Hi everyone, and welcome back to the Forum Webinar Series. We’re going to get started now. My name is Priya, and I’m the manager for online content and products for Preservation Leadership Forum. And if you don’t know what Preservation Leadership Forum is, we are the professional membership program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. And real quick, before we get started, I have a few technical things. You can download a PDF of today’s slides directly from the header marked handouts in your control panel. And if you check into the chat box throughout the presentation, we'll be posting live links to websites that are mentioned throughout the webinar. You can’t directly click from the slideshow if there is a link included. Before we get started, we’re going to put up our first poll of the day to sort of figure out who everyone is in our audience. Go ahead and fill that out for us.

Great. Post the results everyone can see. OK, so it looks like we've got a nice mix of people from preservation organizations, government agencies, house museums, and non-house museums. Welcome. We're really excited that everybody is here.

So real quick, the structure of this presentation is going to be a little bit different than how we've done webinars in the past. We're going to sort of—I'm going to give a quick introduction, and then we're going to have quick presentations from our three speakers—Kristen Laise, Molly Jessup, and Barbara Lau—followed by a 15-minute moderated discussion and then 15 minutes of audience Q&A. But the moderated discussion and the audience Q&A might sort of blend together because we wanted to give the maximum opportunity for your questions to be answered by our speakers today. And then we're going to do the second poll real quick.

And it’s, “Are you currently interpreting women's history at your historic site or in any significant way?”
Alright. So that's great. We've got a combination of people here, and hopefully for those of you who have said no or currently working on it, the speakers today will be able to give you some tips and suggestions about how you can move that work forward.

So what are women's history sites? And to give you context for what we're trying to do with this webinar today, over the last year or so we've been—here at the National Trust—we've been putting together some material leading up to the anniversary next year. And so, we had women's history theories on the Forum Blog which we will provide information about at the end of the presentation. We had some content at PastForward in Chicago, which included a field session about radical women's history. And then we also have a Forum Journal coming up later this year.

But our goal with talking about women's history sites is to emphasize that it's not just about women's history in a specific place, but it is intersectional and inclusive and complex. So it also includes conversations about race and gender in telling these stories of a full American path. And I provided this picture from the Harriet Tubman by-way, to give you an example of how you can tell women's history stories at a variety of different places. This is one of the subjects of... from our blog series last year, and it really does show how women's history is everywhere, even if we don't have objects or a building to tell that story. And so, we're going to start off next with our first speaker, which is Kristen Laise.

Thank you so much Priya. I'm so glad to be here. I'm going to give you a quick five-minute update on some women's history activities we've done at Belle Grove. Belle Grove is located in Middletown Virginia, or in the northern Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, about an hour from Washington, DC—hour and a half. And it's been a historic house museum and site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation since 1967. So we've just celebrated our fiftieth anniversary. It was home of the Hite family from the 1780s to the 1850s, and Major Isaac Hite, Jr. grew the plantation from about 480 acres to more than 7,500 acres during his lifetime. The dominant story here has been his service in the American Revolution and in the Virginia militia, his
acumen in business and in farming, and his management of the Jefferson-inspired manor house here on the screen.

SLIDE 5

Kristen Laise: 00:05:37 This is another shot of the house here, inside. This site would also become very strategic during the American Civil War. And we were at the epicenter of a major civil war battle: the battle of Cedar Creek in 1864.

Kristen Laise: 00:05:57 So on this slide, you actually see some women’s history that we've done. We knew that the plantation did not solely rest on the success of Major Isaac Hite. And my predecessors were dedicated to telling story of his two wives, Nelly Madison Hite, who was the sister of President Madison, and Ann Turnstall Maury Hite; and their daughters. The primary source material tells us about their daily lives; social history of the plantation; how children were born, raised, and educated. And in 2009, their research culminated in this book, The Women of Belle Grove. And having this well-researched source has really helped us. We were including women's history into our daily house tours, or when it’s time to do a special exhibit or program. So, having done the work and having documented it in a very comprehensive way, we have this at our fingertips. And what you see here is the day parlor—the women's parlor—that's right off the foyer. And it would've been a place where we have women's work taking place. You're rocking your child, teaching the children, or doing sewing work. So, we can talk about this history.

SLIDE 6

Kristen Laise: 00:07:03 But we also know that the history of women at Belle Grove did not just stay isolated to white women or even free women. And so, we've been doing increasing history research on the slave population at Belle Grove. And we have family records that note that 276 people were in bondage at Belle Grove by the Hite family during that timeline between the 1780s and 1850s. These records and family letters provide some information about the enslaved individuals, but not nearly as much as we want to know. And so, we're conducting additional archival research, archaeological research, and contextual research to understand how slavery works, specifically in our area of Virginia.

