

S05E01 Reconstructions: Looking Forward to the Seventh Biennial C19 Conference

Transcript

Ryan Charlton [RC]: Welcome to the C19 Podcast. I'm Ryan Charlton at the English Department at Auburn University. In this installment, we are talking to the organizers of the seventh C19 biennial conference happening March 31st to April 2nd in Coral Gables, Florida. This year's conference "Reconstructions" invites us to consider continuities and parallels between the nineteenth century and the present moment. As ongoing struggles for racial justice and voting rights confirm, reconstruction truly is, in the words of historian Eric Foner, and unfinished revolution. The three interviews that comprise this episode explore resonances of the conference theme as well as the practical concerns of conference attendees. As the society's first in-person gathering in four years, the upcoming conference offers some of us the opportunity to be with friends and colleagues who we may not have seen since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. For others, this marks our first opportunity to experience an in-person academic conference and share our work with a room full of scholars. In our first segment Lizzy LeRud talks with members of the conference program committee about the theme and structure of this year's conference.

Lizzy LeRud [LL]: Hi everybody! This is Lizzy LeRud. I am joined today by the Conference Program Committee, and I will let them introduce themselves.

Anna Mae Duanne [AD]: Hi, I am Anna Mae Duanne and I Associate Professor of English at the University of Connecticut.

Sarah Chinn [SC]: I am Sarah Chinn; I am Professor of English at Hunter College, which is part of the City University of New York.

LL: And, unfortunately, not joining us today is Professor Autumn Womack, who is the Assistant Professor of English and African American Studies at Princeton University, but we will have a conversation today with who we have here to talk about the program theme. So, let me start with a general question here. How did you arrive at the conference theme of Reconstructions?

AD: Well, it was Sarah's idea. We sort of immediately thought it was a great idea, and I know that when Autumn joined us she really helped us expand all the possibilities around reconstruction. I don't know, Sarah, since you were the one who came up with it, why were you thinking about it?

SC: I was thinking about it for several reasons. One was, there has been a lot of talk about reconstruction and the sort of push back against reconstruction these days, cause we see so many parallels with the Post-Obama era and this sense that White

Supremacy finds Black achievement insufferable and unsupportable. And so there has to be this sort of backlash and that is exactly what we saw in Reconstruction. So I think for me there was parallels between the post-reconstruction era, the sort of collapse into White Supremacy and Jim Crow, and I feel like with the voter suppression that is going on right now and the rise of the Alt-Right, it seemed like a really timely intervention. And, I think another piece of it was, “Reconstructions” with an “S”, was to think about how in many ways the United States is always in the process of remaking and rebuilding. There is a sense of like, “we’ve made something, oh no! we need to fix it.” And so, in fact, well, I’ll put it this way: not so many of our panels are actually about Reconstruction. It’s a handful. For people, the theme of reconstruction was a really useful way to shape the panels they were going to put together.

AD: Yeah, it’s so interesting and tragic about the timeliness of it because when I was reflecting on the conversation about this when it first came up, one of the things we also talked about was we were at this moment when it was either just before the election or just after the election and we made jokes about constructions and Building Back Better and this idea about the hopefulness of reconstruction at that moment, that like we’ve just gone through this incredibly divisive era and I think when we were discussing this there was this moment of “well, maybe there is a chance to rebuild” though I think [Laugh] by the time we get there, yeah we are very much in the sort of post-Reconstruction – like “oh God, that didn’t work.”

SC: I’d say one more thing, which is Cody Marrs, who is a fantastic scholar of The Civil War and Reconstruction era, talks about this long Civil War, which far preceded 1860 and went far beyond 1877. The seeds of the kind of division happened in the 1860s, were planted at the very beginning of the formation of the United States and the ramifications of reconstruction lingered for a long, long time and linger with us still. Two years ago, only two years ago, people were taking down statues of Confederate generals. So, you know, it’s not like we were not still living with that because certainly are.

