

# Torren L. Gatson

Assistant Professor

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## **Education**

- 2018      Doctor of Philosophy, Public History  
Middle Tennessee State University
- 2013      Master of Arts, United States History, Public History Concentration  
North Carolina Central University
- 2010      Bachelor of Liberal Arts, History  
North Carolina Central University

## **Research Interests**

19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century African American history, historic preservation, material culture, the built environment (housing), Southern history, digital history, and historical equity.

## **Refereed publications**

*Combating the Politics of Housing Discrimination in a Southern City: Race, Place, and Preservation in Nashville, Tennessee Since 1920.* (Under contract, *University of Arkansas Press*)

“Black Iron from the Backcountry: Investigating skilled craftsmanship through the lens of enslaved Ironworkers on a Piedmont North Carolina Plantation.” *The Journal of Modern Craft*, Special Issue on African American Craft Histories. (*Forthcoming*, Summer 2023)

Gatson, Torren. “Upbuilding an Inclusive Future: A Semester of Reciprocal Learning,” in *Teaching Public History*, edited by Evan Faulkenbury and Julia Brock. Pg 75-92. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2023.

[Link to Book](#),

Gatson, Torren and Tiffany Momon “Woven into the American Fabric: Black Craftspeople and the Clothing Trades in Pre-Civil War Charleston, South Carolina.” In *Fashioning America: Grit to Glamour*, edited by Michelle Tolini Finamore, Fayetteville: *University of Arkansas Press*, October 2022.

[Link to Catalog](#)

Gatson, Torren, and Tiffany Momon. “Labor or Artistry? Reconceptualizing Black Craftsmen: The Creation of the Black Craftsman Digital Archive.” *The Southern Quarterly*, (November 2021)

Gatson, Torren and Louis Woods II. "To Tighten the Walls of the Negro Ghettos: The NAACP's Fight Against Discriminatory Federal Housing Administration Mortgage Insurance Policies, 1937-1962." *The Journal of North Carolina Association of Historians*, Vol 28, (September 2020).

Guest Editor. "Introduction for the Special Edition on African American Material Culture." *The Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts (The MESDA Journal)* VOL. 41, (Summer 2020).  
[Link to journal preview](#)

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).

### **Professional Project Review**

"Black Craftspeople Digital Archive," *Reviews in Digital Humanities* • Vol. 3, No. 5. reviewed by Julian C. Chambliss, Michigan State University (2022)

[Link to review](#)

"Black Craftspeople Digital Archive Q&A Part 1 & ,2" *History@Work*, published by The National Council on Public History (2021)

[Link to Part 1](#)

[Link to Part 2](#)

### **Academic Appointments**

2019-Present Assistant Professor of Public History, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

2020 (summer) Adjunct Professor, Wake Forest University

2019-Present Affiliate Faculty, African American & Africana Studies, UNCG

2018- 2019 Visiting Assistant Professor, History, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

2017-2018 Lecturer, Department of History, Middle Tennessee State University

### **Works in progress**

Gatson, Torren and Sarah Calise. "We are, "True Blue," Too: Civil Rights and Civil Unrest on the Campus of Middle Tennessee State University 1930-1990. (Accepted/ with revisions, *Material Culture Review*)

*Black Craftspeople on the Southern Landscape, 1650-1865*. edited volume (co-editor)

### **Refereed Journal/Press Professional Participation**

Routledge Press

University of Mississippi Press, peer-reviewer

*Winterthur Portfolio A Journal of American Material Culture*, peer-reviewer

*The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, Guest Editor Vol. 44 Summer 2020

### **Professional Participation**

Exhibition reviewer, Preservation North Carolina

Exhibition reviewer, Greensboro History Museum

ReVeal Digital (affiliate of ITHAKA), consultant on “Understanding Hate In America” project House Party...R.S.V.P. exhibition at Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (Spring 2022)

### **Professional Appointments**

2023-Present *Winterthur Portfolio* Editorial Board, Member

2023- National Council on Public History Program Committee (annual meeting), Member

2020-Present Decorative Arts Trust Board of Governors, Governor

2020- Present Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts Advisory Board, Member

2019-Present Digital Library of American Slavery Steering Committee, Member

2019- Present Historic Magnolia House Foundation Board, General Member

2019- Present Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Summer Faculty

### **Featured Appearances**

Fall 2021 Classical American Homes Preservation Trust mini-video on “Ayr Mount”

Fall 2020 NC Public Radio- WUNC (station) “The State of Things” (segment)

