

how house museums fared during the Great Depression and during World War II, because many faced similar crises. What can we learn from how they handled them? They dramatically scaled down, they found new partnerships, and they began to tell more complicated stories. We can often find practical advice on how to survive crises in our own institutional histories and the growing body of research that looks at the history of house museums.

Our collective answer to the house museum crisis has been the resounding call for better, more meaningful, and broader stories that engage today. For this kind of interpretative reinvigoration, I'm making a plea that when we look again to storytelling, we think historically, and that we use narrative. We can use it not just to make ourselves more rhetorically aware of the modes we use in interpretation, but to draw attention to the process, the choices, and, ultimately, the way that we can point to the historian's craft. One way to make history matter systematically to new audiences is to so show them that they too can do it. If we are able to show how complicated narrating the past can be, we invite a new generation of visitors to help us take up the task. There's no better way to engage visitors than to ask them to try interpretation for themselves, to let them have a hand in constructing the conclusion to our narratives. We can let them ask and try to answer: Is Twain's tale a Romance or a Tragedy? Did Dickinson find love? How does this story end? If we look hard at the stories we tell—not just for the accuracy of historical information, but at the “art” of our narratives, what can we find? Perhaps if we embrace Comedy, Tragedy, and even Satire alongside Romantic portrayals of the past, we can allow visitors to stake a claim to the stories we most want to tell.

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Safe Containers for Dangerous Memories

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Abstract: Since 1999, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience has worked with historic house museums around the world who assist their visitors in connecting past and present, use dialogue as a central strategy in addressing needs in their immediate community, and encourage visitors to become active in the social issues their sites raise. Featuring case studies from Coalition members Centro Cultural y Museo de la Memoria (Montevideo, Uruguay), Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation (Fayetteville, New York), and the Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice (Durham, North Carolina), this article reviews the revolutionary approaches Sites of Conscience take toward addressing challenging histories and their contemporary legacies.

Key words: Sites of Conscience, Centro Cultural y Museo de la Memoria, Pauli Murray Project, Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation, social change, dialogue

Introduction

THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION OF SITES OF CONSCIENCE is a worldwide network of places dedicated to remembering past struggles for justice and addressing their contemporary legacies. Sites of Conscience, like the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in the United States, the Liberation War Museum in Bangladesh, and Constitution Hill in South Africa, foster public dialogue on social issues to build lasting cultures of human rights. Currently, the Coalition includes almost two hundred member sites in fifty-five countries with total annual visitors in the tens of millions. Among those member sites are three homes that eschew the traditional model of restored

The Public Historian, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 61–72 (May 2015).
ISSN: 0272-3433, electronic ISSN 1533-8576.

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www.ucpressjournals.com/reprintInfo.asp. DOI: 10.1525/tp.2015.37.2.61.

historic house museums in favor of using each space as a safe container for “dangerous memories.”

The home of a little remembered nineteenth-century human rights activist, Matilda Joslyn Gage, in Fayetteville, New York, throws out all rules for visitors save, “think for yourself.” Against a backdrop of Gage’s ideals, rather than her historical belongings, volunteer facilitators lead community members in dialogue around reproductive rights. At the as yet unopened Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice in Durham, North Carolina, staff and volunteers embrace Murray’s intersecting identities so as to help community members come to the site as their whole selves, collectively working to understand racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia. Centro Cultural y Museo de la Memoria (MUME) in Montevideo, Uruguay reclaims Quinta de Santos, the nineteenth-century farm and summer country house of dictator Máximo Santos, who ruled from 1882 to 1886, as a space dedicated to exploring not Santos’s life, but rather the more contemporary struggle for democracy during Uruguay’s last dictatorship (1973 to 1984).

These are historic houses that ultimately have an uncomfortable relationship with the very structures they interpret and preserve. Each exist as social change initiatives that function outside of these spaces and each continually examines whether the walls of their historic homes enable or inhibit the vital work of healing and reconciliation they are attempting to perform. All three spaces ground vital conversations for their communities. Though the walls may not necessarily be important in and of themselves (only one might be considered architecturally significant), they provide shells in which to share the ideas and fears of the people who lived there alongside the lives, stories, passions, and challenges of their modern-day communities.

