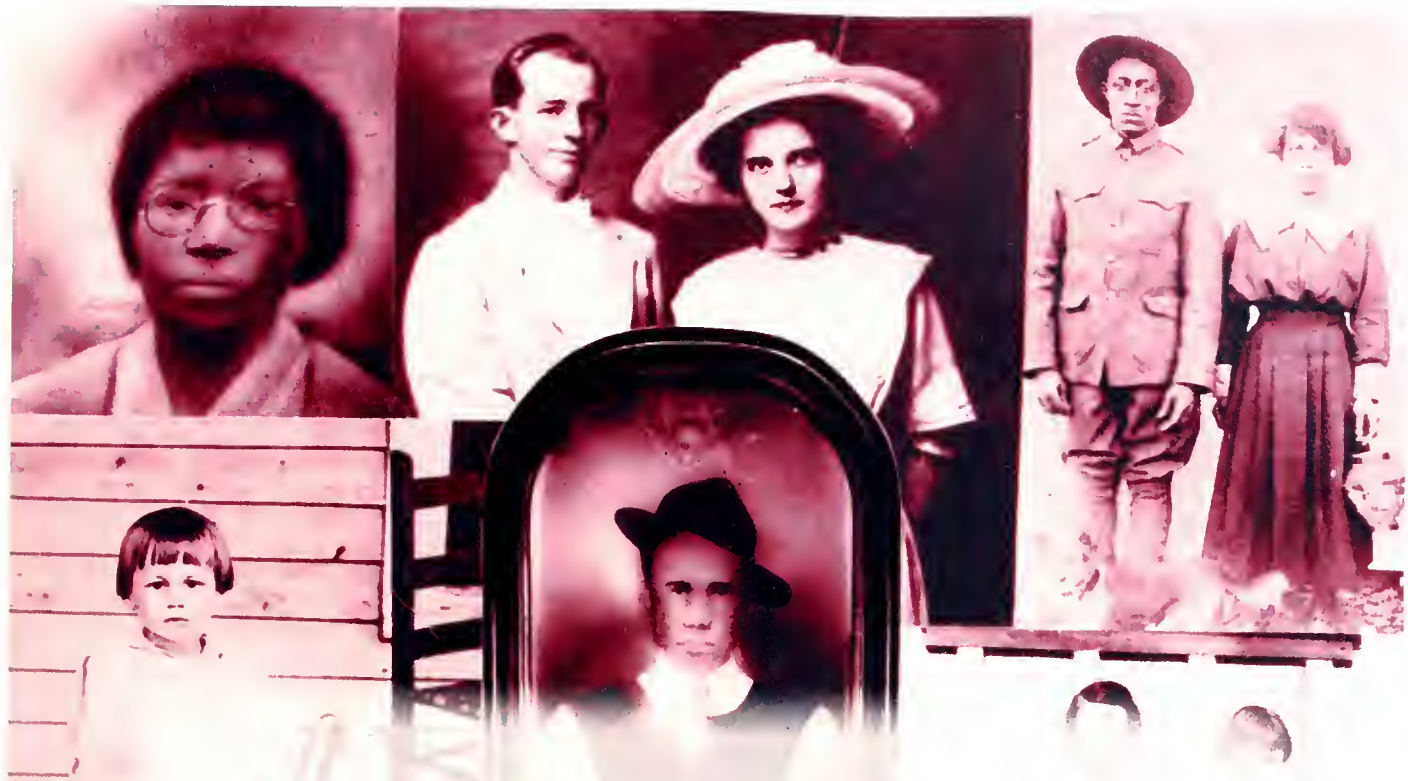


We the People

Conversations on Identity, Culture and History in North Carolina

August 19 – 21, 2005

"Our Red Clay Roots: An Oral History of Iredell County," Sarah Cheek, 1996

North Carolina Humanities Council

Weaving Cultures and Communities

July 26, 2005

Dear Friends,

We are thrilled you are joining us for ***We the People: Conversations on Identity, Culture and History in North Carolina.***

This booklet includes essays which we're calling ***drafts*** of "thought papers." They were written by all of the panelists in the ten conversations. We are sending it to all conference registrants—over 160. Timing did not allow us to include all of the essays and we hope to mail those out separately. As we hoped, the essays represent a wide variety of voices speaking from multiple perspectives. They are a testament to our state's rich cultural diversity along with all the eloquence, complexity and contradiction true for any person, let alone a group of writers this large.

Our objective in preparing the booklet was to offer an opportunity for all of us to reflect on questions that are at once abstract and very concrete. As we noted in our advance information materials, three questions inform our purpose:

- Do public humanities matter beyond the moment of the program?
- What lessons can we pull together from our collective experiences in public programs that might help move forward this work?
- How might we develop networks where these projects intersect, or, where do we go from here?

We asked each person to develop a one-to-two page "thought paper," with the understanding these are being roughed-out during a tight time period and without concern for polished prose. The essays range in regard to prose style; some are in outline form while others are more elaborate. Our hope was to get the conversations going, not to put too much stress on friends already burdened with life and work.

We ask you to read—review—peruse them in preparation for your own participation in the sessions. We mean them to provoke thought and interest so that when we come together in August we already will be in the midst of an ongoing conversation. The papers are not meant to replace the presentations panelists will make. Although we have spoken with several authors about potential directions their "thought paper" might take, we have not edited them for content. Hopefully, we will have more of a collaborative editing process through our discussions of the issues at hand at the conference.

We are very grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for its generous support of all of our "we the people" activities. Thanks to Chairman Bruce Cole and his staff who hope this initiative will result in "strengthening the teaching, study and understanding of American history and culture." As our friend Sarah Cheek taught us, "History is made by people like us." We all participate in the larger process every day in most every way; for us, we think, it is part of what "we the people" means.

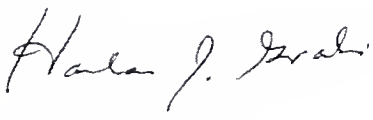
We are indebted to our panelists who took time and care to grapple with fundamental questions about the purpose, structure and practice of public humanities in North Carolina. While the essays

cover much of NCHC's history, there are so many other participants who should have, could have been asked to write "thought papers." We wish we could have invited everyone to do this task.

Special thanks to our NCHC colleagues, especially Ashley L.D. Davis, who has helped make the event and this booklet happen. Always, we must thank Katherine Kubel of *Fit to Print*, who has been helping to shape and design our publications, making us look good.

In advance, thank you all so much for your participation. We can't wait to see everybody in August.

All Best,



Harlan Joel Gradin

Jennifer Edwards

Contents

SECTION 6

What are different notions about the meaning of community and how are those explored and expressed in public humanities?

SECTION 7

What are the relationships between public education and development of public knowledge? Why and in what ways is this contested terrain?

SECTION 8

What does it mean to tell our own, or facilitate someone else's story? What power do stories have, and how do they become connected to something larger, such as the different ways we understand community and our place within it?

SECTION 9

How do we define the meaning of 'place' and how is that reflected in public ways?

SECTION 10

What are our experiences with the various media used to engage in public humanities programming, i.e., exhibits, films, theater, internet, DVD, others? In what ways do particular forms of media influence or shape the story you can tell, and how do you balance those factors with audience accessibility?

* *Essay was not available at the time of printing, and will be provided in a separate handout.*

How do we—collectively and publicly—understand and make use of our multi-storied and conflicted past?

Jeffrey Crow

Larry Edwards

Larry Louis Moore

Kathy Newfont*

Bertha Todd

Humanities for All the People

by Jeffrey J. Crow

In 2003 the North Carolina Historical Commission celebrated its 100th anniversary. As a theme for the occasion, the commission chose "History for All the People." The theme sprang from a statement by Christopher Crittenden, director of the Department of Archives and History from 1935 to 1968. Writing in 1941, Crittenden declared: "Our histories should be something of broad, general interest—not merely for professional historians, not merely for the genealogists, not just for any other limited group, but instead for the people at large."

Crittenden's credo could sum up the mission of the North Carolina Humanities Council. The humanities belong to all the people. By exploring the humanities in their various guises, the Council promotes a dialogue between scholars and citizens. The conventions of "received wisdom" and "sacred texts" get questioned. When new points of view are examined, insights result. Other perspectives enter the discussion. Diversity counts. Suddenly, people understand that no single story can encompass the totality of an event, person, or era.

During the late 1980s I served as project director of a lecture series sponsored by the North Carolina Humanities Council. The series focused on three nineteenth-century novels written about North Carolina. Both literary and historical scholars used the novels as texts to interpret the social, political, and cultural landscape of North Carolina. One of the novels was Albion W. Tourgee's *Bricks without Straw* (1880). Tourgee, a Union veteran from Ohio who came to North Carolina after the Civil War, based the novel on his own autobiographical experiences in the state.

Reconstruction is perhaps the least understood period in United States history. By discussing *Bricks without Straw*, scholars introduced new perspectives to modern-day North Carolinians who probably knew the pro-Confederate version of Reconstruction. Tourgee's book exposed them to other stories from that stormy era. Pro-Union southerners tried to cooperate with freedmen to create a more democratic society. The freedmen sought equal rights, protection of the law, and suffrage. The hopes and aspirations of white Republicans and African Americans disintegrated under the merciless blows of Democratic violence and Ku Klux Klan terrorism. That story is not as well known, if known at all. Not just privileged whites made history. Everyone's story deserves to be told.

The programs of the North Carolina Humanities Council reveal a multitude of stories to audiences. Those stories create a colorful mosaic. That mosaic comprehends North Carolina's past and leads to greater understanding in the future.

"ME" as Plural: The Grammars of Histories

by Larry Louis Moore

The irreducible price of learning is that you do not know. One may go farther and point out ... that the more you learn, the less you know. But that means that you have begun to accept, and are even able to rejoice in, the relentless conundrum of your life.

James Baldwin

I believe that it was Socrates who remarked that an unexamined life is not worth living. Crucial to any discussion on the public discourse of our multifaceted histories is the self-examination of those histories. Personal histories emanate from our actual experiences and its articulations, in other words, how does one define who we are and equally important, who we are not. My usage of the term me, in the plural, is to suggest how each of us have constructed or deconstructed portraits of self and others by limiting descriptives—names, families, genders, races, relationships, fears, terrors, loves, hopes, beliefs, religions, professions, education, etc. It is possible to get beyond the resulting distorted reflections to those idiosyncratic, intuitive selves that have been forged by history's narratives, its counternarratives, and our subjective embraces and/or repudiation of both. How does one excavate one's personal histories? What tools are employed in this task? What role does language play in navigating histories? How do official histories expand or imprison us to the so-called status quo? Can personal histories be described? Is history a singular or plural term, why or why not?

It is critical that we come to comprehend that our personal histories are as cobbled together and transient as the histories of everyone else. We must become cognizant of the fact that histories and humans are never static, and both perhaps, could be better served if we framed each of them as questions or queries rather than answers.

Can we carry our histories to the public stage? I think so. If we are able to bring our examined/examining selves to the public forum, we might possibly create new vocabularies that are more inclusive, new vocabularies that are open-ended, new vocabularies whose grammar is that of vibrant verbs in lieu of neutered nouns.

Who are you? Once one can accept and allow the notion that you can only know a fraction of the questions, one will be able "to accept, and ... even ... rejoice in the relentless conundrum of your life." Bring that evolving, plural me to the stage and let's talk!

Seeing Yourself in Stories

by Kristin Sherman

In our NCHC project, Latino inmates in a county jail collaborated with artists, teachers and writers to create a workbook that could help teach English as a Second Language to other students. Community writers and story tellers conducted workshops for the inmates, community artists helped the inmates develop visual art, and Latino writers from around the country donated the use of their own stories and poems. The student inmates wrote their own stories for each chapter, selected other content, and illustrated the book. Those who couldn't write told their stories in interviews. In this way, the students learned about language, culture, and art.

What we discovered is the power of story. A good story, well-told, moves from the particular to the general, from the individual to the universal. It makes meaning from experience. A story about working in a bakery really tells of poverty, how work can provide self-worth in addition to putting food on the table. A story about a sister's quinceanera forces us to confront the meaning of tradition in our lives, even when values and circumstance change. It is through the sharing of stories that we realize our connections to those around us, across boundaries of race, gender, even country. Story can build community. Story is a way to make one's life and experience accessible to self and to others.

The participants in our project represented people marginalized in many ways. They were mostly poor, relatively uneducated, and immigrants from Latin American countries. While most of the inmate participants had strong oral skills, at least in their first language, their literacy skills were sometimes weak. As participants began to create meaning from their own experience through their narratives, they acquired literacy skills, moving from reading and understanding the stories of others, towards formulating their own stories, and finally to publishing those stories for a wider audience. In telling their specific stories, participants provided a way for their readers to recognize common experience, speaking not only for themselves, but for others like them.

In joining the wider community of writers, storytellers and artists, participants realized their voices contributed to a larger truth. Seeing their stories next to those of famous writers showed participants that they could speak authentically on the same issues, revealing another perspective, another voice. It is the variety of voices that provide texture and depth to a story. Although we focused on the Latino experience, we realized there is no monolithic story, that there are a multiplicity of experiences and points of view. Our project collected and contributed stories around universal themes of work, community, learning, family and identity. These are the same themes that drive great literature and art, allowing all of us to recognize that which we have in common, as we note that which makes us unique.

We hoped this project would impact different audiences: the student inmates who participated, and the larger audience that might use the book in classes. Interviews and surveys can substantiate the effect on the participants. Without exception, the participants took pride in their work,

one saying he never thought he could be part of something so "high-class." The twenty or so inmates who labored on the project for nearly a year were astonished when they held an actual book in their hands—not the photocopied packet they had expected. The book validated their lives, said that the participants' stories were as worthy as the stories of people with wealth and power.

Although our project was completed two years ago, I still get requests from around the country for copies of the book: Alaska, Texas, Massachusetts, Oregon. Teachers using the workbook report that it is their main text for classes in jails and out. Why? I think because of the little "stories," those included in the book told by ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances, as well as those told by established authors, such as Sandra Cisneros and Julia Alvarez. But also because of the other "story," that of the sometimes marginalized—immigrants, the impoverished, the incarcerated—who made meaning from their experience, who set their dreams higher than before, who saw their writing published, their art displayed in a Charlotte museum. The students who use this book will see people like themselves in print, and perhaps want to tell their own stories some day.

What happens when stories, the worlds we construct around us, collide? I'll give two examples.

Best case scenario: In the first student reading in the book, Abad Garcia tells of his experience in school. The instructor makes a face as he asks Abad to introduce himself, and the other students sigh. They expect Abad to fulfill some stereotype they all have of a Mexican. Abad answers with pride: "I am descended from great builders, mathematicians, and scientists. My forefathers were architects and builders of pyramids, viaducts and cities. We were the aristocracy, the landowners, the merchants, the attorneys long before our land was called America ..." In response, the teacher thanks him, acknowledging the lesson Abad has taught them. In this example, a collision of stories results in enlightenment.

Worst case scenario: In another project at the jail, with a similar population, but different individuals, the students took on the task of educating the guards about Latino culture. The officers, mostly black and white southerners, often misunderstood the actions of the Latino inmates. When the Latinos returned to the cells after class, they were often loud and excited, speaking quickly in Spanish. The officers thought the inmates were upset, and ready to rumble. When some Latinos didn't look the officers in the eye, the officers thought they were deceitful. So, in class we developed a training on culture, covering nonverbal communication patterns such as looking down to show respect, verbal patterns such as the naturally loud and fast way of speaking in Spanish cultures. We also addressed differences in culture and values. The jail administration agreed to the training. The students prepared materials, practiced delivering their parts of the training. As they practiced over several weeks, they gradually lost some of their slang, using more sophisticated vocabulary to convey their ideas. On the day of the workshop, the new officers sat in desks, listening to the inmates' presentations. The inmates stood tall, spoke articulately, answered questions thoughtfully. The jail administration said we could never do another training. They hadn't realized the role the inmates would take. They

couldn't let inmates ever appear to have a position of authority over the officers. In telling their "story," in teaching about their culture, the inmates had crashed headlong into the established order of things. But, as one inmate said "I'm proud of us, we were teachers." So even in the worst case scenario, where the story is not accepted, there can be enlightenment.

Can this process be extrapolated to a larger community?

I think it could be. If a community had a sponsoring group, such as the Foundation for the Carolinas, or the library system, and wanted to take on such a project, maybe it could be done. The oral history project people could be involved. You'd need a sponsor, story collectors who would prompt people to write or tell their stories, visual artists to help tell stories another way, and then some forum for getting participants to discuss/use the stories in some meaningful way. I was involved in the Community Building Initiative here in Charlotte, and we spent a year and a half talking about race relations, so I know it could be done.

The 1898 Foundation: Its Vision and Mission

by Bertha Todd

The 1898 Foundation is a former recipient of a grant from the North Carolina Humanities Council. In 1996 the 1898 Centennial Foundation (now 1898 Foundation) was organized for the purpose of commemorating the only successful coup d'état in the United States. This coup resulted in intense violence and many lives were lost. Since the commemoration in 1998 many positive results have been realized in Wilmington and Southeastern North Carolina.

Through the years (since 1996), participants (elected officials and citizens from various backgrounds) have worked tirelessly to accomplish goals established by the Foundation. Efforts have been pursued to "tell the story" of 1898 and its legacy, "honor the memory" of those who have suffered and died, and those who have worked for racial understanding, "heal the wounds" by creating a space of beauty in the form of a memorial and a site for reconciliation, "foster the hope" by envisioning an inclusive society.

Wilmington is a city saturated with historical memories. Historic buildings have been preserved, informative plaques have been erected and commemorative monuments have been created from the early decades of the twentieth century onward. Nevertheless, one hundred years passed before citizens of Wilmington, North Carolina exhibited the awareness and courage to commemorate and memorialize these citizens who were either run out of town or lost their lives during this violent event.

In 1998 citizens from all walks of life participated in a variety of programs and activities designed to study the 1898 events and begin a healing process. Several programs in existence today are a direct result of the 1898 commemoration held in 1998.

America is a "melting pot" and this fact is more evident today than ever! Each citizen must respect the culture and needs of various ethnic groups. The world has only one race-the human race. Although the world (including America) has a history of violence, each individual must develop a healthy respect for another in order to avoid some of the past mistakes. George Santayana (historian and philosopher) in his writing *The Age of Reason* (1906) stated, "Those who cannot remember their past are condemned to repeat it." All citizens, whether in Wilmington, North Carolina or elsewhere, have an obligation to learn and embrace the past (filled with positives and negatives) in order to plan effectively for the future.

Members of the 1898 Foundation realize that even now some individuals continue to suffer from the racial violence that occurred in 1898. This event continues to haunt many and other residual effects also are evident. Positive programs and activities continue for their eradication. Work continues also on a fitting memorial whose design will encourage reflection on the positive efforts rather than on a tragedy that occurred before any of us living today were born.

Notes

Notes

What is the role of public humanities in building community?

Winnie Bennett

Karen Crumbliss

Bennett Judkins

Kirsten Mullen*

Steve Sumerford

Anson County

by Winnie Bennett

A few years ago, a group of Anson county residents met to discuss critical issues facing the county. Anson County was a place with the agonizing problems of high unemployment and illiteracy rates, and half or more of the residents living below the poverty line. The challenge faced by the group was enormous if it hoped to bring all persons affected by such problems to the table for discussions on how to bring about change.

The group decided to use a grant from the NCHC to bring scholars to the county to address some of these issues from the seemingly non-threatening perspectives of history, art, and literature. Members of the group felt that county residents perhaps could come together across the barriers of race, gender, and class to discuss the common problems if we could be reminded of what it is that we share: history, art, values, and even ideas.

One of the presentations by Dr. John Sekora of NCCU, was to focus on the impact of slavery by exploring the life of a young North Carolina slave girl, Harriett Jacobs. To get community participants of all ages, races, and economic backgrounds, with a special emphasis on the "under-involved" segments of the county, the group enlisted the Anson County schools. The principals allowed fliers to go out with each child about the program and teachers worked with the youngsters to plan an activity that would complement Sekora's discussion on slavery. Members of our group expressed excitement at the prospect of the lecture, but there were a few unnerving comments from some locals who expressed reservations that Anson county was not ready for a discussion on slavery. But we pressed on with our plans.

Perhaps the most interesting impact of Sekora's talk was that while he capably and eloquently spoke of Harriett Jacobs' enslavement and subsequent escape to the north, he began his remarks about the importance of people in communities being able to talk together about hurtful and unpleasant topics that affect them. Sekora's family originated in Western Europe in the Balkans where there was then a great deal of strife among the different ethnic groups in the area. He talked about the conflict that has existed there for many years and is causing what is termed "ethnic cleansing" today, a form of genocide. We have to always be aware that we need to talk over the critical and sensitive issues even here in the U. S., he said, as the conflicts that exist in my home country, can erupt here as well. Perhaps not in such serious ways, but springboards for tensions exist in even the most civilized societies and we can do much to alleviate that tension by reminding ourselves that we have shared histories, shared values, beliefs, and ideas. Sometimes how that history is remembered can be a source of conflict but we need to explore our memories and texts of history together.

Some years after this presentation by Sekora, in early 2001, after the initial community group had been disbanded, a former member of the group and me, now engaged in another NCHC funded project with correctional facility inmates, had a discussion about the earlier 1995 project where we brought in Sekora as a part of a series of speakers. Marlene Richardson, the former member, remarked that

she had never forgotten Dr. Sekora's comments, not about the young slave girl, but about the possibilities for tension and conflict that exist in societies. She thought he made an excellent point about the need to create opportunities and venues for people of differing backgrounds and heritages to be able to come together to talk about painful issues that may separate them. Ms. Richardson said that his remarks continued to inspire her in her efforts to make Anson County a better place to live.

In fact, the project we worked together on from about 1996 – 2001 (another NCHC funded endeavor) came about as a result of the earlier series and brought together inmates from the local correctional facility in an oral history project. This project hoped to address two issues. First, could these men in prison change the focus and direction of their lives as a result of telling and understanding their own histories and secondly, could their stories impact the lives of young people about to be at risk of leading violent and criminal lives.

In 2000, the oral history project was completed with the idea of developing performances about the inmates' lives that could be dramatized in front of young audiences. Not only did the performances have a profound impact on the lives of the inmates themselves, but the young audiences that were eventually allowed to view the drama, "Leaves of Magnolia," were also deeply affected as attested by the letters later sent to the project directors. Inmates were forced to deal with intense issues about which they initially expressed a great deal of shame: early physical and sexual abuse, parental alcoholism and drug abuse, as well as abandonment issues. This was truly building community through discussion of painful and unbearable issues.

If issues that communities need to deal with are controversial and hurtful, and almost any issue can be controversial and/or hurtful, the humanities can expose the context out of which many of these issues developed. Certainly, through a historical exploration, we gain perspective. I believe that art reflects life, (others see it the other way around) and in poetry and literature, we can hear and see intense and difficult life circumstances expressed as the inmates did so eloquently in their dramatizations.

There are risks to bringing up controversial issues: you may turn people away and turn them off (including the very people you wish to reach), political leaders may not want to deal with "hot-button" concerns, funding sources may not want to provide monies for issues they interpret as thorny and complex. And any subject can become contentious when combined with another tough issue. For example, education can become a divisive topic when we add the race dynamic to it. What does it take then to bring up such issues? Courage.

It is difficult to document the long-term impact of public humanities programming on people. I believe that like ripples on the river, the impact is far-reaching, and even when we think the ripple has disappeared, it is still there, as my friend Marlene Richardson's comment about John Sekora attests. At Sekora's presentation that night, there were about 300 persons. Consider the potential rippling effect for that group. Perhaps a weakness of our programming is that there is not a way to determine the long-term effects and maybe we need

to do more in that area. But I like the ripple principle.

Finally, I believe that the public humanities play a huge and important role in fostering conversations, here in the state of North Carolina. We're growing larger and becoming an even more diverse state. We have great universities and colleges but not everyone has access to a college or university. Diversity will continue to be a challenge. I find meaning every time I have a conversation with others—whether we are discussing a recently read book, the latest political scandal, or events that occurred in the far or recent past. Meaning becomes even more relevant when the person is different from me because I may gain a new perspective. That is the power of the humanities: helping everyday people see things in different ways—ways that can improve their lives and the lives of the residents of their communities and towns.

Communicating through Co-Creation

by Karen Crumbliss

Humanities experiences in the public realm are definitely important in translating the academic study of the humanities to action and re-action on a broader scale in the community. As I reviewed definitions of the humanities in preparation for this conference, one of the most relevant aspects of the discussions of the humanities was that the humanities help us to better understand ourselves and others, and to find ways to build relationships for the good of all. They help us to think more critically in trying to understand the universal questions of our existence. They can help us to find more purpose and meaning in our lives, and to grow in our ability to relate to others. The information we gain is not geared toward occupational skills, but rather to develop our general knowledge and our intellectual skills ... critical in our complex, wonderful, confusing world ... and important for all.

A publication of the National Endowment for the Humanities states, "In every era, the raison d'etre for the humanities has been that the study of rhetoric, literature, history or philosophy would yield more enlightened and engaged citizens. At the core of this study is education –not only learning in school settings but life-long learning through community-based organizations. ... Humanities activities draw people together to discuss shared values and concerns, inform communities and celebrate our individual and common heritages as a people." [from the web site of the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County, www.creativemoco.com.] The work that the Developmental Disabilities Training Institute has done in collaboration with the North Carolina Humanities Council has been centered around just that—education and enlightenment through shared experiences and values, particularly relating to inclusive creative arts experiences.

