Ciaran O'Neill and Hannah K. Smyth

The Radical Potential of Public History in Global Perspective

We are clearly entering an era where scholars have begun to conceive of the field of public history in more global terms. Over the past ten years we have witnessed the growth of the International Federation for Public History, which has held conferences in Colombia, Brazil, and China. De Gruyter publishes two series on public history with transnational or global emphasis, as well as a journal, *International Public History*, which aims to compete with *The Public Historian* for top spot in a field which has been more locally and nationally focused for much of its short lifespan. Public History programs have mushroomed globally in the past decade (there are four in Ireland alone) and now we are in the strange position of having a *de facto* global field in public history without ever having adequately theorized it. In their recent collection of essays *What is Public History Globally?* Paul Ashton and Alex Trapeznik have shown us the extent to which public history remains mapped onto Anglocentric and Eurocentric hierarchies in the professional and academic contexts in which it is generally taught and practiced.[1] This linguistic and cultural bias remains one of the major auto-critiques of the emerging field. Equally, scholars such as Jenson and Cauvin have shown us the intellectual roots of public history in the European nineteenth century by focusing on Rankean intellectual histories, but textbooks and articles that have been published since have challenged the idea of European roots either implicitly or explicitly.[2] Australia, like North America, has been at the forefront of the developing scholarship and

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1 Paul Ashton and Alex Trapeznik, eds., *What is Public History Globally? Working with the Past in the Present* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019); Serge Noiret and Thomas Cauvin, "Internationalizing Public History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Public History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Serge Noiret, "Public History," in *Research Handbook on Public Sociology*, ed. Lavinia Bifulco and Vando Borghi (MA: Edward Elgar, 2023), 86–104; Rebecca Conard, "Still Grappling with the Definition Question," *The Public Historian* 40, no. 1 (2018): 115–19; Na Li, "Public History in a Global Context," *Public History Review* 30 (2023): 1–2, https://doi.org/10.5130/phrj. v30i0.8372; Thomas Cauvin, "For a New International Public History," *Public History Review* 30 (2023): 71–78, https://doi. org/10.5130/phrj.v30i0.8382.
2 Bernard Eric Jensen, "Usable pasts: Comparing approaches to popular and public history," in *People and Their Pasts: Public History Today*, ed. Paul Ashton and Hilda Kean (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2009), 42–56. For alternative genealogies of public history see Thomas Cauvin, "The Rise of Public History: An International Perspective," *Historia Crítica* 68 (2018): 3–26; Michihiro Okamoto, "Public History in Japan," *International Public History* 1, no. 1 (2018): 20180004, https://doi.org/10.1515/iph-2018-0004.

thus questions of settler colonial dynamics have been at the forefront of many recent debates in the field.[3] Elements of what we call Public History have existed in scholarship and practice across time and space, of course, and what we have yet to reconcile is our understanding of this fact and its relation to the field of public history as it has developed since the 1970s. Public history prides itself on the dialogic principle at its core: that history should be done "with" as opposed to "to" or "for" people. But does our scholarship really deliver on that dialogic potential?

Public History was, and remains, a radical and subversive field, so it is no surprise to see dominant power hierarchies made visible and critiqued in this way, even by those most prominent in the field. The question we are left with is where can it go from here? Our volume of essays will not smash this Anglocentric/Eurocentric hierarchy but it does seek to further undermine it. Our contributors are academics and practitioners (often both) and their formation is typical of others in the field in that their education has come via a mixture of elite and non-elite universities. Our interests are anything but elite, however, and we have made a concerted effort to publish work that is both spatially distributed and produced by diverse contributors who are conscious of the limitations of their own positionalities. We draw on subject material that pertains to modern-day Iran, Argentina, and Chile, as well as more local contexts in Britain, Ireland, and Europe.

The Problem with Global Approaches

Where should public history sit within the matrix of global, international, (trans) national, and more local histories? Since its emergence in the 1970s Public History has typically been read as community-oriented, and more local in its applications, more likely to tackle a topic such as gentrification or exclusion in a local context than a national or global one. Nevertheless, the academic field in particular has developed along national lines and indeed we see in the many monographs, edited books, and journals that have emerged a distinct tendency to consider public history as understandable mostly in its relation to the nation state and its attendant mythologies.

