

BENCH ANSFIELD

Temple University | Department of History
834 Gladfelter Hall | 1115 W. Polett Walk | Philadelphia, PA 19122
bench.ansfield@temple.edu | www.benchansfield.com

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in American Studies with distinction, Yale University, 2021

Dissertation: “Born in Flames: Arson, Racial Capitalism, and the Reinsuring of the Bronx in the Late Twentieth Century”

- *Winner of the Society of American Historians’ Allan Nevins Prize for best dissertation in American History*
- *Winner of the Zuckerman Prize in American Studies from the McNeil Center for Early American Studies*
- *Winner of the Business History Conference’s (BHC) Herman E. Krooss Prize for best dissertation*
- *Winner of the Theron Rockwell Field Prize, one of two university-wide honors awarded to dissertations across Yale departments*
- *Finalist for the American Studies Association’s (ASA) Ralph Henry Gabriel Prize for best dissertation*

M.Phil., M.A. in American Studies, Yale University, 2016

B.A. in African American Studies with High Honors, Phi Beta Kappa, Wesleyan University, 2008

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENT

Assistant Professor of History, Temple University, 2024-present

Postdoctoral and ACLS Fellow, Dartmouth Society of Fellows, 2022-2024

American Democracy Fellow, Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, 2021-2022

PUBLICATIONS

Book

Born in Flames: The Business of Arson and the Remaking of the American City

(W. W. Norton, August 19, 2025)

- *Finalist for the 2026 Pulitzer Prize in History*
- *Winner of the 2026 Los Angeles Times Book Prize for History*
- *Winner of the 2026 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award in Nonfiction*
- *Winner of the 2026 Francis Parkman Prize for the Best Book in American History from the Society of American Historians*
- *Winner of the Frederick Jackson Turner Award from the Organization of American Historians*
- *Winner of the New York City Book Award*
- *Winner of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia Literary Award*

- *New York Times Book Review: 100 Notable Books of 2025*
- *Kirkus Reviews: 100 Best Nonfiction Books of the Year*
- *Philadelphia Magazine Editors' Choice*
- *Finalist for the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work - Nonfiction*
- *Shortlisted for the J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize, the Nieman Foundation and Columbia School of Journalism*
- *Finalist for the Gotham Book Prize*
- *Skipped History Podcast Book of the Year*

Peer-Reviewed Publications

- “Apertures of Urban Crisis: *Fort Apache, The Bronx* and the Struggle Over the Celluloid City,” in *New Histories of New York City Since the 1960s*, eds. Johanna Fernandez, Kim Phillips-Fein, and Mason B. Williams (University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming).
- “Abolition Infrastructures: A Conversation with Rachel Herzing and Dean Spade,” *Radical History Review* 147, “Political Lives of Infrastructure” (October 2023): 187-203.
- “Born in Flames: Arson, Racial Capitalism, and the Reinsuring of the Bronx in the Late Twentieth Century,” *Enterprise & Society* 23, no. 4 (December 2022): 923-927.
- “The Crisis of Insurance and the Insuring of the Crisis: Riot Reinsurance and Redlining in the Aftermath of the 1960s Uprisings,” *Journal of American History* 107, no. 4 (March 2021): 899-921.
- *Winner of the Organization of American Historians' (OAH) 2020 Louis Pelzer Memorial Award for best essay in American History by a graduate student*
- “The Broken Windows of the Bronx: Putting the Theory in Its Place,” *American Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (March 2020): 103-127.
- *Co-winner of the Urban History Association's (UHA) 2021 Arnold Hirsch Award for best article in a scholarly journal published in 2020*
- “Unsettling ‘Inner City’: Liberal Protestantism and the Postwar Origins of a Keyword in Urban Studies,” *Antipode* 50, no. 5 (2018): 1166-1185.
- “Still Submerged: The Uninhabitability of Urban Redevelopment,” in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 124-141.