Kristen Laise: 00:08:16 It was really tempting to wait until our research progressed—until, say, we had a book like The Women of Belle Grove—before we started presenting history about the enslaved workforce here. However, we had the opportunity to do a
training program through a group called the Tracing Center. They’re a group devoted to creating greater awareness of slavery and the slave trade. And it was through their training program that we got a better idea. We decided, why not take the public along our journey with us. We’re fortunate to not only be a site of the National Trust, but also to be a legislative partner in a national historical park. It’s called Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park, and it was founded in 2002. And so, I worked with one of the rangers, Shannon Moeck, to create a program that she’s been presenting for the last two years. It's called, “Kneading in Silence: A Glimpse into the Life of Enslaved Cook Judah.” The program is in the basement kitchen of Belle Grove, which you can see here in the picture. And this is the space where Judah and other enslaved workers—women and children—did the household work, managed household tasks in the building.

Visitors can hoist the dutch oven—feel like what some of this work might have been like. They can smell a hint of wood smoke, and they can imagine Judah might have to be in silence. Because if they’ve been on the full house tour—if they go on the house tour after the program—they will discover that the formal parlor is directly above this kitchen space. Shannon begins by explaining that her program is a “glimpse” because today there are very few documents that tell us much about Judah’s daily life. She shows visitors were Judah’s name was entered onto the family slave register, along with her two sons, Sam and George. And using an analysis of that document, we were able to tell that they may have been purchased from a neighboring relative. Ranger Shannon also talks about how the family slave list allows us to create a family tree of Judah and her children and grandchildren.

A really simple but powerful technique that Shannon uses is to distribute slips of paper with the names and birth dates of each of Judah’s children to participants in the program. In turn, the participants read these names and dates aloud. This gives voice to the individuals, and as their names hang in the air, it becomes impossible to think of slavery as an abstract system of labor. It becomes clear to everyone: this involves real lives. The other key document about Judah’s life is a letter, and you’ll see some excerpts here on the screen written from Anne Hite, the second wife, to a friend. And she recounts Judah’s illness from pleurisy and her death in April 1837, when we believe Judah was only about 42 years old. Anne writes, “She finally went under the disease on Saturday morning, leaving 12 children; the
youngest only five weeks old. I deplore her loss to her younger children more than my own inconvenience, which is very considerable.” Because Judah happened to die in the same year as Major Isaac Hite, Jr., the estate inventory gives us further clues on what may have happened to her children after her death.

We know that Johnathan, that five-week-old—who was five weeks old at Judah’s death—is not listed in that estate inventory. And that leads us to the conclusion that he may have died without his mother’s care. Other children were willed to Hite’s sons and daughters, or they may have been sold altogether, separated from their families. This program that Shannon has put together [inaudible] has gone on for two years, and she will do it again this summer on about a monthly schedule. There will be a website that’s shared along with this recording. You can get that schedule, and if you’re nearby us or if you’re planning a trip in this direction, I highly recommend it. It has been consistently very well attended. It has had the same level of engagement and sometimes greater attendance than some of the civil war programming talking about the military aspects of our site, and it’s been an incredibly powerful way to bring Judah to life in the imagination our visitors. So, thanks!

Great. Thank you, Kristen. Bear with us while we transfer control over to Molly.

Thank you very much. And I'm happy to chat with you all. So, I want to introduce the Oneida Community Mansion House, for those of you who might not be familiar with the site.

So the Oneida Community Mansion House is in Oneida, New York, and it was home to a socialist utopian, religiously-based commune that was led by John Humphrey Noyes. So, it was a commune of about 250 people, and it was active from 1848 to 1880. The house was built in stages, starting in 1862. It’s been a nonprofit museum since 1987. It is also a unique historical site because we have guest rooms for overnight lodging, and we actually have residential apartments. So, there's people who live within the complex, and you can see pictures there.

The utopian community practice—what they called “Bible Communism”—so, they wanted to live in a manner that they
believe in was similar to the first apostles, as one family sharing everything. They rejected the idea of property ownership and rejected monogamous marriage as an exploitative property relationship. As you probably know, women were subject to coverture in the 1800s. So you didn’t have many legal, political or economic rights. So, in this community they practiced what they termed “complex marriage,” which was a polyamorous structure, and it was also related to their religious philosophy. This practice of complex marriage allowed women of this community to have a status separate from that of a husband, socially and in work and labor. And in many ways that led them to have a greater autonomy over their own sexual and reproductive freedoms.

SLIDE 10

Molly Jessup: 00:15:26 So, because the community was large—it was 250 people—some narratives focus mainly on the founder, Noyes, in his own personality, charisma, religious experiences. In the mid-twentieth century, if we see the next image, you also heard narratives about the community as sort of a free love paradise, in a way that speaks more to the 1950s and 1960s than to the community itself. So, in those narratives, as you see in sort of the pulp novel there, there wasn’t a lot of agency for women of the community. They were seen more as objects.

