

# BECAUSE OF HER STORY



Smithsonian American Women's History Museum

2024 Because of Her Story Summer Cohort Internship Program

June 10–August 2, 2024

## PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS



Please select **three projects** that interest you from the descriptions below and enter your first, second, and third preferences on your application form in SOLAA. We recommend that you choose projects that best align with your skill set, academic history, and resume. Highlight your skills and knowledge in these areas in your personal statement and resume.

## **#1 “Engaging Marginalized Genders in STEM Learning”**

### **National Air and Space Museum (NASM) Udvar-Hazy Center**

Are you passionate about promoting diversity and inclusion in STEM education? Do you want to make a meaningful impact by empowering educators to engage girls and other minoritized genders in STEM learning? Over the past seven years, interns and staff have worked to build the framework for facilitation guides for classroom and out-of-schooltime educators, focusing on best practices for gender inclusivity in STEM education. As a BOHS intern, you will be continuing this crucial work. This project will include auditing and reviewing past research, incorporating new findings, and collaborating on the development of an informal educator guide, building on the foundation laid by a previous intern. You will also have the unique opportunity to connect with classroom teachers, conducting interviews to gather insights into their experiences with girls and gender minorities in STEM. This invaluable input will help shape an outline for the guide specifically tailored to classroom teachers. Additionally, you will play a key role in our 2024 Teacher Innovator Institute (TII), attending sessions, assisting with event organization and coordination of workshops, and (if comfortable doing so) potentially guiding reflective sessions. The ideal candidate will be able to conduct a literature review and summarize findings, and will be comfortable interviewing classroom teachers to gain insights into their practice. The internship may require outside activities and walking between sites in Virginia and Washington, D.C. This internship project will be in-person on-site during the Teacher Innovator Institute (TII). Outside of TII, this internship project will be in-person two days a week and virtual two days a week.

## **#2 “Bringing Photographer Barbara Beirne to Light through Metadata and Digitization”**

### **National American History Museum (NMAH)**

This internship project will highlight the career and accomplishments of photographer Barbara Beirne, whose compassionate portraits of marginalized women, female community activists in Southern Appalachia, and important civil rights leaders document hidden but significant aspects of American life. Under the guidance of the Curator of Photography, the Archives Center staff, and the rights and reproductions coordinator, the BOHS intern will scan and create metadata for these portraits for display

in the online SOVA collection records and in the DAMS, and write additional biographical information. The BOHS intern will also create a blog post about Beirne and her photographs which are accompanied by personal statements taken from interviews with her subjects, providing insight into this documentary methodology. This internship provides experience in working with photographic prints by a talented, compassion-driven documentary photographer, and the intern will gain expertise in scanning, working with professional descriptive software, and describing original photographs, as well as in handling and collections care. The BOHS intern will also become familiar with archival methods and philosophy, and will gain exposure to the varied types of original photographs collected by the Archives Center and their significance to researchers. This internship project will be in-person on-site at NMAH two days a week and virtual two days a week.

### **#3 “Star Stories: The Women Behind the Science”**

#### **Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO) | NASA’s Universe of Learning (UoL)**

NASA’s Universe of Learning (UoL) team at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory is developing *Diaries of the Cosmos*—an audio series to highlight stories of astrophysical discovery and the people behind the science, with a specific focus on women scientists and scientists from underrepresented minorities. The Because of Her Story intern will work with the UoL team to develop the content for an episode of this audio series. Their responsibilities will include choosing one American woman in astrophysics to showcase, translating their science into a story for public consumption, choosing an American woman astrophysicist to interview on the current implications of their work, and developing questions for the interview. They will have the opportunity to collaborate with team members at both SAO and UoL, and will interact with and learn from experts in various fields. Through this project, the intern will combine scientific thinking, creativity and writing skills, reporting and interviewing skills, and an understanding of how to communicate with diverse audiences, all culminating in the creation of an exciting in-depth audio story about a revolutionary American woman and her breakthrough in astrophysics. This project explores the questions: Who are the unsung heroines of American astrophysics, and how can we better highlight their stories? What are the intricacies and subtleties of the scientific process, and how can we communicate them in a way to foster public understanding and trust in science? How can we combine science, culture, and human stories to showcase a comprehensive history of discovery in true Smithsonian fashion? This internship project will be virtual four days a week.