Most importantly, all three hold in common their dedication to serving as tangible evidence of histories ignored, of histories relegated, of histories often more conveniently forgotten. Theologian Johann Baptist Metz contends that memory is integral to both individual and community identity and falls into two categories. In the first it is a recollection of the past as a series of accomplishments bereft of struggle, a nostalgic view of history. The second he calls “dangerous memories” because they illuminate a past reality of struggle and suffering, a larger truth that is not limited to the “winner’s” point of view.¹ These definitions are also useful when considering different approaches to the interpretation of historic houses and their important inhabitants. The three sites featured here have chosen to abandon the idea of neat, orderly historic spaces and instead invite “danger” into their site by addressing the human fears of their historic inhabitants and providing a forum for contemporary visitors to share their fears as well.

Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation

A nineteenth-century human rights activist, Matilda Joslyn Gage has not received the historical attention she deserves, a result of her unsuccessful challenge to the conservative direction in which Susan B. Anthony led the woman’s rights movement. Her relative anonymity challenged community organizers interested in restoring and stabilizing Gage’s run-down house in an economically depressed area outside Syracuse, New York. The homes of those who go unremembered do not often make for successful historic house museums. Although organizers knew that Gage’s story was an important one to tell, they were forced, from their project’s inception, to consider if there was a need for one more house museum, one more space that described where an arguably famous person had eaten, slept, and entertained.

Looking for a way forward, organizers turned to Gage’s writings for guidance. When asked for information to be used in a sketch of her life, Gage replied that she always looked upon questions about her “age, number of children, etc.” as “impudent question(s) to us woman suffragists.” Instead, she preferred to be known through her ideas and actions.² In order to create a contemporary space that would reflect these beliefs, organizers decided that the Gage Foundation would not attempt to situate Gage in the historic space by providing information about her domestic life. Rather, the house would serve as a vehicle for sharing Gage’s ideas. The rooms need not be restored to their former use. Instead, utilizing the usual tools of museum work, including objects, images, and text panels, the foundation would tell, not the story of the people who lived in the house, but rather the social justice work of the woman of the house. Five issues; five rooms.

The Haudenosaunee (traditional Iroquois) Room covers Native sovereignty and treaty rights. The back parlor, where Gage ran the National Woman Suffrage Association as executive director, discusses reproductive rights, equal pay for equal work, and an end to violence against women, issues Gage cared about that still have contemporary relevance. The Underground Railroad Room uses Gage’s writing on human trafficking to pay homage to the risks undertaken by enslaved peoples in their pursuit of freedom, and emphasizes that there are more enslaved people on the earth today than ever before. The Religious Freedom Room examines the cause of separation of church and state and the oppressive and also liberating realities of organized religion.

The front parlor is the only room in the house of which a historical photo exists, a photo taken by L. Frank Baum, the author of *The Wizard of Oz*, who married Gage’s youngest daughter in this parlor, and photographed it when he lived in the house during the summer of 1887. Gage, the “Wonderful

1. Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Fundamental Practical*

2. Matilda Joslyn Gage to Lillie Deveraux Blake, May 11, 1890, Blake Collection, Missouri

Mother of Oz,"³ inspired Baum to write his fourteen-book Oz series. The front parlor is the only restored room in the house, but much like the Oz series, it serves as a familiar and accessible format through which to deliver atypical content. Here, interpreters discuss *The Marvelous Land of Oz*, a work that ends with Tip, the book's hero, discovering that he's a female trapped in a male body. She emerges from her gender reassignment as Ozma, the ruler of Oz. Thus the home's historic parlor became a place for the discussion of transsexuality.

