

**Torren L. Gatson**  
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### **Education**

- 2014-2018 Doctor of Philosophy, Middle Tennessee State University  
Public History, Dissertation Advisor: Louis Woods, PhD  
Title: "The Combative Tactics of the NAACP Against Unfair Housing Laws and Practices: A Comparative Study of the Dynamic Changes in Urban and Rural Landscapes 1920-1960."
- 2010-2013 Master of Arts, North Carolina Central University  
United States History, Public History Concentration  
Thesis Advisor: Rhonda Jones, PhD  
Thesis: "Endangered Durham No More: African American Preservation Efforts in the City of Medicine, 1970-2010."
- 2006-2010 Bachelor of Liberal Arts, North Carolina Central University  
History, Cum Laude

### **Professional Experience**

2018- Current Visiting Assistant Professor, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

### **Teaching Experience (Current)**

HIS 317 Introduction to Public History  
HIS 213 Topics in American History: The Quest for African American Citizenship  
HIS 720 Public history Capstone I (Graduate Seminar)

### **Past Experience**

United States History to 1865  
United States History Since 1865

### **Research Interests**

19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century African American history, Historic preservation, material culture, and Southern history

### **Honors and Academic Excellence**

- 2017 MTSU Dissertation Fellowship (Nationally Competitive)  
2017 Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Frank L. Horton Fellowship  
2016 Decorative Arts Trust Emerging Scholar  
2014 James N. Leonard Scholarship  
(Department of History, Middle Tennessee State University)  
2014 Middle Tennessee State University Access and Diversity Fellowship (University Wide)

### **Publications**

Bynum, Thomas L, and Torren Gatson. "Mitchell, Juanita Jackson;" American National Biography Online, Oxford University Press (2017).

Bynum, Thomas L, and Torren Gatson. "Hurley, Ruby;" American National Biography Online, Oxford University Press (2017).

### **Publications Under Review**

Gatson, Torren, and Louis Woods, "To Tighten the Walls of the Negro Ghettos: The NAACP's Fight Against Discriminatory Federal Housing Administration Mortgage Insurance Policies, 1937-1950," *Journal of Urban History*.

### **Current Research Agenda**

*The Quiet Storm: The Combative Tactics of the NAACP Against Unfair Housing Laws and Practices* (manuscript in progress)

The Darker Hugh of Material Culture: Contextualizing African American Material Culture on the Southern Landscape (article in progress)

**MTSU Dissertation Fellow**, Department of History, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN August 2017-July 2018

Courses taught: United States History I and Intro to African American Studies

**MTSU Graduate Assistant**, Department of History, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN fall 2014

Assigned Courses: African American History I and II; Modern Civil Rights Movement

### **Planning Experience**

5<sup>th</sup> Annual Slave Dwelling Conference

Murfreesboro, TN October 2018

Subcommittee: panel selection and presentations

### **Professional Institutes and Residency**

Summer 2017, University of Virginia

Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) Summer Institute

Research Thesis: "Black Iron from the Backcountry: Investigating the enslaved Ironworkers of a Piedmont North Carolina Plantation."

This MESDA Summer Institute combined two weeks of detailed coursework and familiarization with material culture in the Inland South region (Pennsylvania, Kentucky, West Virginia and Tennessee).

Summer 2016, University of Virginia

Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) Summer Institute

Research Thesis: "Dr. Who? Apothe-What?: The Birth of the Modern Pharmacy through the Lens of an 18th Century Apothecary Chest."

This MESDA Summer Institute combined two weeks of detailed coursework and familiarization with material culture in the upper Chesapeake region (Maryland and Virginia).

2016, Spelman College, Archival Residency

The time spent in the Spelman College archives provided a multifaceted opportunity to build a comprehensive audit of internal collections, including paper-based documents, photographs, and media. This information will support the creation of an internal database for scholarly research and internal use. A second project was designed a plan for digitizing the entire collection of paper documents and photographs. Digitization is the current frontier of archives, repositories, and museums. The director of the archives, Holly Smith, and Torren Gatson proposed a preservation assessment grant to allow the archive to allocate money toward hiring a company to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the archive while offering solutions for better resource management.

Summer 2015, University of Virginia

Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) Summer Institute  
Research Thesis: “In the Shadow of Freedom: Contextualizing Culture and Autonomy through 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Charleston Slave Badges.”

This MESDA Summer Institute combined two weeks of detailed coursework and familiarization with material culture punctuated by a week of in-the-field experience visiting the low country (Savannah, Georgia, and Charleston, South Carolina).

### **Public History Experience**

Spring 2017 Gallery Assistant, The National Center for Civil and Human Rights

- Responsible for directing and facilitating the movement of visitors throughout the galleries, with an emphasis on informing visitors on the various aspects within their assigned gallery space.
- Assisted visitors with the execution of the gallery’s hands-on features, while providing exemplary customer service.
- Reported daily operations directly to the Manager of Visitor Services, under the direction of the Director of Visitor Services.

