

**Southern Exposure**

**LIBERATING OUR PAST**

*400 Years  
of Southern History*



\$4.00



# Southern Exposure

November/December 1984

**Special Editors:** Marc Miller, Peter Wood, Bob Hall

**Editors:** Maxine Alexander, Christina Davis, Joe Pfister, Dee Dee Risher, Linda Rocawich, Michael Yellin

**Design:** Jacob Roquet

**Composition:** Southern Types

**Front cover:** "At the Cabin Door," by Winslow Homer, courtesy Newark Museum; see back cover for additional information

**Special thanks to:** Nancy Allred, Ingrid Canright, Mary Elderidge, Robin Epstein, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Liz Holmes, Robert Korstad, James Leloudis, Chris Mayfield, Page McCullough, Chris Nichols, Marcie Pachino, Lillian Ray, Fred Reynolds, Leonard Sherwin, Marshall Williams, Ruth Ziegler

The Institute for Southern Studies is a nonprofit, publicly supported corporation working for progressive change in the region. In addition to publishing *Southern Exposure*, the Institute sponsors a variety of research, education, and organizing programs. At the center of each is an emphasis on (1) building effective grassroots organizations with strong local leadership and well-informed strategies; (2) providing the information, ideas, and historical understanding of Southern social struggles necessary for long-term fundamental change; and (3) nourishing communication and understanding among the diverse cultural groups in the South. Write us for a free brochure on the Institute's activities.

*Southern Exposure* is published bimonthly by the Institute for Southern Studies. Subscription price for one year (six issues) is \$16 for individuals and \$20 for libraries and institutions. *Southern Exposure* is indexed in *The Humanities Index*, *Alternative Press Index* and *Access: The Supplementary Index to Periodicals*. Address all editorial and subscription correspondence to: *Southern Exposure* P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702. Second class postage is paid at Durham, NC 27702 and at additional offices. Copyright © 1984, Institute for Southern Studies, 604 W. Chapel Hill St., Durham, NC 27701. ISSN: 0146-809X. ISBN: 0-943810-18-3. Post Office Publication No.: 053470. Issues are mailed in January, March, May, July, September, and November of each year.

To reach possible new subscribers, we occasionally exchange our mailing list with other progressive organizations and publications. We believe you will have a keen interest in what these groups are doing, but if you do not want your name given to other groups, just drop us a note asking that your name not be included in future list exchanges. That's all there is to it.

## Page 4: THE FIRST REBELLION



### THE GULEAN REVOLT OF 1597

...of 1597... the first... rebellion... in the... South... against... colonialism... in the... Old South... by Carolee Solomon-Schiff

## Page 10: BLACKS MANEUVER BETWEEN TORIES AND PATRIOTS

### "IMPATIENT OF OPPRESSION" BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLES ON THE EVE OF WHITE INDEPENDENCE

IN FEBRUARY, 1776, 20-YEAR-OLD PHYLLIS WHEATLEY, THE AFRICAN...

## Page 32: SISTERHOOD AMONG SLAVE WOMEN



### The Lives of Slave Women

BY VIVIAN GRAY WHITE

## Page 56: WHAT THE NUMBERS SAY ABOUT WORKERS

### STEEL WORKERS IN A BOOM TOWN

On Labor Day weekend, 1983, Sloss Furnaces opened its gates to the people of Birmingham, Alabama. Six thousand citizens, including former workers and their relatives, came to see the site where thousands of men had worked over the years between 1881 and 1971.

- 2 LIBERATING OUR PAST** An introduction

---

## ROOTS OF THE TREE: BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

---

- 4 GUALE INDIAN REVOLT** Anti-colonialism in the Old South, by *Carolyn Stefanco-Schill*
- 10 "IMPATIENT OF OPPRESSION"** Black freedom struggles on the eve of white independence, by *Peter H. Wood*
- 17 RED AND BLACK IN APPALACHIA** Native Americans and black immigrants, by *Theda Perdue*
- 25 TOMBEE** The life and journal of a plantation owner, by *Theodore Rosengarten*
- 32 THE LIVES OF SLAVE WOMEN** The female slave network, by *Deborah Gray White*

---

## TOWARDS THE PRESENT: CIVIL WAR AND AFTER

---

- 40 THE LOWEST RUNG** Court control over free black and poor white women, by *Victoria Bynum*
- 45 SUGAR WAR** Louisiana: the strike of 1887, by *Jeffrey Gould*
- 56 STEEL WORKERS IN A BOOM TOWN** Birmingham, 1900, by *Barbara J. Mitchell*
- 61 "THE MIND THAT BURNS IN EACH BODY"** Women, rape, and racial violence, by *Jacquelyn Dowd Hall*
- 72 ANTI-LABOR VIOLENCE IN THE 1930S** A pattern of terror, by *Robert Ingalls*
- 79 YOU CAN'T BE NEUTRAL** An interview with Anne Braden, by *Sue Thrasher and Eliot Wigginton*

---

## VARIETIES OF HISTORY

---

- 86 REWRITING SOUTHERN HISTORY** An interview with C. Vann Woodward, by *James R. Green*
- 92 WHO SPEAKS FOR THE SOUTH?** On race, sex, and class, *Nell Irvin Painter*
- 93 BITTERNESS AND PRIDE** Appalachian history, by *Ronald D. Eller*
- 95 PAST AND PRESENT** An anthropologist's view, by *Gary McDonogh*
- 96 A SOUTHERN SAMPLER** Popular history, by *Cliff Kuhn*
- 102 SOMETHING THAT HAPPENED TO ME** Making museums ours, by *George McDaniel*
- 103 THEATER AND HISTORY** A perspective from the civil rights movement, by *John O'Neal*
- 104 HIGH-TECH HISTORY** Using television, by *Jack Bass*
- 108 HISTORY FROM SOUTHERN EXPOSURE** A 12-year index

---

## DEPARTMENTS

---

- 110 NEW BOOKS ON THE SOUTH**
- 111 SOUTHERN NEWS ROUNDUP** Louisiana tenants organize, Florida citrus canker, attacks on abortion clinics, and more
- 115 BULLETIN BOARD OF THE SOUTH**
- 116 VOICES FROM THE PAST** The expulsion of the Jews from Thomasville, Georgia



Page 25: A  
PLANTER'S LIFE



TOMBEE: From the Life Story and Plantation Journal of Thomas B. Chaplin

Page 40: POOR  
WOMEN IN COURT  
RECORDS



Page 45: RACE AND  
CLASS IN THE 1880S



Page 61: SEX AND  
RACE IN  
SOUTHERN  
IDEOLOGY AND  
PRACTICE



Page 72: VIOLENCE  
AGAINST  
ORGANIZERS



# LIBERATING OUR PAST

*"A new synthesis awaits the pen of a historian with another world view, fresher insights, and perhaps a different philosophy of history."*

— C. Vann Woodward, 1971

Regions, like people, undergo constant change, and the most dramatic shifts often lead to alterations in self-understanding. Every time we "start over," we begin to see and explain ourselves a little differently. In the 15 years between 1954 and 1969, the American South experienced a painful and exhilarating struggle for social liberation that was long overdue. That many-sided movement stimulated a less visible but equally complicated and hopeful struggle to set the region's history "free at last." This volume is a progress report on the continuing effort to liberate the Southern past.

The people doing the liberating over the past 15 years span several generations, and even continents. Many have received formidable professional training; others have informed themselves in public libraries. But all — through reading old letters and conversing on front porches — have learned from Southerners whose lives have been distorted or dismissed by earlier historians.

The personal odysseys of these liberator-historians differ widely, but as the answers to our recent survey indicate (see pages 88ff.), most credit the Freedom Movement with shaping or crystallizing their commitment to explore a pluralistic, often contentious, always changing South. It's no accident that such pioneers of this non-elitist perspective as C. Vann Woodward and John Hope Franklin joined a delegation of scholars in the Selma-to-Montgomery March of 1965, nor that many of the writers in this volume participated in one aspect or another of the movement. For just as the Freedom Movement challenged the moral authority of the Southern establishment, so too it called into question scholarly research and popular images of a Southern past that considered no one but white elite males as worthy of attention. And just as the movement inspired individual courage and fostered an environ-



ment in which people found themselves taking actions they never dreamed possible, so too a new spirit of experimentation and eagerness prompted a generation of historians to document the roots of a dynamic, activist South — one propelled as much by the revolts and daily struggles of common people as by the economic or egotistical motives of the elite.

With varying degrees of subtlety, the old view projected a harmonious, hierarchical society in which most people found their place according to their color, gender, or class, and kept their mouths shut. "An old fashioned Southern plantation," wrote Charles Morris, "was one of the purest, sweetest, and most agreeable types of social life ever known." According to Morris's 1907 book *The Old South and the New*, "The black man alone may thank the institution of slavery. Through it, he passed perhaps along the easiest road that any slave people ever passed from savagery to civilization. . . ."

On the other hand, Morris continued, "poor whites . . . largely devoid of education, formed the most undesirable part of the population, many of them living in a state of vice and degradation." As for the proper place of women: ". . . the mistress of the Southern plantation and through emulation, Southern women generally, was exalted as in no society in the world."

Like Winslow Homer's painting on the cover, the essays in this book adopt a radically different vantage point toward our collective heritage. People long considered non-actors on the basis of race, class, or sex move to center stage; and the authors who bring them to life have a keen awareness of the often unpredictable relation between past and present.

"Like all historians, I look at the past from a perspective that flows from my personal experience," writes Jacquelyn Dowd Hall (whose preliminary work for a special edition of *Radical History Review* formed the core of this collection\*). Hall expresses well the interaction of the activist scholar with her subject in the preface to her book *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching*:

Certainly, my interest in the movements for racial and sexual equality was enhanced by the ways my own life

has been touched and changed by those struggles. I was not drawn to the anti-lynching reformers of the 1930s, however, in a search for political antecedents or exemplary heroines. On the contrary, at the outset the preoccupations of these women seemed quite alien to my own way of viewing the world. Yet in the mysterious alchemy of author and subject, I found myself confronting women who were indeed my forebears.

This book is designed to help more of us confront our forebears. The synthesis C. Vann Woodward hoped for in the early '70s remains elusive; but the plethora of research from the last decade alone, as represented by the sample bibliographies scattered herein, is truly impressive.

Like many of the works listed, the pieces in this volume are generally more descriptive than analytical or theoretical. Several articles, for example, point to the widespread use of vigilante violence in the region; the far-reaching consequence of this practice for the development of a relatively weak, race-oriented infrastructure of voluntary associations in the working-class South remains to be fully analyzed. Jeffrey Gould's study of how class and race intertwined in late nineteenth-century Louisiana is a step in this direction.

Similarly, while several articles here reflect our richer understanding of the lives of Southern women, black and white, they only begin the more difficult analysis needed for a feminist theory and practice that unites women from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds. Other essays here illustrate the blend of traditional scholarship with new documentary sources and research methods, including oral history, which students today can carry even further. Indeed, we offer a sampling of the research topics and interdisciplinary approaches that intrigue present historians but which may require a future generation to pursue.

Previous *Southern Exposure* articles and special editions have drawn on what's new in the study of our past. We invite you to review the list on pages 108-09 and the inside back cover to add issues that are still in print to your library. This volume is offered as a further testament to the diversity and tenacity of human struggle in this region for more than 400 years, and as a challenge to others to carry on the task of liberating our past. It comes with an invocation that one of our historians has derived from Mother Jones and inscribed above his desk: "PRAY FOR THE LIVING, AND FIGHT LIKE HELL FOR THE DEAD." □

\* The seed for "Liberating Our Past" was a planned special issue of *Radical History Review* on Southern history. That issue was cancelled for financial reasons, but we give thanks to the editors on that project — Leon Fink, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Robert Korstad, James Leloudis, Sue Levine and Harry Watson — for allowing us to take up where they left off.



# THE GUALEAN REVOLT OF 1597

*The past decade has brought an important expansion of writing about Indians in the early South. It is no longer necessary, or adequate, for teachers to begin the story with the forced exile of the Southeastern tribes to Oklahoma along the "Trail of Tears" in the 1830s. After all, De Soto's army of Spaniards and Africans had touched the Cherokee homelands three full centuries before that. At Southern Exposure we have been following what is being said both by and about Native American Southerners, and we plan a special issue next year that will take a closer look at Indians in the South, past and present.*

*Some of the most provocative new historical work focuses on the Indians of Florida and the adjoining coasts during the sixteenth and seventeenth century invasions. Among the resources listed at the end of this essay are books by Henry Dobyns, Lewis Larson, Gene Wadell, and a forthcoming book by William Loren Katz, along with articles by Amy Bushnell and Stephen Reilly. A rich selection of original sources concerning Florida and the adjoining areas can be found in David B. Quinn, ed., *New American World: A Documentary History of North America to 1612*, 5 volumes (New York, 1979). The last*

*volume contains 20 pages of primary documents presenting the Spaniards' view of the Guale Uprising, translated into English, which made possible the following account.*

Uprisings by Native Americans against European encroachment and domination figured frequently in colonial history. Time and again the pressures of epidemic disease, territorial disputes, and religious conflict gave rise to protests that led to armed resistance. The Pueblo Revolt against the Spanish in New Mexico in 1680 was the largest and most successful; Pontiac's Rebellion against the British in the "old North-

west" in 1763 is perhaps the best known. But there were others, many of them in the South, the location of the earliest known contact with Europeans.

Anglocentric Southern historians traditionally have paid attention to the uprisings in Virginia in 1622 and 1644, and to the Tuscarora and Yamasee wars against the English in the Carolinas early in the eighteenth century. Only the historians of Spanish Florida have studied the 1597 uprising of the Guale Indians in the Sea Island region of present-day Georgia, and for the most part they have focused more on the martyrdom of Franciscan missionaries than on the causes of the conflict. Yet the Gualean Revolt, which took place shortly after the failure of the Roanoke colony and 10 years before the founding of Jamestown, is the earliest anti-colonial rebellion in all of North America for which we have substantial documentation. It came at the end of a period of painful and unsettling contact.

Two decades after Columbus reached the New World, Spanish ships from the West Indies appeared off the coast of Florida. Besides searching for a passage to the Orient, they were looking for slaves to replace indigenous Caribbean islanders, who were rapidly being deci-

## ANTI-COLONIALISM IN THE OLD SOUTH

By Carolyn Stefanco-Schill



mated by ruthless labor practices and new diseases from Europe. The Florida peninsula soon became an entry point for explorations of the Southeastern interior, and ships carrying Mexican gold back to Spain followed the powerful Gulf Stream through the Straits of Florida and up the coast for several hundred miles before setting out across the Atlantic. By 1565 the Spanish had crushed a French effort to colonize Florida's northeast coast and had established their own outpost at St. Augustine — the first permanent intrusion of a European power onto North American soil.

We are only just beginning to understand the scope of the demographic and cultural destruction which foreign contact brought to Florida in the sixteenth century. The effects of slaving raids and local wars on the indigenous population were minor compared to those of the new epidemic diseases such as smallpox and measles, which devastated local tribes. A population of well over half a million people plummeted to one-tenth that size within several generations, leaving long-established societies in shambles. Henry Dobyns has recently suggested that the story of the "fountain of youth," long a central feature of early Florida lore, may in fact relate to the desperate efforts of native people to find healing waters that could cure their strange new maladies.

During the second half of the sixteenth century the Spanish spread their tenuous dominion northward along the Atlantic coast in an effort to pre-empt their French and English rivals. First Jesuit and then Franciscan missionaries were used to open contacts with coastal tribes. Envoys sent to Chesapeake Bay were killed in the 1580s, but numerous small missions were established on the shores of "Chicora," the region that would later be called Georgia and South Carolina. By controlling the Sea Islands, the Spanish could reduce foreign piracy, gain protection for their ships from frequent hurricanes, and perhaps even open up an overland route to the new mines of northern Mexico or other riches of the American interior.

This missionary outreach, never large by Latin American standards, was most intense in northwest Florida (Apalache), northeast Florida (Timucua), and the coastal region below the Savannah River (Guale). The tribes in these areas, like those in New England a generation later, had been ravaged by disease without being entirely destroyed. As a result,

they were too weak to offer unified resistance and desperate enough to be receptive to Spanish blandishments of military assistance and religious guidance.

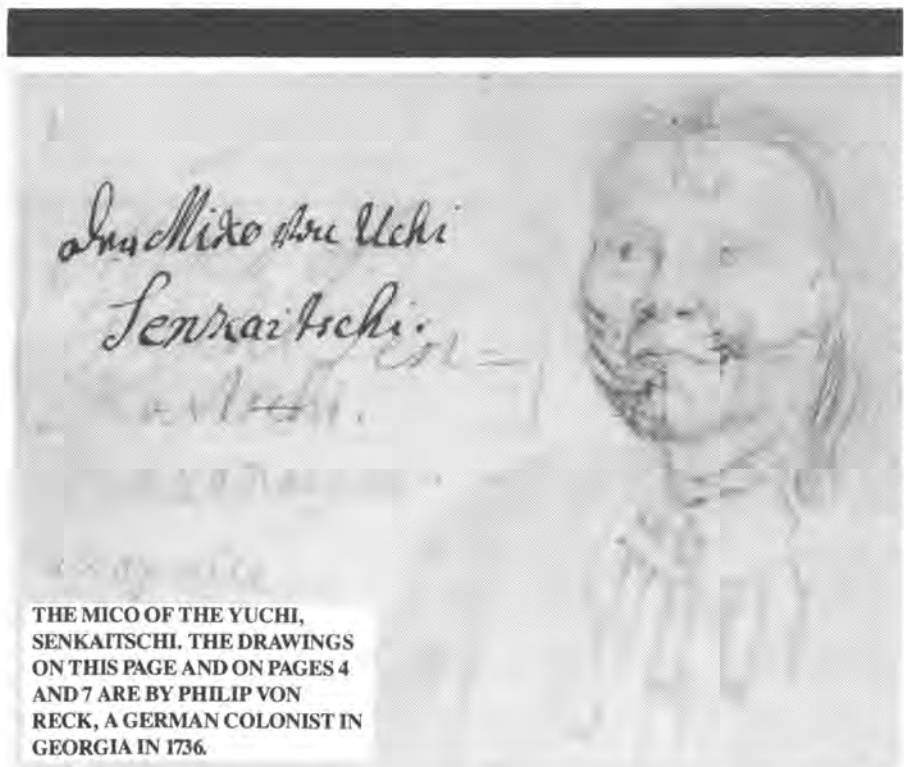
In the province of Guale, for example, some 20 or 30 thousand people were settled in scores of small villages between St. Andrew Sound and the mouth of the Savannah when missionaries established the *presidio* of Santa Caterina on the island of Guale, now known as St. Catherine's Island. Conversions were few, but the Indians tolerated the presence of priests and watched for possible evidence of the power of their deity, such as when a drought ended shortly after the erection of a Christian cross.

The Guale had accepted the first Spanish offers of peace in the 1560s when they were at war with the stronger Edisto Indians further up the coast. But by 1576 they sought an alliance with the Edisto and the neighboring Escamacu on the basis of "the injury they had received" from the Spanish. When a shipwreck deposited more than 100 anti-Spanish Frenchmen on their shores the following year, the Guale sent emissaries south to St. Augustine in hopes of convincing mission Indians there to join them in driving the Spaniards out of the region "with the help of the French." The Spanish governor struck back, and in the three-year Escamacu War he managed to drive the Edisto tribe northward from

Port Royal, to turn the Guale against their Escamacu allies, and then to burn 19 villages of the Guale themselves as a reprisal for harboring Frenchmen.

Military brutality and demands for tribute in the form of provisions and labor for Spanish soldiers did little to ease the missionaries' task, and they remained constantly at odds with the Spanish authorities whose policies they had been sent to implement. The friars protested when authorities in St. Augustine failed to provide adequate pay and supplies for Spaniards billeted along the coast, who then took to stealing food from the same Indians whom the missionaries hoped to convert to Christianity.

For different reasons, both the government and the church backed a policy of forced settlement of the semi-nomadic Gualean Indians in permanent agricultural villages. The administrators hoped to gain control over food production, and the priests expected that fixed residence near the missions would enhance conversion efforts and aid in stamping out the local practice of polygamy. Neither group fathomed the fact that the Gualeans, destabilized by sickness and war, were in no position to generate surplus food. Nor did the foreigners understand that the bases of Indian subsistence — game, fish, corn, and melon — depended upon seasonal movements and other socio-economic arrangements that



Illustrations from Von Reck's Voyage — Georgia in 1736





Indies asserted that the missionaries were making little progress because "the Indians realize how this Governor despises them and lowers their standing in the Indians' eyes." Perception of a power struggle between church and state supported the Gualeans' decision to focus their resistance efforts on the missions. The Gualeans may well have assumed that the governor would tolerate and perhaps even condone an attack on the missions, since he appeared to hold the missions in such low regard.

When the friars deposed a Gualean named Juanillo from his rightful role as hereditary leader, the stage for revolt was set. Father Corpa chose Don Francisco, instead of Juanillo, as heir to the micoship on St. Catherine's Island, charging that Juanillo exhibited "arrogant, quarrelsome, and warlike" behavior. The friars had already chastised Juanillo both privately and publicly for his actions, and clearly saw him as an unsuitable leader. They failed to anticipate, however, that Don Francisco would reject the micoship and ally with Juanillo.

Juanillo and Don Francisco together triggered an uprising which threatened to drive the Spanish from the region for good. They and their followers gathered in the forest and decided that one act of violence would unify the Gualeans and incite rebellion. The group returned to the village of Tolemato and hid in the church, awaiting the return of Father Corpa. When the friar returned to prepare for mass, they killed him with an ax and proclaimed their deed throughout the town. According to a Spanish report, "although some showed signs of regret," most Indians supported this drastic action.

The following day Juanillo drove home the implications of the slaying to a meeting of Gualeans, arguing that reprisals against the community as a whole were inevitable and that they should join together in resistance. "Although the friar is dead," argued the rebel leader, "he would not have been if he had not prevented us from living as before we were Christians: let us return to our ancient customs, and let us prepare to defend ourselves against the punishment which the governor of Florida will attempt to inflict upon us." His speech continued, according to the report:

let us restore the liberty of which these friars have robbed us, with promises of benefits which we have not seen, in

hope of which they wish that those of us who call ourselves Christians experience at once the[se] losses and discomforts:

- they take from us women, leaving us only one and that in perpetuity, prohibiting us from changing her;
- they obstruct our dances, banquets, feasts, celebrations, fires, and wars, so that by failing to use them we lose the ancient valor and dexterity inherited from our ancestors;
- they persecute our old people calling them witches;
- even our labor disturbs them, since they want to command us to avoid it on some days, and be prepared to execute all that they say, although they are not satisfied;
- they always reprimand us, injure us, oppress us, preach to us, call us bad Christians, and deprive us of all happiness, which our ancestors enjoyed, with the hope that they will give us heaven.

These are deceptions in order to subject us; what can we expect, except to be slaves? If now we kill all of them, we will remove such a heavy yoke immediately, and our valor will make the governor treat us well, if it happens that he does not come out badly.

According to the Spanish report, "The multitude was convinced by his speech; and as a sign of their victory, they cut off Father Corpa's head, and they put it in the port on a lance," hoping no doubt that it would incite and empower the people.

While Juanillo and Don Francisco inspired these early stages of the revolt, the micos of individual villages attempted to implement decisions to support or oppose the rebellion. Juanillo's group dispatched messengers through-

out the territory to convey his plan for each chief to arrange for the death of the resident friar. The chief of Tupique complied: his villagers found Father Rodriguez in the church, allowed him to say mass, and killed him.

The mico of Asopa, on St. Catherine's Island, was the next to receive news of the uprising. But instead of ordering the murder of Fathers Aunon and Badajoz, the mico tried to inform Governor Canzo of the rebellion. When he received no reply from three successive messages sent to the governor, the chief traveled to St. Augustine where he learned that none of his messengers had reached Canzo. His subjects, usurping his authority and siding with Juanillo, killed the two priests in his absence. Widespread discontent among the Gualean people outweighed the decision of the mico.

The two friars in the villages of Asao and Tulapo nearly escaped the rebelling Indians. The Gualeans waited at the landing for Father Velascola, who was away when news of the insurrection reached Asao, and killed him when he reached shore. Mission Indians warned Father Davilla of his fate, so he hid in the forest outside Tulapo. But the Gualeans located his hiding place and shot him with three arrows. Father Davilla was spared when the mico of Tulapo interceded on his behalf, and the Gualeans instead reversed the roles of ruler and subject, making the friar their slave. He carried water and wood and served as an archery target for the young boys. They tried to convert him to their system of belief with promises of release if "renouncing his own religion, he would embrace the gods of the Indians and



AN INDIAN CAMP

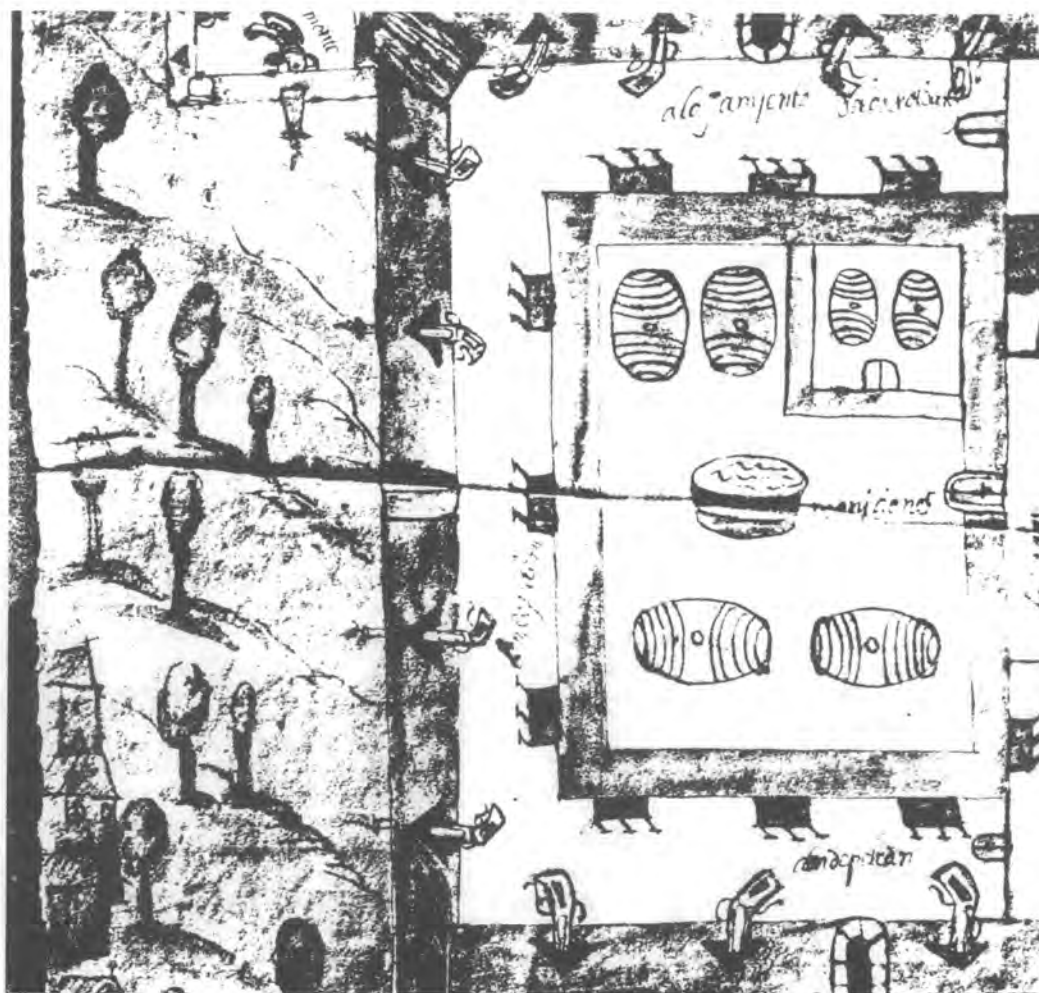
physically espouse the daughter of a savage." But the friar refused to break his religious vows.

The Indians may have miscalculated the outcome of their persecution of the Spanish friars. Instead of devaluing the Christian God, the deaths of the friars glorified his representatives in the eyes of the Spaniards. Father Fernandez wrote, "How they must have felt, . . . those little lambs, on receiving martyrdom all alone as they were!" In a letter to Spain he concluded, "I envy them the crowns of glory which they bear before us; and I await in this desert, by saintly obedience, that which Our Lord, in His mercy may have in store for me."

Martyrdom was envied by the clergy and avenged by the state. The Guale uprising proved a great challenge to Governor Canzo who, despite his dislike for the missionaries, attempted to suppress the revolt. Spanish officials had expressed criticism of his leadership in Florida: there had been few conversions, countless attacks by the Indians, and great expenses. The soldiers at St. Augustine and Santa Elena blamed their problems on Canzo's inexperience and misappropriation of funds. They also believed that by overburdening the Indian people and by failing to respect the Church, the governor had provoked the revolt. The suppression of the Gualean Indians provided one last test of the abilities of Governor Canzo and of the viability of Spanish control over the Sea Islands.

While Canzo prepared to investigate the murders, the Indians developed and broadened their strategy. The Gualeans planned a series of attacks to destroy the missions, the villages of Christian Indians, and the *presidios*. They launched an assault on Cumberland Island where the resident mico, Don Juan, had allied with the Spanish and had failed to kill the friars. Don Juan stopped the Indians from landing and thwarted their attack. He notified Governor Canzo and demanded supplies and reinforcements. Now the governor was forced to contemplate the defense of Indian allies, as well as the protection of Spanish missions and *presidios*.

Canzo dispatched soldiers to the island to protect the mission and intensified his efforts to learn the causes of the rebellion. When interrogating prisoners taken during the attack on Cumberland Island proved unsuccessful, he forced the prisoners to guide him to the resisting tribes. The Indians frustrated his plans by misdirecting the search parties.



## INDIANS OF THE EARLY SOUTH: A SAMPLING OF RECENT WORK

*The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville, 1976) by anthropologist Charles Hudson and *The Land They Knew: The Tragic Story of the American Indians in the Old South* (New York, 1981) by historian J. Leitch Wright, Jr. provide excellent overviews. The Newberry Library in Chicago has prepared a set of detailed critical bibliographies, such as James H. O'Donnell's *Southeastern Frontiers: Europeans, Africans, and American Indians, 1513-1840* (Bloomington, 1982). The Smithsonian Institution is preparing a definitive volume on the Southeast for its new *Handbook of American Indians*. For an introduction to more recent times, see Walter L. Williams, ed., *Southeastern Indians Since the Removal Era* (Athens, GA, 1979) and Francis Paul Prucha, *Indian-White Relations in the United States: A Bibliography of Works Published 1975-1980* (Lincoln, NE, 1982).

William Bartram, *Travels Through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, The Cherokee Country, The Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges, or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Chactaws* (1791; reprint ed., Salt Lake City, 1980).

Karen I. Blu, *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of*

*an American Indian People* (Cambridge, Eng., 1980).

Verner W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (1928; reprint ed. with an introduction by Peter H. Wood; New York, 1981).

Kathleen A. Deagan, "Mestizaje in Colonial St. Augustine," *Ethnohistory* 20 (Winter 1973): 55-65.

Chester B. DePratter, et al., "The Route of Juan Pardo's Explorations in the Interior Southeast, 1566-1568," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 61 (October 1983): 125-158.

Henry F. Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America* (Knoxville, TN, 1983).

John C. Ewers, "The Influence of Epidemics on the Indian Populations and Cultures of Texas," *Plains Anthropologist* 18(60) (1973): 104-115.

Patricia Galloway, ed., *La Salle and His Legacy: Frenchmen and Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley* (Jackson, MS, 1982).

Gary C. Goodwin, *The Cherokees in Transition: A Study of Changing Culture and Environment Prior to 1775* (Chicago, 1977).

Elizabeth A. H. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540-1795* (College Station, TX, 1975).

Lynn E. Kaufman, et al., eds., *Bibliography of the Virginia Indians* (Fredericksburg, VA, 1976).

William Loren Katz, *Black Indians: A Hidden History* (New York, forthcoming).

Duane H. King, ed., *The Cherokee Nation: A Troubled History* (Knoxville, TN, 1979).

Lewis H. Larson, *Aboriginal Subsistence Technology on the Southeastern Coastal Plain During the Late Prehistoric Period* (Gainesville, FL, 1980).

James H. Merrell, "The Racial Education of the Catawba Indians," *Journal of Southern History* 50 (August 1984): 363-384.

Jerald Milanich and Samuel Proctor, eds.,



**PLAN OF THE  
FORTIFICATIONS  
AT ST. AUGUSTINE,  
FLORIDA, 1593 —  
FROM THE  
ARCHIVES OF  
THE INDIES,  
SEVILLE, SPAIN.**



*Tacachale: Essays on the Indians of Florida and Southeastern Georgia During the Prehistoric Period* (Gainesville, FL, 1978).

Thomas C. Parramore, "The Tuscarora Ascendancy," *North Carolina Historical Review* 59 (Autumn 1982): 307-326.

Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866* (Knoxville, TN, 1979).

J. Ralph Randolph, *British Travelers Among the Southern Indians, 1660-1763* (Norman, OK, 1973).

Johr Phillip Reid, *A Better Kind of Hatchet: Law, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Cherokee Nation During the Early Years of European Contact* (University Park, PA, 1976).

Steven E. Reilly, "A Marriage of Expediency: The Calusa Indians and Their Relations with Pedro Menendez de Aviles in Southwest Florida, 1566-1569," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 59 (April 1981): 395-421.

Stanley South, "The Discovery of Santa Elena," Research Manuscript Series #165, Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (Columbia, SC, July 1980).

William D. Steele, *The Cherokee Crown of Imnassy* (Winston-Salem, NC, 1977).

Daniel H. Usner, Jr., "Frontier Exchange in the Lower Mississippi Valley: Race Relations and Economic Life in Colonial Louisiana, 1699-1783," PhD diss., Duke Univ., 1981.

Gene Waddell, *Indians of the South Carolina Lowcountry, 1562-1751* (Spartanburg, SC, 1980).

Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln, NE, 1983).

Patricia D. Woods, *French-Indian Relations on the Southern Frontier, 1699-1762* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1980).

Canzo then perched interpreters in trees to call to the Indians, promising safety to those who would come forward. None did. The governor remained unenlightened.

Church officials, incensed over the governor's failure, started their own investigation and petitioned for the right to hear prisoners' testimony. Governor Canzo denied the request, charging that they apparently "wished to usurp the royal jurisdiction." The friars' authority included only the collection of altar furnishings, according to Canzo, and he resisted all their attempts to involve themselves in the controversy. Canzo especially feared that news of his failure to quell the rebellion would reach Spain and he ordered that the notary refuse to prepare legal documents for the fathers. The friars, in turn, declined to testify in Canzo's investigation, insisting that their priestly vows forbade words and actions which might lead to the mutilation or death of others.

With his power and authority threatened by the Church and by his Indian allies, Governor Canzo implemented a plan to annihilate the Gualean Indians. He ordered his soldiers to burn dwellings and public buildings, to cut down crops, to break apart canoes, and to take all Indians prisoner. Canzo dismissed considerations of guilt and innocence because "the crime committed by the said Indians was so grave, and deserving of an equally heavy penalty and punishment." He therefore enslaved all captives. Though most escaped being taken by hiding while their villages were destroyed, they returned to face starvation.