The foundation's selection of idea-based interpretation followed logically from Gage's writings, as did their selection of rules for visitors to follow while in the house. The most important lesson of her life, Gage said, was "to think for myself." In keeping with this, visitors to the Gage home are asked to adhere to only two rules stitched into a quilted piece hung at the rear entrance: "Check your dogma at the door" and "Think for yourself." These guidelines also led the board of the Gage Foundation to choose facilitated dialogue as the primary method of interpretation for the site because the intention was not to encourage visitors to think as Gage did, but rather board members hoped that visitors would share their ideas, information, experiences and assumptions toward the goals of personal and collective learning.

Working with trained facilitators from Syracuse University, the board initially tested out three possibilities for facilitated dialogues based on Gage quotes relating to economic justice, same-sex marriage, and reproductive rights. After participating in the pilot dialogue on reproductive rights, a board member approached then-director of the Gage Foundation, Sally Roesch Wagner, and said, "I've always liked you, but felt that there was something separating us, knowing how far apart we were on this issue. I heard your ideas and felt like you heard mine. I feel closer to you now than I ever have." They hugged. "This (reproductive rights dialogue) is the one, isn't it?" Wagner asked. The board member agreed. As other board members considered their suggestion, they discussed whether the topic was too controversial. "Why not start with the toughest issue," a board member suggested. "After that, everything will be easy." The board unanimously approved moving forward with a reproductive rights dialogue program.

Volunteer facilitators spent a year developing and testing the program, called "Who Chooses," and then each held four co-facilitated sessions for a month. The results were overwhelming. Every participant wanted to continue the dialogue; many suggested that it should be the model that Congress and the country as a whole should be using to resolve difference. One devout Catholic acknowledged that she had joined the dialogue because she wanted to know "how anyone could hate so much that they would want to kill babies." "What I know now," she told the group, "is that when you hear women's stories, you can no longer judge." A Planned Parenthood employee who was

in the same group was similarly moved. She came into the dialogue, she admitted, expecting the group would be polarized into "us" and "them." But the process of sharing personal experiences brought the group together, despite their differences. She had trouble now, she marveled, even remembering the person she was who saw the world in "us" and "them" terms.

Some museum professionals hearing about the "Who Chooses" dialogues have shaken their heads in disbelief. "We could never take that kind of a risk," they have said. Mark Nerenhausen, founding director and professor of practice of the Janklow Arts Leadership Program at Syracuse University, in reflecting on the risk taking of the Gage Foundation observed that, "interestingly, in the tech world we reward risk-taking. But in the arts and culture world, we fear it." Mark pointed out that although a dialogue on the controversial topic of reproductive choice might have appeared risk-taking, in fact the process was quite conservative. The Gage Foundation was not striking out in a new direction, but instead was steadfastly proceeding in the direction that had early been set. The decision to develop community dialogues on reproductive justice emerged organically and logically. Choosing such an often-vitriolic issue and creating a dialogic model for others to replicate powerfully strengthened the Gage Foundation, bringing new allies, credibility among supporters, and additional funding to expand the program. Funders, supporters, and volunteers, although not necessarily supporting Gage's personal stances on social justice issues, have embraced a historic site willing to facilitate conversations that welcome all points of view.

The path, of course, has not been without challenges. The site's innovative work has drawn national attention and requests for presentations that the foundation's limited resources cannot fulfill. The challenge of interpreting social justice issues from both nineteenth and twenty-first century perspectives has resulted in excessively lengthy text panels (visitors are currently invited to suggest revisions through an interactive process) and although some visitors embrace the invitation to "think for themselves" about the issues alive in each room, others still want a traditional lecture tour. However, the real risk, as Nerenhausen pointed out, would be if the Gage Foundation stopped pushing forward or, worse yet, retrenched and turned into yet another dusty museum. Donors would feel betrayed, drawn as they are to the foundation's commitment to taking on relevant issues and innovative approaches. Thus, every "risk" the Gage Foundation takes by breaking the "rules" of museums and exposing "dangerous memories," is in fact a very conservative act.

The Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice

Pauli Murray (1910–1985) was an accomplished activist who believed in justice, reconciliation, and freedom. "As an American," she wrote in 1945, "I

3. Brochure available through the Gage Center. <http://www.metildioshynegage.org/product>.

toward the dignity of all mankind."⁴ She championed the cause of human rights through her work as an author, educator, lawyer, feminist, poet, and as the first African American female Episcopal priest. But despite all of her accomplishments, she is little known outside a handful of academics and Episcopalians.

Murray's life story is reminiscent of a classic hero narrative, complete with humble beginnings, tremendous obstacles, personal determination, and eventual triumph. What makes her different than most "American heroes" is that she was a woman, a person of color, and a member of the LGBTQ community. Murray's many accomplishments are magnified because she achieved them *despite* living in a society that minimized, terrorized, and rejected people like her. Much of the American master narrative simply ignores the existence of LGBTQ people of color no matter what their contributions. Against that narrative, reclaiming Pauli Murray's lived experience by restoring her house and telling her story feels like a revolutionary act.

The descendent of both slaves and slave owners, Pauli Murray lost her parents at a young age and grew up with her mother's family in a working class neighborhood in Durham, North Carolina. She was denied admission to the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill because of her race and to Harvard University because of her gender. She was often unable to find employment commensurate with her abilities and was denied positions in the State Department and with the Office of Economic Opportunity. Murray would coin the term "Jane Crow" to describe her experience of oppression as a woman and a person of color. She was named 1947 Woman of the Year by the National Council for Negro Women for her legal work and was a founder of the National Organization for Women in 1966. Following her spiritual calling, she left a position as a tenured professor to enter divinity school at age sixty-two and was ordained an Episcopal priest in 1977.⁵ Over seventy-four years, Murray lived at more than fifty addresses. None is more significant than 906 Carroll Street, Durham, North Carolina, her childhood home built in 1898 by Pauli Murray's maternal grandfather, Robert George Fitzgerald.

As a young child, Murray spent many a night barricaded in the second story bedroom with Grandmother Cornelia as she relived the trauma of night visits from Ku Klux Klan. She and her aunt, Pauline Fitzgerald Dame, left the house each morning to walk to the West End Graded School where she was a student and her aunt a teacher. The school was built in the shadow of a tobacco warehouse, seemingly foretelling the common trajectory from elementary education to the factory floor. The Fitzgerald family's story is intricately entwined with both the history of Durham and the history of the African American freedom struggle. It illuminates the hope of emancipation, the challenges of the Reconstruction Era, and the retrenchment of segregation through the passage of Jim Crow laws. From an interpretive perspective, the house is rich in possibility.

4. Pauli Murray, "An American Credo," *Common Ground*, December 1945, 22.

The house is currently in serious disrepair but is safe from demolition. The Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice has struggled to determine whether the house can be an asset in their efforts to advance Pauli Murray's vision. The histories of women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQ community are often lost because of the transitory nature of their lives. Their stories need safe and welcoming homes. Pauli Murray's story invites the center to deploy innovative strategies that help make the world a place where women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQ community all feel safe bringing their "whole selves," and feel accepted and empowered. The center strives to portray Pauli Murray's overlapping identities in a culture that is often more comfortable defining communities by singular characteristics. As Murray shared in a 1977 interview with Charles Kuralt:

This is the fascinating thing about the South. Black, White, Red are related by blood and by culture and by history and by common suffering. And so what I am saying is, look, let's level with one another, let's admit we are related and let's get on with the business of healing these wounds and we are not going to do that until we face the truth.⁶

Engaging a multivocal approach to history can address the trauma inflicted by social and political invisibility experienced by people whose stories are less often foregrounded through historic sites and monuments. The center imagines Murray's childhood home as a location for "the business of healing these wounds."

Pauli Murray rooted her social justice work in her lived experience. She refused to be restricted by the categories of gender, race, class, and sexuality. Instead, she aspired to an integrated body, mind, and spirit that required a holistic sense of self. "And since, as a human being," she wrote in a 1967 letter, "I cannot allow myself to be fragmented into Negro at one time, woman at another, or worker at another. I must find a unifying principle in all these movements to which I can adhere . . . This, it seems to me, is not only good politics but also may be the price of survival."⁷ The search for that underlying principle is as relevant today as during Murray's lifetime, as underrepresented voices are still often fragmented into distinct identity groups, struggling (or avoiding) to include those with multiple affinities. The center's work is to use the past as a key to understanding contemporary issues, especially those that vexed Murray during her lifetime: racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia.