The pale/male/stale meta-narratives that public history pushes against are the building blocks of "national" histories it works against: political, military, and heroic histories. The histories of the mainstream. Conceiving of a public history

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3 Anna Clark, "Private lives, public history: Navigating historical consciousness in Australia," *History Compass* 14, no. 1 (2016): 1–8; Paul Ashton, "The Birthplace of Australian Multiculturalism? Retrospective Commemoration, Participatory Memorialisation and Official Heritage," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 15, no. 5 (2009): 381–98.

in global perspective, then, seems to us to have more radical potential than an international public history, which arguably simply collects these national histories and considers them to be separate, or a transnational public history, which requires us to prioritize flow and movement of people, ideas, and things. What would a more global approach to public history look like and how can it disrupt the field if interpreted radically?

Global History – broadly defined – has itself become an embattled category, even despite its rise to prominence over the past two decades.[4] Derided by its critics as an essentially narrow and methodologically elitist mode of historical enquiry, its relevance has been constantly questioned as political forces in the world turned away from ideas of cosmopolitanism and one-world thinking in the mid 2010s and embraced instead a resurgent populist ethno-nationalism that defines itself outwardly as opposed to aspirant citizens of the world. One of the major debates in the field of global history has, perhaps as a result of this challenge, centered on the place of the micro-unit of analysis in the field. The question of how to pair the micro and the macro is, of course, an old debate in fields that have to balance empirical analysis and grand narrative, and perhaps there is no field of history where that need is as acute as it is in global history. Yet here is where public history can really shine, as public history is very often focused on the micro, or local, and is almost always preoccupied with the concrete effects of larger social forces on precarious groups in society. Furthermore, if Global History has often been (unfairly) characterized as a top-down methodology more concerned with abstract ideas of integration and the interactions of historical units, then the ingrained bottom-up approach that is so fundamental to the practice of public history ought to act as an interesting corrective to that perception.[5] There is also no reason beyond the limits of its practitioners why public history should focus on people, things, and natural phenomena in a regionally biased way.[6]

Let us try and advocate for a public history based on aspirant or potential future directions. As Faye Sayer and others have argued, a more "global" public his-

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4 For coverage of this see Richard Drayton and David Motadel, "Discussion: The Futures of Global History," *Journal of Global History* 13, no. 1 (2018): 1–21; James Belich et al. eds., *The Prospect of Global History* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

5 Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016); Roland Wenzlhuemer, *Doing Global History: An Introduction in 6 Concepts* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); Pamela Kyle Crossley, *What Is Global History?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2008); Friedrich N. Ammermann, "What is Global History of Technology (good for)?", *Global Histories: A Student Journal* 6, no. 2 (2021); Stefanie Gänger and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds. *Rethinking Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024.)

6 Thomas Cauvin, "The Rise of Public History: An International Perspective," *Critical History*, no. 68 (2018): 3–26.

tory can also be conceived of as an inherently political one.[7] It is a mode of history which can seek to confront an issue in the present and to historicize it with political or activist intent. Rather than retrospectively analyzing an historical event in a somewhat passive manner, we can instead proactively seek to historicize injustice or inequity in our present. In this way topics of global significance such as race/racism, poverty/wealth, and so on can come into view, and not just in a way that lends itself to accusations of "woke" analysis or "ahistorical" commentary. Nevertheless, as Rosenthal points out, "what has driven proponents of change is the idea that public spaces should not be occupied – or at least unproblematically occupied – by 'heroes' on pedestals judged to be deeply implicated in a racist or imperialist past."[8] Much of this energy has come "from below."

Contemporary Issues in Public History

One very obvious transformative aspect in public history with potential for a more global consideration emerges from the very disparate worldwide responses to *Black Lives Matter*, the killing of George Floyd, and the consequent demolition of statues and re-articulation of public space. This has led to, or accelerated, many institutional initiatives on "colonial legacies" across universities, museums, and public bodies, which has in turn led to an ugly and rather intemperate public debate about "culture wars," performative wokery, and "audit culture," largely (though certainly not always) from people to the right of the political center.[9] This critique predates 2020, of course, and is partly indicative of what critics increasingly refer to as the problem of decolonial initiatives. As Tuck and Yang argued more than a decade ago, the problem with decolonization is that it so

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7 Faye Sayer, *Public History: A Practical Guide* (Bloomsbury, 2019), x.