These reprisals resulted in the breakdown of the mission system since the friars left the villages, fearing for their lives. In response to this crisis, Governor Canzo lamely reaffirmed Spanish love for the Indians. He told Don Juan and his people:

they must not believe, nor think it a fact, as they did, that his Majesty did not love them; the said natives must understand, from the interest he took in them, that he did love them, and longed for nothing more than to have them come into acceptance of the holy Catholic faith and the law of the Gospel, and hold him for their King and Master.

Canzo asked the Indians to move closer to St. Augustine to prove their faith and friendship. There they would receive religious education, Spanish protection, and a reduction in tribute

payments. Indians loyal to the Spanish — like Don Juan, who moved his people — were rewarded with money, trinkets, and reductions in tribute.

Governor Canzo, however, soon confronted what one historian has called a "deluge of acquiescence." Starving Indians claimed ignorance of recent actions, a wise tactic in keeping with the Spanish perception of them as children. They pledged loyalty and promised peace in return for a restoration to Spanish favor. Canzo accepted their petitions on the understanding that they would promise to keep the Catholic faith, to live in peace, to bring complaints to the governor, and to beg for mercy whenever he chose to visit them. By these measures he further subjugated the Indians and bolstered his authority, but he could do little to alter the effects of his earlier destructive policies. When supplies failed to arrive from Spain, Canzo's decision to destroy Indian crops meant that the Spanish now faced widespread starvation along with their captives.

Despite almost total deprivation, Juanillo and some of his followers continued to resist the Spanish at Tolemato and at the interior village of Yfusinique. Utilizing intertribal rivalries, Canzo persuaded the chief of Asao to lead an expedition against Juanillo's group. Canzo promised the chief that if he succeeded Asao would receive head town status. The chief lost many warriors in the attack, but returned with 24 prisoners and the scalps of Juanillo and Don Francisco. The Gualean rebellion was quelled, and peace was restored to a land now desolate and barren. □

*Carolyn Stefanco-Schill is a doctoral candidate in American history at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. She is now completing her dissertation, "Pathways to Power: Voluntary Associations and the Politics of Women's Culture, Denver, Colorado, 1858-1893."*

#### NOTES

1. See Ester Boserup, *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (New York, 1970) for a discussion of the relationship between polygamy and agricultural production.

2. Louise Lamphere, "Strategies, Cooperation, and Conflict Among Women in Domestic Groups," in Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford, 1974), p. 108, discusses the significance of uterine families for women.

---

# "IMPATIENT OF OPPRESSION"

## BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLES ON THE EVE OF WHITE INDEPENDENCE

Peter H. Wood

**I**N FEBRUARY, 1774, 20-YEAR-OLD PHYLLIS WHEATLEY, THE AFRICAN-born slave-turned-author living in Boston, shared with another non-white, the Indian minister Samson Occom, his belief that "in every human Breast, God had implanted a Principle, which we call love of freedom; it is impatient of Oppression, and pants for Deliverance; and by the leave of our modern Egyptians I will assert, that the same Principle lives in us." Among roughly half a million Afro-Americans living in the 13 colonies, few were in a position to record their

feelings so clearly for posterity. But for nearly a decade thousands of blacks, particularly in the Southern colonies, had been feeling and demonstrating a growing impatience with the "modern Egyptians" who held such sway over their lives.

On the eve of white independence, blacks constituted a larger portion of the population than they would at any subsequent time. Nine of every 10 Afro-Americans lived in the South, primarily in the coastal areas that produced tobacco, rice, and indigo, and nearly all were ensnared in the dominant labor system of hereditary race slavery. Since the adoption of that coercive institution in England's mainland provinces more than a century earlier, acts of individual resistance had been commonplace, and occasionally groups of enslaved colonists had risked more organized rebellion efforts. As historian Herbert Aptheker suggested more than 40 years ago, the plots came in waves, and these cycles of increased resistance continued intermittently in different forms until the end of the slave regime almost a century later.

Often these surges occurred during periods when the white community was distracted by external affairs or divided by internal controversy. So it is not entirely surprising to discover that just such a wave gradually built momentum during the years of colonial disquiet following the Stamp Act controversy of 1765 and crested a decade later in the eventful months before the Declaration of Independence. Yet scholars of black history, often studying a single colony or state, and historians of the American Revolution, traditionally preoccupied with the splits emerging in the white populace during these years, have never acknowledged the swell of hope and discontent that rippled through the slave communities between 1765 and 1776.

This wave of rebellious activity deserves attention, for it touched every major slave colony and was closely related to — and influential upon — the political unrest that gripped many white subjects during these years. Indeed, the familiar story of "Tories" and "Whigs" squaring off in a two-sided struggle drastically oversimplifies the tensions of



the time. Besides the merchants and planters who directed the emerging “patriot” cause and the English functionaries and “loyalist” sympathizers who opposed them, other groups had equally large stakes in the turbulent course of events.

Near the beginning of this century the “progressive” historians stressed that the American Revolution actually involved two struggles. One was the first successful anti-colonial movement against European imperialism—the battle for independence from Britain. But this contest for “home rule,” led by the colonial merchant-planter elite, was entwined with another contest along social class lines over “who should rule at home.” The latter revolution was for the most part unsuccessful, and postwar “consensus” historians have done their best to downplay its importance and even deny its existence altogether. But in the past decade scholars have taken a renewed look at these domestic struggles, coinciding with the better-known independence movement, and they are finding them to have been more complicated, varied, and significant than even the progressive historians had understood.

In the 1760s, after England’s triumph in the French and Indian War, longstanding power relationships came under new strains in Britain’s American colonies. Tensions between provincial leaders and imperial officials were only one element in a web with many interlacing strands. Urban workers, backcountry farmers, and Indian nations living beyond the frontier all applied pressure on occasion to protect their interests and exert their influence in an increasingly volatile political situation.

No group had less formal power, or a larger potential interest in the unraveling of established social relationships than Afro-Americans confined on Southern plantations. Though virtually powerless under the prevailing system of law, these enslaved blacks still represented a crucial force in the overall political equation, for their numbers were great, their situation seemed desperate, and their detachment from the niceties of the imperial debate was considerable. Attentive leaders in the black communities, like their Native American and white working class counterparts, realized they represented key constituencies that could conceivably sway events in one direction or another with results that would be of lasting consequence to themselves and others.

## IN THE 1760S THOUSANDS OF AFRICANS WERE BEING SOLD

every year into “Babylonian Captivity” in the American colonies. But these “saltwater” slaves from across the Atlantic (such as Alex Haley’s famous ancestor, Kunte Kinte, who arrived at Annapolis during this decade) found themselves surrounded by a far greater number of “country-born” blacks whose heritage already blended African and European elements. Phase One of the pre-revolutionary wave of resistance, which began in the mid-1760s and stretched to the emergence of armed violence between whites at Concord Bridge in April 1775, inevitably reflected and built upon this emerging Afro-American culture.

For example, among an increasingly Christian slave population, itinerant preaching developed rapidly and incurred mounting planter resentment. Jupiter, a tall man in his middle thirties also known as Gibb, who belonged to George Noble of Prince George County, Virginia, bore the scars of previous whippings when detained in Sussex County in 1767. Arrested with his mother and brother, he was whipped again “for stirring up the Negroes to an insurrection, being a great New Light preacher.” Soon such preaching was outlawed by whites in Virginia and elsewhere as a political liability. In 1772 slaveholders on the Committee for Religion of the Virginia House of Burgesses drafted a Toleration Bill intended to define the limits of dissenting worship among Baptists, who frequently included blacks in their meetings. The law not only prohibited slaves from attending church without their masters’ permission; it also forbade any night services.

In music, black songs often became political and threatening to authorities, much as *reggae* can be today. By the mid-70s we find reports of slaves playing the African gourd-guitar and singing “in a very satirical stile and manner” about the treatment they have received. Stories of secret night meetings involving “deep and solemn” deliberations by “private committees” raised anxiety among whites. So did the large numbers of slave runaways and their suspected motives. In 1773, shortly after word reached Virginia that slavery had been ruled illegal in

England in the Somerset Case, a planter stated he had lost a slave couple who were heading for England “where they imagine they will be free (a Notion now too prevalent among the Negroes, greatly to the Vexation and Prejudice of their Masters).” By the following summer the news had reached the Virginia backcountry, where a slave named Bacchus absconded from Augusta County and set out “to board a vessel for Great Britain . . . from the knowledge he had of the late determination of Somerset’s Case.”

Occasionally, especially in the coastal towns where the divisions among whites were most apparent, groups of blacks moved openly to exploit these rifts to their own advantage, often using tactics drawn from the white independence struggle. In the fall of 1765 Christopher Gadsden’s white Sons of Liberty took to the streets of Charleston to protest the Stamp Act, chanting “Liberty, Liberty” and carrying a British flag with the word spelled across it. During the New Year holiday, according to Henry Laurens, Charleston blacks began “crying out ‘Liberty’” on their own, and the whites “all were Soldiers in Arms for more than a Week,” while “patrols were riding day and night” throughout the province.

Such occurrences did not escape the notice of British officials formulating contingency plans; they realized that thousands of discontented slave workers made the Southern colonies highly vulnerable. “The great Disproportion, there is between White men and Negroes in South Carolina,” an agent reminded the Lords of Trade in 1770, rendered the colony “less formidable to a foreign or an Indian Enemy, in Case of Hostilities.” Conversely, the British knew that armed and loyal blacks could be a major asset. In 1771 the English governor of West



PHYLIS WHEATLEY

Florida prepared an assessment of Spanish strength at New Orleans, noting that their forces included "upwards of four thousand Negroes upon whom they have great dependence being all used to Muskets and the Woods."

In 1772 Virginia's Governor Dunmore summarized these perceptions when he described conditions in the southern tidewater region. "At present," he said, "the Negroes are double the number of white people in this colony, which by natural increase, and the great addition of new imported ones every year is sufficient to alarm not only this colony but all the Colonies of America." Dunmore, who would give further attention to this subject in the years ahead, observed that in case of war, the white colonist "with great reason, trembled at the facility that an enemy would find in procuring Such a body of men, attached by no tie to their Masters or to the Country." Indeed, he added, "it is natural to Suppose that their Condition must inspire them with an aversion to both, and therefore are ready to join the first that would encourage them to revenge themselves by which means a conquest of this Country would inevitably be effected in a very Short time."

Dunmore's planter opposition also sought to assess the relative strength and restiveness of the slave population and speculated about Britain's willingness to exploit it. "If America & Britain should come to a hostile rupture I am afraid an Insurrection among the slaves may and will be promoted," wrote young James Madison, beginning his political career as a member of the Committee on Public Safety for Orange County. In a letter to printer William Bradford in Philadelphia late in 1774, he reported: "In one of our Counties lately a few of those unhappy wretches met together and chose a leader who was to conduct them when the English troops should arrive—which they foolishly thought would be very soon and that by revolting to them they should be rewarded with their freedom. Their intentions were soon discovered and the proper precautions taken to prevent the Infection. It is prudent," Madison reminded the printer, that "such attempts should be concealed as well as suppressed."

Six weeks later Bradford replied, "Your fear with regard to an insurrection being excited among the slaves seems too well founded." The Philadelphian informed Madison that "a letter from a Gentleman in England was read yesterday in the Coffee-house, which men-

tioned the design of [the] administration to pass an act (in case of rupture) declaring 'all Slaves & Servants free that would take arms against the Americans.' By this," Bradford concluded, "you see such a scheme is thought on and talked of; but I cannot believe the Spirit of the English would ever allow them publically to adopt so slavish a way of Conquering."

As the prospects for insurrectionary acts improved and the anxiety of white patriots grew, the frequency and harshness of punishments increased, and the rate of slave executions seems to have risen. "The most significant exceptions to the rule of moderation," writes historian Pauline Maier, "lay with those accused of inciting slave insurrections in the South." In October 1773 a North Carolina slave charged with murder was burned at the stake by the sheriff of Granville County. The next fall two Georgia blacks accused of arson and poisoning were burned alive on the Savannah Common, and in December several more slaves were "taken and burnt" for leading an uprising in nearby St. Andrew's Parish that killed four whites and wounded others.

Significantly, some white colonists, through a blend of religious scruples, ideological consistency, and strategic necessity, reacted to these mounting tensions with thoughts other than harsh reprisal. Weeks after the murders and executions in St. Andrew's Parish, Georgia, for example, a group of Scottish parishioners met at Darien. On January 12, 1775, they adopted a resolution saying that slavery was an "unnatural practice . . . founded in injustice and cruelty, and highly dangerous to our liberties, (as well as lives), debasing part of our fellow-creatures below men, and corrupting the virtues and morals of the rest." Slavery's existence, they asserted, "is laying the basis of that liberty we contend for . . . upon a very wrong foundation," and they pledged to work for the manumission of Georgia slaves.

Another immigrant expressed similar sentiments. On March 8, 1775, Thomas Paine, using the pen name "Humanus," published his first article, three months after reaching Philadelphia. His essay in the *Pennsylvania Journal and Local Advertiser* was entitled "African Slavery in America," and it pointed out that blacks had been "industrious farmers" who "lived quietly" in Africa before "Europeans debauched them with liquors" and brought them to the New World. Paine reminded white colonists

that because they had "enslaved multitudes, and shed much innocent blood in doing it," the Lord might balance the scales by allowing England to enslave them. To avoid such retribution and give greater consistency to the patriot cause, "Humanus" urged the abolition of slavery and suggested (in terms which resurfaced later in the year) that freed Negroes be given land in the West to support themselves, where they might "form useful settlements on the frontiers. Thus they may become interested in the public welfare, and assist in promoting it; instead of being dangerous as now they are, should any enemy promise them a better condition."

---

## Phase II: Resistance and Reprisals

---

**DURING THE SPRING OF 1775, EVEN AS PAINE WROTE, THE INTER-**locking struggles of Tories, Patriots, and blacks intensified. In this second phase, as talk of rebellion grew, the issue of who controlled supplies of powder and shot took on central importance, and Loyalists charged white radicals with spreading rumors of slave unrest. "In the beginning of 1775," Thomas Knox Gordon of South Carolina recalled, "the Malecontents being very anxious to have some plausible pretence for arming with great industry propogated a Report that the Negroes were meditating an Insurrection."

Patriots, in turn, claimed authorities were prepared to enlist black strength if necessary to quell white dissent. The Committee of Safety for New Bern, North Carolina, announced in a circular letter that "there is much reason to fear, in these Times of General Tumult and Confusion, that the Slaves may be instigated and encouraged by our inveterate Enemies to an Insurrection, which in our present defenseless State might have the most dreadful Consequences." The Committee advised "Detachments to patrol and search the Negro Houses, and . . . to seize all Arms and Ammunition found in their Possession."

Black activists sought to capitalize on white divisions in their plans for freedom fully as much as white factions tried to implicate half a million blacks in their political designs. Whatever the schemes of Patriot and Tory leaders during 1775, local slave leaders were attentive and active participants rather than ignorant and



passive objects. Consider a report from backcountry New York that was being publicized and discussed as far away as Virginia by mid-March. In Ulster County one Johannes Schoonmaker caught part of a conversation between two of his slaves, discussing the powder needed and support available to carry out a plot which included burning houses and executing slave-owning families as they tried to escape. This organized liberation plan involved blacks from the villages of Kingston, Hurly, Keyserck, and Marbletown, and the 20 persons who were taken into custody had considerable powder and shot in their possession. In addition, rumor had it that these blacks were to be joined in their freedom struggle by five or six hundred Indians.

Because we have studied both slavery and the Revolution on a colony-by-colony basis, we have failed to appreciate the full extent of the black freedom struggle in the summer of 1775. In every Southern colony, from Maryland to Georgia, slaves threatened armed revolt. Their local leaders engaged in desperate high-stakes calculations as to when to assert themselves and gain liberation with the help of outside forces. In this they were perhaps not unlike the Jews and other resistance fighters who awaited allied aid during World War II; premature action in each instance was suicidal. Enough weapons were confiscated during the year so that even if one takes into account the fact that many of these incidents were probably frame-ups, the extent of the rebellious wave is still considerable when we look at each colony in turn.

In Virginia in mid-April, Governor Dunmore ordered the barrels of gunpowder in the Williamsburg magazine removed to a ship under cover of night. The local mayor immediately submitted a petition claiming that widespread rumors of a slave revolt made internal security a crucial matter, and news reached the capital of irate citizens coming from the west to reclaim the powder by force. Word spread that Dunmore was fortifying the Governor's Palace and had issued arms to his servants; a physician testified that the governor had sworn to him "by the living God that he would declare Freedom to the slaves and reduce the City of *Williamsburg* to Ashes" if disorder continued. Hearing this, several blacks presented themselves at the Palace to offer their services but were turned away. On April 29, a special supplement of the *Virginia Gazette*

reported that two Negroes had been sentenced to death in nearby Norfolk "for being concerned in a conspiracy to raise an insurrection in that town."

Word of Lord Dunmore's threat quickly reached Thomas Gage, the British general serving as Governor of Massachusetts. "We hear," he wrote in mid-May, "that a Declaration his Lordship has made, of proclaiming all the Negroes free, who should join him, has Startled the Insurgents." And on June 12, 1775, a week before the disastrous engagement at Bunker Hill which was to cost him his command, Gage wrote to his friend Lord Barrington, "You will

---

*"There is much reason to fear . . . that the Slaves may be instigated and encouraged by our inveterate Enemies to an Insurrection."*

---

have heard of the boldness of the rebels, in surprising Ticonderoga; and making executions to the frontiers of Montreal; but I hope such hostilities, will justify General Carleton in raising all the Canadians and Indians in his power to attack them in his turn." Steeling the secretary of war for such tactics, Gage continued, "You may be tender of using Indians, but the rebels have shown us the example, and brought all they could down upon us here. Things are come to that crisis, that we must avail ourselves of every resource, even to raise the Negroes, in our cause."

Two weeks later Dunmore himself observed regarding Virginia's planter elite: "My declaration that I would arm and set free such Slaves as should assist me if I was attacked has stirred up fears in them which cannot easily subside." The *Virginia Gazette* proclaimed that the governor planned "to take the field as generalissimo at the head of the Africans." James Madison, like other planter rebels versed in classical literature, realized that slavery constituted their Achilles' heel; "if we should be subdued," he wrote, "we shall fall like Achilles by the hand of one that knows that secret." Weeks later Dunmore was at work on a secret plan with John Connelly of Fort Pitt to add the threat of an Indian attack on the backcountry to the prospect of slave insurrections.

In Maryland in late April planters

pressured Governor Robert Eden into issuing arms and ammunition to guard against rumored insurrections, though the governor feared their acts "were only going to accelerate the evil they dreaded from their servants and slaves." In May John Simmons, a wheelwright in Dorchester County, refused to attend a militia muster, saying "he understood that the gentlemen were intending to make us all fight for their land and negroes, and then said damn them (meaning the gentlemen) if I had a few more white people to join me I could get all the Negroes in the county to back us, and they would do more good in the night than the white people could do in the day." According to James Mullineux, Simmons told him "that if all gentlemen were killed we should have the best of the land to tend and besides could get money enough while they were about it as they have got all the money in their hands." Mullineux told the grand jury "that the said Simmons appeared to be in earnest and desirous that the negroes should get the better of the white people." Simmons was later tarred, feathered, and banished on the charge of fomenting a slave insurrection.

In August a Maryland minister — a strict believer in the "outside agitator" creed — protested that "the governor of Virginia, the captains of the men of war, and mariners, have been tampering with our Negroes; and have held nightly meetings with them; and all for the glorious purpose of enticing them to cut their masters' throats while they are asleep. Gracious God!" he exclaimed, "that men noble by birth and fortune should descend to such ignoble base servility." By fall the Dorchester County Committee of Inspection reported, "The insolence of the Negroes in this county is come to such a height, that we are under a necessity of disarming them which we affected on Saturday last. We took about eighty guns, some bayonets, swords, etc."

In North Carolina the black freedom struggle during the summer of 1775 was even more intense. "Every man is in arms and the patrols going thro' all the town, and searching every Negro's house, to see they are all at home by nine at night," wrote Janet Schaw, an English visitor to Wilmington. "My hypothesis is," she said, "that the Negroes will revolt." Her view was confirmed when a massive uprising in the Tar River area of northeastern North Carolina was revealed just before it was to begin, on the night of July 8. Scores of blacks were

rounded up and brought before Pitt County's Committee of Safety, which "ordered several to be severely whipt and sentenced several to receive 80 lashes each [and] to have [their] Ears craped [cropped], which was executed in the presence of the Committee and a great number of spectators."

Colonel John Simpson reported that "in disarming the negroes we found considerable ammunition" and added: "We keep taking up, examining and scourging more or less every day." According to Simpson, "from whichever part of the County they come they all confess nearly the same thing, viz<sup>t</sup> that they were one and all on the night of the 8th inst to fall on and destroy the family where they lived, then to proceed from House to House (Burning as they went) until they arrived in the Back Country where they were to be received with open arms by a number of Persons there appointed and armed by [the] Government for their Protection, and as a further reward they were to be settled in a free government of their own."

In South Carolina, meanwhile, the impending arrival of a new royal governor fueled mounting speculation among both blacks and whites. Josiah Smith, Jr. wrote that "our Province at present is in a ticklish Situation, on account of our numerous Domesticks, who have been deluded by some villanous Persons into the notion of being all set free" on the arrival of the new governor, Lord William Campbell. According to the Charleston merchant, this rumor and consequent hope of freedom "is their common Talk throughout the Province, and has occasioned impertinent behaviour in many of them, insomuch that our Provincial Congress now sitting hath voted the immediate raising of Two Thousand Men Horse and food, to keep those mistaken creatures in awe, as well as to oppose any Troops that may be sent among us with coercive Orders."

When Campbell arrived he found a story circulating that the "Ministry had in agitation not only to bring down the Indians on the Inhabitants of this province, but also to instigate, and encourage an insurrection amongst the Slaves. It was also reported, and universally believed," Campbell stated, "that to effect this plan 14,000 Stand of Arms were actually on board the Scorpion, the Sloop of War I came out in. Words, I am told, cannot express the flame that this occasion'd amongst all ranks and degrees, the cruelty and savage barbarity of the scheme was the conversation of all

Companies." A free black pilot named Thomas Jeremiah was jailed on charges of being in contact with the British navy and seeking to distribute arms. Black witnesses for the prosecution testified that Jeremiah had alerted them to the impending war and informed them that it could well mean freedom for blacks.

Jeremiah was publicly hanged and burned in Charleston on the afternoon of August 18.

The situation in Georgia was scarcely different, as John Adams learned through a discussion with several other delegates to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. "In the evening," Adams

## BLACKS IN REVOLUTIONARY AMERICA: FURTHER READING

Good books on Afro-Americans under slavery have multiplied so rapidly that it is impossible to list them all. No other branch of Southern history has seen so much new work of such high quality. Three general books which provide differing introductions to the field are John B. Boles, *Black Southerners, 1619-1869* (Lexington, 1983); Vincent Harding, *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York, 1981); and Nathan I. Huggins, *Black Odyssey: The Afro-American Ordeal in Slavery* (New York, 1977).

The narrower topic of blacks' relation to the American Revolution deserves special consideration. When Alex Haley began exploring his family history in the 1960s, he found that his "furthest back-person" named Kunte Kinte had arrived in Annapolis exactly two centuries earlier. But when he published *Roots* at the time of the national bicentennial, Haley suggested, on the basis of prevailing scholarship, that this ancestor would have known little of the revolutionary struggles that went on during his lifetime. Perhaps, but a new generation of historians has been looking again at the American Revolution, and numerous recent studies have paid special attention to black Southerners.

Gradually these works are reshaping our ideas both on black history and on the Revolutionary Era. The world of Kunte Kinte and that of Thomas Jefferson appear more closely connected than we ever learned in school. For a survey of the expanding literature up to the time of Haley's book, see Peter H. Wood, "I Did the Best I Could for My Day": The Study of Early Black History During the Second Reconstruction, 1960-1976," *William & Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 35 (April, 1978): 218-219.

Other recent articles include two pieces in vol. 37 (January, 1980) of the same journal: F. Nwabueze Okoye, "Chattel Slavery as the Nightmare of the American Revolutionaries"; (3-28), and Jeffrey J. Crow's prize-winning essay, "Slave Rebelliousness and Social Conflict in North Carolina, 1775 to 1802": (79-102), as well as two essays by Sylvia R. Frey: "The British and the Black: A New Perspective," *The Historian*, 38 (February, 1976): 225-238, and "Between Slavery and Freedom: Virginia Blacks in the Ameri-

can Revolution," *Journal of Southern History*, 49 (August, 1983): 375-398.

Dr. Frey is completing a book on blacks during the Revolution that will augment the pioneering study by Benjamin Quarles of Morgan State University, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1961). For striking first-hand accounts by Afro-Americans in the Revolutionary era, see the tale of John Marrant in Richard VanDerBeets, ed., *Held Captive by Indians: Selected Narratives, 1642-1836* (Knoxville, 1973), and the story of Olaudah Equiano in Arna Bon-temps, ed., *Great Slave Narratives* (Boston, 1969).

Recent profiles of eighteenth-century blacks include: Barbara Chase-Riboud, *Sally Hemmings* (New York, 1979); Carol V. R. George, *Segregated Sabbaths: Richard Allen and the Rise of Independent Black Churches, 1760-1840* (New York, 1973); and William H. Robinson, *Phyllis Wheatley: A Bio-Bibliography* (New York, 1981). For young readers, Elizabeth Yates, *Amos Fortune: Free Man* (New York, 1950) won the Newberry Medal for distinguished children's literature in 1951, and it still holds up. In addition, see:

Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1974).

Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, 1983).

Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca, 1982).

David B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, 1975).

Philip S. Foner, *Blacks in the American Revolution* (Westport, Conn., 1976).

Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge, 1979).

A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color: Race and the American Legal Process, The Colonial Period* (New York, 1978).

Sidney Kaplan, *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution 1770-1800* (New York, 1983).

Staughton Lynd, *Class Conflict, Slavery and the United States Constitution: Ten Essays* (Indianapolis, 1967).

Duncan J. MacLeod, *Slavery, Race and the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Eng., 1974).

Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New York, 1972).

Robert E. Perdue, *Black Laborers and Black Professionals in Early America, 1750-1830* (New York, 1975).

Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1978).

James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists* (New York, 1976).

Ellen Gibson Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (New York, 1976).

Alfred F. Young, *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb, 1976).



wrote on September 24, "two gentlemen from Georgia, came into my room [and] gave a melancholy account of the State of Georgia and South Carolina. They say that if one thousand regular troops should land in Georgia, and their commander be provided with arms and clothes enough, and proclaim freedom to all the negroes who would join his camp, twenty thousand negroes would join it from the two Provinces in a fortnight." The New Englander continued, "They say their only security is this; that all the king's friends, and tools of government, have large plantations and property in negroes; so that the slaves of the Tories would be lost, as well as those of the Whigs."

Adams included in his diary entry the observation, no doubt shared by the two Georgia slaveowners, that "the negroes have a wonderful art of communicating intelligence among themselves; it will run several hundreds of miles in a week or fortnight." This acknowledgment of the effective oral network that kept blacks informed is rare indeed among the print-oriented leaders of the anti-colonial Independence movement. But such a grapevine clearly existed, and it would be stretched and strengthened in the months ahead, as the triangular freedom struggle entered a third and climactic phase.

---

### Phase III: The Dream Deferred

---

## IN VIRGINIA GOVERNOR DUNMORE, WHO HAD RETIRED FROM WIL-

liamsburg to the safety of a British ship, was preparing to use the desperate card he had threatened to play, and perhaps should have played, six months earlier. When his marines raided a printing office in Norfolk in September, 1775, they were joined by cheering blacks. During October he continued to conduct raids and to remove slaves to British naval vessels via small sloops and cutters as he had been doing for months. "Lord Dunmore," charged the Committee of Safety in Williamsburg on October 21, "not contented with . . . inciting an insurrection of our slaves, hath lately, in conjunction with the officers of the navy, proceeded to commence hostilities against his Majesty's peaceable subjects in the town and neighborhood of Norfolk; captivated many, and seized the

property of others, particularly slaves, who are detained from the owners."

"Lord Dunmore sails up and down the river," a Norfolk resident wrote to London the following week; "where he finds a defenseless place he lands, plunders the plantation and carries off the negroes."

Edmund Pendleton estimated in early November that perhaps fewer than 100 slaves had taken refuge with Dunmore, but the situation changed drastically on November 14 when the governor's forces won a skirmish at Kemp's Landing. Dunmore capitalized on this small victory in two ways. First, he sent off John Connelly toward Detroit with secret orders approved by Gage to return to Virginia with Indian troops, seize Alexandria, and await forces from the coast. Secondly, Dunmore used the occasion to publish the less-than-sweeping proclamation he had drawn up the week before, emancipating any servants or slaves of the opposition faction who would come serve in his army. It read in part, "I do hereby further declare all indented servants, negroes, and others (appertaining to Rebels) free, that are able and willing to bear arms, they joining his Majesty's Troops, as soon as may be, for the more speedily reducing this Colony to a proper sense of their duty."

Connelly was soon captured, but the proclamation had its intended effect. "Letters mention that slaves flock to him in abundance," Pendleton wrote to Richard Henry Lee at the end of the month, "but I hope it magnified." Landon Carter also hoped it was not true. When 14 enslaved workers on his plantation responded to Dunmore's call, he had a dream that they came back, looking "most wretchedly meager and wan," and pleaded for his assistance. "Whoever considers well the meaning of the word Rebel," stated a white resident of Williamsburg, "will discover that the author of the Proclamation is now himself in actual rebellion, having armed our slaves against us and having excited them to an insurrection." He added, in a line reminiscent of Patrick Henry, "there is a treason against the State, for which such men as Lord Dunmore, and even Kings, have lost their heads."

Since it ultimately failed from both the British and the black vantage points, there is a tendency to minimize the combined initiative of the months following November 15. But at the time, these events in Virginia had enormous potential significance for blacks and whites alike. On December 14 a Philadelphia

---

*"Our Province at present is  
in a ticklish Situation, on  
account of our  
numerous Domesticks,  
who have been deluded  
by some villainous  
Persons into the notion of  
being all set free."*

---

newspaper related that a gentlewoman walking near Christ Church had been "insulted" by a Negro, who remained near the wall on the narrow sidewalk, refusing to step off into the muddy street as expected. When she reprimanded him he replied, according to the report, "Stay, you d—d white bitch, till Lord Dunmore and his black regiment come, and then we will see who is to take the wall."

That same day George Washington urged Congress "to Dispossess Lord Dunmore of his hold in Virginia" as soon as possible. In repeated letters the planter-general stressed that "the fate of America a good deal depends on his being obliged to evacuate Norfolk this winter." Washington spelled out his fears to Richard Henry Lee on December 26: "If my dear Sir, that man is not crushed before spring, he will become the most formidable enemy America has; his strength will increase as a snow ball by rolling; and faster, if some expedient cannot be hit upon to convince the slaves and servants of the impotency of his designs."

Reports from the Chesapeake southward after Dunmore's proclamation are suggestive of the events surrounding Lincoln's emancipation order. With the prospect of freedom at hand, flight became the logical form of rebellion, and along the coast hundreds of blacks took direct action despite terrible odds. The newspapers told of "boatloads of slaves" seeking out British ships, not always successfully. Seven men and two women from Maryland "who had been endeavouring to get to Norfolk in an open boat" were apprehended near Point Comfort. Three blacks who boarded a Virginia boat that they mistakenly took to be a British vessel were only "undeceived" after they had openly "declared their resolution to spend the last drop of their blood in Lord Dunmore's service." Though perhaps more than a thousand reached Dunmore's ships safely, an outbreak of smallpox among the refugees the next spring

reduced their numbers and discouraged others from following. If it had “not been for this horrid disorder,” he wrote, “I should have had two thousand blacks; with whom I should have had no doubt of penetrating into the heart of this Colony.”

News that black freedom had been sanctioned in Virginia must have reached South Carolina by early December. On Sullivan’s Island at the mouth of Charleston harbor, fugitives hopeful of escaping slavery were gathering near the “pest house,” the small structure beside the water supervised by a black named Robinson and used to quarantine the sick off of incoming ships from Africa and the Caribbean. From here, some runaways had already joined the British fleet and begun to participate in raiding parties to liberate their comrades. On December 5 Captain Jacob Milligan of the sloop *Hetty* reached Charleston with a cargo of rum and sugar, but not before he had been seized and searched by Captain Tollemache of the *H.M.S. Scorpion*. The next day Milligan informed the Council of Safety “that there were considerable number of slaves upon Sullivan’s Island,” and that he had learned “huts” were being built to shelter them “in the woods.”

The next day the Council of Safety promptly ordered Colonel William Moultrie to dispatch a force of 200 men to Sullivan’s Island that night “to seize and apprehend a number of negroes, who are said to have deserted to the enemy.” According to Josiah Smith, Jr., Moultrie moved against the encampment at night with a force of 50 or 60 men and “early in the Morning sett Fire to the Pest house, took some Negroes and Sailors Prisoners, killed 50 of the former that would not be taken, and unfortunately lost near 20 that were unseen by them till taken off the Beach by the Men [of] Warrs Boats.” When a local citizen spoke with officers of the *Scorpion* several days later, he reported that Captain Tollemache “did not deny having some of our negroes on board, but said they came as freemen, and demanding protection; that he could have had near five hundred, who had offered. . . .”

Within weeks similar conditions prevailed in Georgia. On March 13 Stephen Bull wrote to Henry Laurens from Savannah to report that 200 enslaved workers (nearly 50 from Arthur Middleton’s plantation alone) had deserted and were on Tybee Island, apparently in contact with the British ships

frequenting the coast. The next day, at the end of a dictated letter to Colonel Laurens, Bull added an extraordinary handwritten note regarding a matter of utmost secrecy. “The matter is this: It is far better for the public and the owners, if the deserted negroes . . . , who are on Tybee Island, be shot, if they cannot be taken, [even] if the public is obliged to pay for them; for if they are carried away, and converted into money, which is the sinew of war, it will only enable an enemy to fight us with our own money and property.” Since members of the local Council of Safety were too “timid” to agree to such a brutal mission, Bull sought authorization from his own home colony of South Carolina for dispatching a party of Indian allies to capture or kill the runaways. He told Laurens that “all who cannot be taken, had better be shot by the Creek Indians, as it, perhaps, may deter other negroes from deserting, and will establish a hatred or aversion between the Indians and negroes.”

Laurens, as the president of South Carolina’s revolutionary Council of Safety, had already dealt with such a situation in the search-and-destroy mission to Sullivan’s Island. So he chose his words discreetly in responding to Bull’s request for permission to act. “Now for the grand we may say awful business contained in your letter,” he responded on March 16; “it is an awful business notwithstanding it has the sanction of the Law, to put even fugitives and Rebellious Slaves to death — the prospect is horrible —.” But then, without hesitation, he continued, “We think the Council of Safety in Georgia ought to give that encouragement which is necessary to induce proper persons to seize and if nothing else will do to destroy all those Rebellious Negroes upon Tybee Island or wherever they may be found.” Apparently Bull left Savannah before this letter arrived and received word of it while on his way back to Charleston. “Could I have heard from you but twelve hours sooner,” he wrote Laurens, “I should not have left Savannah as soon as I have done, as there is one piece of service which I wanted to have put into execution, which I did not think myself properly authorised to do.” The fate of the 200 “fugitives and Rebellious Slaves” on Tybee Island remains unknown.

