



HISTORICAL SOCIETY *of*
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Tuesday, April 19, 2016, Washington, D.C.: The Historical Society of Washington, D.C. is pleased to announce **Kyla Sommers** as the recipient of the 2016 Curt C. and Else Silberman Foundation Fellowship. The fellowship provides university students with a stipend to support their historical research on “the fragility of democracy,” especially as it relates to the history of Washington, D.C.

Sommers is a doctoral candidate at the George Washington University. Her dissertation looks at the 1968 civil disturbances in Washington following the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Sommers works part-time as an archival processor for the D.C. Africana Archives Project, serves as Research Fellow for the Forum on International Tourism and the Environment, and is currently the assistant coach for the GW debate team. Previously, she was the GW Veteran's History Writing Project Research Fellowship as well as Elysee Treaties Debates Fellowship for the Embassy of France to the United States. In 2013 Sommers graduated from GW with a B.A. in History and International Affairs.

Under the direction of the Historical Society leadership, supported by the Silberman Foundation with matching funds from [Humanities DC](#), Sommers will spend the 2016-2017 fellowship year organizing a citywide database of collections related to 1968, including materials at the Historical Society and the 150+ local repositories with D.C.-related collections. She will survey documentary and oral history resources, and seek individuals whose stories are in danger of being lost and who should be the subject of new oral history collection. With this research the Silberman Fellow will help the Historical Society develop relevant educational programming in partnership with Humanities DC, the DC Public Library, the George Washington University Museum | The Textile Museum, the Anacostia Community Museum, the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington, and other significant community partners.

About The Curt C. and Else Silberman Foundation

The Curt C. and Else Silberman Foundation honors Dr. Curt C. Silberman. Dr. Silberman was a German-Jewish and American attorney and community leader. After he fled Germany in 1938, he and his wife Else settled in New Jersey. His legal career focused on assisting the victims of the Nazi regime. His life was torn asunder by the rise of the Nazi party, democratically elected in one of the most cultured, educated nations of its time. Soon citizens deemed to be “dangerous” by and to the majority, were denied the “rights” to which citizens of democracies believe they are entitled. The lesson is this: a democracy, by definition, reflects the will of the majority. That is at once its brilliance as well as its weakness. Dr. Silberman believed that Winston Churchill was correct in his famous statement, “democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried.” Dr. Silberman believed that only by recognizing the fragility of democracy, could we guard against the dangers and evils. It is Dr. Silberman’s memory that the Historical Society wishes to examine the issues of citizens living in the District of Columbia, whose rights have also been expanded and limited by Congressional majorities since the capital’s foundation.

About the Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

The Historical Society of Washington, D.C., is a community-supported educational and research organization that collects, interprets, and shares the history of our nation’s capital. Founded in 1894, the Society serves a diverse audience through its collections, public programs, exhibitions, and publications. Headquartered in the historic Carnegie Library at Mt. Vernon Square, the Society’s galleries and research library are open Tuesday through Friday, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.