

P E T E R L A N G

Trauma and Resilience
in American Indian
and African American
Southern History

EDITED BY ANTHONY S. PARENT JR.
AND ULRIKE WIETHAUS

Trauma and Resilience in American Indian and African American Southern History explores the dual process of a refusal to remember, that is, the force of active forgetting, and the multiple ways in which Native Americans and African Americans have kept alive memories of conquest and enslavement. Complex narratives of loss endured during the antebellum period still resonate in the current debate over sovereignty and reparations.

Remembrances of events tinged with historical trauma are critical not only to the collective memories of American Indian and African American communities but, as public health research forcefully demonstrates, to their health and well-being on every level. Interdisciplinary dialogue and inquiry are essential to fully articulate how historical and contemporary circumstances have affected the collective memories of groups. Until recently, Southern whites have (nostalgically or dismissively) remembered American Indian and African American historical presence in the region. Their recollections silence the outrages committed and thus prevent the healing of inflicted trauma. Efforts of remembrance are at odds with intergenerational gaps of knowledge about family history and harmful stereotyping.

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PETER LANG

New York • Washington, D.C./Baltimore • Bern
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To Anthony E. Parent

Frederick W. Parent

And

To the voices of the past who called us to do our work today

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Introduction

Un-doing Southern Silences

Ulrike Wiethaus and Anthony S. Parent Jr.

REMEMBRANCES of events tinged with historical trauma are critical not only to the collective memories of American Indian and African American communities, but, as public health research demonstrates forcefully, are critical to the health and well-being of these communities. These chapters explore the multiple dimensions of intergenerational processes of remembrance, active against forces of silencing the past and the tragic cost of denial. Interdisciplinary dialogue and inquiry are essential to fully articulate how historical and contemporary circumstances have affected the collective memories of groups. This collection of essays will explore the dual process of a refusal to remember (the force of active forgetting) and the multiple ways in which Native Americans and African Americans have kept alive memories of conquest and enslavement. Complex narratives of loss endured during the antebellum period still resound in today's current debate over sovereignty and reparations. From a European colonial perspective, the Southeast has always been conceptualized and used as part of an international network of exchange, moving capital, human labor, religion, and culture across vast expanses of water and land and fueled by fantasies of masculinity, coded by violence and desire, race and class, utopia and dystopia. Efforts of remembrance are at odds with intergenerational gaps of knowledge about family history and harmful stereotyping.

This collection of essays is the capstone of a multi-year collaboration across disciplines and communities at Wake Forest University and beyond. More scholars, students, and community educators contributed to the process of research and writing on the topic of trauma and resilience in American Indian and African American Southern History than is evidenced by this volume's table of contents. Our unusually diverse cooperation, intentionally making room for activist, artistic, religious, and site-specific contributors, led to explorations of biographies, places and spaces significant to African American and American Indian resistance and remembrance.

Our intention in all the aspects of this project, originally entitled *Southern Silences: Historical Trauma and Remembrance of American Indian Conquest and the Internal Slave Trade in the Southeast*, has been to destabilize the master narrative of Southern history. The master narrative includes the Manifest Destiny ideology of extending the borders of the United States from coast to coast, Indian and Mexican colonization, white supremacy and nationalism, the denial of class conflict, and African American exclusion.¹ Its impact on the present, which perpetuates a presence of American Indians and African Americans as political and cultural non-presence, manifests on multiple levels of our daily lives through what Charles W. Mills describes as the “peculiar moral and empirical epistemology” of white settler states.²

Examples of masking such non-presence as pseudo-presence include Thanksgiving caricatures of American Indian nations posing as quaint relics of a heroic colonial beginning, public school policies based on an assumed “Bell curve” inferiority of African Americans, disproportionately high imprisonment statistics, and Euro-American identity formation locked into ideological constructs of a rugged individualism, moral, political, and cultural superiority, and the American Dream. Through strategies of distraction, the master narrative generates ignorance about parallel existing narratives of resistance and resilience, and about the day-to-day dynamics of political, economic, and cultural dominance of social and religious elites, maintained not without support by subaltern collaborators.³ Its longevity is ensured for as long as its harmful constructs of whiteness, blackness, and redness remain legalized, bureaucratized, and naturalized.

The liberal version of the master narrative, skillfully described by the late Vine Deloria Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux) as he observed the growth of a Euro-American participation in the Civil Rights and Red Power movements is a narrative of intermittent crisis intervention alternated by long intervals of non-engagement and absence. According to Deloria Jr., liberal crisis interventions are characterized by a Euro-American preference for flamboyant radical leadership, no matter how destructive and unproductive within a Native social framework, an attitude of pity and paternalism, and the white desire to “experience” a presumed Native exoticism.⁴ The Hollywood success of *Dances with Wolves*, Boy Scout camps with “Indian” wilderness survival motifs, and Halloween costumes of “Indian princesses” and “Indian braves” are examples of providing experiential white identification with a presumed Indian exoticism.⁵

Efforts at a comparative study of degradation are fraught with difficulty. Scholars have compared and contrasted the evils associated with the African American experience in slavery with Jewish suffering during the Shoah; others have looked for the common ground in the segregation of the Jim Crow South and apartheid South Africa, or the frontier expansion of western powers into Zulu and Lakota lands. Yet comparing, for example, the terrors of the enslavement of African Americans with the Shoah constitutes an assessment of incomparable degradations. The same could be said of trying to compare the experience of a black minority demanding citizenship and constitutional protections with the anti-Apartheid activism of an indigenous majority excluded from the constitution in South Africa. The comparative analyses of imperialisms of conquest of indigenous people stand on firmer ground. The failure of Native and African Americans to make common cause against Jim Crow also invites a comparison of differing experiences with imperialism.⁶

Instead of comparing degradations or encouraging the production of a single uniform counter narrative, we opted for trusting the creativity and community roots of our contributors and made room for a diversity of stories of places, people, and alternative temporalities to emerge. As a consequence, our contributors' work undermines a concept of "the South" as a static, homogenous, and isolated place and space. The white South generated self-serving stereotypes of Euro-American, African diaspora, and American Indian identities and cultural and religious practices that have become naturalized, universalized, and embedded in bureaucratic structures, educational curricula, media habits of news reporting, and cultural and economic preferences too numerous to summarize here. Hegemonic agency and its delimitation are identified by name (e.g., James Norcom, William Plecker), by site (e.g., home, church, factory), by practice (e.g., parenting, political process, dancing), and by the contested transmission of ideologies (through language, stereotyping, taboos).⁷

The symposium that provided the first public arena for the work collected in this book was broadly divided into nineteenth and twentieth/twenty-first century sections. To stimulate reflection on alternative temporalities and processes of remembrance, we chose to sidestep temporal linearity and instead to bundle the essays into four thematic sections: home and place, art and language, sexuality and family, and politics and economics. All sections represent a focus on survivance and remembrance.

Themes of Survivance and Remembrance

“Many pressing concerns about personal and regional identity, about social interaction, and about the exercise of cultural authority and power in the American South,” writes W. Fitzhugh Brundage, “depend on an understanding of how the recalled past has been woven into southern life.”⁸ American Indians and African Americans cannot recall their pasts without references to loss. Both groups suffered serious dislocation and disruption. The Great Dying and the Middle Passage are world historical, traumatic events occurring during the European colonial period. The conquest of native lands, following on the heels of the pandemics killing as many as ninety percent of 100 million indigenous people during the first century of contact, demoralized native communities. The twelve million Africans who had survived the traumatic shock of captivity and forced migration were enslaved in the Americas. The removal of Indians and the internal slave trade both removed people from their homes. Wars of expansion into the Great Plains led to association of Indians with vermin and the slogan “the only good Indian is a dead Indian.” Efforts to assimilate Indians during the boarding school movement amounted to cultural annihilation. The blood libels leveled at black men labeling them as bestial predators of white women beginning in the 1880s assassinated their character and led to the horrific lynching bee.⁹ Indians were confined to reservations and blacks were Jim Crowed into cradle-to-grave segregation. Both groups were stigmatized and slotted into a permanent second class citizenship.

Toni Morrison’s expression “playing in the dark” refers to the American literary imagination using race even when African Americans were not present.¹⁰ Imagining the black menace belies the anxiety of southern whites. The republican strategy for the invasion of Canada was to use militias from the north rather than from the slave country because of the fears of insurrection. These fears were genuine given the recent example of Haitian Revolution (1791–1804) and the Louisiana slave rebellion (1811). These fears were nevertheless heightened by the rhetoric of southern republicans projecting British impressment to white slavery and the whipping of white men as degrading them to the level of enslaved blacks. Later, white prisoners of war castigated British spitefulness for treating them like blacks. Likewise what whites imagined about American Indians might be called “slaying in the woods.” White Americans dreaded the Indian “savages.” They were terrified by their appearance of painted bodies, their stealth in approach, the sound of their war whoops, and their reputation for mutilation with scalping knives and

tomahawks. Persisting long afterward, fear and loathing of the Indians cultivated a culture of vengeance justifying their extermination.¹¹

Indian Removal from the Southeast and the Domestic Slave Trade into the same region euphemistically name the dual events that made possible the expansion of the Cotton Kingdom. Following the Peace of Paris in 1783, American settlers poured through the Cumberland Gap into the trans-Appalachian south, encroaching on Indian lands. Their expansion was fueled in part by the developing market in cotton. White settlers were covetous of the rich loam, the soft ground cultivated by Native Americans from time immemorial, which they called the Black Belt, a twenty to thirty mile band stretching 300 miles across central Alabama and northeastern Mississippi. At first settlers secured Indian land by hook or by crook.

Both events merited constitutional attention. Article 1, Section 9 of the Constitution made the importation of Africans into the United States illegal as of Jan. 1, 1808. Consequently, the territorial expansion of slavery required the movement of an internal labor force. Slave traders forcibly resettled about one million African Americans in the southeast after 1830. This figure is even more remarkable when we realize that there were but two million enslaved adults in 1860, one-half of the population of four million enslaved people. People crowded pens in southern cities waiting for buyers. Coffles of fettered Americans traveled the roads of the countryside. Barges on the rivers and the ships out to sea carried thousands to southern ports where speculators and buyers waited in earnest. At least one-third of enslaved families were broken up by this interstate slave trade. Threatening to sell someone south became a staple in the southern arsenal of punishments.¹²

The 1830 Indian Removal Act allocated funding for the expulsion of all Indians residing east of the Mississippi to Indian (Oklahoma) territory. This notice applied to the Creek, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, and Seminole, the so-called Five Civilized Tribes, in part because of their settled community life, their adaptation to western culture, including Christianity especially among the Cherokee, and their ownership of slaves. The Cherokee challenged this eviction notice with two Supreme Court cases: *Cherokee Nation v Georgia* (1831) and *Worcester v Georgia* (1832). In the first, Marshall hedged questioning whether a dependent nation could challenge the sovereignty of the USA. In the next case, he ruled outright in favor of the Cherokees calling the removal “repugnant” and contrary the constitution, laws, and treaties of the USA. Nevertheless, more than one in five of the Cherokees expelled in the Trail of Tears (4000/18,500) died in the forced march west. The cessation of

Indian lands had begun. The Seminoles chose war rather than the legal path tried by the Cherokees, fighting the US military from 1835–1842. The war ended in the removal of some Seminoles from Florida, others like Chief John Cloud migrating westward, and still others became enslaved.¹³

After the end of the War of 1812 anxiety about Indians lessened.¹⁴ During the era of Indian removal and the internal slave trade, American whites began imagining themselves as “Red Men” and “Negroes.” Only three years after the Indian Removal Act of 1830, whites began appropriating Indian virtues by associating themselves in the Improved Order of Red Men. They found “psychological” comfort in Indian values, even as they dismissed real Indians as “savages and not fit for civilized living.”¹⁵ By the 1840s, white performers were blackening their faces in minstrelsy shows. Rather than appropriating positive virtues as whites had in the Improved Order, the minstrel performers caricatured blacks. They drew upon the genuine tradition of slave cornhusking songs mimicking black aspirations.¹⁶ Rather than deal with real Indians or real African Americans, antebellum whites played “Red Men” and “Negroes.” Patterson argues that the mimicry of minstrelsy evoked both “vicarious involvement and subversive pleasure.” In time, “the African American male body would overlap with, and be partly replaced by, the more directly brutal ritual of the lynch ceremony.”¹⁷ The same can be said of the associations appropriating Indian values. They too overlapped with the genocidal efforts on the Great Plains to remove Indians from their land.¹⁸ By the 1920s, the bloodletting of the lynching ritual and the Indian wars had subsided. By then, African Americans had been Jim Crowed and Indians relocated to reservations.

Southern whites, until recently, have nostalgically, even dismissively, remembered American Indian and African American historical presence in the region.¹⁹ Their recollections silence the outrages committed and thus prevent the healing of inflicted trauma. The reasons, we argue, lie in the materiality that the social relationships created by such loss have not changed significantly. Part of the invisible costs of such rapacious global/local connectivity is a collectively maintained wall of silence and willful amnesia. Symptomatic of enforced amnesia are intergenerational gaps of knowledge about family history, the harmful internalization of stereotyping resulting in depression, heart disease, and other public health risks, and the diminishment of cultural, economic, religious, and political traditions. Alternative narratives will have to move from margin to center to heal these effects of historical

trauma and the experiences of loss endured during the antebellum period. Rather than the master narrative, it is the stories of trauma and resilience that truly contextualize current debates over sovereignty, political representation, and reparations.

Clara Sue Kidwell traces the process of legalized land theft from Southern tribal nations in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially from the Choctaw nation, in the context of President Andrew Jackson's removal policies and the betrayal of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek (Chukfi Ahihla Bogue, 1830) which on paper guaranteed the right of the Choctaw who wished to do so to remain on their land. She notes that although the broad outlines of the Trail of Tears are becoming better known today, the practices of land theft and land speculation through unscrupulous banking, encouraged and enabled by the federal government, are still far removed from public awareness. Jackson dismissed Choctaw women, like Choctaw men, as weak drunkards who could be easily duped. A closer study of the actual treaty negotiations demonstrates the importance of women elders in the process.²⁰

Kidwell demonstrates that land theft, allotment policies, and land speculation occurred already more than half a century before the Dawes Act of 1887. As much as it is a story of legalized theft and failed banks, and the attempted destruction of Choctaw sovereignty, it is also a story about the assault on land as woman. The geographic heart of the betrayal of treaty and land is feminine: the sacred Nanih Waiya Mound, known and cared for as the place where the Choctaw began as a people. Kidwell notes the tenacity of Choctaw people to insist on the investigation of false land claims and protecting their own land holdings, and the choice of a significant number of Choctaw to stay on their homelands despite enormous pressure to migrate to Oklahoma. The Mother Mound, now having been returned to the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, and the Nanih Waiya Day Celebration bringing together Choctaws from across the country in its fourth year, pose a powerful context for Kidwell's story of betrayal and greed, interweaving past and present in geography and ceremony.²¹

Anthony S. Parent, Jr. juxtaposes Harriet Jacobs's use of "Home" and "House" in her autobiographical slave narrative *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. He explores Jacobs's emotive sense of place which he contends contributes a new discourse to the slave narrative genre. Unlike the dominant male slave narrative of wresting manhood from white violence, reconciling home and house in the Harriet Jacobs' narrative espouses the theme of enslaved, legally unprotected womanhood. Far from the romance of plantation

household, enslaved house servants endured physical, psychological and sexual abuse.

Harriet experienced what it meant to be a “slave girl” at the Norcom’s house. Here she suffered from both Dr. Norcom’s sexual pursuits and Mrs. Norcom’s jealousies. She contrasted their household with her late parents’ and her grandmother’s homes and her first mistress whom she identified as her surrogate mother. She understood that home should be a place of love, security and safety. Her resistance was aimed at securing a home for herself and her children. Only by writing her story did she expose the dirty secret of sexual abuse that haunted the plantation household and reveal the dreams of home that African American girls desired.

In freedom African Americans sought to realize Jacobs’s dream of home. Beth Nobrey Hopkins reconstructs the emergence of a middle class African-American family from slavery through the Jim Crow Era. She draws on oral interviews and legal documents to reconstruct the Hill family of Hanover, Virginia. The Hill family saga is an internal history of resilience. Following Booker T. Washington’s philosophy, the two patriarchs Samuel Hill Sr. (1841–1914) and his son Elizah Hill (1892–1967) combined farming and artisanal skills, land and home ownership, and business acumen to make a middle class family. They parlayed sixty-eight acres in Hanover County, Baptist Church affiliation, trades in masonry, plaster and dry wall, and insistence on educational excellence into a middle class existence.

Hopkins acknowledges both authoritarian control and spousal cooperation working in tandem. Elijah’s wife Ethel (1896–1973) was a homemaker and seamstress, known throughout the community. Memories were perhaps a bit nostalgic of the home place: children playing in a copse of trees and bushes; berries abundant although not enough to stave off hunger during the depression era. Dating rituals demonstrated efforts of emergent middle class parents’ effort to shield daughters from premarital sex even as the trends of the majority became more lax. Education figured prominently in family life. Homework was a nightly concern. Moves of hundreds of miles between the city and the country, especially after the Prince Edward County decision to close schools rather than desegregate (1959 to 1962), punctuated residences.

Musical creations express values, often unconsciously so, to the artists. How much do they efface, how much do they preserve traumatic memory? Have the patently dishonorable acts of land theft and land speculation left no traces among white settlers? Margaret Zulick offers a reading of Protestant

hymns to chart a collective and religiously sanctioned process of denial which she suggests constitutes a form of discursive genocide.²² A powerful narcotic, the hymns re-write the infliction of colonial trauma as dreams of biblical promise to a chosen people. Rightfully owned Indigenous land becomes reconfigured as an unpopulated promised land, a Garden of Eden, the meadows, rivers, and springs of Paradise. The collective repression of guilt and the active engendering of perpetrator amnesia are, as theologian Tink Tinker reminds us, “the structural evils that we create and participate in [and] cannot be excused by virtue of good intentions.”²³

Zulick notes that the best way to counter a master narrative is not to unmask it, but to either adapt it or replace it with a more persuasive narrative. In her detailed linguistic analysis of nineteenth and twentieth century Cherokee medicinal texts, Margaret Bender demonstrates remarkable strategies of adaptation. As is true for Kidwell, Bender also tells a story about a submerged undercurrent of the removal era. Bender argues that as Cherokee people moved from their homelands in Southern Appalachia to the north eastern regions of the Great Plains, it became paramount to reconfigure the geocosmic axes necessary for adjudicating spiritual responsibilities, especially so in the realm of healing disease and illness. According to Cherokee philosophy and theology, human beings are anchored in a complex system of interconnected life forms, including pharmacopoeia. To effect healing, all elements of the system have to be taken into consideration and the patient’s embeddedness in a geocosmic *Gestalt* re-coordinated. Leaving Cherokee homelands thus constituted a grave challenge. Bender’s close reading of post-removal medicinal texts suggests that at least in the case of Cherokee medicine man Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya, the geocosmic frame of reference became adapted to the new situation. Medicinal traditions survived and remained efficacious. Indeed, Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya sustained his community not only as a traditional healer, but also as a fully licensed Christian minister. Reading Zulick’s and Bender’s essay side by the side, the Euro-American unwillingness to engage Indigenous spiritual traditions in working out new identities strikes as a vital opportunity lost and difficult to re-create.

Musical creations express meaning in often surprising and complex rhetorical moves. Parent argues that corn-husking songs can be best described as public poetics of resistance. Although reviewers have noted that the enslaved used linguistic strategies in their songs to conceal their meaning, exactly how they did so remains a mystery. Parent introduces the concept of the “loss leader” to decode their songs. A loss leader is a marketing term for

luring customers into purchasing a product by offering a misleading advertisement. By using modern marketing theory, Parent demonstrates how Daniel Kahneman's "Prospect Theory" outlining the dynamics of "cognitive fallacy" can be applied to the rhetoric of slave resistance. People do not behave rationally in the marketplace. Rather, by framing the way that the message is delivered, marketers can "nudge" susceptible consumers into buying against their best interests.²⁴ Parent contends that for the enslaved poet the triggering (signifying) subject is a loss leader by necessity. The loss leader also carries the double entendre of also being a false leader in the direction of the poem. For the enslaved poet, the generated or signified subject is the essence of the songs.

Elsewhere in this essay we have discussed the misuse of this music in minstrelsy. The subsequent southern music industry (i.e., "race records"), grown out of the ragtime, blues, and jazz traditions, is internationally known. How do southern music's cultural adaptations connect with the forces of memory and forgetting? How closely do their myths, legends, and folklore co-exist with spiritual well-being over time? By the mid-twentieth century, African American artists did not need to conceal their intentions as did enslaved songsters. Nina Lucas underscores the significance of dance and choreographed music during the interregnum between the Harlem Renaissance (1920s) and the Black Arts Movement (1968–1970s). Neither dance nor this era has received the attention that it deserves in the development of an African American aesthetic. Although dance has always been recognized as an African American cultural strength, scholars have privileged literary and musical contributions at the expense of choreography. African American artistry during this era has been overshadowed the politically potent *Négritude* movement coming out of France and its colonies during the same time period.

Lucas chronicles three choreographies of the New Dance Group (1940–1960) demonstrating its self-conscious social and political commitment: Pearl Primus's *Strange Fruit*, Donald McKayles's *Rainbow 'Round My Shoulders*, and Talley Beatty's *Mourners' Bench*. She also pays attention to the aesthetic performance of each work by locating them within the larger opus of the choreographers. Primus began to investigate so-called "primitive dances" in African and Caribbean cultures, visited more than seventy southern black churches, and lived with sharecroppers. Her choice of *Strange Fruit* dealt with ignominious ritualized murder. Primus did for dance what Holiday did for song. Talley Beatty experimented with dance styles with noted Katherine Dunham and Ethel Waters before choreographing *Southern Landscapes*.

Mourner's Bench is set against the African American spiritual *There is a Balm in Gilead*. Demonstrating resilience, the dance prayerfully drives through the sorrow of black life. Donald McKayle's *Rainbow* references a hand tool used by chain gang prisoners. The thematic content of the three dances illuminates southern racism and African American resilience.

Public health research is only now beginning to articulate the enormous burden on American Indian and African American health and well-being caused by the long term effects of historical trauma. This collection of essays constitutes perhaps most of all an example of the healing work of remembrance, working with the past as memory, the past as unfinished work in the present, and the present as it acts upon a past.²⁵ Precisely because of its insistence on the specificity of places and people, it makes itself accountable to the high cost of denial. *Trauma and Resilience* attempts to undo what Paul Ricoeur has named "blocked memory", the dynamics of manipulating historical records and the subsequent creation of the inauthentic.²⁶ To make room for the diversity of voices of remembrance and resistance, or what Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor calls the art of survivance, interdisciplinary exchange and inquiry are essential.²⁷

Health providers and scholars have much insight to offer on the long-term effects of social disruption on public health. The seemingly unexplainable provenance of violence and accidental death in survivor communities, the lingering effects of diseases, especially diabetes, stroke, and infant mortality, and the need for a return to traditional diets are persisting community concerns. Evidence suggests that historical trauma is a leading cause of diabetes and diabetes-related complications, cardiovascular diseases, infant mortality.²⁸

Native American women are disproportionately affected in all areas through the additional burden of sexual violence. Rosemary White Shield and contributing author Suzanne Koeplinger employ the emerging paradigm of historical trauma in their work with survivors of sexual violence. The concept of historical trauma covers a broad spectrum of intergenerational symptoms and is increasingly used on a global scale in regions severely damaged by war, genocide, or large scale natural disasters. As contemporary research demonstrates, even when truces are negotiated or wars have officially ended, gender based violence against women and girls will continue if not increase.²⁹ Understanding the short term and long term effects of historical trauma assists communities in developing culturally appropriate strategies to facilitate healing and a process of restoring justice.³⁰

The authors argue that sexual trafficking of American Indian children and women constitutes the contemporary extension of American Indian experiences of colonial slavery. In the early contact period in the South, native women have been the coveted objects of sexual trafficking, both for white male sexual gratification and to produce the next generation of enslaved workers. A distinctly European-American system of enslavement and human trafficking eroded ethnic and political boundaries to create opportunities for cooptation and collaboration. Whether in the South, the Southwest, California, or the Caribbean, some American Indian collaborators and assimilated slave holding families profited from the slave trade; others put up resistance. For example, it is estimated that in the early 1800s, sixty-six percent of all Diné (Navajo) families were affected by Spanish enslavement with some support of Ute and Comanche allies to the Spanish.³¹ Seminole solidarity with runaway slaves and the Buffalo soldiers' capture of Native women during raids in Mexico in the 1870s are other well-known examples of the complexity of the slave trade.³²

Applying the concept of historical trauma and unresolved grief explains the heightened vulnerability of women and girls in gravely damaged modern social and political contexts and the difficulty in accessing traditional sources of strength and self-esteem. Native women's vulnerability to sexual violence is encoded in Western legal practices, as the Amnesty International report documented for a number of reservations across the US.³³ Although not explicitly discussed in White Shield and Koeplinger's essay, a significant aspect of trafficking American Indian women has been the systematic delegitimization of Native women's political leadership and the rise of the colonial myth that Native women were powerless beasts of burden within their tribal communities. And as Andrea Smith has suggested elsewhere, "the project of colonial sexual violence establishes the ideology that Native bodies are inherently violable—and by extension, that Native lands are also inherently violable."³⁴

How long and how hard the path to healing African American and American Indian divides can be is demonstrated by curator and scholar Gabrielle Tayac's essay on creating the exhibit *IndiVisible. African-Native American Lives in the Americas* at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC (Smithsonian Institution).³⁵ Tayac's work dismantles the invisible walls of silence surrounding unexamined, internalized race theory assumptions on one hand and the celebrations of bi-racial and tri-

racial families proud of their rich and diverse heritage. Tayac's study relates compellingly to White Shield's research by tracing contemporary repercussions of historical trauma and resilience in the complex relationships between African American and American Indian communities. In *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black People*, historian Jack D. Forbes outlined this relationship from pre-contact intercontinental voyages by First Americans across the Atlantic through early stages of Indian slave trade until the contemporary reclamation of Red-Black people's heritage as the "modern re-peopling" of the Americas and the concomitant development of a Euro-American lexicon of terms to racialize and dominate emerging networks of resistance and resilience.³⁶ Tayac describes a new twist in the circulation of racist stereotypes and the policies they hid: the eugenics and racial hygiene movement of the 1930s aptly named by Tayac and her co-authors Indian removal by other means.³⁷ Instrumental in unleashing this new wave of destruction was a white Southerner and Nazi sympathizer, Walter Ashby Plecker (1861–1947). It was Plecker who successfully pushed the Racial Integrity Act of 1924 through the Virginia General Assembly to block and obliterate the rich and vibrant multi-ethnic Red-Black re-peopling of America, and to annihilate American Indian peoples in Virginia and beyond through the synchronized machinery of modernity: science, technology, bureaucracy, and legislature. As Tayac details with great clarity, the profound dis-ease in naming the staying power of the "one drop rule" can also function as the life-changing catalyst for political, cultural, and spiritual reclamation and reconciliation. Activist scholar Devon Abbott Mihesuah has discussed the open-ended and life-long process of such recuperation of identity and authenticity as she compares African American and American Indian journeys of identity decolonization. According to the model, in the first phase of identity reclamation, named pre-encounter, one tends to uncritically embrace and emulate white or mainstream culture; the second stage, encounter, denotes a jolting experience that awakens critical consciousness; in the third stage, efforts are being made to immerse/re-immers oneself deeply in one's tradition and heritage; in the fourth and final phase, peace is being made with the "basket of rainbows" (Tayac) that constitutes one's journey and identity in life.³⁸

Christy Buchanan, Laura N. Costa, and Joseph G. Gryzwacz have examined a contentious topic in psychological literature. The parenting by African American mothers is usually presented negatively because of the predominance of single parent households and their authoritarian style.

Although these analyses are sensitive to the historical trauma leading to single parent households and authoritarian parenting styles, this victimhood focus fails to account for African American cultural resilience. These critiques also fail to account for accompanying expectations of mutual respect and love between mothers and adolescents. (For example, see Hopkins's discussion of the authoritarian parenting of the Hill family.) The authors find that in two studies of mothers in a small southern city, African American mothers took parenting responsibility seriously. Their greater expectations of positive behavior than white mothers in spite of greater risks their children encountered offered their children emotive comfort: their youth knew they were loved because their mothers paid attention and spent time with them. Buchanan et al. illustrate their findings with a series of interviews. Their absolute intolerance of substance abuse has reduced usage relatively to other groups. Mothers were clear about their expectations and quick to enforce discipline. Nevertheless, mutual respect softened authoritarian style. A willingness to admit when wrong solidified their relationships. They have argued for cultural specificity in criteria that are generally lacking in analyses.

Although such practices are permeated by ideologies, some of the contributors (for example, Zulick and Boyd) try to isolate the formation of mental and oftentimes unconscious regimes of domination. Through ideological communication, "power and control are not explicitly exercised as much as embedded in routine thoughts, actions, and [everyday] processes. Ideological control is subtle and indirect, but highly effective. . . . [It] works most effectively when the world view articulated by the ruling elite is actively taken up and pursued by subordinate groups."³⁹

Ideological control also compromises the white majority. Like Hopkins, Steven Boyd uses both legal documentation and oral interviews to develop his chapter. Unlike Hopkins, who finds a family history of resilience, Boyd learns of a family history of racism. This history has unconsciously impacted his personal life. His family once enslaved people. This revelation at once explained Boyd's interpersonal relationships with African Americans and the "visceral roots of southern racism." Boyd, a professor of religion, could have used as his guiding text Exodus 20:5 to pursue the question, do the sins of fathers visit the third and fourth generations? After learning from a document that his family had mortgaged enslaved people, Boyd questioned an aunt about this history. She spoke of her anxieties, couched in moral rectitude, of becoming a social outcast if she strayed from expected social behavior. What he learned illuminated his upbringing as it related to interracial sexual relations

and social acceptability. “The rules that defined a group’s supremacy [in the Jim Crow South] were so tightly wound,” according to Isabel Wilkerson, “as to put pressure on everyone trying to stay within the narrow confines of acceptability.”⁴⁰

Boyd has been able to exorcise this demon by his activism in African American and American Indian causes, in itself the product of a long personal process. He points out that he benefitted professionally and personally by participating in the “men’s movement” during the 1980s when he “played” Indian, in itself a white practice with a long history, as was noted earlier. During the New Age era following the 1970s, whites once again began exploring Indian culture.⁴¹ Later, Boyd had an epiphany after attending a community meeting at an African American church. Working as a community activist, Boyd began to understand the impact of institutional racism that Native and African Americans endure. Only after removing his personal blinders was he able to comprehend emotive racism that still grips southern society. His personal example demonstrates that overcoming racism can be achieved through personal introspection and social struggle.

Engaging academic with non-academic work of remembrance and resistance, numerous topics could be pursued. Some have been tracked as part of our *Southern Silences* project. For example, the legacies of slavery, sharecropping, and forced migration beg the economic question. How significant are they to the rise of poverty and social stratification? Using South Carolina as a case study, Ron Neal argues that these shameful legacies are a “past that is still present” and can be explained by an ideology of southern masculinity. Whereas Boyd examines a pattern of silence transmitted in white family systems, Neal targets white Christian practices. He makes the case that Southern social stratification is maintained by a racialized Abrahamic masculinity, analyzing leadership from the vantage point of religious studies. Neal maintains that Christian fundamentalism and evangelical Protestantism have informed white nationalism masked by American patriotism. Any wonder that the state of South Carolina from 1962 to 2000 hoisted an American flag and a Confederate flag side by side on the statehouse grounds?

Neal argues that Mark Sanford is an emblematic recent southern leader in this tradition. His policies were old wine in new bottles, hiding an overtly racist agenda. Earlier politicians had promoted the same white supremacism at the expense of African American citizens. South Carolina, like Virginia, resisted school desegregation, impoverishing its black citizens. The state constitution allows for only the bare minimum for education, a far cry from the

efforts of the Reconstruction-era Francis Lewis Cardozo (1836–1903) and others who put state-supported education at the forefront of their South Carolina constitutional efforts. Sanford’s policy of offering tax breaks to rich parents who had their children in private schools is the best example of how the politics of inequality work in South Carolina. These policies in turn have severely crippled African American protest.

In contrast, North Carolina African American and Latino churches in the nineties have proven to be more willing to engage difference across ethnic divides. Ana Gonzalez Wahl and Steve Gunkel’s research on union organizing at the Smithfield Packing Plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina offers a formidable case study in mobilizing solidarity among mostly undocumented new immigrant, African American, and American Indian communities. Today, industrialized agriculture has replaced sharecropping and small farming operations. Due to its monopolistic stranglehold in the rural South, poverty is dramatically increasing, and for those who have work—in this case, at the packing plant, labor conditions have been appalling, compromising health, income security, and, although not mentioned in this essay, environmental safety. Nearly each one of the goals of economic well-being “regardless of station, race, or creed” articulated in Franklin D. Roosevelt’s *Bill of Economic Rights* (1944) has been violated.⁴²

The silences of the past continue. Gonzalez Wahl and Gunkel point out that the rural South, also a theme in Ron Neal’s overview of South Carolina politics as it maintains the “Corridor of Shame,” has been a neglected area of study in the post-Civil Rights era. North Carolina, historically a “right to work” state, has shunned labor organizing. Countering highly manipulative corporate strategies to divide workers by mobilizing nationwide as much as local support, the question arises whether the successful 2008 creation of a union at the Tarheel Plant can be replicated and will lead to increased collaboration among the different ethnic communities, union chapters, activists, and churches.

Acknowledgments

The research, lectures, and presentations that informed our collective thinking and research yet did not make it, for one reason or another, into the volume, deserve brief mentioning here. The reader may look for a published version to complement this volume. Generously funded by a Wake Forest University grant, David E. Wilkins, McKnight Presidential Professorship in

American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota, opened our project with a lecture comparing and contrasting African American and American Indian legal history.⁴³ We visited and learned from a number of community educators, activists, and activist scholars in North Carolina. In Cherokee, Patty Grant, Program Manager of the Analenisgi Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services, Roseanna Belt, the Director of the WCU Cherokee Center, and Lisa Lefler, Director of the Center for Native Health and Western Carolina University faculty lectured on the impact of historical trauma on the health of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Cherry Beasley, Professor of Nursing at the University of North Carolina, Pembroke, offered us a Lumbee perspective on historical trauma. UNC Chapel Hill scholars Heather Williams and Germa A. Jackson presented new work on historical memory and black families; Williams on efforts to reunify families following emancipation and Jackson on how personal memories of slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction circulated in black families and communities in the twentieth century.

Kenneth Clark, faculty at the Indian Education Resource Center in Pembroke, and Mary Ann Jacobs, Director of the Native Studies program at UNC-P, introduced place-specific perspectives on Lumbee culture and history.

Our project led to the production of a play by nationally renowned playwright and screenwriter André Minkins, an undergraduate seminar on race and Southern history team-taught by the editors, and a symposium entitled *Southern Silences: American Indian and African American Trauma and Resilience*.

André Minkins, professor of theatre at Winston-Salem State University wrote, directed, and produced an oral history performance with Winston-Salem State University and Wake Forest University students as part of the *Southern Silences* symposium. We thank the student actors, START Gallery, Hasheem Salley, artistic director of the Otesha Creative Arts Ensemble, and Paula R. Stump and her Raks Sharki Dance Studio

As part of the symposium, Rian Bowie, English Department, WFU, presented a paper entitled “The High Cost of Freedom”; Matthew Vaughan Johnson, National Director, Every Church a Peace Church, addressed the issue of “A Psychoanalytical Reading of the Middle Passage”. Malinda Maynor Lowery, UNC-Chapel Hill, shared her research in progress with a paper entitled “Remembering Blackness, Forgetting Indianness: The Story of Charley Patton, King of the Delta Blues”. Earl Smith and Angela Hattery

(American Ethnic Studies and Sociology, WFU), presented a paper on their joint research in progress entitled “Interracial Sex, Exploitation and Violence”.

We wish to thank Robert Leath and Daniel Ackerman at the Museum for Southern Decorative Arts for their support and insight. They shared their knowledge of American Indian and African American artifacts, especially the newly discovered Harriet Jacobs’s rooms. Mo and Martha Hartley, archeologist and planner respectively at Old Salem, led tours of the Historic St. Philips Church. Alton Mitchell, manager of Historic Stagville State Historic Site, arranged for our visit there. Phil Archer at the Reynolda House Museum of American Art provided the art historical framework for the symposium, and forged a bridge between our work and the concurrent Reynolda House Museum exhibit *Virtue, Vice, Wisdom, and Folly: The Moralizing Tradition in American Art*, curated by Allison Slaby.

We thank our students in the jointly taught HST372/REL348: *Race, Memory, and Identity in the United States* for their input and creativity. Together with them, we visited the *InDivisible* exhibition at the Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC, and met with Gabrielle Tayac, who contextualized the exhibit in this volume.

We wish to thank community educators Darryl Hunt, founder and president of the Darryl Hunt Project for Freedom and Justice, Reverend Carlton Eversley, Senior Pastor, Dellabrook Presbyterian Church, and Ms. Rosa Winfree, Chair, American Indian Women of Proud Nations, for contributing their perspectives at the *Southern Silences* symposium. The American Men’s Studies Association’s sixteenth annual conference, entitled “Masculinities and Institutions” (2008), allowed the editors to envision this project. We thank Steve Boyd and the Association for providing the opportunity. None of us would have been able to meet each other and work together without the generous support of Wake Forest University’s Provost’s Fund for Academic Excellence, the Department of History, the Department of Religion, and Reynolda House Museum of American Art. We are especially grateful to Leah Schenkel who formatted this volume using her vast technical skills.

In tandem with the compilation of the essays in this volume, one of the editors, Ulrike Wiethaus, worked with the *Brothers of the Buffalo*, an American Indian prayer circle at a North Carolina maximum security prison, to create a collection of autobiographical writings and poetry. It has been published separately as a fund-raiser for the families of the incarcerated authors. Two of the *Brothers of the Buffalo* poems, in addition to those

by Walter Migaél Harris, a currently incarcerated African-American friend of the circle, found their way into this book. We are grateful to Alexander Correctional Institution, the Wake Forest University Institute for Public Engagement, and the Religion and Public Engagement initiative of the Wake Forest University Department of Religion for their support of the prison writing project.

Notes

- ¹ N. I. Huggins, “The Deforming Mirror of Truth: Slavery and the Master Narrative of American History,” *Radical History Review* 1991 (January 1, 1991): 25–48. Dorothy Ross, “Grand Narrative in American Historical Writing: From Romance to Uncertainty,” *The American Historical Review* 100, no. 3 (June 1, 1995): 651–677.
- ² Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 3.
- ³ Thomas C. Holt, “Marking: Race, Race-making, and the Writing of History,” *The American Historical Review* 100, no. 1 (February 1, 1995): 1–20. For an overview of an everyday politics of domination in Indian country, see Dean Chavers, *Racism in Indian Country* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009).
- ⁴ Vine Deloria, “The Liberal Problem” in *We Talk, You Listen. New Tribes, New Turf* (second edition, Lincoln, Nebraska: Bison Books, 2007), 68–85. The “one drop rule” precludes for constructs of black exoticism, thus reducing it to merely scopophilic pleasures of observing black skin.
- ⁵ For the on-going need for a response to such stereotyping, see the reprint history of Devon A. Mihesuah, *American Indians. Stereotypes and Realities* (Regina, Canada: Clarity International, 1996).
- ⁶ Thomas Mordekhai Laurence, *Vessels of Evil: American Slavery and the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, U.S., 1993). George M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1982). James O. Gump, *The Dust Rose Like Smoke: The Subjugation of the Zulu and the Sioux* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1996). Theda Perdue, “Native Americans, African Americans, and Jim Crow,” in *Gabrielle Tayac, ed. IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas*, (Washington, D.C. and New York: Smithsonian Books, 2009), 21–33.
- ⁷ Eisenberg, E. Goodall, H. L., Jr., & Trethewey, A., *Organizational Communication: Balancing creativity and constraint*, 5th ed. (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2007), 171.
- ⁸ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed., *Where These Memories Grow, History, Memory, and Southern Identity* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of Chapel Hill Press, 2000), 23.
- ⁹ Orlando Patterson, *Rituals Of Blood: The Consequences Of Slavery In Two American Centuries* (Jackson, Tennessee: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 179.
- ¹⁰ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage, 1993). Unfortunately, Morrison marginalizes American Indian presence in her study, yet her point extends to the absence/presence syndrome of “playing Indian” in white cultural practices.

- ¹¹ Anthony S. Parent Jr review *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies* in *Journal of American History* 2011: 98, 798–800.
- ¹² Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001). Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996).
- ¹³ Philip Weeks, *Farewell, My Nation: The American Indian and the United States in the Nineteenth Century*. 2nd ed. (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, 2000).
- ¹⁴ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 58.
- ¹⁵ Vine Deloria, Jr., *C.G. Jung and the Sioux Traditions: Dreams, Visions, Nature and the Primitive* (New Orleans, Louisiana: Spring Journal, Inc, 2009), 22–23.
- ¹⁶ Roger D. Abrahams, *Singing the Master: The Emergence of African-American Culture in the Plantation South* (NY, New York, Penguin Non-Classics, 1994), 131–139.
- ¹⁷ Orlando Patterson, *Rituals Of Blood: The Consequences Of Slavery In Two American Centuries* (Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 253–254.
- ¹⁸ Gump, *The Dust Rose Like Smoke*.
- ¹⁹ Brundage, *Where These Memories Grow*, 18–19.
- ²⁰ For a diagram of the seating order and the place of honor for seven women elders, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Dancing_Rabbit_Creek#cite_note-Broox_Sledge.-2. Accessed November 14, 2011.
- ²¹ Debbie Burt Myers, “Nanah Waiya Day includes traditional Choctaw dance, food”, *The Neshoba Democrat*, 8/18/2010, <http://neshobademocrat.com/main.asp?SectionID=2&SubSectionID=297&ArticleID=21737>, accessed October 16th, 2011.
- ²² For a study of Christian truth claims in the conquest of Native nations, see George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest. The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). For a more extensive analysis as it relates to land theft and the erasure of Indian presence, see also Jean M. O’Brien, *Firsting and Lasting. Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
- ²³ Tinker, *op.cit.*, 30.
- ²⁴ Evan R. Goldstein, “The Anatomy of Influence,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 8, 2011, sec. The Chronicle Review, B7, <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Anatomy-of-Influence/129688/>. Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness*, 1st ed. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2008), 6–8.
- ²⁵ On the complex usage of temporalities, or modalities of time, we rely on Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s reflections in *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995). To quote Trouillot, “...the past does not exist independently from the present. Indeed, the past is only past because there is a present, just as I can point to something *over there* only because I am *here*. In that sense, the past has no content. The past—or, more accurately, pastness—is a position” (*op.cit.*) 15.

- ²⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 68 ff.
- ²⁷ See most recently, Gerald Vizenor, *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009). For Canadian First Nations perspectives, see Emma LaRocque, *When the Other Is Me. Native Resistance Discourse, 1850–1990* (University of Manitoba).
- ²⁸ Lisa Lefler, unpublished research paper and public health literature review presented in Cherokee, NC, August 2010.
- ²⁹ For a contemporary global context, see “Ending violence against women”, www.rescue.org. Accessed November 17th, 2011.
- ³⁰ The non-profit *Wisdom of our Elders, Inc.* resource website lists eighteen sources for historical trauma among American Indian nations. The most prevalent include ecocide, culturcide, genocide, assimilation, separation, and termination. The website also offers curricular resources for healing historical trauma and an extensive bibliography. See <http://discoveringourstory.org>. Accessed October 15th, 2011.
- ³¹ Nancy C. Maryboy and David Begay, *Utah’s Native Americans*, chapter seven. http://historytogo.utah.gov/people/ethnic_cultures/the_history_of_utahs_american_indians/chapter7.html (accessed November 17th, 2011). The enslavement of California tribes by Europeans, beginning with the labor camps of Spanish missionaries, constitute yet another chapter in the history of Indigenous enslavement. In terms of resistance, in 1851, the Miwok, for example, freed at least a dozen enslaved American Indian women held captive as “wives” by a white American. See <http://www.nahc.ca.gov/califindian.html>. Accessed November 17th, 2011. For a case study on African/American/ Indian race relations and slavery in the Creek nation, see Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian. Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- ³² See Kevin Mulroy, *Freedom on the Border. The Seminole Maroons in Florida, the Indian Territory, Coahuila, and Texas* (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 1993).
- ³³ Amnesty International, *Maze of Injustice. The failure to protect Indigenous women from sexual violence in the USA* (New York: Amnesty International, 2006).
- ³⁴ Andrea Smith, *Conquest. Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005), 12. See also Devon Mihesuah, op.cit., 61–66, and Barbara Alice Mann, “Where Are Your Women? Missing in Action” in Four Arrows (Don Trent Jacobs), *Unlearning the Language of Conquest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 120–134.
- ³⁵ Gabrielle Tayac, general editor, *Indivisible. African-Native American Lives in the Americas* (Washington, D.C. and New York: The Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian in Association with the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 2009).
- ³⁶ Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans. The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), second edition 1993, quotation p. 265. Ulrike Wiethaus thanks her colleagues Mary Ann Jacobs and Cherry Beasley at the University of North Carolina Pembroke for discussing Forbes’ work on the ethnogenesis of Red-Black people with her. See also

- Tiya Miles' essay, "Taking Leave, Making Lives" for a summary of more recent scholarship and her own insights into the nexus between African American and American Indian communities, published in Gabrielle Tayac, general editor, *Indivisible*, 139–151.
- ³⁷ Angela Gonzales, Judy Kertesz, and Gabrielle Tayac, "Eugenics as Indian Removal: Sociohistorical Processes and the De(con)struction of American Indians in the Southeast," *The Public Historian*, 2009, Vol. 29, No. 3, 53–67.
- ³⁸ Devon Abbott Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women. Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism* (Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), chapter eight, "Finding a Modern American Indigenous Female Identity", 81–112.
- ³⁹ Eisenberg, E., Goodall, H. L., Jr., & Trethewey, A. *Organizational Communication: Balancing creativity and constraint, 5th ed.* (New York, New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2007). p. 171.
- ⁴⁰ Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York, New York: Random House, 2010), 33–34.
- ⁴¹ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 173–174.
- ⁴² "The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the nation; The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation; The right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living; The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad; The right of every family to a decent home; The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health; The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment; The right to a good education." See http://www.fdrheritage.org/bill_of_rights.htm. Accessed November 21, 2011.
- ⁴³ See David E. Wilkins, "African Americans and Aboriginal Peoples: Similarities and Differences in Historical Experiences" in *Cornell Law Review* (90:2), January 2005, 515–530.

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Part I

Home and Place

More Than a Slave
Walter Megael Harris

I am no servant nor a slave for one of my greatest foes evolved from mountainous caves
As I sit on my throne and look across my land, a land with black sand and people with an
 ebony tan
I run with the cheetah and talk to the baboon as we sit and play chess while gazing at the
 moon
As I drink from water, you drink from me, for even in hate I am what you wish to be.

On foreign ground
Hearing foreign sounds
Even chased by black hounds
Where I am weighed and priced by the pound
Where I scream and no man or woman hears my sound
I yearn to be free, going back to the land of the black honey bee.

For we are created from the richest soil, as black and rich as flowing oil
Honey that is brown is more precious than any gold that can be found
Our skin is black and many shades of brown
By spirit and body, we are Africans forever bound.

Chapter 1

American Indian Lands and the Trauma of Greed

Clara S. Kidwell

THE CURRENT economic recession in the United States is a result of speculation in mortgages resulting from an expectation that property values would continue to appreciate indefinitely. Policies beginning in the Reagan administration and pursued in the Bush and Clinton Administrations promoted home ownership as an American ideal, much as Jeffersonian democracy had promoted the image of the self-sufficient yeoman farmer in the early nineteenth century. Those policies led to easy credit for home mortgages, the creation and sale of bonds based on those mortgages and on their value, and ultimately, collapse of the housing market and economic collapse.

The belief in the sanctity and value of private property has been a hallmark of American society since the country's beginning. If historians proclaim to classes that we study history to learn from the past, the current situation has interesting reverberations with earlier events in American history. That history is marked by periodic financial panics in 1837, 1893, and in 1932. The circumstances of each were different, and they happened at different stages in the development of the American economy, but they are characterized by a common thread—a belief in the value of property, a desire to control it, and a desire to make a profit from its value. Financial speculation in the value of land has been a hallmark of American history.

In the 1830's, speculation, however, thwarted federal policy of private landownership by yeoman farmers by pitting men who acquired large amounts of land with an eye to profit by driving up prices against individuals who wanted to establish farms and homes.¹ Indian land became a valuable commodity in the South because of Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Policy, enacted in 1830 and providing for the exchange of Indian land in the southeast for land west of the Mississippi River and removal of Indians to those new lands.

In the history of American Indians, the federal government embraced a general policy of allotting Indian lands to individual tribal members in the General Allotment Act of 1887, the idea being that individual ownership of land would have a “civilizing” effect on Indians and allow them to assimilate the values of American society more readily, but allotment was very much a part of policy in much earlier treaty negotiations with American Indian tribes.

The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek with the Choctaws in 1830 is a prime example of the effects of this allotment policy in a highly volatile financial situation. The removal treaties with the large southeastern tribes under Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal policy commodified Indian Land as private property in a new economic system that thrived on speculation in rising values of land. The treaties show how the American ideal of private property was imposed on Indians very early in their relations with the United States government. The United States government adopted its policy of allotment of communally held land to individual Indians in these early removal treaties, and the idea of private property would continue to inform federal Indian policy until the 1930’s.

In the early history of the American republic, Indian land became the object of American ideals and federal policies of private property. In the 1830’s, Americans’ desire for low cost land on which to settle drove demand that fueled Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal policy. The policy culminated in the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, providing that the Indian nations east of the Mississippi River would be moved west to lands in the still largely undeveloped Louisiana Territory west of the Mississippi, thereby opening vast tracts of southeastern land to settlement. Provisions of the various tribal treaties agreeing to removal embodied the notion of private property by allowing for allotment of individual holdings to tribal members as private property rights, either to be sold to compensate them for improvements that they had made or to be settled as individual lands. Americans wanted land for settlement, but as the American nation moved west they also wanted land for railroads and roads for western expansion. The history of Indian removals reveals enormous suffering on the “Trail of Tears.” This is the story that is most familiar to the American public through school textbooks. That story of tragedy far overshadows the longer term economic consequences of Indian land for the United States economy and the disruption of individual lives for those dispossessed of their homes.

The release of that land into public land markets in the early 1830’s came about in a national economy that was facing a major crisis over the

development of a banking system. The first National Bank was established under the leadership of Nicholas Biddle of Philadelphia and chartered by the United States Congress. But it represented a strongly centralized control of money in the East that came into conflict with the desire of westerners to gain access to land and money. Andrew Jackson, with his strongly populist tendencies, objected to the rechartering of the National Bank and argued for decentralization of banking. State chartered banks, many vastly undercapitalized, sprang up across the country. In 1836 in one of the most important acts of his presidency, Jackson issued the Specie Circular, calling for the transfer of specie to local banks and requiring that public lands be purchased with specie. Land speculators looking to profit in land markets were implicated in the financial situations that precipitated the financial panic of 1837.²

The major removal treaties signed with the large tribes of the Southeast (The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, Choctaw, 1830; the Treaty of Cusseta, Creek, 1832; the Treaty of New Echota, Cherokee, 1835; the Treaty of Washington, Chickasaw, 1832) contained terms that reflected American values of private land ownership. Indian governments that were giving up the homes of their citizens would receive title to the Western lands in fee simple, a very European concept of private ownership. All provided for allocations of tribal land to individual tribal members. The intent was that individuals who had homes and cultivated fields would be able to sell them to compensate for their loss when those individuals went west.

This concept of sale of individual property was counter to Indian cultural values of land usage. Tribesmen did not understand this concept of buying and selling. They did understand on an individual basis the attachment they had to their homes. The attachments were not based necessarily on mystical associations with the land (although for the Choctaws the story of the emergence of their ancestors from the great mound Nanih Waiyah was common knowledge) but on the fact that they and their ancestors had always lived on these lands. They had built homes and cultivated fields, but they also hunted in the surrounding environment for deer and small game. They were familiar with the terrain and the wild vegetation that provided greens such as wild onions and medicines.³

In the late 1830's, the availability of land as an investment in rising value ultimately collapsed upon itself. All these treaties led to the opening of several million acres of land in the southeast for public sale in a highly volatile political and economic situation that allowed for speculation in values. This

speculation fed into the land bubble that contributed to the collapse of the national financial system in the great financial panic of 1837.⁴ Many holders of Indian land had to liquidate their investments at significantly lower values. As the credit system of the United States collapsed, so did the fortunes of those who attempted to profit from Indian land.

The 1830's were a period of economic instability in the United States. The struggle between Andrew Jackson and Nicholas Biddle over the rechartering of Biddle's Second National Bank revealed basic tensions in the new American government over centralization of power and Jackson's strong states' rights stance. The failure of the recharter and the distribution of the First National Bank's assets to state banks led to a situation of easy credit, a situation especially desirable for land speculators who wanted to buy public lands, including the lands being ceded by American Indian tribes in the southeast. Easy credit from state banks allowed men to buy land at inflated prices to forestall small farmers from the market. Men who wanted land for farms were then forced to buy land at artificially high prices controlled by the speculators, who were assured a profit. But for men anxious to gain land for farms, speculation was an evil. The availability of Indian land, however, inspired widespread speculation. The various articles of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek that gave Indians the possibility of private ownership of land fueled white men's speculative urges.

The Choctaw Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, signed on September 27, 1830, stands as a prime example of the effects of land politics in the Southeast. In one fell swoop, the federal government could effect a policy to remove Indians from their lands and open those lands to settlement for Americans who were anxious to settle new territories. Jackson asserted a humanitarian reason for his removal program to preserve Indians from complete disappearance in the face of a "superior culture" by giving them land west where they could pursue their traditional hunting ways of life.

The Treaty contained a number of provisions that gave individual allotments of lands to various leaders and non-Indians who had been helpful to the Choctaw Nation. The 19th article spelled out an elaborate system of allotments to Choctaw farmers which they could sell for fifty cents an acre to recoup the value of their investments in their homes and crops in Mississippi when they moved west. Various chiefs and captains of Choctaw "companies" were given individual allotments.⁵ The rationale for allotments was to protect Indians from loss of personal resources by giving them something they could

sell.⁶ What it ultimately did was make Indians and their land the object of speculators, whose activities cast doubt on the legitimacy of individual Choctaw claims.

The 14th article proved to be most problematic of the treaty in terms of the sale of Choctaw lands. It provided that Choctaws who wished to stay in Mississippi in their homes would get individual allotments of a section of land so they could remain as citizens of the state. The provision was considered necessary to get the assent of Choctaw leaders to the treaty. It spelled out a specific procedure for 14th article claimants to register with William Ward, the Choctaw agent for their claims. They must have made improvements and remain on their lands for five years in order to receive title to their land.⁷

What seemed to treaty negotiators a fairly straightforward award of lands as individual property to individual Choctaws in order to encourage Choctaw leaders to sign the 1830 treaty became a legal nightmare that ended with the dispossession of most of the approximately 5,000 Choctaws who actually chose to try to remain in their homes in Mississippi.

The opening of land ceded by the Choctaws in Mississippi for public sale set off a frenzy of buying at the public land offices where the land was offered for sale beginning in 1833. The problem complicating the Choctaws land sales was the 14th article of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. The individual claims for sections of land constituted an area of some 615,686 acres of land in central Mississippi that could be opened to land buyers.

Andrew Jackson summed up his opinion of the Mississippi Choctaws.

All classes and sexes are habitually intemperate, ready to barter any chattel in their possession for whiskey, and under its influence many of them have been deluded into these fraudulent assignments of their rights.

He offered a moral argument for his policy of removal of the Indians: “a measure called for by humanity in its loudest tones.”⁸ At the same time, the allotment provisions of the treaty promised that Choctaws could either take advantage of the sale of their land to recoup the loss of their homes, crops, livestock, or to preserve their homes as citizens of Mississippi on the same basis as other citizens.

The whole process of assigning individual Choctaw lands under the direction of the federal government opened up opportunities for speculators. Choctaws who wished to claim individual allotments under the 14th article had to register with the federal agent, William Ward, but Ward’s directions reached

him several months after he was supposed to start the registration process. During the course of the registration, Ward was evidently drunk for periods of time, and he actively discouraged attempts by community leaders who brought bundles of sticks representing their groups, saying that each claimant must appear in person.

George Martin's survey of the lands was ostensibly to be based on Ward's register, but Ward submitted several registers to Congress. They not only put Choctaw lands on the market in the face of treaty claims, but created clouds of doubt on the claims process and the claims themselves. Ward himself admitted that he suspected that claims were fraudulent and that he had discouraged claimants.

—I will observe that there are many more who wish to stay five years than had been expected. There were upwards of two hundred persons from one section of the country apply a few days since at a great council held near this place. I put them off as I did believe they were advised to that course by designing men who were always opposed to the treaty. This I trust is the last effort they will be able to make to thwart the aims of Government.⁹

Ward thus seemed to appoint himself as an agent to carry out what he saw as federal policy by discouraging Choctaw claims.

When Martin was appointed by the government to carry out a survey of individual Choctaw claims and reserve them from public sale, he was unable to get copies of land plats. When he did get plats and traveled through the ceded territory, he heard frequent complaints from Choctaws who thought they had registered but whose names were not on Ward's register. In the meantime, land sales had begun in the fall of 1833, with many potential Choctaw individual claims still in question.¹⁰

As the sales of public lands continued, Martin was instructed by the President to withhold from public sale enough land of equal value to cover Choctaw claims that had already been sold.¹¹ Congress passed a law appointing a commission to investigate the circumstances of the claims.¹² The actions of Congress set off a flurry of activity charging speculation and denying the legitimacy of the majority of the Choctaw claims. Citizens of the State of Mississippi also called for the investigation. Citing some 3,000 questionable claims at an average of 1,280 acres, a group of 100 citizens addressed a memorial to Congress challenging the legitimacy of the claims.

Your memorialists are persuaded that not more than one out of twenty claims are founded in justice and equity, and if scrutinized by a tribunal . . . those honestly

claiming would be secured in their rights, and a most stupendous system of fraud on the government would be exposed and defeated; the settlers relieved from the embarrassments thus brought on them, and Congress saved from the teasing and vexatious applications of false claimants for a series of years to come.¹³

Were Choctaw claims legitimate, or were Choctaws being manipulated by white land speculators to file fraudulent claims? Mary Young's classic study *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks*, explored this situation of allotments and speculation with an exhaustive study of speculators.¹⁴ Agents for various companies of land speculators circulated among Choctaws drawing up contracts to represent individual Choctaw claims before the investigating commission, in exchange for a fee of half the land that they could procure for their clients. But as the effects of America's financial crisis linger on individuals with job loss and foreclosures, what of the individual Choctaws in Mississippi who found themselves dispossessed of their homes?

Prominent in the discussion was the fear that white land speculators, as representatives of Choctaw claimants under the 14th article, would gain control of Choctaw lands for speculative purposes. Suspicion of speculation undermined the legitimacy of Choctaw claims, and individual Choctaws with their claims became pawns in a highly political game.

A three-person commission was appointed by Congress in 1837 and empowered to accept new applications from Choctaws for allotments. Many people came forward to give testimony that Agent Ward had refused to take their claims for individual reservations of land. The commissioners received 1,349 applications for land. In addition, seventy-seven claims had actually been listed by William Ward, thus making a total of 1,426 claims.¹⁵ The Commission examined 261 of the cases presented to it before their commission expired in 1838.¹⁶

The continuing charges that the Choctaws who were making claims were doing so at the prompting of speculators led to the revival of the commission in 1842, with a new set of commissioners, John F. H. Claiborne, Ralph Graves, and George Gaines, who continued the investigation of claims.¹⁷ Claiborne, who served as chair of the Commission, made it quite clear, however, that the commission's purpose was to see that the Choctaws who remained in Mississippi would be removed from the state.¹⁸ Claiborne's concern was to protect the Choctaws from exploitation by speculators. Claiborne "solemnly avers his belief that gross and extensive frauds are in contemplation on the Government and the Indian."¹⁹

Although Claiborne's statement implies concern that Indians were being defrauded by land speculators, his solution to the problem was to see that the Choctaws would be moved out of the state. His rationale is questionable since there is evidence that Claiborne had financial dealings with William Gwin, a man deeply involved in land speculation companies in Mississippi.²⁰ Gwin's brother, Samuel, was appointed the registrar at the Chochuma land office in Mississippi because of Gwin's friendship with Andrew Jackson and was charged with marking lands as sold in order to reserve them for companies of speculators. He mounted a vigorous defense before the Congress of the United States.²¹ But the charges and defense were submitted to the U.S. Congress, and there was no official exoneration of Samuel Gwin.

In 1842, Congress passed a law converting unsettled Choctaw land claims into payment in scrip, which could be used to settle unsold lands in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. The scrip became a form of currency for entry into public land in the Southeast.²² The availability of land scrip offered new possibilities for speculation.

The men involved in speculation were among the leading citizens of their respective states. In North Carolina, Charles Fisher was a politician and businessman in Salisbury, North Carolina. He served two terms as representative from North Carolina in the United States Congress and as a representative in the North Carolina state legislature, in addition to holding interests in mining operations and businesses. He also speculated in land. Fisher saw land value, not humans, in the disposition of Choctaw claims. He estimated the available land that would become available through scrip at 1,820,000 acres. At a value of \$1.25 an acre, the total value was \$2,275,000. Fisher observed that "the most of this scrip will be thrown into market for sale, as soon as it is issued: the consequences of bringing so much into market at once will be that it must fall greatly below its nominal value. By judicious management a large amount of it may be had at from 25 to 50 cents in the dollar." Ultimately, "if the change most desired should be effected as we believe it will, then every dollar of the scrip will be worth at the lowest estimate \$2 and the whole amt. may be realized in two, or three years at most."²³

Franklin Plummer, who made a career in Mississippi politics, was also a major player in land speculation by representing Choctaw claims. He became a representative in the Mississippi State Legislature, representing himself as a candidate of the poor against the rich in his early career. His own involvement

in land claims speculation countered that claim. Plummer's name appeared often in testimony as representing Choctaw claims.²⁴

William Gwin was born in Tennessee. He practiced medicine in Clinton, Mississippi. He had become a political protégé of Andrew Jackson, through whose influence he was appointed U.S. Marshall for the district of Mississippi in 1831. He speculated extensively in Choctaw land in partnership with Abraham A. Halsey, who was also associated with Charles Fisher. Halsey represented a number of claims before the 1837–38 Commission.

But for claimants such as Chishahoma, forcible dispossession was the story. He testified before the commissioners Murray and Vroom in 1838. He was confronted with a group of white people who had come across the creek to where he and his family lived and declared that they were going to build a town on land that they had bought at a sale at the Augusta land office. Or Monubbee, a 48 year old full-blood with a wife and five children. His witness, Ticbepalubbee, reported that Monubbee had a house and a cultivated field, until a white man came and pulled down his house. Monubbee then moved his family to a settlement on the Yallobusha River, near Anthony Turnbull's home.

While men such as William and Samuel Gwin viewed the Choctaw cession as open land available for acquisition and sale, the testimony of Chishahoma and Monubbi and Ticbepalubbee indicate the human effects of the removal policy and subsequent loss of land and property to Choctaw families. The problem was that the veracity of their testimony was questioned by commissioners who were fearful of speculators.

Choctaw claims were unanimously clouded by fears of speculation. The line between truth and falsehood became blurred by the historical and financial circumstances of the times. Charges were made before Congress and as vigorously disputed. The legitimacy of Choctaw testimony was called into question by Choctaw association with known land speculators and contracts that they signed with members of land companies who would represent their claims. The names of John Johnson, John B. Forester, A. A. Halsey, and Charles Fisher appear frequently in the proceedings of the commissions. The field of speculation broadened to land scrip when the validity of claims was acknowledged but could not be met because of land sales. The Congress seemed more than ready to protect Choctaw rights by converting the value of Choctaw lands that had been sold to non-Indians into scrip that would allow entry on any unsold or unclaimed public lands in Mississippi, Alabama, or Louisiana. It also continued to pass preemption laws which allowed settlers on

public lands to claim those at a price of \$1.25 per acre if they had spent five years thereon and made improvements.

Since the status of Choctaw claims seemed largely irresolvable, the Congress of the United States finally decided in 1853 to convert all the scrip into cash sums to be paid directly to Indian claimants once they had moved West. The final census on which distribution was to take place showed 2,221 Choctaws still in the East. These included 193 in Louisiana, 514 in the Six Towns Clan in Jasper and Newton Counties; 294 in the Chunka clan in Newton and Jasper counties, 359 in the Moglusha clan in Newton and Neshoba counties; 269 in the Yok nuk ne clan in Carroll and Leake counties, 69 in the Pearl River clan near that river, 403 in the Bogue Chito Clan in Neshoba county; 49 in the Haloon Iowah clan near Pearl River in Neshoba and Leake counties; 19 of the Sukanache clan in Kemper County; 63 in the Talla Chulak clan in Kemper county; 16 in the Tushkalameta clan in Scott County, and 13 in the Lobatche clan in Leake and Neshoba counties. Of these people, 490 were men, 618 were women, and 1,063 were children.

The remarkable thing about the whole confused, contentious, and controversial process of adjudicating Indian claims was that Choctaws did not disappear from Mississippi. Although some 5,000 of them succumbed to pressures to leave the state between 1845 and 1849, others clung stubbornly to kinship ties, as the persistence of clan identity indicates. When dispossessed, they moved to other communities where they might find relatives. They found public lands in the pine forests of the central part of the state and simply camped there. After the Civil War, they often became sharecroppers or tenant farmers for white landowners.

Pressure for removal continued. Many people had relatives who had moved West, and people moved to join them. By the early 1900's, only about a thousand Choctaws remained in the state, most of them full bloods who lived by subsistence farming on public lands or tenant farming or sharecropping. The dispossession of most of the approximately 5,000 to 6,000 Choctaws who remained in Mississippi is a revealing story of systematic federal policy, the greed of speculators, and outright racism that combined to deny the Choctaw the basic right to remain on their lands as guaranteed in the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek. It is also a tale of the persistence of a people in the face of those forces. Although the Choctaws in Mississippi remained desperately poor throughout much of the twentieth century, the so-called "Choctaw Miracle," the economic development projects engineered by Chief Philip Martin in the late 1970's, brought the

tribe new resources and stability, and the introduction of casino gaming in the 1980's has made the tribe a political power in the state of Mississippi in the early twenty-first century.

