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# Race Is in the Eyes of the Recorder: Understanding Race in Records

**By Darcie Hind Posz, CG, FASG**

> *The price one pays for pursuing any profession or calling, is an intimate knowledge of its ugly side.—James Baldwin*[1]

Americans' fascination with race endures as a part of American history and identity. It centers us in the present, yet also connects us to our origins. The assignment of race, by self or society, can also disconnect us. The siloing and categorizing of races has been part of efforts to empower persons and communities, but has also at times removed them from the whole and brought about racial hierarchies, whether unintentionally or purposefully.

Rarely is someone just one race in the United States. Persons are biracial, transracial, or multicultural.[2] 2020 census results showed that America is more racially diverse than thought. In some states nearly 32% of people identified as more than one race.[3] Before 2000, enumerated individuals were only allowed to choose one. This trend is observable by U.S. genealogists: Most of our ancestors or research subjects could historically choose only one race. Choosing wisely had implications for rights and property.

### Racial Hierarchy and Considerations

> *Most people of color in America must navigate racialization within dominant discourses of society and cope with stereotypes about their racial/social group. In a society with a low tolerance for multiple and intersecting identities, individual and social strategies of passing and colorblindness obscure the richness and complexity of multilayered racial and ethnic. . . identity.*
> —Kim Park Nelson[4]

I meet people twice. First, in writing, my maiden name is British with a Bavarian married surname. But when I meet people in person, it is obvious I am AANHPI.[5] What people see, like it or not, is what will be recorded.[6] There will be contradictions, especially if several people of various backgrounds and experiences with people of different races record an event. Racial hierarchies created in White-dominated social contexts have "contributed to the development of multiple strategies of survival among non-White persons."[7]

We need to understand the historical contributions to racial inequality and hierarchy when we evaluate historical documents. Studying the racial foundations, the impact and origins of laws, guidelines, regulations, and systems, will assist us when we encounter records that contradict how we currently live.[8] If we feel pressured today to choose one and choose wisely, can you imagine the societal pressure for our ancestors or the subjects we are researching?[9]

Knowledge and alertness to American racial hierarchy and identity is essential when navigating those of American research subjects. Did they feel pressured to pick one race in particular because of their time period?[10] We have to be aware of the double standard by which "the multiethnic heritages of White Americans are allowed to operate both as concurrent (several ethnicities) and divergent (just one). . . . There is much less social tolerance for hybridity in ethnic. . . identity formation among people of color."[11]

### Race Is in the Eyes of the Recorder

Records reflect what the recorder saw. This might have been an enumerator, a county official, a reporter, a self-reporting individual. Each person brings with them their education, bias, and personal history when entering race into a record. The record itself reflects a snapshot of time and of a person's perception of the event being recorded. Detachment is key when we, the researcher, begin to sneakily apply pre-

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## Race Is in the Eyes of the Recorder

*continued from page 1*

sentism. Ibram X. Kendi described a method to undo racism that can be applied as we evaluate these records and consider the recordkeepers: "consistently identify and describe it—and then dismantle it."[12]

As an example, consider the acquisition of ancestral land by Native Hawaiians. *Identify*: "the treasured promise of Hawaiian homestead still requires maximizing one's percentage of Hawaiian blood. . . . Pressure remains on Native Hawaiian men to regain control of their race and encourage Native Hawaiian women to 'save the race.' If Native Hawaiian women do not have children with Native Hawaiian men (of the appropriate blood quantum) one view is that they are 'diluting' Native Hawaiian claim to land."[13] *Describe and dismantle*: The pressure to find those that meet a certain blood quantum requirement in indigenous research can skew what and where you research.