Public Writing

- “Fighting Fire,” *Urban Omnibus*, December 10, 2025.
- “The Business of Arson: An Interview with Bench Ansfield” by Andrew Anastasi, *Law and Political Economy Project Blog*, December 9, 2025.
- Also published as “FIREstorm: Bench Ansfield in Conversation with Andrew Anastasi,” *History and Political Economy Project Blog*, December 9, 2025.
- “How the Watts Uprising in L.A. Led to the State’s FAIR Insurance Plan,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 1, 2025.
- Reprinted in *Santa Monica Daily Press* (October 3, 2025), *Insurance NewsNet* (October 3, 2025), *Imperial Valley Press Online* (October 3, 2025), *CalMatters* (October 2, 2025), *Ojai Valley News*

(October 6, 2025), *East Bay Times* (October 8, 2025), *The Mercury News* (October 8, 2025), *The Press Democrat* (October 9, 2025), *Altadena Now* (October 14, 2025), *Stocktonia News* (October 16, 2025), *Times of San Diego* (October 16, 2025), *Marin Independent Journal* (October 18, 2025).

“The Disasters ‘High-Risk’ Insurance Fails to Paper Over, *Zócalo Public Square*, October 2, 2025.

“Edifice Complex,” *Jewish Currents*, Winter 2022 issue, January 3, 2023.
 • Longreads “Best of 2023”

“A Theater of State Panic,” *New York Review of Books*, September 16, 2022.

“How a 50-Year-Old Study Was Misconstrued to Create Destructive Broken-Windows Policing,” *Washington Post*, Made by History, December 27, 2019.

“Philly Stands Up: A Portrait of Praxis, An Anatomy of Accountability,” in *Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement*, ed. Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2019), 91-99. (Co-authored with Esteban Lance Kelly, et al.)

“How We Learned Not to Succeed in Transformative Justice.” *Make/Shift Magazine*, no. 12 (2012): 31-32. (Co-authored with Jenna Peters-Golden).
 • Reprinted in Mariame Kaba and Shira Hassan, *Fumbling Towards Repair: A Workbook for Community Accountability Facilitators* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2019).

“Confronting Sexual Assault: Transformative Justice on the Ground in Philadelphia,” *Tikkun* 27, no. 1 (2012): 41-44. (Co-authored with Timothy Colman).

Review Essays and Book Reviews

Review of Shannon King, *The Politics of Safety: The Black Struggle for Police Accountability in La Guardia's New York* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2024), *Journal of American History*, 112, no. 3 (2025).

“Bonded Metropolis: Race and the Shadowy World of Municipal Debt,” review of Destin Jenkins’ *The Bonds of Inequality: Debt and the Making of the American City* (University of Chicago, 2021), lead essay in *Reviews in American History* 43, no. 3 (September 2021), 392-398.

“The Privatized City from Below: Benjamin Holtzman’s *The Long Crisis: New York City And The Path To Neoliberalism*,” The Gotham Center for New York City History, April 22, 2021.

PUBLIC and DIGITAL HUMANITIES

Podcast and Radio Appearances: *The Long View with Julian Zelizer* (January 9, 2026), *Pod Save the People* (December 16, 2025), *Soundscape NYC* (December 3, 2025), *Death Panel* (November 3, 2025), *Sad Francisco* (October 16, 2025), *Mountain Money* on KPCW (NPR, September 15, 2025), *Smarty Pants – The American Scholar* (September 11, 2025), *Skipped History* (August 22, 2025), *New Books in Economic and Business History* (August 20, 2025), *Who Makes Cents: A History of Capitalism Podcast* (August 9, 2025).

Beinecke Library Exhibit: [Road to Ruin: Bronx Frontier & the Harvest of Rubble](#), Curator, 2021
Curated an exhibition with the James Weldon Johnson Collection of African American Arts and Letters.

New Haven's [African American, Indigenous, and Latinx Walking Tour](#), Researcher, Podcast, 2020
Consulted on two neighborhood-based, People's History Walking Tours, created by public high school students at Metropolitan High School, and nationally recognized by the Gilder Lehrman Institute.

[Decade of Fire](#), Researcher, Documentary Film, Independent Lens/PBS, 2019
Oversaw research for feature-length documentary about the 1970s Bronx fire wave.

“Living Jim Crow,” Supervisor, Digital Humanities Project, 2018-2020
Directed Yale undergraduates for Professor Matthew Jacobson's digital humanities project documenting the desegregation of baseball and life in the Jim Crow South.