A great deal had changed in the year since Tom Paine had advocated emancipation and western resettlement. The British had coopted these ideas and used them to their own advantage, capitaliz-

ing on the slaves’ aspirations for freedom and tipping black hopes decidedly toward the loyalist position with the carrot of emancipation. When Dunmore’s proclamation gave public substance to this stance, the planter elite viewed the threat to their property as a compelling argument for independence, just as their grandchildren would more than four score years later. Patriot opinion had solidified around the notion that the freedom struggles of enslaved Africans were a liability rather than an asset. When Paine’s *Common Sense* first appeared on January 9, 1776, it spoke of the British as barbarous and hellish agitators and of Indians and blacks as brutal and destructive enemies.

Preoccupied with imperial misrule and prejudiced from the start against members of another class and different race, colonial leaders were unable to acknowledge accurately (or perhaps even to perceive) the nature of the struggle for liberation which was being waged passionately around them. When this struggle was diverted, postponed, crushed in its early stages — as is the way with most such difficult liberation movements — the whites could hardly sense the full weight of the despair or measure the full extent of the contradictions. Rather than elaborate upon the difficult triangular struggle, acknowledging the shifts and compromises of their own course and the strength of the opposition from below as well as from abroad, they instead adopted the hypocritical view that outside agitators had been at work, unsuccessfully, among passive and anonymous victims of enslavement.

By relying upon their persuasive and partisan words, we have been largely blinded for two centuries to a major factor in the turmoil leading up to the Revolution. Hemmed in by our categories of color, we have failed to recognize a significant chapter in the story of worker and artisan political unrest. We have underestimated the complexity and importance of this little-known wave of struggle within the crosscurrents of revolution. It concerned nothing less than the proper boundaries of American freedom. □

*Peter Wood of Hillsborough, North Carolina, is the author of Black Majority (New York, 1974), concerning slavery in colonial South Carolina. He is presently writing a general history of the South in the eighteenth century, and he expects to publish an expanded and annotate version of this essay shortly.*



# RED & BLACK

## IN THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIANS

BY THEDA PERDUE

The first black Appalachians did not live under the control of white planters, railroad builders, lumber companies, or mine operators. Instead, they lived within the domain of the Cherokee Nation, which extended from its spiritual center at Kituwah (near present-day Bryson City, North Carolina) into what has become the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Tennes-

see, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Virginia.

The Cherokees were agriculturalists long before the arrival of whites and blacks, but they practiced only subsistence farming. Restrained by a belief system which condemned producing more than necessary for survival, these Cherokees made no attempt to farm on a commercial scale which might have demanded slave labor. Cherokee society was relatively egalitarian compared to European and some African societies; the only distinctions derived from superior knowledge or skill. European contact dramatically changed Cherokee society — its economy, its political structure, and its attitudes. And the transformation of Cherokee society profoundly affected black Appalachians.

The Cherokees encountered Africans at least as early as they did Europeans and may have seen blacks even before Spanish conquistadors visited their towns. When the black slaves in Lucas Vazquez de Ayllon's ill-fated colony on the Pee Dee River revolted in 1526, some

of the rebels fled to the Indians, and it is at least possible that the Cherokees saw these Africans or their offspring. Black slaves later accompanied Spanish expeditions to the Cherokees, including those of Hernando de Soto in 1540 and Juan Pardo in 1567. When de Soto's prize Indian prisoner,

**"Les Nouvelles Indes"** — this nineteenth-century tapestry is more noted for its romantic images than for its accuracy.



the Lady of Cofitachequi, escaped from the Spaniards, a black slave belonging to one of his officers accompanied her to Xuala, perhaps a Cherokee town, where they "lived together as man and wife." Although the initial reaction of Cherokees to Africans is unknown, the cohabitation of the Lady of Cofitachequi and the Spaniard's runaway slave indicates that the Indians probably regarded Africans simply as other human beings who were either traversing or invading their territory. Since the concept of race did not exist among Indians and since the Cherokees nearly always encountered Africans in the company of Europeans, one supposes that at first Cherokees equated the two and failed to distinguish sharply between the races.<sup>1</sup> Soon after their first contact with Africans, however, the Cherokees no doubt realized that Europeans regarded blacks as inferiors and that they were in danger of receiving the same treatment.



In the years following their initial meeting, the enslavement of Indians and their employment alongside African slaves produced extensive

contact between the two peoples. The English colonists purchased their first cargo of Africans at about the same time they began enslaving Indians, but blacks proved to be more desirable slaves than Indians.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the Indian slave trade in the South reached its peak in the Yamassee war of 1715-17 and declined steadily thereafter until United States policy in the post-Revolutionary era formally ended the trade.

Although early historians attributed the dwindling market for Indian captives and termination of the Indian slave trade to the racial and cultural unsuitability of Indians for forced labor, contemporary accounts portrayed the Indian as a good worker.<sup>3</sup> John Brickell, for example, reported in his natural history that "some that are Slaves prove very industrious and laborious."<sup>4</sup> The demise of Indian bondage can probably be attributed to the fact that the African, wrenched from his or her homeland with no opportunity to escape and return, represented a better investment. Certainly the higher prices commanded by Afri-

cans reflect the planters' preference for them. Between 1722 and 1730, for example, an African slave brought as much as 330 pounds at the Charleston market, while no Indian sold for more than 250 pounds.<sup>5</sup>

The Indians auctioned at the Charleston slave market presumably belonged to belligerent tribes. Colonial governments originally viewed Indian captives as war booty and therefore encouraged the enslavement, the sale, and preferably the export of native peoples. While white colonists took captives in Indian wars, most Indian slaves were victims of intertribal wars or raids often prompted by colonial officials or white traders who profited from the Indian slave trade. In one notorious episode, a group of Cherokees attacked a peaceful Yuchi town and enslaved many of the villagers in order to satisfy their debts to English traders on whose guns and ammunition the warriors depended.<sup>6</sup>

Prior to European contact, Cherokee slaves had been unimportant to the indigenous economy. But with the introduction of European trade goods and the development of a market for war captives, slaves became a financial asset. Throughout the eighteenth century, Cherokees did not especially value slaves — Indian or black — as laborers because they worked communally. Additional workers might possibly add to the wealth of the community, but no particular benefit accrued to the owner unless the slave were sold. Therefore, as long as warfare continued and a market for captives existed, the Cherokees sold slaves instead of keeping them.

White planters had special problems with Indian slaves because the geographical proximity of their kin and fellow tribe members prompted many of them to escape. Advertisements for runaway Indian slaves frequently appeared in colonial newspapers. Revolts also seemed a troublesome possibility because the nearness of probable supporters increased the likelihood of successful resistance. The involvement of Indian slaves in one of the earliest suspected plots for an insurrection in South Carolina heightened the colonists' concern. In addition to the economic liabilities of Indian slavery, the pacification policy embarked upon by many colonial governments and ultimately adopted by the United States contributed to the demise of Indian bondage since the presence of Indian slaves made it

difficult to establish rapport with other tribes. Colonists in early eighteenth-century Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Rhode Island cited the suspicion and hostility aroused among local Indians over-seeing other Indians enslaved as a reason for passing laws forbidding the importation of Indian slaves.<sup>7</sup>



While Indian slavery and the resultant warfare existed, Cherokees became acquainted with blacks not only through the experience of com-

mon bondage, but also as warriors capturing black bondsmen. Antoine Bonney, a Frenchman taken prisoner, reported the existence of black captives among the Cherokees: "We found also a negro and negress who formerly belonged to the widow Saussier, and having been sold in 1739 to a Canadian, deserted the Quabache on their way to Canada, and were captured by a group of Cheraquis who brought them to the same village where I found them."

Another account of the capture of blacks by Cherokees is that of David Menzies, whom the Cherokees seized along with the gang of slaves he was supervising. In a similar episode, Chief Bowl attacked a boat on the Tennessee River in 1794 and took 20 black slaves captive after having killed the 13 whites on board.<sup>8</sup>

The Cherokees discovered that the capture of black slaves was particularly profitable, and by the American revolution Cherokees traded almost exclusively in black slaves. The Indians stole slaves from settlers in one location and sold them to planters living on another part of the frontier, rarely keeping black servants for their own use. The most commonly used tactic in the capture of slaves was that employed by a group of Cherokees who "took by Force a Negro Boy away out of John Geiger's House, when there were but two Women in it, whom they threatened to shoot as they offered Resistance."

Acquiring slaves through duplicity was far less violent and seems to have been almost as successful, as a South Carolinian's account of the theft of slaves in 1751 affirms:

The half-Breed Fellow who came down from the Cherokee Nation in



Company with James Maxwell, did seduce 6 of my Negroes to run away from me into the Cherokees, from whence they might depend on their Freedom. They proceeded on their way as far as Broad River, and there three of them receded from whom I have this Account. There is many circumstances to corroborate the Truth. As he is a subtil Fellow, he may have like Influence on many Slaves in South Carolina. It's necessary some Expedient should be fallen on to prevent a Practice of such dangerous consequences.<sup>9</sup>

Whether Cherokees abducted slaves or lured them away with the promise of freedom, the capture of Africans quickly replaced the capture of other Indians when the market for Indian slaves disappeared.

The most notorious Cherokee kidnapper of slaves was Chief Benge, one of the Chickamaugan warriors who refused to make peace with the white Europeans until 1794. On his last raid into southwest Virginia, Benge captured white slave-owners Susanna and Elizabeth Livingston and three black slaves, and attempted to transport them back to northwest Alabama where the Chickamaugans resided. While on the trail, Benge queried Elizabeth about the slaveholders who lived on the North Holston River, particularly a General Shelby, and told her that he would "pay him a visit during the ensuing summer and take away all of his Negroes." On the third day after the raid, the Virginia militia attacked the abductors and killed Benge and most of his comrades. Colonel Arthur Campbell, the military officer of the area, wrote Governor Henry Lee of Virginia: "I send the scalp of Captain Benge, that noted murderer, . . . to your excellency . . . as proof that he is no more." The death of Benge marked the end of such brash slave raids.<sup>10</sup>

Some Africans who came into the possession of the Indians were not captured, but had instead sought refuge among the Cherokees whose mountainous territory discouraged all except the most avid slave catchers. The treaty signed between the British and the Cherokees in London in 1730 contained a provision for the return of these fugitives: "If any negroes shall run away into the woods from their English masters, the Cherokees shall endeavor to apprehend them and bring them to the



A Cherokee log cabin and farmstead, c. 1890.

plantation from which they run away, or to the Governor, and for every slave so apprehended and brought back, the Indian that brings him shall receive a gun and a matchcoat."<sup>11</sup>

According to Brickell, white slaveholders commonly employed Indians to retrieve their lost property:

They are also very expeditious in finding out the *Negroes* that frequently run away from their masters into the Woods, where they commit many outrages against the *Christians*. . . . The *Indian Kings* are sent for on these Occasions, who soon find out their Haunts, and commonly kill many of them whenever they are sent in pursuit after them, for they never cease pursuing 'till they destroy or hunt them out of the Woods.<sup>12</sup>

In 1763, whites agreed to pay Indians one musket and three blankets, the equivalent of 35 deerskins, for each black slave captured and returned.<sup>13</sup>



The fear that runaways might establish maroon communities in the relative safety of the Cherokees' mountains motivated slaveholders to offer these lavish rewards for the recovery of their slaves. In 1725 a prominent South Carolina planter expressed concern that some slaves had become well acquainted with the language, customs, and the hill country of the Cherokee. The possibility that slaves and Indians might join forces against the whites made the colonists shudder. In 1712

Alexander Spotswood of Virginia wrote the Board of Trade that he feared "the insurrection of our own Negroes and the Invasions of the Indians."

The dread of such an alliance continued throughout the colonial period and gave rise to "law and order" political parties. John Stuart's North Carolina rivals, for example, successfully capitalized on this anxiety because, as Stuart pointed out in 1775, "nothing can be more alarming to the Carolinas than the idea of an attack from Indians and Negroes."<sup>14</sup> The fear of raids by maroons also helped to shape colonial Indian policy:

In our Quarrels with the *Indians*, however proper and necessary it may be to give them Correction, it can never be our interest to extirpate them, or to force them from their Lands: their Grounds would be soon taken up by runaway *Negroes* from our Settlements, whose Numbers would daily increase and quickly become more formidable Enemies than *Indians* can ever be, as they speak our Language and would never be at a Loss for Intelligence.<sup>15</sup>

This fear was not wholly unfounded, as the following deposition given in 1751 by Richard Smith, the white trader at Keowee, demonstrates:

Three runaway Negroes of Mr. Gray's told the Indians, as they said that the white people were coming up to destroy them all, and that they had got some Creek Indians to assist them so to do. Which obtained belief and the more for that the old Warriour of Kewee said some Negroes had applied to him, and told him that there was in all Plantations many Negroes more than

white people, and that for the Sake of Liberty they would join him.<sup>16</sup>

The colonists went to great lengths to prevent conspiracies between Indians and slaves. They soon discovered that the most effective way to accomplish this goal was to create suspicion, hatred, and hostility between the two peoples. The colonists not only employed Indians to find escaped slaves, but also used blacks in military campaigns against Indians. In 1715 during the Yamasee war a company of black militiamen participated in the invasion of the Cherokee Nation and remained after other troops departed to assist the Cherokees in an attack against the Creeks. After the Yamasee war, the colonists ceased using black soldiers, although the South Carolina Assembly during the Cherokee war of 1760 defeated by only one vote a bill to arm 500 blacks. Nevertheless, slaves continued to contribute to the war effort in other ways, and over 200 blacks served as wagoners and scouts for Colonel James Grant's expedition against the Cherokees in 1761.<sup>17</sup>

In another move to prevent the development of congenial relationships between Africans and Indians, the Southern colonies enjoined whites from taking their slaves into Cherokee territory. Trade regulations imposed by both Georgia and South Carolina under various administrations almost always made it illegal for the traders to employ blacks in their dealings with the Indians.<sup>18</sup> The traders frequently ignored the provision, however, and took their slaves into Indian territory to act as teamsters and to paddle their canoes. As early as 1725 Colonel George Chicken, the South Carolina Indian Commissioner, noted infractions: "I must take notice to your Honour that [John] Sharp and [William] Hatton have brought up their Slaves altho' by law they are forfeit one hundred pounds for so doing and I should think myself Negligent in my Duty if I did not Acquaint your Honor."<sup>19</sup> That the offenders made no effort to conceal their slaves indicated that they did not expect to be penalized by the Indian commissioner. In fact Hatton sent one of his slaves on an errand to Colonel Chicken: "This day was brought to me by one of Capt. Hattons Slaves the Young French Fellow."<sup>20</sup>

As more traders with even greater scorn for the rules entered Indian territory during the mid-eighteenth century,

the number of black slaves increased. In 1757 Cornelius Doherty, a trader near Hiwassee, owned at least four slaves, and Samuel Benn of Tennessee Town used a slave to help him transport his goods over the mountains by packhorse. Benn's slave Abram won his freedom for his feats during the Cherokee war of 1760. He carried dispatches between besieged Fort Loudon and Fort Prince George and ultimately died trying to get through with a message.<sup>21</sup>



Stringent efforts to keep Africans and Native Americans separate and hostile sometimes failed. When red and black people successfully resisted or overcame the misconceptions fostered by whites, they probably recognized certain cultural affinities between themselves. Both emphasized living harmoniously with nature and maintaining ritual purity; both attached great importance to kinship in their social organizations; and both were accustomed to an economy based on subsistence agriculture.

African and Cherokee relationships to their environments reflected similar attitudes toward the physical world. Spiritual merged with environmental factors. Common everyday activities, such as getting up in the morning, hunting, embarking on a journey, and particularly curing illness, assumed for both races a religious significance, and even topographical features were invested with religious meaning. Africans associated mountains and hills as well as caves and holes with spirits and divinities, while Cherokees viewed streams and rivers as roads to the underworld and "deep pools in the river and about lonely passes in the high mountains" as the haunts of the *Uktena*, a great serpent with supernatural powers.<sup>22</sup>

Animal symbolism was prominent in the myths of both Cherokees and Africans. Some Africans believed that snakes were immortal; others prohibited the killing of sacred snakes. Africans often portrayed the lizard as a messenger between gods and mortals, and the spider as a symbol of wisdom. Similarly, in Cherokee myths the Great Buzzard created the mountains with his wings

and the Water Spider devised a way to obtain fire.<sup>23</sup> People, animals, and plants formed distinct categories, and each group was essential to the cosmos as a whole. People could respectfully draw sustenance from nature, but should not mistreat it. Nature had a valid existence apart from its profitability; Cherokees and Africans eschewed the gross exploitation of nature by which Europeans eventually wreaked havoc on their environment. Both red and black belief systems discouraged the misuse of nature, and their economies did not demand it.

Olaudah Equiano, an African slave who eventually obtained his freedom, described the economic system of the Kingdom of Benin in which he lived before he was captured and brought to the New World. The subsistence-level agriculture practiced by this society limited the division of labor: "Agriculture is our chief employment; and everyone, even the children and women are engaged in it."<sup>24</sup> According to Equiano, Africans used "no beasts of husbandry; their only instruments are hoes, axes, shovels, and beaks, or pointed iron, to dig with." While most African societies had advanced further technologically than those of Native Americans, particularly in their use of metal tools, the production of iron remained limited and Africans depended on the cultivation of rice, yams, millet, sorghum, and bananas for their livelihood.<sup>25</sup>

Although Africans probably produced enough surplus to support iron artisans, they did not develop a capitalistic economy. Equiano reported that "our manners are simple, our luxuries are few." The people were satisfied if they had enough to support life and saw no need to strain: "As we live in a country where nature is prodigal of her favors, our wants are few and easily supplied."<sup>26</sup>

Neither the Africans described by Equiano nor the Cherokees placed a premium on material wealth, and a person who acquired more than the accepted norm risked suspicion and censure. Both Native Americans and Africans believed in the finitude of resources and realized that one person's gain was another's loss. The welfare of the community superseded the aspirations, desires, and even rights of a particular individual.<sup>27</sup> The African and Indian sense of community contrasted sharply with the trend in Western culture toward glorification of personal wealth,



free enterprise individualism, and the destruction of a cooperative ethic.



As in Cherokee society, kinship rather than economics ruled the lives of most Africans. Kinship groups governed marital customs and relationships between individuals, settled most disputes, and enabled individuals to exercise their personal rights. Kinship was also a major factor in shaping the nature of both indigenous West African slavery and aboriginal Cherokee bondage. A slave generally lacked kinship ties and therefore lacked the personal rights and claim to humanity which stemmed from kinship.<sup>28</sup>

The Cherokees were already keeping slaves when Europeans first ventured into the southern Appalachians. Sparing a few war captives from the usual torture, warriors reserved them for various purposes including using them as hostages, diplomatic pawns, informants, and spies. The name which Cherokees applied to these people was *atsi nahsa'i*, or "one who is owned," a term also used for animals. For the Cherokees, an *atsi nahsa'i* literally was an animal because he had no kin to protect his rights as a human being; such a person could be killed because no one would avenge the death. As a result, that fate ultimately awaited some *atsi nahsa'i*. Others, however, became full-fledged members of the tribe because a Cherokee clan, or kin group, could elect to adopt them. Adoption erased any distinction between the *atsi nahsa'i* and native born Cherokees. Kinship ties could bestow full human rights on someone who had been seen as a mere animal.<sup>29</sup>

African slavery was sometimes more complex than Cherokee or European systems of bondage. The Ashanti, for example, distinguished four unfree statuses: *odonko* or "foreign-born slave," *awowa* or "pawn," *akoa pa* or "pawn become slave," and *akyere* or "criminal awaiting death." The *odonko*'s master gave him land to work and permitted him to retain the product of his labor. Economically, he was on a par with the master, but the *odonko*'s exclusion from the kinship system denied him the activities, rights, and obligations of the Ash-

anti and thereby isolated him socially. The *awowa* on the other hand maintained his position in the kinship system while serving another in payment of a debt incurred by his clan or lineage. The *uakoa pa* were also enslaved for debt, but were not redeemed by kin, and so their situation became permanent, and the kinship ties were severed.<sup>30</sup>

Accounts of West African slavery confirm that a person could be enslaved through a variety of circumstances. William Snelgrave, a British slave trader along the Guinea Coast in the eighteenth century, reported that African bondage could ensue from capture in war, commission of a serious crime, or enslavement for debt. Equiano recalled seeing coffles of slaves traveling through his village and described them as "only prisoners of war, or such among us as

had been convicted of kidnapping or adultery, or some other crimes, which we esteemed heinous." The only slaves used by Equiano's society were captives taken in battle, and masters treated slaves much better in Benin than in the New World: "Those prisoners which were not sold or redeemed, we kept as slaves; but how different was their condition from that of the slaves in the West Indies! With us they do not more work than other members of the community, even their master; their food, clothing, and lodging were nearly the same as theirs."<sup>31</sup>

An African anticipated only temporary enslavement, for rarely did slavery become a perpetual state. Most societies expected slaves to marry, and the responsibility for procuring a spouse for a slave often fell to the master. The

THE  
INTERESTING NARRATIVE  
OF  
THE LIFE  
OF  
OLAUDAH EQUIANO,  
OR  
GUSTAVUS VASSA,  
THE AFRICAN.  
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.  
VOL. I.

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid, for  
the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he is my salvation.

And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name,  
declare his doings among the people. Isaiah xii. 2, 4.

L O N D O N :

Printed for and sold by the AUTHOR, No. 10, Union-  
Street, Middlesex Hospital;

Sold also by Mr. Johnson, St. Paul's Church-Yard; Mr.  
Murray, Fleet-Street; Messrs. Robson and Clark, Bond-  
Street; Mr. Davis, opposite Gray's Inn, Holborn; Messrs.  
Shepherdson and Reynolds, and Mr. Jackson, Oxford-Street;  
Mr. Lockington, Chiswell-Street; Mr. Mathews, Strand;  
Mr. Murray, Prince's-Street, Soho; Messrs. Taylor and Co.  
South Arch, Royal Exchange; Mr. Burton, Newington-  
Causeway; Mr. Parsons, Paternoster-Row; and by all the  
Bookfellers in Town and Country.

[Entered at Stationer's Hall.]

offspring of these unions gained their freedom or at least could not be sold. Africans generally permitted or even encouraged slaves to marry free persons, including members of their master's lineage. Ashanti society provided that an *odonko* became free after marriage to a citizen, thus preventing the development of a slave class in the Ashanti state.<sup>32</sup>

The social mobility that Africans and Cherokees allowed their slaves derived from the economic insignificance of slaves as laborers. After contact with European slave-traders, slaves did become central to the economies of many African states, such as Ashanti and Dahomey, but as articles of commerce rather than as workers. Warfare, the previous purpose of which had been revenge and not conquest, supplied the slaves to the European traders.<sup>33</sup> Equiano gave the following account of hostilities between African states:

From what I can recollect of these battles they appear to have been interruptions [sic] of one little state or district on the other, to obtain prisoners or booty. Perhaps they were incited to this, by those traders who brought the European goods I mentioned, amongst us. Such a mode of obtaining slaves in Africa is common; and I believe more are procured this way, and by kidnapping, than any other. When a trader wants slaves, he applies to a chief for them, and tempts him with his wares. It is not extraordinary if on this occasion he yields to the temptation with as little firmness, and accepts the prices of his fellow creature's liberty, with as little reluctance as the enlightened merchant. Accordingly he falls on his neighbors, and a desperate battle ensues. If he prevails and takes prisoners, he gratifies his avarice by selling them.<sup>34</sup>

The establishment of commercial relations with European powers altered the traditional African institution of slavery in a somewhat different way than it did indigenous Cherokee slavery. The development of a market for slaves among Europeans eventually led West Africans to distinguish between domestic slaves and commercial slaves. Snelgrave reported a thwarted attempt to purchase slaves from the king of Dahomey's factor:

I understood afterwards the King had no slaves by him for sale, tho' he had great numbers of captive Negroes, which tilled his Grounds, and did other Work. For, it seems, after they are once inrolled in that Service, his Majesty never sells them, unless they are guilty of very great crimes.

Europeans encouraged warfare in Africa so that the demand for slaves in their American colonies might be satisfied.

The European presence in Africa did not drastically alter domestic slavery, however, until long after abolition had ended the demand for commercial slaves.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, the rapid economic changes experienced by the Cherokees in the eighteenth century transformed the status of unfree people, and domestic slaves became commercial slaves. Eventually, political and military policy dictated the end of warfare for marketable captives, and the indigenous Cherokee system of domestic bondage was irretrievably altered.



From the beginning of their permanent settlement of North America, Englishmen desired Indian land more than Indian slaves. They

gradually realized that their existence on the same continent with the Indians called for pacification of the various tribes until they could devise some less hazardous plan to divest the "savages" of their land. In pursuance of their ultimate objective of entirely dispossessing the native inhabitants of North America, Englishmen attempted to persuade the Indians that their interests coincided with those of the whites and that native Americans were "savage" versions of Europeans who needed only to be "civilized" in order to become equivalent to Europeans.

The presence in North America, as well as Africa, of people who appeared to be vastly different from Europeans posed a real problem for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scientists. The Bible described a single creation of humanity, and theories therefore had to be developed to explain how the differences came about. The most visible contrast

between Europeans and Indians was skin color, but in their determination to establish that Native Americans were exactly like them except for their "uncivilized" customs, Europeans refused to admit that Indians possessed genetically darker skin. James Adair gave the following explanation for this very obvious difference in hue:

The parching winds, and hot sunbeams, beating upon their naked bodies, in their various gradations of life, necessarily tarnish their skins with the tawny red colour. Add to this, their constant anointing themselves with bear's oil, or grease, mixt with a certain red root, which, by a peculiar property, is able alone, in a few years time, to produce the Indian colour in those who are white born. . . . The colour being once thoroughly established, nature would, as it were, forget herself, not to beget her own likeness.<sup>36</sup>

Convinced that the Europeans and Native Americans were practically identical, whites simultaneously insisted that Africans were the exact opposite of Europeans and Indians. By emphasizing the actual, exaggerated, and imagined differences between Africans and Indians, whites successfully masked the cultural similarities of the two races as well as their mutual exploitation by whites. Thomas Jefferson in *Notes on the State of Virginia* described both the Indian and African and found the African's color to be a "powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people" while regretting that "an inhumane practice once prevailed in this country of making slaves of the Indians." Jefferson expressed a suspicion that blacks were "inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind." Indians, on the other hand, supposedly differed from Europeans north of the Alps before the Roman conquest in number alone, and Jefferson implied that with time, literacy, and an increase in population, the American Indian might produce an individual comparable to Newton.<sup>37</sup>

Jefferson's views became embodied in laws such as the South Carolina Supreme Court's January 1850 decision that an Indian could not be classified as a "free person of color" for the following reason:

The whole State policy in making slaves of Indians, was temporary....



It was to deter their inroads by intimidations of slavery, so hateful to Indian instincts. . . . They never made valuable slaves, but withered away in a state so alien to the red man's nature. . . . But all history assures us that the negro race thrive in health, multiply greatly, become civilized and religious, feel no degradation, and are happy when in subjection to the white race.<sup>38</sup>



The argument for the resemblance of Europeans and Indians and the profound difference between these two peoples and Africans convinced

many Cherokees, particularly those who eventually sought the white man's "civilization," and they came to perceive the subjugation of blacks to be in their self-interest. Cephas Washburn, a missionary to the Cherokees relocated in Arkansas, reported that Ta-Ke-e-tuh gave him the following explanation for differences in people's color:

The first human pair were red; and the varieties in the color of the human race he accounted for by the influence of climate, except in the case of blacks. Black was a stigma fixed upon a man for crime; and all his descendants ever since had been born black. Their old men, he said, were not agreed, as to the crime this marked by the signal of God's displeasure. Some said it was for murder, some cowardice, and some said it was lying.

Such an account for the origin of racial differences spawned racial hostility which the Cherokee openly expressed as early as 1793. In that year Little Turkey sent a letter to Governor William Blount of Tennessee in which he described the Spaniards in the most derogatory terms he could, as "a lying, deceitful, treacherous people, and . . . not real white people, and what few I have seen of them looked like mulattoes, and I would never have anything to say to them."<sup>39</sup>

Cherokees acted upon their assumptions about blacks, and, when they founded their republic in 1827, excluded

blacks from participation in the government. The founding fathers granted all adult males access to the ballot box except "negroes, and descendants of white and Indian men by negro women who may have been set free." The Constitution restricted office-holding to those untainted by African ancestry: "No person who is of negro or mulatto parentage, either by the father or mother side, shall be eligible to hold any office or trust under this Government." The Cherokees also sought to discourage free blacks from moving into the Nation and issued a statute warning "that all free negroes coming into the Cherokee Nation under any pretence whatsoever, shall be viewed and treated, in every respect as intruders, and shall not be allowed to reside in the Cherokee Nation without a permit."<sup>40</sup>

By the time the Cherokees established their republic, the use of black slaves on plantations had become a feature of their society. In part, the United States government was responsible for the introduction of plantation slavery. Following the Revolution, U.S. Indian policy focused on the pacification and "civilization" of Southern tribes. In compliance with the "civilization" program,

many Cherokees adopted the white society's implements and farming techniques, and those who had substantial capital to invest soon came to need extra workers. Because of the government's pacification policy, Cherokee planters could not satisfy their demand for labor by capturing members of other tribes, and few Cherokees worked for wages because the tribe's common ownership of land enabled all Indian to farm for themselves. Therefore, the Cherokee upper class followed the example of its white mentors and began using African bondsmen. While most Cherokee masters owned fewer than 10 slaves, and on the eve of removal, 92 percent of the Cherokees held no slaves at all, a few Cherokees developed extensive plantations in the broad valleys of eastern Tennessee, northeastern Alabama, and north Georgia. The most famous, Joseph Vann, lived in a magnificent red brick, white-columned mansion built by his father. It still stands near Chatsworth, Georgia, owned 110 slaves in 1835, cultivated 300 acres, and operated a ferry, steamboat, mill, and tavern.<sup>41</sup>

The house of James Vann, a Cherokee, built in 1804. Before white men forcibly seized the house, his son owned 110 slaves and hundreds of acres of cultivated land.





In the late 1830s, the United States government forced the Cherokees to relinquish the fertile valleys of their homeland and move west of the Mississippi River to what is today the state of Oklahoma. Many slaves accompanied their masters on this sorrowful migration which has become known as the "Trail of Tears." The only Cherokees who remained in the southern Appalachians were those who lived along the Oconaluftee River high in the Smoky Mountains. Among those Cherokees lived at least one black slave. In the 1840s Charles Lanman visited the North Carolina Cherokees and spoke with Cudjo, who had belonged to Chief Yonaguska, or "Drowning Bear," before his death. Cudjo told Lanman that

Yonaguska "never allowed himself to be called master, for he said Cudjo was his brother, and not his slave."<sup>42</sup> Perhaps Yonaguska treated Cudjo as his brother because in the mountainous region no opportunity existed for him to exploit his slave. Since removal, interaction between blacks and Indians in the southern Appalachians has been limited, but their experiences in some ways have been similar. Until recently, legal discrimination made both groups second-class citizens. For example, only in the 1950s did North Carolina repeal legislation prohibiting marriage between blacks or Indians and whites. Educational and social discrimination affirmed this second-class status. Generally offered only menial jobs at wages below those paid whites, blacks and Indians also have been victims of economic discrimination. Indians, of course, had a land base

which most blacks lacked, but frequently the land served as an invitation or provocation to further exploitation. Nevertheless, when compared with blacks, the Cherokees have continued to view themselves as radically different and their situation as significantly better. Such an attitude is the legacy of three centuries of hostility and fear. Perhaps if an atmosphere of cooperation and trust begins to pervade the next three centuries, the legacy will be different. □

*Theda Perdue is associate professor of history at Clemson University. She is the author of Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society, 1540-1866 from which she adapted this article. It is reprinted with the permission of University of Tennessee Press. Copyright © 1979, University of Tennessee Press.*

**NOTES**

1. R.R. Wright, "Negro Companions of the Spanish Explorers," *American Anthropologist* 4 (1902): 217-28; Edward Gaylord Bourne, ed., *Narratives of the Career of Hernando de Soto* (2 vols., New York, 1922), 1:72; Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York, 1943), p. 163; Woodbury Lowery, *The Spanish Settlements Within the Present Limits of the United States, 1513-1561* (New York, 1911), pp. 165-67; Michael Roethler, "Negro Slavery Among the Cherokee Indians, 1540-1866" (PhD diss., Fordham Univ., 1964), p. 16; Nancy O. Lurie, "Indian Cultural Adjustment to European Civilization" in *Seventeenth-Century America: Essays in Colonial History*, James M. Smith, ed. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1959), p. 16.

2. Almon W. Lauber, *Indian Slavery in Colonial Times Within the Present Limits of the United States* (New York, 1913), p. 118; Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York, 1956), p. 18.

3. Sanford Winston, "Indian Slavery in the Carolina Region," *Journal of Negro History* 19 (1934): 437-38.

4. John Brickell, *The Natural History of North Carolina* (Dublin, 1737), p. 282.

5. Winston, "Indian Slavery," pp. 435-36; William R. Snell, "Indian Slavery in Colonial South Carolina" (PhD diss., Univ. of Alabama, 1972), p. 144.

6. William L. McDowell, ed., *Journals of the Commissioners of the Indian Trade, Sept. 20, 1710-August 29, 1718* (Columbia, SC, 1955), pp. 53-57, 140, 179.

7. Vermer W. Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732* (Durham, NC, 1928), pp. 113-14.

8. Samuel Cole Williams, ed., *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country, 1540-1800* (Johnson City, TN, 1928), p. 154; David Menzies, "A True Relation of the Unheard-of Sufferings of David Menzies, Surgeon. Among the Cherokees, and of his Surprising Deliverance," *Royal Magazine*, July 1761, p. 27; John Haywood, *The Civil and Political History of the State of Tennessee* (Knoxville, TN, 1969; original ed., 1823), pp. 321-22.

9. William L. McDowell, ed., *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, May 21, 1750-Aug. 7, 1754* (Columbia, SC, 1958), pp. 46, 83.

10. Luther F. Addington, "Chief Benges's Last Raid," *Historical Society of Southwest Virginia* 2 (1966): 124-33.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 190; Alexander Hewatt, *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia, 1779* (2 vols., London, 1779), 2:8.

12. Brickell, *Natural History*, p. 357; Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion* (New York, 1974), pp. 52, 262-63, 318.

13. William S. Willis, Jr. "Divide and Rule: Red, White, and Black in the Southwest," in *Red, White and Black: Symposium on Indians in the Old South*, Charles M. Hudson, ed. (Athens, GA, 1971), pp. 104, 106.

14. William L. Saunders, ed., *The Colonial Records of North Carolina* (10 vols., Raleigh, NC, 1886-90), 1:886, 10:118; Gary B. Nash, *Red, White and Black: The Peoples of Early America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1974), p. 295.