8 David Rosenthal, "Revisioning the City Public History and Locative Digital Media," in *Hidden Cities: Urban Space, Geolocated Apps and Public History in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Fabrizio Nevola, David Rosenthal and Nicholas Terpstra (Routledge, 2022), 21–38 at 21. See also Gianfranco Bandini et al. eds., *La Public History tra scuola, università e territorio Una introduzione operative* (Firenze University Press, 2022).

9 For some coverage of this relative to public history especially see Corinne Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land: Creative Responses to Rural England's Colonial Connections* (Leeds, 2020), chapter 1; Gvyk Tang, "We Need to Talk About Public History's Columbusing Problem," History@Work (2020); Priya Satia, "Britain's Culture War: Disguising Imperial Politics as Historical Debate about Empire," *Journal of Genocide Research* 24, no. 2 (2022): 308–20; Ana Lucia Araujo, *Slavery in the age of memory: Engaging the past* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020); Axelle Brodiez-Dolino and Émilien Ruiz, "Les écritures alternatives: faire de l'histoire hors les murs?", *Le mouvement social* 4 (2019): 5–45.

often "re-centers whiteness, and extends innocence to the settler."[10] Their trenchant critique reveals a potential obstacle to a truly global public history, namely the economic, class, and racial inequities that allow easy platforming and publication for scholars in a field which remains stubbornly white, middle class, and somewhat Euro-centric. Thinking about this from the perspective of the repeatedly colonized, indigenous, or displaced peoples of the world very much ought to be the work of public historians. Mariko Smith has proposed the idea of dialogic memorialization as a way of undermining these sorts of unhelpful hierarchies.[11]

Despite sharing radical roots and emerging in the same era as women's history, gender history, and black history, public history has to some extent operated outside of these fields. Indeed an (often unspoken) critique of public history would have to center on its whiteness. How then, to confront this? What would a public of history of whiteness look like? Mary Rizzo's recent work on processes of elision and the invisibility of whiteness in Baltimore's theater scene indicates the ways in which Public History as a field might develop.[12] So too do more "orthodox" interventions into the history field. The political utility of a book like Olivette Otele's bestseller *African Europeans* (2019) should not be underestimated. By centering a global narrative in Africa, and with Africans, as well as deftly undermining the Eurocentric suppositions of generations of historians of imperialism and colonialism, Otele's work is itself an agent or instrument of global public history, and one that proves its radical potential.

Historians of transatlantic slavery and memory have long grappled with the difficulties of scale inherent in analyzing a trade that spanned the globe, was run for profit by several empires, and with such uneven distribution of documentation across regional archives, if we are lucky enough to retain them. It is not possible, really, to be historian of this entire global phenomenon, but the potential of a global digital history has revealed the huge potential of collaboration stretching ahead of that field.[13] Two major initiatives demonstrate this point. The first is the ESRC-funded Legacies of British Slave-ownership project (2009–2012) and the database it created. The other is a separate digital initiative which has now joined forces with the LBS, the NEH-funded Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database,

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10 Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," *Decolonization* 1, no 1 (2012): 3.
11 Mariko Smith, "Who controls the past… controls the future: A Case for Dialogical Memorialisation," *Public History Review* 28 (2021): 1–12, http://dx.doi.org/10.5130/phrj. v28i0.7787.
12 Mary Rizzo, "Who Speaks for Baltimore: The Invisibility of Whiteness and the Ethics of Oral History Theater," *The Oral History Review* 48, no. 2 (2021): 154–79, DOI: 10.1080/00940798.2021.1943463.
13 For an excellent overview see Serge Noiret, Mark Tebeau, and Gerben Zaagsma, eds., *Handbook of Digital Public History* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022).

originally published as a CD-ROM in 1999 but re-branded for the present as the *SlaveVoyages* website, the latest iteration of a global collaboration that is constantly evolving and adding new datasets.[14] These types of enabling projects are inherently political as well as inherently "public" by nature.