Attempts have been made to apply similar methods to genealogy over the years. Elizabeth Shown Mills wrote a chapter in *Generations and Change* that examine racial purity in the South, Indian-White marriages, a single drop of blood interpretations, multicultural lineages that included White/Indian/Black coexistence, slavery, and reliance on oral history. All of these were discussed to dispel myths of southern research. Mills stated, "It is time . . . that outmoded ethnic misconceptions be set aside and the genealogist approach these resources with the open inquisitiveness and judicious discretion that produces success in scholarship."[14] This was a revolutionary approach to records that would normally have been siloed: African American research in one silo, slavery in another, Indian research in another, slave owners in another, and neighbors and associates in still another. But while each group might have their own records groups, they would rely on the records groups of all the others to form a more complete historical account of their times. These records in total would deal with race and racism, blood quantum, possible plural marriages, illegitimacy, and differing ages and classes for parents. If out of the many records Mills described we only dealt with topics that did not make us uncomfortable, we might be left with no more than an index entry.

### Describe and Dismantle: A Case Study

Laws and guidelines for determining a person's race or ethnicity can differ from document to document and from state to state. They also reflect their time period. Be careful when making a final declaration on an ancestor's race. What they knew during their lifetime might be different from what is available to us now.

For example, if a person was told that someone was their father and believed what they were told during their entire lifetime, and now, with access to DNA tests, we discover a different biological father or different ethnicity, we must also respect what the subject believed to be true and avoid genetic presentism.

Try to generate a list of records and the laws regarding race and color that could accompany them as guidelines for registrars and record keepers. A strategic way to do this is to utilize Elizabeth Shown Mills's *QuickSheet: Genealogical Problem Analysis: A Strategic Plan* and generate a timeline using that model.[15] Create a timeline in a table that lists the record and the race/color. Then pair it with laws from that time period. *The Advancing Genealogist* website has links to law books for each state.[16]

In Table 1 on the next page, see how individuals were supposed to record people. Where the individual being researched is themselves the informant, take special note (**bold** in Table 1). Now consider why they might have wanted to list one race over another in different locations or during different time periods. When we describe, dismantle, and detach, we get to see how our ancestors or research subjects lived in a time very different than ours.

As an example, early records for Ned Neki Hind relied on informants: his biological mother, his maternal grandparents, and the observations of the census taker. Birth records did not require the race of the child, but they did list the parents' race in the Territory of Hawai'i. Between the filing of his christening and birth record, his surname was updated from Tanaka to Hind, which gave him the shield of an English surname.[17] In the household of his *hanai* (adopted) parents, his maternal grandparents, his race was that of others in the household.[18] When he registered his Social Security application in 1944, he reported the races that he thought he was: Japanese, English, and Hawaiian.[19] This was at a time in Hawai'i when I.D. cards had to be carried due to martial law.[20] Once he entered the military, Ned was usually classified as White. When he relocated to a part of the mainland where laws dictated that Asians could not marry Whites, self-reporting that he was Hawaiian provided another safeguard. And now, with DNA tests, Ned's descendants know that his father was not even the Japanese man he thought, but an unknown male with southern Chinese ancestry.[21]

### Conclusion

Ned's wandering racial designation protected him in several locations where social and legal strictures dictated how he would be treated and seen. His claimed race is not repeated by his descendants. The interaction of how race is seen by society, reported by an individual, and captured in records will be further impacted by the laws of the time period. In genealogy, we need to evaluate the entire sequence of records generated during a person's life, view them within the context of legal and societal mores, and be aware of motivations for choosing one or more.

**Endnotes**

1. James Baldwin, "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy," in *Nobody Knows My Name* (Vintage Books, 1993), 302; original published in *Esquire* (May 1961).
2. Kim Park Nelson, *Invisible Asians: Korean American Adoptees, Asian American Experiences, and Racial Exceptionalism* (Rutgers University Press, 2016), xiii.
3. Eric Jensen, Nicholas Jones, Megan Rabe, et al., "2020 U.S. Population More Racially and Ethnically Diverse Than Measured Before in

