian.

*Interview conducted in person, transcribed, and edited for length by Claire Winter, Spring ’15*
Deconstruction of La Conquista: Paraguay

We live in a period characterized by the rapid synthesize of information. Through social media and hashtags, information and the dissemination of ideas and opinions have become more easily accessible and we are confronted with the issue of over-generalizations and the simplification of complex issues. This is seen on a daily basis, but as a student of history these generalizations often form the base of our knowledge that has become so deeply entrenched into our minds we become blinded to alternative interpretations of historical events. One central issue I wrestled with for the duration of my last semester at USF was that of the Spanish conquest of the Americas. My interest in the subject long preceded this last semester yet my interest was piqued by the popular lashing out over social media condemning Christopher Columbus as a genocidal maniac. I questioned this apparently popular fallacy that was spreading across my social media platforms. Many of us have fallen into this teleological pitfall at one point or another that has pigeonholed our conceptions of historical peoples and events. Our tendencies to conflate groups like Spaniards and Natives as singular and cohesive entities are rooted in the fixed dichotomy of conqueror and conquered. While it cannot be denied that indigenous peoples across the Americas have suffered grievous effects stemming from colonization, this story of colonization is not one of obvious and inevitable European domination.

The idea that Europeans as "technological superiors" were predestined to conquer the "simple" native suggests that indigenous peoples were an monolithic entity in which political, social, cultural, and linguistic tensions were acted out solely between white Europeans and Natives. Rather than the popular story that pits Native and European interests as diametrically opposite to one another, I look to more complex relationships that at times can be categorized as simultaneously mutually beneficial and exploitative. Inspired by the knowledge that tribes like the Tlaxcalans aided the Spaniards in conquering the Aztecs, I sought to find more examples that would further complicate and nuance our understanding of "La Conquista."

Intrigued by Professor Olds' Latin-American/European senior seminar tackling the myth of nation and national identity I decided to research the largely neglected country of Paraguay. Paraguayan history has provided an interesting history of Spanish dominance and indigenous resilience. I narrowed my scope by looking almost exclusively at the continued use of the region's dominant indigenous language, Guarani, as the primary modal language despite Spanish's elevation as the national language. The fact that Paraguay as a former Spanish colony has been able to retain and incorporate Guarani into its national identity defies our modern conceptions of colonialism. Through analysis of the hagiographical account of Jesuit missionary Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, I argued that the very manner in which Spanish colonization unfolded aided in the formation of the Guarani people by creating centralized "reduction" communities and unifying various tribes of native people. Reductions sought to concentrate and unify a multiplicity of indigenous tribes under the direction of Jesuit missionaries who profited from the terror and violence wrought by Portuguese slave traders and Spanish colonizers. Simultaneously, newly converted natives peoples protected the Jesuits from attack from hostile tribes. I focused on the crucial point that the “Guarani” identity was created by the Jesuits themselves rather than as a product of self-identification on the part of the local people.

(continued on page 5)
Paraguayan pride and national identity are distinct from two of its neighbors because of its history of resistance and the persistent use of the Guaraní language. Paraguayans have tied themselves to a people that was created by Jesuit writing and have used Guaraní-ness as a symbol of resistance. Throughout Paraguay’s history its people have been forced to contend with outside control and domination. The Guaraní linguistic heritage of the Paraguayan people does not only contend with the dominating legacy of Spanish colonialism but also the invasion of neighboring countries. The Guaraní language has been the constant for a country that has experienced a long tradition of absolute social and political upheaval. It has become a point of comfort and familiarity among its diverse people and in essence has become the center of Paraguayan identity as literally and symbolically a beacon of resistance against the outside world. Yet the very persistence of the Guaraní language is a testament to the legacy of Jesuit Christianization of the local population. There is no longer an indigenous Guaraní people, but the terminology itself has developed to symbolize the endurance of a new racially mixed people. The erasure of Guaraní culture as well as the simultaneous mystification of its people by Jesuit missionaries has become central to the creation Paraguayan identity as a symbol of resistance to foreign invaders as well as the domination and extermination of the Indians where modern Paraguayans live.

