

**NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO CELEBRATE WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH  
WITH A SPECIAL EXHIBITION AND PROGRAMS**

**March 2017 Initiatives Offer a Preview of the New Center for Women's History,  
Opening Late April 2017**

**New York, NY, February 14, 2017**—In advance of the opening of its new Center for Women's History, the New-York Historical Society will present a special exhibition and series of programs in March 2017 to celebrate Women's History Month. The exhibition *Saving Washington*—showcasing the contributions of First Lady Dolley Madison and her female contemporaries to the fledgling democracy of early America—will inaugurate the Joyce B. Cowin Women's History Gallery within the Center for Women's History on New-York Historical's renovated fourth floor. Other highlights of Women's History Month will include a conference on the history of reproductive rights; an evening with tennis icon and social justice pioneer Billie Jean King, who will unveil select items from her personal archives, recently donated to New-York Historical; a reading series with Girls Write Now featuring young women sharing their creative works; and a panel discussion about "Women and the White House," moderated by *60 Minutes* correspondent Lesley Stahl.

"*Saving Washington* upends the familiar narrative of our American founding as a power struggle among men, offering the story of Dolley Madison, and women of the early republic more generally, as an example of how women's critical but often behind-the-scenes work gave rise to the nation's capital as a beacon for the world," said Dr. Louise Mirrer, president and CEO of the New-York Historical Society.

"Women's contributions have been fundamental to the American story, but too often they have been relegated to the margins," said Pam B. Schafler, chair of New-York Historical's Board of Trustees. "What better exhibition with which to inaugurate New York Historical's groundbreaking Center for Women's History and the Center's Joyce B. Cowin Gallery than *Saving Washington*, which restores the women of our early American republic to their rightful place."

Following Women's History Month, the New-York Historical Society will open its transformed fourth floor to the public in late April 2017, unveiling even more of the Center for Women's History, as well as a custom-designed glass gallery showcasing the Museum's preeminent collection of Tiffany lamps, and a reimagined installation of historic treasures from the Museum's permanent collection that tells the American story through the lens of New York.

### **Saving Washington**

Opening on International Women's Day, March 8, and remaining on view through July 30, 2017, in the Joyce B. Cowin Women's History Gallery, *Saving Washington* will explore the tenuousness of American democracy from the aftermath of the Revolutionary War through the War of 1812 and beyond, addressing women's roles as citizens of a new republic by focusing on the political and social significance of First Lady Dolley Madison and other women of the era. Curated by Valerie Paley, New-York Historical vice president, chief historian, and director of the Center for Women's History, the exhibition will illustrate the mission of the Center for Women's History: to reveal the often-overlooked stories of women who shaped American history.

*Saving Washington* recasts the traditional Founding Fathers narrative to focus on the less-examined contributions of women whose behind-the-scenes and largely unrecognized efforts helped develop the young nation and realize the Constitution "on the ground." Among those who expertly navigated the political world of the early republic, Dolley Madison (1768-1849) was more than an example of what a woman could be in America; she was the embodiment of American strength, virtue, and honor. As the wife of the fourth U.S. president, she is sometimes remembered merely as the hostess who saved the White House portrait of George Washington from British vandalism during the War of 1812. But in fact, she was one of the most influential women in America during the nation's formative years and a powerful force during a time when women were excluded from affairs of state.

*Saving Washington* will feature more than 150 objects—including artwork, books, documents, clothing, jewelry, and housewares—within immersive, interactive installations evoking Dolley Madison's famous "Wednesday night squeezes," her popular social gatherings that drew a wide range of people to "squeeze" into the president's mansion and encouraged informal diplomacy. Lead support for *Saving Washington* has been provided by Joyce B. Cowin and the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation, with additional support provided by Susan Klein. Educational programming was made possible by Deutsche Bank.

### **Diane and Adam E. Max Conference in Women's History**

The Diane and Adam E. Max Conference in Women's History will be held on Sunday, March 5, 9 am – 4 pm. The day-long event will focus on "Reproductive Rights in Historical Context," examining the political, legal, and cultural history of reproductive rights. Topics to be addressed include the fluctuating legal and cultural status of contraception throughout American history, the evolution of obstetrics and gynecological medicine, and the role of race and class in the birth control movement.

Following a keynote speech by award-winning author Jill Lepore, recipient of the 2015 American History Book Prize for *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*, in which she'll discuss the history of birth control in America, the three panels will address:

- *The Legacy of Margaret Sanger*, featuring a discussion of Margaret Sanger's visionary stances as a feminist, reformer, and activist, as well as her problematic embrace of eugenics.
- *Disciplining Reproduction: Political and Legal Battles*, exploring the country's long and agonized controversy over women's right to control their bodies. Moving beyond individuals and institutions, panelists will focus on the historical impact of the law on questions of reproductive justice.
- *Planning Families: The History and Future of Reproduction*, asking important, controversial questions about having children: Who gets to make a family—and how? What are the ethical, legal, and scientific consequences of the different ways to have children, from in vitro fertilization to surrogacy, adoption, and beyond?

More information about the conference, including a list of moderators and panelists, can be found online at Morning Session or Afternoon Session.