Creek lands also went on the market, and were the subject of similar frauds.²⁵ The Chickasaw also ceded land, but the lessons learned by the government affected the Chickasaw cession treaty. It was made clear that Chickasaw would receive individual allotments that would be sold to give the Chickasaws the capital to buy a new homeland in the west.²⁶

A question is, did speculators in Indian lands profit from their acquisitions? The evidence indicates that they did not.²⁷ The majority of speculators in public lands in two counties in the Chickasaw Cession in Northern Mississippi saw yearly returns of three percent or less on their investments.²⁸ Franklin Plummer, lawyer and Mississippi Congressman, became president of a local bank in Granada, Mississippi that went bankrupt.²⁹

Land speculation was an ongoing issue in the sales of public lands, not just Indian lands. Between 1835 and 1837, 38,000,000 acres of public lands were sold, 29,000,000 of which were bought for speculation.³⁰ Ultimately, the opening of public lands and the easy credit occasioned by the opening of state banks under Jacksonian monetary policy worked against the small farmers who wanted access to cheap land and the Indians whose rights the government had guaranteed in previous treaties. Some speculators profited handsomely from their investments, but probably as many lost money as land prices dropped during the panic of 1837, and some went bankrupt.³¹ The human face of speculation was in the experiences of Choctaws driven off their land by white settlers who had bought their lands at public sales or ultimately, by land speculators.

The main question, which is largely unanswerable, is, were the Choctaw claims for individual lands valid? The suspicion of speculators clouded the proceedings with doubt, and it is obvious that lawyers and agents for land companies did represent claims before the 1837–38 commission. Were Indians simply vulnerable dupes of scheming white men? Were they legitimately trying to protect their homes and improvements? Despite two commissions and presidential action after the fact, in 1846 only 147 patents for land title were issued to Choctaw claimants. Speculation and suspicion probably served to dispossess Choctaws as much as outright fraud, and human greed reared its head throughout the proceedings.

Notes

- ¹ Arthur H. Cole, "Cyclical and Sectional Variations in the Sale of Public Lands, 1816–1860," in *The Public Lands: Studies in the History of the Public Domain*, edited by Vernon Carstensen (Madison, Milwaukee, and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1868), 247.
- ² Benjamin Horace Hibbard, *A History of the Public Land Policies* (Madison and Milwaukee: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), 220–221.
- ³ John Swanton, *Source Material for the Social and Ceremonial Life of the Choctaw Indians*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin, No. 103. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931.)
- ⁴ Reginald Charles McGrane, *The Panic of 1837: Some Financial Problems of the Jacksonian Era* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1965), 43–69.
- ⁵ Treaty with the Choctaw, 1830. Sept. 27, 1830; 7 Stat., 333. Proclamation, Feb. 24, 1831. Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*. 5 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904–41), Vol. 2, 314–15.
- ⁶ Mary Elizabeth Young: *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks: Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi 1830–1860* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961). 33.
- ⁷ Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, 5 vols (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904) Vol. II, p. 313
- ⁸ James D. Richardson, ed. *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789–1897*. Vol. III, part 2, Andrew Jackson's Second Annual Message to Congress, December 6, 1830.
- ⁹ M234, roll 185. William Ward to Lauch L. Harniton, Esq., Choctaw Agency, 6/21/31, opened book for those who wish to register and mentioned receipt of letters of 21st and 27 ult. under 19th Art., "I have advised the Department the number of acres that were entered by the chiefs prior to the first of January under the 14th Article. All the registers will be returned in due time to the Dept."
- ¹⁰ Choctaw Indians, by Andrew Hays, Agent, February 1, 1836. 24th Congress, 1st session, House of Representatives, Doc. No. 119, 1–3.
- ¹¹ Marlon Dickerson to George W. Martin, October 13, 1834. Claims to Choctaw Reservations of land under the 14th article of the article of the Treaty of 1830, 7 American State Papers Public Lands, 617, 1860 23rd Congress, 2nd session, No. 1316, 627.
- ¹² Resolutions, March 3, 1834. Senate doc. 135. 23rd Congress, 1st Session.
- ¹³ "Adverse to the Location of the Reservations of the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi" February 1, 1836, 8 American State Papers Public Lands, No. 1414, 431.
- ¹⁴ Mary Elizabeth Young: *Redskins, Ruffleshirts, and Rednecks: Indian Allotments in Alabama and Mississippi 1830–1860*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961.
- ¹⁵ 25th Congress, 3d Session, House of Representatives Document No. 294, Reservations of Land Under Fourteenth Article of Treaty of 1830 with the Choctaw Indians.
- ¹⁶ 19 C. Cls. 243 *The Choctaw Nation of Indians v. The United States* [No 12742, Decided March 3, 1884].

- ¹⁷ 28th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Document 168, January 30, 1844. Message from the President of the United States Transmitting the Correspondence in Relation to the Proceedings and Conduct of the Choctaw Commission, Under the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid*, Statement by John F. H. Claiborne, March 22, 1843.
- ¹⁹ Choctaw Indians, Memorial of J. F. H. Claiborne, February 19, 1844. 28th Cong., 1st sess., House Doc. 137, 2.
- ²⁰ Claiborne to Gwin, March 10, 1845, Claiborne to Gwin, March 15, 1845, William McKendree Gwin papers, BANC Mss. C-B 378, Part II, Box II, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.
- ²¹ Brief of the Evidence in Defense of Samuel Gwin from Charges Affecting his Official Conduct and Character as Registrar of the Land Office at Chochuma, Mississippi, American State Papers, Public Lands, II, 24th Congress, 1st Session, No. 1536, June 1, 1836. 711.
- ²² Letter from the Secretary of War, in relation to the adjustment of claims arising under the 14th and 19th articles of the treaty of Dancing rabbit creek with the Choctaw Indians, 27th Congress, 2d session, Senate Doc 188, March 16, 1842. The document reported the following data: Total of ceded land, 7,796,000 acres; those selected to satisfy claims admitted for reservations under different articles of the treaty, 225,000 acres; sales up to December 31, 1841, 4,979,408 acres; required to satisfy claims reported by “late Choctaw commissioners, 225,720 acres; Claims remaining are estimated at 1,396,000 acres, although may be reduced to 896,000; claims under the 19th article, 30,000 acres, Making 1,152,720 acres available to satisfy outstanding claims.
- ²³ Fisher family papers, Series 4, folder 79, Southern Historical Collections, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
- ²⁴ Edwin Miles, “Plummer: Piney Woods Spokesman of the Jackson Era,” *The Journal of Mississippi History*, 14 (January 1952): 2–34.
- ²⁵ Young, 73–113; Alleged Frauds on Creek Indians, 25th Congress, 2nd sess., House Executive doc.452, July 3, 1838.
- ²⁶ Young, 114.
- ²⁷ James W. Silver, “Land Speculation Profits in the Chickasaw Cession,” *The Journal of Southern History* 10, no. 1 (Feb. 1944), 87–88.
- ²⁸ Silver, 91.
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- ³⁰ Paul Gates, “The Role of the Land Speculator in Western Development,” in Paul W. Gates, *The Jeffersonian Dream: Studies in the History of American Land Policy and Development*, ed. By Allan G. and Margaret Beattie Bogue (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 12.
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Chapter 2

“Home” and “House” in Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Anthony S. Parent Jr.

Introduction

AT THE BEVERLY Jones Homestead in Wachovia, North Carolina, an elderly Mrs. Betty Cofer, enslaved as a child by the Jones family, recalled a traumatic event at the home place. In her recollection, she made a distinction between house and home:

We started to buy our little place and raise a family. I done had four chillun, but two’s dead. I got grandchillun and great-grand chillun close by. This is *home* to us. When we talk about the old homeplace, we just say the ‘house’ cause there is only one *house* to us.... Miss Ella was a little girl when I was borned, and she claimed me. We played together. I waited on her and most times slept on the floor in her room....The rest of the family was all fine folks and good to me, but I loved Miss Ella better’n anyone or anything else in the world. She was the best friend I ever had. If I ever wanted for anything, I just asked her and she give it to me or got it for me somehow....I always did what I could for her too and stood by her—but one time. That was when we was little girls going together to fetch the mail. It was hot and dusty; and we stooped to cool off and wade in the branch. We heard a horse trotting and looked up and there was Marster switching his riding whip and looking at us. ‘Git for *home*, you two, and I tend to you,’ he says, and we got! But this time I let Miss Ella go to the *house* alone and I sneaked around to Granny’s cabin and hid. I was afraid I’d get whupped!¹

Mrs. Cofer gently changes the direction of the interview with the nuance between house and home. She breaks down a concept of homeplace with her notion of home. “Home was where we raised our children”. The homeplace is a *loss leader*, a marketing strategy and a promotion that brings in customers only to sell them something other than what is advertised (s.v. *OED*). The homeplace loses its sense of home for the enslaved girl and becomes simply the place where

the white folks have their house. She amplifies this sentiment with her screen memory of Ella and her fear of a whipping. The master, Ella's father, told them to "git for home" where he would deal with them. What remains of the home in the white-folks' sense is re-enforced when Ella runs to the house. Yet Betty reflexively reasoned that this is not her home; she intuitively runs home to her grandmother's cabin.

Jennifer Fleischner has found the inverse of Mrs. Coffey's juxtaposition in Kate Drumgoold's *A Slave Girl's Story*. Drumgoold remembers that when she was three years old, her owners sold her mother to raise money. Nevertheless, she develops a romance of her white mistress who rescued her from her from her "slave...house," (emphasis mine) which burned down. "I was three years old when I was leaving my own dear mother's home to go to my new mother's home, or should I say to my white mother's home, to live with her, and I left my mother's as happy as any child could leave her own home." Whether this statement is an unconscious utterance or a deliberate rhetorical device is not important. What is important in this discourse is the dialectical doubling that Drumgoold makes in reconciling her relationships to her two mothers. Fleischner writes that "with the repetition of 'mother's home' (intensified twice with the possessive 'own' and the repeated redirections)...the ambiguities in Drumgoold's summation of feelings come into focus."²

Perhaps the most well-known "home" in the fugitive slave narrative is Harriet Jacobs's crawlspace described in her autobiographical *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. This attic where she hid for seven years was in her Grandmother Molly Horniblow's house on West King Street in Edenton. When Jacobs returned to Edenton in 1867, her grandmother had died and her family no longer owned the house. She expressed her feelings of being home to her employer Ednah Dow Cheney of the New England Freedom Aid Society. "I felt that I would like to write you a line from my old home. I am sitting under the old roof: twelve feet from the spot where I suffered the crushing weight of slavery... I had long thought I had no attachment to my old home. As I often sit here and think of those I loved of their hard struggle in life—their unfaltering love toward myself and Children."³ Just as important to her narrative was the "home" of her enslaver Dr. John Norcom, where Jacobs lived and worked as "a slave girl." Interpreting her relationships within these rooms will be my central theme.⁴

An Emotive Sense of Place: Speaking Truth to Power

It is clear here, as was the case with Cofer and Drumgoold, that Jacobs's

feelings about house and home were tied to her relationships. Unfortunately, for enslaved females these relationships were often defined for them. Thavolia Glymp argues that the overwhelming tendency of interpreting the slaveholder's "home" as a private space where the mistress has domestic dominion has silenced the testimony of the enslaved. Rather, she contends that it is a public space, a work space, not a private sphere, where "the controlling context of power comes into clear view." She reminds us that female-dispensed violence quickly disabused enslaved girls and women of an idealized household. Even if the mistresses were themselves "subordinated," they "dominated slaves," defining in the process "what it meant to be female."⁵ Consequently, even as the narrator tenaciously testifies, she represses, for self-preservation, certain memories, and unconsciously utters others.

Jacobs had struggled mightily with requests that she tell her story. Responding to her friend Amy Post's request to make her story public, she expressed her diffidence in overcoming the "degradation" that she had suffered as a slave girl. She "thought it [the proposal] over and over again but not without some most painful remembrances." She had anxiously avoided the Antislavery circuit "because I felt that I could not be honest and tell the whole truth." She and her brother had "grieved" together in her own Garden of Gethsemane, but she was now ready to tell her story in the fight against slavery: "I have tried for the last two years to conquer it [her dread] and I feel that God has helped me or I never would consent to give my past life to any one for I would not do it without giving the whole truth if it could help save another from my fate."⁶

A few months later, Jacobs felt compelled to answer an article penned in the *New York Tribune* in 1853 by former first lady Julia Tyler, even though she risked re-enslavement. Taking umbrage with an antislavery protest from the "Ladies of England," Tyler had thrown down the gauntlet. Promoting the patriarchal pretensions of southern planters in the name of the "Women of America," Tyler contended that the breakup of families rarely happened. (Jacobs might have asked rhetorically as did Sojourner Truth two years earlier: "Ar'n't I a Woman?") Picking up the challenge, Jacobs appealed directly to women. She not only witnessed both the sexual assault that unscrupulous slaveholders visited on American girls and women "at home," but also the undeserved punishment they gave their loved ones, recompense for their futile efforts to protect them. She also recounted the shameful act of the selling their damaged preys, adding insult to injury.⁷ Although she contended that "the truth can never be told so well through the second or third person as from yourself," she was still hesitant to tell

of her own degradation. "No," she wrote, "it would harrow up my soul."⁸

Speaking truth to power is no minor task. Since "this is the first time that I ever took my pen in hand to make such an attempt," she averred, "you will not say that it is fiction, for had I the inclination I have neither the brain or talent to write it." Although she did not write a fiction, she did disassociate herself from the account, making the quarry an imagined sister rather than herself.⁹ Jacobs had both the "brain and talent" to tell the truth about slavery, but it would take another eight years before she anonymously published *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, "written by herself." Fleischner writes that overcoming the oppression of silence, intrinsic in sexually abusive relationships, especially between masters and slaves, was the primary reason that women wrote their slave narratives. Speaking truth to power, they reclaimed their individuality by recalling their personal memories.

Harriet Jacobs...views her master's seemingly isolated assaults against her personal memory as part of the systematic attack against the collective memory of her family and, by logical extension, the history of slaves....Abusers require a conspiracy of silence, both to enforce their rule and to protect their name....Jacobs struggles against silence and repression, knowing that this struggle is not hers alone. The slave narrator's insistence on the truth of what...speaks to the erasure of memory—that reinforces tyrannical abuse.¹⁰

This chapter explores Jacobs's emotive sense of place as described in *Incidents*. In the 306-page text, the word "house" is used 167 times and "home" 116 times.¹¹ These places include her parents' home which provided Harriet with a sense of belonging. After her mother's death, when she was six years old, Harriet lived with her mistress, whom she looked to as a surrogate mother. With her mistress' death, six years later, she became the property of a minor child, the daughter of Dr. James Norcom. At Norcom's house, she experienced her life as a slave girl. She babysat her owner Mary Matilda and assisted her Aunt Betty in the kitchen. She slept with her aunt in the hall outside of Mrs. Norcom's chambers. Harriet experienced her first sexual pressure here, heightening tension with a "jealous mistress." Norcom had her sleep in his daughter's room to gain access to her. Later, Norcom propositioned her with an isolated cottage in the woods. Norcom finally sent her to his "great house" at the Auburn plantation, six miles outside of Edenton, for refusing his sexual demands. During this entire period, her grandmother's "snug little home" offered a refuge, just as had Betty Coffey's grandmother, including her seven-year ordeal in the crawl space. This home not only offered her shelter from enslavement, but also gave

her the space needed to construct an alternative sense of home. In *Incidents*, Jacobs problematized the house and home contradiction for both enslaved and enslavers.

Loss and Romance: Two Mothers' Homes

Harriet's first home was the house of her parents where she lived until six years old. She described it as a "comfortable home", a place where her parents Delilah Horniblow and Elijah Knox "so fondly shielded" her that she was unaware of her social status as chattel. Her father, a carpenter, was often absent, both travelling "long distances" as foreman of construction projects, and hiring out his labor.¹² In *Incidents*, Harriet does not mention her mother specifically until her death. The loss of a mother is devastating, yet one is struck by what little content Harriet allocates to her mother in the narrative. She recollects the condolences, all of which spoke highly of her mother as "noble and womanly." She tersely states, "I grieved for her" [ILSG 14].

Harriet suffered the loss of her mother, but not her naiveté. She turned inward, "determined to let others think as they pleased but my lips should be sealed."¹³ Understandably, she was most concerned about who would care for her when her mother died. Her father could not, because he was often away from home. Perhaps she would be taken in by her maternal grandmother to whom she was already "indebted for many comforts," including sweets from her bakery. For the first time, she heard talk about her legal condition. Fearing who would care for her and her brother John, a grieving Harriet was consoled when she learned that her new home would be with her mother's mistress. Harriet believed that she was rescued by her mother's "foster sister" Margaret Horniblow. Even in this passage, the presence of her mother is overshadowed by Margaret. While in the nursery, Harriet learned later, likely from her grandmother who nursed both of them, her mother was weaned at three months so that she could better nourish her "white foster sister." Delilah and Margaret were playmates as children, and close companions all their lives. Delilah became a "faithful servant" to Margaret. Fulfilling a death-bed promise to Delilah that "her children should never suffer for anything," Margaret assumed parental charge of Harriet.

Even if Harriet had accepted her surrogate mother, she revealed that her father had not conceded his parental authority. Atypical in slave narratives, he headed his household, paying his owner \$200 a year for this prerogative.¹⁴ Indeed, her most poignant memory of her father, reflecting this double bind, was

not with her, but with her brother. She vividly recalled his anger at her "perplexed" sibling answering his mistress's call rather than his simultaneous call. John later felt his father's raft: "You are *my* child," he emphasized "and when I call you, you should come immediately, if you have to pass through fire and water" [ILSG 17]. As God-fearing children, Harriet and John were certainly conflicted by the contradictory scriptural message of the Letter to the Colossians: "Children obey your parents in all things Fathers, do not provoke your children, for they may lose heart. Slaves, obey your earthly master in all things" (Col 3: 20–22).¹⁵ "Fear will get in the way of children obeying their parents," said Mende Nazer in an interview with Bernadette J. Brooten. Reflecting on her enslaved experience and this scriptural text, she reasoned: "The children will be confused and torn between the parents and the master. The father will know that if the master says something to the children, the children will listen to the master and not to him. When the children do not listen to him, the father may provoke them so that they lose heart. He may regret treating them harshly because he knows that the children have no choice. Slavery creates an endless circle of trauma."¹⁶

Harriet's new home, she recalled, was "a happy one" where little was required of her. Harriet found her life carefree, her chores domestic, and her play childlike. "My mistress was so kind to me that I was always glad to do her bidding, and proud to labor for her as much as my young years would permit. I would sit by her side for hours, sewing diligently, with a heart as free from care as that of any free-born white child. When she thought I was tired, she would send me out to run and jump; and away I bounded, to gather berries or flowers to decorate her room. Those were happy days—too happy to last" [ILSG 14–15]. Harriet had, as a motherless child, developed a family romance, a fantasy that she had been rescued by an idealized parent.¹⁷

A Dreary House and a Snug Little Home: Not Expecting Happiness

Harriet's happiness, however, was short-lived. "When I was nearly twelve years old, my kind mistress sickened and died. . . . I loved her; for she had been *almost like a mother* to me" [ILSG 15, emphasis mine]. Wishing that her surrogate mother would free her, she soon learned that she had been willed to a three-year old niece, Mary Matilda Norcom. She was soon claimed by Mary Matilda's father Dr. James Norcom. He lived in "fine residence" on Eden Street and practiced medicine in the neighborhood [ILSG 25]. Distraught, Harriet wrote "I prepared for my new home," where I was met with "cold looks, cold

words, and cold treatment.” I cried myself to sleep that night on “my narrow bed,” feeling “desolate and alone” [ILSG 17–18].

Her loneliness was abated by her family relations there, especially her Great Aunt Betty, her grandmother’s sister. At the Norcom’s, Harriet always slept with Aunt Betty, “an old woman who had been in the family many years.” As housekeeper, “waiting-maid,” and “*factotum*,” Aunt Betty “had always slept on the floor in the entry, near Mrs.[Norcom’s] chamber door, that she might be within call” [ILSG 22, 217–218]. Her feelings of loneliness intensified a year later when her father “suddenly” died. Orphaned and feeling abandoned, she was losing faith when her grandmother took her home, promising “to be a mother to her grandchildren, so far as she might be permitted to do so” [ILSG 17–18]. Intending to go to her father’s house in the morning, Harriet was ordered back to the Norcoms to decorate their house for a party that evening. She had to recall all that she had lost: her parents dead, no home to call her own. She now thought that her life at the Norcom house had become “more dreary than ever” [ILSG 19].

It was “catch a bit of food” as catch can at the Norcom’s, who were indifferent to their meals [ILSG19]. A mean-spirited Mrs. Norcom kept the cook from using the drippings in the pans and kettles by spitting into them, denying “gravy and scrapings” that might flavor their “meager” diets. She rationed out their food, measuring “pound and ounce three times a day,” priding herself that she knew the measure of a quart of flour to the size and number of biscuits [ILSG, 22]. Norcom once made the cook eat the mush that she had prepared for the dog after it had become sick. She too became sick. If a meal was not to his liking, Norcom sometimes “locked [her] up, away from her nursing baby,” for a twenty-four hour stretch at a time [ILSG, 23].

Yet Harriet was able to contrast the “dreary life” at the Norcom house with her grandmother’s home. She could still find succor at her grandmother’s house when she was out and about running errands [ILSG 19]. Her grandmother kept “the necessaries of life” in her “snug little home.” Harriet associated happiness with home, recognizing that people “who had pleasant homes...were happy.” Enslaved children without a home to call their own, especially orphans, like Harriet and her brother, “could not expect to be happy.” They might find a measure of joy in being “good” [ILSG 30]. Harriet found “sweet balsam” in her grandmother’s affection for her children and grandchildren, but never accepted her resignation; rather she yearned “for a home like hers” [ILSG 28].

It was in Mrs. Norcom’s room where Harriet remembered being punished for the first time. She had just come into the house out of a cold February

snowstorm, wearing new shoes that her grandmother had given her. Her "creaking" shoes so disturbed Mrs. Norcom that she forced Harriet to take them off, threatening to throw them into the fire. Defiantly, Harriet then ran an errand outdoors, bare feet freezing, fantasizing that her sickness or death would cause Mrs. Norcom's remorse [ILSG 31–32]. This first punishment was perhaps the only one that Harriet suffered directly at the hands of Mrs. Norcom. Indeed, Harriet quickly learned that unlike her previous owner, her new mistress was a mean-spirited woman.

Dr. Norcom did not allow anyone, including his wife, to discipline Harriet. He reserved the right to punish her to himself, a ruse to reassure the young girl that he was her "watch and ward... a status different from the other slaves, since her master would have been upset by either her mistreatment or sexual advances toward her"¹⁸ [ILSG 30]. Harriet was well aware of the ruse. She wrote that "the slave girl is reared in an atmosphere of licentiousness and fear. The lash and the foul talk of her master and his sons are her teachers. When she is fourteen or fifteen, her owner, or his sons, or the overseer, or perhaps all of them, begin to bribe her with presents." "If these fail to accomplish their purpose, she is whipped or starved into submission to their will" [ILSG 79]. Harriet also understood "that he had reasons of his own for screening [her] from punishment, and that the course he pursued made my mistress hate me and persecute me" [ILSG 56].

A Den of Violence: Preferring a Cabin or Cell

In this manner Dr. Norcom began pursuing this pubescent charge in and about the house. As early as age twelve she began to feel "no longer a child" [ILSG 46]. The house servants readily understood what was happening, suffering with Harriet in silence. His pressures included notes, signs, and innuendo. Harriet feigned ignorance and naiveté when he asked, "Do you understand?" She knew that he purposefully devised situations for him to be alone with her. "Sometimes he would complain of the heat of the tea room, and order his supper to be placed on a small table in the piazza. He would seat himself there with a well satisfied smile, and tell me to stand by and brush away the flies. He would eat very slowly, pausing between the mouthfuls. These intervals were employed in describing the happiness I was so foolishly throwing away, and in threatening me with the penalty that finally awaited my stubborn disobedience. He boasted much of the forbearance he had exercised towards me, and reminded me that there was a limit to his patience" [ILSG 50]. She avoided

his advances by avoiding being alone with him, although she described his pressure as “though a razor was at my throat.” She had thwarted his pursuit, taking “refuge” by sleeping with Aunt Betty [ILSG 51–52].

Dr. Norcom endeavored to have his four-year old daughter Elizabeth Hannah Norcom to sleep in his apartment, despite the protests of his wife. Perhaps Maria Norcom also feared that he, a proven pedophile, might molest her child. More likely, she sensed his ploy was to compromise Harriet.¹⁹ If propriety deemed it “necessary” for an enslaved nurse to share the quarters also, protecting the child’s virtue, custom did not afford an enslaved girl the same consideration. After one night with the three sleeping together in the room, an enraged Mrs. Norcom interrogated Harriet about her relationship with her husband. She told her honestly about his propositions, moving the mistress to groans and tears, not with empathy for poor Harriet, but with pity for herself. Mrs. Norcom had reason to suspect her husband. He had fathered nine enslaved children [ILSG 55]. If his social position as a doctor in Edenton society required concealment, he was nevertheless “notorious in the neighborhood.” Indeed, Yellins writes that the neighbors would likely have agreed with Harriet’s assessment of Dr. Norcom as a “monster,” for they knew his “scandalous history.” Maria Norcom had to recall her role in his disrepute. Her own marriage to him at age sixteen happened after he had his first wife committed to an asylum; his wife was her age at the time.²⁰

Mrs. Norcom’s reaction was that Harriet should “sleep in a room adjoining her own” in the narrow hallway adjacent to the staircase [ILSG 54]. “There I was an object of her especial care, though not of her especial comfort, for she spent many a sleepless night to watch over me. Sometimes I woke up, and found her bending over me. At other times she whispered in my ear, as though it was her husband who was speaking to me, and listened to hear what I would answer. If she startled me, on such occasions, she would glide stealthily away; and the next morning she would tell me I had been talking in my sleep, and ask who I was talking to.” Harriet was caught in the crosshairs between a lecherous master and a “jealous mistress.” She remarked that she would much prefer the life in a cabin of a field hand or in the cell of a criminal to her plight as a girl in their house [ILSG 49].

Their home, she believed, was typical of a southern slaveholder’s home, a “den” of violence and iniquity; yet southern whites romanticized their households. “They are not only willing, but proud, to give their daughters in marriage to slaveholders. The poor girls have romantic notions of a sunny clime, and of the flowering vines that all the year round shade a happy home” [ILSG

57]. Ironically, this romance is not unlike her own description of life with her mistress, when Harriet recalled having "a heart as free from care as that of any free-born white child." My "white mother" "would send me out to run and jump; and away I bounded, to gather berries or flowers to decorate her room. Those were happy days—too happy to last" [ILSG15]. Drawing on Helen Deutsch's psychoanalytic theory of the maternal imago as a lifelong, although changing, mother identification, Fleischner theorizes enslaved girls like Harriet or Kate Drumgoold who had lost their own mothers and found surrogates. These substitutes, drawn from older enslaved women or mistresses offered them conflicting cultural standards. The loss of a mother for slave girls, writes Fleischner, "helps generate the cluster of images that will become associated within the narrator's mind with slavery's negation: home, love, safety, freedom, and (in this culture) whiteness."²¹ Harriet clearly identified with both the southern romance of home and her white mother. Her death and removal to the Norcom's home forced Harriet to reconsider those romantic images. Yet what's true is the southern home, she now observed, is bastardry and betrayal. "Jealousy and hatred enter the flowery home, and it is ravaged of its loveliness" [ILSG 57].

Her own dream, on the other hand, was to marry and have a "comfortable home," not unlike her parents. Trying to realize this dream, Harriet desired to marry a free man of color "near (Norcom's) home." Harriet had fallen in love with a young free man of color in the neighborhood. He was a carpenter by trade, not unlike her father, who promised to purchase her freedom. But she soon came to understand that it served no purpose because Dr. Norcom still could exercise power over her, "for the husband of a slave (even a free man) has no power to protect her" [ILSG 59].²² Taking umbrage to this proposal, Norcom called her into his study: "I have half a mind to kill you on the spot. If you *must*" marry you could marry one of my slaves. I thought by your carriage that you were above relations with "puppies." She responded that "If he is a puppy I am a puppy, for we are both of the negro race.... The man you call a puppy never insulted me, sir; and he would not love me if he did not believe me to be a virtuous woman." To this retort, Norcom struck her for the first time and threatened to whip the two of them if he caught them on his property. After not speaking to Harriet for two weeks, Norcom "contrived" to run into her in the entry hall and "thrust a note" into her hand as he left the house. In it he regretted hitting her, an abuser's assurance, but "wholly blamed her for causing it" [ILSG 63]. Not long afterward, Norcom spied Harriet speaking to her suitor on the street from his window. She hurriedly returned home "trembling with fear." He

sent for her” immediately” to come into his room, where he delivered a tirade [ILSG 64].

A Cottage in the Woods and the Great House: Choosing Escape

Norcom’s harassment had not gone unnoticed. His predilection for Harriet had become the topic of gossip in the neighborhood [ILSG 84]. Her predicament, she believed, had brought her the attention of Samuel Treadwell Sawyer, scion of a prominent North Carolina family, who began to chat up Harriet. Ironically, Samuel was the grandson of George Blair, the original owner of the house where Harriet lived as a ‘slave girl.’ His mother Margaret (Peggy) had grown up in that house.²³ At the same time Harriet “heard” that Norcom had begun to build a cottage for her in the woods. Harriet “vowed” that she would die first before being consigned to “such a living hell” [ILSG 85]. Daringly, Harriet thwarted his plans by choosing Sawyer as a lover and by becoming pregnant by him. Nevertheless, she felt humiliated and suffered greatly when she told her grandmother. Her grandmother’s response was to tear off her only tangible mementos of her mother—her “wedding ring and her silver thimble”—and throw her out, telling her that she had disgraced her family: “Go away! . . . and never come to my house, again” [ILSG 88]. Norcom cursed her as both “obstinate” and “worthless” . . . ‘I would have bettered your condition.’” He tells her that Mrs. Norcom, “disgusted by your conduct, forbids you to return to the house” [ILSG 91]. Dr. Norcom threatened to sell her south and Mrs. Norcom threatened to kill her if she returned [ILSG 117]. Her grandmother finally relented, offering her grandchild refuge.

At this point in the narrative, Harriet, now age sixteen, shamefully apologizes to the reader for her fall from grace. Yet she blames slavery, for enslaved women have no home and no refuge; white women, on the other hand, have “homes [that] are protected by law,” sheltering them from abuse. Although Harriet desired chastity, a white gentleman, neither married nor her master, learning of her compromised situation “became interested in her,” and flattered her. Harriet’s consent constitutes a bold rejection of her status as enslaved woman. She asserts, “There’s something akin to freedom in having a lover who has no control over you, except that which he gains by kindness and attachment” [ILSG 85]. Harriet also said that she knew that this action of self-declaration would “enrage” Norcom. She believed that his rage would cause him to sell her and that her lover would buy her [ILSG 83, 85].²⁴

Harriet prematurely gave birth to a son Joseph (1829), but he soon

recovered. His father supported the two of them at her grandmother's house. Mrs. Norcom maintained her stance not to allow Harriet to return to her house. Nevertheless, Dr. Norcom continued his pressure and abuse.²⁵ Harriet wrote that an enraged Norcom had thrown her down the stair, leaving her bedridden for "many days." Several months later, after learning that she was pregnant again (1833), Norcom left the house and returned with shears. Accusing her of being prideful in arranging her "fine head of hair," Norcom sheared her hair "close." Storming and swearing, he beat her when she protested "some of his abuse" [ILSG 118]. Note the psychological implications of cutting off her hair. Whites resented enslaved youth who had hair like theirs because it reminded them of what Fleischner wrote about in a different context: "forbidden sexual wishes and anxiety- and guilt-ridden feelings of sexual rivalry."²⁶ Norcom certainly was fixated on her hair. He later wrote in the runaway advertisement that he published that she had "a thick covering of black hair that curls naturally, but which can be easily combed straight."²⁷ The hoped-for sale did not take place. In yet another reclamation of her freedom, Harriet decided to run away when Norcom once again propositioned her with a "cottage...where you and your children can live together...in home and freedom." Now that Sawyer had left town, Norcom "offered to build a small house for [her] in a secluded place, four miles from the town" one that he claimed he could construct cheaply and quickly. "He talked of his intention to give me a home of my own, and to make a lady of me." She believed that this was a "snare"; that his promise of freedom was a lie [ILSG 128]. Entering into this bargain would guarantee her enslavement and that of her children. She believed that she had no choice but to go to the Auburn plantation where his son was about to reside with a new wife and bide her time for escape.

Dr. Norcom sent Harriet to the Auburn plantation with her daughter Louisa Matilda. Her son Joseph was too ill to travel. Upon reaching the Great House, Mr. James Norcom immediately put Harriet to work to ready the house for his new bride. Blaming his father for her haughty airs—"he ought to have broke her in long ago"—he said, and that he would "soon take the town notions out of her head" [ILSG 131]. Harriet was determined not to give him "cause to accuse me of being too much of a lady" She was also fearful that he would beat her child and break her spirit as he beat the other children, their mothers defenseless. Two-year old Louisa Matilda suffered severely, separated from her mother who worked "day and night," together only while they slept. Crying uncontrollably, she wandered unsupervised around the plantation. One day Harriet found her asleep under the house, raised two feet off the foundation, where a snake had

been killed that afternoon. She sent her back to grandmother's [ILSG 132]. Left her to manage the house, "because he [Mr. Norcom] knew nothing about it," Harriet soon pleased the new Mrs. Norcom with her household management skills [ILSG 134–135].

When her old mistress learned of her husband's plan to build a cottage, she insisted that the children move to the plantation as well. "They thought my children's being there would fetter me to the spot, and that it was a good place to break us all in to abject submission to our lot as slaves" [ILSG 143]. Hard up for servants, the younger Norcoms were eager to keep Harriet. Nevertheless, their mean-spiritedness hastened her decision to run away. Harriet had carried her own bed from home, realizing that they would not furnish her one. Yet they would not allow her to bring it inside because she would get feathers on the carpet. Forbidden to use her own bed, she thought it was only a matter of time that her children would be transferred as property to the younger Norcom: "I was certain my children were to be put in their power, in order to give them a stronger hold on me." Harriet "resolved" to escape that night [ILSG 142–146].

Conclusion

Jacobs's subsequent escape, hiding in her grandmother's attic for seven years, is beyond the scope of this essay. Yet a careful reading of *Incidents* highlights the centrality of house and home in Jacob's experience of slavery. She overcame both her traumatic memories and her anxieties in recounting her life as a slave girl. While the themes of black manhood and white violence, including sexual violence, are pervasive in most slave narratives, Jacobs contributes a new discourse of freedom and safety to the genre in juxtaposing the household horror of her master's lust and her mistress's maliciousness with her own dreams of home.²⁸ The reconciliation of house and home in the Harriet Jacobs' narrative espouses the theme of enslaved, legally unprotected womanhood. Enslaved house servants suffered the dual deprecations of spiteful mistresses and predator masters. Far from the euphemistic domestic home scenario for white men and women, enslaved females were at the beck-and-call of mean-spirited mistresses. Sexual abusers cowed their victims into silence. Only by speaking truth to power did Jacobs shatter the silence enforced by southern slave society. By speaking truth to power, she rescued the humanity of both herself and her sex, similarly at risk.

After losing her parental home with the death of her mother, she had initially romanticized her new home, idealizing her mistress as a surrogate mother. This

romance was shattered when her mistress died, transferring her as the property of a minor child of Dr. Norcom. Harriet learned what it meant to be a "slave girl" at Norcom's house. Although a materially fine house, she found it "dreary" when measured against her grandmother's "snug" and comfortable home. She despaired wondering whether orphaned enslaved children could ever hope to have a home of their own. She contrasted the romance of the slaveholding household with its reality. Mrs. Norcom's mean-spiritedness and Dr. Norcom's sexual pressures help accentuate her belief that "home" ought to be a refuge and a sanctuary from abuse. She actively sought a home through courtship, hoping to marry a free black man in the neighborhood, yet only to be brutalized by her scorned master. Choosing a powerful lover, she boldly tried to thwart Norcom's advances. Undeterred, Norcom terrorized Jacobs both physically and psychologically, beating her and threatening her children. His plans for a cottage in the woods contrasted sharply with Harriet's sense of home. Her escape to freedom had to await the purgatory of a seven-year ordeal in her grandmother's attic. Only then could she realize a home in freedom.

Notes

- ¹ Emphasis mine. Belinda Hurmence, *My Folks Don't Want Me to Talk about Slavery: Twenty-one Oral Histories of Former North Carolina Slaves* (Winston-Salem N.C.: J.F. Blair, 1984), 72–73. It is not uncommon for the former-enslaved informant to lead with one thought into another, combining part of the two, and then picking up the first again, binding it to the second as Mrs. Cofer did in her interview.
- ² Jennifer Fleischer, *Mastering Slavery: Memory, Family, and Identity in Women's Slave Narratives* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1996), 133–153. Quotation: p. 153.
- ³ Harriet Jacobs to Ednah Dow Cheney, April 25, 1867, Edenton, North Carolina. Harriet A. Jacobs, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), vol. II, 712–713.
- ⁴ The rooms from Dr. Norcom's house were relocated to Winston-Salem, NC. Robert Leath, the curator of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) in Winston-Salem discovered that the a set of period rooms tagged as the Edenton Rooms were indeed the same rooms where Harriet Jacobs lived as a slave girl. Robert Leath to Anthony Parent, Winston-Salem, NC. Jan. 12, 2010 (personal communication). The museum displays a series of thirteen restored period settings. The Edenton rooms were part of the first installation in 1965. The house which furnished these rooms was demolished in 1957 to make way for a planned medical clinic (never built). Frank Horton, MESDA's founder, had purchased the down stairs interior rooms, about four-fifths of the house's interior space and put them into storage. The rooms include a bedroom, a parlor, an entry hall, a staircase and stair hall. The house, built around 1765, had been owned by George Blair, an important merchant and member of the Continental Congress. The house's distinctive T-Shape design

appeared on the 1769 Sauthier Map of North Carolina. Not only was Horton interested in its historical pedigree (Blair), but also in its Georgian-style woodwork crafted by Southern artisans. Dr. Norcom purchased the house in 1824. Reid Thomas, “(George Blair House, ca. 1765) Observations and Notes” (ca. 2007), MESDA Archive.

⁵ Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3–5.

⁶ Harriet Jacobs to Amy Kirby Post After December 27, 1852, and before February 14, 1853 Cornwall Orange Co [N.Y.]. Jacobs, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, vol. I, 190–191.

⁷ LETTER FROM A FUGITIVE SLAVE [Harriet Jacobs] to the letter of the New York Tribune Slaves Sold under Peculiar Circumstances. June 21, 1853, *Ibid.*, 196–200.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁹ LETTER FROM A FUGITIVE SLAVE. [Harriet Jacobs] to the editor of the *New York Tribune* Slaves Sold under Peculiar Circumstances. June 21, 1853, *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Fleischner, *Mastering Slavery*, 2, 26–27.

¹¹ Jacobs, Harriet A. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself* (ILSG) [1867] (Electronic Edition) Second edition (Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2003). <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/jacobs.html>. Jean Fagan Yellin, the premier Jacobs’ scholar, uses home in the subtitles of each of the parts of her biography: “Private Dreams of Freedom and Home”; Public Dreams of Freedom and Home”; and Public Demands for Freedom and Homes.” Jean Fagan Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: a Life* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2004).

¹² ILSG 11. Hereafter, references to *Incidents* will be made in text.

¹³ Harriet Jacobs to Amy Kirby Post After December 27, 1852, and before February 14, 1853 Cornwall Orange Co [N.Y.]. *HJFPI*, 190–191

¹⁴ Frances Smith Foster, *Witnessing slavery: the development of ante-bellum slave narratives. Contributions in Afro-American and African Studies* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 133.

¹⁵ Willis Barnstone, *The Restored New Testament: A New Translation with Commentary, Including the Gnostic Gospels Thomas, Mary, and Judas* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009).

¹⁶ Mende Nazer with Bernadette J. Brooten, “Epilog,” Bernadette J. Brooten with Jacqueline L. Hazelton, *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 309–318.

¹⁷ Anthony S. Parent and Susan Brown Wallace, “Childhood and Sexual Identity under Slavery,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 3, no. 3 (January 1, 1993): 395; Stephen M. Weissman, “Frederick Douglass, Portrait of a Black Militant: A Study in the Family Romance,” *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 30 (1975): 750. Fleischner, *Mastering Slavery*, 40–41.

¹⁸ Parent and Wallace, “Childhood and Sexual Identity under Slavery,” 397. Henry James, *Henry James: Novels 1871–1880: Watch and Ward, Roderick Hudson, The American, The Europeans, Confidence* (New York, NY: Library of America, 1983).

¹⁹ Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs*, 23–24. Yellin describes Dr. Norcom’s feeling for Mary Matilda as “heartfelt affection” for his “beloved daughter” even if he expected her “implacable” obedience; she interprets his subterfuge as an effort simply directed at compromising Harriet.

- ²⁰ Joshua D. Rothman, *Notorious in the Neighborhood: Sex and Families across the Color Line in Virginia, 1787–1861* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003). Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl, Written by Herself: With Related Documents*, ed. Jennifer Fleischner, First Edition. (New York, NY: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2009), 59n. ; Harriet A. 1813–1897 Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*, ed. Yellin, Jeam Fagin (Harvard University Press, 1987), 266n.; Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs*, 16, 30.
- ²¹ Fleischner, *Mastering Slavery*, 137–139.
- ²² Her condition was not unlike that of an acquaintance married to a free man, but enslaved with her six children to a woman who had inherited them. Unlike Harriet’s mistress, hers was “rare” in her kindness to them. “They had a comfortable home of their own, parents and children living together. The mother and eldest daughter served their mistress during the day, and at night returned to their dwelling, which was on the premises.” Their happiness, however, came to an abrupt end when her mistress married. Her new husband claimed them as “his property,” selling the two older boys south to Georgia and disbursing the others to his plantations. The mistress succeeded in freeing the wife, but “no longer had power” over the fate of the others [ILSG 77].
- ²³ Personal communication: Jenny Garwood, Guide Coordinator, MESDA, to Anthony Parent Jr., Oct. 31, 2011. Garwood has made the connection between Harriet and Samuel’s children and George Blair, the original owner of the Edenton house. Her genealogy demonstrates how well-connected Sawyer was in Edenton and North Carolina society. “George Blair (1738–1772) marries Jean Johnston Blair (1740–1789) the niece of Governor Gabriel Johnston. They have five children, two of which are daughters: Helen Blair (“Nelly”) and Margaret Blair (“Peggy”). Margaret (Peggy) marries Dr. Sylvester Hosmer. A bond for this marriage has not been located, but one for her 1795 marriage to Dr. Matthias Sawyer does exist, listing her as Peggy Hosner. Dr. Sawyer and Peggy have five children, their oldest son being Samuel Tredwell Sawyer (1800–1865). Interestingly, Peggy’s sister Nelly marries a man named Samuel Tredwell (1763–1827) James Iredell, Jr. He served as Governor of North Carolina from 1827–1828, and was related to Samuel Sawyer. He was a cousin of Peggy, his mother. He marries Nelly’s daughter Frances Johnston Tredwell. There are extensive letters between James Iredell (who was also a member of the US Supreme Court) and the Blair family, including Jean, Nelly, and Peggy. Also, in Jean’s will, she lists her children including Nelly and Peggy. Just to note, these names so up as signers of the Edenton Tea Party–Jean Blair, Hannah (Johnston) Iredell, Isabella Johnston (another sister), and even twelve year old Nelly Blair. Peggy must have been too young! Samuel Tredwell Sawyer marries a Lavinia Peyton form Alexandria, Virginia, making this the same man who was the father of Harriet Jacob’s children.”
- ²⁴ For a discussion of home sanctity see P. Gabrielle Foreman, *Activist Sentiments: Reading Black Women in the Nineteenth Century*, 1st ed. (University of Illinois Press, 2009), chap. 5.
- ²⁵ Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs*, 30–31.
- ²⁶ Fleischner, *Mastering slavery*, 40.
- ²⁷ ILSG, 118; Parent and Wallace, “Childhood and Sexual Identity,” 394–398; Jacobs, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, vol. I, 37.

- ²⁸ Frances Smith Foster, *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-bellum Slave Narratives* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 58–59.

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Chapter 3

The Making of an African American Family

Beth Norbrey Hopkins

The Quest for the Beginning

AS AN AFRICAN AMERICAN, the quest to trace one's genealogy is a daunting task. However, the oral tradition in some of our families serves as the bridge connecting one generation to the next. Stories of poverty, tragedy, and survival transcend race, but in the African American community in particular, it is almost inconceivable that a man who withstood the lashes of his slave master would give rise to a family that was self-sufficient and solidly middle class in the next generation. Such is the account of Samuel Hill Sr. who was born as a slave in 1841 in Richmond, Virginia to slave parents Nathaniel Hill and Lilly Ann Fox. I have recreated the pathway of my great-grandfather through oral tradition, and I have employed the use of scholarly journals and monologues to authenticate the information that I obtained by virtue of the childhood memories of Grace Hill Norbrey, granddaughter of Samuel Hill Sr.

Virginia passed laws authenticating slavery in 1661. Harsh laws followed curtailing the slave's freedom of movement, and laws invoked severe punishments for infractions such as whippings, hangings, or maiming parts of a slave's body. In spite of this restrictive environment, Samuel Hill Sr. became a free black, married twice, and fathered twenty-three children. How he obtained his freedom and acquired the funds to purchase sixty-eight acres of land in 1886 is still being probed. However, the deed from the Winston Estate clearly establishes Samuel Hill Sr. as the purchaser. Except for the marriage certificates and census records, most of the information obtained about Samuel Hill Sr. and his son Elijah is from personal interviews of granddaughter Grace Hill Norbrey who was born after Samuel Hill Sr. died.¹ Yet, the imprint of Samuel Hill Sr. was stamped on Grace Hill Norbrey's father Elijah Hill who is the focus of this manuscript, and through his legacy, the reputation of Samuel

Hill Sr. resounds one hundred and twenty years later in Hanover County.

Elijah Hill, the fourth of ten children, was born on the land in Hanover County which Samuel Hill Sr. had cultivated. As his father the head of the household, Elijah demanded absolute authority, and he earned the reputation for being exceptionally disciplined to the point of being harsh. However, as one glances back a generation, it is this same trait which pulled Elijah Hill's family through the crippling effects of the Depression era. Farmers such as Elijah Hill in the South suffered before the Depression era. But in some cases, as with the Elijah Hill household, the black farming family did not suffer as much in the South as their northern brethren. According to Grace Hill Norbrey, for a while, farmers could produce enough food on their land to sustain them until the soil became eroded or until families exhausted their seed money. Yet, acquisition of land was crucial to the survival of the black families during the post-civil war period, too. Blacks sought land for security and for providing sustenance for the family. In addition to owning land, blacks realized they needed an education in order to participate in the political structure that governed their lives.

Following the Civil War, education for blacks was not within immediate reach. Southerners considered education a private responsibility. Even though Southern states passed laws punishing people who educated blacks, some blacks still managed to get a rudimentary education by pooling their resources. Family groups banded together so that knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic was passed on from one to another. Gradually, momentum built for the education of black children, and *Brown vs. Board of Education* opened the flood gates for the concept of equality of education in 1954.² With Virginia leading the pernicious opposition to *Brown*, Southern states responded by adamantly refusing to obey the decision of the Supreme Court, and this rebellion became known as massive resistance. In Prince Edward County, Virginia schools closed rather than integrate. While white children attended private schools, many of the county's black children did not attend schools from 1959 to 1962 unless their parents took them to schools almost ninety miles away to Petersburg, Virginia. Other parents sent children out of state, or children attended one of the makeshift schools in the county. Blacks still pushed for educational equality in Virginia and throughout the South. Gradually secondary schools and colleges reluctantly opened their doors to an emerging class of black citizenry paving the way for the rise of the black middle class.

Even though after the Civil War white business owners did not welcome

blacks into their businesses, around the last quarter of the twentieth century, a black middle class emerged. By the end of the century, blacks owned grocery stores and became tailors, builders, and contractors. As professionals, occupations such as physicians, dentists, and educators, not skilled laborers were more prominent among the middle class blacks. In the early twentieth century, it was difficult for skilled laborers to get a foothold. Fortunately, Elijah Hill's knowledge of farming obtained from his father Samuel Hill Sr. helped to sustain Elijah's family as he pursued the plaster contracting business on the tail end of the Depression. The acquisition of land, the pursuit of education, and the refusal to succumb to dire circumstances ushered Elijah Hill and other blacks in the South similarly situated into a status where comfort and access to the political process became the expectations for the new middle class blacks.

Religion played a key role in the lives of middle class and poor black people throughout the country during slavery and immediately after the Civil War. The church was the source of pride for the community, and the church helped to unite blacks towards the common goal of becoming part of the mainstream of American life. The church was the center of activity and anchor for black people, and the minister was the undisputed leader. Elijah Hill stepped into this role early in his ministry, and because his salary was less than fifteen dollars a month, he was forced to pursue outside income as a plaster contractor. The story of Elijah Hill's dream of prosperity for his family unfolds in this essay. Some questions remain unanswered. However, this search to connect the past to the present has exposed a remarkable family leader whose steadfast ways led his family through an incredible journey.

The Vision of Samuel Hill, Sr. (1841–1914) in Hanover County, VA

In his marriages to Charlotte Freeman and later Patsy Fox in 1886, Samuel Hill Sr. (Sam) fathered twenty-three children.³ He was the consummate head of the family, demanding and dictatorial, yet committed to the welfare of his family. Remember that Sam's masculinity derived from a slave culture where men played a minimal role in the family and were not expected to provide resources for family. However, in the post-civil war years, the family became a primary basis for survival since free black families had male heads of households unlike slave families. Throughout the nineteenth century, black families struggled against forces such as hostility and economic disparity which threatened their stability.⁴ But Sam persisted and forged ahead

with his plans to marry and build a family.

Sprawled north of the Chickahominy River and Richmond, Virginia was the plush land where Sam and Patsy Hill welcomed Elijah Hill into the Hill clan in 1892. According to the 1890 United States Census, there were an estimated 8,211 Negroes in Virginia of which 4,056 were males.⁵ Though advocacy abounded for states' rights, there was little support for recognizing the rights of a newly freed people. Therefore, when the morning dew welcomed Elijah Hill, the stage was set for conflict and proof of the resilience of a proud people.

Oral tradition provides that Sam was a slave on the Tinsley Plantation in Hanover County. It has been repeated through the generations that Sam's master beat him brutally, and that these beatings influenced his method of discipline. Wife beatings were not uncommon in his household, but he earned the reputation of being a clever farmer, an enigmatic leader and helpful neighbor.⁶ Relatives of Sam declare he was tall, red headed, and light skinned (22 February 2010). His parents Nathaniel Hill and Lilly Ann Fox were born in the early 1800s.⁷ Although Sam had ten children by his second wife Patsy Fox (1845–1918), only one stayed in Richmond, and that one was Elijah. People knew Sam as an obsessively hard working farmer who was harsh to his children. He pushed his children and had the high expectation that each one would be independent. Two sons, Thomas and Elijah, became ministers. Daughters Irene and Leila became successful hair stylists in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania while the other daughter Maria was a wife and mother to eleven children. One son, Sam became a dry wall rock contractor turned hustler while another son, Nat was a valet for the Rockefellers in the late 1890s. He later joined the Merchant Marines and sailed around the world. The whereabouts and occupations of Ann and of the other sons Beverly and James are unknown and still remain a family mystery (22 February 2010).

Family lore provides further that initially, Sam was a member of Hanover County's Zion Hill Baptist Church. Unfortunately, the members allowed the church to fall victim to disrepair and as a result, a new structure was necessary. Sometime in 1900, the minister traveled down the road, found a new location, and built another church. The minister, Reverend Elijah Brooks, purchased the land for \$8.00, and it cost \$40.00 to construct the building. Around 1955, the Nazarene Baptist Church selected Grandpa Elijah as its pastor, and he rebuilt it a year later. The members changed the name of the church to the Greater Nazarene Baptist Church. As pastor of the church, Elijah embellished the family's reputation and survived Jim Crow, President Hoover, and the pre-

Brown v. Board of Education era. Grandpa Elijah often said to his grandchildren, “If a black man can survive Herbert Hoover, he can survive anything.” All things considered, the future generations of Hill children survived, struggled, and built a life of prosperity that had its beginnings in Hanover County, Virginia in 1841.

The Origins of the Home Place

Samuel Louis Hill Sr. (1841–1914) was a former slave who became a landowner in Hanover County, Virginia. This was a monumental task by any standard. For the purchase price of \$129.00 in 1886, he obtained sixty-eight acres from the estate of William A. Winston who died testate.⁸ Due to irreconcilable family differences eighty-eight years later, the heirs sold the land to a residential developer in October of 1984 for \$100,000.00 pursuant to a partition suit.⁹

Black ownership of land began immediately after the Civil War. By 1910, nearly twenty percent of the farms were owned by blacks, but around 1920, such ownership had declined almost exclusively in the South. Most blacks acquired land through purchases. In Virginia land was easier to purchase as the market shifted from row crops and tobacco to farming, and the land some blacks acquired was undesirable to whites because in many cases the war had ravaged and depleted the land. Land sales occurred more often in Virginia than in other parts of the South.¹⁰

To this day, it is unknown how Sam saved up enough money to buy the property. The supposition is that he tilled land and performed other agricultural services as many newly freed blacks did in his era. The 1900 twelfth census lists him as a farmer. Farm hands were numerous in Virginia after 1830, where eighty percent of free blacks lived in the countryside. The Quaker community supported black families by protecting them from oppressive Jim Crow laws. Therefore, by 1886, Sam may have received support from his hard work and other unknown sources. Before that time, whites feared the growing numbers of blacks in Virginia. As early as 1831, white Hanover County landowners petitioned the General Assembly to forbid free blacks the right to live in Virginia entirely.¹¹ In spite of these glaring hostilities, Sam earned enough money to purchase sixty-eight acres of land. Ownership of land was crucial to the Hill family. It provided a foundation for survival when hard times descended upon the country during the Great Depression. Moreover, owning land was a means to provide security and an entrée to an elevated social status.

On January 23, 1897, eleven years following the purchase of land, Sam conveyed sixty-eight acres in trust for the benefit of his children from his first marriage to Charlotte Freeman Hill and his children through his second marriage to Patsy Fox Hill.¹² When Sam died, all ten of Patsy's and Sam's children survived him. Nathaniel, James, Maria Hill Green, Irene Hill Cooper, Nannie Hill Freeman, Thomas Hill, Leila Hill Howard, George Hill, Elijah Hill, and Samuel L. Hill Jr. Nathaniel died intestate without a spouse or children in 1957, and James died intestate as a widower with four children who conveyed their interest in the property to Elijah Hill in 1966.¹³ Sister Maria Hill Green died a widow and intestate in 1938 and left an enormous legacy. Eleven children with the last name of Green survived her. It is the unequivocal position of the Hill family that sometime before she died, Elijah Hill (Elijah) purchased Maria's interest from her. The Green family disputed that notion. However, Elijah proceeded as if he had paid for that portion of the Green interest and held firmly to the position that the lawyer never recorded the deed of purchase.

Nevertheless, Thomas Hill, a widower, Samuel L. Hill Jr. and his wife Georgia, Irene Hill Cooper and husband Charles as well as Leila Hill, a widow, conveyed all of their interests in the land to Elijah Hill.¹⁴ Sometimes there were great lapses of time between the actual date of the deed and the date when it was recorded in the Clerk's Office. In the case of Thomas' conveyance, the deed dated February 8, 1919, was not recorded until October 26, 1924, five years after Thomas had signed the deed of conveyance. George died intestate around 1926 without a spouse or children. Therefore, his interest passed to his surviving brothers and sisters. Nannie Hill Freeman, a widow, died intestate and was survived by four children whose heirs received a portion of the proceeds from the partition suit.

Of all the siblings, Elijah had an elaborate plan to retain his home property and to keep it in the family. Quietly, he bought out the interests of his brothers and sisters and passed that interest on to his eight children. However, in 1980 the property became the subject of a strongly contested law suit which sought equitable distribution of the sixty-eight acres. The Green's share was the subject of dispute, and two of Elijah's children had carved out the best portion of the property for themselves. Others of Elijah's children felt the sting of exclusion and protested. The land had become a divisive issue.

The law suit settled all claims, and the property had to be divided among the heirs who responded to the law suit. Officially, the case has been closed, but feelings that the court did not handle the matter properly and that some of

the family members felt they had been robbed plagued the Hill-Green family for many years. Great despair hung over the two families, and for nearly three decades some of the Hills and Greens refused to speak to one another. There is no greater issue that splits families than legitimate title to inherit property. The Hill-Green dispute was not the exception to that rule.

The Right Arm of Elijah Hill: Ethel Hill (1896–1973)

Ethel Hill, the only child of Walter and Mina Duncan, was born in the deep woods of Mechanicsville, Virginia in a log cabin on the most celebrated day of the year, Christmas Day, in 1896. That year held no special affection for poor black people in rural or urban America. Jim Crow tried to devour the souls of black folks, particularly in the South. The methods of disenfranchisement for blacks developed unrestrained. Years prior to that, *Plessy v. Ferguson* gave joy to the white people who resented and misunderstood the economic and cultural contributions of black folks.¹⁵ It sanctioned segregation by making separate but equal the law of the land. However, in spite of this harsh reality, Ethel was a remarkably creative woman whose resourcefulness and unselfishness brought happiness and joy to her family and friends.

Ethel married Elijah on May 10, 1912, several months before the election of Woodrow Wilson. Elijah and Ethel met at First Union Baptist Church in Atlee, now Mechanicsville, Virginia under the watchful eye of the church mothers. Based on family oral history, Elijah was attracted to Ethel because she had cascading, curly black hair and “nice long legs” (7 June 2010). Soon after the marriage, children were born. Without the use of pharmaceutical birth control methods, Ethel birthed their eight children about two years apart. The marriage followed the traditional notions of a family seeking a better life, where the father provided the staples and the mother maintained the household.

Elijah’s greatest supporter in the church, Ethel usually did not question his role in the family. Yet there was one great misunderstanding and an unsettling discussion which led to Ethel’s brief departure from the family. She did not want the children to grow up with an impoverished education. Elijah understood the necessity of a good education, but felt that the backwoods reading and writing was enough to get any black man a foothold in society so he could learn a trade. He subscribed to Booker T. Washington’s controversial theory that blacks would travel down the road of prosperity and self-sufficiency if they learned first how to work the soil or learned an industrial

craft before they pursued a formal education. Washington urged blacks to “cast it [buckets] down in “agriculture, mechanics, commerce, domestic service, and in the professions”. Moreover, he asserted further that blacks must learn that they will not be able to move forward until they learn that “there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem”.¹⁶ Elijah had cast his bucket by setting out to train his children to become financially secure without the benefit of education.

Angry with the stubborn and seemingly short sighted Elijah, Ethel left the country home in Hanover County in 1929, found her way to the big city (Richmond) and stayed with aunts. Elijah realized that his stubbornness may have cost him dearly. Abandoning his pride, he begged his wife to return home. He promised to do better. Ethel had grown weary of the hard farming life and wanted a better chance for her children (7 June 2010). Elijah moved to the city eventually. Ethel’s insight was phenomenal, because Hanover County did not build a high school for blacks which the county designated as a training school until the 1950s.¹⁷

Ethel’s educational training in Hanover County extended to the equivalent of a seventh grade education. It must be remembered that following the Gabriel and Nat Turner revolts, it was not difficult to convince whites that teaching blacks to read and write would be tantamount to signing a death warrant. Therefore, as early as 1842, blacks were prohibited from gathering together for the purpose of acquiring the Basic rudiments of an education.¹⁸ Since there were no public schools for blacks in the section of Hanover County where Ethel grew up, older people gathered children together and tutored them.¹⁹

Ethel’s aunts, who had worked for white families, trained her in the basics and cultivated her interest in creativity. This method of the parents teaching the children had a rocky history.

Following the Civil War, the right to an education for people of color was the battle cry of the newly freed people. They realized that literacy would enable them to be full participants in the political process. Therefore, they appealed to the federal and state governments to broaden the scope of schools to transition them into truly public domains. The right to an education was not well received among the establishment, since education was not universally available to whites who were economically insignificant. For this new group of blacks, the concept of freedom was meaningless as they echoed the sentiment that acquiring an education was essential for the children and themselves. Otherwise, they would be subservient forever.²⁰

The freedmen found themselves in a curious dilemma. Funding for local

schools was derived from the respective localities. Yet, the right to vote triggered the necessity for blacks to have representatives on the local board which determined the level of funding for its schools. So, until blacks obtained representation on those boards, they had to rely on their own resources to educate the family members. Ethel's family circumvented this dilemma by pooling their resources to ensure their children would not regress.

Families helped their children to utilize whatever gifts the children had. Ethel must have had a talent for understanding angles and line segments. Her uncanny sense of the juxtaposition of patterns led her to become one of the most respected seamstresses in the county and later in her neighborhood in Richmond, Virginia. During the early 1920s, Ethel did not need a store pattern to sew or design a lavender dress with white ruffles or an azure three piece ladies' suit with elaborate abalone or smoked freshwater shell buttons. She made her own patterns from newspaper. It is regrettable that none of the dresses she designed for her grandchildren were saved. Once outgrown, those pieces of clothing were given to children who had limited access to clothes that were not tattered.

Moreover, under her guidance, a feed bag would become a different entity. Bags were soaked with Clorox until they were white and soft and then hung on line to dry and later pressed. At the market Ethel purchased cloth for ten cents, a pound of sugar for five cents, a pound of potatoes for three cents, and paid forty nine cents for a pair of children's shoes. Sometimes she exchanged staples for cloth and made dresses for her three girls. She changed feed bags into curtains, underwear, and pillows with delicate and elaborate designs for children (7 June 2010). She tried to teach her grandchildren crocheting, knitting and quilting, but the call of the nearby playground overpowered the grandchildren's need to construct dollies, blankets, and lace tablecloths. Fortunately, a few of those hand quilted pieces, sweaters, and lace doilies have been maintained by those same grandchildren. Ethel crafted pieces for other children, too.

In the church, every new born baby received a long, neat white christening dress when Elijah blessed the children. Ethel designed and hand made over 200 christening dresses, and children clamored to her because she carried sweets in her black patent leather purse (10 June 2010). Since Ethel could sew, she dressed elegantly every Sunday morning. Her children had a fond memory of a black polyester dress with a decorative belt, black and white spectator shoes to match and a black patent leather purse. The matching chapeau was black, too, with a white peony perched on the right side of the

hat. Ethel loved to strut proudly with “Papa” (pronounced Poppa) to Sunday service each week, and she fostered the church’s and Elijah’s mission to provide for persons who had special needs.²¹

Caring for the disadvantaged was a special concern of Ethel Hill. This priority fit neatly into Elijah’s focus for his family and his evangelical message. Ethel had a special gift for getting parishioners and friends to empty their pockets for the causes that she supported. Black philanthropy through the church was part of the mission of the black church, and the women in the church spearheaded the drive for charitable endeavors. W.E.B. DuBois championed the role of black women in their churches. In fact, Dubois quipped that black women were the “main pillars of those social settlements we call churches”.²² Ethel fit squarely into the picture DuBois described. She sponsored fund drives for the black orphanage, the Virginia Baptist Children’s Home in Chesterfield County, Virginia, and every Christmas, she collected donations from the church members and held parties at the Hill home in Richmond for children whose parents could not afford to celebrate the holiday. In the church, she was the oak tree where Elijah often rested and found solace.

The Home Place: Joy and Peace

The youngest of Elijah and Ethel’s three daughters, Grace Vernell Hill Norbrey (Nell) remembers the peacefulness of what she calls a “bygone era”. The home place was located on what was then Fire Lane Road which is nearly a mile down Georgetown Road in Hanover County. It was an isolated area consisting of about sixty-eight acres surrounded by chickpeas, ash, birch, Virginia pines, red and white oaks, maples, and cedars. The persimmon and hazelnut trees formed a perimeter. Roses, Sweet Williams, Queen Anne’s lace, golden rods, and red dahlias filled the yard. The holly berry bushes with their toxic leaves bordered the property and warned intruders to stay out so that the natural balance and beauty of the area would not be disturbed (8 June 2010).

Elijah Hill taught his children to love the woodlands. Before they were six years old, each child had an adventure trip into the woods with him. He identified the edible nuts such as the hazelnuts that grew on the edge of the property and black and blue berries. He showed them when the strawberries were ripe enough to be swallowed. There were juicy nuts inside of shells in which the children found a great delight. Each Christmas season, the children knew where to find the healthiest and most magnificent Christmas

trees because “Papa” had taught them to observe the maturity of the trees throughout the year. The children enjoyed observing the fleeting white tail of the baby fawns, the scampering of the plump brown and white bunny rabbits in the wild grass, and the red foxes who watched them guardedly. The land that Sam acquired many years ago set the tone for a peaceful family upbringing.

The unpainted wooden house on Fire Lane Road was a two-story frame home with three bedrooms. There were no rugs on the floors, and Ethel required the children to scrub the floors every day. There were no mops; the children cleaned the floors on their knees. Elijah and Ethel had a bed in one room downstairs. The children had to go up a ladder to the loft where there were two huge rooms. The boys were in one side and the girls on the other. The living room, which was always kept clean, was at the front door entrance. Family meals were in the kitchen while the dining room, with its large oak table and eight chairs, was reserved for guests. There were two windows in every room, and in the kitchen was a large black stove that consumed wooden logs that the eldest brothers fed each morning at 4:30 a.m. There was no garage, and in the winter the outhouse seemed more than about twenty-five feet from the rear of the house (14 January 2010).

In 1930, when Nell was five years old, the family moved to Richmond, Virginia so the children could get a better education. The house on Fire Lane Road succumbed to the wiles of nature circa 1950. It has since vanished, but the huge oak tree that marked the location of the foundation still stands. Resting deeply within its heartwood, the tree holds the laughter, disappointments, and adventures of a struggling yet proud family.

Sam had purchased the land because the soil was rich, porous, and dark. He began planting vegetables during the spring of 1886. Elijah continued to farm the land when he settled on it after his marriage to Ethel. The farm was prosperous at first as Elijah and his family lived on it beginning in 1912. The farm made the family basically self-sufficient, and it was lively with animals as well. There were at least five hound dogs at any given time. The favorite was Brownie. A cow named Belle provided the milk the family needed, and Rhoda, their reddish brown mule, helped to plough the fields. Rhoda worked hard for the Hill family. Patient and dependable, she never seemed to grow weary of the formidable heat or the frosty winters. Rhoda had coarse hair that stuck out in parts and a long fluffy tail. That mule helped to keep the farm prosperous and stable. Up to the late stages of the Depression era, the family had plenty. An assortment of vegetables sprouted every spring and fall to feed the family, and

they sold the surplus at the Eighteenth Street market in Richmond. Tomatoes, green beans, lima beans, turnips, green peppers and wheat which grew fiercely were the staple products that rounded out a variety of vegetables (25 January 2010).