LL: Could we talk about some of the nitty-gritty of the planning and the program, what might feel new and what might feel familiar? Are there features that are new to the program? And are there other things that are coming back that have been successful in the past?

[SC]: I think mostly because the structure works so well, we are basically doing the same sort of structure. You know, one thing I am very excited about is the C19 Now presentation by Desmond Meade, and who, you know, is a voting rights activist and is the proponent but also the energy behind the ballot initiative that returned voting rights to people who were convicted of felonies. And given the parallels with the kind of voter suppression that is going on right now and the suppression that went on after The Civil War, he was a really obvious choice for us. And that work is so exciting and he is so passionate about it. And so, we’ve had C19 Now presentations before, this one that is

so explicating engaged with community, engaged with political action is very exciting to me cause that is a direction that we have not gone in.

[AD]: And I think in terms of the tried and true things that have already worked, we are very excited, I am, about the seminars because, which I think is such a great innovation, and I remember the conversations around creating the seminars, you always want more time to talk – and I think even leaving the seminars, people always want more time to talk which is an indication of how exciting and generative they are, but a way to really share your work over an extended period with people who are working on something similar. I have actually hosted one, and still everyone who was in it, I stay in touch with. It was an incredible experience and I am very excited because I am attending one. And it also is a way of mapping some of the more, you know where people are clustering, what sort of trends or sort of conversations are emerging because of who is willing to do it and who wants to apply to it that all of a sudden we've got 15 people at this conference who are all thinking about carceral studies or visual studies; you know it is a really great sort of way to get little constellations I think is the metaphor I want of where the gravity is sort of increasing around certain conversations.

[SC]: And one thing we have done is expand the time of the seminars from two hours to two and a half hours because, well, my experience of being in seminars is that there is not enough time. Two hours is just not enough time for everybody to talk about their work, really to have conversations among all the people. So that is one thing we've decided, we are just going to make them longer. You know, it is in the only feedback that we get about the seminars, that is not "Extremely Enthusiastic!" is "I wish I had more time." So, we're like "o.k., we'll give you more time."

[LL]: A couple of new features I noticed on the program, I am wondering if you would speak to them a little bit, the Common Table Dinner and the Cluster Lunches:

[SC] No, that's been at every conference I think, the Common Table Dinner. Yeah. It's been in every conference. And, it's a really lovely tradition where we all go to a local restaurant; people just sit where they want to sit, eat food ... and we just talk, we just talk. I've met people with whom I am still in touch, people that I respect their work, that I respect intellectually. To be able to talk both about our work and about our lives is a really wonderful experience. It's communal; it's community building and I think C19 is very conscious of is that we don't want to just be, you know, an academic society. We want to be a community, and to welcome people, and it is a really nice way of welcoming people in.

[AD] Agreed. My experience of the Communal Table is very similar, and I would just add that I think everyone who goes, and so many people go, it is always just everyone's there is going to build community and to welcome people. So, I remember I sat across from someone, who is now a brilliant scholar, but who was a fledgling graduate student

at the time and we are still friends, and I learned so much from her, but this idea that I think that she was quite nervous cause you are, it is your first conference, and I said the Communal Table is a place, no one is there to just talk to old friends, you are there to welcome everyone who is coming. So, I would really encourage, like if you are on the fence, come to the Common Table you will have a good time.

[LL]: I am realizing that my first C19 was the virtual C19, so I (yeah!) so, I have never experienced those lovely in-person communal events that you are describing, so I have a lot to look forward to.

[SC]: So your Common Table was you were eating a bagel and someone was having a sandwich on the same session. [“Yeah” Laugh.]

[LL]: So, when we arrive at Coral Gables, and were on the ground together, what do you imagine it will be like?