In our connection with the NCHC, we made a video of a conference called "Arts for ALL." The purpose of the conference was to demonstrate that through the communication that takes place in the process of co-creation in the arts, people can develop personal, one-to-one relationships with others, regardless of whether they have disabilities and in ways that might never happen in other situations. Barriers fell during the art-making process in theater, visual arts, music, poetry, and dance/movement, as people expressed feelings, emotions, and ideas that were shared with others. Participants left with new perspectives and new ideas for building community. The ten minute video that resulted has created "light-bulb moments" for many of the people who have seen it.

The question becomes, how can we build on this experience and offer similar opportunities in the public arena, with the goal of building new ideas about inclusive communities? Where do we find the "general public" and when are they likely to be receptive to the ideas to be conveyed and discussed?

Our work at DDTI involves supporting people with disabilities, particularly developmental disabilities, to live more typical lives in our communities and to avoid segregated and congregated environments. Not only is this the way that people want to be treated and the way in which they have a better opportunity to reach their potential, but now the laws of our society are also communicating that people with

disabilities should be treated as anyone else, and should have equal rights and opportunities. As with groups marked by culturally constructed barriers, people with disabilities have been completely segregated from our communities, in separate buildings, in separate isolated locations. In addition to addressing specific physical needs, we must overcome huge historically imbedded perceptions that view people with disabilities as being less than full humans.

Breaking down this barrier is where public humanities can help our communities to grow and become more inclusive. On a very basic level, one could come to the conclusion that the humanities were not enough involved a century ago. People with developmental disabilities were viewed mainly from a medical (scientific) perspective, differentiated from the rest of the population in many devaluing ways, and segregated. Progressive change has occurred in the last fifty years, but we still have a lot of history to overcome—to truly accept the humanity of this group of people and treat them appropriately. Attitudes of fear and misunderstanding were maintained over several generations and are slow to break down. This is where the humanities can help.

We have noted that there is a lack of consistency as to whether the creative arts are considered to be 'apart from' or 'a part of' the Humanities. For clarification, we have used the creative arts as a critical vehicle to communication and community, as we are talking about the *process* of creativity, not about the ultimate product of that creativity. The product may often be valuable, too, but we are focusing on the mutual processing of creative expression through which we are really able to connect. If we can begin a conversation this way, we have broken through an important barrier. Then we need to determine how we are going to keep it going!

More questions arise. Are there other ways for the humanities to help in building inclusive communities where people who experience cognitive and other developmental disabilities will be openly welcomed as equals? Knowing that all involved in co-creative experiences may benefit, how can we promote the idea in ways that are attractive to more people?

Clearly, we are still in the process of exploring how the humanities can help us to encourage inclusive communities, but we have no doubt that they provide an important avenue. We hope that the experience of this conference will help us to discover some answers to our questions.

Telling Our Stories: The Role of the Public Humanities in Building Community

by Bennett Judkins

I have been fortunate to be involved in the North Carolina Humanities Council (NCHC) in several capacities—as a project director, a speaker for the Humanities Bureau, and serving on the Council from 1996 to 2002. Two of the projects in which I was initially involved occurred when I was a faculty member at Belmont Abbey College. The first was titled *Making Tomorrow Better: Did it Happen in Gaston County?* In this project we brought the community together to talk about the history, present and future of Gaston County, North Carolina, from its textile beginnings to its more contemporary economic and social struggles. A few years later we received a grant from the NCHC, and additional funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities, for a second project titled *In Relation to One Another: Historical Perspectives on the Southern Textile Industry*. This was a more elaborate effort that involved forums, study sessions, oral histories, and the creation of a model textile community (McAdenville, North Carolina). A collaboration between the college, the community and the textile industry, it created a dialogue among elements of the region that were not often in conversation with one another.

More recently, as a faculty member at Lenoir-Rhyne College, I worked with the local Human Relations Council of Hickory, North Carolina, to establish a conversation project that lasted about five years. Titled "Building Community from Diversity," it received start-up funds from the North Carolina Humanities Council in 1995 and eventually, with financial support from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and the NCHC, went on to produce a number of activities from 1997 to 2002 that had the goal to bring the diversity of populations in the Unifour area together in various formats for dialogue. Among other things, this included oral histories, study and dialogue groups, conferences, forums, workshops, and educational community events.

At the heart of all of these projects has been the meaning of community, citizenship and identity, at both the local and the national level. Several years ago, historian Sheldon Hackney, then Chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities, started a project called "The National Conversation on Pluralism and Identity." Hackney and the NEH were responding to what they saw as the fraying of social bonds dividing Americans into mutually suspicious and antagonistic subgroups, as well as a perceived lack of confidence in our public institutions and growth of cynicism and a sense of alienation. Hackney was also concerned about national polls that continuously showed that Americans had lost confidence in institutional leadership and trust in each other as Americans. Their project posed some important questions for our nation and for its people:

What does it mean to be an American? How are our notions of identity affected by the complexities of our lives today and by our many different relationships and allegiances? Is America to become a nation whose citizens think of themselves first as members of an ethnic community,

race, or culture, and only second as Americans? Can our ideal be an America of shared values and commitments that nonetheless retains cultural differences? What holds our diverse society together? Can we identify those values and commitments that we need to share as a successful society?[1]

Intellectually, Hackney was influenced by Robert Putnam at Harvard and especially his book *Bowling Alone: The Loss of Community in America.*[2] Among other things, Hackney pulled from Putnam the concern that civil society has declined in America and more people were (metaphorically) "bowling alone" – people were doing more, just not doing it with others in their communities. Attributing a lot of this to a great public awareness stimulated in the 1960s, especially to the recognition of many historic social injustices, Hackney argued "we have multiple stories now and we don't know how to bring them together."[3] He was also uneasy about the paradox of Americans being committed to both individualism and community at the same time. While there is a strong emphasis on self-reliance, we often form organizations or institutions, especially at the community level, to solve problems collectively.

What was unique about the NEH conversations, and what gave them intellectual integrity, was the presence of the humanities as a guiding discipline. As one project director reflected: "There was a kind of joining of academic culture and the world of the public I thought was one of the most exciting parts of these conversations. The humanities provided the language and the historical literary narratives and the people provided their lives and their experiences and I think that is what made it work."[4]

It is this type of conversation—with people sharing their lives and experiences with scholars in the humanities—that poses the most promise for America and Americans to move forward in living up to the ideals of our nation. I think it will also begin to address the loss of confidence in trust that seems to be so prevalent today. The North Carolina Humanities Council pointed out in its "Democratic Vistas" flyer, "By knowing our respective stories, we come to know ourselves and each other," and this shared knowledge "gives us confidence and trust in our neighbors and reasons to care for and help each other." It is the process of sharing these stories that allows for a commitment to working together for a common community. This is sorely needed in America today and the public humanities play a critical role in bringing it about.

(Endnotes)

[1] *A National Conversation on American Pluralism and Identity, A Special Competition.* National Endowment for the Humanities, 1994, p. 7.

[2] Robert Putnam. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse And Revival Of American Community.* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

[3] Sheldon Hackney. *One America Indivisible.* (Published by the National Endowment for the Humanities, August, 1997), p. 13.

[4] Ibid. p. 26.

Libraries and the Humanities

by Steve Sumerford

For many years now "Libraries Change Lives" has been a popular slogan among librarians. Note that the slogan is not: "Libraries Change Communities" or "Libraries Build Communities." Librarians are very comfortable claiming to positively change the lives of individuals and we have boatloads of quantitative and anecdotal data to back up this claim. But should libraries design and sponsor humanities-based programs that intentionally strive to change their communities? To some that seems risky, presumptuous and even outside the library's mission. (One notable exception to this is libraries in African-American communities that, in response to oppression and segregation, often have a long history of community building initiatives.)

It is only recently that community-building language and programs have begun showing up in library literature. I am proud to say that my own library system, the Greensboro Public Library, has had "community-building" as one of its stated goals for several years.

And it is certainly safe to assert that "Humanities change lives." Interaction with the humanities can even change many individual's lives simultaneously. But is that all there is to building community?

As a community programmer, the question I have been wrestling with for several years is this: in a city rich with cultural and human assets, but simultaneously rife with human suffering and inequality, how can humanities programming make meaningful, sustained connections among diverse communities within the city? It is this question, almost as perplexing to me as a Zen koan, that has informed my thinking as I have embarked on various literature-based projects. It is a question that I have not yet answered but one that I know I will always be asking.

Social capital theory talks about two types of social capital—bonding and bridging. I have found that it is fairly easy and common to build bonding capital. With the right program, we can bring lots of like-minded folks together. Often such groups have the same demographic characteristics and sometimes they all even have the same zip codes. But building "bridging capital" is harder, especially when your community has all of the typical inequities that most American cities have.

Paradoxically, I have found that the humanities can be the perfect meeting ground for isolated communities to become connected to each other. A poetry program that features both slam poets and literary poets not only creates a culturally and ethnically diverse audience, but it also engenders mutual understanding and compassion. And in a well-facilitated book discussion group the heart-felt words spoken by one person can break through lifetimes of prejudices and fears of those hearing them. I've seen it happen with my own eyes. There is something ineffable and powerful that moves through a room when, through literature, a group encounters the deepest thoughts, hurts and joys of one who is "Other."

Humanities can be the connective tissue that feeds and nurtures our best human traits and communal instincts. Humanities can create understanding and trust. And trust is an absolute prerequisite to genuine community.

Humanities give the individual a framework for understanding his or her interrelatedness and codependence, a concept that is best articulated by the Zulu concept of ubuntu: "I am because we are." Or, as the ultimate poet of community Walt Whitman said, "Every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you."

In my twenty years of community-building work, I have found five key ingredients for making really delicious community soup.

The first, and most obvious, ingredient for community building is participation. Without an audience, a program is the proverbial tree falling in the empty forest. How do we get people in the room so that we can bridge the divides and enhance understanding? The latest research on audience development indicates that people make decisions about participation in the arts and humanities based on two factors: content and relationships. In simple terms: people participate either because they care about the content—the subject matter—or because they have a relationship with the program sponsors or with someone they trust who invites and encourages them to participate.

Historically, it seems to me, humanities-based programs have emphasized content more than building and nurturing diverse audiences. There may still be some queasiness about "using the humanities" to build community, as if the humanities are a tool (a hammer?) for achieving something other than personal enlightenment. But until the audiences represent the community, there can be no authentic community-building, no matter how good the content.

In the library programming we have done in Greensboro, we have unabashedly used phrases like "building community through poetry" and "using literature to connect the people of Greensboro to each other." If we have had any success at community building—and I believe we have—then it is because we have intentionally knitted together content and relationship.

The second key ingredient is relevancy. Programs that intend to build community must directly address community issues. For community programmers, the old maxim has to be expanded from "Know thyself" to "know thyself AND thy community."

Know and use the community's assets, but also know the hurt places in the community and address those. The poet Rumi best said this: "Don't turn away/Keep your gaze on the bandaged place/That's where the light enters you." Programming that is not afraid to embrace the "bandaged places" is programming that can be transformative. When the Greensboro Public Library sponsored its first citywide read, using *A Lesson Before Dying* as our selected book, we announced that the project's goal was to use literature-based programs as a means for open, healing conversations about racism. We paired up African-American and white churches and synagogues. We always used white and African-American co-facilitators, no matter what the demographics of the group they were facilitating. We trained facilitators to push the conversation to the hardest, scariest places. We kept our gaze fixed on the bandaged places of segregation and racism, and some light entered into places that had previously been darkened.

The third ingredient to community-building programming is creative

marketing. One theme for our Poetry GSO project is that we want people to "bump into poetry." So we taped poems up in bathroom stalls, put poems on placemats in fast-food restaurants, put poems on buses and in the Bargain Box (the used clothing store run by the Junior League). We combined seemingly dissonant genres in order to create diverse audiences. For example, we introduced spoken word groups to folks in retirement homes and we combined poetry with yoga, jazz, ballroom dancing, pizza and theater. We sponsored poetry-writing workshops in art galleries with the objects as the inspiration for the poems.

The fourth ingredient is mindfulness and flexibility. We have to ask the community for input and then incorporate that into our programs A community is a living organism and, as poet Marge Piercy said, "nothing living resembles a straight line." We have to be constantly mindful of the changing needs and assets of the community, and then be flexible enough that our programs speak directly to those needs.

The fifth key is walking the talk. We have to model community as we build it. As Gandhi said so well, "we must be the change we seek."

Communities are hungry for the ancient wisdom contained in the Humanities. Our programming can carry those truths to coffee shops, barbershops, bus stops and recreation centers. Humanities can become the tipping point that helps us envision a new community, what Dr. Martin Luther King called a "beloved community."

Notes

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What issues are related to one's identity as a North Carolinian, and how is that shaped by geography and notions of class, race, ethnicity and gender?

Vandy Chhum*

Gary Freeze

Ran Kong*

Malinda Maynor Lowery

Melton McLaurin

Dorothy Spruill Redford

Traditional Agrarian Discourse

By Gary Freeze

Several years ago, I went to Chicago with another North Carolinian—a humanities reference librarian to be more exact—and he talked me into touring the imposing, impressive Harold Washington Public Library. When we got to the special collections floor, the librarian turned out to be from Charlotte. He was more than polite; he was genuinely glad to meet us. More significantly for me, he was pleased to hear us. "It's good occasionally," he noted while we chatted, "to hear that soft, distinct North Carolina voice."

That moment in Chicago has been important to my quest as a North Carolina humanist. He had known us by our voice—not just by our accent, but by the resonance we conveyed when we actually said the things we wanted to say. Because he had heard North Carolina voices before, he could tell we really were who we said we were, and meant what we said, unlike the counter attendant down Michigan Avenue who told me outright I was a liar when I mentioned I had gone to the same school as Michael Jordan. I did not argue with the attendant, as, of course, was my "soft" way of being polite, of being a "distinct"-ive North Carolinian.

As a sometime scholarly presence for state Humanities programs, I have come to value the "soft" character of so much of what we do. Although my role as a social historian calls for acute analysis of the inequities and harsh realities of the past, my use of that history as a humanist tends to be softer and subtler. Rather than pile drive interpretation down anyone's throats, I ply suggestion whenever possible to help my fellow Tar Heels come to their own conclusions about their past and their culture.

In part, I do the soft approach because it marries well with my interpretation of what it has meant to be a North Carolinian through time. In many ways this softness is as much a historically-based artifact as is, say, the remnants of the "high toide" accent on Ocracoke Island. It is an echo of what I have come to call "traditional agrarian discourse." Each of these three words has suggestion for us today. As North Carolinians we have always been traditional, we have had those traditions rooted in our shared agrarian experience, and, most importantly, we have always pursued some form of discourse about our very unurban condition. This has been the case from the Regulation to the Research Triangle.

Let me explain that this catch phrase deviates a bit from the standard thematic approach to state history. Sectionalism has been state history's longtime benchmark, and I have nothing to refute its validity. There are today, and have been always, "two North Carolinas," one down East, the other in the West. The sectionalism theme has manifested itself in everything from two types of barbecue to Old East and Old West at Chapel Hill, to the governor having a house in Asheville as well as in Raleigh.

The agrarian discourse emphasis can also mask recent revisionist views of the state that emphasize disparities in race, class, and gender relations. I have no brief against the revisionist view, other than to acknowledge its limits for interpretation. Bias and discrimination, struggle and power are just some of the terms for understanding history

everywhere. But what about here? Race, class, and gender do not alone explain why I sound the way I do when I go to Chicago. It is more subtle than that; in fact, what is revealed is that I, and most North Carolinians, don't have an urban background.

My work gravitates toward the idea that North Carolinians have spent centuries working out the terms of their identity without the guidance of urban identity. Think of it; until very recently no North Carolinian ever lived in a really big city—unless, like Thomas Wolfe, they moved to one. At times in our history, even Troy, New York, has been bigger than our largest place, and even today, the sprawl of Charlotte or the Triangle pales before the sweep of the slums in Asian megacities. From the 1705 founding of Bath to the 1969 establishment of the multi-arena Carolina Cougars, the state has tried often, but has never established the central place so common elsewhere.

This historic condition, I think, drives the distinct character of Humanities discourse in our state. Holland Thompson, a North Carolina historian of a century ago, noted that the people he saw moving to town to work in textiles still had "the tang of the soil on their feet." I think we still have it on our minds, at least those of us who came of age in the vicinity of 1972, that pivotal year when so much about our politics, commerce, and culture began to change. The agrarian discourse model does more than hark tradition. It helps explain, for example, how matters of race can be pursued in a polite, but substantive way. It helps explain why labor unions had such a hard time in the twentieth century, why, for example, one textile organizer wrote back north to say, "These people don't even understand what a union is." It helps us ferret out the hidden stories of each community, because we understand better how matters like deference, shame, pride, and identity have worked among us. It helps us understand that even if we do not want to live in Mayberry, at least metaphorically, we have all come from there. As the sage Barney Fife noted, "You have to understand, this is a small town." What the deputy meant to say to those mythical urbanites from Raleigh was, "y'all" is a bridge to proper expression of feeling as well as fact. It has been the work of the Humanities in North Carolina to mesh the feelings of our people with the facts of our past.

Finally, awareness of how we sound and what we mean, given our past, helps us meet the future. Humanities programs in the twenty-first century, I believe, should become bridges to the values which are worthy of retrieval from our traditional discourse. The new fact for North Carolinians is that we are finally becoming urban in most of our arrangements and many of our habits. Since 1972, the locks of race, class, and gender that were part of the past have become brittle, if not broken. Yet we face new challenges of space allocation, social adjustment, and demographic changes that many of our youth seem poorly tooled to handle. The continuation of our own distinct Humanities approach can perpetuate that "soft" voice that makes us recognizable in the singular global city of today.

Constructs of Race, Class and Gender in Public Discourse

by Malinda Maynor Lowery

As I consider the conference, our panel, and the questions posed to us, I return over and over again to a central theme or quest in my own work, a theme that I think ties these questions together. That central theme has been to encourage audiences to think about how race, gender, and class are socially constructed concepts. An awareness of this would, I believe, transform many of the inequities and injustices in our society. Imagine the possibilities for equal opportunity if we could get beyond the idea that we are born naturally different from one another.

I think often about a point historian Ira Berlin made in the introduction to his book, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. He pointed out that as much as historians have demonstrated that race is and has been a social construction in America, this insight has had little, if any, impact on the modern political and social discourse. I think he's right, but that's why humanities programs exist and why we need to keep them going—to make sure that as many people as possible have access to these ideas and that the ideas are given a chance to have an impact. If scholars just talk to each other, as we so often unfortunately do, then our ideas will expire before anyone else gets a chance to taste them. That's the fundamental reason why I enjoy public humanities forums and seek them out and try to create them—they give ideas a chance to breathe and be tested, in a sense, among people who live in the real world.

I've actually never thought of scholars as not living in the real world—both of my parents were college professors, I have brothers and sisters who do research and teach for a living, and we all live very much in the real world. But the humanities—unlike science, interestingly—often gets regarded as having no relevance to contemporary problems. Of course, I do not believe that history, culture, and literature have no relevance, but I do think that we always need to do more to make sure those ideas get into the discourse.

In my own work, I have tried to do this a number of ways. Oral history, for example, is an incredibly important and effective way to communicate, both cross-culturally and within a culture you think you're familiar with. I also think that photographs are a tremendous help, in terms of jogging memories but also in terms of prompting interesting questions and discussion. The discussions that came out of the Lumbee River Fund "Telling Our Own Stories" project illustrated this. But when I take this work outside the Lumbee and Tuscarora communities, I find myself sometimes caught up in a "scholarly" mentality that says such engagement is for information-gathering purposes only, and if we feel for or identify with the meaning these stories have for their tellers, we are being less than objective and consequently misleading our audience. I heard this criticism through the grapevine recently when an acquaintance told me that her husband thinks disciplines like Native American History aren't "general" enough. She didn't linger on the point long enough for me to get much context about the remark, but I interpreted it to mean that Native

American stories are too marginal and thus irrelevant to what we ought to know about history or society.

But this person's comments are important, because he is someone the humanities can and do reach—someone who is thoughtful, interested in history, and asking questions. If we stay too far away from folks that feel this way, we allow the "scholarly" mentality to take over and alienate our audience, ultimately enabling the persistence of the stereotypes we want so badly to dispel. It's sad to say how far away most of my academic colleagues are from this discussion, but in my experience, audiences are very close to it, in touch with it, and have strong opinions about it. They want their histories and their perspectives to be included and be visible, but most don't have the resources or the access to make that happen. Continued, expanded, and efficient humanities program funding help get those voices heard. It's a long term process, one that doesn't always have immediate outcomes and payoffs for social trends at large, but they do have immediate positive outcomes for participants. The question may be, then, to get as many people involved as possible.

So back to my point about race, class, and gender as social constructions. Everyday people know this to be true, especially those whose voices are not yet included in the mainstream. Sometimes people lack the language to articulate these thoughts, but in my experience, that barrier can be broken by a willingness to engage in a lengthy, honest, and deep discussion. With such in-depth engagement, one quickly realizes that "multicultural" or "diversity" doesn't just mean having one person of each ethnic group up there on the stage. Audiences see through this—they want people, not images. They want people who they can identify with and who will be respectful of them and their experiences. Audiences yearn to know more about themselves, which is why they are so interested in their history and their culture. They want to know who they are. I found this so clearly on the "Coming Home" Tour for the *Tobacco Money Feeds My Family* film. Audiences didn't care if I was Indian, they wanted to know what I knew about them and their experiences. They were tough, and hard to impress with credentials or background information. They liked it best when I told stories of my own, or related something they said to something another person experienced. They also liked music, art, and different ways of seeing their experiences. The ability to do that relating is what the humanities teaches us.

Why Am I a North Carolinian?

by Melton McLaurin

Among the many and varied personal identities we each possess, that of North Carolinian resonates deeply within in me. It is true that I was Tar Heel born, and there is a high probability that I will be Tar Heel dead, although I have not lived my entire adult life so far within the state. Why do I have such a strong identity as a North Carolinian, in some very important aspects of my life far stronger than my identity as an American? Like so many things in life, it results from the circumstances of my childhood and of my youth, from those early formative years in which ones soaks up the surrounding culture and mores as if by osmosis. Formal education, travel, life experiences, each and all have diluted the impact of those early years upon character and personality, but they can never erase them. They are far too deeply imbedded in the psyche to be removed, perhaps even to be significantly changed.

With this in mind, rather than attempt to explain the forces that shaped my identity as a North Carolinian in scholarly fashion, which often is synonymous with boring, I would like to engage in a bit of stream of consciousness, or remembering. I realize that some of the specifics in this remembrance may not relate to the experiences of those who read this piece, but believe that the collection as a whole will. And so, we begin.

Wade, home town, rural hamlet, the sure knowledge of its geography, the streets on which less than a thousand people lived, evenly divided between black and white. The flat terrain of eastern North Carolina, the smell of plowed earth, tobacco fields ripening in the searing summer heat, townspeople, black and white, working on outlying farms, helping with the harvest, dirty, sweaty, gossiping, lying, singing, tying handfuls of green tobacco leaves on to sticks to be hung in curing barns. Walking down a dirt street with schoolmates to the local white elementary school. Singing the Old North State in the school auditorium. The moist cool of summer nights; fireflies; cold cokes; homemade, hand churned ice cream, vanilla with fresh peaches; pick up baseball games on the community field. Church, always church, the stern legalism of Presbyterianism for me, catechism, who made you god made you and all things. The joyous hymns of the Baptist services, the shouted amens in Pentecostal congregations, the small black churches, Baptist and Methodist, I never entered.

Family. My home at the town's limit, three bed room, one bath bungalow, six children. A father drilled in the virtues of North Carolina and North Carolinians, a mother from South Carolina. Baseball on the lawn. Mowing the grass. Waiting for the school bus on a cold winter morn. My grandfather's store, candy and cokes, work from the time I was twelve, gasoline and money as a teen. My grandmother's home, pies in the pie safe, grapes on the vine. Thanksgiving week visits from a great uncle in Virginia, a foreign land. Holiday feasts, coconut cake, lemon pie, apple float, syllabub, ambrosia, homemade wine. Heated political arguments at the table or before a fire after dinner. Family trips, including grandmother, great aunt, and the dog, to the coast, to Holden Beach, Carolina Beach, the Outer Banks, never to Myrtle Beach.

Trips to the state fair, the midway, thrill drivers, girlie shows, fireworks. My father's driving, fast, aggressive, scary, high school friend who wrecked two cars praying for survival as Daddy drove.

Basketball, the other religion. Goal in the backyard. Tuesday and Friday night high school contests, cheerleaders, pickup games in cold that numbed fingers and on asphalt that ate knees. Trips to the Dixie Classics and the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament at Reynolds Coliseum. Noise, excitement, fervor, devotion, Everett Case and Frank McGuire, magic figures.