Farm life was patterned for the purpose of continuity. Around February, neighbors helped one another clear the wheat fields and till the soil in preparation for the spring crops. In the late spring, all family members worked in the fields gathering potatoes and other crops to take to the market. Once the vegetables were ripe, Saturdays were all consuming days. Ordinarily, the family rose at 5:00 a.m. to load nearly fifty crates of vegetables. Farming did not give the family excessive cash flow, but it provided insurance against starvation and a good life until economic disaster hit the country in 1929 (25 January 2010).

The Hill Clan and Family Life

Elijah was the undisputed head of the household. He did not tolerate back talking and demanded the highest respect from his family. Ethel said that his demeanor was similar to his father's Sam who had the reputation of being impenetrable, but knowledgeable in farming and dependable. Sam was beaten unmercifully as a slave and never recovered from the sound of the whip that stripped his flesh and left indelible reminders of a hurtful era. Aggressive and a community leader, Sam was consulted often by neighbors to help solve agricultural problems that affected the area periodically (3 June 2010). His leadership traits were transmitted to Elijah who later became the pivotal force in the family when conflicts arose. Sam loved the outdoors, too, and Elijah absorbed that same passion for nature.

Finding solace in the woods, Elijah took the children there often; he knew the name of every tree and wild flower. Tradition has it that his mother was a medicine woman who knew how to use wildflowers to cure ailments. Sometimes, Elijah would get syrup from vines in the woods that grew low to the ground. Then, he made lemon and honey syrup, mixed with the syrup from the vine and boiled it in a pot. The family called it the woodland cough syrup.

Castor oil mixed with orange juice seemed to work for coughs, too. Each coughing child received a spoonful at night which quieted a thrashing respiratory system. Elijah's remedies worked. He brought in Jimsonweed from the fields, ground it up, and burned it; this potion acted as medicine for daughter Estelle's asthma. It had an acrid smell, but it helped to reduce her

congestion. Mulleinweed juices were used to cover the body after mixing it with a salve to break a fever. Another weed referred to as “life everlasting” was crushed and burned and used as an inhaler. This was an old Indian remedy (25 April 2010).

Herbal remedies played a prominent role in the early slave culture that trickled down to succeeding generations according to author Sharla M. Fett, who wrote extensively about cures derived from the slave culture. Enslaved herbalists cultivated their skills as the early slaves developed their own resources for health care. They brought with them the plethora of cures and remedies when they were forced to cross the ocean. The African Diaspora greatly influenced the development of African American healing traditions, and these traditions played a prominent role in the relationships between slaves and slaveholders. Fett confirms there is documentation of Southern white reliance on the plant remedies of the slaves, and planter interest in the medicinal treatments was not unusual. One example is of a Virginia slave who made his tea composed of soot and pine root. Fett’s research reveals that Africans in the New World used okra leaves for poultices, and kola leaves for abdominal pains. Last, intermarriage between Native Americans and African Americans provided a conduit for exchange of herbal remedies.²³ Elijah shared his knowledge of herbs with his children that he had obtained from his mother.

On special days, Elijah brought home books and games for the children to read, but he had a sense of adventure, too. Some days, Elijah played with children as if they were trapping elephants in parts of southern Africa or in parts of the Congo. While playing in the woods, Elijah taught the children how to trap rabbits, which snakes to avoid, and how to properly climb and jump from limb to limb in the trees. He taught all five of his sons to wrestle and to box, but Elijah watched the daughters with great vigilance, and they were not allowed the same freedom as their brothers.

In keeping with the family tradition, Elijah did not allow social mixing for the daughters until they were over sixteen. Beth Bailey, the author of a study that explores the early dating phenomena in middle class American families, examined the calling to dating transition from the early nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. A new style of dating replaced nineteenth century calling about 1920. Dating arose out of the lower class response to pressure and movement in the era. Crowded rooms in lower class homes made calling impersonal and impractical. Therefore, a new way of dating evolved.²⁴

African American families in the early part of the twentieth century refused to adapt to the new trends in dating. Therefore, Elijah applied strict codes for dating with respect to his daughters. Dates occurred at home with the parents sitting in the adjacent room. The same restriction did not apply to the boys. Later in life Nell understood the value of parental efforts to control the hormonal challenges of young adults. The family's strength helped the siblings to enjoy the camaraderie of one another, and they learned to spend little time complaining about the strict parental controls. Plus, Elijah and Ethel's heavy emphasis on education consumed a great deal of the family's time.

Achieving through education was paramount in the Hill household. In the early 1920s, Hanover provided first through seventh grades in one-room schools for black children.²⁵ Work was done without the benefit of every child having pencils and paper. In addition, new books were rare. Teachers taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, and there was a heavy emphasis on recitations. This unsophisticated method of training proved valuable for the students as they struck out into the world (February 24, 2010).

The Commonwealth of Virginia was not shy about resisting school desegregation. In 1959, after the Virginia Supreme Court found a school closing law repulsive, the General Assembly repealed the school compulsory attendance law and gave localities the option to operate public schools.²⁶

Prince Edward County refused to acquiesce to *Brown* and shut down its entire public school system until 1964. Private academies sprung up, but no provision was made for educating black children. Some attended schools in communities nearby while other received their education out of state.²⁷ The other group of children who did not receive an education never recouped what they lost. It was not until 1964 that massive resistance came to an end. Other states like South Carolina were more deceptive with their handling of desegregation. South Carolina draped gentility over their hostility to blacks and developed strategies against the demand to mix students in the school system.²⁸ As the Southern states manipulated the system to avoid desegregation, families like Elijah Hill's saw the need to get their children into any public schools in proximity to their homes.

After the move to Richmond in 1930, all of the Hill children were on the honor roll in each grade they attended. Elijah and Ethel told the children, "Do not come through that door unless you have an honor certificate at the end of each grading period" (February 24, 2010). So each child brought home a silver certificate to present as evidence of their dedication to their school work. Study sessions took place every night from the first day of school. Once a child

returned home from school, each one had to tell what he or she had learned in school that day. Both parents supervised homework. Each school day, Elijah reviewed the math by giving examples and challenging each child. Ethel tutored reading and writing and checked completed homework assignments diligently. They did not let up until the high school curriculum outpaced their knowledge.

Since schools were slightly better in Richmond, the family continued to live there for three years. In 1933, they moved to New Kent County, where Elijah became the pastor of Rising Mt. Zion Baptist Church, and received \$5.00 a month salary. Elijah thought that he was going to farm while living in New Kent County. However, the soil was too hard, and he could not sell enough corn and beans to support the family. The harsh reality of the Depression created a somber atmosphere in a once joyful home (24 February 2010).

Tough People Did Last

Directly and indirectly, the Depression touched every family in America. However, most black communities knew how to survive. Neighbors helped each other by exchanging goods for services. Before the family moved to New Kent County, white families had helped black families in Hanover County. A white neighbor who lived in an imposing white house across the road helped the Hill family during this difficult period in Hanover County. A prominent lawyer named Laney Jones would bring food over to the Hill household, and it was graciously accepted. The children were surprised that Elijah accepted these gifts from his neighbor, but the only explanation was that hunger will trump pride. Although the use of racially restricted deeds spread in the middle of the nineteenth century, it was not unusual for blacks and whites to live as neighbors in Hanover County around the turn of the twentieth century. In that county, it seemed that the restriction against selling land to blacks was not as pronounced as it was in other parts of the country such as the Northern and Midwestern regions.

When the family moved to New Kent County in 1933, black families there bartered, hustled, and struggled together to survive, and they were not strangers to hard work or creative use of limited resources. They knew how to interact with the environment without causing irreparable harm. Likewise, recycling was a means to survival before it became politically expedient in the late twentieth century. Soon, farming was almost impossible because seeds cost too

much money, and many black farmers could not spare the funds to purchase seeds. Some small farmers in the area persisted but had insurmountable challenges confronting them. Elijah had no money to buy gas, and when he could not catch a ride on the back of a truck, he walked forty miles a day round-trip to work (February 23, 2010). Consequently, tough times forced Elijah to plan a new course of action to keep his family from starving. Also, discrimination occurred with the distribution of food as blacks were turned away from some soup kitchens. Historian John Hope Franklin commented that the lack of political power and working for starvation wages created a desperate time for unemployed black people.²⁹

Atypically, work in the construction industry was the conduit for keeping the Hill family from sinking into an abyss. Yet, skilled laborers such as carpenters, bricklayers, and welders faced a tougher challenge and were not met with enthusiasm.³⁰ Elijah developed an interest in pouring cement which was made on the premises of the construction site. A powder was poured into a large portable wooden rectangle container. Then Elijah would stir and toss the sluggish mixture until it was ready to be poured as a foundation. This line of work sustained his family, but Elijah still had nine other mouths to feed every day. While pouring cement, he discovered another means for producing cash flow. In his next venture, Elijah learned the art of plastering which today is a lost skill. Nevertheless, in the early thirties, hope was an evasive entity for the Hill family. Some of the rural areas of the nation were still reeling from the Depression in 1935, and the Hill family was hungry in New Kent County.

In the early mornings, the children would pick blueberries and blackberries for breakfast, and soon those berry vines were depleted. Nell remembers one day there was little to eat. There were six chickens, and the family of ten ate one chicken a day for six days. On the seventh day, Ethel decided that they had to kill the cuddly pet rooster to feed a famished family. To kill the rooster was a struggle. The body of the rooster was put in the upside down tub with his neck protruding. A child sat on the tub as the rooster cried with angst knowing his future was dark. Ethel swung the axe and cut off his head. The children screamed because the body of the rooster thumped against the tub. Ethel had decapitated their rooster, Teddy. Once the rooster stopped moving under the tub, Ethel placed the body in a pan of scorching water, and she pulled off his feathers. Next, Ethel removed his intestines and other inedible organs, soaked the rooster in salt water, and baked it in the oven. Although starving because there was no other food to be eaten, when Ethel placed Teddy on the table, the Hill children sat dumbfounded and resolute at the dinner table. They would not

touch the rooster. It sat on the table until sunset while their stomachs churned with hunger and an inability to dine on a beloved pet (February 22, 2010).

Elijah returned home that evening and announced he was moving the family back to Richmond, Virginia. The income from the church was meager, and working the land was debilitating. So in 1936, the family packed up its few belongings and moved to North Twenty Ninth Street in the segregated black neighborhood known as Church Hill (February 22, 2010). The move to Church Hill yielded work for Elijah who found a niche in continuing his construction work. He worked for builders and mastered the trade of plastering.

By the late 1950s, that vision led Elijah, the son of a slave, to a prosperous undertaking. His company did plaster work on schools, mansions in the West End of Richmond, and office buildings in the hub of downtown. As he grew knowledgeable in this industry and observed the work of bricklayers, he developed a reputation for astute skills in predicting the precise number of bricks needed to build an edifice. His calculations were astounding. It was said that when he did an estimate for the number of bricks needed for a project, his estimate would be so accurate that only one or two bricks were unused (22 February 2010). This is an amazing accomplishment for a man with a rural seventh grade education.

In the early part of the twentieth century, occupations were labeled black or white jobs, but blacks were moving towards skilled labor. Blacks and whites worked well together in “approximate equality” in the trades, and according to economist Donald Dewey, blacks became accomplished in plastering, masonry, bricklaying; they worked with whites but did not transition into other trades as well. These jobs were well paying, the reason being that construction was up and down, and blacks who were skilled could get work in their own communities.³¹

As Elijah trained and gained experience in the construction industry, the echoes of his father’s teachings about financial security and independence haunted him. He toyed with the idea of forming his own construction company. The company got its seed money due to an unfortunate and unexpected circumstance. Around 1936, Ethel was in a street car accident and subsequently received \$3,000.00 for personal injuries. Elijah moved the family from the Church Hill section of Richmond and purchased a home on Akron Street in the Washington Park neighborhood for \$2,000.00 in 1937. It is believed that the balance of that money was invested in his dream to start a plaster company, Hill and Sons, Inc. (3 June 2010).

Sensing a new life and a new way to earn a living, the Hill family enjoyed their freshly built home. In Washington Park, the family settled in to a new life style. Originally, the house was a two-story wooden structure with running water. Eventually, they were the proud owners of the first bathroom with an indoor toilet and an electric stove in the neighborhood. However, Elijah abhorred the taste that the electric stove produced in his meals; he said that the homemade biscuits were spongy and bland. So he had the old wooden stove reinstalled. By 1955, his company began to prosper, and none of the family members had to eat berries for dinner again (3 June 2010). When his sons Biggy and Leroy returned from the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy respectively, they joined another brother, Philemon, to help with the family business. Elijah provided a comfortable life for his family from the middle 1950s until his death in 1967. After Elijah's death, this company grew under the supervision of his son Philemon, who developed the company into a drywall business and ultimately generated a million dollars in revenue by 1969.³² For the Hill family, the skilled labor of plastering led to the rise of the family into the middle class.

Cranking Up the Model Ford

The Hill family loved adventure and owning a Model T Ford was quite an undertaking. Although the Model T Ford suffered a dubious reputation early on, Elijah purchased one in 1929 just fifteen years after the car was assembled. In its inception, the car sold for about \$825.00, weighed about 1,200 pounds, and had a four-cylinder twenty horsepower engine.³³ The Depression had not traumatized Hanover County early on because the farming families were self-sufficient. By the time Elijah obtained a used Model T in 1929, the price and novelty of the car had dropped significantly below \$300.00, but it is not clear how Elijah obtained this car. The Hill family screamed with delight when he and the "new" car rolled into the yard one day. Ethel instructed all the children to get dressed up. She admonished them to put on clean socks, and the girls had to pull out their Sunday dresses for the first family ride. Excitement in the Hill household was unrestrained (8 June 2010).

The Broadneck model was black, sat perched on four wheels and grinned at the family as if it had a regal anointing. The top could be folded back and could be extremely stubborn when it rained. There were no glass windows except for the front window shield. The car was large enough to accommodate Elijah and Ethel in the front as well as six small children in the rear. Nell, four

years old at the time, remembers that on the first family outing “Papa” had to start the monster by putting an L-shaped iron pipe object in the front. Then he turned and turned it until he was red in the face. He would crank the car, run around to the front and push the accelerator and then crank it some more. The engine sputtered, whined, and coughed up black smoke. Nell recalls that Papa might have even uttered an expletive because the ignition of the iron monster would not catch. After the fourth re-engagement of winding the iron pipe, the car broke into a high pitched cry, shimmered, and finally shifted into a heinous wail that dominated the short but fateful spin around the neighborhood (14 January, 2010).

The Hill family was bumping along the road when the car’s engine died, and no selective use of epitaphs would bring the engine to life again. Elijah’s solution was to get two of his sons (ages six and eight) to walk back to the house for nearly three miles. They fetched Rhoda, the family mule, and Black Maria, the family horse. In addition, he brought the wagon that was used to transport vegetables for sale at the Eighteenth Street market in Richmond on weekends. Neighbors passed by, recognized the family’s distress, and helped to hitch Rhoda and Black Maria to the car. It was not the last time the horse and the mule had to pull the car home. Inclines were another challenge. Elijah and his sons would often have to push the car up an incline, but the family was so proud to have a Model T that any memory of an inconvenience yielded to the delight of moving in the wind on four wheels. On Sunday afternoons when the Model T made the successful journey from church to the Hill’s home, Nell would sit up front in Ethel’s lap and drift to sleep. The Model T was an adventure every time the family rode in it (14 January 2010).

Surviving Racism

Elijah understood the realities of being black in a hostile environment. He cautioned his children to be careful late in the evenings. He believed that the best defense against the white man was to learn a trade, get an education, and always complete a task that they started. As the children got older, he reminded children of the plight of the Indian in America as well as heinous and violent acts committed due to racism. He used the death of Emmett Till, who was murdered in Money, Mississippi in 1955, as an example. Till’s death was a fresh reminder of how guarded black boys and men had to be in the South.³⁴

Elijah told his children to dress neatly and to be clean, avoid profanity, and to know how to defend themselves (in addition to knowing when to

retreat). If one was caught alone and confronted, it was best to remain silent (20 June 2010). This advice helped his family to survive a turbulent time in the United States.

Survival was the ultimate goal. Elijah gave his children the basic skills on how to make it to the next day in a country that had been fractured by a Civil War that had left bitter memories between countrymen over seventy-five years later. As history has revealed, some wounds take a century or more to heal.

Stepping Up to the Pulpit: The Greater Nazarene Baptist Church

Most black Christians were Baptists in the nineteenth century, and by 1890 over 1.3 million blacks embraced the Baptist faith.³⁵ Jerma A. Jackson's research on the black church describes the church as a pivotal force which helped blacks unite for the purpose of elevating them to comfortable standard of living.³⁶ Nazarene Baptist Church was the center of life for many black families in Hanover County. Not all members of the church comprised the talented tenth. It was common for working class men and women to hold leadership positions and socialize with upper class blacks.³⁷ Members built the church in 1900, and Elijah's father Sam was a founding member. Elijah joined the church as a young boy, was ordained as a deacon in 1916, and elected to the office of Pastor in 1955. Following his election, Elijah called a meeting to see if the members agreed that the church was in dire need of restoration. They decided to build a new church themselves because the costs for repairs were astronomical. The small white-frame building that hardly held seventy-five people was rebuilt on the same property, and this time it was a brick building.³⁸

The ground-breaking was held on Thanksgiving Day of 1956 and a devoted member, Brother John Winston, laid the blocks for the outline of the church. Elijah's son Philemon donated \$1,100.00 for the plaster work in the new building. Members pitched in to lay bricks, provided the plaster, set the electrical outlets, painted the walls, erected the steeple, and landscaped the yard. Others contributed their earnings to make the new church a reality. This church would have indoor toilets and sinks with running water. No longer would there be a wood stove for heating the edifice because a heating system was installed. Air conditioning would follow in a few years. When the church was finished, it was free of debt.³⁹

Among the church leaders, the dedicated Deacons Herbert Allen and Peter Fox spearheaded the fund drive, and the church members, particularly the women, purchased new hymnals, rails for the front steps, and a Ditts (Ditto)

machine for copying materials. Black women played prominent roles in the church. They served as a vital network for the church's social, political, and educational agendas.⁴⁰ Thus, First Lady Ethel Hill contributed the flood lights, and Sister Bray Burruss gave the church its bulletin board. Every member participated in the construction of the new place of worship.

On the first Sunday in May of 1960, the members marched from the old building into the new one to hold their first service in the newly erected structure. Elijah's brother, Rev. Thomas Hill of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania delivered the sermon, and the members changed the church's name from Nazarene Baptist to The Greater Nazarene Baptist Church.⁴¹

There were several special days celebrated annually. A spectacular event was the Big Meeting day. Once a year, members rolled out their best dishes that *Southern Cooking* magazine could never replicate. Few members shared recipes on how to achieve the crispness of fried chicken. Usually, one was the recipient of a generational recipe which was passed down to daughters and some daughters-in-law. Families set up tables. Peach cobbler and red velvet cake were the ultimate prizes. The feast was one of the social events of the year.

Another important activity was Revival, which stretched over an entire week. Sitting on the mourner's bench was an old custom in black rural churches that took place during Revival. At the beginning of service, the minister made a call for all sinners to come up and sit on the bench. The sinner had to confess his or her sins, then say the following, "I thank God and thank my Jesus that I have been washed in His blood. I believe in the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost." Mostly children sat on the Mourners' bench, and some were there for several annual sessions. The youngest daughter Nell recalls that one child sat for nine years. Converts dressed in white for the baptismal, and the entire church joined in the singing "Take Me to the Water".⁴² A processional ensued as the flock walked down to the pond to witness one of the most cherished activities, the Revival baptismal. This day called for jubilation and there was no short supply of singing and dancing. Children sang and quoted Bible verses. Solos and poems germane to the festive event filled the air. The church was active with numerous outlets for spiritual growth and personal development. Their minister planned the direction of the program for the church.

The black minister assumed the role of the church leader and the pivotal person who was crucial to the survival of the church.⁴³ Elijah stepped into that role and was a charismatic leader who orchestrated and organized the Baptist

church mandate. At the Greater Nazarene Baptist Church, Sunday morning service was held twice a month with programs four times a day. On Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m., the Sunday School activities began. There was devotion with prayer, two songs, and the superintendent made announcements. The regular morning worship service chimed in at 11:00, and dinner followed at home. The family returned to the Baptist Training Union session for young people. Then, there was a night service from 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. By 10:00 p.m. on Sunday nights, a weary Hill family of ten would take the three mile walk home in Hanover County and collapse in their beds.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the number of black Baptists in the United States surpassed all other denominations.⁴⁴ For blacks during this time, the church was the most important structural entity because it was organized by and for its congregation. The minister sat as the supreme leader, and in many cases had received little formal education. In fact, Booker T. Washington had little sympathy for black ministers who had minimal educational training. In 1890, at a Fisk University commencement, he launched a vitriolic campaign against black ministers. His view was that many of the ministers, Baptist and Methodist, were unfit to be leaders.⁴⁵ Yet, social, educational, and spiritual needs were fulfilled through the church and its minister irrespective of the minister's level of education. At the Greater Nazarene Baptist Church, similar to so many other Baptist churches, hierarchies were established with the Board of Trustees dominated by the founding members. The services were emotional, lively, and punctuated with the call and response chants, a cultural carry-over from the continent of Africa. Songs from the not too distant slave days expressed hope and carried forth the oral tradition of what are now considered Negro Spirituals.⁴⁶

As the morning service progressed and pure melodies poured forth from the souls of the congregations, bodies would dip, sway, and sometimes jerk and dance to the harmonic melodies that still exist today. Church service at the Greater Nazarene Baptist Church fell squarely within the traditional black church members' expectation. Reverend Elijah Hill was a traditionalist who did not stray far from the literal interpretation of the Bible.

Elijah believed in the conventional omnipotence of the Almighty. God was the Supreme Being and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a traditional believer and conservative Old Testament preacher. His central message was that God was the master of every act, and He would take care of the believers no matter what trouble one encountered. In the beginning of his ministry, the church paid him a salary of \$5.00 each Sunday or ten dollars a

month. In the 1960s, the salary increased to twenty dollars a month. However, he never kept the payments, because he returned every penny back to the church treasury (24 September 2010). The parishioners could expect fire and brimstone messages on Sunday mornings. The Ten Commandments were the cornerstone rules for governing life. He preached fiercely about children of Israel and the strength and wrath of God. No earthly rulers or sovereign kings could withstand the power of The Almighty. At 11:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings, hearing Elijah preach was a real treat.

The hymn "I Am Thine, O Lord" would begin the service on any Sunday morning.⁴⁷ The soft a cappella notes resonated, and one could hear Elijah's voice bellowing over the congregation as he stood majestically with the hymnal placed firmly in his right hand. He was impressive with his black robe, thinning gray hair peaked at the top, and gold plated glasses. Delicately he would spin a message for the people twisting and bending the English language with words that caused a worshipper to feel the fiery damnation of hell or the blue mists from heaven. Members would shout Amen and shake in the aisles, and the sermon would close with a special hymn Elijah loved, "Till We Meet Again". The song offered a comforting good-bye and employed the metaphorical shepherd-leader dynamic.⁴⁸ Times were particularly tough for black folks in the 1960s when Elijah conducted his sermons. Civil rights activists were at their peak, fire bombs raged in the South, and tempers flared all over the nation. In spite of Jim Crow, hope was seen as a symbolic expression fostered by the "trial and temptations" of segregation which were addressed in this hymn.

The message would crescendo and slowly drift to a peaceful end. Organ or piano music signaled the finale, and the church sang the closing hymn prior to the benediction. The blend of voices were in perfect pitch and united with the expectation of a better day. Members of the congregation would tingle with every tenor, baritone, high soprano, and alto note that created poetry of song steeped in an unwritten tradition. Songbooks were sparse, but the members had committed most hymns to memory.

Baptism that was not conducted during the revival was a particularly joyous occasion, too. Parishioners and those who were to be baptized dressed in sparkling white. Following the service, the members marched to a pond where the cleansing was consummated and the song, "Take Me to the Water" was the song of unison. The word water was stretched through five beats as members melodiously made their way to the site of the baptismal. When the minister uttered the words of redemption for the repentant soul, the voices died

down like a shifting mist to a whisper. Then after the old soul was dipped, and the new one rose from the water, the song resumed majestically again sending distant echoes into the clouds for posterity. A new person emerged from the water ready to assume the challenge of practicing what the Apostle Paul preached about becoming the children of light (Thessalonians 5:4).⁴⁹

Servant of God, Well Done

The son of Samuel and Patsy Hill born March 2, 1892, in Hanover County, Virginia slipped into eternity on July 5, 1967, while sleeping in his home on Akron Street in Richmond, Virginia. The following Saturday, over one hundred relatives joined the funeral procession that meandered from the home along Route Two to the Greater Nazarene Baptist Church in Mechanicsville, Virginia. Elijah was the consummate head of the household and unequivocally in his religion, based on the manner in which he conducted his life. The pursuit of happiness for him was wrapped in the meaning of how one adhered to the teachings of the Baptist church. Elijah Hill was unrelenting in his faith and to people outside of the Hill family, he sometimes seemed to be dogmatic in the application of religious beliefs.

At the time of his death, he was survived by his wife of fifty years, Ethel Hill, two daughters Elizabeth Hill Taylor of Richmond, Grace Hill Norbrey of Petersburg, Virginia, four sons, Rev. James Hill, Philemon Hill, both of Richmond, Walter Hill of Boston, Massachusetts and Matthew Hill of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; his brother, Samuel Hill, and two sisters, Irene Cooper and Leila Howard, all of whom were in attendance, as well as eight grandchildren and one great granddaughter. Over 250 friends were present to express their condolences at the small Baptist church tucked in the woods of Hanover County.

In 1967, an air conditioned church was a luxury not many rural churches enjoyed. The funeral began at 2:00 p.m., one of the most intense temperature times of a southern summer day. The hand-held fans were moving at a brisk pace, stirring the oppressive heat from left to right. I watched as my uncles collapsed into tears because they accepted the reality of the final rites for their sometimes stern and often misunderstood father. Following the eulogy by grandpa's old friend Reverend L.M. Bray Sr., the President of the Ministers Conference of Hanover, the family and friends recessed to the backyard of the church. There the physical remains of Elijah Hill were folded into the brown lumpy earth near a majestic Sycamore tree in a cemetery that

held other church members dating back to 1860. Two of the five siblings who had predeceased him, Nat Hill (d.1957) and Maria Hill Green (d.1938) met “Lijah” at the gate, and Saint Peter gave him his robe. “Lijah” was gone, and Ethel’s life was never the same.

Elijah Hill’s Legacy

Reverend Elijah Hill was born to a former slave and farmer who laid the groundwork for the successive generations to flourish. Bringing the Hill family into the middle class demanded hard work and a vision. Cultivating the farm, property ownership, taking a chance on getting a foothold in the construction business, and Elijah’s undeniable role as head of the household were vital to the family’s self-sufficiency, survival, and slow climb into the middle class. Education and religion were intertwined in the Hill household and were principal factors in lifting the family out of the residual effects of the Depression. Sometimes considered as stubborn as his father, Elijah was well respected in the church community. Since he developed his skilled labor as a plaster contractor, he was revered in the construction industry of Richmond, Virginia. His sense of fair play, his emphasis on honesty and integrity overshadowed his stiff neck approach to the changing social dynamics and his concept of harsh discipline for those who broke the rules.

The grandchildren knew him as a personable, seemingly old wise man who loved Ethel’s cooking, cherished his children’s children and who could turn a church crowd upside down with Biblical analogy. His wise advice to his children and grandchildren that there was no short cut to success, is embedded in the Hill family today. Now the grandchildren and great grandchildren of Elijah Hill have the undisputed obligation to build upon the legacy that he left the family and to walk the road of prosperity that first Sam, then Elijah plotted one step at a time.

Notes

- ¹ Grace Norbrey, “Interview by Beth Norbrey Hopkins”, January 10, January 14, February 22, February 23, February 24, April 25, June 3, June 7, June 8, June 10, June 20, and Sept. 24, 2010. Grace Hill Norbrey is the only person interviewed for this manuscript. Therefore, in the forthcoming footnotes, all interviews will be referred to by date only.
- ² *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
- ³ U. S. Census of Population and Housing, “U.S. Census of Population and Housing,” *University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center*, 1890, <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>.

- ⁴ Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1997), 162, 163, 326, 327.
- ⁵ “University of Virginia Library”, n.d., <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/start.php?year=V1890>.
- ⁶ Theodore Rosengarten, *All God’s Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2000), 88. Rosengarten chronicles the life of an illiterate eighty-four year old black tenant farmer who as a child witnessed his father beating his mother with a whip. This account supports the prevalence of wife beatings in some black families where the family was one generation removed from slavery.
- ⁷ See Appendix One showing the descendants of the Hill family.
- ⁸ Deed of Sale from Estate of William A. Winston to Samuel Hill Sr. 6 January 1886 (recorded 9 February 1887) Hanover County, Virginia, Deed Book 19, Page 387. Clerk’s Office, Hanover County, Virginia.
- ⁹ *Hill v. Hill*, Va. Cir. Ct. Hanover County, Chancery No. 159–1980 (1982).
- ¹⁰ James S. Fisher, “Negro Farm Ownership in the South,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 63, no. 4 (December 1, 1973): 478, 483–485.
- ¹¹ Martha W McCartney, *Nature’s Bounty Nation’s Glory: The Heritage and History of Hanover County, Virginia* (Hanover, Va.: Heritage and History of Hanover County, Inc., 2009), 158.
- ¹² Deed of Trust from Samuel L. Hill Sr. to Edward Coleman, Trustee, 23 January 1897 (recorded 10 May 1915) Hanover County, Virginia. Deed Book 61, page 315. Clerk’s Office, Hanover County, Virginia.
- ¹³ *Hill vs. Hill*. Also, see Deed of Sale from James Hill, John Hill, Samuel Hill ,and William Hill (Heirs of James Hill Sr. to Elijah Hill, 27 January 1966 (recorded 15 March 1966) Hanover County, Virginia, Deed Book 253, page 137. Clerk’s Office, Hanover County, Virginia.
- ¹⁴ Deed of Sale from Thomas Hill, a widower to Elijah Hill, 8 February 1919 (recorded 28 October 1924), Hanover County Virginia, Deed book 79, Page 157. Clerk’s Office, Hanover County, Virginia. Deed of Sale from Samuel L. Hill Jr. and his wife Georgia to Elijah Hill, 14 June 1957 (recorded 11 September 1958) Hanover County, Virginia, Deed Book 186, page 300. Clerk’s Office, Hanover County Virginia. See also, Deed of Sale from Irene Cooper and husband Charles to Elijah Hill, 27 January 1966 (recorded 15 March 1966) Hanover County, Virginia, Deed Book 253, page 139. Clerk’s Office, Hanover County Virginia; and Deed of Sale from Leila Hill Howard, a widow, to Elijah Hill, 27 January 1966 (recorded 15 march 1966) Hanover County, Virginia, Deed Book 253, page 141. Clerk’s Office, Hanover County Virginia.
- ¹⁵ *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U. 537 (1886)
- ¹⁶ Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (New York: Doubleday, 1901), 219, 220, <http://doc.south.unc.edu/fpn/washington>.
- ¹⁷ McCartney, *Nature’s Bounty Nation’s Glory*, 289.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 189.
- ¹⁹ Faustine C. Jones-Wilson, “Race, Realities, and American Education: Two Sides of the Coin,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 59, no. 2 April 1, 1990,: 123.
- ²⁰ Heather Andrea Williams, *Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 70, 75, 79.

- ²¹ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Harvard University Press, 1994), 1, 2. Here, Higginbotham affirms the largely ignored but compelling role of black women in the church, and she asserts that black women helped to build the church into the most important self-help movement for black people. Also, black women used the Bible to advocate for women's rights and through their efforts, the church fed the poor, built old folks homes, and addressed the welfare needs of the members.
- ²² W.E.B. Du Bois, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Writings: The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade/The Souls of Black Folk/Dusk of Dawn/Essays and Articles* (Library of America, 1987), 963.
- ²³ Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 2, 60, 61, and 63. One splendid example is taken from the journal of a white planter. During the summer of 1833, planter John Walker kept a journal which recorded an incident of a sick slave who was losing his sight and for whom the white doctor had no cure. The planter employed he services of "Old Man Doc Lewis" who used herbal medicine to restore sight to the slave (61).
- ²⁴ Beth L. Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 14, 17. Dating took the relationship out of parlors. No longer would fathers and mothers guard the beguiling couple in their homes. Dating gave couples new freedom. However, in the 1960s social scientists still recognized dating as new and not the old way of how men and women developed relationships.
- ²⁵ McCartney, *Nature's Bounty Nation's Glory*, 288.
- ²⁶ *Griffin v. School Board of Prince Edward County*, 377 U.S. 218 (1964).
- ²⁷ Irv Goodman, "Public Schools Died Here.," *Saturday Evening Post* 234, no. 17 (April 29, 1961): 1,2,3. A few black students attended a high school division of Kirtrell College located in Kirtrell, NC, near the Virginia border. Others were sent to live with families out of the county and state. Goodman reports that about 1400 students were left. About 800 students attended "training centers", while about 600 never received an education and were hopelessly lost, 1–4. In the fall of 1999 the author visited a former employer, Oliver Hill, one of the attorneys in the *Brown* case. He told me that when he received the telephone call to visit the Prince Edward schools, he had vowed not to take any more civil rights cases because it was becoming difficult to manage his present case load. However, when he saw the one room school shanty with no heat and dim lighting, he knew he could not keep his vow. This Prince Edward school matter became part of the historic *Brown vs. Board of Education* case. See also Jones-Wilson, "Race, Realities, and American Education," 121. When the author was in the fourth grade in Petersburg, Virginia students from Prince Edward County joined her class. Even as youngsters, we were astounded that a county would close schools rather than allow black and white children to attend school together.
- ²⁸ R. Scott Baker, *Paradoxes of Desegregation: African American Struggles for Educational Equity in Charleston, South Carolina, 1926–1972* (University of South Carolina Press, 2006), xv.
- ²⁹ John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*. 8th ed. (New York: Knopf, 2000), 421.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 261,609. See also, Nancy Martin-Perdue, *Talk About Trouble: A New Deal Portrait of Virginians in the Great Depression*. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina

Press 1996), 109.. Martin-Perdue discusses the difficulty of blacks to change occupations during the Depression.

31 Donald Dewey, “Negro Employment in Southern Industry,” *The Journal of Political Economy* 60: 4 (1952): 280, 284.

32 Gerald Sider, *Living Indian Histories: The Lumbee and Tuscarora People in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), xii, xvi. Likewise, the Lumbee Indians of Pembroke, North Carolina sustained their families by engaging in the drywall business, and at one time, they did most of the drywall work in North and South Carolina.

33 “Henry Ford and the Model T”, n.d., <http://www.wiley.com/legacy/products/subject/business/forbes/ford.html>.

34 Mamie Till-Mobley and Christopher Benson, *Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime That Changed America* (One World/Ballantine, 2004). Emmett Till’s sad story is chronicled in this book as told from his mother’s viewpoint.

35 Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction—15th Anniversary Edition*, 15th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2007), 160.

36 Jerma A. Jackson, *Singing in My Soul: Black Gospel Music in a Secular Age* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 11.

37 Bettye Collier-Thomas, *Jesus, Jobs, and Justice: African American Women and Religion* (New York: Knopf, 2010), xxiii.

38 Reverend Earl B. Hall Sr., *The Greater Nazarene Baptist Church 100 Years, 1900–2000* (The Greater Nazarene Baptist Church, 2000), 6.

39 Ibid.

40 Collier-Thomas, *Jesus, Jobs, and Justice*, xxvi.

41 Reverend Earl B. Hall Sr, *The Greater Nazarene Baptist Church, 100 Years*, 6.

42 Reverend Dr. Delores Carpenter, Jr., *African American Heritage Hymnal: 575 Hymns, Spirituals, and Gospel Songs* (Chicago: Gia Publications, 2001), 326.

43 Mary Pattillo-McCoy, “Church Culture as a Strategy of Action in the Black Community,” *American Sociological Review* 63: 6 (December 1, 1998): 769.

44 Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 160.

45 Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: Volume 1: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856–1901* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1975), 194.

46 Jackson, *Singing in My Soul*, 1. Jackson states that that most slavery hymns were “lined out” meaning that the leader sang each line, and most of the congregation who could not read would sing or shout back with great religious vigor. Further, spirituals included a call and response structure where slave songs mixed harsh experiences with a hope for the future.

47 Carpenter, Jr., *African American Heritage Hymnal*, 387.

48 Ibid., 634.

49 Thomas Nelson, Dr. Cain Hope Felder, and James W. Peebles, *KJV The Original African Heritage Study Bible* (Iowa Falls, IA: World Bible Pub, 1993), 1726.

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Part II

Art and Language

Native Pride

Red Horse

N: No matter what you think you know, an Indian stands tall & true.

A: Always willing to walk with heads held high.

T: To tell the young the ways of old, and teach the way of the Red Road

I: In times of sorrow will look at times past for strength

V: Very much sure that when the time comes, we'll accept death without fear.

E: Every Indian Man, Woman and Child are sacred to the tribe.

P: Proud to be part of the blood line story and true.

R: Respectful unto even the smallest of living life.

I: I will someday fly as the spirit of the Elders.

D: Devoted to the heart beat of Mother Earth.

E: Ending in death with the cry Hoka Hey.

Chapter 4

Language Loss and Resilience in Cherokee Medicinal Texts

Margaret Bender

CONTEMPORARY linguistic anthropology addresses the relationship between language, particularly as it is used in specific cultural and historical contexts, and power in its many forms. Linguistic diversity, linguistic hegemony, and language loss have been huge factors in the struggles for domination and the establishment of identities in the U.S. South. Linguistic anthropology therefore has much to contribute to our understandings of this history. As the complex and violent relationship between African-Americans and literacy in the South suggests, linguistic resources can be controlled and withheld by those in power and also mobilized in movements of resistance. Native American languages have played an important role in such struggles. Because of their vast structural and lexical differences from European languages, they have the capacity to open windows into non-European worldviews. In part because of these differences, these languages were targeted for extermination through the U.S. boarding school program. But many of them have survived and have subsequently been central to Native American cultural and political revitalization and autonomy. This chapter explores the forms of Cherokee used in two sets of medicinal texts. The very existence of these Cherokee language texts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries speaks to the importance and resilience of the Cherokee language in this period but also gives evidence of the forces affecting this language use.

The nineteenth century brought numerous disruptive pressures to bear on the Cherokees and their language, from the violence of the Removal to the powerful discourses of Christianity and the United States' Civilization Program. Therefore, it would come as no surprise if Cherokee sacred language and the contexts in which it is used underwent enormous changes in that period. The larger project of which this essay is a part seeks to explore those beliefs about sacred language, sacred writing, sacred texts, and the

effectiveness and appropriateness of their use that are revealed in the sacred texts themselves and through what we know about their contexts of use. In particular, the project will explore the evidence for shifting beliefs about how language can and should be used as a vehicle for interaction with the spiritual realm, what new communicative genres and participant structures emerge concomitantly with these beliefs, how new linguistic practices and structures index new categories of speakers and social persons, and what role literacy plays in these shifts.

Cherokee Texts

Three sets of Cherokee language texts will be explored in my larger project: (1) The Swimmer Manuscript, a set of nineteenth-century non-Christian medicinal texts from the Cherokee homeland in what is now North Carolina¹; (2) a twentieth-century post-removal set of medicinal texts published as *Notebook of a Cherokee Shaman*,² and (3), *The Book of John* from *The Cherokee New Testament*. In this chapter, I deal only with the first two. These are both well-known and previously-published “notebooks” containing spiritual healing texts, the words to be delivered along with the administration of herbal and other physical treatments in rectifying spiritual and physical imbalances in patient-clients. These were the tools of trade of individual Cherokee medicine men, Swimmer and *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*, respectively.

The origins and authors of these two collections considered differ in a number of significant ways that shed light on differences in the texts themselves. In addition to the essential geographic difference (one being from an Eastern Cherokee medicine man and the other from a Western one), the Eastern collection is older. James Mooney collected this manuscript of ninety-six texts from Swimmer (*Ayv?ini*)³ in the 1880s. Fogelson suggests, however, that “much of the ritual knowledge contained in [these texts]” may actually be generations older, “having been set down in the decades immediately preceding and following the Cherokee removal in 1838.”⁴ The Kilpatricks received the other notebook containing fifty texts⁵ from the widow of its author, *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya Ga:n(i)sgawi*, in 1961, but they note that the notebook was probably in use from some time before World War One, in which the author served and was wounded, until the time of his death in 1938.⁶ *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya* was a licensed Christian minister, as well as a practicing medicine man. According to the Kilpatricks, he had no particular

specialty, and was known as a general practitioner. Swimmer was a “traditionalist and patriot” who spoke no English and held a prominent position in his society as keeper of ancient knowledge.

As one moves between these sets of texts, one may note several linguistic shifts or contrasts that have much to tell about how the religious effectiveness and power of language was understood by the creators and users of the texts in a time of nearly comprehensive social upheaval. As indicated in Table 1, these include differences in spatial deixis (emphasis on horizontal vs. vertical), voice (as in declarative-performative vs. imperative), mode (reportive vs. assertive), and pronominal prefixing attaching to the key verb stem-*nehlvn-*, usually translated as ‘to create’ or ‘provide’.

The roles of time, space, and multilingualism here are complex: both sets of medicinal texts represent the transcription of indigenous oral poetic forms whose origin cannot easily be dated. In the case of the Swimmer Manuscript, these oral forms may predate the invention of the Cherokee writing system in the 1820s. We might therefore provisionally interpret the language in the Swimmer Manuscript as being older. There is reason to believe that the language in *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*’s notebook is the more recent, since it bears hallmarks of the post-removal context. Comparing Swimmer with *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya* thus presents an opportunity to consider the linguistic effects of and responses to removal, and to explore the later collection’s multiglossic language reflecting contextual shifts in space and a mutual articulation and appropriation across two religious traditions.

This chapter focuses on two sets of differences that could be characterized as grammatical narrowing or silencing that emerges in the transitions represented by these texts.

From Proximate Control to Symbolic Abstraction

The first of these sets of crucial differences between the collections has to do with the variability with which subject-object pronouns are attached to the Cherokee stem-*nehlan-*, manifesting in its nominal form as *-nehlanv:hi*, glossed in various contexts as ‘creator,’ ‘provider,’ ‘apportioner’ and as the God of Christianity. In *The Swimmer Manuscript*, the range of subject-object combinations attached to-*nehlanv:hi* suggests a dynamic interpersonal relationship and a variety of interactive positions occupied by human healer, patient, and spirit being. By contrast, *Ade:lagh(a)dhiya* shows a marked reduction in the variability of subject-object prefixes attaching to *-nehlanv:hi*.⁷

In both sets of *medicinal* texts, a form of *-nehlan-* is used to refer to a curative or potentially curative agent. Swimmer includes forms of *-ne:hlan-* in only five of his ninety-six texts, and the actual forms vary considerably, as indicated in Table 1. The forms *tsane:hlanv:hi* and *skwane:hlanv:hi* appear, with ethnographer Frans Olbrechts translating them as ‘thou hast apportioned’ and ‘thou hast apportioned for me,’ respectively. But he also addresses or describes this agent in the following ways: *titsune:hlanv:hi*, ‘thou hast apportioned them;’ *akane:la:nehe:?i*, ‘he has apportioned for him, reportedly;’ *ane:liski*, ‘he apportions, habitually;’ *whane:tlani:ka* ‘there, thou hast apportioned for him;’ and *ane:hlanvhi*, ‘it has been apportioned.’

By contrast, a form of the word occurs in eight of *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*’s fifty texts, a much higher proportion. In one instance, the form is *sgwane:hlanv:hi*, ‘you, provider of me’ but in all others, the form is *tsane:hlanv:hi*, ‘you, provider of it.’ *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*’s texts thus represent a narrowing range of pronominal configurations for referring to the creator-provider and a shift away from third person reference to exclusive use of direct address. In addition, the creator-provider plays a larger role as healing agent, relative to other spiritual beings, in *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*’s texts.

The root verb translatable as ‘create,’ ‘provide,’ or ‘apportion’ is used in a more productive and flexible way in Swimmer’s texts than in those of *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*. One could argue that the variability in subject-object pronominal prefixes suggests a greater potential for personalization or at least contextualization in the relationship with this being. It might also suggest that this creative force is ongoing and locatable, particularly when the root can be combined with the translocative prefix *-w-*, indicating that the action occurs remotely with respect to the speaker, as it does in the word *whane:hlani:ka*, ‘you created him or her (over there)’ (w_{-1} - ha_2 - $ne:hlan_3$ - hi_4 + $a_5=i:ka$; translocative₁-2S₂-’apportion’₃-purposive₄+present tense₅=recent past).⁸

The use of *tsane:hlanv:hi* in *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*’s texts is similar to the Biblical form of *une:hlanv:hi* in that it is relatively invariant, and in that the subject-object prefix indicates a singular inanimate object: ‘you or he created it’—that is, you or he created *creation*. By contrast, the surface forms in Swimmer’s texts suggest a singular, inanimate object only once in the five texts in which it appears.

If *tsane:hlanv:hi* is functioning in *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya* in some ways like the *nehlanv:hi* of Christianity, one might expect to see the word used in conjunction with a Christian mode of prayer or supplication. On the surface of it, almost the opposite seems to happen in *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*’s texts. In four

out of the eight cases in which *tsane:hlanv:hi* is addressed as the curative agent, the imperative is also used to indicate what action is to be taken. *Tsane:hlanv:hi*'s action is commanded in the following ways: *hinv:go:li:yvna*, 'divert it!' *hiyu:sagi* 'uncover it!' and *hi li:da* 'crawl about upon it!' This mode of calling on the curing agent might seem less than reverential, but one has to consider the alternative ways of addressing the curing agent in *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*'s texts. In many of the texts, it is the medicine man himself, using his own voice or speaking on behalf of the client, who effects the change in the client's condition. Alternatively, the medicine man joins forces with a curing agent, most often tobacco, indicating that 'you (agent of cure) and I' will accomplish the change. The inclusive dual first person meaning 'you (the addressee) and I' is used to address the curing agent in ten texts out of fifty, and the inclusive plural first person, 'the addressee, I, and other(s)', is used to address the curing agent twice.

Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya's texts make greater use of the first and second person to address the agents of disease and cure in general than do those of Swimmer, and they make common use of the second person singular agent +first person singular object pronominal prefix to link 'the provider' to the medicine man himself. This recurring pronominal structure indexes a speaker who is highly relational and collaborative. This agent rarely, if ever, is able to accomplish his goals alone. The fact that 'provider' is always linked to the medicinal speaker through the use of the second person also suggests a permanence to that relationship. On the other hand, Swimmer's greater reliance on *third* person, along with his more variable pronominal categorizing of *-nehlanv:hi* suggests a more isolated and autonomous speaker. Whereas Swimmer's texts are more indexically linked to the geocosmic surround of the patient (as I have discussed elsewhere), they are less indexically linked to specific interlocutors, whose places are determined by mythology and do not depend upon the position of the speaker.⁹

The shrinking productivity and flexibility of *-nehlanv:hi* as one moves from texts with less to more engagement with Christianity suggests a movement in religious language from describing, asserting, and indeed *producing* spiritual relationships to asking for them. It also has to do, of course, with differences in the understood authorships and voices of the texts and with the goals of their mobilization. There is a general movement across these texts toward greater symbolic abstraction in healing language and an increasing sense that the forces of illness and health are not under the medicine man's immediate proximal control. However, the voice of the medicine man shifts

over time and space away from, rather than toward, a relatively unitary, autonomous, declarative voice (which is also a performative voice), and toward a more relational one that presupposes the presence of relevant external agents. And if the goal of mobilizing biblical text through Christian worship is understood to be the bringing of the one in spiritual need closer to God, we can see that there might be still additional reduction of indexicality focusing on the patient-client-worshipper, turning attention away from him or her in order to project the bulk of attention and aspiration outward and upward toward the divine.

De-Centering and Re-Centering

The second set of differences I will consider here has to do with the intended spatial orientation of the patient-client. Removal took the Cherokees from the lush, wet mountains of Southern Appalachia to the hilly northeastern corner of Indian Territory on the edge of the Great Plains. These changes in location, geography, and the available pharmacopoeia could all be expected to have affected Cherokee medicine. Indeed, what we see here is a major shift in the indexicality of these curative texts—that is, in the bidirectional, presupposing and creative relationship between the language of these texts and the contexts in which they are mobilized.

Swimmer's texts generally seek to center the patient-client in the cosmos by way of horizontal deixis (a specific form of indexicality that connects what is being said to the *physical* context). By contrast, to the extent that Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya's texts seek to center the patient-client, they do so vertically. It could furthermore be argued that the later texts reveal a more generalized loosening of the specific indexicality that, in the earlier texts, aligns the patient's body with a specific, ordered cosmology manifest in the Southern Appalachian Cherokee homeland.

Cherokee verbs contain a number of locative and motion-related morphemes as shown in Table 2. These are mostly horizontally-oriented. In Swimmer, these morpheme-level locatives are used in multiple verb forms to indicate the patient's central position in the horizontal plane and the peripheral orientation of disease with regard to the patient.

In several of Swimmer's texts, the disease-causing agent(s) are described as rising up and facing the patient from one or more of the cardinal directions. Often the curing agent is called upon, similarly, to rise up and face the patient, but from an opposing direction. The disease-causing agent is described as

having placed the ‘important thing,’ or the disease, under the patient, and the curing agent is called upon to come to the center, take the disease from under the patient and remove it (by throwing, or sometimes by pushing it along in the same direction it has already traveled), usually to the Night Land, or West. Consider this excerpt from a text captioned “This is the Medicine When They Have it Hot.”¹⁰

Now, then! Ha, in the Night Land thou art staying, [Black]¹¹ Fish. He has arisen, facing us, in the middle of the day, and at night he has done it. In the Sun Land thou art staying, White Fish. He has arisen, facing us, in the middle of the day. Quite near this other one he was resting, it seems, (as) he rose up, facing us, in the middle of the day. They have caused the Heats to come together. There at night they have come to do it. Where human beings (live) and move about flittingly, they have come to do it, it seems. They have come and done it, full of envy. He has been overcome by the Heat which they caused to come down.

Now, then! In the Cold Land thou art staying, thou great Blue Man. It is a mere fish that has caused Heat to come down. Ha, but now thou hast come to force him to let go his hold. His paths lie stretched out toward the Night Land. Somewhere in the distance he will be (seen) flittingly carrying on (his activity), but there it will be doing it for a night (only). Ha, now, (in the Night Land) it has gone to stay; thou hast come to force him to let go his hold.¹²

As Olbrechts explains, this treatment is intended to cure fever attacks, caused by fish-ghosts¹³ who bring heat to their victims.¹⁴ One fish-ghost arises from the Night Land, a land positioned at the western cardinal point and associated with black, night and death. The other arises from the Sun Land, associated with east, dawn, birth, and usually red (See Figure 1) In the Cherokee cosmological context of a dome-like universe (See Figure 2), arising from the edges of the world means coming toward the center, and also, temporally, toward the middle of the day. Upon reaching the center, these ghosts cause disease. To balance this disorder in the east-west axis, the Blue Man from the Cold Land (North) is called upon to force the disease to let go its hold and flee to the Night Land (West) forever, to die in a cosmic sense (See Figure 2). It is important to note that this is not a transparent or straightforward confrontation between good and evil or even between the cardinal axes. What has come *up*, i.e. the fish-ghosts, must be pushed *out* by means of the west, where it is possible to exit the dome-like world in which humans dwell. While the explicit reference in such texts is to the location of disease-causing and curing agents, the central location of the patient is

simultaneously presupposed and, in curative mode, asserted by the language of the treatment.

The verb form Mooney and Olbrechts gloss as “he has got up, facing us, apparently,” is *to:tsulehne:?i* (to_1 - ts_2 - u_3 - $lehn_4$ - $e:?i_5$; distributive (plural objects) $_1$ -position facing speaker $_2$ -3S $_3$ -‘rise from a sitting position’ $_4$ -reportive past $_5$).¹⁵ This verb is used to describe the action of both approaching fish-ghosts, thereby indicating that the patient is in the center, surrounded on *both* the east and west sides. The word contains the *h* morpheme manifested here as *-ts-*, in the second position, indicating that the subject is facing the speaker. That the curative Blue Man is also located remotely is indicated by the initial cislocative/distantive prefix *-ti-* in *titsathlthohisti* (ti_1 - t_2 - tsa_2 - $thlthohis_3$ - ti_4 ; cislocative $_1$ -2S $_2$ -‘stay’ $_3$ -infinitive $_4$), which Olbrechts translates as “thou art staying” [in the Cold Land]. Finally, it is made clear by uses of the initial translocative prefix *wi-* that in order to be removed to the Night Land, the fish will have to move away from their present position at the location of the patient and speaker. The fish must follow trails that “lie stretched out toward the distance,” *wite:tu:tanv:?v?si*, (wi_1 - te_2 - tu_3 - $tanv_4$ - $v?si_5$; translocative $_1$ -distributive $_2$; 3S agent+3P inanimate patient $_3$ -‘lie stretched out’ $_4$ -imperative $_5$). The same prefix occurs when we learn that the disease has ‘gone [West] to stay,’ *wathlthohisthani:ka* (w_1 - a_2 - $thlthohis_3$ - tan_4 - hi_5 - $a_6=i:ka$; translocative $_1$ -3S $_2$ -‘stay’ $_3$ -causative $_4$ -purposive $_5$ + recent past $_6$).

In Swimmer’s texts, the patient is clearly located in the center of a peripheral spiritual world of harm and good. In *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*’s texts, by contrast, the disease-causing agent is either unidentified or it is not identified as coming from any particular location. Consider the following excerpt from a text used to treat the ‘big black’.

It was the Black Crow.

It was just the Rainbow.

He thrust It into the very middle of your head (Kilpatrick and Kilpatrick 1970:115).

No location of origin is identified for this action, nor is its orientation with respect to the patient, e.g. ‘facing,’ indicated by the verb form *uwe:thi?hnele?i*, ‘he thrust it’ (u_1 - $we:thi?hn_2$ - el_3 - ewi_4 ; 3S $_1$ -‘set something long into (the ground)’ $_2$ -dative $_3$ -reportive past $_4$). In both Swimmer’s and *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*’s texts, it is important to note, the centrality of the client is asserted by reference to the curing agent (and, in many of Swimmer’s texts, to the disease-causing agent), as having ‘come to’ perform an action.

This meaning is conveyed by means of a pervasive verbal infix, the purposive *-hi-*, indicating that the subject “is at or comes to the place of reference for the purpose of performing the action of the verb” (Cook 1979:41). The use of this infix implicitly indexes the patient as stationary and at the center of action. The infix adds a deictic dimension to any verb, indicating that the agent has moved *toward* the place of utterance, which is the location of the healer-speaker and therefore the patient. The infix manifests as *-hil-*, for example, in *utv:nhile:?i*, (u_1 -tv:n₂-hil₃-e:?i₄; 3S₁-’do’₂-purposive₃-reportive past tense₄) ‘[the fish] has come and done it, apparently’.¹⁶ But the curing agents identified in *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*’s texts, other than the medicine man himself, are most likely to come from ‘above,’ if they come from any specified direction at all. I will return to this point below.

In Swimmer’s texts, the disease-causing agent is removed from contact with the centrally-located patient to the periphery, usually to the western periphery. It is not entirely clear from *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*’s texts, on the other hand, what happens to the disease. It is described as ‘eaten’ or ‘crawled over’ or ‘expelled,’ and the patient is ‘relieved.’ But it is not given a spatial location subsequent to removal from the patient. The medicine man, patient, and curing agent(s) are seemingly self-contained, their effectiveness not dependent in an obvious way on context.

In sum, the rich horizontal deictics of Swimmer are relatively absent from *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*’s texts. A relative emphasis on the vertical axis particularly the relationship between *here*, the location of the client and medicine man, and *up*, is illustrated by a number of features of *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*’s texts, including the frequent use of tobacco and smoke as curing agents, the complete absence of north and south as references, and mere singular references to east and west. Of the references found in these texts to the physical environment or landscape, only one *yv:wi ganv:hi:dv*—a reference to the ‘long person or long water’—could truly be considered horizontal. The rest are all vertical: e.g., *ada? u:sdado:gi iyv:da* ‘far up in the treetop;’ *na:ghw(i)si igv:gwadu:[yv:]hmv:hi* ‘under the star;’ *no:du:hi igv:gwadu:[yv:]hmv:hi* ‘under the blackjack oak;’ *gado:hi igv:gwadu:[yv:]hmv:hi* ‘under the ground.’ Only twelve of *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*’s fifty texts contain clear linguistic references of any kind to horizontal position or movement. Nearly all, however, contain lexemes semantically related to verticality. For example, the verb stem *-atawó*, ‘climb over,’ is frequently used to describe the action of would-be opponents or the medicine man himself. Direct lexical references to “above,” *kalv:lati*, are also frequent.

Both of these sets of texts focus on the patient and identify both the current, unacceptable condition of the patient as well as that which needs to be done in order to restore health. Both indexically assert the centrality—that is, the central location—of the patient.

Yet in Swimmer's texts, various devices are used to establish that the patient is at the center not only of the medicine man's attention but of the Cherokee cosmological world. Furthermore, the spatiotemporal location of the patient, this cosmological world, and the Cherokee physical homeland are all brought into synchrony through the language and action of the performed ritual, for which the medicinal text provides the plan. This is accomplished indexically on a number of levels. First, the texts may refer to cosmologically important lands, physical or spiritual entities, or colors associated with the cardinal points as all being *away* from the patient, in the proper directions. Or the texts may indicate that disease-causing agents or curers associated with the points have come *in toward* the patient, or face the patient from the periphery, or remove the disease from *under* the patient and take it away to the periphery. Finally, they may identify the figures and entities of Cherokee cosmology with the physical landscape of the pre-removal homeland.

In ordinary speech, spatial deixis may be principally presupposing.¹⁷ Spatial deixis can be particularly creative and transformative, however, when specific deictic language recalls an alternate or remote context and thereby transforms the current one culturally, socially, and experientially.¹⁸ In religious healing language of the kind we see in Swimmer, the creative potential of spatial deixis is foregrounded; this language is intended to establish an equivalency between the patient's environment and the Cherokee cosmological world, thus semiotically recharacterizing (refreshing, if you will) the patient's subjective experience of his or her surroundings. When the disease is thrust 'there', and 'there' refers simultaneously to the cosmic Night Land and to the patient's geographic west, the result is the consubstantiation of two orders of reality. These texts point to both a timeless cosmic world of places, beings, events, and the spatial relations among them, and to a currently transforming present, making the patient's own surround subject to the same timeless truths and values as the Cherokee cosmos.

That is, the text is simultaneously about (and locks together in the moment of the utterance) something that always happens, a general principle, and something that is to happen in the moment of recitation. The timeless statement in the written (or memorized) text is a general statement; the contextualized utterance points directly to the geocosmologic surround of the

patient, projecting the Cherokee cosmological world and the patient's physical environment onto each other.

It is this collapsing of semiotic layers that gives the curative process its sacred character and healing power. The postremoval texts, because they draw less on timeless third-person narratives and rely more on imperatives and first and second person, exert a different semiotic force. These text-performances recall past interactions among healer, patient, and spirits in which the same language was used. Thus the power and authority of the doctor and healing agent are foregrounded, rather than the power and authority of the geocosmological surround.

In *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*'s medicinal texts, the goal is also to restore the patient to balance, harmony, and centrality, but it is usually a more general and decontextualized symbolic process of opposing a harmful force with a positive one or otherwise subverting the disruption caused by the disease. When the centered location of the patient is established in *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya*'s texts, it is by the medicine man's assertion of his control *in the center*, over forces above and below. In Swimmer's texts, the patient's centrality is established by reference to what is happening *out there*, in a detailed and familiar periphery the features of which are both indexically presupposed and asserted by the texts themselves.

In Swimmer's texts, the indexically-invoked presence of a highly specified and localized periphery from which centripetal-centrifugal forces act upon the patient makes it clear that it is not only the patient whose centrality is asserted via these texts. It is also the Cherokee homeland in the southeastern mountains of what is now the U.S. that is centralized and locked into alignment with an ongoing cosmic drama. Many of the specific details in the texts contribute to this effect, including: their direction to make use of the local pharmacopoeia and the spirits of indigenous species of animals, an emphasis on mountains as routes for the expulsion of disease; the importance of the southwest-northeast axis of differentiation; the identification of *Wahala* or *Wahili* (the cosmological land associated with the southern cardinal point) with a mountain on the South Carolina border known as Caesar's Head;¹⁹ widespread use of specific toponyms such as Broken-Rock Mountain; and very specific descriptions of landscape. More importantly, even though Swimmer's medicinal texts may not all explicitly ground the action they chronicle in the local landscape, the healing figures they invoke are generally locally grounded through the rich and vast Cherokee mythology on which the texts draw.

Conclusion

As the two parts of the Cherokee Nation, torn apart by removal, proceeded down separate historical paths in separate environments, it is not surprising to find a different healing context reflected in and created by these two sets of medicinal texts. But in the midst of these dramatic shifts, there is also an important cultural continuity and resiliency. The goals of centering the patient and countering de-stabilizing influences remain the same, but in the context of a national deracination, new and creative means of “finding the center” must be sought. One way in which this is accomplished is via the shift from the traditional deictics of Cherokee healing to a reliance on the more general symbolic efficacy of texts. However, while we do see a reduction in the importance of one kind of indexicality, one linking patient, healer, and relevant cosmology to a specific horizontal landscape, we see the emergence of a new kind of indexicality. Perhaps deriving some of its semantic strength from Christian presuppositions, this new indexicality locates the patient vertically with respect to the forces of disease and cure. *Up* and *center* remain connected; when the Removal causes the Cherokee horizontal periphery to slip out of place, *up* becomes in fact the most reliable center.

Table 1. Summary of Linguistic Contrasts Between the Medicinal Notebooks of Swimmer (Eastern) and *Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya* (Western)

| Swimmer | <i>Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya</i> |
|---|---|
| <p>1) Emphasis on horizontal deictics, peripheral location of disease and cure, and central location of patient and healer, reflected morphologically, e.g.:</p> <p>a) cislocative–<i>ti-</i> indicating motion toward or facing of speaker; manifest as–<i>ts-</i> in <i>to:-ts-ulehne: i</i>, ‘he has reportedly faced (us)’</p> <p>b) distantive–<i>ti-</i> indicating remote location of action, as in <i>ti-tsatlthohisti</i>, ‘you are staying (over there)’</p> <p>c) translocative–<i>wi-</i> indicating movement away from patient as in <i>wi-thlthohisthani:ka</i>, ‘[the disease] has gone away to stay.’</p> | <p>Emphasis on vertical deictics, accomplished lexically through repeated use of words such as <i>kalv:lai</i>, ‘above’</p> |
| <p>2) Variable pronominal prefixing to—<i>nehlanv:hi</i>, ‘creator’:</p> <p><i>tsane:hlanv:hi</i>, ‘you created it’ (<i>ts-</i>, 2S agent + 3S inan. patient)</p> <p><i>skwane:hlanv:hi</i>, ‘you created me’ (<i>skw-</i>, 2S agent + 1S patient)</p> <p><i>titsune:hlanv:hi</i>, ‘you created them’ (<i>tits-</i> or <i>tets-</i>, 2S agent + 3P inan. patient)</p> <p><i>akane:la:nehe:vw:i</i>, ‘he created him (reportedly)’ (<i>ak-</i>, 3 indefinite agent + 3S patient)</p> <p><i>ane:liski</i>, ‘he creates (habitually)’ (<i>a-</i>, 3S agent + 3S patient)</p> <p><i>whane:tlani:ka</i>, ‘you created him (over there)’ (<i>h-</i>, 2S agent + 3S inan. patient)</p> <p><i>ane:hlanvhi</i>, ‘it has been created’ (<i>a-</i>, 3S agent + 3S patient)</p> | <p>1 use of <i>skwane:hlanv:hi</i>, ‘you, creator of me’</p> <p>All other instances manifest as <i>tsane:hlanv:hi</i>, ‘you, creator of it’</p> |
| <p>3) Use of the declarative-performative to indicate accomplishment of cure: purposive suffix <i>-hi-</i> combined with present-tense suffix <i>-a-</i> yields surface form <i>i:ka</i>, indicating that the action has just been completed at the place of speaking and in the present—i.e., during the course of speaking, e.g. <i>utsihnawa atohn-i:ka</i>, ‘relief it-has-just-been-said’</p> | <p>Use of the imperative to demand cure</p> <p>a) <i>hiyu:sagi</i>, ‘uncover it!’</p> <p>b) <i>hivw:li:da</i>, ‘crawl about on top of it!’</p> |
| <p>4) Widespread use of reportive past tense, often to describe action of curing agents, e.g. <i>nikhatvtl-ehi</i>, ‘they have forced through (reportedly)</p> | <p>Use of reportive past rare—3 of the 4 instances describe action of</p> |

Table 2. Locative and Motion-Related Verbal Affixes in Cherokee

| Infix Position | Morpheme | Name | Meaning/Function |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---|
| Pre-pronominal Prefixes | -w- | translocative | Motion, orientation, or location away from speaker |
| | -n- | partitive | Lateral position, subject is next to or passing by speaker |
| | -ti-/-ta- | cislocative | Motion toward speaker, facing speaker, distant from speaker |
| | -e- | distant imperative | Person addressed is facing the speaker from a distance |
| Suffixes | -e:-/-u: ∇ ka | approaching | “Subject is going to a known location to perform the action of the verb” (Cook 1979:140–141) |
| | -hi- | purposive | “Subject is at or comes to the place of reference for the purpose of performing the action of the verb” (Cook 1979:141) |
| | -ito:-/-ita | ambulative | Motion from place to place |

Figure 1

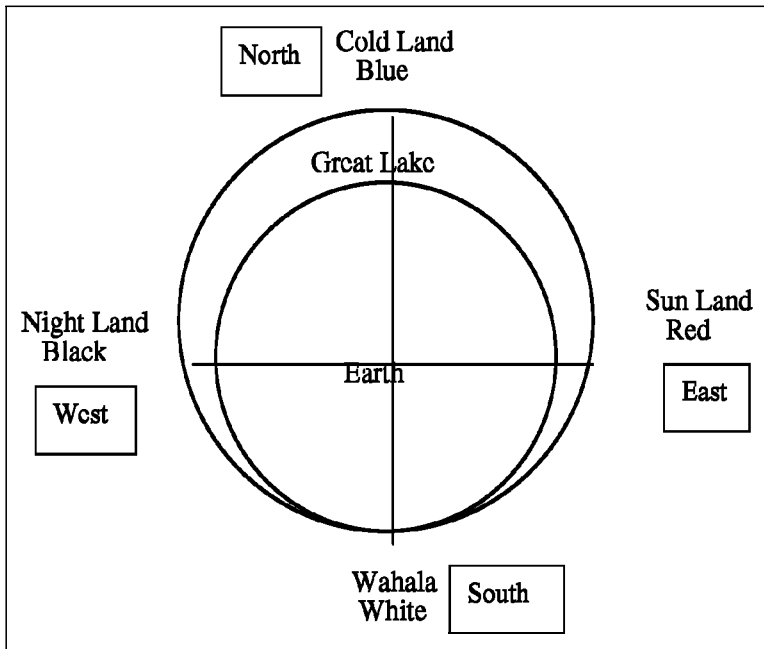
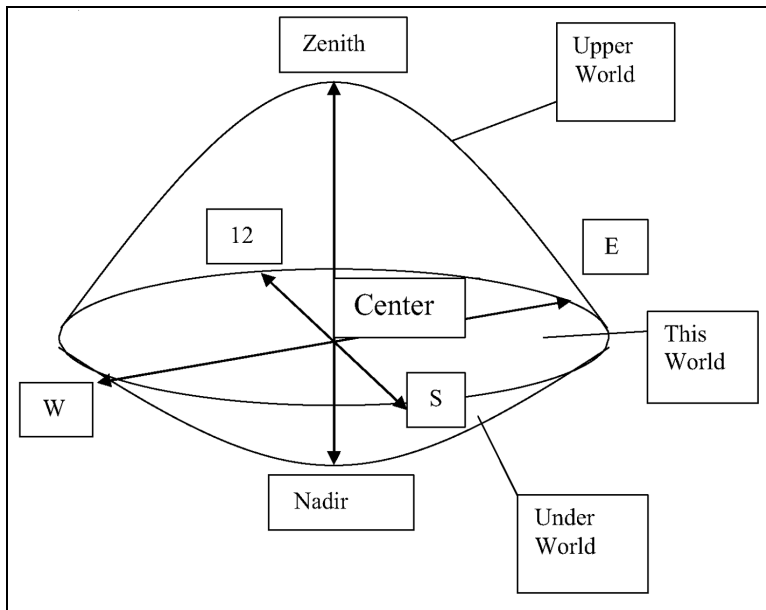


Figure 2



Notes

- ¹ James Mooney and Frans M. Olbrechts, eds. *The Swimmer Manuscript: Cherokee Sacred Formulas and Medicinal Prescriptions*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1932.
- ² Jack Frederick Kilpatrick and Anna Gritts Kilpatrick. *Notebook of a Cherokee Shaman*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1970.
- ³ Because Olbrechts' orthography is difficult to reproduce and not easily recognizable even by those familiar with Cherokee, I substitute more conventional spellings, following Janine Scancarelli, "Grammatical Relations and Verb Agreement in Cherokee" (PhD diss, University of California, Los Angeles, 1987), for his. I reproduce the Kilpatricks' spellings as they are in the original.
- ⁴ Raymond D. Fogelson, "An Analysis of Cherokee Sorcery and Witchcraft," in *Four Centuries of Southern Indians*, ed. Charles M. Hudson (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1975), 114.
- ⁵ Kilpatrick and Kilpatrick, *Notebook*.
- ⁶ More recent work on Western Cherokee medicinal texts and beliefs has been carried out by the Kilpatricks' son (Alan Kilpatrick, "A Note on Cherokee Theological Concepts," *American Indian Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (September 30, 1995): 389–405 and Alan Kilpatrick, *The Night Has a Naked Soul* (Syracuse University Press, 1997)).
- ⁷ The Cherokee language version of the Book of John, published in 1838, shows a nearly complete reduction in this pronominal prefixing, illustrating that the Christian form,

unehlanv:hi, translatable as God with a capital G, became fixed as a proper name in the mid-nineteenth century.