[SC]: Well, I think it is going to be great because our on site hosts who are Martha Schoolman and John Funcion have done a fantastic job of booking the hotel for the Common Table, getting Desmond Meade, working with the hotel, and also I have to mention of course the president of C19, Edlie Wong, who is done an incredible job of pulling this together and doing so much behind the scenes kind of work that people don't see. So, you know, Coral Gables is kind of cun, I have not been there in a really long time but I think that John and Martha have been and will be really terrific hosts. Um, and I bringing also a bunch of students to help run the conference, do the logistical stuff. So, I think it is going to be, when wer get on the ground, very smooth, very effortless. And, I want to put in one plug actually which is like we did last time, we are going to have a Red Bubble shop. It is called RedBubble, right? Is that right?

[AD]: I don't know. I think so.

[SC]: I think it is called RedBubble. I will look it up. But, anyway, [Laugh] so we are going to have, we are going to choose a couple of images and phrases and we are going to have t-shirts and mugs and all that kind of stuff. So, it will both help you remember the conference fondly and also help fund C19's efforts both in the conference and beyond. So, go to Red Bubble and buy your merch.

[AD]: Swag! Yeah!

[SC]: Get your Swag! I have to say I have a lot of stuff from Dissent, like an embarrassing amount. So, you know, um, if you are C19 collectors now is your time to stock up.

[LL]: Well, let me close here and say thank you so much for your responses today. I appreciate this conversation, thank you.

[AD]: Oh my pleasure!

[SC]: Thank you, this was really enjoyable. Great!

[RC]: In our next segment, Julia Bernier talks with C19 President Edlie Wong about the challenges of planning a conference during a pandemic and what participants can expect from this year's gathering.

Julia Bernier [JB]: I'm Julia Bernier, a member of the C19 Podcast Committee, and today I am talking with Dr. Edlie Wong, who is President of C19 and Professor of English at the University of Maryland about all the stuff you need to know for our next conference, "Reconstructions," happening soon in Coral Gables, FL. So, I am sure that you have been extremely busy getting ready for this event, that is now years in the making. Um, so thanks so much for taking some time to talk to us about it today. So, first let's talk about planning a conference during a pandemic. I am sure some of our listeners really do not have a sense of all that goes onto planning and academic conference and also one that is happening at this point in time. Um, so could you briefly walk us through what that process looks like and what it entails.

Edlie Wong [EW]: I'd be happy to! As you said this is a conference that is approximately four years in the making. We were supposed to have our 2020 conference in Coral Gables, FL but we pushed it to 2022 when, of course, the onset of the pandemic happened about 3 weeks before we were due to arrive in Coral Gables. Um, as a consequence this will be the first in-person C19 conference since the pandemic and we wanted to ensure that it was a safe conference and I mean that is paramount importance to us, the safety and health and well being of our members. So, we have done something unusual in the sense that past conference organizers haven't had to take into consideration Covid-19 protocols. So, this has been a learning experience for so many of us, which is staying on top of the most recent news from the CDC and the WH) and just putting in place kind of practical practices that will ensure that our members you know remain masked, that they socially distance, that the layout of the rooms, the seating, the snacks and beverage stations, all of these, the kind of minutia, the details are attentive to these questions of health of safety.

[JB]: What can you tell us about what C19 has learned from convening virtually in 2020, um are there any elements of that experience that you expect will inform this year's meeting, or future C19 conferences?

[EW]: When we held our 2020 virtual conference in October. One of the earliest large-scale conferences that was held in the virtual medium. At that time, my senses is Zoom fatigue hadn't quite set in and we just kind of reveled in the accessibility and convenience of a virtual conference and it was really well attended. It was a two week conference, given the medium we had to stretch out the conference timeline. And, I think since then, the shift has been the desire for us to meet in-person as long as it is

safe for everyone to gather and one of the things that we implemented in the executive committee was our Ad Hoc Committee on events and it was a committee that convened and chaired by Blevin Shelnuttt and they have done incredible work to bridge the virtual 2020 conference with the in-person 2022 conference. They have held a number of very well attended and recently this past week, they had the new author's Zoom event take place which was excellent. And, the intention of that was to kind of capitalize on the accessibility and convenience of the Zoom environment, so to speak. And allow us a chance to gather together intellectually, even while we are apart. But, our senses for the 2022 conference is that a very different type of event and the idea is to really emphasize the in-person event and for some many of our community members to gather together in person and to take advantage of the social experience of being in community together. So, in a way, we see the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Events at that bridging between the two different conferences.