#### **#4 “Research in Its Many Forms: Uncovering the Stories of Women Across Science Museum Roles,” National Museum of Natural History (NMNH)**

Since the 1870s, the Bureau of American Ethnology and later Department of Anthropology within the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) have been collecting ethnographic and archaeological objects, conducting original field research, and conserving and sharing the objects and specimens they gathered. Yet the labor of women in Smithsonian anthropology has been relatively invisible, as women were often hired in an unpaid or underpaid capacity as wives, piece workers, clerks, and administrators—even as they sometimes conducted substantial field research or research into and care for the Smithsonian’s anthropology collections. The 2024 BOHS intern will work with their mentor to compile names and workplace or biographical details about women working with the anthropology department from archival records, giving them the opportunity to develop familiarity with processes of research into primary sources and original materials. The intern will learn how to work with collections information such as Emu (collections database), printed catalog cards, conservation records, archival finding aids, and repatriation database and reports, all of which often contain the names of people who worked with or processed collections. When finding notable women, they will have the opportunity to dig further into their stories. The BOHS intern will identify several women whose stories inspire, surprise, or speak to them. Working with their mentor, they will draft content that may be used for social media or the website that highlights the stories of women who have researched and documented collections, educates our audience about American women’s history, and conveys the value of what the Smithsonian does in caring for cultural and historic objects from around the world. This internship project will be in-person on-site at NMNH on the Mall two days a week and in-person on-site at NMNH’s Museum Support Center two days a week.

## **#5 “Fashioning History: Exploring Women’s Labor History Through Postal Uniforms”**

### **National Postal Museum (NPM)**

For centuries, dress codes and uniforms have been used to maintain specific social roles and hierarchies in labor. But the juxtaposition of fashion, functionality, and professional requirements have also created pathways for individuals to express their individuality, assert their viewpoint, and convey political ideals and aspirations. Though mail delivery in large cities began in 1863, no official uniforms were worn until after July 1868. And while women have worked for the United States Postal Department, in both official and unofficial capacities since even before its initial conception, it wasn’t until the 1960s that uniforms were first designed specifically for women. How does what people wear, particularly women, affect their daily lives and experiences as postal employees? And what do dress codes and uniforms tell us about women's work culture within the postal service, and larger conversations about labor? During this internship project, the BOHS intern will work with NPM’s curatorial department to explore how clothing and fabric operate as valuable cultural history sources and combine this approach with oral histories, additional material culture, and primary documents to uncover and understand the experiences, challenges, and hidden stories of women’s labor history in the Postal Service. Using their research, the BOHS intern will work with the Education and Visitor Experience department to create a hands-on learning gallery-cart for NPM’s diverse audiences to engage with during their visit and learn more of the untold stories of women and uniforms in the Postal Service. The intern will also spend time prototyping the gallery cart experience in the museum, concluding with an evaluation and a presentation of the project and their evaluation to NPM’s Curatorial and Education and Visitor Experience departments. The BOHS intern will gain invaluable skills across museum career tracks. This internship project will be in-person onsite at NPM two or three days a week and virtual one or two days a week.

## **#6 “African American Women Photographers and Their Art: Behind the Scenes in Collections Stewardship and Research at NMAAHC”**

### **National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC)**

The Office of Collections Management at the National Museum of African American History and Culture provides collections stewardship for its 38,000+ museum objects and archives. This internship project focuses on providing an opportunity to explore museum careers in collections management on-site in our storage facility and at the museum on the Mall. The BOHS intern will join the team of a multi-year project already in-progress that is in support of collections stewardship and preservation. The BOHS intern will experience the life cycle of museum objects; help rehouse collections and manage storage while learning and applying preservation principles and taking into consideration: object handling and movement; object and personal safety; the preservation environment; user access; housing and storage; and object documentation. Although the BOHS intern will work with a wide range of object media, the focus of rehousing will be on the paper-based collections of African American women photographers. Examples include:

- Kesha Bruce’s contemporary mixed media works
- Sheila Pree Bright’s series “1960 Now” of epic-sized portraits of young members of the Civil Rights Movement
- Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe’s photos exploring identity and activism
- Lola Flash’s series “[sur]passing” which probes how skin pigmentation impacts Black identity; series “SURMISE” on gender identity; and a series of self-portraits on seeking truth
- Dana Scruggs’s photos expanding notions of the term “black is beautiful” in commercial and fashion arenas

To understand how the work behind the scenes helps further collections research, interpretation, and access for sharing stories about women, the BOHS intern will collaborate with digitization and curatorial staff to research and develop an article for NMAAHC’s website that tells of the significance and accomplishments of African American women photographers. The BOHS intern must be able to lift up to 20 pounds unassisted. This internship project will be in-person onsite in collections storage at the Penny Collections and Museum Support Center two days a week and virtual two days a week.