Fall 2020 ‘YES! And Café’ Podcast, UNCG, episode 12

Fall 2020 UNCG Research Magazine (Winter Issue)

Fall 2020 “Curious Objects” podcast, The Magazine Antiques, hosted by Ben Miller

Spring 2019 “The Slave Deeds of Guilford County,” Guilford County Register of Deeds

### **Courses Taught**

#### **University of North Carolina at Greensboro**

HIS 213 Topics in American History: The Quest for African American Citizenship

HIS 317 Introduction to Public History

HIS 401 Topics in Public History: Oral History

HIS 403/502 Topic in African American History: Politics of Urban Spaces

HIS 546/446 American Material Culture

HIS 627 Museum and Historic Site Interpretation (Graduate Seminar)

HIS 626 The Practice of Public History (Graduate Seminar)

HIS 631 Digital History (Graduate Seminar)

HIS 633 Community History Practicum (Graduate Seminar)

HIS 720 Public History Capstone I (Graduate Seminar)

HIS 721 Public History Capstone II (Graduate Seminar)

#### **Wake Forest University**

HIS 723 Special Topics in African American History (Graduate Seminar)

#### **Middle Tennessee State University**

United States History to 1865

United States History Since 1865

### **Honors and Academic Excellence**

2020 Gladys Strawn Bullin Award (Leadership and Service), Nominated

2019 UNCG New Faculty Research Grant (\$10,000)  
2016 Decorative Arts Trust Emerging Scholar  
2014 James N. Leonard Scholarship (Department of History, MTSU)  
2014 Middle Tennessee State University Access and Diversity Scholarship

### **Fellowships**

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

Frank L. Horton Fellowship, Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts  
Winston Salem, NC Summer 2017

Public History Fellow in Residence, Spelman College Archive,  
Atlanta, GA August 2016- July 2017

### **Sponsored Research**

Gatson, Torren. Participation as Historical Consultant for the Montana Historical Commission, National Endowment for the Humanities. Project: African American Heritage Interpretive Plan for Virginia City and Madison County Montana.

Torren Gatson (UNCG), Tiffany Momon (Sewanee) Decorative arts Trust, Prize for Excellence & Innovation; "Black Crafts People Digital Archive Object Database" \$100,000.00

Torren Gatson (UNCG), Anne Parsons (UNCG), Omar Ali (UNCG), Charles Denton Johnson (NCCU), Adrienne Nirde (NCAAHC), Angela Thorpe (NCAAHC) Community engaged P2 Grant, "Crafting a Community-Engaged Approach: Creating Pathways for African Americans in Public History," \$16,000. (January 2021-2023)

Gatson, T. L., "New Faculty Research Grant," The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, \$10,000.00. (January 2020 - June 2021).

Chase, J. M. (Co-Investigator), Barr, M. (Co-Principal), Gatson, T. L. (Co-Investigator), Pitts, H. B. (Co-Investigator), "Transforming the Humanities at a Minority Serving Institution: Funding for Inter-disciplinary Faculty Student Collaborative Groups 2019," Sponsored by Office of Research and Engagement UNCG, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, \$9,190.00. (April 2019 - March 2020).

Gatson, T. L. (Co-Investigator), "Slave Names Matter: Digital Archives and Public History in Support of Community Genealogy," Sponsored by People Not Property Project (UNCG Library), The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, \$3,000.00. (June 2019 – December 2019).

### **Scholarly Digital Initiatives**

Black Crafts People Digital Archive, Co-Director and Director of Special projects and Publications. [Blackcraftpeople.org](http://Blackcraftpeople.org)

This project is at the intersection of History and the digital humanities through the creation of a digital archive and ArcGIS map highlighting the achievements and triumphs of black craftspeople from the eighteenth century onward. This digital interactive resource merges spatial analysis with archived primary sources to display the historical record that humanizes and captivates the true experience of African Americans on the Southern landscape.

### **Directed Student Learning**

Current Students:

Stephanie Haire, PhD student, Middle Tennessee State University (committee member)  
Felton Foushee, PhD Student, UNC Greensboro (committee member)

Completed:

Dissertation Committee Member, Victoria Hensley (Graduate, Doctoral). "State of Emergency": Nashville and the Battle Against Displacement from Urban Renewal and Gentrification, 1950-2017. (Finished 2021)

Master's Thesis Committee Member, Monica Davis (Graduate, Masters). "Revealing Culture and Tracing Change: A Study on Shotgun Homes in East Wilson Historic District, 1988-2018," In-Process. (Finished 2021).