SELECTED AWARDS and FELLOWSHIPS

2025	History and Political Economy Project (HPE) Research Grant
2022-2023	American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Fellowship
2022	Society of American Historians' Allan Nevins Prize for best dissertation in American History
2022	McNeil Center for Early American Studies, Zuckerman Prize in American Studies for the “best dissertation connecting American history (in any period) with literature and/or art”
2022	Business History Conference's Herman E. Krooss Prize for best dissertation in Business History
2021	Urban History Association's Arnold Hirsch Award for best article in a scholarly journal published in 2020 (co-winner)
2021	Finalist for the American Studies Association's Ralph Henry Gabriel Prize for best dissertation in American Studies
2021	Yale University's Theron Rockwell Field Prize, the university's highest honor (along with the Porter Prize)
2020-2021	Mellon/American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Dissertation Completion Fellowship
2020-2021	Jefferson Scholars National Fellowship, University of Virginia
2020	Organization of American Historians (OAH) Louis Pelzer Memorial Award for best essay by a graduate student in American History

2020	Yale Center for the Study of Race, Indigeneity, and Transnational Migration (RITM), Research Grant
2020	Yale Initiative on Labor and Culture Summer Research Award
2017-2018	Mellon Fellowship for Dissertation Research in Original Sources, Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR)
2017	Moody Research Grant, LBJ Foundation
2016	John F. Enders Fellowship, Yale University
2015	Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship, Social Science Research Council (SSRC)
2008	W.E.B. Du Bois Award for Academic Excellence, Wesleyan University

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS and LECTURES

- “Bonds of Catastrophe: Capitalism and the New Climate of Risk,”** presented at the History and Political Economy Project conference, Boston University, Boston, MA, December 13, 2025.
- “New Books in Urban and Suburban History,”** roundtable at the Urban History Association Biennial Conference, Los Angeles, CA, October 10, 2025.
- “Fort Apache, The Bronx and the Struggle over the Celluloid City,”** presented on the panel “Beyond the Urban Crisis: Art and Activism in the New York Metropolis,” Urban History Association Biennial Conference, Los Angeles, CA, October 10, 2025.
- “New Approaches to Housing, Landlords, and Tenants in U.S. History,”** panel chair and comment, Organization of American Historians, Chicago, IL, April 3, 2025.
- “Out of the Shadows and into the Streets,”** invited workshop with the Black and Otherwise Geographies working group, Stanford University, March 6, 2025.
- “The Fires Last Time,”** presented at the University of Pennsylvania Project in Humanities, Urbanism, and Design Symposium on Urban Spatial Justice, Philadelphia, PA, February 28, 2025.
- “Behind on Rent,”** presented at the University of Pennsylvania Workshop on Rental Housing, organized by Brent Cebul and Michael Glass, Philadelphia, PA, October 18, 2024.
- “Jim Crow’s Residuum,”** presented at the Workshop on Risk, Uncertainty, and Democracy, organized by Suzanne Schneider at Magdalen College, Oxford University, May 14, 2024.
- “Writing about Crime,”** guest lecture for the course “Writing Histories of Crime,” taught by David Petrucci at Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, May 1, 2024.
- “Still Burning,”** panelist on the roundtable “History’s Ashes: Fire, Race, and Resistance in U.S. History,” Organization of American Historians, New Orleans, LA, April 13, 2024.
- “Roundtable Discussion of *Police and the Empire City*,”** panelist, alongside Matthew Guariglia, for the release of his new book, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, February 28, 2024.
- “The 1970s Bronx in Three Frames,”** guest lecture for the course “Social Justice and the City,” taught by Erin Collins at Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, October 13, 2023.
- “Geographies of Financialization: The Bronx and Its Triangular Trade in Risk,”** presented on the panel “Transnational Routes of the Post-War Urban Crisis and Global American Capitalism,” Organization of American Historians Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, CA, April 1, 2023.