[JB]: So, can you tell us a little bit about listeners should go who are unfamiliar with the conference to see whose going to be there, what kinds of events are going to happen, where to register for it, where is Hub for all of that kind of information that I'm sure people are going to be looking for.

[EW]: Sure! So, our C19 2022 Conference "Reconstructions" website is fully operational. We actually just uploaded the finalized program schedule, so I recommend folks going to the website and take a look at the program before they come out so that they have a sense of basically some difficult choices they have to make. We are running seven concurrent sessions for the three days. Um, so, there are going to be some tough decision, but excellent panels. We had such wonderful submissions. What I am really looking forward to is attending all of these sessions. Um, we also have a terrific keynote speaker, our C19 Now Plenary Session will be featuring Desmond Meade of the Florida Rights Reconstruction Coalition. Um, I have been told that he is an electrifying speaker and for his view unfamiliar with his work, he was recently awarded a MacArthur Foundation Grant and recognition of his work basically spearheading the passage of amendment 4, and this happened in 2018 which restored the voting rights to over 1.4 million Floridians who had past felony convictions. So, I mean his work, his life is just fascinating so I'm really looking forward to the Plenary Session and I invite everybody to attend. So, in terms of the Common Table dinner, which is the ongoing tradition for us and let's held outside at a restaurant, so it will be outdoor dining. We also have a closing reception that everyone is invited to that will also take place outdoors in the ... courtyard, so a spacious outdoor space where we can kind of conclude our conference and say goodbye to each other. Um, but there are a lot of special events, there are terrific panels, go to our website, take a look, come prepared to make some difficult decision about the panels that you want to attend. And, you can register through the Ex Ordo conference portal. You can select the special events that you want to pay for such

as the Common Table dinner or the Cluster Lunches. So, it is one place where you can do all of that.

[JB]: The Plenary sounds like a great way to be thinking about reconstructions across time, right, and the activism that is happening today, especially in places like Florida and the south, right around voting rights, which is a state and also of course national issue. Um, so what to you is the importance of reconstruction now?

[EW]: The importance of reconstruction now, um, the conference theme was, you know, in many ways really attentive to our kind of current political climate and the selection of Desmond Meade, which was recommended in fact by our terrific local site coordinators, Martha Schoolman and John Funcion, that we really wanted a speaker that would kind of really encapsulate this question of Reconstruction Now? And, his work was kind of restoring voting rights, um especially given kind of contemporary struggles over the kind of restriction and curtailment of voting rights for so many Americans. Um, that it was in many ways a kind of perfect marriage so to speak of a keynote speaker and a conference theme.

[JB]: What advice do you have to give to either people who are attending for the first time, people who haven't been in a while, which is kind of all of us, at this point, right, um, to really help to make the most of conference this time around. You have already told us about amazing events that are happening, but any other sort of recommendation that you can make for people?

[EW]: So, in organizing this conference we knew that this would most likely be the first or the ... conference that many members, including myself, will be attending in person since the onset of the pandemic. So, we really kind of emphasize that this social aspect of this conference will be just as important as the intellectual. And, in terms of that we made a concerted effort to shift earlier many of kind of our special events. So, they start around 6:00 p.m. which will allow individuals to kind of gather with friends and colleagues they haven't seen in a really long time and take advantage of the beautiful weather of Miami/Coral Gables, catch up over dinner outdoors together. So, that is one of those kind of aspects that I really want to, you know, um, emphasize about this conference is to really kind of take advantage of the kind of outdoor space of Miami. We tried to organize the conference in such a way that you did not feel really torn between catching special events and just catching up. Our entire program has been really attentive to the needs and desires of our memberships. So, we are bouncing the intellectual and the social component of this conference, and we hope that we have done it well for everyone.

[JB]: I want to know what you personally are most looking forward to.