The center has begun using a Venn diagram, termed the *Pauli Murray Project Working Zone*, to represent the work of the Pauli Murray Project. Looking at this diagram with its overlapping ovals, a local human relations commissioner said, "Oh, now I understand what you mean by intersectional

6. Interview by Charles Kuralt, February 13, 1977, T-245, reel 4, 2577 at., Pauli Murray Collection, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

7. Pauli Murray to Kathryn Clarenbach, November 21, 1967, box 51, folder 899, Pauli

work.” But without taking another breath she said, “You can’t do that.” Barbara Lau, the center’s director, was stunned but not surprised by the commissioner’s swift dismissal. Intersectional work challenges groups to come together who may feel they have little in common, but working at the intersections of these issues, at this place of “dangerous memory,” is the kind of public history programming Pauli Murray’s story invites. The center has experimented with this approach in a series of summer walking tours that included stops related to different human rights struggles, such as the sites of an anti-Klan rally, a women’s bookstore, an anti-war rally at the draft office, the gathering place for an LGBTQ rights protest called *Our Day Out*, and others. At each stop individuals who had participated in these efforts spoke to the group about their personal memories. Outreach and marketing, print and social media, were widespread and resulted in great attendance (more than ninety at each tour). These tours created the architecture for people who claim different identities to share an experience and perhaps become more aware of the overlapping nature of their struggles. To take this awareness to the next level of engagement the center must build deeper relationships with community members who want to walk together on the difficult path of healing and reconciliation. The evaluation data from these programs indicated an interest in deeper, more engaged programming. As the site’s staffing levels and institutional capacity grows, the center is dedicated toward expanding their capabilities to respond to the anger, hurt, shame, and pain that is a natural part of this healing, ensuring that they do not retraumatize community members or fail to provide support for new understandings and actions.

The center continues to identify words to easily describe their intersectional goals. After much discussion, they and collaborators at a sister organization, stone circles,⁸ developed a description of this intersectional approach to social change work:

Intersectionality is a way of living and working that strives to build a world where all people can be their full selves all of the time. It means honoring the multiple identities we each experience, moving beyond competition, cultivating solidarity and collaboration, and creating space to admit what we do not know. We believe that intersectionality is one of our greatest resources and strengths, not a distraction or diffusion of mission. Our greatest strategic power lies in articulating the interdependence between the many issues and identities that shape our lives.

The center’s process is a departure from the trajectory of traditional house museums, in that it may not be creating a museum at all, but rather a safe space to honor and grapple with Pauli Murray’s spirit and story by embracing contemporary issues. The home was a launch pad and touchstone for Pauli Murray and they seek to make it the same for others. In embracing Murray’s and their visitors’ intersectionality, the center envisions a historic home which

is also intersectional in practice. Much like the Gage Foundation, the center strives to be both a historic home and a community center, a space that pursues a public history mission and a social change agenda. Existing at the center of their Venn diagram allows the site to simultaneously embrace the tradition of historic home preservation and the tradition of social justice activism.

Centro Cultural y Museo de la Memoria

Quinta de Santos is the nineteenth-century farm and summer country house first owned by Máximo Santos, dictator of Uruguay from 1882 to 1886. Since December 10, 2007, upon the urging of the city government of Montevideo and Uruguayan human rights organizations, it has functioned as a place of memory preserving the history not of Santos, nor of his home, but rather the last and most recent Uruguayan dictatorship (1973–1985) and the national struggle for democracy.

Quinta de Santos was typical of the country homes of nineteenth-century aristocrats. It was far away from the Montevideo city center, in an area where the oligarchy built huge mansions and large gardens until the beginning of the twentieth century. The architecture reflects the political power enjoyed by General Maximo Santos who claimed rule after a period of Uruguayan economic instability in the early 1870’s. Santos abandoned the austerity of prior rulers and surrounded himself, his family, and his army with luxury. Quinta de Santos is a symbol of this kind of life and the way he handled politics.