SLIDE 11

Molly Jessup: 00:16:08 So currently in our programming, in every house tour that we have, most of our programs are dialogic, so we want to have a conversation, and we try to examine how gender and sexual relationships change power dynamics and how those influence social practices in work, education, and governance. So, for instance, in the image on the left, on the regular guided house tour, we have more conversations about the larger ideas and concepts that the community was manifesting, rather than objects based in the house. Although we use some object-based learning. Our other kinds of programs, as you can see on the right, this is part of our discussion series. So, in that we take the scenes from the community, and we consider—for instance, in the programs we had on women and gender recently—how those apply across different time periods and how they speak to other social issues in the present. So, for instance, there are programs on women's political activism of the 1800s. There are programs on adultery and what the meaning of marriage was for the 1800s. But also, programs that speak to present issues about reproductive freedom—so who decides issues of reproduction. Programs about masculinity in labor—so to look

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at it from the other side too. So we really try and take some of our scenes and apply them to different places. And we do the same thing... For instance, when we partnered with Girl Scouts, and we developed a program about ideas about gender and gender stereotyping. So, we talk about that in modern media, but because the theme was relevant to our site, we were also able to adapt that and use that here. So, for our current programs, what we try and do is look at how the community’s practices changed power dynamics. So we explored that in every tour. Then we also used programming that sees and examines how the community, sort of, concepts show up in other places and circumstances. And then in particular, in a very practical way, we get a certain number of questions that we hear quite often. So, in developing new programs—for example, things for International Women’s Day—we ask our docents to write down different things about what people have been asking them, what people are curious about, so that we can build programming around that. So that’s a little bit of what our site is currently doing. Thank you.

SLIDE 12

Priya Chhaya: 00:18:52 Thanks Molly. Barbara, it's all up to you now.

Barbara Lau: 00:18:57 Thank you so much. It’s so great to be with Kristen and Molly and Priya and Rebecca today and all of you out there watching and listening in. Our site is actually still emerging. We are in Durham, North Carolina, and we hope to be open full-time by 2020. We are the first National Historic Landmark in North Carolina focused on women’s stories, and we are very excited and planning now for our future.

SLIDE 13

Barbara Lau: 00:19:38 OK. So, let me just give you a little bit of an overview about Pauli Murray. She grew up in this house which was built in the 1890s by her grandfather, Robert George Fitzgerald, who was a northerner of mixed racial descent, who first fought on behalf of the Union and then came south after that to be an educator. After being orphaned as a young child, Pauli Murray came to live in Durham and really grew up to be a very independent thinker, quite a challenging human rights activist. Someone who worked very hard to embrace a multiple set of identities. And throughout her life during the twentieth century, we really see her standing at the nexus of all of the major civil and human rights activism movements. She, as you can see on the slide, challenged roles based on gender, based on race. She was rejected by multiple colleges based on her race and then by her
gender and began to use her own experience to craft new language and new thinking about these intersections, including coining the term “Jane Crow,” to really talk about her experience as both a woman and a person of color.

Barbara Lau: 00:20:52 Despite all of this, she really attained quite an amazing resume: as a co-founder of the National Organization for Women and, notably at the end of her life, the first African American woman ordained as an Episcopal priest. In 2012, the Episcopal Church actually named her a saint. We learned from her FBI file that she had lived in over 50 addresses in her 75 years. So, we felt that this address where she was — where she grew up, where she was really shaped by the values of the people around her, by this emergent, manufacturing city in the new south — that this would be a great place for people to be able to come and learn more about her story and the story of her family.

SLIDE 14

Barbara Lau: 00:21:39 One of the things that we think is really important is to try to take an intersectional approach to this work. And we are called to that by Pauli’s own experience. In a letter in the 1970s to the president of the board of the National Organization for Women, who had asked her to join that board, she said, “Don’t ask me to be a woman one day, a Negro one day, a worker the next. I need to find the unifying principles under which I can work.” She said that for many people, this was just good politics, but that for her, this was really the price of survival. So, trying to hold that approach to the work, we think about this working zone — as you can see on your left — that is that intersection of identities which many of us experience in our lives, by which we are constantly being pulled in one direction or another. So, what does it mean for us to try to begin our work from that center spot, that place of wholeness and integration? And how might that be different from the work that we see in other places? The picture on the right is actually part of an exhibition. It talks a little bit about how Pauli Murray navigated this “in-between-ness,” coming from a background of both white and black people, both working class and middle-class people. From people who are both homosexual and heterosexual, and her own experience of discovering that she was attracted to women when she was in her twenties. And her challenge of gender identity. She actually sought hormone treatment in the 1930s after doing research into some things that were happening in Europe. But that coming to this place where she thought about human rights being indivisible and how important that is as a concept — both in her life, in her vision for social change, and in
the work that we want to do at the Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice.

