

Claytee White

I am honored to nominate Claytee White for the Distinguished Nevadan Award in recognition of her extraordinary contributions to preserving and documenting the history and cultural heritage of Nevada.

As the founding director of the Oral History Research Center at UNLV Libraries, Claytee has been instrumental in shaping the landscape of historical preservation in Southern Nevada. Since returning to UNLV and establishing the center, she has curated and conducted more than 4,000 oral history interviews, capturing diverse narratives that illuminate the lived experiences of Nevadans who have shaped our region. These projects span significant topics, including the history of African American communities, the evolution of Las Vegas, and the transformation of the gaming industry. A robust historical record that represents all aspects of the community is essential to our collective identity, our understanding of our shared history, and our ability to glean meaningful insights from the past. Her tireless efforts have ensured that the diversity of experiences that make Southern Nevada unique are preserved for the benefit of future citizens.

Her expertise and dedication have made her a sought-after speaker and consultant. Claytee has presented at national conferences, contributed to publications, and shared her insights on public panels, thereby amplifying the importance of oral history in academic and community contexts. Her efforts have elevated the visibility of Nevada's history, ensuring its stories resonate far beyond our state borders.

Claytee's work with the historic Westside of Las Vegas has been transformative in preserving the history of this vibrant community. She has meticulously documented the stories of residents who experienced the challenges and triumphs of living in this historically African American neighborhood, capturing narratives about segregation, civil rights, and the evolution of the Westside. Through partnerships with community leaders, local organizations, and UNLV, Claytee has ensured these stories are preserved, fostering a deeper understanding of the Westside's pivotal role in shaping Las Vegas. She is one of five founders of the Las Vegas Black Historical Society, dedicated to chronicling the history of the Las Vegas Black community. As a member of the Greater Westside Historic and Cultural Preservation Society, Claytee has contributed to efforts to safeguard and celebrate the rich heritage of the Historic Westside. Additionally, she played a vital role in the development of the HUNDRED (Historic Urban Neighborhood Design Redevelopment) Plan in Action, a strategic initiative of the City of Las Vegas aimed at revitalizing the Historic Westside of Las Vegas, ensuring that its cultural significance is preserved for future generations while fostering community growth and development.

She served 15 years on the Las Vegas Historic Preservation Commission, where she advocated for the preservation and recognition of the city's rich cultural and historical landmarks. She has participated in events such as "Juneteenth in Southern Nevada," where she shared her expertise on the history and significance of Juneteenth, contributing to the community's understanding and celebration of this important event. She serves on the Academic Advisory Board of BlackPast.Org,

an educational platform that provides access to articles, primary source materials, biographies, and other resources related to African American history and the broader African diaspora.

Claytee has demonstrated exceptional dedication to professional service throughout her career, significantly contributing to the fields of oral history, public history, and community engagement. She has served on numerous local and national boards and committees, including leadership roles within the Southwest Oral History Association, the national Oral History Association, and various historical and cultural organizations across Nevada. Her expertise and commitment to preserving history have made her a sought-after advisor for projects and initiatives that aim to document and celebrate diverse narratives, particularly those of historically underrepresented communities.

In Nevada, she has worked closely with institutions such as the Nevada Humanities Council and the Clark County Museum, collaborating on projects that amplify regional history and culture, and has been the recipient of the organization's Judith Winzeler Award for Excellence in the Humanities from Nevada Humanities. She has also provided mentorship and guidance to emerging historians and archivists, fostering the next generation of professionals dedicated to documenting and preserving the past. She is on the Board of Directors for the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, more commonly known as the Mob Museum, and was formerly a member of the museum's Advisory Council.

In the wake of civil rights protests in the summer of 2020, Claytee co-created and hosted the award-winning series, *We Need To Talk: Conversations on Racism for a More Resilient Las Vegas*. This ongoing, innovative series fosters open and honest dialogue about systemic racism, social justice, and equity in Southern Nevada. Claytee's expertise in historical context and her skill in connecting past injustices to present-day challenges have been central to the series' success. Her thoughtful curation of topics and speakers has created a platform for underrepresented voices, amplifying stories and perspectives that inspire meaningful change. By facilitating these critical conversations, Claytee has not only educated the community but also empowered it to take actionable steps toward building a more inclusive and equitable Las Vegas. Her work on this series demonstrates her unwavering commitment to using history and storytelling as tools for progress and resilience.

Claytee is a host of the *Women Who Saved History* podcast, a platform that highlights the invaluable contributions of women in preserving history, particularly the stories of marginalized communities. Through this podcast, Claytee engages with historians, activists, and community leaders to spotlight the often-overlooked efforts of women who have played pivotal roles in safeguarding cultural heritage. She also serves on the executive board for Women of Diversity, an organization dedicated to empowering women and giving visibility to achievements of women through production of documentaries.

A passionate ambassador for Las Vegas and Southern Nevada, Claytee's extensive work in historical preservation, community outreach, and education has made her a key figure in shaping the narrative of the area. She routinely provides tours of the Westside to visiting dignitaries, new

faculty, students, and community organizations. As a trusted spokesperson, she actively fosters dialogue about the city's history and its ongoing cultural evolution, ensuring that Nevada's history continues to be recognized and celebrated on a national and global scale.

She has authored several articles and book chapters that delve into the African American experience in Las Vegas. Her writings, including "African American Women Migrants: A Las Vegas Odyssey," published in the Nevada Women's History Project, provide valuable insights into the challenges and triumphs of African American communities in the region.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from California State University, Los Angeles, and a Master of Arts in History from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and has completed doctoral work at the College of William & Mary.

Claytee White embodies the spirit of the Distinguished Nevadan Award through her unwavering dedication to preserving the heritage of our state, her scholarly excellence, and her meaningful contributions to the cultural and intellectual fabric of Nevada. I strongly recommend her for this prestigious honor.

Nominated by Chair Amy J. Carvalho