In 1875, the Uruguayan Rural Association, comprised of wealthy businessmen working with Great Britain, France, and Belgium, sought for the military to lead the nation’s government, rather than politicians, doctors, intellectuals, and *caudillos* (wealthy land owners). Santos served in the professional army born of the Triple Alliance War (Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay against Paraguay, 1865–1870), and would become the nation’s second military dictator in power between 1875 and 1886, following Coronel Lorenzo Latorre. The objectives of his government were “order and progress.” In their pursuit, Santos used the national army and the police to enforce his policies. People who did not conform to the new political ideologies, including transients and liberal intellectuals, were subject to violence and censure. Many were taken to *taller de adoquines* (paving stone workshops). There, they cut stones to build streets in the cities. Others were exiled from Uruguay.

The Quinta de Santos, whose sober architecture and garden were designed for visual pleasure, illustrates Santos’s adoption of not only European style, but also the centralized power common to European states at the time. In 1880, visitors to the home would enter through a large and imposing gate and take the rising path to the principal house. The driveway and marble stairs at the main door showed the majesty and the authority of the owner. The Italian

showed the European cultural influences on the Uruguayan elite and the government. Such architecture was called “modern” and “civilized.” In other words, for Santos, “European” and “civilized” were culturally synonymous.

Today, the same gate and path introduce visitors into a place of changed meaning. Centro Cultural y Museo de la Memoria (MUME), at the behest of the municipal government, has set up the house implicitly to make a connection between two dictatorships, one at the end of the nineteenth century and the other in the end of the twentieth, in an effort to represent how the thread of authoritarianism has woven through Uruguayan history. Since opening in 2007, MUME’s interpretation further dismantles the brutal rule of Maximo Santos. Santos’s story is not the story told here. Rather than re-create luxurious furnishings, the rooms of Quinta de Santos are used as containers in which to rebuild the memory of state terrorism, explore the state’s human rights violations, and share methods of popular resistance to state repression throughout the 1973–85 dictatorship in Uruguay. The museum, designed to serve an audience of Uruguayan citizens, allows visitors to explore a part of their past they sometimes prefer to forget. In its rooms, visitors explore exhibits on “The Coup and the Installation of the Dictatorship” and “The Restoration of Democracy and the Struggle for Truth and Justice.” In the galleries, visitors learn the different mechanisms used by the last dictatorship to repress its people. From 1973 to 1984, approximately nine thousand people were arrested and imprisoned. Three hundred eighty thousand Uruguayans were exiled between 1960 and 1985.

MUME is quick to point out that they are a memory museum, not a history museum. They do not utilize a chronological structure in their interpretation, nor do they attempt to structure the visitor experience in a specific way. Because memory has no structural order, people can begin their visit in any room. Visitors can see the results of the 1980 referendum where the people said NO to a new constitution from the dictatorship government. They can view pictures of the massive demonstration organized to ask for “A Uruguayan democracy without exclusion.” In another room, visitors can remember and reenact the different methods used to resist the violent and authoritarian power of the dictator, for example, *las caceroleadas*, popular from 1982 to 1984. In these protests, people hit pots in their houses or in the street to protest against the government. It was an ordinary, but significant, form of resistance in the last years of the dictatorship. Rather than the relative quiet of many historic house museums, the sound of visitors hitting pots in the exhibit echoes throughout Quinta de Santos.

The audience responds strongly to the exhibit because, like the Gage Foundation, MUME has chosen to interpret ideas and messages of social justice, rather than the history of Santos or the architectural significance of the house itself. MUME is in a suburban area of the city, in a neighborhood with a variety of social classes, so working in partnership with numerous educational, social, and cultural organizations is essential for their work. Con-

local community, a shared space where neighbors can use art and education to remember a traumatic aspect of their past and develop and practice their civil and human rights through community dialogue. MUME gives Quinta de Santos a new shape and meaning, changing an aristocratic place into a democratic one. Here, memory is a new weapon to promote consciousness of a dangerous past, to build intersectional identity and a world based on the value of solidarity so that visitors might be better equipped to address the emergent needs of the present.

