



Lindsay Graham is the Ambienominated and Webby Award-winning host of the podcasts *American History Tellers*, *American Scandal* and *History Daily*, and the executive producer of the audio dramas *1865* and *Terms*. He is a podcast creator, producer and host whose productions reach tens of millions of listeners. Through his production company *Airship*, Lindsay seeks to expand human understanding and empathy through audio storytelling.

I recently learned an important lesson about how we interpret history, and it starts with Rod Stewart.

On July 23, 1988, supporting his “*Out Of Order*” album, Stewart played the inaugural concert at the brand new Starplex concert venue at Fair Park in Dallas, TX, my home town. The very next night, Guns N’ Roses opened for Aerosmith.

Officially, the venue was known as the “Coca-Cola Starplex Amphitheater,” but locals just called it “Starplex.” Lots of great concerts there, from Frank Sinatra and Miles Davis, to Lollapalooza and Ozzfest. Almost anything you wanted to hear, you could at Starplex.

Today, it’s called the Dos Equis Pavilion. Before that it was the Gexa Energy Pavilion and Superpages.com Center. Each time the name changed, many Dallasites would wince, before realizing, “oh, you mean Starplex.”

This is no doubt also true where you live. A highway is renamed. A municipal building. A mountain, even. A whole country. We rename things all the time, and it’s never without reason. We should be used to it, but still we wince.

I’m not a historian; I’m a podcaster. But my shows all tell stories from the past in order to entertain and, hopefully, educate. In that sense, maybe I’m a public historian, and I take my role in teaching and interpreting history seriously. I want to make sure that I get my facts right.

But that’s where the trouble starts. Am I more correct to call it Starplex? Or the Dos Equis Pavilion?


This past August 11th, my podcast *History Daily* released an

episode on the Watts Rebellion. Hearing that phrase, many listeners objected immediately, “oh, you mean the Watts Riots.” Some even accused me of trying to ‘change history’ by using “rebellion” instead of “riots.”

I of course do not have the power to change history. The past is set. But the names we use are fluid; they are merely symbolic representations of things in the universe. “A rose by any other name,” after all—and names change all the time. We don’t call North, Central and South America the “New World” anymore. Huntington’s Disease is no longer “St Vitus’ dance.” And it’s now the Dos Equis Pavilion, not Starplex.

The underlying thing did not change. The symbolic reference to it did, and for reasons that aren’t arbitrary, and often stem from an increased understanding of the thing we’re trying to describe. You can’t change history by renaming something. You can, perhaps, increase or decrease our present understanding of history. And that’s important—the only reason why a study of history is useful at all. But many people interested in history just want “the truth.” That’s impossible. Without us living humans to interpret it, “the truth” is a set of unreadable coordinates in space and time, a map without a compass rose.

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"History, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us." * **James Baldwin**, *Ebony*, August 1965

The same August that these words from James Baldwin were published, racial tensions in Los Angeles exploded. The events I called the Watts Rebellion were violent, spontaneous and costly in lives and property. Fires were set; stores were looted. Thirty-four people died, with more than a thousand injured. That does sound like a riot. But it could be a rebellion, if there was some objective to the violence, something the fight was against. If it affected real political or social change, it could even have been a revolution. These words are not interchangeable, and an increased understanding of the events can lead to choosing one over another.

But "Riot" was the first used and most frequent still. And as I discovered recently, using something else makes people wince. I can understand the wince if it's merely an unfamiliarity with the name—the head scratching realization, "oh, you mean Starplex." But wouldn't the curious person wonder why it's no longer called Starplex?

For the curious among you, we used "Rebellion" in our podcast because we believe that term better explains the underlying causes of the events. The violence wasn't random, senseless or without context. And that context isn't modern revisionism. Many people knew the source in the beginning, including James Baldwin, who wrote on the topic in 1966, and Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., who visited Watts only days after the violence ended.

But the question of what happened in Watts, and what it should be called, was asked in more mainstream quarters, too. Even as the fires were still burning, a CBS radio editorial proclaimed, "This was not a riot. It was an insurrection against all authority. This was not a riot. If it had gone much further, it would have become civil war."

And reaching an even greater audience, a December, 1965 CBS television report on the violence explicitly asked the question, "Watts: Riot or Revolt?" From the very beginning, we were questioning which symbolic reference to these events in the universe we should use. But the use of the word "riot" was the prevalent one, and set the narrative: what happened in Watts was senseless violence perpetrated by an inflamed mob of largely Black Americans.

Over the decades, that narrative has been changing. Sometime in 2016, the prevalence of "Watts Rebellion" overtook "Watts Riot" in published books. But changing terms to reflect a changing narrative is not necessarily presentism. Instead, it's the lens of history, crafted to correct society's myopia. We can see things like the Watts Rebellion in light of the Rodney King Riots and George Floyd Protests, and they will each inform each other because that's what historical context does—it's a telescope with both ends available for viewing. History looks backward and forward because, "the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us."

