

Torren L. Gatson

Assistant Professor

University of North Carolina at Greensboro, History Department

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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

Research Interests

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

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)

“Upbuilding an Inclusive Future: A Semester of Reciprocal Learning,” in *History in Action: Essays on Teaching Public History*, edited by Evan Faulkenbury and Julia Brock. (Forthcoming, UNC Press)

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, 2022. (Forthcoming in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title, organized by and presented at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR, Fall 2022.)

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).

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

[Link to review](#)

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. (under review with *Material Culture Review*)

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

Refereed Journal/Professional Participation

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

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)

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

Professional Appointments

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

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

Public History Fellow in Residence, Spelman College Archive,

Atlanta, GA August 2016- July 2017

Sponsored Research

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-Founder, Co-Director and Director of Special projects and Publications.

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

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

Master's Thesis Committee Member, Monica Davis (Graduate, Masters). "Revealing Culture and Tracing Change: A Study on Shotguns Homes in East Wilson Historic District, 1988-2018," In-Process. (Spring 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 18th and 19th 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/

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 instillation for the Shiloh Rosenwald School Notasulga, AL

2016 Developing an exhibit and panel text for the McLemore House, Franklin, Tennessee

2016 Driving tour for historic Orange Mound pamphlet 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

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, Torren Gaston and Jenna Stout accompanied Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area (TCWNHA) Interpretative Specialist

Leigh Ann Gardner in documenting the house. 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, Jessica White and Torren Gatson documented the site. Leigh Ann Gardner and Torren Gaston worked on researching the history of the site.

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 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

Spring 2012 Researcher, *Preservation Durham*

- Conducted research for the principal investigator 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

Presentations/ Lectures

Summer 2022 Annual Green Symposium hosted by The Georgia Museum of Art, "The Power of Black Hands: Honoring Black Craftspeople of the Southern Landscape." **(Upcoming)**

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."

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 2021 Omohundro Institute 26th 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 Harvest Lecture Series, Keynote: “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)
- 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 Old Salem Museum and Gardens, “Salem Presents: In The Shadow of Freedom: The Slave Badge in 18th and 19th Charleston, South Carolina,” Invited Lecture (Through crowdcast.io)
- 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 6th Annual Novem Mason Symposium for Engaged Community Design,
 “Wanersville, Memory, and Community Heritage Design.” (Held at UNCG)
- Spring 2019 9th 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).
- 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 18th 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 18th 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 18th and 19th 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 McCloud 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

Planning Experience

National Council on Public History (NCPH)
2023 Annual Meeting

Program Sub-Committee

5th Annual Slave Dwelling Conference
Murfreesboro, TN October 2018
Subcommittee: panel selection and presentations

UNCG Conference of African American & African Diasporic Cultures & Experiences (CACE)
Greensboro, NC February 2018 & 2019
Subcommittee: panel selection

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