Politics and history. Family pride in its Scottish heritage. Grandmother's tales of her father's role in the Populist Party, a great uncle named for Leonidas Polk. The reverence with which my father spoke of W. Kerr Scott. Devotion to the Democratic Party. My parents supporting Truman and Stevenson.

A sense of people, of families known and who knew me. A sense of place, of rootedness, A sense of heritage, taught at schooled and imbibed at home. Above all, a sense of belonging, of being a North Carolinian.

Claiming Home

by Dorothy Spruill Redford

In 1935 Fred and Dorothy Littlejohn packed all that their suitcases could carry and boarded a train in Columbia, North Carolina, bound for the North. Both hailed from "prominent" black Columbia families and were leaving behind substantial homes, family-founded churches and schools, family-owned businesses, and two living generations of family elders—one of whom had been born enslaved. They also left behind Jim Crow and the systemic expectation that blacks show deference to all whites regardless of their age, educational attainments, or socioeconomic status. They left the South at a time when historians, social scientists, the media, and lawmakers all seemed to conspire to denigrate or demonize everything identified with Americans of African descent: facial features, manner of speech, cultural traditions including music and other art forms, and (above all else) basic human intelligence. The Littlejohns felt nothing beyond their immediate family culturally affirming about being a North Carolinian or, for that matter, Southern. They lived for a time in Philadelphia, "the city of brotherly love," then settled permanently in Jamaica, New York.

By the time I joined them at the age of two in New York in 1945, my Uncle Fred and Aunt Dot lived invented lives. They were transplanted West Indians complete with contrived, non-Southern, accents. Their cover story for knowing nothing about the West Indies was that they had left the islands as small children and had never returned. In New York the beaches, public transportation, retail outlets, the block they purchased a house on, and the Presbyterian Church they attended were all integrated. And rather than just skin color, discrimination was based on ethnicity, country of origin, religion, neighborhood, and any other distinguishing factor one could name. As West Indians in New York, they felt more a part of the American tapestry that they did as blacks from the South.

In New York I too became a reborn islander—"Don't tell anyone where you are from and don't pronounce that word that way," Aunt Dot insisted—and I too perfected a contrived unidentifiable accent. We visited North Carolina kin every summer, stopping first in Virginia where my North Carolina parents had settled. But we never told our New York neighbors where we were actually going. In the end, Aunt Dot and Uncle Fred's rejection of the South and all the culturally negative feelings it evoked was so complete they refused even to have their bones interred in Columbia soil.

In time I returned permanently to the Jim Crow South I was born to and soon came to hate the way the South made me feel. My parents were Grady and Louise to white children less than three years old. Mother drew my footprints on a sheet of paper and took the sketch to the store to buy my shoes because she knew we couldn't try on shoes in the store. When segregated buses finally ended, I remember getting on the bus and sitting directly behind the driver. You couldn't see as much sitting behind the driver nor was the seat particularly comfortable, but the symbolism was irresistible. Although by the late 1970s historians and social scientists had begun to retell southern history, public representations of the history of Americans of African descent still vacillated between

cannibalistic African tribes and their inherently "slow" and inferior American progeny. For a number of years, when folks asked where I was from, I'd smugly rattle off, "I was reared in Queens, New York—150-21-115th Drive—out near Kennedy Airport." I found little affirming about being a native North Carolinian until 1983 when I discovered Somerset Place: an antebellum plantation turned tourist attraction situated no more than fifteen miles from Columbia. It was the plantation on which my enslaved ancestors had cleared the land of virgin timber, cultivated prosperous fields, and constructed more than 100 business and residential structures.

By 1983 the National Endowment for the Humanities had been around for eighteen years, fostering democratization of the nation's history and supporting public dialogue and representations of America that are inclusive of the diverse races and ethnicities forming the durable foundation upon which the nation we celebrate today stands. Academy-based and public historians, social scientists, and even media outlets also cooperated in retelling all southern history—including North Carolina's history. And at Somerset Place I discovered my family history—a tangible, deeply rooted, and valuable connection to North Carolina's history—and my soul came to know that North Carolina is what is today because of my blood line, and nothing about the way my fellow southerners choose to view and value me can change that fact. I now know and ensure that representations of history at Somerset Place reinforce the fact that the history, culture, and heritage of all Americans coexists, commingles, and inextricably meshes into one incredibly delicious stew. Today, when asked where I am from, "Columbia, North Carolina" is my answer. I covet the empty spot next to my grandmother in the Disciples of Christ cemetery in Columbia. I want my decaying bones to enrich North Carolina's soil.

My North Carolina, the state I lay claim to on behalf of every African American whose roots are planted in her rich soil, is not yet the North Carolina that I would want her to be. A few years back I hired a white twenty-one-year-old local fellow who had just earned a degree and was looking for part-time summer work. I decided to let him sit in on the interviews for a full-time, permanent position at Somerset Place. When the seven interviews were behind us, I observed that one applicant was "heads and shoulders above the others—the most qualified." Without missing a beat, and seemingly without malice or intentional offense, the young man said, "but she's black!!" He had, perhaps without even realizing it, embraced a historic and systemic racist world view. My North Carolina, the one I envision when I say "We The People," will rear generation upon generation whose inculcated beliefs about African Americans and other minorities are without automatic distinctions based on skin color.

Notes

Notes

Who has authority to speak for whom in ways that are represented in public?

Nyoni Collins

Gary Grant*

Barbara Lau

Joseph Mosnier

Alicia Rouverol

Lynn Rumley

Who Speaks For My Ancestors and Who Will Tell My Grand-Children?

by Nyoni Collins

I look up above my computer screen to see the host of family photographs on my shelf—myself at various stage of my life—childhood, young adulthood, and now middle age. I see pictures of the first family re-union that we held and the awards that I have been honored to receive for the work I have done. I see mementoes of places and experiences that I have had that have brought great meaning to my life.

But the most revered of all of these collected on that shelf is the photograph of Ma Catherine, the oldest family ancestor that any of us has any visual record of—this black and white photo of the etched dark-skinned face of a rural elderly woman stolen from Africa at age twelve and sold into slavery in the south is my historical connection to memory. Ma Catherine stares at the camera through deep set eyes that say, "You can never know what I have seen."

The photograph we have come to believe was taken in the 1930s when the federal government's WPA sent mainly white writers and photographers to conduct oral histories documenting the lives and experiences of former slaves. Sadly, we have no record of what Ma Catherine shared or did not share with these documenters. We long for any fragment of her life they might have asked her about, any words of knowledge she might have spoken—but none can be found. We are left only with this recently recovered treasure—the face of an African woman, who lived an African-American experience in a cruel historic time period in this country. But across the boundaries of time and space, across the boundaries of the living and the dead, Ma Catherine gazes at me and asks this question, "Who will speak for me?"

It was Ma Catherine's question that set me off on an unexpected journey that would eventually bring me to the work I have done for the last five years in African-American community history documentation. But it was the unexpected question of a white woman writing in the Spring 2002 issue of the NC Humanities Council's newsletter that raised concerns about her own work in documentation in communities of color that I found very revealing. So much so that I telephoned Harlan Gradin at the Council to discuss it. I have much respect for Harlan's intellectual ability to delve into such matters and have over the years come to trust his caring for my opinions. I wanted him to know that I was moved by Jill Hemming's self-examination and honesty.

In her article, "As I Was Talking, Fresh Ideas Came to Mind of Things That I Could Do," Hemming states, "Indeed, there was a time when I gleefully embarked on new community projects in my work as folklorist. Both feet forward. What I did not anticipate was that once I began a project, it would never entirely end. ... I soon discovered that human relationships do not disappear with the end of grant periods or paychecks." I found her comment refreshing because it has been just the opposite experience of documentation in communities of color in this country, specifically African-American. White documenters in the vein of the WPA have come into communities, gathered their research, written their papers, received their paychecks or finished

their dissertations, become experts, and moved on and back to the world from which they came. When Hemming speaks of human relationships that do not disappear, she would undoubtedly be surprised to hear that in my opinion, those relationships reach back to the nonliving and to the yet-to- be as well. A valuable personal story revealed to a documenter today is the life of someone's ancestor fifty years from now. It is knowledge of the community of which that person was a member. It is community history, not just the work of the documenter or the institution they represent.

In a "straight up" question from a community member, Hemming heard, "If you come in here, what do we get out of it? When you leave, is the community going to have a park sitting over there that's safe for our kids to go into and play?" This speaks to the heart of the question of results of documentation. I'm going to assume here that this is not the first time in the existence of this community of color that someone has come to record it. After all, documenters do not go to communities of affluence and status to research. They do not go to their own homes. They go to communities that have "problems" that they are interested in learning about for which there are research dollars. So this community or others like it have had many documenters over the years, over time. And how has that made the community stronger?

Hemming's response to the question is, "This is not a direct 2+2=4 relationship, but rather a "if we can imagine 4, maybe we can get a few 1s together" approach. If people are going to get involved, they have to remember why it matters." I have to state my unease with this kind of thinking. After all the documentary hours and dollars that have preceded the work of any individual documenter, why isn't there a park? How many times does the community have to be asked the same questions, tell the same stories?

If people are going to get involved for the long haul that it takes to make a difference, it is the memory of the ancestors that toiled before them that must matter, it is the hope that what they share with any documenter will be a legacy for a better future. Listening, even with the best intentions, is not enough. Change will not be enough. It is the power of continuity in which we must invest, upon which we must call. It is my ancestor speaking to me and I telling my grand-children that our community had a story that mattered in this world. It is learning the skills of written and visual documentation ourselves for it is only this record that is defined as credible. It is only then that the community will know where it came from, without having to re-discover it each generation; that they will know that their history has value and no one from the outside has to validate that for them.

Honoring Voices as Folklorists

by Barbara Lau

As scholars interested in cultural equity, our search for truth and our commitment to democracy have tremendous implications as we ponder issues of representation and authority.

Part of our responsibility as public humanities scholars is to develop working models for research and public presentation that honor the voices of our community collaborators while also rigorously examining issues from multiple perspectives.

There are many ways that the "voices" of community members and scholars can exercise authority. They include:

- Shaping the form, content, access, and look of presentations
- Speaking in leadership or authoritative roles
- Participating in decision making about projects and presentations
- Being quoted, the inclusion of individual voices in otherwise passive presentations such as publications and exhibitions
- Attributing all text, avoiding the "voice of god" approach to project descriptions, presentations, and evaluations.

Knowing who is speaking has deep implications. I believe scholars, audience members, and community members benefit from hearing from first person sources, from listening to people speaking for themselves. I also believe there are benefits for community members and audiences derived from listening to scholarly analysis and observations. The challenge is to find a respectful balance between these sometimes concordant and sometimes oppositional voices.

My reference is a folklore project I have been involved in since 1992 that recently resulted in an exhibition *From Cambodia to Greensboro: Tracing the Journeys of New North Carolinians* at the Greensboro Historical Museum, an exhibit catalog of the same name, and a children's book, *Sokita Celebrates the New Year: A Cambodian American Holiday*. The entire project was more successful, more engaging, and more truthful because we opened up the process of creating each element to leadership and direction from Cambodian community members. The project was supported by a 30th Anniversary Grant from the North Carolina Humanities Council.

In my experience, folklore fieldwork vests authority in the voices and experiences of community members. Our theory as a field grows from practice, from listening deeply and openly to community members. We are challenged to carry on this pattern in the realm of public presentations including exhibits, recordings, publications, web sites, oral presentations, and educational curriculum materials.

Folklorists can and do occupy many roles in this public humanities process. We sometimes view ourselves as bridges, as cultural translators or brokers, as designated representatives, as outside observers, and as contributing voices. It is incumbent upon us to avoid self-appointment to these roles and only step up when it is appropriate.

The research plan for the Cambodian community exhibition became a team effort. Two college-educated Cambodian women, Ran Kong and Vandy Chhum, were enlisted as community scholars. I first met Ran and Vandy in 1994 as teenage members of the Cambodian Temple Dancers. Together, we made a list of people we wanted to interview and I found that our experiences were tremendously improved when I stepped back from the role of lead interviewer, instead choosing to coach these two young scholars and let them conduct most of our interviews in their native Khmer language. Ran and Vandy also did the lion's share of work to identify personal objects and photographs that could be used in the exhibit. Putting young women into leadership roles on this project challenged some of the cultural hierarchies in the Cambodian community. It is generally understood that men traditionally took on public leadership roles but Ran and Vandy's association with the Greensboro Historical Museum gave their questions and requests weight and legitimacy with their elders and their personal relationships with many of our informants allowed them to probe and push, encouraging the telling of more intimate stories and share personal feelings. Being able to include selections from these personal stories in the exhibit made the whole experience much more compelling for visitors and would not have been possible without Ran and Vandy's involvement.

I was compelled to let go of some of my control of the project and cede a good deal of this authority to the community. At an early meeting at the Greensboro Buddhist Center, I posed several questions to the gathered elders, 1) Was presenting an exhibit about the Cambodian community in Greensboro a good idea? 2) Could drawing attention to the community become a liability in any way? And 3) If we went forward with the exhibit, what should be the exhibit's primary messages be? After some discussion, we agreed that the exhibit was a good idea and that it did not present any foreseeable liabilities to the community, in fact, the project provided an important opportunity from the community's point of view. I knew that many visitors would want to know how Cambodians came to live in North Carolina and why they had to leave their home country. I also thought visitors would be interested in learning more about Buddhism and other Cambodian cultural traditions.

The message of most interest to the Cambodian community members at the meeting that day had nothing to do with their American experience. They thought of the exhibit as an opportunity to educate both their own children and visitors about ancient Cambodian Khmer history and culture. They made it clear, from the beginning that they wanted to be seen as much more than just "poor refugees" from Southeast Asia trying ro learn to live in the United States. They wanted people to know of the glorious Cambodian Khmer civilization at Angkor, an empire that stretched across most of their home region from 800 to 1400 AD. It was from this history and culture that they drew their identity. They were very concerned that their children had little connection to this touchstone. Representing their community must therefore include an exploration of this historical connection. With this in mind, the exhibition was designed to open with an entire section about the elemental role that ancient history plays in contemporary Cambodian life.

Two dancers, clad in outfits reminiscent of their centuries old predecessors welcome visitors to the gallery and a 10th century stone sculpture draws visitors to historic and contemporary images, maps, commercial sculptures and text exploring the Angkor empire and its influence on Southeast Asian politics and history.

One of the primary audiences for the exhibit is Guilford County school children. More than 5000 school-age visitors have visited to learn more about the Cambodian community and to think about what it means to be a refugee in a country far from home. Cambodian students in those visiting classes are invited by Museum docents to help lead the tours, putting them in a position of authority in relation to their own culture.

While my goals for the Cambodian research was focused on educating an audience outside the Cambodian community and raising public awareness about the struggles and challenges faced by refugees and immigrants to North Carolina, the community's goals were more inwardly directed. Vandy Chhum, talking about her own experience working on the project said, "It feels as if I'm getting closer and closer to my culture just by doing this project. Sooner or later I will discover myself in a blanket fold of lost identity. This exhibit will not just reveal what I have lost but also of what I have not yet learned."

Ruminations on Public Humanities Programs

by Joseph Mosnier

Anticipating the discussion noted above, the Council has set us the interim task of gathering up preliminary thoughts about some very big questions. Rephrased just a bit, these include: Does public humanities programming make any important difference in the lives of our communities? Does it have any measurable political or policy impacts? Are current programming formats effective? Do we handle race, class, and gender issues with sensitivity and to some good effect? How might contemporary public dialogue around issues of values and culture be made more effective?

Rather than attempt a detailed sequential reply (I note with thanks that the Council has waived that obligation), let me instead offer some general thoughts and ruminations on these and related themes. In the remarks that follow, I confess that I am motivated as much by instinct and personal experience as by any type of careful empirical analysis or other cultivated sensibility, since I have never attempted to gauge the impacts of my humanities work in its various forms – scholarly writing, interview gathering, teaching, archival deposits, and the like. Neither, I observe, has my employer, the Southern Oral History Program, beyond the use of relatively cursory response instruments distributed to those persons attending our occasional public events and other similarly limited post facto evaluative gestures.

When it comes to the public impacts of our work, mostly we go on faith, the same faith that motivates educators everywhere. Both the value and the impact of public education being unquestioned, we tend to regard the merits, at least, of our labors as similarly beyond scrutiny. Any of us can cite anecdotes to make the point—students awakened to new futures, individuals inspired to serve their communities, persons who arrive at entirely new and more satisfying self-understandings—and this seems proof enough to confirm our faith. We simply view public humanities programming as a form of public education. Additionally, and in a not entirely unrelated vein, many of us accept that work in the humanities is not only inherently meritorious but also existentially necessary; we do it because it's who we are and it's therefore what we have to do, altogether apart from concern about "impacts" and "effectiveness."

However, in the arena of public humanities programming, as distinct from K-12 and post-secondary education, funders, of whom there are precious few in our place and time, are rarely moved to write checks on the basis of anecdotal evidence or assertions of existential necessity. Business efficiency models continue to be applied to schooling at all levels and to public humanities programming; measurable outcomes are increasingly the vogue, even when the desired outcomes involve such objectives as, for example, "bettering race relations" or "improving public policy development via enhanced public understanding of community history." Clever social scientists have, in fact, developed strategies for generating meaningful outcome assessments around values and culture work, but these evaluations are neither "hard" science of the test score type nor

inexpensive, and nobody likes it when taking stock costs more in coin and time than the programming itself.

I remain unshaken in my commitment to the value of public humanities programming, and my strong sense is that we suffer not from the ineffectiveness or inefficiency of such programming but from its relative dearth. Given the tidal wave of mass "culture," much of it created by enormously powerful and strategic entities (governments, corporations and their advertising agencies, entertainment purveyors, special interest concentrations) in support of consumerist or other ideological purposes unconnected to the public interest, I am little surprised that the occasional subtle public humanities presentation fails to rally the masses to the barricades of social justice struggle or manifestly to enliven public discourse. Being so terribly atomized by mass culture and the compulsions of the contemporary economy, we struggle to find any shared meanings, any common rituals, around which we might organize a more coherent, humane society. Surely there are places that have resisted and continue to resist such processes far more effectively than has the United States, societies that articulate and reflect more sophisticated and humane public cultures. None is a utopia, certainly, but on Rawls' test we would probably rather land there than here if arbitrarily assigned to take our chances as a citizen of average prospects in one place or the other.

I remember reading something in the mid-1980s that has always stuck with me. West Germany in that era was said to have been investing the equivalent of $2 billion (that is, mid-1980s US dollars) *annually* in support of *theater* (including operatic theater, I believe). It can seem from our vantage that such levels of support could not have been possible and it may be that these figures are wildly incorrect, but even if the estimate is high by a factor of ten, then it was still the case that the West Germans were spending twice as much annually in absolute terms *on theater alone* than the far larger, far wealthier United States was investing in *all* forms of arts and humanities combined. Shifting to the present to make a similar point, the combined FY 2006 federal NEH and NEA budgets won't top $260 million, a sum approximately equivalent to *one-twentieth of one percent* of the nation's current annual outlay on what is termed defense.

My point is not that careful scrutiny of the form and efficacy of our public humanities programming can't deliver some welcome outcomes. But I do want to insist, in my few lines of preliminary thinking here, that we not lose sight of essential matters of scope and scale. We ought not fault ourselves too severely for failing to push back the tide with a spoon if that is the only instrument we're provided. And we might do well to ask whether the problem isn't the character of our current humanities programming efforts, but the profoundly discouraging lack of them.

On Authority

by Alicia J. Rouverol

For more than ten years, through the Southern Oral History Program (SOHP) and later as an independent folklorist and writer, I have worked with the North Carolina Humanities Council (NCHC) on oral history-based humanities programming. My most recent initiative, the Brown Creek Life Review Project, involved groups of inmates in life review sessions, one-on-one interviews, and the creation of a play, titled *Leaves of Magnolia*, that the men performed for at-risk youth in the spring of 2001. Sponsored by SOHP and the Durham Arts Council, with funds from the NCHC and Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, the project was based at Brown Creek Correctional Institution, an all-male, medium-security facility in Polkton, North Carolina. My perspectives on authority and collaboration in fieldwork are perhaps best expressed through illustrating the challenges I faced on this project.

From the start, I wanted to do this project as a collaboration with the student-inmates. With virtually all my oral history work, I team up with my interviewees to co-create the final products (exhibits, performances, books, etc.) based on the interviews we conducted together. Collaborative oral history is based on the idea that power should and essentially does not reside solely in the hands of the interviewer, but is instead shared—"shared authority." Oral historian Michael Frisch means by this term the shared nature of an oral history interview. Folklorist Elaine Lawless advocates involving one's interviewees in the subsequent analysis of the interviews, arguing that authority should be shared beyond the interview itself. Ultimately, by my thinking, this sharing of authority should continue through all phases of our work with our interviewees.[1]

Putting these concepts into practice meant treating the inmates as colleagues, using the same strategy I would use in any community in which I conducted fieldwork. Collaboration in a correctional setting is especially challenging, though, for any number of reasons, not the least of which is that the prison setting is all about power—who has it, who wields it, and what that means on a daily basis for all who live or work at the prison.[2]

While prisons are defined in many ways by competition over power and control, I insisted on a peculiar kind of power not generally visible in prison power-bartering: the powerful right of each inmate to own their own stories, to determine how they would be seen and heard, and to be the authority in and on their respective stories.[3]

I tried to share my own authority by soliciting their input on the script and the development of the performance; but in myriad ways the inmates often took authority. They began asserting control early on in the scriptwriting process. Once, when we were reviewing transcripts for possible inclusion, we began discussing something not addressed in the taped sessions: the issue of prison visits by family, a painful topic for many. One of the inmates, Perez, stood up abruptly, left the room, then stepped back in. He cleared his throat, pulled at his belted pants as if to straighten himself, and then launched into a brilliant improvisation about "visitation" in a prison setting.

He fumbled through a few lines about his experience of waiting for a family visit, then spoke poignantly about how difficult it is when your family leaves. Perez seized authority by moving beyond a textual approach (my approach, initially) to creating the performance. Improvisation became a strategy for the inmates to insert their own material into the script. One inmate, Fenton, claimed a different kind of power and control at each rehearsal by not bothering to learn his lines. He paraphrased them instead, which drove our director mad and both irked and entertained the rest of us. Yet another inmate, McCarl, ended up nearly dropping out during the rehearsal process, because, as he later put it, "I'm not gettin' my say. I need my story in here, in this play."[4]

Collaboration requires constant realigning of goals and priorities while in the field, rigorous communication with project participants (especially our interviewees), and a sensitivity to the power dynamics at play in fieldwork settings. But the results can yield new and sometimes shared understandings of the human experience. If we are undertaking humanities projects to learn more about who we are, collaboration and sharing authority can help take us there.

Footnotes

[1] Note: A portion of this essay is excerpted from my forthcoming article in Della Pollock, ed. *Remembering: Oral History Performance*, Palgrave Studies in Oral History (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). See Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991). See also Elaine J. Lawless, *Holy Women, Wholly Women: Sharing Ministries of Wholeness Through Life Stories and Reciprocal Ethnography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993). For further discussion on collaboration, see Rouverol, "*I Was Content and Not Content:* Oral History and the Collaborative Process," Oral History 28.2 (2000): 66-78.

[2] See Oral History Review 30.1 (2003) for a series of articles on shared authority. In my article, I explore the challenge of collaboration in a prison setting, as well as the particular dynamics of power and authority within the corrections system, and how that played out in our classroom. See Rouverol, "Collaborative Oral History in a Correctional Setting: Promise and Pitfalls," *Oral History Review* 30.1 (2003): 61-85.

[3] Like the performance, the book I am at work on will be developed in collaboration with the inmates.

[4] Fieldnotes, February 22, 1999. Note: For publication, pseudonyms have been used for all inmates involved in the project.

Who Has the Authority to Speak for Whom?

by Lynn Rumley

For those of us involved in preserving the story of the Carolina cotton mill hill experience, this is a good question. My answers have evolved from our sixteen years of grass-roots history work in the former mill town of Cooleemee and from the new Southwide Textile Heritage Initiative born in 2004.

After beginning our video interviewing project of village elders in 1989, we called a meeting to ask what people thought were the most important aspects of life they wanted conveyed in a documentary movie. About thirty folks showed up, mostly elders. Aside from mentioning natural gathering spots, like the Old Square, and collective, shared experiences like school or working in the cotton mill—most comments centered on the values upon which mill people based their lives and relations to others. There was surprisingly little talk about mill work itself.

But, before that discussion ensued, our elders wanted to ask <u>us</u> a question. It boiled down to this: ***how will we be portrayed?*** Theirs was not a plea to gloss over any unpleasant facts of local history; rather it was a simple assertion that their experience was worth something and that it be treated with respect. They made it clear they didn't want be "classed" as one-dimensional, ignorant, victims in someone else's saga. Consisting exclusively of interview excerpts, guided by their direction, the documentary has sold over 500 copies.

Authority is something either imposed or delegated. In the end, all authority is subject to the "will" or assent of the people. But that, too, is an historical process.

Us lay historians of the Cooleemee Historical Association have been "authorized" by our 1,200 members to both gather history and to interpret the Cooleemee experience. We have gathered hundreds of individual stories, done scores of interviews, collected documents & photos—all of which have enlightened the creation of a public museum, many exhibits, a documentary movie, books, 59 issues of a history quarterly and an elementary school curriculum—all of which aim to tell the story of the Cooleemee cotton mill people. This humanities effort has had a tangible affect on reknitting the social fabric of our community, bridging generations and rekindling the town's collective spirit.

