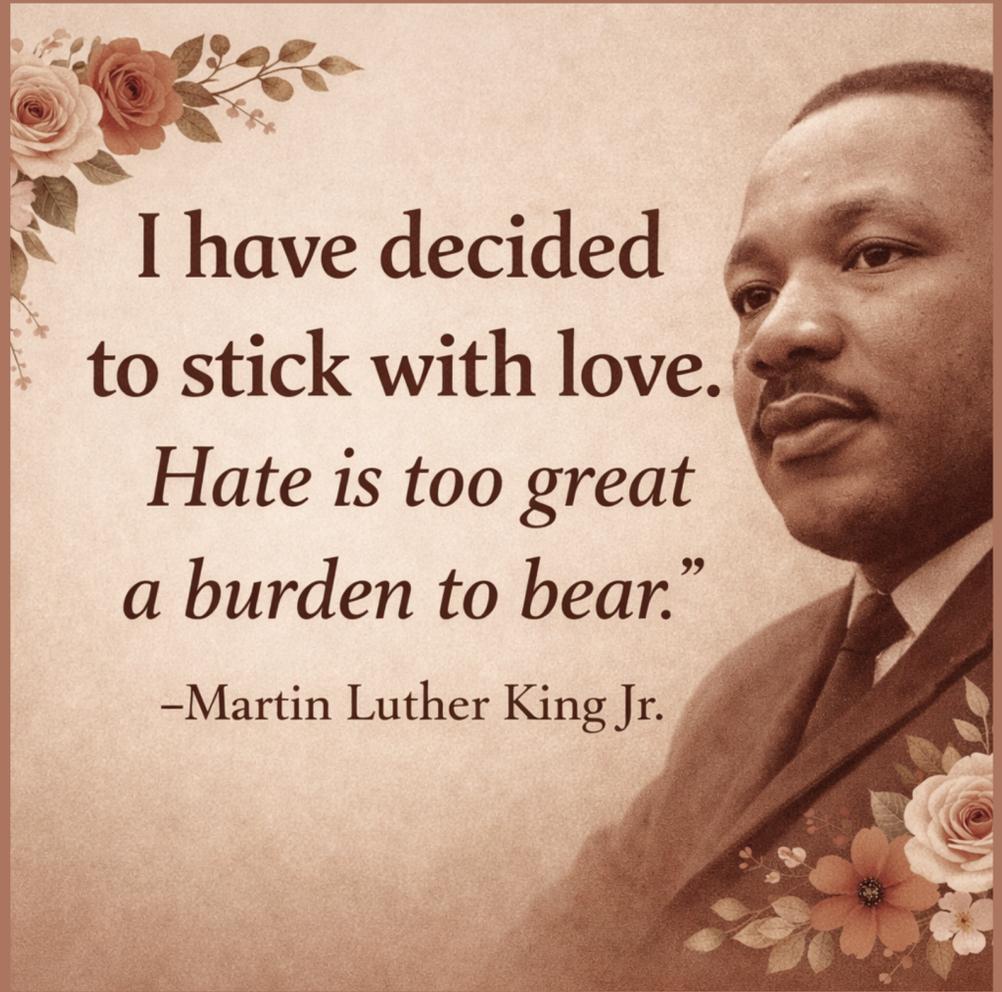




# The CPH Chronicles



## ISSUE OVERVIEW:

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- **Meet the Fellows**

Meet our CPH Fellows and learn about the projects they're leading this spring through research, storytelling, and community engagement.

- **Celebrating Black History**

We celebrated Black History Month by uplifting Harrisburg voices, honoring civil rights advocates, and highlighting important community events!

- **Projects Past & Present**

Explore past CPH projects and learn about our current research, events, and ongoing work within the Harrisburg community.

## WHAT IS “CPH”?

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You might be wondering what CPH is and what we do. CPH stands for the Center for Public Humanities at Messiah University. Founded in 2014, the Center brings together students, faculty, and community partners to engage the public through history, culture, and the digital humanities. Our work extends beyond the classroom and into the Harrisburg community.

A signature program of the CPH is the Fellows Program led by Professors David Pettegrew and Peter Powers. The Fellowship supports students as they explore Harrisburg's past and consider its future. Through research, storytelling, and collaboration, we work to make the humanities accessible and meaningful to a wider audience.

The CPH Fellows newsletter helps keep our community connected. It shares updates on projects, highlights student and faculty work, and celebrates accomplishments. Most importantly, it offers a space to showcase the meaningful and creative work happening within CPH.