- “Embers of Capital: To Burn a Fireproof Building in the 1970s Bronx,”** presented on the panel “Creative Destruction and the Reverb of Racial Capitalism,” American Studies Association Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA, November 5, 2022.
- “Jim Crow’s Residuum: Insurance Brownlining in New York After 1968,”** presented on the panel “Governing Through Risk: Histories of Insurance and Power,” Organization of American Historians Annual Meeting, Boston, MA, April 2022 (accepted).
- “How Urban Historians Use Primary Sources,”** guest lecture for the course “What Is Urban History?” taught by Professor Lizabeth Cohen at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, March 23, 2022 (invited).
- “The Ashes of History: The Racial Politics of Remembering the Bronx in Its Burning Years,”** to be presented on the panel “Exposing Segregated Memory in the North,” African American Intellectual History Society (AAIHS) Annual Conference, University of Nevada-Las Vegas, March 11, 2022.
- “A Triangular Trade in Risk: Reinsuring Landlord Arson in the 1970s Bronx,”** Newberry Library History of Capitalism Seminar with Prof. Daniel Immerwahr, Chicago, IL, December 10, 2021.
- “To Burn a Fireproof Building: Race and Risk in the 1970s Bronx,”** Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative’s Urban Conversations series with Prof. Lizabeth Cohen, Cambridge, MA, November 18, 2021 (invited).
- “Reading Capital,”** guest lecture for the course “Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in the U.S.,” taught by Professor Jessica Levy at SUNY-Purchase, Purchase, NY, November 17, 2021 (invited).
- “American Quarterly: Workshop on AQ Review and Editorial Process,”** roundtable at the American Studies Association Annual Meeting, October 12, 2021.
- “Riot Reinsurance and Redlining in the Aftermath of the 1960s Uprisings,”** to be presented on the panel “Race and Risk in U.S. Cities,” Urban History Association Biennial Conference, Detroit, MI, October 2021.
- “Edifice Complex,”** on the panel “The Relations of Human Resources,” with the Working Group on Globalization and Culture, Marxist Education Project, Brooklyn, NY, June 6, 2021.
- “Broken Windows as Liberal Law and Order,”** guest lecture for the graduate course “Race, Colorblindness, and the Academic Disciplines,” taught by Professor Daniel Martinez HoSang at Yale University, New Haven, CT, May 5, 2021 (invited).
- “Turn on, Tune in, Burn out,”** on the panel “The Half-Life of Human Resources,” with the Working Group on Globalization and Culture, American Studies Symposium, Yale University, New Haven, CT, April 30, 2021.
- “Sleeping with Shoes On: Surviving the Arson Wave in the 1970s Bronx,”** on the panel “Producing Precarity: NYC Histories of Tenant Displacement from the Ground Up, 1945-1990,” Organization of American Historians Annual Meeting, April 2021.
- “Queer Visions of Sovereignty and Freedom,”** guest lecture for the course “Race, Politics and the Law,” taught by Professor Daniel Martinez HoSang at Yale University, New Haven, CT, November 14, 2019.
- “‘Broken Glass Everywhere’: The Bronx as Window and the Windows of the Bronx,”** on the panel “Overtime, Overexposed,” American Studies Symposium, Yale University, New Haven, CT, April 19, 2019.
- “Broken Windows and the Bronx: Putting the Theory in Its Place,”** on the panel “Testing and Contesting the Postwar City,” Urban History Association Biennial Conference, Chicago, IL, October 13-16, 2016.
- “Racialized Space,”** presentation at Keywords in Critical Ethnic Studies, Yale University, New Haven, CT, January 18, 2016.
- “Unsettling Inner City: Origins of a Keyword in Urban Studies, 1954-1963,”** on the panel “Urban Renewal,” Urban History Association Biennial Conference, Philadelphia, PA, October 9-12, 2014.

“Carceral States,” guest lecture for the course “Critical Perspectives on the State,” taught by Professor Anu Sharma at Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT, March 24, 2014.

INVITED ADDRESSES

“The Fires Last Time: Landlord Arson and the Reverb of Racial Capitalism,” invited talk at the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, University of California, Santa Barbara, May 14, 2026.

“Born in Flames: The Business of Arson and the Remaking of the American City,” keynote lecture at the Urban Studies Program Student Research Forum, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI, May 8, 2026.

“Born in Flames: The Business of Arson and the Remaking of the American City,” invited talk at the Institute for Public Knowledge, NYU, New York, NY, March 4, 2026.

“Racial Capitalism in the Burning Years: The 1970s Bronx in Three Frames,” invited talk at the Weitzman School of Design, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, April 7, 2026.

“Born in Flames: The Business of Arson and the Remaking of the American City,” invited talk at the Princeton Initiative on the Urban Environment, Princeton, NJ, February 11, 2026.