*continued on page 3*

2010," (https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/2020-united-states-population-more-racially-ethnically-diverse-than-2010.html). Maria Krysan and Amanda E. Lewis, eds., *The Changing Terrains of Race and Ethnicity* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), Table 5.1.
4. Nelson, *Invisible Asians*, 121.
5. AANHPI = Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander. Darcie M. Hind Posz, "The Skill Set Option for Multicultural American Genealogy," *National Genealogical Society Magazine*, 39 (July–September 2013): 31–34.
6. Nelson, *Invisible Asians*, 122. Nelson argues, "Individuals with hybrid identities are pressured to pick a side, usually that of the most visibly obvious race."
7. Nelson, *Invisible Asians*, 121.
8. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s, Critical Social Thought* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).
9. Reynolds Farley, "Identifying with Multiple Races: A Social Movement that Succeeded but Failed?" in Krysan and Lewis, *Changing Terrains*. Miri Song, *Choosing Ethnic Identity* (Polity Press, 2003). Mia Tuan and Jiannbin Lee Shiao, *Choosing Ethnicity, Negotiating Race: Korean Adoptees in America* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2011).
10. Nelson, *Invisible Asians*, 126–127.
11. Ibid., 126.
12. Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (One World, 2019), 9.
13. Maile Arvin, *Possessing Polynesians: the Science of Settler Colonial Whiteness in Hawai'i and Oceania* (Duke University Press, 2019), 147.
14. Elizabeth Shown Mills, "Ethnicity and the Southern Genealogist: Myths and Misconceptions, Resources and Opportunities," in Robert M. Taylor, Jr., and Ralph J. Crandall, eds., *Generations and Change: Genealogical Perspectives in Social History* (Mercer University Press, 1986), 89–108, specifically 108.
15. Elizabeth Shown Mills, *QuickSheet: Genealogical Problem Analysis: A Strategic Plan* (Genealogical Publishing Company, 2010).
16. Debbie Mieszala, "Law Library Index," *The Advancing Genealogist* (https://advancinggenealogist.com/laws-and-statutes-index/).
17. Hamakua District, Hawaii, Record of Members, 1923–1932, Births and Blessings, 8, Ned Tanaka, p. 1227, 7 June 1926: FSL microfilm 899825.
18. 1930 U.S. census, Hawaii County, Territory of Hawaii, population schedule, Kukuihaele, Hamakua District. ED 1-9, sheet 1A, dwelling 6, family 8, Ned Hind in the Robert Hind household. 1940 U.S. census, Hawaii County, Territory of Hawaii, population schedule, Kukuihaele, ED1-8, sheet 6B, dwelling 146, Ned Hind in Robert Hind household.
19. Ned Neki Hind, SS no. 576-20-8111, 15 June 1942, Application for Account No. (Form SS-5), Social Security Administration. Ned identified his father as "Ned Yoshida" and his racial identity as Hawaiian, English, and Japanese.
20. Ned Neki Hind, Personal Identification Card No. 69826 (1944); Honolulu Police Department, Honolulu, Hawaii; held by Darcie Hind Posz.
21. A draft is pending publication with the DNA explored. Darcie Hind Posz, "The Three Lineages of Ned Neki Hind: A Case Study of Unknown Paternity."