## PAST PROJECTS

The Center for Public Humanities supports several signature events that enrich both the campus and the broader community. The Center assists with the annual American Democracy Lecture at Messiah University, which brings distinguished scholars and public intellectuals to speak on timely civic issues. It also hosts the Humanities Symposium, a week-long celebration of student and faculty scholarship that culminates in a keynote address from a respected leader in the field. In addition, the Center welcomes middle and high school students to campus for Speech and Debate and History Days, providing opportunities to present research, creative projects, and performances.

## MAKING AN IMPACT

These programs foster civic engagement, academic excellence, and a deeper appreciation for the humanities by building meaningful connections between Messiah University and the greater Harrisburg community. Each lecture, symposium, and outreach event extends learning beyond the classroom, creating space for dialogue, reflection, and shared growth. Through accessible and engaging programming, the Center for Public Humanities is committed to making the humanities relevant and enriching for all—because we believe in putting the public in public humanities.

## COMMUNITY WORK

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The Hoverter Course in the Humanities is a tuition-free program for adults (18+) with limited access to higher education. Offered through Messiah University, it provides evening classes in Harrisburg that introduce key humanities subjects such as writing, communication, history, and critical thinking. Students who complete the fall course may continue in the spring, earning up to six college credits. Participants receive free books and on-site childcare. The program builds foundational liberal arts skills and encourages students to pursue further college education.

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Another program the Center for Public Humanities offers to the Capital Region is Teachers as Scholars, a professional development initiative that brings together secondary school teachers and college faculty. Through humanities-based seminars, teachers in subjects such as history, English, and world languages engage with the latest research in their fields.

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# Meet Our CPH Fellows

Each issue, we will highlight two Fellows who have contributed to the hard work and success of the Center for Public Humanities. In this issue, we are featuring Kylie Smith and Sarah Lee Meeks—two of our longest-serving Fellows. As they prepare to graduate this May, we celebrate their dedication, leadership, and the lasting impact they have made on the Center and the community.

Kylie Smith has been serving as a Center for Public Humanities Fellow for a little over three semesters. She first became involved through a project focused on the life and legacy of Jacob Compton. Her interest in public history led her to continue pursuing research and community-centered storytelling. Recently, Kylie completed an article dedicated to the history of the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg. She has also contributed to the Center's social media and researched ideas for future projects.

Her favorite aspect of the Fellowship has been writing and engaging in meaningful community work. She has especially enjoyed the hands-on experience that comes with diving deep into research. One of her favorite memories with the Fellows was visiting Harrisburg for a tour of the city.

Through her work with CPH, Kylie has enjoyed connecting her interests in agriculture, wildlife, and history. Kylie is stepping down from the fellowship to pursue an internship this Spring.

## Kylie Smith



**Year: Senior**

**Major: Public History, minor - Agricultural Studies**

**Interests: Economic development, research and writing, sustainable agriculture, and livestock management.**

## Sarah Lee Meeks



Sarah Lee has been serving as a Center for Public Humanities Fellow for about five semesters now! She first became involved through a project focused on telling the story of the YWCA Harrisburg, where she wrote an article about Maude Coleman and quickly discovered a passion for public writing and storytelling.

Since then, she has contributed to the Center's social media, developed the idea for the CPH newsletter, and worked closely with the T. Morris Chester Center at the McCormick Riverfront Library to create two posters highlighting Thomas Chester's legacy and the Center's impact.

Her favorite aspect of the fellowship is building connections within the community and growing her professional network. One of her favorite memories with the Fellows was attending a play together in the city.