“Racial Capitalism in the Burning Years: The 1970s Bronx in Three Frames,” invited talk at the Center for the Humanities at Temple (CHAT), Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, October 27, 2025.

“Born in Flames: The Business of Arson and the Remaking of the American City,” invited talk at the Museum of the City of New York, NYC, October 18, 2025.

“The Fires Last Time: Landlord Arson and the Reverb of Racial Capitalism,” Distinguished Alumni Lecture, Wesleyan University Center of African American Studies, Middletown, CT, November 6, 2025.

“Racial Capitalism in the Burning Years: The 1970s Bronx in Three Frames,” invited talk at the Stanford University Department of History, Palo Alto, CA, March 7, 2025.

“Racial Capitalism in the Burning Years: The 1970s Bronx in Three Frames,” invited talk at the Heilbroner Center for Capitalism Studies, The New School for Social Research, New York, NY, February 15, 2024.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Temple University, Assistant Professor

Readings in the History of Capitalism (Graduate, Spring 2026)
 Honors History of the U.S. City in Nine Uprisings (Spring 2026)
 Philadelphia Art and Culture (Fall 2025)
 Honors Philadelphia Art and Culture (Fall 2025)
 Philadelphia Art and Culture (Spring 2025)
 History of the Carceral State (Spring 2025)
 History of the U.S. City in Nine Uprisings (Fall 2024)

Dartmouth College, Postdoctoral Fellow

Histories of the Carceral State (Spring 2024)

Yale University, Teaching Fellow

Race, Politics, and the Law (Professor Daniel Martinez HoSang, Fall 2019)
 Origins of U.S. Global Power (Professor Jenifer Van Vleck, Spring 2016)
 The Formation of Modern American Culture, 1876-1919 (Professor Jean-Christophe Agnew, Fall 2015)

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

Manuscript Review*ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies**American Quarterly**Antipode**Du Bois Review**International Review of Applied Economics**Journal of Urban History**New York History**The Review of Economics and Statistics***Monograph Workshop**

Nathalie Barton (Vanderbilt University), *The Terms of the Lease: Race, Inequality, and the Renovation of the Landlord-Tenant Relationship in Urban America* (in progress), March 30, 2026.

Spencer Weinreich (Harvard Society of Fellows), *An Experimental Box: A History of Solitary Confinement* (Harvard University Press, forthcoming), New York, NY, November 21, 2025.

Temple University

Center for the Humanities at Temple (CHAT) Fellow, 2026-2027

History Graduate Committee, 2025-2027

Community Engaged Learning Initiative, 2025-2026

Co-Convener, Urban History Workshop: Brianna Nofil (William & Mary), October 24, 2025

University Honors Program Affiliate, 2025-2028

Selection Committee, Feinstein Center Summer Research Fellowship, 2025

Committee Member for PhD Candidates Jacob Wolff, Jake La Fronz, Hannah Srajer (Yale University)

Co-Convener, Urban History Workshop: J.T. Roane (Rutgers), October 25, 2024

Co-Convener, Urban History Workshop: Matthew Countryman (U-Mich), October 17, 2024

Dartmouth CollegeConvener and moderator, *Beyond Walls: 5 Films for Prison Industrial Complex Abolition*, May 8, 2024

Convener and moderator, "Housing Justice from New York to the Upper Valley," April 19, 2023

Harvard University

Co-Convener and Moderator, "Transformative Justice and the University with Mariame Kaba," April 2022

Member, Abolition Democracy Co-Curricular Collaboratory, 2021-2022

Yale University

Member, Selection Committee of the Yale Bassett Award, Yale Center for the Study of Race, Indigeneity, and Transnational Migration, 2021

Member, Advisory Working Group on Doctoral Education in the Humanities, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2020

Member, Working Group on Globalization and Culture, 2020-2021

Student Representative, Graduate Student Advisory Committee, Department of American Studies, 2020

Student Representative, American Studies Emergency Fund, 2020

Member, Racial Capitalism and the Carceral State Working Group, 2019-2020

Graduate Student Liaison for Recruitment, Department of American Studies, 2016-2018

Co-Chair, Urban History Working Group, 2014-2016

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Studies Association

Business History Conference

Organization of American Historians

Urban History Association