### **Professional Institutes**

Combining two weeks of detailed coursework and familiarity with material culture punctuated by a week of in-the-field experience the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) Summer Institute sponsored by the University of Virginia is the hallmark of historical southern material culture investigation.

Summer 2017, (MESDA) Summer Institute research thesis: "Black Iron from the Backcountry: Investigating the enslaved Ironworkers of a Piedmont North Carolina Plantation."

Summer 2016, (MESDA) Summer Institute research thesis: "Dr. Who? Apothe-What?: The Birth of the Modern Pharmacy through the Lens of an 18th Century Apothecary Chest."

Summer 2015, (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."

### **Student directed Museum/Historic Site Exhibitions**

2021 *Sacrifice and Service: Grimsley's Legacy of Honor* (Grimsley High school)

2020 *More than Just a Home* (Historic Magnolia House)

2019 *Unveiling the Roots of the Penn-Diggs/Pass-Richmond Family* (Historic Magnolia House)

### **Oral History Projects**

2019 *Unsung Heroes of the Civil Rights Movement*  
[http://libresearch.uncg.edu/unsung\\_heroes/](http://libresearch.uncg.edu/unsung_heroes/)

### **National Register Nominations**

2019 *Historic Black Colleges and Universities in Alabama. National Register Multiple Property Nomination and Surveys of Eight Campuses.* Alabama Historical Commission, 2019. Principal Investigator: Tiffany Momon, research team: Carroll Van West, Torren Gatson, Savannah Grandey, Kelli Gibson, Victoria Hensley.

### **Historic Preservation in Practice**

Projects completed at the Center for Historic Preservation:

- 2017 Exhibition design and installation for the Shiloh Rosenwald School Notasulga, AL
- 2016 Developing an exhibit and panel text for the McLemore House, Franklin, Tennessee
- 2016 Driving tour entitled “Historic Orange Mound: Past, Present, and Future”
- 2015 Heritage development plan for Orange Mound, Memphis, Tennessee
- 2014 African American driving tour of Maury County, Tennessee
- 2014 Meadow Green Farm, Sumner County, Tennessee Site Documentation
- 2014 McMinnville Town/Spring Quarry Site Heritage Development Plan

### **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.

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:

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
- 2011-2013 Joseph Wilson Memorial Fellow in Public History, Museum of the Confederacy
- Transcribed historical documents
  - Created finding aids for museum artifacts
  - Processed and arranged the Jefferson Davis Family Papers

### **Presentations/ Keynote Lectures**

#### **Keynote Lecture**

- Spring 2023 National Council on Public History keynote address: In the Making: Turning an Idea into a Movement!
- Summer 2022 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Green Symposium hosted by The Georgia Museum of Art, keynote address "The Power of Black Hands: Honoring Black Craftspeople of the Southern Landscape."
- Fall 2020 Harvest Lecture Series, keynote address: "Mobility in America's First Planned City: Understanding Salve Badges and Enslaved Autonomy on the Southern Landscape. (Event held at Davenport Museum & Historic Savannah Foundation, Savannah Georgia)

#### **Invited Lectures**

- Spring 2023 Colonial Williamsburg 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Antiques Forum- Past, Present, Future. "Fighting for Freedom: Black Craftspeople & the Pursuit of Independence:" Tiffany Momon and Torren Gatson, co-directors of the Black Craftspeople Digital Archive and William Strollo, DAR Museum.
- Fall 2022 "Scale in Vast Early America" graduate seminar at the University of Delaware (Winterthur Program). Invited by Jennifer Van Horn (professor of record)
- Spring 2022 Bayou Bend Museum & Gardens, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, "Contextualizing Enslaved Ironworkers through a Piedmont Plantation."

- Fall 2021 North Carolina Humanities, “Guide the Way: Traveling the Historic South and The Poetry of Today,” discussant alongside Tyree Daye author of the book, *Cardinal* and teaching assistant professor at UNC Chapel Hill.
- Summer 2020 Old Salem Museum and Gardens, “Salem Presents: In The Shadow of Freedom: The Slave Badge in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Charleston, South Carolina,” Invited Lecture (Through crowdcast.io)
- Spring 2017 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.”