**Year: Senior**

**Major: Human Development and Family Science**

**Interests: Marine biology, immigration and refugee support, family advocacy, and public writing**

# Meet Our CPH Mentors

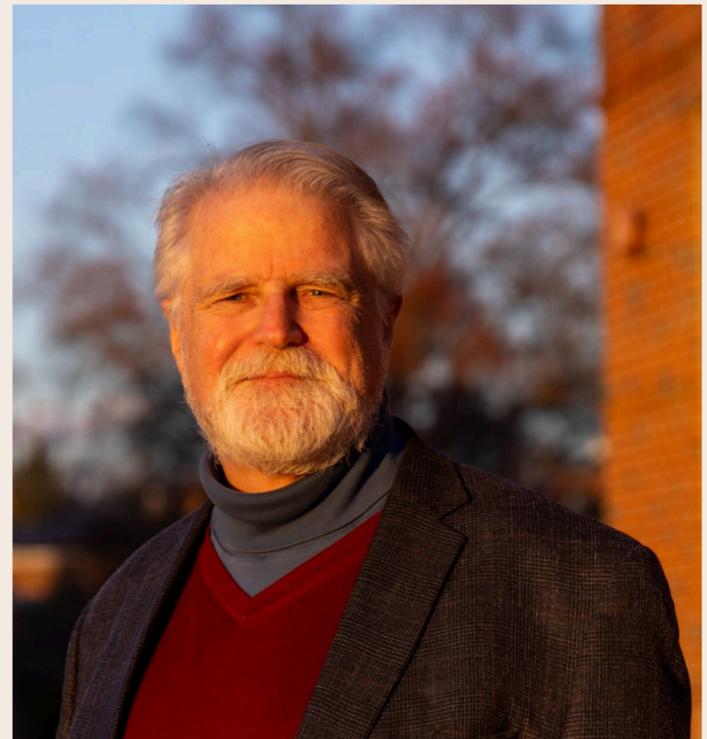
The work of the Center for Public Humanities would not be possible without the leadership and support of Dr. Pete Powers and Dr. David Pettegrew. Dr. Powers serves as the current Director of the Center, guiding its vision and continued growth. Dr. Pettegrew serves as a mentor and advisor to Fellows and leads several internship opportunities through CPH. Together, their investment in students and community partnerships helps make the Center's work possible.



Dr. David Pettegrew has been connected with the Center for Public Humanities for over a decade, supporting its work in digital public humanities. At Messiah University, he has served for twenty years as a Professor of History and Archaeology and as the Coordinator of Digital Humanities.

Through CPH, Dr. Pettegrew has helped lead projects in digital scholarship, public history, and community partnerships that connect student research with public audiences and community needs. His favorite part of working with the Center is collaborating with students, colleagues, and community partners on projects that promote the public good.

Reflecting on his work with the Fellows, Dr. Pettegrew shares: "Working closely with undergraduates on digital and public projects has been a privilege and highlight of my work at Messiah. In the CPH Fellows program, we bring together student creativity, rigorous academic research, and meaningful community partnerships on projects that connect faith with justice, reconciliation, and the common good. This kind of work in applying learning beyond the classroom is transformative for everyone involved."



Dr. Peter Powers has been connected with Messiah University for 29 years, serving since 1997 as a Professor of English and in various leadership roles, including 15 years as an academic dean and founding dean of the School of Arts, Culture, and Society. He currently serves as Director of the Center for Public Humanities and advisor to the Fellowship Program. While he has been Director for 1.5 years, he has supported and overseen the Center's work for many years and helped reimagine the Fellows Program into its current form.

In regards to this work with the CPH, Dr. Powers supports initiatives that connect humanities learning with public audiences, community partnerships, and real-world engagement. His favorite part of the work is building connections between Messiah and the wider community and helping students apply their learning beyond the classroom.

Reflecting on his work with the Fellows, Dr. Powers shares: "The Fellows are at the cutting edge of public humanities work, and it's a privilege to help envision the future of the humanities with them."

# Fellows in the Field

On February 17–21, Messiah University, in partnership with the Center for Public Humanities, hosted its annual Humanities Symposium. This year's theme, Food & Culture, brought together a wide range of voices through poetry readings, lectures, panel discussions, workshops, and community events that explored the cultural meaning of food.

CPH Fellows Kylie Smith and Maddie Graham participated in this year's programming. Kylie presented a student lecture titled "Pastoral Provisions: The Role of Sheep in Food Production and Culture," while Maddie assisted with a faculty library discussion, "Flavors From My Table: Memory, Nostalgia, & the Immigrant Experience," which featured a community cookbook of personal and family recipes.

The symposium's keynote speaker, Christa Barfield (FarmerJawn), shared her work in regenerative farming and food justice, highlighting the connection between agriculture, health, and community.



*Maddie Graham presenting during her session of the Messiah University student and faculty cookbook project.*

*History alum Sophia Snyder shared her research on "S.R. Smith and the Noodle Factory at Grantham, 1909," using StoryMaps to transform local history into an interactive public humanities experience.*

*The photo captures the keynote address delivered by Christa Barfield, CEO and Founder of Farmer Jawn. Farmer Jawn is a 128-acre working farm committed to building a regenerative organic food system by and for underserved communities. It is recognized as Pennsylvania's largest African American-owned produce farm.*



# Fellows in the Field

On Friday, February 6th, four CPH Fellows joined Dr. Powers and other professors and students for a visit to the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.