SLIDE 15

Barbara Lau: 00:23:37

So this is a photo of an exhibition because we don't yet have a site. Many of our programs are either traveling, or they start at the site. We have some walking tours and that kind of thing. But we're not yet able to use the spaces at the house to do our interpreted work. This exhibition is currently up at St. Paul's Chapel in New York City. It will be there until March 21st, if any of you are in that area. But here we use these photographs, what I might call early selfies, that Pauli took in the 1930s and literally wrote on with these names that you see: the Imp, the Dude, the Crusader. There was also the Vagabond, the Poet, the Acrobat. So, this idea of her playing with identity. And I think this inspires us to think about how we ask our visitors, or people that come to our programs, to also think about those issues of—how do these different pieces of our identity interact, and what does it mean for us to try to embrace a more integrated view of ourselves and create a just world in which all those people, all those pieces of us, can show up?

SLIDE 16

Barbara Lau: 00:24:52

So we do this in lots of different kinds of programming. Some of this—you can see this tool “Still Walking for Justice.” That was the anniversary of the Journey of Reconciliation which happened in the 1940s and challenged segregated buses. In the center is a photo from an original clay that we commissioned that is going to be touring to New York, New Haven, and to Washington, DC in April. It's called “To Buy the Sun.” But also, neighborhood-based activities like you see on the right: our national night out event that invites people who live right around this house, which is in the middle of a residential neighborhood, to meet and to just be in fellowship with other people who are supportive of the project. Below is one of our community dialogues. This one in particular [was] in connection to an exhibition that we did not produce, but that really questioned the biological basis of race—inviting people to think about that in a more complicated way.

Barbara Lau: 00:25:49

And below on the right is a photo from an intergenerational LGBTQ oral history project. So, while part of our goals are to lift up the life and legacy of Pauli Murray, we also want to tell the stories like hers that don't get told as often. And so, in this picture—very interesting interaction between two women, both involved in the music, especially rooted in the LGBTQ.
community, but of very different generations. Talking about their experience and not only answering our questions, but also engaging in a conversation themselves. So, all sorts of different approaches—with documentary work, with activism work, with dialogue, with the arts—to think about ways that we inspire people to think about the ideas that Pauli Murray forwarded in her life.

**SLIDE 17**

Barbara Lau: 00:26:41 Now as we move toward opening in 2020, we also were trying to think about a way to embrace Pauli's vision in our interpretive planning, and so while much traditional interpretive planning is focused on the period of significance—in particular, historical themes—we tried to pick some themes that were very important to Pauli's life, arenas in which she worked.

Barbara Lau: 00:27:08 So this is our first, what we call "think tank"—a gathering of museum professionals, historians, artists, activists, members of the Pauli Murray family, members of our board—to talk about, what does it mean to do Pauli Murray's work at the Pauli Murray House. And these are just a few of the concepts that came up as a part of that meeting. We're planning additional meetings focused on spirit, focused on justice. Pauli Murray also wrote a very important, sort of, autobiographical book about her family called *Proud Shoes* that really focuses on local history. Pauli Murray's family was very important in the establishment and the growth of Durham, which really didn't exist before the Civil War. And so, we want to make sure in our work, that we stay very connected to the people and the places that are right around us in our neighborhood, which is being impacted tremendously right now by gentrification, by change, as our city is growing.

Barbara Lau: 00:28:15 And so, we don't want to ignore that when we think about those programs—where one of the things that comes out of our conversation is, what does it mean to do this work without leaving anyone behind? So perhaps a little bit different kind of historic site. I don't think... We don't have many artifacts of the house and a couple of other things. Our intention is not to create a site that is focused on a very particular time period or [that] tries to recreate a residential environment, but to use that space in a broader way as a container or an architecture in which people practice community, in which people think about activism and social justice work, and in which we inspire the next generation of Paulis. And people who are pushing the envelope and encouraging us all to think in broader ways. So, that's all for me, and I look forward to the conversation.
Thank you so much, Barbara. Now’s the time, panelists, if you can turn on your webcam for the moderated panel discussion. And while they do that, we have our third poll to sort of set the stage for what we’re going to talk about.

**POLL 3**

So the question was, “What are the biggest perceived barriers to shifting interpretation at a historic site?” And it's a combination, but it looks like 44%... So, it's primary source research, and then community opposition. Oh, sorry—funding and then community opposition. I’m really interested to hear what the “Other” is. And so, we actually have a chat box on the side, and if you have questions you can go ahead and put that in. But if there are other barriers, I would love to hear what those are, if you can fit those in the chat box as well. This will help me, if we decide to do follow-up blogs or follow-up tools for you guys as you do your work.

**SLIDES 18 & 19**

So to sort of kick-off the moderated panel discussion, now we can see everyone on the screen. That’s so great. I’m going to be sort of like a silent disembodied voice because hopefully I won't have to add that much. But the kickoff question I had was similar to the poll question, which is, “What are some of the challenges to adding women's history into existing historic site interpretation?” And I don't know if there is anyone who wants to go first...kick it off.