15. George Milligan-Johnston, "A Short Description of the Provinces of South Carolina" in *Colonial South Carolina: Two Contemporary Descriptions*, Chapman J. Milling, ed. (Columbia, SC, 1951), p. 136.

16. McDowell, *Documents, 1750-1754*, p. 103; Nash, *Red, White, and Black*, pp. 291-92.

17. Kenneth W. Porter, "Negroes on the Southern Frontier, 1670-1763," *Journal of Negro History* 33 (1948): 56-58; Willis, "Divide and Rule," p. 106.

18. McDowell, *Documents, 1750-1754*, pp. 88, 136, 199; John Richard Alden, *John Stuart and the Colonial Southern Frontier, 1754-1775* (New York, 1944), pp. 19, 210; Mary U. Rothrock, "Carolina Traders Among the Overhill Traders 1690-1760," *East Tennessee Historical Society Publications* 1 (1929): 3-18.

19. Newton D. Mereness, ed., *Travels in the American Colonies* (New York, 1916), pp. 138-39.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

21. William L. McDowell, ed., *Documents Relating to Indian Affairs, 1754-1765* (Columbia, SC, 1970), pp. 426-27; Rothrock, "Carolina Traders," p. 8.

22. Charles Hudson, *The Southeastern Indians* (Knoxville, TN, 1976), pp. 317-50; James Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees* (Seventh and Nineteenth Annual Reports of the Bureau of American Ethnology; reproduced, Nashville, 1972), pp. 240, 251, 264, 270; John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York, 1970), pp. 72, 80.

23. Mbiti, *African Religions*, pp. 65-66; Mooney, *Myths*, pp. 239, 241.

24. Olaudah Equiano, *The Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, The African* (New York, 1969; original ed., 1837), p. 17.

25. Basil Davidson, *The African Genius: An Introduction to African Cultural and Social History*

(Boston and Toronto, 1969), pp. 33-36.

26. Equiano, *Life*, pp. 12, 16, 18.

27. Davidson, *African Genius*, pp. 57, 66; Charles Hudson, "The Cherokee Concept of Natural Balance," *Indian Historian* 3 (1970): 41-54; Mooney, *Myths*, pp. 239-40.

28. Mbiti, *African Religions*, pp. 135-38; John Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa* (New York, 1975), p. 7.

29. Theda Perdue, "People Without a Place: Aboriginal Cherokee Bondage," *Indian Historian* 9 (1976): 31-37.

30. A. Norman Klein, "West African Unfree Labor Before and After the Rise of the Atlantic Slave Trade," in *Slavery in the New World: A Reader in Comparative History*, Laura Foner and Eugene Genovese, eds. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1969), pp. 89-91; R.S. Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution* (London, 1956; original ed., 1929), pp. 34-46.

31. Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America* (4 vols., New York, 1969), 2:352; Equiano, *Life*, pp. 16, 20.

32. Klein, "West African Unfree Labor," p. 90.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 88; Davidson, *African Genius*, p. 75.

34. Equiano, *Life*, p. 75.

35. Donnan, *Slave Trade*, 2:351; Grace, *Domestic Slavery*, pp. 7-8.

36. Samuel Cole Williams, ed., *Adair's History of the American Indians* (Johnson City, TN, 1930), p. 4.

37. Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Boston, 1832), pp. 6, 63, 143, 145.

38. Helen T. Catterall, ed., *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro* (5 vols., Washington, DC, 1926-37), 2:416.

39. Cephas Washburn, *Reminiscences of the Indians* (Richmond, VA, 1869), p. 192; *American State Papers*, Class 2: *Indian Affairs* (2 vols., Washington, DC, 1832), 1:461.

40. *Cherokee Phoenix and Indians' Advocate*, 21 Feb. 1828, 13 Apr. 1828.

41. Theda Perdue, "Cherokee Planters: The Development of Plantation Slavery Before Removal," in *The Cherokee Indian Nation: A Troubled History*, Duane King, ed. (Knoxville, TN, 1979), pp. 110-28.

42. Charles Lanman, *Adventures in the Wilds of the United States and British American Provinces* (Philadelphia, 1856), pp. 417-20.



---

BY THEODORE ROSENGARTEN  
WOODCUTS BY DALE ROSENGARTEN

---



---

## TOMBEE: From the Life Story and Plantation Journal of Thomas B. Chaplin

*The following selections come from a work provisionally titled Tombee: The Life Story and Plantation Journal of Thomas B. Chaplin (1822-1890), to be published in the fall of 1985 by William Morrow.*

*Tombee combines a biography of an unlucky slavemaster and cotton planter from St. Helena Island, South Carolina, with the journal he kept between 1845 and 1858. The biography traces the so-*

*cial and ecological history of St. Helena Island from the day Europeans first laid eyes on it to the moment Chaplin left for the last time, in 1885, old, defeated, still searching for the peace of mind that had always eluded him.*

*This history is the backdrop for an intense family drama involving three generations of Chaplins. Thomas Chaplin's mother, Isabella, married four times and accumulated five plantations*

*and nearly 300 slaves, making her one of the richest women in America on the eve of the Civil War. Her third husband was Thomas's father. Her fourth husband was a bankrupt pharmacist and portrait painter 20 years her junior. For 25 years, right up to the day that Sherman's army liberated the slaves of the lower Carolina coast, Chaplin battled his stepfather over his mother's wealth and affections. He himself had two wives*

and seven children, six of whom died before he did. The generations were linked by land — but the land was lost, either swept away “by the great blast of ruin and destruction,” the Civil War, or seized to pay debts in the bitter aftermath.

*Chaplin’s Journal* offers rewarding entry into the last years of an American aristocracy, recorded in complete innocence of the changes ahead. It contains a social history of the Carolina Sea Islands during the second golden age of cotton. It furnishes an extensive account of the Sea Island cotton trade and a relentless, if inadvertent, study of the dull horror of plantation slavery.

The first excerpt includes two sections from Chapter II of the biography, dealing with the origins and spread of Sea Island cotton and changing patterns of land use on St. Helena Island.

The search for a new staple intensified after 1786. Planters in the Southern states and Louisiana began experimenting with varieties of cotton. An international traffic in seeds broadcast strains of cotton from Siam, Egypt, Malta, Cuba. The cotton that first took hold in South Carolina was a long-staple, black-seed variety that migrated to the Sea Islands from Georgia, which had received it from the Bahamas, where it had drifted from Anguilla, in the Leeward Islands. Nor was it native to the West Indies, but had journeyed there from the Near East, possibly from Persia. William Elliott of Hilton Head Island raised the first successful crop of long-staple cotton in South Carolina, in 1790. Great fortunes awaited those who followed his example. Estates that had risen and fallen with indigo grew rich again. Thomas B. Chaplin’s grandfather probably built the Big House at Tombee with the profits from his first Sea Island cotton crops.

Cotton is a soft, white, downy substance made of the hairs or fibers attached to the seeds of plants of the genus *Gossypium*. When carded or combed to its full length, the fiber of Sea Island cotton measures one-and-a-half to two inches long, compared to a range of five-eighths to one inch for common upland or short-staple cotton. The fineness is reckoned by the number of hanks that can be spun from one pound — a hank being a length of yarn 840 yards long. Sea Island cotton normally spun about 300 hanks to the pound, about twice the number for short-staple cotton. The longest and finest of the long staples was said to have spun 500 hanks. Because of



its superior strength, long-staple cotton was used for making the warp, or longitudinal threads, of many woven fabrics. It went into the finer cloths which adorned the wealthy classes of Europe. The entire Sea Island crop was shipped abroad, most of it to the mills of Lancashire, none to the mills of New England.

Only the Sea Islands of South Carolina and the northernmost islands of Georgia

produced the finer varieties of Sea Island cotton. The same seeds planted on the mainland near the coast yielded a less fine but still valuable cotton called Mains or Santees, depending on the location. Sea Island seeds sown inland yielded a coarser fiber, less profitable than the short-staple cotton that could be raised in the same place. A variety of long-staple cotton grown on the islands off the lower coast of Georgia and north-





ern Florida passed for Sea Island, but it was an inferior fiber and brought less than Mains or Santees.

Though Sea Island cotton commanded at least twice the price of upland cotton, and usually much more, it bore considerably less fruit and produced only about half as much lint to the acre, and then only on well-fertilized fields. A great deal more labor was necessary to grow, clean, and pack a pound of Sea Is-

land. The bolls opened slowly, and the picking season could last six months. Being so long in the field, the cotton was vulnerable to bad weather. Sea Island cotton fields needed heavy manuring, the plants needed many hoeings, and the lint needed special handling during its preparation for market.

Before 1805 the only manuring on the Sea Islands consisted of moving cow pens over potato patches and spreading barn manures. Each year, cotton would be planted on a different piece of ground, to rest the spot where it grew the year before. This "absurd doctrine" of resting arable land ended with the discovery of a cheap, abundant fertilizer — salt marsh mud, the sediment-rich peat that lay at the doorstep of every Sea Island plantation. Salt marshes are the most fertile and productive parts of the earth. They contain more organisms per square foot and are capable of nourishing the young of more different species than any other soil. Marsh mud added organic matter to the sandy cotton fields and supplied vital elements like phosphorus and magnesium. Salt marsh grass was good for littering stables and stock pens; its judicious use could double the quantity of animal manure. Or the grass could be turned into the ground directly. Planters experimented with mixtures of marsh mud, stable manures, and vegetable composts. They carefully guarded their formulas for the most efficacious concoctions. During the first golden age of cotton, which ended in 1819, many Sea Island fortunes were built on foundations of mud and manure.

Once it was proved that the long-staple cotton would flourish in the warm island soil, its cultivation spread swiftly along the coasts of Beaufort, Colleton, and Charleston Districts. In 1790 the Sea Island cotton crop of the United States was under 10,000 pounds, or just about 30 bales. By 1801 it had soared to 8.5 million pounds, or about 22,000 bales. In the space of 11 years — three or four years, really, once the knowledge caught on — thousands of laborers had learned to make a new staple crop, an active market of buyers and sellers sprang into operation, and a vast exchange of money, seeds, and information had thrust some fallow islands off the malarial coast of South Carolina into prominence as producers of the world's finest cotton.

The Sea Island crop of 1805 rose to 26,000 bales. Twenty-five years later, the size of the crop was about the same. While the upland output increased phenomenally right up until the Civil

War — with the exception of two brief recessions in the 1840s — Sea Island cotton approached a limit early in the century. It was restricted to the soil and climate of the Sea Islands, and the crop could expand only if more acres on the islands were planted. For this to happen, profits would have to justify the expense of preparing the less accessible and weaker lands or impounding the few small interior marshes. Such enterprises generally were not attempted between 1819 and the late 1840s, the era of the Sea Island cotton depression. As a proportion of the total American crop, Sea Island declined steadily. It accounted for 20 percent of the total in 1801, but a scant 1 percent 40 years later. It had become strictly a luxury item, "almost entirely consumed in administering to vanity."

For the first six years of the nineteenth century, prices for Sea Island cotton at Charleston ranged between 44 and 52 cents per pound. Planters were profiting from the boom in English cotton manufacturing, from technological advances in looms and new methods of dyeing and printing. Prices slumped to about 25 cents a pound by 1809, then rose again the next year when, perhaps coincidentally, a labor-saving lace-making machine was invented in England. The War of 1812 stimulated construction of cotton mills in New England, but none that handled the long-staple. Prices for Sea Island cotton sank to 13 cents in April 1813 but revived after that, reaching a heady 50 to 55 cents a pound at the end of 1815. High prices held for two-and-a-half years, culminating in a "frenzy of speculation" that peaked at 75 cents a pound in August 1818. The price differential between Sea Island fine and the better grades of upland cotton was nearly half a dollar. Prices fell suddenly, touching 30 cents a pound in December 1819. They kept falling,<sup>1</sup> and in the spring of 1822, when Thomas B. Chaplin was born, prices for common Sea Island cotton hovered near 25 cents a pound.

...

All of the cotton raised on St. Helena Island went to market by boat. The island is shaped like the body of a blue crab, and most of the plantations were distributed around its circumference. A few were tucked against the branches of creeks that flowed into the island's interior, and three or four plantations were landlocked. These had to share a neighbor's boat landing, using oxcarts to haul the cotton bales to a dock. Plantations

were separated by woods, hedges, creeks, ditches, and fences. They tended to be rectangular in shape, with a short side on the water, stretching lengthwise from the water's edge toward a belt of woods that extended across the center of the island. Tombee was an exception, a crown-shaped tract — looking at it from the northeast — bisected by a branch of Station Creek.

Tombee contained 376 acres of improved and unimproved land. It was larger, in 1860, than 33 plantations on St. Helena Island, and smaller than 21 others. More than half the plantations contained between 100 and 300 acres. Eighteen plantations had 500 acres or more, and two had more than 1,000 acres — Coffin's Point, on St. Helena Sound, and Frogmore, on the Seaside, both belonging to Thomas A. Coffin. St. Helena Parish had the lowest ratio of improved to unimproved acres — about seven to five — of any parish in the Low Country. At the end of the slavery era, there was unused cultivable land on virtually every plantation on St. Helena Island. Most fields were in the shape of large squares intersected by cart paths and drainage ditches. The fields were enclosed by costly rail-and-pole fences or by natural divides or obstructions capable of keeping out livestock. By and large, the plantations were rectangular and open; the fields were square and closed.

Two roads traversed the island, one running southwesterly from St. Helenaville, the other running more westerly from Coffin's Point, about two

miles below the village, with the two roads meeting above Lands End, just west of Tombee. A fork of Lands End Road, or Church Road, as the upper, more northerly road was called, led west to the Ladies Island ferry. The lower road, called Seaside Road, crossed the rich Coffin, Fripp, and Jenkins lands before reaching Tombee on its way to Lands End. These all were sand roads with wooden causeways over tidal drains and marshes. They connected the plantations to one another and to the institutions which serviced white society — the churches and the general stores, the Agricultural Society lodge and the muster house, the village of St. Helenaville with its wharf, summer mansions, parsonage, and small boarding schools.

There were no farms on St. Helena worked by free labor, and no cotton that was not produced by slaves. Many plantations bore the names of their owners but not necessarily their current owners. Some plantation names suggested a location or physical feature — Riverside, Corner Farm, Pine Grove, Mulberry Hill. Every name had a history and a reputation, in equity court as well as in public opinion. A name signified a house and a lineage, a collection of assets and the means of producing more wealth, a credit rating and an appraised value. Once a name became attached to a tract of land, it took more than a change in ownership to pry them apart.

What will the land produce? How much to the acre? This is what people who looked to the land for a living want-

ed to know. Utility mattered most. There was no part of the land — or water — that did not make some contribution to the plantation economy. The sea and tidal streams provided fish and shellfish at all seasons. The barrier islands contributed deer and ducks to the master's larder and wood for a great variety of uses: for heating and cooking; for Negro houses, outbuildings, and fences; for wagon parts, tool handles, and crude furniture. From the marshes came manure for the cotton fields without which a different agriculture would have evolved.

The plantation grounds produced the money crop and most of the food. But the pattern of land use was not static; the land was put to many different uses over time. Imagine visiting the same plantation at 15- to 25-year intervals through the first half of the nineteenth century. What would we see?

In 1795 a St. Helena planter was sowing the new long-staple cotton in an old indigo patch where root crops had been planted after the market for indigo collapsed. Young woods had grown up on fields which were cultivated 20 years before. The human settlement was compact and centralized on a piece of high ground toward the interior of the plantation. The planter's family lived in an old, plain, low house, a sprawling assemblage of rooms added on the basic dwelling over the years. A porchless front facade looked out on an irregular row of Negro houses, stables, and provisions grounds, including a piece set aside for a house garden. A road ran from the front door of the house half the distance across the plantation to a small boat landing on the creek. Behind the house, resting in a small crowded cemetery, were the remains of the planter's father and mother, his stepmother, several of his father's brothers, and numerous children.

Fifteen years later, fattened by fabulous prices for his cotton, the planter has moved his family into a mansion, or Big House — a house about the size of a large New England or Ohio farmhouse — on the creekside of his plantation. From the front veranda, he could look out over water and marshes to neighboring islands. It was a short walk from the front steps of the house to a new dock and boathouse. Out the back door extended the larger part of the plantation. Nearest to the Big House was a separate kitchen building with a small garden beside it; beyond that lay fields. New Negro cabins and stables sat farther





from the planter's new residence than they had from his old one, which was now in ruins, pilfered for firewood. There were more Negro cabins — more Negroes — more cotton, and relatively less land in grain and vegetables. Cotton was selling so well that the planter did not try to grow a surplus of food; if he fell short he could afford to buy what he needed. Cotton occupied all the highest ground and was moving into the lower. The woods that had sprouted over old indigo fields were cut to make room for cotton.

A visitor to the plantation in 1830 could not tell immediately that prices for Sea Island cotton had been depressed for a decade. Effects of the large profits made before 1819 were still visible from the dock. Where a flood tide used to creep freely up a gentle incline toward the Big House, leaving lines of detritus in the yard to mark its advances, the tide was frustrated now by a levee that gave to the landscaped yard behind it the appearance of added elevation. The planter had set out shade trees and fruit trees. His wife had planted a flower garden and had succeeded in establishing crested irises and May apples at the edge of the salt marsh. A cluster of outbuildings seems to have risen out of the ground since 1810 — a dairy, a smokehouse, a fowl-house with a coop for exotic birds. In the fields, cotton was firmly established in the low ground as well as the high, though neither area was planted to capacity. More land was in corn and potatoes because it cost more to buy food relative to the income from cotton. One sign of tight economic times was the dilapidation of the Negro cabins, now shielded by bushes and trees from sight of the Big House.

Between 1830 and 1845 the outward appearance of the Sea Island plantation deteriorated slowly. Cotton prices stayed low and the planter hesitated to make capital improvements. Old fences rotted, the Negro houses were mildewed and worm-eaten, and even the Big House had lost its luster. The roof leaked and the exterior stairs needed patching. On the remains of an old generation of outbuildings, new, frugal structures were rising. Crop acreage and the ratio of cotton to corn, peas, and potatoes was about what it had been in 1830, but distribution of the crops had changed. Cotton now filled the lowest arable land, thanks to the recent introduction of oxen to haul manure to the damp ground. More corn was planted through the cotton rows, and in the cornfields the rows were longer,



narrower, and higher — a sign that the plow had come back in favor. In cotton, however, the plow was still used sparingly and did not challenge the raised-bed system worked entirely with hoes. Orchards were numerous but run down. Pastures were kept up and fine horses prospered. But stock raised for the table, left to forage on their own most of the year, looked thin and poor.

Land use changed conspicuously between 1845 and 1860. Pastures and livestock declined, cotton spilled over onto acres previously planted in grains and vegetables, and more land than ever was in production. The impetus for change was higher cotton prices. Once again, it was more profitable to grow

cotton to the doorsteps of the Negro cabins than to set aside land for food crops. "Now plantations are cotton fields rearing a crop for foreign markets and little more," lamented Beaufort's William Grayson at the close of the era. The effect of raising one great money crop, he wrote, was "to starve everything else." Fruit orchards had "almost disappeared. Oranges are rare, pomegranates formerly seen everywhere are seldom met with, figs are scarce and small. Few planters have a good peach or strawberry. . . ." Even the fish and game had mysteriously fallen off.

Grayson was angry that Sea Island commerce — the brokering, freighting, insuring, and financing of cotton — made large profits for middlemen in New York and Liverpool. A good part of the profits that returned to the Sea Islands was subsequently trifled away at watering holes in the North, instead of being spent at home. It was objectionable for planters to purchase their pianos and pineapples from Northern merchants, and unforgivable for them to buy cider pressed in Vermont, butter churned in New York, corn grown in Pennsylvania, and hogs raised in Tennessee, any of which could be produced at home. Even oysters from the North found a market in Charleston, though the salt waters of South Carolina teemed with oysters.

We might view the intensification of cotton planting in a different light than Grayson. Where he saw change, we might remark on the persistence of Sea Island cotton over a period of 80 years — far longer than the age of cotton in such Deep South states as Alabama or Mississippi. Grayson stressed the departure from traditions of mixed farming and conservation of the resources of land and water. We might point to the plantation's capacity to retain its economic function and social character from decade to decade.

To Grayson, taking refuge in the up-country after Beaufort was abandoned in 1861, the question of the planters' devotion to cotton was a question of life and death, settled on the side of death. Moreover, it had been settled at least a generation before when, in 1841, at the depth of the agricultural depression and with no reason to hope for higher prices, planters began stepping up production of Sea Island cotton. Twenty years of agitation for crop diversification by the agricultural press and the state Agricultural Society went largely ignored.

Planters might set aside a sandy hill for grapes or import a bull to improve their milk herds, but they never considered giving up cotton. There were numerous practical difficulties, of course, in switching over from an established staple crop to a new one, not the least of which was marketing. Then, too, memory of old fortunes built by cotton in one or two wildly prosperous years made men reluctant to try something else. They may not have been growing richer with cotton, but it appears that at no time were Sea Island planters faced with out-of-pocket cash losses. They stuck with what they knew because it had been good to them or to their fathers before them, it was not bankrupting them, and it held out the dream of immense wealth quickly earned. Until that day they could live comfortably, if fretfully, off the fat of old harvests.

Then commenced a new era of high prices for cotton, in the 1850s, which shored up their attachment to the old staple, if indeed it had ever eroded. Had they turned to sugar beets or millet or hemp or any of the other foods and fibers proposed as substitutes for cotton — had history gone in the direction Grayson would have preferred — Sea Island planters still would have been susceptible to secession hysteria, so long as they worked their crops with slaves. But if their major crop had not been cotton they might have been less prone to the catastrophic illusion of their importance to the rest of the South and to England. With less cotton they would have made a less inviting target. There is no doubt that the great cotton crop of 1861, some of it already ginned and baled, and the balance of it waiting to be picked, encouraged Union military planners to invade Port Royal, of all likely places on the South Atlantic coast.

Sea Island cotton in 1860 had brought upwards of 60 cents a pound for medium fine varieties. Planters were expecting even better returns in 1861. In October the Charleston *Mercury* reported that bales of the new cotton, received at the market but kept in port by the Union naval blockade, compared “most favorably with the growth of former years, in bright appearance, strength, and length of staple.” Following the invasion of Port Royal in November, the crop of St. Helena Parish was confiscated and shipped to New York, where it was ginned and sold, bringing a total of \$675,000 to the United States Treasury. Thus the proceeds from one of the largest and finest Sea Island crops ever produced — in-

cluding, from St. Helena Island, 20 bales from Thomas B. Chaplin, 45 bales from T.G. White, 85 bales from Dr. William J. Jenkins, and 110 bales from J.J. Pope — were used to finance the war against the planters.

*This second excerpt contains entries from Thomas B. Chaplin's Journal for six days in February 1849. The first five days are taken up with agricultural items typical of Chaplin's concerns — preparing cotton for market, keeping up plantation resources, worrying about the weather, overseeing the work of the slaves. Events of the sixth day are unique in the Journal, both in the brutality of the subject and the extent of Chaplin's narration. On the morning of February 19, 1849, Chaplin joined 11 other St. Helena planters — about one-fifth of the adult white males on the Island — at an inquest to decide whether one of their neighbors and peers should be brought to trial for killing a slave. Chaplin's revulsion over the crime and dissent from the majority opinion show him at his most merciful. In years to come, his attitudes harden and he becomes more conventional and less humane in his outlook.*

**Feb. 14th.** Wednesday. Aimar came to work at the smokehouse, Sancho working with him. The cattle broke out of the pen last night & eat down nearly everything in the garden — onion, cabbage plants & turnips. Tis damned disheartening. Packed the 9 bale of cotton. 326 lbs.

**Feb. 15th.** Thursday. 5 gins. The Capt. came round & paid Mother some money — Daphne's wages. Aimar finished the brickwork to the smokehouse, tried it, & it does admirably, the cost, \$9.00. I did not expect to pay more than five dollars. Let Aunt Betsy have some asparagus roots. I feel quite unwell today, very much like fever.

**Feb. 16th.** Was greatly surprised on looking out of the window this morning to see the ground almost covered with snow. It must have snowed gradually all night, but the ground was not in a state for it to lie, & was only covered in spots. The tops of the houses were covered about 2 inches thick. Some snow fell after I got up, but stopped about 11 o'clock a.m. & about 2 p.m. there was hardly a flake to be seen. This is the first snow I have seen since I have lived on the Island. There was a snowstorm I recollect here when I was a boy. E. Capers came



to see me yesterday evening & stayed all night.

Finished weatherboarding the smokehouse. Finished ginning all the white cotton, will have 10 packed bags, will not pack the last bale before Monday. The weather cleared off about 11 o'clock & no one would suppose there had been snow on the ground in the morning.

**Feb. 17th.** Saturday. Clear and cold. Run out, staked & burnt off the root patch, 4 acres. Isaac & Anthony with me. Put Sancho with Summer carting. 4 hands getting poles for the fence. Women cleaning cotton ginned yesterday.

Hear that Edw. Chaplin intends to sell all of his Negroes and go regularly into merchandising. One of his fellows came here today to ask me to buy him, fellow Cuff. That was out of the question for me to do, to sell one year & buy the next would be *fine* speculation on my part.

**Feb. 18th.** Sunday. I had to go out last night and have fire put out that got away from where I had burnt yesterday. It burned some of Cousin Betsy's fence at the Grove, only a few panels. The fire went over Jn. L. Chaplin's pasture & passed by his fence, but the water in the





ditches prevented the fence from burning.

**Feb. 19th.** Monday. I received a summons while at breakfast, to go over to J. H. Sandiford's at 10 o'clock a.m. this day and sit on a jury of inquest on the body of Roger, a Negro man belonging to Sandiford. Accordingly I went. About 12 m. there were 12 of us together (the number required to form a jury), viz. — Dr. Scott, foreman, J.J. Pope, J.E.L. Fripp, W.O.P. Fripp, Dr. M.M. Sams, Henry Fripp, Dr. Jenkins, Jr. McTureous, Henry McTureous, P.W. Perry, W. Perry & myself. We were sworn by J.D. Pope, magistrate, and proceeded to examine the body. We found it in an outhouse used as a corn house, and meat house (for there were both in the house). Such a shocking sight never before met my eyes. There was the poor Negro, who all his life had been a complete cripple, being hardly able to walk & used his knees more than his feet, in the most shocking situation, but *stiff dead*. He was placed in this situation by his *master*, to punish him, as he says, *for impertinence*. And what this punishment — this *poor cripple* was sent by his master (as Sandiford's evidence goes) on Saturday the

17th inst., before daylight (cold & bitter weather, as everyone knows, though Sandiford says, "It was *not very cold*"), in a paddling boat down the river to get oysters, and ordering him to return before high water, & cut a bundle of marsh. The poor fellow did not return before ebb tide, but he brought 7 baskets of oysters & a small bundle of marsh (more than the primest of my fellows would have done. Anthony never brought me more than 3 baskets of oysters & took the whole day). His master asked him why he did not return sooner & cut more marsh. He said that the wind was too high. His master said he would whip him for it, & set to work with a cowhide to do the same. The fellow hollered & when told to stop, said he would not, as long as he was being whipped, for which impertinence he received 30 cuts. He went to the kitchen and was talking to another Negro when Sandiford slipped up & overheard this confab, heard Roger, as he says, say, that if he had sound limbs, he would not take a flogging from any white man, but would shoot them down, and turn his back on them (another witness, the Negro that Roger was talking to, says that Roger did not say this, but "that he would turn his back on them if they shot him down," which I think is much the most probable of the two speeches). Sandiford then had him confined, or I should say, murdered, in the manner I will describe. Even if the fellow had made the speech that Sandiford said he did, and even worse, it by no means warranted the punishment he received. The fellow was a cripple, & could not escape from a light confinement, besides, I don't think he was ever known to use a gun, or even know how to use one, so there was little apprehension of his putting his threat (if it can be called one) into execution. For these *crimes*, this man, this demon in human shape, this pretended Christian, member of the Baptist Church, had this poor cripple Negro placed in an open outhouse, the wind blowing through a hundred cracks, his clothes wet to the waist, without a single blanket & in freezing weather, with his back against a partition, shackles on his wrists, & chained to a bolt in the floor and a chain around *his neck*, the chain passing through the partition behind him, & fastened on the other side — in this position the poor wretch was left for the night, a position that none but the "most *bloodthirsty tyrant*" could have placed a human being. My heart chills at the idea, and my blood boils at the base

tyranny— The wretch returned to his victim about daylight the next morning & found him, as anyone might expect, dead, *choked, strangled, frozen to death, murdered*. The verdict of the jury was, that Roger came to his death by choking by a chain put around his neck by his master — *having slipped from the position in which he was placed*. The verdict should have been that Roger came to his death by inhumane treatment to him by his master — by placing him, in very cold weather, in a cold house, with a chain about his neck & fastened to the wall, & otherways chained so that he could in no way assist himself should he slip from the position in which he was placed & must consequently choke to death without immediate assistance. Even should he escape being frozen to death, which we believe would have been the case from the fact of his clothes being wet & the severity of the weather, my *individual verdict* would be *deliberately but unpremeditatedly murdered* by his master James H. Sandiford. □

*Theodore Rosengarten is a longtime friend of the Institute for Southern Studies and the author of All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw.*

#### NOTE

1. Observers could not agree what caused the depression. Some linked the abrupt decline to the passage of Sir Robert Peel's Act, of 1819, by which Parliament set a date for the return to cash payments in overseas trade. It is not clear, however, if in the ensuing panic the demand for precious metals contracted the financial resources of England's trading partners, or if it was "the contraction of enterprise, confidence, and credits" which led to the resumption of cash payments. Many observers believed the price of Sea Island cotton had been inflated for a generation and was settling now into a more realistic relation to the cost of food crops and other commodities.

Leading Sea Island growers chided their colleagues for passively accepting the depression. Whitmarsh B. Seabrook and William Elliott criticized planters for planting too much cotton; for turning management of the sensitive crop over to hirelings, while they spent the growing season away from home; for neglecting the scientific side of their vocation to pursue pleasure at spas and racetracks; for forfeiting the power that could have come from cooperating with one another. The old Sea Island name was not enough to guarantee a good price. Buyers reacted to the actual condition of the crop. Planters had grown sloppy in cleaning and packing their cotton, mixing several grades in the same lot and allowing the ginned staple to fall to the floor of the gin house where it picked up trash that rode in it to the bale. Spinners at the mills "would frequently find, in addition to a large supply of leaves and crushed seeds, potato skins, parts of old garments, and occasionally a jack-knife." Out of this situation arose a movement for reform and for the diffusion of agricultural knowledge. Prices were not much affected by the planters' reforms, however, though a clean and lightly handled crop would always fetch a premium.



# The Lives of Slave Women

BY DEBORAH GRAY WHITE

Slave women have often been characterized as self-reliant and self-sufficient, yet not every black woman was a Sojourner Truth or a Harriet Tubman. Strength had to be cultivated. It came no more naturally to them than to anyone else, slave or free, male or female, black or white. If slave women seemed exceptionally strong it was partly because they often functioned in groups and derived strength from their numbers.

Much of the work slaves did and the regimen they followed served to stratify slave society along sex lines. Consequently slave women had ample opportunity to develop a consciousness grounded in their identity as females. While close contact sometimes gave rise to strife, adult female cooperation and dependence of women on each other was a fact of female slave life. The self-reliance and self-sufficiency of slave women, therefore, must be viewed in the context not only of what the individual slave woman did for herself, but what slave women as a group were able to do for each other.

It is easy to overlook the separate world of female slaves because from colonial times through the Civil War black women often worked with black men at tasks considered by Europeans to be either too difficult or inappropriate for females. All women worked hard, but when white women consistently performed field labor it was considered temporary, irregular, or extraordinary, putting them on a par with slaves. Actress Fredericka Bremer, visiting the ante-bellum South, noted that usually only men and black women did field work; commenting on what another woman traveler sarcastically claimed to be a noble admission of female equality, Bremer observed that "black [women] are not considered to belong to the weaker sex."<sup>1</sup>

Bremer's comment reflects what former slaves and fugitive male slaves regarded as the defeminization of black women. Bonded women cut down trees to clear lands for cultivation. They hauled logs in leather straps attached to their shoulders. They plowed using mule and ox teams, and hoed, sometimes with



the heaviest implements available. They dug ditches, spread manure fertilizer, and piled coarse fodder with their bare hands. They built and cleaned Southern roads, helped construct Southern railroads, and, of course, they picked cotton. In short, what fugitive slave Williamson Pease said regretfully of slave women was borne out in fact: "Women who do outdoor work are used as bad as men."<sup>2</sup> Almost a century later Green Wilbanks spoke less remorsefully than Pease in his remembrances of his Grandma Rose, where he implied that the work had a kind of neutering effect. Grandma Rose, he said, was a woman who could do any kind of job a man could do, a woman who "was some worker, a regular man-woman."<sup>3</sup>

It is hardly likely, though, that slave women, especially those on large plantations with sizable female populations, lost their female identity. Harvesting season on staple crop plantations may have found men and women gathering the crop in sex-integrated gangs, but at other times women often worked in exclusively or predominantly female gangs.<sup>4</sup> Thus women stayed in each other's company for most of the day. This meant that those they ate meals with, sang work songs with, and commiserated with during the work day were people who by virtue of their sex had the same kind of responsibilities and problems. As a result, slave women appeared to have developed their own female culture, a way of doing things and a way of assigning value that flowed from their perspective as slave women on Southern plantations. Rather than being squelched, their sense of womanhood was probably enhanced and their bonds to each other strengthened.

