

**PRESS RELEASE**

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For Immediate Release

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Microgrant winners selected for *American Journalism/Journalism History* initiative

Six historians will receive funding this spring to advance diverse perspectives in media history.

The microgrant initiative was a joint collaboration between *American Journalism*/American Journalism Historians Association and *Journalism History*/AEJMC History Division. Journalism History Publications Chairwoman Teri Finneman said the goal was to provide direct support to increase diversity research in the journals.

"The number of applications that we received exceeded expectations, prompting us to award more projects than initially planned," Finneman said. "It's truly wonderful to see how many great ideas there are and the direction of journalism history research."

The inaugural grant winners are:

Robby Byrd is an associate professor of journalism in the University of Memphis Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. Byrd's research focuses on LGBTQIA+ media, particularly on the Queer press of the late 20th century.

His project is an attempt to add the stories of the Southern Queer press to the body of existing journalism history. By shedding light on the publications produced by gay and lesbian journalists/activists in the Southern United States—particularly from 1981 to 2000—this project aims to provide a deeper understanding of the role of the Queer press in community building and worldmaking specifically during a time of unparalleled crisis.

Jeremy J. Chatelain is a religious educator and holds a Ph.D. from the Department of Communication at the University of Utah. His journalism history research emphasis is the power and influence of the 19th-century press in American religious history, particularly during the rise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) history.

His project examines a pivotal moment in U.S. religious history in the June 1844 issues of Illinois frontier editor Thomas C. Sharp's *Warsaw Signal*. His 41 lengthy, embittered anti-Mormon articles and Extras will be studied to analyze and describe his printing efforts that coalesced and motivated mob actions that led to the murder of the Mormon leader Joseph Smith.

Sydney Dillard is an associate professor and graduate director of DePaul University's Public Relations and Advertising MA program. Her areas of expertise include advertising creativity, DEIA, health campaign development, and sustainable university-community partnerships for social change.

Her project will preserve oral histories of advertising racial/ethnic minority industry professionals who have led the art direction of some of the U.S.'s most influential advertising campaigns, including brands such as Google, McDonald's, Walmart, Toyota, Comcast, American Airlines, Coca-Cola, Budweiser, and Walt Disney World. The project will provide deeper insight into the challenges and opportunities for better addressing disparities currently found within the multi-billion-dollar advertising industry.

Lisa D. Lenoir is an assistant professor at Indiana University Bloomington and a critical and cultural scholar who uses historical context to make sense of

... critical and cultural context. The above historical context is made visible in race, gender, and class phenomena in media and journalism discourses. Her doctoral research focused on “woke culture” and its articulation in *Essence*; *O, The Oprah Magazine*; and *Teen Vogue*.

Her project, “The *Chicago Defender*’s Quiet Power: The Legacy of Mattie Smith Colin—From Covering Emmett Till’s Death to Everyday Life,” aims to examine archival materials and conduct interviews in Chicago to demonstrate Colin’s impact in political and everyday life journalism. The research will contribute to Black feminist, ethics of care, and lifestyle journalism history and scholarship.

Michael T. Martínez is an assistant professor in the School of Journalism and Electronic Media at the University of Tennessee. His research interests include the history of journalistic practices; media law, with a specific focus on media and the courts; and political coverage in visual communication.

His project, *Voces en la Mesa (Voices at the Table): The Hispanic Journalists Oral History Project*, is a study that records narratives of Hispanics in the newsroom and the effect their roles played on covering the underserved Latin community in the news media. The goal of this research is to explore how diversity in the newsroom has evolved since 1978 when the American Society of News Editors (ASNE) challenged the news industry to achieve racial parity by 2000.

Wendy Melillo is an associate professor of journalism in the School of Communication at American University. As an educator, journalist and media scholar, her work examines the influence of journalism and persuasive communication in U.S. history, American government, political campaigns, popular culture and race relations.

Her project will trace how automaker Henry Ford and the “Radio Priest” Father Charles Coughlin routinely disseminated direct antisemitism in the 1920s and 1930s using phrases like “Jewish capitalist” and “Jewish Communist” to reinforce antisemitic tropes such as “Jews have too much power” or “Jews are greedy.” This historical study will then be compared to more coded antisemitic terms like “Cultural Marxism” and “Globalist” used today in the increasingly visible world of extremist American social media sites.

American Journalism Editor Pamela Walck said it was difficult to only select a handful of projects for this inaugural microgrant.

“As an editor, it was inspiring to see so many worthy projects covering a wide range of topics that can only enrich the historical record. I hope each proposal still finds a way toward completion,” she said.

AJHA President Mike Conway said the number and depth of the proposals illustrate how many great ideas there are for expanding our understanding of media history.

“If these microgrants help a few historians to move a project from idea to publication, I consider the initiative a big success,” he said.

The microgrant winners will discuss their research in progress during an AJHA panel this fall and will submit their final papers to *American Journalism* or *Journalism History* for review at the end of the year.

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Founded in 1981, the American Journalism Historians Association seeks to advance education and research in mass communication history. Members work to raise historical standards and ensure that all scholars and students recognize the vast importance of media history and apply this knowledge to the advancement of society. For more information on AJHA, visit <http://www.ajhaonline.org>.



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