The trip was filled with meaningful learning and moments of empowerment. Fellows explored a variety of special and limited-time exhibits, including the Smithsonian Gardens' 30th Annual Orchid Exhibition, which featured a stunning display of orchids from around the world. They also visited the Spirit in the Dark exhibit, which highlighted the powerful role of religion and faith in shaping Black culture and community.



*Orchid display at the National Museum of African American History and Culture.*



*Pete Powers speaking with Messiah History alumna Kelly Henderson about her work in public history at the museum*



*Embracing the winter chill while exploring the nation's capital.*



*CPH Fellows who attended the trip gather for a group photo.*

**Content Disclaimer: All photos taken by CPH Fellows**

# Celebrating Black Voices & Legacy

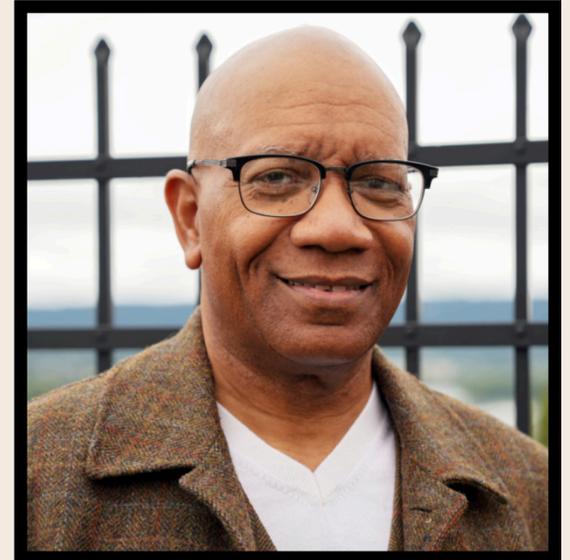
**We honor the lasting impact of Black leaders who have shaped and continue to strengthen the Harrisburg community.**

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## **Bryan Wade: Preserving Black History Through Film**

Bryan Wade is a producer, educator, military veteran, and public historian dedicated to preserving and sharing African American history in the Harrisburg region. Through documentaries, oral histories, and school curriculum, his work highlights the contributions and resilience of local Black communities while bringing overlooked stories into public understanding. His projects, including *Keystones: The African American Military Experience*, are now used as educational resources in local schools. Reflecting on his inclusive approach, Wade shares,

**“I try to be a constructive agent of history. I am open to all cultures and people”**



## **Dr. Todd Allen: Educator and Civil Rights Leader**

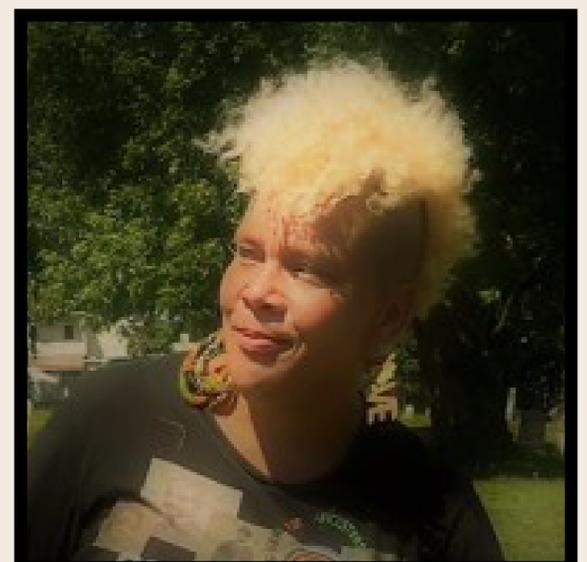
Dr. Todd Allen, Vice President for Diversity Affairs at Messiah University, is an educator and community leader advancing equity and civic engagement in the Harrisburg region. Through his teaching, public speaking, and leadership of the Civil Rights Bus Tour, he helps students and community members connect the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement to present-day justice and social change. Emphasizing honest dialogue and shared understanding, Allen reflects,

**“This isn’t just African American history—it’s American history.”**



## **Rachael Keri Williams: Preserving Ancestral Legacy**

Rachael Keri Williams is the founder and Executive Director of SOAL (Saving Our Ancestors’ Legacy), a nonprofit established in 2021 to restore Harrisburg’s historic Lincoln Cemetery, the region’s oldest Black burial ground. As a descendant, she leads grassroots efforts to uncover gravestones, restore the land, and reconnect families with ancestors whose stories were nearly lost. Combining hands-on preservation with technology and research, Williams works to combat the erasure of Black history. Under her leadership, SOAL has partnered with institutions including Messiah University, Harrisburg University, and Kutztown University, ensuring that the legacy, dignity, and history of Harrisburg’s Black community are preserved for future generations.