Since slaveowners and managers seemingly took little note of the slave woman's lesser physical strength, one wonders why they separated men and women at all. One answer appears to be that gender provided a natural and easy way to divide the labor force. Also probable is that despite their limited sensitivity regarding female slave labor, and the double standard they used when evaluating the uses of white and black female



labor, slaveowners did, using standards only they could explain, reluctantly acquiesce to female physiology. For instance, depending on their stage of pregnancy, pregnant women were considered half or quarter hands. Healthy nonpregnant women were considered three-quarter hands. Three-quarter hands were not necessarily exempt from some of the herculean tasks performed by men who were full hands, but usually, when labor was being parceled out and barring a shortage of male hands to do the very heavy work or a rush to get that work completed, men did the more phys-

ically demanding work. A case in point was the most common differentiation where men plowed and women hoed.<sup>5</sup>

Like much of the field labor, nonfield labor was structured to promote cooperation among women. In the Sea Islands, slave women sorted cotton lint according to color and fineness and removed cotton seeds crushed by the gin into the cotton and lint. Fence building often found men splitting rails in one area and women doing the actual construction in another. Men usually shelled corn, threshed peas, cut potatoes for planting, and platted shucks. Grinding corn into meal or

hominny was women's work. So too were spinning, weaving, sewing, and washing.<sup>6</sup> On Captain Kinsler's South Carolina plantation, as on countless others, "old women and women bearin' chillun not yet born, did cardin' wid hand-cards." Some would spin, others would weave, but all would eventually learn from some skilled woman "how to make clothes for the family . . . knit coarse socks and stockings."<sup>7</sup>

"When the work in the fields was finished women were required to come home and spin one cut a night," reported a Georgian. "Those who were not successful in completing this work were punished the next morning."<sup>8</sup> Women had to work in the evenings partly be-

---

*A great deal  
of both field  
labor and  
nonfield labor  
was struc-  
tured to pro-  
mote  
cooperation  
among slave  
women.*

---

cause slaveowners bought them few ready-made clothes. On one South Carolina plantation each male slave received annually two cotton shirts, three pairs of pants, and one jacket. Slave women, on the other hand, received six yards of woolen cloth, six yards of cotton drilling, and six yards of cotton shirting a year, along with two needles and a dozen buttons.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps a saving grace to this "double duty" was that women got a chance to interact with each other. On a Sedalia County, Missouri plantation, women looked forward to Saturday afternoon washing because, as Mary Frances Webb explained, they "would get to talk and spend the day together."<sup>10</sup> Quiltings, referred to by former slaves as female

"frolics" and "parties," were especially convivial. Anna Peek recalled that when slaves were allowed to relax, they gathered around a pine wood fire in Aunt Anna's cabin to tell stories. At that time "the old women with pipes in their mouths would sit and gossip for hours."<sup>11</sup> Missourian Alice Sewell noted that sometimes women would slip away and hold their own prayer meetings. They cemented their bonds to each other at the end of every meeting when they walked around shaking hands and singing, "fare you well my sisters, I am going home."<sup>12</sup>

The organization of female slave work and social activities tended not only to separate women and men, but also to generate female cooperation and interdependence. Slave women and their children could depend on midwives and "doctor women" to treat a variety of ailments. Menstrual cramps, for example, were sometimes treated with a tea made from the bark of the gum tree. Midwives and "doctor women" administered various other herb teas to ease the pains of many ailing slaves. Any number of broths — made from the leaves and barks of trees, from the branches and twigs of bushes, from turpentine, catnip, or tobacco — were used to treat whooping cough, diarrhea, toothaches, colds, fevers, headaches, and backaches.<sup>13</sup> According to a Georgia ex-slave, "One had to be mighty sick to have the services of a doctor." On his master's plantation "old women were . . . responsible for the care of the sick."<sup>14</sup> This was also the case on Rebecca Hooks's former Florida residence. "The doctor," she noted, "was not nearly as popular as the 'granny' or midwife, who brewed medicines for every ailment."<sup>15</sup>

Female cooperation in the realm of medical care helped foster bonding that led to collaboration in the area of resistance to abuses by slaveholders. Frances Kemble could attest to the concerted efforts of the black women on her husband's Sea Island plantations. More than once she was visited by groups of women imploring her to persuade her husband to extend the lying-in period for childbearing women. On one occasion the women had apparently prepared beforehand the approach they would take with the foreign-born and sympathetic Kemble, for their chosen spokeswoman took care to play on Kemble's own maternal sentiments, and pointedly argued that slave women deserved at least some of the care and tenderness that



Kemble's own pregnancy had elicited.<sup>16</sup>

Usually, however, slave women could not be so outspoken about their needs, and covert cooperative resistance prevailed. Slaveowners suspected that midwives conspired with their female patients to bring about abortions and infanticides, and on Charles Colcock





Jones's Georgia plantation, for example, this seems in fact to have been the case. A woman named Lucy gave birth in secret and then denied that she had ever been pregnant. Although the midwife attended her, she too claimed not to have delivered a child, as did Lucy's mother. Jones had a physician examine Lucy, and

the doctor confirmed what Jones had suspected, that Lucy had indeed given birth. Twelve days later the decomposing body of a full-term infant was found, and Lucy, her mother, and the midwife were all hauled off to court. Another woman, a nurse, managed to avoid prosecution but not suspicion. Whether Lucy was guilty of murder, and whether the others were accessories, will never be known because the court could not shatter their collective defense that the child had been stillborn.<sup>17</sup>

The inability to penetrate the private world of female slaves is probably what kept many abortions and infanticides from becoming known to slaveowners. The secrets kept by a midwife named Mollie became too much for her to bear. When she accepted Christianity these were the first things for which she asked forgiveness. She recalled, "I was carried to the gates of hell and the devil pulled out a book showing me the things which I had committed and that they were all true. My life as a midwife was shown to me and I have certainly felt sorry for all the things I did, after I was converted."<sup>18</sup>

Health care is not the only example of how the organization of slave work and slave responsibilities led to female cooperation and bonding; slave women also depended on each other for child-care. Sometimes, especially on small farms or new plantations where there was no extra woman to superintend children, bondswomen took their offspring to the field with them and attended to them during pre-scheduled breaks. Usually, however, infants and older children were left in the charge of an elderly female or females. Josephine Bristow, for example, spent more time with Mary Novlin, the nursery keeper on Ferdinand Gibson's South Carolina plantation, than she spent with her mother and father, who came in from the fields after she was asleep: "De old lady, she looked after every blessed thing for us all day long en cooked for us right along wid de mindin'."<sup>19</sup> In their complementary role as nurses, they ministered to the hurts and illnesses of infants and children.<sup>20</sup> It was not at all uncommon for the children's weekly rations to be given to the "grannies" as opposed to the children's parents.<sup>21</sup> Neither the slaveowner nor slave society expected the biological mother of a child to fulfill all of her child's needs. Given the circumstances, the responsibilities of motherhood had to be shared, and this required close female cooperation.

Cooperation in this sphere helped slave women overcome one of the most difficult of predicaments — who would provide maternal care for a child whose mother had died or been sold away? Fathers sometimes served as both mother and father, but when slaves, as opposed to the master, determined maternal care, it was usually a woman who became a child's surrogate mother. Usually that woman was an aunt or a sister, but in the absence of female relatives, a non-kin woman assumed the responsibility.<sup>22</sup> In the case of Georgian Mollie Malone, for example, the nursery superintendent became the child's substitute mother.<sup>23</sup> When Julia Malone's mother was killed by another Texas

---

*A slaveowner  
lamented that  
Big Lucy, one  
of his  
oldest slaves,  
had more  
control over  
his female  
workers than  
he did.*

---

slave, little Julia was raised by the woman with whom her mother had shared a cabin.<sup>24</sup> On Southern plantations the female community made sure that no child was truly motherless.

Because black women on a plantation spent so much time together, they inevitably developed some appreciation of each other's skills and talents. This intimacy enabled them to establish the criteria by which to rank and order themselves. The existence of certain "female jobs" that carried prestige created a yardstick by which bondswomen could measure each other's achievements. Some of these jobs allowed for growth and self-satisfaction, fringe benefits that were usually out of reach for the field laborer. A seamstress, for example, had



unusual opportunities for self-expression and creativity. On very large plantations the seamstress usually did no field work, and a particularly good seamstress, or “mantua-maker,” might be hired out to others and even allowed to keep a portion of the money she earned.<sup>25</sup> For obvious reasons cooks, midwives, and female folk doctors also commanded the respect of their peers. Midwives in particular often were able to travel to other plantations to practice their art. This gave them an enviable mobility and also enabled them to carry messages from one plantation

to the next.

Apart from the seamstresses, cooks, and midwives, a few women were distinguished as work gang-leaders. On most farms and plantations where there were overseers, managers, foremen, and drivers, these positions were held by men, either black or white. Occasionally, however, a woman was given a measure of authority over slave work, or a particular aspect of it. For instance Louis Hughes noted that each plantation he saw had a “forewoman who . . . had charge of the female slaves and also the boys and girls from twelve to sixteen

years of age, and all the old people that were feeble.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, a Mississippi slave remembered that on his master’s Osceola plantation there was a “colored woman as foreman.”<sup>27</sup>

Clearly, a pecking order existed among bondswomen — one which they themselves helped to create. Because of age, occupation, association with the master class, or personal achievements, certain women were recognized by other women — and also by men — as important people, even as leaders. Laura Towne met an aged woman who commanded such a degree of respect that other slaves bowed to her and lowered their voices in her presence. The old woman, Maum Katie, was according to Towne a “spiritual mother” and a woman of “tremendous influence over her spiritual children.”<sup>28</sup>

Sometimes two or three factors combined to distinguish a particular woman. Aunt Charlotte was the aged cook in John M. Booth’s Georgia household. When Aunt Charlotte spoke, said Booth, “other colored people hastened to obey her.”<sup>29</sup> Frederick Douglass’s grandmother wielded influence because of her age and the skills she possessed. She made the best fishnets in Tuckahoe, Maryland, and she knew better than anyone else how to preserve sweet potato seedlings and how to plant them successfully. She enjoyed what Douglass called “high reputation,” and accordingly “she was remembered by others.”<sup>30</sup> In another example, when Elizabeth Botume went to the Sea Islands after the Civil War, she employed as a house servant a young woman named Amy who performed her tasks slowly and sullenly, until an older woman named Aunt Mary arrived from Beaufort. During slavery Amy and Aunt Mary had both worked in the house but Amy had learned to listen and obey Aunt Mary. After Aunt Mary arrived the once obstreperous Amy became “quiet, orderly, helpful and painstaking.”<sup>31</sup>

The leadership of some women had a disruptive effect on plantation operations. Bennet H. Barrow repeatedly lamented the fact that Big Lucy, one of his oldest slaves, had more control over his female workers than he did: “Anica, Center, Cook Jane, the better you treat them the worse they are. Big Lucy the Leader corrupts every young negro in her power.”<sup>32</sup> A self-proclaimed prophetess named Sinda was responsible for a cessation of all slave work for a considerable period on Butler Island in



Georgia. According to a notation made by Frances Kemble in 1839, Sinda's prediction that the world would come to an end on a certain day caused the slaves to lay down their hoes and plows in the belief that their final emancipation was imminent. So sure were Sinda's fellow slaves of her prediction that even the lash failed to get them into the fields. When the appointed day of judgment passed uneventfully Sinda was whipped mercilessly. Yet, for a time, she had commanded more authority than either master or overseer.<sup>33</sup>

Bonded women did not have to go to such lengths in order to make a difference in each other's lives. The supportive atmosphere of the female community was considerable buffer against the depersonalizing regimen of plantation work and the general dehumanizing nature of slavery. When we consider that women were much more strictly confined to the plantation than men, that many women had husbands who visited only once or twice a week, and that slave women outlived slave men by an average of two years, we realize just how important the female community was to its members.

If we define a stable relationship as one of long duration, then it was probably easier for slave women to sustain stable emotional relationships with other bondswomen than with bondsmen. This is not to say that male-female relationships were unfulfilling or of no consequence. But they were generally fraught with more uncertainty about the future than female-to-female relationships, especially those existing between female blood kin. In her study of ex-slave interviews, Martha Goodson found that of all the relationships slaveowners disrupted, through either sale or dispersal, they were least likely to separate mothers and daughters.<sup>34</sup> Cody found that when South Carolina cotton planter Peter Gaillard divided his estate among his eight children, slave women in their twenties and thirties were twice as likely to have a sister with them, and women over 40 were four times more likely to have sisters with them than brothers. Similarly, daughters were less likely than sons to be separated from their mother. Over 60 percent of women aged 20 to 24 remained with their mothers when the estate was divided, as did 90 percent of those aged 25 to 29.<sup>35</sup> A slave song reflected the bonds between female siblings by indicating who took responsibility for the motherless female slave



child. Interestingly enough, the one designated was neither the father nor the brother:

A motherless child see a hard time.  
Oh Lord, help her on de road.  
Er sister will do de bes' she kin,  
Dis is a hard world, Lord, fer a  
motherless child.<sup>36</sup>

If female blood ties did indeed promote the most enduring relationships among slaves, then we should probably assume that like occupation, age, and personal achievement these relationships

helped structure the female slave community. This assumption should not, however, obscure the fact that in friendships and dependency relationships women often treated non-relatives as if a consanguineous tie existed. This is why older women were called Aunt and Granny, and why unrelated women sometimes called each other Sister.<sup>37</sup>

While the focus here has been on those aspects of the bondswoman's life that fostered female bonding, female-to-female conflict was not uncommon. It was impossible for harmony always to prevail among women who saw so much

of each other and who knew so much about one another. Lifelong friendships were founded in the hoe gangs and sewing groups, but the constant jockeying for occupational and social status created an atmosphere in which jealousies and antipathies smoldered. From Jesse Belflowers, the overseer of the Allston rice plantation in South Carolina, Adele Petigru Allston heard that "mostly amongst the Women" there was a "goodeal of quarling and disputing and telling lies."<sup>38</sup> The terms of a widely circulated overseer's contract advised rigorous punishment for "fighting, particularly amongst the women."<sup>39</sup> Some overseers followed this advice. According to Georgian Isaac Green, "Some-



times de women uster git whuppin's for fightin."<sup>40</sup>

Occasionally, violence between women could and did get very ugly. Molly, the cook in James Chesnut's household, once took a red hot poker and attacked the woman to whom her husband had given one of her calico dresses.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, when she was a young woman in Arkansas, Lucretia Alexander came to blows with another woman over a pair of stockings that the master had given Lucretia.<sup>42</sup> In another incident on a Louisiana cotton plantation, the day's cotton chopping was interrupted when a feisty

field worker named Betty lost her temper in the midst of a dispute with a fellow slave named Molly and struck her in the face with a hoe.<sup>43</sup>

The presence of conflict within interpersonal relationships between female slaves should not detract from the more important cooperation and dependence that prevailed among them. Conflict occurred *because* women were in close daily contact with each other and because the penalties for venting anger on other women were not as severe as those for striking out at men, either black or white. It is not difficult to understand how dependency relationships could become parasitical, how sewing and washing sessions could become "hanging courts," how one party could use knowledge gained in an intimate conversation against another.

Just how sisterhood could co-exist with discord is illustrated by the experience of some black women of the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands between 1862 and 1865. On November 7, 1861, Commodore S.F. DuPont sailed into Port Royal Sound, quickly defeated the Confederates, and put Union troops ashore to occupy the islands. Almost before DuPont's guns ceased firing, the entire white population left the islands for the mainland. A few house servants were taken with the fleeing whites but most of the slaves remained on the islands. The following year they and the occupying army were joined by a host of government agents and Northern missionaries. Several interest groups were gathered in the islands and each had priorities. As Treasury agents concerned themselves with the cotton, and army officers recruited and drafted black soldiers, and missionaries went about "preparing" slaves for freedom, the black Sea Islanders' world was turned upside down. This was true for young and middle-aged men who served in the Union army, but also for the women who had to manage their families and do most of the planting and harvesting in the absence of the men.<sup>44</sup>

During the three years of upheaval, black female life conformed in many ways to that outlined here. Missionaries' comments indicate that certain women were perceived as leaders by their peers. Harriet Ware, for instance, identified a woman from Fripp Point on St. Helena Island named Old Peggy as "the leader." This woman was important because she, along with another woman named Binah, oversaw church membership.

Ware's housekeeper Flora told her, "Old Peggy and Binah were the two whom all that came into the Church had to come through, and the Church supports them."<sup>45</sup>

On the Coffin's Point Plantation on St. Helena Island, a woman named Grace served her fellow women at least twice by acting as spokeswoman in disputes over wages paid for cotton production. On one occasion the women of the plantation complained to Mr. Philbrick, one of the plantation superintendents, that their wages were not high enough to permit them to purchase cloth at the local store. They were also upset because the molasses they bought from one of the other plantation superintendents was watered down. As Grace spoke in their behalf, the women shouted words of approval. At least part of the reason for Grace's ascendancy stemmed from the fact that she was among the older women of the island. She was also a strong and diligent worker who was able despite her advanced age to plant, hoe, and harvest cotton along with the younger women.<sup>46</sup>

Ample evidence exists of dependency relationships and cooperation among Sea Island women throughout the war years. In slavery sick and "lying-in" women relied on their peers to help them, and the missionaries found this to be the case on the islands during the Union occupation as well. For instance, Philbrick observed that it was quite common for the blacks to hire each other to hoe their tasks when sickness or other inconveniences kept an individual from it. In 1862 some of the Coffin's Point men were recruited by government agents to pick cotton elsewhere in the Sea Islands. This left many of the women at Coffin's Point completely responsible for hoeing the land allotted to each. Women who were sick or pregnant stood to lose their family's allotment since neglected land was reassigned to others. However, the women saw to it, according to Philbrick, that "the tasks of the lying-in women [were] taken care of by sisters or other friends in the absence of their husbands." No doubt these "other friends" were women, since in the same letter Philbrick noted that the only men left on the plantation were those too old to work in the cotton.<sup>47</sup>

Another missionary, Elizabeth Hyde Botume, related similar episodes of female cooperation. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding a pregnancy, it was common for the women of Port Royal to care for, and keep company with,



expectant and convalescing mothers. Several times Botume was approached by a spokeswoman seeking provisions for these mothers. Sometimes she gave them reluctantly because many of the women were not married. Usually, however, she was so impressed by the support that the pregnant women received from their peers that she suspended judgment and sent clothes and groceries for the mothers and infants. On one occasion she was approached by several women who sought aid for a woman named Cumber. The women were so willing to assist one of their own that Botume remarked abashedly: "... their readiness to help the poor erring girl made me ashamed."<sup>48</sup> These were not the only instances of cooperation among the black women. Some moved in with each other and shared domestic duties; others looked after the sick together.<sup>49</sup> With so many of the men away, women found ways of surviving together and cooperating. Predictably, however, along with the "togetherness" went conflict.

Many situations held possibilities for discord. Charles P. Ware, a missionary from Boston, wrote that the work in the crops would go more smoothly if only he could get the women to stop fighting. At least some of the fights were caused by disputes over the distribution of the former mistress's wardrobe. According to Ware, when a woman said, "I free, I as much right to ole missus' things as you," a fight was sure to erupt.<sup>50</sup> Harriet Ware witnessed a fight in which the women "fired shells and tore each other's clothes in a most disgraceful way." The cause of the fight was unknown to her but she was sure it was the "tongues of the women." Jealousy, she noted, ran rampant among the women, and to her mind there was "much foundation for it."<sup>51</sup>

The experiences of the Sea Islands women in the early 1860s comprised a special episode in American history, but their behavior conformed to patterns that had been set previously by bonded women on large plantations. Historians have shown that the community of the quarters, the slave family, and slave religion shielded the slave from absolute dependence on the master and that parents, siblings, friends, and relatives served in different capacities as buffers against the internalization of degrading and dependent roles. The female slave network served as a similar buffer for black women, but it also had a larger significance.

Treated by Southern whites as if they were anything but self-respecting women, many bonded females helped one another to forge their own independent definitions of womanhood, their own notions about what women should be and how they should act. □

*Deborah Gray White is associate professor of history and Africana studies at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. This chapter is adapted from her forthcoming book, **Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South**, to be published in 1985 by W. W. Norton. Copyright © 1984 by W.W. Norton and Co., Inc.*

#### NOTES

1. Fredericka Bremer, *Homes of the New World*, 2 vols. (New York, 1853), 2: 519; Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation*, ed. John A. Scott (New York, 1961 [1863]), p. 66. See also: Harriet Martineau, *Society in America*, 3 vols. (London, 1837), 2: 243, 311-12.
2. Benjamin Drew, *The Refugees: A North Side View of Slavery*, in *Four Fugitive Slave Narratives* (Boston, 1969), p. 92.
3. George Rawick, ed., *The American Slave, A Complete Autobiography*, 19 vols. (Westport, CT, 1972), Ga., vol. 13, pt. 4: 139.
4. Frederick Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* (New York, 1856), pp. 430-32; Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom*, ed. David Freeman Hawke (New York, 1971), p. 176; William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South (Canada, Its Defenses, Condition and Resources)*, 3 vols. (London, 1865), 1: 379-80; Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave, Narrative of Solomon Northup in Gilbert Osofsky, ed., Puttin' on Ole Massa* (New York, 1969), pp. 308-09; Rawick, *American Slave*, Ark., vol. 10, pt. 5: 54; Ala., vol. 6: 46, 336; Newstead Plantation Diary 1856-58, entry Wednesday, May 6, 1857, Southern Historical Collection (SHC), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Adwon Adams Davis, *Plantation Life in the Florida Parishes of Louisiana 1836-1846 as Reflected in the Diary of Bennet H. Barrow* (New York, 1943), p. 127; Frederick Olmsted, *A Journey in the Back Country* (New York, 1907), p. 152; *Plantation Manual*, SHC, p. 4; Eugene Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York, 1961), p. 133; Stuart Bruchey, ed., *Cotton and the Growth of the American Economy: 1790-1860* (New York, 1967), pp. 176-80.
5. See note 4.
6. J.A. Turner, ed., *The Cotton Planters Manual* (New York, 1865), pp. 97-98; Guion B. Johnson, *A Social History of the Sea Islands* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1930), pp. 28-30; Jenkins Mikell, *Rumblings of the Chariot Wheels* (Columbia, SC, 1923), pp. 19-20; Bruchey, *Cotton and the Growth of the American Economy*, pp. 176-80.
7. Rawick, *American Slave*, S.C., vol. 2, pt. 2: 114.
8. *Ibid.*, Ga., vol. 13, p. 3: 186.
9. *Plantation Manual*, SHC, p. 1.
10. Rawick, *American Slave*, Ok., vol. 7: 315.
11. George P. Rawick, Jan Hillegas, and Ken Lawrence, eds., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Supplement, Series 1*, 12 vols. (Westport, CT, 1978), Ga., Supp. 1, vol. 4: 479.
12. Rawick, *American Slave*, Mo., vol. 11: 307.
13. For examples of cures see: *Ibid.*, Ark., vol. 10, pt. 5: 21, 125; Ala., vol. 6: 256, 318; Ga., vol. 13, pt. 3: 106.
14. *Ibid.*, Ga., vol. 12, pt. 1: 303.
15. *Ibid.*, Fla., vol. 17: 175; see also: Rawick et al., *American Slave, Supplement*, Miss. Supp. 1, vol. 6: 317; Ga. Supp. 1, vol. 4: 444; John Spencer Bassett, *The Southern Plantation Overseer, as Revealed in His Letters* (Northampton, MA, 1923), pp. 28, 31.
16. Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation*, p. 222.

17. Robert Manson Myers, ed., *The Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War* (New Haven, CT, 1972), pp. 528, 532, 542, 544, 546.
18. Charles S. Johnson, ed., *God Struck Me Dead: Religious Conversion Experiences and Autobiographies of Negro Ex-Slaves in Rawick, American Slave*, vol. 19: 74.
19. Rawick, *American Slave*, S.C., vol. 2, pt. 1: 99.
20. *Ibid.*, Ga., vol. 12, pt. 2: 112; S.C., vol. 2, pt. 2: 55; Fla., vol. 17: 174; see also Olmsted, *Back Country*, p. 76.
21. See, for instance, *Plantation Manual*, SHC, p. 1.
22. Rawick, *American Slave*, Ala., vol. 6: 73.
23. Rawick et al., *American Slave, Supplement*, Ga. Supp. 1, vol. 4, pt. 3: 103.
24. Rawick, *American Slave*, Tex., vol. 5, pt. 3: 103.
25. Hughes, *Thirty Years a Slave*, p. 39; Rawick, *American Slave*, Fla., vol. 17: 158; S.C., vol. 2, pt. 1: 114; White Hill Plantation Books, SHC, p. 13.
26. Hughes, *Thirty Years a Slave*, p. 22.
27. Ophelia Settle Egypt, J. Masuoha, and Charles S. Johnson, eds., *Unwritten History of Slavery: Autobiographical Accounts of Negro Ex-Slaves* (Washington, 1968 [1945]), p. 41.
28. Laura M. Towne, *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne Written from the Sea Islands of South Carolina 1862-1884*, ed. Rupert Sargent Holland (New York, 1969 [1912]), pp. 144-45. See also: Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation*, p. 55.
29. Rawick, *American Slave*, Ga. vol. 13, pt. 3: 190.
30. Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York, 1968 [1855]), p. 36.
31. Elizabeth Hyde Botume, *First Days Amongst the Contrabands* (Boston, 1893), p. 132.
32. Davis, *Plantation Life in the Florida Parishes*, p. 191. See also pp. 168, 173.
33. Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation*, pp. 118-19.
34. Martha Graham Goodson, "An Introductory Essay and Subject Index to Selected Interviews from the Slave Narrative Collection," (Ph.D. diss., Union Graduate School, 1977), p. 33.
35. Cheryl Ann Cody, "Naming, Kinship, and Estate Dispersal: Notes on Slave Family Life on a South Carolina Plantation, 1786 to 1833," *William and Mary Quarterly* 39 (1982): 207-09.
36. Rawick, *American Slave*, Ala., vol. 7: 73.
37. Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York, 1976), pp. 216-22.
38. J.H. Easterby, ed., *The South Carolina Rice Plantations as Revealed in the Papers of Robert W. Allston* (Chicago, 1945), p. 291.
39. Bassett, *The Southern Plantation Overseer*, pp. 19-20, 32.
40. Rawick, *American Slave*, Ga., vol. 12, pt. 2: 57.
41. C. Vann Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (New Haven, CT, 1981), pp. 33-34.
42. Norman Yetman, *Voices from Slavery* (New York, 1970), p. 13.
43. J. Mason Brewer, *American Negro Folklore* (New York, 1968), p. 233.
44. Willie Lee Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment* (New York, 1964), p. 11.
45. Elizabeth Ware Pearson, ed., *Letters from Port Royal: Written at the Time of the Civil War* (New York, 1969 [1906]), p. 44.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 250, 303-04.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
48. Botume, *First Days Amongst the Contrabands*, p. 125.
49. See for instance: *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56, 58, 80, 212.
50. Pearson, *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 1133.
51. Botume, *First Days Amongst the Contrabands*, pp. 210-11.

The illustrations accompanying this article originally appeared in Rudolph Eickemeyer, *Down South (New York, 1900)*. They are reproduced in Ronald Killian and Charles Waller, eds., *Slavery Time When I Was Chillun Down on Marster's Plantation (Savannah, 1973)*.

On April 8, 1861, Susan Williford pleaded with the magistrates of the Granville County court of North Carolina to allow her to maintain custody of her two youngest children, Nancy, age eight, and Louisa, age six. Williford charged two

planters of the county with forcibly removing the girls from her home despite her urgent objections. In defending her right to raise her own daughters, Williford declared in an affidavit that although she was poor, she had always supported Nancy and Louisa comfortably through “industry and frugality,” and further that she was an “honest and hardworking woman . . . much distressed at being separated from her children of such tender years.” The court ordered the

matter investigated but appears not to have rescinded the apprenticeships.<sup>1</sup>

Beginning with her own apprenticeship as an illegitimate child in 1815, Williford was in and out of court most of her life. At one point her mother sought to void her apprenticeship on grounds that Susan had been abused by her master. As an adult she was indicted at least three times for fornication and at least four times for bastardy. Five of her six illegitimate children, four of them fathered by Peter Curtis, a free black man with whom she lived for at least 15

years, were at some point apprenticed out.<sup>2</sup>

The predicament of Susan Williford was not unusual. It was common for courts in the ante-bellum South to apprentice children judged to be indigent,

loved and took good care of her children, the fact that they were also the illegitimate offspring of a racially mixed union labeled her a social deviant incapable of raising her children properly. For committing the crime of miscegenation she

was reduced, in a legal sense, to the lowest rung in the Southern social hierarchy outside of slavery — a position usually reserved for the free black woman.<sup>3</sup> From childhood to middle age, Susan Williford’s life presents a microcosm of the response of Southern courts to women who contradicted the sexual and racial constructs of a slave-based white patriarchy.

By their very existence, free black and poor white women blurred the boundaries of ante-bellum Southern society. The society’s roots in white male hegemony and black slav-

ery, and its organization around bonds of kinship and property, assured that poor women would be seen as outsiders.

Compounding their inferior status was the fact that poor women often behaved in ways which contradicted their society’s cherished beliefs about women’s natural delicacy, servility, and virtue. “Respectable” white Southerners thus labeled sexually active, unmarried, free black women as “naturally” lascivious and amoral by virtue of their race; deviant white women, considered an inferior strain of white humanity, were “vile.”

---

ON THE  
LOWEST  
RUNG

---

COURT CONTROL OVER  
POOR WHITE AND FREE  
BLACK WOMEN

---

ill-raised, illegitimate, orphaned, or of free black parentage. In essence, the apprenticeship of many illegitimate or free black children meant their removal from the homes of their parents (usually single women) to those of court-appointed masters (usually white men) for whom they were bound by contract to labor in return for their livelihood. Rarely did the contracts specify that a skill be taught the children other than farming for boys and spinning for girls.

Although Susan Williford, a white woman, might truthfully argue that she





"lewd," and "vicious." Labeling women's deviant behavior or economic poverty as immoral and potentially polluting to the society at large in turn legitimized the power of the state to punish such behavior and to limit the movement of poor women in society.<sup>4</sup>

The courts' treatment of free black and poor white women mirrored the structure of racial and class relationships while it pointed up the special problems associated with gender in the ante-bellum South; yet little has been researched or written on the subject. Neglect of so illuminating a topic seems due to an artificial separation of the fields of Southern history and women's history. Historians of the nineteenth-century South who have focused on issues of region, class, and race have for the most part ignored gender, while historians of Southern women are only beginning to explore the complex configuration of region, class, and race, as well as gender, which bounded Southern women's lives.

As in other societies, the application of the law in North Carolina was an evolving process in which court procedures and statute law were continually adjusted to suit the needs of the state's dominant social order. The eruption of the Civil War, however, dramatically altered the priorities of the North Carolina courts and crippled their ability to function efficiently. Many of the courts' traditional governing mechanisms broke down during the war and, as a result, many poor women gained an unfamiliar freedom from the state's interference in their lives.

More positively, the ascendance to power of a different class and race of men under Radical Reconstruction allowed many poor women to maintain or reclaim custody of their children. Ultimately, however, the decade of the 1860s ushered in no new age of opportunity for

poor Southern women. The rise of the Ku Klux Klan and the return of North Carolina conservatives to power in 1872 restored traditional boundaries of race and class, albeit without slavery.

To understand the impact of war and reconstruction on the lives of certain poor women, we examine their comparative treatment by local courts in three North Carolina Piedmont counties — Granville, Orange, and Montgomery — as revealed through such court procedures as bastardy bonds, prostitution and fornication indictments, and, most directly, apprenticeship contracts. Despite their close geographic proximity, these counties provide contrasting economic and demographic features. Granville and Orange both produced tobacco and some cotton for market, but only Granville was a major slaveholding area. In 1860 almost 50 percent of Granville's population were slaves, while free blacks constituted 4 percent of the population. The county boasted many wealthy planters but also substantial numbers of white yeoman farmers.

Orange County was more diverse; the town of Chapel Hill, housing the University of North Carolina, was a hub of intellectual activity, while the nearby crossroads of Durham presented a rowdy clustering of yeoman farmers, free black and white laborers, and a few planters around the community's cotton factory and railway station. Slaves constituted 30 percent, and free blacks 3 percent of Orange County's population. The third county, Montgomery, was relatively isolated from market centers, had not one major city, and many of its villages bordered the untamed Uwharrie Mountain forests. Although Montgomery County contained some planter families, the majority of its farmers owned few or no slaves. Slaves constituted just 23 percent of its population, and there were hardly any free blacks.<sup>5</sup>

In all three counties, the absence of punishments between 1850 and 1860 for sexual assault pointed up the non-protection society offered poor women. Because many upper-class Southerners believed that inferior morals rather than societal conditions accounted for the greater sexual activity of single poor women, they were considered — particularly if black — a sexual proving ground for men too "gentlemanly" to disturb the "finer" sensibilities of a wealthier woman, whose most prized possession was her purity — a body reserved exclusively for her future or present husband.

Trials involving rape were extremely rare in ante-bellum North Carolina because women depended more on male vigilante justice than on the courts for protection of their honor.<sup>6</sup> But kinless, poor, and free black women had less access to both family protection and the courts than other women. Insights into contemporary attitudes about rape and its relationship to women of "bad" reputation are scattered throughout the documents of the time. A letter from J.G. Gulley to Governor Bragg, accompanied by a petition of April 1, 1856, demonstrates that where a valuable slave would be lost if executed for rape, white men would admit that some white women willingly had sexual intercourse with black men. But such a woman was a "base prostitute" whether she sold her services or not.<sup>7</sup>

The protection and control of white middle- and upper-class women generally occurred in the male-headed households rather than in the courts. Wives and daughters of planter and yeoman households were valued, even idealized, as caretakers of male property and producers of heirs to that property. But as the works of Anne Firor Scott and Catherine Clinton clearly show, the price of such exalted and indispensable

status was the necessity of control by males over the social and sexual behavior of "their" women.<sup>8</sup>

Control over unmarried, propertyless, white or free black women was a different matter; these women were not the vessels through which white male property and progeny passed. Their sexual and reproductive behavior was often outside the realm of a family-centered white patriarchy, especially since class and caste boundaries limited their marital choices. Not surprisingly, single poor women defied norms of social behavior in greater numbers than did daughters of planters or yeomen; they had less status to lose and therefore more incentive to experiment.<sup>9</sup>

In his discussion of miscegenation Bertram Wyatt-Brown does not consider the possibility of a subculture existing in which outcast or marginal women formed a code of behavior congruent with their own needs and limited opportunities. Rather, he concludes that white women who consorted with black men displayed a "defective" notion of their social position, and suggests many may have been "mentally retarded."<sup>10</sup> Wyatt-Brown's evidence for their retardation is the frequency with which many claimed in court to have been bewitched or conjured by their black lovers. There is no reason to believe, however, that poor white women were any less capable of feigning ignorance in the hope of escaping fines or imprisonment than were male slaves who affected "Sambo" roles to lessen work loads and avoid punishment by masters. Single white women who led active sex lives with either white or black men probably had an accurate sense of their social options. And because many single poor women lacked control and protection by a male, it fell upon the courts to monitor their behavior; as for protection, they received little — privately or publicly.

The biracial communities of Orange and Granville counties relied heavily on statutes geared toward racial control, while predominantly white Montgomery County had less need for such controls until the eruption of the Civil War. Both the Orange and Granville courts used laws against fornication and prostitution primarily to punish miscegenation and limit sexual contact between free blacks and slaves.<sup>11</sup> The fact that Montgomery County rarely indicted anyone for such offenses, despite evidence from divorce petitions and criminal records that such practices existed, and apprenticed far fewer children than either Orange or

Granville, indicates that the primary goal of such laws was racial control.<sup>12</sup>

In seeking to control bastardy, the state was more concerned with economic than racial consequences. Bastardy laws were designed to prevent illegitimate children from becoming charges upon the county. Because fathers of bastards were often wealthier than mothers, the women were required to name in court the fathers of their children so they could be bonded for the future support of their illegitimate children.<sup>13</sup> Between 1850 and 1860, Montgomery County magistrates showed a greater tendency to prosecute cases of bastardy than their counterparts in Orange and Granville. That difference reflected the fact that Montgomery County had far less disparity of wealth,

These factors make it difficult to assess trends in illegitimacy; still, when one considers the counties' varying use of court procedures involving fornication, apprenticeship, and prostitution, as well as bastardy, the priorities of each are evident.