Cases like Paraguay’s bilingualism challenge our perceptions of Spanish colonization as a narrative of fixed hierarchical structures. Paraguayan identity, much like Latin American history in general, does not so easily fit into the model of clear-cut colonial oppression. Instead, the creation of the mestizo Paraguayan has come out of indigenous roots and the legacy of the conquistadors. The creation of national identity acknowledges the residual hierarchy of colonization while appropriating and celebrating a Spanish-created indigeneity. Whether it is Paraguay or Columbus, we must challenge what we have been told since birth. It is far too easy to blindly recycle the black and white history lessons of our childhoods. Ultimately, history should be examined through its complexities and from a perspective in which outcomes are not certain because through our generalizations we are doing ourselves a great disservice.

-Lauren Davis, Fall ’14

SENIO RS

Do not forget to meet with your advisor to go over your grad checklist! If you don’t know who your advisor is stop by the History Department office in KA 327 and ask our Program Assistant, Cheryl, for the list of advisors.

YOU NEED TO DO THIS TO GRADUATE IN MAY
Free Speech: Limited or Limitless?

On January 7, 2015, two Islamist terrorists killed twelve people at the headquarters of the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris, France in response to the ongoing controversial depictions of the prophet Muhammad. The recent tragedies in Paris have people around the world outraged but have also gained greater support for freedom of speech and freedom of expression with the slogan “Je suis Charlie.” As we embrace this idea and remember the lives lost in this massacre, we can look at our own city’s history and influence on the expansion of the First Amendment and on the fight for freedom of speech during the Howl Obscenity Trials in the late 1950s.

While less violent and more democratic, San Francisco has faced suppression of dissent in the 1950s when Allen Ginsberg’s famous poem “Howl” was intercepted and censored because of its purportedly graphic and obscene content. “Howl” is a poem that embodied postwar America and depicted the everyday American through the eyes of Ginsberg. Americans during this time were eager to enjoy the peace and post-depression prosperity, striving for the lives of those depicted on famous TV shows like Leave it to Beaver and I Love Lucy. However, with this “emerging affluence of the new American middle class, there was a poverty, racism, and alienation in America that was rarely depicted on TV.” Artists and poets like Ginsberg emerged in San Francisco and became known as the Beat poets who used their work to criticize the racism, materialism, and uniformity of mainstream America. “Howl” protested against the era’s “soul-crushing conformism” and spoke to the beauty and sacredness of the human body and mind.¹

Published in 1956 by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, “Howl” was opposed by the public because of its direct and unprecedented obscenity and vulgarity on the subject of homosexuality. This groundbreaking literary subject matter attracted public attention and opposition in a time when sodomy laws outlawing homosexual acts were present in every state throughout the country and when discussing any sort of sexual act was taboo. However, it was this opposition to Ginsberg’s writings that made “Howl” and the other writings of the Beat Generation so influential and significant. Ferlinghetti was brought to trial with the argument that “Howl” was pornographic and carried no literary value. The taboo topic of homosexuality and the casualness with which Ginsberg wrote about sex and experimentation was not only his way of inserting himself in his work, but it also set the stage for the 1957 trial that saw the First Amendment pitted against charges of pornography and vulgarity that the country had seldom seen in literary work.

Backed by testimonies from nine literary experts who argued the poem had literary merit, Ferlinghetti won the controversial case in the California State Superior Court in 1957. This ruling not only set a precedent that opened the door for other Beat Generation authors to fully express themselves through words, but it also strengthened the constitutional right to free speech. Socially, the works of the Beats embodied the free spirit of experimentation of the 1950s and 1960s which was secured through litigation. Thus, these works did not just revolutionize literature, but they also led to social movements and political reforms. Allen Ginsberg, put his thoughts and emotions into his work, and found sanctuary in his writings. Poetry provided a sense of truth and pureness that he could not find in postwar society. (continued on page 7)
He and his contemporaries transformed expressive literature and American politics through the expansion of freedom of speech and the practice of literary expression.