There is widespread "consensus" about this mill town experience—and our elders seem not only satisfied but also proud of how this story is being told. Thus, our "delegated authority" has remained in tact for now.

The interpretation that has evolved expresses a composite of Old Cooleemee society, both its "Like One Big Family" dimension along with its social tensions that periodically emerged. A picture emerged of a definable "social contract" which included mutual obligations (largely absent in today's corporate world) between workers and management. We have been able to discern how, even under the rubric of official segregation, people from both black and white neighborhoods worked out their own ideas of honorable race relations. Perspectives on such social arrangements naturally varies from individual to individual and group to group, but a surprisingly consistent consensus about mill village life has

emerged—especially when it comes to shared values and traditions.

The universality of this viewpoint has been born out by our work with folks from over 100 other mill towns and villages in the South. In 1996, a humanities conference with representatives from 27 other mill villages convened in Cooleemee to create a dialogue among cotton mill people and with professional historians writing on this subject. The notion that the textile industry and life on the mill hills of the region was largely positive was echoed time and again by those who had lived it. When the NC Humanities Council once again supported another gathering of cotton mill people last April, those attending the Cotton Mill Reunion & Convention in Kannapolis repeated the same themes.

The job set for the Southwide Textile Heritage Initiative is to gather as many of our peoples' stories across the region as is humanly possible—a time sensitive task because those who fully lived this experience are now passing on rapidly. Each story is part of a firsthand narrative, authentic in the form of its "raw material" saved in the form of interviews, in each completed Mill Family Life Survey, in preserved photograph and document or artifact of daily life and work.

But, we are not of the mind to shy away from drawing these together to paint a picture and make our best stab at interpreting this experience as a whole—highlighting the themes that people feel strongly should be portrayed, gleaning what wisdom we can, pointing to conflicts that arose and, most importantly, passing on to our children what we feel is vital for their future. In that sense, this peoples' history movement is already acting as a partisan for our communities' best traditions. We are taking the authority to speak. Time will tell if people accept or reject this. But, I can say now that this humanities work has thus far brought people together to transform individual stories into their own collectively produced, share memory.

To Cooleemee and other textile people, history work is not an academic exercise. It is a question of identity and of a hard-working people being remembered by future generations. It is a matter making sure that the voice of an older generation is able to share its wisdom with their young descendants who today face an increasingly confused and tradition-eroding society. Just as with Native Americans, heritage is not simply a collection of historical facts but the threads of cultural continuity. Every community has both a right—perhaps even a duty—to utilize its past in benefit of its future.

Most heritage work is not carried out by academia or by academics. Most of the gathering of stories and facts about historical events, the preservation of images, artifacts, documents and places as well as the creation of historic narrative to be is being accomplished at a local level. It is being done everyday by lay historians, history buffs, local history teachers, local historical societies, local library history rooms and historic re-enactors and we are a passionate bunch. Better local work would result if there was a free and open dialogue between this group of humanities workers with academia and if we were considered peers—not mere amateurs.

For, in the end it is around the kitchen table and in local school classrooms where most individuals get their rudimentary historical framework and

historical identity, shaping conclusions about where they fit into the stream of history. Actually, I think that's good. Organized public humanities dialogue and public history work can play an important role in enlightening process.

History, heritage and tradition comprise the social DNA of any culture. Every generation necessarily looks at the past through its own eyes; its outlook is prejudiced by its own experiences. Each generation will ask its own questions pertinent to its own inherited values, conflicts, status quos and dilemmas. It is inevitable that some lessons will be overlooked or ignored, some traditions will be preserved that might should be discarded. Future generations will have their own chance.

None of this should make us shrink from the task. For the loss of history's wisdom and traditions—and with it human cultural systems—is a real possibility. The resulting vacuum will most certainly be filled with corporate and media-produced, mass-consumer ethos—not at all of our own making. It has a different "authority"—one that is imposed by weight, intensity, pervasiveness and its marketing savvy. If we shy away from interpreting our own historical experience, the result may be an end to natural community and the many existing human cultures. Perhaps much of the social breakdown we witness today is evidence that this process is well underway.

When our Cooleemee elementary school children "graduate" from six years of "Discovering Our Heritage" history lessons, we can make this observation: they know this place, they know something of what happened on this ground, they know that their ancestors were important actors in a history and that this didn't begin in a cotton mill but can be traced down the Great Wagon Road before the American Revolution, they know something of what traditions their elders expect them to uphold today, they have such a sense of place that they feel that they "own" this little town. We know that as the first group of kids history club members and summer heritage campers graduated from high school this year, they had become active volunteers in the community and are proud to be from a little blue-collar cotton mill town.

If that's all that our public humanities programming has produced and if that's where asserting our "authority" has led, I am happy with the results.

Notes

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What are the processes of documenting the lives, history and culture of people? What are the implications arising from public documentary work?

Willa Cofield

Sally Peterson

Charles D. Thompson Jr.

Melinda Wiggins

Lesley Williams

Brick School Project

by Willa Cofield

What are the processes of documenting the lives, history and culture of people? What are the implications arising from public documentary work?

For years I mulled over the possibility of documenting the history of Brick School. Born in Enfield, three miles from the school's site just five years before the school closed in 1933, I had grown up hearing stories of the school's glorious past and the grief upon its closing. I had attended some of the reunions that the alumni initiated in the early 1950s where I heard the site described as "holy ground." I knew many Brick graduates and former students personally. They were my teachers, aunts, uncles, and neighbors.

I yearned to write a book that would tell the remarkable story of the school's founding, its awesome potential, actual achievements, and mysterious closing. One summer while serving as a group leader at SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity), a professional development program for teachers, for the second time I saw "Women of Summer." This beautiful film told the story of working class women who attended summer classes at Bryn Mawr during the 1930s. The aged women who attended a reunion, scenes of the Bryn Mawr campus, and the closing of the program made me think about Brick School. I gave up the book idea and began dreaming about putting the history of Brick School on film.

The process of turning this ambitious idea into a film proved long, tedious, and fraught with many ups and downs. Early in the process, I appealed to the North Carolina Humanities Council for help. I had worked with the NCHC and the National Endowment for the Humanities during the 1970s while a staff member of WVSP, a jazz-oriented, Warrenton-based, public radio station. The Council had been a reliable friend of the fledgling station.

NCHC showed interest in my project and awarded me a grant to write a media treatment, a huge act of faith on the part of the organization. Except for a small monograph written by Thomas Inborden, Brick School's founding principal, information about Brick lay in the memories of the aging people who had attended and worked at the school.

At age nine-four, Dorothy Miller, daughter of Thomas Inborden, was the oldest source. She had vivid memories, riveting stories, and much to my delight, well-preserved pictures of Brick School. She had obviously dedicated much of her life to the preservation of the story of her father's work at Brick School. But Dorothy Miller wanted a book written about her father; she had little faith in the longevity of films.

During this early period of long phone conversations with Mrs. Miller and dusty searches through old journals in the basement of Drew University Library, I found major pieces of the story of Brick School. Virginia Wills, who had been in second grade when Brick School closed, brought passion, pictures, and artifacts to the search. She had articles her father had made in the school's manual arts classes and certificates that her mother and father had received when they graduated from the school in 1905. Through the efforts of many people, including other Brick alumni, academic advisors and community people, we put together a coherent and readable history of Brick School. The collection of memories

that we wove together told the school's history from the perspective of the people who attended it, who taught its classes, and mourned its closing.

The efforts to find a filmmaker, though aggressive and widespread, did not bear fruit. Finally, the advisory committee decided to organize an exhibit of the dozens of photographs that the project had acquired. This exhibit introduced the school's history of Brick School to the community and during a three-year period traveled to many venues across the state.

Old dreams persist and the idea of putting the story on film took on new life in 1998 when I retired. I enrolled in classes at the Scribe Video Center in Philadelphia. With the help of the staff and a battery of photographers, technicians, and editors, we put together "The Brick School Legacy," a 35-minute documentary that tells the story of Brick School. The video premiered at the Inborden School in Enfield in the summer of 2003. Media Insights, a New York agency that specializes in educational videos and films included it in its spring 2005 catalog.

What are the policy implications of the Brick School History Project?

1. The accounting of unknown chapters of community and personal history can be achieved through persistence and dedication.
2. These enterprises warrant the support of public funds and public agencies. In fact, they absolutely require this kind of support. Without the initial act of faith demonstrated by the NCHC, the Brick School History Project would never have seen the light of day.
3. Productive partnerships between professionals and the laity pay rich dividends to all. The academy benefits when it lends its resources to researching the concerns of the community. The community develops new insights and understandings through acquisition of the tools and techniques of the academy.
4. Mainstream history almost always records the past through its own narrow lens, omitting the heart and soul of what many people have lived and experienced. It is absolutely vital that this history be reclaimed by those of us who rarely appear in the pages of traditional history. Through this empowering process we can realize new dimensions of our own identity and begin the process of envisioning a different future. Through such accounting, perhaps, we may yet find ways to heal our society and learn to live and thrive together.

On Documenting Communities

by Sally Peterson

What does it mean to document a community? The census documents community, so does the local newspaper. Private papers of individuals and businesses deposited in archives document communities, as do the headstones of cemeteries. But despite dictionary definitions to the contrary, these documents are not what we mean when we ask 'what does it mean to document a community?' Documenting community, in the language of the Humanities, means to tell a community's stories and to provide the context needed to understand them. This kind of documentation takes many forms, including exhibitions of photographs and artifacts, publications of oral histories and interviews, and films of events, performances, and daily routines and encounters. Or community documentation can be a combination of some or all of these. And some or all of these may also incorporate such documentation tools as the census and newspapers mentioned above. This question, so simply answered, becomes a more complex inquiry when we ask 'who documents communities?

Traditionally, documentation is performed by those trained in a theory and/or methodology that validates the idea that communities can be studied, and that we can learn from their stories. Again, traditionally, it is the trained documentarian, armed with ethnographic or historic sensitivities and current technical procedures, who chooses which community will be documented, and what stories will be told. The documentarian, however, rarely acts alone. Community members serve the documentarian with inspiration, consultation and with resources of memory and imagination. They indicate where meaning lies, translate the language of everyday life, and, when asked, provide feedback to the documentarian's interpretation. Often such friends in the field smooth the way for the documentarian's efforts, by providing introductions, suggesting locations, or arranging meetings and events. Rarely, however, are such community members found behind the camera or tape recorder, in the cutting room or the studio, or pounding out texts on the computer.

The editing process, the final arbiter of public presentation, lies within the control of the documentarian. The intended audience often is not the community itself, but rather a broad spectrum of individuals who, from interest or custom, attend the exhibits, read the books, and see the films that document the community. The documentarian controls the interpretive frame of the community story through production means, normally insuring that the intended audience will be able to understand the piece with no additional interpretation provided (unless it is supplemented through another kind of community documentation, such as a workshop, performance or discussion).

This traditional model of community documentation is not the only way to tell a community's stories. Visual anthropologists have recognized that we cannot, as Ruth Benedict suggested, "see the lens through which we look," nor can we always articulate the grammar of the non-verbal language we use when we manipulate the tools of visual and oral documentation. When such tools are held by hands trained in different cultural backgrounds, does a

different picture of community emerge? For decades, documentarians have trained interested community members in the tools of documentation, and invited them to document their own communities. The professionals do not choose the communities, the stories, the camera angles or the edits They do control access to equipment, funding, and public presentation, three items of documentary infrastructure that make such activity possible. Sometimes, continued efforts at community documentation by such individuals is wholly dependent upon the patronage of professional documentarian mentors and their sponsors. Audiences for such documentary forms tend to be smaller, centered in the communities being documented and in the professional communities of the documentarian. "Lay" (not of the community) audiences may need guidance to interpret the meanings of the documents, since they have been taken with a lens through which Others do not look.

Between these two extremes of community documentation emerges a diverse continuum of collaboration between professional documentarians and community members. Often individual researchers or cultural organizations (museums, university programs, arts councils, etc.) will propose a project to a community, and invite participation from community members at varying levels of decision-making. At times, communities seek the collaboration of professional documentarians with a project of their own choosing. Such collaborations engage all participants in a series of negotiations concerning content, interpretive frame, style, aesthetic and other details of research and presentation that characterize documentary projects. This process may require participants to closely examine their own perceptions and presumptions about their roles as cultural interpreters. Obligations to traditional audiences and to one's craft makes the potential loss of creative control an issue for professional documentarians and their funders. Community documentarians must satisfy the representational expectations of their own community and also communicate an understandable message to an often larger audience outside their boundaries.

By its very nature as a diverse conglomeration of fields that study human expression, the Humanities plays a vital role in the continued development of community documentation models and procedures. By supporting innovative collaborative projects, it provides both professional and community documentarians with an environment that fosters communication and the exploration of different systems of knowledge and perception. It is not only a matter of finding common ground, but of also knowing when to concede authority as well as when to claim it.

Even the Dead Will Not Be Safe

by Charles D. Thompson Jr.

Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.

Walter Benjamin from "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in *Illuminations*

In the sideboard in my grandparents' farmhouse dining room was a bowl of photographs. Some were very old shadowy images of the Appalachian past staring as through a glass darkly. Most of the people in them my grandmother could identify by name, location and a story, though some were lost even to her. As a child, I returned to the bowl of pictures again and again. Taking the bowl to the kitchen table, I'd ask questions and she'd tell the story. Why did they have that hatchet and saw in the picture? Whose log house was that? Why did Grandpa Smith carry a pistol? Grandma patiently leafed through the images with words, reliving her past and what she knew of the pasts of ancestors even she may never have met. I was mesmerized. She helped me reach across a chasm of time and space to find relationships, and to know that I'm not alone. These moments were sacred ... and fleeting.

Beyond the few images, names and details, there was precious little for me to grasp, fingertips almost touching then slipping back into the darkness of the photos. Now that my grandparents are gone and the photographs are scattered, the flourishes they added are silenced. This is a tragedy repeated in nearly every family in every generation. "Why didn't we record her when we could have?" we lament, or "if only they had not thrown away that diary when they moved!" or "if they had just taken better care of that photograph. ..." Such are the tragedies of the human condition that will ruin us if we are not vigilant. We have aphorisms about what happens to us if we forget the past. We also know that we always lose our grasp on the present and that by tomorrow what we have preserved is always already not all that we wish it could be. As James Agee lamented in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, it would be so much more preferable to preserve the real objects: the horses and their reins, the plates of food, soil, and even excrement, to really show, to smell, hear the thing in itself, instead of telling. But we always lose that battle to preserve the real. As soon as we try to do it, we know we have failed. We settle for the representation in words, sound, and image. We hope that what we capture or trap for a fleeting moment is enough to convey, to show, to cause someone else to feel and to believe something.

It is this sense of impending loss and the hope of reversing it and influencing the continual revitalization of our potential that has generated in many of us a desire to keep communications with our pasts alive, to do the best we can with representation, as faulty as it may be. We have taken to making photographs and films, written words and recorded voices, as a vocation. We call this impulse documentary work. This work, now a way of making a living for me and others, bears the huge weight of preservation of the human story. It comes from wanting to touch and to be touched, to reach across divides of time, space, and idiom, and make a difference in the way history is remembered from now to the unimaginable future. But it always must also be subjective, selective, and imperfect.

What I began doing instinctively as a child, I now see as a calling, a task

weighty with responsibility, an endless effort to wrest the past from the enemy Walter Benjamin would say is always lurking nearby, ready to wrest meaning away for the fascists and others bent on destroying our human potential, our very freedom. What heavy work for a child carrying a bowl of photographs!

I look back on my grandmother's storytelling sessions and know that we innocently embodied at those moments an essential human inclination to remember and to tell and we had every right to do this task together. In those times in her kitchen, no one needed to discuss the ethics of Grandma sharing a story with me or for me to see the particular photographs in question. She made decisions about what to leave out and what to put in when she told it, but no one talked of self-reflexivity or the problems of translation from one culture to another. These times were ours, the sharing between us unquestionable.

Problems unimaginable in personal relationships like these, however, take on a different tenor in our professional documentary relationships, particularly when we cross into other families, other cultural constructions with our questions and representations, our own equipment and our devices. Somebody's grandma can easily become a human subject and boundaries can be transgressed, sacred scenes unfolded without sensitivity. In short, people can be used. Thus, we have realized in this vocation of preserving stories and images, that preservation always begs the question: "For whom?"

The task of the documentarian is therefore never as simple as one might wish for, the story is never without subplots, and the motives are never as unencumbered as a child's question. While this realization has paralyzed more than one of my students in their efforts to do fieldwork (and perhaps rightly so in the beginning) realizing the imperfection of re-telling and reworking need not be abandoned altogether. The stakes of not preserving the past are too great not to pursue this work. The challenge is to acknowledge the imperfections of our work and to always return to the questions of motivation, profit, ownership, and long-term preservation of the work.

One discovery we documentarians have made is that extended fieldwork often makes for better and fairer representations. In contrast, whizzing in and out of a community to grab the sound and image is always a flawed model. Oh, to spend days on end with someone who at her leisure tells a story about a photograph and who can say so much with a laugh about that gun so that you know that he was not as dangerous as he looked in that picture! Yet, we must be careful with such longings. If we never crossed divides, or never found out anything about people different from us, we would be damned to eternal conflict, difference provoking diffidence, or violence.

So, our flawed task is to go carefully, always extending our hands across divides, hoping to grasp something beyond ourselves, something that might shake us out of our dogmatic slumber, our self-assured modes of communication, to learn and to change. Also, always remembering that everyone we encounter is someone's grandmother, grandson, partner, parent or child also helps. We must document

because telling stories is what makes us human. Human beings, as our own families often remind us, love to document, but are often horrible at preservation or sharing information with others. Should every history always be shared? Perhaps not, yet often to declare something unknowable to anyone else is also a tragedy.

We documentarians are insiders in a few places and outsiders in many others, always finding ourselves betwixt and between the past and future. We bear a weight on our shoulders, not only of preservation but of getting the story right. And we know that no one ever quite succeeds. This is our blessing and our curse.

Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Documentary Work

by Melinda Wiggins

Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF) has been documenting the lives and culture of farmworkers for over 11 years. Many of the philosophical issues that we have dealt with include the following:

- Whose stories are we presenting (an occupational group or ethnic group)?
- Who is documenting the stories (farmworkers or non-farmworkers, young people)?
- What is folklife and who determines such (professional white folklorists or Latino students)?
- Who does SAF need to be in order to present the stories in a way that is empowering to farmworkers? How can our staff, board, and interns represent the communities we 'serve'?

SAF's organizational values have been critical in determining ethical decisions for our documentary fieldwork and public presentation. We are explicit about the need to bring diverse communities together to document farmworkers' lives and advocate for changes in the agricultural industry. Through a multi-cultural internship experience, students live and work with other students from diverse racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds. Students represent migrant families, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, private and state-supported universities, and community colleges. Each year one half of our interns are children of Latino migrant farmworkers. By directly partnering farmworker students with non-farmworker students, we give interns the opportunity to develop better communication, understanding and support among people of different cultures. This pairing of 'outsiders' with 'insiders' provides a unique opportunity for students to struggle with important ethical questions around power and ownership of farmworker communities' stories. By preferencing the voice of farmworkers, we create an environment where 'privileged' white students are challenged to give up some of their traditional power roles.

There is much public education work to be done to differentiate between farmworker, Latino, immigrant, undocumented, 'illegal', etc. Though SAF's work is focused on an occupational group, the lines between occupation and ethnicity are often merged. Since the overwhelming majority of farmworkers are native Spanish-speakers and recent immigrants, much of our documentary work and public presentations about farmworkers focus on the specific barriers and contributions of Spanish-speaking farmworkers. We also collaborate with many Latino and immigrant organizations.

At the same time we are trying broaden public awareness of who is a farmworker. We are trying to address this by documenting where there are non-Latinos working the fields, recruiting African American student interns, and developing programs specifically targeted at African American workers. This ability to enlarge our scope to include all agricultural workers is significant as employers' recruitment trends look beyond Latin America toward Thailand.

The most rewarding part of our work is connecting with a diverse group of young people to build their leadership within the social justice movement. We advocate for young people to have a voice in decisions that affect them by training students to become critical thinkers, vocal activists, and committed participants for the long term. This leadership comes through in our documentary work in which students with minimal documentary training are the primary field workers, interviewing and photographing farmworkers about their cultural traditions. This allows us to emphasize process over product, thus enabling us to focus on building relationships, gaining trust, and developing leaders.

The commitment to developing the leadership of farmworkers and young people also rests within our own organization. Several years ago, we also began a dismantling oppression process, an intensive long-term process of understanding and deconstructing racial and other forms of oppression in the workplace. As an organization that promotes economic and racial justice for farmworkers, we felt that it was important to evaluate our internal policies and structures utilizing the same critical lens that we use outwardly.

Through this work, we have diversified our intern class from having one individual from a farmworker family to over half. This summer 18 of the 29 interns are from farmworker families. Likewise, our staff has changed from one white female at the organization's inception to 4 out of 6 being people of color today. Our board has changed from 3 of its 9 board members being people of color to 8 of 12. Since the majority of farmworkers are Latino, the majority of the people of color involved with SAF are Latino as well. It is important for this self-reflection and resulting organizational shifts to be conscious and ongoing, and is at the root of who and how we ethically record and share the stories of farmworkers.

Stop, Look and Listen: How Public Humanities Programs Transform Lives

by Lesley Williams

In 1997, while working at the South Carolina Arts Commission I, along with two of my colleagues, started the Institute for Community Scholars (ICS). The motivation for this program was very pragmatic. I was the first full-time folklorist employed by the Commission and I had a miserably small grants budget. Many of my constituents were interested in conducting field surveys to identify the traditional artists in their community. Very few, however, had had any type of training in community research and documentation. The only solution that I could see was to provide those on the front line basic training in folklife research and documentation techniques. The program has worked so well that this summer we trained our fifth class, which brings the number of community scholars we've trained to over 100.

The ICS is a South Carolina project which is overseen by a state arts agency. The point of including it in a discussion about the status of North Carolina's public humanities activities is less about describing the program and more about examining which elements make the Institute a concrete example of the way in which public discourse can have a significant and lasting impact on individuals and communities.

First, some background: The Institute for Community Scholars is a two-week program paid for largely through grants from the SC Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. The curriculum includes sessions on folklife and ethnography; project planning; interviewing techniques; grant writing; and methods of presenting and interpreting traditional culture. Community scholars also attend workshops on audio, video and still photography. As a result of this training, community scholars have come together to form a network of support for community traditions and their practitioners through South Carolina. Individually, they have produced compact discs, concerts, exhibitions, radio programs, and publications. ICS graduates have become key players in the conservation and documentation of their state's expressive culture.

The key to ICS, I believe, is creating a safe space for the exchange of ideas, questions and personal experiences. As the scholars explore the issues involving the mission, design and execution of their projects, they engage each other in discussions about history, language and about the presentation and interpretation of cultures. Ostensibly, all they have in common is an interest in documenting local culture. However, it is through their group exploration of the humanities that they form bonds that go beyond ages, educational level, economic status, gender, regional identity, race and occupation.

The success of ICS points out a glaring shortcoming of contemporary life. The participants are hungry for the opportunity to step back from the many demands on their time and energy and put the work that they do, or hope to do, into a larger theoretical framework. This is something that most do not feel able to do within the structure and confines of their everyday lives. The program requires that

participants devote intellectual energy to defining themselves in relationship to their communities and that they develop the skills to critically analyze interpretive material.

Because the field of folklore deals with the ways in which groups of people forge common identity, and transmit expressions of this identity across generations, it is an ideal vehicle for exploring issues surrounding race, class and gender. It gives us a theoretical framework for examining the ways in which we define ourselves in solidarity with or in opposition to other human beings. ICS also benefits from the fact that the scholars have an opportunity to spend a great deal of time together in a variety of situations. Knowing that the dialogue will be a sustained, open-ended one alleviates much of the tension that can arise when discussions are limited by time or scope, and people feel that they cannot make substantial inroads into others' world views. ICS facilitators and instructors work to create a place where people feel that their viewpoints are respected and given careful consideration, rather than being trivialized or dismissed. They work to reinforce the notion that acknowledging cultural differences does not necessarily assign negative or positive value to them.

For all these positive attributes, the real key to ICS is the participants themselves. They bring an openness of mind and a generosity of spirit which is not always easy to find. But perhaps, most of all, they bring courage -- courage to ask difficult questions, strive to find answers, and explore new ways of thinking. Most importantly, they display the courage to confront the ways in which they may have been limited in their outlooks, and that by engaging in a public humanities program, they can become better thinkers and citizens. If public humanities programs can facilitate such transformative experiences for those who participate, they have a value beyond measure and are worth all the support and resources that we can possibly give them.

Notes

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What are different notions about the meaning of community and how are those explored and expressed in public humanities?

Karen Loughmiller

Roxanne Newton

John Parker

Rebecca Reyes

Ann Woodford

Everything Has a Story

by Karen Loughmiller

I think everything has a story, and by following one's own individual stories and the stories which face the central issues of one's life and one's time, one changes things. The story will do it.

