

The Report of Organizations of American Historians Annual Conference 2024

Shinya Yoshida

The annual conference of the Organization of American Historians (OAH) convened in New Orleans, Louisiana, in the spring of 2024. I was looking forward to participating in this conference, not just because I had never been to the South before, but also because this was my first time attending a meeting of the OAH, the largest scholarly organization of U.S. historians in the world. Upon arrival at Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport, the sound of jazz playing in the hall caught my attention. The French Quarter Festival was taking place near the conference venue at the same time, which made me feel the vibe and cultural richness of New Orleans.

All the sessions and panels at the conference, held from April 11 to 14, seemed fascinating to me. The first session I attended was “New Directions in United States Empire” on April 11. The panelists, all early career scholars, discussed the contested boundaries of community and nation within the context of the American empire, ranging from American Samoa to Hawai‘i. The debate centered around the definition of "empire," methodology, and how to teach this history. Next, I attended "Race, Labor, and Politics in Contested American Work Spaces." Spanning the 20th century, all the panelists offered interesting insights into how workers in the U.S. faced challenges related to race, ethnic diversity, and international relations in their work environments. On April 12, “Sovereignties in the Atlantic World: Black and Indigenous Intersections” caught my attention. As I understand it, the session examined the division between African diaspora studies and Indigenous studies, showing how slavery and Indigenous sovereignty are two sides of the same conceptual coin, with a particular focus on the cases of Maroons. "Transnational Conversations on Indigeneity between Native America, Japan, and the Japanese American Diaspora" also explored the intersection of seemingly disparate fields. Prof. Kumiko Noguchi’s presentation was especially intriguing. On the final day, I attended the workshop “Moving from Dissertation to Book.”

This conference was a great place for reconnecting with my old friends and building new networks. By meeting Hiroko Saito (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa) and Genki Komori (University of Nevada, Reno), who also received the JAAS Graduate Student Travel Grants, I got to know what their Ph.D. experiences were like. On April 12, we, along with JAAH-OAH committee members and Prof. Sam Lebovic, the recipient of the Japan Residency Program, had lunch together. Later that evening, my dissertation advisor invited me to the banquet of the Immigration and Ethnic History Society (IEHS), where I had the chance to talk with several prospective Ph.D. students and prominent scholars in the field. I especially enjoyed

my conversation with Prof. Kevin Kenny, who received the Saloutos Book Award this year—it was a memorable experience.

All things considered, I really benefited from the annual OAH conference in 2024. I want to express my gratitude to the JAAH-OAH committee members for providing me with such a wonderful opportunity. My special thanks go to Prof. Shuichi Takebayashi, Prof. Renee Romano, and Prof. Judy Tzu-Chun Wu for attending us.

It was invaluable experience of attending the OAH Conferences on American History this year for the panels I participated in, the book exhibition where publishers were so generous that they helped me with my purchase of significant studies, and visit to the Louisiana Civil Rights Museum.

There were many interesting panels that drew my attention, and particularly useful for me were as below: how the police contributed to gentrification of Atlanta; how American merchant mariners were excluded from, but gradually included into, American citizenship; how oral history can enhance photographs as historical sources in the case of female soldiers in the Iraqi War; and how the era of the NAACP's legal activism connected to that of Black Power. On April 11st, I learned how the police could, even intentionally, encourage redevelopment of neighborhoods of color through the case of Atlanta. Labor was racialized, and with the ongoing deindustrialization, the racialized labor was divested, which led to harsher police brutality. The same day, I found that American merchant mariners were in a negatively special social positions, where they were attributed as many devaluing judgements as possible. However, necessity that WWII created led to depiction of the sea men as essential for American security, through which they were integrated as US citizens. On April 12nd, I heard a presentation on how oral history can contribute to the study of photographs as historical sources through the case of female soldiers in the Iraqi War. This methodology is useful when topics can be sensitive. For example, how female soldiers disposed of their

excrements in the battlefield was exemplified by photographs examined through oral history.