[EW]: I am looking forward to this conference happening. As I said, we have been working on this for four years and for those of you who are unfamiliar with how our C19

conferences are organized, it's all volunteer bases. All of our EC members, we all have fulltime jobs, all the work we do in planning and organizing and just thinking about kind of you know all these different elements related to the pandemic are all on kind of volunteer time and so you know just seeing this come together people coming together finally after four years is the one thing that I am looking to most of all, and that people come away having a very positive kind of experience and just an intellectually kind of inspiring one. I feel like there is a lot of expectations because it has been four years in the making so, I can't wait to see this take place.

[JB]: Great, well again thank you. I know you have a lot more work to do in these last few weeks. Um, but I am sure everybody listening is really excited to be there um to see each other again and to listen all the great ideas that are gonna be floating about in Florida. So, thank you.

[RC]: In our final segment, DeLisa Hawkes talks with March Schoolman and John Funchion, On Site Coordinators of this year's conference about the location of the conference and points of interest in the Miami/Coral Gables area.

DeLisa Hawkes [DH]: Here I have with us, Martha Schoolman, she is an Associate Professor of English and Director of the Grad Program in Literature, Writing and Rhetoric at Florida International University and we also have John Funchion who's Associate Professor of English at the University of Miami. Hi Martha and John, how are you both doing?

Martha Schoolman [MS]: Good thank you!

John Funchion [JF]: Good, thanks!

[DH]: I just want to ask you a few questions that pertain to the location of this year's conference. So, originally the decision to hold the C19 conference in Coral Gables was made to accommodate the 2020 theme of Dissent. How does Reconstructions map onto Florida's past or its present?

[MS]: Reconstructions is a little more of a complex fit because unlike a lot of other places in Florida, Miami is a 20th century city. Key West, if you go down there, the nineteenth century is everywhere, what Kristen Silver Bruce, calls the Gulf of Mexico System is everywhere present in Key West as in places like Pensacola, you know, Civil War battle sites. Um, and Saint Augustine to the north is obviously one of the oldest cities in Florida, but Miami for various geographic reasons because of the kind of the swampy topography because there was kind of an inconvenient sandbar, there really wasn't a lot of Euro American settlement in this specific area until close to 1900 when the railroad was extended this far south. So, I think what is interesting, you know, for thinking of Reconstructions plural, or Reconstructions in this kind of iterative way, it is interesting to think of Miami as an important site of maybe this and Florida of this kind of

second and third Reconstructions. Because Miami because the big boom era was in the teens and twenties, which was the era in which Coral Gables was built, um, Miami was very much a place built by the exploitation of black labor and deep segregation and so the what people call the Second Reconstruction, the Civil Rights era was very salient in Miami as a moment of desegregation, of opening education access, of integrating public accommodations, for example, there is the still famous African American beach because African Americans weren't allow to swim anywhere but this one spot called Virginia Key. So, in terms of this second Reconstruction Miami has important stories to tell and then in terms of, uh, what some people are maybe somewhat optimistically this moment calling the Third Reconstruction, the kind of Black Lives Matter, um, protest against police violence in the carceral system, it's very salient in Florida right now and we're exploring that with our Keynote speaker Desmond Meade who is the Executive Director of The Florida Rights Restoration Coalition and what is interesting there is that one of the real holdovers of slavery and its legacy is felony disenfranchisement, which means that if you have a felony conviction, you can never vote. And, with Desmond Meade's leadership that was removed from the Florida constitution only in 2018. But, right wing legislature kind of passed a bunch of regulations to knock it down and to make less accessible to most people. So, we kind of see this Third Reconstruction/White Reconstruction battling out in a way in the state of Florida and that is why we wanted to hear from Desmond Meade as part of the conference.

[DH]: How are you all thinking about Reconstructions as a way to better understand the university that is in the U.S., its concerns or its concerns of the people that it serves?