### **Speakers and Films**

Month-long programming will also feature a speaker series, with *History with David M. Rubenstein* presenting *An Evening with Billie Jean King* on March 7. Billie Jean King—longtime champion for social justice, former number 1 tennis player in the world, and the first female athlete and first member of the LGBT community to be honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom—is a pioneer in the movement for gender equality both within and outside of sports. In anticipation of the opening of the Center for Women’s History, King will discuss her life and career, highlighting pivotal moments including her historic victory in the 1973 “Battle of the Sexes” match and underlining her mission to incorporate equality into the larger fabric of the American story. A special display on view on New-York Historical’s first floor during Women’s History Month will include items from King’s recently donated archives, including a tennis dress, racquet, and materials that illustrate her historic fight for women’s rights and equal pay.

The *Bernard and Irene Schwartz Distinguished Speakers Series* will feature two programs relating to women’s history in March. *The Ascent of Woman* on March 1 will feature a talk by historian Amanda Foreman, whose groundbreaking BBC/Netflix documentary series *The Ascent of Woman* delves into the social, political, and economic importance of gender equality—a history which has spanned millennia and cultures and has developed into one of the critical issues of the 21st century. *Women and the White House* on March 9 will explore how women throughout history have played an integral role in influencing the executive branch, and our nation as a whole, from both inside and outside the First Family. Moderated by Lesley Stahl, correspondent for *60 Minutes* and a former CBS News White House correspondent, the panel will include Carol Berkin, Presidential Professor of History, Emerita, at Baruch College and the Graduate Center, CUNY; Annette Gordon-Reed, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*; and Gil Troy, author of *The Age of Clinton: America in the 1990s*.

Additionally, New-York Historical continues its *Bernard and Irene Schwartz Classic Film Series*, featuring the *Justice in Film* series that explores how film has tackled social strife, morality, and the perennial struggle between right and wrong—conflicts that manifest across cultures and history. On March 24, New-York Historical will screen *Woman of the Year* (1942), a film starring Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy as colleagues who fall in love despite his traditional family values and her driven career ambitions. Author and journalist Kati Marton will introduce this Academy Award-winning romance about rethinking gender roles.

Throughout March, young visitors can learn more about women’s contributions to history by exploring the DiMenna Children’s History Museum with a women’s history scavenger hunt. On March 4, acclaimed historical musician Linda Russell will explore the women of the past as reflected in the popular songs and stories of the day in their own words. On March 5, culinary historian Lavada Nahon will share some of the most important historical resources that her mother has passed down, including antique recipe cards and books, to inspire children to discover stories of women in their own family history. Families can learn about the women who fought during the Civil War on March 18, as living historians will recreate the underrepresented and contested contributions to the North and South’s war efforts by those who openly served in combat roles as women, women who disguised themselves as men to enlist, as well as individuals who may not have or who today cannot be identified as one gender. On March 19, the Ladies of Trenton—who organized in the summer of 1780 and surprised George Washington with a tremendous

contribution of \$15,488 to the Continental Army—will be portrayed by living historians as they recreate the sewing circle. Sunday Story Time throughout March will feature books about remarkable women in history, including *Elizabeth Leads the Way* by Tanya Lee Stone, illustrated by Rebecca Gibbon, and *Here Come the Girl Scouts!* by Shana Corey, illustrated by Hadley Hooper.

On March 17, New-York Historical welcomes New York's first and only writing and mentoring organization for girls, Girls Write Now, which mentors underserved young women to find their voices through the power of writing and community. Visitors are invited to attend Girls Write Now's CHAPTERS reading series in which new writers go from the page to the stage and perform pieces they have written in front of an audience. Mentees share the spotlight with one another, performing and presenting their best pieces, developed with guidance from and oftentimes in collaboration with their mentors. Guest authors and speakers join them, telling stories of how they became writers and what supports their work. March's CHAPTERS will feature Hala Alyan, author of *Salt Houses* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt/May, 2017). Future CHAPTERS readings will also be hosted at New-York Historical.

Tickets and more programming details are available at [www.nyhistory.org](http://www.nyhistory.org).

### **The Center for Women's History**

The Center for Women's History is the first institution in the nation within the walls of a museum dedicated to this essential subject and will be unique in its size, scope, and inclusive spirit. Located on the transformed fourth floor of the New-York Historical Society and officially opening in late April 2017, the Center will showcase special exhibitions in the Joyce B. Cowin Women's History Gallery, special display cases illuminating particular moments from the broad sweep of women's history, and bold interactive digital installations. Public funding for the Center for Women's History was provided by the City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs and the State of New York Empire State Development. Major funding for the Center and its programs has been provided by Joyce B. Cowin, Diane and Adam E. Max, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Jean Margo Reid, and the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation. Corporate support provided by Deutsche Bank and Hogan Lovells.

### **About the New-York Historical Society**

The New-York Historical Society, one of America's preeminent cultural institutions, is dedicated to fostering research and presenting history and art exhibitions and public programs that reveal the dynamism of history and its influence on the world of today. Founded in 1804, New-York Historical has a mission to explore the richly layered history of New York City and State and the country, and to serve as a national forum for the discussion of issues surrounding the making and meaning of history.

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