**Cassy Jane Werking**

**PhD Candidate**

**University of Kentucky**

**Biography:**

Cassy Jane “CJ” Werking is a PhD candidate in history at the University of Kentucky studying under the guidance of advisor, Dr. Amy Taylor. Tentatively titled, “Is My North Star Also Your North Star? How the Borderlands Between Canada and the United States Shaped the American Civil War,” CJ’s dissertation explores how both enslaved people before the Civil War, and the Confederacy during the war, exploited the Canadian border to advance their diametrically opposed causes. She is from Albany, New York, and received her B. A. in American Studies from Siena College in 2013. In 2014, CJ earned her M.A. in History from SUNY Albany. In 2015, she interned at the White House in the Office of Presidential Correspondence for President Barack Obama before entering her PhD program in Fall 2016. Currently, CJ can be found teaching college students and inspiring them to also love history. Her dream is to be a professor.

**Dissertation Abstract:**

My dissertation, entitled “Is My North Star Also Your North Star? How the Borderlands Between Canada and the United States Shaped the American Civil War,” explores how enslaved people before the Civil War and the Confederacy during the war exploited the Canadian border to advance their diametrically opposed causes.Examining their actions in this region will show that the Civil War, despite its name, was not a war that transpired only within the borders of the United States, but also *on the border*, specifically in the “borderlands” between the United States and Canada.

This dissertation examines the international borderlands between the years of 1850 and 1865 because the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act pushed the boundaries of freedom farther north for enslaved people—making the borderlands the primary arena for forging freedom. The Confederacy counteracted setbacks on established battlefields in southeastern states by moving the boundaries of war farther north to the same borderlands to cause destruction on the Union home front. Enslaved people and Confederates assessed, accessed, and exploited the borderlands as a space that was imbued with emotional, legal, and political value.

Analyzing the border between Canada and the United States, adds a new dimension to how the scholarship conceptualizes the geography of war and builds on recent studies that examine borders as contested spaces. Therefore, a fuller understanding of the war requires a reframing that positions it as a fight that played out across the western hemisphere—making the study of Canada crucial to grasping the magnitude and reach of the American Civil War.