



Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)

## STATEMENT TO ASALH MEMBERS

Regarding An

ASALH PARTNERSHIP WITH

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

At the Business Meeting of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History on October 6, 2016, the Publications Committee of the Executive Council reported on ASALH's efforts to enter into a memorandum of agreement with the University of Chicago Press (UCP) in regard to *The Journal of African American History* (JAAH or the Journal). We believe that it is important to present the facts to you and state the reasons why we consider this to be a wise decision for ASALH, in order to correct any past, present, or future misinformation. Faced with a staff of only four full-time employees in the ASALH national office, the inability to pay an adequate stipend to the Journal's editor VP Franklin, and the Journal's past and current limited net income, we believe that a partnership with the University of Chicago Press is in the best interests of ASALH at this time.

Neither the Publications Committee nor the Executive Council arrived at this conclusion lightly, but only after months of thorough study and hardnosed deliberation that made possible the ability to negotiate a contract that would leave no ambiguity as to ASALH's ownership, control, and independence in regard to the Journal. We also stood steadfast in our commitment to bring the Journal more effectively to our members, especially to those who should be receiving the Journal, but presently are not. We secured guarantees from the UCP for not only a net annual income but for marketing to a far greater readership than currently exists, especially internationally to people in Africa and the African diaspora who will have access to the JAAH for the first time. We also secured guarantees for internships at the University of Chicago Press to HBCU students. Most important, this partnership, at our request, is only five years long and can be assessed midway through. For any breach of the terms of the agreement, the contract may be terminated. We are not locked into a permanent relationship with UCP that can hurt ASALH. These and other guarantees are stipulated and explained below:

1. Who will own and control the *Journal of African American History*? Who will hold copyright authority and control of its intellectual property? Who will call the shots about content?

**Answer:** ASALH will retain absolute control and ownership of the JAAH – its editorship, direction, peer review, advertisement approval, and all intellectual content and

copyrights. The agreement with UCP reads: “The copyright to the issues, volumes, and the individual articles in the Journal shall carry the name of the Association as the copyright owner. Ownership of the Journal and all proprietary rights thereto, including but not limited to its goodwill and any copyright and trademark rights therein, shall remain with the Association.”

2. How does the arrangement with UCP differ from our current arrangement to produce the Journal?

**Answer:** ASALH currently has no in-house publishing capacity as in the days of its business enterprise, the Associated Publishers. Today publishing the Journal entails sending out the copyedited content, which is done by the Journal’s editor Dr. V.P. Franklin, to the printer Tapestry Press, after which the ASALH staff sends the copies of the journal to a mailing company for distribution or submits it electronically to JSTOR. The responsibility in regard to accounting for income and expenses is also that of the ASALH staff. By partnering with the University of Chicago Press, these roles will all be handled under one roof. The various roles of subscriber maintenance and financial recordkeeping, printing, and mailing will be done far more efficiently and cost-effectively through the in-house operation of the University of Chicago Press, since as the agreement states “UCP will perform and pay for all services relating to publication and distribution of the Journal.” Such services include preparation and execution of mailing, marketing, financial record-keeping, copyediting, etc. This will alleviate significantly the capacity problem of the already understaffed ASALH national office.

3. How will the partnership with UCP be a better financial arrangement?

**Answer:** ASALH Treasurer Gilbert Smith, in addition to his reference to ASALH audits, noted in his official report in October 2016 that between 2011 and 2014 ASALH publications overall had net losses. In 2015 the *Journal of African American History* had a net income of \$240, which is slightly better than break even. On the other hand, the UCP agreement provides that beginning in 2018 ASALH will receive a percentage royalty on all *JAAH* income with a minimum guaranteed quarterly royalty payment that increases annually. The UCP agreement also states that, “*This amount can include editorial office support (e.g., honoraria, supplies, staff stipend).*” It is entirely ASALH’s decision as to how the UCP income will be allocated. Under all circumstances, the guaranteed royalty payment to ASALH will significantly augment ASALH’s total net income because UCP’s expenses, e.g., mailing, marketing, copyediting, etc., do not impact the royalty payment calculation. Also crucial is the fact that UCP’s calculation of *JAAH* income does not include any portion of ASALH member dues. ASALH retains exclusive ownership of its members’ dues. The partnership with UCP would go a long way in guaranteeing a steady income to ASALH. Finally, UCP stipulates that “if expenses exceed UCP’s share of revenue, UCP covers the deficit either through its annual surplus or through disbursement from its capital fund.”