With the onset of war, the priorities of the local courts shifted to issues more immediately threatening to their communities — crimes against public and private property. During the war indictments for sexual misconduct decreased in all three counties while indictments against women for larceny increased dramatically — from eight between 1850 and 1860 to 88 between 1861 and 1871.<sup>16</sup>

Women who stole almost invariably took food, clothing, bedding, or kindling. Runaway slaves and, later, freed



fewer blacks, and less tenancy — but not necessarily a higher incidence of illegitimate births. Both mothers and fathers of bastards in Montgomery tended to be from the white yeoman class and were able in most cases to post bond.<sup>14</sup> Conversely, in Granville, many fathers of bastards were slaves, propertyless free men, or white men wishing to remain anonymous.<sup>15</sup> Court magistrates seldom prosecuted cases of bastardy where males were unable to post bond or where white men fathered mulatto children.

black women often stole from former masters; likewise, free blacks sometimes stole from whites to whom they had previously been apprenticed.<sup>17</sup> Some farming-class women rioted at and pillaged local flour mills or stole from merchants thought to be speculating in staples.<sup>18</sup> In the struggle to feed themselves and their families, women often vented their rage at long-standing enemies or those whom they believed responsible for their suffering.

As the war drove more women into the



public sphere, violent assaults took a new form. Prior to the war's outbreak, most prosecuted threats and assaults upon women were committed by male family members; during the war they were more often committed by unrelated males. Except in Montgomery County, where Union sympathizers and Confederates engaged in internal warfare, reported violence against women increased very little. Indictments for prostitution and fornication decreased during the war, as the courts faced a more immediate and direct threat to the institution of slavery.<sup>19</sup> Thus, amid the suffering and deprivation of war, poor white and free black women gained some freedom from the courts' traditional control.

The laxity of court regulation in war-



time North Carolina, followed by Radical Reconstruction, contributed to an unprecedented challenge to the apprenticeship system. Poor women had long resisted this system in various ways: by hiding their children upon court notice that they were to be bound; by charging apprenticeship masters with mistreatment; or by striving to influence their children's placement.<sup>20</sup> Rarely did they attempt, however, to challenge the court's authority to order apprenticeship. Susan Williford's effort to do so in

1861 foreshadowed an upsurge of such petitions that followed the war's end. In contrast to the ruling in Williford's case, between 1868 and 1870 the reconstructed courts and the state government of North Carolina aided blacks who demanded the release of their children from apprenticeship contracts.<sup>21</sup>

In 1869 Lila McDonald, an illiterate black woman of Montgomery County, challenged the legality of her children's apprenticeship contracts because they failed to provide for their education, an omission her petition cited as "contrary to the provisions of the Fourteenth article of the United States [Constitution and] . . . the spirit of the Reconstruction acts of the congress."<sup>22</sup> Successful challenges to the apprenticeship system by blacks also occurred in Granville and Orange during Radical Reconstruction. This success was due largely to black fathers rather than single mothers initiating many of the suits during an era in which black men briefly wielded political power. Nevertheless, poor white and black women gained greater control over their children when postwar challenges to the apprenticeship system precipitated the system's demise by 1872 in all three counties.<sup>23</sup>

The defeat of Southern secessionists by Union forces thus altered the class and racial dynamics of political power in North Carolina, but the exclusively male leadership of postwar governments left some women, as before, unprotected by the law. The freed black woman was particularly vulnerable. Following the Emancipation Act of 1865, a freed black woman who gave birth to an illegitimate child was required, like other free women, to identify her bastard's father in court. Certain well-documented cases clarify the untenable position in which a freed black woman might find herself if pregnant and unmarried. Not only were there complications if the child's father was white; there was also the necessity of supporting a child who would formerly have been provided for by its white master. A letter written in 1866 to an Orange County magistrate by county solicitor John W. Graham explained one white male point of view.

Wrote Graham:

Pattie, daughter [sic] of Peter formerly slave of Judge Ruffin . . . is now pregnant and . . . must declare the father of the child. . . . Negro testimony is rather inconvenient to some who have been prowling around too promiscuously [and] I think we might let the

young fellow go for what was done before Negroes were allowed to testify."<sup>24</sup>

Graham arranged the posting of Patsy Ruffin's bond and the paying of her fine in return for her silence in court. He offered the magistrate a reward for his cooperation in the matter and enjoyed success from his carefully laid plans: two days later Patsy Ruffin was bonded in court for bastardy but refused to name her child's father.<sup>25</sup>

In postwar Montgomery County plans did not proceed so smoothly for the white family that coerced Linda McQuean, a freed black mother, into falsely naming Harry Butler, a local freedman, as the father of her illegitimate child.<sup>26</sup> Too poor to post bond,



Butler was forced to apprentice himself to a white farmer of the county in exchange for the bond. The facts of the case came to light when Benjamin F. Simmons, a sympathetic and wealthy white lawyer of the county, obtained a new trial for Butler through the Freedmen's Bureau Headquarters in Raleigh. Harry Butler's eventual acquittal was a rare happy ending to one black man's trouble, but the case highlights Linda McQuean's double burden of race and gender. McQuean was subjected first to

coercion, then to a humiliating trial in which she was labeled a liar and her past sexual relationships were examined. Finally, she was left to support her child as best she could, while the child's true father was apparently never identified.<sup>27</sup>

Dilemmas such as Ruffin's and McQuean's accounted for the rising numbers of infanticide cases appearing on the court dockets shortly after the war's end. In an age that offered few methods of birth control, women of all classes and races had occasionally been accused of the ancient crime. We will never know their exact numbers, for the individual situation depended on a woman's ability to hide her pregnancy or gain the complicity of a friend or lover. Those caught faced charges of manslaughter and up to 12 months' imprisonment.<sup>28</sup> In the decade just before the war, the three counties reported only four cases of infanticide, but between 1861 and 1871 this number increased to 13. All but two of the accused women were black.<sup>29</sup> The decision by these women to murder their infants illuminates the depth of postwar poverty and the continued sexual exploitation of black women.

Depending on a woman's race or class, then, Radical Reconstruction aided some and ignored the plight of others. At any rate Republican power in North Carolina was soon shattered by the political success of Southern conservatives. The Civil War and Reconstruction had uprooted the lives of many women, but, with the exception of those who had been slaves or were of the propertied classes, their legal and social status were left essentially unchanged. In coming years many poor women were absorbed into the textile and tobacco factories that accompanied the commercialization of agriculture in the North Carolina Piedmont.<sup>30</sup> Poor Southern women too often traded domestic drudgery for public harassment. Although a significant minority flaunted the courts' authority and stole for themselves a small sphere of autonomy, the heart of their struggle remained the same: to sustain themselves and their families in a society which too often granted and denied resources along lines of class, race, and gender. □

*Victoria Bynum is a graduate student at the University of California at San Diego. She wishes to thank Tom Dublin, James Grossman, Steven Hahn, Dolores Janiewski, and Rachel Klein for their comments and criticisms on earlier drafts of this paper.*

#### NOTES

1. Affidavit of Susan Williford, Apprentice Bonds, Granville County, April 8, 1861, North Carolina State Archives.

2. See Granville County Apprentice Bonds, November 6, 1821 and November 1822, also between 1850 and 1860; Criminal Action Papers, February 1852 and February 1861; Bastardy Bonds, 1836, 1845, 1849. See also U.S. Manuscript Census for Granville County, 1860.

3. See *Midgett v. McBride*, 48 N.C. 36 (1855) for the state supreme court's declaration that the county court "has power to bind out all free base-born children of color, without reference to the occupation or condition of the mother." Thus both unmarried white mothers of mulatto children and all unmarried free black mothers were subject to having their children apprenticed regardless of their abilities as parents. Stanley R. Keyser, in "The Apprenticeship System in North Carolina to 1840" (M.A. Thesis, Duke University, 1950), found this law a refinement of colonial statutes requiring mulatto children of white servant women to be bound until age 31 and providing for the binding of all free black children. It was not common to bind the children of free blacks, however, until the nineteenth century, when their numbers increased dramatically.

4. As Phyllis M. Palmer comments in "White Women/Black Women: The Dualism of Female Identity and Experience in the United States," *Feminist Studies* 9 (Spring 1983): 157, "The dualism of good/bad was usually connected with race and class, but it could be used to chastise any woman moving out of her assigned place." Mary Douglas's anthropological study, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 1966) provides interesting insights into how beliefs concerning the "dangerous contagion" of those outside the boundaries of a society function to uphold the moral values and system of relationships within a society.

5. Population data copied from the records of the U.S. Census Office, 1860, and contained in the Governor's Papers, 1861, North Carolina State Archives.

6. See Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Mind That Burns in Each Body": Women, Rape, and Racial Violence," elsewhere in this issue; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1982), pp. 388-89; Guion G. Johnson, *Antebellum North Carolina, A Social History* (Chapel Hill, 1937), p. 508-10.

7. Letter of J.G. Gulley and accompanying petition, April 1, 1856, Governor's Papers, 1840-1860, North Carolina State Archives.

8. Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics 1830-1930* (Chicago, 1970); Catherine Clinton, *Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York, 1983); and Johnson, *Antebellum North Carolina*.

9. Less opportunity and incentive for marriage is discussed in the case of free black women for an earlier period by Suzanne Leacock in *Free Women of Petersburg* (New York, 1983). My own research into county marriage bonds and manuscript censuses indicates that the same was true to a lesser extent, and for somewhat different reasons, for poor white women. On the subject of the state and families, Rayna Rapp points out that the concept of the male-headed nuclear family is a "false universalization" that serves the state's power to define what are legitimate and illegitimate family forms. See Rayna Rapp, Ellen Ross, and Renate Bridenthal, "Examining Family History," *Feminist Studies* 5 (Spring 1979): 178.

10. Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, pp. 315-16.

11. Criminal Action Papers, 1850-60, Orange and Granville Counties, North Carolina State Archives.

12. Criminal Action Papers, 1850-60, Montgomery County, North Carolina State Archives. All six of Montgomery's divorce petitions prior to 1860 charged spouses with fornication; several wives charged their husbands with visiting local prostitutes. Most of the seven white couples indicted for fornication were accused by individuals engaged in long-standing feuds with one or the other defendant.

13. Rev. St., N.C., ch. 31, sec. 37. See also *State v. Pate*, 47 N.C. 14 (1854).

14. Bastardy Bonds, 1850-60, Montgomery County, North Carolina State Archives. U.S. Manuscript Census, 1860, Montgomery County, North Carolina State Archives.

15. Both Apprenticeship Bonds and Criminal Action Papers, North Carolina State Archives, reveal significant numbers of women in Granville who were never bonded for giving birth to illegitimate children. For example, free blacks Mary and Kate Durham had at least five children apprenticed by the court in 1861. They were indicted together in 1864 for illegal cohabitation (fornication) with two different slaves of the same plantation. Yet neither woman was ever bonded for bastardy, presumably because of their mates' slave statuses.

16. Criminal Action Papers, Montgomery, Granville, Orange Counties, 1850, 1871, North Carolina State Archives.

17. *Ibid.*, 1860-1871. Indictments for larceny against freed people frequently specified their previous enslavement to the plaintiff; identical last names between defendant and plaintiff suggest the same. The link between defendants and plaintiffs as apprentices and masters was made for Granville County by comparing criminal cases with apprenticeship contracts.

18. *Ibid.*, 1860-65. One attack on a flour mill by Martha Briggs, Sally Fuller, and Lucy Fuller, tried in Granville County during the May Term, 1864, is discussed in a letter from J.F. Coghill to Mit Coghill, March 28, 1864, Durham, North Carolina, in James O. Coghill Papers, Manuscript Dept., Duke University. J.T. Coghill, the son of plaintiff James O. Coghill, bragged that had he been present, the women "would have known which side of thare bread was buttered . . . [after] I throwed my paws on the side of her head a time or two." Two of the women were nearby neighbors of the Coghills according to the Manuscript Census of 1860 for Granville County.

19. Criminal Action Papers, Montgomery, Granville, Orange Counties, 1850-1871, North Carolina State Archives.

20. Apprenticeship Bonds, 1840-60, North Carolina State Archives. In a few instances court officials noted that children ordered to be bound were "not to be found." Twelve mothers between 1840 and 1860 petitioned for cancellation of their children's contracts on grounds they were mistreated by their masters. Eight stated in letters written for them (with their marks as signatures) to whom they preferred their children bound.

21. Eric Foner, in *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge, 1983), argues persuasively that black and white radicals wielded considerable power over the local courts during Radical Reconstruction. The Apprenticeship Bonds, 1840-75, Montgomery, Granville, Orange Counties, North Carolina State Archives, record 23 parents who sued for custody of their children between 1865 and 1872 as compared to 12 between 1840 and 1860. Only seven of the postwar suits were filed by single women; all of the ante-bellum suits were. The Freedman's Bureau Papers, Rg. 105, National Archives, Washington, DC, show many examples from all over the state of similarly successful suits during the period of Radical Reconstruction. See Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York, 1976), pp. 402-12, for similar findings.

22. Civil Action Papers, April 12, 1869, Montgomery County, North Carolina State Archives.

23. Keyser, "The Apprenticeship System in North Carolina," claims the system was not entirely disbanded until the early twentieth century, but it was rarely used after 1872 in the counties of this study.

24. Graham's letter is lying loose among the Bastardy Bonds of Orange County, August 19, 1866, North Carolina State Archives.

25. *Ibid.*, August 21, 1866.

26. *Ibid.*, Montgomery County, August 29, 1867.

27. Criminal Action Papers, Montgomery County, September 11, 1867, North Carolina State Archives.

28. Johnson, *Antebellum North Carolina*. Criminal Action Papers, Montgomery, Granville, Orange Counties, 1820-1875.

29. Criminal Action Papers, 1850-65.

30. Dolores E. Janiewski, "From Field to Factory: Race, Class, Sex, and the Woman Worker in Durham, 1880-1940" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1979), traces the transformation of patriarchy within an industrializing region (Durham, North Carolina) and demonstrates how societal beliefs and practices concerning race and gender were incorporated into management policies and worker relationships.



THE STRIKE OF 1887: LOUISIANA

# SUGAR WAR

BY JEFFREY GOULD

On November 1, 1887, Brigadier General William Pierce observed from his train the immediate effects of the most important strike in the history of rural Louisiana. An estimated 10,000 sugar plantation workers — most of whom were black, but 1,000 of whom were white — organized in the Knights of Labor (K of L), had stopped cutting and

grinding sugar cane, in demand for wage increases and the abolition of scrip payments. Pierce reported that he saw “the fields in all directions full of cane, the mills idle, the stock and carts and wagons laid by and no work being done.”<sup>1</sup>

After more than three weeks of intense conflict, often involving General Pierce’s troops, this interracial class movement degenerated into racial violence. In the small city of Thibodaux, Louisiana, at dawn on November 23, 300 armed white vigilantes murdered over 50 black people. The Thibodaux Massacre ended the strike, fatally wounded the labor movement, and initiated a racist reign of terror in the Louisiana sugar region.

Several historians who have studied this strike have explained its failure and racist finale as a consequence of Knights of Labor ideology and tactics. Philip Foner, for example, points to the lack of assistance from the national leadership of the K of L and to the racist fears of white workers as key explanatory factors. Melton McLaurin expands on Foner’s analysis, pointing to organizational inadequacies of rank-and-file leadership as an equally important cause of the strike’s failure. Placing the sugar workers’ strike



in the context of two other strike movements led by the K of L, he writes:

... as soon as the order had organized a relatively large segment of the work force, the new members, hoping for support from the state and national assemblies, initiated offensive strikes. They did so without local financial resources, with no method of curtailing strikebreakers, with no assurances of support from outside the local or locals involved, and with no detailed strike plan. Not surprisingly they lost.<sup>2</sup>

William Ivy Hair, rather than analyzing the weakness of the labor movement, attempts to explain the ferocity of the planters' response. He cites one circumstantial factor — a frost which threatened serious harm to the cane crop — to explain the urgent necessity to end the strike. Hair then connects this climatic imperative to cut the cane to a South-wide phenomenon of increasing white racist violence. He argues that:

viewed in perspective the Thibodaux blood-letting was simply a deadlier than usual example of a much broader phenomenon. The lot of the Louisiana Negro was growing harder. Indeed throughout the South, during the late 1880s and the 1890s repression and discrimination against the black race was on the rise.<sup>3</sup>

These analyses fail to explain adequately the transformation of class into race struggles. The conclusions may indeed be rephrased as questions. If white workers were "racist," why did they join the K of L, which admitted blacks and whites, and initially participate in the strike movement? Specifically, why did they change from strikers into anti-strikers? If local leadership of the strike was responsible for the defeat, why were they able to achieve partial victories? Finally, why did planters and the state government choose violent repression as a means of ending the strike?

The answers to these questions require exploring the developing social relations of production in the sugar region and the unique roles played by planters and laborers in shaping the racism of post-Civil War Louisiana.

## PLANTERS AND THE LABOR QUESTION

In January 1874, less than a decade after slaves had deserted the sugar plan-

tations en masse, black laborers along Black Bayou in Terrebonne Parish struck to resist wage cuts of \$7 a month.<sup>4</sup> Although the state militia and neighboring Lafourche vigilantes repressed the movement after two weeks of struggle, this strike nevertheless influenced both the development of the labor movement in Lafourche and Terrebonne and planter strategy towards "the labor question."

Confronted with the disastrous effects of the national financial crisis of 1873, planters in Terrebonne, Lafourche, and St. Mary's Parishes attempted to create a class-based organization. They agreed to reduce wages uniformly to \$13 a month and to continue aggressively recruiting workers from Southern cotton regions in order to create a surplus labor supply.

Plantation laborers reacted to these initiatives by organizing the first union in the sugar regions: the Laboring Men's Benefit Association. When some planters failed to pay yearly wages owed for 1873, association members went on strike. This first act of organized black proletarian resistance since the Civil War fought simultaneously against wage cuts and against "the free labor system." Black laborers organized themselves to lease land in order to form production cooperatives; if planters refused to lease their lands, laborers reportedly planned to take them over.<sup>5</sup>

The laborers' union was inextricably tied to the grassroots "pure Radicals" faction in the Republican Party.\* The Laborers possessed a clear understanding that successful resistance to the



DROPPING AND PLANTING

wage system and agricultural reform depended on a high degree of black political power on the regional and state level. For example, Republican Alfred Kennedy, arrested in January 1874, was elected parish sheriff four years later. By 1887 Kennedy had returned to plantation labor and actively participated in the Knights of Labor strike that year.<sup>6</sup> Another example is State Assemblyman W.H. Keys, whom planters called "the nigger who was going to ruin Terrebonne Parish." In 1887 Keys also participated as a rank and file organizer in the K of L.<sup>7</sup>

The 1874 repression was but a Pyrrhic victory for the planters. Lafourche planters had demonstrated solidarity with their Terrebonne brothers, and the Republican state apparatus had rejected its black base to help put down the strike. But the political and economic organization of laborers, their generalized discontent with the wage system, and their aspirations for agrarian reform posed a continued threat to the planter class. During the next three years, laborers consistently sabotaged planter efforts to construct a wage system held together by force and designed to guarantee a labor supply permanently bound to plantations.

Workers resisted the planters in several ways. Typically, they moved at the end of the year and undermined the planters' class solidarity by inducing them to compete for labor. In addition, workers constantly resisted labor discipline. Since Emancipation, workers insisted on "doing things their own way."<sup>8</sup> They occasionally enforced their own labor discipline by shooting uncooperative foremen. Finally, workers strove to convert their desire for agrarian reform into immediate reality. They devoted "excessive" time to their "arperns" — .85 acres of land ceded to each worker by the planters in order to diminish costs of supporting their labor.<sup>9</sup> Particularly in lower Lafourche — which had a proportionately larger white and racially mixed population than the upper

\* Historians usually consider the "Pure Radicals" to have been an urban wing of the Louisiana Republican Party in the 1860s. Although there is no doubt that the "pure Radicals," as an organized faction, no longer functioned by 1874, it is our contention that men like W.H. Keys clearly represented a continuation of that political tradition in the countryside. Future historians of the 1874 strike should take note that the black Republican Party in Terrebonne was split between "moderates" such as state legislators Marie and Murrell and Radicals like Keys and Kennedy whose conception of political action clearly went "beyond equality."



region — workers also acquired small plots of land to complement their fishing and trapping activities with subsistence farming and thereby escape the lot of permanent plantation laborers.

Labor resistance directly threatened the planters' prosperity, especially those "advanced" planters who were attempting to expand their operations and modernize their processing mills. Post-Reconstruction planters as a group were threatened by the development of a New York-based sugar trust which increasingly turned to cheap imports for its raw sugar. This trust further undermined the planters' economic power by producing a refined white sugar which by the mid-1880s was virtually the only type consumed in the U.S. The majority of Louisiana planters could only produce kettle-made brown sugars for sale to refineries. More than half of Louisiana's medium- and large-scale planters thus found themselves subject to the price dictates of the New York trust.

An emerging planter elite hoped to compete with the trust by developing their own highly mechanized sugar refineries. But to compete adequately, these "advanced" planter-manufacturers needed to process far more cane than they grew on their individual plantations; they had to expand their holdings or convert smaller planters, who were diverting a portion of their harvest to the making of molasses and brown sugar, into mere cane growers.

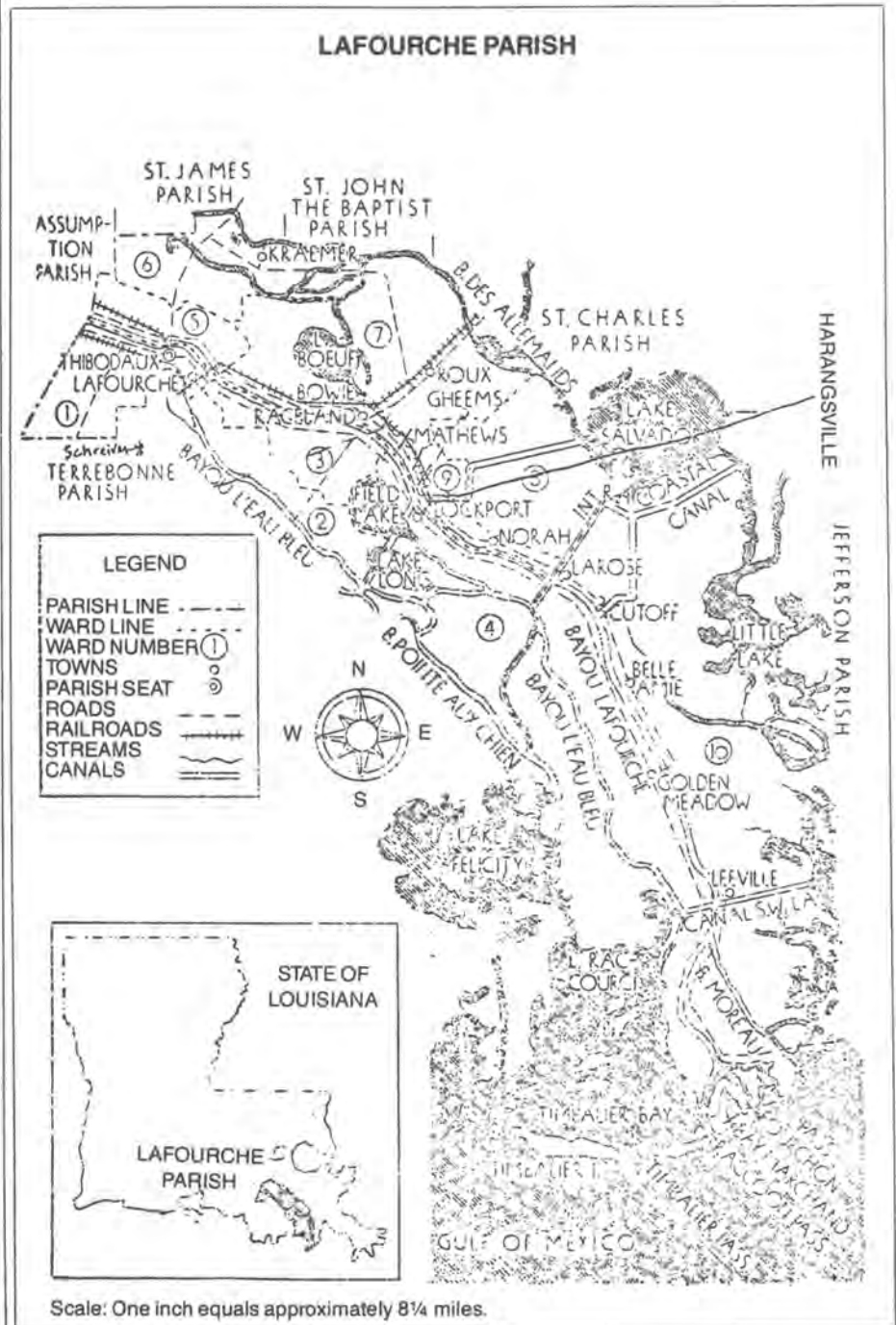
As we shall see, the evolving structural antagonism between elite and non-elite planters generated increasing tensions between "advanced" planters in various parts of the cane-growing parishes and the "backward" planters of other areas. It also fueled an anti-monopoly ideological discourse which conditioned the emergence of an interracial labor movement but which planters generally tried to turn to their advantage by focusing attention on the evils of the New York trust, New Orleans banks, and the railroads, which victimized the entire region.

From the elite planters' perspective, the development of local sugar refineries substantially minimized labor costs and dramatically increased the production of sugar per ton of cane by 50 percent during the 1870s and 1880s. But the production of cane was only slightly less labor-intensive than it had been during the ante-bellum period. Total labor costs for the production of refined sugar varied between one-half and two-thirds of the total business costs, with at least

75 percent of the wage bill devoted to agricultural labor. The efficient use and maximized productivity of field labor was thus a fundamental, if not determinant, precondition for achieving the transition to a fully modern sugar industry under elite control. A free labor market, regulated by supply and de-

St. Mary's planter (and later U.S. senator) issued the following call for planter unity:

There are occurrences of recent date and ills of long standing which required prompt and combined action on the part of the planters of St.



mand, seemed unable to guarantee such a precondition.

The incipient planter class organization of 1873-74 failed to halt labor unrest or to establish itself on a permanent basis. In 1877 Donelson Caffery, an elite

Mary. Quite recently a deliberate attempt was made to burn down in one night four large sugar houses. . . . The labor question is also very serious. The destruction consequent upon the ruinous policy of competi-

tion among the planters, though not so immediate, is considerably surer than by fire. We may guard against the attempts of the incendiary, but how as to curbing our appetite for our neighbor's servant? . . . We can observe the laws of supply and demand. A serious question for them [the planters] to consider is the matter of strikes. From the monthly payment of wages in full and the execrable system of job work largely obtaining all over the parish, the labor has been spasmodic, unreliable and [discontent] on the rise this whole season. . . .<sup>10</sup>

The New Orleans *Daily Picayune* firmly supported Caffery's position, calling the labor question "the most important subject to be considered . . . at this time." In October, a month after Caffery's call, the Louisiana Sugar Planters Associations (LSPA) formed and proposed a program which would modify the free market wage system in order to ensure a successful transition to modern industry.\* First, the planter elite, as we have seen, proposed to unify wage scales, thus eliminating planter competition for laborers. Second, they sought to establish a uniform wage withholding system. Eighty percent of the wages would be withheld monthly.<sup>11</sup> On large plantations, scrip payments coerced workers into buying commodities at company stores. These stores sometimes charged 100 percent more than market prices.<sup>12</sup> The scrip and wage withholding system fostered laborer indebtedness, which in turn guaranteed a dependent labor supply.

Third, planters struggled to supplant the "job system," whereby a laborer would contract for a specific job such as hoeing, ploughing, woodchopping, or ditch-digging. Laborers strongly preferred this system, but planters, not surprisingly, found it incompatible with the military-like discipline necessary to run a modernizing sugar plantation.

Finally, planters attempted gradually to replace black male laborers with a cheaper and more docile labor force. Depending on the demographic and geographic characteristics of the region\*\*, planters proposed white immigration or the use of female black labor as a way of eliminating "undesirable" black male labor. Since Emancipation, black women had withdrawn themselves from the permanent plantation labor force, but in the late 1870s and 1880s planters strove to re-integrate them. By 1887 elite planters had created a sexual division of

labor wherein female labor often exclusively planted and cut the cane. Planters paid women 25 to 40 percent less than males for the same work.<sup>13</sup> The strategic creation of a sexual division of labor to complement the racial division not only created another cleavage in the work force but also tended to depress wage levels in general. Planters assumed that they were supplanting "unreliable" with "docile" labor.\*\*\*

From 1877 through 1887 laborers struggled intensely against the implementation of the LSPA program. In 1880 workers in five parishes along the Mississippi River struck in demand of 50 percent wage increases. The relatively mild repression of these movements, which involved hundreds of workers in each locality, in no way dampened the spirit of black proletarian resistance. Not a grinding season passed between 1881 and 1886 without reports of strikes in the sugar region. In October 1886 a strike of 250 cane cutters in Plaquemines announced another harvest of discontent. In January 1887, in upper Lafourche, 15 allegedly armed blacks organized a strike on three major plantations. A sheriff's posse apprehended eight of the militants. The *Thibodaux Sentinel* commented on the incident: "Un signe des temps."<sup>14</sup>

Strikes and strike threats were not the only means of worker resistance in the 1880s. The daily struggle against labor discipline — in the case of elite plantations, the militaristic control over the labor process in the fields — was intense and violent. In 1880 a planter in St. Mary's underscored the gravity of these struggles:



CUTTING CANE

They [blacks] are becoming more and more unmanageable. By degree they are bringing the planter to their way of thinking in regard to how they should work and no telling at what moment there will be a serious move to compel the planter to comply with any request. . . .<sup>15</sup>

Foremen killed workers occasionally in order to set a disciplinary example. Similarly, foremen were the immediate target of the workers' resistance to discipline. On November 16, 1880, for example, an assistant overseer murdered a laborer in the fields. On January 30, 1886, to cite one of numerous cases, laborer Albert Williams killed the overseer on W.H. Minor's Southdown Plantation in Terrebonne with a hoe. Revolvers proved a more common method of fighting the daily class war in the fields. The *Sentinel* commented succinctly, "Notre contre [sic] est toujours la terre classique du revolver." (Our wars are always fought with revolvers.)<sup>16</sup>

From 1874 to 1887, in a largely unorganized fashion, workers fought against militarized discipline and economic coercion, and for above-subsistence

\* It should be understood that many aspects of what we call the "program" of LSPA and Caffery were not formalized as such, nor did it burst forth in 1874 or 1877. Rather, scrip payments and wage withholdings had been objects of planter-laborer struggle since the war. Finally, the uneven development of the entire sugar region, posed one more difficulty for elite planters in the implementation of a coherent strategy.

\*\* In the Teche Region (Upper St. Mary's and New Iberia), planters continually organized and called for white immigration, due to the low population density and the availability of arable lands. The racial incidents (for example in New Iberia in 1884) and the considerable racist demagoguery in this region is probably not unrelated to the strategic possibility of supplanting black labor. In Lafourche, on the contrary, where cultivable land was defined by closely settled narrow bayous, it is not surprising that planters opposed immigration: "There are thousands of small farmers, swampers, ditchers, etc, who always come out to save those crops, men who are here all year round" (*The Sentinel*, August 20, 1885).

\*\*\* This point deserves more research. As for female labor "docility," the evidence is scanty and conflicting. On the one hand, many of the strikebreakers were indeed women, but no significant quantitative analysis can be made to render the statement meaningful. On the other hand, many black women in Thibodaux were clearly militant. Whether they were plantation laborers or not is unclear, although the documented desire of the latter to affiliate with the K of L gives credence to such an interpretation. It is, however, beyond doubt that planters sought to depress wages through greater reliance on female labor, and that the K of L fought for the principle of "equal work-equal wages" in the sugar region.



wages. When the laborers organized themselves into the K of L, their tactical goals synthesized previous struggles and threatened the very core of the elite planters' transitional program towards a "modern sugar industry." First, the organization of the K of L amounted to a formalized counterpower in the fields and mills. Second, organized workers demanded the elimination of the mechanisms which the planter considered essential to maintain a stable, dependent, and docile labor force. The workers demanded that payments in scrip instead of cash be abolished, that cash payments be made at short intervals rather than withheld for long periods, and that wages be increased to above subsistence levels. Their further demand for a unified wage category — \$1.25 a day and \$.60 a night for all workers — directly subverted planter efforts to depress the wages of male laborers, if not to replace them completely with lower-paid female workers. Finally, the cooperativist and anti-monopolist ideology of K of L militants threatened the planter elite's hegemony in land ownership.

#### THE KNIGHTS ORGANIZE

Inspired by national railroad strikes organized or supported by the K of L, white railroad workers in Morgan City organized the first local assembly in the sugar region in the fall of 1885.<sup>17</sup> The role these workers played in the February 1886 New Orleans-organized strike on the Morgan Line is unclear, but it was at that moment that they surfaced publicly. On February 22, 1886, the Morgan City *Free Press* greeted this development:

The *Free Press* notes with pleasure the organization of the laborers of Morgan City; it is something that should have been done years ago, for in no locality has labor been more imposed upon than here. Every effort has been made by the railroad monopoly to destroy the independence of its employees. They were not expected to have opinions of their own. If the Morgan Line considered that a certain storekeeper was unfriendly, the employees were given to understand that he was not to receive their trade, and woe be to him who failed to understand. . . . We would advise every laborer to join the association . . . to insist that the laborer is to work so many hours, to receive so much

money and to spend that money when and where he pleases.<sup>18</sup>

The unique conditions of this company town (population 2,500) organized around Charles Morgan's Railroad and Steamship Company provided fertile ground for the K of L organization. By July 1886 black railroad workers had organized a 150-member local which acted in concert with the white local. Within a year a total of seven locals, ranging from 50 to 150 members and including clothing and domestic workers, were func-

**The ideology of Knights of Labor militants, which was cooperative and anti-monopolist, threatened the planter elite's hegemony in land ownership.**

tioning in the Morgan City area. At least 80 percent of the work force belonged to the K of L. This precocious organizational development would have profound consequences for the labor movement in the sugar region.<sup>19</sup>

The concentration of district leadership in the hands of white railroad workers spurred the development of the K of L along the railroad lines; however, outside of its connection through railroads and steamboats, K of L district leadership was isolated from its base in the plantation zones of St. Mary's, Terrebonne, and Lafourche parishes. Moreover, the railroad-based organizational network tended to preclude the unification into the Knights local organization, District Assembly (DA) 194, of such

parishes as St. James, St. John the Baptist, and St. Charles, which were areas of intense strike activity in 1880. Thus thousands of potential militants were excluded from DA 194, and from any role in the 1887 strike.\*

The K of L domination of Morgan City also had direct political consequences. Anti-monopolism, as typified by the *Free Press* editorial, was an ideological perspective which appealed to nearly the entire population. In politics and economics, specific conditions supported an interclass alliance, which middle-class elements dominated. The municipal elections of January 1887 resulted in a sweep for K of L candidates. Four out of five of the elected officers were white merchants and physicians.<sup>20</sup> This election served as a model for similar interclass district assembly organizations in Franklin and in the Lafourche Parish seat of Thibodaux.