The “Howl” trials and debates over the pornographic content and literary value led to questions of the limits of free speech. Similarly, backlash over the hashtag #JeSuisCharlie (#IAmCharlie) and the solidarity of the international community shows the debate on where to draw the line. Many question the intolerance and racism of the magazine, but they are also outraged by the killings at Charlie Hebdo. According to Saba Mahmood, associate professor of Anthropology at U.C. Berkeley, “Free speech is differently regulated under the First Amendment in the U.S. than Europe where the right to speech... says that everyone is free to express whatever they wish, and... that allows the state to restrict speech if it poses a threat to public and political order.” This intense divide over freedom of speech has existed for decades, but has since gained momentum because of the Charlie Hebdo attacks. While the United States has little to no restrictions presently because of legislation brought from cases like the Howl Trials, Europeans have slightly more restrictions on freedom of speech. However, these restrictions did not ultimately matter in the case of the Charlie Hebdo drawings of Muhammad, yet these drawings led to violence and the deaths of innocent people in Paris. So, the question remains: Should there be limits to free speech?

- Meagan McGovern, Spring '15

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The History Department is Looking for a New Student Assistant for Next Year!

Duties Include:
- Clerical office work (scanning, copying, filing, etc.)
- Occasional errands (to Gleeson, the mailroom, etc.)
- It's a great way to get more involved with both the history department professors and our wondrous program assistant, Cheryl!
- A chance to work on this beautiful newsletter!
- Underclassman preferred

Contact Cheryl Czekala at czekala@usfca.edu if you're interested!
Advice from a Graduate: Meet Lincoln Stanfield!

Year of Graduation: Spring ‘14
Emphases: U.S. and European History

Why did you choose to be a history major?

Having visited the campus countless times during childhood, I was very familiar with USF’s faculty and particularly connected with the history department. History had always been my favorite subject in high school and I also thought it was a great prep for law school (potentially).

Where are you living and working now?

I live in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of SF and I work for a specialist recruiting company called Real Staffing.

What advice do you have for our current majors/minors?

Don’t listen to those who doubt the value of a history major. Unless you’re studying to be an RN, accountant, or a very specific technical professional, many majors provide similar outcomes. Make relationships with as many professors as you can and always qualify for their time, as they are super busy.

What sort of work are you doing at Real Staffing?

I am a vertical market specialist for a local agency in downtown SF. My niche is the Texas healthcare IT market and I am working with five others on the contract team. My areas of emphasis are EMR (Electronic Medical Record system) implementation, informatics, information security, and business intelligence for medical facilities across the Texas region. Just recently I placed an IT Clinical Data Analyst in Houston. That’s my job and despite its rigorous demands, it’s a great option for graduating seniors. Contact me if you have any questions about Real Staffing, my e-mail is l.stanfield@realstaffing.com

How do you feel your history degree has benefitted you?

It has given me excellent writing skills and the ability to work in a collaborative working environment effectively. Also, my critical thinking skills and ability to compare real world issues to the past make me a credible source amongst my peers. Maintaining discipline during the “grind” of a work week is another transferable skill I’ll use in my career.

Interview conducted via e-mail by Claire Winter, Spring ’15
Anachronisms in Historical Literature

Anachronism is defined as “an act of attributing a custom, event, or object to a period to which it does not belong.” For example, it would be anachronistic to portray Julius Caesar was assassinated using a firearm, simply because firearms did not exist in 44 BC. This example is overly simplistic but provides a basic understanding of an anachronism. Anachronisms are tricky and sometimes difficult mistakes that the modern historian must come to terms with and try to work around. They are mistakes that lead to misunderstandings about the past and a misrepresentation of the historical actors and objects. The problem with them is that they proliferate in the majority of historical scholarly research. That is not to say that modern historians are trying to mislead their readers into believing something false. These anachronisms are merely widely accepted ideas created, possibly and probably, for the sake of simplicity or were created and popularized by nationalists. If historians did not use these anachronisms in order to simplify, history would be very muddled and rather inaccessible to those who do not study it intensely. Anachronisms and misrepresentations of the past may be attributed to the patriots of the Renaissance and nationalists of the 18th-20th centuries. Both used history for patriotic and national gains.