Another obviously global topic could be the perennial subject of gentrification. This affects just about everywhere and public historical work has long focused on a mixture of advocacy work and an attempt to platform the voices of those whose lives are made precarious or are in fact displaced by global process of gentrification with local applications.[15] Various attempts have been made to do this, and indeed these "urban" preoccupations are at play in one of the most influential public history works of the past 30 years – Delores Hayden's *The Power of Place* (1995) – and in several other studies looking at what was then sometimes referred to as "third wave" gentrification.[16] While gentrification has generally been centered in studies of urban planning and social geographies, it has rarely dominated in Public History on a global scale despite operating as a "site" of the type of conflict that is often at the heart of any public historical problem, the encounter between the marginalized and the powerful. Standard texts on gentrification and globalization do not generally adopt or integrate public historical approaches and this seems to us an obvious failure on both sides.[17] If public history purports to try to platform the voices of the marginalized in a collaborative mode of shared inquiry, surely a phenomenon such as gentrification is the perfect fit? As Lopez-Morales argues, in most cases gentrification is "the superimposition by the dominant strata of market rules in spaces where other, alternative social structures pre-exist them." In other words, the history of people and place is intrinsic to understanding this process. Gentrification is, he continues, "more than a class-imposed dispossession of land value. It is instead the loss… experienced by the poor who inhabit urban places now deemed desirable for political and economic goals."[18]

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14 For a full history of the evolution of both projects see https://www.slavevoyages.org/about/about#history/1/en/ and https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/project.

15 Tim Verlaan and Cody Hochstenbach, "Gentrification Through the Ages: A Long-term Perspective on Urban Displacement, Social Transformation and Resistance," *City* 26, no. 2–3 (2022): 439–49; Manuel B Aalbers, "Introduction to the Forum: From Third to Fifth-Wave Gentrification," *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* 110, no. 1 (2019): 1–11.

16 Jason Hackworth and Neil Smith, "The Changing Face of Gentrification," *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 92 (2002): 464–77.

17 See for example Rowland Atkinson and Gary Bridge, eds., *Gentrification in a Global Context* (Routledge, 2004); Loretta Lees, Hyun Bang Shin, and Ernesto López-Morales, *Planetary Gentrification* (London: Polity Press, 2016); Jack Denton, "Is Landmarking a Tool of Gentrification or a Bulwark Against It?," *Pacific Standard,* July 3, 2019.

18 Ernesto López-Morales, "Gentrification in the Global South," *City* 19, no. 4 (2015): 564–73.

Critical Perspectives: Social Justice, Activism, and Public History

What more radical possibilities does this open up for rethinking Public History in global contexts? Combined with the recent growth in university courses, the visibility and professionalization of the "public historian" figure is ever increasing. Public History increasingly sits at a crossroads between the radical and anti-elitist roots of its modern iteration and its authorizing status as a globally-recognized academic field. It is at the interface of public debates about contested heritage. In recent years these trends have often developed alongside late-modern cultures of commemoration and socio-political shifts that have turned attentions towards the memorialization of contested historical figures and institutions. The Covid-19 pandemic propelled many of these longstanding grievances into the spotlight and into the streets just as public history and commemoration became an act of grassroots visibility and justice-seeking for those lost to the virus. They were also acts of solidarity-building among those disproportionately affected by it. It is useful to consider these developments and memory contexts that were, after all, the backdrop against which many of the essays in this volume were conceived, and which are provocations on the ways that we might conceptualize public history in a "global" perspective.

In the past ten years, the First World War centenaries across Europe and initiatives such as the "Decade of Commemorations" (2012–2023) on the island of Ireland have underlined the "political role of the Historian" and the place of the Historian as public intellectual.[19] In the Republic of Ireland this has extended further to the creation of novel public historian jobs embedded in local libraries and archives.[20] Major commemorative initiatives across Europe have also injected community and public history-making with significant visibility and funding with a

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19 *Decade of Centenaries*, accessed March 6, 2023, https://www.decadeofcentenaries.com/; David Motadel, "The Political Role of the Historian," *Contemporary European History* 32, no.1 (2023): 38–45, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777322000716; Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, "Historians and the Decade of Centenaries in Modern Ireland," *Contemporary European History* 32, no.1 (2023): 21–26, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777322000522; Dominic Bryan, "Ritual, Identity and Nation: When the Historian Becomes the High Priest of Commemoration," in *Remembering 1916: The Easter Rising, the Somme and the Politics of Memory in Ireland*, ed. Fearghal McGarry and Richard S. Grayson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 24–42, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316550403.003.
20 E. g. Dublin City Council, "Dublin City Council Historians-in-Residence," accessed March 6, 2023, https://www.dublincity.ie/residential/arts-and-events/decade-commemorations/historians-residence.