Yet, I still wince when someone calls it the Dos Equis Pavilion, even when I know there are reasons it's called that, and entire generations have never stepped inside a "Starplex." I'm sure you sometimes wince, too. That's OK. But when you do, I'd encourage you to make sure you're merely experiencing an animal reaction to the unfamiliar—and not an incurious obstinance, or worse: a dehumanization of a historical event that only makes sense at all due to its humanity. Because as David McCullough told me so succinctly, "history is human."

"I think that every student in school from grade school right on through should be learning, reading, and involved with the quest of learning that comes through studying history. In many ways, [it's] the most important subject that education provides. There's no foreseeable future, there never was, and that's one of the lessons of history, and there's no such thing as a self-made man or woman. We're all results of lots of people who shaped us. Primarily teachers, other than your parents, great teachers, can change your life. I don't think history is just about politics or the military. It's about people, and art and music and architecture and science... History is human. I think that's the most important part." * **David McCullough**, once called "America's Greatest Living Historian"

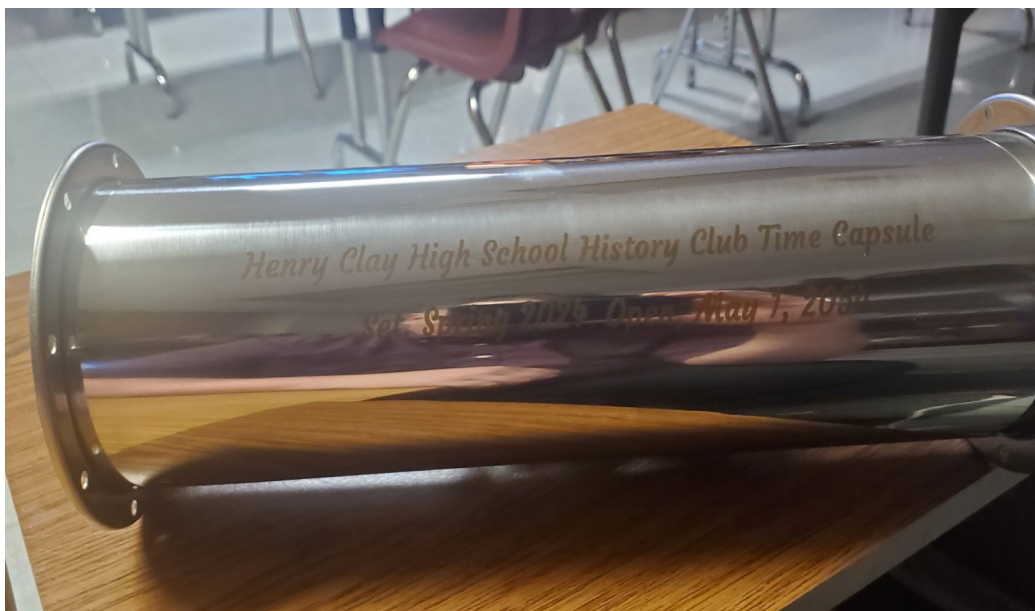
Access to the NHC network, which includes chapters in 46 states and over 18,000 members, is a great benefit of joining the NHC. We encourage you to read about other chapters in your state or across the country and explore new opportunities! To explore specific sites click on the bolded text to be redirected!



Brown County High School (IN) at Mounds State Park in Anderson, Indiana. The park has preserved ten earthworks built by the Adena-Hopewell people, prehistoric Native Americans that settled the Ohio River Valley.



Camden Central High School (TN) sponsored a Veterans Day program where veterans of all ages came to the school Nov. 10 to be recognized and appreciated with a brunch served by the students. The school has now held this event for 30 years, with the History Club sponsoring it for the last 10 years.



Henry Clay High School's (KY) Club has 128 members this year! They are creating a time capsule for the school, taking oral histories of faculty who have 20 plus years at HCHS, and have done a history walk where over 200 students visited the library to interact with artifacts from their History Lab.



Cannon School (NC) held a ceremony, where History Club Imperatrix, **Ashmi Trivedi**, presented on the history of Veterans Day to students. They then wrote and sent notes to veterans both at the local VA Hospital in Salisbury and also to their own veteran teachers.



Sullivan High School (IN)—in conjunction with their local library—conducted a cemetery walk highlighting important local residents buried in their oldest cemetery. Each student researched an individual, and then in period costume retold their history in first person.



Heritage Christian Academy (MI) traveled to the Michigan Maritime Museum in South Haven, Michigan. The Museum showcases Michigan's Great Lakes maritime heritage, and students got to see an old Coast Guard boat station, displays of and sounds from various ships, and left with a better understanding of commercial fishing in Lake Michigan.



La Quinta High School (CA) has participated in a variety of activities this year, including debates about such topics as the Great Society and the Cold War, and visiting the Nixon Library. Here they are with Cal State Long Beach University History Professor Brett Mizell, who spoke to students about his role as the Director of the American Studies program and reasons for majoring in History in college.



