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NEWS RELEASE

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MANUSCRIPT EXAMINING MEMOIRS AND LETTERS FROM CALIFORNIA SEX WORKERS ANNOUNCED AS WINNER OF 2015 CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOOK AWARD

- ***Authors to receive \$5,000 advance and publication of their manuscript in both print and e-book format by the California Historical Society and Heyday***

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. September 8, 2015 – The California Historical Society (CHS) and Heyday have announced the winner of the 2015 California Historical Society Book Award, selecting *Voices from the Underworld: Sex Worker Narratives, California 1913*, which shines light on the often overlooked lives and voices of Progressive Era sex workers—including the serialized memoirs of Alice Smith—while tracing the roots of California’s first sex worker protest.

The authors, Devon Angus and Ivy Anderson, who have diverse professional experiences, expertise and knowledge in California history and activism, will receive a \$5,000 advance and publication of the manuscript in both print and e-book format by the California Historical Society and Heyday.

"We are honored to receive this award and to have the opportunity to work with two of our favorite institutions, the California Historical Society and Heyday Books," stated Devon and Ivy. "Over the last three years our research has been fueled by our intrigue with the modern character of Alice Smith’s memoirs and the many letters to the editor it inspired, touching as they do upon the role of working-class women in California, the role of vigilantism and anti-vice movements in shaping society, and the growth of a modernizing media on popular opinion. We are excited to bring these previously lost voices to the attention of scholars and popular readers alike."

Voices from the Underworld details how Fremont Older, crusading editor of the *San Francisco Bulletin*, published the serialized memoirs of Alice Smith, a prostitute of the Barbary Coast, in 1913. The public response to these memoirs was overwhelming, flooding the office of the *Bulletin* with thousands of letters to the editor, many of them from working prostitutes from all over California. The piece inspired social critics of the time, including Emma Goldman who lectured on the work in San Francisco, and its publication led to the organization of the first sex worker protest in California history. *Voices from the Underworld: Sex Worker Narratives, California 1913* gathers together in book form the memoirs and letters of this remarkable publication from California’s Progressive Era, brought to light for the first time in over a century.

"The California Historical Society is delighted to bring to publication the deeply personal story of Alice Smith, a California prostitute, whose account of her life around the turn of the twentieth century contributes to our state’s labor, women’s rights, politics, and economic histories in a powerful and profound way. The impact of Alice’s story on readers of her time, following its publication in the progressive *San Francisco Bulletin* in 1913, will resonate with readers across our state today, highlighting

the force of original voices in primary sources to educate, enlighten, and empower,” said Anthea M. Hartig, PhD, Executive Director & CEO, California Historical Society.

“There is a brilliant turn in the structure of this manuscript that takes it from a personal narrative to a historically enlightening book. The variety of first-person accounts is an innovative way to put one woman’s story into the larger framework of her times, and it’s stunning. *Voices from the Underworld* personifies history, connecting Alice Smith’s story with our own time—the struggles of women employed in gendered trades, vice and sentencing laws, immigration and labor policies. Seeing her story within this context brings these policies from the abstract to the concrete, reminding us of how they shape the lives of real people. Much like the original intent of the *San Francisco Bulletin* to ‘replace condemnation with pity,’ this manuscript gave me a heightened sense of compassion,” said Lindsie Bear, Heyday editor and California Historical Society trustee.

The California Historical Society Book Award is awarded annually for a book-length manuscript that makes an important contribution to scholarship and deepens public understanding of some aspect of California history. The work must adhere to high scholarly standards and must be lively and engaging to general readers as well. In addition to conventional works of historical scholarship, other genres that are considered include: biographies, collections of letters or essays, photographic or artistic studies, creative nonfiction, or other ways of informing the mind and engaging the imagination in an understanding of California’s past.

Finalists for the 2015 California Historical Society Book Award include: *East of East: A New Suburban History* by Carribean Fragoza, Romeo Guzman, Ryan Reft, and Alex Sayf Cummings (South El Monte Arts Posse); *Val Verde Road* by Linda Roberts Patterson (Los Angeles); and *Islands of Discovery, Unfulfilled Dreams, and Lost Treasures: The True Story of the Aborted 1939–1941 Channel Islands Biological Survey* by Corinne Heyning Laverty (Manhattan Beach).

The California Historical Society Book Award is presented annually and allows CHS to continue its rich publishing tradition, which began in 1874. Heyday, founded in 1974, continues to be an important partner and collaborator with CHS. Together the organizations publish books on topics of California history that strive to transform California’s understanding of itself and shape its future.

About the Authors: Devon Angus is an artist, activist, and historian based in San Francisco, California. He composed and performed a conceptual folk operetta based on San Francisco history, *The Ghosts of Barbary*, throughout the Bay Area, Switzerland, and Italy in 2014. He organized and published a series of oral histories of immigrants in the Catskills region through the Skene Memorial Library in Fleischmanns, New York, between 2001 and 2003, and he was the recipient of an arts grant through the New York State Council on the Arts for his show *Songs and Stories of Old New York* in 2002. He is currently pursuing an MA in history at San Francisco State University. Ivy Anderson is a San Francisco–based writer by way of Ojai, California. Focused on issues of Bay Area ecology and radical history, her reportage on water management issues has recently been published in *Water Efficiency Magazine* and her poetry in *Poecology*. She holds a BA in environmental studies with a minor in geography, runs a community garden, and is on the board of a bookstore collective in San Francisco.

About the California Historical Society: The California Historical Society, founded in 1871, is a non-profit organization with a mission to inspire and empower people to make California’s richly diverse past a meaningful part of their contemporary lives. We hold one of the top research collections on California history, which includes over 35,000 volumes of books and pamphlets, more than 4,000 manuscript collections, and about 500,000 photographs documenting California’s social, cultural, economic, and

political history and development, including some of the most cherished and valuable documents and images of California's past. Learn more at californiahistoricalsociety.org.

About Heyday: Heyday is an independent, nonprofit publisher and unique cultural institution. We promote widespread awareness and celebration of California's many cultures, landscapes, and boundary-breaking ideas. Through our well-crafted books, public events, and innovative outreach programs we are building a vibrant community of readers, writers, and thinkers. Learn more at www.heydaybooks.com.

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