**Table 1**

| Record | Race or Color Guidelines (Laws) |
|---|---|
| Birth certificate | "Race or color was not a requirement on certificates of birth until 1937." Hawaii State Archives, Vital Statistics Collection, 1826–1929 (Hawaii State Archives, 2021); PDF, (https://ags.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/hsa_223_Vital-Statistics-Collection_FA_20210901.pdf). Of note: A parent's race is still listed. |
| 1930 U.S. census | "Mixtures of colored races should be reported according to the race of the father, except Negro-Indian." *Fifteenth Census: Instructions to Enumerators, Population and Agriculture* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1930,) 26. |
| 1940 U.S. census | "Mixtures of colored races should be reported according to the race of the father, except Negro-Indian. *Sixteenth Census: Instructions to Enumerators, Population and Agriculture, 1940* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940), 43. |
| **Social Security** | Designation of race was required on applications. Robert C. Lieberman, "Race, Institutions, and Social Policy," *Social Science History*, 19 (Winter 1995): 511–542, specifically 515. |
| I.D. Card (Martial Law) | "All civilians. . . were registered and fingerprinted, and they were required to carry identification cards at all times." Issued by the Control Identification Bureau. "Martial Law in Hawaii," *Densho Encyclopedia*. J. Garner Anthony, *Hawaii under Army Rule* (University Press of Hawaii, 1975). |
| **WWII Draft** | 1940–1943: "the familiarity of local [draft] boards with the ancestry of registrants made it a logical choice for determining race." "By early 1943 [Director Lewis] Hersey had developed a policy which more or less accepted the racial claim of the registrant, unless there was some serious charge against it." George Q. Flynn, "Selective Service and American Blacks During World War II," *The Journal of Negro History*, 69 (Winter 1984): 14–25, specifically 21. |
| 1950 U.S. census | "Determining and entering race. . . Assume that the race of related persons living in the household is the same as the race of your respondent, unless you learn otherwise. *Enumerator's Reference Manual for the 1950 Census of the United States* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940), 1-469. |
| **Marriage #1** | Since 1880, race has been recorded in Iowa. "Researching Iowa Birth, Death, Marriage and Divorce Records," *State Historical Society of Iowa* (https://history.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/history-research-collections-vitalrecords-reference-18.pdf). |
| **Marriage #2** | Until 1969, anti-miscegenation laws made it illegal for a white person to marry an Asian (or Black.) "Jim Crow Laws: Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, and New Hampshire," *Americans All* (https://americansall.org/legacy-story-group/jim-crow-laws-missouri-montana-nebraska-nevada-and-new-hampshire). |
| **Birth certificate of son and daughter** | Since 1880, race has been recorded in Iowa. "Researching Iowa Birth, Death, Marriage and Divorce Records," *State Historical Society of Iowa* (https://history.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/history-research-collections-vitalrecords-reference-18.pdf). |
| Death certificate | Since 1880, race has been recorded in Iowa. "Researching Iowa Birth, Death, Marriage and Divorce Records," *State Historical Society of Iowa* (https://history.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/history-research-collections-vitalrecords-reference-18.pdf). |

# Effective Research Questions

## By Jan Joyce, DBA, CG, CGL, AG

**What Is a Research Question?**

Research questions, research objectives, and research goals—how are these similar or different? Research objectives and goals are broad terms often used interchangeably. They might encompass something like "work on my Kaser surname line," or typical client requests such as "find out everything you can about my Correll line."

However, a research question (RQ) is distinct. Research questions possess specific characteristics that make them actionable. When the questions are well-crafted, they often guide us to their answers.

**What Comes before and after a Research Question?**

A research question is the first stage in what is typically a five-stage research cycle. It initiates the cycle, followed by identifying and collecting sources, identifying and testing evidence found in information within the sources, recognizing and resolving conflicting evidence, arriving at conclusions, and then arguing for those conclusions in writing.[1]

Given its foundational role, the clarity, accuracy, specificity, and answerability of the research question are critical. Without it, the next stage of identifying sources for a research plan could go awry. It could not only waste time but might lead to problems.

**Types of Research Questions**

Research questions usually fall into one of these categories:

- *Relationship*—usually a "who" question: "Who was the mother of Brita Gaard, born 22 April 1866 in Talgje, Norway, and married on 18 June 1888 to John Knudt Twedt Johnson in Faribault, Minnesota."
- *Identity*—usually a "which" question: "Which Brita Gaard from Norway died in 1948 in Story City, Iowa?"
- *Activity or Event*—usually an event or situation: "When did Brita Baard, born 22 April 1866 in Talgje, Norway, immigrate to the United States?"
- *Biographical Detail*—usually a date or location: "Where was Brita Gaard, who lived in Faribault, Minnesota, in 1888, born?"

**Characteristics of Good Research Questions**

Effective research questions exhibit simple yet critical characteristics:

- *Information Identification*—Research questions must include information that uniquely identifies the research subject such as names, locations, and event dates.
- *Specificity*—The question should focus on a single research subject and one specific thing you want to learn about them.
- *Feasibility*—The question should be answerable directly or indirectly, with sources likely available for the time and place in question.

Additionally, research questions should be ethical and not invade a living person's privacy. Standard 10 helps us understand more about the types of research questions as well as their characteristics.

**Characteristics of Ineffective Research Questions**

Conversely, there are ineffective research questions. A yes or no question is too limiting. For example, one might ask "Was Joseph Kaser the father of Lydia Kaser who was born in 1807 in Northampton, Pennsylvania?" Since the next stage is to formulate a research plan and identify sources, those sources might have information indicating that Joseph was not Lydia's father. Then the research has not progressed. Instead, reframe the question as "Who was the father of Lydia Kaser, who was born in 1807 in Northampton, Pennsylvania?"