—Laurens van der Post

Public humanities engage and reflect our common and individual identities, acknowledging our past, illuminating the present, and pointing us toward a future based on a new or renewed experience of who we are and where we are now. They can invigorate important bonds of which we were barely aware, or which had grown weak or lapsed, and enable us to forge new bonds based on new insights about who we are and what communities we claim.

Every community has a story, and through that story both members of a particular community, and the rest of us, can better understand the nature and meaning of that community. With the help of NCHC, I have worked with three communities.

"The River & The Road" sought to collect and document the history of West Asheville through group discussions, oral histories, and the collection of photos, newspaper articles, etc. The project centered on place, and participants identified themselves largely according to their experience of that place.

"Speed & Spirit" examined the experiences of the stock car racing community in Buncombe County during the 50 years in which tracks existed there. The project centered on people connected with racing, and drew participants from well outside Buncombe County.

"In Love with Poetry" came about in response to an article by poet Dana Gioia entitled, "Can Poetry Matter?" Sometime after the article appeared, poet Edward Hirsch published *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry*. Bringing Dr. Hirsch to Asheville in conjunction with a discussion series based on the book, we sought to answer Gioia's question: could poetry matter to the general public? The project drew numbers of people who were attending the poetry event or joining their first discussion of poetry since high school.

In thinking about what is important about any of these projects, I realize that each project strongly affirmed the community involved.

In the case of West Asheville, a predominantly working class community, long referred to by the rest of the city as "Worst Asheville," a little discussion and investigation revealed a community with much of which to be proud. Discussion also revealed that the values important in the early years of the community remained strong in the present day, and that they were values of which the community could be proud. The interest and support of the local library and newspaper gave added impetus to a renewed sense of pride and a revitalization of the community in general. In fact there has been something of a renaissance—new parks, businesses, and community groups. There is no doubt that our discussions sparked a new sense of possibility in the community, and the publicity generated contributed to enhancing the community's sense of self-worth and positively affected the way other segments of the city view West Asheville.

The racing community was still smarting from the underhanded way in which the very popular Asheville Motor Speedway—the last remaining track in Buncombe County—was sold and closed, when that project began. With the racing community being largely (but by no means entirely) composed of working class folks with a high school education, and the buyer of the track being the Biltmore Estate, issues of class came to the fore early in our discussions. This we expected; what was not expected was how quickly participants abandoned that discussion in favor of sharing memories of the racing experience itself. Although many self-deprecatingly referred to themselves as "a rough bunch" and started out telling exaggerated stories of drinking, fighting, and swindling at the tracks, what soon emerged was the deep bond among all segments of the racing community. Tales of cooperation between rivals, scrupulous attention to fair play as they saw it, fundraisers for drivers—and fans—down on their luck, the camaraderie of the track, and high esteem in which the drivers were held began to get play in the local media. There was a sudden sense that the racing community had been misjudged, and that here was a fascinating legacy for the entire community. One outcome of this is that there will soon be a public monument to mark the location of AMS and recognize those who made it immortal to so many. Another outcome is that a local highway was recently named after the legendary Bob Pressley, the undisputed king of AMS.

In the case of the poetry seminar, a different sort of affirmation took place. Many people whose last brush with poetry was in high school, attended either the discussion with Edward Hirsch or the book discussion series. Their comments on the project evaluation forms were unfailingly of the highest praise for Dr. Hirsch, for the book, and for the opportunity to reconnect with this vital art in such an interesting and non-threatening setting. What was affirmed here was the innate potential of these people to understand and appreciate this wonderful heritage. Did it last? The library still has most of the copies we bought of Dr. Hirsch's book; we still have them because they continue to check out!

In addition to affirming the communities involved, each of these projects was significant to participants because of the implications for the future. In the first two projects mentioned, participants put a high value on the fact that their contributions to the project were adding knowledge to the historical record that would be available to future generations. It meant a great deal to them that their experiences were considered important enough to record for future generations. For those participating in the poetry seminar, the added value was the feeling that their personal future was enhanced by reconnecting to poetry, or by deepening their appreciation and understanding of it.

In all cases, participants placed added value on the projects because a humanities scholar saw fit to give time to the endeavor. People felt that this indicated a greater seriousness and worthiness of the projects and they in turn took them more seriously.

I recently viewed the NCHC-supported exhibit, "A Thousand Words: Photographs by Viet Nam Veterans," created by Martin Tucker at the Sawtooth Center for Visual Art in Winston-Salem. The exhibit shares photographs veterans made while in

Viet Nam. Each photo is accompanied by a brief description of the time and place, in the vet's own words. The photos and comments were gathered by Martin's beginning photography class, that is to say, by amateurs. Both pictures and text are surprisingly devoid of overt political import. No attempt is made at commentary or analysis; no external voice tries to put the show "in perspective" for the viewer. As nothing comes between the exhibit and the audience, the show returns us to the era and experience of the Viet Nam War in a direct, unambiguous, and very personal way. I think anyone whose life was touched by the Viet Nam War in any way will find this exhibit a stunning experience, and one that they will be thinking about, and talking about, long after they leave.

In closing, I would like to say a word on the question of making a lasting difference. What is the ultimate value of this work?

The story of how saffron robes for Buddhist monks were traditionally made illustrates pretty well what I think about the lasting value of what we do in this field. The makers began with pure white cloth, soaking it in saffron dye for a day, then putting it out in the sun to dry. It was left to bleach in the sun until it was almost completely white again. It was then returned to the dyebath, soaked for a day, and again placed in the sun to dry and bleach. Again the sun bleached nearly white, and again it was returned to the dye. This simple process was repeated hundreds of times. Finally, there were so many sun-resistant increments of saffron that the cloth was impervious to the sun; it was then made into robes.

This to me is the long view of the collective impact of countless humanities projects upon the fabric of our lives. Every project, large or small, adds its increment to affirming and strengthening our collective impulse to examine ourselves and our world, enhancing our ability to recognize and understand the communities to which we belong, broadening our appreciation of the varied expressions of culture and heritage that declare our common humanity.

The Ghanaian author Ayi Kwei Armah wrote: "The linking of those gone, ourselves here, and those coming: our continuation, our flowing not along any meretricious channel, but along our living way: it is this which calls us." It is this which calls us: bringing to light our communities' living ways.

Creating Community in Public Humanities Programs

by Roxanne Newton

Like the threads connecting layers of fabric, my thoughts about community and the public humanities return again and again to the defining metaphor of much of my work: quilting. Many of the public humanities programs and projects that I have experienced are similar to the quilting bees of our foremothers. With a common purpose, participants bring their notions, patterns of experience, and unique ways of stitching together multiple pieces of our individual and common fabrics. Again and again, in these public humanities gatherings, I have watched in awe as people from all walks of life come together to sit before the frames and stitch. As the humanities quilt is pieced together, we remember our collective and disparate pasts in the fabrics of memory, and we consider our similar and divergent present lives in our stitches across the counterpane of community. Working in unison, our handiwork becomes a warm coverlet of our collective imagination. We dream together under our quilt, creating richly textured, inclusive possible futures. Our humanities quilting bee *is* community.

Stitching together our future community is perhaps the most important purpose of public humanities programs. Because we can make a difference in the lives of participants, it is essential that we continue to find meaningful ways to engage North Carolinians in the challenging work of creating a public space for significant dialogue across the boundaries that threaten to divide us. The NCHC "Let's Talk About It" program is one good model for dialogue since participants often encounter divergent opinions, beliefs, and perspectives in response to the books that they have read. Participants thoughtfully consider challenging, controversial topics and themes and often disagree with one another. At times, participants will take these discussions in directions neither they nor I could have anticipated as together we envision new ways to think about history, daily life, and the future through the various lenses of culture, race, gender, class, and age.

On several occasions, LTAI participants have had the courage to tell their stories of past and present sorrows, resulting from injustice, change, loss, or regret. In these moments, we each transcend ourselves, attending carefully to our neighbors as they share the precious gifts of their experiences. Thus the power of dialogue is demonstrated where real understanding can occur. For example, in a small mountain library, as the fourteen participants discussed the changes and challenges of urban sprawl in North Carolina's rural and small-town communities, one person courageously shared her frustrations with the "outsiders." The majority of participants were "outsiders," and the group had a wonderful exchange about what it means to be the native and the newcomer in a small community. I felt that together we reached an accord and that these people would continue to talk about these changes in ways that would lead them to their common humanity even as they learned to celebrate their differences. Public humanities programs afford us with these opportunities that might otherwise not exist as we go about our busy daily lives, which often prevent us from connecting with our neighbors. But can we take these connections one step further?

While programs such as "Let's Talk About It" undoubtedly bring people together to

think and talk about challenging ideas, perhaps the NCHC should consider adding new formats and projects designed to move individuals' transformed thinking into substantive positive change. In recent years, our rapidly changing communities are often divided across seemingly widening cultural, racial, religious, and political chasms. Public humanities programs may help bridge the gap through sustained programs in communities—perhaps working with community activists and organizers to create year-long or multi-year projects focused on relevant themes, involving multiple constituent organizations, agencies, schools, and churches. Town meetings, reconciliation commissions, and teach-ins are some formats that empower participants not only to learn more about history, memory, and cultures in their communities but also to *act* on their new knowledge, extending dialogue with their neighbors and changing their communities for the better. Perhaps project directors and other interested people in a community can create coalitions in counties and regions to consider the possibilities.

Possible topics and themes that may enable us to recognize our common humanity will also help us to foster equality and justice in our communities. One crucial topic is globalization and its effects in communities in North Carolina and around the world. While we may lament the loss of jobs and income in our home state, we need to consider the conditions of people striving to live on the other side of the globe. We also need to think in terms of the history of economic development in our country and how globalization played a part in the creation of wealth in the United States. We also should examine racism and other forms of discrimination and their effects in schools, neighborhoods, and communities. It would be helpful to understand the rich and often painful histories of our communities and how race and ethnicity are and have been intertwined with our progress and our failures. Ultimately we should strive to find connection and unity in our discussions of this often-divisive topic. Other possible themes are religious fundamentalism and political absolutism. If we can respectfully and authentically explore our different beliefs, seeking new ways of connecting across these divides, perhaps we may agree that no simple answers exist. The public humanities offer us the best hope for finding common ground and moving toward building community in the midst of difference and conflict.

In creating new opportunities for communities to participate in public humanities programs, we should also consider ways to include people who do not often participate. In my experience, the majority of participants in humanities programs have been white women over 40. Therefore we need to explore ways to include men, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, younger people, and others who traditionally have not been involved. Perhaps we can use different venues and work with alternative agencies, for example, homeless shelters and community centers. Perhaps we can offer Spanish or Hmong translations of programs and materials. One of my own NCHC projects featured people from the Hispanic and Hmong communities in an oral history collection and history quilt. Some of our materials and the presentation were translated into Spanish, which was responsible in part for the increased participation by people from the Hispanic community. I believe if we educate our communities about the need to be inclusive, we will be more successful. The possibilities for future directions in the public humanities are limited only by our imaginations. We can bring new people to our community quilting bee, add new patterns to the quilt we have crafted together, and share the warmth of our collective creation.

Beloved Community

by John Parker

Exploring community through the public humanities reinforces my belief that we must create transformative relationships and be good stewards of our gifts and resources to bring about the change we wish to see in the world. My life's work is to explore community in order to help develop sustainable communities, promote sustainable living practices, and advocate for creative leadership, entrepreneurship, and good stewardship. As a father, husband, North Carolinian, community development practitioner, and applied cultural anthropologist, I trust community will continue to provide meaning for us, keeping us together across time and space, despite all of the forces that pull us apart.

With the guide of the public humanities, we can relate to community in all of its diversity, memories of the past and dynamic snapshots of present.

The public humanities remind us of what we know about community, its heart and spirit, what we will learn about life as we experience its wonder and trials. Through stories, dialogue, expression, living history, drama, literature, organizing, art, documentary, photography, ethnography, exhibits, and community work, we learn about what we've lost about community, the intimacy and ease of fellowship, our memories of generations before, and lives lived.

In many ways, the humanities help us envision the potential directions and forms community can take in the future, how we will live, relate to others, and what it will mean to be human.

* * * * *

Remember community is strengthened by all of our relations. Through family, faith, neighbors, and friends, at home, work, about town, and in the city and country, we learn about community.

I describe community as an active association of relationships formed through shared experience—history, geography, sense of place, identity, and intention. Culture, the dynamic and adaptive symbolic knowledge system that is learned and shared among people and used to interpret experience and shape a way of life, shapes and is shaped by community. Communities and cultures are diverse, connected, overlap, interact, and influence each other.

Through the exploration of community through the public humanities, we are reminded that over centuries, we have witnessed and participated in a great transformation. We are not as aware of the web of life as we used to be, our disconnectedness fueled by greater cultural fragmentation, rootlessness, more alienation, stress, anxiety, and isolation. The 21st century popular commercial culture does not teach us to live with and for the commonwealth. However, the humanities remind us to share, give, provide hospitality, and be more equitable and fair. Today, we have greater concentrations of power and wealth, nurturing social stratification, greater debt and dependency, reinforcing the punitive and inhumane criminal justice systems, influencing wealth in government and politics and the misuse of power advantages, status, privilege, and prestige which feeds the concentrations of power and wealth.

Through the humanities we see community and people being pushed: land shortages, soil erosion, lack of

resources, lack of food, family conflict, environmental disasters, poverty, violence, and war. We see community and people being pulled: jobs, independence, opportunities, access to technology, education, and resources.

If we let ourselves get close enough to community through the humanities, we can see the world, in all of its beauty and ugliness, and it is possible to see that we can create the beloved community. If we want to be intentional, we can have an inclusive civic table, where our relationships affirm the dignity, worth and potential of everyone. If we truly listen to the stories of struggle and hope, we will remember we have the power to transform our lives and communities.

I believe our communal instincts are more powerful than memory. Our voices and action have the power to expand the influence of people to achieve social, economic, political and environmental health and justice, if we listen and learn.

Through the power of the public humanities, I believe we can create communities that work together—with integrity, shared values, and transparency—for vibrant local economies, strong neighborhoods, healthy families, and sustainable communities.

The public humanities reinforces my belief in the power of community.

Community

by Rebecca Reyes

The fundamental law of human beings is inter-dependence. A person is a person through other persons.

—Archbishop Desmond Tutu

We are connected to each other and on the surface one could say community thus exists. However, I believe it is not only random acts of inter-dependence that creates community but the integration of the "humanities" is what shapes and gives our community the core of its life. The elements of the spirit, moral discourse, knowledge exchanged through the arts, memory captured via photography and documentaries, are only a few of the variables which contribute to making the gathering of folk into being community.

Communities vary in size, purpose, and diversity. They have different names: school, university, family, neighborhoods, nations, gangs, cohorts, etc. Each community will also have its particular boundaries, mission, purpose, and distinctions, but what makes these groups into community is the intentional action of wanting to be with another for the purpose of enriching the whole.

Communities also contribute to the change and transformation of the individual. Said another way, we, as individuals receive certain clues, messages, and gifts from participating in a community that shapes our individual life. These communities also provide us with the resources, opportunities, stories, and questions, conversations that will contribute to the decisions, which will be the foundation for our lives journey. And our communities also contain those invisible elements that shape our values, ethics, spirituality and rituals, which help us, explain our questions.

Integrating the humanities in communities helps strengthen their mission and synergy by paying attention to the welfare of all and helping individuals keep their life awake and alert. Paying attention to the gifts and strengths that each member can contribute affirms that the whole is only as strong as its individual member. Paying attention to who is not part of our community helps us identify the gaps in our diversity. Paying attention to whose voice, face, question is missing in our community assist us in expanding our critical thought process and identity.

The North Carolina Humanities Council has as its mission the commitment to share our stories, music, documentaries, historical accounts for the purpose of helping the individual to sort out the questions of life and daily questions. Whether it is a poet sharing the words describing the struggle of a farmer, or the archivist sharing the pictures of the past, or the musician sharing a ballad of war, the individual receives a gift which will enrich one's understanding of what has shaped their life and journey. I suppose one way to help us relish and appreciate the humanities is by asking: would your community and life be different if the stories of your community were silenced, the music of your culture were discarded, the ballads and poems of your region and nation never recorded, the photographs and mediums of arts were erased. You decide and that will tell you the significance the humanities and your community has made to your life.

Thought Paper

by Ann Miller Woodford

We have always heard it said "Home is where the heart is." "It takes a village to raise a child" is a revitalized phrase. "Rural communities are the heart and soul of our Nation and they are emblematic of the unique character of the American people," says Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman. Vice President Dan Quayle once promised from the government, "We will invest in our people, quality education, job opportunity, family, neighborhood, and yes, a thing we call America."

Our Constitution promises us that we should not be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law and that private property should not be taken for public use, without just compensation. Yet in June 2005, the Supreme Court ruled that local governments may seize people's homes and businesses, against their will, for private economic development. This usually happens to the underserved populations and minorities who have no voice.

Gentrification is killing Black businesses across the country. Racism is rearing its ugly head again. War and conflicts feel like they will eat our young people alive. Suspicion and conflicts have set neighbor against neighbor and caused us to fear becoming neighbors. It is open season for the destruction of babies, children and young people. Terrorism, homicide and suicide are breaking the hearts of people of all creeds, cultures and races.

Then we wonder why there is so much crime among minorities and the disenfranchised no matter what race. Why drugs? Why Viagra? Why the intense fascination with violent video games among our young boys and men? Why have young people escaped into reality TV? We cannot believe it when we hear on the evening news that someone has been killed or have killed while stealing extremely overpriced, sweat shop-produced tennis shoes or celebrity-endorsed jackets, caps or t-shirts.

What happened?

President Lyndon B. Johnson is quoted thus: "We live in a world that has narrowed into a neighborhood before it has broadened into a brotherhood."

A question was asked in the Bible, "Could anything good come out of Nazareth?" The answer is a resounding YES! Small, rural and grassroots urban organizations, like One Dozen Who Care, Inc. (ODWC) and others that are served by the NC Humanities Council are made up of people who have answers to the problems of society. They need a bootstraps opportunity to work hand-in-hand with humanities scholars to create the important changes that make for better homes and neighborhoods which in turn will create a better quality of life throughout our nation and reach out to the entire world.

Bill Cosby's relatively recent comments have spoken to the dirty, ugly secret behind closed doors, comments and worries that come from many African Americans. They wonder what we are to do in the face of rising crime rates, disproportionate imprisonment of our young men, out-of-control pregnancy rates among our young women and the growing number of HIV/AIDS cases among Black women.

There is a primal cry for home, neighborhood and country. How can

we address this cry? Mahatma Gandhi said "WE must BE the change WE wish to see in the world." We need more dialogue—more conversations—more directed discussions about what is meaningful to our youth adults and elders of all cultures.

One Dozen Who Care, Inc, with the support of the NC Humanities Council, kicked off an African American history preservation project in 1998, "When All God's Children Get Together," that has not yet seen completion; but it has launched the Multi-cultural Women's Development Conference, the 10-10-10 Youth Mentoring Project, and a new small business and incubator economic development project proving that we do "make a difference beyond an immediate and ephemeral impact and in ways that can be expressed and documented." (re: point 1)

ODWC members are teaching each other that "service is the rent we pay for living on earth," as said by the late Shirley Chisholm. We must work to fight against the idea that things have to be done the same way they have always been done. It is our job to produce creative projects and programs that come out of the ideas expressed by our constituency.

The arts and humanities provide a venue for creative thinking, give us opportunities to share our gifts and strengths, teach us how to use our past as stepping stones to a positive future and become the venue for change. They allow us to talk about our hurts, sing about our joys and fears, plan and think long term for a better future, and dream the impossible dream.

The mission of ODWC is to strengthen local leadership and create strong community bonds. We exist to bridge the gaps between races and cultures and between the young and old, train leaders and preserve African American history and culture. The foundation for it all is the average, everyday people we serve. We know that change is inevitable and we, with the help of the humanities, will become the change we wish to see in the world.

Notes

Notes

What are the relationships between public education and development of public knowledge? Why and in what ways is this contested terrain?

Paul F. Bitting

Karen Cobb Carroll

Howard Machtinger

Doris Terry Williams*

The Power of Ideas in the Development of Human Excellence

by Paul F. Bitting

It is common place to say that the humanities bake no bread, that they do not have practical value, that they are cherished for their own sake or for personal enrichment of those who study and engage in them. Professor E. M. Adams (1991) recounts that many humanists are frightened by, and want to reject, talk about the usefulness of the humanities. "They take pride," he continues, "or at least pretend to, in the alleged fact that the humanities are valued only for themselves." Thus, that one feature which characterized the humanities from its very beginning is generally and apologetically conceded to distinguish it still—its "uselessness." In speaking of the education of the young, indeed, in defining it for the Western world, Aristotle says, in the *Politics*, that, though useful arts are indispensable for the young, they should not be taught so many mechanical skills as to make them narrow, but they should be educated in the free liberal arts. The liberality of the humanities then and now is its freedom from the constraints of application. It can take a leisurely, large, and long perspective; it allows the mind to play over possibilities; it strives for no immediate application.

However, Adams contends, the humanities have their utility value as do the sciences, even though much of their potential in this regard is unrealized. "Where the sciences have their utility value in providing knowledge that guides our efforts to gain manipulatory mastery of the conditions of our existence, the humanities have their utility value in terms of their contribution to the overall healthy development of the culture, including science, and the development, nurture, and support of persons, institutions, and the social order in which people live and have their being" (1991, p. 18). I can here only sketch what such an approach would be like. The humanistic perspective is constituted by one's total experiential encounter and active engagement with reality. It is from within this orientation that one becomes aware of oneself as a being in the world and becomes a fully functioning person. Thus, the usefulness of the humanities is to be found in its unique emphasis on the pursuit of ideas. It is through such pursuit, I argue, that human excellence is achieved. Let me, then, make a sharp and highly debatable assertion: "Human Excellence" and the "Pursuit of Ideas," rightly understood, are convertible terms. Such excellence *is* the pursuit of ideas; such pursuit *develops* human and cultural excellence.

The objection might well come from those who are interested in that side of the world of the school which, if not of its essence, is yet a necessary supporting condition, the culture of the body. Athletes know perfectly well that there is physical excellence and that it wins, rightly, high admiration. It is a corroborating historical fact that the Greeks of the classical world, for whom excellence was an acute and central concern, used their word *arete'*, most pointedly of distinction in athletic competition, in *a'gon* or "*agony*." But is athletic competition really excellence of the body? I recall seeing a documentary of one of the Olympic games in which were shown the Marathon runners at the end of the course. Many hours after the winner the last runner came

into the stadium—if one could call it running. He looked like a puppet held up by too long a string; his legs were buckling and *they* were clearly not what was carrying him. If that runner was not pursuing an idea, that is to say, in this case, a fixed purpose of the kind we call an ideal, I can't imaging who might be. The film makers recognized the magnificence of this effort by playing for this last runner and only for him the Conqueror's chorus from Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*, a piece which expresses the quintessence of triumph.

My point is that every human activity which is accomplished with distinction is the pursuit of an idea, an idea of the sort called a purpose or plan or an ideal. To give a pointed formulation to this connection and the problems that come with it, it is useful to introduce a distinction first formulated by Aristotle in his *Ethics*. It is the distinction among three kinds of life: the theoretical life, the practical life and the productive life. Aristotle's sensibleness is shown by his recognition that there are different ways of life, which we more or less deliberately enter upon and which are more or less mutually exclusive. There is the practical or active life, by which he means all that has to do with governing or running things, with the exercise of judgment and decision-making. There is the productive or making life, which we like to call "creative." It ranges all the way from the baking of a good cheese cake to the composition of a poem. Among these possibilities we must choose. It is, of course, a most important fact that—certainly while we are young—but later also, the choice of any one life need not be for a life-time. That is precisely why it is possible to choose to come to the university—it means, or ought to mean, to choose to live the theoretical life for a portion of one's adult life.

When I say it *ought* to mean that the theoretical life is chosen, I intend to say something strong and very controversial. For what Aristotle means by theory and theoretical (humanistic) life is an activity of learning and insight, of proper perplexity about the nature of things and happy contemplation of truths found, that is done at bottom *for its own sake*. But don't we all know that a very vocal and effective part of the academic world does not think people should attend the university for the sake of learning and insight at all, but rather in order to be trained and ready for careers?

If the reader will agree that this so-called theoretical (humanistic) life is somehow what is meant by the pursuit of ideas, the question—and of course, also my answer to it—is set out. The question is: granted that all human activity which is carried out with distinction is carried on in accordance with ideas, is there some special connection between human excellence and living the theoretical life, life in pursuit of ideas. My answer will of course be a resounding *yes*. Agreement with that *yes* should have the most determining effect in our conversations on identity, culture, and history in North Carolina. If anything is meant by such a life and such learning it must be, it seems to me, this: the theoretically educated person can articulate reasons, give causes, spell out why's, wherefore's and how's. I doubt the reader will find myself saying that wildly exciting. It has the sort of insipid obviousness that a truth much battered about but never quite exterminable does have. Three or four generations of students past it was aggressively and even brutally denied, in an attempt to regain a lost paradise of primitive, inarticulate, spontaneous, playful immediacy. For, as mentioned earlier,

the only commonly recognized mark of such a life is the negative one of non-specificity and uselessness. And while that notion is nostalgically tolerated as an ideal it is also practically set aside as luxury. So reduced to a pulp first by the aggressiveness of its enemies and then by the insecurity of its friends the terms will scarcely cause anyone's heart to miss a beat.

