

***A Civil War Version of Black Lives Matter:  
The Social Justice Storytelling of Worcester's Sarah and Lucy Chase***

A Hands-on-History Workshop for Clemente Grads and Supporters

5:30-7:00 Wednesday, May 29 (in person at the AAS)

*Enrollment limited. Priority given to those also signing up for Storytelling for Social Change Course.*

“Storytelling for Social Change” is a relatively new term which is usually used to describe the way non-profits use social media to share narratives about the people they serve as a way of breaking down stereotypes. However, the letters of Sarah and Lucy Chase preserved at the American Antiquarian Society reveal that storytelling has been a tool of social justice advocates at least as far back as the years of the Civil War. The two Worcester natives spent their days as freedmen’s teachers opening schools in the South for people experiencing their first days of freedom from slavery. Despite the labor-intensive nature of their work, the Chase sisters always took time to take extensive notes during their talks with freedmen. When writing letters to people back in Massachusetts, Sarah and Lucy would share moving stories they had heard from their students directly contradicting the racist stereotypes that were cultural staples in both South and North.

In this workshop led by Assumption Professor of English Lucia Knoles we will begin by looking at political cartoons and newspaper illustrations from the Civil War years as a way of identifying key racist stereotypes from that period. Then we will go on to analyze stories from the Chase letters to see how the narratives respond to those tropes. Finally, we will examine some of the stories currently being used by organizations like the Bail Fund as a basis for answering two questions: Do any of these stereotypes continue to be part of the American conversation? What kinds of stories are being used today to transform hearts and minds? Because this workshop is intended as preparation for our own work as social change storytellers, a focus of our discussion of all the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century narratives will be the question of what qualities allow a story to have an impact on our culture—for better or worse.

**Storytelling for Social Change: A Clemente Worcester Summer Course**

5:30 – 7:00 Wednesdays: June 29, July 6, July 13, July 20, July 27 (Zoom)

Have you noticed how hard it is to change someone’s mind? Sometimes by arguing we only reinforce the notion we are opponents. How did we even end up on such different “sides” in the first place? It may be because *we’ve lived different stories*. That’s why we need to TELL stories if we want to bring people together. By sharing stories that let people *see what we’ve seen* and *feel what we’ve felt*, perhaps they will understand why *we believe what we believe*. That’s why telling stories may be the best way of changing the world.

In this summer course, you will learn how to tell the kinds of stories that will make you a more effective advocate for yourselves, your families, your communities, the organizations you belong to, and the causes you believe in. Together, we’ll collaborate in writing several profiles of members of the Clemente community that can later be used in social media campaigns to educate the public about the challenges you face, the values you live by, and the many ways you work to make this a better world.

The class will be led by Lucia Knoles, Professor of English at Assumption University and a charter member of the Worcester Clemente Advisory Board. Media Consultant and former WGBH producer Iris Adler will serve as a guest advisor and editor.