particular focus on "diverse" or "hidden" histories.[21] In Ireland's commemorative decade, a multifaceted program of public history explored the less well-known stories of soldiering across the political divide in the First World War, socialism, feminism, and the "forgotten" women of the revolution (1916 – 1923).[22] Though such national commemorative initiatives inevitably reinforce authorized narratives, addressing such issues as race, gender, class, and sexuality have also characterized these late-modern remembrance cultures alongside more familiar discourses of "shared authority" and reconciliation. Likewise, a scholarly turn towards understandings of that conflict as a global event have been reflected back in commemorative initiatives and discourses.

Such has been the place of race and empire in memorializing the First World War in different global contexts. In various post-imperial and settler colonial nations this has manifested in many forms of public media, art, historical programming, and participatory remembrance highlighting the plight of colonial soldiers as well as the role of, and imperial influences on, women and ordinary citizens in the war machine.[23] These more critical approaches to the commemorations in the UK, for example, have linked into wider efforts to challenge the absence of colonialism in the national curriculum and to develop crowd-sourced teaching materials on race, migration, and empire.[24] Likewise, calls by Māori students and educators to include New Zealand's colonial history in the national curriculum were heightened during the First World War centenary, as were calls for a national day of commemoration for the Waikato War. That the First World War commemorations were greatly prioritized for funding over the coinciding one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Waikato War was not lost on those calling for re-

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21 Lucy Noakes and James Wallis, "The People's Centenary? Public History, Remembering and Forgetting in Britain's First World War Centenary," *The Public Historian* 44, no. 2 (2022): 56 – 81; Karen Brookfield, "The People's Centenary: A Perspective From the Heritage Lottery Fund," *Cultural Trends* 27, no. 2 (2018): 119 – 24, https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2018.1453455.

22 Mary McAuliffe, "Commemorating Women's Histories during the Irish Decade of Centenaries," *Éire-Ireland* 57, no. 1 (2022), 237– 59, doi:10.1353/eir.2022.0011. See also Ann-Marie Foster, "Complicated Pasts, Promising Futures: Public History on the Island of Ireland," *Public History Review* 30 (2023): 6 – 14, https://doi.org/10.5130/phrj.v30i0.8376

23 For examples during and since the centenary period see Ben Wellings and Shanti Sumartojo, eds., *Commemorating Race and Empire in The First World War Centenary* (Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2018), https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pup.49703; Noakes and Wallis, "The People's Centenary?"

24 "Teaching British Histories of Race, Migration and Empire," *Institute of Historical Research*, accessed March 6, 2023, https://www.history.ac.uk/library/collections/teaching-british-histories-race-migration-and-empire.

form.[25] In Ireland, the centennial commemorations have been directly implicated in public and political debates about the geo-political future of the partitioned island. Thus, many aspects of this historic period of international commemoration that have been revisited or "re-imagined" have also traversed wider discourses around identity, heritage, and historical justice.

Just as there has been an undeniable historical consciousness-raising engendered by this period of internationally significant commemorations, Public History is increasingly at the epicenter of social justice struggles within and transcending national borders. With growing visibility and reach, acts of participation in radical public history (re)making have been playing out on a global and digitally mediated stage. Some of the most visceral examples of this have been the removal or defacement of statues and monuments to slave owners or prominent colonial figures in settler-colonial and postcolonial contexts. As Tebeau has pointed out, although "historians helped establish the intellectual groundwork, the impetus for change has been driven by grassroots activists" on the back of existing local frustrations and spurred by the *Black Lives Matter* movement (BLM) and social media.[26] Ballantyne has recounted how these "global currents" sparked by BLM and the toppling of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol in 2020 "reignited debates about statues" in New Zealand, where disputes over the commemoration of colonial rulers have been long-running.[27] This rejection of authorized heritage and the question of how to come to terms with these contested pasts has sparked intense debate across the public, political, and cultural spheres. In some cases, these actions have led to highly politicized interventions in the curatorial direction of memory institutions, in others the passing of laws banning the unauthorized removal of statues.[28] In the UK, conservative activist groups such as "Restore Trust" have been formed out of shared criticism of the National Trust – the governing body for protected historical sites in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland – and the ways in which it is allegedly "driven by modish, divisive ideologies" advocating instead to "present history responsibly and use it as a tool for understanding, not as a revisionist weapon."[29]

