LINDA K. KERBER, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA (EMERITA) RECEIVES 2018 ROY ROSENZWEIG DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD FROM THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN HISTORIANS

BLOOMINGTON, IN—During its annual meeting in Sacramento, California, the Organization of American Historians (OAH) presented Linda K. Kerber, University of Iowa (Emerita), with their prestigious 2018 Roy Rosenzweig Distinguished Service Award, which is given annually to an individual or individuals whose contributions have significantly enriched our understanding and appreciation of American history.

Roy Rosenzweig Distinguished Service Award

The Organization of American Historians is proud to confer its 2018 Roy Rosenzweig Distinguished Service Award on Linda K. Kerber, May Brodbeck Professor in the Liberal Arts, Professor of History, and Lecturer in Law, Emerita, University of Iowa.

For over four decades, Linda Kerber has been a dynamic force in the expansion of American history, women’s history especially, a compelling undergraduate teacher and graduate student mentor, and a spirited institutional leader who has persistently pushed our profession to support scholars and histories as diverse as America’s complex past.

Professor Kerber’s leadership emerged along with her thriving scholarship. She emphasized inclusiveness, personal and intellectual. She understood the power of committees and institutions to promote change, and she led them, first as an engaged, productive member, then as an officer. She asked questions. How many women and minorities were tenured in college and university departments? Why were women and minorities so absent from convention programs? Whose history mattered and why? She discussed, she organized, and she consulted, opening doors and standing for all of history’s practitioners. She reached out personally to women and minorities especially. Strangers were encouraged by her remarkable openness in lectures, panels, and even the briefest hallway conversations. They asked questions about careers, books, and difficulties in meshing academic, professional, and personal life, and her advice has resonated for years, amplified by her memorable personal warmth.

Professor Kerber underlined this leadership from the beginning of her career through front-rank scholarship. Federalists in Dissent (1970) immediately marked her as a major figure in the historical reconstruction of postrevolutionary political life. Her distinctive 1976 expression, “republican motherhood,” has ever since described women’s central responsibility in shaping postrevolutionary concepts of citizenship. Women of the Republic (1980) upended everything we thought we knew about women and the American Revolution (but didn’t) and helped catapult women’s history into a prominent, vibrant field in American history at large. No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies (1998) demonstrated how women’s exclusion from civic and legal obligations persistently compromised their citizenship from the early republic to the present. It revealed Kerber’s stunning mastery in yet another field, American legal history. Little wonder that her classroom readings book, Women’s America: Refocusing the Past, co-edited with Jane Sherron DeHart and Cornelia
Dayton and first published in 1982, now is in its eighth edition, or that she is writing a new book on another new subject, the United States and the long-standing international dilemma of statelessness.

Amid all the scholarship, Kerber not only won the trifecta of American historical society presidencies but was a dynamic president in each. Her presidential address for the American Studies Association (1989) proved so dazzling that the American Quarterly began publishing all ASA presidential addresses. She initiated the Organization of American Historians’ still-vibrant Japan residency program during her term as President (1996–1997), substantially expanding the OAH’s international profile. As President of the American Historical Association (2006–2007) she took the lead in marshaling historians to use their skills and knowledge to advocate for archiving and preserving the records of government. She has served on numerous editorial boards, plus the governing boards of the ASA, OAH, AHA, the American Society for Legal History, and the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture. She is a presidential appointee to the board overseeing the published history of the U.S. Supreme Court, sits on the Board of Trustees for the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion in The Hague, and has written friend of the court briefs for U.S. Supreme Court cases and innumerable op-eds for newspapers, journals, and online publications.

The OAH is honored to honor Linda K. Kerber, whose consummate leadership and transformative scholarship epitomize selfless citizenship in our profession, our institutions, and our nation.

The award was presented on April 13 by OAH’s 2017–18 President Edward L. Ayers and 2018–19 President Earl Lewis.

For more information, visit oah.org or call 812.855.7311.

# # #

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN HISTORIANS

Founded in 1907, the Organization of American Historians (OAH) is the world's largest professional association dedicated to American history scholarship. With more than 7,500 members from the U.S. and abroad, OAH promotes excellence in the scholarship, teaching, and presentation of American history, encouraging wide discussion of historical questions and equitable treatment of history practitioners. It publishes the quarterly Journal of American History, the leading scholarly publication and journal of record in the field of American history for more than a century. It also publishes The American Historian magazine. Formerly known as the Mississippi Valley Historical Association (MVHA), the association became the OAH in 1965 to reflect a broader scope focusing on national studies of American history. The OAH national headquarters are located in the historic Raintree House on Indiana University's Bloomington campus.