[JF]: So, I think at least to start out answering that questions, when I think about the relationship between Reconstruction and the university, I tend to think immediately just in terms of academic labor and in particular again to regionalize it, I guess, in a sort of Southern context, even though I think often sometimes Miami wants to think of itself as "South of the South," but the really you know one of the legacies of the dismantling of First Reconstruction was of course the Jim Crow era and one of the sort of major pieces of legislation that came out of that era was the Taft Hartley Act in 1947 which was sort of an anti-union bill. And that bill I think casts a long shadow over attempts for labor within universities not just faculty but really from staff, support staff, certainly graduate students, and contingent labor to organize. You know the phrase "Right to Work" really comes out of that act. And, southern states have continued to pursue, Florida certainly among them, legislation that makes it very difficult for unions to organize and so I think about the kind of legacy of labor relations that come out of Post-Reconstruction and really the south being a kind of template for wage suppression and labor exploitation. So, I think it poses a real challenge, but I think as a result being here in South Florida is an opportunity to think about those challenges especially at a time when we are seeing

rather encouragingly a lot of organizing happening at other universities across the country.

[MS]: I have a slightly different take of those questions because I was thinking about it very much from the perspective of FIU as this kind of Second Reconstruction institution. Cause FIU was a public university founded in 1965 as part of the Great Society programs that expanded access to education all over the country like a lot of the younger Cal schools are from this era as well. As the largest Hispanic Serving Institution in the US, FIU very much continues to do this work of democratizing access education. But, what I think is a very specific kind of regional contradiction, FIU was founded and located where it is to serve the children of new Cuban immigrants who, cause of the Cuban Revolution was in 1959, so the theory there or the Cuban Exile population and even their grandchildren that I teach now tend to resist the idea of redistributive policies or state aid that makes all of these things possible for example FIU is almost 50% Pell Grant recipients. So, it really is a kind of social mobility university, but all the ideas are at the same time sometimes culturally unspeakable, which I think kind of gets to all these contradictions we are trying to probe here.

[DH]: What kind of special events will be featured at the conference this year?

[MS]: Well, the special events, we are going fairly light on special events because Covid is still among us, so our main event is the Desmond Meade talk. Um, that I already talked about, we are really excited about that. It is going to be a big Friday night keynote. And on Thursday the 31st we are holding a Common Table dinner, which is going to be outside at a restaurant brewery called Bay 13, which is just across the street from the Hyatt. We really encourage people of all ranks to come to the Common Table dinner because it will be a chance to mingle in a relatively safe environment.

[DH]: Do you have any recommendations for places or activities that might be of particular interest to conference attendees?

[JF]: We are compiling a list which will be part of the program, so there will be a lot of possibilities. One of the things of course that will be certainly cognoscente of is activities that are conducive to people during a time of Covid in terms of, you know activities that can be done outside or venues where people can expect a certain of degree of compliance when it comes to masking as well. We are also not going to send people too far afield either, although as Martha mentioned in some of her earlier responses. There are other points in Florida, that interest quite interestingly with the theme of Reconstructions. Just to maybe mention a few, I always like to promote Books and Books, our local independent bookstore, run by Mitch Kaplan who is well known in the Independent Bookseller world as a kind of leisure. I think in terms of thinking both in terms of the politics of reconstruction, whether it be a Third Reconstruction or even the original theme of Dissent, something that is notable about Books and Books is that as

an independent bookstore it does see itself as a kind of civic institution, it is very supportive of local political organizing and plays host to those things. You know its more of a trade bookstore, but I think attendees will really like to visit and it is just a short walk from the conference venue, it is right in the neighborhood. You do not have to get into a car to reach it, and there is a nice outdoor area to where you can grab something to eat. Um, I don't know Martha if you want to talk a little bit about the museums that people might want to visit when they are here.

[MS]: Yeah, the other thing I would recommend, Miami has some really good museums and we will go into this on our list but sort of two I wanted to highlight is History of Miami, which is a Miami history museum that is really beautifully done and it is right downtown by the main public library and they start the history with the Tequesta, the earliest native group that was here, kind of all the way through the nineteenth century and up to the present so it is really beautifully done so I recommend that. So the other thing that I especially recommend is the Perez Museum also known as the Pam, which is a contemporary arts museum that collects very much around Latin American and Caribbean art. Um, so they always have something that you have never seen in another museum. And it is really a beautiful building as well. So, I recommend that.