- ⁸ In the Book of John, we see almost exclusive use of une:hlanvhi, a form translatable as 's/he, creator of it,' corresponding to the proper name 'God' in English. The only exception I have found thus far is one instance of okane:hlanvhi ('Our (pl., exc.) God,' which actually seems to be a mistranslation of the words "your God," uttered by Jesus).
- ⁹ Relational prefixing appears in the Book of John, but almost never with–nehlanvhi. It does attach to–to:ta, the Cherokee word for 'father.' For example, in prayer, the form okito:ta ('our (exc.) father') occurs. The form eto:ta ('Father,' direct address) occurs in a quotation attributed to Jesus. Interestingly, the English form "my father" is translated as akayv:like ('old man') in several instances.
- ¹⁰ Free translations throughout this paper are quoted from Mooney and Olbrechts for Swimmer and from the Kilpatricks for Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya.
- ¹¹ In Olbrechts' free translation, this is mistakenly given as "White."
- ¹² Mooney and Olbrechts, Swimmer, 242–243.
- ¹³ Cherokee medicinal practice and belief reverberate with a central myth, "[The] Origin of Disease and Medicine." According to this sacred narrative, the mythic proto-animals conspire to take revenge on humankind for failing to show the proper respect when hunting. This revenge takes the form of disease transmitted by the ghosts of improperly killed animals. These diseases may generally be avoided by careful attention to precautions and taboos when around animals and especially when hunting. Plants came to the aid of human beings when the animals handed down their curse, and agreed to furnish one cure for each disease (James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees*, Reprint. Charles & Randy Elder Publishers, 1982, 250–252). As we shall see, the Swimmer texts tend to reflect this mythic structure somewhat more than the ones from Ade:lagh(a)dhi:ya, but both are profoundly influenced by it.
- ¹⁴ Two Cherokee men imprisoned by Union troops during the Civil War were believed to have come down with smallpox after being shown a red fish, swimming in a bowl. Since this happened as the men were being released, they presumably brought the smallpox back to their people (Mooney and Olbrechts, Swimmer, 39).
- ¹⁵ Cherokee verb morphology has not been comprehensively documented. The analyses in this paper are based on the information we currently have. I rely with gratitude on the work of Cook (William Hinton Cook, "A Grammar of North Carolina Cherokee," Ph.D. diss, Yale University, 1979), Feeling (Durbin Feeling, *Cherokee-English Dictionary*, Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, 1975), and Scancarelli (*Grammatical Relations*) and on the knowledge shared with me by my Cherokee teachers, consultants and friends.
- ¹⁶ In an example given on the previous page, wathlthohisthani:ka, 'he has gone [West] to stay', the purposive suffix is used even though the action takes place remotely from the patient. Presumably this is because the initial cislocative prefix establishes the place of reference as remote, and as Cook states, the purposive indicates that the subject "is at or comes to the place of reference" (Cook, *Grammar*, 41) in order to carry out the action. In the absence of such a prefix, the understanding is that the place of reference is the place of speaking.
- ¹⁷ Michael Silverstein, "Shifters, Linguistic Categories and Cultural Description" in *Meaning in Anthropology*, eds. Keith H. Basso and Henry A. Selby (Santa Fe: School of American

Research, 1976); Benjamin Lee, *Talking Heads* (Duke University Press, 1997).

¹⁸ e.g., see Alessandro Duranti, "Indexical Speech across Samoan Communities," *American Anthropologist* 99, no. 2 (June 30, 1997): 342–354.

¹⁹ Mooney and Olbrechts, Swimmer, 228.

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Chapter 5

The Suppression of Native American Presence in the Protestant Myth of America

Margaret Zulick

THE NARRATIVE of the Promised Land maps the story of God's gift of the Promised Land to his people onto the American landscape. Even as explorers and investors were mapping the New World and enumerating its goods to European interest, a powerful religious narrative justified the occupation of the Land of Promise to waves of Protestant immigrants. As a narrative trope, the land plays multiple roles via isomorphism and recapitulation, becoming in turn the New Eden, the Wilderness of Sinai, the New Canaan, and the New Zion.

The idea for this essay came from an essay in a communication journal about the representation of Yosemite in photographs depicting it as an American Eden. Toward the end of this article it is briefly mentioned that:

Just ten years prior to Watkins' discovery of Yosemite, the Mariposa Battalion had entered the valley with the intent of relocating or exterminating the Ahwahneechee. The ability of whites to rhapsodize about Yosemite as paradise, the original Garden of Eden, depended on the forced removal and forgetting of the indigenous inhabitants of the area for the past 3,500 years, people whose practices of habitation, including planned burnings of the meadows, had created the pristine wilderness whites were celebrating.¹

It seemed to me upon reading this that what got a brief mention in the time honored implications section should have been the meat of the essay. Why is it that this view of Eden could so easily erase the existence of inhabitants whose humanity intruded on its pristine narrative?

Unlike the unabashed acquisition narratives of explorers such William Bartram,² William Byrd³ and Thomas Hariot,⁴ the Protestant narrative of America as the Promised Land was an unconscious taking. Nevertheless it

had the power to frame the experience of white settlement in America in such a way that more than any other ideological force it created a discursive genocide and ethos in which the presence of indigenous people in the “wilderness of Sinai” would spoil the story—and must be reconciled through conversion or removed from the narrative. Thus a second, less violent but more enduring silence is imposed. The first silence is due to material suppression, because the sources of knowledge of America’s native past have been destroyed. The second silence of narrative suppression prevents knowledge about native America’s past and present that should be readily available from being socialized as part of the myth of America. There has been a loss of knowledge that was available to earlier generations, and a tacit consent to silence that endures to this day.

In this essay I will make a first attempt at tracing the discursive interactions that breed namelessness. In what follows, I will first lay out a theory of public narrative suitable to the task. Then I will outline briefly some elements of the narrative structure of America as the Promised Land, looking at archetypal biblical patterns and their appropriation in the folk hymnody of the two Great Awakenings. Finally, I will examine early accounts of religious encounters with American Indians to establish how Indians were and were not incorporated into the narrative of the Promised Land.

Public Narrative

America as the Promised Land is a complex public narrative. As such it produces a fund of episodes and themes that coordinate to build a long story in the minds of American audiences.

What is a public narrative? It has both narrative structure and instantiation. It exists as a unique whole only in the mind of the audience. And it projects a narrative frame onto public characters and events that foregrounds elements that resonate with the narrative and masks what doesn’t resonate or what contradicts the narrative.

In modern communication theory the idea of narrative as a form of public knowledge was introduced by Walter Fisher in his essay “Narration as Human Communication Paradigm.”⁵ Fisher posed a paradigm of public judgment as an alternative to the “rational world paradigm.” In rational judgment arguments are made and the stronger arguments win the field. In narrative judgment decisions are made instead through storytelling.

Audiences in this paradigm make judgments through the criteria of probability—does the story hang together—does it have a plausible narrative arc, and fidelity—does it ring true—does it match what we know of the world through other stories?

Yet Fisher did not invent the concept of public narrative out of whole cloth. It has roots in the classical tradition as fable and tale. Both these forms are tropes in classical oratory. Fables, both human and animal, are fictitious narratives containing morals while tales are elements of the story that can be divided into agent, act, place, mean and cause (corresponding almost exactly to Burke's agent act scene agency and purpose).⁶ These forms are modular parts that can be fitted into extemporaneous speech as decorum demands. What is new with Fisher then is that narrative is not only a sub-genre of public speech but is also an orientation toward moral and political judgment in the mind of an audience.

Outside the field of communication perhaps the best known literary theory of narrative also lends itself to a theory of public narrative. In narratology, drawing on the Russian formalists, Svetlan Todorov makes a distinction between *fabula* or story—the basic structure of a common narrative—and *sujet* or discourse—the instantiation of the narrative in a particular textual rendition. The concept of *fabula* supports the notion of public narrative because it exists as a backdrop in public knowledge and is also manifest as *sujet* in specific discourses.⁷

What is the functional pivot between *fabula* and *sujet*—how do audiences navigate back and forth between implicit public narrative and specific discursive applications? Victor Turner describes the “feedback loop” that links social drama to “stage drama”—in other words the connection between fictional narrative tropes and their social counterparts, such that social relationships form the materials for narratives while narratives in turn furnish the scripts and roles for social behavior.⁸ Thus there is constant reinforcement of the narrative frame as manifest discourses feed the implicit narrative *fabula*, which in turn supplies the frame for new discourses.

Therefore public narratives furnish inventive material for public arguments; possess implicit form; are recapitulated in the mind of the audience; and impose prescriptive frames on characters and events in the public sphere of discourse.

America as the Promised Land

What then are the structural elements of the narrative of America as the Promised Land? There is a very broad potential field for research here in the fiction, sermons and songs of Protestant tradition.

The biblical episodes that form the fabula of America as the Promised Land are the journey in the wilderness of Sinai, the conquest of Canaan, and isomorphic with these the return to Zion and recovery of Eden that recapitulates the journey and conquest. All of these motifs are present in the hymnic tradition stemming from the Puritan and Methodist-Baptist awakenings of the 18th century.

Folk hymnody is a demonstrative source for public narrative because it provides many texts used in a well-defined context and expresses the voice of the congregants rather than the voice of the preacher. The narrative of America as the Promised Land certainly was in the ears and voices of every congregation as they rose to sing. The ground they were standing on was the holy ground promised by God. The hymns themselves express similar narrative elements in three isomorphic fabulae: the individual journey through life to heavenly salvation, the collective journey of Israel in the wilderness and covenant with God at Sinai, and the immigrant journey to the New Canaan. The lives of the congregants are then mapped into this narrative. The songs are full of the imagery of land and water: The wilderness, the mountain of Sinai/Zion, the meadows of Paradise; the waters of the sea, the River Jordan, and the river and fountains of Paradise.

Stephen Marini conducted a study of thousands of hymns to obtain a list of the most frequently reproduced and presumably most frequently sung. After noting the absence of theological or sectarian themes in the hymns he points out the presence of similar themes to the ones listed above. While Marini does little to explain this phenomenon other than to raise it, explanation can be found in the sources mentioned above: the continuing reliance on Old Testament poetry, especially the Psalms, and the tropological mapping of the life of the worshipers onto the biblical prophetic narrative of calling, wilderness wandering, and entry into the Promised Land.

Individual Journey

The individual pilgrim journey is the most common Promised Land motif in the hymns of writers like Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley. "I'm just a poor wayfaring stranger, travelling through this world of woe" expresses a

common trope of the individual journey over the landscape of prophecy. At least partly inspired by John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the journey motif also invokes the psalms of individual lament.⁹ The worshipper wanders like Israel or Elijah in the wilderness, looking toward "that bright land" across the water. "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand and cast a wistful eye toward Canaan's fair and happy land where my possessions lie"¹⁰ (Samuel Sennett, 1787).

The mountain in the individual journey or collective is always a place of encounter with the divine:

Teach me some melodious sonnet
Sung by flaming tongues above,
Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
Mount of thy redeeming love (Robert Robinson).

In the landscape of prophecy the mountains of Horeb, Sinai, Carmel and Zion coincide, as do the springs in the wilderness that are also sites of encounter. The worshipper stands mimetically in the place of Abraham, Jacob, Hagar, Moses, Elijah, or David meeting God and receiving grace. "Deep River" is a song of individual journey moving toward the collective:

Deep river, my home is over Jordan.
Deep river, Lord, I wanna cross over into camp ground.
All God's children, oh don't you wanna go
to the heavenly feast in that promised land where all is peace.
Walk right into Heaven and take my seat
and throw myself at Jesus' feet...."¹¹

And with the entrance of the second person address we can envision a congregation travelling together toward the Promised Land. This song has multiple layers of narrative meaning—campground is simultaneously the revival tent, the afterlife and freedom for escaping slaves.

Collective Journey

But the individual journey toward salvation recapitulates the collective journey of the congregation as a people wandering in the American wilderness. Here the travel of the people in the wilderness was the dominant theme. But Edenic motifs are also common as in this text by Isaac Watts:

We are a garden wall'd around,
Chosen and peculiar ground;
A little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness

And the heavenly Paradise likewise recapitulates the Edenic Paradise there. The old favorite “Shall We Gather at the River” converts the River Jordan to the river of Paradise described in Revelation. Once again, however, the heavenly river is mapped onto the river of baptism and the camp meeting:

Shall we gather at the river
Where bright angel feet have trod,
With its crystal tide forever
Flowing by the throne of God?¹²

And of course it must be remembered that these songs were intended to be sung at baptisms, including the river baptisms common amongst the primitive Baptists of the South. Thus from beginning to end, both as individuals and in corporate worship, life is figured as a pilgrim journey across a sacred landscape.

America as the Promised Land

In a sense there is no need to spell out the role of America as the Promised Land. After all, we are standing in it. The hymn does the work of sacralizing the ground on which we stand. Nevertheless, some songs do make the narrative explicit. A collection of hymns from manuscripts held by the Sabbathday Lake Shaker community contains several examples of this explicit connection.¹³

A long ballad called “Mother” tells the story of Mother Ann’s prophetic career in England and America and describes the sea passage thus:

To mark their shining passage,
Good Angels flew before,
Towards the land of promise,
Columbia’s happy shore.

Another better known Shaker hymn, also included in the Sacred Harp, tells a similar story:

The everlasting gospel
Hath launched the deep at last,
Behold the sails expanded,

Around the tower'ing mast!
 Along the deck in order
 The joyful sailors stand,
 Crying "Ho!—here we go
 To Emanuel's happy land.

It is interesting to note that even here, where the reference to an actual ocean journey is known, it is difficult to tell from the text of the song whether the meaning should be understood literally or figuratively. The metaphor of the Promised Land is so pervasive in the cultural ethos of American folk hymns that it can be read either way, and no doubt was understood as a moral journey through life by generations of Sacred Harp singers who knew little about the Shakers and their prophet Mother Ann.

Thus not only ministers and missionaries but most frontier lay Protestants had ringing in their ears the image of America as the Promised Land.

The American Indian in the Promised Land

Among the first Protestants in America were agents who saw American Indians as the mirror of the soul—living proof that God speaks directly to the conscience and not merely through church authority.

In 1672 George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, visited Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina, going north as far as Rhode Island. Repeatedly he recounts being met, welcomed and heard by Indians. Yet in his narrative frame they are enlisted most often as living proof of his own universalist theology. So for instance he reports a speech to "the Indian emperor and two of their kings" in which he "desires them to speak to their people, that God is setting up his tabernacle of witnesses in their wilderness countries and setting up his glorious ensign and standards of righteousness." Note of course the narrative theme of the collective journey in the wilderness. And from his venture to New England he relates the following:

There was an Indian king that said he saw that there were many of their people of the Indians turned to the New England professors. He said they were worse since than before they left their own religion; and of all religions he said the Quakers were the best.

Clearly the Indian here is functioning as an independent witness to the superiority of Quakers over Puritans. But in the next paragraph a more ominous note is sounded:

And an Indian said, before the English came, that a white people should come in a great thing of the sea, and their people should be loving to them and receive them; but if they did hurt or wrong the white people, they would be destroyed. And this hath been seen and fulfilled, that when they did wrong the English they never prospered and have been destroyed. So that the Indian was a prophet and prophesied truly.

At this point it is clear that Fox knows the coming of white people has caused and will cause the destruction of the Indians—yet so embedded is he in the prophetic narrative frame that all he sees is a proof of the fulfillment of prophecy and not a wrongful taking on the part of white people who have come to fulfill God’s destiny. He justifies the taking of America based on the promise of God.

In November of 1672 in Edenton NC, George Fox entered into a dispute with a “doctor” over his doctrine of the universal Inward Light and called upon testimony from an Indian to prove his point:

And there was a doctor that did dispute with us...concerning the inward Light and the Spirit. And he so opposed it in every one, that I called an Indian because he denied it to be in them, and I asked him if that he did lie and do that to another which he would not have them do the same thing to him, and when he did wrong was there not something in him, that did tell him of it, that he should not do so, but did reprove him. And he said there was such a thing in him when he did any such a thing that he was ashamed of them. So we made the doctor ashamed in the sight of the governor and the people; and he ran so far out that he would not own the Scriptures.

First, Fox is calling on living testimony from a representative of the outsider nation—a people that do not know the Scripture and are outside the narrative frame—of Israel in the wilderness. Second, there *is* in 1672 an Indian present in the discussion and able to express his views.¹⁴

By 1752 in Edenton, August Gottlieb Spangenberg’s Moravian expedition diary records:

The Indians in North Carolina are in a bad way. The Chowan Indians are reduced to a few families, and their land has been taken from them. The Tuscaroras live 35 miles from here, and are still in possession of a pretty piece of land...Those that are still here are much despised, and will probably soon come to an end. The Meherrin Indians, living further west, are also reduced to a mere handful. It looks as though they were under a curse that crushes them...¹⁵

Within the intervening seventy years, the Indians have diminished radically. Similarly to Fox, Roger Williams in New England displayed a great interest in Native Americans, writing a book on their language and religion. He compared them favorably to the Christians of his day—yet also likened them to heathen. So the first wave of Protestant encounter with native Americans was curious, and somewhat open with regard to what kind of religion true or false they would find. In the very near future, however this naiveté was already eroding.

Stage Two: The Indian as Mission Field

A century later, the evangelist of the Second Great Awakening, George Whitefield, demonstrates a subtle shift in the view toward Indians. Writing to an Indian trader in 1740, he states:

I remember, when it was first impressed upon me, that I should go to Georgia, this promise came with such power as will never be forgotten, and too, long before I had any outward call—"I have made thee the head of the heathen."

So in the context of exhorting a merchant to live among the Indians and minister to them, Whitefield identifies them as heathen—outside the narrative of the chosen people—Canaanites or nations who can enjoy God's promise and participate in the narrative only through conversion. And in his memoirs, Whitefield relates of his visit to Georgia:

Many praying people were in the congregation, which, with the consideration that so many charitable people in England had been stirred up to contribute to Georgia, and such faithful labourers as Messrs. Wesleys and Ingham had been sent, gave me great hopes, that, unpromising as the aspect at present might be, the colony might emerge in time out of its infant state. Some small advances Mr. Ingham had made towards converting the Indians, who were at a small settlement about four miles from Savannah. He went and lived among them for a few months, and began to compose an Indian grammar; but he was soon called away to England; and the Indians (who were only some run-away Creeks) were in a few years scattered and dead.

Whitefield is watching Indian communities die before his eyes. Yet he sees it within a narrative frame that identifies the loss with the providence of God in which the "heathen" are converted or perish.¹⁶

Native American Response

The best form of resistance to a powerful public narrative is not to debunk the narrative but either to adapt it or counter it with a better narrative. Both these attempts were made at different points and it is worth mentioning them here.

Probably the most famous counter narrative is the Code of Handsome Lake, which begins with a date of 1800 but of which the only written copy was not published until 1912 by anthropologist Arthur Parker. This remarkable document contains the words of a Seneca prophet in a thorough blend of indigenous and Christian themes. It is therefore not independent of Christian influence but instead represents an attempt to counter white religion with a similar narrative construction—a code of laws given in the course of a journey accompanied by divine messengers.¹⁷

George Copway (Kahgegahbowh), an Ojibwe Indian and Methodist missionary, used adaptation to make a Christian plea for the welfare of the Indian in a speech to the South Carolina State Legislature in 1848. Asking for a portion of the West in South Dakota to be set aside for the Indian, he makes this plea:

If you are prosperous, and, sitting in halls like this, our children come to you and ask you for bread, will you give it to them? Will you put plough in their hands and teach them how to use it? Then will our children be merry around our fireside, with a Bible in their hands, and a touch of God's fire in their hearts. Then will our people participate in the blessings of religion and civilization. Then will peace, love and unity prevail; and our poor neglected race will occupy a high place in the scale of nations.¹⁸

Is it reading too much into this narrative sujet to hear an echo of the New Canaan in the plan for land to the West, and the new Eden in the idyllic future fireside of the Christianized Indian? Perhaps not.

Both these strategies—the counter narrative and the adaptive narrative—failed to preserve the identity of American Indians. The first strategy was suppressed directly. The second strategy failed because in converting Indians to the Christian myth it erases their particular identity and merges them into the existing narrative frame. And that serves to illustrate the paradox with which we began—the two ways in which the unwonted presence of outsiders, nameless in the Promised Land, can be reconciled with the narrative frame—convert or be removed.

Notes

- ¹ Kevin Michael DeLuca and Anne Teresa Demo, "Imaging Nature: Watkins, Yosemite, and the Birth of Environmentalism," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* (17, no. 3, 2000).
- ² William Bartram, *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges, or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Chactaws; Containing an Account of the Soil and Natural Productions of Those Regions; Together with Observations on the Manners of the Indians*. By William Bartram. Philadelphia: Printed by James & Johnson, 1791.
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- ⁴ Thomas Hariot, and John White, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (New York: Dover, 1972 (1590)).
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Chapter 6

Slave Songs as a Public Poetics of Resistance

Anthony S. Parent Jr.

Introduction

THE LAST GENERATION of slavery scholarship has captured the consciousness of enslaved Americans in their songs. Outsiders were not privy to their spirituals. These sacred songs, first published by William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison, and later promoted by the Fisk Jubilee Singers, have gained international attention as American classical music.¹ If the spirituals were not collected until after slavery, the seculars, especially the cornhusking songs, were collected on southern plantations during the slavery era, notated partly for literary curiosity and partly for grist for the mill of minstrel shows.² Lawrence Levine has privileged the spirituals as African Americans' "most significant musical creation . . . far superior [to the secular songs] because slaves used it to articulate their deepest and most enduring feelings and certainties."³ Nevertheless, Levine did recognize the significance of the secular songs for slave consciousness. The spiritual and seculars can be classified into four modes: sacred, frolic, work, and festival. The slaves hummed their sacred songs noiselessly outside the earshot of whites, secretly in hush arbors or in outlying cabins in the dead of night, the sound muffled by a capsized kettle.⁴ Songsters performed at frolics during off hours in the yards and cabins without white supervision. Laborers sang in fields and on waterways pacing their work. Revelers performed festival songs in front of white spectators at harvest-time cornhusking and Christmas-time Jonkonnu celebrations. The spirituals were privately performed. The seculars, except the frolics, were performed in public, either as work songs or at revelries, under the gaze of white authority. Unlike "off times" when the people sequestered in the cabins or yards sang songs at frolics or when laboring to keep a tired folk on task,⁵ the cornhusking festivals and Jonkonnu parades were ritualized public

performances under the gaze of whites.⁶ The best venue for secular songs was the cornhusking festivities. The corn-shucking festivals held at various plantations in the neighborhood developed from the communal effort to prepare corn, the staple of the enslaved diet, for storage at the end of November and early December. Roger D. Abrahams interprets the cornhusking festivals as ritualized status reversal, which eased social tension.

Unpacking the cornhusking songs reveals underlying messages illuminating a vast terrain of struggle that do not reaffirm the social order but contest it forcefully. Demonstrating this point I reinterpret the cornhusking songs utilizing a new methodology. Although reviewers as early as Frederick Douglass have noted that the enslaved used linguistic strategies in their songs to conceal their conscious intent, exactly how they do so remains a mystery. By employing a new methodology of the “loss leader,” introduced in chapter three above, we learn *how* public poets delivered their message of resistance. What we learn from the cornhusking songs is that the enslaved laborers, even in the most inappropriate setting, a scrutinized festivity, were able to challenge their masters’ claim on them and to evoke their wishes for a better life. Decoding these songs is possible if we listen to them as public poetics, delivered for more than one audience. Since the poet or song leader used traditional melodies and lyrics familiar to enslaved African Americans, tropes of suffering, material conditions, planter hypocrisy, courtship, and rebellion are deftly rendered. The improvisational skills and repertoire of the corn general enabled him to entertain both revelers as they shucked the corn and spectators on the portico, even as each group understood what they heard differently. These songs not only express myriad emotions, both conscious and unconscious, but also enslaved Americans’ wide-ranging efforts at resistance. Contesting the social order ranged from dissimulation to rebellion. Poets lay bare the hypocrisy of slaveholders and their duplicity. Their songs relentlessly criticize material conditions and exhort escape.

The songs selected for this essay are representative of such a poetics of resistance. “Shuck corn, shell corn” demonstrates consciousness of their naked exploitation. The forced removal from upper states to the lower cotton states prompted the composition “I loves old Virginny.” An actual event about the exploitation of laborers on Sunday, a traditional day off, is the thematic content of “The parson says his prayers in church.” A woman dying of consumption and the ritual at her deathbed is the hidden message of “How’s ye feeling brudders?” “Run, Nigger, Run” dovetails hiding from patrollers and empty promises from a mistress. “Johnny come down de hollow” is a farewell song before running

away. Troubled love characterizes the Jenny songs. “Up Roanoke and down the river” is an insurrectionary wish song. Wishes for freedom and role reversal are voiced in “It’s a mighty dry year, when the crab grass fail.”⁷

Cornhusking Songs as Linguistic Strategies of Resistance

Cornhusking songs can be best described as public poetics, a radical indictment of slavery even if contemporary recorders missed the essential themes. Drawing upon literary theory allows us the recognition that these poems have two subjects, signifying and signified. This insight opens a window into the collective consciousness of an enslaved people. Henry Louis Gates dubs their vernacular usage “Signifyin(g).” Signification is the art of delivering an implicit message through a dialectical interplay of manifest and latent “ways of meaning.” This meaning is never directly arrived at; rather it is “signified in some way.” The signifyin(g) poet alerts his interior audience that his text should not be taken literally; rather its true meaning is evoked by his manipulation of mutually understood rhetorical tropes. “Signifyin(g) . . . depends on the success of the signifiers at invoking an absent meaning ambiguously ‘present’ in a carefully wrought statement.” This ability distinguished the enslaved poet. “The narrator’s technique is to be gauged by the creative (re)placement of these expected or anticipated formulaic phrases and formulaic events, rendered anew in unexpected ways. Precisely because the concepts represented in the poems are shared, repeated, and familiar to the poet’s audience, meaning is devalued and the signifier is valorized.”⁸ Another way of looking at the public discourse of enslaved songsters is the interpretive mode of “simultexuality,” a term coined by P. Gabrielle Foreman to interpret nineteenth-century black women’s writing. Simultexuality, she argues, is the rhetorical method of delivering multiple messages with the same embedded text to various audiences at the same time. Acutely aware of the prejudices of their white readers, these authors made a “transparent rhetorical appeal” to them, while dramatizing their own humanity. What Foreman has found in black women’s writing may be applied to enslaved songsters at public events. While assuaging their white listeners, even valorizing their stereotypical notions, the poets at the same time vindicate their people’s humanity. Foreman goes further to recognize that these simultaneous renderings can be rooted in an historical context, which she has called “histotextuality.”⁹

It is in the public performances that African-American poets and their choral subordinates challenge the authority of the master. We can glean

insight into these public poems by looking at poet Richard Hugo's discussion of creative process in poetic composition poetry. Hugo writes that there are two subjects in a poem, the triggering subject and the real subject. The triggering subject is the initiating subject, locating the poem in a real place. The real or generated subject constitutes the core of the poem itself. Its meaning is discovered in the rendering of the poem, and may not even be understood by the poet. It is here that we find the poet's insight and meaning. Public poets are bards or performing poets. They are confined to their audiences' expectations for words. Hugo says of the public poet: "The public poet must always be more intelligent than the reader, nimble, skillful enough to stay ahead, to be entertaining so his didacticism doesn't set up resistances."¹⁰ This intelligence is certainly true of the enslaved public poet, for the didactic or moral lesson embedded in the poem must be hidden from the slaveholders. Listening for the triggering subjects (signifier) and real generated subjects (signified) in these songs reveals an overtly rebellious voice.

For the enslaved poet the triggering (signifying) subject is a loss leader by necessity. A loss leader is an advertisement term. It is a promotion that brings in a customer only to sell her something other than what is advertised. The seller is willing to take a loss on the advertised article in order to profit elsewhere. For the loss leader to be successful, the consumer is unaware of the scheme. For enslaved poets, the loss leader also carries the double entendre of also being a false leader in the direction of the poem. The enslaved poets give their listeners a loss leader as the triggering subject, one that invites the oppressors into the enslaved shop of riddle and one that will throw them off the trail of the generated subject. The whites swallowed the lure whole.

In the next section, I will offer close readings of select cornhusking songs to demonstrate the dynamics of linguistic resistance.

"Shuck corn, shell corn": Naked Exploitation

Frederick Douglass admitted that as a youth "within the circle" he did not fully comprehend the "deep meaning" of these songs. Only upon reflection as a free man could he realize the message in the songs of unconscious yearnings of liberation and of the "dehumanizing character" and "soul-killing effects of slavery."¹¹ In his second autobiography *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) he emphasized the "double meaning" of the slave songs.¹² He commented on the use of the choral interlude to disguise the message (loss leaders). They

“would sing, as a chorus, to words which seem unmeaning jargon, but which, nevertheless, were full of meaning to themselves.”¹³ Nevertheless, he recorded a secular song “We raise de wheat” without any choral exchanges to demonstrate slave consciousness. He gave this song as an example of the intermittent “sharp hit,” emphasizing “the meanness of slaveholders.”¹⁴ Using this example, Gates interprets that the songster “signified directly” here, rather than “protectively,” the usual mode of expression.¹⁵

We raise de wheat,
Dey gib us de corn;
We baked de bread,
Dey gib us de cruss;
We sif de meal,
Dey gib us de huss;
We peal de meat,
Dey gib us de skin
And dat’s de way
Dey takes us in.

The hypocrisy of the master-slave relationship is laid bare here. “We Raise de Wheat” demonstrates that the enslaved were clearly conscious of their exploitation.

If we look at a slightly different version of the song—“Shuck corn, shell corn”—the charge is muted, yet the meaning remains the same. Rather than a sharp hit, Abrahams interprets this song as a jab, describing “some activity of the occasion [cornhusking] while commenting ironically on the plight of the slaves.”¹⁶

Shuck corn, shell corn,
Carry corn to mill.
Grind de meal, gimme de husk;
Bake de bread, gimme de crus’;
Fry de meat, gimme de skin,
And dat’s de way to bring ‘em in [RDA 305].

Unlike “We raise de wheat,” the generated subject is muted by the loss leaders in the opening lines. Acting as the signifying or triggering subject, “Shuck corn, shell corn, / Carry corn to mill,” ensnares the uninitiated audience, yet, at the same time, the songster alerts the insider audience with a transition to grinding the corn. Amos Oz, author and critic, calls the opening lines of a text done right “an entrapment of a contract” with a reader. On first

reading the scene might be idyllic, requiring “a grave demand for slow and detailed reading.” “Unless one internalizes the details . . . the overeager reader may simply deduce the rich are happy, and hurry on.” “The reader is therefore directed, almost compelled,” Oz admonishes, “to return to the opening, to reexamine, as it were, the fine print of the contract. In doing so, the reader may establish that he has not at all been deceived: he might have been merely too hasty in trusting.”¹⁷

The same can be said of white informants at a cornhusking event: they gullibly rushed to judgment. The opening lines of the cornhusking song are a loss leader, the “fine print” in the contract. The opening verse was even a more serious exercise to the enslaved public poet than a creative writer. It is there that he signals to his enslaved companions, his primary audience, which text is at work, even as he entraps the white spectators. The opening lines, as Oz explained, duplicitously obscure the generated subject. “Carry corn to mill” is followed by an indictment of the slaveholders’ hypocrisy. The signified or generated subject “Grind de meal, gimme de husk; / Bake de bread, gimme de crus” is as clearly stated as in the rendition “We raise de wheat, / Dey gib us de corn, / We baked de bread, / Dey gib us de cruss.”

“I Loves Old Virginny”: Forcible Removal to the Deep South

The lyrics of “I Loves Old Virginny” likewise provide a simultaneous, if dissimilar effect, on both audiences. The informant Rev. T.C. Thornton gives this as an example of one of their “wild songs,” sung so heartily that it could be heard three miles away. The chorus responds to each line with the refrain “So ho! Boys! So ho!”

I loves old Virginny / (Chorus—So Ho! Boys! So Ho!)
 I love to shuck corn. / (C.)
 Now’s picking cotton Time. / (C.)
 We’ll make the money boys. / (C.)
 My master is a gentleman. / (C.)
 He came from Old Dominion. / (C.)
 And mistress is a lady / (C.)
 Right from the land of Washington. / (C.)
 We all live in Mississippi / The land for making cotton. / (C.)
 They used to tell of Cotton seed / (C.)
 As dinner for the negro man. / (C.)
 But boys and gals it’s all a lie. / (C.) We live in a fat land. / (C.)
 Hog meat and hominy. / (C.)
 Good bread and Indian dumplings. / (C.)

Music roots and rich molasses. / (C.)
The negro up to picking cotton. / (C.)
The old ox broke his neck. / (C.)
He belong to old Joe R— / (C.)
He cut him up for negro meat. / (C.)
My master say he be a Rascal. / (C.)
His negroes shall not shuck the corn. / (C.)
No negro will pick the cotton. / (C.)
Old Joe hire Indian. / (C.)
I gwine home to Africa. / My overseer says so. / (C.)
He scold only bad negroes. / (C.)
Here goes the corn boys [RDA 204–206].

Loss leaders are lurking throughout in the song and in the chorus. While catering to the whites' sense of decorum, the corn general slips in the actual conditions of slavery. The first stanza develops the tension between the triggering and generated subjects that are the hallmark of this poem: "I loves old Virginny/ I love to shuck corn. / Now's picking cotton Time. / We'll make the money boys." The first two lines referencing love for "Old Virginny" and shucking corn are loss leaders, which camouflage the generated subject of seasonal labor and exploited labor in the following three. The title or lead phrase "I loves old Virginny" carries the cavalier romance that the enslaved that are now in frontier Mississippi have for their forsaken Virginia; the second "I love to shuck corn" is hyperbole.¹⁸ Fanny Kemble, the renowned actress married to Pierce Butler, the wealthy Georgia slaveholder, remarked on the allusion to "grass" that she had heard sung on a neighbor's plantation in Georgia: "Oh! my massa told me, there's no grass in Georgia," sung with an "extremely pretty, plaintive, and original air" repeatedly by a chorus. She was told that it was "the lamentation of a slave from one of the more northerly states, Virginia or [North] Carolina, where the labour of hoeing the weeds, or grass as they call it, is not nearly so severe as here, in the rice and cotton lands of Georgia."¹⁹

The generated subject is introduced in the next two phrases: "now is picking cotton Time" and "We'll make the money boys." Making money during the harvest by "working beyond customary expectations," not uncommon in Mississippi, may be the allusion here.²⁰ Fanny Kemble may have thought the reference to making money—"God made man, and man makes . . . money"—that she heard in Georgia "a peculiar poetical proposition."²¹ The enslaved participants would have comprehended it completely. They sang of appropriating the surplus of their labor.

The loss leader in the second stanza locates the gentility of the master and

mistress in their birthplace in Virginia, apprising the white audience of their acquiescence. “My master is a gentleman. / He came from Old Dominion / And mistress is a lady / Right from the land of Washington.” Yet for the song moves rapidly to the generated subject, slave life in Mississippi: “We all live in Mississippi/The land for making cotton. / They used to tell of cotton seed. / As dinner for the negro man.” One has to qualify the gentility of owners’ birthplace by reminding the enslaved that we now are in the frontier cotton state of Mississippi. “The gentleman and the negro man” may both be from Virginia, but they have different social realities. The allusion to cottonseed as “dinner for the negro” directly referenced the deficiency of their diet, but the critique is couched in the indirect phrasing “they use to tell us.” Quick to assuage the slaveholders’ character, the poet gives another loss leader. Calling the anecdote a lie, the leader calls Mississippi “a fat land,” a cornucopia of food. Yet this plenty is not distributed evenly. The generated subject thus highlights the poor diet of the enslaved: hog meat, hominy, and music roots and the rich diet of the owners, good bread, Indian dumplings, and rich molasses. “But boys and gals it’s all a lie. / We live in a fat land. / Hog meat and hominy. / Good bread and Indian dumplings. / Music roots and rich molasses.”

The song leader is only now able to go back to the generated subject, the real condition of enslaved life in Mississippi. The initiated is aware that he is back on track because the poet recalls the theme of picking cotton, as he had in the earlier stanzas introducing material conditions. It is only the old ox’s accidental death that allows the enslaved meat; “negro meat” has a telltale quality. This triggering subject pulls us away from the moorings of the fat land. The culprit here is a mean-spirited owner, which allows the poet to indict the system while placating their owners’ sensibilities. The indictment is opaque to the white listeners because of its loss leader. It is the master who calls Old Joe R—a “rascal.” The meanness of Joe is answered by the enslaved workers’ indifference to his crops, an agency that whites likely missed in hearing the poem. Joe in turn must hire Indians to work his crop. Joe becomes Jones in other songs. Perhaps the enslaved carried the memory of this trope with them from the Old Dominion. Its provenance may be the “Scandal” of Colonel Jones, whose slaves, William Byrd II described, lived as “a kind of Adamites, very Scantily supply’d with cloaths and other necessaries. However they are even with their Master, and make him but indifferent crops.”²²

In the next line the generated subject is a wish for escape or release, which is a constant theme in the poems. The wish here is for a return to Africa: “I gwine home to Africa. / My overseer says so.” The mention of the overseer is

significant as a loss leader. The poet is saying that returning to Africa is no idle contemplation, but it has been validated by the overseer, a white authority. Sterling Brown has found that expressions of “going home,” whether to Africa or to heaven, were allusions to escaping their condition, not “forgetfulness of the past,” but rather “this world was not their home.”²³ The final stanza is again a loss leader. “He scolds only bad negroes./Here goes the corn boys.” Returning to the overseer, the leader, tongue-in-cheek, recalls corporeal punishment, but it is only inflicted on the “bad Negroes.” The final phrase “Here goes the corn boys” reminds the participants that the preceding remark is “corn,” a colloquial expression, acknowledging the falsity of the charge.²⁴

“The Parson Says”: Hypocrisy of Laboring on Sunday

If Old Joe might have been based on an actual person, “The Parson Says,” one of the earliest known cornhusking songs (1816), definitely was. Both songs were recorded at the same festival. Rev. Thornton reported that this song was based on a real event that had happened twenty-five years earlier when the African Americans “put him [the parson] into their corn songs.” His informant also told him that “they are not yet done singing about the old parson. . . . Poor fellow we are told that he was actually sung out of the neighborhood” [RDA 206–207]. The song spells out the hypocrisy of a minister who exploits his workers by making them work in the rain on their day off. Drawing the chorus into the joke, the response to each called line is the refrain “It rain, boys, it rain.”

The parson says his prayers in church. / (C.)
 Then delivers a fine sermon. / (C.)
 He cuts the matter short, my friends, / (C.)
 He say the blessed Lord send it. / (C.)
 Now’s the time for planting bacco. / (C.)
 Come , my negroes, get you home. / (C.)
 Jim, Jack, and Joe and Tom. / (C.)
 Go draw you plants and sell them out. / (C.)
 Don’t you stop a moment, boys. / (C.)
 ’Twas on a blessed Sabbath day. / (C.)
 Here’s a pretty preacher for you. / (C.)

The opening lines locate the loss leader in church where a minister is praying and preaching. “The parson says his prayers in church. / Then delivers a fine sermon.” The song then moves quickly to the generated subject of a hypocrite who forces his laborers to work on Sunday, their customary holiday.

“He cut the matter short, my friends,/He say the blessed Lord send it.” He “cuts” to the chase, moving to his true vocation, master not minister. Of course, the minister lays the blame for the rain on the Lord. The refrain “It rain, boys, it rain” put forward that it is wet, making the conditions more miserable. Working with wet tobacco plants is sickening. Handlers of wet leaves can experience nausea and dizziness, because the nicotine from the leaves leaches through the skin pores.²⁵ Likewise Joyner gives an example of a secular song, outside of earshot of whites, that criticized work conditions in the rice fields: “Come listen, all you darkies, come listen to my song, / It am about ole Massa, who use me bery wrong: / In the cole, frosty mornin’, it ain’t bery nice, / Wid the [w]ater to de middle to hoe among de rice.”²⁶

The parson’s hypocrisy is re-enforced by blaming the rain on the Lord. “Now’s the time for planting ‘bacco / Come, my negroes, get you home. / Jim, Jack, and Joe and Tom. / Go draw you plants and sell them out. / Don’t stop a moment, boys.” The bard personalizes the activity by naming Jim, Jack, Joe, and Tom. They are called out of church because it’s tobacco planting time. The command “Go draw you plants and sell them out” once again gets at enslaved consciousness that their exploited labor enriches their owner. Selling the plants on a Sunday gets at the double exploitation of losing the opportunity of earning money because they are working on a customary day off. The songster tells his audience that they are not only working on a rainy holiday, but they also being pushed without a break: “don’t stop a moment.” As was the case with the mean-spirited slaveholder Old Joe—, the preacher is singled out as a culprit, allowing the enslaved to indict the system without bringing the wrath of their own owners on their heads.

“How’s ye feeling brudders?”: Dying and Ritual

Like “The Parson Says,” the following song is a critique of physical conditions. Nevertheless, the white informant in “How’s ye feeling brudders?” believes that the song is simply a request for liquor, a “time to have a dram”. The refrain (R.) “O dear, I’m so dry!” The chorus (C.) is “Ho google, my google guggle.”

How’s ye feeling brudders?
 Seem to me
 De wedder’s gittin
 To be powerful dry
 Ober in dis neighborhood!! / (R.)

I's a chokin' / (R.)
Who dat sneezin' / (R.)
Oh my brudders, wake up 'an' tell me
If any of yer 'member what de jug used
To say, long time ago. / (C. 2x)
O dat's de talk! but now she's sick and
Lying out da in the fence corner, and it
'pears like never will say— / (C.)
Wonder what's de matter. / (C.)
She's down wid consum'tion. / (C.)
Ho! I look out and da and see her comin'
Dis way, / Google guggle,
Walking fast, / Google guggle,
Mos' here, / Google guggle,
Now all togedder, / Google guggle,
Now all togedder, / Google guggle,
Make yer bow, / Google guggle,
Den one by one, / Google guggle,
Mind what yer 'bout da, / Google guggle,
Touch her light boys, / Google.
Hoh-h-goo-ggoogle-gug-gug-gug-guggle
My time come at last! [RDA 216–217]

The initiation of the dry weather in this neighborhood makes the request immediate, leading the white spectators to assume that the huskers are requesting liquor. The poet throws the whites off with the loss leader. “How’s ye feeling brudders? / Seem to me / de wedder’s gittin / to be powerful dry / ober in dis neighborhood!” The double entendre suggests a critique of health conditions. Like the refrain “It rain, boys, it rain” The refrain “O dear, I’m so dry!” amplifies the material conditions. It answers the question of “How ye feeling brudders?” by revealing the generated subject, a sick woman dying alone with consumption (tuberculosis). In this sense the lyrics of “How’s ye feeling brudders?” allow the choral group to assist the passage of the dying woman, offering both communal catharsis and reassurance.

The triggering subject in the next lines puts the whites off by referring to the animated jug. What the jug used to say brings us back to the generated subject. The sounds at first are nonsensical, a loss leader, yet these noises are onomatopoeic suggesting congestion, a respiratory ailment, a disconcerting mimicking of a sick woman. “O dear, / (R.) / I’m a chokin’ / (R.) / Stop dat coughin’ / (R.) / Who dat sneezin’ / (R.)”

The corn general changes the question from “How you feeling Brudders” to “Wonder what’s de matter?” Oh my brudders, wake up an’ tell me / if any

of yer ‘member what jug used / to say, long time ago. / (C.2 x). The whites hear the nonsense; the enslaved understand all too well the dire health conditions are being described: “O dat’s de talk! but now she’s sick and / Lying out da in the fence corner, and it / ‘pears like never will say—/ (C.) / Wonder what’s de matter. / (C.) / She’s down wid consum’tion.” The symptoms of consumption were “breathing difficulties, abdominal pain, and wasting away.”²⁷

Announcing death approach, the next several lines move swiftly like a river rushing headlong to the woman’s demise.²⁸ The use of seemingly inarticulate words here contrasted sharply with what White and White found with this type of sound in song. The enslaved” employ[ed] calls that . . . tended to function as do syllables in scat singing, as pure sound, rather than as vehicles for conveying information.”²⁹

“Ho! I look out and da and see her comin’
 Dis way, / Google guggle,
 Walking fast, / Google guggle,
 Mos’ here, / Google guggle,
 Now all togedder, / Google guggle,
 Make yer bow, / Google guggle,
 Den one by one,” / Google guggle,

One by one, each pays respect to the dying woman. The clamor slows considerably as seen in the last lines, releasing in death, but also releasing her from slavery.

Mind what yer ‘bout da, / Google guggle,
 Touch her light boys, / Google.
 Hoh-h-goo-goggle-gug-gug-gug-guggle
 my time come at last!³⁰

Sharla M. Fett has found that “as death approached, enslaved men and women placed great emphasis on surrounding the sick person with songs and prayers that anticipated the sufferer’s ‘crossing over.’ Fett illustrates her point about dying alone with the following slave song “When my health is weakening, / Never leave me alone; / If you see me failing, / Never leave me alone; / My Jesus promised, Never leave me alone.”³¹ Letitia Burwell, in her *Plantation Reminiscences* recalled the death ritual of Fanny, an enslaved woman in Virginia. “Several days before her death . . . her room was crowded with Negroes who had come to perform their religious rites around the death

bed. Joining hands they performed a savage dance, shouting wildly around her bed.” Responding to a minister who thought the “noise and dancing” might have worsened her condition, Fanny said: “Honey that kind of religion suits us black folks better than your kind.”³²

“Run, Nigger, Run”: Patrollers and Empty Promises

The song “Run, Nigger, Run, De Patteroler’ll Ketch You” [RDA 269–270] speaks to the duplicity of the whites. The loss leader starts with the thirty-nine lashes a runaway receives for being caught on the road by the white patrol, which is repeated several times. “Run, nigger, Run, de patteroler’ll ketch you, / Hit yer thirty-nine and sware ‘e didn’t tech yer.” The song then describes the poor white patrollers that keep the enslaved from being on the road, visiting loved ones, hunting or trapping, or pursuing other social pursuits. The second theme that emerges is the ability of the enslaved to outwit the patrollers.

Poor white out in de night
Huntin’ for niggers wid all deir might.
Dey don’ always ketch deir game
D’way we fool um is er shame.
Run, Nigger Run.

The next lines introduce the generated subject. You cannot trust the whites to live up to their promises to emancipate you. You must free yourself by running away. “Run Nigger Run” then is not simply to avoid the paddy roller. It is an act of rebellion to escape slavery. Sterling Brown noted that this “bitterest secular” about the mistress shared the “robust humor” about the patrollers.³³

My ole mistis promus me
When she died she’d set me free,
Now d’ole lady’s ded an’ gone,
Lef dis nigger er shellin corn.
Run, Nigger run.
My old master promus me
When he died he’d set me free,
Now he’s ded an’ gone er way
Neber’ll come back tell Judgement day.
Run, Nigger run—

The corn general returns to the theme of the patroller trying to catch the enslaved on the road, relieving the tension building about runaways. The

enslaved avoids the patter roller in the tree. However given the foregoing discussion of promises not kept and the need to run away, the patroller is an obstacle in the fugitive's quest for freedom, one that the fugitive can avoid.

I seed a patteroler hin' er tree
 Trying to ketch po' little me,
 I ups wid my foots an' er way I run,
 Dar by spolin dat generman's fun,
 Run, Nigger, run—

“Johnny come down de hollow”: Escape

“Johnny come down de hollow” was first recorded by William Cullen Bryant [RDA 224] in his travel account of 1843 in Carolina and was later memorialized by William Wells Brown [RDA 248–249] thirty years later. Bryant singled this song out as different as the others which possessed a “comic character”. On the other hand, this one had a “wild and plaintive air.” The only black memoirist Brown, enslaved for twenty years in Kentucky and Missouri, remembered the annual corn-shucking event that took place on Poplar Farm. He recollected that the men leaving the festival in search of small game “frequently” sang this song. It is an indictment of the internal slave trade and a plea for assistance to escape. It presents the reality of loss and depression yet there is a bold plea for help to escape. The loss leader is thinly veiled request for Johnny to come down to the hollow, a gap or a mountain pass, an innocent plea. At first we think of the hollow, a low-lying concave in the landscape. As in the previous two examples the choral refrain—“Oh hollow!”—summons the condition of the enslaved.

Johnny come down de hollow. (/ C.)
 Johnny come down de hollow. (/ C.)
 De nigger-trader got me. (/ C.)
 De Speculator bought me. (/ C.)
 I'm sold for silver dollars. (/ C.)
 Boys, go catch de pony. (/ C.)
 Bring him around the corner, (/ C.)
 I'm goin' away to Georgia, (/ C.)
 Boys, good-by forever! (/ C.)

The “Oh hollow” refrain introduces the triggering subject: low-down, depression state of mind. These are images that it evokes. “Johnny come down de hollow. / Oh hollow! Johnny come down de hollow. / Oh hollow!” The next

lines get at the poem's meaning. The protagonist has been sold—put in de pocket as the enslaved said—for silver dollars. The “Oh Hollow” refrain moves from depression to indictment of how low down: “Oh how low, oh how low. / De nigger-trader got me. / Oh Hollow! / De Speculator bought me. / Oh Hollow! / I'm sold for silver dollars. / Oh Hollow!” At last we learn why the narrator wants Johnny to come to de hollow. He needs his assistance to escape. “Boys, go catch de pony. / Oh Hollow! Bring him around the corner, / Oh Hollow!” The final lines are of loss; it makes the preceding ones that much more poignant: “I'm goin' away to Georgia, / Oh Hollow! / Boys, good-by forever! / Oh Hollow!”

Another version of “John come down de hollow” [RDA 240] begins with the loss leader, a farewell to white mistress before giving the cue of John come to the hollow. “Fare you well” to a mistress seems to be a common loss leader. For example, Fanny Kemble heard enslaved singers begin a medley of songs with “Fare you well” before that seemed to promise something sentimental—Fare you well, and good-bye, oh, oh! / I'm goin' away to leave you, oh, oh!—but immediately went off into nonsense verses about gentlemen in the parlour drinking wine and cordial, and ladies in the drawing-room drinking tea and coffee, &c.”³⁴ Unlike the first version, the generated subject is the expressive hope of escape to Canada.

Fare you well, Miss Lucy
John come down de hollow.
Fare you well, fare you well
Weel ho. Weell ho.
Fare you well, young ladies all
Weel ho. Weell ho.
Fare you well, I'm going away.
Weel ho. Weell ho.
I'm going away to Canada.
Weel ho. Weell ho.

Rather than the how-low depression and sale to Georgia the “Weel (weal) ho” refrain is an affirmation of well-being. The word weal was an expression of happiness often contrasted with woe.³⁵ The fare you well of the poem becomes goodbye by the last lines, not the blessing of a good trip as suggested in the first lines to the mistress. “Farewell to young ladies all” may be reference to the courting-age girls, for usually young men are running away.

The Jenny Songs: Beauty, Violence, and Scandal

Jenny gone away

The cornhusking festivals were the principal time of courting. Jenny is cast as the personification of these love songs, a catchall for love interests, partying, and sexual innuendo.³⁶ For example, Nancy Williams, enslaved in Virginia, remembered “Yessuh I’s e out there in the middle of the flo’ jes’ a dancin’; *me* an Jennie, an’ de devil. . . . Jes’ dance ole Jennie down” (emphasis mine). Notice that both the personas of the devil and Jenny are competing for her attention.³⁷ Jenny was attitude, showing out; the devil was danger. Fanny Kemble thought a ditty about Jenny that she heard from her laborers nonsensical.

Jenny shake her toe at me,
 Jenny gone away;
 Jenny shake her toe at me,
 Jenny gone away.
 Hurrah! Miss Susy, oh!
 Jenny gone away;
 Hurrah! Miss Susy, oh!
 Jenny gone away.³⁸

Hansen uses the refrain *Jenny gone away* to demonstrate sexual innuendo in a way that their mistress could not comprehend. He suggests that “toe” was likely an African-derived word meaning hips or buttocks. He also suggests that the enslaved likely would have referred to their dance as “Jenny” derived from *djan*, a Niger-Congo word meaning dance or play.³⁹ Perhaps there’s more going on in this refrain than butt-shaking. Jenny, his lover has “gone away,” either a lost love or a runaway. There is also a loss leader in the song, “singing” or praising the mistress: “Hurrah! Miss Susy, oh!” The spiritual “Many thousands Gone” offers a meaning of the word “gone”. Each line is repeated twice followed by its respective chorus.

No more auction block for me,
 No more, no more
 No more auction block for me,
 Many thousand gone.
 No more peck o’ corn for me . . .
 No driver’s lash for me . . .
 No more pint o’ salt for me . . .
 No more hundred lash for me . . .
 No more mistress’s call for me . . .

The word “gone” alluded to the thousands of fugitives who have escaped. Unlike the above nuanced Jenny refrain, this spiritual speaks directly to the oppressive conditions. “More directly to the slave experience” than any other, writes musicologist Richard Newman, “because it does not attempt to hide or code its meaning.” Like the Jenny refrain “Many Thousands Gone” invokes the mistress, but not to praise her; rather it defiantly proclaims “no more mistress call for me.”⁴⁰

“The song of ‘Jenny gone away,’” William Cullen Bryant wrote, “was also given” at the same social where he recorded “John Come Down de Hollow” in 1843. Unfortunately he did not give the lyrics, perhaps because a full rendition had been published in 1836 and had already become popular among American audiences. This earlier rendition was recorded by a “Gentleman” who had travelled through Virginia. He heard eighty to one hundred huskers in chorus led by a “poet” who “seemed to have no fixed object in view but to sing.” He offered it as “an idea of their style of composition” [RDA 209–210].⁴¹

Oh, Jenny, gone to New-town
 (Chorus) Oh, Jenny gone away!
 She went because she wouldn't stay, / (C.)
 She run'd away, an' I know why, / (C.)
 For she went a'ter Jone's Bob, / (C.)
 Mr. Norton, good ole man, / (C.)
 Treats his niggers mighty well, / (C.)
 Young Tim Barnet no great thing, / (C.)
 Never say, come take a dram. / (C.)
 Master gi's us plenty meat, / (C.)
 Might apt to fo'git de drink. / (C.)

The loss leader is self-evident: “Mr. Norton, good ole man, / Treats his niggers mighty well.” Shane White and Graham White ferret out the generated subject. “Jenny had ‘gone away’ in order to follow ‘Jones’s Bob,’ whose master, the unsympathetic and miserly ‘Tim Barnet,’ had sold him to a person in New-Town.” “An outsider . . . unaware of the contextual references contained in the song’s lyrics would not have seen that possible connection between the two verses. To those slaves who supplied the song’s chorus, however, the connection might well have been obvious enough.”⁴²

“Jinny was de gal!”

“Jinny was de gal!” (208–209), a courtship song, masked a trope of

violence. The 300 bass voices belting out “Jinny was de gal!” “in the middle hour of the night” still reverberated more than twenty-five years later, when Henry Chivers sent the song to Edgar Allan Poe in 1853. Even if his informant missed it, Poe, the master of the macabre, likely understood the violence in the “Jinny was de gal!” The poem is about a former lover protesting his undying love to a woman who has apparently chosen an abuser. “Jinny was de gal” acts both as the triggering subject and loss leader. Jinny was not only special (“the girl”) but also his lover (“darling”). For the novice, the triggering subject—“Jinny was de gal! Jinny was my darling!”—indicates a courtship song, the love that the protagonist has for Jinny. On the other hand, the initiated would have grasped the generated subject in the second line “Oh! Jinny had de black eye.” The black eye has three simultexual meanings: a dark lustrous eye (beauty), a bruised eye (violence), a scandalized name (disrepute).⁴³ The generated subject in the second line indicates that Jinny with the lustrous eye has left him for another, abusive man, scandalizing her name.

Jinny was de gal!
 Oh! Jinny had de black eye—
 Jinny was de gal!
 Jinny was my darling!
 Jinny was de gal!
 Oh, Jinny was my darling—
 Jinny was de gal!

With this evidence of violence in mind, the past tense “was” indicates that this is a lover’s loss of his darling Jinny, who had been abused. The generated subject of the courtship follows in the next stanzas. Sighing and heartache indicate forlorn longing. This trope of romance is continued, following the refrain “Jinny was de Gal” with kissing and declarations of love.

Jinny took to sighing—
 Jinny was de gal!
 Oh! Jinny took to sighing—
 Jinny was de gal!
 Jinny had de heart arche—
 Jinny was de gal
 Oh! Jinny had de heart ache—
 Jinny was de gal

The second refrain triggers a new loss leader, “Git away de Cawn (Corn), Boys!/ Git away de Cawn,” a tried-and-true work cadence.

Git away de Cawn, Boys!
 Git away de Cawn!
 Jinny lem me kiss her—
 Jinny was de gal!
 Oh! Jinny lem me kiss her—
 Jinny was de gal!
 Jinny said she lubbed me—
 Jinny was de gal!
 Oh! Jinny said she lubbed me—
 Jinny was de gal!

After the triggering subject “Git away de Cawn, Boys!” the following stanzas pick up the same frenetic danger as “How’s ye feeling brudders?” questioning his lovers’ health (“Jinny! What de matter?”). He also protests that he’s dying. Without a doubt the profession of *dying* indicates I can’t live without you; the queries whether Jinny feels the same way: “Jinny, ain’t you (dying) gal?” is a double entendre of her abusive relationship and a question of their mutual misery.

Git away de Cawn, Boys!
 Git away de Cawn!
 Jinny! What de matter?
 Jinny was de gal!
 Oh! Jinny! What de matter?
 Jinny was de gal!
 Jinny! I am dying!
 Jinny was de gal!
 Oh! Jinny! I am dying
 Jinny, ain’t you gal?
 Oh! Jinny! I am dying!
 Jinny! Kiss me gal!

The song ends with the word “Shuffle.” Introduced for the first time this term is associated with obeisance, further concealing the poem’s true meaning from the uninitiated.

Git away de Cawn, Boys!
 Git away de Cawn!
 Git away de Cawn, Boys!
 Shuffle out de Cawn.

Run, Jinnie, Run!

The farewell song, a traditional trope (see *John come down de hollow*

discussed above) can be seen in the following Jenny version recorded at a Jonkonnu festival. Rather than Jenny running away, her lover pleads for her to run away with him.

Run, Jinnie, run! I'm gwine away,
 Gwine away, to come no mo.
 Dis am de po' house.
 Glory habbilulum.
 Poor massa, so dey say;
 Down in de heel, so dey say;
 Got no money, so dey say;
 Not one shilling; so dey say;
 God A'mighty bless you, so dey say.
 Poor massa, so dey say

The singer begins this song with a loss leader of love; he is leaving Jinnie, his sweetheart. Then the singer brings the immediate, generated message. At the Jonkonnu festival the enslaved accosted whites for petty gifts. Satirizing the master for his poor donation, he calls this the poor house. Then he dissembles and throws the white audience off by calling on God's blessing. Implicit in the song is the desire for his lover to follow him to freedom. Yet he finishes hard by continuing to criticize the parsimonious master. (The use of shilling in reference to money suggests a colonial-era provenance.) The repetitive use of "So dey say" gives the singer cover, for it's not him making the charge.

"Up Roanoke and down the river": Insurrectionary Wishes

Enslaved songsters expressed their wishes for insurrection and emancipation by drawing on historical heroes and events, familiar to their community. "Up Roanoke and down the river" [RDA 301–302] is an insurrectionary wish song. Each call is followed by the choral response *Oho, we 'most done* and then the call is repeated:

Up Roanoke and down the river. / C.
 Two canoes and nary paddle. / C.
 There is where we run the devils. / C.

Away over in reedy bottom. / C.
 There is where we tricked the devils. / C.
 Jack de Gillam shot the devils. / C..

Blue ball and a pound of powder. / C.
Shot him in the rim of the belly. / C.
That's the way we killed the devils. / C.

The song opens with the loss leader of being up the creek without a paddle and the refrain of finishing work: “Up Roanoke and down the river, / Two canoes and nary paddle . . . /Oho, we ‘most done.” Yet the song’s historic attribution may be the Easter Conspiracy of 1802. Sancho, the leader of the conspiracy, had recruited slaves up and down the James and Appomattox rivers. The conspiracy spread. What its leader King Brown told a fellow conspirator is revelatory: “all [the rebels] up the [Roanoke] River were joined and ready.” The leaders there even changed the date of the event from Easter Monday to June 10, choosing that date when the whites were vulnerable because they were attending a Baptist association meeting. They planned to first strike in Windsor, killing the white people and burning the town before moving into Virginia.⁴⁴

Although the Roanoke is specific, “Oho” in the refrain could be *Myo*, an allusion to the river of death. The informant may have misheard the term or the singers may have corrupted it. Trying to understand the meaning the *Myo* in spiritual “My Army Crosses Over” General Thomas Wentworth Higginson learned from an elderly enslaved man who “thought that it meant the river of death.” Higginson surmised that among the Cameroonian speakers “‘Mawa’ signifies to ‘die’.” Indeed, Pharaoh’s army drowns in the *Myo*. “My army cross over; / We ‘ll cross de mighty *Myo*, / My army cross over. (3x.) O, Pharaoh’s army drownded !”⁴⁵ [also see RDA 264]. Literary critic Keith Cartwright believes that the “mighty *Myo*” is likely the “Mayo” River (Niger) remembered by Salih Bilali, a Fulani of Fulbe (Pulo), who resided within a half mile of it. During Bilali’s time in Georgia, the enslaved had sung “Down to the Myuh.” Cartwright also notes that when coastal Georgia informants sang “myuh” they might (simultaneously) mean “mire,” which “ambiguously signifies depths or bottom.”⁴⁶ This riverine imagery persists in “Up the Roanoke.” Shifting from the river to the reedy bottom also underscores the exodus imagery also present in “My Army Crosses Over.” The generated subject of running and fooling the devils (slaveholders) interspersed between the refrain “Oho, we ‘most done”: “There is where we run the devils. . . . / There is where we tricked the devils.”

The trope of the folk hero Jack de Gillam is used as a foil. Shielding the enslaved from the anger of the white listeners, this archetype, unknown to the

whites, poses as a loss leader. Invoking the folk hero Jack de Gillam likely references Jean Jacques Dessalines of the Haitian Revolution. Dessalines, the first king of the new republic of Haiti, was infamous for massacring the remaining whites there because of their treachery. The pronunciation of his name in Creole *Janjak Desalin* sounds very much like Jack de Gillam (Jak de Salin).⁴⁷ This event in 1803 coincides with the timing of the Easter Conspiracy of 1802 when black watermen spread the news of both the revolution and the conspiracy up and down the Roanoke River.⁴⁸ Revenge and killing both figure prominently in the song.

Jack de Gillam shot the devils.
 Oho, we 'most done.
 Jack de Gillam shot the devils.
 Oho, we 'most done.

Jack de Gillam shoots devils in the belly and kills them. The gut shot shows visceral anger.

Blue ball and a pound of powder
 Oho, we 'most done.
 Shot him in the rim of the belly.
 Oho, we 'most done.
 Shot him in the rim of the belly.
 Oho, we 'most done.

The communal (we) wish of revenge returns in the final stanza. "Oho, we 'most done" takes on an ominous tone, a far cry from finishing shucking corn.