Small planters, farmers, urban workers, artisans, and small merchants all suffered at the hands of banks and railroad monopolies. Anti-monopolism oriented these social groups for self-defense against financial, commercial, and transportation interests which threatened to submerge them in a sea of foreclosures, bankruptcy, unemployment, and inflation. For the elite planters, the New York "Trust," New Orleans banks, and sugar factors (agents) provided a clear focus for development of an anti-monopolist discourse which could unify, under elite control, distinct social groups in the sugar region. But such a cohesive ideology was rendered problematic by the very monopolistic tendencies inherent in the elite planters' movement toward centralizing the local manufacturing process and dominating the primary producers. Trapped between a nascent anti-monopolist alliance on the one side and continual plantation laborer unrest on the other, the planter elite in the 1880s had to make important ideological and political concessions to the alliance. But these very concessions on the one flank would debilitate elite defenses against labor.

Anti-monopolism as championed by the Knights of Labor in the countryside had two concrete meanings for laborers. First, it meant resistance to those

\* Many of these Mississippi Parish workers belonged to DA 102, based in New Orleans. There was no apparent coordination between the two DAs, perhaps owing to the fact that DA 102 began organizing the River parishes only in October 1877.

aspects of plantation wage labor which coerced them into remaining under planter domination: subsistence wages, scrip payment, and wage withholdings. Second, the K of L prescription for a new system based on cooperative production meshed perfectly with traditional desires for agrarian reform.

The Knights program attracted skilled workers, laborers, shop owners, several white newspaper editors, and black schoolteachers involved in the local Republican Party who opposed plantation domination of politics. On August 12, 1886, the first local assembly of sugar workers was organized in the town of Schriever, which was little more than a railroad depot located in the midst of the most productive and modernized sector of the Terrebonne sugar industry. A year later, LA 8404 had over 300 members. Originally composed exclusively of black workers, it grew to become the first integrated branch of the K of L, and it is probable that this local initiated the plans to make wage demands on the Planters Association in 1887.<sup>21</sup>

Other locals sprang up throughout the sugar region, in both the upper "advanced" and lower "backward" areas; some were segregated by race and trade, others were mixed, and most were exclusively dominated by male middle-class and working-class leaders.

## THE STRIKE

In August 1887 the leaders of DA 194 proposed negotiations with the St. Mary's branch of the LSPA, citing the universal predictions of a bumper crop and expressing the desire to avoid a "misunderstanding" between employer and employee. The LSPA politely refused the proposed negotiations.<sup>22</sup> At that moment, the DA 194 leadership sought to increase its leverage by incorporating Terrebonne and Lafourche assemblies into its radius of action. Constant communication about organizational growth, brief work-stoppages, and economic distress undoubtedly conditioned this decision. At the time, the leadership did not anticipate the necessity of engaging in strike activity to obtain wage increases and the abolition of the scrip system. Nevertheless, they felt that if necessary a strike would triumph, given the solidarity of railroad and steamboat workers who would block attempts to bring in scabs (probably convict laborers).

Curiously, K of L leaders did not anticipate the use of the state militia to pro-

tect strikebreakers.<sup>23</sup> The union had several militant members in the militia, and the railroad men may have supposed that because the militia consisted of \$2.50-a-day "mechanics" like themselves, class solidarity would prevail. Although several white railroad workers had conquered their own racism to the point of being tireless organizers of black workers, the K of L also failed to recognize that other white workers were not as committed to the Knight's doctrine of interracial solidarity. Nor did the K of L see the weakness in allowing middle-class merchants, craftsmen, and professionals to take positions of leadership over a working-class agenda. Indeed, as St. Mary's planters met during October to devise strike-breaking tactics, they received the collaboration of the white middle-class-dominated assembly in Franklin.

The full extent of the internal weaknesses of the Knights had not yet emerged, and on October 19 delegates from DA 194's three parishes met and in a militant mood adopted three demands:

1. wage increases from \$1 to \$1.25 per 12-hour day shift and from \$.50 to \$.60 for the six-hour night shift ("watch");
2. elimination of scrip;
3. payment every two weeks for the day shift and every week for obligatory night work.

The delegates resolved to strike on November 1 if the planters did not agree to their demands. K of L leaders in Lafourche let it be known that they would compromise if the demands were considered "exorbitant." The planters in Thibodaux, on the other hand, left no doubt about their position. Comforted by the knowledge that 11 artillery companies and two cavalry detachments were ready to occupy the sugar district, Republican judge Taylor Beattie and Democratic state senator E. A. O'Sul-



MAKING THE SUGAR

livan, in a nonpartisan gesture, organized a meeting of planters on Saturday, October 30. The planters and other "influential people" refused to recognize the K of L or any of its demands, pledged to blacklist any discharged employees, and promised the lawful eviction of any strikers on the plantation.

Lafourche planters awoke the next morning to find that virtually no laborers had reported to work. Planter morale, however, was uplifted by the 4:00 p.m. arrival at the train depot of two companies of the state militia composed of 48 men equipped with a Gatling gun, which they installed in front of the courthouse. A crowd of 500 black and white strikers peaceably gathered in the town square facing the troops and their Gatling gun. Inside the courthouse, Judge Beattie presided over a hastily called meeting of planters from the Thibodaux area.

Beattie and the planters briefed the militia's Brigadier General Pierce on the situation in Lafourche. The strike was practically general throughout the parish. Planters in lower Lafourche had already given in to the strikers' demands, setting a precedent which threatened planter solidarity. Moreover, bringing in strikebreakers to upper Lafourche would prove difficult. Already the laborers had refused to vacate their cabins when ordered to do so by the planters. General Pierce listened patiently, and then strongly suggested that the strikers had to be evicted immediately. Judge Beattie and Judge Knoblock (an ex-planter who was both a district judge and lieutenant governor) issued warrants for the arrest of over a dozen strikers. The planters promised to defray all state expenses and to board and lodge all militiamen.

On Wednesday, November 2, the situation in Thibodaux became more strained as evicted strikers from neighboring plantations moved their possessions into the black and mulatto areas of town. A sheriff's posse supported by state troops arrested several workers who refused to vacate their cabins. Local K of L leaders posted bond and obtained their release.

Late in the afternoon, General Pierce met with Judge Beattie and Lieutenant-Governor Knoblock. Beattie and Knoblock believed the strike would be settled in "two or three days, but the General was impatient." He urged the militia to commence "heroic and vigorous action" to enforce the eviction of all strik-



ers (the majority still remained) from their plantation-owned homes. As if sent by fate to win the general's argument, C.S. Mathews, a prosperous Lockport planter, burst into the courthouse and declared that in lower Lafourche "scenes of depredations and bloodshed were imminent" on both sides of the bayou in the Lockport area. He asked for a company of militia to go to the region, inaccessible by rail or telegraph. On Thursday, one militia battalion journeyed by train to Raceland and then made the seven-mile march to the Mathews place.

In Thibodaux, the K of L local leadership foresaw the mounting problems caused by the state's armed presence and control of the railroads: they would have to sustain and discipline an increasing Thibodaux population of evicted strikers. Negotiations for goals short of total victory were thus imperative, and were apparently going on with Beattie's group of elite planters. Indeed, on the third day of the strike, a negotiated settlement seemed a distinct possibility. However, the news that planter Rochard Foret had been shot on his Lockport plantation in self-defense by a K of L militant, Moses Pugh, aborted the possibility of a negotiated settlement.

Accompanied by a deputy sheriff's posse, General Pierce made a four-and-a-half-hour journey by buggy from Thibodaux to Lockport. When the general arrived, he found Foret's condition satisfactory. A large crowd of blacks "hooted and used violent language, the women waving shirts on poles, and jeering," when the battalion arrested Pugh. K of L delegates Gustave Antoine and Julius Allen were also arrested on charges of obstructing justice. Three black small farmers — the Goff brothers and Henry Franklin — posted bail.

The violence in Lockport, in southern Lafourche, undoubtedly hardened Pierce's militancy. The Lafourche Planters' Association met the next day, on Saturday, November 4, to assess the situation which seemed to be shifting in their favor. In upper Lafourche perhaps 20 percent of the labor force (mostly women) had returned that morning to work, hungry and intimidated by the troops. The planters organized massive shipments of strikebreakers from the now terminated cotton harvests in Mississippi. Moreover, they had succeeded in driving a wedge through the K of L leadership in Thibodaux. When Delphin Monnier, a white small farmer and K of L delegate, was beaten for protesting the

arrests of two fellow white strikers in Laurel Valley, he switched sides from being a "dangerous anarchist" to join L.C. Aubert, the K of L building contractor, in a public condemnation of the strike. Given these favorable developments, the planters believed, negotiations with the strikers had lost their urgency. The association lodged a formal request with General Pierce to maintain the state forces in Thibodaux until the strikebreakers were safely at work.

Events in St. Mary's further aug-

[REDACTED]

**The planters refused to recognize any of the strikers demands, pledged to blacklist any discharged employees, and promised to evict any strikers.**

[REDACTED]

mented the Lafourche planters' power. Military occupation of the railroads effectively isolated the DA 194 leadership in Morgan City. Pattersonville, a predominantly black town, became the



PLANTATION SUGARHOUSE

focus of strike activity during the first week of November, as hundreds of evicted strikers moved there. On November 5, a sheriff's posse led by K of L white delegate A.J. Frere and supported by a battalion of state militia marched into the town and massacred between five and 20 residents. Donelson Caffery, the elite planter who had issued the call for planter unity a decade earlier, described himself as a reluctant participant in the massacre, and a week later wrote:

I think I will make 3 or 4 thousand if I can save my crop. The strike is effectually squelched. It was necessary to apply a strong remedy. The negroes are quiet and with few exceptions have gone to work. A few bad white men ought to be harshly dealt with and then there will be no more.

One black K of L leader wrote during that fateful week: "The planters and Government are trying to crush our Order out of existence . . . but they only strengthen our resolve." Nevertheless, this labor militant substantiated Caffery's and newspaper assertions that the St. Mary's strike movement was mortally weakened by the racist violence. He ended his letter by stating that his 377-member black local had leased a large plantation which they planned to work as a cooperative, thus indicating he recognized that a strike victory was unlikely.

The weakening of the strike movement in Terrebonne Parish further isolated Lafourche workers from any potential solidarity. The Terrebonne workers struck one week earlier than the Lafourche laborers; elite planters there placed orders for Mississippi white and black strikebreakers, and by November 10, 800 were working the Terrebonne plantation. State militia aggressively protected the welfare of the strikebreakers. Local authorities, backed by militia, arrested at least 50 strikers in a "modern" section of Terrebonne. In the rest of the parish at least 11 of the less prominent planters, in zones where whites formed a significant part of the work force, had acceded to the strike demands. A visit from a national K of L organizer and the continued support of the Terrebonne *Times* apparently stimulated a second wave of strike activity in the Houma-Schreiver area between November 15 and 20. During this period, a militant laborer wrote from Terrebonne:

The cane being ripe, the planters must either come to terms or lose their crops. The many companies of the state militia cannot harvest the crops nor drive the united laborers to do so at starvation prices.

By November 20, however, the strike had ended in the modern sector of Terrebonne. The militia and a planter-organized vigilante committee guaranteed the right to work for strikebreakers and demoralized laborers. The plantations where the strikers had triumphed had no practical effect on the parish's sugar plantations as a whole. The black and white workers of Canal Belanger, a "backward" zone, maintained the only pocket of resistance, but they were by November 20 alone and cut off from all communications.

The failure of the strike in St. Mary's and Terrebonne, at the very least, made it clear to upper Lafourche K of L militants that they would have to continue the fight alone. Moreover, since the first week of November the DA 194 leadership had not communicated with Lafourche militants. New Orleans DA 102's gesture of solidarity — a blistering condemnation of Governor McEnery's military intervention in general and the Pattersonville massacre in particular, as well as an appeal to the nation's working class to work for the repeal of the sugar tariff to "bring the planters to a sense of justice" — had served only to strengthen the planters' position. Elite planters who backed McEnery's opponent in the December Democratic primary\* could not help but close ranks with the other planters in support of the governor and his military agent, General Pierce. Republican Judge Beattie of course was thrilled that the troops had named their site "Camp Beattie," and the K of L manifesto had snapped the last bond of sympathy he may have felt towards his former black Republican allies. Moreover, the white population of Thibodaux, including many former K of L supporters, seemed to be turning against the strikers. After all, a repeal of the sugar tariff would destroy the town more thoroughly than the newly circulating rumor of a plot by black strikers to burn the town.

Although the Thibodaux K of L lead-

\* Governor McEnery and ex-Governor Nicholls, the "reformist," campaigned through the fall for the Democratic primary election, to be held in December. Nicholls had important support among elite planters. McEnery waged his campaign with vigorous racist demagoguery.

ers protested that they maintained a strict discipline in Thibodaux and that no violence had occurred since the strike began, they could not deny that unknown people had shot into several sugar mills in upper Lafourche, where small groups of local white workers processed the cane cut by the reduced crew of strikebreakers.

The foreman on the Leighton place was wounded the night of November 16. On November 17, Judge Beattie, accompanied by a small armed entourage of local residents, walked into the K of L's office in the St. Charles Street area. His visit was brief. He did not wish to talk, and stated only that "the shooting and burning must cease. You will be personally held responsible . . . the community must begin to look to their lives and property and protect themselves." The committee left before the K of L leaders could protest their innocence. Beattie and his group went back to the Hotel de Ville and began a very serious discussion.

The Thibodaux-area planters were truly amazed at the determination and resourcefulness of the strikers. Not one of the more than 500 newcomers was having to sleep outdoors. Somehow the newcomers were bringing in food to the strikers, probably with the help of black farmers from the Lockport area. (Down there the strike was basically over. The planters had given in, with the exception of Mathews, who was allowed to work half a crew unmolested. The old eccentric planter Godchaux had his force back at work on the strikers' terms. He was getting richer every day, a bad precedent for planter unity.) Beattie admitted that the general had assessed the situation correctly at every juncture. Pierce



HARVESTING SUGAR CANE

had indeed been right to force the eviction issue with "heroic and vigorous" action. But this had worked better in Terrebonne where the planters had not counted on an early settlement and had brought in a sufficient quantity of strikebreakers. In the Thibodaux area, two Laurel Valley planters had already lost half of their crops and the weather was getting colder; a freeze would wreak more damage and the Thibodaux strikers showed no signs of weakening. Even the "arrogance" of the local black women — mostly their own domestic workers — was beginning to grate on the planters. The general had long argued that the planters take bolder steps on their own and in the last few days he suggested that "the troops were . . . in the road of an early settlement of the strike." Now the committee accepted his argument for local-based repression. They petitioned him to maintain the Shreveport Guards in town until Monday, November 21. By then the planters would have organized their "self-defense."

On Sunday afternoon, November 20, Rhody DeZauche, the barrel maker, was giving a speech to a large group of black strikers on the south side of the Thibodaux canal. A sheriff's posse grouped on the other side of the canal. The sheriff thought he heard DeZauche call for the burning of Thibodaux, and the predominantly black crowd responded with loud cheers. The heavily armed white men crossed the bridge and grabbed DeZauche. The sheriff arrested him on charges of conspiracy to commit murder.

Mary Pugh, the adult daughter of a prominent planter family from Assumption parish, wrote to her son that she was wondering aloud, as she walked out of church, if the congregation would be allowed to celebrate Thanksgiving. News from the canal interrupted her meditation. Many armed whites raced towards the south side. As she started walking home, she became terrified by the spectacle of three black men walking down the other side of the street, armed with double-barreled shot guns. A black woman leaned out a window and shouted: "Fight yes! Fight! We'll be there."

On Sunday evening a crowd of 300 white men gathered to hear speeches by town officials and elite planters. They were urged to constitute themselves as a local militia, deputized to guard every "entrance and inlet" to the town. The speakers claimed that there were strong indications that blacks planned to invade



Thibodaux, aided by the strikers who had stockpiled arms on St. Charles Street. From Sunday night until Wednesday at dawn, over 300 "pickets" — Thibodaux residents and white volunteers from neighboring parishes — thoroughly guarded the town day and night. No black person could enter or leave the town without the written permission of Judge Beattie.

Monday morning two K of L delegates went to see the mayor. They protested vehemently that rumors of impending black violence were totally unfounded, and that the few arms in black hands were shotguns for self-defense. They urged the re-opening of negotiations.

On Monday night a group of armed white men walked into Henry Franklin's crowded barroom. Two shots exploded. Two black men staggered out of the bar onto Jackson Street. One fell down. The other walked for a block and dropped dead.

Tuesday morning the planters announced that they were engaged in fruitful negotiations with the strikers. K of L leaders Henry and George Cox were then arrested on charges of making incendiary speeches. Later, Beattie would call the charges misdemeanors. Throughout the night, vigilantes rode through the St. Charles area shooting into the air.

Between 4:00 and 5:00 a.m. Wednesday morning, Joseph Molaison, the son of a dry goods store owner, and Henry Gorman, a co-proprietor of a foundry, were warming their freezing hands over a fire by a "picket" station on St. Charles Street. Unidentified people, most probably blacks trying to escape from Thibodaux, fired two shots. One bullet grazed Molaison's leg. Another bullet entered Gorman's head, just below his bushy eyebrows. Miraculously the bullet emerged out of his bloody mouth. The shots snapped groggy deputies to attention. The impulse for retribution propelled them from Beattie's courthouse to St. Charles Street, where pickets were already storming a large brick building which housed many strikers' families.

Every shot which pierced the cold dawn air made Mary Pugh thankful that her husband had left town. She saw crowds of armed white men leading blacks along with the English carpenter Foote, a K of L leader, towards the commons. Then the noise became deafening, like that of a battle.

She looked across the canal and saw elite planter Andrew Price lead a group

of men into a house. They emerged dragging a black man with them. The group crossed the bridge over the canal and walked right past Mary Pugh's side gate. She, along with a few neighbors, followed. She thought they were headed to the jail, but:

Instead they walked with one over to the lumber yard where they told him to "run for his life" — gave the order to fire — all raised their rifles and shot him dead. This was the worst sight I saw, but I tell you we

**The end of the strike initiated a period of terror directed primarily against black people. "Regulators" drove most militants from the parish.**

have had a horrible three days — and Wednesday excelled anything I ever saw even during the War. I am sick with the horror of it — but I know it had to be else we would have been murdered before a great



KETTLES IN AN ANTE-BELLUM SUGAR HOUSE

while — I think this will settle the question of who is to rule the nigger or the white man for the next fifty years.

## AFTERMATH

Mary Pugh estimated that over 50 black people were massacred on the morning of November 23, 1887.<sup>24</sup> Others estimated the death toll at from 30 to 300. Judge Beattie released the Cox brothers from prison later that morning and told them to run for their lives. Solomon Williams sought official protection, but instead was marched to the bayou. All three K of L leaders were most likely assassinated. Ten months later a band of white vigilantes — a common sight in post-November Lafourche — broke into Gustave Antoine's house, dragged him to a tree, tied him up, and riddled his body with bullets. Earlier in the year a similar group "expropriated" the black farming cooperative in Antoine's neighborhood.

In Terrebonne, the end of the strike initiated a period of terror directed principally against black people. "Regulators" drove most militants from the parish. The editor of the Terrebonne *Times*, Dr. H.M. Wallis, a K of L supporter in Houma, wrote:

The record of crime growing out of our labor trouble is now complete, blood has been shed and the moloch of vengeance has been satiated with the sacrifice of human life. And who is to blame for this state of affairs? We answer unhesitatingly the intelligent though not over scrupulous planter. In his bullheadedness he has over shot the mark and is answerable for his recklessness. Either through his inspiration or disloyalty to the mandates of the civil law and the rights of others, there has sprung into the existence a mushroom crop of bull-dozers all over the troubled section, who are exercising unauthorized vengeance upon the unarmed negroes — such a sight sickens sympathy and destroys all regard for law. . . . The object of these intimidators seems to be twofold; first to break up the lodges of the Knights of Labor and scatter its membership, and secondly to make use of intimidation for political effect.

Only two K of L assemblies functioned in Lafourche and Terrebonne Parishes in November 1888. These were LA 1043 at Canal Belanger and LA 10943 at

Harangville, precisely the less technologically advanced and racially more open zones where the K of L had won at least partial victories.

On February 21, 1888, Donelson Caffery, the elite planter and politician, wrote to his wife: "I went to Pattersonville on Sunday and organized a branch of the 'law and order league.' They are very enthusiastic down there to have a white man's government." Caffery, along with other "progressive" planters, had at last found a political solution to the "labor question" which had plagued them throughout the decade. The smashing of the labor movement and the establishment of racist political rule in the region shaped the transition to modern industry.

The immediate effect of the union defeat on Lafourche and Terrebonne laborers, beyond generalized terrorism, is hard to ascertain. Reports from neighboring parishes, however, make it clear that the planter elite used their consolidated power to solidify mechanisms designed to maintain a submissive and stable work force. By September 1888 scrip payments equivalent to subsistence wages prevailed throughout the region. A laborer in St. John's wrote: "If members of a family be more than two it costs more for living than the present wages can afford." In addition, in many cases planters began to charge rent for cabins and to deny laborers' right to farm an *arpent*. Thus as the elite tied laborers to the plantations through scrip they turned into monetary terms every social relationship within their domain, thereby further deepening the workers' dependency and bondage through indebtedness.

By 1894 over half of the sugar mills operating in 1887 had ceased to grind cane. Former small manufacturers became cane farmers, supplying the elite central factories. During the same brief period sugar production increased over 100 percent. By 1900 the organization of production in the sugar region only vaguely resembled the system prevalent in the 1880s: production was almost entirely concentrated in a handful of fully modernized central factories, operated almost exclusively by white labor. On the greatly expanded elite plantations in the leading sugar parishes of St. Mary's, Terrebonne, and Lafourche, many new white tenants closely supervised small groups of black laborers (often female), who worked in the fields from dawn to dusk, under conditions approximating slavery.

## THE PLANTERS' SOLUTION

The socio-geographic development of the strike significantly shaped its outcome. Although the K of L organized locals in upper and lower Lafourche, the strike did not develop similarly in the two regions. Planters in lower Lafourche who manufactured brown sugar inefficiently with the open kettle process literally could not afford to lose production. Burdened by increasing debts to New Orleans bankers and factors, with no immediate prospects of increasing production through modernization, many lower Lafourche planters might have lost their mills and land as a result of a prolonged strike.<sup>25</sup> "Lower" planters confronted a visibly unified multiracial movement, materially supported by the black and white small farmers of lower Lafourche. Moreover, it is highly doubtful that "lower" planters, geographically and culturally isolated from elite "upper" planters, felt much class solidarity with the planter-manufacturers who seemed determined to subjugate the southern area's sugar production to their needs.

Lower Lafourche demography and the primitive level of the productive forces shaped the labor movement. In contrast to upper Lafourche, proportionately more whites worked as permanent and seasonal laborers. A large mulatto population, in part the result of postwar miscegenation, probably eased racial tensions on the plantations. Moreover, the open kettle process of sugar manufacture provided no technical basis for a racial division of labor. Previously, slaves had performed all tasks in open kettle manufacturing. Following Emancipation whites and blacks worked as threshers, cane loaders, and as highly skilled sugar boilers during the grinding



SLAVE  
QUARTERS  
ON AN  
ANTE-BELLUM  
PLANTATION

season. Just as no technical division existed between skilled and unskilled workers, similarly plantation labor and mill labor was essentially undifferentiated. Typically, a black, white, or racially-mixed lower Lafourche laborer alternated between field and mill tasks, regardless of skill level.<sup>26</sup> Thus the low level of development of the productive forces did not permit a technical differentiation among mill worker or between industrial and agricultural laborers, which in turn would have provided the basis for a racial division of labor. Such a division of labor, a technical basis for white supremacist ideology, would have allowed lower Lafourche planters to pit white against black workers. Instead the planters confronted a unified multiracial movement buttressed by the material support of black and white small farmers.

In contrast to lower Lafourche, large fully modernized plantation-refineries dominated the economy of the area north of Lockport and enforced an increasingly clear racial division of labor. Blacks made up the overwhelming majority of permanent field laborers and participated in the manufacturing sector as unskilled laborers. Whites, often small farmers and urban residents, worked as seasonal field laborers and as skilled and semi-skilled mill hands. The emergence of the modern sugar industry involved the creation of new relations of production, which, in turn, conditioned the development of a racial division of labor in the sugar region. The introduction of vacuum pans, shredders, and centrifugals confronted planters with the task of training new operatives. These new tasks were not necessarily more skilled — that is, they did not involve more mental and manual dexterity — than open kettle mill work. But planters chose not to retrain black mill workers. Whites, often urban residents, became the new skilled workers in the modern sector. Although our data are insufficient, it appears certain that these workers received salaries at least twice those of unskilled workers.<sup>27</sup>

The process of racial and technical division of labor was concomitant with the development of modern industry. By 1911 cane production and sugar processing were totally separate entities. No field workers participated in sugar production. Blacks worked the fields at subsistence wages while substantially higher-paid whites labored in the mills.<sup>28</sup>

Such a clear racial separation between



field and factory workers was still an incipient tendency in 1887. Elite planters in Upper Lafourche, however, such as Beattie, Price, and Warmold, had succeeded in organizing production along racial lines. The structural racial division on these elite plantations seriously undermined the labor movement and clearly played a key role in the combination of class and race struggle.

Although it is unclear whether the K of L organized skilled white workers in modern mills, there exists no doubt that many of these workers acted as strike-

  
**The smashing of the labor movement and the establishment of racist political rule in the region shaped the transition to modern industry.**  


breakers. Indeed, the modern mills in Upper Lafourche operated, by the second week of the strike, with nuclei of white workers. These strikebreakers, working at night, became the obvious target for spontaneous acts of striker resistance. Strikers shot at skilled white strikebreakers on several different occasions. These actions not only provided a pretext for planter and state repression but also helped make a plausible argument for racial struggle. The settlement of the strike in isolated lower Lafourche deprived workers in the more technologically advanced areas of visible solidarity with white workers which would have belied the planters' propaganda about racial conflict. And the eviction of upper Lafourche plantation workers from

their cabins meant that between 500 and 1,000 mostly black strikers flooded into Thibodaux and turned the town, in the eyes of many whites, into a hostile black ghetto.

Some courageous white workers fought alongside blacks even after November 20. But the manipulation of a labor struggle into an apparent racial power struggle by that date clearly shaped the racist terror which began at dawn on November 23. While non-elite whites were probably swayed to the planters' side by racial appeals, it is doubtful that racism alone conditioned the planters' response. Rather, Judge Beattie and Andrew Price came to the realization that the continued progress of their industry, based on exploitation of workers beyond that which would have occurred without violence and terror, hinged on the elimination of all manifestations of workers' autonomy. In this sense, the blood shed in November 1887 fertilized the ground on which modern industry could grow. This, indeed, was the solution to the planters' "labor problem."<sup>8</sup>

*Jeffrey Gould, a doctoral candidate in Latin American history at Yale, is currently engaged in dissertation research in Chichigalpa, Nicaragua, a sugar-producing area. He wishes to express deep gratitude to David Montgomery for his tireless encouragement, interest, and support for the research and writing of this essay. He also thanks Conrad Russell for obtaining financial assistance and Emilia da Costa and Eric Arnesen for reading and criticizing the essay from which this is excerpted. The full essay and detailed references are available from the author by writing the history department of Yale University.*

#### NOTES

1. General William Pierce, *Report to the Adjutant General* (Baton Rouge, 1888), p. 4.
2. Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker 1619-1972* (New York, 1973), p. 61; Melton McLaurin, *The Knights of Labor in the South* (Westport, CT, 1978), p. 61.
3. William Ivy Hair, *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest* (Baton Rouge, 1969), p. 185.
4. "Report of Special Commission," January 22, 1874, *Journal of House of Representatives* (Baton Rouge, 1874), p. 62; *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, January 22, 1874.
5. "Report of Special Commission," *Daily Picayune*, January 22, 1874; *Black Republican* 14, January 22, 1874.
6. On Kennedy's election as sheriff, see "House Investigations on Louisiana 1878 election," *Miscellaneous House Documents* vol. 1, no. 12, 2nd session of 41st Congress, 1880; on arrest as labor militant, *Criminal Docket*, Terrebonne Parish, November 16, 1880.
7. *Black Republican*, January 22, 1874; *Criminal Docket*, Terrebonne Parish, December 1887; both Kennedy and Keys are listed as laborers in Census, 1880.

8. J. Carlye Sitterson, "The Transition from Slave to Free Economy on the W.J. Minor Plantations," *Agricultural History* XVII (1943), p. 220.

9. *Ibid.*: "History of Glenwild Plantation," in Pharo Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, L.S.U. Clearly, more work needs to be done on the "arpent." Slaves had the right to a "garden patch," but not to an "arpent."

10. *Daily Picayune*, September 30, 1877.

11. This was more of a goal than an actual uniform policy. Yearly withholdings were less frequent in 1887 than in 1880. Statement based on examination of other papers cited here; see also letter by W.W. Pugh in *Daily Picayune*, November 20, 1887.

12. *Journal of United Labor*, October 4, 1888. Estimate based on comparison of plantation store prices and wholesale prices. Also see letter by W.B. Merchant published in *Weekly Pelican*, November 19, 1887.

13. In addition to other sources cited here, see particularly *Journal* citations for wage differential rate.

14. *Louisiana Sugar Bowl* April 28, 1881; *Report of the Grand Jury*, St. John the Baptist Parish, 1882, 1883; *Donaldsonville Chief*, *Assumption Pioneer*; Sidney Kessler, "The Negro in Labor Strikes," *Midwest Journal*, Summer 1954; *Thibodaux Sentinel*, January 22, 1887.

15. *Louisiana Sugar Bowl*, July 15, 1880.

16. *Ibid.*, November 14, 1880; *Sentinel*, January 30, 1886 and February 27, 1886.

17. *Powderly Papers*, letter from D.B. Allison and Edward Gallagher to Powderly, July 7, 1886.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Morgan City Free Press*, February 22, 1886; *Journal of United Labor*, February 1887.

20. *John Swinton's Paper* December 12, 1886; *Daily Picayune*, January 4, 1887; Manuscript Census, 1880.

21. *Journal of United Labor*, April 30, 1887.

22. The following description of the strike is based on a number of manuscript and newspaper sources, including: *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, October 29, 1887 — December 3, 1887; *Journal of United Labor*, September 17, 1887; the Manuscript Census for Lafourche Parish; *Thibodaux Sentinel* for September 5, 1887 — December 3, 1887; "Report to the Adjutant General," *The Criminal Docket* for Lafourche Parish for 1887-1888; *Terrebonne Times*, November 12, 1887; *New Orleans Times-Democrat*, November 8, 1887; *Assumption Pioneer*, November 12, 1887 and November 26, 1887; *Weekly Pelican*, November 19, 1887 and November 26, 1887; *The Daily States*, November 15, 1887; *Southwest Christian Advocate*, November 19, 1887 — December 15, 1887; The Caffery Papers and the Pugh Papers in the LSU Manuscript and Archives; Covington Woods, "Conflict in the Sugar Fields," manuscript reprinted in Philip Foner and Ronald Lewis, eds., *The Black Workers During the Era of the Knights of Labor* (Philadelphia, 1978).

23. 20 members of the Morgan City Knights were members of the militia. This may have influenced DA 194 leadership myopia.

24. The events following the strike are based primarily on these sources: *Daily Picayune*, November 24, 25, 26, 1887; *The Daily States*, November 15 and 24, 1887; *Southwest Christian Advocate*, December 1, 1887 and December 15, 1887; *Weekly Pelican*, November 26, 1887; *Louisiana Standard*, September 1, 1887; *Thibodaux Sentinel*, March 30, 1888; *Journal of United Labor*, June 2, 1888 and October 4, 1888; Pugh Papers, Hayes Papers, and Caffery Papers in LSU Manuscripts and Archives; Covington Woods, "Conflict."

25. Covington Woods, "Conflict," *Pioneer*, November 26, 1887.

26. Manuscript Census, 1880; *Ibid.*; *Sentinel*, August 20, 1885.

27. *Journal of United Labor*, May 30, 1887 and August 13, 1887; lower mechanic/laborer wage ratio offered for Plaquemines: October 29, 1887.

28. *Sugar Industry* (1913), pp. 28, 84-86.

# STEEL WORKERS IN A BOOM TOWN BIRMINGHAM, 1900

On Labor Day weekend, 1983, Sloss Furnaces opened its gates to the people of Birmingham, Alabama. Six thousand citizens, including former workers and their relatives, came to examine the site where thousands of men had worked over the years between 1881 and 1971.

*When the Jim Walter Corporation closed the furnaces in 1971, they deeded Sloss to the Alabama State Fair Authority with the hope that it could be made into an industrial history museum. The State Fair Authority did not consider the preservation of the furnaces feasible, and instead proposed their dismantlement.*

*The threatened destruction of Sloss Furnaces resulted in great public outcry. A group of citizens, including many former employees, organized the Sloss Furnace Association; through their work the furnaces were deeded to the City of Birmingham, and city voters passed a special bond referendum which raised funds for preservation and development of the historic property. In 1979 the U.S. Department of the Interior designated Sloss Furnaces as a National Historic Landmark.*

*Today Sloss serves as an important symbol of Birmingham's past, as a museum, and as a popular community center. The work of reconstructing the past has begun in earnest. Unfortunately, few written manuscripts have survived, company records have never been located, and public archival materials are scarce. The absence of these written materials about Sloss Furnaces has forced researchers to rely heavily on oral histories, material artifacts at the site, maps, and — as is done here — entries about individual workers in city directories and the manuscript census.*

*Data gleaned from city directories and the manuscript census yields a composite picture of workers' lives in a Southern industrial city. Patterns of work, family, and community become clearer as tabulated figures provide details about age, race, and household size. Home addresses provide clues to neighborhood composition, and job titles flesh out the meaning of the ubiquitous term "laborer." We offer this as a snapshot of Birmingham workers in 1900, and as a starting point for further analysis, and as an example of what can be done in other cities.*

Birmingham, Alabama, was founded when railroads built after the Civil War connected the outside world to the rich yet untapped coal and iron ore deposits of the Jones Valley. At the intersection of two rail lines Birmingham began in 1871, and its new iron furnaces and steel mills soon attracted workers from all over the U.S. and Europe. Saloons flourished and the daily brawls and shootouts of rough settlers gave the New South boom town the nickname, "Big Bad Birmingham."

This study began as an investigation of a "company town" on the edge of Birmingham — specifically the area known as Sloss Quarters. Colonel James Withers Sloss, one of the city's earliest land speculators and railroad leaders, formed the Sloss Furnace Company in

1881. By 1900 his reorganized Sloss-Sheffield Steel & Iron Company (SSS&I) owned five coal mines in Jefferson County and two furnaces on the eastern and northern fringes of the city.

At the turn of the century Birmingham encompassed only a small area and most people walked around town. The city was divided into quadrants by a railroad line and a perpendicular main street, but a number of new suburbs hinted at the area's future growth. North Birmingham, Avondale, and East Birmingham were primarily industrial suburbs with small houses, East Lake, Woodlawn, Elyton, and Smithfield were residential suburbs with larger homes located further apart.

Many of the area's iron and steel companies, and certainly the coal mining operations in Alabama, owned and operated worker housing and commissaries. Their operations fit the pattern of the traditional company town: a dense cluster of sub-standard housing for long-time workers tied to a single corporation. According to the 1900 Birmingham City Directory, however, only 35, or one-third, of the household heads living in Sloss Quarters were employed by SSS&I. The other 69 workers living in the Quarters included 19 female laundresses and male industrial workers employed by other companies. The presence of so many non-Sloss workers in company-owned housing challenges the concept of a company town and raises a number of questions. Who were the Sloss workers? Where did they live, if not in the Quarters? And did the company maintain control over their lives and mobility?