Another type of poor research question is one that might not be answerable. This could be because sources do not exist in the time and place of interest. For example, it will not work to ask a research question to identify a fifteenth great-grandmother in an undocumented location. Asking something so specific that it cannot be answered such as the time of day someone was born predating birth certificates or the "right" spelling of a name are also inappropriate research questions.

Problematic research questions include those with multiple answers or ambiguity. For example, a question such as "Who was Lydia Kaser?" is too general, not asking for a relationship, identity, or activity.

**Creating a Research Question from a Document**

As a part of BCG's certification process, applicants complete a portfolio element titled "Document Work." Requirement 3-C involves identifying a single research question. This might seem counterintuitive: Genealogists typically formulate a research question before obtaining a record. However, BCG's purpose in requiring the RQ is to assess the applicant's ability to construct an effective research question that guides the next two requirements of analyzing the document in relation to the research question and creating an efficient and effective research plan.

How can we best select a research question in this setting? In addition to the aspects mentioned above, consider:

- The research question should be related to a person mentioned in the document and should be a logical question. For example, a will mentions only a male testator and his children. A good research question could be: "Who was the mother(s) of Ida, William, and Ella Cleave, the named children of James Cleave who wrote his will 1 January 1919 in Summit County, Ohio?"
- Create a research question that allows your research plan to shine. You are an expert in the geographic place and time period you selected (see BCG's *Preliminary Application Form*, which initiates the application process). Your research question should showcase your ability to plan research through a series of records appropriate to that time and place. For example, a deed names and shows the signatures of John and Juliann Shank. A research question could be "What was the

maiden name of Juliann Shank, named wife of John Shank, who executed a deed on 15 May 1823 in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania?"

- The RQ for this requirement should not be so simple that it can almost certainly be answered with one easily acquired document. For the deed example just mentioned, do not ask who the prior owner of the land was. The previous deed is likely easily found and thus the RQ is answered in one record. This would not display the applicant's ability to plan research for a more complex scenario.

### Focusing a Research Question for a Research Report

Research reports are generally driven by client requests. Frequently, clients ask something like "tell me everything about my third great-grandmother and her family." The genealogist has the responsibility to guide clients into identifying focused and targeted research questions. This approach holds true for the BCG certification process and the portfolio's element titled "Research Report Prepared for Another Person" (see BCG's *Application Guide*).

When selecting a research report for submission to BCG, ensure that the characteristics of well-formulated research questions are evident in your work sample. These include specificity, information identification, and feasibility as discussed above. Additionally, choose a research question that employs one of the recommended types of research questions: relationship, identity, event, or biographical detail.

Consider refining a broad objective into a targeted research question. For instance, rather than tackling the request to find out everything about the client's third great-grandmother, narrow the focus to "Who was the father of Sarah Headley, who was born around 1808 in Pennsylvania and who married David Dewitt 21 February 1827 in Holmes County, Ohio?" This focused question provides a clarity permitting the research process to be more manageable and effective.

### Identifying a Research Question for a Case Study

BCG's certification process includes the element "Case Study: Conflicting, Indirect or Negative Evidence." This work sample must be more narrowly focused: Only a significant problem of relationship or identity is allowed. That criterion excludes research questions about events, activities, or less significant biographical details. Research questions are the basis for why the case study is created.

### Summary

Research questions are not complicated. When we get them "right" they aid us in improving research efficiency and effectiveness. Identifying first the type of question we want to ask and then including the identifying characteristics will create solid RQs. For BCG portfolio submissions, be sure to apply the basic tenets of good research questions and thoroughly read the BCG *Application Guide*, *Genealogy Standards*, and the BCG rubrics as they apply to each element.