## **#7 “Woven Threads: The African American Quilting Tradition”**

### **National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC)**

The National Museum of African American History and Culture currently stewards nearly 70 quilts ranging from the 19th to the 21st centuries. The quilt collection raises questions around the argument for folk/craft or art, the legacy of early scholars of African American quilts, and the continued marginalization of the breadth and depth of the African American quilting tradition and its contemporary practitioners in the quilt world. Over the course of the internship, the BOHS intern will work closely with NMAAHC's Curator of Women's History and collections team and the African American Quilt Task Force to conduct research on the quilts and their creators, assist with the development of a collections and conservation plan, transcribe oral histories of quilters, and join outreach efforts to document the network of African American quilting guilds across the United States. The BOHS intern must be able to lift up to 20 pounds unassisted (physical capacity for lifting and folding quilts and textiles). A background in textiles, quilts, or crafts and archival and collections-based research experience are preferred. This internship project will be in-person onsite in both NMAAHC and NMAAHC's collections storage at the Pennsy Collections and Museum Support Center two days a week and virtual two days a week.

## **#8 “Accessible Gaming for Women’s History”**

### **Smithsonian American Women’s History Museum (SAWHM)**

This internship is an opportunity to develop dynamic and accessible online spaces that contribute to the Smithsonian American Women’s History Museum’s vision of a more representative history and a more collective future. Women's history is American history. SAWHM expands the story of America through the often-untold accounts and accomplishments of women to better understand our past and inspire our future. SAWHM seeks an intern to help design accessible games that further our goals of inclusive and dynamic storytelling. The BOHS intern would help SAWHM refine its audience and content strategy, ensuring our approach to gaming is centered around accessibility and inclusion. During the course of the internship, the BOHS intern would potentially: conduct research on accessible gaming and existing best practices; identify and sample games designed with accessibility in mind; develop recommendations for SAWHM on accessible game design practices; develop concept recommendations for prospective future games; collaborate with SAWHM's digital interactives team on early sensory (visual, auditory, etc.) designs for one of the proposed games. Through research, the intern will explore the questions: what makes a digital game accessible? What models exist that do this well? How can

women's history become more engaging and accessible through gaming? The intern will have opportunities to work with experts across SAWHM and the Smithsonian in such areas as inclusive design, digital storytelling and curation, disability history, women and gender history, VR, game design, and more. This internship is an opportunity to develop dynamic and accessible online spaces for untold women's stories. This internship project will be in-person on-site at SAWHM two days a week and virtual two days a week.

## **#9 “Picture a Conservation Biologist: An Interactive Journey through the Colorful History of Women in Conservation Biology Science”**

### **National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute (NZCBI)**

The study of Conservation Biology was formalized by scientists in America and has developed into a global discipline that guides the theory and practice of conserving biodiversity worldwide. While many women were integral to the development of the discipline and helped found in the 1970s the Society for Conservation Biology—the first professional society for conservation biologists—they are largely overlooked in the history of this relatively young discipline. The BOHS intern will help illuminate the untold stories of these pioneering women by working closely with the NZCBI Librarian to research women working in science and contributing to the founding and expansion of conservation biology. A key part of the internship will include collating and summarizing archival documents and talking with women scientists in collaboration with our team. In addition to research, the BOHS intern will work with Zoo Education and Outreach staff to convey the stories of women scientists in an engaging and educational video format. The BOHS intern will choose one of the following focal scientists whose work has also been instrumental to advancing the mission of the Smithsonian National Zoo:

- Devra Kleiman who pioneered breeding techniques on giant pandas that led to successful captive breeding programs worldwide. Her research on golden lion tamarins helped save them from extinction, and she went on to reintroduce the species to its native habitat in Brazil.
- Katherine Ralls who was the first to diagnose inbreeding depression in zoo populations which led to their management. The same principals were adopted for small wild animal populations to maximize the maintenance of genetic diversity and improve their fitness for survival.
- Lisa Stevens who helped propel the Zoo’s giant panda program to the forefront of global conservation efforts and helped open the world of science to young children from diverse backgrounds.



- JoGayle Howard whose research has helped bolster endangered and extinct-in-the-wild species including black-footed ferrets and clouded leopards.

