ON THE SPOT LORI D. GINZBERG

We ask leading historians

why their research matters, what history has taught them, and what we should be reading…



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Why are you a historian of gender studies?

I fell in love with history when I learned that historians disagreed with one another’s interpretations. As a young feminist, I found the most engaging debates in US women’s history.

What’s the most important lesson history has taught you?

That it’s complicated.

Which history book has had the greatest influence on you?

Too many to list.

What book in your field should everyone read? Dorothy Roberts’ *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*.

Which moment would you most like to go back to?

I’d want to attend an abolitionist or women’s rights convention in 1837 or 1838.

Which historian has had the greatest influence on you? Two of my college professors, Ronald Grigor Suny and David Rankin.

Which person in history would you most like to have met?

Elizabeth Cady Stanton,

so we could have our ongoing arguments face to face.

How many languages do you have?

One and a half.

Is there an important historical text you have

not read? Too many to name, including, sadly, *Moby Dick*.

What historical topic have you changed your mind on? Whether to support the

15th Amendment to the US Constitution, which gave Black men, but no women, the right to vote.

What is the most common misconception about

your field? That scholars who study elite white men are more objective than those of us who study everyone else.

Who is the most underrated person in history…

We don’t know her name yet.

… and the most overrated?

Most US presidents.

What’s the most exciting field in history today?

The history of slavery, globally.

What’s your favourite archive? The Library Company of Philadelphia.

What’s the best museum? The National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.

What technology has changed the world the most? It’s a tie: effective birth control and inexpensive printing.

Recommend us a historical novel... Daniel Mason’s *North Woods.*

... and a historical drama?

*A Gentleman in Moscow*.

You can solve one historical mystery. What is it?

How ideas once declared ‘unthinkable’, discussed in the privacy of people’s kitchens, get moved onto public agendas.