



Request for Qualifications

Research Fellowship: Maryland's History of Religious Diversity and Its Role in Present-Day Democracy in the United States

PURPOSE

The Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) is seeking qualified candidates for a short-term research fellowship on the subject of the history of religious diversity in Maryland and how it can play an active role in present-day democracy in the United States.

The research fellowship is part of the grant project funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc., titled "Support for Exploring Maryland's Legacy of Religious Toleration 1649 to Present—Religion and Cultural Institutions Initiative III program." The project is carried out by MCHC in collaboration with the Institute for Islamic, Christian and Jewish Studies (ICJS) from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024.

The research fellowship will take place between May 15 and December 1, 2024. The final schedule will be determined with the successful candidate.

Interested candidates must apply by March 15, 2024. See below for instructions.

Any questions should be addressed to Dr. Martina Kado at mkado@mdhistory.org.

BACKGROUND

As the United States approaches the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 2026, it is an opportunity to examine what it means to build an inclusive, religiously diverse democratic society. Cultural and historical organizations are called upon to actively highlight stories of individuals and communities whose perspectives may have been left out of the national narrative up to this point.

As the home to many pivotal moments in our country's pursuit for religious tolerance and plurality, Maryland has a deep and complex religious history and present. This grant project will be a launching point for a larger interpretation of religious pluralism in Maryland from the state's founding to the present day, understanding religious diversity to be a building block of functioning democratic societies.

SCOPE AND SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

The selected candidate's responsibilities will include:

- An assessment of MCHC's museum and library collections that pertain to Maryland's diverse religious history;
- Working collaboratively with ICJS and their network of partners, the fellow will assess collections in other notable repositories of religious objects and archives in Maryland. This assessment will inform the development of MCHC's discoverability tools to increase access and awareness of MCHC's religious collections. It will also



reveal gaps in MCHC collections to help guide strategy for future community outreach with an aim toward new acquisitions and programming;

- Working closely with staff at MCHC and ICJS, the fellow will synthesize their findings into an interpretive framework on the history of religious tolerance, inclusive of more recent histories concerning religious pluralism in modern Maryland. This framework will inform MCHC's signature museum initiative for the 250th anniversary of our country in 2026;
- Participating in community outreach and public programming activities led by MCHC and ICJS as needed.

Potential areas and angles of research include, but are not limited to:

- Revisiting the "origin story" of Maryland as a state of religious toleration: The Maryland Toleration Act (aka the Act Concerning Religion, 1649), its repeal in 1654, and subsequent tension between professed tolerance and actual practices of exclusion for minority faith groups;
- The impact that state-church collaboration toward Christian conversion and assimilation had on Indigenous communities from the 17th century onward and its implications for the life of Indigenous communities today;
- The history of Maryland's "Jew Bill," which allowed Jewish citizens to hold public office, and interfaith collaboration that enabled the act to pass in 1826;
- The diversity of African American faith traditions in Maryland; of particular interest would be the organization of African Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, and Catholic communities (including the Oblate Sisters of Providence, first Black order of nuns in the nation).
- An exploration of the growth of the Muslim community in Maryland, including the development of the Islamic tradition from the transfer of West African communities via enslavement to the rise of communities post-Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.
- Religious diversity among Asian communities in Maryland, leaning on current research in special collections as well as oral history work being carried out in the region.

The research fellowship will take place between May 15 and December 1, 2024, with an estimated commitment of about 30 hours a week. The fellow will work for 640 hours total, with the final schedule to be determined with the successful candidate. The fellow's schedule will include:

- Onsite work at MCHC (museum and library collections), as well as visits to other potential repositories as needed;
- Meetings with MCHC and ICJS project teams (onsite and virtual);



- Remote work as agreed-upon with the successful candidate.

WHAT WE OFFER

The selected fellow will receive total compensation of \$32,000 for their work on their project. This position does not include benefits.

There is an allocated budget for travel expenses for the purposes of project activities.

The fellow will receive a complimentary one-year MCHC membership.

We will explore MCHC's publication channels (scholarly journal; blogs; membership communication) as potential dissemination and visibility avenues.

QUALIFICATIONS

We are seeking a research fellow with the following desired qualifications:

- A doctoral degree in history, museum studies, religious studies, archival science, political science, or other relevant degree; ABD candidates will be considered.
- Specialization and published track record in Maryland history, history of religion, history of democracy, interpretive frameworks, and/or other relevant fields;
- Experience researching in special collections archives and museum collections;
- Experience building interpretive frameworks for museums and/or cultural heritage sites.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Qualified candidates should apply by March 15, 2024, with the following:

- CV or resume highlighting experience relevant to this project, including publications, projects, and/or previous positions;
- Cover letter addressing how the candidate fits the specific requirements included in the Scope of Services and Qualifications sections;
- Contact information for 3 professional references; alternatively, 2 professional and 1 academic reference.

Applications are accepted through our [online application system](#) (account creation required). Applications may be saved and returned to before submitting.



REVIEW PROCESS AND TIMELINE

Submissions will be reviewed by a panel of MCHC and ICJS staff. Finalists will be invited for an interview in March and April 2024, and the final decision will be communicated to candidates by the end of April 2024.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Maryland Center for History and Culture collects, preserves, and interprets the history, art, and culture of Maryland. By exploring multiple perspectives and sharing national stories through the lens of Maryland, MCHC inspires critical thinking, creativity, and community. Learn more at mdhistory.org.

ICJS envisions an interreligious society in which dialogue replaces division, friendship overcomes fear, and education eradicates ignorance. To dismantle religious bias and bigotry, ICJS builds learning communities where religious difference becomes a powerful force for good. Learn more at icjs.org.