

MINUTES

NERWHA Executive Council Meeting, 18 June 2020

Attending:

David Kalivas, President

David Northrup, Vice President

David Burzillo, Treasurer

A. J. Andrea, Secretary

Gustavo Carrera

Thomas Johnson

Michele Louro

Lincoln Paine

Robert Pelletier

Violetta Ravagnoli

Luke Scalone

Heather Streets-Salter

With the COVID-19 pandemic forcing the Executive Council to meet via Zoom, the virtual get-together commenced with friendly exchanges at 11:00 AM and probably a few admiring glances at the over-flowing bookcases behind President Kalivas, who won the unofficial prize for best video background.

Disregarding that ephemeral distinction, Kalivas called the meeting to order at 11:05, whereupon Heather Streets-Salter congratulated him upon his retirement from full-time teaching.

Please note, what follows is a replication of the conversation that flowed for the next 45 minutes. To save space and typing finger (sic), the Secretary (who is more comfortable with parchment and quill) will indicate each person by her/his initials.

DK: What is to be done regarding COVID-19? There is a high likelihood that we will not be able to hold a symposium in the Fall, and Spring 2021 looks just as unlikely. We do not want NERWHA to fade away. Shall we use Zoom as the medium for symposia in the near future? I have been in Zoom conferences with 300+ and it works. It is not perfect, but it works.

ML: The WHA has had Zoom sessions. Possibly NERWHA can partner with future WHA sessions. Kerry (Vieira) has created a system for large web-sessions, and quite a few are planned for throughout the summer. These sessions are free to WHA members, and a small fee is charged non-members.

HSS: We should also note that Northeastern University will not host any Fall 2020 conferences, so Michele's idea is a good one. If we do not wish to pair with the WHA, we can sponsor virtual symposia with a small number of presenters on a specific topic, who will prepare papers that are circulated ahead of time and are then discussed on Zoom. Indeed, Zoom is giving us flexibility for a new model.

DN: Heather's suggestion is simpler and better. The limited number of presenters is excellent. Moreover, we do not have to do this in a 24-hour period. We have flexibility to experiment.

AA (*writing furiously*): Yes.

LP: We had a maritime history presentation (*unidentified voice in the background*—"Yes, you dabble in that area.") on YouTube followed by a one-hour session with Q&A and discussion.

TJ: We can use the digital medium to expand our membership. Now people can attend from home at no expense, and our high-risk members are high in number. As for the next symposium, I suggest the theme of "The Crises of 2020." Let us strike while the iron is hot. Today's crises make history relevant to 1000s. (*Let it be noted that TJ corrected this by email to read "hundreds of thousands, even millions," his intended meaning.*) As I see it, there are currently five crises that are relevant to world history.

HSS: The crises of the 21st century are relevant. Great idea!

TJ: Let me add that it has been our practice to partner with schools. We should partner with high schools to draw the attention of students who want guidance.

LP: Great idea, but let me throw out a related idea. Contact the North American Society for Oceanic History to find out how it runs its pedagogical/historical meetings.

ML: There are plenty of models for video conferencing. But video conferences take a lot of work, especially when it comes to editing. We should look at our favorite models and post them on Chat (*a medium that eludes the Secretary's severely limited knowledge of such media; he hopes he got this one right.*) I also like the idea of a book club.

GC: A book club in addition to symposia?

ML: Yes, both.

GC: How do you promote it?

AA (*taking a blessed break from his stylus and wax tablet*): Well, we use our gmail list, which reaches about 220 people, and our host schools also use their networks to get the word out. (*He forgot to mention that Angela Lee also uses her contacts to reach out to teachers.*)

DK: Outreach is there. In the past we featured our books and research and people responded. The book group is also a good idea. We can ask authors to participate. Maybe once a month?

GC: At some level, the book club has much more reach. Having discussions with scholars will be helpful for teachers and students. Also, a book club gives us the ability to act immediately while a topic is hot.

DN: The retired faculty at Boston College has turned its seminar into an online meeting and seen a 20 percent rise in attendance. But, we do not have to choose between them. Both are fine: a research seminar and a book club. And about themes. Holy wars are still relevant today. Can we prioritize our themes?

DK: So the decision is unanimous? A Spring symposium on live video? Maybe even in Fall 2020? A book group in September? Shall we focus the book club groups on race, pandemics, and similar crises? Then in either the Fall or the Spring do holy war? Where do we go? I open the floor for discussion.

LP: I have no opinion on themes, but we must keep in mind that if we discuss race, it must be in a world history context. So also pandemic.

DN: The *Bulletin of World History* is coming out with an issue on pandemics, as is *World History Connected*. Maybe we should wait and see.

HSS: We should not forget that there are links between the two: marginalized people and pandemics, because the marginalized are the worst affected and the worst treated.

ML: We do not want to replicate what others are doing. The WHA already has a blog on pandemics. About the book club: early in the summer we should reconvene or use email to exchange our best ideas regarding book topics. It is too short a period today to make an immediate decision.

DK: Can we form a small coordinating group, even one person? Perhaps me? We need a list of books—1 book every 5 weeks. So, we will need 6 or 7 books for next year. Who can create a Google Docs page?

GC volunteers.

VR: To engage more people, let's title this "Crises in History," which gives us flexibility.

DK: So, let's reconvene after one month after we have all sent in something to Google Docs. The end of July?

TJ: My druthers for upcoming events: "Five Crises: 2020 in World Historical Crisis." The five crises are: the pandemic; economic depression; racism; election messiness and threats on democracy; the climate crisis. And our audience will find us! Consider Amazon books. Get on a moving train!

RP: It would be nice to be able to sign up for online guidance sessions via Zoom.

DK: Great idea.

ML: Let's think about the program. Once we have a list of book, one or two of us takes on a particular month to coordinate matters.

DK: So add to the Google Doc our willingness to lead a discussion. So we meet again in what, 5 weeks or so?

AA (*Much to his own surprise*): Not soon enough. In three weeks.

DK: OK, we meet in three weeks in mid-July.

DN: You must nominate a book you have already read not one you want to read.

ML: We must all consider the research and pedagogical implications of each nominated book, as well.

GC: Each of us will need a google email account for Google Docs (*which made the Secretary blanch*).

DK: Is Kerry (Vieira) on this listserv?

AA: Yes, she was put on last year. (*A check of the listserv later that day showed he was wrong; she had mysteriously disappeared from the list.*)

After a few light-hearted remarks among the members, David Kalivas adjourned the meeting at 11:51.

Respectfully submitted,

A. J. Andrea, Secretary