I can say something. I can speak to that a little bit. With some of our stakeholders, some of the descendants of the utopian community actually intentionally destroyed some of the primary source material that we would have had access to, in 1948. Just because at that time period it would have been very difficult for them—for us—to have this legacy of Bible communism and polyamory in their own history. So, one of our challenges is actually using the then-published materials of the community and the remaining diaries and letters and things to try and read between the lines and get more sense of some of the personal thoughts that people might have been having or some of the challenges that they were having. Just because some of the most insightful stuff that we may have had, we just no longer have. So that is a particular challenge for us, too. So, we really have to critically analyze what they would’ve been saying about
themselves for the general public, which would obviously be different than their private conversations.

Kristen Laise: 00:32:32 I would say one of the challenges we face is to integrate the story of the different women’s lives into our historical house tour. We are all-volunteer run when it comes to programs at Belle Grove. We’re very small staffed. And so, we are training volunteers on how to give tours and how to interact with the public, and they can sometimes be overwhelmed with the amount of information there is to share. We’re talking about architecture of the home, the economy locally, the local history, the biography of the entire family, its connection to the Madison family. And so there had been this belief that getting into women’s history or getting into talks about the history of the slave workers of the house, that you were adding content and therefore adding time; therefore begging the patience of say, the causal tourist, who may or may not have the passion for history that we do. And that was a hurdle to overcome—that these are stories that are, not that are add-ons. This is the story. This is interwoven throughout the story of the house. So, sometimes that pressure was on to then provide additional guidance to make sure that was clear and to make sure we were clearly training our staff.

Barbara Lau: 00:33:56 So, at our site we really start with women’s history because obviously it’s a site that’s really focused on, sort of, a woman-identified person. But I think in the larger context of Durham history—which we often are called upon to talk about and shape in terms of the person who built the house and the contributions that they and their family made—you know, there isn’t as much research been done about the women. There’s a very strong history here in Durham of both white and African American men who have been tremendous entrepreneurs and who have really shaped this city. And so, trying to continue to put women at the center of the programming, in the center of some of the tours and other things that we lead continues just to be a challenge because—in part because of what people think they already know about this place, but also, based on some of the research available.

Priya Chhaya: 00:34:57 Great! So, one of the other questions that you guys had posed during our planning meeting was that sometimes learning new information makes visitors defensive or even antagonistic. And I think the audience will be really interested in knowing, how do you handle receiving tough questions when you are in a group setting, especially if people don't necessarily have the buy-in, to see this sort of thing done?
So I can talk a little bit about that. I think in our case, that those tough questions are often about sexuality and about Pauli Murray’s sexuality or her gender non-conformity. And again, there's often an interest in respectability. Why don't you only talk about her as an educator, as an author, as a lawyer—you know, all these sorts of professional identities? And why would you talk about someone's personal life? And I think that's—it can be difficult—but I think it's really important for us to not shy away from that and to present that as a piece of what makes a person a person. And why that part of their legacy is important. And we are lucky that there's been some more recent publications that really do center on the way that Pauli Murray’s life as a person who didn't fit, actually gave her tremendous insight. So it was, in fact, an asset to her as she started to think about what was going on around her and how to analyze that. So, not fitting into the gender norms, not fitting into the norms of gender, sexual expression for women as heterosexual. It then pushed her to think more broadly and to give us new ideas. So the idea that she shares about Jane Crow is a precursor to what we talk about now as intersectionality. The ideas she shared in personal correspondence about her he/she personality then, also becomes a precursor to what some people might call a trans identity. And so, I think one of the things that we try to do is to not talk about that as a liability or as something to be ashamed about, but how understanding a person in their fullness is also understanding how all those pieces become assets to the contributions and the brilliance and the other things that they bring us.

I think that's a really...that's a beautiful answer. That's very interesting to hear about Pauli Murray. Our situation is often kind of kind of opposite. If not looking at the individual, we speak to how sexuality or how identity influences power structure and things like that. We sort of go in the opposite direction at our own site. And because we—as I mentioned, this is the home to a socialist utopian community—so sometimes our audience is a little bit self-selected in that they kind of have looked a little bit to see what it was about before they got here. But we do get some very difficult and challenging questions about human sexuality, about the religion here. And as I mentioned, we have docents note different questions after their tour, so when we start getting certain common questions, we can think about the best way to answer them. But in our case, with some of the questions, what I often recommend for our docents is to sort of validate in some way. Which question often; there are...there's a lot of people who are curious about that. And then be able to provide them with an answer. And one thing that we try and do is also—as you were
saying, Barbara—be very forthright. We’re not going to shy away from some of the more controversial topics because we really want to give people a full understanding of what women's experiences here were like, how that related to what some of the men's experiences here were like, and how that changed the power structure within their gender relationships.

