

UPCOMING HISTORIAN LECTURES FROM *LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN HISTORY*



To register, please visit: <http://pd.nycoit.org>

Registered participants will receive books, materials, and a light dinner.

January 24th

New York and the Making of American Multiculturalism:

By Edward O'Donnell, PhD

No city in America, perhaps even the world, is more closely associated with immigration than New York City. From its earliest days as New Amsterdam, where 500 residents spoke 18 languages, the city has accepted wave after wave of the foreign-born. Along the way the city has acquired both a reputation for tolerance and the icons to prove it, from the Statue of Liberty, to Ellis Island, to the Lower East Side. Indeed, America's ethos of tolerance, what is now enshrined in terms such as multiculturalism and diversity, was to a large degree developed in New York and then projected to the culture at large. Yet it was a contentious, frequently violent process, for the city also produced most of the nation's major nativist crusades, from the Know Nothings in the 1850s to the eugenics movement in the early 1900s. This talk, accompanied by 75 slides of period images, cartoons, and maps, examines the course of immigration in the 19th and 20th centuries, tracing the evolution of American multiculturalism and the role key individuals such as Jacob Riis and Lillian Wald, played in it.



March 20th:

The Most Progressive State in the Country? -- New York, Post-war liberalism and the Civil Rights Movement

By Brian Purnell, PhD

Description: In 1945, New York State passed some of the country's most progressive legislation banning racial discrimination in housing and employment. In fact, New York was a leader in the nation with respects to civil rights laws. And yet, during the 1960s, New Yorkers mounted one of the most dynamic and aggressive demonstration movements against racial discrimination. Activists in the city fought against racially segregated public schools, housing discrimination and employment discrimination. They demanded cleaner streets in predominantly black neighborhoods and an end to racial exclusion in the building trades unions. How is it that racial discrimination remained a potent political issue in one of the most progressive states in the country? How did the movements in New York influence and contribute to the national civil rights movement? These questions, and more will be discussed in this lecture.

May 29th:

Gotham Goes to War

Mike Wallace, PhD

In New York, 1941, the city looked across the Atlantic, at the conflagration that had been underway since the Germans invaded Poland in 1939, and saw, especially in the fate of London, a possibly frightening future for Gotham. Wave after wave of German bombers were daily dropping hundreds upon hundreds of heavy explosives and thousands of incendiaries on England's capital city, filling morgues and hospitals with dead and wounded, and devastating historic buildings like the House of Commons and Westminster Abbey. At the same time U-boat wolf packs were sinking merchant vessels carrying war supplies from New York to England at a terrifying rate, and moving their operations ever closer to the city itself. In May 21, Mayor Fiorello La Guardia declared that because "New York City is the logical and most attractive and tempting target for a foreign enemy it was imperative to assume the worst might happen," and he pushed a massive program to involve citizens in preparing to withstand a massive Nazi hit.

La Guardia's leadership role was complemented by other citizens and by military defenders as they responded to approaching war – people like Eleanor Roosevelt, who sought a wider definition of preparedness than did the Mayor, A. Philip Randolph, who mobilized the city's African-Americans to demand the right to fight and work for their country, Lieutenant General Hugh Drum and Rear Admiral Adolphus Andrews, who readied the city's physical defenses of forts, airbases and submarine nets. Most important, the New Yorker in the White House, Franklin Roosevelt, led the country – against fierce opposition in and outside New York – towards a war with fascism, defined that war as more than military victory (the Four Freedoms). We will look at these and other leaders – people in the media (like Henry Luce), the labor movement (Sidney Hillman), the arts and sciences – who promoted varied, sometimes contesting strategies, for preparedness. We will then follow them into the war years themselves, to see how leaders (and citizens) fared under the extreme conditions of global war.