The BOHS intern will receive training in educational video production, accessibility standards and scientific communication, in addition to scholarly writing and research training. This internship will provide a unique opportunity to work with a broad range of Smithsonian staff, including ecologists at the National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute, exhibit specialists, librarians and archivists, educational specialists, writers, videographers, and illustrators. This internship project will be in-person on-site at NZCBI one to two days a week and virtual two to three days a week.

## **#10 “Untold Women’s History: The Podcast”**

### **Smithsonian Enterprises (SE)**

More than 157 million treasures fill the Smithsonian’s vaults, but where public view ends, *Sidedoor*—the Smithsonian's flagship podcast—begins. With the help of biologists, artists, historians, archaeologists, zookeepers, and astrophysicists, host Lizzie Peabody sneaks listeners through Smithsonian’s side door to search for stories that can’t be found anywhere else. This project will highlight the collaboration between *Sidedoor* and the Smithsonian American Women’s History Museum by featuring the story of a historical American woman from an underrepresented background—for example, Ethel Earley Clark, the first president of the Negro Garden Clubs of Virginia in 1932. Clark represented and organized a growing number of Black women who used garden clubs as a means of civic engagement. This internship project will help add stories of historically underrepresented groups to the mainstream historical narrative in an engaging, entertaining and educational manner. The BOHS intern will complete a *Sidedoor* podcast script outline during the eight-week internship. The BOHS intern will be exposed to all aspects of creating an episode, from pitching the idea, to researching potential guests to appear on the episode, recording interviews, writing the script, and editing the audio. The intern will learn how to communicate history effectively to the general public, a difficult skill that requires taking complex, dense, and a vast amount of information and distilling it into something that is informative, engaging, understandable, and entertaining. Being proficient in audio editing software like Pro Tools or Adobe Audition is preferred but not mandatory. This internship project will be in-person on-site at Smithsonian Enterprises two days a week and virtual two days a week.

**#11 “Planning a Study Day with PORTAL for *Brilliant Exiles: Exploring American Women in Paris, 1900-1939*,” National Portrait Gallery (NPG)**

PORTAL, the National Portrait Gallery’s Scholarly Center, fosters engagement with American portraiture through the coordination of discussions, new research, and scholarly publications on portraiture in all media and within various social and cultural contexts. Its symposia, fellowships, online programming, and research situate American portraiture and visual biography within larger social, historical, economic, and political frameworks. This project will encompass many facets of museum work—public programming, exhibit curation, marketing, and event planning—and will be mentored across the museum’s history and curatorial departments. The BOHS intern will assist the PORTAL Program Manager and NPG Historian in organizing a Study Day program that will take place in October 2024 centered around the exhibition *Brilliant Exiles: American Women in Paris, 1900-1939*, which illuminates the accomplishments of 60 convention-defying women—including Alice Toklas, Gertrude Stein, Josephine Baker, Isadora Duncan, Zelda Fitzgerald, Loïs Mailou Jones, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Anaïs Nin, Ethel Waters, and Anna May Wong—who crossed the Atlantic to pursue personal and professional aspirations in the vibrant cultural milieu of Paris. The October 2024 Study Day will also focus on an upcoming exhibition featuring the work of Felix Gonzalez Torres which will include his photograph tribute to Stein and her wife “Untitled (Alice B. Toklas' and Gertrude Stein's Grave, Paris).” The October 2024 Study Day will explore the fluid expressions of art, gender, and sexuality by the women featured in both exhibitions. The BOHS intern will help curators and historians research the thematic ties between the two exhibitions, such as queer ancestry, belonging, and citizenship, drawing from scholarly articles, exhibition catalogues, and primary documents from the Archives of American Art. The BOHS intern will also conduct biographical research on figures that link the two exhibitions, such as Alice Toklas and Gertrude Stein. The BOHS intern will assist the PORTAL project team with planning a full day of programming for October 2024, including gallery tours, public talks, and a reception. The BOHS intern will also help the team identify potential keynote speakers, emerging scholars and artists, and attendees from local institutions. The BOHS intern will help the PORTAL project manager create a communications plan that emphasizes outreach to local universities. The BOHS intern will also assist with the coordination of a PORTAL program in June 2024 exploring Josephine Baker’s legacy of sexuality and subterfuge. Throughout the project, the BOHS intern will receive research guidance from mentors and will meet weekly with the project team. The BOHS intern will gain historical research and program planning experience throughout this internship project.