And yet it ought to. If there is one realization which proves itself over and over it is this: that the person is an animal, that is that physical organism, which cannot find its fulfillment in mere functioning or even in mere consciousness, but which needs—**needs**—to come to terms with itself, to be self-conscious, to be clear and truthful about itself. There is such learning and it is useless and unspecific only because it is at the root of all usefulness and at the foundation of all specialization.

Living a life of this kind, in compelling us to articulate what we think, what we are, what we ought to be, in leading us to the roots of the world and making us see what is in our power and what is not, in giving us the best of models and supplying us a clear notion of their deficiencies—a life of this kind gives us **convictions**—not prejudice and predilections, but convictions, strong, thought-supported opinions which in their warrentedness and endurance come close to being knowledge. Socrates thinks—and I think he is right—that such knowledge-like conviction is contiguous to action, and that it leads to potently good conduct immediately.

Public Education

by Karen Cobb Carroll

Public education has, throughout American history, served as the forum in which public knowledge is built. If one defines public knowledge as the corporate knowledge of a society, this knowledge base is constantly in motion, morphing into new and expanded ideas that reflect current trends and issues as well as recent historical trends. Historians only carefully comment on politics of recent years, as it takes some years to develop an historical perspective in order to more fully understand a president's contribution. For instance, Ronald Reagan was misunderstood and maligned while in office; yet as the years added historical perspective to his administration the public knowledge expanded to more completely understand his actions and abilities. Harry Truman is another example whereby a president was more respected years after his administration. One may say that these men were only ahead of their time; another way to say that is that public knowledge had not yet expanded to incorporate their visions.

How does public knowledge expand? The most obvious avenue is through public education. Formal public education has been tied to America since the Pilgrims scratched their survival from New English soil. Alexander Pope said, "'Tis education forms the common mind: Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclin'd." Throughout the history of the US public education has served multiple roles: ties to bind children to the religious tenets of their fathers; diversions to keep young antebellum rakes from much mischief; avenues to help balance early twentieth-century professional gender inequities; and as the great educational equalizer as the GI Bill redefined higher education after World War II.

In the 1960s, however, public education found a new and to some more frightening role: that of societal crucible, where societal ills were exposed and public knowledge was no longer a consistent idea but became a reflection of society. The relationship between public knowledge and public education became adversarial, each searching to define itself within a relationship to the other. This adversarial relationship continues.

Public knowledge has become a fluid entity. If public education is still charged with transmitting public knowledge, the question has become who decides what is to be transmitted? Recent studies have found that academic conservatives often face discrimination on higher education campuses. It seems that the current public knowledge forum holds little place for them.

If the role of public education is to transmit public knowledge, to whom falls the responsibility of deciding what knowledge is worthy of transmission? Is transmittable knowledge firm or situational? To what extent should ethical principles and values help define truth? Herein lays the conflict, as political ideologues and cable TV advertisers battle for the malleable minds of those who seek truth.

The environment in which public education functions has changed radically in just the past two decades. Public education must decide if it is to be shaped by public knowledge or if it is to shape public knowledge. As is often the case, to not decide is to decide. If public education does not confidently move to mold the development of public knowledge, public education will cease to hold its central place in American culture.

Public Education and the Creation of Public Knowledge

by Howard Machtinger

To try to say something useful about public education, let me begin with some biographical context and follow it up with my recent experience in attempting to develop a public discussion about race and racism in our schools. My experience with public education began with the civil rights and antiwar movements of the 1960s, which attempted to move beyond "speaking truth to power" to exercising power through speaking and acting "truth." We hoped to convince/educate a broader public about a number of crucial issues: that segregation and denial of opportunity and power for non-whites was unjust; that the Viet Nam war was wrong, and that there were viable alternatives that were more just and fair. I attended the antiwar Teach-Ins in the mid-60s and I went to countless conferences and demonstrations about these issues.

Claiming to speak "truth" implies access to a better truth than others possess. Therefore the claim is prone to generate some dangerous tendencies: arrogance ("my perspective means that I always know better than others"), purism ("my standards will not be besmirched by reality; working in the imperfect world is selling out"), and elitism ("I am here to educate the unenlightened masses").

Power—exercised by those who run things—usually tries to bend the truth to its own ends, or in the word of a Bush operative: it creates "realities" for others to react to. Segregation is normal, traditional. Imperial war (in support of dictators) will bring peace and democracy. Privatization will create better public goods and services, and so on. Those drunk on power want to control truth, and thereby constrain hope.

The need for public education implies that there is a problem with the current state of public knowledge. This can be unsettling to people because it suggests that there is something wrong with them for (passively) accepting current knowledge. It has the whiff of betrayal and goody-goodism, and the authoritarian connotation of being "pc." To break from this can be wrenching and can push public educators in one of two possibly problematic directions:

1. *To adopt a defiant, rebellious style, to be out there: "This is where I stand; deal with it!" This "pose" has the advantage of moral clarity and forthrightness along with the dangers of marginalization and impracticality.*

2. *Conversely, one can act as unthreateningly as possible, claiming to be "average" or to be reviving traditional values. This "pose" has the advantage of alienating as few as possible of the potential audience, but at the possible costs of superficiality, opportunism, or blunting of message.*

So these are some of the dilemmas that those of us who feel the need to engage in public education face. I have come to the conclusion that we need to find/develop another "pose" or space, which respects and engages people's current perspectives, but poses alternatives, which express moral clarity and forthrightness, that keeps its edge without turning off potential allies and supporters.

In this context I would like to describe and analyze my recent efforts to foster

public discussion of race and racism in our education system. First of all, I (and other participants) faced the problem of convincing our potential audience and collaborators that the issue of race still haunts America. Many whites, for instance, believe that outstanding race issues were resolved by civil rights legislation, that they themselves were color-blind and impervious to racial perceptions, on the one hand, and that advocates for racial equity were obsessed relics (of the 60s) prone to special pleading and guilt tripping. They saw discussions of race as white "guilt trips" or as beating a dead horse over and over again, a discussion with little fresh to contribute. Other people were tired of seemingly purposeless and inconsequential, superficial discussion. Still others thought that our social problems were really class-based, and not race-based. Some Asians and Latinos were unsure of their place in a discussion that had been long dominated by the white/black paradigm.

On the other hand, when I received a small grant six years ago to sponsor a conference on character and moral education in our schools, I brought it to the Teaching Fellows leadership group for consideration. Teaching Fellows is a scholarship program for prospective teachers, which I have directed for the last six years. After some discussion, and to my surprise, the students chose to organize a conference on race and racism in the schools. They said that race was kind of taboo in their schools. Schools saw discussions (or activities) about race as potential trouble, possible provocations, preferring a "look no evil, see no evil" attitude. Many African-American students found such discussions superficial, dishonest and boring, and sometimes resented bearing the brunt of the conversation. Whites saw the discussions as a lose-lose proposition; talking honestly laid them wide open and if they probed too deeply they might encounter resentment from other white students; the thicket of potential complications seemed hardly worth the trouble. But these students—as potential teachers—saw a need for better, more honest communication—because of growing segregation in their communities and inside the schools, the absence of minorities in honors programs, the complications of interracial romance and sex, a sense of profound interracial misunderstanding and distancing.

The friendship between two of our students—one black and one white—particularly the willingness of the black student to push and probe, but also listen, modeled what we hoped to do with our conference, now entitled "Let's Talk R.A.C E." (Racial Attitudes and Conversations in Education). Since then, we've held five more annual conferences. The first conference focused on the pervasiveness of racial thinking in our society, the second on social relations and the strengths and weakness of desegregation in North Carolina, and the third on the history of black education and Latino education, which illustrated the deep desire for quality education on the part of these groups. The fourth on desegregation then and now featured a speaker who participated in the desegregation of Little Rock High, as well as an expert on the current state of Chicago schools. Our fifth conference featured a debate on No Child Left Behind, the Bush administration's education initiative, and our most recent dealt with language education for African-American and Latino students.

The reason I've listed the theme of each conference is to illustrate our attempt to focus on racial issues by doing variations on a theme, and to elaborate a scope and sequence for understanding race in our educational system.

At first, the conference was voluntary for Teaching Fellows, but we soon discovered that college students—except for the most interested and engaged—are reluctant to voluntarily give up a Saturday. Besides the 15 or 20 students who helped organize the conference, perhaps another 15 or so attended. The organizers had engaged in intense, thoughtful, safe, but provocative and honest discussions about race as part of their preparation for the conference. For them, the conference then functioned as a fulfilling culmination of these discussions.

We also developed a growing base of educators for these discussions. Attendance grew from 60 non-Teaching Fellows to well over 200. We decided to require Teaching Fellows to attend the conference since we thought it was an important opportunity for them to hear thoughtful presentations and to seriously engage racial issues.

As a consequence, we met with some resistance. Some issues were more obvious than others. Requiring attendance bred anti-authoritarian resistance. Even though we made some efforts to prepare students for our conference, our efforts were too schematic, superficial, and often missed the point. For instance, many Teaching Fellows had never attended a conference before and had naïve assumptions about conference behavior. But the larger problem had to do with how disconnected the conference seemed to be from their lives and academic work. We did not do an adequate job of justifying the conference, linking it to their future as prospective educators. Despite some weak attempts at creating an accessible web site, we also have not figured out how to build on the conferences or feed into a larger discussion.

So the conference works fairly well for the students who are already interested, for a larger core of involved educators, but not so well in affecting prospective teachers who are not predisposed to pay attention to racial issues. And so far, it is mainly a one-shot deal with little obvious long-term effect.

So what are the implications for affecting the larger public of educators, parents and students in which discussions of race seem to be limited to grade disparities on standardized tests—the notorious "achievement gap"—critiques of ethnic and racial culture, and token representation in positions of public power.

First of all, public sites for real dialogue must be created and supported. The false sophistication of cynicism about power—"you can't fight city hall," "all politicians are alike" and so on—must be combated on the ground, at the grass roots, not mainly from on high or only by increasingly hollow exhortations to vote. Public education is crucial in overturning outmoded and demoralizing frameworks of public knowledge and understanding.

I believe there is a vacuum of authentic discussion—unpolluted by spin doctors and egomaniacal media mavens—but also a powerful, if hidden, desire for authentic communication about things that matter. This does not require the absence of strong points of view—

after all if something is important, one ought to care deeply enough to have a strong point of view—but the absence of hectoring, moralism and the presence of the real-life practice of dialogue leading to action, where the opinionated (in the best sense) and experts (who have precious depth of understanding and experience) interact respectfully and honestly with a larger public who seek respite from spin and manipulation but who are also unsure of their own footing. We are responsible for not modeling impossibly pure, brave or charismatic leadership, but developing caring, open and thoughtful direction. The urgency of our work demands it.

After you have put out your message through a conference, a moving talk, opinion piece, newsletter, email, or conversation, how do you follow up so that new knowledge becomes incorporated in your and others world view and activity? If there is sufficient agreement around a common set of concerns, networks need to develop and a grassroots movement should grow in which individual and local particularities enrich and elaborate the core issues with which we are concerned. A movement is a public space where words and action intermingle (sometimes with surprising and creative results), their connection driven by a passionate need to empower people to make meaningful change. As it stands, too many of our best efforts end up as whistling in the dark, on the one hand, or one-shot deals in which issues are re-introduced over and over again with little development and without fresh energy.

We can bow to power, follow the funding, avoid the larger issues, and we will continue to reap the ensuing whirlwind. Or we can try to build a serious, open public space with perspectives and implications for meaningful action—in fact building such a space is in itself meaningful action—creating a different sort of power in opposition to manipulation and demagoguery.

Notes

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What does it mean to tell our own, or facilitate someone else's story? What power do stories have, and how do they become connected to something larger, such as the different ways we understand community and our place within it?

Ken Betsalel

Edie Cohn

Lu Ann Jones

Heidi Kelley

Magdalena Maiz-Peña

Sharon Raynor

Holy Silence and the Art of Observation

by Ken Betsalel

"If you ask him: 'What is silence?' he will answer: 'It is the Great Mystery! The holy silence is His voice! If you ask: 'What are the fruits of silence?' He will say: 'They are self control, true courage or endurance, patience, dignity, and reverence. Silence is the cornerstone of character."

Ohiyesa, *The Soul of the Indian* (1911)

"About the vulnerability we are still barely able to speak"

Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer* (1996)

As ethnographers, documentarians, field-workers, and story tellers, how do we ask the most important questions of our subjects? Should we? I remember taking a photograph of two homeless men for my NCHC project, "Houseless Not Homeless." I generally do not ask people to pose for me but in this case I did. We were in the back alley of a downtown church where the day shelter I was documenting was located. It was a cold December day. The two men who I knew only slightly were setting on the steps when I asked them if I could take their picture. Without speaking one of the men put his arms around the other and stared intensely into the camera. It was clear the two men were comrades. I did not ask any questions and made the photograph. Not long after the photograph was taken both men would be dead. One from alcohol and exposure the other from heartbreak (hearing the news of his friend's death he walked out onto a rain slick highway and was struck by a car.)

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neal Hurston wrote, we "Don't know nothing, but what we see." The more I do field work the more I believe I now what she meant. Doing field work with my wife and colleague Heidi Kelley on stroke survivors and co-survivors, I have learned a great deal by silently watching. One afternoon before going out to lunch in Durham with Rosie and Chris our two stroke friends (informants is too weak a word to describe our relationship), I watched as Chris put the rings on the fingers of his wife's hands. The stroke had immobilized Rosie's left side. It was as though everyday their wedding vows were reenacted and redeemed.

How do you ask a co-stroke survivor why he cares for his partner? The Davids have been together for twenty-seven years when David had his stroke, leaving him aphasic—that is, speechless. David had been a well known lawyer and his partner also named David had run a successful mail order ocean liner collectables business. David always attends the stroke survivors support group meetings in Asheville. He learns all he can about stroke and aphasia so that he can help his partner anyway he can. Several years after David's stroke his partner still makes sure he continues his speech, physical, and occupational therapies. While David continues to improve his speech and movement, it is slow going and lots of hard work on both of their parts. In the year and half Heidi and I have known the Davids as fellow stroke survivors and co-survivors we have never asked David why he is such a dedicated and faithful caregiver. Perhaps it because we know from observation and experience that it is because they both care for each other.

While as ethnographers, documentarians, field workers, and story tellers I know there is no question that we cannot ask (God forbid we should censor ourselves!) I also know

that in silence and through close observation of ourselves and others there may also reside the story we seek to tell. Too often we go into the field to get something to "take" a picture or record a story. What we sometimes forget, at our peril I think, is that we are also observed and part of the picture we are creating. The only time I was refused a story on our stroke project was when my subject sensed I wanted something more from him then himself. He was poor, he was white, and he lived in a trailer and continued to smoke long after the stroke left him unable to walk. I think Ray understood that the only thing he really owned was his story and I was not going to have it to use as an example of a certain class of stroke survivor. I respected Ray and could see in his silence a courage and fierce determination to be himself. I guess what I am saying is that we must be willing to listen to the holy silence of others and the lessons it has to teach us.

Lies

by Edie Cohn

I have a personal problem with lies or hypocrisy. It really grates on me—I hated it when it happens to me, I have a hard time forgiving it and when it comes to putting out a project with my name on it—it's got to be as honest as I can possibly make it.

With that said—working on an oral history/documentary project with homeless people brought that issue out in me in ways that I had not anticipated. It wasn't so much that the people I interviewed may have been lying to me; that was not good, but I could deal with it. In fact I wanted to include in my 'dream' book an essay about that idea—I wanted to warn the reader that not everything they read may be true since I didn't have any real way of knowing for sure on this project.

But I think my greatest betrayal was when I realized there was probably no way of interviewing someone and editing the text in a completely objective way—no matter how much I tried. How can I possibly say, "Here is their story"—as if I was reporting it word for word, sentence for sentence, everything that they had been spoken in some objective way. Subjectivity is everywhere. How I listened, how I didn't listen. Was that bullshit, or wasn't it? How many kids did he say he'd fathered!? And he's proud of it! What was she trying to say? I like that idea … can I make it clearer by eliminating this word, (which she'd said twice before), or that 'um'? How about all of those 'ums'? If she sounds stupid, uneducated—who is going to listen to her? I'm listening. As I said, I like that idea! But will the reader like it if it is not packaged right? All of these questions are so blatant, and the homeless I drew and interviewed shared so much with me that I know was the truth—but my choices through out the whole project were all so subtle—like the stokes of the charcoal beneath my fingers as I smudged the paper, willing their character to come out, to take form for all to see. I shaped it all.

Thus it became very clear to me from the beginning that I was constantly making judgmental decisions about how to edit my interview that had little to do with them or their beliefs but had to do with me and my values—thus who I was and how I was raised. And even more disturbing to me: How could ANYONE possibly think they were doing an interview and editing the materials without letting in a whole lot of their own personal issues? (That's where the betrayal comes in, because I had bought that idea for so many years!!)

The whole idea that when I read about another person's life in a book or had heard if from someone else—that it was the truth and it was an objective account of their lives. All of that is lies. It's got to be. I could see from working on the project that my viewpoint slanted everything—even when I was doing the drawing—I was in there.

So how could I deal with that dishonesty that threatened the whole fabric of my project? That I had discovered quite innocently? I was angry, and I didn't know what to do with those feelings, so I started writing and slowly came to realize that I didn't want to do that same trick on the reader, the person who would be reading my book. I wanted them to know my biases right up front. I wanted the reader to know the filter,

the lens that all of the information had passed through before it reached their eyes. None of it was it was reaching them untouched—none of it was objective.

So I started writing essays about myself. Essays for those times when I could see the influences and experiences in my life guiding my decisions as to what to include and what not to. I thought the reader could then judge for himself or herself where the truth may or may not lay. I even carried it a step further, and put together several versions of the same interview—each edited differently, each having a different meaning. Let the reader in on that process as well—again, let us not call that process 'objective'.

By doing it that way I felt a lot better about my role in this dilemma of honesty, but it also made the project expand 10 fold. Now I was writing a story not only about the homeless, but about myself as well.

When I started doing the project with the Humanities Council, Harlan wanted me to pull myself out of the process as much as I could. He wanted the world, our community, to have the opportunity to hear the homeless people tell their own stories. So, through Harlan, I worked with a wonderful Humanities Scholar, Lisa Yarger, who tried to guide me through the interview process in a more 'objective' way—as I re-interviewed people who had been in my project 10 years earlier. Ms. Yarger also edited the new interviews as well as the old ones as we prepared for a small publication, "Ah, without Pity" that was to be handed out during the library exhibit of the charcoal portraits and the community forums.

I trusted Lisa completely. I gave her the parts of the interviews that I thought were relevant; the parts that told the story I wanted to tell about these people. She condensed the writing, she didn't change the meanings/the points I thought were important, and she made it all more coherent. She is a good editor—I want her to help me rewrite the whole project so that I can turn it into a book that publishers will want to publish. But you know, Lisa is a lot like me. We share a lot of the same values. We care about many of the same causes. But are we really any more objective as a team than I was alone? I don't know. And then I go back to wanting to educate the reader more about the process of doing an oral history/documentary.

Inequalities of Power and Community Oral History

by Lu Ann Jones

My reflections on the meaning of stories come after two decades of working with the North Carolina Humanities Council in several capacities. I have helped community groups and museums design oral history projects. I served as a faculty member at teachers' institutes that explored conflict, democracy, and dissent in the state's history. As a member of the Humanities Forum, I shared my own oral history research on southern agriculture with citizens across the state. Whatever the venue, I have seen that oral history can put into play a multiplicity of perspectives and that stories beget stories.

Let me be more specific. One of the most vexing issues for any group that undertakes a community oral history project is one of inclusiveness. Whose stories do we listen to and preserve? On several occasions, my primary job as a consulting scholar was to encourage local project directors to expand their list of potential narrators, to include the perspectives of black as well as white, poor as well as middle class, women as well as men. Designing an oral history project often requires community members to acknowledge that hierarchies of race, class, and gender have created inequalities of power and to determine how their project can address and perhaps heal some of those rifts. These are difficult tasks for local historians, because it is hard to acknowledge conflict and suffering in our own backyards in much the same way that it is not easy for us to come to terms with conflict in our own families. Patience and honest soul-searching have to precede the nuts and bolts of doing oral history.

One of my great pleasures as an NCHC associate has been to use stories to help various groups understand that "people like us make history" and to build empathy across generations. At a teachers' institute where we used oral histories to explore dissent in southern cotton mills and the nature of historical memory, several participants who teach in or near mill towns discovered the history of those places and of the people who called them home. The teachers might have routinely passed the physical markers of the textile industry's heyday—huge brick factories and modest mill worker housing—without understanding their meanings from the perspective of people who toiled there day in and day out. They returned to classrooms with an appreciation of how stories and place are linked—and able to help their students make connections between past and present.

Whenever I shared my own oral histories of southern farm women with audiences at historic sites, museums, and historical societies, I was reminded that stories generate stories. Without fail during discussion periods, people began to tell stories of mothers and grandmothers who contributed to their families' farms by growing abundant gardens and working in the fields. Invariably, audience members suggested that I return to interview an aging relative or neighbor; I, in turn, encouraged them to trust their capacity to ask questions and preserve valuable stories. In the best of circumstances, our conversation linked personal stories to larger contemporary issues:

What are the consequences of a farm population that has dwindled so dramatically? What values guide our land-use policies as the countryside undergoes rapid suburbanization? What difference does it make that so little of the food we eat is grown locally?

In the end, oral history and the public humanities are about asking thoughtful questions and creating safe spaces in which people can tell their stories and grapple with answers. We live in an age of incessant talk—on radio, on television, on cell phones. Stories invite us to listen, for a change.

Reflections on Being An Insider

by Heidi Kelley

When I began collecting the stories of stroke survivors in North Carolina, I felt more confident than I did commencing my fieldwork in Galicia (a region of Spain) twenty years ago. It is not my relative maturity or the fact that I am doing fieldwork "at home" (with all the comforts of speaking the same natal language and sharing the same cultural assumptions) that led to my increased confidence (though they helped). I was confident, perhaps too confident, because I too am a stroke survivor. Let me explain.

Soon after I fell out of bed and into the world of stroke, I realized that I could apply my anthropological insights to understanding my changed situation. With my co-survivor and research partner, Ken Betsalel, I gave a conference paper and published an article about my experience as stroke survivor (Kelley and Betsalel 2004), and put an exhibition of photographs of my rehabilitation and recovery. My goals were two: to change the way people thought about stroke and to give my fellow stroke survivors hope of a meaningful existence after stroke. Now I had written about my experience (or our experience, for the co-survivor's experience is intricately interwoven with the stroke survivor's story), Ken and I wanted to go out in the world to collect the stories of and photograph other stroke survivors. We are now doing just that, thanks, in part, to a grant from the North Carolina Humanities Council.

Three years into the next phase of our project, I realize that my confidence in being an insider might have been misplaced. Being a fellow (or sister) stroke survivor is powerful, able to break down barriers of white and black, straight and gay, Christian and Jewish. Being an insider in stroke country, is leading me to many compelling insights. But being an insider in any country potentially leads to some blind spots. For example, I am immersed in the disability studies perspective. Disability studies is a relatively new field. It holds that disability is socially constructed, not a finite thing but an abstract entity, woven out of the gossamer strands of social conventions. The disability studies perspective holds that the pathology is not in the disabled individual (as the medical model holds) but in the society, where attitudes and physical barriers loom equally large as impediments to people with disabilities. The disability studies model also questions "normalcy." What is normal anyway when the only thing blocking disabled people's way are the barriers erected by society?

My informants are not acquainted with the disability studies model. They accept, by and large, the prevailing cultural assumptions about normalcy. They may be stroke activists, speaking out for other stroke survivors, presenting at stroke conferences, even organizing support groups, but they are not questioning the very tenets of normalcy as my colleagues in disability studies do. Am I supposed to be true to my informant's experience or expose their "false consciousness" as some of my disability studies colleagues might put it? Exactly to which culture do I belong?

My answer is both. I am both an adherent of the disability studies model and a stroke survivor. I both try to question the very tenets of normalcy and try to walk and talk as normally as possible. Being aware of the tension in my identity is important to my role of

a researcher and as an activist. I can tell my stroke friends about the views of the disability studies perspective and likewise, present to my disability studies colleagues the positions of my stroke informants (see Kelley and Betsalel 2005). In my written work, I would like to simultaneously reveal an insider's perspective to the country of stroke and question the reader's (including other stroke survivors) pre-conceptions about normalcy. In that tension, lies the creativity and the insight that doing work at home is not that different from doing work in other lands. It is for that reason, Ken and I have entitled our current project, "Travels in Stroke Country." I now feel just as "at home" (or estranged) in Galicia as in my new land, the country of stroke.

Notes

My thinking about what being an insider means was influenced by Kirin Narayan's "How Native Is a 'Native' Anthropologist" in *Situated Lives: Gender and Culture in Everyday Life*, edited by Louise Lamphere, Helena Ragoné, and Patricia Zavella, New York: Routledge, 1992. As always, I thank my fellow stroke survivors and co-survivors.

