

Dr. Gaila Sims

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EDUCATION

The University of Texas at Austin May 2022

Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies

Dissertation Title: "Imprimatur of the State: Interpretation of Slavery at American State History Museums"

The University of Texas at Austin May 2018

Master of Arts in American Studies

Thesis Title: "Mandatory Education: Sharing the Story of Slavery at the Whitney Plantation Museum"

Portfolio in Museum Studies

Oberlin College May 2011

Bachelor of Arts in History and African American Studies • Honors in African American Studies

EXPERIENCE

Fredericksburg Area Museum, Fredericksburg, Virginia June 2022 – Present

Curator of African American History and Special Projects

- Responsible for interpretation related to African American history for the Fredericksburg Area Museum and across the city of Fredericksburg.
- Curated *A Monumental Weight: The Auction Block in Fredericksburg, Virginia*, physical and digital exhibition incorporating historical documentation, academic scholarship, and extensive community feedback, opened in November 2022.
- Leads the African American History Committee, consisting of representatives from the FAM's staff and Board of Directors, the City of Fredericksburg, the Department of Community Planning, the Economic Development and Tourism Office, scholars and administrators from the University of Mary Washington and Germanna Community College, K-12 educators, leaders from local businesses and nonprofits, and community members.

Department of African and African Diaspora Studies, UT Austin December 2020 – May 2022

Research Assistant to Dr. Cherise Smith

- Gathered background information and consult secondary materials about African American artists Cauleen Smith, Rodney McMillian, Charles Gaines, and Carrie Mae Weems for Dr. Smith's forthcoming book, *Healing Old Wounds: Affect, Appropriation, and Trauma in Contemporary African American Art*.
- Coordinated submission of revisions, image permissions, and roundtable discussions for manuscript draft.
- Provided administrative support for Dr. Smith in roles as AADS Chair and Executive Director of the Art Galleries at Black Studies, including creation of slideshows, job descriptions, and budget spreadsheets.

MuseWork Exhibit Planning and Design, Austin, Texas February 2017 – May 2022

Researcher + Interpretive Writer

- Researched and wrote interpretive text for *Boomtown and Beyond, 1920-2020* based on primary sources (including newspapers, yearbooks, and photographs) for permanent exhibit at Barbers Hill Hall of History in Chambers County, Texas.
- Created questions, answers, and biographical summaries for interactive Pioneer Quiz at Barbers Hill Hall of History in Chambers County, Texas.
- Conducted audience research (surveys and one-on-one interviews) for Visitors Center redesign at Shangri La Botanical Gardens & Nature Center in Orange, Texas.
- Researched and wrote interpretive text for Bullock Texas State History Museum website series Campfire Stories, tracing the history of African Americans in Texas from First Contact through Civil Rights Movement.

National Museum of American History, Washington, DC June – August 2021

American Food History Project Curatorial and Programming Intern

- Drafted 26 expanded web labels of 340 words each for objects donated to the museum by Julia Child Award Winners José Andrés, Mary Sue Milliken, and Susan Feniger.
- Identified significant Black women in food history to highlight and assembled resources to create and update entries for the American Women's History Initiative Wikipedia edit-a-thon.

- Uploaded expanded labels as web descriptions for objects after receiving training in Mimsy XG, the collections management software used at the Smithsonian.

Education Beyond the Walls, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary September 2019 – August 2020
Researcher, Writer

- Conducted research on the history of racial groups in Austin, Texas for website entitled YouAreHereATX.
- Compiled collection of resources related to segregation, civil rights, gentrification, and larger history of African American, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian American communities in the area now known as Austin.
- Wrote narrative of four groups incorporating resources to facilitate community exploration of the diverse history of Austin, Texas with accompanying timeline illuminating important moments for each group.

Department of American Studies, The University of Texas at Austin September 2019 – May 2020
Teaching Assistant, Main Currents in American Culture Since 1865

- Designed and lead review sessions for midterm and final exam, allowing students opportunity to receive feedback and additional information about exams in order to better prepare.
- Graded assignments and exams, provided comments and feedback for each student, submitted grades.

Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas September 2017 – August 2019
Graduate Research Associate

- Provided general support for the Ransom Center Reading and Viewing Room, including answering research queries, offering orientations to new patrons, and providing reference and reception assistance.
- Presented on Ransom Center materials to visiting scholars, academic conference attendees, and university organizations, highlighting materials based on audience interests and needs.
- Conducted research for undergraduate and graduate classes, and taught students about Ransom Center materials, archival practices, and primary source analysis.
- Co-curated exhibition entitled *Fugitive Findings: How Artists of Color Survive in the Archive* incorporating materials related to diverse novelists, poets, and playwrights represented in Ransom Center collections.
- Co-wrote articles for the *Ransom Center Magazine* including *Curating Fugitive Findings and the Right to Research Slowly*, winner of the 2021 Diversity Award for Research Engagement Graduate Student Award.

Bullock Texas State History Museum, Austin, Texas September 2017 – August 2019
Family Programs Assistant

- Developed age-appropriate curriculum to introduce young readers to diverse perspectives for storytime programs. Target audience of 2-5 year olds, with attendance of up to 50 per event.
- Coordinated activities and support for Free First Sundays, monthly events with attendance of up to 5000.
- Organized activities and classes for other museum events, including Museum Day, Homeschool Day, and Summer Programming.

Education Intern January 2017 – June 2017

- Created an activity guide for elementary and middle school students for *Purchased Lives: The American Slave Trade 1808-1865*.
- Attended and assisted education staff at *Purchased Lives* Exhibition Opening and Teacher Workshop.
- Presented at *Purchased Lives* Teacher Open House on primary source instruction for students.

Asian American Resource Center, Austin, Texas June 2016 – April 2019
Public Event Staff

- Coordinated events and provided general support to maintain safe and well-organized rental and cultural events, including documentary film screenings, religious events, and cultural festivals.
- Assisted with event setup, cleanup, and additional needs for over 30 events, with up to 500 attendees.

George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center, Austin, Texas October 2013 – June 2016
Culture and Arts Education Specialist

- Planned, organized, and increased event attendance for education offerings at the museum, including film screenings, lectures, and children's events.
- Lead tours of museum exhibits to visiting groups and helped direct spring break and summer arts camps.
- Managed social media accounts and email marketing, using Twitter, Facebook, Hootsuite, Constant Contact, and doubled follower counts and email subscribers.
- Recruited, trained, and coordinated volunteers for museum events.