**Panel Discussant**

- Spring 2022 Organization of American Historians (OAH), “Public History and the Politics of Conversation: Unsung Heroes Project, in Pedagogy and Practice.” Annual meeting held in Boston, MA. Full panel title, “Voices of Freedom: Oral History and the Black Freedom Struggle.”
- Summer 2021 Omohundro Institute 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, sponsored by the College of William & Mary, “Material World/Virtual Worlds: The Physical and the Digital in Vast Early America,” presentation, “Revealing the Invisible Black Landscape: Spatially Mapping African American Skilled Craftsmen in Charleston, South Carolina through the Black Craftsman Digital Archive” (Co-presented with Dr. Tiffany Momon Sewanee: University of the South).
- Spring 2021 Digital Lagniappe: Conference in Digital Humanities, “Black Digital Humanities” Hosted at the University of Southern Mississippi, panelist.
- Fall 2020 Glen Foerd Historic Site (Pennsylvania), “It’s Our Time: Creation of the Black Craftspeople Digital Archive.” (Virtual event)
- Fall 2020 Association of African American Museums & Emerging Museum Professionals Washington, D.C. chapter: Rethinking GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, & Museums): Exploring Digital Impact and Activism, panelist.
- Fall 2020 Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Tuesday Talk!: The Black Craftspeople Digital Archive. (Virtual event)
- Fall 2020 UNCG Minerva Scholars graduate lecture series, The Yellow Sentinels: A Retrospective on Desegregation and Black Lives Matter Invited panelist.
- Summer 2020 Race and Racism in American History Forum Part II, Panelist (Virtual event at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, livestreamed)
- Summer 2020 MESDA Journal Live! A virtual discussion with contributing authors featured



in the *MESDA Journal* (Vol 41).

- Spring 2020 African American Historical Commission “Oasis Spaces Green Book Project” Panelist (event held at The International Civil Rights Museum, Greensboro, NC)
- Fall 2019 High Point University, “A Turbulent Ride, African Americans and Housing, 1865-1965.” Guest Lecture for Professor Paul Ringel.
- Fall 2019 Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society (AAHGS) National Meeting “People Not Property: Reading the History of North Carolina Slave Deeds” (Held at The University of Maryland, College Park)
- Fall 2019 Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) “Conceptualizing Black Movement in Charleston, South Carolina: Slave Badges and their Impact on the Formation of Culture” (Held: Charleston, South Carolina)
- Spring 2019 National Council on Public History annual meeting (NCPH), “Early Career Public History Academics: Questions, Issues, Resources,” (working group)
- Spring 2019 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Novem Mason Symposium for Engaged Community Design, “Wanersville, Memory, and Community Heritage Design.” (Held at UNCG)
- Spring 2019 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Lemon Project Symposium, The College of William and Mary: “Objects and Places: Telling the Truth and its Consequences.” panelist
- 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 at the University of Georgia).
- Fall 2015 2nd Annual Slave Dwelling Conference Group Presentation on “Transitional Spaces, Transitional Times: Looking at Slave Dwellings Beyond the Civil War.” (Held in Charleston, South Carolina).

### **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

### **Planning Experience**

2023 National Council on Public History (NCPH) Annual Meeting  
Atlanta, GA Annual Meeting  
Program sub-committee

2022 Preservation North Carolina Black Builders Symposium  
Wilmington, NC  
Planning Committee

2019 UNCG Conference of African American & African Diasporic Cultures & Experiences  
Greensboro, NC  
Panel selection sub-committee

2018 Slave Dwelling Conference (5<sup>th</sup> annual)  
Murfreesboro, TN  
Programs sub-committee

### **Professional Affiliations**

2022-Present Organization of American Historians  
2020-Present The Decorative Arts Trust, Member  
2006-Present Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Member  
2014-Present National Council on Public History, Member  
2019-Present American Historical Association, Member  
2019-Present North Carolina Association of Historians, Member  
2019- Present Young Benefactors of Old Salem Museum and Gardens, Member  
2009-Present Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society, Member  
2009-Present Pi Gamma Mu International Honor Society in Social Science, Member

### **Certifications**

2017 FEMA Active Shooter Training

### **Professional Skills and Mastery of Software**

PastPerfect software (museum)  
Adobe Photoshop (exhibit design)  
Sierra (library resource management)  
Wix.com (website design)  
Marketplace software (financial budgeting)  
Banner software (student access)  
WordPress (website design)  
ArcGIS  
Draw.io

Sketchup  
Adobe InDesign  
Timeline JS  
Canva.com  
emaze.com  
Over 1,000 hours of work in a library and museum repository

**Languages**

Spanish: Reading