2014-2017 Graduate Research Assistant, Center for Historic Preservation

- Assisted with the research of various projects associated with the Rutherford County Heritage Center
- Engaged with the public and facilitated office operations at the Rutherford County Heritage Center
- Completed projects included the following:
  - African American driving tour of Maury County, Tennessee
  - Heritage development plan for Orange Mound, Memphis, Tennessee
  - Developing an exhibit and panel text for the McLemore House, Franklin, Tennessee
  - Driving tour for historic Orange Mound pamphlet entitled “Historic Orange Mound: Past, Present, and Future”

Summer 2014 Digital Historian, Jekyll Island Oral History Project

- Facilitated oral history interviews to obtain research regarding Jekyll Island between 1948-1978
- Transcribed oral history interviews
- Created digital formats and uploaded interviews into PastPerfect software
- Designed and published a website displaying the mission of the project's oral histories collected in the field:  
<http://vignettesofhistory.wix.com/jekyllislandoralhist>  
<http://vignettesofhistory.wix.com/jekyllislandoralhist>

Spring 2014 Historian, Cornerstone of the Community Exhibit

- Served as historian for the permanent exhibit for the Center for the Arts, Murfreesboro, Tennessee
- Generated the history of the Center for the Arts and earlier structures at that location
- Contextualized text panels and designed labels
- Configured chronological timeline and outline for exhibit
- Constructed layout plans for exhibit panels:  
<http://cfamtsuph2014.wix.com/cfaexhibit>

2014-2015 Supervisor of Circulation, James L. Walker Library

- Supervised student workers
- Maintained integrity of circulation standards associated with Dewey Decimal and Library of Congress catalog systems
- Provided excellent customer service to clients
- Managed the distribution of reserve materials, inner library loan system, and media (DVD, VHS)
- Promoted from Level II to Level III student supervisor
- Prepared and managed daily deposit of all library fines and charges

Spring 2014 Judge, 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Middle Tennessee District History Day Competition

- Served as a judge for the competition
- Scrutinized presentations, documentaries, websites, theatrical plays, and research papers
- Nominated the superlative project documenting African American history
- Critiqued projects while promoting paramount historical research

2011-2013 Archival Intern, Museum of the Confederacy

- Completed the Joseph Wilson Memorial Internship in Public History at the Eleanor Brockenbraugh Library
- Transcribed historical documents
- Created finding aids for museum artifacts
- Processed and arranged the Jefferson Davis Family Papers

2010-2012 Graduate Assistant, North Carolina Central University

- Prepared lectures for undergraduate students

- Graded course work
- Entered course work and grades into the system
- Provided research materials to supplement lectures

Spring 2012     Researcher, *Preservation Durham*

- Conducted research for the manager of the grant
- Sourced documents and information regarding the African American heritage of Durham, North Carolina

Fall 2011        Archival/Museum Practicum: *Kinship and Community*

Developed in conjunction with Wilson Library's Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

- Conducted documentary research
- Designed the layout of the installation
- Wrote interpretive captions for artifacts

### **Public History Reports**

Fall 2014        “Meadow Green Farm, Sumner County, Tennessee Site Documentation”

Meadow Green Farm in Hendersonville (Sumner County) is part of the Shackle Island Historic District, placed on the National Register of Historic Places on January 30, 1978. In April 2014, graduate assistants Torren Gaston and Jenna Stout accompanied Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area (TCWNHA) Interpretative Specialist Leigh Ann Gardner in documenting the house. A full documentation was not performed at that time. However, the exterior and interior were photographed, and room measurements for two of the lower level rooms were taken.

Fall 2014        McMinnville Town/Spring Quarry Site Heritage Development Plan

This Heritage Development Plan is the result of a project partnership between McMinnville Heritage Preservation, Inc., and the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area (TCWNHA). McMinnville Heritage Development owns and leases the Town Spring/Quarry site located in McMinnville, Warren County, Tennessee. Leigh Ann Gardner and Jessica White of the TCWNHA first met with Dr. Neil Schultz of McMinnville Heritage Preservation in January 2014 to discuss the site. Leigh Ann Gardner and Jessica White and Torren Gatson documented the site. Leigh Ann Gardner and Torren Gaston, Graduate Research Assistant, worked on researching the history of the site.