That's the way we killed the devils,
 Oho, we 'most done.
 That's the way we killed the devils,
 Oho, we 'most done.

It's a mighty dry year, when the crab grass fail: Wishes for Freedom

Only one full rendition of a corn-shucking song was recalled by an interviewed ex-slave in the twentieth century. Significantly, Wayman Williams, enslaved as a child in Mississippi and Texas, heard a corn-shucking song that evidenced aspirations of emancipation. After the work was completed and supper eaten, he recalled, all would gather around a fire and listen to "de tales told by de ole folks 'bout de war and why dey fighting and

sing the songs dat wee sing in de corn shuckin' time." He gave one corn-shucking song "Hit's a mighty dry year" [RDA 327]. The agency of the enslaved workers and their wishes for a reversal in their status is embedded in this song.

Hit's a mighty dry year, when the crab grass fail, (Chorus)
Oh, row, row, row, who laid dat rail?
Hit's am mighty dark night when de nigger turn pale,
De big foot nigger dat lad dat rail! / (C.)
Rinktim Ranktum, laid dat rail.
Show me de nigger dat laid dat rail. / (C.)
When de niggers fus de white folks fail. / (C.)
We are gittin dar now, don' tell no tale,
Show me de nigger dat laid dat rail,
I'll stick he head in a big tin pail.
Oh, turn me loos', let me tech (touch) dat rail, / (C.)

Something extraordinary triggered in the phrases "Hit's a mighty dry year, when de crab grass fail" and "Hit's am a mighty dark night when de nigger turn pale." The crab grass dying theme suggested the end of a cycle.⁴⁹ As noted earlier, Kemble found that allusion to grass or rather its difficulty in hoeing in the Deep South was a lament of their forced removal from North Carolina or Virginia where their labor was not as difficult.⁵⁰ Failing crabgrass suggested an even worst situation. These phrases trigger the unnatural drought and the phenomenal (even biblical) rarity of changing the Ethiopian's skin. (Jeremiah 13:25). Peppered with nonsensical words "Rinktim Ranktum," the work cadence's call: "Oh, row, row, row, who laid dat rail" and response "De big foot nigger dat lad dat rail," evokes the theme of the bottom rail on top, a trope current during the war years when enslaved African Americans viewed the cataclysm of war as the reversal of status.⁵¹ For example, when a freed man in the Union Army saw his ex-owner being led away in chains as a prisoner, he said to him "Hello massa, bottom rail on top this time."⁵² The generated subject of the poem—"When de niggers fuss de white folks fail / We are gittin dar now, don't tell no tale"—not only asserts the agency of the enslaved during the war, but also its finality. A loss leader—"I'll stick he head in a big tin pail"—separates the generated subject from its conclusion. Its final call Oh, turn me loos', Let me tech dat rail" heralds that the day of jubilee is near.

Conclusion

Enslaved bards publicly combated the trauma of slavery at cornhusking festivals by employing the linguistic strategy of loss leader. My reinterpretation of cornhusking songs uses this tool of loss leader to unpack their meaning. This innovative approach extends both Gates's theory of signifying in the African American vernacular tradition and Hugo's of triggering in public poetics. Comprehending this linguistic strategy give us insight into the resilience of an enslaved people. Although white informants heard and recorded these songs, they did not comprehend their seditious import. They missed it because of the linguistic strategy of the loss leader in the signifying or triggering subject, its cadence an essential element introducing the theme. The signified or generated subject matter, often in the background, is the essence of the poem. The poet only then reveals the meaning, which is often only discovered in its rendering. Improvisation, so essential in the enslaved oral tradition, is a creative force in this poetry. For the enslaved poet, the generated subject is the key verse in the reel. After throwing the slaveholders off the trail with the loss leader, the songster not only ambushes the white spectators with insidious verses of their naked exploitation, but also affirms their righteousness. The generated, signified subjects in the cornhusking songs include criticism of their diets, and wishes for escape or return home (to Africa). Affirmations of courtship and death rituals are memorialized in the cornhusking songs. Expectations of physical and spiritual release combine to reveal their cultural resilience.

Notes

- ¹ William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison, *Slave Songs of the United States* (Carlisle, MA: Applewood Books, 1996). W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*; Essays and Sketches: [1903] New York, NY: Penguin Classics, 1996. 205–206.
- ² Roger D. Abrahams, *Singing the Master: The Emergence of African-American Culture in the Plantation South* (New York, NY: Penguin Non-Classics, 1994), 136.
- ³ Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*, 30th anniversary ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, New York, 2007), 19.
- ⁴ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1979), 212, 219. Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), 28, 35. Josephine Wright, "Songs of Remembrance," *The Journal of African American History* 91, no. 4 (October 1, 2006): 413–424. Dena J.

Epstein, *Sinful tunes and spirituals: Black folk music to the Civil War* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 172–176.

- ⁵ “Off times” were the afterhours, a part of the “moral economy,” Charles W. Joyner writes, when enslaved people contributed to their own sustenance Penningroth called this the “economy of time.” “Permitting slaves to use part of their work week for themselves saved masters money on food and clothing.” “Rather than undermining the system of slavery, allowing slaves the ‘privileges’ of time and property ownership more profitable and easier to manage.” Charles W Joyner, *Down by the riverside: a South Carolina slave community*. Blacks in the New World (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 128. Dylan C. Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 53, 57.
- ⁶ Harriet Jacobs remembered the event as the “greatest attraction” of the Yuletide season. Costumed Jonkunnuers from the plantations, dressed with bones and bangles and organized in companies of a hundred or more, converged on the town. Parading through the streets they accosted whites including children, pressing them for donations. The revelers satirized parsimonious that refused their solicitation with verses composed in advance the. Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself* (ILSG) [1867] (Electronic Edition) Second edition, 2003 Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2003, 179–180. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/jacobs.html>; Peter Reed, “There Was No Resisting John Canoe: Circum-Atlantic Transracial Performance,” *Theatre History Studies* 27 (2007): 65–85; Elizabeth Fenn, “‘A Perfect Equality Seemed to Reign’: Slave Society and Jonkonnu.” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 65 (1988), 127–53.
- ⁷ Abrahams has reprinted verbatim accounts of the cornhusking festivals and songs in his appendices. *Singing the Master*, 203–328. All further references to these primary sources are bracketed with his initials and page numbers.
- ⁸ Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: a Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), 51, 53, 61 78, 80–81, 86.
- ⁹ P. Gabrielle Foreman, *Activist Sentiments: Reading Black Women in the Nineteenth Century*, 1st ed. (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 4–14.
- ¹⁰ Richard Hugo, *The Triggering Town: Lectures and Essays on Poetry and Writing*, Reissue (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 13–14.
- ¹¹ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave, Written by Himself*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002), 51.
- ¹² Frederick Douglass, *My bondage and my freedom ...* (New York, NY: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 277–278.
- ¹³ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 51. Douglass, *My Bondage and my Freedom*, 51.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 252–253.
- ¹⁵ Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 67. Sterling A. Brown, “Negro Folk Expression,” *Phylon* (1940–1956) 11, no. 4 (December 1, 1950): 51.
- ¹⁶ Abrahams, *Singing the Master*, 124. Abrahams thought so much of this song, the last folklore in his appendix (1913), that he used it as his frontispiece.

- ¹⁷ Amos Oz, *The Story Begins: Essays on Literature*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1999), 10, 16, 26.
- ¹⁸ Brown, "Negro Folk Expression," 51. "General Washington was a gentleman," sung at the same event, begins with a loss leader like "I Loves Old Virginny," but then moves quickly to the generated subject: the recognition that the enslaved are often cheated by peddlers. "General Washington / was a Gentleman. / I don't love the ped- / dlars. / They cheat me in my rabbit skins. / When I bought their / Tin ware" [RDA 206].
- ¹⁹ Fanny Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838–1839*. (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1863), 128.
- ²⁰ Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk*, 51.
- ²¹ Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838–1839*, 219.
- ²² William Byrd, *The writings of "Colonel William Byrd, of Westover in Virginia, esqr."* (New York, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1901), 338. Foreman, *Activist Sentiments*, 11–13.
- ²³ Brown, "Negro Folk Expression," 47.
- ²⁴ (*OED*, s.v. "corn").
- ²⁵ Terri Ballard et al., "Green Tobacco Sickness: Occupational Nicotine Poisoning in Tobacco Workers," *Archives of Environmental Health: An International Journal* 50, no. 5 (October 1995): 384–389. Working with wet tobacco leaves is now considered an occupational hazard known as Green Tobacco Sickness (GTS). The symptoms were first diagnosed more than thirty-five years ago. Lauren Etter, "Tackling Green Tobacco Sickness: Companies Seek to Help Field Workers Avoid Acute Nicotine Poisoning," *Wall Street Journal*, March 24, 2009.
- ²⁶ Charles W Joyner, *Down by the riverside: a South Carolina slave community / Blacks in the New World* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press., 1984), 132.
- ²⁷ Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 223n.
- ²⁸ Leslie Howard Owens notes that the approach of death is not uncommon in slave songs. *This Species of Property: Slave Life and Culture in the Old South* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, New York, 1977), 172.
- ²⁹ Shane White and Graham White, 'US LIKES A MIXTERY' *Listening to African-American slave music*, 405–426. Gad J. Heuman and James Walvin, eds., *The Slavery Reader* (New York, NY: Routledge, London, 2003), 408.
- ³⁰ This final line recalls the refrain from the spiritual made popular by Dr. Martin Luther King: "Free at last, free at last/ Thank God almighty, I'm free at last. / (2x). Richard Newman, *Go Down, Moses: Celebrating the African-American Spiritual*, annotated edition. (New York, NY: Clarkson Potter, 1998), 77.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 56–57.
- ³² Letitia M. Burwell and Page Thacker, *Plantation Reminiscences by Page Thacker [Pseud.]*, [1878]. <http://www.archive.org/details/plantationremini00burw> [1878] 57.
- ³³ Brown, "Negro Folk Expression," 51.
- ³⁴ Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838–1839*, 123.
- ³⁵ s.v. "weal": *OED, American Heritage Dictionary*.
- ³⁶ Zora Neale Hurston, highly sensitive to this folk tradition, named her lead character Janie in *Her Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). Janie could easily have been a derivative of

Jenny. Jenny was also a most common name. Kemble remarked on an encounter with one of “our multitudinous Jennies.” Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006). Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838–1839.*, 232.

37 Perdue, *Weevils in the wheat*, 316.

38 Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838–1839.*, 128.

39 Chadwick Hansen, “Jenny’s Toe: Negro Shaking Dances in America,” *American Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (October 1, 1967): 554–563. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, 11. Hansen, “Jenny’s Toe Revisited,” 4.

40 Newman, *Go Down, Moses*, 115.

41 Hansen, “Jenny’s Toe Revisited,” 1–2.

42 Shane White and Graham White, *The Sounds of Slavery: Discover African American History through Songs, Sermons, and Speech* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2005), 68. Elizabeth A. Fenn, ““A Perfect Equality Seemed to Reign”: Slave Society and Jonkonnu.” *The North Carolina Historical Review*; 65; (1988), 127–53.

43 *OED, American Heritage Dictionary*, <http://www.wordnik.com/words/>>: s.v., “black eye”).

44 Douglas R. Egerton, *Rebels, Reformers, & Revolutionaries: Collected Essays and Second Thoughts* (Routledge Press, 2002), 65–66.

45 Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment: and Other Writings* (New York, NY: Penguin Classics, 1997), 152–153. Bois, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 541. Michael Ortiz Hill with Mandaza Augustine Kandemwa, *The Village of the Water Spirits: The Dreams of African Americans*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Spring Publications, Inc., 2006), 41.

46 Salih Biali’s Recollections of Massina,” (1844), Philip D Curtin, *Africa Remembered; Narratives by West Africans from the era of the slave trade*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press,, 1967), 147. Keith Cartwright, *Reading Africa into American Literature: Epics, Fables, and Gothic Tales* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 39, 46. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 209.

47 “Jean-Jacques Dessalines, pronounced zhahn zhahk day sa LEEN” http://www.dolphin.upenn.edu/dhsa/dessa_bio.html (Nov. 13, 2011); “Haiti’s founding father, Janjak Desalin: I Have Avenged America,” posted by *Ezili Dantò* on September 19, 2011 under *Blog, FreeHaitiMovement*, <http://www.ezilidanto.com/zili/2011/09/haitis-founding-father-janjak-desalin/> For the creole pronunciation see <http://www.forvo.com/word/janjak-desalin/> (Nov. 6, 2011). Foreman has coined the term histotexuality “as a method for interpreting sophisticated historicized tropes in narratives whose meaning has previously been thought to be produced by relying on the texts’ thin and putatively singular or seemingly impoverished mimetic referents.” Strategies using historical references can “create alternative, sometimes dissonant, interpretive possibilities.” Foreman, *Activist Sentiments*, 13–14.

48 David S. Cecelski, *The Waterman’s Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press Books, 2001), 30.

49 See “Ole Dan Tucker” [RDA 236–237].

50 Kemble, *Journal of a residence on a Georgian plantation in 1838–1839*, 128.

51 Brown, “Negro Folk Expression.”

- ⁵² Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Vintage, 1980), 102. See also James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 862.

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Chapter 7

Dancing as Protest: Three African American Choreographers, 1940–1960

Nina Maria Lucas

Introduction

IN 1932, DURING the heart of the Great Depression, seven modern dancers in New York City founded the New Dance Group. Their purpose was to bring social and political issues to the forefront and to raise awareness of social injustice in America. During a time of social and political upheaval, these artists dedicated themselves to a social revolution through dance. This essay offers reflections on the impact of African American Concert Dance choreographers between the decades of 1940–1960, specifically examining the work and careers of three modern dance choreographers and their best known choreographies: Pearl Primus’s *Strange Fruit*, Talley Beatty’s *Southern Landscapes* and Donald McKayle’s *Rainbow ‘Round My Shoulders*. Primus’, Beatty’s and McKayle’s contributions to dance in America reflect explicitly on African-American traditions and Southern themes. All three used dance as a political and cultural tool against systemic social injustice of the time. Attention is given to their choreographic style, aesthetic principles, and artistic philosophy.

Pearl Primus (1919–1994)

The critically acclaimed Pearl Primus was one of the first African Americans to train and dance with the New Dance Group. The New Dance Group’s work and support empowered Pearl Primus to create dances of protest, dances about the black experience, and to highlight the social injustices experienced by the “American Negro”. Pearl Primus is unique in that she was not just a dancer and choreographer, but also a pioneer, a scholar, and an activist in New York City. She is the first dancer to present African American experiences with a framework of social protest in dances such as *Strange Fruit*, *Hard Time Blues*, and *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*.¹ She drew her

choreographic material from a variety of black cultures and figures, ranging from African stonecutters to Caribbean religious practices to rural life in the American South. Trained in anthropology, she studied the dances of Africa first-hand to create work based on African movement traditions. Through her choreography, she was instrumental in drawing attention to the injustices experienced by her people and simultaneously showcasing the beauty of the “American Negro”.

Pearl Primus was born in Trinidad in 1919. Her family moved to the United States when she was three years old. With New York City as her new home, and no memories of her Caribbean heritage, it would not be until she was introduced to dance that she felt compelled to reconnect with the culture of her people. Aspiring to become a doctor, Primus attended Hunter College. She graduated in 1940 with a B.A. in biology and pre-medicine, and went on to graduate school at New York University to work on her M.A. degree in psychology. She eventually transferred to Columbia College and changed her major to Anthropology. While attending school, she worked part time and was introduced to dance through the National Youth Administration. The National Youth Administration (NYA) was an agency that operated from 1935–1943 as part of the Works Progress Administration. It provided a government job training program for young people. In 1941, Primus found employment in the wardrobe department of the National Youth Administration. When NYA needed an extra for a part in the “America Dances” production, they took her on, because there was nobody else.²

Pearl joined the National Youth Administration Dance group as an understudy, and it was then that she realized how much she loved movement. In 1941, after the program disbanded, she heard about auditions for a scholarship at the New Dance Group, a politically activist dance collective and studio that had been founded in 1932.³ Joining the New Dance Group meant two hours of washing floors, cleaning toilets and other menial labors in exchange for two hours of instruction.⁴ Primus was the first African-American to receive a scholarship from the New Dance Group. She trained with fellow Trinidadian Belle Rosette, a specialist in Caribbean dance, and dancers Jane Dudley, Sophie Maslow, and William Bales.⁵ She was also encouraged to study with modern dance greats including Doris Humphrey, Hanya Holm, Martha Graham and Charles Weidman. Primus’s talent and athleticism aided in her dance training progress and she began to excel. Ambitious and passionate about dance, she aspired to create her own dances. She began

conducting research in the area of what was then known as “primitive dances” by studying books, articles, pictures and visiting museums. In the words of one scholar, her independent research “gave her confidence and courage to learn about African culture; it gave her a sense of background, of belonging in an aristocracy of the spirit; for the Africans were a proud and honorable people, a rich and happy people before the white man went in and exploited them, she said.”⁶

Before long, Primus was preparing for her first professional dance concert. To gather American dance research material, she traveled to the Deep South and visited seventy Negro churches, lived amongst the people, and picked cotton with the sharecroppers. Her experiences in the Deep South served as foundation and material for her new choreography. She made her professional performance debut in 1943 at the Ninety-second Street YM-YWHA in a program entitled *Five Dancers*.⁷ Her performance included *African Ceremonial*, a dance about Africa and Haitian origins; *Strange Fruit*, a dance about the black experience in the United States and a woman’s reaction to a lynching; *Rock Daniel*, a jazz inspired dance and *Hard Time Blues*, a dance protesting the plight of the southern sharecroppers.

Strange Fruit

Strange Fruit is one of Pearl Primus’s best-known protest dances. Powerful and provocative, it depicts a woman’s reaction to the horror of a lynching. This violent solo filled with hate, sadness and murder is performed with no music, but to a poem written by Lewis Allan, *Strange Fruit*. In the dance, Primus contorts her body to communicate the pain and suffering of the human spirit through movement. Importantly, the dancer’s point of view is not about the relationship of the woman to the victim, but to the lynch mob members who encouraged and cheered on the gruesome act. Once the lynching is completed, one woman stays behind, and she realizes the horror that has been done. It is noteworthy that Primus identifies herself with a white person, and has the acumen to see, even in a lynch mob, the possibility of remorse.⁸ When she made her solo debut at the Ninety-second Street YM-YWHA in 1943, Pearl seemed to have come out of nowhere, and the world of dance was captivated. Two dances in particular, *Strange Fruit* and *Hard Time Blues*, consistently brought the audience to their feet.⁹

Strange Fruit was also a title of a famous anti-lynching song performed by blues singer Billie Holiday. The lyrics were written in 1930 by a Jewish

schoolteacher from New York, Abe Meeropol. Arthur David Margolick writes that “it is possible that what inspired him [Meeropol] to write *Strange Fruit* was a double lynching that took place north of the Mason Dixon line—in Marion, Indiana in 1930—immortalized in a shocking and widely publicized photograph”.¹⁰ The picture was of two men, Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith. Meeropol said “it haunted him for days.”¹¹ Abe Meeropol was a member of the American Communist Party and used the pseudonym name Lewis Allan, thus credit for the lyrics is given to his pseudonym, Allan. Abe Meeropol, aka Lewis Allan, published the poem twice, in the Communist journal *The New Masses* (1936) and in the *New York Teacher Journal* (1937).¹² Meeropol also wrote the music for his poem. Before Billie Holiday ever performed and recorded *Strange Fruit*, Meeropol’s wife Anne and her friends presented it in various informal settings in New York City. The song was also performed at the time by black vocalist Laura Duncan at Madison Square Garden.¹³ It is not clear how Meeropol arrived at the Café Society, a progressive nightclub in New York City, or how he connected with the club’s owner Barney Josephson, but he performed *Strange Fruit* for Josephson, a producer named Bob Gordon, and Billie Holiday. Gordon and Josephson were impressed with the song and encouraged Holiday to perform it.¹⁴ In July 1939, Holiday’s version of *Strange Fruit* made it to number sixteen on the music charts. It has remained a classic in American Music History to this day. Meeropol continued to write poetry and songs, including *The House I Live In* for legendary singer Frank Sinatra. Although he was an accomplished American writer, he is best known today for having adopted Julius and Ethel Rosenberg’s two young sons after the conviction and execution of their parents for espionage in 1953.

Dancers, artists, musicians and writers such as Meeropol and Holiday used their talents to protest against social injustices. Primus’s own version of *Strange Fruit* was a protest dance in its own right, its creation encouraged by the mission of the New Dance Group to bring social and political issues to the forefront.

Also a dance scholar and historian, Primus’s research is extensive. She used libraries, museums, field experience, and living sources as the foundation of her choreographic work. Her style is influenced by the rich cultural heritage of the African-American. She has used spirituals and other songs, poetry, jazz and blues music as a source of inspiration, yet in all cases, the essence of the choreographic vocabulary is filled with the experiences of her people. Whether the dance movement derives from African or Caribbean religious practices, or from a variety of black cultures and rural life in the American South, it draws

the audience's attention to the injustices of black people. It celebrates black culture not simply as politically charged subject matter, but also foregrounds the beauty of the "American Negro." Her work has influenced dance artists such as Donald McKayle, Talley Beatty, Alvin Ailey and many others. As a performer she was known as passionate, honest and electrifying. Dance critics praised her movements as being forceful and dramatic, yet graceful and deliberately controlled. For example, critic John Martin wrote about her combination of strength, social passion, and talent: "Here, newcomer or not, was obviously the greatest Negro dancer of them all...besides strength and speed and elevation, her movement had a beautiful quality, a beautiful muscular phrase, and was an open channel for her inward power and her pervasive, outgoing honesty."¹⁵

In 1949, Primus was awarded a fellowship from the president of the Rosenwald Foundation, Dr. Edwin Embree. For eighteen months, she studied the dance traditions of the Gold Coast, Angola, Liberia and Senegal. While there, she performed her own work and observed and learned native dances. In the years that followed, she also studied and performed throughout the Caribbean and the Southern United States.¹⁶ In 1954, Pearl Primus married dancer and choreographer Percival Borde. Continuing her education and scholarship, she received an M.A. in education from New York University in 1959, and a Ph.D. in Dance Education from New York University in 1978. Serving as a professor of Ethnic Studies at the Five Colleges Consortium in Massachusetts, Primus continued to foster education in her area of specialization. During her long career as a scholar, she continued to create dances. She traveled to Liberia, where she expanded her research material in African dances and choreographed *Fanga*, her interpretation of a traditional Liberian invocation dance of the earth and sky.

In her lifetime, she was the recipient of many awards and honors, including the National Media of Arts awarded to her by President George Bush in 1991. Despite these many honors, Pearl Primus's contributions to dance are beyond measure. Her repertory of work not only required research and talent, but confidence and bravery. Through her choreography, she became a spokesperson for her people, breaking down the barriers of prejudice and hate. Lynne Emery Fauley concludes that "the presentation of the African with dignity has been one of Primus's major contributions. Through her work she has helped to destroy the stereotype of the African as a savage without culture or heritage and has portrayed him as he really is a human being".¹⁷

Talley Beatty (1918–1995)

Beatty was born in Louisiana and grew up in Chicago, Illinois. He began his career as a dancer at a very young age. He was fourteen years old when he studied with African-American dancer and choreographer Katherine Dunham, becoming a member of her troupe and performing with her from 1937 to 1943. Beatty performed in his first professional concert setting with Katherine Dunham's group at the Ninety-Second Street Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) in New York City in 1937. He performed in Dunham's concert *Tropics and Le Jazz Hot* in 1940. Beatty was a gifted dancer, and was sometimes singled out by the critics who considered him to have a more balletic quality than other dancers in the company. He had a strong physical presence, and trained long and hard to develop his technical ability and captivating performance qualities. He left Dunham's company in 1943 after completing the film *Stormy Weather*. Now on his own and like most choreographers, Beatty experimented with a variety of dance styles and dance roles. His credits included a role in the Broadway musical *Cabin in the Sky* where he performed once again with Katherine Dunham and Ethel Waters. He also performed as a lead dancer in a Broadway revival of *Showboat* opposite Pearl Primus. Beatty eventually formed his own dance company and toured the United States and Europe performing a program called *Tropicana*. *Tropicana* was a suite of dances in a style derived from African and Latin American cultures.

In 1947, Talley Beatty choreographed a new work entitled *Southern Landscapes*. *Southern Landscapes* was inspired by a book written by author Howard Fast titled *Freedom Road*, a novel about the Reconstruction era. Howard Fast's writing dealt with political themes; his Marxist views were reflected in his publications during this time period, including *Freedom Road*. *Southern Landscapes* is a dance in five sections: *The Defeat in the Fields*, *Mourner's Bench*, *My Hair Was Wet with the Mountain Dew*, *Ring Shout*, and *Settin Up*.

Mourner's Bench

Like Primus *Strange Fruit*, Beatty's solo *Mourner's Bench* makes a powerful political statement. It is filled with passion and personal expression. In this solo, the dancer moves across a bench thinking about the events of the day and meditates about a life lost to social injustice. When the solo was originally performed by Beatty, critic John Martin termed *Mourner's Bench*

“brilliant.”¹⁸ Writing of the same piece performed at a later date, Martin described it as:

A marvelous job, a tour de force demanding endless variations in control and dynamics as he moves on, around and under a simple long wooden seat, it is also vital in form and inner motivation.¹⁹

The mourner’s bench is an actual bench or pew that is found in churches in the South. The bench or pew is approximately 20–25 inches high and very long. Mourners use the bench to meditate and mourn the loss of a loved one. It is sometimes referred to as a Sinner’s Bench, used by members of the congregation to reflect and repent their sins. Beatty sets the dance *Mourners Bench* to a very well known black American spiritual titled “There is a Balm in Gilead.” The song refers to a resinous balm mentioned in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 37) used to heal the sick, and by extension to comfort the sinners. Beatty challenges the dancer requiring him to put his technique and skills to the test. He has the dancer execute difficult dance moves on and around the bench. The dance is filled with beautiful lines of the body. The dancer’s arm and leg extensions seem endless. At one point, the dancer extends his leg into second position, tilts his torso forward, and slowly moves his extended leg around to the back in an arabesque. While holding this position, the dancer unhurriedly promenades clockwise on the bench and then gradually lowers his body on one leg from the bench to the floor. Beatty’s use of long lines, tilts, and deep wide positions of the dancer body are breathtaking. This dance requires flexibility, strength, and control. The quality of movement is slow, controlled, and sustained, but Beatty breaks up the movements again with sudden contractions of the body, expressing the distress of the dancer under a calm demeanor. Beatty has the dancer focus inward to depict meditation. The dancer is in the moment and vulnerable, but through his movement exhibits strength and perseverance to push through the pain, suffering and loneliness. Beatty’s *Mourner’s Bench*, created in 1947, is still performed today and constitutes the premier legacy of his work.

By the 1950s and ’60s, Beatty explored themes of African-American life that served as an artistic counterpoint to the Civil Rights Movement. In 1959, he choreographed *The Route of the Phoebe Snow* (also known as *The Road of the Phoebe Snow*). This piece focuses on the life around the Lackawanna Railroad, something he had seen and experienced in his childhood. The dance is accompanied by the music of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. Beatty

took the title of the piece from freight trains with the name *Phoebe Snow* painted on their sides, which he observed as a boy on the road with his father. *The Road to Phoebe Snow* is one of Beatty's greatest achievements in the form of dance called Jazz Dance. It became part of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre's company repertory in 1964. Jazz Dance mirrors the social history of the American people, reflecting ethnic influences, historical events, and cultural changes. Jazz Dance has been influenced by social dance and popular music—especially jazz music.²⁰

Throughout his career, Talley Beatty continued to create some of the most compelling works in dance documenting and interpreting the social and political issues and the life of the African-American. *Come and Get the Beauty of It Hot* (1960) and *Montgomery Variations* (1967) are two dances which focus on racial injustice and discrimination. *Black Belt* (1969) probes and exposes the realities of ghetto life with power and authority. In the 1950's and 60's, Beatty established a working relationship with the great composer and musician Duke Ellington. Beatty provided choreography for several of Ellington's extended works, such as *A Drum Is a Woman* (1957) and *My People* (1963) and *Ellingtonia*, which premiered in 1994 at the American Dance Festival in Durham, North Carolina.

Talley Beatty continually expanded his reach and directed new choreography and his own repertory for many other companies, including Stockholm's Birgit Cullberg Ballet, the Boston Ballet, The Inner City Dance Company of Los Angeles, Ballet Hispanica of New York City, and the Bat-Sheva Company of Israel. In the 1970's, he composed numerous theatrical works such as *Your Arms Too Short to Box with God* (premiered in 1977) and *But Never Jam Today* (1978), an African-American adaptation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. In 1983, Beatty created a dance based on the black experience with *Stack Up* (1983), an anti-drug portrayal of life on the streets of the inner city set to modern jazz. The piece takes place in the modern-day Harlem. The audience witnesses the cruel reality of urban street life as a young man is destroyed by drugs. By every measure, Talley Beatty is an accomplished social critic, choreographer, teacher and artist. During his long illustrious career, he has created over forty choreographic works and ten theatrical works to tell the African American story. Today he continues to share his work with the world.

Donald McKayle (Born 1930)

Donald McKayle, or Mr. McKayle, as his dancers respectfully call him, is a modern dance icon, a humanist, and one of the most compassionate choreographers alive. A dancer, teacher, and choreographer, he has enjoyed an extensive teaching career at some of the leading academic institutions and dance education organizations in the US and Europe, including Bennington College, the Julliard School, the American Dance Festival in the US. In California, he taught at the Inner City Cultural Arts Center, and served as the Artistic Director of the School of Dance at the California Institute of the Arts. Currently, he is a Professor in Dance at the University of California Irvine and the Artistic Director of the University's performing group *Étude*. He teaches, restages his classic works, and creates new choreography, endlessly giving back to the dance community his love and passion for the art of dance. Mr. McKayle donated all of his personal papers, articles, drawings, pictures, programs and the synopsis of his choreographic work to the university's Special Collections Department. While reviewing his material, one immediately notices his attention to detail, his vision for his work, and the depth and breadth of his lifelong accomplishments. Dig a little deeper, you see his love for humankind and why he is considered to be a humanist. McKayle effectively summarized his own philosophy and the way he is perceived by colleagues and the public in an interview with the inveterate dance interviewer John Gruen. He notes,

I always begin a project with the knowledge that I am dealing with people—with individuals, with human beings. And my approach is always visceral. I give movements that are visceral. Everything must come from within. And everything must have meaning. When I choreograph, I never use people merely to create design. I mean, abstraction is always present in an art form, and I use it, but I have never used human beings simply as a design element. My work has always been concerned with humanity, in one way or another. Basically, I feel the beauty in man is in his diversity, and in his deep inner feelings.²¹

Born in 1930, Donald McKayle's dance career was inspired by modern dance pioneer Pearl Primus. He followed in her footsteps by auditioning for a scholarship with the New Dance Group in New York City. McKayle told the story of going to the audition unprepared, not knowing what to expect, nor wearing the correct dance attire. Nonetheless, he received the dance scholarship and began his training and studies. Under the direction of renowned artists including Pearl Primus, Sophie Maslow, Jean Erdman and

others, McKayle made his professional debut with the New Dance Group in 1948. Ambitious and ready to create his own work, McKayle collaborated with his friend, modern dancer Daniel Nagrin, to found and form the Contemporary Dance Group. In 1951, at Charles Weidman's dance studio, McKayle premiered a draft of his first choreographic work titled *Games*. *Games* is a dance based on memories of McKayle's childhood. The games he played as a child and songs he sung with his friends in his neighborhood provided rich research material and a motive for this early work. Although the dancers in *Games* are young adults, McKayle directs the dancers to embrace the innocence of the children, their imaginations, and what it is like to live in a dangerous urban environment.

In 1955, McKayle received a scholarship from the Martha Graham School of Dance. He danced in her company from 1955–1956. He continued to pursue a performing career working with choreographers Merce Cunningham, Charles Weidman and Anna Sokolow. In 1959, McKayle returned to the studio to choreograph and created one of his most popular works in Modern Dance history, *Rainbow 'Round My Shoulders'*. Premiering in 1959, *Rainbow Round my Shoulders* is a modern dance classic and a dance of protest. *Rainbow* is a dramatic narrative story about “Negro” chain gangs in the South, prisoners doing hard labor. The music is traditional, chosen from the collection of John and Alan Lomax, arranged by Robert Dercomier and Milton Okun, and sung by Leon Bibbs (soloist), Joe Crawford, Joli Gonsalvez, Elijah Hodges, Sherman Sneed, Billy Stewart, Roy Thompson, and Ned Wright.²²

The title *Rainbow* is derived from a hand tool called a pickaxe that is used by the prisoners. The shape of the pickaxe is curved and resembles a Rainbow. In this dance, McKayle takes the audience members to a place where they do not want to go, inside the world of a prisoner, causing us to witness and feel his anger, pain, wants and desires. In the South, a chain gang consists of a group of prisoners who were chained together and had to perform physically challenging work as a form of punishment. Their punishment included tasks such as building roads, digging ditches, or chipping stone. McKayle's choreography mimics these tasks. It is grueling and full of anger. The movement is direct and clear. It exhibits hard labor, jabbing, and punching, and is filled with contractions of the body to depict tension, pain and sadness. The hopes and desires of the prisoners are filled with the dream of freedom. Because these men probably all have someone at home waiting for them, a mother, sister or girlfriend, McKayle cleverly incorporates the use of a female dancer to represent the idea of freedom. *Rainbow 'Round My Shoulders* is a

difficult dance to rehearse; it is physically and emotionally taxing on the dancers.

Rainbow was a success. Donald McKayle, the humanist, effectively brought a unique part of the culture and world to the concert stage. Although McKayle's *Rainbow* is a protest dance and universal in style, it is also representative of a historically and regionally specific point of view about prisons, politics, and people. A choreography focused on politics and people continues in his more recent works such as *Ring-a-Levio*, a dance about street gangs and sexual politics or in *House of Tears*, a work about the people who disappeared during the Peron reign of terror in Argentina.

With an extensive career in dance, it is no surprise that he is the recipient of many honors and awards. McKayle was named by the Dance Heritage Coalition "one of America's Irreplaceable Dance Treasures: the first 100." In 2005, he was honored by the John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. and presented with a medal as a Master of African American Choreography. His legacy lives on as his choreography, including *Games*, *Rainbow Round My Shoulder*, *District Storyville*, and *Songs of the Disinherited* is performed around the world and considered to be modern dance classics. Several companies in America, including the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, and the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company (to name a few) serve as repositories for his work. In his career, McKayle has created over seventy works for dance companies in the United States and abroad in Europe and South America. His choreographic work extends beyond the concert stage. It has been seen on television in shows including *Ed Sullivan Show* (1966–1967), *The Bill Cosby Special* (1968), *The Oscar Presentation* (1970) and the *Marlo Thomas Special "Free To Be You and Me"* (1974). His Broadway credits include *Golden Boy* (1964), *I'm Solomon* (1969), *Raisin* (1974), *Dr. Jazz* (1975) and *Sophisticated Ladies* (1981) where he was one of four choreographers. He has choreographed for films such as *The Great White Hope* (1970), Disney's *Bednobs and Broomsticks* (1971), *Charlie and the Angel* (1972) and staged acts for entertainers Harry Belafonte and Tina Turner.²³

Conclusion

The purpose of the New Dance Group was to move social and political issues to the forefront, notifying the American public of these injustices. During a time of social and political upheaval, these artists dedicated

themselves to a social revolution through dance. The New Dance Group influenced and supported choreographers like Pearl Primus, Talley Beatty and Donald McKayle, who contributed in major ways to American modern dance, lifting up high the culture and history of the African American people by using the language of dance as a cultural-political tool. Primus, Beatty, and McKayle paved the way for up and coming modern black dance artists like Alvin Ailey, Garth Fagan and Bill T. Jones. Pearl Primus's *Strange Fruit*, Talley Beatty's *Southern Landscapes*, and Donald McKayle's *Rainbow 'Round My Shoulders* have become dance classics today, celebrating African-American traditions and articulating a history of African-American trauma and resilience in the South with grace and power.

Notes

- ¹ Jessie Smith, *Black firsts: 4,000 Ground-Breaking and Pioneering Historical Events*, 2nd ed. (Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 2003), 8–9.
- ² Margaret Lloyd, *The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance*. [1st ed.]. (A. A. Knopf, 1949), 268.
- ³ John O Perpener, *African-American Concert Dance: The Harlem Renaissance and Beyond* (University of Illinois Press, 2001), 163.
- ⁴ Lloyd, *The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance*, 269.
- ⁵ Perpener, *African-American Concert Dance*, 163.
- ⁶ Lloyd, *The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance*, 269.
- ⁷ Perpener, *African-American Concert Dance*, 163.
- ⁸ Lloyd, *The Borzoi Book of Modern Dance*, 271.
- ⁹ Peggy Schwartz, *The Dance Claimed Me: A Biography of Pearl Primus* (Yale University Press, 2011), 35.
- ¹⁰ David Margolick, *Strange Fruit: Billie Holiday, Café Society, and an Early Cry for Civil Rights* (Running Press, 2000), 36.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 36–37.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 37.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.
- ¹⁵ Lynne Fauley Emery, *Black Dance: From 1619 to Today*, 2nd ed. (Princeton Book Co., 1988), 260–262.
- ¹⁶ Jack Salzman, *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, vol. 3, pp 1738–1739, and 2222 (New York: Macmillan Library Reference, 1996), 2222.
- ¹⁷ Emery, *Black dance*, 266.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 286.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ Minda Goodman Kraines and Esther Pryor, *Jump into Jazz: The Basics and Beyond for the Jazz Dance Student*, Fifth edition. (McGraw-Hill, 2005), 1.

- ²¹ Richard A. Long, *The Black Tradition in American Modern Dance* (Rizzoli, 1989), 136.
- ²² Donald McKayle, *Transcending Boundaries: My Dancing Life*, Routledge Harwood Choreography and Dance Studies; (Routledge, 2002), 296.
- ²³ Jack Salzman, *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, vol. 1, pp 298 (New York: Macmillan Library Reference, 1996), 1738–1739.

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Part III

Sexuality and Family

What If

Daniel A. Sean Little Bull

What If I wasn't me?
What If I was someone else?
What if I did care about how someone felt?
What if I would have looked at life in a different way?
What if I would've stayed in school?
Do you think I would still have a chance
With that girl from the pool,
Who said she only likes school boys and good dudes?
What if she would've just gotten to know the real me?
And found out that I'm not the bad guy that,
People make me out to be.
What if these things really happened?
I guess if it would've,
Then "what if" wouldn't be the question.
What if I never came to prison at all?
What if I didn't, and
I never would've noticed my flaws.
What if it wasn't true that
Sometimes bad things happen for good reasons?
What if someone said that to you,
Would you believe it?
Now what if you were me and not someone else?

What if you were emotionally scarred, and
Didn't care what someone felt?

What if you saw life through my eyes, and
Not someone else's?
Do you think you could've or would've made it
If you were me?
What if you had to quit school,

Just to help grandma make ends meet?
What if you were twelve when you fell victim to the streets?
What If you were only five when both your mom and pop left?

Damn! Let me take a deep breath.
What if your dream of having a whole family was like a gun?
Wouldn't it be nice to conceal one?
What if you called the people you grew up with your family,
Because you never knew what it was like to have a real one?
What if my life wasn't hard?
What if it was easy?
What if I told you, "I've never had a problem in my whole life,"
Would you believe me?

"What if" is a question that is real deep.
So before you start to judge,
Think "what if" I were you and "what if" you were me.

Chapter 8

The Slavery Experience of American Indian Women

Rosemary White Shield

with contributing author Suzanne Koeplinger

SINCE “past events shape current reality”, historical contexts are crucial to understanding the experience of American Indians in this country.¹ The colonization experience of American Indians in the United States has been massive and brutal. Its effects have been aimed at the extermination of the Indian individual and collective sense of self, encompassing their physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social realities of being. Pre-contact, tribally diverse ways of identity and affirmations of a sense of self had been created over thousands of years of experience. Yet no Indian Nation was left unscathed by European invasion, each fighting for its life during the early era of colonization and beyond. Not only were Native cultures and political systems under attack; the human victims of colonial acts of genocide and epidemics are estimated to number from three and a half to thirteen million of the original population at contact. Even using the most conservative population estimates, over two-thirds of the Indigenous peoples in North America were exterminated between 1500 and 1900.²

Historical trauma is an innovative concept used to describe the events and effects of the impact of the colonization experience of American Indian peoples. It refers to a cumulative wounding across generations as well as across an individual life span. For Native peoples, the legacy of colonization and genocide includes distortions of Indian identity and values. The process of colonizing Native peoples and their varying degrees of assimilation have resulted in altered states of self and identity for Indian people. Well-respected visionary Native scholar Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart describes the events and effects of the colonization experience on American Indian peoples. The Brave Heart theory of *Historical Trauma Response* underscores the intergenerational transmission of historical trauma or the psychological

transfer of trauma response across generations. She suggests that it frequently manifests as dis-attachment from traditional values, worldviews and ways of being in the world.³

One of the foundational components of the historical trauma endured by American Indians was the experience of slavery. Although historians have given little attention to Native slavery in the past, a steadily increasing contemporary scholarly focus on North American Indian slavery has pushed historians in the United States beyond identifying the slave trade as an exclusively African American experience.⁴ From the kidnapping of individual Indians to buying and selling Native peoples as slaves, the slavery experience of American Indians began with Norse colonization efforts in Greenland as early as 1013. Its second phase expanded with Columbus and other European slave traders, and lasted until close to the end of the Revolutionary War.⁵ During the colonial period, the elite owners of European colonies built profitable yet harsh plantation systems in pursuit of wealth and economic power in the American South. Of the tens of thousands of Indian people who were enslaved, many were exported to Europe and its other colonies.⁶ Others were used on plantations or shipped to the northern part of America. Historian Alan Galloway estimates that between 1670 and 1715, 30,000 to 50,000 southern Natives were sold in the British slave trade alone.⁷ Olexer notes that the European colonists employed the practice of enslavement “to clear the land of its rightful owners, destroy tribal leadership and organization and obtain cheap labor and/or ready money”, with Indian slave labor paramount to the early stages of plantation expansion in the South and the West Indies.⁸ Contrary to commonly held beliefs, “the Indian slave trade was so massive that more Indians were exported through Charles Town than Africans were imported during this period of time”.⁹ In the opening chapters of chattel slavery, Native women were favored over male enslaved persons. They constituted the largest number of Indian slaves in the Southeast. As much as three to five times more Native women than men became enslaved. Indian women worked in fields and as servants in their European owners’ households.¹⁰

We are deepening our understanding of the range of special functions of Native women in the slave trade. Throughout US colonization, Native women slaves were used as social and political capital, transformed into objects of currency and sex.¹¹ According to historian Julianna Barr, Native women “often stood in unique positions to learn languages, to act as translators and

emissaries in cross-cultural communications, and to create ties between cultures.”¹² The well-intentioned effort to reclaim enslaved Native women’s agency, however, has effectively obscured “the powerlessness, objectification and suffering” many endured.¹³ For example, promoting Sacagawea’s (ca. 1788–1812) alleged status as “wife” to a French trader and mediator during the acclaimed Lewis and Clark expedition (1804–1806) has minimized and obscured the “violence and coercion” of her enslavement.¹⁴

Suffering the violence of their capture and continuing enslavement, Indian girls and women were not only lost to their families. They became redefined as commodities, cheap labor, and objects for the sexual pleasure of their owners.¹⁵ The social condition of such exploitation was known and understood by contemporaries. French missionary François le Maire, to cite an example, “bemoaned the trade in ‘savage female slaves’ who, though reputedly bought to perform domestic services, in actuality, became concubines.”¹⁶ Le Maire’s concern was not for the sexual slavery of Indian women, but focused on the Indian slave trade as encouraging a licentious way of living that was seen as a challenge to effective colonization.

The sexual slavery of Indian women extended beyond the South. For example, it was a commonplace practice in the Illinois Country slave trade during the French and Spanish colonial period (late seventeenth to late eighteenth century). According to historian Carl Ekberg, “Indian concubines served sexual, economic and political purposes, providing physical gratification as well as cementing commercial bonds between traders and various tribes.”¹⁷ Ekberg’s research reveals that “Indian slave women were often reserved to serve as sexual partners for French-Creole men—as prostitutes, concubines, common-law wives or wives formally married to their husbands after the women had been emancipated.”¹⁸ Native women, being the most sought after Indigenous slave population in the early colonial period, were not only used for labor or for sexual commodification. Their sexual enslavement also had another purpose: to produce more slaves. One example of using Native women as breeders is a Bill of Sale archived at the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis. It was received in 1783 by Auguste Chouteau for an unborn Indian slave child. Chouteau is among the founding “fathers” of St. Louis, Missouri, established in 1764.¹⁹

As we will describe in the following section, the Indian slave trade in the United States has contributed to collective symptoms of traumatic memory among Native peoples. It continues its destructive trajectory through

intergenerational historic trauma. In our view, the enslavement of Native women and girl children constitutes a core element of the massive historical trauma experienced by American Indians. Although the colonization patterns have regionally differed in some ways, depending on the colonization strategies of diverse European countries, it is a profound and terrible truth that the wealth and economic power of the plantation system in the South arose from the brutality of the Indian slave trade.

Contemporary Context and Issues

Are contemporary Native women free of colonization in its form of sexual slavery? Is it only a historical experience or is it extending into the present? Many Indians and others find that the sexual slavery of Indian women in the United States still continues as part of the on-going colonization and historical trauma experience of Native peoples. It persists in brutally altering the sense of self for Native women and Indian Nations as a whole. As in the historical practice of sexual slavery of Native women, tribal location does not matter, but only that the commodification and sale of Indian women for profit remains intact to finance and accommodate those in power. In our experience, the current face of colonization manifested as the sexual slavery of Indian women is as ugly and heinous as it has ever been. It continues to exist as domestic sex trafficking in modern form.

According to Amnesty International, American Indian women suffer sexual violence three times as often as any other group today.²⁰ Urban Native women report high lifetime rates (thirty nine percent) of sexual assault and experience rape at a rate more than twice that of non-Hispanic whites.²¹ The disproportionately high rates of sexual violence, homelessness, and other disparities experienced by Native women led the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center (MIWRC) to begin examining the scope of sex trafficking of Native females in Minnesota in 2007. In 2009, MIWRC published the first research of its kind in the United States analyzing the scope of sex trafficking among American Indians. The report, called *Shattered Hearts: the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of American Indian Women and Girls in Minnesota*, has been disseminated widely and is now being used to build a framework of appropriate response.²²

The study found that American Indian women are disproportionately impacted by the lack of affordable, stable housing in Minnesota. There is a clear link between homelessness and sexual victimization, with homelessness

placing women and children at heightened risk of assault.²³ The research suggests that most homeless Native women have histories of physical and/or sexual violence, with ninety-two percent of homeless women reporting violence occurring at some point in their lives, and forty-three percent reporting sexual abuse as children.

The findings of this preliminary report indicate that there is yet a much larger problem to be uncovered and resolved. The correlation between the crime of sex trafficking and what is widely viewed as prostitution is most evident when juveniles are involved, but it applies to the sexual victimization of adults as well. According to federal and Minnesota law, any sexual exploitation of a juvenile is a crime against that young person. The federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 defines sex trafficking as:

The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act is under 18 years of age.²⁴

Minnesota law does not require the use of force, fraud or coercion to be proven for an individual to be a victim of sex trafficking. It simply states that no individual can consent to be exploited.²⁵ Young people are routinely trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation, which includes stripping, exchanging sex for shelter, food, or drugs, or anything of value, including approval.²⁶ Data collected by MIWRC as part of its study revealed that sixty-three percent of its clients meeting the definition of having been trafficked into prostitution were first trafficked as children. Of this group, one third had been first sold into sexual slavery between the ages of eight and twelve.

The preponderance of evidence from MIWRC's report and supporting documentation underscores the widespread concern that American Indian women and children will continue to be victims of sexual exploitation at a rate far disproportionate to their representation in the general population. The experiential spectrum of American Indian youth includes high rates of academic failure, youth out-of-home placement, suspected fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD), chemical dependency, and early sexual traumas. Due to the prevalence of historic trauma in Native families generally, the report uncovered families where sexual exploitation had become normalized and transmitted from generation to generation. This overwhelming sense of normalcy of sexual violence was one of the more disturbing findings of the report.

The report also found that poverty was another key risk factor. In today's commercial market where sexual appeal is highly glamorized and promoted, youth find the appeal of easy money in the face of few other viable options difficult to resist. Teens are bombarded daily with messages that reinforce a sexually driven culture at odds with the cultural values of traditional Native communities. The fractured family structure brought about largely by a history of failed government assimilation policies has left many Native youth feeling adrift and disconnected from their traditional values. MIWRC's report found that thirty-four percent of the women and girls meeting the definition of having been sexually exploited had exchanged sex for money. Many of the youth first trafficked into sexual slavery as children reported that they quit school, became addicted to drugs and alcohol, and suffered repeated beatings and abuse, which led to multiple traumas.

The barriers to their recovery are complex and daunting. The difficulties in achieving recovery set up a lifetime of abuse and trauma. When a child victim of sexual slavery reaches the age of eighteen, she is automatically classified as a criminal under prostitution statutes. American society largely and wrongly condemns women who have been victims of sex trafficking as "prostitutes", or criminals. In reality, these women are victims of federal and state crimes that we have failed to accurately identify as the on-going effects of colonization in need of adequate resources and recourse.

As is well known, the damage of a life in prostitution is extreme. Rates of physical and sexual violence in this population are seventy to ninety percent.²⁷ Rape and beatings are common, rarely reported, and accepted as part of the life. In 1985, the Special Committee on Pornography and Prostitution in Canada reported the death rate of prostituted women to be forty times higher than that of the general population.²⁸ It is thus vital that we reframe our language and understanding of this issue and recognize that sexual violence against all women and children, and particularly against American Indian women and children, constitutes systemic violence against the most vulnerable group in our communities. We also must recognize that sexual violence has been given tacit approval for years. Racism and historic oppression have taken a heavy toll on the overall wellbeing of Native communities, including sexual wellbeing, thus leading to increased vulnerability and victimization. It is past time to put a stop to it.

Fostering Healing and Resilience

MIWRC's report calls for a series of responses to the widespread sexual exploitation of Native women and children that have already begun to be implemented on community, state, and federal levels. On a community level, ensuring that knowledgeable Native leaders are engaged in identifying and implementing solutions is critical. Focusing on the healing and resilience of Native people and culture, and strategically including male voices in crafting solutions will bring long term, positive change. On a state and federal level, we have begun to challenge laws that continue to criminalize victims and do not hold perpetrators accountable. Broad based, cross system training to educate teachers, medical professionals, law enforcement, judicial personnel, child protection workers and the general public is needed. Women and children who have been victimized deserve the full spectrum of healing, including culturally based services that will help them recover and rebuild their lives. This includes but is not limited to extensive housing, education, mental health, chemical health, legal and reunification services.

Lasting change will not come cheap. We must invest in healing over the long term, and not impose artificial time limits on women and children whose traumas we cannot even begin to imagine. Law enforcement must focus on ending the demand for sexual slavery by arresting and prosecuting the solicitors and traffickers to the full extent of the law. Sex trafficking of American Indian women and children is a market driven enterprise and continues historical trauma in its most terrible forms. From the historical introduction of sexual slavery to its modern manifestations, one truth remains: as long as there is demand, there will be supply. The historical memory of the slavery experience of Native women and the resulting historical trauma for Native peoples is silent no more, thus challenging the wall of denial surrounding the demand-supply chain. Giving voice and visibility to this terrible part of American history and its present influence is the first step in bringing healing and restoration of Native peoples' dignity and sovereignty, as individuals and as nations.

Relying on Native traditional values and practices is a healing response to slavery.²⁹ Within traditional values and worldviews exists a reality and an identity for Native women to attach to that is absent from the concept and experience of slavery. Utilizing cultural and spiritual strengths, Native women can find resiliency when confronted with historical and continuing attempts of enslavement. Traditional oral histories, ceremony, and reliance on one's

traditional roles and gifts as a Native woman that have remained largely intact despite colonization efforts have provided a powerful path in life for many Native women. These cultural spiritual strengths have been born out of thousands of years of Native experience and provided healing and well-being to Indian Nations throughout colonization, both in the past and present. Opportunities and support for reattachment to Native traditional cultural and spiritual strengths will heal and dissipate the effects of colonization for native peoples and bring a new day of freedom.

Notes

- ¹ Hilary N. Weaver and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, "Examining Two Facets of American Indian Identity: Exposure to Other Cultures and the Influence of Historical Trauma" in *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 2:1-2 (1999): 19-33, 22.
- ² For an overview of how to assess the traumatic population decline, see Russell Thornton, "Population: Precontact to Present" in Frederick E. Hoxie, *Encyclopedia of North American Indians. Native American History, Culture, and Life from Paleo-Indians to the Present* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 500-502. On Native women, see Andrea Smith, *Conquest. Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge, MA: Southend Press, 2005).
- ³ Maria Brave Heart, "Oyate Ptayela: Rebuilding the Lakota Nation Through Addressing Historical Trauma among Lakota Parents," *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 1 (January 1999): 109-126.
- ⁴ Julianna Barr, "From Captives to Slaves: Commodifying Indian Women in the Borderlands." *Journal of American History* 92 (June 2005): 19-46. Allan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).
- ⁵ See Barbara Olexer, *The Enslavement of the American Indian in Colonial Times* (Columbia: Joyous Publications, 2005; reprint, Barbara Olexer, *The Enslavement of the American Indian*, Library Research Associates, Publishers: Monroe, New York, 1982).
- ⁶ See Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans. The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993).
- ⁷ Galloway, 299-308. See also William Goins, "The Forgotten Story of American Indian Slavery", *Teacher's Guide: South Carolina Indians Today* (Orangeburg: Carolina Indian Heritage Association, 2009), 7-8.
- ⁸ Olexer, 104; for Olexer's presentation of issues related to the expansion of plantations, see especially 89-143.
- ⁹ Tony Seybert, *Slavery and Native Americans in British North America and the United States: 1600 to 1865*, http://web.archive.org/web/20040804001522/http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/history/hs_es_indians_slavery.htm. (accessed November 24, 2011).

- 10 Patrick Minges, "All my Slaves, Whether Negroes, Indians, Mustees or Molattoes: Towards a Thick Description of 'Slave Religion'." *The American Religious Experience* (August 1999).
- 11 Anjamaka, "Native American Women: Part of the Slave Trade?" <http://progressiveu.org/160224-native-american-women-part-slave-trade> (accessed December 15, 2009).
- 12 Barr, 20.
- 13 Barr, *ibid.*
- 14 Barr, *ibid.*
- 15 Anjamaka, *ibid.*
- 16 Barr, *op.cit.*, 30.
- 17 Carl Ekberg, *Stealing Indian Women: Native Slavery in the Illinois Country*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 88.
- 18 Ekberg, 76.
- 19 Ekberg, 76, 85.
- 20 Amnesty International, "Maze of Injustice," <http://www.amnestyusa.org> (accessed November 29, 2009).
- 21 "Triangle of Risk: Urban American Indian Women's Sexual Trauma, Injection Drug Use, and HIV Sexual Risk Behaviors." *AIDS and Behavior*, Volume 8, Number 1; the statistic is cited in "Reproductive Health of Urban American Indian and Alaska Native Women: Examining Unintended Pregnancy, Contraception, Sexual History and Behavior, and Non-Voluntary Sexual Intercourse." *Urban Indian Health Institute, Seattle Indian Health Board* (Seattle: Urban Indian Health Institute, May 2010), 3.
- 22 Minneapolis Indian Women's Resource Center, *Shattered Hearts: The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of American Indian Women and Girls in Minnesota*. (Minneapolis: MIWRC, 2009).
- 23 VANet, "No Safe Place: Sexual Assault in the Lives of Homeless Women," http://new.vawnet.org/category?main_Doc.php?docid=558 (accessed November 29, 2009).
- 24 United States Congress Statute 1591: Trafficking Victims Protection Act, 2000.
- 25 Minnesota Statute 609.321 subd. 7
- 26 National Institute of Justice, "Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: What Do We Know and What Do We Do About It?" U. S. Department of Justice, 2007.
- 27 Ayala Pines and Mimi Silbert, "Victimization of Street Prostitutes. *Victimology*, 7 (1982):122-133.
- 28 Fraser Committee, "Pornography and Prostitution in Canada," Ottawa: Canadian Government Publishing Centre, 1985.
- 29 For an overview of the issues in counseling and psychotherapy, see Roy Moodley and William West, editors, *Integrating Traditional Healing Practices into Counseling and Psychotherapy. Multicultural Aspects of Counseling and Psychotherapy Series 22* (Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005).

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Chapter 9

IndiVisible: The Making of an Exhibition at the Museum of the American Indian

Gabrielle Tayac

Introduction

IN 2005, a woman living in Washington DC came into the newly opened National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) to view the exhibition *Our Lives: Contemporary Native Life and Identity*, which I co-curated with Jolene Rickard and Cynthia Chavez. There she encountered a wall of faces, showing people of all skin colors and appearances yet identifying themselves as Native Americans. One face seemed much like her own, appearing to the casual eye as an African American but by her presence clearly attached to an American Indian tribal identity. But where was the story behind the picture? This encounter started a grassroots community effort of African-Native American people, who sometimes refer to themselves as Black Indians, to push for a revelation of often hidden history through the NMAI venue. It ultimately resulted in the *IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas* exhibition. The exhibit opened in 2009, accompanied by a book of the same name, and travelled to diverse institutions including, among many, Rosa Parks Museum, the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, the Reginald Lewis Museum, and the Mashantucket Pequot Museum¹. The years-long curatorial process cut directly into the questions about race, authenticity, and identity—Who is Native American? Who is African American? Who decides? Why do we have to decide? These can be unsettling inquiries. For Native peoples, the questions can be threatening to maintaining distinctiveness and upholding vulnerable, too often unrecognized sovereignty. For African Americans, considerations might bring forward feelings of community disloyalty and accusations of self-hate. But there are also beloved family memories, connections to place, inseparable histories,

and renewed senses of wholeness that fuse color lines. It was this latter set of experiences, especially for those individuals and communities with both heritages, which fueled our project, while we were always mindful of the former.

The project was certainly not the first time African-Native American intersections had been addressed. Cultural organizations, genealogical networks, and artistic expressions had been addressing the Black Indian experience over time. Scholarship including the established works of Jack Forbes, William Katz, Ron Welburn, James Brooks, Claudio Saunt, and Theda Perdue among notable others was already circulating largely within universities.² An important conference, organized by Tiya Miles with Sharon P. Holland, at Dartmouth called *Eating Out of the Same Pot: Relating Black and Native Histories*, introduced an official conversation for the first time.³ By all accounts, that meeting exploded with divisive rhetoric that mostly pitted those adhering to legal definitions of tribal membership (predominantly Native constituents from western tribes) against those who were seeking inclusion based on family heritage (largely identifying as Black Indians). Cherokee chattel slavery practices were flung onto the floor on the one side, met with accounts of the infamous brutality conducted by Buffalo soldiers (African American U.S. Cavalry) on the other side. These clichéd points and counter points came up time and again, all containing truth but blocking the vastly rich and complex connections forged over centuries. The *IndiVisible* exhibit took as much of the past work, with its successes and difficulties, to heart as possible. Situated on the shoulders of giants, it sought to bring African-Native American lives into an internationally visible venue to launch the dialogue out of insular circles into the psyche of the general public.

The *IndiVisible* curators thus not only went through the general research stages involved in exhibition scholarship, but also had to confront tribal politics, racial dynamics, self-inquiry, and historical silences to navigate the representational outcomes. This essay, presented as a narrative, delves into my own experience of border crossing through indigeneity—a sometimes perilous yet more often joyous journey. A journey that is still in progress.

Beginning with a Single Step

The woman in the picture, Penny Gamble Williams, is a Chappaquiddick Wampanoag and African American activist artist. Penny, and her husband,

Thunder Williams, an Afro-Carib lawyer who spent his career at the United States Department of Justice, started talks with Louise Thundercloud, the visitor who began the questioning. Penny and Thunder, whom I have known nearly all of my life in grassroots activism and tribal ceremonials, decided to write a proposal in 2005 and send it to the National Museum of the American Indian. After receiving no response, they called me for some advice on how to navigate their proposal to the right people. I gave my opinions, helped them to rewrite some sections, and patted myself on the back when they called me back to say that one of my colleagues had called them to set up a meeting. Good deed done, I was out of it—thank goodness because I had made a new resolution to stay out of trouble, turn down the politics—and on to a low risk ethnobotanical project contemplating plants.⁴ Or so I thought. I had severely underestimated the wiles of a certain Comanche.

The Comanche Raid

The late beloved Comanche artist, curator, and field researcher Fred Nahwooksy (1955–2009), was hired at NMAI to coordinate exhibits that were specifically created to travel to tribal communities. He became *IndiVisible*'s project director and managed the community fieldwork. Shockingly, several weeks before the exhibit opened and the book came out in November of 2009, Fred suddenly died of a massive stroke at age 53. Penny and Thunder's proposal, which had no other name but the Black Indian Project, landed on his desk. Fred had no African ancestry, but he came from a stance of social justice for Native peoples and had worked on international cultural projects for the Smithsonian Folklife Center. His parents, Clydia and Reeves, had lived in the Washington DC area before, and Fred spent much of his childhood there since they were part of progressive set of Indian policy workers in the 1970s. Clydia, in fact, had been instrumental of helping my tribe, the Piscataway, formally reorganize in the early 1970s. When Fred came knocking on my door to "well, just kinda help pull some stuff together, not too much work", I did a quick cost-benefit analysis, Native reciprocity obligation versus opening myself up to be involved in what could be a seriously explosive topic and promptly told him I was busy. I even went to my boss and explained that since I was so busy, he should tell Fred to ask someone else. But Fred kept coming down to my office, "could you look at this, what do you think of that", completely ignoring the fact that I told him I was busy. I had to also do some soul searching about why I was avoiding

involvement with this project. It was not, of course, because I was too busy.

Rather, my reason was rooted in fear. Our own historical and cultural legacies shape us. In my case, my tribe, the Piscataway, straddles the South in Charles and Prince George Counties of Maryland. My reaction was very much informed by the politics that would direct how the project would be dealt with there. The Piscataway are at times ethnographically referred to as tri-racial isolates—a term which certainly confounds me since the multi-ethnic relationships initiating the community marked the opposite of xenophobic behavior. Our authenticity is constantly questioned with a particular fervor directed toward the African American imprint that we carry, but submerged to the point of nearly complete disassociation across history. Frankly, I myself had no knowledge of having African American ancestry until about 2000. This may sound unbelievable, but it is true, and most tribal members sincerely believe that they have no connection whatsoever to the African diaspora. Even the priest serving tribal members interpreted the “M” marked on some church documents as a code for Indians. The word, “mulatto,” did not figure into the equation and to be fair, census documents were sealed for seventy years having few people look at their own ancestors records. The thought in the community upon looking at the designation’s meaning was that they had been completely misclassified due to dissolutions of colonial period reservations, that somehow the “mulatto” category showing up for us on the census was simply a term for non-white free people. Although that may be true in some cases, in the Piscataway case it is clear that intermarriages with free blacks (often the children of enslaved African fathers and indentured English Catholic mothers) began in the late 1600s.⁵

Such interrogation about Indianess is not a practice that ended in the nineteenth century or with the rise of the Civil Rights Movement. In fact, only ten years ago, tribal members engaged in a decades-long bid for formal recognition (myself included) received mailed packages with no return address literally accusing us of ethnic fraud on the premise that census classification as free people of color trumped the Indian identity documented in church and ethnographic records. We were uniformly declared to be lying and deceptive over the past 150 years for calling ourselves Indians at all. The writer Leah C. Sims then launched an internet site about our apparent intergenerational racial crime.⁶ She and her husband, Thomas Ford Brown, had reportedly sent similar intimidating materials to Lumbees and Poarch Creeks on the premise that they were pretending to be Indians in order not to be African Americans.⁷ Interestingly, the exact same argument was made in

the 1920s by the notorious eugenicist, Walter Plecker. Later in this essay, I will describe the Plecker platform that claiming Indian identity was a way for blacks to sneak into and therefore “taint” the white race. Rather than vocally counter the site as racist and publicly denounce the premise that African American ancestry should prohibit tribal rights, the community reaction was shock and outrage followed by paralysis.

I realized, bolstered by the unfettered exuberance of my bravely iconoclastic Comanche brother, that the *IndiVisible* project was just the antidote. It was time to embrace our entire history, all of our ancestors, celebrate every side. My thought was that in so doing, we should no longer be bowed by the lingering, persistent racial hatred, triggered by the groundless shame put forward by those policing racial boundaries, that was endemic both outside and in. This was a time to be empowered in the recognition that we as Atlantic indigenes were connected all over the hemisphere on an African-Native American biological and cultural continuum. As a woman associated with a tiny surviving tribe, I felt far less lonely or burdened than I ever had as I realized how far the blending pervades the continents. As is shown time and again, reconciliation cannot take place without truth.

The boundary crossing work could not be done by one or two people alone. Even with a firm base in scholarship, the work had to be accomplished by a core collective. So Fred and I wished up an extraordinary team. We called Penny and Thunder Williams back into the center of the project as community based liaisons and co-curators. Then I contacted three more scholars who I knew could form a tight collaboration while networking with tribal communities and academics. The curatorial team expanded to include Robert Keith Collins, a Choctaw/African American anthropologist, Judy Kertesz, a historian of Lumbee, African American, and Jewish ancestry (which I share as well through my mother), and Angela Gonzales, a Hopi sociologist. We solicited research packages from twenty-seven more scholars, which not only ended up as essays in the book but served as foundation for the empirical work of the project. Along with NMAI’s media unit, led by Gussie Lehman, we organized field visits to four communities for individual interviews and family photography. Sites included the Creek Association and the Garifuna Association in Los Angeles, the Tutelo Reunion in Ithaca, and the Mashpee Wampanoag in Cape Cod. We obtained critical partnerships with the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Smithsonian Institution Travelling Exhibition Service (SITES).

The curators realized that it would be impossible to tell the entire story of Red-Black relations in the planned twenty panels and ten minute media piece, and decided early on to work thematically so that visitors could learn a framework for thinking about cases that they might encounter. These themes include *Racial Policy*, *Lifeways*, *Community*, and *Creative Resistance*. I would like to make clear that this project does not label anyone in ways that they themselves do not want to be labeled. Self-expression was at the core of the issue, taking into account Native sovereignty and African American community ties as relevant to each person and family. *IndiVisible*, at its base, affirms and promotes tribal membership for Native communities and also affirms African American diversity. We cannot fully understand our present circumstances or transcend oppressive legacies without putting together the African-Native American story. Native and African American histories are utterly incomplete without each other. Ultimately, the story is about the human desire for being and belonging. I would now like to turn to a conversation about how our attempts to anticipate regional responses to project participation went awry. Each of us had extensive research and personal experience across the Atlantic seaboard tribes as well as deep relationships with tribal members. None of this, however, prepared us for the profound traumas and resiliencies that presented themselves in the course of curating *IndiVisible*. And at the same time, we were humbled by the capacity for growing through these processes.