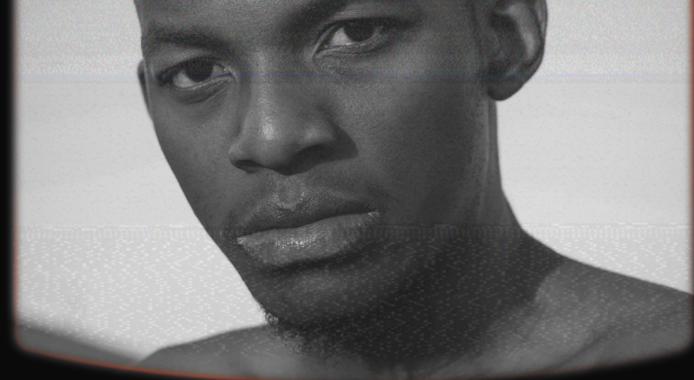


# WHY BLACK HISTORY MONTH MATTERS IN OUR COMMUNITY

*Black History Month matters now more than ever.* In a cultural climate that can sometimes highlight differences in divisive ways, this month invites us to see those differences as something to celebrate. It creates space for appreciation, learning, and growth—both across the Harrisburg community and within our shared American story. By intentionally pausing to honor Black voices, contributions, and experiences, we are reminded that our history is richer, more complex, and more interconnected than we often realize.

At the Center for Public Humanities, Black History Month reflects the heart of public humanities work. It calls us to preserve stories that might otherwise be forgotten, challenge dominant narratives shaped by stereotypes or exclusion, and center voices that have too often been overlooked. Public memory is shaped by what we choose to remember, share, and uplift. When local histories, personal stories, and community experiences are brought into the public sphere, they deepen our understanding of the past and its connection to the present.

By sharing local histories and community voices, we hope our audience will reflect, learn, and engage more deeply with the people and places around them. Remembering these stories is not only about honoring the past—it is about building empathy, strengthening relationships, and working toward a more just and inclusive future. Through this work, we grow in understanding, reconciliation, and a stronger commitment to the common good.



# CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

Hear from our CPH Fellows on the importance of Black History Month and meaningful ways to continue learning, reflecting, and educating others.



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“While reading and studying are essential, physically engaging with historical spaces offers a deeper, more personal understanding. Literature also plays a vital role in continued learning, and I would recommend works such as *The Help*, *Homegoing*, and *Beloved* as meaningful starting points”.

- **Emmy Fogle**

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“Black history has profoundly shaped American education and the stories taught in our classrooms. Without Black history, there is no complete understanding of U.S. history. I would recommend visiting local Black-owned restaurants and bookstores!”

- **Sarah Lee Meeks**

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“From the perspective of an international student, learning about Black history in the United States has deepened my understanding of why it is emphasized so strongly here. Coming from a country where conversations about race and racism differ significantly, I have gained new perspectives and a greater appreciation for the importance of honest dialogue and historical awareness”.

- **Faith Snyder**

# Ways to Support the Harrisburg Community



## Eat Local

### Sweet T & Greens

Harrisburg is home to several Black-owned restaurants that reflect the city's strong sense of community and cultural heritage. Sweet T & Greens, located at 231 North Street, is a family-owned restaurant operated by husband-and-wife team Geno and Erin Goodman. What began as a small stand at the Fresh Market in Hershey has grown into a full-service space offering Southern-inspired comfort food rooted in family recipes and made with hospitality and care.

## Read History

### Midtown Scholar Bookstore & Cafe

In addition to supporting Black-owned restaurants and local entrepreneurs, Harrisburg is also home to community spaces that uplift diverse voices and create opportunities for cultural engagement. One such space is the Midtown Scholar Bookstore-Café, located at 1302 N. 3rd Street. The Midtown Scholar regularly hosts author talks, poetry readings, and live music events that highlight a wide range of perspectives and stories. CPH Fellows have had the privilege of attending several book tours and public speaking events here, making it a meaningful partner in fostering learning, dialogue, and community connection in Harrisburg.