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25 Michael Belgrave, "Brave New Curriculum: Aotearoa New Zealand History and New Zealand's Schools," *International Public History* 3, no. 2 (2020): 20202007, https://doi.org/10.1515/iph-2020-2007.
26 Mark Tebeau, "Apples to Oranges? The American Monumental Landscape," *International Public History* 1, no. 2 (2018): 20180012, https://doi.org/10.1515/iph-2018-0012.
27 Tony Ballantyne, "Toppling the Past? Statues, Public Memory and the Afterlife of Empire in Contemporary New Zealand," *Public History Review* 28 (2021): 18.
28 Geraldine Kendell Adams, "Dowden Letter on Contested Heritage Stokes Fears of Government Interference," *Museums Association*, October 2, 2020, accessed March 6, 2023, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2020/10/dowden-letter-on-contested-heritage-stokes-fears-of-government-interference/; Tebeau, "Apples to Oranges?"
29 Restore Trust, "About Us," accessed October 4, 2023, https://www.restoretrust.org.uk/about-us.

Some of this resistance came on the back of an interim report in September 2020 by the National Trust that revealed the extent of the links between its historic properties, colonialism, and the slave trade, and manifested in a (failed) campaign to install conservative trustees to the Board in November 2022. With buy-in from across the academic, public, and political spheres, as well as from within institutions themselves, groups such as this and "History Reclaimed"[30] highlight yet again the insidious dialogic between white supremacy and notions of what an "impartial" interpretation of History is or is not. Indeed they reveal the extent to which the language of inclusivity and radical public history have been co-opted to push back against those very movements that have reached global momentum.

Some of these pivotal moments of public outcry and activism also took place during the onset of the global Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, when many looked anew to the "forgotten" global influenza pandemic of 1918–19, the centenary of which had been marked the previous year. Cycles of pandemic lockdowns between 2020 and 2021 forced many cultural institutions to close and to find new ways of engaging their publics beyond physical boundaries, such as rapid response collecting of "covid memories." Both grassroots and institutional efforts to document the pandemic sprouted all over the world and many heritage institutions, universities, and community archives were proactive in collecting lockdown memories and ephemera, as well as capturing the online record of the pandemic response during the crisis.[31] Some such initiatives, like *A/P/A Voices: A Covid-19 Public Memory Project*, emerged from a need to document the specific impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the spike in xenophobia and anti-Asian violence on Asian/Pacific American communities in the US.[32] As we have seen, the pandemic lifted the lid on many undercurrents of social and civil unrest. The lockdowns brought into sharp relief the ways in which the urban landscape, access to healthcare, and greenspace has progressively contracted for those outside the dominant culture or economic elite. Documentation and memorialization became part of a public desire for accountability and recognition of the national and global health inequalities that, during the

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30 History Reclaimed, accessed October 4, 2023, https://historyreclaimed.co.uk/about-history-re claimed/.

31 Thomas Cauvin, "Mapping Public History Projects about COVID 19," *International Federation for Public History* (2020), https://ifph.hypotheses.org/3225; Amanda Greenwood, "Archiving COVID-19: A Historical Literature Review," *The American Archivist* 85, no.1 (2022): 288–311, https://doi.org/10.17723/2327-9702-85.1.288; Frédéric Clavert, "Traces et Mémoires en Devenir D'une Pandémie," C²DH, accessed March 6 2023, https://www.c2dh.uni.lu/thinkering/traces-et-memoires-en-devenir-dune-pandemie.