Kristen Laise: 00:39:17 One thing we've found that helps with our program is having a really clear introduction to the program: why we're presenting it, where we got our information, why we think it’s important, why we think it fits with our story. And we learned this the hard way. Ranger Shannon for some reason had started a program—maybe people were late or they were joining the program late—for whatever reason, she got off her game. She got off her regular note cards that she uses for reference, and she did not do her normal introduction. And at the end of the program we actually had some really challenging conversation. And one of the questions that came from the audience was, ‘What are you trying to do? Are you trying to vilify the owner of Belle Grove?’ And that was a new question for us. And a new aspect that we hadn't had to addresses in a public forum before. And we reflected later on, on where that came from, where that defensiveness came from, and realized that we hadn't set it up. And I think that helps the public. It’s a bit of a segue into why we’re talking about what we’re talking about, sort of, allows them to be more receptive to information that they’re about to hear. So, taking some time and being intentional [in] maybe why you’re introducing some topics that are challenging and difficult to talk about. [Inaudible.] And I've been observing that at other sites, especially the sites that deal with slavery, sites that involve the founding fathers. Just have a docent acknowledge, ‘You know, this is challenging for me to address because I've grown up reading that this founding father did a lot of good things for this county. Now I'm getting information that's contrary to that.’ [This] has been just a refreshing way for people to at least be on the same page.

Priya Chhaya: 00:41:25 Great. So, this is partially an audience comment and partially one of the questions you guys gave me ahead of time. As you conceptualize new programming, or as language/theories evolve in the public history field, what kind of training do you do for your staff and volunteers at your site? And you started a little bit on that in this last response, but especially those resistant to narrative change. And the audience comment we got is that sometimes they struggle to get sites to start the conversation because there is resistance from within to add women's history to the conversation. So, what are your approaches or suggestions to that?
Barbara Lau: 00:42:06 So I had a call from a site, an established site of someone who...of course there are rumors about their sexuality. A leading female figure. And you know, [they] shar[ed] that there were a lot of docents that were hesitant to talk about some of those issues or some of those parts of this person’s identity. And, you know, one of the things that they asked me was, well, do you think that I should do like an anonymous sort of query of all of the volunteers to see how they felt? And I said, no, I actually don't think that. I think that if there are issues around shame or issues around uncomfortableness, that making things more silent or more hidden is not going to necessarily help you really approach those. And I suggested to her the idea of modeling of your own... You know, the way that you talk about the issues as the director of the site or as the director of interpretation at the site—I can't remember what this person's job was—is really important because as we normalize the conversation, as we begin to shift the narrative very intentionally and say, ‘yes, the women are just as important [as] the men; yes, people's personal lives are also as important as their public lives, you know; who people love is important.’ Those kinds of things. I think as we do that, we shift the whole conversation about the meaning of the place. And as leaders in these environments, I think that's part of our opportunity, and our opportunity in general, to address major challenges to the sort of major dominant national narratives about what's important and who’s important and why. And so, you know, I think that part of our opportunity is to take that on ourselves and the ways that we talk about our work. In the ways that we talk about the places that are important to us. And to try to model that for others. You know, I also think that sometimes, introducing new content means an opportunity to bring different people into those roles as volunteers or as people—and in fact may open the doors for some younger people who wouldn't necessarily choose to be as engaged because they weren't as engaged with the content—to be more engaged with the opportunity of becoming public historians and being involved in public history sites.

Priya Chhaya: 00:44:50 Kristen or Molly, go ahead.

Kristen Laise: 00:44:56 Ok. So, I agree totally, Barbara. Modelling is totally important. Language is important. So that was important for us, wanting to use the term ‘enslaved.’ Explaining sort of why we choose enslaved over slave when possible. But at the same time there was a level of comfortability. I said, look, I’m not the language police. I’m not following you around with a clipboard saying, you messed up there. It was more important to understand the concept behind that change in language and to start to
internalize that change in language. And to actually be talking about the subject. I would much rather be open and honest about a subject matter and maybe not have perfect language all the time, than not to discuss it. So that was really important to model that. And we also wanted to make sure they had as much information... So as Molly was mentioning with those frequently asked questions, we try to give them information so that they feel prepared. So they can answer those frequently asked and possibly challenging questions.

Molly Jessup: 00:46:10 In our case, I think a lot of the docents and volunteers here—because we have an all-volunteer docent staff—have actually been pretty excited about looking at some of the different angles of the community, thinking about it because they themselves... Once I started working here we moved from just having the guided house [tour] to having several different kinds of tours that we do, including the one for International Women's Day. So, for some of our volunteer staff, they think, oh, this is kind of fun to be introduced to new angles or new ways of thinking about it. And the other way that we’re able to persuade people is through our audience research where we actually say, oh, there's lots of people who might want to talk about this with you. Lots of people who seem excited about this. So, let's try and meet that need that they have because that's essentially what we do. We, um, it's not just the story we want to tell, it's also sort of a Venn diagram. What do they want to hear? What do they want to learn about? So that's, I think, important to think about too. And because our volunteer staff is here, because they want to engage with the public, that's something that's pretty helpful for that.