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Telling Latino Stories: Weaving Life-Writing Narratives con Acento

by Magdalena Maiz-Peña

Through the power of the word, we touch the world, through life-writing narratives we unveil realities, and through them we become aware of the peripheries of our own stories, and of those of Others. Reading Latino Lives with inflection in literary and cultural narratives we approach the horizons of our own past and future, inhabit unknown borderlands, converse back and forth in different tongues, and we recognize the trace of our own life-lines in those of Others. Listening to fictional and non-fictional Latino stories coming from Chicano, Puertorriqueños, Cubanos, Centroamericanos, Neorriqueños, Sudamericanos, and Caribeño voices, we dwell in painful realities of dislocation, loss, pain, separation, and isolation, witnessing the cruel realities of poverty, fear, violence, racism, malnutrition, unemployment, depression, discrimination, and marginality, as we caress individual and collective memories woven with threads of integrity, strength, faith, and determination embedded in life-narratives of metallic thorns and undefeated hopes.

As we inhabit the borderlands of Latino narratives with acento carved in poems, short stories, essays, plays, fictional and non fictional works, and autobiographical writings, roots, cultural heritage, tradition, collective memory, artistic representation, and socio-political expressions unwrap their raw material: dislocated selves, cultural disjunctures, scarring of solitudes in exile, nostalgia and longing for the homeland left behind, separation from one's own communities and life-tracks. Latino voices, identities, and personal narratives document the migratory experience, settlement, and negotiation of cultures situated in historically specific realities, rooted to family, community, a sense of place, feeling of belonging, and homeland.

Stretching the boundaries of the page, Latino voices weave in between the lines of the stories, layers of cultures, languages, and stories of their barrios and borderlands documenting the history of a mestizo struggle, and patterns of experiences marked by bordercrossings as they construct their stories at the crossroads of their own individual and collective journeys. As we listen to their stories, bilingual and bicultural voices map cultural discourses of self-definition, self-affirmation, and self-configuration, dismantling old paradigms, uprooting inherited notions, silencing imposed interpretations in the reader/listener. Telling their own story, Latino narratives with an accent become sites of cultural transformation, and geographies of cross-cultural contestation discarding the dominant culture cultural scripting, editing, and voicing over. Listening to Latino stories we are repositioned on the edge of the page from the inside out, immersed in new geographies of knowledge, exposed to socio-cultural dialects, inserted in collective and relational representations of cultural identities grounded in a poetics of differences. As their stories unfold, Latino history, language, and culture disentangle hidden forms of ignorance and prejudice, uncontested racial, sexual, social, economic, ethnic and cultural assumptions, uncontested ethnocultural scripts, and shattered and distorted media perceptions shattering the mirror of invisibility and indifference.

Hearing passionately one another's voices beyond the walls of silence, fear, ignorance and misunderstanding, moving back and forth between two or three languages, walking on the edge of European, Indigenous, and African heritages and cultures, Latino writers not only rewrite their own stories, but also the stories of their readers. These mestizo stories examine critically the positionality of the listener contesting his/her readings from specific cultural locations, create crosscultural tensions, and call for an experiential reading anchored in conflicting cultural fields. These hybrid stories with an accent lay out a feeling of displacement, and a profound awareness of linguistic, socio-cultural, and ethnic barriers, and cultural asymmetries from which we name and read the lives of Others. This dislocating reading process remind us of the importance of cultural genealogy in our desire to understand Latino communities in North Carolina, and to place their stories in a transcultural frame within a larger perspective of the transnational migratory experiences.

Reading their stories with an accent becomes a critical cultural practice of a contesting nature as the sound of Latino voices name imaginary and non-imaginary realities of alienation, displacement, solitude, loss, and exiles exile of their migratory experience. Writing/reading themselves from within themselves, they resist the erasure of their languages, the loss of their traditions, identities, and memories as they struggle against cultural assimilation breathing in their pages unending cultural negotiations.

Chicano, Cuban American, Puerto Rican and NuyoRican stories pose critical questions about historical memory, conflicting cultures, unsettled identities, socio-cultural conflicts, diasporic realities, tamed languages, broken dreams, struggle and survival, resistance to acculturation, and mestizo consciousness, writing their own worlds with an accent into our own realities.

Writing from "el Mexico de afuera o El Mexico del Norte," "Miami Little Havana," and "Tropical Manhattan" place us closer to the lives of migrant workers, family histories, narratives of oppression, and stories of the suppression of language, identity, sexual preference, ethnic heritage, and culture, and challenge us to rethink the paradigm of cultures within cultures, communities intersecting communities, and about hybrid border cultures in the making in the New South.

Reading/Writing/Listening to Latino Narratives with acento provides a unique framework to engage in a critical dialogue with the cultural memory of their past which will imagine their future, as the Chicano Poet Cherrie Moraga has suggested in her essay "Art in America con acento," as well as to foresee the unique contribution of Latino Lives to the social fabric of transformation of the Americas, and we could add to the southern fabric of North Carolina con acento Latino.

To Tell the Story . . .

by Sharon Raynor

What does it mean for a community to hear about experiences that are often horrific and traumatic? What does it mean for the bearer of those burdens and horrors to share those experiences—to tell the stories that are so endured with pain? Stories are the chosen language of a community when they must communicate their sufferings, their traumas, their joys and their epiphanies. The community can select what to tell and who should hear it. The rendering of these stories become their sacred language and bond.

Telling one's story offers profound liberation for perhaps those tortured souls whose voices have become intermingled with pain and misunderstanding. When facilitating someone else's story, such as my father's and his time during the Vietnam War, I am also telling my own story. Parts of him become embedded in me. I am able to share the emotions of his telling while also moving through my own. There comes a point when the teller, the tale, and the listener become one—united by a merging of otherwise unmerged voices and unspeakable thoughts.

The oral history project, "Breaking the Silence: The Unspoken Brotherhood of Vietnam Veterans," not only changed the lives of all those who participated but it also changed my life. I cannot imagine not doing this work. Their stories have become my story; their voices have become my voice. These men and women live in me because their loyalty and determination has crossed and blurred all lines of gender, race and class. Our coming togetherness is focused on healing, survival and brotherhood. The intense popularity and need of the community forums and panel discussions sponsored by the project has been overwhelming because their stories have been shared with generations, young and old, who are culturally and religiously diverse. We managed to create a project of living history—that captured those voices long home from the margins.

My work and involvement with war veterans have taught me the essence of community- of a shared culture collectively speaking with one voice. These men and women are the stories which they tell. Because of how some of them were treated when they returned home, they became very protective of their experiences. They share a code of silence that is often impenetrable by most others outside their experiences. So for me to be accepted into their community and completely embraced by them is a remarkable complement. After years of working with the project and building these relationships, they have entrusted their stories to me. They have even allowed me to be their voice when their spirits will not allow them to speak. They have taught me the importance of togetherness as well as the importance of coming together for healing and survival.

Years after being home from the war, these soldiers still need each other. I have become a bit hesitant to refer to them as veterans because that indicates that their service is complete and their time has come to pass. So I have learned to still call them soldiers, marines, airmen, and seamen because they are still very much in their glory and they should be honored as surviving heroes. Their identity as a community was formed during

the war and that community is still thriving today. This established but often silent brotherhood is essential to their patriotism; it is essential to our patriotism now as nation. They must always remain a united front even when they are suffering themselves. In their presence, I can laugh aloud and cry buckets of tears and I know that they stand with me because we share the dignity of this work. We have grown to believe that telling these stories have become our lives' work. This project has given my father and so many other men and women a renewed reason to live and to give voice to their own stories as soldiers and as cultural depositories of history—our cultural mythmakers—our griots—our storytellers.

Notes

Notes

How do we define the meaning of 'place' and how is that reflected in public ways?

Barbara Braveboy-Locklear

David Brose

Sarah Cheek

Jan Eason

Ben Speller

Senses of Place: Rites and Passages

by Barbara Braveboy-Locklear

Forming literacy from inside prison cells. Ennobling teachers in the mountains, by the sea, and beside green pastures and chalk boards. Exalting hallowed southern traditions: eating bowlfuls of hot grits after morning grace, shelling peas while breathing gnats on sultry August days, singing spiritual gospels to crowds of believers, performing cultural ceremony, song and dance indoors, on grassy knolls, in streets, too. Weaving wool, cotton, river reed, pinestraw, vines, family stories, paths into roads, villages into towns. Exposing indelible truths from history's racist past. Capturing the haunting marriage of sorrow and fear on workers' faces over a mill closing, in black and white. Giving measure to countless wrinkled hands for earth gifts planted, cultivated and gathered then and now. Treating emotional flood wounds with self-scripted, healing words. Bending young ears toward mother's reading lips. Encompassing all artists, well known and little known. Empowering artists. Memorializing artists, still loved.

Place and Legitimacy in Old Time Music

by David Brose

I have functioned as a consultant for a half-dozen Public Programs funded by the North Carolina Humanities Council. Of these, my personal favorite was a conference, which took place in Mount Airy, North Carolina called "Old Time Music on Radio." Before talking about what meaning "place" had in conjunction with this conference, I'll first offer a few thoughts on the power of radio as a means to disperse very specific messages to communities which are targeted for very specific reasons. In the interest of brevity, I am making a very broad sweep across history. Please forgive the generalities.

The first radio station to go "on air" in the United States was KDKA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which broadcast for one hour each night beginning in 1920. By 1922, there were stations licensed in "farm states" such as Iowa and Ohio that were "clear channel" and powerful. WOI in Ames, Iowa and WRFD in Columbus, Ohio each served audiences of tens of thousands. The intended audience for these powerful stations was farm families and communities who needed up to the minute news RE: weather, the single most important factor in the success of crops and an annual income. The music that was broadcast between weather updates was the genre that we have come to call "Old Time Music;" this includes fiddle/banjo instrumentals, old narrative ballads, familiar old folksongs and newer compositions of "country and Western" music modeled after the earlier traditional songs.

The root of this music was Appalachia, but in the later 1920s because of the emergence of radio, the recording industry, and anxieties of emerging modernity, this music found audiences throughout the United States. It spoke to the hearts of rural audiences everywhere, as it spoke to ideas which were at the crux of family, community and church, ideals that resonated with nostalgic notions of simpler times and "easier ways of life." The music was particularly important to mainly white urban audiences with rural roots. It reminded them of less complex times, when the pace of life was slower and people somehow seemed a bit more friendly and humane.

The post- World War II period brought a new set of anxieties. In a rapidly expanding consumer culture, many Americans strived for "a better way of life." In the 1950s, the "Grand Generation" that grew up on farms or in small towns flocked to the cities and suburbs. They took jobs in factories and offices and simultaneously developed the suburban lifestyle. Suddenly, the "old time music" of their parent's and grand-parent's generation seemed out-of-date and out-of-touch. It gave way to the sounds of the evolving big bands and popular male and female vocalists who gave new meaning to the word "ballad." And, of course, there was soon to be the evolving strains of Rock and Roll and urban Black/White blues. Even the folk revival of the 1960s couldn't place the traditional old time music back on center stage. However, because this music was always associated with a particular place (accurately or not), it always had a root from which to spring. This was illustrated by the "Old Time Music on Radio" conference.

In the late 1990s the North Carolina Humanities Program gave grant funding to bring together a network of radio hosts and administrative

personnel from throughout the United States. Each of these radio hosts had one thing in common: they were broadcasting programs of old time music in contexts of near isolation within their host stations. Many of these host stations are National Public Radio affiliates whose "bread and butter" are the morning news programs ("Morning Edition"), the afternoon news ("All Things Considered"), nationally syndicated programs and an almost steady diet of classical music and jazz. The old-time music hosts are sometimes seen by other on-air "personalities" and some management at NPR affiliates as mavericks, purveyors of a music that has little "legitimacy" in comparison to the sophistication of classical music and jazz. There also are stigmas of class distinction; management sometimes believes that the listeners and fans of old-time music simply did not have the economic means of classical and jazz fans when it came to on-air pledge drives and fund raisers.

The Old Time Music Conference took place in Mt. Airy, North Carolina. This location was significant for two reasons: (1) Mt. Airy as a community is one of the strongest locations in all of Appalachia for the performance of old-time mountain music; and (2) Mt. Airy is home to WPAQ, one of the oldest stations in the United States to honor and celebrate old-time Appalachian music on a twenty four hour a day, seven day a week broadcast schedule. NPR management that attended this conference was awe-struck at the professionalism and state of the art audio and broadcast facilities at WPAQ.

The impact of this conference was simply miraculous. There were African-American men and women who played traditional blues and Black Folk music to their constituents. There were Spanish speaking hosts who played traditional music of North Mexico and the American Southwest, music such as Tex-Mex, rancheros, huapangos and mariachi. One Cajun host from Louisiana shared excerpts from his programs on Cajun instrumentals and love songs. I played and spoke about the folk music that I presented over NPR affiliate WCQS-Asheville, music that included local Black Gospel music, local Mexican-American music, Cherokee singing and chant and the old-time mountain music which Black, White and Cherokee persons have done in southwestern North Carolina since the mid-19th century. Each of the recordings that I offered were on-location field recordings that were digitally captured between 1991 and the present.

Post conference and back home there was a newly perceived legitimacy for the hosts of old-time music. Management saw that the broadcast of local/regional ethnic and folk music was indeed an important function for underserved musical genres and communities. Management also saw that the broadcast of ethnic and folk music was a national phenomenon, not simply the activities of one "maverick" host at their individual affiliate station. Finally, the fact that the NCHC underwrote this conference gave the kind of legitimacy that State/Federal funding recognition can foster in the minds of radio station management who constantly seek to further the status of their stations in the minds of their listening audience; "legitimacy" equals dollars for the bi-annual on-air fund drives.

Public Folklore and Public Humanities share common goals RE: a desire to utilize cultural materials for the

empowerment of the disenfranchised. Since the early 1920s radio has been used as a means to serve very specific audiences with very specific kinds of cultural information. Once an integral part of early radio broadcasts, by the end of the 20th century old-time Appalachian music, ethnic music and local/regional traditional music was a "red-headed step child" to many radio programmers. Oddly, although the soundtrack to the film "Oh Brother Where Art Thou?" (which featured old-time mountain music) sold millions of CD's, it received almost no airplay and did little to change the music's status in the minds of those who favor classical music and/or "sophisticated" jazz. This conference helped to foster a legitimacy for culturally diverse musical genres which had a small faithful constituency, yet little power and prestige in the minds of station personnel and management who have since perceived (folk) cultural materials as important to the building of an ever diversifying community of listeners. But this was possible because this music had a home; it was rooted in a particular place.

In Search of Our Place

by Sarah Brawley Cheek

Aunt Lula

My grandpa cut the wood and filled the pot with water,
But it was she who started the fire and stirred the clothes,
Bracing herself against the biting winter wind,
Her back unbowed,
Without a murmur, she stood in the doorless washhouse with a window so small
That the suds from her washtub obscured it from view as she scrubbed on her board.

Her world was private, and she was its keeper.
She tolerated my questions, my shadowing her every move,
yet, she never let me into her world.
Until her death at a few months shy of a century,
She remained an enigma to me,
a portrait of dignity, tranquility, and grace in a world of indignities, upheaval, and pain.

How I wish that I had found the words to tell her what she was to me.

Some in the white community would say that Lula Torrence Allison "knew her place." She worked in their fields and homes and she knew their families well. Yet she respected their privacy and demanded that her privacy be respected as well. Although Lula lost nine of the ten babies that she bore, she found the strength to serve as midwife to women of all shades. She also sat with the lonely and nursed the gravely ill for most of a century in the Amity Hill community. Lula never complained, at least to me, about what life required of her or what it took from her. She "knew her place" in the only way that counts, and her place was private. It had little to do with where she was or what she was doing. It was her internal space, her sense of self-worth, from which came her strength and resolve. She served at whatever cost to herself. Her skills were admired and appreciated, but it was her compassion that set her apart. Her service to those in need was her true legacy.

Not everyone in America has Lula's sense of self or of being valued in the community. So many are still excluded for reasons beyond explanation, and because those left-out of community feel no connection, they have little desire to give anything of themselves to that community. Talents are not discovered or shared; knowledge is being lost. The community grows poorer every day as barriers go up instead of coming down.

To be fully human, we need to understand our connection to community and accept our mutual responsibility. Together we need to build an inclusive, caring community, one that makes the problems of those in need and displaced a priority. My father used to say, "I am not the father of all of Abraham's children." "No," I would say to myself, "but you are their brother." And he knew that as well. When someone needed help, black or white, he was one of those they could turn to. My father was frugal but compassionate.

The way in which we respond to life's challenges and opportunities has everything to do with our "place in history," a place which we earn every day from the moment of our birth. My father made many mistakes, but his place in history was secured by the acts of kindness. His last days were spent consoling those who were grieving or in pain. Some of them lived nearby

but never came to our door, yet they came to us for him when he died. I met dozens of people I had never known, all with a story to tell. He died in 1993, and I am still hearing from people who remember him.

And what of my own place in history? What legacy will I leave for my own children? A part of that answer has a great deal to do with the North Carolina Humanities Council. When I wrote the proposal for "Our Red Clay Roots: An Oral History of Iredell County," I did not know that it would become a life-changing experience. I wanted something for my students to show them that they had value and were valued. I also wanted to preserve a time and place that was fast disappearing as growth around the interstates that dissect our state from north to south and east to west swallow our farmlands and rural communities.

I was cautioned that this project was not to become a search for my own family roots, and it did not. I still have no time for that kind of research. But I quickly learned that there was no way this project could not be about me also. I kept running into myself at every turn.

And the project was perfectly named. It is, first of all, *our* community. We talked to black and white Iredell County natives, school teachers and the undereducated, wealthy business owners, textile workers, farmers and the very poor. Most of them were *rural* in origin, rooted in the *red clay* of this county, that unforgiving soil that teaches and molds and binds those who know and love it well.

The products of that project, the exhibit of photographs that were collected and the book *We Well Remember* that I compiled from the interviews have become a part of my legacy. My daughter experienced part of my journey personally. Hopefully my grandchildren will feel at least a connection to this project as well. I hope that *Our Red Clay Roots* will remind them of who I was and what I valued, and that they will understand that this project was my attempt to make a difference and pass on to them a part of their heritage.

But I also hope that they learn from this project the meaning of community as our subjects understood it. They survived the Depression and the World Wars because they were a community. By sharing and supporting each other, they overcame impossible odds. This lesson is a real legacy of *Our Red Clay Roots*.

The road that leads to the building of a community should begin with a sign that says communication and an arrow indicating a one-way street—no turning back. The North Carolina Humanities Council understands that. Through their programs, people from diverse segments of our communities are brought together for dialogue. From that dialogue comes knowledge, from knowledge comes understanding, from understanding comes caring and from caring comes action that builds bridges in our community and in our world. The NCHC is providing the kind of bridge-building opportunities that we need. In their work lives hope for our future.

Sense of Place

by Jan Eason

Can we talk about sense of place without defining it? In some ways it seems easier than trying to define it. We know it when we experience it. It just becomes difficult to explain. Why? Because it is an emotional response to physical space and emotions are evasive and hard to define. They aren't rational left-brain kinds of things.

Place, in the context of this discussion is not just physical space. The best way I know of to explain sense of place is by example. With an NCHC grant, I have been working on the North Carolina Outer Banks. The Outer Banks are a physical place, but is there a sense of place? I would venture to say no, in most cases the Outer Banks have no sense of place.

The old communities on the Outer Banks, such as Nags Head, Kill Devil Hills, Hatteras, etc. probably once had a sense of place. They have now been overbuilt with endless rows of beach cottages and miles of commercial strip development. The only reference points to keep from getting lost are mile markers. The sameness of this kind of development makes any concept of "sense of place" impossible.

My work at Portsmouth village has taught me much about sense of place. The remote village is located on Core Banks across the inlet from Ocracoke. Today the island is owned by the National Park Service and is often deserted, but in the mid-1700s, it was the largest settlement on the Outer Banks. And in the decades preceding the outbreak of the Civil War, it was home to the state's busiest port. In the mid-1800s, for instance, about two thirds of NC's exports passed through Ocracoke Inlet.

I was aware of a sense of place at Portsmouth the first time I visited the village. Even though no one lived there, a sense of place was still obvious to me. There were houses scattered about, a life saving station, a small school and, near the center, a church. I could imagine a group of people living in this hostile environment surviving by fishing and salvaging shipwrecks. Even under these conditions, they thought it important enough to use scarce resources to build a church and worship together. That, to me, says a lot about community. Community is probably the most important concept when trying to define sense of place.

Communities are based on meaningful human relationships. It requires lots of time, at least decades. New community seems like an oxymoron to me. Since they require time to develop, they also then have a history, or like Portsmouth, many histories. The time period covered at Portsmouth is from colonial times to the present. In the days before large-scale channel dredging, heavily laden ships arriving at Portsmouth had to transfer their cargo to lighter draft boats to deliver goods to towns on North Carolina's shallow inland waterways. This was a labor-intensive process, and it provided a thriving business for Portsmouth. Much has been written about this history of Portsmouth in local magazines and small publications, mostly for tourist consumption. But these almost never mention that the business of the port depended upon the labor of people held in bondage and free blacks. Just prior to the Civil War, over a hundred African Americans lived either at Portsmouth or on other small islands offshore. Almost certainly they were all involved in the maritime trades.

I have met many descendents of the residents of Portsmouth. Several seem to have an overly romantic view of life on the island. For some, especially the descendents of African Americans held in slavery, the memories seem more bittersweet. Because the village has such a strong sense of place, people are attracted to it. They go there to experience a whole range of emotions; they go to celebrate and to grieve. I have heard them sing hymns in the church; I have watched them put flowers on graves. There is no official history of Portsmouth; there is only a collection of different perspectives. With funding from groups like NCHC, this collection can be preserved.

Place

by Ben Speller

General Overview

One of our continuing needs is to develop, out of our increasing diversity, a common vision for the common good. Today that common vision must embrace a shared understanding of the importance of "place" as one of the guiding principles by which people with diverse differences can contend robustly but civilly with each other in deployment of transitional or new public ways.

Through stories and place names people have long fashioned a relationship to their physical environment. By what means does this relationship building continue, and what impacts are transitional or new public ways having on the process? How will the deployment of transitional or new public ways affect our understanding of the design of places, from buildings to urban landscapes?

The Meaning of "Place"

A place is a literal or tangible space which is *invested with understandings* of behavioral appropriateness and cultural expectations. We are *located* in "space," but we *act* in "place." *Harrison & Dourish, 1996*

- *Place is a spatial/social concept—a point of contact between physics and culture*
- *Rooted in everyday experience, often taken for granted and used metaphorically*
- *Often used metaphorically, though most of our focus on today and tomorrow*

How to think about place with respect to public ways?

Place as Infrastructure. Places offer pre-existing collections of resources that transitional or new public ways can use to:

1. find users and target services
2. embed devices and ground augmentations
3. serve as metaphors
4. leverage existing practices, laws, and perceptions

Place as Habitat. Places are living systems whose existence is impacted by transitional or new public ways:

1. Natural habitat monitoring and management
2. Sustainability—economic and ecological
3. E-government and community networking
4. Many critiques, regarding surveillance, privacy, isolation, distraction, division

Place as Creation. Places are expressions of culture through design, materials, or tools:

1. Places as cultural statements, vessels for emotion and meaning
2. Professional and vernacular place-makers
3. Acts of creation, and re-creation
4. Sense of place vs. placelessness

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What are our experiences with the various media used to engage in public humanities programming, i.e., exhibits, films, theater, internet, DVD, others? In what ways do particular forms of media influence or shape the story you can tell, and how do you balance those factors with audience accessibility?

James S. Lee

Della Pollock

Marty Rosenbluth

Laurel Sneed

Darrell Stover

To Ask "Why" or To Ask "What," That Is the Question

by James S. Lee

The question, as posed in the original panel proposal, seems to guide the panelists toward media-specific rather than message-specific answers. As I read the question I am inclined to look in two different directions for answers. The first direction is the one most strongly suggested by the question itself. It is essentially a question of media-specific effectiveness. We are asked to look at the impact of particular forms of media on the message itself. That part of the question is McLuhanesque at its core. It is a virtual certainty that at least one of the panelists will make that connection. We are also asked to reflect on our real life experiences with various media and consider the extent to which our work can actually reach audiences.

It terms of effectiveness, I would venture to say that humanities programming may be a little behind the curve when it comes to understanding the technologies of production and distribution as they have changed over the years. The exponential nature of technological change means that being behind the curve by a couple of years can have major consequences for reaching audiences.

While we still live in a real world of mass audience where major networks and media conglomerates hold sway, that is not the only viable way of looking at audiences. The proliferation of outlets such as cable, satellite, micro-broadcast, and various internet devices (podcasting, blogging, mp3 audio, mp4 visuals, streaming, etc.) make smaller more targeted audiences a real possibility. We have more and less expensive ways than ever before for distributing humanities programs. The means of distribution, at least for now, is no longer the exclusive domain of the few. That even applies to over-the-air broadcasting if one is willing to skate to the edge of legality with homemade equipment. From a technological perspective, the democratizing genie of production is out of the bottle for now. We cannot afford to assume that everyone wants it to remain free. That part of the question belongs to the second part of this essay.