Skirting the South

Our team had to decide where to conduct our field work. The main trepidation came up when we talked about whether or not to go to the South. Nervous laughter broke out when someone would ask, so, who wants to go to Robeson County? Robeson County, located in North Carolina, is the homeland of the vibrant tribe, the Lumbee. Frequently the subject of anthropological inquiry into mixed race populations, the Lumbee themselves firmly identify solely as an American Indian tribe.⁸ They also have a limited federal recognition as American Indians, but cannot receive benefits as a tribe, although nearly a century of work has gone into efforts to attain full acknowledgement for their rightful nationhood.

From the time of Jim Crow, the Lumbee defied black or white race categorization in a binary system and insisted on maintaining a strong tribal organization. Ranging from their black and Indian militant movement led by

Henry Berry Lowery after the Civil War to their routing of the Ku Klux Klan in 1958, in addition to peacefully organizing their own churches, schools, and associations, the Lumbee stand out as a premiere example of how Native people persist as tribes.⁹ At the same time, they also exemplify how nineteenth century race policy and its legacy in social attitudes can continue to affect communities today. In bids for federal recognition, opponents of the Lumbee often blatantly point to their diverse appearances—especially those that show African American features—as proof that the Lumbee are not “real Indians.” From our stance on *IndiVisible*, I would argue the exact opposite, i.e., that the Lumbee are essentially Native in their aboriginal connections, their self-expression, their adherence to their land-base, their cleaving to unshakable family lines. Indianess is not merely a genetic composition, but a cultural, social, political, and spiritual category that can, as any nation can, absorb others into its citizenship.

Testing out the possibilities of broaching the subject in North Carolina, we took a hard look at the essays we were receiving from Lumbee colleagues. Although in conversation there was definite interest expressed in finally coming out about the actuality of interracial heritage, and how this genetic blend should not limit Native sovereign status, the issue was not put into writing. Not one mention of any African American ancestor. Testing the waters further, we found a mix of reactions to *IndiVisible*—ranging from anger about even being considered on the topic to hope about having an open conversation on a taboo subject.

It may be easy to label Native people who reject or submerge African American ancestry as outright racists, but that ignores the dynamics spinning out from white supremacy. I will be clear in not excusing the all too real racism and discrimination which exists among some Native individuals, as it occurs in all American sectors. What I project here, however, is a historical context for heightening anxiety in Native communities about being classified as black.

Atlantic seaboard Native communities south of Maine have been displaced and officially detribalized not only for the common assaults of war, land grabbing, assimilation, disease and removal. The distinctive factor for tribal communities on the coast, which did not usually play out in the same way further to the north or west, was the application of race law aimed at African Americans in order to regulate slavery and white economic, social, and political supremacy. Native peoples, especially if they had engaged in earlier intermarriages with Africans and African Americans,

became reclassified as mulatto in the colonial period. This reclassification was often part of the justification for dissolving reservation lands. For example, a Choptank Indian named Abraham Bishop living on the Locust Neck Reservation in Maryland was reclassified as a “free Negro” in 1797. This shift of identity, asserted by external authorities, occurred at the same time the reservation was dissolved in 1800.¹⁰ In the 1840s, the Pamunkey of Virginia nearly lost their reservation when white neighbors petitioned (unsuccessfully) to have the tribe’s treaty rights abrogated due to the presence of African Americans on their land.¹¹ Another case took place in Delaware when a Nanticoke business man, Levin Sockum, stood on trial for selling firearms. White townspeople, likely feeling competition with his successful store, brought charges against Sockum for selling firearms, which was illegal for mulattoes. Despite his long-standing identification as a Nanticoke, the court found Sockum to be a mulatto, not a Nanticoke Indian. Sockum lost his business and the entire Nanticoke community faced attack on their tribal rights.¹² Race reclassification became a basis for documentary Indian removal, and at the same time, Native peoples sharpened their tribal lines as a strategy.

During Reconstruction after the US Civil War, a sharper bifurcation between black and white emerged. Those in the middle categories of race caste were pushed to either black or white, and if they were too dark to “pass” for white, outsiders including census takers simply designated them as black. Later, in the 1920s and 1930s, eugenics started to play a more insidious role. In Virginia, the head of the Bureau of Vital Statistics, Walter Ashby Plecker (1861–1947), crafted the Racial Integrity Act in 1924. This law prohibited the classification as Indian, and wreaked havoc in Native communities. Plecker, a eugenicist who promoted “racial hygiene” and corresponded with officials of the Third Reich, sent letters to other states as well in order to search out those whom he claimed were ethnic frauds for asserting their Indian identity. The Racial Integrity Act was not overturned until 1967 when the famous case, *Loving vs. Virginia*, reversed bans on interracial marriage.¹³

Eugenics practices also hit hard in North Carolina among the Lumbee beginnings in 1936. Carl Seltzer, a Harvard researcher, launched a project to measure blood quantum through anthropometric exams. The purpose was to find out the eligibility of individuals for American Indian classification through the Office of Indian Affairs. Using tools to determine head shape, hair texture, lip width, and skin color, Seltzer’s findings became a basis for invalidating American Indian identity in the community. Considered archaic

and racist now, these exams still have lasting effects—spurring divisions in the community based on the amount of blood found in ancestors in the 1930s. Beyond imperfect, Seltzer often labeled siblings of the same parents with different quantum. Much damage was done in Virginia and North Carolina due to eugenicist practices, layering on top of the 19th century attempts to dismantle reservations and subject Indians to Jim Crow laws.¹⁴ Native people often hardened their position that they had no African American ancestry and communities ostracized those who intermarried.

These were the background issues, still upfront and central to our conversations about how to approach communities in the South. Should we include communities who did not want to participate because they were concerned about reconfirming notions that they were not authentic Indians if they were presented as having African American ancestors? One person with whom we consulted, while expressing understanding about the importance of the project and the need to reconcile with history, was afraid that the museum would get burned down if we included Southeastern tribes. So we sat on the fence for several months, moving ahead with other cases and field research in other regions.

Looking at our progress, and deftly noting the absence of North Carolina, NMAI's Director, Kevin Gover, gave us a reality check. "You guys are going to have to be braver", he admonished, "stop giving in to fear and falsehood and tell the whole story." Knowing he was right, and facing ourselves, we engaged. The exhibit produced panels about Henry Berry Lowery, the KKK, and Walter Plecker. We went further to speak about Buffalo Soldiers, Cherokee slavery and its current legacy found in the expulsion of Freedmen.

To our delight, after the exhibit opened, we received calls asking us to send the panels to Pembroke, right in the heart of Lumbee country. Numerous individuals messaged to say that they finally had the feeling of support to call their tribes, to reconnect—and in some cases, these tribal people lost to Jim Crow and Walter Plecker found their way home. Not one call, message or letter arrived from the South to complain about our work.

Surprises from the North

While there has been much more research on Native-Black relations in the South, there has also been ample interaction in the North, particularly in the coastal areas of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Generally, Native communities do not carry with them the same levels of total land or

territorial displacement as in the South. The decimation of land bases still remains severe as shown by the numbers of state Indian reservations in New England and New York State. Black historic intermarriage is widespread and does not have the effect of casting out mixed-race members. All is not tranquil on the race front, however. Communities are often questioned about their authenticity because they frequently have a wide range of color. There are sometimes internal divisions and conflicts that take place that indicate divides along color lines. Yet adherence to specific tribal identities has had continuity.

All of us on the curatorial team agreed that a prime example of how tribal identity can remain strong, and even trump race, could be found at Mashpee. Several of us had long-time involvement with the community and strong personal as well as professional relationships there. The Wampanoag tribe in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, looked to be a beacon of hope for other communities struggling with the acceptance of diverse racial strands. Over several centuries, Mashpee appeared to easily take in the children from intermarriage with Cape Verdeans and African Americans. Indigenous nationhood, rather than color, shows primacy at Mashpee. We thought this would be an ideal example of how interconnections could be celebrated rather than hidden. We were to find out that no place in our contemporary world is post-racial. And we found out the hard way.

For two years, working with a community liaison, Fred Nahwooksy and Judy Kertesz visited, interviewed, and filmed individual Mashpee people about African-Native American identities. The culmination of their fieldwork took place at the Mashpee Pow Wow in 2008. Part of the exhibit includes a series of family portraits, beautiful compositions of people who consider each other relatives. Word spread like fire at the Pow Wow—the National Museum of the American Indian had arrived to take photos of Mashpee people for its collection. While our team thought that it had been made clear to the crowd that the photos were specifically for *IndiVisible*, and the release form stated that purpose, something got lost in the melee.

The Mashpee Singers and Dancers came to lead the celebration for *IndiVisible*'s opening and inaugural symposium. The exhibit looked beautiful, with larger than life sized selections of the family portraits, including those from Mashpee, enhancing the banners and film. It was a bittersweet occasion, having the fullest house of any NMAI program to date. Fred Nahwooksy, though, had made his all too early trip to the Spirit World, and so we were in mourning. We all felt uplifted in seeing the work finally be presented to the

public. That evening, a number of people found long lost relatives and connected with fellow tribespeople. The sense of being and belonging was clear.

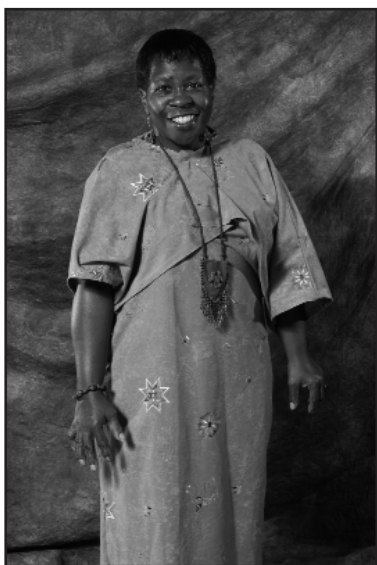
Two days later, however, calls started coming in from Mashpee. In the community, word spread that the National Museum of the American Indian was denying their hard-fought tribal identity and had reclassified them as African American. Individuals demanded that their photos be stricken from the show. Moreover, the Native world is small and enmeshed. Several people called my family to ask what was wrong with me. How could she, a long-time ally and sister, betray them like this? Why would she ruin her reputation as a Native woman and take away their tribal status? Along with my colleagues, I was stunned at their reaction. Several of the callers spoke plainly about their Cape Verdean ancestry and their intermarriages with African Americans. But in a public venue like NMAI, being put into a show that included in its title, African-Native American, the threat level went to an extreme for some individuals. All of the exhibit participants had been identified only as they wanted to be identified. In these cases they were identified clearly as Mashpee Wampanoag, yet the larger context was about intersections. Fred was gone—there was no way to find out what happened in his lengthy exchanges with the community liaison there. I slowly pieced together that the Mashpee people who lined up for the family photo shoot largely did not understand the nature of the project, and so, not wanting to force inclusion in a show about self-identification, NMAI and our partners agreed to take out the family photos.

The incident raised the specter of a terrible past racial trauma. The Mashpee had been put on trial in the 1970s and a judge ruled that they were not an American Indian tribe.¹⁵ This disastrous finding opened the way for real estate development, displacement of Mashpee from their traditional fishing and clamming grounds, and emotional devastation for the community. Racial profiling and police brutality increased, with non-Native residents often accusing the Mashpee of not being real Indians because of their skin color and hair texture. Among the generation who had experienced this era with the hardest blows, the conflict remained fresh. Mashpee won eventually, gaining federal recognition after nearly thirty years and finally having the chance to defy the earlier court ruling. Thus, even in an embracing, proud community there remained great anxiety about having Indian identities erased by African genealogies past and present, thus continuing a debilitating trail of social death inherent in white supremacy. There was certainly not a unilateral

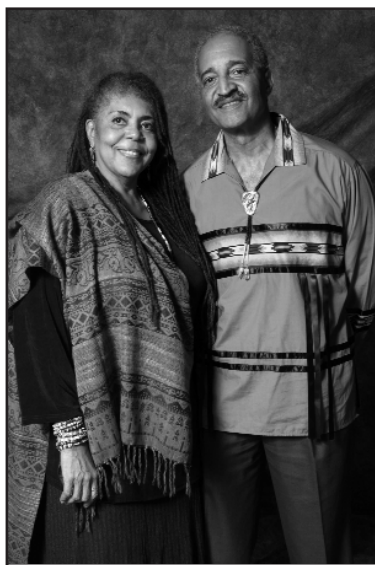
rejection of the project at Mashpee, but the opposition was vocal. As time has gone on, bits and pieces of the fuller situation have made themselves clearer. Other Mashpee, especially of a younger generation, have contacted me with encouragement about revealing a whole history. Crispus Attucks (ca. 1723–1770), the Natick and African American martyr of the American Revolution, and Paul Cuffee (1759–1817), the great seaman who had a Wampanoag mother, stand against erasure in *IndiVisible*. So does the Mashpee family of Anne and Maurice Foxx, smiling and brilliant across generations on the cover of our book.

A Basket of Rainbows

José Barreiro wrote to me on our opening day, “you have not opened a can of worms but a basket of rainbows.” The balance of the project has been met with a sense of affirmation for those living with both legacies—African and Native—as well as those living with either who have a clearer view of how racial dynamics have brought us through to our current state of affairs. Intermarriage is on the increase in Indian Country. In fact, Native Americans have the highest rates of intermarriage of any ethnic group in the United States. African-Native American people are on the rise, and with them rise indigenous nations.



Louise Thundercloud (Hunkpapa Dakotah/
Sirsika/Salish/West African)



Penny Gamble-Williams (Chappaquidick
Wampanoag) & W. Thunder Williams (Afro-Carib)

(Photos by R.A. Whiteside, NMAI Photo Services. © 2013 Smithsonian Institution.)

Notes

- ¹ Tayac, Gabrielle, ed. *IndiVisible: African-Native American Lives in the Americas*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, 2009. See also http://www.sites.si.edu/exhibitions/exhibits/indivisible_African_Native_Lives/index.htm (accessed October 28, 2011) for online exhibition and venues.
- ² For exemplary works by these scholars on African-Native American studies, see Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1993); William Loren Katz, *Black Indians: A Hidden History* (New York: Atheneum, 1986); Ron Welburn, *Roanoke and Wampum: Topics in Native American Heritages and Literatures* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001); James Brooks (ed.), *Confounding the Color Line: The (American) Indian-Black Experience in North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Claudio Saunt, *Black White and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of the American Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2006); and Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540–1866* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987).
- ³ See <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~news/releases/2000/mar00/relations.html> (accessed October 20, 2011). For Tiya Miles' innovative work which won her a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, refer to *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) and *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).
- ⁴ See Duane Blue Spruce and Tanya Thrasher (eds.). *The Land Has Memory: Indigenous Knowledge, Native Landscapes, and the National Museum of the American Indian* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).
- ⁵ Genealogical documents and analyses in petitions Maryland state recognition by the Piscataway Indian Nation and the Piscataway Conoy Tribe, on file at the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs, Baltimore, Maryland.
- ⁶ Mitrano, Erica. "A tribe divided," *The Maryland Independent*, August 3, 2007 (accessed October 20, 2011).
- ⁷ Personal communications with Malinda Maynor Lowery, Judy Kertesz, and members of the Hathcock Family, March, 2001).
- ⁸ Blu, Karen I. *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American Indian People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980). This work is part of a school that finds multiracial ancestry among solely tribally identifying communities perplexing similar to quandaries laid out in the tri-racial debates. See also Brewton Berry, *Almost White* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1963).
- ⁹ An indigenized study of Lumbee can be found in Malinda Maynor Lowery's *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South: Race, Identity, and the Making of a Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).
- ¹⁰ Rountree, Helen C. and Davidson, Thomas E. *Eastern Shore Indians of Maryland and Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1997), 162–165.
- ¹¹ Rountree, Helen C. *Pocahontas's People: The Powhatan Indians of Virginia through Four Centuries* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 194–198.
- ¹² See Ned Heite's archeological report, *Delaware's Invisible Indians*, <http://www.heite.org/Invis.indians2.html>, accessed September 20, 2011.

- ¹³ An overview on Walter Plecker's effects on Indian policy is given by Angela Gonzales, Judy Kertesz, and Gabrielle Tayac, "Eugenics as Indian Removal: Sociohistorical Processes and the De(con)struction of American Indians in the Southeast," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 53–67.
- ¹⁴ Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South*, 181–211.
- ¹⁵ Campisi, Jack. *The Mashpee Indians: Tribe on Trial* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

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Chapter 10

African-American Mothers of Adolescents: Resilience and Strengths

*Christy M. Buchanan, Joseph G. Grzywacz,
and Laura N. Costa*

THE PARENTING of African-Americans can be portrayed as negative or deficient, at least when compared to the standards and norms of mainstream America, which are predominantly shaped by the values and beliefs of European-Americans. In this chapter we offer data to support a more positive perspective. We are not the first to argue that a more positive, strength-based view of African-American parenting is merited.¹ Nonetheless, a more positive view is often silent, or at least quiet, within the roar of mainstream ideas and cultural values. Our goal is to turn up the volume on a more positive perspective—on a perspective that recognizes the strengths of African-American parenting and the ways in which it is likely to promote positive development in African-American youth—through a consideration of existing data and through presentation of new data drawn from African-American mothers of adolescents in one southern community.

The new data we present were collected from African-American mothers in a mid-sized metropolitan city in the south. This city, like many cities in the south, has a long-standing history of turbulent race relations and racial segregation. The roots of racial segregation lie deep within its economic development. Growth of a major company, which by the 1920s paid a quarter of the city's property taxes,² contributed to the city's solid economic base in manufacturing. Empowered by the dominant notion of racial capitalism, which enabled subjugation of African-Americans to unskilled jobs and promoted white supremacy, this company actively recruited and relocated African-Americans from throughout the southeast to work its production facilities.³ The large influx of African-American men and women contributed to the concentration of African-American neighborhoods in the areas around the company's production facilities.⁴ This economic development exaggerated

structured racial segregation housing policies implemented in 1912 forbidding people to live on city blocks where the majority of inhabitants were of another race.⁵

The turbulent race relations and racial segregation throughout the city's history, again like many areas in the south, have largely been silenced. Some argue that experiences in the city, such as sit-ins, provided the first stepping stones of the civil rights movement and created a model for subsequent activist strategies,⁶ yet this history has also been largely silent. As others have noted, there are very few systematic records of the experiences of the African-American community in this city.⁷ An important point of silence in the city in which the data were collected (as well as other southern cities) is the whole scale destruction of African-American neighborhoods and the displacement of entire African-American communities between the 1940s and 1990s to accommodate expansion of the industrial complex of Winston-Salem's manufacturing base, including new transportation corridors.⁸ These projects and "redevelopments" fractured the African-American community as individuals and families were forcibly relocated to other areas contributing to a loss of inhabitants' sense of community. Although our research was not explicitly focused on issues of racism or segregation, it is against this historical and social backdrop that our research sought to investigate the characteristics of parenting among African- American mothers of adolescents, including some arguably overlooked inherent strengths.

Considering a Deficiency-Based Perspective of African-American Mothers' Parenting

First we consider three reasons the parenting of African-American mothers has been interpreted by some as deficient. For each, we argue that such interpretations are questionable based on a full understanding of existing data.

Single-Parenting

African-American mothers are more likely to rear children as single mothers and with the help of extended family than are mothers in other ethnic groups.⁹ Over fifty percent of African-American households with children under the age of eighteen are headed solely by a female (American Community Survey, 2005–2009).¹⁰ Given documented risks to children associated with being reared in single-parent families¹¹ and societal

preferences for a traditional two-parent family structure¹² the high incidence of single mother (and grandmother-headed) families can easily be viewed as a deficiency.

Nonetheless, it is problematic to assume that parenting is deficient based simply on family structure.¹³ Correlates of single-mother status such as household income, social support, and family interactions vary within and between ethnic groups, and these correlates are better predictors of children's outcomes than are family structure *per se*.¹⁴ Furthermore, family structure may be a less important determinant of parenting behavior for minority than majority parents.¹⁵

Authoritarian Parenting Style

Authoritarian parenting is more common among African-American than European-American parents.¹⁶ By definition, authoritarian parenting is highly demanding yet low in responsiveness or warmth, and is characterized in terms of harsh punishment and psychological control. Authoritarian parenting is parent-centered (i.e., emphasizing parental authority), emotionally distant, uses punitive or harsh discipline, and does not emphasize reasoning with children or include children in discussions or decision-making.¹⁷ Low responsiveness implies low parent-child reciprocity, little open communication, and infrequent expressions of physical and verbal warmth and affection.¹⁸

Descriptions of African-American parenting as authoritarian imply deficiency because this parenting style has been associated with more negative social, behavioral, and academic outcomes among children and adolescents than has an authoritative parenting style, which is defined as highly demanding but emotionally close and supportive.¹⁹ Based on this evidence, authoritative parenting—which is also prioritized by European-Americans²⁰—has been held up as the ideal.²¹ Despite increasing recognition that parenting styles that contribute to optimal youth outcomes may vary across racial, cultural, and socioeconomic groups,²² a dominant theoretical tradition and some empirical data associating negative outcomes with authoritarian parenting across ethnic groups gives hegemonic advantage to the parenting style (i.e., authoritative) that is putatively less commonly in the African-American community.

Social science discussions of single parenting and the use of authoritarian parenting among African-Americans are sympathetic. Scholars acknowledge that there are good reasons that African-American parents are more demanding, more parent-centered, more mother-centered, or involve more

extended kin in parenting.²³ These reasons range from a history of slavery that tore families apart to the continued reality of societal prejudice and discrimination. Poverty, education, and experiences of discrimination are powerful predictors of authoritarian parenting.²⁴ Thus, scholarly treatments of the authoritarian nature of parenting for African-American parents are sympathetic and certainly not explicit in describing this parenting as deficient. But at least some deficiency is implied because this parenting is believed to be less than ideal for children and is not valued by mainstream American society.²⁵ Outside of a scholarly context, such characterizations of African-American parenting might have more explicit pejorative connotations.

Scholars who have focused explicitly and in depth on African-American parenting—in contrast to focusing on parenting style and ethnic differences therein—have for a long time argued that strengths of African-American parents (among other minority parents) can be “overlooked or misinterpreted because of the cultural biases that traditional methodological approaches and paradigms carry.”²⁶ Specifically, it has been argued that the typical description of an authoritarian style does not capture the parenting of many African-American parents well. For example, McLoyd notes that “...two distinct patterns of child rearing have been associated with black parents—one that combines strictness and high support and another marked by power assertion, punitiveness, and arbitrariness.”²⁷ Similarly, Brody and colleagues have emphasized what they call “no-nonsense” parenting or “competence-based parenting” among rural southern African-American mothers. This type of parenting is described as firm and “vigilant” but still affectionate and communicative.²⁸ Thus, there is recognition that the African-American parenting is variable. Perhaps more importantly, there is recognition that even when African-American parenting is highly controlling or even punitive, it does not necessarily follow that accompanying levels of parental warmth or responsiveness are low.

In one explicit demonstration of the independence of authoritarian control practices and perceived parental warmth in African-American families, Jackson-Newsom et al. found that although more harsh and less collaborative parenting practices were indeed associated with lower perceived maternal warmth among European-American youth, this was not the case for African-American youth.²⁹ In other words, contrary to the assumptions of traditional parenting style theory, African-American youth felt close to and supported by their mothers even if those mothers used higher levels of harsh discipline or were unlikely to include them in decision making. In fact, perceived maternal

warmth was as high among African-American youth as it was among European-American youth despite more harsh punishment and less joint decision-making by African-American mothers.

Brody and his colleagues note that many studies of African-American parenting and African-American youth have focused on families in urban settings.³⁰ Their own work has focused on African-American families in rural Georgia; this research and the ethnographic work on which it is based has shown that positive parenting is present and possible in these families. Importantly, this work has illuminated that high parental control does not preclude loving, open, communicative aspects of parenting among rural African-American mothers. Jackson-Newsom et al.,³¹ who studied mothers in the southern city discussed at the start of the chapter, broaden evidence for this type of parenting to African-American mothers in a non-rural although still southern context. Whether the patterns of parenting revealed in these southern contexts exist in other parts of the country awaits more geographically widespread research explicitly designed to test such hypotheses and less reliant on traditional survey measures of parenting style.

Outcomes for Youth and Young Adults

Statistics showing higher levels of certain problem outcomes among African-American youth as compared to European-American youth can also contribute to questions about the adequacy of parenting for these youth. Twice as many African-American as European-American youth dropped out of school in 2009 (i.e., 9.9% and 4.8% for African-American and European-American, respectively).³² African-Americans account for less than fifteen percent of the adolescent population in the Youth Risk Factor Surveillance System, yet 31.3% of arrests and 51.6% of arrests for violent crimes of individuals under the age of eighteen were African-American.³³ Fully forty percent of incarcerated youth are African-American.³⁴ African-American youth are also at relatively high risk for ever having sexual intercourse, and having sexual intercourse for the first time before age thirteen.³⁵

Given that single-parent families and use of authoritarian parenting have been associated with the very risks just described, it can be easy to assume that these problematic outcomes arise from deficient parenting. It might be easy for strengths of the African-American parent to go unrecognized, to remain silenced in discourse about African-American parenting. Yet attributing problematic behavior of African-American youth to aspects of parenting that

do not fit the majority norm might represent faulty logic. African-American youth face many challenges that majority youth do not (e.g., higher rates of poverty, poor schools and neighborhoods, prejudice and discrimination); such challenges might explain the higher rates of problem behavior. Furthermore, a focus on the admitted problems in school dropout, incarceration, and teenage pregnancy among African-American youth overlooks some strengths of African-American youth as well as geographic variation in outcomes. For example, rates of smoking, binge drinking, and using prescription medications without a doctor's prescription are lower among African-American than European-American youth.³⁶ African-American youth also tend to have the highest self-esteem of youth of any American group to which they have been compared,³⁷ and African-American adolescent females are less self-deprecating than European-American adolescent females.³⁸ Especially given the higher levels of difficult life circumstances to which African-American adolescents are exposed, these latter outcomes could lead one to suspect the existence of parenting strengths rather than deficits. It is also noteworthy that rates of some problems vary by geographical region. For example, dropout rates are lower among African-American adolescents in the south relative to those in other places,³⁹ providing further evidence of the variability within African-American families and the importance of considering contextual reasons for both parenting and youth behavior.

Summary

A full consideration of existing data raises questions about a portrayal of African-American parenting as deficient. Next we offer new data about the beliefs and behaviors of African-American mothers of adolescents from one southern community in an effort to highlight un- or under-recognized parenting strengths. Results of two studies presented in the rest of this chapter are consistent with the conclusion of existing ethnographic and culturally sensitive studies suggesting that African-American parenting, at least in southern and less urbanized areas, can be mischaracterized by a traditional "parenting style" framework. The new studies also identify important nuances in parenting that have not been heretofore articulated.

Study 1: African-American Mothers' Beliefs about Adolescents

Belief systems are important predictors of individuals' behaviors.⁴⁰ Two

aspects of belief systems that predict parents' behaviors are expectations for children's behavior⁴¹ and parenting efficacy, or the belief that one has the capabilities to parent competently and to have influence over children's behavior and outcomes.⁴² With respect to adolescence, mothers' expectations for behavior consistent with "storm and stress" stereotypes (e.g., risk-taking, parent-child conflict⁴³) predict later "storm and stress" behavior,⁴⁴ perhaps because such expectations affect parenting behavior.⁴⁵ Thus, belief systems that resist negative stereotypes and that maintain parenting efficacy at adolescence can be viewed as parenting strengths because such belief systems predict more positive parental engagement and more positive behavioral outcomes for children.⁴⁶

Given the challenges commonly faced by African-American mothers (e.g., single parenthood, economic stress, experiences of discrimination and racism for parent and child) and the emotional distress that can result from such challenges, it would not be surprising if African-American mothers of adolescents had more negative expectations for their adolescent children and lower levels of parenting efficacy than did European-American mothers.⁴⁷ It is possible, however, that cultural and contextual characteristics such as a greater emphasis on parental authority⁴⁸ or a greater perceived need to rely on one's own resources due to inadequate or unreliable community resources⁴⁹ for African-Americans allows or motivates parents to maintain a higher sense of parenting efficacy than one might expect even in the face of other challenges. In support of this possibility, in a study of inner-city low-income mothers of 11–15 year-olds from Philadelphia, there were no ethnic differences in parenting efficacy despite more difficult living conditions (e.g., more single parenthood, more dangerous neighborhood, even fewer economic resources) for the African-American poor compared to the European-American poor.⁵⁰

In our lab we studied mothers' expectations for adolescents and parenting efficacy. Participants were 102 African-American mothers and 184 European-American mothers of 6th and 7th graders from a small southern city. Representing the area from which they were drawn, mothers in both ethnic groups came from families representing a range of incomes and educational backgrounds. Neither maternal nor paternal education differed as a function of ethnicity, but African-American families were of lower income on average and were more likely to be from single-parent homes. Data on maternal beliefs about and expectations for adolescents and parenting efficacy were collected via telephone interviews.

Beliefs about adolescents as a group and expectations for one's own young adolescent child were measured using the Stereotypes of Adolescents scale.⁵¹ Evidence emerged for a more positive view of adolescence among African-American than European-American mothers. Controlling for education and income, African-American mothers were less likely than were European-American mothers to characterize adolescents as a group as risk-taking, conforming, or internalizing (e.g., moody, depressed). African-American mothers were more likely than were European-American mothers to rate adolescents as "active" (e.g., adventurous, energetic). African-American mothers also had more positive expectations for their own 6th and 7th graders than did European-American mothers. African-American mothers were more likely to expect their own adolescents to be friendly and generous, and less likely to expect them to be risk-taking, conforming, internalizing, or to engage in problem behaviors such as substance use.

Mothers were also asked how much they felt they could do now (*current efficacy*) and how much they could do in the future (*future efficacy*) to influence various aspects of their adolescent child's behavior (e.g., grades, staying out of trouble).⁵² Mothers were then asked about their level of comfort in handling a variety of tasks that face parents of adolescents (e.g., maintaining adequate limits, teaching their child to handle sexual pressures).⁵³ The items in this latter set formed three scales: comfort addressing *external issues* (e.g., responsibilities of school, peer pressure), comfort addressing *internal problems* (e.g., conflicts with child, discipline), and comfort addressing *risky behavior* (e.g., drug and alcohol pressures, sexual pressures). Finally, in contrast to these scales that asked mothers about their own efficacy, mothers rated more generally how much influence twenty-nine factors (e.g., parents, peers, genetics) had on the behavior and opinions of adolescents. Findings concerning their beliefs about *parental influence* in general (i.e., ratings of the influence of "mothers", "fathers", and "parents' current behavior") and *peer influence* in general (i.e., "peers") are reported here.

African-American mothers reported higher efficacy on several measures when compared to European-American mothers (see Table 1). They reported higher future efficacy, and more comfort addressing external issues, internal problems, and risky behavior. Differences in current parental efficacy and in general parental influence were not statistically significant. However, African-American mothers were less likely than European-American mothers to endorse peers as an influence on adolescents' behavior. Correlations between beliefs about general influences on adolescent behavior and personal parenting efficacy indicated that the more "parenting" was endorsed as an important

influence in general the higher a mother's own parenting efficacy. This was true regardless of ethnicity. Interestingly, however, the link between beliefs about peers as influences and personal current and future efficacy varied by ethnic group. The more that European-American mothers endorsed the influence of peers, the lower their own current and future parenting efficacy was. Among African-American mothers, beliefs about general peer influence were unrelated to personal parenting efficacy.

Consistent with the possibility that a greater cultural emphasis on parental authority and respect for adults is a source of parenting efficacy, the results of this study suggest that African-American mothers are equally or more likely than European-American mothers of adolescents to believe they retain parental influence and to feel comfortable in their ability to parent during this important developmental period. This is true despite the reality that African-American mothers and their adolescents are likely, on average, to face more challenges such as financial stress, discrimination, and negative stereotyping than are European-American mothers. An additional reason for this "efficacy advantage" might be that as a minority group African-American mothers are less likely to buy into the negative stereotype of adolescents that is dominant in majority culture⁵⁴ and that emerged from a Western psychological perspective emphasizing adolescence as a period of "storm and stress."⁵⁵ Our data suggest that African-American mothers of young adolescents are less likely to hold negative beliefs about adolescents as a group and less likely to have negative expectations for their own young adolescents than are European-American mothers from the same community. Furthermore, they appear less likely to endorse the idea that peer influence is at odds with their own parental influence. Because mothers' beliefs about adolescence and about their own efficacy are predictors of parenting and adolescent behavior,⁵⁶ such beliefs represent potential parenting strengths.

Study 2: African-American Mothers' Beliefs about Adolescents and Parenting of Adolescents

The second line of new research we present comes from a study of twelve African-American mothers drawn from the same southern community as the mothers in the research reviewed above. In-depth semi-structured interviews were used to create a culturally sensitive context and to elicit information on topics of interest from the mother's perspective.⁵⁷

Mothers were sampled to represent a range of socioeconomic contexts.

Forty-two percent of the mothers were low income (annual family income \$0–40,000), twenty-five percent were middle income (\$40–80,000), and thirty-three percent were high income (over \$80,000). Twenty-five percent of the mothers had a high school degree or less, forty-two percent had graduated from college, and thirty-three percent had a graduate degree. Thirty-three percent were unemployed at the time of the interview whereas sixty-seven percent were employed. Thirty-three percent were never married, forty-two percent were married, and twenty-five percent were divorced. All mothers had at least one child between eleven and eighteen years of age.

Most interviews occurred in participants' homes and lasted one to two hours. A trained interviewer used a semi-structured interview guide to conduct the interview. We aimed to have mothers articulate their beliefs and expectations *about adolescents* as well as their beliefs *about effective parenting for adolescents*, so the interview guide had questions to elicit discussion of these topics. Interviews were recorded and recordings were transcribed. Data analysis involved coding of transcripts, reading of coded extracts (as well as full transcripts) to determine themes, and discussion of themes by multiple lab members.

Before presenting themes, some cautions are in order. Beliefs and parenting are variable within any group. In this analysis we do not claim that all African-American mothers of adolescents are characterized by these themes. We also do not claim that the themes are unique to African-American mothers. Using these data to draw conclusions about ethnic comparisons would be inappropriate. If any comparison is intended, it is a comparison between what we heard from the mothers and the characterization of African-American parenting as authoritarian in the traditional sense. Our foremost goal was to gain insights into parenting that might be missed in research that is framed by dominant theories in social science (e.g., parenting style theory) and that uses more traditional research designs.⁵⁸ Next we summarize five themes that we believe suggest un- or under-recognized strengths of African-American mothers of adolescents.

Theme #1: Complex and Relatively Unstereotyped Views of Adolescents

Throughout their interviews, African-American mothers articulated complex and nuanced views of adolescence that contained positive, neutral, and negative characteristics. Their initial spontaneous descriptions of “normal

adolescent behavior” were only mildly consistent with negative stereotype of adolescents. When these descriptions were rated (by trained raters blind to ethnicity) regarding consistency with “storm and stress” stereotypes (e.g., risk-taking, moody, in conflict with parents), responses were, on average, between “not at all” and “somewhat” consistent with the stereotype ($M=1.7$ on a scale where 1=not at all consistent, 2=somewhat consistent, and 3 = very consistent). Furthermore, many of the mothers—across income groups and age of children—expressed beliefs stressing variability across adolescents in behavior. Variability was attributed most commonly to parental upbringing or personality, and sometimes to peer group. Mothers’ comments on parental influence echo the quantitative findings from our lab reported earlier in this chapter. For example, Participant 132, a low-income mother of a 16–18 year old, responded to the question “what types of behavior do you think are normal for adolescents?” by saying:

I don’t really expect anything to be of the norm, so to speak....I take one day at a time and whatever she gives me is what I deal with, but as far as behavior is concerned, I want her to behave in the way that a sixteen year old should behave, with manners and respect.

Interviewer: Would you say that is typical?

Mother: ...It all depends on their upbringing.

Similarly, comments by Participant 131, a low-income mother of a 14–15 year old illustrated expectations for increasingly mature behavior and that did not embrace negative stereotypes, as well as a belief in variability due to how children are raised:

Interviewer: So in general what kind of behavior do you think is normal for adolescents?

Mother: ...I think at this age they’re a little bit more mature than the pre-stages of ... I guess children, because they’re developing. So they do know right from wrong to the full extent and I think on the average a child should be a little bit more respectful and carry they self a little bit better than they did when they was children.

Interviewer: What do you think that entails?

Mother: Like the way they dress, make sure they’re clean ... And I think they should be well behaved, be respectful to teachers, I think a(n) average 14 on up should be able to do that no problem. If they do have a problem, they’re at the age where they can go

seek out their help without taking it into their own hands.

Interviewer: So you're saying it's not normal to be disrespectful to others?

Mother: No it's not normal, not in my eyes.

Interviewer: What about disobeying authority? Do you think that is normal for adolescents?

Mother: No.

Interviewer: Any authority in particular? ...

Mother: I think they're more likely to disobey a teacher versus their parents or a police officer... And I think it depends on the parent ... I have seen parents where their children talk to them like they're the child. That's not my case in my house. I don't have that type of problem.

Interviewer: What about having problems or difficulties in relationships with parents? Like talking back or fighting with parents? Is this normal for adolescents to go through?

Mother: Not if they're raised correctly.

Interviewer: And what's raising correctly? How do you think that's avoidable?

Mother: I guess they just know not to talk back to parents or adults. Children can...make bad decisions, but they do not ever have to be disrespectful.

Interviewer: So what about exhibiting positive traits or characteristics and behaviors?...

Mother: Again, I think it's how you're raised and your environment. It's what they parents have in their own household. ... I have a young teenage group of girls, and all of them are like that. They can share with their mothers, they can share with other female adults, they're very helpful, not only at their house but at other houses. They clean up behind themselves, they do everything, they're pretty decent ... adolescents...

Participant 129, a middle-income mother of a 14–15 year old emphasized personality as an important predictor of variability:

... I mean I have a pretty good daughter. I mean she has tried me undoubtedly but as far as being out there and wild and crazy... Based on her personality, she's very shy, kind of quiet, so her risk taking is going to be different from what I did as a teenager because we have two totally different personalities, so I guess it would depend on the

child. My son takes risks already at 5 years old. So...it really just depends on the child and their personality...

Interviewer: What about adolescents' self-care, such as exercising, eating, and sleeping? What types of behaviors do you think are normal for adolescents when it comes to those things?

Mother: They definitely eat a lot. Sleep whenever they can. ... every child is different ... I can't say what's normal for a certain amount of exercise cause each child is kinda different.

The valence of mothers' spontaneous descriptions of adolescents together with their emphasis on variability gave the impression, which would be consistent with the results of Study 1, that African-American mothers did not readily or fully embrace a "storm and stress" stereotype of adolescents. In one especially explicit comment resisting a negative stereotype, when asked about why she said substance use was not normal for adolescents, a high-income mother of a 14–15 year old explained:

I just, I know kids that don't. I think it seems more pervasive than it maybe really is...and I think...you get more of people... acting like that's what's expected and not necessarily reacting to what actually happens. So I think it's maybe not as prevalent and not as much the norm as it might seem. (149)

Qualitative analyses of mothers' comments also illuminated the variety of additional beliefs that can accompany expectations that negative characteristics are normal or typical. For example, African-American mothers who endorsed negative characteristics as normal usually also conveyed a certainty that such characteristics were unhealthy and avoidable.

Theme #2: All Risk-Taking Is Not Created Equal

One category of "storm and stress" stereotypes for adolescents has to do with risk-taking and rebellious behavior, or behavior that tests limits, takes risks, and resists adult authority.⁵⁹ African-American mothers to whom we talked did not endorse these different aspects of risk-taking and rebellious behavior equally. Although mothers endorsed "testing limits" as normal for adolescents, they rarely endorsed disobedience toward or disrespect of authority as normal. Consistent with other work showing the value of respect in the African-American community,⁶⁰ expectations that adolescents show respect were high. Mothers also rarely endorsed the risky behavior of

substance use as normal. Thus, believing that adolescents would “test limits” did not imply to these mothers that adolescents would act disrespectfully, disobey authority, or experiment with alcohol or other substances. Furthermore, mothers’ endorsement of testing limits as normal seemed to refer to testing limits within the family in situations of daily routine (e.g., chores) rather than testing limits in more serious ways outside of the home. These distinctions are nicely illustrated by two mothers of 14–15 year olds, the first low-income and the second middle-income.

Interviewer: What about taking risks, testing limits, or getting into trouble. Do you think that’s normal for adolescents?

Mother: Yeah.

Interviewer: Why ...?

Mother: Because I did it...only once and that was asking for more punishment. Yeah, they gonna try, ... They ain’t all perfect.

Interviewer: What do you think about disobeying authority? Do you think that’s normal for adolescents?

Mother: No you’re not supposed to disobey your adults.

Interviewer: No?

Mother: Never.

Interviewer: OK, what about using alcohol or cigarettes?

Mother: Never.

Interviewer: Not normal?

Mother: Not normal and um, bad things, bad things, to stay away from. (109)

Interviewer: What about taking risks, testing limits, or getting into trouble. Do you think that’s normal for adolescents?

Mother : To a certain degree, yes.

Interviewer: Why do you think that? Or what do they normally do that you think reflects that?

Mother: ...For example, I can give my daughter a curfew to come back at, from a neighbor's house and instead of being home at that time she may call at that time. You know, just pushing my hand a little bit. Um, same with going out to a sporting event...if I say meet me at the gate at 10 o'clock, regardless if it's 10 overtimes, you are supposed to meet at the gate. But...they have to grow and learn so they're going to see ...why can't I do so and so...it is part of ...growing and learning, it's just hoping that they don't take it too far.

Interviewer: What about using alcohol, cigarettes or drugs?

Mother: No.

Interviewer: You don't think that's normal?

Mother: No...It shouldn't be, it might be, it's not my norm. I'll say that, it's not the norm for me in my household. (129)

The absolute intolerance for substance use is interesting to note given the lower rates of alcohol and tobacco use among African-American teens.⁶¹ Our interviews indicated that this intolerance is not related to expectations that adolescents will not test limits or take risks; rather, to these mothers testing limits and substance use appear independent, separable phenomena.

Similarly, to these mothers testing limits does not compromise and adolescent's ability to show respect to adults. Expectations for respect from children to adults are of course consistent with an authoritarian, parent-centered style of parenting. However, the mothers to whom we spoke did not expect respect simply *from* their adolescents; they also expressed the importance of showing respect *to* the adolescent. In other words, they emphasized mutual respect in the parent-child relationship. The characterization of a relationship as one of mutual respect is qualitatively different than the characterization of African-American parenting as parent-centered, which implies that expectations for respect go only from child to parent. The idea that respect is something that needs to flow from parent to child as well as child to parent was clear was illustrated by Participant 114, a high-income mother of an 11–13 year old:

I kind of respect when she's not in a good mood or it's that time of the month because I know how that is...you just don't feel like being bothered. So when she's in a mood, and it's not very frequent, I give her space and let her have her time to herself, to get out of her mood. However, when she's very moody, and it's consistent, then I know there's a problem and I try to coach her out of it, see what's wrong, and (how we can) try to turn her mood from one way to another.

This idea was also captured succinctly in Participant 107's (middle-income, 16–18 year old) description of what it means to be a good or effective parent:

Interviewer: What does being a good parent ... mean to you when you think of parenting an adolescent?

Mother: Listening, communicating, acknowledging and respecting their voice.

Thus, the African-American mothers with whom we spoke acknowledged that adolescence is a time when children test limits, but for these mothers such testing did not imply what could be characterized as rebellion against parental or other authority, nor did it imply rebellion or risk-taking in the form of substance use. With regard to respecting others (including parents) and substance use, expectations for adolescent behavior were generally high. In contrast to a traditional portrait of authoritarian parenting, expectations for respect were not one-sided or parent-centered; mothers also spoke of the importance of understanding and respecting their adolescent children.

Theme #3: Unapologetic Parenting

Another theme that emerged was what we call “unapologetic parenting.” This theme is akin to what the parenting style literature terms “demanding” and even closer to Brody and colleagues’ concept of “no-nonsense” or “vigilant” parenting. Although we noted these characteristics (high demands, high vigilance) in mothers’ words, we noted an additional element. This element is a belief that as a parent one has been entrusted with the responsibility to raise a child right that one will not abdicate. It is a demanding, no-nonsense, vigilant approach because one believes that it would be irresponsible to behave otherwise. It is an attitude of obligation, not an attitude of privilege to exert power out of self-centeredness or disinterest in the child’s perspective. In this sense, unapologetic parenting is quite child-centered; several mothers referred to it as “tough love”.

The attitude transcended income lines, so it was not simply a reflection of a financially-driven need to protect children in the kinds of difficult or unsafe environments often present in poverty and commonly present in the lives of mothers studied by Brody and colleagues. The notion of unapologetic parenting was illustrated by a middle-income mother of a 16–18 year old, replying to the question “...and what about talking back or fighting with parents, do you think that’s normal?”

...in my household, no, we're not having' that ... I teach my children, it's not always what you do but how you do it ... I have to make sure they understand what happens in one household doesn't necessarily happen in this household. So I'm laughing cause I can think of occasions where you know, well, so and so's mom does such and such and so and so does, what that got to do with this house? Do you see so and so here? Do you see their momma here? No. ...I'm the mom, I'm workin', I'm raisin' you. God put you in my charge better or worse as imperfect as I am but you're still under my reign, but you're still, you know, under my charge. So I can only do the best I can do.... My children can come to me and we can talk about things, but then quite honestly with some things it just is what it is. As for me, talkin' back, that's disrespectful. Now I'm not trying to stifle you as an individual and your voice. But ... there's a balance and children have to be able to know the line...Sometimes parents are too concerned with being friends of their children or being liked and ...that's not what parenting is about. It's my responsibility as your parent to teach you here so you know how to govern yourself outside. (107)

Unapologetic parenting extends into the level of privacy adolescents are afforded, both in terms of personal space and electronic media. For example, Participant 114 (a high-income mother of an 11–13 year old) said:

I think [adolescents] do deserve some privacy. However, I think that the generation X parents like myself, sometimes we give them too much privacy and then when they do something that's life-changing, or in a negative way, we're surprised, when we really shouldn't be surprised. ... Like I said, my daughter's texting. She knows I'm going to check her phone, so she knows that I'm going to see it, whether you like it or not, and it's for your own good, and it's one of the rules of the house. ... There are certain things that you can have and certain things that you can do, as long as you follow the rules. There should be no difference with privacy. I give her privacy, however, she still lives in my home and I'm still responsible for her and her actions, then you have to follow my rules.

Likewise, Participant 131 (a low-income mother of a 14–15 year old) described regularly monitoring her child's text messaging:

Like with her cell phone, I check it periodically...I don't check it constantly. But periodically. So she feels like she has some say so. But I want her to know this is a privilege you know, for you to have this, so when I take it and check it, just know that you're not texting anything improper, that's just me caring. I don't want you in trouble ... so I'm doing it for your own good. And she doesn't like it.Of course she's not gonna like it ... and it's not that I don't care if she doesn't like it, but I'm gonna be the parent. And that's part of parenting. You have to ... make the right decision even when they don't.

As evidenced in these quotes, one context in which expressions of “unapologetic parenting” emerged was that of a parent's role in monitoring

adolescents' behavior and activities. Academics debate the impact of active parental monitoring at adolescence. Most scholars agree that parental knowledge about adolescents' behavior and activities predicts less adolescent risk-taking,⁶² but there is less agreement over the best ways to obtain knowledge.⁶³ Stattin and colleagues argue that active parenting strategies (e.g., soliciting information through direct questions, getting to know the parents of adolescents' peers) do not increase knowledge and might even "backfire", leading to less disclosure and more rebellion. Their argument is based on the expectation that adolescents view such techniques as an infringement on their personal rights and privacy. Yet findings in support of their argument are largely based on research with European⁶⁴ or European-American⁶⁵ samples. In our conversations with African-American mothers—across the income spectrum—it was exceedingly clear that they stood firmly on side of active parental monitoring. In addition to the quotes above illustrating mothers' commitment to very active monitoring (e.g., checking text messages), here are some additional examples:

If we want to go in, we're going in. We gonna be respectful, we gonna knock but we're coming in. So, no they don't have total ... just do whatever they want to do, or have whatever they want to have... It's important to know. They're still developing. I mean, they're still learning and ... you're still teaching. (122, middle-income, 16–18 year old)

My thing in my house is I have to know the parents. If I don't know the parents, you're not going. And I'm not talking about I just met them ... tonight, before you go, no no. I have to know them, I have to know how they live their life, if you smoke or drink I gotta know...that you're not going to offer it to my kids. (132, low-income, 16–18 year old)

Any type of electronic they have, if it's a Facebook page, when she had Myspace, when she have her email and text messages, I have the code to all of those and I am checking them at random. And she say: "That's my privacy." You don't have no privacy. You have privacy when you are grown and gone, because everything you do reflects on me. (111, high-income, 16–18 year old)

These quotes affirm the characterization of African-American mothers as strict, vigilant, and willing to assert power. They do not, however, characterize this power as parent-centered or even unresponsive. The power results from a (God-given) responsibility to show tough love.

Theme #4: Love and Communication Are Essential to Effective Parenting

In contrast to the characterization of African-American parenting that emerges from traditional parenting style literature as “unresponsive,” and consistent with those who have described a demanding but loving and communicative approach,⁶⁶ our mothers undeniably prioritized expressing love and communicating with adolescent children. This theme was so prominent that a person reading the transcripts would find it hard to believe that African-American mothers have ever been described as low in responsiveness or warmth. Warm, responsive parenting was clearly illustrated by Participant 122, a middle-income mother of a 16–18 year old:

Interviewer: In your ideal world what kind of things do you try to do or believe you should do to be a good parent to your adolescent child?

Mother: Listen, be attentive, have expectations, and be willing to be there, be in ...there with them. If that means we're wrestling sometimes, we're wrestling sometimes. ... When adolescents are beginning to discover who they are, I think that's part of where sometimes parents drift away...but that's where parents need to be there with them...and being involved with them.

Interviewer: What kinds of things do you do as a parent that would make your teenager feel loved?

Mother: We embrace on a daily basis. We say “I love you” on a daily basis ... call on the phone, we go out to eat together, I may play a game, I may get on Facebook with them or just be with them...watch TV with them, play a game with them, not be around them when they don't want ... just a variety of things.

All mothers were asked: “What does being a ‘good parent’ or an ‘effective parent’ mean to you when you think about parenting adolescent children?” Answers were coded as to whether answers indicated any of four aspects of parenting: love, monitoring, rules, and modeling. Eleven of twelve mothers spontaneously described behaviors coded as representing “love”, usually first and foremost (the twelfth mother never seemed to understand the question but later said it was very important for parents of adolescents to express love). Examples of the behaviors mothers identified and that were coded as representing “love” are: “be there”, “listen to them”, “communicate”, “be open and accepting”, “have love and show kindness”, “talk to them”, and “spend time with them”. Although themes of respect and unapologetic parenting were

still evident when mothers spoke of love, mothers unquestioningly emphasized the importance of love and open communication as aspects of ideal parenting at adolescence and they had no shortage of concrete examples of what they did to express their love to their teenagers.

Interviewer: ...do you have any goals as far as your relationship with her?

Mother: Our goal would be for her to always know that I'm her mother first, before I'm her friend... So my goal for this particular point in her life is to maintain the role as mother. ...Where she can talk to me and approach me about things that affect her life because most importantly I'm concerned about her and I love her ... I'm friendly, you know, we share experiences with each other but we're not friends.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about some of the things that you try to do to express love to your teenager?

Mother: We do some of the things that she enjoys doing. We go to the movies, we shop....she still plays, does my hair. I fix her favorite food, fix her plate...I always get involved with her homework, with her projects...correspond with her teachers...we get on the computer together and...we talk and we text each other ... and all of those type of things. We go shopping together. (132, low-income, 16–18 year old)

Interviewer: Tell me about the things that you try to do to express love to your adolescent.

Mother: I tell him that I love him. I make lunch for him in the morning when he decides he's gonna have...his new 'I only want to eat fish' then... we'll go get fish and cook it and try and support him in that. We go to all of his performances. I know who his friends are and try to keep straight...who's who and who he knows from where. And he likes to lay and lean in against me and that kind of stuff when we watch, we have a couple of TV shows we watch together and I won't watch without him and he doesn't watch without me, and we try to make time to do that... I worked very hard to learn how to play a piece of music on the piano so I could accompany him on (his instrument)...I ...try to do stuff that kind of is his world...coming in there and seeing kind of, where he lives. (149, high-income, 14–15 year old)

We asked participants to imagine some hypothetical situations that could occur with a hypothetical teenager of the age and gender of their focal adolescent child. Participants' responses again emphasized a clear emotional connection with their child. For example, when asked what she would do if her adolescent son were uncharacteristically quiet and sad for several weeks, Participant 109 (low-income mother of a 14–15 year old) reported:

It ain't gonna go on that long. He can't be sad for one hour without me on his back, so several days, it will never go that long. He got one minute to be sad and I'm gonna ask him why he's sad. ..there won't even be seven days... [when asked what she would do] Baby, what's wrong? Is you got a problem? Did I do something wrong? Did someone did something wrong to you?...Yeah, I is on him twenty-four/seven. ... Until I'm dead I'll be on him twenty-four/seven.

Interviewer: Imagine John has been very argumentative and uncooperative towards his parents for several weeks. What do you think about that?

Mother: It ain't gonna be that... several weeks your child doing that? Come on, stop it on that first second. ...Eye contact. Hearing. The way he talk. Be on it at all times. Wake up, listen to how he sound. You can tell from the second he wake up something's wrong. ..Baby, what's wrong with you? You had a bad dream. And don't let it go no further. Solve it then. But several weeks, ain't something wrong with that parent not to notice that with that child.

Studies finding African-American mothers low in responsiveness may focus on the extent to which children have input into rules or decision-making over other dimensions of responsiveness such as talking, communicating, listening, or spending time together. Our data suggest no lack of these latter types of responsiveness among African-American mothers. Our interviews provide insight into how African-American adolescents can feel loved regardless of the extent to which mothers discuss discipline or allow joint decision-making.⁶⁷ For these mothers, allowing children's input into decisions involving discipline or rules was not the best evidence of their love. Close attention, shared time, and communication were.

Theme #5: I'm Not Perfect, but I Am Still Your Parent

The final theme emphasized here was mothers' readiness to admit imperfection. By and large, these mothers did not worry about having to represent themselves to their children as individuals who had made no mistakes or had all the answers. All of the mothers we talked to thought it somewhat or very important to share personal mistakes and regrets with their teenagers, and several expounded by explaining that they did not want their child to think they were perfect. The words of Participant 133, a low-income mother of a 16–18 year old were typical: "...kids need to know their parents aren't perfect. I think a lot of times parents try to make themselves perfect. No, we're not. We're growing just like them."

Yet the acknowledgment of personal mistakes or limitations did not

diminish their confidence in “being the parent”. There was no conflict, so to speak, between admitting to mistakes and demanding respect from their children or being an unapologetic parent. Participant 107, a middle-income mother of a 16–18 year old, exemplified this theme when she said:

I’m the mom, I’m workin’, I’m raisin’ you. God put you in my charge better or worse as imperfect as I am but you’re still under my reign, but you’re still, you know, under my charge. So I can only do the best I can do.... I may not be perfect but I’m your parent and I’m all you got. (107, middle-income, 16–18 year old)

Participant 129, a middle-income mother of a 14–15 year old included admitting mistakes as an aspect of ideal parenting:

...I communicate with my children ... I show them affection and love ... I spend time with them separately ... I discipline them ... I show them that I make mistakes, I apologize when I’m wrong, you know ...

Mothers also talked about using their personal mistakes as a strategy for illustrating life lessons to their adolescent. A high-income mother of an 11–13 year old illustrates:

Well what I try to do is I try to expose her to more positive environments than negative environments. I do let her experience some not so positive environments, just so she knows the difference, and I feel that it’s important for her to see both sides of the tree rather than just the good side... I try to give her an atmosphere where she can see that even I did things that were wrong that now I’m paying for, and no one is exempt from making bad decisions or maybe not the right decisions... (114)

The willingness to admit imperfections did not reflect embracing a “do as I say, not as I do” attitude, as mothers consistently recognized the need to try to model the behavior they expected in their children. The potential strength that we perceived lay in the ability to admit imperfection without letting such imperfections diminish parental efficacy.

Conclusions

As noted at the start, our goal in this chapter was to turn up the volume on a strength-based perspective of African-American parenting through a consideration of existing data and through presentation of new data speaking to the strengths of African-American mothers of adolescents from one southern community in which there is a strong but often silenced history of racism

and segregation. We argue for a view of African-American parenting that is not just sympathetic but that is more explicitly positive and strength-based, a view that has been articulated in social science literature⁶⁸ but that arguably needs increasing recognition. Just as ethnographic studies have illuminated how mainstream culture can misinterpret the behavior of urban poor African-Americans individuals, families, and communities,⁶⁹ we believe that the parenting of African-American mothers has been misunderstood and underestimated. Of course, there is variability in the parenting of African-American mothers, but on average their strengths have been muted, if not silenced, by the dominant social science frameworks for describing parenting. The strengths we have documented include some that have been identified before, such as the unquestioned commitment to responsible parenting and the ability to express love and to be responsive within the context of strict control practices. Others have received less attention in previous literature; these include belief systems that resist negative stereotypes and that maintain parenting efficacy at adolescence. Such belief systems can be viewed as parenting strengths because they predict more parental engagement and more positive behavioral outcomes for children and adolescents.⁷⁰ Another potential strength that may be worth further investigations is mothers' ability to "be real" in the sense of acknowledging and accepting mistakes but not letting this diminish one's sense of efficacy and responsibility as parent.

By un-silencing these strengths of African-American mothers, not only might we empower African-American mothers but we might gain insights that would help all parents in their goal of raising strong and successful adolescent children. For example, African-American mothers' absolute intolerance of substance use might have something to do with the lower levels of substance use among African-American youth. The ability to accept imperfections without diminishing personal worth and competence might have something to do with the relatively high self-concepts of African-American youth. Our point is not to elevate or diminish any one group of parents, but to recognize that we can learn from all parents. Furthermore, efforts to intervene with, support, and enhance the parenting of adolescents—with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes for youth—are likely to be most successful within any ethnic, racial, or economic group if those efforts recognize and respect the strengths of that group.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Mothers' Reports of Efficacy

| Subscales | European-American | | African-American | |
|--|-------------------|------|------------------|------|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Freedman-Doan et al. (1993) ^a | | | | |
| 1. Current Efficacy | 5.81 | .94 | 5.94 | .89 |
| 2. Future Efficacy* | 5.06 | 1.13 | 5.70 | .94 |
| Ballenski & Cook (1982) ^b | | | | |
| 3. Comfort with External Issues* | 1.99 | .73 | 1.69 | .64 |
| 4. Comfort with Internal Problems* | 2.61 | .84 | 2.30 | .81 |
| 5. Comfort with Risky Behavior* | | | | |
| | 2.01 | .90 | 1.77 | 1.02 |
| Beliefs about Influences ^c | | | | |
| 6. Belief in Parental Influence | 4.56 | .57 | 4.51 | .63 |
| 7. Belief in Peer Influence* | 4.47 | .69 | 4.21 | .81 |

^a Scale ranged from 1=very little influence to 7=a great deal of influence.

^b Scale ranged from 1=always comfortable to 6=never comfortable; low numbers indicate more comfort.

^c Scale ranged from 1=not at all important to 5=very important.

* Means significantly different at $p < .05$.

Notes

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³ Ibid.

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Chapter 11

The Visceral Roots of Racism

Stephen B. Boyd

BEGINNING with two personal narratives, this essay describes silences in my own Southern family's history about their practices of slave-holding and the visceral roots related to that silence, and suggests how such silence results in habits of avoidance and obliviousness. How do these roots generate cultural and political forms of silence, discrimination and exclusion? How might those forms be transformed or displaced by other, more inclusive cultural forms? I propose that the cultural and political silences of many whites in the United States are rooted in visceral, embodied aversions that can be transformed. Practices generating political alliances can produce such transformations by creating new cultural spaces in which racially and ethnically diverse people might speak and hear one another. I will describe the production of new cultural spaces by an inter-racial, inter-faith group of citizens in Winston-Salem, North Carolina employing practices fostered by the broad-based community organizing principles of the Industrial Areas Foundation.

Silences Rooted in Visceral, Embodied Aversions and the "Will-to-Disregard"¹

Facing Embodied Aversion

The following autobiographical narratives recount two critical experiences by which I became aware of my own racial obliviousness, linked to my family's holding of African Americans in slavery in the 1820s. An African American colleague initiated the first realization by inviting me to attend a series of meetings in an African American congregation in a predominantly black neighborhood in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The second narrative summarizes a conversation with an older relative about our family's history of slave-holding.²

In the early 1990s a “men’s movement” grew among predominantly white, middle-class professionals. Many of these men turned to Native American traditions, rituals, and perspectives for inspiration and healing. Drumming circles, sharing from the heart with the use of a “talking stick,” smudging with burnt sage, sweat lodge ceremonies, and “new warrior” weekends became common practices for many men. I attended several of these retreats and found them helpful in shedding some of the masculine expectations that seemed counterproductive in my own life. My participation and the insights gained from it led to academic and practical work.³

In the midst of this work, I gave a presentation in a department colloquium about the aspect of the men’s movement that encouraged mostly white men like me to go into the woods, literally or figuratively outside the heavy responsibilities of our institutional duties, where we could find “sacred space” to heal and to choose more intentionally the ways we wanted to live. An African American colleague, Dr. Alton Pollard, observed, “You don’t have to go out in the woods for that. All you have to do is drive over to East Winston [the predominantly African-American part of our town].”

In April 1991, I drove to Emmanuel Baptist Church, where a local, bi-racial organization—Citizens United for Justice—met bi-weekly. On the way, a number of anxious thoughts ran through my head: “What will they think—a white guy showing up at *their* meeting? What will they say? Will they say anything to me? I wonder if it is a dangerous part of town? Will the church parking lot be safe? Why am I doing this?” My heart was pounding; I was short of breath; my knuckles turned white as I gripped the steering wheel. “I’ll turn around. I’ll go next week,” I assuaged myself. But I kept driving. Paul Ricoeur observes that just such an encounter with an “other”, who is “perceived as a danger to one’s own identity”—both one’s personal and communal identity—can lead to “humiliations, [and] real or imagined attacks on self-esteem.”⁴

When I arrived, it did not take long to realize that the source of my anxiety was largely in my own head. The group welcomed me warmly, asked why I had come, and then went on with the business of the evening. Underneath my misperception, Ricoeur identifies the functioning of an ideology that distorts reality, legitimizes a system of power (in this case, racial supremacy), and embeds a symbolic system in actions. The result, he observes, is a “silent constraint exerted on the mores of a traditional society”—in this case, avoiding driving to or remaining in certain parts of a city.⁵

Starting that night, I heard person after person (mostly working-class black but also some working class white people) come and talk about what had happened to them in our city's courts, police station, schools, and businesses. By attending meetings at Emmanuel Baptist Church, from 1991 to 1994, I learned a number of important things. Those who came were more like me than not. As I did, they too wanted opportunities for a good education and meaningful work. They wanted freedom from violence, affordable health care, and good, life-giving relationships with others, including me. It also became clear that their lives were affected by racial and class dynamics in ways mine was not. With regard to education, I learned that a judge's desegregation order in 1971 led to a period of busing that produced a more racially diverse student body in each school.⁶ However, honors programs (with names like Academically Gifted, and Highly Academically Gifted) established tracks within the schools for students who were selected by teachers and took classes designed exclusively for them. The classes in these programs became predominantly white; few African American students were selected for them, despite their similar academic profiles.⁷ After desegregation, each school became more racially diverse, but the classrooms within the schools became racially segregated. Then, in 1993, under a "neighborhood school" assignment plan, the city/county schools once again moved toward racial segregation, as the county has a long history of residential racial segregation. Further, I learned that expulsions and suspensions were meted out to African-American students—males in particular—at a rate disproportionate to their numbers in the school system. For some young African-American males, these suspensions and expulsions contributed to their falling behind in their school work and became a precursor to incarceration.⁸

Economically, African Americans have faced discrimination in our community as well. A man in his early thirties who was involved in real estate and development told about his frustration at being turned down for loans to purchase new properties. He knew that other (white) developers—no more qualified than him—were getting loans approved. A black fifteen-year-old boy recounted that he lived with his single mother, who was absent during the day while at work. When he was around twelve and wanted the basketball shoes and jewelry some guys in the neighborhood had, he began delivering drugs for the dealers. Eventually, he began selling them himself. The money he made was considerable—hundreds of dollars in a single deal, thousands over the course of a month. Faced with few resources, a less than supportive school environment, and discrimination in the workplace, I began to see how risking

another stint in juvenile detention or later in prison might seem worth it to him.

After I witnessed, in 1996, the false arrest and wrongful prosecution of a twenty-five-year-old son of middle-class African American professionals for a string of jewelry store robberies in five counties, it became clear to me that even if the fifteen-year-old boy stayed in school and got a job, he might still wind up in jail through no fault of his own. With no material evidence linking the twenty-five year-old man to any of the crimes and, using disingenuous investigative procedures, detectives created false eye-witness testimony against him. In another case, though the man's attorney had a time card showing that his client was at work, with a stamped time card to prove it, the prosecution went forward nonetheless, hoping that the jury would convict the accused on the fabricated testimony and ignore the exculpatory evidence. Fortunately, when two women who had picked him from a photo line-up saw the defendant for the first time in the courtroom, they told the district attorney they were no longer certain of the identification and the judge dismissed the charge.⁹ In two other cases, judges threw out the charges against him as well. Nonetheless, the man was convicted in one county and agreed to a plea bargain in another not because he was guilty, but because he believed with good reason that challenging the prosecution would be futile.¹⁰

Before driving to Emmanuel Baptist Church, I had no idea that African Americans experienced Winston-Salem/Forsyth County in this way. There was a rich world of people, relationships, institutions, and history about which I knew next to nothing. I was stunned that all of this had been virtually invisible to me.

Though we lived in the same town, African Americans and Euro-Americans did not live in the same "place." Following post-modern place theorists, Mary McClintock Fulkerson observes that place, for example one's hometown, is "constructed by the people of a particular geographically defined reality—from family and friends to the strangers who make up our environment and its past and present."¹¹ It includes both physical things (buildings, homes, schools, churches, natural monuments) and aesthetic, experiential and interpretive features (associations with light, dark, warmth, safety, and danger). So, it is a "territory of meaning" that includes both physical features and interpretive meanings, but is not reducible to either.¹² As such, places "snag, and route and reroute the meanings of [a] place by refracting communications through affective resonances—the hopes, fears, and multiple feelings—to which they connect".¹³ It slowly became clear that the affective resonances elicited by Winston-Salem/Forsyth County North

Carolina were very different from African Americans who lived in this same city/county. I doubt many African Americans would experience the same anxiety that I did by simply driving through a predominantly African American residential neighborhood on Reynolds Park Road—the street leading to Emmanuel Baptist Church—nor would they have had the same nervous questions running through their heads about the reception they were likely to get once they arrived. An African American may well have experienced anxiety driving in a predominantly white neighborhood or visiting a predominantly white congregation. I'll return to that at the end of this essay.