### Endnotes

1. Thomas W. Jones, *Mastering Genealogical Proof* (National Genealogical Society, 2013), 5.

### Reference List


- Board for Certification of Genealogists, *The BCG Application Guide*, 2021. https://www.bcgcertification.org/images/files/BCG_Application_Guide.pdf.
- Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards* (Ancestry.com, 2019). Specifically, Standard 10.
- Henderson, Harold. "Ten Minute Methodology: How to Ask Good Research Questions, *Board for Certification of Genealogists* (https://www.bcgcertification.org/ten-minute-methodology-how-to-ask-good-research-questions.)
- Jones, Thomas W. "Focused Versus Diffuse Research," *OnBoard* 17 (September 2011). https://www.bcgcertification.org/skillbuilding-focused-versus-diffuse-research
- Jones, Thomas W. *Mastering Genealogical Proof* (National Genealogical Society, 2013), especially pp. 7–8.


## BCG Education Fund News

The Spring 2025 Putting Skills to Work event will be held in person at the National Genealogical Society Family History Conference on Friday, 23 May at the Galt House in Louisville, Kentucky. Lunch will be provided by the National Genealogical Society.

Margaret Rose Fortier, CG, and Mary Kircher Roddy, CG, CGG, current editors of the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, will offer "Applying Standards to Writing for Publication." Patti Hobbs, CG, CGG, will teach "Mastering Reasonably Exhaustive Research: Identifying, Analyzing, and Prioritizing."

Both workshops include hands-on exercises. Visit the BCG Ed Fund website (https://bcgedfund.org/) for more descriptions and to register for this all day event.

The BCG Ed Fund will sponsor "Margaret's Mother: Using DNA to Solve a Mystery," presented by Judy Russell, JD, CG, CGL, at the Ohio Genealogical Society Conference, held in Sandusky, Ohio, 30 April–3 May 2025. For more information on this event, see https://www.ogs.org/2025-conference/.

## Upcoming Webinars

Register for upcoming BCG webinars at http://legacy.familytreewebinars.com/?aid=6803.

21 January: "The Everleigh Sisters: A Case Study in Conflict Resolution," Karen Stanbary, CG, CGG

18 February: "Applying Research Standards to the Census," Diane MacLean Boumenot, CG

18 March: "The Influence of Free and Cheap Land on Migration," Annette Burke Lyttle, CG

15 April: "A Matrimonial Advertiser: Tracing the Treacherous Trail of an Early 20th-Century Romance Scammer," Sharon Hoyt, CG

## New and Renewed Associates

### NEW ASSOCIATES

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## Call for BCG Trustee Nominations

Under BCG bylaws, one-third of the trustees are elected each year to serve three-year terms. The 2025 Nominating Committee requests suggestions by 1 May 2025 for candidates for this year's slate.

Nominees placed on the ballot will be certificants whose standards of work are exemplary and who contribute to the Board's composition with regard to geographic areas and expertise in fields such as accounting, administration, law, and marketing. Individuals suggested to the committee must be willing to fulfill the duties expected of all trustees:

1. To serve for three years and participate in a wide range of BCG activities involving many volunteer hours;
2. To attend the trustees' midyear meeting generally held at the annual National Genealogical Society Family History Conference in the spring; and
3. To attend the annual meeting of the trustees, generally held in September or October in Salt Lake City.

Trustee meetings may be held in person or virtually as designated by the BCG Executive Committee. Trustees serve without compensation and are expected to pay their own travel and related meeting expenses.

Trustees whose terms expire at the end of the 2024 annual meeting are LaBrenda Garret-Nelson, Jari Honora, David Ouimette, Barbara Vines Little, and Scott Wilds.

Please send suggestions for candidates with a short description of their special skills by 1 May 2025 to the chair of the Nominating Committee: mroddy3@msn.com. 2025 Nominating Committee: Mary Kircher Roddy CG, CGG, chair; Ruth Randall, CG; Debbie Hooper, CG.

