

Preliminary Call for Participation

2018 Appalachian Studies Association Conference *Re-stitching the Seams:* *Appalachia Beyond Its Borders*

April 5-8, 2018, Millennium Hotel, Cincinnati, OH

Deadline for proposals: October 9, 2017

The 41st Annual Appalachian Studies Association Conference will be held outside the official borders of Appalachia for the first time in more than a decade. As we move beyond the third generation of Appalachians living in urban migrant centers, and cities within the region's traditional boundaries continue to grow, what it means to be Appalachian is evolving to encompass these communities, as well as rural areas and small towns. We find common ground and purpose in shared geographic origins, values, and similar challenges to life and livelihood. Even as we emerge onto ever changing landscapes, our seams line up. How might we best work together, regardless of our location, to address the larger issues facing the region's extended family and to develop the social, cultural, and economic resilience necessary for future generations to thrive?

For the first time in ASA history, a community organization, the Urban Appalachian Community Coalition (UACC) will be the stand-alone host for the conference. The coalition is an outgrowth of the groundbreaking Urban Appalachian Council, a key nucleus for urban Appalachian services, research, and advocacy. Its members believe strongly that the Appalachian spirit can be a positive and powerful force in making progress toward individual and community health, transformation, and empowerment. UACC welcomes this partnership with ASA as they continue their long collaboration with Appalachian people to improve quality of life and foster research and creative expression related to regional identities and heritage.

It is thus only fitting that the 2018 ASA gathering will have community as its focus and will highlight in particular six essential themes key to Appalachians' future: Diversity and Inclusion, Economic Sustainability, Education, Environmental Sustainability, Health, and Migration (please see further explanations below). We hope to draw on the diverse voices and experiences of artists, youth, educators, researchers, workers and business owners, health care providers, and grass roots movers and shakers to share creative expression, important historical insights, useful data and studies, richly textured ideas, inventive plans, and workable solutions that will strengthen our connections and foster mutual support.

The conference will be held in downtown Cincinnati at the Millennium Hotel, with activities taking place at various locations within walking distance or accessed by streetcar. Downtown Cincinnati is experiencing a Renaissance with a lively cultural and entertainment scene. Conference participants will have the opportunity to explore the ever-evolving story of Appalachian peoples in the area, as well as experience world-class museums and theater, electric nightlife, thriving urban parks, and the 2018 season opener for the first professional baseball team in the U. S., the Cincinnati Reds! Check out all the larger metropolitan area has to offer at: <http://www.downtowncincinnati.com/exploring-downtown/downtown-cincinnati-entertainment>.

The Urban Appalachian Community Coalition and Cincinnati welcome the ASA!

For further information contact:

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Conference Themes:

The Program Committee invites proposals for workshops, roundtables, presentations, performances, and exhibits, especially those related to:

Diversity and Inclusion:

These sessions will explore issues related to race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, age, religion, and ethnicity. While our differences continue to impact political and economic empowerment, educational attainment, personal safety, civil rights, and human dignity in the mountains, the region has been in the national spotlight for clashes over beliefs and values. This has led to significant court cases, rallies, and boycotts that have garnered national media attention. Discussions that address any area of these topics are welcome—examples include public policy, current litigation, grassroots efforts to foster diversity and inclusion, the larger political climate of intolerance (e.g. the vilification of Muslims), and the Black Lives Matter movement, as well as its historical antecedent, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Economic Sustainability

The dramatic decline in living standards and life expectancy in Appalachia, the Rust Belt, and other areas of the U.S. that has accompanied the rise of outsourcing and a high-tech, service-oriented economy is intensified in Central Appalachia by the coal industry's sharp contraction in recent years. Political divisions and timidity hinder progress toward a better Appalachian economy, and both major parties have failed to adequately prioritize or put forward sufficiently ambitious policies to address the region's economic problems. We invite you to help us develop bold, alternative plans and strategies for transitioning to a more just and sustainable economy, while recognizing the complexity and difficulty of the task. We especially seek proposals that highlight local development, reconcile economic growth with community well-being, and foster solidarity and cooperation among polarized community members working towards a diversified and high-wage economy.

Education

This theme will focus on education access, pedagogy, and innovation. Presentations might address education availability; implementation and impact of early childhood education programs; integration of technology in all facets of the educational process; innovative approaches to outcomes in public and private elementary, middle, and high school classrooms; regional approaches to education for students with special educational needs, including gifted education; community-based auxiliary educational concepts and public/private partnerships; the elimination of access and affordability barriers to post-secondary options; culturally significant curriculum; efforts to address social issues affecting students and families and their communities; arts- and heritage-centered educational opportunities for technologically minded students; and initiatives that promote positive outcomes at all stages of academic development.

Environmental Sustainability

Our focus for these sessions is the ongoing dialogue among Appalachians about the vital interconnections between our communities and the land, water and air that sustain us. The meaning of that sustainability will be explored through a review of current ecological problems, remediation efforts, and challenges being met by citizens in both rural and urban areas of the Appalachian region. Proposals are invited that will address the legacy of environmental exploitation by the coal industry; current issues related to fracking for natural gas in the region; and grassroots environmental advocacy via legislation, citizen scientist monitoring, and action toward restoring our natural and human resources. Other vital topics might include challenges facing revitalization efforts; restoring our agricultural legacy via community supported farms and home gardening; establishing and maintaining access to healthy, organic food; recycling; and redefining economic development in the context of social and environmental justice.

Health

Appalachia has been at the forefront of an on-going decline in health among Americans. Chronic illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes, as well as lung and colorectal cancer occur at rates much higher than the national average. What do we know about the causes of these trends and which programs have made progress toward reversing them? These sessions will focus on health disparities in Appalachia and issues such as affordability of and access to care (including dental care); community health planning and education; preventive care, including nutrition and physical activity; substance abuse, treatment, and recovery; medical infrastructure, and environmental and cultural factors that are impacting wellness.

Migration

Historical migration streams have shaped Appalachia from its geographic heartland to its borderlands. From the first hunter-gatherers through the twentieth century Great Migration, human mobility defined the region culturally, geographically, and economically. Appalachian migration also shaped the demography, economics and culture of many other regions, including the Northern Kentucky-Cincinnati-Miami Valley region. What stories remain to be told from this experience? How have music and art, the written and spoken word sustained, transformed, and revitalized Appalachian identity? Which organizations and community programs have supported Appalachian migrants? What issues of economic and social justice face those coming to the mountain region and those leaving it behind? How does the current political climate inform these questions locally, nationally, and globally? And what strategies can we share that make people more resilient to adversity and change in new environments?

The full Call for Participation with details for online submission will be made available on August 15.