### **Teaching Experience (High school)**

2011-2013     Substitute Teacher, Person County, North Carolina

- Distributed lecture materials and educated high school students on American history
- Prepared lesson plans and interactive assignments to engage students and prepare them for state-mandated testing

### **Presentations/ Lectures**

- Spring 2019 National Council on Public History annual meeting (NCPH) “Early Career Public History Academics: Questions, Issues, Resources,” (working group)
- Summer 2018 Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Guest Lecture, “Tell the Truth and Shame the Devil: A Conversation on African American Life and Interpretation; throughout Historic Sites and Plantations in the Low Country.
- Spring 2018 Southern Labor Association Conference: “Dirty Work”. Presentation, “The Dirty Work of Black Iron from the Backcountry, investigating slaves at Vesuvius Iron Plantation” (held in Athens, Georgia)
- Spring 2017 Invited Presenter at Colonial Williamsburg 69th Annual Antiques Forum-American Craftsman: Influence and Innovation (Held in Williamsburg, Virginia). Presentation on “Dr. Who? Apothe-What?: The Birth of the Modern Pharmacy through the Lens of an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Apothecary Chest.”
- Summer 2016 Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts Summer Institute (Held in Williamsburg, Virginia). Presentations on “Dr. Who? Apothe- What?: The Birth of the Modern Pharmacy through the Lens of an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Apothecary Chest.”
- Fall 2015 2nd Annual Slave Dwelling Conference (Held in Charleston, South Carolina). Group Presentation on “Transitional Spaces, Transitional Times: Looking at Slave Dwellings Beyond the Civil War.”
- Fall 2015 Association for the Study of African American Life and History (Centennial Celebration, Held in Atlanta, Georgia). Presentation on “In the Shadow of Freedom: Contextualizing Culture and Autonomy through 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Charleston Slave Badges.”
- Spring 2015 Invited Presenter, Department of Veterans Affairs Annual Diversity Luncheon (Smyrna, Tennessee). Presentation on “From Whence We Come: Carter G. Woodson, ASNLH and the Formation of Black History Month.”
- Fall 2014 Association for the Study of African American Life and History Annual Conference (Held in Memphis, Tennessee). Presentation on “Many Shades of Blue: Sylvester Brooks, Bart McCash and the Fight for Racial Equality at MTSU, 1967-1970.”

- Fall 2014 The Slave Dwelling Project Annual Conference (Held in Savannah, Georgia).  
Panel Discussion on “Slave Dwellings and Heritage Farms in Tennessee:  
Decoding and Preserving the Landscape of Work in the South.”
- Spring 2013 North Carolina Central University Graduate and Undergraduate Research  
Symposium and Competition (Held in Durham, North Carolina). Presentation on  
“The Dynamics of Mary McLeod Bethune.” Selected First-Place Winner of Oral  
Graduate Presentations.
- Spring 2013 3rd Annual African Diaspora Studies Symposium in Memory of Dr. Sylvia Jacobs  
(Held in Durham, North Carolina). Panel Moderator on “Haiti: A Diasporic  
Community.”
- Fall 2012 Association for the Study of African American Life and History Annual  
Convention (Held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania). Presentation on “Intertwined in  
Solidarity: The Partnerships of Mary McLeod Bethune.”
- Spring 2012 North Carolina Central University Women’s History Month Lecture Series (Held  
in Durham, North Carolina). Presentation on “Mary McLeod Bethune: A Public  
Historian.”
- Spring 2012 North Carolina Central University Black History Month Celebration (Held in  
Durham North Carolina). Presentation on “Priestesses of Preservation: Black Club  
Women as Cultural Bearers.”
- Fall 2011 E.E. Thorpe Lecture Series (Held in Durham, North Carolina). Presentation on  
“Life at the Museum of the Confederacy and After.”  
Panel composed of interns from the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond,  
Virginia.

### **Service**

- 2014-2015 American Democracy Project “Constitution Day”
- Conducted voter registration on campus of Middle Tennessee State University
  - Educated students on voter rights and laws
- 2014-2015 History Day
- Volunteered for a statewide academic contest
  - Served as a special judge for categories depicting African American life and culture

### **Honor Society Membership**

- 2010-2013 E.E. Thorpe Graduate Student Society (North Carolina Central University)
- 2009-Present Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society, Member
- 2009-Present Pi Gamma Mu International Honor Society in Social Science, Member

### **Historical Association Membership**

2006-Present Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Member

**Relevant Coursework and Research Experience**

- United States History Since 1865
- Slavery and Freedom in America 1750-1865
- 20<sup>th</sup> Century African American History (emphasis on civil rights/black power)
- Essentials in Museum Management
- Museum Interpretation
- Over 1,000 hours of work in a library and museum repository

**Certifications**

2017 FEMA Active Shooter Training

**Professional Skills and Mastery of Software**

PastPerfect software (museum)

Adobe Photoshop (exhibits)

Sierra (library resource management)

Wix.com (website design)

Marketplace software (financial budgeting)

Banner software (student access)

WordPress (website design)

**Languages**

Spanish: Reading