Visceral Roots

Several years later, information about my family history helped explain why driving on Reynolds Park Road in East Winston-Salem had triggered those particular affective resonances of anxiety and fear. I found that one of my ancestors had held African Americans in slavery from the 1820s until the 1840s. I uncovered a deed of trust containing the names of six people who were put up as collateral on the purchase of land. Evidently, my great-great-great-grandfather could not pay the loan payments on the land he had purchased and his creditors took him to court to recover their money. He was forced to liquidate the collateral that he had put up. In this case the “collateral” he sold included six people he owned.¹⁴

This came as a surprise, because none of the other family historians had ever mentioned that anyone had owned slaves in the family, nor was there ever any reference to it in the family lore with which I was familiar. I called a great aunt on that side of the family tree; she lived near the archive and she invited me to visit. While on the phone with her, I mentioned that our ancestor, Nehemiah, had owned six slaves and that I knew their names. Her response was, “Well, Jim [another family historian] said that Nehemiah might have had two slaves.”

“No,” I said, “He had as many as six.”

“Well,” she replied, “many of the men in those days...take Robert E. Lee...they say he didn't believe in slavery, but he had slaves. That's just the way it was. They followed them.” I presumed she meant that people like my great-great-great-grandfather followed the lead of men like Robert E. Lee.

After arriving at her home, we were going through pictures on her dining room table and I reiterated, “You know, Nehemiah had at least six slaves and I

know their names.” She said again, “Well, Jim thought he might have had one or two.” “No, he had six,” I replied. Again, she said, “Well, Jim said he might have had one or two.” She was not hearing me, or so it seemed.

As I was preparing to leave the next day, she asked, “Steve, did you say that you know the names of Nehemiah’s six slaves?” Only then did I know that she had indeed heard me. “Yes,” I said. “What were they?”

I went to the car and got a copy of the deed of trust and read their names, “Patrick, Joseph, Henry, Sarah, Garrison, and Hannibal.”

Without missing a beat she launched into an extraordinary fifteen-minute, nearly breathless monologue that included some of the following:

“Well, I’ll tell you this. I’ll just tell you right now, right here. If I were growing up and I was raped by a black man and I couldn’t get an abortion, I would commit suicide.”

“Why?”

“Oh, I just couldn’t bear the shame, oh, it would be horrible. My doctor—the one who gave me the hysterectomy [the same physician, she had earlier revealed, that had told her that she was “all messed up in there” and could not have children of her own] said that the way the white race was going to destroy itself was to mix with the blacks. He said, ‘Blacks have inferior blood’—you know sickle cell anemia and all that. I believe that blacks are inferior—in that sense I am a white supremacist. Blacks smell bad. Have you noticed? They smell when you get close to them even if they are clean—because it’s the blood. There is this [black] Seventh Day Adventist who comes to my house and sits in my living room. He treats me nice and I treat him nice, but...he smells. And take the Bible, I don’t think the Bible says that you should party and have sex with black people.”

Three or four times she interrupted this monologue to say something like:

“Now I pray to my heavenly father and He says I am ok with this...he says I am ok with this.”

After we had finished up and I was getting ready to leave, she started again,

“Listen, if my son, even if he were a preacher, had sex with a black woman, I would disown him.”

Because she had confided earlier that the one great sadness of her life was her inability to have children, I interrupted.

“Wait a minute. Seriously, if you had a son, you would really disown him if he dated a black girl?”

She replied, “Yes. There was this girl over in Pineville named Victoria

[she was related to our family] who is living with a black man up in Parkersburg. She is very pretty. She went to college and started dating a black athlete. They are now living together, not married, just living together. And she will not be accepted in Pineville and she knows that. She is trash. You know what goes on at these parties, with the drugs and everything; people are around doing all kinds of things—having sex.”

“Is trash having sex with someone you’re not supposed to?” I asked, sitting down.

“No, it isn’t that so much as having sex with a black man. Now, I don’t want people to believe I am ignorant. I’m simply opinionated. I have strong opinions about mixing the races,” she said.

I had always assumed that my great, great-grandfather (Nehemiah’s son), like many who served in the Confederate Army, fought not to protect slavery but because his friends and family expected him to defend the South from what they perceived to be northern aggression. Thinking now of him and others I asked, “Would your mom and my great-grandmother, the captain, and people of their generation have held the same opinions? Would they have had the same attitudes?”

“They’d be worse!” she exclaimed. Then she said, “I was fair to the blacks. When I was a principal [at a middle school], at Christmas, I gave presents to the blacks as well as the whites. But I do not believe in mixing the races.”

At one point, she said, “Oh, no. When you leave, you’re going to think I’m a White supremacist.”

“Well, that’s what you called yourself a little while ago.”

Shortly thereafter, I left. In retrospect, it seemed like I was listening to an internal tape that had been recorded in her years ago. Her monologue tumbled out very quickly, as if I had undone the Gordian knot that released it all.

The content of the tape is revealing. An important focus seemed to be that African Americans are somehow different from Whites, that they are not fully human (their blood is defective, they smell different). Authorities (Robert E. Lee, her physician, God) lend credibility to that assertion and the family reinforces its “truth” by exacting adherence to it by threatening to disown or excommunicate any family member who violates it.

The purpose of the internal tape seems to have functioned to reduce the cognitive dissonance still apparent in her. That is, she professed to believe what she was saying, but acknowledged that her parents’ and grandparents’ attitudes were “worse” than hers. On some level she knew that these beliefs and the slavery they justified were morally wrong; I doubt she would have

wanted her freedom to be taken from her and to be bought and sold as property. Her periodic protests that God was all right with these opinions reveal her underlying anxiety that the opposite was probably true. However, she could not bear to face the excommunication that had befallen Victoria in Pineville. She both needed her family and she knew that slavery was wrong. To some extent, the stereotypes she had of blacks helped her reduce the dissonance between her need for her family and her belief about slavery. The stereotypes justified why it was that her grandfather had bought and sold people: Blacks, she believed, weren't really like us.

I sensed fear underneath her recitation. She became noticeably agitated recounting what had happened to Victoria and when she declared that she would have excommunicated a son, even a preacher son, had he been sexually involved with an African-American woman. That was particularly jarring having come after she had shared how painful it was for her when she discovered that she could not have children. In her mind, this fear of excommunication set clear limits to her engagement with African Americans; she could relate to them professionally, but never, ever socially.

When considering this aspect of her tape, an incident came into focus that I had had with my father, her great nephew. During my years in high school, I had running arguments with him about racism. On occasions, when I would challenge derogatory remarks about African Americans, we would throw our opinions at each other. For a time, we did this fairly regularly, without a great deal of animosity. One exchange felt different. We had had what seemed to me like a fairly routine argument. As I left the kitchen, he said with more than the usual feeling, "If you ever bring a black girl in this house, that's it!" It was the only time I ever remember my dad threatening me. Yet the threat seemed to come out of the blue; we hadn't been talking about interracial marriage, or even dating. After my conversation with the great aunt on my father's side of the family, his sudden outburst made sense. Becoming sexually involved with a black woman was the line his family drew in the sand. It was the transgression for which he could have been excommunicated and for which he apparently was prepared to excommunicate me. It seems to have had the desired effect on me. Thinking back on my high school experience, I recall that I knew several black males on sports teams, but I cannot remember the name of one black female at my school. They were essentially invisible to me. This seems to have been one of the roots of the visceral fear I experienced as I drove to Emmanuel Church years later. If I interacted socially with blacks, it might lead to emotional intimacy, which, in turn, might lead to sexual

intimacy that could get me excommunicated from my family. That was a frightening prospect, though not one that was fully conscious, yet felt deeply in my body. Relationships with black women were especially scary and were best avoided.

The beliefs and behaviors that enabled people in my family to justify the practice of slave-holding have persisted for over a hundred and fifty years. The last time anyone in this branch of my family held someone in slavery was in the 1840s, yet stereotypes that justified that ownership have re-enforced our social isolation from African Americans for at least six generations. Glenn Loury argues that

the symbols we call race have, through time, been infused with social meanings bearing on the identity, the status, and the humanity of those who carry them. Once established, these meanings can come to be taken for granted, enduring unchallenged for generations. In a hierarchical society a correspondence may develop between a person's social position and the physical marks taken by that society to signify race.¹⁵

In my family, marks signifying race—skin color, perceived smells and assumed blood condition—determined for us the place of African Americans in our lives and in our society. We were to keep them at arm's length and maintain a posture of superiority over them.

Non-Innocent Obliviousness, the Will-to-Disregard, and Civic Oblivion

These visceral reactions produce practices of discrimination and exclusion that can be characterized as “non-innocent obliviousness” in Euro-Americans and social discrimination and the threat of political oblivion for African Americans. Following political scientist Iris Young, Fulkerson defines obliviousness as “a form of not-seeing that is not primarily intentional but reflexive. As such, it occurs on an experiential continuum ranging from benign to a subconscious or repressed protection of power.”¹⁶ Until I went to Emmanuel Baptist Church and listened to the voices of African Americans, I was not aware of what I did not see, of what I did not know. Until you see what you have filtered out previously, you do not have conscious awareness of what you are not seeing. My unconscious not-seeing the rich fullness of the lives of African Americans was not innocent. As McClintock Fulkerson observes: this “not-seeing” entailed a disregard for “the marginalizing forces of racism...” and repressed my “complicity in the/my production of difference.”¹⁷ I see now that

my non-verbal reactions, reflexes, and behaviors to racial differences have contributed to the creation and maintenance of the marking of African American embodied selves as different. In turn, that marking targets African Americans for practices of discrimination, exclusion, and mistreatment. These aversive reactions and the discriminatory practices tied to those reactions shape a “denied, thus repressed will-to-disregard” on the part of Euro-Americans, producing civic oblivion for African Americans.¹⁸ Both, observes McClintock Fulkerson, are the result of wounding. Euro-Americans are wounded—literally and figuratively blinded—by the ideology of racial supremacy imbedded in the symbols and rhetorical tropes that shape our communal and personal identities toward obliviousness.¹⁹ African Americans are wounded by the civic oblivion—discrimination against and exclusion from various forms of public life—produced by Euro-American obliviousness, including my own. In me, even though the fears, anxieties, and disgust underlying these more overt and intentional oppressive practices are a result of my own wounding and are unconscious, they are, nevertheless, not innocent; they become a weapon as experienced by African Americans. Bringing them to consciousness then becomes a moral imperative and a civic necessity.²⁰

The Creation of “Spaces of Appearing”

How might these visceral roots be addressed? How might these aversions be brought to consciousness? How might the wounds of obliviousness among Euro Americans and the wounds resulting from civic oblivion among African Americans be healed?

The most likely method is to find a way to see those who have been invisible, but how, as McClintock Fulkerson asks, “do those with the power to disregard become able to recognize those who have become substantially invisible to them?”²¹ She looks to political theorist Kimberley Curtis and her call for “a shared space for appearing—a place to appear, a place to be seen, to be recognized and to recognize the other.”²² McClintock Fulkerson’s book employs ethnography to describe practices in a local multi-racial, differently abled congregation that “redress the social problem of obliviousness.” She argues that discrete formation practices, worship practices, homemaking practices, and interpretive practices create a new cultural space—in her case, the Good Samaritan United Methodist Church in Durham, North Carolina. She calls it a “place of redemption” as it addresses the wounds of obliviousness among Euro Americans and the wounds resulting from civic oblivion by African Americans.

I want to suggest that broad-based community organizing can also create effective “spaces for appearing” across lines of race and class.²³ The principles and practices of such national networks as, for example, the Industrial Areas Foundation, create new cultural spaces that foster relationships between African Americans and Euro-Americans based on shared interests in the common good and, therefore, mutual respect.²⁴ These cross-racial relationships can promote psychological and bodily healing for both African Americans and Euro Americans. With a background in union organizing (Congress of Industrial Organizations), Saul Alinsky founded the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) in 1940 that facilitates collaboration of diverse groups of people across boundaries of race, class, and religion.²⁵ The IAF method supports the creation of local organizations, whose membership is made up, not of individuals, but of organizations in the civic sector (e.g., congregations, neighborhood associations, fraternities, sororities, unions, and alumni associations), reflecting the racial, demographic, and religious diversity of a community. For example, Winston-Salem’s CHANGE (Communities Helping All Neighbors Gain Empowerment) consists of fifty congregations and community groups, including churches, mosques, synagogues, neighborhood associations and sororities. It represents some 20,000 members.²⁶ The organization focuses on training in public skills and leadership development.

The IAF employs several principles and practices aimed at dismantling obstacles to collaborations across lines of race, class, and religion. Among those obstacles are disrespect and distrust, residential segregation, and asymmetrical patterns of power and decision-making. To build respect and trust, CHANGE leaders have adopted practices that counteract the condescending tendencies among members of dominant groups who might believe that they should set the group’s agenda and speak for “weaker” members of non-dominant groups. The “iron rule”, referred to in almost every training session, encourages participants to “never do something for someone else that they can do for themselves.” In addition, all meetings begin on time and end on time, so that everyone’s schedule and commitments are equally valued. In anticipation of public meetings, each institution is asked for a quota of participants and places are prepared for that number. If the institution does not deliver the number promised, a representative leader must explain why. Trust is built when participants from member institutions make commitments and are held accountable for them. Public meetings are intentionally scheduled in institutions all over the city of Winston-Salem. Since Winston-Salem is the third most

segregated city in North Carolina, this practice assures that participants routinely drive to unfamiliar parts of the city and visit spaces that often have a membership that is predominantly that of a different race, religion, or socio-economic group than their own. Each institution pays an equal share of dues (ten dollars for every active member) and each receives one vote in the deliberative and decision-making process that identifies issues and specific actions. This practice assures that each institution and its members have an equal role in determining CHANGE's agenda and strategies.

To ensure that CHANGE's agenda reflects the shared interests of participants, it follows an inductive process of identifying and ratifying the issues it pursues. House meetings within member institutions (congregations, sororities, and neighborhood associations) are held in which participants identify areas of injustice they consider most important to their well-being. When CHANGE began, eighteen hundred persons participated in house meetings. Lay leaders and professional staff weighted the issues that the organization would pursue according to the frequency with which they were mentioned in the meetings. In addition, leaders divided the issues into areas, such as public education, economic development, and health care. At a public meeting, participants from member organizations signed up to work in the area of interest to them, producing Action Teams of thirty to forty people, representing a cross section of the organization. Bi-racial co-chairs led the Teams in research, action plans, targeted actions, and evaluation. In addition, the Teams identify issues that are clear, actionable, and winnable. Importantly—for the purposes of this essay—the Action Teams are the sites for long-term working relationships between and among members across racial and other differences.

Leaders build on these practices and employ others to create annual or semi-annual Delegates' Assemblies where CHANGE accomplishes significant aspects of its public work. Action Teams present the results of their research and either propose actions for ratification or ask public officials to commit to actions deemed beneficial to the Action Team's goals

A recent Assembly demonstrates how these practices create a new cultural "place." Held at the predominantly African American United Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church in the historically black part of the city, seven hundred fifty people attended, representing forty-three institutions, with a racial mix of approximately forty percent African American, forty percent Euro-American, and twenty percent Latino delegates.²⁷ The Assembly addressed the problems that have arisen as a result of the racial and economic resegregation re-introduced in the City/County schools due to the "Neighborhood Schools"

parental choice plan, proposed and adopted in 1994 by a Republican majority on the School Board. As a result of the plan, seventy percent of the schools are dominated by one race, with resulting high concentrations of poverty. In addition, twenty-five percent of the students are not expected to graduate. The Education Action Team invited all candidates for School Board to the Assembly held three weeks before the election and asked each to commit to: reduce the dropout rate by reducing out-of-school suspensions (meted out in disproportionate numbers to African American children); work with CHANGE to develop a more effective parental involvement program; re-visit the school assignment plan and change it so that each school reflects the overall demographics of the county; and develop an anti-bullying and anti-discrimination plan to reduce the harassment aimed at students perceived as different in school settings.

Before asking for the commitments from the school board candidates, the Education Action Team presented the context and issues that constituted the basis of CHANGE's request. A white female teacher presented statistics on school suspensions; in one predominantly African American school, the suspensions in one year outnumbered the total number of students in school. An African American mother of children in a school with a high concentration of poverty detailed the lack of resources she and others experienced. An African American female student described instances of harassment of a Jewish student and a gay student and asked school board candidates to stand if they were willing to develop an anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policy.

The Assemblies and the new places cultivated on the Action Teams constitute "spaces for appearing," in which African American and Euro Americans, as well as Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans hear and see each other and work closely together. As African Americans are re-embodied as leaders, speakers, strategists, and decision-makers in a mutually respectful, collaborative enterprise, these places have the potential to address the wounds of "non-innocent obliviousness" by providing opportunities for Euro Americans to become aware of the unconscious habits of aversion and their deep-seated, visceral roots. In addition, the principles and practices aimed at mutually respectful collaboration can transform those habits of aversion and heal the isolation they produce. Further, through new practices Euro Americans can be re-embodied—as partners, listeners, hosts, and challengers of racial discrimination—and, thereby, provide opportunities for African Americans to experience themselves as full and equal partners in civic life.

In conclusion, I offer two brief examples of the transformative character of

the new places constituted by these practices. As I have recounted above, the visceral roots of racism embedded in my own body and mind, in part by my family, led to habits of fear, anxiety and aversion and isolation from African Americans, particularly female African Americans. In my work in CHANGE, I have had the opportunity to work closely with several African American women. For two years, I co-chaired the Strategy Team, similar to a board of directors, of the organization with an African American woman, who is a retired teacher. We met once a week with the professional staff to discuss the challenges faced by the organization, including racial tensions, to coordinate the work of the Action Teams, and to plan the deliberative processes by which the member institutions would ratify the campaigns recommended by them. We listened to one another, though in the beginning, I confess, it was difficult. Sometimes we agreed and others we did not and said so clearly and, at times, passionately. As time went on, I came to understand better her perspectives and values and appreciate more deeply their importance to our work together. Of the many feelings I am aware of as I think of her today, fear, anxiety, and aversion are not among them; respect, gratitude, and affection, however, are.

With regard to the effects of these new cultural places on the trauma experienced by African Americans due to Euro American practices of discrimination and exclusion from civic life, I offer a story. Recently, a predominantly Euro American downtown congregation considered leaving the organization because of tension within the congregation. Some in the congregation asserted that CHANGE was too political in that it not only worked with local officials, but, on occasion, publicly challenged them. Among the CHANGE leaders that went to speak to a gathering of congregational leaders was Ms. Deltra Bonner, an African American woman, who had begun as a lay leader and later served on the professional staff for two years as Lead Organizer. When asked why she was involved in CHANGE, she recounted that she had grown up in Winston-Salem and, when her father became ill when she was a child, she did not understand why he could not simply go to the hospital very near their house. At that time in the city's history, the hospital was restricted to white patients only. That and other experiences led her to leave the city, desiring never to return. However, after her marriage, she returned, worked and raised a family. That night, she said that before she was involved in CHANGE, she knew about this church, but had never been inside. However, because of her relationships with two white members, she had been in the church several times and felt at home there. Today, Ms. Bonner—one of the most highly regarded

leaders in CHANGE, leads an organizing effort among the senior members across the fifty institutions—black and white.

Notes

- ¹ Iris Marion Young coined this phrase in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) 122–123. See the discussion below.
- ² An earlier version of the following eight paragraphs, modified here, appeared first in *Making Justice Our Business: The Wrongful Conviction of Darryl Hunt and the Work of Faith* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011) and is used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers. www.wipfandstock.com.
- ³ See *The Men We Long to Be* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1996; The Pilgrim Press, 1997; and *W Redeeming Men: Religion and Masculine Identity*. Edited with Merle Longwood and Mark Muesse (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996).
- ⁴ See Chapter 2 “The Exercise of Memory: Uses and Abuses” of his book *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, transl. (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 81–83.
- ⁵ Ricoeur, 82.
- ⁶ Judge John J. Parker of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 402 U.S. 1 (1971).
- ⁷ The Office for Civil Rights estimated that African-American and Latino students are underrepresented in gifted programs by as much as seventy percent regionally. Nationally, experts estimate that black and Latino students in gifted programs are underrepresented from fifty to seventy percent. Consequently, while an African-American student is three times more likely than a white student to be placed in a special education class, a white student is three times more likely than an African-American student to be placed in a class for the gifted. See the literature review by Patrick Alexander and Amy Kleitman, *Gifted Education in New York City: An Analysis of Segregation in New York City’s Gifted Programs*, August 5, 1998 [www.advocatesforchildren.org/pubs/gifted.doc retrieved 5/23/2011], citing Angelia Dicken’s Project, *Revisiting Brown v. Board of Education: How Tracking Has Resegregated America’s Public Schools*, 29 Colum. J.L. & Soc. Probs. 469, 499–500 (1996); Dennis P. Saccuzzo, Nancy E. Johnson, and Tracey L. Guertin, *Identifying Underrepresented Disadvantaged Gifted and Talented Children: A Multifaceted Approach*, 2 (1994); and James J. Gallagher, *Education of Gifted Students: A Civil Rights Issue?*, 76 Phi Delta Kappa 408, 409 (1995).
- ⁸ See Marsha Weissman, et al., *The Right to Education in the Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems in the United States*, submitted to Vernor Munoz, Human Rights Council, United Nations, December 31, 2008, 2: “56% of African American youth in the juvenile justice system report prior school suspensions. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, “Juvenile Offenders and Victims 2006 National Report,” U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 2006); “The National Center for Educational Statistics found that 31% of students who had been suspended three or more times before the spring of their sophomore year dropped out of school compared to 6% of students who had never been suspended.” (“The Conditions of Education 2006, U.S. Department of Education, Table 27–2); “Dropouts, in turn, are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be

incarcerated in their lifetimes (N. Martin and S. Halperin, “Whatever it takes: How twelve communities are reconnecting out-of-school youth,” American Youth Policy Forum, 2006).

9 Guilford County Courthouse, North Carolina, August 17, 1996.

10 He was convicted July 1998 in Rockingham County, NC and accepted the plea in Alamance County, NC in January 1998.

11 *Places of Redemption: Theology for a Worldly Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 27.

12 Fulkerson cites E. C. Relph, ‘Place,’ in Ian Douglas, Richard Huggett, and Mike Robinson (eds.), *Companion Encyclopedia of Geography: The Environment and Humankind* (New York: Routledge, 1996) 907–8.

13 Fulkerson, *Places*, 29.

14 An earlier version of this section appeared first in *Making Justice Our Business: The Wrongful Conviction of Darryl Hunt and the Work of Faith* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011) and is used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers. www.wipfandstock.com.

15 Glenn C. Loury, *The Anatomy of Social Inequality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002) 65, 66–67; quoted in Fulkerson, *Places*, 20.

16 McClintock Fulkerson, *Places*, 19.

17 McClintock Fulkerson, *Places*, 15.

18 McClintock Fulkerson, *Places*, 20, following Young, *Justice*, 122–23.

19 See McClintock Fulkerson, *Places*, 21 and Ricoeur, 82.

20 Ricoeur, 89, argues that the virtue of justice turns memory “toward others” to whom we are indebted “for part of what we are.” Further, he claims, “. . . among those others to whom we are indebted, the moral priority belongs to the victims.”

21 McClintock Fulkerson, *Places*, 21.

22 McClintock Fulkerson, *Places*, 19–21, citing Kimberley Curtis, *Our Sense of the Real: Aesthetic Experience and Arendtian Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

23 The same is true across lines of religious affiliation and sexual difference, although, for the purposes of this essay, I focus on race and class.

24 Other, similar networks include the Gamelial Foundation, the Pacific Institute for Community Organizing, and the Direct Action, Research and Training Institute. In 2000, these networks, including the IAF, included 133 local organizations, some 4,000 member institutions, about 2,700 leaders serving on governing boards, around 24,000 participants on committees, and approximately 100,000 attending public actions. See Mark Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling: Community Building to Revitalize American Democracy* (Princeton, N.J. and Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2001), 8 and Chapter 2, “A Theology of Organizing: From Alinsky to the Modern IAF,” 40–71.

25 See Nicholas von Hoffman, *Radical: A Portrait of Saul Alinsky* (New York: Nation Books, 2010). After his death in 1972, Ed Chambers succeeded Alinsky as Executive Director and shifted the IAF’s focus to congregation-based organizing. See Warren, Chapter 2, “A Theology of Organizing: From Alinsky to the Modern IAF,” 40–71.

26 See <http://www.changeiaf.org>.

27 In 2011, Winston-Salem is 53.7% White, 34.1% black or African American, 8.6% Hispanic or Latino American, 1.8% Asian American, 0.3% Native American. http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?_event=Search&geo_id=&_geoContext

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Part IV

Politics and Economics

Illusion of Life

Walter Megael Harris

Am I the lion or the sheep, am I the one who kills or the one who weeps?
Do I slumber or do I sleep, for children die as mothers weep?
Like cows on a pasture, we are headed for certain disaster
As we follow and worship a material master.

Standing by a river that flows
Loving my friends and fighting my foes
Where lives are bought and lives are sold,
Where some are feared and some are bold,
Many are watchful as the story unfolds, for this is for glory and all the gold.

For in the name of money lives are sold, but the true treasure of life is love, not gold.

Chapter 12

Race, Class, and the Traumatic Legacy of Southern Masculinity

Ronald Neal

Introduction

DURING HIS campaign for the presidency in 2008, presidential candidate Barack Obama toured the state of South Carolina. Eager to win the support of South Carolinians, his visit brought him face to face with many of the state's residents. He received a bird's eye view of the racial, economic, and political challenges faced on a day-to-day basis, including extreme poverty and the failure of public schools, which had received national attention. Obama's sojourn through the southern part of the state, known as the Low Country, allowed him to see firsthand the "Corridor of Shame"¹: a track of impoverished counties and school districts running along Interstate 95 from Beaufort, SC to Savannah, GA. At the time of Obama's visit, these districts had been in a legal battle over funding with the State of South Carolina that harkened back to the legal struggles related to the Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). At the heart of this legal struggle is South Carolina's constitution, which insures limited state support for public education, requiring only a "minimally adequate" education for its citizens.² This means the state will not fund public school districts beyond this standard. Monetary support that exceeds this requirement is determined by the tax base of a given county and school district. Only school districts with a strong tax base can move beyond what is required by the State of South Carolina. Unfortunately, all of the counties that comprise the "Corridor of Shame" are poor. This limits their ability to provide a high quality education to their constituents. Because of its association with *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the "Corridor of Shame" is indicative of a living legacy of racial inequality that continues to plague South Carolina, but also the South and the United States at large.

In recent years, a number of African American scholars have turned their attention to the ongoing impact of the southern past on American life. Concerned with the vestiges of slavery and Jim Crow, scholars such as Michelle Alexander, Houston A. Baker, and Patricia Hill-Collins make connections between current social arrangements and the legacy of American racism.³ In this essay, I join this chorus of scholars. I wish to call attention to the past that is still present in the U.S. South. I look at a southern legacy in politics that continues to impede the realization of democracy in America. Enabling racism and neglect, it constitutes the most persistent and glaring legacy of the southern past: the hegemonic and anti-democratic politics of ruling class southern white men. I argue that the Corridor of Shame is just one consequence of this masculine legacy in southern politics. By using the interpretive tools of religious studies, I reengage southern white masculinity of the ruling class in a new way, framing its persistence in terms of a religious-ideological construct that I call Abrahamic masculinity.

Derived from what in religious studies is commonly referred to as the Abrahamic Religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), Abrahamic masculinity is a form of masculine hegemony which thrives wherever Abrahamic religions exist. Since the Christian tradition is the dominant religious tradition in the U.S. South and the United States broadly speaking, I limit my concerns in this essay to this tradition and its construction of male dominance as a worldview and practice whose roots extend to male slaveholder privilege and its ideological justifications. In a forthcoming monograph, *Democracy in 21st Century America: Notes on Race, Class, Religion, and Region*, I take up the legacy of racism and its supremacist politics of denial and neglect in greater detail. The religious justification of political racist hegemony entails an enduring legacy of inequality which plays itself out at the levels of economics and education, where a race and class gap divides the most privileged populations and those with the least privilege and resources. This gap continues the racial caste system of the racially polarized era of Jim Crow, which was sanctioned as much by law as by religion. However, one must go further than the language of Jim Crow to adequately frame race and class inequities today. The race and class disparities that characterize the present U.S. South and America at large are First World and Third World disparities.⁴

Southern racial caste plays itself out in underdeveloped rural areas where extreme poverty conditions human life, affecting everything from job opportunities to schooling to political representation. These rural areas, which

tend to be majority black, are left to fend for themselves. The reform the extreme conditions which characterize this Third World condition is not a top priority for politicians, the majority of whom are white and male, and who live and thrive under different circumstances. The state of South Carolina constitutes an important case study for engaging the First World and Third World gaps of race and class in the U.S. South. It is paradigmatic of the extent to which hegemonic white male rule, sanctioned religiously as Abrahamic masculinity, legitimates and sustains it.

Abrahamic Masculinity in the South

The practices of elite white masculinity which concern this essay are an institutionalized expression of racial masculine dominance. They define ideals of male white rule the U.S. South and elsewhere. Abrahamic masculinity, legitimated by the monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (known as Abrahamic religions), may be defined as a masculinity of power, wealth, and status in the name of a benevolent yet abusively hierarchical paternalism. It is driven by masculine practices that depend on gendered subordination and the pursuit of empire. The most visible global display of this form of masculinity is war, the most intimate and hidden display is violence against women and children. The ideology and practices of Abrahamic masculinity can be found in any part of the world where Abrahamic religions thrive.

The Ancient Near Eastern legend of Abraham is both the religious foundation and ideal form of dominant political masculinity (Genesis 11:26–25:10). The hegemonic spread of Christian and Muslim cultures is indicative of the extent to which Abrahamic masculinity pervades the world. What is more, our current global conflicts involving each of these traditions, conflicts involving Christians and Jews, conflicts involving Christians and Muslims, and conflicts involving Christians and Christians (Catholics and Protestants and Protestants and Protestants) point to the masculine ideal of linking violence, war, religion, and dominance evidenced in the legend of Abraham. The foundational myth of such patriarchal identity formation is found in the Hebrew Bible, commonly referred to as the Old Testament. The book of Genesis, especially chapters eleven to twenty-five, recounts the story of a dominant male, a patriarch who is selected and chosen, for religious purposes, to be a founder of a nation, i.e. Israel.⁵ In the Hebrew Bible, he is portrayed as a property owner whose possessions include land and slaves.

He is portrayed as a husband and father whose relations with women and children are paternalistic and benevolent in orientation. Surrounded by slaves, a subordinate wife, concubines, and a subordinate male relative, Abraham models an exalted level of social status that is legitimated and indeed ordained by Yahweh. Through Abraham, Yahweh establishes a tradition of patriarchy which is extended through his male progeny. Ultimately this force of Abrahamic masculinity will develop, expand, and lead to a fully developed empire, an empire that entails a succession of kings whose powers and authority are legitimized on religious grounds. Empire is narrated as the ultimate end and fulfillment of Abrahamic masculinity.

Over the last generation, U.S. feminist and womanist biblical scholars have analyzed in great depth the subordinating and oppressive quality of Abrahamic masculinity. They have pointed to the manner in which it perpetuates and legitimates inequality between men and women.⁶ They have also exposed the manner in which it thwarts the emotional lives and psychological development of children. However, Abrahamic masculinity also still remains relevant as a masculine ideal of paternalistic political dominance in conservative American political Christian circles. I propose that Southern men, whether consciously or unconsciously, are not only asked to live up to this religiously codified standard of masculinity, but are also judged and measured by it. In contrast, men who do not display the paternalistic slave holder, violence-prone, and misogynist virtues are often dismissed as pathological and perverse. Males who are not property owners, males who do not actively pursue heterosexual marriage and procreation, males who are not in dominant relationships with women, children, and other males, and males who refuse to engage in masculinized projects of empire-building are deemed to be cancers that ruin the body politic of civilization. Their abject masculinities are defined as inferior, immoral, unproductive, immature, perverse, or criminal.

Abrahamic masculinity does not exist in a vacuum. Its nuances are conditioned by geography and time. The American South has deep connections with Abrahamic Christianity, especially in its manifestations in Christian fundamentalism and evangelical Protestantism⁷ and because of the southern legacies of slavery, Jim Crow, and the Great Migrations. Yet most Americans are profoundly unaware of the extent to which southern politics, masculinity, gender roles, and sexuality have been conditioned by southern expressions of Abrahamic masculinity. The regional and historical legacy of Abrahamic masculinity demands greater scrutiny and theoretical

understanding than the broad outline offered by this essay. The Abrahamic code articulates itself in what political scientists refer to as white nationalism, by an ideology of racially framed rights and entitlement.⁸ White privilege is often cloaked in and buttressed by the language of patriotism or the love of country. To pursue and hold political office in the U.S. South, be it as a mayor of a city, the president of a school board, a state representative, a congressperson, a senator, or governor is to participate in a morality whose end is imperial in the political and religious plane. The paradigmatic Abrahamic politician in the U.S. South exercises a morality where personal and public displays of wealth, status, and power represent a triad of divinely sanctioned being.

Past and present examples of this theocratic dominance can be found in southern states such as Georgia, Mississippi, Texas, Louisiana, and Alabama. One southern state, South Carolina, a crucial site for the flourishing of Abrahamic masculinity, will serve as an exemplar of the presence of Abrahamic masculinity in politics. Transferred from their religious foundation into the secular nation state, these masculine practices continue to oppress those defined as inferior to it in the realm of education, economics, and politics. The recent gubernatorial history (2003–2011) of South Carolina illustrates the point I wish to make. For two consecutive terms, the state of South Carolina was governed by Mark Sanford (b.1960), a well-educated millionaire and public official who made his mark in the world of real estate and finance before becoming a politician. A native of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, with connections in Beaufort South, Carolina, Sanford holds a bachelor's degree in business from Furman University (1983) and an M.B.A. from the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business (1988). For most of his tenure as governor, Sanford was viewed and treated as a rising star within the Republican Party.⁹ In conservative and Republican circles, he was viewed as a Ronald Reagan-Republican politician. Sanford is the embodiment of the CEO turned politician, a type of public official which has become the standard and model for the American politician. Since the Reagan era, the American-CEO-as-politician has turned politics into a corporate enterprise. As a CEO-politician, Sanford has deep convictions regarding the powers of free market capitalism to organize, manage, and improve American society and the world at large. He holds a libertarian view of government, which seeks to limit the role of government in the lives of ordinary citizens and to replace traditional mechanisms of government with private enterprise. Overall, Sanford is a mirror of the politics that has

dominated the United States since the Reagan era. What is more, he is a symbol of a political tradition of manhood which has deep roots in the history of the South.¹⁰

In addition to his political style, Mark Sanford is a professed Southern Baptist who governed from a state where Southern Baptists represent a politically religious majority. His tenure in a Southern Baptist and politically conservative state such as South Carolina is inconceivable without considering the influence of the ideological force of Abrahamic traditions. Sanford governed during an era when Southern Baptists—the largest Protestant denomination in the world—exerted an enormous amount of influence in American political life.¹¹ Its political message of Christian masculinist capitalism has been popularized through the influence of Abrahamic men such as Billy Graham (b.1918), the late Jerry Falwell (1933–2007), and more recently Rick Warren (b.1954), politically engaged conservative ministers with Southern Baptist backgrounds. Their influence as members of America's Christian right, affecting American politics and moral debates within America, spans more than four decades.¹² Their relationship to American politics is evident in Billy Graham's connection to the Nixon Administration during the 1970s, the influence of Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority during the early 1980s, the rise and prominence of the Christian Coalition, founded by Pat Robertson (b. 1930), during the mid-1990s, and the emergence of Rick Warren as an advisor to the Obama Administration.

As members of the Christian Right, Southern Baptists represent a Protestant majority among politically conservative evangelical Christians, which means that the Christian right is to a large extent a Southern Baptist phenomenon. What is more, Southern Baptists represent the Southern arm of the Republican Party, thus exerting their influence on both local and national elections. As a Southern and conservative state, South Carolina has been pivotal in this regard by influencing national politics, particularly the most recent presidential elections. The 2000 and 2004 presidential elections were impacted by South Carolina's status and influence with respect to the electorate in the South.¹³ The South Carolina primaries have been decisive for presidential candidates seeking the Oval Office. The religiously conservative element in the state has been significant with respect to these outcomes.¹⁴ In this context, Mark Sanford's tenure in a Southern Baptist and politically conservative state such as South Carolina is not imaginable without considering his Baptist and religiously conservative background.

Mark Stamford governed from the corridors of political power in South Carolina, the State House, and exercised his authority as a member of a high income Republican majority, predominately white males, who share his basic values. The policies that are set for the state of South Carolina, including those proposed by Sanford, reflect the basic interests and values of this political majority. Sociologically, these values favor high income communities which are majority white, the communities from which these legislators come. The politics of the high income white suburbanite is the politics of manhood that has impeded the realization of democracy in America. Cloaked in a religious ideology of paternalistic Abrahamism, it is a brand of political masculinity that is driven by racial, economic, and gendered elitism. Tragically, this brand of elitism on the part of high income whites is consistent with the history and persistence of class privilege in America. The dominance of Abrahamic masculinity in South Carolina politics mirrors Abrahamic masculinity in politics all over America. In South Carolina, such dominance impacts communities on two levels: 1) at the level of economic development and 2) at the level of education. In both arenas, the interests of economic elites, especially high income whites, overwhelm the interests and circumstances of low income and poor Americans, especially the non-white racial and ethnic poor.

In South Carolina, as in many states throughout America, state government has functioned as an engine of economic development. Similar to many other states, South Carolina's state government has been a facilitator of economic development especially in parts of the state where high income populations are plenteous. A top down approach to economic development which excludes the poorest towns, cities, and counties and the poorest populations of the state, has been the primary means of growth and economic expansion in the state as a whole.¹⁵ In addition to economics, the state's efforts to improve education, particularly secondary education, are connected to the interests and status of high income white populations as well. Within the state, there is an intense movement to include vouchers and school choice among the educational provisions that South Carolina offers its young. During his tenure as governor, Sanford stood at the forefront of the state's economic efforts. He has also been an ardent champion of vouchers and school choice in South Carolina. In fact, he spearheaded an effort called *Put Parents In Charge*, an initiative that would allow tax payers to use public funds for private schools. It would also give tax breaks to high income parents, parents who have their children enrolled in private schools. High

income suburbanite whites have been the strongest supporters of the efforts of the Government and that of the Governor in pushing a policy vision which primarily benefits their economic interests. The kind of politics played out every day in the State House in Columbia, South Carolina, from education to economics to race and class, is a stark illustration of the vestiges of the Southern past and a measure of America's distance from its democratic ideals. The distance between South Carolina realities and American democratic ideals can be attributed to the rhetoric power of Abrahamic masculinity in politics. It accounts for the failure to break the Third World structures of inequality in South Carolina, and continues to manifest itself in poor counties and failing public schools.

Integral to Southern history and culture is the politics of race. Race politics stood at the center of Dixiecrat politics (the southern wing of the Democratic Party before 1968), shaping the nature of cultural life in the region.¹⁶ Today, however, the dynamics of race are more complicated than they were two generations ago. Still, race, in addition to economics and gender, impacts inequality today. The interests of high income educated whites, especially ruling class males, overwhelm the interests of other population groups, including middle income minorities and low income minorities and whites. Though slightly different from its predecessor, the politics of race, class, and gender which impedes democracy in America today is connected to the Dixiecrat politics of the Jim Crow era of American history. If there is a line of continuity between the eras, it is one that converges at the point of inequality, the dilemma of an underdeveloped South educationally deprived and economically disadvantaged.

A Southern politician such as Strom Thurmond (1902–2003) embodies the evolution in Southern political hegemonic rhetoric.¹⁷ In fact, Thurman led the way in reinventing politics in the South and America at large. Holding the record as America's longest serving United States Senator (from 1954–2003), Strom Thurmond or Ol' Strom, as he was affectionately called, led the march against liberal politics. Thurmond, who ran for the American presidency in 1948 as a public and die hard segregationist, is responsible for the political conversion of thousands of Southern democrats into southern Republicans. In some respects, he singlehandedly changed the Republican Party. What is more, the conservative South which was controlled by a single party, the Dixiecrat Democratic Party, became a two-party South largely due to Strom Thurmond. Recognizing that the days of pro-segregationist politics were numbered due to civil rights advances, Thurmond reformed his political

ideology, dropped his affiliations with southern Democrats, and joined the Republican Party. As a political actor, Thurmond exemplifies Abrahamic masculinity and the politics of manhood in the U.S. South.

Thurmond's shift and the mass exodus of Dixiecrat southerners to the Republican Party marked the shift in racial politics in America. It was also the dawn of a new political tactic, later known as the "southern strategy," and a revised philosophy of southern conservatism. Before the Civil Rights Acts of 1963, 64, and 65, Thurmond was a staunch segregationist. After the passage of these Civil Rights Acts, Thurmond became a conservative southern Republican, shifting from a politics of states' rights and segregation to one of Southern individualism and national interests. It was a shift from overt white supremacy to class-driven individualism and Americanism. Although connections can be made between the three, the focus on individualism and Americanism overwhelmed the focus on race. With the promotion of patriotism, American nationalism with a strong military presence, and individualism, a formula was crafted that would in time eclipse the agenda of baby boomer liberals and leftists and eventually take over American politics. With Strom Thurmond leading the way, Southern conservatives were largely responsible for the election of Richard Nixon in 1968 and Ronald Reagan in 1980. They were elected through "the Southern strategy" embodied by Thurmond's ideological adjustments.

In many respects, Strom Thurmond became a redeemer of ruling class whites and the South as a region, and the prominent role that both have played in American history. In many respects, Thurmond's overt abandonment of publicly argued white supremacy was unprecedented. However, as a religious Southerner with a deep reverence for tradition, his actions were consistent with his political predecessors. Thurmond was not the first Southern and conservative politician to attempt to redeem the South without abandoning its elites. Thurmond personally knew one of the most infamous Abrahamic saviors of the South who, like himself, was produced by the state of South Carolina.

Benjamin Ryan Tillman or "Pitchfork Ben" (1847–1918), as he was affectionately called, was a close friend of Thurmond's father. Tillman was the son of a plantation owner whose wealth and status, including property, became casualties of the Civil War. In an effort to restore the Southern Confederacy to its perceived former glory, Tillman undertook a political campaign to restore property and status to the sons of plantation owners.¹⁸ Tillman was disenchanted with the economic and political enterprise known

as Reconstruction (1863–1877), the decade long federal effort to transition former slaves from servitude to freedom. He pursued a populist strategy heightened by racial demagoguery, later known as “Tillmanism,” that created solidarity between white male planters and poor white farmers. His goal was to end Reconstruction by rallying white men of all strata against blacks in the South. His campaign included driving black elected officials out of political office through voter fraud and intimidation. His campaign also included the erection of barriers toward public education and initiatives geared toward the education of black people. Overall, Tillman was the force behind the establishment of poll taxes, the infamous grandfather clause, and black codes throughout the South. He was one of the instrumental players in the emergence and development of the Protestant Klu Klux Klan (“Circle of Brothers”), an organization whose chief tactics were the intimidation of African-Americans through terrorism. Tillman was one of the chief architects of legalized segregation in the South otherwise known as Jim Crow, and his campaign to return the South to the rule of white men was replicated by politicians throughout the South. More than three generations would pass before the impact of Tillmanism in South Carolina and the South at large would be challenged. In his autobiography *Born to Rebel*, Benjamin Elijah Mays (1894–1984), President of Morehouse College from 1940 to 1967, recounts what it was like to be born into and to live in a world that had been shaped by Tillman politics.¹⁹ A native South Carolinian and a child of sharecroppers, Mays spent his entire life dismantling the legacy of Tillmanism. The impact of Tillmanism was so pervasive that it would take federal intervention, through a Second Reconstruction, to undermine its impact on the South, particularly the lives of African-Americans.

In the past, inequality was overwhelmingly visible. It overshadowed whatever prosperity or literacy existed in the region. In dramatic ways, the impoverished South of the present is largely invisible. It has taken a backseat to a public image of a new and prosperous South. Yet the values and political networks that prevail and sustain this new and prosperous South have their roots in history. In order to gauge the differences between the South of yesterday and today, it is important to take note of the political changes that were engineered by Southern politicians, and which generated the dominant political morality in the South today.

Until the end of Jim Crow, racialized male-driven-white supremacy or Abrahamic masculinity governed the South. This politics of male-driven-white supremacy evolved into economic elitism. Far from being a new

development, economic elitism became a significant means for maintaining interests of ruling class whites. The political achievements of the Civil Rights era forced Southern segregationists to remake their politics. A language of overt white supremacy lost its ability to preserve the interests of elite white men. So, class as opposed to race began to drive the ideological program of white politicians in the South. The ideology of male-driven-white supremacy gave way to a middle class ideology of class superiority, such superiority being compounded by race.

One way to ward off racial interests has thus been to counter and nullify such interests by appealing to class-specific ideals (the “American Dream”) and to translate the interests of a marginal racial group—African Americans—into class pathology. After the death of *de jure* Jim Crow, conservative ruling class whites, especially in the South, translated African American interests into underclass threats to the status and privileges of middle class whites. Politicians such as North Carolina’s Jesse Helms (1921–2008), South Carolina’s Strom Thurmond (1902–2003), and Georgia politician Newt Gingrich (b. 1943), translated all social policies that sought to address inequality as African American concerns.²⁰ African Americans were characterized as members of the underclass and labeled as pathological, lacking “middle class values.” Interestingly, the kind of class ideology pushed by Southern politicians would surface in academic diatribes against liberal social policies, most notably, Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein’s, *The Bell Curve* (1994).

Toward the end of the twentieth century, economic elitism couched with race became the dominant trait of politics in the U.S. South and by extension, American conservatism. Fueled by the Southern electorate and the dominance of Southern politicians, the presidency of Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) became the embodiment and voice of economic elitism, an economic conservatism of middle class values which include patriotism, militarism, and individualism. It was a form of elitism that showed no concern for inequality, especially racialized economic inequality. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the poorest of America’s citizens and the condition of the working class was nowhere on the agenda of American conservative economic elites, especially in the South. As far as the South was concerned, resistance to addressing racial and economic inequality was consistent with the aristocratic traditions of the southern past. Similar to its historic treatment of racial inequality, southern elites have and continue to maintain a policy of benign neglect. The resistance to taxes, the disparaging of social democracy via states’ rights, and

the ideological embrace of libertarianism has worked to the benefit of Southern elites, particularly white men. These political actions are part and parcel of an age old American counter-story challenging Abrahamic narcissism within white and non-white communities: the story of the rich white men and their exploitation of poor white men, and the manner in which the economic interests of rich white men are perpetuated at the expense of all poor people, black and white, in the South and beyond.

Conclusion: Engendering Trauma through an Abrahamic Abuse of Power

What I have described in this essay is the politics of white elite manhood in the U.S. South. This politics is profoundly shaped by Abrahamic Christian masculinity and is conditioned by race, religion, and class. What is more, this anti-democratic condition, especially as it is nurtured by racial and economic discrimination, is connected to a long history of inequality, a history characterized by antagonistic relationships between the most privileged classes of Americans and the most powerless Americans among us. Able to adapt to new circumstances, it continues to contribute to and perpetuates an “us” and “them” psychology and social reality whose effects are socially destructive on a large scale. Tragically, this psychology, as it is amplified by the widening divisions of race, class, and gender persists in the present. In a state such as South Carolina, contemporary racial separation and the separation of the classes, an endless struggle in education, and a weak economy have multi- generational historical antecedents. The current struggle for the realization of democracy in America is a struggle of the past in a twenty-first century modality. Indeed, the past is still present. If America is to live up to its democratic ideals, then this past must be addressed and engaged with honestly. As long as the politics of Abrahamic masculinity, exemplified by the dominant political tradition of the US South, continue unabated, America cannot claim to be an authentic democracy. An Abrahamic society, one that is polarized along the lines of race, class, gender, with the least of us being unable to bridge the gap is not a democratic society.

Notes

- ¹ See *Corridor of Shame: The Neglect of South Carolina's Rural Schools* <http://www.corridorofshame.com/case>. Also see, “Obama Talks About the “Corridor of Shame,” Transcript, NBC News, NBC Universal, Inc. 2007.

- ² South Carolina's Constitution was created in 1895, during the Post-Reconstruction Era. The South Carolina Constitution was an outgrowth of a backlash against Reconstruction throughout the South. One source of strife during Reconstruction was the effort among Reconstruction governments to educate African Americans. See Stephen Kantrowitz's: *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (London and Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
- ³ See Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness* (London and New York: The New Press, 2010), Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Turning South Again: Re-thinking Modernism/Re-reading Booker T.* (Durham and London: Duke University Press 2001); and Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York and London: Routledge Press, 2004).
- ⁴ Since the 1950s, the term Third World has been used to describe economic conditions in countries that are undergoing a process of development. It has been used to distinguish poor nations from wealthy nations. My use of the terms "Third World" and "underdevelopment" are informed by recent studies, most notably, by Kema Irogbe, a political scientist and colleague, whose research focuses on Africa. See "Transformation in South Africa: A Study of Education and Land," *International Third World Studies Journal and Review*, Volume XIV, 2003 and "Nigeria. Globalization and the Development of Underdevelopment in the Third World," *The Journal of African Policy Studies*, Volume 9, Number 2&3, 2003.
- ⁵ *The Bible: The New Revised Standard Version* (Iowa Falls: World Bible Publishers, 1997).
- ⁶ See Renita J. Weems, "Reading Her Way through the Struggle: African American Women and the Bible" in *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 57–80; and Alice L. Laffey, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: A Feminist Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).
- ⁷ See H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989); Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (Nottingham: Intervarsity Press, 2004); and James Davidson Hunter, *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).
- ⁸ For a recent account of white nationalism in the United States see Carol M. Swain, *The New White Nationalism in America: Its Challenge to Integration* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- ⁹ For a profile of Mark Sanford, his administration, and political agenda see the website for the Office of the Governor at www.scgovernor.com. For an account of Sanford's celebrity within the Republican Party see John J. Miller's "A Carolina Kid: Republican Governor Mark Sanford Makes an Impression," *The National Review*, April 25, 2005.
- ¹⁰ The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 ushered in an era of political conservatism which until recently dominated American politics. Politicians from the American South were at the forefront of this renewed era of conservatism. See Earle and Merle Black's, *The Rise of Southern Politicians* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2003) and Sean Wilentz's, *The Age of Reagan: A History*

- 1974–2008 (New York, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008).
- ¹¹ For a thorough treatment of the impact and influence of Southern Protestants on American culture, particular the influence of Southern Baptists, see Sam Hill's essay, "Fundamentalism in Recent Southern Culture: Has It Done What the Civil Rights Movement Couldn't Do?," *The Journal of Southern Religion*, 1998, <http://jsr.fsu/essay.htm>.
- ¹² Sociologist of Religion Sara Diamond provides insightful accounts of the cultural politics of the Christian right in her books, *Roads to Dominion: Right Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Press, 1997) and *Not By Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998). Discussions of the key players in this movement, Abrahamic men, are paramount.
- ¹³ See *Newsweek Magazine's* coverage of the 2004 Reelection of George W. Bush; "How He Did It," *Newsweek Magazine*, November 15, 2004. Also, in 2005, *Time Magazine* devoted an entire issue to the influence of the Christian Right on the 2004 presidential election. See "The 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America," *Time Magazine*, January 7, 2005.
- ¹⁴ See "How It Could Go Wrong: Too Southern Too Greedy and Too Contradictory" in John Micklethwait and Adrian Woolridge's *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America* (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 249–269.
- ¹⁵ Top-down economic development is one of the consistent themes in Governor Mark Sanford's administration. This theme is echoed annually in the Governor's *State of the State*. As far as the concerns of this chapter are concerned see the 2005 *State of the State* address at www.scgovernor.com.
- ¹⁶ See *The Rise of Southern Republicans*, Ibid.
- ¹⁷ See *Strom*, Ibid.
- ¹⁸ For an exhaustive account of the politics of white redemption see Stephen Kantrowitz. *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
- ¹⁹ See "In the Days of My Youth" in *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press).
- ²⁰ See Dan Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace and Conservative Politics* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1997). Also see Jack Bass and Marilyn W. Thompson, *Strom: The Complicated Personal and Political Life of Strom Thurmond* (New York: Public Affairs Books, 2005).

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Chapter 13

‘Living High on the Hog’? Race, Class and Union Organizing in Rural North Carolina

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Introduction

IN THE PRE-CIVIL Rights era, the rural South was central to the analysis of the racial caste system and race relations, more broadly, that defined the United States.¹ Scholarship that examined the economic exploitation of African Americans, tied to the slave economy and subsequently sharecropping, necessarily focused on rural areas across the historic Black Belt. Similarly, scholarship as well as public discourse decrying the Jim Crow system focused on rural areas where deeply entrenched divisions between blacks and whites cut across all public and private spaces—and racial conflict took its most egregious forms as political and economic elites stood intransigent in their resistance to change. In the post-Civil Rights era, however, the rural South largely disappeared from the sociological analysis of race relations as well as public discourse. Instead, the largest metropolitan areas like Chicago, Detroit, and Los Angeles became the focus of high profile government reports as well as research by sociologists on residential segregation, labor market discrimination, housing discrimination, racial profiling, police brutality and a long list of other injustices suffered by African Americans as well as other minorities.²

Within sociology, studies of class conflict and labor organizing have similarly treated the rural South as secondary.³ This reflects both an “urban bias” as well as “northern bias”. In part, the “urban bias” that runs through this work reflects the reality that union organizing has historically been centered in manufacturing, which has largely been concentrated in metropolitan areas like Detroit, New York and Chicago. The northern bias also evident in labor studies further reflects the fact that the political economy of the South discouraged union organizing. Southern states were among those with the

lowest rates of unionization throughout the twentieth century, as political elites passed “right-to-work” laws in the post-Wagner era while employers openly engaged in union busting tactics presumably made illegal by federal law. In addition, the paternalism that was a cornerstone of labor relations in the South, particularly in rural areas, is typically regarded one of the key obstacles to labor organizing in this region.

This piece re-examines the dynamics of race, class and union organizing in the rural South, uncovering the forms that exploitation takes in the post-Civil Rights era and the complex factors that account for failure and success in the struggle for economic and social justice. More specifically, we focus on the way that class and race relations unfold in the historic union organizing drive that occurred at the Smithfield Packing Plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina. This town of sixty-seven sits in the largely rural southeastern corner of the state, eighty-five miles south Raleigh, the state capitol, and just forty miles north of the South Carolina border (see Figure 1). More than ten years ago, the Tar Heel Plant was the focus of a piece by *New York Times* journalist Charlie LeDuff that appeared in the best seller *How Race is Lived in America*.⁴ More recently, this plant was featured in the film *Food Inc.* (2009) which focused on the damage done by industrial food production to the environment and consumers. These accounts reveal two realities that make our analysis of class and race relations in this context a strategic case study which differs in several theoretically important ways from widely held images of the rural South—and informs broader discussions about global capitalism, race/class divisions and union organizing in the twenty-first century. First, the region in which the Smithfield Packing Plant sits is among those with a long history of rural industrialization. Second, this region is more multi-ethnic than most rural areas typical of the “Old South”. Since the colonial era, it has been home to Euro-Americans, African Americans, and Lumbee Indians as well as several other indigenous groups. In the past decade, the area has also become a “new Latino destination”.⁵

Scholars who focus on the labor movement as well as other social movements have identified a wide range of factors that may contribute to the failure and success of union organizing drives.⁶ Consistent with these accounts, LeDuff and others highlight three realities that are particularly relevant to analysis of union organizing at the Smithfield Packing Plant. First, most scholars treat the political climate as significant. North Carolina is among those southern states that are “right to work” and thus, a political climate that is largely unfavorable to unions. In this context, employers are

often given more freedom to engage in union busting tactics. The political climate undoubtedly contributes to the low unionization rate in North Carolina, which stood at 3.2% in 2010.⁷ More telling perhaps, this rate was the lowest in the nation. Second, low unionization rates are often tied to high unemployment. The area in which Smithfield Packing sits has been hard hit by plant closings, leaving many unemployed and desperate for work. Third, racial segregation and tensions have often worked to undermine union organizing. In his account of more than a decade ago, LeDuff portrays the multi-ethnic labor force at the Tar Heel plant as deeply divided by racial animosities that were rooted largely in the rising economic competition for the increasingly limited supply of job opportunities. According to this account, Latino immigrants, in particular, became targets of this hostility as employers increasingly depended on their labor while native born workers were displaced. Given these conditions, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) lost two union certification elections held in the 1990s at the Tar Heel plant, one of many such elections lost across the state and, more broadly, across the South.

In this piece, we return to this rural corner of North Carolina to explore the way that class relations, racial divisions and the struggle for social and economic justice have played out in the past two decades. More specifically, we examine more systematically the factors that contributed to the failure of organizing drives in the 1990's—and, ultimately, the success of the UFCW in 2008. In general, this victory built on a rare instance of solidarity across racial/ethnic lines as well as the mobilization of other strategic resources including a coalition of middle class allies and high profile celebrities. This case study provides many important insights about the history of trauma and resilience that is central to race and class relations in the United States. More broadly, the analysis of these dynamics as they have played out in the Tar Heel area underscores the significance of the rural South for the study of race and class relations more generally, particularly as this becomes a new Latino destination. Below, we examine these dynamics and their broader theoretical, historical and political significance.

From the Historic Black Belt to a New Latino Destination

Until the 1990's, the Tar Heel area was in many ways similar to other rural places that are part of the historic Black Belt that emerged across the South more than two centuries ago.⁸ African Americans, arriving as slaves as well as

free men and women in the 1700s and 1800s, remain a more significant share of the population in this area than across the state and nation (see Figure 2). In Bladen County, African Americans account for 38% of the population. In Robeson County, they account for 25% of the population. Anglo Americans, most the descendants of Scottish settlers who arrived at the same time as African Americans, constitute 57% of the population in Bladen and only 31% of the population in Robeson. This part of the historic Black Belt, unlike most others, also includes a large Native American population.⁹

In the past two decades, the racial/ethnic composition of this area has become even more diverse with an unprecedented wave of Latino immigrants. In 1990, only 704 Latinos lived in Robeson County while only 150 lived in Bladen County, accounting for less than 1% of the population across the area. By 2000, those figures had increased by more than 600% to reach a total of 7,192 (see Table 1). In the past decade, the Latino population has continued to grow, exceeding 12,000 by 2010. This growth reflects a broader trend that is widely considered one of the most important demographic shifts of the late twentieth century. Latinos, who were historically concentrated in traditional gateway cities like Chicago, have increasingly settled in smaller towns and cities in the last twenty years.¹⁰ Nowhere has this transformation been more apparent than in the non-metropolitan areas of North Carolina, where the growth of the Hispanic population has registered record highs. Though Latinos represent a small minority, their arrival to the Tar Heel area as well as other rural places has transformed the racial/ethnic landscape in ways that complicate race and class relations.

A Rural Economy Transformed: Industrialization, Deindustrialization, Poverty and Wealth

For much of the 19th and 20th centuries, the institutional racism that defined the Old South gave Whites economic and political power over blacks and other non-whites in the Tar Heel area. The economy, as part of the historic “Black Belt”, offered few opportunities other than those tied to the production of cash crops—and, subsequently, textiles, furniture, and lumber as well as commercial agriculture. During the slave era, more than 20% of the population in this area was forced to work the fields producing tobacco and cotton as well as other crops for regional and global markets. With emancipation, sharecropping replaced slavery as the cornerstone of an economy that remained largely dependent on the production of agricultural

products for market. In Robeson County, more than 20% of the farms were sharecropped.¹¹ In Bladen County, this figure rose to more than 25%. African Americans were disproportionately relegated to sharecropping across these counties. By the turn of the century, Robeson County ranked second in cotton production in North Carolina while tobacco production similarly provided the county a leading role in the regional and national economy. Bladen County also played a significant role in tobacco and cotton production as well as lumber. At the same time, a number of manufacturing firms were established across the area.

In the post-War era, manufacturing became more pivotal to the regional economy, taking center stage in a cycle of boom and bust that has devastated the area. By the 1990's, textiles and furniture had become key sources of employment in this area as they did across many North Carolina counties, including those defined as rural. Robeson County, in particular, became increasingly dependent on manufacturing. Companies like Sara Lee, Hanesbrands, and Universal Leaf Tobacco provided hundreds of jobs as well as thousands of dollars in tax revenues across many towns in this county.¹² Lumberton, as the urban core, was home to the largest number of manufacturing firms but towns as small as Fairmont, Maxton, St. Paul's and Red Springs also depended heavily on textiles and apparel as well as several other industries. At its height, manufacturing accounted for nearly 30% of employment in the area.¹³ In the past two decades, these industries have declined dramatically, casualties of the international competition that has driven textiles and furniture overseas in search of cheaper labor (see Figure 3). Robeson County has witnessed more than ninety-four business closings since 1990. More than 10,000 jobs have been lost in this process of deindustrialization. Textiles account for over half of the job losses.

During this period, Bladen County has remained more heavily dependent on commercial agriculture. As of 2000, agriculture accounted for 48% of total employment.¹⁴ However, rural industrialization also occurred in this area, bringing Crown Hosiery, Mayo Yarns, Frontier Spinning Mills, and WestPoint Pepperell as well as other textile firms and manufacturing establishments. In the past decade, these companies and others have shut down their plants across the county. Total job losses since 1990 exceed 1,600. As in Robeson County, textiles and apparel account for the majority of these losses.¹⁵

In the midst of this decline, the arrival of Smithfield Packing was heralded by local officials as well as many displaced workers as a golden opportunity. In 1992, the company opened the largest pork processing facility in the world

in Tar Heel. By any measure, the scale of operation is enormous; this plant employs more than 5,000 workers to process more than 32,000 hogs a day. No other company in the area employs as many workers at a single facility. The operation, like other such plants, was established as part of a broader process of vertical integration in the meatprocessing industry. Beginning in the 1980's, conglomerates like Smithfield shifted production from city to country to be closer to the farms that provided livestock to processing facilities.¹⁶ Smithfield's Tar Heel plant strategically capitalized on the region's long history as a leading hog farming area. At the time the plant opened, Bladen County ranked fourth in hog production across the state while Robeson County ranked sixth. Hog farming subsequently expanded driven by rising production goals at the Tar Heel plant. From 1992 to 2002, hog production increased from 141,916 to 396,921 in Robeson and 214,113 to 865,615 in Bladen, an increase that reflected the growing importance of the pork processing industry to the local economy.¹⁷

The growth of this sector, in large part, accounts for the dramatic growth of the Latino population in this area. The correlation reflects a more far-reaching causal effect captured in national studies; across the country, the arrival of Latinos to new settlement areas is largely fueled by the expansion of meatprocessing as well as other food processing industries.¹⁸ This effect is indicative of a widely recognized reality: in the past few decades, these industries increasingly turned to undocumented workers to cut labor costs. Most Latinos who settled in the Tar Heel area as well as other rural areas across North Carolina during this period were undocumented and, thus, particularly desperate for the job opportunities provided by Smithfield as well as other employers. By the late 1990's, many observers estimated that more than half of the workers at the Tarheel plant were Latinos, most undocumented.¹⁹

Notwithstanding the arrival of Smithfield Packing, the Tar Heel area remains one of the most economically disadvantaged in the state. The bleak economic reality facing residents of this area is captured by several indicators commonly used to tap the socioeconomic status of individuals and families. In 2009, the median household income was only \$31,248 and \$27,421 in Bladen and Robeson counties respectively, falling far short of the median household income across North Carolina and the United States (see Table 2). Poverty rates tell a similarly grim story. In 2000, 23% of the population in Robeson County fell below the official poverty line. By 2009, this figure had increased to more than 31%, double the rate evident at the state and national level. In

Bladen County, poverty rates increased from 21% to 23% during this same period. Among children, the poverty rates are particularly alarming. Participation in free and reduced lunch programs, a widely used measure of child poverty, reaches more than 75% across this area.²⁰

In large part, these high poverty rates are tied to the rise in unemployment that is the consequence of deindustrialization in the area. For the past two decades, Robeson County and Bladen County have reported significantly higher unemployment rates than those recorded for the state and nation. In 1990, the unemployment rate was over 9.0% across these counties while the state and nation recorded much lower rates of 5.1% and 6.3%, respectively. In 2000, unemployment rates in the area had dropped below 7% but remained significantly higher than the state and national rates, both of which had declined to 3.9%. With the most recent recession, unemployment rates increased dramatically to reach highs around 13.5%-13.6% early in 2010. These rates ranked among the highest reported across counties in North Carolina at that time.

Unemployment in this area cuts across racial/ethnic lines as do other economic hardships that are tied to the process of deindustrialization. Non-whites, however, are overrepresented among those who struggle financially. African Americans, in particular, have historically depended more heavily on manufacturing jobs than other native-born residents in this area and thus have been hardest hit by job losses in this sector. In 2000, more than 30% of all African Americans across the area were employed in manufacturing (see Table 2). According to census figures, unemployment rates among blacks in Robeson County reflect the wave of plant closings that has occurred in the past two decades. Between 1990 and 2000, unemployment rates among blacks rose from 12.6% to 16%, a rate higher than for any other group. Given this, poverty rates among African Americans are also extraordinarily high. More than 30% of the black population across the area falls below the official poverty line, a figure significantly higher than the poverty rate for African Americans across the state and nation. This figure is nearly three times the poverty rate among non-Hispanic whites.

Many American Indians in this area also face significant economic hardships, though their incorporation into the local economy as well as tribal affiliations distinguishes their experience from African American experiences in several important ways. In general, Native Americans in Robeson County and Bladen County have depended less heavily on manufacturing jobs than blacks; about 26% were employed in this sector in 2000. In contrast, they have

depended more heavily on construction as several members of the Lumbee Tribe have been able to build their own businesses. More broadly, educational institutions, health and housing programs as well as other such sectors that serve the Lumbee provide members of this tribe a set of employment opportunities that exist alongside the larger economy. Notwithstanding these opportunities, the economic downturn in manufacturing has also created economic hardship for many Native Americans who either worked in this sector or other sectors that suffer the ripple effects of plant closings. These difficult conditions are reflected, in part, in poverty rates that are significantly higher among Native Americans than among non-Hispanic whites. In 2000, the official poverty rate reached 23% and 40% in Robeson and Bladen counties, respectively.