[JF]: One, just one other thing I will mention is the Fairchild Garden, which can be done outside. It is not walkable distance, but if attendees are comfortable taking, getting a ride, uh, down there, it's you know not that far from downtown Coral Gables, I want to say maybe 10 to 20 minutes, depending on traffic. But again, it is a really expansive place. It's run by a private organization but its owned by Miami Dade County. It is a really neat place and some of you can do safely because all of it is outside with the exception of the gift shop. And maybe the one other thing we should stress maybe the obvious, but I think one of the good things about having an in-person conference in Miami at this time of year is that unlike a lot of other venues, the weather is going to be amazing. So, there is going to be lots of outdoor eating options available. So, you should be able to avoid you know any kind of uncomfortable situations where they might have to eat inside. So, you will be able to go out to eat and socialize and also do it pretty safely too.

[DH]: Well, I for one am very excited to be in Miami in March for the in-person conference, which leads me to my next question. What are you most excited about with regard to this seventh biennial conference?

[MS]: I am so excited to see my friends [Laugh]. I have to say that there are so many people I have not seen in years. Um, my birthday is around the conference, and I had a significant birthday two years ago and I invited everyone I know to the party and then I had to cancel, so I am really excited to see a lot of friends and just see/ interact with

people kind of formally and informally and kind of spend some of this pent up social energy that I don't know I am still harboring after two years of Covid.

[JF]: Yeah, I couldn't say it better. I think we are all really excited to be able to see people. There are a lot of people that I have not been able to interact with that one counts on seeing at conferences like C19. So, I think that is the most exciting element of this.

What advice would you offer to those who are attending the conference for the first time?

[JF]: So, I mean aside from the usual Covid advice in terms of taking care, uh, you know I think it is important. You know we are in a state, as probably attendees know, where we have a Republican administration and so masking is kind of hit and miss in indoor places. You know, it is voluntary. You will see a lot of people masked. But, you are going to see a lot of people not masked. So, be prepared for that if you are venturing indoors, outside of areas where C19 is sort of running the show. Ah, the other thing that is important to stress, and I think this has been communicated through email, but C19 is going to be providing PPE and test kits. I believe which are I think Martha informed me are being stockpiled in her garage, so, a lot of those supplies are going to be available to you as well. And, again, as I mentioned previously the important thing is is that you still are going to be able to engage in social activities here outside. And, so it is not going to be particularly essential to have to venture inside to do those kinds of things ... in Miami at the time.

[MS]: And maybe sort of on another level, and I think I probably said this on the podcast two years ago, but I just want to reinsert it, is that, um, if you haven't come to C19 before, or if you are not a regular C19 is a pretty friendly, democratic environment so I encourage people to connect with people they haven't met before. If you are a junior scholar, accost senior scholars that you are kind of serious about. Write ahead and invite them to coffee. I have a colleague for a while just had a practice of every conference, he would invite one or two people to coffee that he hadn't met before that he was just sort of curious about. And it seems like a nice practice. The worst thing people will do is ignore you, and most people are pretty happy to be sought after. So, um, just try to socialize. Try to make connections, that is the beauty of an in-person conference that now we are in a position to appreciate.

[DH]: Well, thank you for taking the time to speak to me. Coral Gables as a conference location, I am definitely excited to attend in person.

[RC]: We hope you will join us in Coral Gables for the seventh biennial conference featuring panels on a wide assortment of topics including the environmental humanities, theatre, pedagogy, black and indigenous ecologies, trans histories, religious studies, queer studies, poetry, print culture, and much more. For more information about the

conference, visit C19reconstructions.com. For more information about C19, The Society of Nineteenth-Century Americanists, or this podcast, visit C19society.org.

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