



Appalachian Studies Association

www.appalachianstudies.org

Natalie Sypolt, ASA President

April 3, 2020

Dear Appalachian Studies Association Conference Registrants:

First, let me say that I hope this message finds you safe and healthy in these difficult times. While the future feels uncertain, I am sure that, like me, you have seen glimmering examples of people reaching out to help their neighbors and moments in this chaos that give us hope for brighter days. Already, many of our members have reached out to support the association during this difficult time. We cannot express enough how much we appreciate that support.

Thank you for your patience while the ASA Steering Committee worked to sort through the fallout from cancelling the conference that was to be held in Lexington in March. This was an incredibly difficult decision, because we all wanted to share in the incredible experience the team in Kentucky put together. We also knew there would be major implications for the association, presenters, and everyone who registered to attend.

ASA operates almost entirely on the proceeds from conference revenues. Without the conference, ASA—an organization that has meant so much to so many, myself included—would likely not remain sustainable and therefore not able to continue to fulfil our mission. The Steering Committee values inclusiveness in ASA and one way to do this is to keep membership and conference registration fees artificially low. As such, conference registration fees do not actually cover the cost of the conference, so we rely on the generosity of the host site to cover both actual and in-kind costs of the conference. In this regard, organizers in Kentucky have suffered financial losses that will not be recouped.

ASA will not be refunding conference registration; however, if you registered for the conference, you will retain membership in the Appalachian Studies Association, which means that you are a voting member in the organization and will have access to the *Journal of Appalachian Studies*. We will refund the amount you paid for meals.

Please understand that we did not reach this decision lightly; however, we must hold to the refund cutoff date of February 24, 2020, for the financial health of the association. We did take all responsible precautions to attempt to avoid a situation such as this, including taking out cancellation insurance. However, our insurance company—as well as many others—added a rider that they would not pay for cancellations because of the coronavirus. After consulting legal advisors, we understand that filing a claim with the insurance company would not be successful.

In addition to the Kentucky organizers, including the University of Kentucky, ASA suffered financial losses by canceling the conference. We are working to fill the gap left by the conference, including applying for the CARES Act non-profit loan that is part of the recent

stimulus package. If successful, we will be able to support ongoing operations as we prepare for next year's conference.

If you have any questions, reach out and we will do our best to answer them. If you have been overly affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, contact us at AppStudies2020@gmail.com to see if there are any remedies for your situation. Please look forward to next year, and joining us for a spectacular conference in Athens, Ohio.

Sincerely,

Natalie Sypolt
President, Appalachian Studies Association, 2020-2021