## President's Corner

**By David Ouimette, CG, CGL**

A meeting of the Trustees of the Board for Certification of Genealogists was held on 13 October 2024 at Salt Lake City, Utah. At the meeting, the Trustees elected the officers for the 2024–2025 terms:

- President: David Ouimette, CG, CGL
- Vice President: Angela Packer McGhie, CG, FUGA
- Secretary: Gary Ball-Kilbourne, PhD, CG, CGL
- Treasurer: Shannon Green, CG, CGG, CGL
- Member at Large: Karen Stanbary, MA, LCSW, CG, CGG
- Member at Large: Scott Wilds, CG

Faye Jenkins Stallings continues as a Trustee and, as past president, will serve as an *ex officio* member of the Executive Committee, providing counsel and guidance.

The Trustees also elected the 2025 Nominating Committee: Mary Kircher Roddy, CG, CGG, of Washington State, chair; Deborah Hooper, CG, AG, of Delaware; Ruth Randall, CG, of New Mexico.

Trustees Matthew Blaine Berry, CG; Angela Packer McGhie, CG, FUGA; and Mary Kircher Roddy, CG, CGG, were reelected to the Board for another term. We welcome Mark Wentling, CG, of Massachusetts and Jennifer Zinck, CG, of Connecticut as newly elected Trustees.

Other continuing Trustees are Catherine B. W. Desmarais, CG; LaBrenda Garrett-Nelson, JD, LLM, CG, CGL, FASG; Jari Christopher Honora, CG; and Barbara Vines Little, CG, FNGS, FUGA, FVGS. Michael S. Ramage, JD, CG, continues as General Counsel to the Board, and Darcie Hind Posz, CG, FASG, continues as Executive Director.

I want to thank Faye Jenkins Stallings for her service as BCG President for the past two years. Her long-term vision and daily leadership has been vital. It is an honor to follow her in leading BCG in its continue mission, "to foster public confidence in genealogy as a respected branch of history by promoting an attainable, uniform standard of competence and ethics among genealogical practitioners, and by publicly recognizing persons who meet that standard.

I also want to thank Richard G. Sayre, CG, CGL, FUGA, for his invaluable service as a Trustee and a past president. We have benefitted greatly from his tenure on the Board.

During the October meeting, the Board approved changing the requirement for retired status to include those "who are aged 65 or older and who have maintained their credential in good standing for at least ten years." It was agreed by consensus that the Executive Committee will look at making this policy retroactive.

The BCG Board plans to meet in person during the National Genealogical Society's conference at Louisville, Kentucky, in May 2025. Associates are welcome to attend in person or virtually.

I am grateful for the amazing work done by our webmaster, Patti Hobbs, and the website committee, to develop, test, and release the new BCG website. With the new hosting service, modernized site navigation, and upgraded store, the website is more user friendly and stable than ever. The new website, with improved layout and site organization, is designed primarily to help our visitors find Certified Genealogists to hire, learn how to work to standards to become excellent genealogists, and become Certified Genealogists.

I offer my gratitude to Nikki Gilkison LaRue for her efforts arranging for this year's Joy Reisinger Memorial Lecture Series presented at the FamilySearch Library in Salt Lake City on 11 October. Five wonderful lectures were given by Elissa Scalise Powell, CG, CGL; Teresa Steinkamp McMillin, CG; Rebecca Whitman Koford, CG, CGL; Angela


Packer McGhie, CG, FUGA; and Michael G. Hait, Jr., CG, AG. These presentations were well attended and are now available for viewing on the *Legacy Family Tree Webinars* website at http://familytreewebinars.com/reisinger.

Thank you to Margaret Fortier, CG, for her years of service as chair of the BCG webinar committee, and to Jennifer Zinck, who has been on the committee for the past few years and is now stepping up as the next chair. We also thank Teresa Steinkamp McMillin and Melissa Johnson for their service on this committee, and welcome Barbara Vines Little as a new committee member.

Since the launch of the Certified Genetic Genealogist credential, six associates have completed its requirements. The two newest are Paul Graham, CG, AG, CGG, and Mary Kircher Roddy, CG, CGG.

Please continue to share your ideas about ways in which we can advance BCG's mission: president@bcgcertification.org.

## Spotlight: Jari Honora, CG

By Judy G. Russell, JD, CG, CGL

There aren't many genealogists who can hear the words *curator*, *tutor*, *accession*, *succession*, and *usufruct*—and smile comfortably from the vantage point of familiarity with Civil Law concepts and records.