32 "A/P/A Voices: A COVID-19 Public Memory Project," accessed January 10, 2024, https://apa.nyu.edu/apa-voices-covid/.

crisis and beyond, have disproportionately affected global majority people and the economically disadvantaged.[33] Thus, in its aftermath, calls to adequately commemorate those lost to the pandemic – in stark contrast to the lack of memorials to the 1918 flu – have in many places taken on a political valence.[34]

Extending this critical public history yet further and into the streets and social media spheres have been the controversies surrounding many prominent art and heritage institutions that rely on funding from neo-colonial corporate entities or who court philanthropic donors of dubious ethical repute. In 2019, the Louvre Museum in Paris removed the name of the Sackler family – whose pharmaceutical enterprise sparked an opioid crisis in the USA and who have donated large sums to cultural institutions across the world – from its exhibits and its website following protests by the "Sackler PAIN" activist group. The same group stormed the V&A Museum in London, and these protests and takedowns have spurred a number of institutions internationally to rescind further donations from the family.[35] Likewise, the British Museum faces continued protests by climate activist groups over its sponsorship by the multinational oil and gas producer BP, further heightened by unprecedented temperatures reached across Europe in the summer of 2022.[36] Indeed, the case of the British Museum's sponsorship by BP exemplifies the relationship between climate justice and the "decolonization" of museums and heritage institutions. Demands for the repatriation of heritage items and human remains acquired under colonial or pseudoscientific circumstances have likewise been bolstered by this public momentum of, and grassroots participation in, the discourse of "decolonization". Some institutions and national governments have begun the process of returning artifacts and collections to their originating countries, while many more international disputes over looted heritage and displaced archives continue unresolved.[37]

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33 Katherine Franz and Catherine Gudis, "Documenting COVID-19," *Journal of American History* 107, no. 3 (2020): 692–95, https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jaaa455.

34 For example, the Covid Memorial Wall opposite the UK Parliament in London was organized primarily by the campaign group Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice. The National Covid Memorial Wall, accessed March 6, 2023, https://nationalcovidmemorialwall.org/.

35 Naomi Rea, "The Louvre Museum Has Removed the Sackler Name From Its Walls and Website Following Protests by Nan Goldin's Activist Army," *Art News*, July 17, 2019, accessed March 6 2023, https://news.artnet.com/art-world/the-louvre-museum-has-removed-the-sackler-name-from-its-walls-and-website-1602979.

36 Joe Ware, "Pressure on British Museum to Ditch BP Mounts Following UK's Record Summer Heatwave," *The Art Newspaper*, September 13, 2022, accessed March 6, 2023, https://www.the artnewspaper.com/2022/09/13/pressure-on-british-museum-to-ditch-bp.

37 Emma Gregg, "The Story of Nigeria's Stolen Benin Bronzes, and the London Museum Returning Them," *National Geographic*, September 17, 2022, accessed March 6 2023, https://www.natio

As Li observed in a recent special issue revisiting "global perspectives" in public history: "Such radical social movements are not only unique to a specific country; they are indeed part of a global movement. What does this mean for public history as a field and as a social movement?"[38] This emphasis on public history as a field and as a social movement echoes the "glocal" approach, whereby "local practices can affect international public history discussions"[39], while also reasserting its twentieth century roots as an applied historical tool of recognition and counter-culture. Might we push this global perspective further towards a public history of not just collaboration and enrichment but also of solidarity? The various examples above are indicative of the intensification of global currents concerning the future of contested public monuments,[40] museum and archive collections that hold materials acquired through imperialistic coercion, the global financial ties of publicly owned heritage institutions, the implication of heritage institutions in the perpetuation of climate breakdown, and the social justice value of public history-making and memorialization in the present. In these examples we can see radical and globally connected public history in hyper local contexts, but also resistance and counter-politicization of history from conservative political circles and activist groups. These questions are not new to the Public Historian but the ways in which they are enfolding with global crises and movements is cause to reconsider them in a global perspective. And although the examples