In addition to greater access to the means of distribution, there is also greater access to the means of production. The hardware and software solutions for producing visual, aural, and literary packages are widespread and affordable as never before. Anybody who wishes to make a book, a video, an audio, a broadcast (real time or delayed) can get affordable access to the necessary tools. Skills and aesthetics are other questions. The main point here is that physical access is no longer a real barrier.

It is going to be the strategic and creative uses of these technological possibilities that will be the keys to the success of future humanities programming. As new programs are evaluated, it is important to be open to new definitions of audience and new definitions of what it means to reach them. Mass media models are no longer as relevant as they once were. Yet, they continue to be the main reference points for evaluation. The biggest selling point for media proposals is still whether or not the project will be aired on PBS or NPR.

The second approach to the initial question is one not so strongly suggested by the question itself. But I think it is an essential part of any discussion of public humanities programs. I would ask us to consider why we are doing humanities programming in the first place and why we are choosing to use particular media for those purposes. Our focus should be not so much on how well we use the tools of media. Instead we should be looking for some clarity as to why we use them.

Most people in the humanities community whom I know are activists at heart. The activist nature of the NCHC, at least historically, can be detected through careful reading of the mission statement. Yet, few members of the community would, in the context of humanities programming, admit to having an agenda, an intent, or a political purpose for doing what they do. They do not admit to being about social change or, at this stage in history, to being a part of the resistance. They do not even admit publicly that there is anything to resist. Resistance! Now there is a word, the very use of which suggests a community under siege. Dare we utter it? Resistance, after all, is political action taken only under extreme circumstances.

Well, the times are extreme and they call for us to be clear in our intent, to be clear in our agenda. Just because we tell the story does not mean we have no interest in its resolution. We cannot afford to live by the same fallacious code of "objectivity" that plagues journalism. Because we are of the story, we have a subjective interest in its plot development. We are actors at least as much as we are observers.

While we may not be so clear about our own political agendas, those forces that are clear are moving forward and being quite open about their intent. Let's face it. Efforts to shut down the two major national endowments, arts and humanities, as well as the public broadcasting institutions are coming from the political right. Their opposition is based upon their perception of threat or resistance to their own agenda even if it is often couched in terms of "free market economy." The right recognizes "intent" in their work. The left feels compelled to deny it. That, for which we strive, has been demonized successfully by the right. We have come to speak in the code of denial. "Not guilty," we proclaim while our dreams get washed away in a flood or rightist muck.

I am presuming to speak about (perhaps even for) a larger collective of people whom I believe to be represented in this gathering. I thus open myself up to hear from those of you who feel I have overstepped my bounds in making assumptions about your politics.

Public humanities programs are some of the most potentially powerful forces for change in that they seek to engage culture. Culture is, at the same time, the glue that holds societies together and the sinew that enables societies to flex with the forces of change that constantly buffet them. An important part of freedom is the right to understand, criticize, and challenge those forces that determine who we are. We must be free to try to understand the very essence of what it means to be human. Exploration of fundamentals and essences is the basic work of the humanities.

So what are we doing as part of the resistance and how is that reflected in humanities programming? My impression, drawn mainly from

memory and informal examination of recent programming would suggest that we choose safer critiques mainly around issues of history and identity to form the basis of most of our work. That is certainly consistent with any reasonable definition of the humanities. I think I am most disturbed by the tendency to retreat most often to the safer arena of identity. When I reflect on humanities media programs I am struck by how many of them are either celebratory of identity or reliant upon examining identity as the basis of the program. In some sense, "Identity" is the meat and potatoes of humanities work, especially media related work.

Identity has always been one of the tools of social movements but rightist elements of those movements have historically made the best use of it. The reason lies in the very conservative and reactionary nature of identity-based thinking. In its essence it is always reactionary and always used most successfully by rightist forces even in legitimate liberation struggles. Identity tends to be nostalgic rather than visionary. Backward looking instead of progressive, alienating rather than uniting. It is often couched in terms of learning about the past in order not to repeat it, whether as tragedy or farce. There seems to be a fear of creating a future. Identity futures must never entail weakening of the primacy of the identity. That would weaken the hold of the proponents over the constituencies they purport to represent. Where identities are future oriented, they are necessarily rightist, separatist, militarist, and generally dangerous for all but the identified.

I would say that even biographical work falls into the same category. Humanities biographical projects are by default, backwards looking. More importantly, they are often funded because of the ethnic appeal of the subject whether it be the only Jewish family in some southern town or a relatively unknown African American craftsperson whose aesthetic influence is still to be seen in some outlying colonial "burg."

Is identity important? Of course it is. Nevertheless from a strategic perspective, it may be the most ineffective, most irrelevant basis/tool for organizing because issues are not as identity specific as they have been in the past. When challenged on a fundamental level, the state becomes an equal opportunity headbanger. Perhaps we would do well to focus more on the "why" of the human condition and less on the "what." Perhaps it is time for the humanities community to be more prescriptive and less descriptive.

Let us not squander the time we have left. Resist, Envision, Educate, Create, Lead.

The Stories You Can Tell: Performance and Public Humanities

by Della Pollock

Performance can help. I'll approach these questions by offering three platform claims about how performance can or might help to engage public humanities.

Performance can help to build community.

Above all, performance brings people together. Unpredictably. As a sensuous medium, performance charges the gathering space with feeling, expectation, a sense of self-at-risk in the stories heard and told. The performance event may consequently exceed the stories told in the pressing vitality of people gathered for the express purpose of remembering and retelling the life of their community. Accordingly the knowledge "stored" in performance is not in the stories told *per se* but in the storied and storying bodies of those actively present.

Hence, one of my favorite moments in an NCHC-sponsored event occurred as a performance based on oral histories of the textile industry opened into audience interaction.[1] The performers moved from telling a mix of others' stories and their own toward asking questions that changed from performance to performance. One night, at Belmont Abby College in Gastonia, one performer burst out with real frustration: "I cannot tie a weaver's knot. Can anyone show me how to tie a weaver's knot?" Laughter. As if, by the sophisticated code of most theatrical presentations, the question were rhetorical. But then a woman stood ramrod straight in the back row. (Some hundred and fifty people had gathered for the event—including textile workers, former workers, managers, all of their respective families and friends.) She edged her way to the center aisle and strode down to the stage area. She picked up the thread from the performer's hands, turned to the audience, and with flat expertise, quickly made a weaver's knot. The story was literally in her hands. The words she spoke a moment or two later only underscored the risk and certainty with which she'd moved to "tell" the labor history she carried in her body: "My sister's going to kill me for coming down here!"

Performance can help to put "community" into question.

In performance, stories ride on currents of feeling, exchange, desire, and surprise. They are fluid. What may have seemed stuck in "the way things were" (or what is all too often understood as "history") is suddenly open to contest, revision, recreation, new or renewed expectations and demands. In the super-charged space of some performances, the substance of the stories told—the brick and mortar of community—comes into question. It becomes subject to the kind of thinking that comes with seeing and feeling one's self more or less satisfactorily mirrored, with a strong sense of stake in that representation. It's this reflexivity that makes me think of performance as a "hot" form of representation.

Two or three times during audience discussion at Belmont Abby, a woman in the front row swiped her hand at the stage area: "You all didn't say nothing about Gastonia! Nothing!," making about as vigorous a claim as possible on the history she held dear. A few minutes later, as we broke into informal

conversation, a former manager drew one of the performers into a side room to explain to him what things were "really like," correcting what he took to be our over-representation of the workers' points of view with the managers' and owners'. At the same all kinds of stories about what we left out—mostly about remembered pleasures of baseball teams and family life—flew around the room, while recipes for the cakes we were sharing passed hand to hand. The review was divided but, even so, bursting with energy that alone challenged the narrative of loss and pity that had, to some extent, overtaken mill history. One woman concluded: "I'll be up all night retelling and reliving!"

In the thriving mill town of Lancaster, SC, the corrective response was more uniform. One after the other, audience members stood to regale strategies they'd used to get through poverty and crisis, strategies of interdependence that, by their logic, made unionization unnecessary, even a threat to community stability. In the rising momentum of their performances, they embraced an anti-union stance ostensibly for us but ultimately, for themselves.

Intimate and interactive, performance can help to stake the grounds of change.

Even such gestures at consolidating ideology, at drawing neighbors into common conclusions about what their past means today for tomorrow, put the terms of community on the table. What may have been hidden or taken for granted is made explicit by and among those for whom it matters most. Change in this case may mean resealing old wounds and renewing old ties. It may mean facing down questions of unionization here or elsewhere with extra vigor. It may also mean that something else bubbles up from beneath this sealed surface. That someone begins to wonder. Either way, performance initiates a reckoning.

In Alicia Rouverol's production of *Leaves of Magnolia* with the inmates of the Anson County correctional facility, this reckoning took the form of at-risk youth questioning the course of their lives and certainly anything like the romance of a life of crime. In the open, interactive section built into the body of a performance composed primarily of the life stories of incarcerated men, hands began to fly. The attending youth—figuratively and literally now on the threshold of prison life—began to ask questions. A kind of interrogation ensued, this time not of suspects but of experts. For the moment, the inmates held the key to prison life. The kids asked:

> *What's wrong with reefer? You only get ten days…*
>
> *How many of you all, when you all pulled it down, did you stand by yourself?*
>
> *When you all first came into the system, did anyone try to rape you?*
>
> *Are you scared to go to sleep at night?*
>
> *How do you all hide your feelings when you want to cry or are worried about something?*
>
> *Did any of you all have kids? Did you think about those kids before you all did the crime that you did?*[2]

Conditioned by the inmates' vulnerable, reflective self-representations, the interaction put all kinds of stories—about the law, about prison, about the heroics of crime—and their meanings and value into a sudden and intense process of coming to terms.

This process may be embodied in the common crafting of a string of gestures that reflects on aging, as in the recent work (and play) of the community-based movement group, Even Exchange. It may start long before anything like a formal performance in a story told over a hot stove, in an interview, to a judge. It may erupt in response or gurgle on underground—what cannot be encompassed in a single encounter wending its way among crevices and through old creek beds, finally welling in a spring of new stories awaiting performance. And public reckoning.

Footnotes

[1] I have written about this performance elsewhere including in "Telling the Told: Performing *Like a Family*," *The Oral History Review* 18.2 (1990): 1-36.

[2] See Alicia Rouverol, "Trying To Be Good: Lessons in Oral History and Performance," *Remembering: Oral History Performance*, ed. Della Pollock (New York: Palgrave/ Macmillan, 2005), for full elaboration.

"If a video falls in a forest . . ."

by Marty Rosenbluth

The power of media to influence our perceptions and steer public debate cannot be overestimated. And while I don't want to denigrate the power of the written word, I do believe that the pen is mightier than the sword, we are living in an age where visual medium like video and still photography play an increasingly influential role. I should add that those of us who work in video say that while a picture may be worth a thousand words, with video you get both but that is probably a point for another conference.

The most powerful recent example of the power of the visual image to alter public debate and perceptions are the images that we all saw of the torture and other abuse of prisoners at Abu Gharaib prison in Iraq. In my non-videographer hat I do a lot of volunteer work with Amnesty International, and I know that Amnesty along with other human rights groups and the International Committee of the Red Cross had been documenting these abuses for many months and trying to get the international community and the mainstream media to pay attention to what was going on. We got basically nowhere. After the release of the photos brought these abuses to the front page of every newspaper in the world, our work became much easier.

I have been a videographer for the past 12 years, but I come to video from the nonprofit sector. I got involved in making videos out of frustration, when the human rights group I was working with would publish our annual report of 500 pages or more and release an executive summary of 10 pages for the press and journalists would ask us if we had anything shorter they could read. I began to realize that nonprofit groups had to see media not just as something they were passive consumers of, or something they had to beg for attention in. We had to see media as something we could create and use for our own purposes.

The first major project that I made was a video I did in collaboration with a coalition of international, Palestinian and Israeli human rights groups on housing rights in Jerusalem. It was the first use of video as an educational tool by NGOs in the region that I am aware of. This video is still in distribution over ten years after it was released and has since been translated into seven languages and shown on television and used as a grassroots organizing tool throughout the world.

For example, it was shown on SBS-TV which is the second largest network in Australia. I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that more people saw that video the one time it aired than have read all the publications of all the human rights groups in the region combined. I'm not stating that to be boastful, but to make an essential point which ties in with the theme of this session, which is that while we are thinking of producing "media" we cannot forget that if you drop a copy of your video in a forest it might go "clunk," but that is about it. We also need to think about distribution.

The theme of this session, as defined to me in my invitation to attend is: "What are our experiences with the various media used to engage in public humanities programming, i.e. exhibits, film, theater, internet, DVD? In what ways do particular forms of media influence or shape the story you can tell, and how do you balance those factors

with audience accessibility?" I think this is the key question for people active in "making media" in the current period.

When we made our Jerusalem video, and I should make it clear that this was not NCHC funded but I am using it as an illustration, we were lucky. We were in a period where changes in technology made it possible for non-profit groups to make their own videos, but before access to such technologies created a "glut," for lack of a better word, on the market. When it first came out it was the only video made by groups on the region and it created a lot of interest and excitement. Palestinians and Israeli peace activists speaking for themselves! Live on TV! Cool! The Australian TV showing literally came about when a Palestinian who was living in Australia saw the video when he was visiting Jerusalem and showed it to his neighbor in Australia who worked for Australian television.

Now there are dozens or more videos, some excellent (better than ours even) some not so excellent that never have been seen. It is a paradox that as changes in technology have made it easier and less expensive to produce a video, distribution has become more challenging. Now, pretty much anyone can pick up a mini-DV camera for under $1,000 and edit on the free software that comes bundled with every new Apple computer and pretty much do what filmmakers and videographers did just a decade ago on cameras that cost over $50,000 and edited in studios that cost $250 an hour to rent. This access to media makes it easier to tell our stories without a doubt. But getting it shown is another story.

I wish I had easy answers, but I am afraid the best I can offer is a framework for discussion. Since producing videos has become cheaper, do we then take the money we save on production and put it into publicity and promotion? Do we look at "leased access" (yes, like an infomercial) and buy advertising to promote it? Do we look to the web? Do we look to more grassroots strategies? Do we rent theaters to show our films and videos that can't get commercial distribution. For every success story like Michael Moore and Supersize me, there are thousands of videos going clunk in the forest. The challenge we face is how to help them make a noise.

Media as Method to Include African American History in K-12 Curriculum

by Laurel C. Sneed

We have an ambitious mission: to infuse the study of African American history and culture in K-12 curriculums on a national scale. In this essay, I'd like to talk about how media has been critical in that work. Indeed, we are constantly informed and challenged by the questions posed in this seminar regarding the relative value and effectiveness of different media and methods for communicating humanities content. But first, I should introduce myself and acknowledge those us have helped us with funding.

For ten years, I have been an instructional and media designer working in humanities programming. I founded the Thomas Day Education Project (TDEP), funded primarily by the NEH and sponsored by the North Carolina Museum of History/NC Department of Culture Resources. NCHC helped us create a prototype CD-ROM which has been instrumental in the growth and development of the TDEP.

For the past three years, TDEP has brought a total of four hundred K-12 teachers from all over the country to North Carolina to study African American history and culture through the experience of 19th century enslaved and free black artisans and entrepreneurs. The stories of two lives who we have examined most are Thomas Day, a free black cabinetmaker who lived in Milton, NC, and Elizabeth Keckly, a dressmaker and fashion designer of Mary Todd Lincoln, who was enslaved as a young woman at the Burwell School in Hillsborough, NC. While media is the vehicle, our ultimate goal is the infusion of African American history and culture into the K-12 curriculum nationwide.

In these workshops, we use a broad variety of media and methods to communicate humanities content including:

- scholarly lectures;
- less formal presentations by scholars and other experts supplemented by Powerpoint and/or 35 mm slides;
- presentations and demonstrations by people who represent "living history," i.e., traditional craftspeople and individuals who lived through a particular cultural or historical event/period;
- visits to historical sites with site interpretation through lectures, presentations and dramatic readings of primary source material related to the site;
- dramatic readings/performances with an emphasis on primary source material written by 19th century enslaved and free African Americans;
- PBS documentaries on African American history (used primarily when traveling via bus from site to site);
- opportunities to review/experience educational resources the TDEP has developed for teaching this content, including an interactive multimedia CD-ROM, a hands-on "kit" we call the Thomas Day Furniture Kit and other teacher developed hands-on and technology-based resources which we present in a "Resources Fair;"

- seminars and discussion groups in which participants brainstorm and discuss their ideas/plans for translating content learned in the workshops into lesson plans, instructional activities, and in some cases web sites and community based humanities projects.

We also provide humanities content in an on-line course on African American history and culture and produce films and videos as well as interactive multimedia applications and other interactive computer-based humanities applications. Finally, we foster on-going professional relationships and continue to dialogue with participants in our workshops after the workshops are over via our on-line teacher network which we call the "Let It Shine" network.

Because of my training in media and instructional design, I approach any communications project—humanities or otherwise—with this basic question: What are the outcomes we want to achieve with this audience? Or, to put it another way: What do we want our audience to know, to be able to do, and feel as a result of this exposure to humanities knowledge? I think our emphasis on having expectations of action and emotion—even passion—has contributed enormously to the perceived quality and value of our programs. Knowledge is great to have, but how can the knowledge be used to help people and communities communicate more effectively and to build a better, more humane world? That is the essential question and the real value of the humanities.

Of course, establishing upfront who the primary, secondary and even tertiary audiences are for the humanities content is crucial. Marshall McLuhan advised back in the 1970s that we need to stop seeing audiences as targets or merely as "receptacles" of knowledge and start seeing them as active and equal partners in the design of the educational or communications experience.

Desired outcomes should determine what approach one uses to present humanities content. Because every audience is different, no single medium will deliver all desired outcomes or work with all audiences. It's important to figure out what kind of audience or community of learners you're working with and where you want this community to end up after the humanities program is experienced. It's also important to recognize that as designer of the communications experience you are a leader of this group. The audience will be looking to you to lead them somewhere so you need to know where that is!

At the Thomas Day Education Project, we spend a lot of time studying our audience before we design approaches to deliver humanities content to them. We are constantly soliciting, studying and analyzing feedback from workshop participants to and asking ourselves: what experiences are most meaningful and which ones are not as meaningful and why? We've been known to revise workshops from one offering one week to the offering the following week, and even day-to-day based on participant feedback.

From my years of work in humanities education and communications, I've found the following to be true (at least in our work):

- Stories!—People learn about the humanities primarily through a "story-mode" of knowing. Historical facts, figures and dates are fine, we need them to describe historical and cultural contexts, but if the humanities are going to help

bridge divides in communities or "weave communities" this cannot be done without sharing stories.

- The communicative power of real people and real places to convey humanities content cannot be overstated. We live in a world where much experience occurs "virtually" via a computer screen or tv screen. Given this modern phenomenon, going to real places and interacting with real people has a heightened value. In our workshops, we take people to places where history happened.

- Multiple formats within one presentation are more powerful than just one approach. We often think that we have to either choose this medium or that approach when in fact the more one can combine different ways of communicating humanities subject matter the more effective and enduring the desired outcomes will be.

- Embrace all modes of communication—including new technologies. No mode of communication is a silver bullet. Each has unique properties that can serve the humanities. New interactive multimedia technology has enormous potential for communicating humanities content, especially to younger people who are usually more computer savvy than their teachers and parents. With our CD-ROM "Exploring the World of Thomas Day," we simulated for kids the process of actually doing historical research with primary source documents. This gives young people a pre-experience of doing historical research that prepares them for undertaking "the real thing" which of course is far more tedious and difficult than the simulation. But they know the ropes of historical research as a result of the simulation. The internet has also opened up extraordinary new ways of exploring the humanities and researching/knowing humanities subject matter. The power of these technologies to bring the humanities to audiences around the world is mind-boggling to think about. We really have become a "global village."

Are we ready to follow-through and support our audiences as they become actively empowered and impassioned as a result of the content we present to them? How do we ultimately deal with the fact that humanities knowledge empowers people? I have found that the more I expect and believe that people will be changed and influenced by humanities content presented to them, the more they rise to the challenge. The more they change, the more we, the providers of the content, are changed by them. Communication really is a two-way process. Just as the humanities content of our project has affected me and changed my life and the way I see the world, the same process can happen in others with the content they're being exposed to. Knowledge is empowering and humanities knowledge is particularly empowering because it can change people's hearts and minds for the better.

Media Used in Public Humanities Programming

by Darrell Darius Stover

My wonderful opportunities to use film and performance poetry to project to the public engaging and rich humanities *events* were due to my associations with the St. Joseph's Historic Foundation/Hayti Heritage Center in Durham, NC. I emphasize "events" because of the resounding responses and exchanges during the programs. The first was in 1999 when as Program Director for the Foundation I produced the 5th Annual Black Diaspora Film Festival entitled "Celluloid Sounds: Black Music Traditions in Film." The second was through collaboration with the Foundation by which I expanded my "Run on Water" multimedia project to the stage in 2004. Both of these projects suggested alternatives and vitalized the lifeblood of humanities programming in NC.

We digest film so often with a passive and submissive gaze. "Celluloid Sounds" had the objective of invigorating that process through encouraging a focus on film sounds as storytelling, relating black music history as an embedded by-product of film to be extracted and re-inherited. The presentation of both documentary and narrative films that either situated black music in front and center focus or as framing soundtrack gave voice to rememory and celebrated the society-impacting legacy of this cultural heritage. There were 25 films that included "Mahalia Jackson: Power and the Glory," "A Great Day in Harlem," "Sonny Terry: Whoopin' the Blues," "The Wiz," "Sparkle," "Stormy Weather," "New Jack City," "Do the Right Thing," and "Wild Style."

This cultural excursion through history, sound and social revolution opened with Michelle Parkerson's "... But Then, She's Betty Carter" which encouraged discussions on her contributions and commitment to jazz apprenticeship as well as dialogue on her NC appearances. The excitement continued through discussions, Q & A's, and observations made by hip-hop scholar Dr. Tricia Rose (*Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*) film historian Ed Guerrero (*Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film*), Dr. Joanne Gabbin (*Sterling A. Brown: Building the Black Aesthetic Tradition*) and filmmaker Haile Gerima ("After Winter" and "Sankofa"). The blues, jazz, gospel, soul and rap music captured through the films presented at the festival received a thorough examination through the lenses of historical and cultural analysis. The attending public played both critic and researcher as they created and witnessed the power of humanities programming via film.

"Run on Water," the second project, came out of my continuing interest in performance poetry and coastal Carolina, its human and natural history. My specific interest is the black experience in Civil War era coastal North Carolina. This love affair has resulted in three epic poems, a radio documentary on WNCU 90.7FM (another important medium for the humanities), an experimental documentary film in-process, and a staged performance poetry/lecture series (the project of importance here).

I have created the character, Td (short for Tedious), who through the telling of his own story fleshes out real people, events, and natural characteristics of our coast's past. His six year search takes him from the Great Dismal Swamp, to New Bern and Beaufort, Fort Fisher, Wilmington, Raleigh and Roanoke Island. The final work is the result of travel and research in these places and on the internet. The project is also informed and draws inspiration from David Cecelski's *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina*, Harriett A. Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, William B. Gould IV's *Diary of a Contraband: The Civil War Passage of a Black Sailor*, and Patricia Click's *Time Full of Trial: The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony, 1862-1867.*

"My name is Td/I'm a two times captured/North Carolina runaway slave/looking for my wife and son" rings out as the opening and closing lines of the epic poem, "Run on Water: Td's Tale." It has set many listeners off on an adventure into the past where the sea was an escape route to freedom and a way of life for African Americans, where a special determination was needed to maintain one's family and one's soul, and where this country's sociopolitical re-making took place.

The full performance unfolds in three poetic voices—Td's (dramatically rendered by Thomasi McDonald), Jenna, his wife (soulfully interpreted by Jackie Marriott), and Td's friend, Toby (boldly told by myself). Td's and Jenna's son is played by my son, Darius Stover. It is grounded in spirituals of the time period and moving percussion delivered by storyteller and multi-musician, Morton Brooks. The poetry performance was coupled with a lecture/slide presentation by historian C.R. Gibbs (*Black, Copper & Bright: The District of Columbia's Black Civil War Regiment*) examining the development and actions of colored troop regiments of coastal North Carolina.

The performance poetry aspect of this project was only able to come together through the actions of V. Diane Pledger, Executive Director of the St. Joseph's Historic Foundation/Hayti Heritage Center. Several people in response to the radio documentary series aired in early 2004 requested that the center should have a program that people could attend. We pulled the performance poetry/lecture presentation together to meet the community's demand.

The emotional immediacy that performance brought to the humanities' audience as reflected in the "Run on Water" project yielded feelings of a deeper desire for investigation. People wanted to know how C.R. Gibbs accessed the information on colored troops at the National Archives and Library of Congress. People shared with me their family histories connected to the Carolina coast. And isn't that what this is all about, seeking out our collective heritage as stories and spreading them about? I am sure of it. Fi'm and performance are two media that get this job done for the humanities and us.

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North Carolina Humanities Council

Weaving Cultures and Communities

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the People

Sharing the lessons of history with all Americans