There are fewer still who can wax poetic at the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual culture of the Louisiana Creoles—and intersperse dozens of French and Creole words and expressions into daily conversation.

There are even fewer who can be described as a young person of color born, raised, and still living in the Deep South.

And there's only one who matches all of those and sits on BCG's Board of Trustees.

Jari Christopher Honora was born and reared in "the greatest city in America, New Orleans" with deep roots in south Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. A graduate of Tulane University with a degree in history, he taught social studies to middle and high schoolers for four years and then began working in museums. Elected to the Board in 2024 and its youngest member at the age of just 33, Jari came to genealogy when the grandmother who raised him couldn't answer his questions about her own grandparents. "Her reply was that she never knew any of her grandparents, as all but one of them died before she was born" he recalls. "That inspired me to research them so I could share my findings with her."

It wasn't always a straight path to those findings. Like many others, Jari faced what he calls his "genealogical comeuppance" when he realized that he'd conflated the identity of a third great grandfather with another man of roughly the same age with a similar surname in the same area. And like many others, he learned the hard way about properly documenting sources. "There were several times when I had to retrace my steps to properly identify photocopies or abstracts of records I'd made." Still, those experiences brought him to an appreciation of the Genealogical Proof Standard and, ultimately, to certification.

Jari achieved certification in 2022 after the pandemic unexpectedly gave him time to work on his portfolio. He credits regular reading of the *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* as a key in his own preparation, and recommends it to anyone thinking about certification, along with reading the work samples on the BCG website and at BCG tables at conferences and institutes.

One of his research specialties is lineage and fraternal society history. He is himself a member of the Sons of the American Revolution, the Society of the War of 1812, and the Sons and Daughters of the U.S. Middle Passage, and he recently co-curated an exhibit on the history of fraternal orders. A standout moment for Jari was when he was scanning the list of delegates to the 1920 National Convention of the Knights of Peter Claver, a 115-year-old international fraternal order in which he himself is a Fourth Degree Knight and has served as a local, state, and national officer. "There just as clear as day was the name of my great-great-grandfather, Sandor Honora, who was Grand Knight of his council." Jari is also a Fourth Degree Knight of Columbus, and a member of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World.

But Jari's abiding interest is in Louisiana research in general and Creole research in particular. For the last six years, he's been the Family Historian at The Historic New Orleans Collection's Williams Research Center in the heart of the French Quarter, just two blocks from historic Jackson Square and St. Louis Cathedral. The challenges he sees in that research begin with its Civil Law tradition, with records primarily in French and Spanish, the use of surnames particularly among Creoles of color derived from forenames of ancestors, diminutives of forenames or even from "dit" names or nicknames, and even difficulties in defining just what "Louisiana Creole" means.

"It's a cultural identity," Jari notes. "It doesn't mean 'mixed-race' and doesn't depend on a phenotype or 'look.' It is and it always has been rightfully embraced by people who are White, Black, indigenous, or any combination thereof. Louisiana Creoles are rooted in the Latin culture, using French, Spanish, or Creole languages, practicing Roman Catholicism, and following cultural practices of Latin Louisiana rather than those of the 'Americans'—the people who purchased Louisiana, settled in it, and continue to be confounded by it even today."

Particularly in this work, Jari has seen a "tremendous need for education" among the general public. "I regularly assist patrons who have no concept of what archival research entails and who have the notion that genealogical research is either entirely online or merely a question of consulted magical compilations that can answer all one's questions instantaneously," he said. "We need to do a better job of promoting these activities among—or even hosting them in institutions such as religious congregations, colleges, enrichment programs, retirees' groups, veterans' groups, etc."

It's a task that Jari wants to undertake personally—he's one of four contributors to the more than 300 posts on Creole history and culture at CreoleGen.org (https://www.creolegen.org)—and as a BCG trustee. "I hope to 'spread the news,' as so many have done before me, about the learning opportunities BCG provides through its website, its publications, and the lectures it sponsors."

And on a personal note: "I hope that my unique position as a young adult, a person of color and as a genealogist who is a native, still residing and working in the Deep South, will help to extend our reach into all three of those populations."