This paper is merely a warning and a clarification. It will attempt to explain popular anachronisms involving German history. The anachronisms of modern academia are much more difficult to understand and have become somewhat ingrained into our society’s patterns of thought. The history of Germany is riven with these trickier anachronisms and is a perfect example for the simplification of history and nationalist aims of people.

Examples of anachronistic German history may be found in A Mighty Fortress: A New History of The German People by Steve Ozment. This text is a history of Germany from its supposed origins in antiquity via the Germanic tribes until Germany after its reunification in 1989. Ozment portraits everyone who has lived in or near the area of present day Germany as German. He does not seem to do so in order to mislead, but rather because many people of history, the Germanic tribes of antiquity and Frankish historical actors, such as Charlemagne, have been adopted as Germans throughout history. The antiquity-age “Germans” of Tacitus’s Germania, a text written in the first century AD about the tribes that lived in the unconquered area of Germania bordering the Roman Empire, are included in his text, and we must ask why. By adding these people to a history of Germany it may seem to nationalize these ancient Germanic tribes. However, Ozment even declares himself that these “tribes were neither racially uniform nor transregionally united [...] who formed no coherent Germanic front.” It seems that Ozment is contradicting himself. On the contrary, Ozment is merely giving a history of the people who have been defined and portrayed as German. This portrayal is the work of Renaissance patriots in the 15th and 16th centuries, who “patriotized” the ancient Germanic peoples.

In the late 15th century Tacitus’s Germania made its way to Rome and subsequently to the Holy Roman Empire and into the hands ‘German’ humanists. It is partially admissible to call these humanists Germans because they were able to define themselves as German. “Germany” during the Renaissance merely constituted an idea that was defined by a common history, culture, and language. Furthermore, the Holy Roman Empire was an amalgamation of duchies, principalities, free imperial cities, and other domains. Once the Germania was in the humanists’ hands they began to draw virtues and characteristics from the Germanic tribes and to take them as their own.

(continued on page 10)
Thus, the Germanic tribes of *Germania* were “patriotized” and used for the purposes of the German humanist patriots. Once adopted, the Germanic tribes became part of German history. *Germania* was seen as a founding text of the Germans through the Third Reich and by its downfall in 1945 the tribes were fully rooted into the national history of Germany.¹

The problem is that our modern lexicon has become muddled. It seems as if “German” and “Germanic” are synonymous. Unfortunately, the word ‘Germanic’ carries the ties that is has with German. The common Latin root makes it difficult for those who have not studied the difference between “German” and “Germanic” to understand that they are very different. “Germanic” is not synonymous with “German.” German defines the people of the German nation (Deutschland) and their language. “Germanic” means “relating to or denoting the peoples of ancient northern and western Europe speaking Germanic languages.”¹ Germanic languages include, German, in addition to English, Norwegian, Swedish, Dutch, and many others. Thus, “Germanic” describes something much larger than “German” ever could.

This essay merely provided a very brief introduction to the anachronisms of modern literature. Whether they are the result of patriotic or nationalistic movements or academic simplicity, they are prevalent and misleading. German history is not the only “national” history to be marred by anachronisms. The modern reader and historian must be careful when reading about histories of nations and peoples because they may not be as straightforward as we would like or hope. No national history is free from the errors and cultural baggage of its predecessors.

-Justin Meyer, Spring ’15

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**Heads Up!**

The History Department will be holding group advising sessions in the coming month. This means...

- all history majors will have advising holds placed on their record
- to have your hold lifted, you’ll need to attend one of the group advising sessions
- these sessions are designed to streamline your path to graduation and give you a chance to find out what’s coming up in Fall 2015

**GROUP ADVISING SESSIONS**

Wednesday, April 1, 2:00-3:00 p.m. – CO 413
Tuesday, April 7, 11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m. – KA 363
Wednesday, April 8, 3:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m. – KA 367

Your registration hold will be lifted after you have attended. If you cannot attend, contact Cheryl at czekala@usfca.edu