4. How will ASALH members receive the Journal? Which members will receive the print version?

**Answer:** UCP will provide free access to the electronic version (online and e-Book) of the entire run of the Journal to an unlimited number of active Association Members and

will provide print copies to all ASALH Branch members and Life members at no additional charge. Print copies will also be available to ASALH members in other ASALH membership categories for a minimal additional fee of \$20. This is ASALH's current policy, so nothing will change in this regard.

5. How easy will it be to get access to the Journal in digital format?

**Answer:** Easier access to the electronic version of the Journal is one of the most exciting features of an ASALH-UCP partnership. Member login to the Journal will occur via the ASALH website. ASALH members will have access to the online edition by going to the ASALH website and using their already existing member log in credentials to reach the Journal's entire run, from volume one to the present, plus e-Book editions going forward. UCP states that "member organizations are in the best position to reinforce the benefits of membership when those benefits are intuitively connected to the association."

6. How will the Journal attain an international readership immeasurably broader than at present?

**Answer:** UCP enjoys a strong international marketing business with journals "generating 46 percent of their total revenues through international sales and subscriptions." In addition, UCP's philanthropic arm, Chicago Emerging National Initiative (CENI), ensures that readers at higher education and research institutions in more than 95 nations will receive access to electronic and print editions of the Journal of African American History at no cost or deeply discounted rates. Current CENI partners include JSTOR Africa Access and Developing Nations Access Initiatives, which cover all countries in Africa, including South Africa and Egypt.

7. What does the editor Dr. V.P. Franklin think about the partnership with UCP, since he has worked with Tapestry Press for a number of years and has played a singular role in restoring the Journal to its first-rate quality as a scholarly journal?

**Answer:** The Journal's editor, Dr. V.P. Franklin has both requested and strongly endorsed a partnership with the University of Chicago Press. He has been outspoken about the difficult situation under which he has had to work in order to maintain his high standards for the Journal. He has contributed a good deal of his own money to insure the production of the Journal, and especially after his retirement from the University of California, Riverside (UCR) beginning in July 2015, when he lost university funding for editorial support. While ASALH has been unable to pay him the relatively small stipend that he requests, Tapestry Press, in an effort to cut costs, no longer does the copyediting essential to our needs. The Executive Council agrees with V.P. Franklin that this is an unreasonable expectation of both his personal finances and his labor, and that it would be a similarly unreasonable expectation for the editor who will follow him when he retires in 2018. Partnering with the University of Chicago Press is also important because ASALH's four-person staff lacks the capacity as well as the expertise to do the level of copyediting and other editorial management to produce a high quality scholarly journal.

8. How will the University of Chicago Press help HBCU students?

**Answer:** ASALH has negotiated for an HBCU student internship at the UCP building. As the press states: "ASALH will organize and run the selection process. Internships will

take place at the UCP campus, mere steps away from the future home of the Obama presidential library.”

9. Is ASALH locked into a partnership that is detrimental to its long-term wellbeing?

**Answer:** The agreement of partnership stipulates a five-year term, with both parties able to engage in a full review of the agreement at the mid-point of the term. For any breach of the terms of the agreement, the contract may be terminated. We are not locked into a permanent relationship with the UCP that can hurt ASALH.

10. How will the University of Chicago Press be identified on the print copy?

**Answer:** The wording on the cover of the Journal will be explicit and prominently displayed: Journal of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. The inside page of the Journal that follows the cover will read: “Published by the University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History.” Most importantly, the method of display must be approved by the Association. See on page 5, Diagram A, for an example of the cover of the periodical *Polity*, which is published by the University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Northeastern Political Science Association.

Sharon Harley  
Chair, Publications Committee  
November 3, 2016

cc: ASALH Executive Council

**DIAGRAM A: EXAMPLE OF A JOURNAL COVER PUBLISHED BY UCP**