Finally, on April 13rd, Patricia Sullivan discussed how the era of the NAACP in the early 1950s was connected to the era of Black Power in the late 1960s. Unlike many historians who focus on political activism, especially street demonstrations, she emphasized the role of legal struggles in the African American struggle. Meeting with her was great experience because my dissertation on the NAACP was first and foremost influenced by her study on the NAACP from its founding to *Brown*.

I would like to add the visit to the Louisiana Civil Rights Museum on April 14th. Although it had only one rather large room, a variety of topics such as education, right to assemble, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, voting, equal protection clause, and the 105-miles march of Louisiana's civil rights movement. While Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia are still popular states for research on African American history for racial justice, the museum tells visitors that New Orleans is also a place where unique race-relation was established as well as the racial order was challenged in peculiar ways. Moreover, the operation of the long march suggests New Orleans was the only spot where African American activism was strong enough for any fight for racial justice: many localities in the state should have helped it. In short, the small museum has a large amount of information that can both reinforce and complicate the history of Civil Rights Movement in the mid-1960s America.

Report of the 2024 OAH Annual Conference

Hiroko Saito, University of Hawaii at Manoa

I attended the annual conference of the Organization of American Historians from April 11 to 14. Thanks to the grant from JAAS, I had a great time in New Orleans. Though I love my academic environment in Hawaii, it is always difficult to attend a conference in the mainland due to the flight cost. So, I really appreciate this opportunity and the general support from JAAS.

On the first day, I attended the roundtable on Emily Conroy-Krutz, *Missionary Diplomacy: Religion and Nineteenth-Century American Foreign Relations*. I decided to join this panel because my dissertation topic is strongly related to the history of American missionaries activities in Asia in the late 19th century though I didn't know about this book beforehand. The panelists were having a rich discussion on one book and it helped me not only to develop the knowledge related to my research topic but also to learn how to read academic books critically. Other than that, I also attended a panel titled "New Directions in United States Empire" and another one titled "Amidst and against a Patriarchy: Women as History-Makers, Advocates, and Defenders of Rights."

The second day started with the meeting with the OAH-JAAS committee. After a brief self-introduction and a discussion about the cultural differences seen in graduate and undergraduate classrooms, we went to lunch with Professors Shuichi Takebayashi, Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, Renee Romano, Jennifer Dorsey and other two recipients. I am grateful that I could have an opportunity to share my research interest and contribute to the mutual understanding between Japanese and American academia. In the afternoon, I joined a panel "Queering Public History and Remembering Our Queer Past" because queer theory is my another research interest. Both presenters were PhD students and adopted an interesting method and approach using digital technologies. It was very inspiring for me to see other doctoral students working on their project with passion. In the reception, I talked to one graduate student whose research topic is closely related to mine. These encounters are one of the best parts of attending this conference.

On the third day, I attended three panels—"Mapping the Encounter Between Religion and Empire in American History," "Transnational Conversations on Indigeneity between Native America, Japan, and the Japanese American Diaspora," and "Teaching Gender in 2024: Opportunities, Challenges, and Future Directions"—and the Presidential Address. In each panel, I had an opportunity to ask a question in discussion and had fruitful conversation with panelists and other attendees. In the first panel, I learn how the relations between American missionaries and the government were contrastive in Japan and Korea. It helps me to reconsider my dissertation topic from the transpacific and intra-Asian

perspectives. In the third panel, I asked about the practice of pronouns in classrooms. This was a very challenging issue for me for a long time, so I really appreciate that I could have a chance to hear experienced professors' actual practices.

After the workshop on the fourth day, I visited the National WWII Museum to learn how the war is represented from the American national perspective. This visit was not a part of the conference, but the grant from JAAS enabled me to have a chance to visit this important museum in public history.

During the conference and this visit in New Orleans, I had so many great encounters, discussions, and learnings. It inspired me so much that I started searching for a conference where I would be able to present my paper right after I left New Orleans. Thank you again for this great opportunity, and I am excited to share my experiences with my colleagues in Hawaii.