Latino newcomers also face a serious set of economic hardships despite the opportunities in meatpacking that have drawn them to this area. As accounts of rural industrialization and Latino migration suggest, manufacturing is the single most important source of employment for Latinos in the Tar Heel area but, for many, it has failed to provide economic security. Latinos depend on manufacturing even more heavily than African Americans, as 44% are employed in this sector. Poverty rates among Hispanics, however, are high, reaching more than 25% which is double the rate among non-Hispanic whites.

At the same time, this portrait of the dire economic realities facing non-whites should not obscure the profits and wealth secured by several corporate actors and individuals in this area. Smithfield Packing, in particular, has increased its profits and financial worth since its arrival to the area. By 2010, the company was generating more than \$11 billion in revenues and its Chief Executive Officer, C. Larry Pope, was paid a salary of more than \$1 million. As importantly, the company has expanded its reach in two key ways. First, it has secured control over every part of the production chain including many of those farms that provide livestock to its processing plants. In North Carolina, for example, the company owns nearly 300 farms.²¹ These larger confinement facilities have increasingly replaced traditional family farms adding to the hardships facing many in this area.²² Second, Smithfield has acquired several corporate competitors. Premium Standards Farms, the second leading pork producer, represents its most significant acquisition. Despite anti-trust charges, the merger was approved by the Justice Department in 2007. The company's reach geographically has also expanded to include farms and plants in North Carolina, Virginia, South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska and Illinois. More recently, Smithfield has expanded its operations to Romania and Poland. Together,

these strategies have consolidated Smithfield's position as the leading pork producer though, paradoxically, many residents in the communities in which it operates struggle to secure basic needs.²³

Organizing for Justice at Smithfield

Over the past two centuries, those relegated to the lower ranks of the class and racial hierarchies that define the rural South have organized in multiple ways to protest the system of power relations in place. In the 1990's, Smithfield Packing became "ground zero" in this on-going struggle, as rank-and-file workers mobilized to protest the problematic conditions they faced at the Tar Heel plant and, more broadly, the abuse of corporate power at the expense of men and women who work hard to support their families. The struggle for union representation and more humane work conditions encountered the kind of employer resistance and "countermovement strategies" that are common in response to union organizing drives, particularly in the South. At Smithfield, racial/ethnic divisions also were a serious obstacle for union organizers. Tensions between blacks and Latinos, in particular, proved problematic, given that these groups accounted for more than 80% of all production workers. Despite these obstacles, workers finally succeeded in their drive to secure union representation in 2008. The victory is widely regarded as historic. More broadly, the struggle for union representation that unfolds at the Smithfield Packing plant provides important insights about the obstacles that workers across the South encounter, particularly in new Latino destinations, and the resources, allies and strategies that can be mobilized to negotiate these obstacles and secure victory.

Workers at the Smithfield Packing Plant began organizing soon after the plant opened in 1992. Union organizing was fueled less by the bread and butter issues that have been central to the American labor movement and more by health and safety issues as well as the harsh and arbitrary treatment to which workers were routinely subject. Low pay was certainly a concern for many production workers given that many, if not most, were making less than a living wage.²⁴ More pressing, however, were the injury and illnesses that are so common among those who worked the disassembly line. Workers at the Tar Heel plant face a wide range of hazards, many life threatening. To some extent, these health and safety problems reflect a long-standing problem that cuts across meatprocessing plants. Meatpacking is widely recognized as a high hazard industry. From the "kill floor" to the packaging department,

workers are faced with a production process that is grueling and dangerous. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) provides a grim review of the injuries and illnesses that are common along the disassembly line in its "Safety and Health Guide for the Meatpacking Industry". It states:

Workers can be seriously injured by moving animals prior to stunning, and by stunning guns that may prematurely or inadvertently discharge while they try to still the animal. During the hoisting operation, it is possible for a 2,000- pound carcass to fall on workers and injure them ... Workers can suffer from crippling arm, hand, and wrist injuries. For example, carpal tunnel syndrome, caused by repetitive motion, can literally wear out the nerves running through one section of the wrist. Workers can be cut by their own knives and by other workers' knives during the butchering process.... Workers can be severely burned by cleaning solvents and burned by heat sealant machines when they wrap meat. It is not uncommon for workers to sever fingers or hands on machines that are improperly locked-out or inadequately guarded. Many workers can also injure themselves by falling on treacherously slippery floors and can be exposed to extremes of heat and cold.²⁵

Given these conditions, injury and illness rates have consistently been much higher than in other manufacturing industries. From 1975 to 1991, these rates rose from 31.2 to a high of 45.5 per 100 full time workers. In the 1990s, the incidence of illness and injury declined but remained triple the overall rate for manufacturing, exceeding that in other high hazard industries like construction and mining.²⁶ Data for the past decade indicates that meatpacking remains more hazardous than other manufacturing industries with illness rates alone reaching over ten times the national average. Repetitive motion disorders, in particular, are more common in meatpacking than they are in 23 other high hazard industries identified by OSHA.²⁷ Workers suffering from this disorder typically experience damage to fingers, wrists, shoulders and arms that can result in long term disability.

In large part, these injuries are tied to technological "innovations" in the disassembly of hogs and cattle fueled by the drive to maximize efficiency, productivity and profits. In the past few decades, the assembly line has become increasingly mechanized, deskilled and fast paced. In an effort to boost productivity, management has increased line speeds to unprecedented rates, forcing production workers to repeat the same motion more than 2,000 times an hour. Health and safety problems are compounded by a disregard for health and safety laws that are intended to protect workers from falls, machinery, and chemical exposure as well as other hazards.

At the Tar Heel plant, management's disregard for the health and safety of

workers has been particularly egregious according to many. In part, this disregard is reflected in the excessive quotas and pace of production imposed on workers at the plant. However, neither federal nor state law explicitly prohibits these excessive line speeds—and thus Smithfield has technically not acted illegally on this count. In other ways, however, “corporate misconduct” at the Tar Heel plant does contribute to health and safety problems. This misconduct is reflected perhaps most clearly in the results of inspections conducted by OSHA. From 1992 to 2010, this plant was inspected 30 times (see Table 3). In nearly every inspection, the company was cited for violating health and safety laws. Overall, inspectors recorded 115 violations. Nearly a third of these violations were serious. The violations discovered during two inspections conducted in 2005 are indicative of the hazards that workers faced. In March, the company was cited for twenty-seven violations, including unguarded blades, improper training, and blocked exits.²⁸ Three months later, 660 pounds of ammonia spilled onto the roof due to an improperly installed refrigeration system, exposing more than 1,000 workers to the fumes. The company was again cited for negligence. In one particularly tragic case, the company’s failure to comply with safety standards resulted in the death of an employee.²⁹ On November 20, 2003, Glenn Birdsong, 25, climbed into a holding tank to clean it out. He was overcome by toxic fumes and found dead at the bottom of the tank. In their inspection report, OSHA officials indicated that this employee, who was in a ninety day training program, had not been properly instructed by his supervisors. In addition, the tank was not properly labeled as a dangerous confined space.

Other workers, though not fatally injured, have experienced a set of health and safety problems that make this plant more problematic than others. The UFCW, among others, has identified three key ways in which the situation facing Smithfield workers has been particularly egregious. First, non-fatal injury rates at the Tar Heel plant rose in the past decade when rates at comparable unionized plants declined. Second, non-fatal injuries sustained by Smithfield workers were more serious than those reported at other plants. Injuries due to cuts, lacerations, blunt force trauma, and excessive exposure to ammonia and other chemicals resulted in more days away from work. Third, management systematically responded in ways that exacerbated the health problems workers developed. Workers who are injured on the job are typically directed to the on-site clinic—or the medical facility that Smithfield runs right across the road from the plant. Based on hundreds of interviews with workers, the UFCW claims that staff often failed to recognize the severity of the injuries

that workers sustained—and, as a result, failed to provide adequate care. In addition, the company routinely denied injured employees worker compensation. Further, many workers report they were fired after sustaining injuries even though they tried to return to their jobs. For this reason, workers have been reluctant to report injuries and illnesses and often “work hurt”.³⁰

Several sources document the hundreds of cases in which injured workers have been treated with this disregard. Quincy Harvey is just one of the many cases that are typical at the Tar Heel plant.³¹ Harvey, an African American man, worked for ten years on the disassembly line, beginning on the kill floor where he was a split saw operator. “I had to cut it [the hog] open... while the line was moving. I did that [seven and a half hours a shift] for six years.” He suffered multiple injuries while in this job and was finally transferred to another position after developing persistent shoulder pain. At Harvey’s request, his supervisor finally sent him to the company clinic when he complained about the pain but insisted the injury was not work related. The doctor ordered a week medical leave, at which point Harvey returned to his job but continued to experience pain. He was then sent back to the Smithfield clinic and given an MRI which revealed a torn rotator cuff. The injury forced him to take an extended medical leave during which time he received a letter from Smithfield indicating he had been terminated. Despite surgery and physical therapy, Harvey’s injury resulted in permanent disability, leaving him with few job prospects. Months after he was fired, Harvey shared with reporter Aaron Sarver a story echoed by other injured workers: “I still have to have another surgery on my shoulder. The doctor didn’t take enough bone out. I’m going to have to go through this whole thing over again. He said that there’s scar tissue build up because I was in a sling for six weeks. I don’t have nowhere near the motion I had in my arm before.”

Smithfield initially denied him worker compensation for the medical costs incurred, which exceeded \$30,000.

Nationally, Latino workers are more likely than others to be injured on the job.³² Consistent with this pattern, Latinos at the Smithfield Plant have been among those who most commonly have sustained injuries and illnesses in the past two decades. Migdalia Felicia Valdez is one of many such workers. She was eight months pregnant when she had a miscarriage followed by a strenuous workday. She believes the physical stress caused by excessive line speeds triggered the miscarriage. “We have to put a stop to this. I’m not the only one—there is a pregnant woman on the line who the supervisors know is far along, yet they still put her on the line working with knives”.³³ For

Hispanic employees, these health and safety problems were often exacerbated by language barriers and their immigration status. According to many, the Smithfield clinic largely failed to provide Latino employees with the bilingual services that they needed when they sought medical care, thus compromising treatment. Further, undocumented workers were much less likely to seek and secure worker compensation. Many failed to apply for these benefits when injured, fearful that their undocumented status would be uncovered if they completed the paperwork and result in termination and/or deportation. Others were simply not adequately informed of their rights—and Smithfield often exploited their lack of knowledge.³⁴

All who work along the disassembly line, regardless of race/ethnicity, face these problems. However, building solidarity, which is central to the success of every union organizing drive, was a difficult task at Smithfield Packing. Racial/ethnic divisions and tensions posed perhaps the greatest obstacles to worker solidarity. Outside the plant, racial divisions were most clearly reflected in the residential segregation evident across towns as well as across neighborhoods within towns. The color line that cut through Lumberton, the largest population center, was typical of the divide seen in other towns in this area. Though a multiracial place, African Americans, in particular, have been concentrated in neighborhoods where few whites live. Census maps further clarify the level of residential segregation in the broader Tar Heel area—and the distance that has literally separated blacks, whites, Native Americans and newly arrived Latinos. In Robeson County, African Americans who live outside Lumberton have been concentrated in the smaller towns and rural areas that lie near the South Carolina border, more than 30 miles from the Smithfield Packing Plant (Figure 4). In places like Maxton, Fairmont and Rowland, African Americans account for the majority. In Bladen County, blacks are scattered across sparsely populated rural areas. Native Americans, on the other hand, have largely been concentrated in Lumberton, Pembroke and Prospect, historically significant places for the Lumbee population (Figure 5). Perhaps not surprisingly, Latino newcomers have become concentrated in the small towns and rural stretches that lie closest to the Tar Heel plant, like St. Paul's, Rennert, Rex and Shannon (Figure 6). Many others, however, are scattered along desolate rural routes where they live isolated from longer time residents. In fact, only 22% of all Latinos in Robeson and Bladen counties live in towns that are incorporated. Only 11% live in the two largest population centers, Lumberton and Elizabethtown.³⁵

Within the Tar Heel plant, these racial/ethnic divisions were reinforced by

a set of corporate practices reminiscent of the strategies used to “divide and conquer” industrial workers at the turn of the century. In general, workers were organized into a rigid racial/ethnic hierarchy that assigned supervisory jobs to whites, “clean” menial jobs to American Indians, and the most demanding production jobs to African Americans and Latinos.³⁶ Blacks and Hispanics were further segregated along the disassembly line in ways that systematically undermined trust and solidarity. According to Sherri Buffkin, formerly a supervisor at the Tar Heel plant, “Smithfield keeps blacks and Latino employees virtually separated in the plant with the black workers on the kill floor and the Latinos in the cut and conversion departments.”³⁷ Racial tensions were exacerbated as company officials replaced black workers with Latinos. African Americans held more than 60% of the jobs at the plant during its early years while Latinos held about 25% of the slots. Within a decade, the demographics were reversed. Latinos constituted a majority at 60% while African Americans had become the minority on the disassembly line, accounting for about 25%. Faced with this dramatic shift, it was common for African American workers to define Hispanics as the “problem”, a source of cheap labor willing to endure increasingly faster line speeds and harsh conditions at the plant. Further, Hispanic workers, given their undocumented status, were widely seen as unwilling to stand with African Americans in their support of a union.³⁸

To counter union organizing, Smithfield Packing coupled these hiring practices with a wide range of other strategies made illegal by the National Labor Relations Act in 1935. In general, these tactics interfered with the right to organize by using threats, intimidation and coercion to discourage support for the UFCW. According to Buffkin, the campaign to counter union organizing was deliberate:

The company brought in attorneys to tell us [management] what to do and how to react. The first thing the company told us was that the attorneys were there to make sure that the union did not get in... The attorneys showed us how to undermine pro-union sentiment and undermine pro-union employees. We were told to keep a record of the names of anti-union employees in our departments and the shifts they worked... If an employee was pro-union, we were to tell them how bad it would be if the union got in. We were told to push the idea that the union would mean a threat of strikes, that strikes would mean loss of their job, and that without a job they wouldn't be able to support their families.³⁹

Workers were subject to written warnings as well as captive audience meetings that featured anti-union speakers and videos. At the same time, union

flyers were confiscated and other information promoting the union was censored in various ways.

The company took additional measures to discourage support for the union among Latino workers, exploiting their vulnerability as undocumented workers as well as fueling their distrust of black workers. Management hired a special consultant from California to run the anti-union campaign in Spanish. Latinos were forced to attend meetings where they were told that African Americans would “take over” the union if the organizing drive was successful. Further, management claimed the union would, in turn, report undocumented workers to immigration officials, allowing African Americans to take back these jobs at the Tar Heel plant.⁴⁰

Workers who supported the union, including African Americans as well as Latinos, were also subject to various forms of discrimination and retaliation. For example, corporate attorneys advised management to force union sympathizers to work overtime if they typically did not want to do so. Conversely, those who typically requested overtime were denied these benefits, exacerbating their financial difficulties. Other benefits were similarly manipulated to penalize pro-union employees. Most significantly, many workers who supported the union were fired in direct violation of federal labor law. Buffkin, as a supervisor, was among those directly charged with this task. Her account of these terminations reflects the company’s determination to rid the plant of pro-union workers. According to Buffkin, “I was called downstairs by the company attorney and asked if Margot [McMillan] was one of mine... He then told me that he had come out of a meeting in which Margot’s name had come up repeatedly as “pro-union”. This company attorney looked me dead in the face and told me, ‘Fire the bitch. I’ll beat anything she or they throw at me in court.’”

Similarly illegal was the use of police to intimidate workers, a strategy also reminiscent of tactics mobilized by employers against the labor movement at the turn of the century but not common today. In the week leading up to the second union certification election, Smithfield’s director of security Daniel Priest mobilized local police officers to patrol the road leading into the plant where union organizers were distributing flyers. The presence of police was particularly intimidating to Latino workers who were undocumented. Further, security guards were stationed inside the plant cafeteria while workers cast their vote, a practice not typical in union certification elections.⁴¹

As in countless other organizing drives across the country, these tactics succeeded at least in the short run. In 1994, the UFCW lost its first election at

the Tar Heel plant. In 1997, the union lost its second election. This defeat, however, was not decisive. Rather, it became an important turning point for workers as the struggle to secure union recognition moved from the local level to the national stage fueled largely by the strategic action of both workers and union organizers as well as the work of several high profile allies. In the wake of defeat, more than a dozen complaints were filed against Smithfield through the National Labor Relations Board. These complaints charged the company with a wide range of unfair labor practices that interfered with the right to organize guaranteed by federal law.⁴² Unlike most such cases, these lawsuits gained national visibility through both media outlets and the political arena. On June 16, 2000, the *New York Times* ran reporter Charlie LeDuff's stark exposé of the harsh conditions workers faced on the disassembly line at the Tar Heel plant and the tactics used by Smithfield to counter union organizing.⁴³ Concurrently, Human Rights Watch published a searing account of illegal anti-union activities across several industries; a case study of the Tar Heel Plant was among those included in the report. Two years later, a Senate Committee headed by Edward Kennedy held an investigative hearing to examine these same labor law violations. In 2004, Human Rights Watch published another report, focusing squarely on meatpacking. The Tar Heel plant, with its abysmal record of injuries and illness as well as corporate resistance to union organizing, was again included as a case study.⁴⁴

During this period, workers secured several significant legal victories. On December 15, 2000, Administrative Law Judge John West found the company guilty of "egregious and pervasive" misconduct during the two failed union organizing drives. Based on the testimony of workers as well as other evidence, he concluded that employees who supported the union were illegally fired, disciplined, threatened and coerced in multiple ways, creating a climate of intimidation that interfered with the rights of all workers. He was particularly critical of the role of company officials who stationed police in the plant parking lot on the day of the election. This move, Judge West claimed, was among the many tactics intended to intimidate workers in ways reminiscent of corporate anti-union activities at the turn of the century. "Employees who supported the union would have an old-fashioned example of what can occur when they try to bring in a union." In his ruling, Judge West set aside the results of previous elections and ordered the company to rehire with back pay eleven workers who had been fired for union activity. Smithfield, however, appealed the decision, taking it for review before a three member NLRB panel in Washington D.C. On December 14, 2004, the NLRB

reaffirmed Judge West's decision, prompting another round of appeals. The case was finally decided by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia on May 5, 2006, nearly nine years after the UFCW had last failed to win the election at Tar Heel.⁴⁵ The Court upheld the decision of the NLRB, concurring that the company "was exceptionally hostile to union-organizing activities at the Tar Heel plant" and had illegally engaged in a pattern of 'intense and widespread coercion' to discourage union organizing. Further, the court ordered the reinstatement of four workers and issued a "cease and desist" order to halt all illegal anti-union activities.

In the wake of this decision, the UFCW pressed Smithfield to voluntarily recognize the union or at minimum enter into a "neutrality agreement" so as to guarantee workers the fair election they had been denied. The proposal represented a new direction unions were pursuing nationwide after losing elections.⁴⁶ Frustrated by their losses, unions were pushing companies to remain neutral during organizing drives. When Smithfield refused this proposal, the struggle to secure union recognition entered a final round. This time, union leaders focused more deliberately on organizing a national campaign to highlight the plight of Smithfield workers while also working in the trenches at the local level. The decision largely reflected the growing significance of the Smithfield campaign for the labor movement across the country, a point underscored by lead organizer Gene Bruskin. "Many people regard this as one of the most important, if not most important, labor struggles going on in the United States. Organizing in the South is really critical to the future of the region."⁴⁷ Given its significance, the UFCW launched "Justice at Smithfield" in June 2006. Its purpose was to mobilize a coalition of college students, clergy, civil rights activists and others across the country to work in multiple ways as allies. To this end, union leaders emphasized two points in framing their campaign. First, they highlighted the health and safety problems workers faced on the disassembly line and claimed the drive for union recognition was the only way to secure safer conditions for these workers. Second, they explicitly defined the harsh conditions workers faced on the shop floor as a civil rights issue. Bruskin, for example, referred to the Tar Heel Plant as a "modern plantation" saying "it's got walls and machinery in there instead of cotton." Further, organizers emphasized the ways employers had pitted Latinos and blacks against each other and called for solidarity in their campaign for "justice".

This discourse was paired with organizational work on the ground to establish a network of allies. To draw the support of students, union leaders

organized a nationwide tour of college campuses. At each stop, *Justice at Smithfield* held events that featured rank-and-file workers who could provide personal accounts of the injuries and other hardships they had faced at the Tar Heel plant. A similar approach was used to generate links to a wide range of churches and civil rights organizations, including the NAACP, Midwest Coalition for Human Rights, and Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In addition, unions secured the support of such high profile celebrities and “moral entrepreneurs” as Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Susan Sarandon and Danny Glover.

Building on this network, the campaign organized protests in several major cities, including Chicago, Washington, Atlanta, New York, Raleigh and Richmond, the company’s headquarters. *Justice at Smithfield* enlisted international support as well, as protests were organized in Poland, France and Spain. Many echoed the discourse articulated by the union. Atlanta pastor Markel Hutchins, who became a speaker at colleges and churches to generate support for the campaign, was among those who emphasized their concerns regarding civil rights, in particular. “I became involved with this not so much as a union issue, but as a civil and human rights issue. What’s happening there is eerily reminiscent of the days of Jim Crow in terms of gross mistreatment.”⁴⁸

Mobilized by these concerns, the protests in which this coalition of allies participated had several targets that reflected two key goals: first, generate public awareness of the problem and second, enlist consumers and other key stakeholders to put pressure on Smithfield on behalf of workers. As in many of the most historic union organizing drives, a boycott emerged as the cornerstone of *Justice at Smithfield’s* national campaign- and thus, grocery stores became one of the key targets for protesters. “Smithfield is not listening so we’re going to have to go after their pocketbook,” said Leila McDowell, key spokesperson for the campaign.⁴⁹ Wearing “Justice at Smithfield” shirts, union supporters provided educational flyers featuring worker’s stories to shoppers at grocery stores across the nation. In addition, union leaders pressed management at Harris Teeter and other groceries to boycott Smithfield products until the company agreed to a fair election. They also petitioned city council members in Boston, New York, Chicago and other cities to adopt resolutions calling for a boycott “until the company ends all forms of abuse, intimidation, and violence against its workers.”⁵⁰

In addition, *Justice at Smithfield* launched an innovative campaign to pressure celebrity spokesperson Paula Deen to support workers in their drive

for union recognition and sever her ties with the company. In 2006, Deen became Smithfield's first celebrity spokesperson, providing unprecedented publicity for the company. She also became the first food celebrity to be targeted by a union in an organizing drive.⁵¹ Drawing from its network of allies, *Justice at Smithfield* organized rallies, demonstrations and prayer vigils at multiple stops along Deen's national book tour in 2007. In Washington D.C., for example, more than twenty individuals gathered outside the National Museum of Natural History, holding signs that urged, "Paula: Tell Smithfield to Stop Abusing its Workers". Protestors along this tour articulated their concerns in ways that reflected the effectiveness of the union's campaign to educate consumers and mobilize them for action. Reverend William Jarvis Johnson, one of several at the D.C. site, explained, "Workers have suffered terrible injuries at Smithfield," and "once you know the truth you will not promote a product that is made through the pain and suffering of our families. We are here today to demand justice for Smithfield workers."⁵² In Atlanta, Reverend Marvin Morgan underscored the larger impact these protests hoped to generate, "What we're trying to do is bring this whole matter to the attention of the public."⁵³ Protestors also targeted Deen's restaurant in Savannah pressing her to meet with workers at the Tar Heel plant. Deen was also bombarded with petitions by mail from religious leaders, civil rights activists, students and others. The North Carolina Council of Churches, for example, sent a letter describing conditions at the plant and urging her to take action on behalf of workers. Similarly, Deen was called to account for her ties to the company on shows like *Larry King Live* and *The Diane Rheem Show*. In a final coup de grâce, *Justice at Smithfield* persuaded Oprah Winfrey to curtail Deen's appearance on her show, barring the celebrity chef from advertising in any way Smithfield products.⁵⁴

Justice at Smithfield used similar tactics to sway another group with the power to shape company policy: shareholders. In August 2006, the campaign drew more than 300 protesters to the site of the annual shareholders meeting in Richmond, Virginia. At a shareholders meeting the next year, the turnout increased to more than 500 protestors. As had other protests, the participants included workers from the Tar Heel plant as well as religious leaders, civil rights activists, and other supporters. A group of ministers, emphasizing their concern for human rights, entered these meetings to confront management about the practices at the plant and press the company to guarantee fair elections. Reverend William Barber, president of the North Carolina NAACP

chapter, articulated the sentiments of others, "It's about people who work hard and don't mind working hard, but they want protections and they want a fair contract."⁵⁵

This campaign at the national level was coupled with renewed organizing efforts at the local level. Among workers at the plant, union organizers focused on building solidarity among African Americans and Latinos, in particular. In large part, this involved generating support for union representation among Latino workers so that they would stand with their African American co-workers on this issue. The UFCW did so in several ways. As at other plants that depended heavily on Latinos, the union hired scores of Spanish-speaking organizers who could discuss with undocumented workers the fears that management had fueled, clarify their legal rights, and explain the benefits they would secure if they supported the union. Some of these organizers were paid union staffers while others were drawn from the pool of students and other allies recruited through *Justice at Smithfield*. These organizers worked out of a UFCW center close to the plant where they provided English classes as well other services. They also visited many in their homes and Latino stores and restaurants. These strategies could not, however, counter the difficulties union organizers faced when immigration officials targeted the Tar Heel plant beginning in 2006. Smithfield Packing, one month after the *Justice at Smithfield* campaign was launched, entered into an agreement with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to identify undocumented employees at the plant and target them for "removal". The agreement marked Smithfield's participation in a nationwide program dubbed the ICE Mutual Agreement between Government and Employers (IMAGE) that was intended to facilitate enforcement through "cooperation". As a participant in this program, Smithfield and ICE would share records to flag those individuals, whose social security number did not match other key identifiers, including names, date of birth and gender. Using this strategy, Smithfield identified more than 500 employees as suspected undocumented workers. In October, the company fired seventy-five of these workers. In January 2007, ICE conducted a larger scale raid of the Tar Heel plant, arresting twenty one employees. ICE returned in August to detain and arrest suspected undocumented workers at their homes.⁵⁶

These events, though devastating in many ways, created an opportunity for union organizers to further generate support among Latino workers and more broadly build solidarity across racial/ethnic lines. To that end, the union emerged as a key advocate for undocumented workers—and worked more

deliberately to frame the campaign for union representation as a campaign that would protect the rights of immigrants, documented and undocumented, as a part of a broader effort to defend the civil and human rights of all workers. To some extent, union leadership at the national level had laid the groundwork for this approach to the challenges of organizing plants that depended heavily on undocumented workers. In 2000, the executive council of the AFL-CIO officially endorsed amnesty for undocumented workers—and subsequently union leaders became advocates for these workers in several high profile organizing drives (e.g., Minneapolis). The UFCW was among those unions guided by this historic shift in policy. On the ground in Tar Heel, union leaders empowered by this policy responded to the “crackdown” facing undocumented workers with harsh criticism as well as more protests. In response to the first wave of firings, hundreds of workers, led by the UFCW, participated in a two day walkout at the plant. Following the ICE arrests, Gene Bruskin, head of the *Justice at Smithfield* campaign tied the assault on undocumented workers to the long history of anti-union activities by management. “Smithfield has a history of using threats of arrest by immigration authorities to intimidate workers and this is a continuation of the pattern... The entire community has been terrorized... Parents are being torn from their young children who don’t know where they are. Many of these workers have given their life blood to this company for as long as six years and now are being summarily handed over to be arrested and discarded. It is unconscionable and continues Smithfield’s pattern of callous disregard for the wellbeing of its workers.” On behalf of the victims, the UFCW set up a “humanitarian” fund to assist their families with the financial hardship they were facing.⁵⁷

At the same time, union organizers worked to more explicitly tie their advocacy on behalf of Latino workers to the struggle for civil rights among African American workers and, in so doing, forge a coalition across these groups. These efforts were perhaps most evident in a campaign that centered on the Martin Luther King holiday. On January 9, 2007, workers and union officials formally petitioned management to provide a paid holiday. More than 4000 workers had signed a petition that was submitted at a meeting with company officials. Smithfield rejected the proposal. In response, union leaders organized a walkout that was coupled with several other events to rally workers and the community against the company. These events were specifically used to highlight the common plight of Latino and African American workers—and the need to stand together in their struggle for better work conditions. Most significant was a program held at a local church that

drew Hispanic and black workers together to commemorate the holiday along with individuals from Chicago, Washington D.C and other places representing the *Justice at Smithfield* campaign. The program for the event included photos of Dr. King and Cesar Chavez, co-founder of the United Farmworkers Union of America. A panel that included Latino and African American workers shared their personal accounts of the injuries they had sustained at Smithfield Packing. The testimony of Rafael Hernandez is typical of the stories shared. Through a translator, he spoke of injuries to his hand and spine, urging “we need people to support us so we can have better conditions.”⁵⁸

The MLK events, according to union leaders, represented an “enormous” success on several counts. Hundreds of workers participated in the walk out at the plant, despite management’s threat to terminate those who joined the protest. Eduardo Pena, the lead UFCW organizer in Tar Heel, highlighted the significance of the walkout saying, “In this type of facility, just a few workers missing has a big impact. If you’re working one of those specialized jobs and you don’t show up, everything slows down. In some departments, dozens of people were missing ... and the lines were moving very, very slow.” Many of these workers joined more than 700 individuals who turned out for the rally and program union and community leaders had organized to commemorate the holiday. Importantly, Latinos joined African Americans and others at these events. The turnout reflected the unions’ concerted efforts in the weeks leading up to the holiday to use the event to build solidarity across racial/ethnic lines. Union representative Keith Lundlum noted, “We’ve been passing out flyers in Spanish explaining the history of Dr. King, that fact that he fought for all people, that when he took the bullet he was supporting sanitation workers in Memphis who wanted to be treated with respect.” Pena further emphasized, “You don’t build African-American/Latino unity by doing a flyer or coming up with a catchy phrase...You do it by educating workers and letting them decide what they’re going to do.”⁵⁹

The coalition forged through these efforts, from the perspective of union leaders, represented a key organizing moment that provided a critical base for future action. Perhaps most importantly, a core of African American and Latino leaders emerged that renewed the organizing drive in Tar Heel. In the face of subsequent immigration raids, they were able to pull together a broad based coalition of workers and their allies with support from *Justice at Smithfield* to urge African Americans and Latinos to stand together. Within a month of the MLK holiday, leaders organized another protest in front of the hog-processing plant to denounce the treatment of undocumented workers.

The Reverend Nelson Johnson, an African American civil rights activist from Greensboro⁶⁰, captured the central theme of the discourse at the protest: “We are deeply concerned about the treatment of Latinos and the way that they are being arrested and put in fear. Our view is that they did not create this flawed immigration system and ...now they are being asked to bear the burden of separation of family, the loss of income and deportation ...[Hispanic workers have certain inalienable rights]. Latinos and blacks must work together to bring about change. I think at the end of the day, if we can create a unity between the races and unity around just causes, it will result in a better life for all of us.”⁶¹

In the next year, organizing at the local level continued to build this multi-racial coalition. A conference held in July, for example, pulled together Latino, African American and white workers along with ministers, students, and other activists affiliated with the *Justice at Smithfield* campaign. More than eighty individuals participated. Locally, participants came from the small towns surrounding the Tar Heel plant like St. Paul’s, Red Springs, Dudley, and Efland as well as Lumberton, Fayetteville, Raleigh and Greensboro. Others, recruited largely through a network of faith based organizations, came from Chicago, Atlanta, Detroit, New York, and San Diego as well as other cities across the nation. Three days of workshops were paired with a rally at the Smithfield Packing Plant that featured, as at other events, a panel of workers who provided powerful testimony about conditions at the plant.⁶²

This solidarity was further fortified when African American and Latino workers as well as others stood together again to celebrate the Martin Luther King holiday in 2008. The event marked their first significant victory: Smithfield had agreed to a paid holiday. At First Baptist Church, the program emphasized the connections between African Americans and Latinos as it had the previous year at this same location. Both Dr. King and Cesar Chavez were again commemorated—and, in turn, their struggle was linked to the struggle for worker’s rights at the Smithfield plant. Four workers shared their stories, emphasizing the record of accidents and injuries. Along with others, Pastor Maria Palmer commended the multiracial coalition gathered for the event, noting King and Chavez would have been proud to see “black and brown and white people committed to struggling together for justice”.⁶³

At several points during this campaign to forge broad support for the union at the local level as well as at the national level, Smithfield Packing met with union officials to discuss union recognition. However, negotiations broke down in October of 2007, at which point Smithfield escalated the conflict with

a lawsuit that was potentially devastating to the UFCW. This lawsuit charged the union with violating the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) as well as state laws. RICO lawsuits are typically used to fight organized crime perpetrated by the mafia and similar entities. Only in the past decade have corporations used the legal weapon provided by RICO to counter union organizing drives. Smithfield's suit borrowed from the precedent set by this handful of cases. In general, the suit claimed that the tactics used by the *Justice at Smithfield* campaign constituted "extortion", inflicting economic losses on the pork processor to force it to recognize the UFCW and secure a contract. Lead attorney G. Robert Blakey claimed on behalf of Smithfield, "It's economic warfare. It's actually the same thing as what John Gotti used to do. What the union is saying in effect to Smithfield is, "You've got to partner up with us to run your company."⁶⁴ Specifically, the suit claimed that the tactics used by the union in its national campaign illegally cost the company millions in revenues as well as a decline in stock prices. These losses were specifically tied to the grocery store pickets as well as the resolutions passed by city councils and "the loss of an advertising opportunity" for Paula Deen on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* as well as other strategies deliberately used by *Justice at Smithfield* organizers. Smithfield sought more than \$17 million in damages as well as an injunction to bar the union from engaging in these and similar tactics.

Some predicted the lawsuit would bankrupt the union's organizing fund.⁶⁵ In response, however, the *Justice at Smithfield* campaign persisted in its national and local level efforts, organizing additional rallies and pickets while also reaching out to rank-and-file workers in the Tar Heel area. In addition, union leaders launched an unprecedented negative ad campaign costing \$200,000 on June 19, 2008.⁶⁶ The ten week campaign strategically targeted Washington D.C. and Prince George's County to capitalize on the ties linking African Americans in the area to rural counties in North Carolina. Union leaders also hoped to reach congressional staffers who might press elected officials to stand with the union on this issue. The ad campaign ran advertisements on the metro, buses, as well as television and radio spots. The ads focused on the injuries and illnesses sustained by workers at the Tar Heel plant. Roscoe Bell was among the workers featured in these ads which carried his photo and personal story:

I was trampled by a 250 pound hog when I worked at Smithfield Packing in Tar Heel, North Carolina. I had internal bleeding and a dislocated shoulder but I had to

stagger alone to the clinic. No one from Smithfield would help me. Now I'm on pain pills every day I can barely walk. I can't play with my sons or work. My life is ruined. Until Smithfield does better by us, you can buy better than Smithfield.⁶⁷

In addition, many area residents received recorded phone calls from actor Danny Glover calling for solidarity with Smithfield workers. At a rally to launch the campaign, participants held a banner with the names of close to 800 workers injured on the job in 2006–2007 alone. Reverend Donald Robinson, a local Baptist pastor leading the rally, underscored the significance of the event saying, “The Washington region is one of the biggest consumers of Smithfield products.”⁶⁸

Within months, Smithfield's resistance to union organizing was broken. In October, the company announced they were dropping the RICO suit—and negotiated a neutrality agreement that would guide a third union certification election. According to labor leaders, the settlement was more favorable to union organizers than most such agreements. “Both the union and the company may talk themselves up, but neither may disrespect the other.”⁶⁹ The union also was guaranteed regular access to speak with production workers at the Tar Heel plant. In return, it would suspend the *Justice at Smithfield* campaign. With these guarantees in place, union organizing at the plant intensified. During lunch breaks, workers wearing “Smithfield Justice” shirts gave speeches to hundreds of their co-workers. Hundreds wore hard hats that read “Union Time”.

On December 12, 2008, the UFCW finally declared victory after its fifteen year struggle. The close vote—2,041 to 1,879—was testament to the difficulties of winning in the South as well as the importance of remaining resilient in the face of fierce opposition. The settlement assuring a fair election was widely credited as decisive. “We won because that gave us more of a level playing field,” claimed Joseph Hansen, UFCW president. Some credited the win to the immigration raids and the black majority that replaced Latinos on the shop floor.⁷⁰ Others, however, claimed that the union's victory reflected the support of a broad coalition. Lydia Victoria noted, “A lot of Hispanic people were scared to support the union... but people came together. People wanted fair treatment. We fought so long to get this and it finally happened.”⁷¹ Given the obstacles the union had faced, labor leaders and rank-and-file workers alike emphasized its historic significance. Gene Bruskin, director of the campaign, claimed, “The Tar Heel plant is big enough and important enough and close enough to other places that it has the possibility of moving other people. The

possibilities of organizing packinghouse workers would be transformative to the labor movement, for immigrants, for African American workers, for the South.”⁷² On the shop floor, Wanda Blue, a hog counter, echoed these sentiments along with many others. “It feels great. It’s like how Obama felt when he won. We made history.” By June 2009, the UFCW had secured the first ever union contract for 5000 production workers at the Tar Heel plant. The union was able to negotiate several significant concessions on traditional bread and butter issues, including wage increases and pension protection. More importantly perhaps were the gains made on health and safety issues as well as grievance procedures. Workers were guaranteed company funded safety training, a greater role in health and safety policies, and better sick pay. In addition, a system that guaranteed workers their grievances would be more systematically and fairly considered was established. UFCW member Orlando Williams, underscoring the significance of the contract, emphasized, “this contract will completely transform our workplace. This is the biggest four year wage increase our workers have ever had and it will make a real difference for our families and in this community. We could never have gotten that increase without a chance to bargain with the company. We will finally have a sense of security on the job because through our union we can make sure we have a safe place to work and that everyone is treated fairly.”⁷³

Conclusion

In the past few decades, the American labor movement has suffered a precipitous decline in membership and political power. For rank-and-file workers, this decline has had enormous costs, as real wages have dropped significantly and economic uncertainty has increased. As importantly, many workers who labor without union representation are increasingly forced to endure harsh and arbitrary treatment in silence. Despite a set of conditions that generate enormous discontent, union organizing drives among workers who fill many of the most difficult jobs have repeatedly been defeated. Union organizing across the South, in particular, has largely met with failure, leading many unions to give up on the region.

In this context, the victory secured by the UFCW at the Smithfield Packing Plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina is exceptional, providing a set of lessons critical for scholars and activists interested in rebuilding the labor movement. First, this case study underscores the fact that the struggle to organize workers in the South is often protracted, facing long odds against

enormous obstacles. These include the persistence of anti-union tactics that are illegal. Corporate resistance to unions remains entrenched and management is seemingly willing to use threats, coercion, and punitive measures like those used at turn of the century. The strategies used to fuel racial tensions on the shop floor, central to the tactics used against the labor movement in its early days, are increasingly significant across the rural South given that it has become a new Latino destination. Latino newcomers who are undocumented are likely to remain a “weak link”, particularly reluctant to stand in solidarity with African Americans and other native-born workers if they are convinced by management that doing so will cost them their jobs and result in their deportation. Conversely, native born workers will find it difficult to resist defining undocumented workers as unwanted competition and anti-union. Smithfield’s willingness to fuel these perceptions and animosities, though highly problematic, capitalizes on one the most important lessons provided by American labor history. Racial divisions are easily exploited and one of the most effective ways to “divide and conquer”. In the historic Black Belt, this strategy has resulted in one of the great ironies of recent anti-union campaigns. African Americans who were once defined as the “problem” by white ethnics when hired as strikebreakers are now faced with corporate practices that can similarly turn them against their Latino co-workers who are simply desperate for work.

Conglomerates like Smithfield can also mobilize more sophisticated strategies that capitalize on their legal and financial resources to counter union organizing. The use of consultants to strategically advise management in these anti-union campaigns is increasingly common. The RICO lawsuit levied by Smithfield against the UFCW is potentially a more damaging precedent for labor. Corporations faced with similar union organizing drives may increasingly turn to RICO as a way to intimidate labor leaders and, ultimately, bar them from using strategies historically treated as central to the democratic process (i.e. organizing boycotts etc.). Third, companies like Smithfield may also be able to simply depend on the “discipline of the market” to discourage union organizing. High unemployment and economic uncertainty tied to the current economic crisis simply make it much more difficult for unions to gain the support of workers who may fear for their jobs.

Notwithstanding their significance, the victory at the Smithfield Packing Plant provides a critical reminder that these obstacles are not insurmountable. However, this case study also makes clear that success in the face of these obstacles calls for the kind of strategic action and resilience often difficult to

mobilize and sustain. In this case, success rested on the mobilization of a multiracial coalition at the national level as well as local level coupled with several forms of “tactical innovation” that are not often coordinated in union organizing drives. In part, some of these strategies, like the negative ad campaign, require significant financial resources. Others, however, are lower cost strategies that could be more systematically pursued in other organizing drives. The strategies used to forge solidarity among workers at the Tar Heel plant are among these. The way that the union organizers framed the Martin Luther King holiday to bring Latino, African American and other workers together provides a particularly useful model for others. In this case, local pastors along with union leaders played a decisive role, undoubtedly because of the centrality of the church to the lives of both African Americans and Latinos. At the local and national level, college students can also contribute in multiple ways, as recent initiatives like Union Summer sponsored by the AFL-CIO indicate. The support of other “middle class allies” and high profile celebrities can also be critical, particularly when boycotts become a central piece of organizing strategies to press companies for fair elections. The Smithfield case suggests that labor leaders will likely need to be more strategic in framing their struggle to draw the support of these allies. More specifically, the problems facing workers on the shop floor need to be framed as a civil rights issue and/or human rights issue. The civil rights frame can be easily invoked in the rural South, given that the majority of workers in the most demanding jobs are often African Americans and, increasingly, Latinos. The human rights frame is also one that can be used to mobilize broad based support given that the problems facing many, including injuries and illnesses, violate legal principles intended to protect the dignity and worth of all persons.

Across the rural South, most workers employed in food processing, meat processing, poultry processing and other manufacturing industries remain unorganized. In North Carolina, this includes workers at Smithfield plants located in Wilson, Kinston and Clinton. At the Wilson plant, the UFCW lost a recent election by 388 to 181. Labor leaders claim this defeat reflects many of the same obstacles they encountered at the Tar Heel plant, including illegal anti-union activities by Smithfield. In the past year, the story of this and many other such defeats has been eclipsed by public discourse that casts unions as a problem. Labor leaders have been blamed for the recent collapse of the auto industry, the fiscal crisis facing state governments and the serious problems plaguing public schools as well as other crises. In the midst of this rhetoric, scholars and activists who return to the rural South in their work are

strategically situated to highlight the plight facing the most disadvantaged American families and the role unions can play to give them a voice. Without work that focuses on their struggle, the concerns of African Americans who have remained in the historic Black Belt as well as the concerns of Latino newcomers are easily silenced and their future will remain difficult in ways reminiscent of the past they had hoped to leave behind.

Figure 1: Smithfield Packing, Tar Heel, North Carolina

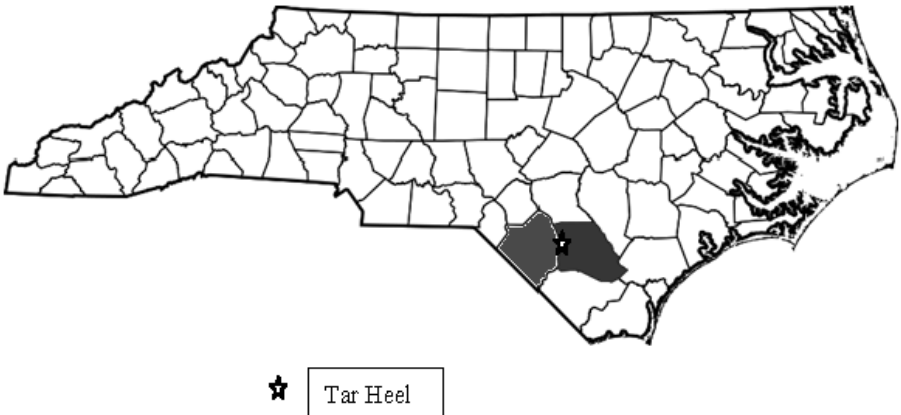
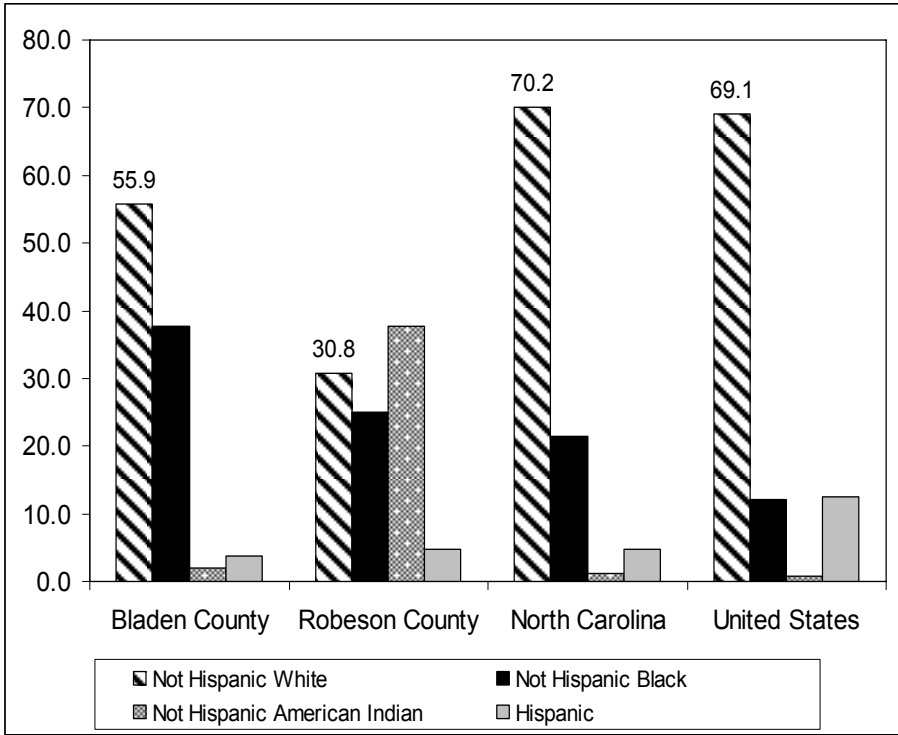


Figure 2: Demographic Profile of Tar Heel Area, 2000



Source: United States Census Bureau. Census of Population and Housing, 2000.

Table 1. Hispanic Population Growth in Tar Heel Area, 1990–2010

| | Hispanic Population | | | % Growth | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| | 1990 | 2000 | 2010 | 1990–2000 | 2000–2010 |
| Bladen County | 150 | 1,198 | 2,502 | 698.67 | 180.8 |
| Robeson County | 704 | 5,994 | 10,932 | 751.4 | 82.4 |
| North Carolina | 76,726 | 378,963 | 800,120 | 393.9 | 111.1 |
| United States | 22,354,059 | 35,305,818 | 50,477,594 | 57.9 | 43.0 |

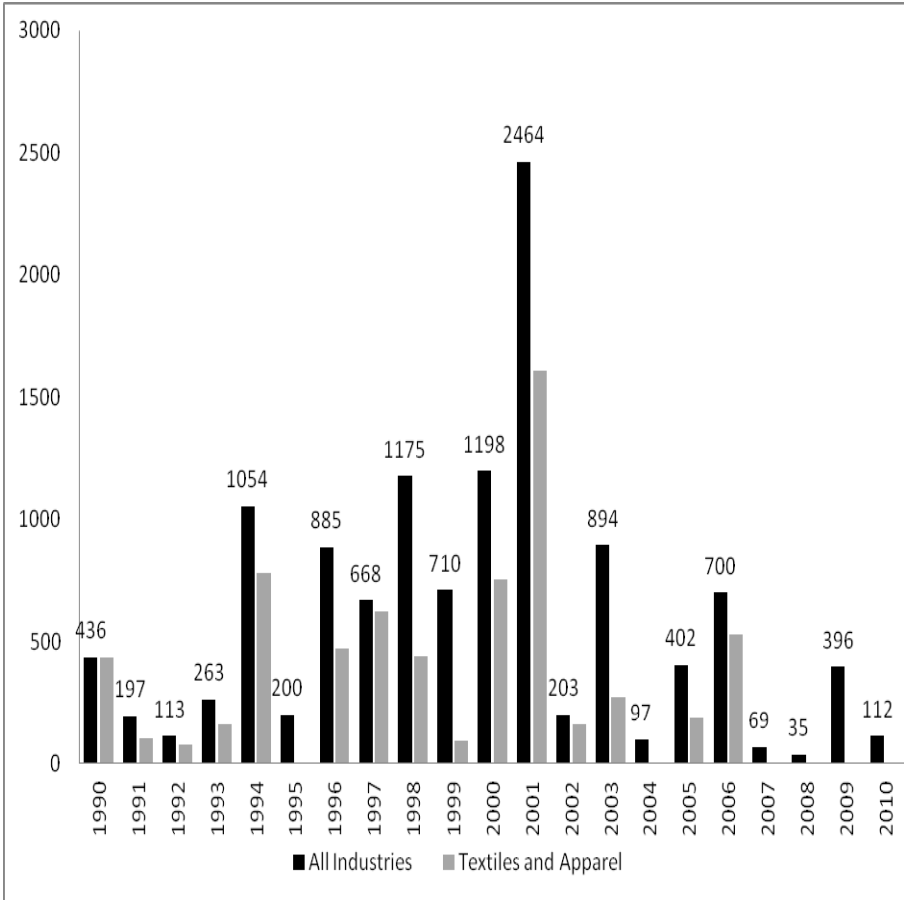
Source: United States Census Bureau. Census of Population and Housing, 1990 and 2000.

Table 2: Socioeconomic Profile of Tar Heel Area

| | Bladen County | Robeson County | North Carolina | United States |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Median Household Income, 2009 | 31,248 | 27,421 | 43,754 | 50,221 |
| Poverty Rate, 2009 | 23.3 | 31.10 | 16.20 | 14.30 |
| Poverty Rate, 2000 | 20.98 | 22.81 | 12.28 | 12.38 |
| Non-Hispanic White | 12.23 | 12.95 | 8.08 | 8.12 |
| African American | 32.66 | 34.19 | 22.89 | 24.90 |
| American Indian | 40.23 | 22.99 | 20.99 | 25.67 |
| Hispanic | 28.20 | 25.87 | 25.17 | 22.63 |
| Unemployment Rate | | | | |
| 1990 (Dec.) | 9.5 | 9.0 | 5.1 | 6.3 |
| 2000 (Dec.) | 6.6 | 6.9 | 3.9 | 3.9 |
| 2008 (Aug.) | 9.9 | 8.6 | | |
| 2010 (Feb.) | 13.6 | 13.5 | 12.1 | 9.7 |
| 2010 (Dec.) | 11.9 | 12.3 | 9.7 | 9.4 |
| Manufacturing Employment, 2000 | | | | |
| Non-Hispanic White | 19.5 | 21.1 | 18.5 | 14.0 |
| African American | 33.6 | 35.8 | 23.1 | 13.1 |
| American Indian | 12.6 | 27.7 | 21.6 | 12.3 |
| Hispanic | 33.8 | 44.4 | 28.6 | 15.8 |

Source: Median Household Income and Poverty rates for 2000 are provided by the Decennial Census, United States Census Bureau. Median Household Income and Poverty rates for 2009 are provided by the American Community Survey. Unemployment rates provided the Bureau of Labor Statistics. All unemployment rates are seasonally unadjusted.

Figure 3: Job Losses due to Plant Closings and Permanent Layoffs, Bladen and Robeson County, 1990–2010



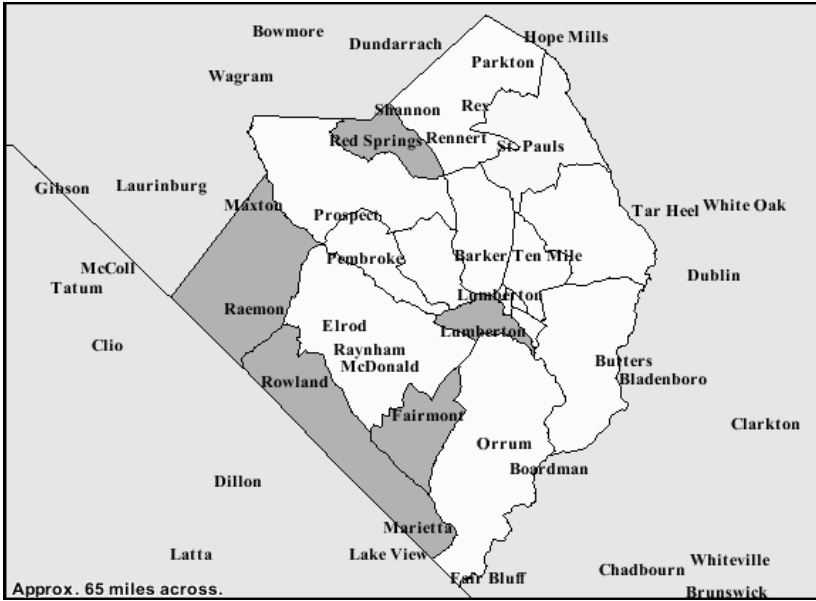
Source: Authors' compilation using data provided by the North Carolina Employment Security Commission at <http://esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/d4/AnnounceSelection.aspx>.

Table 3: OSHA Inspections at the Tar Heel Plant, 1992–2010

| Year | Total No. | Type | | | Total Violations | Serious | Penalty |
|--------------|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|------------------|---------|-----------|
| | | Accident | Planned | Complaint | | | |
| 1994 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 14 | 6 | 72625 |
| 1995 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 55 | 24 | 933000 |
| 1996 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 7000 |
| 1998 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 6300 |
| 1999 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2001 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2002 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1138 |
| 2003 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 7313 |
| 2004 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2005 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 33 | 0 | 25789 |
| 2006 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2007 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2008 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 12600 |
| 2009 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2010 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 30 | 3 | 3 | 18 | 115 | 32 | 1,065,765 |

Source: Author(s) compilation using inspection records provided by OSHA at

Figure 4: Percent African Americans by Census Tract, 2000

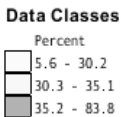
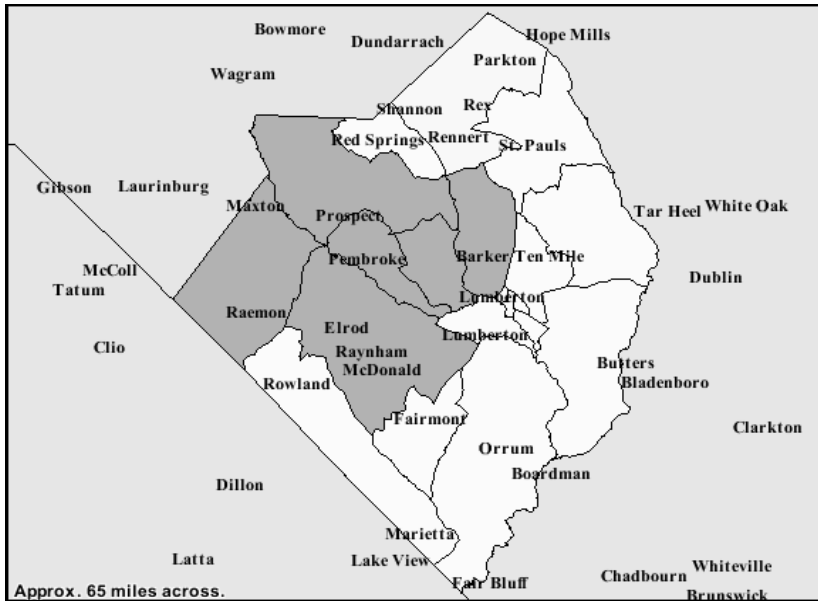


Data Classes

Percent

| |
|-------------|
| 4.4 - 27.6 |
| 27.7 - 32.5 |
| 32.6 - 70.3 |

Figure 5: Percent Native American by Census Tract, 2000



Notes

- ¹ For example, see Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: the Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: London, Harper and Brothers, 1944).
- ² For example, see United States Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, New York: Bantam, 1968 (Kerner Commission); Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, Washington, D.C.: Office of Planning and Research, U.S. Department of Labor, 1965 (Moynihan Report).
- ³ For a review of this work, see Howard Kimeldorf and Judith Stepan-Norris, “Historical Studies of Labor Movements in the United States”, *Annual Review of Sociology* 18, (1992), pp. 495–517; see also Edna Bonacich, “Advanced Capitalism and Black-White Relations in the United States: A Split Labor Market Interpretation”, *American Sociological Review* 41 (1976): 34–51; and Lowell Turner and Daniel Cornfield (eds.), *Labor in the New Urban Battlegrounds* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2007).
- ⁴ Charlie LeDuff, “At a Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die”, in *How Race is Lived in America*, eds. Correspondents of *The New York Times* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001), 97–114.
- ⁵ See Ana-Maria Gonzalez Wahl, “Southern (Dis)Comfort?: Latino Population Growth, Economic Integration and Spatial Assimilation in North Carolina”, *Sociation Today*, 2007, accessed June 5, 2011, <http://www.ncsociology.org/sociationtoday/v52/ana.htm>; Ana-Maria González Wahl, Saylor Breckenridge and Steven E. Gunkel, “Latinos, Residential Segregation, and Spatial Assimilation in Micropolitan Areas: Exploring the American Dilemma on a New Frontier”, *Social Science Research* 36 (2007): 995–1020.
- ⁶ For example, see Bruce Western, “Unionization and Labor Market Institutions in Advanced Capitalism, 1950–1985”, *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (1994): 1314–1341; Larry J. Griffin, Michael E. Wallace, and Beth A. Rubin, “Capitalist Resistance to the Organization of Labor before the New Deal: Why? How? Success?”, *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986): 147–167.
- ⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Economic News Release Union Members Summary”, January 21, 2011, accessed June 15, 2011, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.nr0.htm>.
- ⁸ For a number of reasons, we restrict our focus of this area to two counties: Bladen and Robeson. Tar Heel sits near the border that divides Bladen and Robeson—and together these form the local geopolitical context which most directly shapes the dynamics at the Smithfield Packing Plant. Politically and economically these two counties are closely linked. Bladen and Robeson originally formed a single entity. In 1787, Robeson County was established as a separate geopolitical unit. Their labor markets, however, remain closely intertwined as do the political actors and social institutions that operate across these counties. Given that Bladen is sparsely populated, many workers, if not most, at the Smithfield Packing Plant are drawn from the population of Robeson County.
- ⁹ The majority of Native Americans in the area identify as Lumbee. They are largely concentrated in Robeson County, where they account for nearly 40% of the population.
- ¹⁰ See Wahl et al., 2007; Wahl, 2007.
- ¹¹ David Goldfield, *North Carolina Atlas: Portrait for a New Century*, University of North

- Carolina-Charlotte, Department of Geography and Earth Sciences, 2005, accessed June 15, 2011, <http://www.ncatlasrevisited.org>.
- ¹² Drawn from North Carolina Employment Security Commission website (<http://esesc23.esc.state.nc.us/d4/AnnounceSelection.aspx>).
- ¹³ Leslie Hossfeld, Mac Legerton, and Gerald Keuster, "The Economic and Social Impact of Job Loss in Robeson County, North Carolina 1993–2003", *Sociation Today*, 2004, accessed May 23, 2011, <http://www.ncsociology.org/hossfeld.htm>.
- ¹⁴ North Carolina State University, "Agriculture and Agribusiness in Bladen County", NCSU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, 2003, accessed June 15, 2011, <http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/cfprod/apps/calswebsite/documents/county/bladen.pdf>.
- ¹⁵ North Carolina Employment Security Commission.
- ¹⁶ See Ana-Maria Wahl, Steven E. Gunkel, and Thomas W. Sanchez, "Death and Disability in the Heartland: Corporate (Mis)Conduct, Regulatory Responses, and the Plight of Latino Workers in the Meatpacking Industry", *Great Plains Research* 10 (2000): 335.
- ¹⁷ Figures drawn from United States Department of Agriculture, accessed June 15, 2011, http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/1992/State_and_County_Highlights/North_Carolina/index.asp.
- ¹⁸ William Kandel and John Cromartie, *New Patterns of Hispanic Settlement in Rural America* (Rural Development Research Report, No. 99), U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2004, accessed June 5, 2011, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/rdr99/rdr99.pdf>.
- ¹⁹ Kandel and Cromartie, *New Patterns*, 2004.
- ²⁰ Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Percent of Students Enrolled in Free and Reduced Lunch 2009–2010", <http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org/data/bystate>.
- ²¹ Food and Water Watch, "The Trouble with Smithfield: A Corporate Profile", 2008, accessed June 15, 2011, <http://documents.foodandwaterwatch.org/SmithfieldJan08.pdf>.
- ²² The shift from smaller hog farms to large "factory farms" accounts in large part for the dramatic increase in hog production across the state. In 1988, the state recorded a hog population of 2.6 million. By 1997, this had increased to 8 million (North Carolina in the Global Economy, Center on Globalization, Governance & Competitiveness, Duke University). http://www.soc.duke.edu/NC_GlobalEconomy/hog/overview.shtml
- ²³ Food and Water Watch, "Trouble with Smithfield".
- ²⁴ In both Bladen County and Robeson County, a living wage is \$13.98 for an adult supporting one child in 2011. It rises to \$18.11 for a household that includes two adults and one child. See living wage estimates provided by Pennsylvania State University, Department of Geography <http://www.livingwage.geog.psu.edu/counties/37155>.
- ²⁵ Occupational Safety and Health Administration, "Safety and Health Guide for the Meatpacking Industry", 1988, U.S. Department of Labor, OSHA, OSHA 3108, accessed June 15, 2011, <http://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3108/osha3108.html>.
- ²⁶ Wahl, Gunkel and Sanchez, "Death and Disability", 2000: 331.
- ²⁷ Wahl et al., "Death and Disability", 331–332.
- ²⁸ Research Associates of America, *Packaged with Abuse: Safety and Health Conditions at Smithfield Packing's Tar Heel Plant*, 2007, accessed June 15, 2011, <http://www.pigbusiness.co.uk/pdfs/Packaged-with-Abuse.pdf>; United States Department of Labor, OSHA, *Inspection (Report) 308548866*, 2005, accessed June 15, 2011, http://www.osha.gov/pls/imis/establishment.inspection_detail?id=308548866.

- ²⁹ Puente, Teresa, “Celebrity Chef Needs to Put Reality on Menu”, *Chicago Sun-Times*, November 8, 2007, accessed June 15, 2011, <http://www.chicagolabor.org/content/view/222/207/>; United States Department of Labor, OSHA, *Inspection (Report) 111099560*, 2003, accessed June 15, 2011, http://www.osha.gov/pls/imis/establishment.inspection_detail?id=111099560.
- ³⁰ Research Associates of America, *Packaged with Abuse*.
- ³¹ Aaron Sarver, “Processing Pain at Smithfield Foods”, *In These Times*, July 28, 2006, accessed June 14, 2011, http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/2741/processing_pain_at_smithfield_foods/.
- ³² Catherine Singley, “Fractures in the Foundation: The Latino Worker’s Experience in an Era of Declining Job Quality”, National Council of La Raza, 2009, <http://www.nclr.org>.
- ³³ Eric Frumin, “Testimony Before Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions”, Change to Win, 2008, accessed June 15, 2011, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-110shrg41699/html/CHRG-110shrg41699.htm>.
- ³⁴ Research Associates of America, *Packaged with Abuse*.
- ³⁵ Authors’ calculations based on the U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000. We can also use several statistical measures to more systematically tap residential segregation. The most commonly used measure, the index of dissimilarity, indicates that every racial and ethnic group is highly segregated from every other group in this county at the block level. Latinos are more segregated than any other group. In Robeson County, the dissimilarity index tapping Latino-Black segregation reaches 77.7, a level comparable to that we see in the most segregated metro areas in the United States. The dissimilarity index tapping the segregation of Latinos from American Indians and whites, respectively, is similarly high at 76.6 and 77. In Bladen County, Latinos face similarly high levels of segregation.
- ³⁶ The position of Native Americans at the Tar Heel plant reflects the unique ways in which their experience differs from that of African Americans in this area, despite the history of racism and discrimination both groups have faced. Though precise figures are difficult to secure, every report we consulted confirms LeDuff’s account that very few Native Americans have worked on the disassembly line. Most estimate that African Americans and Latinos account for more than 85% of all workers at the plant—and the vast majority are concentrated in production jobs. At one level, this reflects the reality that Lumbee members, in particular, have other options given the jobs that are connected to those institutions that serve this tribe. However, it should also be treated as a paradox that deserves further scrutiny given that many Native Americans have worked as production workers along with African Americans at Campbell Soup as well as other manufacturing plants in the area.
- ³⁷ Senate testimony, “Workers’ Freedom of Association: Obstacles to Forming a Union”, Hearing before the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, June 20, 2002, 112.
- ³⁸ For demographics see Lance Compa, *Unfair Advantage: Workers’ Freedom of Association in the United States under International Human Rights Standards*, Human Rights Watch, 2000, accessed June 5, 2011, [http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/2000/uslabor/](http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/2000/uslabor/http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/2000/uslabor/); John Ramsey and Sarah

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- 39 Buffkin Senate testimony, 2002: 111–112.
- 40 Lance Compa, *Unfair Advantage*.
- 41 When the election results were announced, police actually triggered a confrontation as they shoved union supporters from the cafeteria. In the chaos that ensued, police beat and arrested Ray Shawn Ward, a union organizer. Daniel Priest, as well as others, was later found guilty of civil rights violations.
- 42 *The Smithfield Packing Company, Inc., Tar Heel Division and United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 204, AFL-CIO, CLC*, 344 NLRB 1, December 16, 2004.
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- 45 *UFCW Local 204 v. NLRB*, 447 F.3d 821, 371 U.S. App. D.C. 46, 2006.
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- 58 William Johnson, “Smithfield Meatpackers Stay off Work to Demand Martin Luther King Holiday”, *Labor Notes*, January 26, 2007, accessed June 4, 2011, <http://labornotes.org/node/525>.
- 59 William Johnson, “Smithfield Meatpackers”.
- 60 Reverend Johnson is a well-known civil rights activist with a long history as a leader in Greensboro as well as across the state. He is one of the survivors of the Greensboro Massacre that occurred in 1979. Klan members shot down several students who had organized a rally to denounce the organization. Five were killed. Johnson was one of the young leaders who survived the attack. He currently heads the Southern Faith, Labor and Community Alliance.
- 61 Venita Jenkins, “Religious, Labor Leaders Protest Hog-Processing Workers’ Treatment”, *Fayetteville Observer*, February 8, 2007, accessed June 15, 2011, <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/>.
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