ACLS Leading Edge Fellowship

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<th>Project:</th>
<th>Decolonizing Historic Germantown: Re-Framing Sites, Collections, Landscapes, and Museums</th>
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<tr>
<td>Organization:</td>
<td>Historic Germantown (Philadelphia, PA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>Remote</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stipend:</td>
<td>$60,000 per year, plus health insurance and professional development funding</td>
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<td>Start Date:</td>
<td>September 2021</td>
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**ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION**

Historic Germantown (HG) is a partnership organization of 18 independent historic, green, and cultural sites in Northwest Philadelphia that works collaboratively to preserve these assets, increase public access and equity, and raise their visibility. Historic Germantown supports its member sites by facilitating tours, lectures, exhibits, festivals and other public programming; distributing funding for building preservation; creating and disseminating print and electronic resources related to the history of the region; and providing training, networking and peer learning opportunities for site owners and managers. It also directly manages the programs and operations of the Germantown Historical Society. Learn more at https://freedomsbackyard.com/

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

This project will develop a conceptual framework to expand existing initiatives to decolonize Historic Germantown. Historic Germantown’s geographic footprint centers on what was the ‘Old German Township’, now the neighborhoods of Chestnut Hill, (East and West) Mt. Airy and (East and West) Germantown. The three neighborhoods have distinct characters and demographics: Germantown’s population is 85% African American, mixed income, though with higher rates of poverty than the other neighborhoods; Mt Airy is mostly middle class, over 50% African American and well-known for its positive approach to integration in the 1960s-70s; Chestnut Hill is majority white and one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the city. Most of Historic Germantown’s member sites are located in Germantown, with three in Mt. Airy, and three more in other nearby areas.

The development of a decolonial framework must confront the living legacy and slow violence of Colonial Revivalism—predicated on an “elite,” white version of the past—at the foundation of the local heritage movement in Northwest Philadelphia (and in the U.S.), including the predecessor of the Germantown Historical Society, the Site and Relic Society of Germantown. The development of a decolonial framework will lay the basis for community-led programs and exhibits and for organizational change within HG and its affiliated organizations.

In the project’s first phase, the Leading Edge Fellow will work with HG staff to conduct research that proposes a decolonial framework for HG and takes on the legacy of Colonial Revivalism, both in general and in its particular influence on the development and operations of many HG sites. This research will draw deeply on the archives of the Germantown Historical Society and on several special collections of member sites and peer organizations. Faculty at the University of Pennsylvania’s Program in Environmental Humanities (PPEH) will provide research mentorship. This research feeds the construction of an on-line exhibit that will also serve as an example for future reinterpretation of collections and exhibits at the Germantown Historical Society. The exhibit serves both to introduce these topics to our member sites and will position HG as a leader in the cultural heritage sector working to

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document and redress the legacies of colonization and empire and its continued expression as Colonial Revivalism. PPEH staff will support the fellow with expertise in the development of the digital exhibit.

The fellow will work collaboratively to translate this research and thinking into a practical “Toolkit” for use across HG’s member sites—and beyond. While developing the Toolkit, the fellow will have the opportunity to interview and work with leaders at HG’s 18 member sites, from Cliveden of the National Trust to The Black Writers Museum. This is a full-time commitment for the fellowship year, including dedicated time for professional development activities.

**Responsibilities and tasks:**

- With support from the Penn Program in Environmental Humanities, develop and share annotated public bibliography on decolonization and heritage sites;
- Participate in and learn from community engagement work with selected Historic Germantown sites part of the William Penn Foundation funded “Activating Green Spaces” program;
- Conduct research and produce a draft working paper/document related to colonial revivalism, its legacy, and methods and practices of decolonizing Historic Germantown/Germantown Historical Society;
- Creation of a ‘decolonial toolkit’ for HG and adaptable for other heritage sites;
- With support from HG staff, plan digital exhibit based on this research;
- Report to HG on key learnings from the Fellowship.

**Qualifications:**

- PhD in any field of the humanities or humanistic social sciences. Read more about eligible fields [here](https://www.acls.org/Competitions-and-Deadlines/Leading-Edge-Fellowships);
- Excellent writing and research presentation skills; if selected, finalists will be asked to submit a research and writing sample;
- Keen interest in increasing access and equity in the field of cultural heritage;
- Ability to write well for both general and academic audiences;
- Collegial and adaptable approach to remote work and collaboration.

**APPLICATIONS**

- Information on the Leading Edge Fellowship Program: [https://www.acls.org/Competitions-and-Deadlines/Leading-Edge-Fellowships](https://www.acls.org/Competitions-and-Deadlines/Leading-Edge-Fellowships)
- All applications must be submitted through the ACLS Online Fellowship Application System (ofa.acls.org)
- Application deadline: 9pm EDT, May 6, 2021.

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