## Real Benefits

### Doing Your Part

By choosing places like these, you invest locally and actively support Black entrepreneurship while helping strengthen not only the economy, but also the cultural vibrancy of Harrisburg.

# Honoring the Legacy of Lenwood Sloan

*Community Partner, Storyteller, and Catalytic Agent for Change*

Lenwood Sloan was a visionary storyteller, artist, historian, and community leader whose passion for justice and remembrance deeply shaped the public history landscape of Harrisburg and central Pennsylvania. Lenwood passed away unexpectedly on December 26, 2025, at the age of 77, leaving behind a legacy of storytelling, collaboration, and community impact. He often described himself and those he worked alongside as “catalytic agents”—people committed to uplifting overlooked stories and inspiring change through collaboration and community engagement.

As Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Monument Project, Lenwood played a key role in honoring the legacy of the African American community and Harrisburg’s historic Eighth Ward, including the dedication of the bronze monument, “A Gathering at the Crossroads,” at the Pennsylvania State Capitol Complex.

Lenwood worked closely with Messiah University’s Center for Public Humanities and generously welcomed CPH fellows into conversations and projects that connected historical research with storytelling and public memory. Through collaborations with initiatives like the Commonwealth Monument Project and related exhibitions and story maps, fellows had the privilege of learning from his creativity, leadership, and deep care for the community. His legacy will continue through the many students, educators, and community members he inspired.

## *Remembering Lenwood’s Vision*



*Lenwood Sloan at a Commonwealth Monument Project event*

**“I am only concerned with ‘did I make something better for someone today?’ If not, I will start again tomorrow.”**

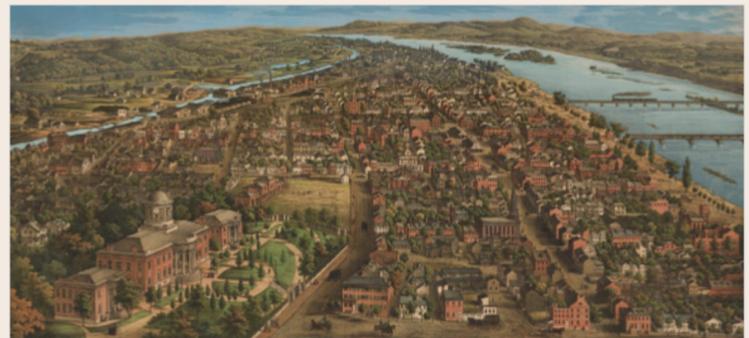
**Lenwood Sloan**

Lenwood’s work reminds us that storytelling, collaboration, and community engagement can be powerful tools for justice and remembrance. His catalytic spirit continues to inspire the work of the Center for Public Humanities and the students and communities it serves.

# Ways to Support CPH

*If you're looking for ways to support CPH and the fellowship, we invite you to explore the links below! Be sure to follow our social media pages to stay up to date with the latest news and events. The fellowship truly thrives because of supporters like you.*

**Digital Harrisburg is a collaborative website created and maintained by Dr. David Pettegrew and the CPH Fellows. Through this platform, visitors can explore the rich history, society, and culture of Pennsylvania's capital city. The site features a wide range of content, including digital exhibits, student projects, and engaging articles that highlight different aspects of Harrisburg's past and present.**



**Digital Harrisburg**  
Exploring the history, society, and culture of Pennsylvania's capital city  
[Digital Harrisburg](#)

**Humanities in Place is the official blog of the Center for Public Humanities, featuring articles written by CPH Fellows and participants in the internship program. The blog serves as an open forum that connects the work of Messiah University's Public Humanities Fellows with the broader community. Through their writing, Fellows seek to bring the humanities beyond the classroom and into meaningful conversation with Harrisburg in its local, national, and global contexts.**



**Humanities in Place**  
Bridging the gap between classroom and community  
[Humanities in Place](#)

**The Humanities Fellows Program webpage offers a comprehensive overview of the Center for Public Humanities and its student initiatives. Here, you can learn more about the Center's mission, the opportunities available to students, and the impact of its programs both on Messiah University's campus and in the surrounding community. This page highlights how students engage in hands-on humanities work that connects academic study with real-world experiences.**



**Humanities Fellows**  
[Center for Public Humanities /](#)