nalgeographic.co.uk/travel/2022/09/benin-bronzes-return-to-nigeria; Catherine Hickley, "Netherlands Takes Lead in Europe's Efforts to Return Artefacts to Former Colonies," *The Art Newspaper*, February 4, 2021, accessed March 6, 2023, https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2021/02/04/nether lands-takes-lead-in-europes-efforts-to-return-artefacts-to-former-colonies; John Bartlett, "Easter Islanders Call for Return of Statue from British Museum," *The Guardian*, June 4, 2019, accessed 6 March 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/jun/04/easter-islanders-call-for-return-of-statue-from-british-museum; "University to return skulls to Irish island," BBC News, February 24, 2023, accessed March 6, 2023, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ck5y95394l8o; Mobeen Hussain, Ciaran O'Neill, and Patrick Walsh, "Working Paper on Human Remains from Inishbofin held in the Haddon-Dixon collection at TCD" (March 2022), accessed January 10, 2024, https://www.tcd.ie/seniordean/legacies/inishbofinTLRWGworkingaper.pdf; James Lowry, *Disputed Archival Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2022), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003057765; Mandy Banton, "History Concealed, History Withheld: The Story of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office 'Migrated Archives' and the Decades-long International Search for Redress," *Archives* 55, no. 1 (2020), https://doi.org/10.3828/archives.2020.1; this has also included moves to open access to data about restitution processes e.g. Open Restitution Africa (n.d.), accessed October 13, 2023, https://openrestitution.africa/.
38 Li, "Public History in a Global Context," 2.
39 Thomas Cauvin, "For a New International Public History" *Public History Review* 30 (2023), 76.
40 For a survey of international case studies see: Laura A. Macaluso, ed., *Monument Culture: International Perspectives on the Future of Monuments in a Changing World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

given here have taken center stage mainly in Western contexts, they and the pub-
lics that drive them are also implicated in global networks of historical conscious-
ness, affect, and solidarity, however flawed or contradictory.

Chapter Descriptions

Memory and commemoration cut across most of these chapters, but many other
themes and questions that have been raised in these global debates mirror
those that are addressed in these parts of the book. These range from the concep-
tual, such as competing memories of revolution and liberation struggles (Monica
Parisa Rabii) and the public historian at the nexus of scholarship and activism
(Alissa Cartwright) to the practice-based, such as community heritage and the pro-
fessional public historian (Samantha Wells; Jennifer Mitcalf), to the politics of her-
itage/public history funding in a neo-liberal cultural economy (Nora Katz; Alexan-
dra D'Astolfo). Our essays range across Europe, South America, and the Middle
East, and in many cases they focus in on something happening at a micro level
rather than speaking directly to the macro. Nico Ferguson explores the role arpil-
leras played in providing a voice for the women who made them and their lasting
legacy in contemporary Chilean society. Her piece speaks to that evergreen preoc-
cupation of Public History, the voice of the marginalized in society and the ways in
which we might learn to hear them. It shows the power of the micro in accessing
peripheral voices. Peripherality is also a feature of the work of Agata Gigante,
whose chapter addresses the complex history of a tiny Jewish community museum
in rural Entre Rios. She raises fundamental questions that are mirrored in Jennifer
Mitcalf's work on the enduring local heritage and material culture of a Lancashire
mill town. Both authors are working with, interviewing, and analyzing a commu-
nity whose local contexts have changed in remarkable ways but are still shaped by
urban planning, and the industrial or agricultural architecture that continues to
shape and influence their environment for the generations that followed. What
connects these approaches is precisely what makes public history valuable. It is
a process, as Alissa Cartwright argues, more than a set of prescribed outcomes,
that defines public historical work. Her searing analysis of the state-funded Land-
scapes of Injustice Project (2014 – 21) tries to grapple with the sustainability and in-
tentionality of a large scale history project that genuinely attempted to decenter
academics and orthodox outputs in favour of centering and platforming both
the history of thousands of Japanese Canadians dispossessed of their lands in
the Vancouver region in the early 1940s by the Federal Government and those
communities who carry that history with them most closely. Seldom has a project
so clearly aligned with public history been funded to the extent that this one was,

and we have much to learn from it. It has some common points with the Irish Folklore Commission, explored here by Beibhinn Breathnach, who sees similar public historical principles at work in this Irish state sponsored project from the 1930s.

Our collection draws from a wide spectrum of subject material, encompassing modern-day narratives from regions such as Iran, Argentina, and Chile as well as exploring more localized contexts within Britain, Ireland, and Europe. By doing so, we hope to take our approach to public history one step closer to realizing its full dialogic potential, truly engaging with, rather than merely about or for, the people it seeks to serve.