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Scholar to discuss anti-slavery sentiment in the original draft of the Declaration of Independence

Holly Brewer, Ph.D. to present free lecture at LancasterHistory on the contradictions between the Declaration and the men who wrote it

Lancaster, PA (April 23, 2019) – On Thursday, May 23, 2019, Dr. Holly Brewer will join LancasterHistory to discuss the anti-slavery sentiment in Jefferson’s original draft of the Declaration of Independence, and the vigorous debates it led to.

When Thomas Jefferson wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence in June 1776, he railed against the monarchy of King George III for being “determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought and sold.” At the time, Jefferson owned about 200 slaves. He would continue to own slaves for the rest of his life.

Hypocritical or not, Jefferson’s public stance on the slave trade in his original draft of the Declaration of Independence was quite clear. “He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him,” Jefferson wrote of King George III. “Captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisp[h]ere.” When the document was sent to Congress for its approval, the representative from South Carolina took issue with its anti-slavery sentiment. After it had been

edited by Congress, the resulting document was still one that would send echoes of freedom throughout the colonies. But it didn't mean the same for all the new country's inhabitants as the original draft would have. The result was the strange juxtaposition of slavery amid calls for freedom. Dr. Holly Brewer will discuss the complex factors at play in these debates, and the resulting document which came to represent the fragile relationship between liberty and slavery in America.

Holly Brewer, Ph.D. is the Burke Professor of American History and an associate professor at the University of Maryland. She works on debates about justice in early America and the British Empire through the revolutionary period and into the nineteenth century. She is the author of *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (2005), which won three national prizes in legal history, as well as of the prizewinning "Entailing Aristocracy in Colonial Virginia" (*The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 2 April 1997). She is currently finishing a book on the ideological origins of slavery in early America and the British Empire for which she received a Guggenheim fellowship.

About The Event: The Regional History Colloquium is a series of lectures and presentations hosted by LancasterHistory throughout the year. Presenters at the Colloquium are historians and scholars who are in the midst of a work-in-progress or who have recently completed a publication. Topics focus on historical issues relating to southeastern Pennsylvania and its wider borders.

Tickets: The event *Slavery & The Declaration of Independence* will take place on Thursday, May 23, 2019 in Ryder Hall at LancasterHistory, 230 N. President Avenue in Lancaster. A speaker's reception takes place at 4pm, followed by the main presentation at 4:30pm. The event is free and open to the public. Due to the popularity of the Regional History Colloquium series, **advance registration is required to guarantee a seat at the presentation**. Visit www.lancasterhistory.org/lectures to register online or call (717) 392-4633. Questions and accessibility requests may be directed to info@lancasterhistory.org or (717) 392-4633.

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