Temple High School (GA) holding their annual Veterans Day ceremony at the beginning of November, where Veterans from the community came into the school to speak with students about their experiences in their respective branches.



Williams Bay High School (WI) members (from left to right) **Ella Durbin**, **Elliana Borgen**, **Gabby Klein**, and **Savanah Woods** participated in "The Final Harvest" remembrance ceremony of the 187th anniversary of the removal of the local Potawatomi People at the Ancient Burial Ground in Williams Bay.

Moline High School (IL) started the year with a big project focused on their mission of community service and civic education. The Club took on the task of reshaping the senior patio into an outdoor learning classroom for use by students and teachers. The Club spent much of the fall hard at work, physically transforming the space by mulching the grounds, cementing posts into the ground, and then attaching the signs (see photo) for exhibits. The first exhibit that was unveiled at the grand opening was one featuring local history. All Club members decided to research historical locations in Moline and the Quad Cities. Working in teams, the members created panels to be displayed in the outdoor classroom. The Club plans to do multiple historical exhibits over the year as well as in future years, and hopes that the MHS History Club Outdoor Classroom will benefit future classes for years to come.



Lake County's History Club (SD) is a new member to the NHC and to raise money for their group they hosted a car show, which was a huge success. Nearly 30 cars came to the high school parking lot for the event, and the students sold hot dogs for lunch and awarded trophies for various categories. They had over 250 in attendance and the students raised nearly \$1000 for the chapter!

THE CONCORD REVIEW HISTORY CAMP



The Concord Review (TCR) History Camps are intensive online and in-person workshops in which secondary-school students learn and practice a toolbox of skills for researching and writing history.

Students must arrive with at least a subject they want to investigate, preferably with several books and journal articles that they've read about it, though they may bring a draft of their work-in-progress. With the guidance of experienced instructors, they learn and practice fundamentals of the historian's craft, enabling them to complete a historical research paper of 4,000 to 8,000 words—a long-term project that takes upwards of two to six months. Many students who have attended our Camps have then submitted and had their papers published in *The Concord Review*.

Instructors work one-on-one with students, coaching them through the research and writing process: formulating productive research questions; finding and making discerning use of primary and secondary sources; taking accurate notes; analyzing evidence, formulating a provisional narrative and testing it with more research; marshaling evidence to support one's position or narrative; puzzling together a narrative structure for one's essay; documenting evidence with University of Chicago-style source citations; and writing and rewriting. **We are now accepting applications for our Winter sessions, as well as our Summer 2024 sessions. To find out more please visit our website.** More than 200 students have attended our History Camps this year and have left better prepared for the academic work they will be expected to do in college and beyond.

"In my experience at my school, I haven't learned new writing skills since early middle school. I've always felt restricted in what I could write about and how I was able to go about it. This is an experience most of my friends share. Quite honestly, I've learned more about writing an excellent and sophisticated paper in these two weeks than I have in five years in school."

The NHC is proud to have the support of over 60 college history departments! We hope that any of our members who are interested in majoring in history in college will visit a college's website listed down below to find out more about the history department and its offerings.



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| American University | Loyola University Chicago | University of Alabama |
| Barnard College | Marquette University | University of Alabama Birmingham |
| Baylor University | Massachusetts Institute of Technology | University of Chicago |
| Boston College | Mount Holyoke College | University of Colorado |
| Boston University | New York University | University of Georgia |
| Brandeis University | North Carolina State University | University of Iowa |
| Carnegie Mellon University | Northwestern University | University of Illinois |
| Dartmouth College | Ohio State University | UMass Amherst |
| Centre College | Princeton University | UMass Lowell |
| Georgia Tech University | Rhodes College | University of Michigan |
| Gonzaga University | Rice University | University of Mississippi |
| Fordham University | Rochester Institute of Technology | University of North Carolina |
| Franklin & Marshall College | Santa Clara University | University of Pennsylvania |
| Harvard University | Skidmore College | University of Richmond |
| James Madison University | Southern Methodist University | University of Rhode Island |
| Johns Hopkins University | Southwestern University | University of Texas at Austin |
| Kenyon College | Stanford University | University of Utah |
| Lewis and Clark College | Stony Brook University | University of Vermont |
| Louisiana State University | Suffolk University | Vassar College |
| Loyola Marymount University | Swarthmore College | Wake Forest University |
| Loyola University Maryland | Texas Christian University | Wellesley College |

NATIONAL HISTORY CLUB

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Omohundro Institute of Early American History	Art Snyder
Organization of American Historians	Rick Sperry
Parkview High School (GA)	Lisa Wingate

The National History Club is a 501(c)(3) organization that relies on grants and donations to support efforts. If you are passionate about history and would like to contribute to our mission of promoting history at the secondary level please contact **Robert Nasson** (rnasson@nationalhistoryclub.org).