Active Players in Modeling Democratic Ideals

In 1999, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience was founded on the principle that there is immense power in historic spaces, power that drives visitors to connect not only intellectually, but also emotionally and spiritually with stories of the past. Member sites like the Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation, the Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice, and the Centro Cultural y Museo de la Memoria complicate our notion of how and why visitors connect with historic homes. All three are based in spaces and historical narratives that might be classified as “dangerous memory.” All have made the choice to reduce, if not abandon, historical furnishings and resist the urge to freeze interpretation in a particular moment in time. Each prefers to embrace social justice ideas alongside or in place of interpreting historic domestic use. Most importantly, each works to use the dangerous memories of these homes to provide safe containers for communities to examine pressing social issues. By doing so, each serves as an active player in modeling democratic ideals, promoting the idea that community dialogue on the issues that divide us is essential to the furtherance of democracy. Are these approaches dangerous? As museum guests increasingly demand relevance, interaction, and substance in their experience, perhaps the greatest risk for all cultural heritage institutions is continuing to play it safe.

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SALLY ROESCH WAGNER, Founding Director of the Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation in Fayetteville, New York is a founder of one of the first college-level women’s studies programs in the United States (CSU Sacramento), and received one of the first doctorates awarded for work in women’s studies (UC Santa Cruz). She directed a diploma on reproductive choice and a Civil Liberties Curriculum for the National

Coffey Award for outstanding service to museology from the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums in 2012.

BARBARA LAU is director of the Pauli Murray Project at the Duke Human Rights Center/Franklin Humanities Institute and the lead developer of the Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice. Lau's twenty years experience as a folklorist, curator, radio producer, and author includes curating museum exhibitions about Cambodian American traditions in North Carolina and Pauli Murray's legacy as a social change agent, and two traveling exhibitions about civil rights and African American history in Durham. She also produced *To Buy the Sun*, an original play about Pauli Murray; and directed the "Face Up: Telling Stories of Community Life" community mural project. She was honored with the National Association of Multicultural Education's Children's Publication Award in 2003 for her book about Cambodian New Year's celebrations.

MARIA JOSÉ BOLAÑA CABALLERO works in the Education Department of the Centro Cultural y Museo de la Memoria (MUME) where she previously worked as a guide and served as the lead educator on the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience-funded project "Looking at the Present from Memory." Prior to her work at MUME, Maria Jose worked as a history teacher and is currently finishing her MA in Rioplatense History (Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, Universidad de la República Oriental del Uruguay).

Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-first Century at a Post-Emancipation Site

JENNIFER SCOTT

Abstract: How can a historic house museum speak to communities experiencing complex urban change and social ills in the twenty-first century? Weeksville Heritage Center (WHC), a post-emancipation site based in residential Brooklyn, interprets a free black, intentional, land-owning community, which established its own schools, churches, and anti-slavery organizations, and operated as a safe space for African Americans in the greater New York area throughout the nineteenth century. The museum is a direct result of more than a generation of community activism begun in the late 1960s to reclaim a forgotten history. WHC radically attempts to redefine ideas of freedom and emancipation in contemporary and self-determined ways. Drawing on Weeksville's histories, WHC explores interpretations that highlight agency, independence, and activism and that resonate with contemporary concerns.

Key words: post-emancipation, self-determination, activism, preservation, oral history

"You are your own stories and therefore free to imagine and experience what it means to be human without wealth. What it feels like to be human without domination over others, without reckless arrogance, without fear of others unlike you, without rotating, rehearsing and reinventing the hatreds you learned in the sandbox. And although you don't have complete control over the narrative (no author does, I can tell you), you could nevertheless create it."

Toni Morrison

The Public Historian, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 73–88 (May 2015).

ISSN: 0272-3433, electronic ISSN 1533-8576.

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