Kristen Laise: 00:47:25 Yeah, Molly. We've found that actually that’s true. I've found, unfortunately... I have feedback from our community that a trip to Belle Grove where an inclusive story was not heard actually propelled people away from our site. And what we found out was that they weren't going to come back. They weren't going to complain or tell us about it. They were just going to go away. That's the worst case. [Inaudible] but to have someone just write you off and say you don’t matter, that’s really hard to hear. And so, to present that to our volunteers and say, look, we might not even get a second chance if we don’t do this right and if we’re not telling the full inclusive story.

Priya Chhaya: 00:48:15 Great, thanks guys. So, I have an online question and then one... Actually, maybe the one I'll do first is to maybe expand on those poll results we got, where people said the biggest challenge they had was finding primary sources. And we talked about this a little bit in our planning call, and I was wondering if you guys
could talk through some of the non-traditional sources people could look at for pulling out the women's stories, especially if they don't have the primary source documentation for the people at their particular site.

Molly Jessup: 00:48:51 So I can give one example, I guess, of material culture here and how it relates to women's history. So, women here wore dress reform clothing. So, although we don't have...we do have some documentation about what they thought about that, why they wore it. So, it's a dress that stops above the knees with, kind of, a pair of pants underneath it—is what it looks like. But then, we're able to talk about how this kind of clothing might have allowed for better health, for better movement. Why it would have been controversial for other people to see this kind of clothing. And in our case, we're fortunate that actually this clothing had gotten the attention of The New York Times in the 1870s, so we were able to find men making a commentary on this clothing. So even though our site didn't have those outside sources talking about the site, we're able to look at, well, who else may have been talking to them. Similarly, we found out there's another historic site in New York state: the William Seward House—Seward being, you know, secretary of state. We found out that the community, our community, had sent him a gift, and it was in their archive. So that was interesting to us as well. And then otherwise in material culture... Here because they were Bible Communists and owned things together, they developed this—a woman created this—little tiny dresser that we call a miniature bureau, and it represents really the community's interest in starting to have privately held property. So, in that way, even the objects that we had in the house—this little dresser—shows a shift in the mindset of the Bible communist community. So even without a written source, we can start to see when these objects became popular within the group. This indicates a change in their way of being. So, my recommendation is, [think of] who else may have been out there talking about the site or the community, if you're missing some primary sources. And what might your objects sort of symbolize, if you are lucky to have some objects close by.

Barbara Lau: 00:51:07 We have, as I said, very few objects at the house. And the only other object we have is actually a paper address book of Pauli’s from the 1960s and ‘70s. There are 600 people listed in the address book. So it's taken a little while to begin to understand who some of those people are. And then we were able to use a data visualization program to pull out about 175 of those folks, who are either involved in women's rights or civil rights, and start to look at the overlap; therefore, then making some suggestions about Pauli Murray’s social networks and social
capital. So, you know, in that sense, that was somewhat non-traditional. We're blessed. Pauli Murray has 2,700 folders of material at the Schlesinger Library for women's history at Radcliffe. So, the chance to even get through most of that is going to be, you know, a huge lift. But I think that, you know, as my training—my background—is actually in folklore and oral history... So, I think oral narratives and stories that get passed down, while they—you know, you might deal with those a little bit differently than you would other kinds of evidence—I think those are also really important kinds of evidence as we think about the meaning of someone's life. I mean, we're pretty lucky in that Pauli Murray was a 20th century figure. So, there's actually still people alive who knew her, and they kind of show up occasionally. And in a sense...in some of our program, we've gotten to meet people and talk with them a little bit about, not just what she said or what she thought, but what she was like, and what kind of personality [she had], or how her interactions... We just met somebody who was in one of her classes at Brandeis whose career was changed by having been in the class. So, it's always great to hear those kinds of stories and think about the way in which she lived—not just what she did or what she said. So, we're lucky to be able to use stories in that way.

Kristen Laise: 00:53:17 We’ve also been fortunate to have a certain amount of primary source material, but we always search for more. I’ve been finding it a little bit challenging... Some of the letters from Anne Hite that give us some great insight, you really need to know all the players—as if you were overhearing a mother-daughter phone conversation, name dropping—and if you don't know the players, you don't understand what they're talking about. So even just dissecting primary sources can sometimes be a huge task. [Inaudible.] We go back to our primary sources again and again, and look at original manuscripts again and again, to make sure we’ve really wrung out every ounce of information we possibly can from them. It’s not something that you can do easily, but we are having very good luck with our archaeology. We are very fortunate to have a PhD supervisor from the university take on looking at the area where we had slave quarters at Belle Grove as the PhD’s dissertation. And so, he had started a multi-year research project, and we're hoping to learn even more this summer. That image I showed in my slide of someone with the artifacts...they're actually holding a piece of cast iron pot, and this has been one of those tangible—like Molly said—one of these material culture touchpoints for us as we talk about women in slavery. [Inaudible] just passing around the lid of a hot and heavy cast iron pot. We don't heat it up, but to just, sort of, imagine the amount of labor involved in doing
that simple task of lifting something—has been something that always resonates with our visitors. So then to be in the field, to be in the space where enslaved workers lived, to find this artifact...it’s just very emotional for us. And so other things we have found—other clues we are getting from that archaeological analysis—are telling us more and more and more about daily life. That, unfortunately, is our only hope until we learn more about what the daily life was like. Because primary sources [do] not exist.

Barbara Lau: 00:55:38 I just want to add one more thing. We’re really inspired by our sister site, the Jane Addams Hull House in Chicago, who spends a lot of time working with artists and inviting artists in to have a different interpretation of things or places or ideas—or how historical ideas connect with contemporary realities. And so, we’ve had some... We have a walking tour now that is co-developed with a dancer-performer-artist here in Durham, and it’s just been amazing. So, she’s used some of Pauli Murray’s material, but also then interpreted them in her own way and created small movement pieces and vignettes that...I’ll tell you, for the tours that I lead, they make them a lot more engaging and interesting. But it’s been really exciting to work with artists to create pieces and parts of this storytelling process in our community. And I think that’s, again, it’s stepping, pushing us a little bit outside the comfort zone of, you know, who does this work or how we do this work. And trying to, you know...we’ve been excited to be able to branch into some other arenas like that.

Priya Chhaya: 00:56:50 Great. So, we’re almost at time, but a question just came in that I wanted to make sure to ask. With staff that [are] unwilling to learn new material or make changes to the traditional male-centric tour, how do you encourage change? So it’s a little bit different from what I asked earlier about training, but more about encouraging

Barbara Lau: 00:57:15 So we don’t have any staff. So I think I’m going to pass this on to my colleagues here.

Kristen Laise: 00:57:22 We do a training day, I think, exciting people about the information. So ,we—both with staff or consultants or other people you’re working with—still give in-depth talks about things. And, fortunately, our volunteer corps love...they love history. They love learning more about history. That Tracing Center training that we did was also instrumental. It just allowed... First of all, it was a wonderful opportunity to have the National Park Service provide it for us, so we were able be invited as guests and not worry about the funding for that. And
we were able to, sort of, choose the docents and volunteers that we thought were most likely to use the material or need additional information—some may say that was sort of an elite invite—and make them feel more committed and informed and prepared to take on some of these topics. So that’s very much paid off.

Molly Jessup: 00:58:30 And in our own case, I don’t think you would’ve been able to volunteer as a docent here unless you were eager already to talk about gender relationships in history. So even though, sort of, Noyes is the center point for a lot of scholars, there were so many people who lived in this community—and women were always the majority of the community—that you really can’t get away from understanding the way that their society functioned without understanding that relationship that existed. So, the women were always really central to the—I think have to be central to the—interpretive equation. But when it comes to focusing more just on women’s experiences or creating that here… Maybe this relates to what Kristen is saying. We have—as we develop customized tours and specialized tours—we have ones that we invite sort of docents to, to consider a new tour script or to participate in the research of a new tour. So that the people who are very interested in pursuing it in more depth, have that opportunity to sort of specialize in a certain area of Oneida Community history. So, I think perhaps with the creation of special programs, if there are volunteers or staff who wish to specialize in it, I think that has been helpful at our site.

SLIDE 20

Priya Chhaya: 01:00:07 Great. So, thank you guys so much for joining us. I wanted to give everyone a quick shout out on social, so everyone knew what their social handles are. And then if you decide to tweet about this later: #PreservationForum. I also wanted to thank everyone else who attended the webinar, especially Barbara, Molly, and Kristen for taking the time to join us. And then, if you have questions following the webinar, please don’t hesitate to contact us. I think Rebecca put the email in the chat.

SLIDE 21

Priya Chhaya: 01:00:48 But, I especially wanted to remind you guys that we do have this online platform called Forum Connect, which is an online community that allows you to basically talk and interact with preservationists from across the country regarding questions that you might have. And it’s free and open to everyone. And so, we really, really would like to have as many people as
possible join the community because the more voices there are, the more you can help each other along the way.

SLIDE 22

Priya Chhaya: 01:01:17 And then, the last slide is a real quick list of some different resources that we've put together on Forum. We've had three different series on women's history—one about social justice and interpreting slavery—over the last year or so. Like I mentioned earlier, we have the Forum Journal on women's history. And there's also this great organization that's been working with us on a lot of our women's history work, which is the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites. Which you should also check out. And finally, I don't want to forget to thank Kelly Schindler from our historic sites department. She's been silently hanging out in this room with us. You helped get a lot of this conversation up off the ground and actually put us in contact with some of our panelists.

CLOSING SLIDE

Priya Chhaya: 01:01:17 So, again, this webinar has been brought to you by Preservation Leadership Forum. You can learn more about us and our webinar series on the website, including our archives, through the URLs that are noted here. Thank you so much for joining us and have a great day.