No company records presently available answer these questions. City directories and census manuscripts are two useful sources for identifying Sloss workers by residency and occupation and for providing specific information about their families. A thorough search of the names of workers in the 1900 city directory identified 579 SSS&I workers and executives, of whom 437 were black males and 142 were white, including one woman, a stenographer. Nearly one half of the white men and one fourth of the black workers were also listed in the 1900 manuscript census. (The higher percentage of whites recorded in both sources reflects the fact that whites more often held skilled jobs, and blacks were more likely to live on alleys not included in the census.)

The profile of the Sloss workers that emerges from the census and city directory shows a work force of predominantly black laborers and exclusively white managers. The job segregation of workers by race is clearly apparent. Assuming that skilled, unskilled, and supervisory workers were found in both the furnaces and mines, we see that 98.1 percent of the blacks and 55.2 percent of the whites were involved in hard, physical labor; while only 1.9 percent of the blacks (two office "runners") worked outside the furnaces and mines, 44.8 percent of whites worked in other areas. Further, if we focus on the 133 skilled and unskilled workers listed in the census (see Table 1), it is clear that almost 80 percent of the hard labor was performed by black men.

The census records another group of workers engaged in hard labor: nearly 500 blacks and a few whites housed at the "SSS&I Convict Prison" in North Birmingham. Thus in 1900 nearly one half the Sloss workforce consisted of convict labor. Most of these men were arrested on charges of vagrancy and leased by Alabama counties to SSS&I for nine to ten dollars a month; the workers themselves received no money.

The census also allows us to ascertain some personal information about free Sloss workers — factors such as age, literacy, place of birth, and household composition. The average SSS&I employee was 35.3 years old (36.1 for blacks and 34.2 for whites), yet they lived in a city that had been a cornfield only 30 years earlier; essentially, they all came from somewhere else (Tables 2 and 3). All black workers, and all but one of their parents, were born in the South, mostly in rural Alabama. In contrast, only 41.8 percent of white workers were born in Alabama, and a fourth of their parents were foreign-born.

The continuous mobility of Sloss workers is demonstrated by the fact that a majority listed in the 1900 city directory do not show up in later editions. Indeed, some workers identified in both the 1900 directory and the census listed different addresses in the two documents, indicating a change of residence in the six-month interval between the preparation of these two surveys.

Census records provide abundant additional data on family life. For example, nearly three-fourths (72.2 percent) of black workers and three-fifths of white workers (58.2 percent) were married;

**TABLE 1**  
**Occupational Breakdown**  
**1900 Census Schedule**

| Whites             |                  | Blacks          |                  |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <b>Unskilled</b>   | <b>5(7.5%)</b>   | <b>Unsk.</b>    | <b>93(86.1%)</b> |
| furnace laborer    | 2                | furnace laborer | 44               |
| foundry worker     | 1                | day laborer     | 30               |
| quarry worker      | 1                | quarry laborer  | 16               |
| worker             | 1                | quarry duller   | 1                |
|                    |                  | quarry miner    | 2                |
| <b>Skilled</b>     | <b>22(32.9%)</b> | <b>Skilled</b>  | <b>13(12.0%)</b> |
| carpenter          | 2                | carpenter       | 1                |
| engineer           | 2                | engineer        | 1                |
| locomotive eng.    | 4                | locomotive eng. | 1                |
| stationary eng.    | 1                | weigher         | 1                |
| machinist          | 7                | iron loader     | 2                |
| stovekeeper        | 2                | iron carrier    | 2                |
| boilermaker        | 1                | coke puller     | 1                |
| blacksmith         | 2                | top filler      | 2                |
| weighmaster        | 1                | sandman         | 1                |
|                    |                  | iron moulder    | 1                |
| <b>Office</b>      | <b>16(23.9%)</b> | <b>Office</b>   | <b>2(1.8%)</b>   |
| bookkeeper         | 3                | messenger boy   | 1                |
| accountant/clerk   | 4                | office porter   | 1                |
| timekeeper         | 1                |                 |                  |
| secretary          | 1                |                 |                  |
| stenographer       | 6                |                 |                  |
| office boy         | 1                |                 |                  |
| <b>Store</b>       | <b>5(7.5%)</b>   |                 |                  |
| manager            | 1                |                 |                  |
| buyer              | 1                |                 |                  |
| bookkeeper         | 1                |                 |                  |
| store clerks       | 2                |                 |                  |
| <b>Pro&amp;Mgr</b> | <b>14(20.9%)</b> |                 |                  |
| chemist            | 3                |                 |                  |
| draftsman          | 1                |                 |                  |
| master mechanic    | 2                |                 |                  |
| yardmaster         | 1                |                 |                  |
| gang foreman       | 1                |                 |                  |
| machine shop for.  | 1                |                 |                  |
| quarry supt.       | 1                |                 |                  |
| furnace supt.      | 1                |                 |                  |
| manager            | 2                |                 |                  |
| chief civil eng.   | 1                |                 |                  |
| <b>Exec.</b>       | <b>5(7.5%)</b>   |                 |                  |
| president          | 1                |                 |                  |
| vice pres.         | 1                |                 |                  |
| secy/treas.        | 1                |                 |                  |
| auditor            | 1                |                 |                  |
| purchasing agt.    | 1                |                 |                  |

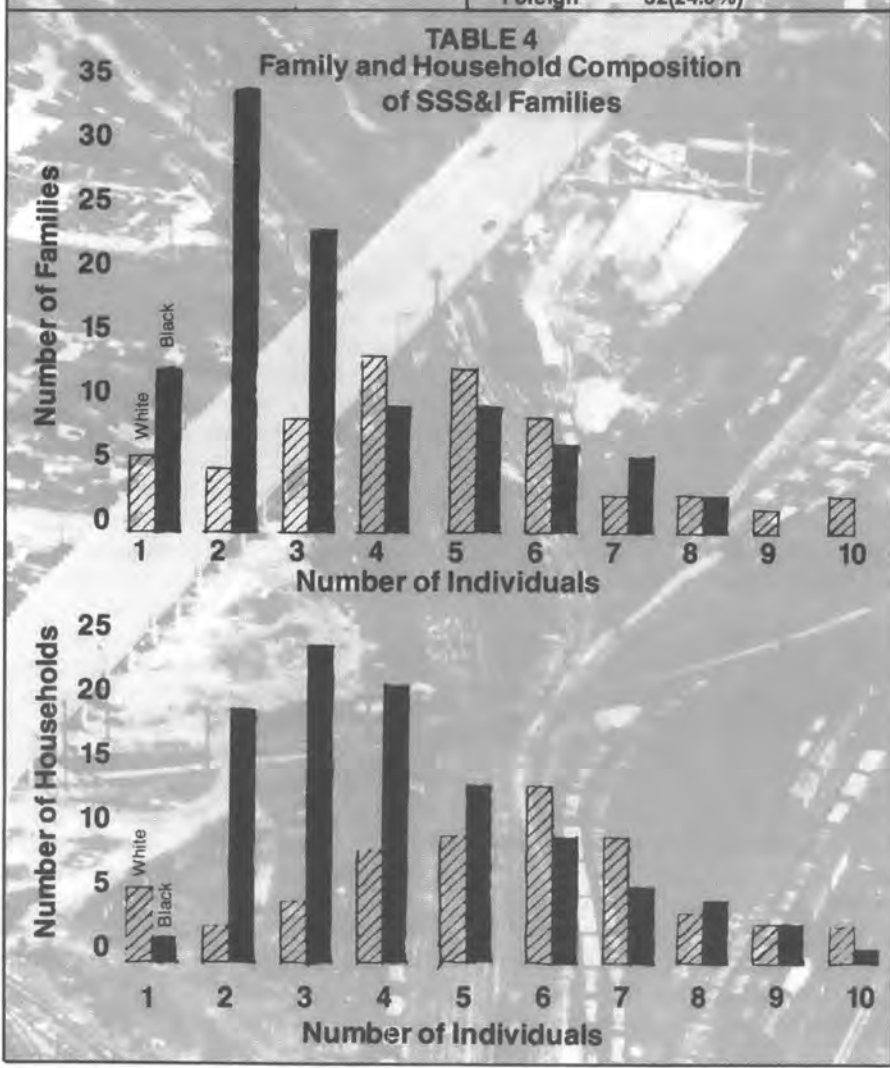


**TABLE 2**  
**Worker's Place of Birth**

| State          | Whites           | Blacks           |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Alabama        | 28               | 68               |
| Georgia        | 2                | 20               |
| Mississippi    | 4                | 3                |
| Tennessee      | 5                | 4                |
| Virginia       | 4                | 4                |
| South Carolina | 2                | 3                |
| North Carolina | 0                | 2                |
| Florida        | 0                | 2                |
| Louisiana      | 1                | 0                |
| Kentucky       | 1                | 0                |
| Arkansas       | 2                | 0                |
| <b>South</b>   | <b>49(73.1%)</b> | <b>106(100%)</b> |
| Ohio           | 3                |                  |
| Indiana        | 2                |                  |
| Pennsylvania   | 3                |                  |
| Delaware       | 1                |                  |
| Missouri       | 1                |                  |
| New York       | 1                |                  |
| <b>North</b>   | <b>11(16.4%)</b> |                  |
| England        | 2                |                  |
| Scotland       | 2                |                  |
| France         | 1                |                  |
| Germany        | 1                |                  |
| Canada         | 1                |                  |
| <b>Foreign</b> | <b>7(10.4%)</b>  |                  |

**TABLE 3**  
**Parent's Place of Birth**

| State          | Whites           | Blacks            |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Alabama        | 37               | 99                |
| Georgia        | 9                | 38                |
| Mississippi    | 5                | 6                 |
| Tennessee      | 7                | 7                 |
| Virginia       | 9                | 26                |
| South Carolina | 9                | 9                 |
| North Carolina | 2                | 7                 |
| Florida        | 0                | 3                 |
| Louisiana      | 2                | 0                 |
| Arkansas       | 4                | 0                 |
| <b>South</b>   | <b>84(64.6%)</b> | <b>195(99.5%)</b> |
| Ohio           | 6                | 0                 |
| Indiana        | 1                | 0                 |
| New York       | 3                | 0                 |
| Pennsylvania   | 3                | 0                 |
| Connecticut    | 1                | 0                 |
| Rhode Island   | 0                | 1                 |
| <b>North</b>   | <b>14(10.8%)</b> | <b>1(.5%)</b>     |
| England        | 8                |                   |
| Ireland        | 6                |                   |
| Scotland       | 8                |                   |
| Germany        | 5                |                   |
| Wales          | 2                |                   |
| France         | 2                |                   |
| Spain          | 1                |                   |
| <b>Foreign</b> | <b>32(24.6%)</b> |                   |



the average number of years of marriage ranged from 11 for blacks to 14 for whites. None of the wives of white Sloss workers indicated an occupation, while 19.2 percent of black wives worked for wages, usually as laundresses, cooks, and house servants.

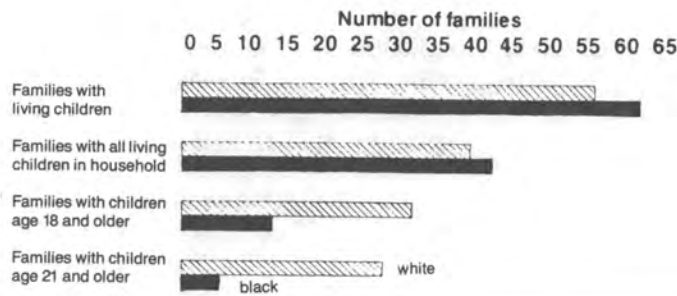
We often think of the typical 1900 family as including an assortment of grandparents, in-laws, cousins, and uncles, as well as non-relatives such as boarders and servants. We might also speculate that black households among the Sloss workers were larger than white ones since blacks were closer to their birthplaces and families. But Tables 4 and 5 demonstrate that the average white family with children and the average white household were in fact larger than their black counterparts (4.6 whites vs. 3.3 blacks for families, and 5.3 vs. 4.7 for households). Further, most households included at most only one person who was not part of the nuclear parent/child family. About one in four families of both races included a relative in the household, generally the spouse of a married child. Few white families had boarders — less than 9 percent — while almost 26 percent of black households included boarders. Few families of either race had servants: three black households out of 108, and seven white households out of 67.

Because the 1900 census listed by name and age all children living in a home, it is possible to identify the number of adult children who remained at home with their parents: 8.1 percent of black families with children included at least one child aged 21 or older; in sharp contrast, 48.2 percent of the white families with children had a child aged 21 or older. Many of these white adult children were unmarried men living with their parents, which explains the higher percentage of single Sloss workers among whites.

A comparison by race of the 27 single workers who lived with their parents illustrates significant class distinctions among Sloss employees. Of the six who were black, all were unskilled laborers, with the exception of one clergyman. The average age of black sons was 16.8 years and 55.3 years for fathers. Five of these six sons lived in rented housing. Thus, most single black SSS&I workers who lived at home were younger boys who either supplemented the income of their lower-income family or attempted to replace a deceased father's earnings.

The 21 single white workers living with their parents present a far different

**CHART 5**  
**Age and Living Arrangements**  
**for SSS&I Families with Children**



picture. Ten were skilled laborers, and their fathers were either skilled laborers or middle-class tradesmen. The remaining 11 sons were office workers or professionals, and their fathers were professionals, federal employees, or self-employed. These two groups of whites show no significant differences in the ages of sons (23.1) or fathers (54.9), and there is an even division of owned and rented homes. Most working white

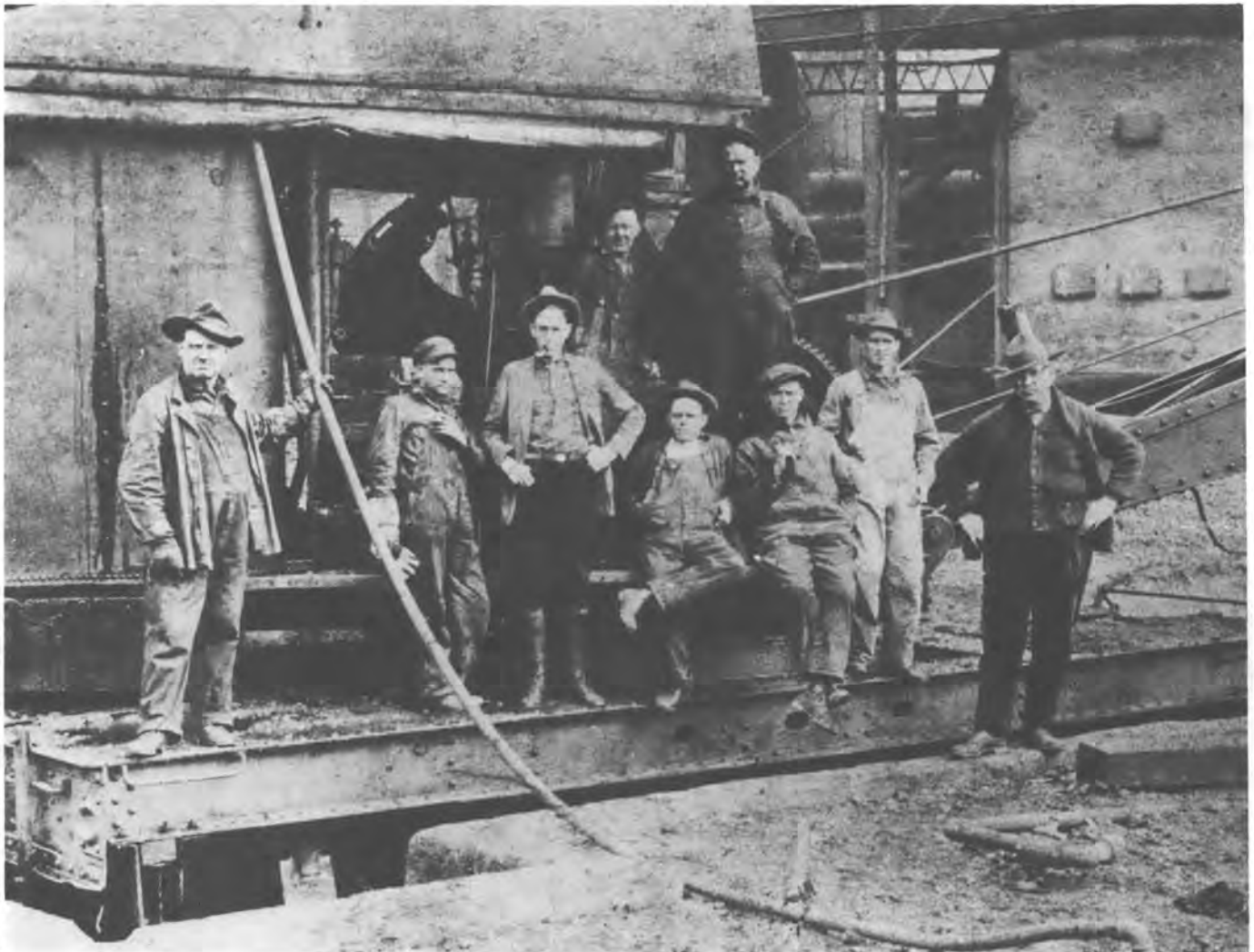
sons living at home were older than their black counterparts, and either carried on a tradition of skilled labor or performed white-collar jobs as members of families which were comfortably middle class.

This review of working sons also indicates that no strong company ties compelled relatives to work for Sloss. In fact, the data reveal only two instances where both a father and son worked for SSS&I. In only four other cases did a

family have two sons working at Sloss.

The absence of paternalistic or traditional company-town control exerted by SSS&I is further indicated by the residential patterns of its employees. While there was a high concentration of SSS&I workers near the North Birmingham and City Furnaces, company workers lived throughout the city and in outlying areas. Neighborhoods were generally integrated, although the alleys which bisected certain blocks usually housed only black families. Table 6 shows that while the western sections were least populated, the remaining parts of greater Birmingham were home for a variety of black and white Sloss workers.

It is important to note that the majority of SSS&I workers rented or boarded, especially if they lived inside the city limits. Only 4.6 percent of blacks and 37.3 percent of whites owned homes, primarily located in the suburbs of East Lake, Avondale, Woodlawn, and North Birmingham. Among blacks, 82.4 percent rented homes and 12 percent board-



photos courtesy Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark

ed with other families or in boarding houses. Among whites, the figures were 49.3 percent and 10.5 percent respectively. Once again, the evidence gives an impression of a highly mobile population.

We see, then, that the data describing Sloss workers in 1900 contradict the notion of an urban industrial labor force locked in a company town. There is no indication that SSS&I controlled where or how its workers lived, nor that it provided educational, recreational, or residential services which increased the workers' dependency on the company. (It is not possible at this time to compare the prices at the Sloss commissary with those at other stores to determine if the commissary benefited or indebted Sloss workers.) Most striking is the high mobility of Sloss employees, demonstrating that workers were not tied to SSS&I, a particular house, or even the city of Birmingham; the only source of stability and continuity for workers revolved around their families, with small, single-family households the norm. In all other areas, we see a highly mobile urban population which stands in sharp contrast to the typical company town and workforce. □

*Barbara Mitchell is a graduate student in history at the University of Alabama in Birmingham.*

**TABLE 6**  
**Residence and Occupation**

|                 | Unskilled |    | Skilled |    | Middle & Upper Class |    | Total |    |
|-----------------|-----------|----|---------|----|----------------------|----|-------|----|
|                 | Bl        | Wh | Bl      | Wh | Bl                   | Wh | Bl    | Wh |
| Western suburbs | 1         | 0  | 0       | 1  | 0                    | 2  | 1     | 3  |
| Eastern suburbs | 46        | 4  | 5       | 6  | 0                    | 6  | 51    | 16 |
| North B'ham     | 24        | 1  | 3       | 8  | 1                    | 7  | 28    | 16 |
| City Lim NW     | 4         | 0  | 0       | 0  | 0                    | 7  | 4     | 7  |
| NE              | 5         | 0  | 1       | 5  | 1                    | 9  | 7     | 14 |
| SE              | 8         | 0  | 3       | 2  | 0                    | 5  | 11    | 7  |
| SW              | 5         | 0  | 1       | 0  | 0                    | 4  | 6     | 4  |
| Total           | 93        | 5  | 13      | 22 | 2                    | 40 | 108   | 67 |

## ONE LIFE

*Because of the paucity of traditional sources, the history of Birmingham workers can be written only with community cooperation and a clear sense of an ongoing exchange between researchers and former workers. Quantitative and qualitative information together provide a sense of the social experience of the community of workers whose collective histories hold the key to Birmingham's past.*

*Interviews with former workers make it possible to go beyond quantitative data to answer questions such as: What happened to the area traditionally called "Sloss Quarters" in the period after 1900? Did the integrated housing pattern of 1900 persist, or did the company eventually segregate housing the same way they did jobs within the plant? How did workers feel about living in company housing and what conditions did they find?*

*J.B. Oliver came to Birmingham from Gadsden, Alabama, in 1925. He had*

*worked as a stove tender in the Gadsden furnaces since 1917, and was hired at Sloss as an assistant turn foreman.*

*Oliver's descriptions of company housing are from an interview conducted by Joey Brachner in Birmingham on October 5, 1984.*

The second house I ever lived in in my married life was owned by the company. Whatever the company wanted for rent out of that house, they deducted it out of my salary. You could do anything you wanted to in the house, or out of the house or about the house. The company never put no restrictions on nobody because they lived in a company house. If you lived in one of their houses why it was just like you were living in your own house. They didn't harp about nothing. If your house was \$8 or \$10 a month they just deducted that out of your salary for rent. It was a good house for the money, as good as outside.

For the black people they had shoddy houses. They were not up-to-date like the majority of white people's houses.

White people's houses were better equipped with different things. Black housing was red painted. They had a whole bunch of them houses way down yonder back away from the plant. All the black people lived back down there, the white people lived up here in front closer to the plant in the more modern kind of houses. All companies did it. The company did the painting and the keeping up. The black blast furnace housing was painted what we called "oxide red." No good paint to it just something to make it red, to make it shine. All the housing had outdoor toilets. None of that housing is left standing.

I just lived in their house not more than a year and a half. I was in my first and second year of marriage, me and her. We didn't have no children when we first moved into a company house. My first and second boy was born in a company house. One in 1926 and one in 1928. □

— Mary Frederickson



---

# “The Mind That Burns In Each Body”

---

## Women, Rape, and Racial Violence

### **I** HOSTILITY FOCUSED ON HUMAN FLESH

*Florida to Burn Negro at Stake: Sex Criminal Seized from Jail, Will Be Mutilated, Set Afire in Extra-Legal Vengeance for Deed*

— Dothan [Alabama] Eagle,  
October 26, 1934

*After taking the nigger to the woods . . . they cut off his penis. He was made to eat it. Then they cut off his testicles and made him eat them and say he liked it.*

— Member of a lynch mob, 1934

Lynching, like rape, has not yet been given its history. Perhaps it has been too easily relegated to the shadows where “poor white” stereotypes dwell. Perhaps the image of absolute victimization it creates has been too difficult to reconcile with what we know about black resilience and resistance. Yet the impact of lynching, both as practice and as symbol, can hardly be underestimated. Between 1882 and 1946 almost 5,000 people died by lynching. The lynching of Emmett Till in 1955 for whistling at a white woman, the killing of three civil rights workers in Mississippi in the 1960s, and the hanging of a black youth in Alabama in 1981 all illustrate the persistence of ritual violence in the service of racial control, a tradition intimately bound up with the politics of sexuality.

Vigilantism originated on the eighteenth-century frontier, where it

filled a vacuum in law enforcement. Rather than passing with the frontier, however, lynching was incorporated in the distinctive legal system of Southern slave society.<sup>2</sup> In the nineteenth century, the industrializing North moved toward a modern criminal justice system in which police, courts, and prisons administered an impersonal, bureaucratic rule of law designed to uphold property rights and discipline urban workers. The South, in contrast, maintained order through a system of deference and customary authority in which all whites had police power over all blacks, slave owners meted out plantation justice undisturbed by any generalized rule of law, and the state encouraged vigilantism as part of its overall reluctance to maintain a system

*Copyright © 1983 by Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson. Reprinted by permission.*

of formal authority that would have undermined the master's prerogatives. The purpose of one system was class control; of the other, control over a slave population. And each tradition continued into the period after the Civil War. In the North, factory-like penitentiaries warehoused displaced members of the industrial proletariat. The South maintained higher rates of personal violence than any other region in the country and lynching crossed over the line from informal law enforcement into outright political terrorism.

White supremacy, of course, did not rest on force alone. Routine institutional arrangements denied to the freedmen and women the opportunity to own land, the right to vote, access to education, and participation in the administration of the law. Lynching reached its height during the battles of Reconstruction and the Populist revolt; once a new system of disenfranchisement, debt peonage, and segregation was firmly in place, mob violence gradually declined. Yet until World War I, the average number of lynchings never fell below two or three a week. Through the 1920s and '30s, mob violence reinforced white dominance by providing planters with a quasi-official way of enforcing labor contracts and crop lien laws, and local officials with a means of extracting deference, regardless of the letter of the law. Individuals may have lynched for their own twisted reasons, but the practice continued only with tacit official consent.<sup>3</sup>

Most important, lynching served as a tool of psychological intimidation aimed at blacks as a group. Unlike official authority, the lynch mob was unlimited in its capriciousness. With care and vigilance, an individual might avoid situations that landed him in the hands of the law. But a lynch mob could strike anywhere, any time. Once the brush fire of rumor was ignited, a manhunt organized, and the local paper began printing special editions announcing a lynching in progress, there could be few effective reprieves. If the intended victim could not be found, an innocent bystander might serve as well. It was not simply the threat of death that gave lynching its repressive power. Even as outbreaks of mob violence declined in frequency, they were increasingly accompanied by torture and sexual mutilation.

At the same time, the expansion of communications and the development of photography in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gave reporting a vividness it had never had before. The

lurid evocation of human suffering implicated white readers in each act of aggression and drove home to blacks the consequences of powerlessness. Like whipping under slavery, lynching was an instrument of coercion intended to impress not only the immediate victim but all who saw or heard about the event. And the mass media spread the imagery of rope and faggot far beyond the community in which each lynching took place.

Writing about his youth in the rural South in the 1920s, Richard Wright describes the terrible climate of fear: "The things that influenced my conduct as a Negro did not have to happen to me directly; I needed but to hear of them to feel their full effects in the deepest layers of my consciousness. Indeed, the white brutality that I had not seen was a more effective control of my behavior than that which I knew. The actual experience would have let me see the realistic outlines of what was really happening, but as long as it remained something terrible and yet remote, something whose horror and blood might descend upon me at any moment, I was compelled to give my entire imagination over to it."<sup>4</sup>

A penis cut off and stuffed in a victim's mouth. A crowd of thousands watching a black man scream in pain. Such incidents did not have to occur very often, or be witnessed directly, to be burned indelibly into the mind.

## II NEVER AGAINST HER WILL

*White men have said over and over — and we have believed it because it was repeated so often — that not only was there no such thing as a chaste Negro woman — but that a Negro woman could not be assaulted, that it was never against her will.*

— Jessie Daniel Ames (1936)

Schooled in the struggle against sexual rather than racial violence, contemporary feminists may nevertheless find familiar this account of lynching's political function, for analogies between rape and lynching have often surfaced in the literature of the anti-rape movement. To carry such analogies too far would be to fall into the error of radical feminist

writing that misconstrues the realities of racism in the effort to illuminate sexual subordination.<sup>5</sup>

It is the suggestion of this essay, however, that there is a significant resonance between these two forms of violence. We are only beginning to understand the web of connections among racism, attitudes toward women, and sexual ideologies. The purpose of looking more closely at the dynamics of repressive violence is not to reduce sexual assault and mob murder to static equivalents but to illuminate some of the strands of that tangled web.

The association between lynching and rape emerges most clearly in their parallel use in racial subordination. As Diane K. Lewis has pointed out, in a patriarchal society, black men constituted a potential challenge to the established order.<sup>6</sup> Laws were formulated primarily to exclude black men from exercising adult male prerogatives in the public sphere, and lynching meshed with these legal mechanisms of exclusion.

Black women represented a more ambiguous threat. They too were denied access to the politico-jural domain, but since they shared this exclusion with women in general, its maintenance engendered less anxiety and required less force. Lynching served primarily to dramatize hierarchies among men. In contrast, the violence directed at black women illustrates the double jeopardy of race and sex. The records of the Freedmen's Bureau and the oral histories collected by the Federal Writers' Project testify to the sexual atrocities endured by black women as whites sought to reassert their command over the newly freed slaves. Black women were sometimes executed by lynch mobs, but more routinely they served as targets of sexual assault.

Like vigilantism, the sexual exploitation of black women had been institutionalized under slavery. Whether seized through outright force or granted within the master-slave relation, the sexual access of white men to black women was a cornerstone of patriarchal power in the South. It was used as a punishment or demanded in exchange for leniency. Like other forms of deference and conspicuous consumption, it buttressed planter hegemony. And it served the practical economic purpose of replenishing the slave labor supply.

After the Civil War, the informal sexual arrangements of slavery shaded into the use of rape as a political weapon, and

the special vulnerability of black women helped shape the ex-slaves' struggle for the prerequisites of freedom. Strong family bonds had survived the adversities of slavery; after freedom, the black family served as a bulwark against a racist society. Indeed, the sharecropping system that replaced slavery as the South's chief mode of production grew in part from the desire of blacks to withdraw from gang labor and gain control over their own work, family lives, and bodily integrity. The sharecropping family enabled women to escape white

sion than as a transaction between white and black men. Certainly Claude Levi-Strauss's insight that men use women as verbs with which to communicate with one another (rape being a means of communicating defeat to the men of a conquered tribe) helps explain the extreme viciousness of sexual violence in the post-emancipation era.<sup>9</sup> Rape was in part a reaction to the effort of the freedman to assume the role of patriarch, able to provide for and protect his family. Nevertheless, as writers like Susan Griffin, Susan Brownmiller, and others have

replaced an older notion of women's dangerous sexual power.<sup>11</sup> Even at the height of the "cult of true womanhood" in the nineteenth century, however, views of women's sexuality remained ambivalent and double-edged. The association between women and nature, the dread of women's treacherous carnality persisted, rooted, as Dorothy Dinnerstein persuasively argues, in the earliest experiences of infancy.

In the United States, the fear and fascination of female sexuality was projected onto black women; the passionless lady arose in symbiosis with the primitively sexual slave. House slaves often served as substitute mothers; at a black woman's breast white male babies experienced absolute dependence on a being who was both a source of wish-fulfilling joy and of grief-producing disappointment. In adulthood, such men could find in this black woman a ready object for the mixture of rage and desire that so often underlies male heterosexuality. The black woman, already in chains, was sexually available, unable to make claims for support or concern; by dominating her, men could replay the infant's dream of unlimited access to the mother.<sup>12</sup>

The economic and political challenge posed by the black patriarch might be met with death by lynching, but when the black woman seized the opportunity to turn her maternal and sexual resources to the benefit of her own family, sexual violence met her assertion of will. Thus rape reasserted white dominance and control in the private arena as lynching reasserted hierarchical arrangements in the public transactions of men.



Hale Woodruff, "Giddap," 1938

male supervision, devote their productive and reproductive powers to their own families, and protect themselves from sexual assault.<sup>7</sup>

Most studies of racial violence have paid little attention to the particular suffering of women.<sup>8</sup> Even rape has been seen less as an aspect of sexual oppres-

sion than as a transaction between white and black men. Certainly Claude Levi-Strauss's insight that men use women as verbs with which to communicate with one another (rape being a means of communicating defeat to the men of a conquered tribe) helps explain the extreme viciousness of sexual violence in the post-emancipation era.<sup>9</sup> Rape was in part a reaction to the effort of the freedman to assume the role of patriarch, able to provide for and protect his family. Nevertheless, as writers like Susan Griffin, Susan Brownmiller, and others have

replaced an older notion of women's dangerous sexual power.<sup>11</sup> Even at the height of the "cult of true womanhood" in the nineteenth century, however, views of women's sexuality remained ambivalent and double-edged. The association between women and nature, the dread of women's treacherous carnality persisted, rooted, as Dorothy Dinnerstein persuasively argues, in the earliest experiences of infancy.

### III LYNCHING'S DOUBLE MESSAGE

*The crowds from here that went over to see [Lola Cannidy, the alleged rape victim in the Claude Neal lynching of 1934] said he was so large he could not assault her until he took his knife and cut her, and also had either cut or bit one of her breast [sic] off.*

— Letter to Mrs. W.P. Cornell, October 29, 1934, Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching Papers



. . . more than rape itself, the fear of rape permeates our lives . . . and the best defense against this is not to be, to deny being in the body, as a self, to . . . avert your gaze, make yourself, as a presence in the world, less felt.  
— Susan Griffin, *Rape: The Power of Consciousness* (1979)

In the 1920s and 1930s, the industrial revolution spread through the South, bringing a demand for more orderly forms of law enforcement. Men in authority, anxious to create a favorable business climate, began to withdraw their tacit approval of extralegal violence. Yet lynching continued, particularly in rural areas, and even as white moderates criticized lynching in the abstract they continued to justify outbreaks of mob violence for the one special crime of sexual assault.

For most white Americans, the association between lynching and rape called to mind not twin forms of white violence against black men and women, but a very different image: the black rapist, “a monstrous beast, crazed with lust”;<sup>13</sup> the white victim — young, blond, virginal; her manly Anglo-Saxon avengers. Despite the pull of modernity, the emotional logic of lynching remained: only swift, sure violence, unhampered by legalities, could protect white women from sexual assault.

The “protection of white womanhood” was a pervasive fixture of racist ideology. In 1889 a well-known historian offered this commonly accepted rationale for lynching: black men find “something strangely alluring and seductive . . . in the appearance of the white woman; they are aroused and stimulated by its foreignness to their experience of sexual pleasures, and it moves them to gratify their lust at any cost and in spite of every obstacle.”

In 1937, echoing an attitude that characterized most local newspapers, the *Daily News* in Jackson, Mississippi, published what it felt was the *coup de grace* to anti-lynching critics: “What would you do if your wife, daughter, or one of your loved ones was ravished? You’d probably be right there with the mob.” Two years later, 65 percent of the white respondents in an anthropological survey believed that lynching was justified in cases of sexual assault.<sup>14</sup> Despite its tenacity, however, the myth of the black rapist was never founded on objective reality. Less than a quarter of lynch victims were even accused of rape or attempted rape. Down to the present,

almost every study has underlined the fact that rape is overwhelmingly an intraracial crime, and the victims are more often black than white.<sup>15</sup>

A major strategy of anti-lynching reformers, beginning with Ida B. Wells-Barnett in the 1880s and continuing with Walter White of the NAACP and Jessie Daniel Ames of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, was to use such facts to undermine the rationalizations for mob violence. But the emotional circuit between interracial rape and lynching lay beyond the reach of factual refutation. A black man did not literally have to attempt sexual assault for whites to perceive some transgression of caste mores as a sexual threat. White women were the forbidden fruit, the untouchable property, the ultimate symbol of white male power. To break the racial rules was to conjure up an image of black over white, of a world turned upside down.

Again, women were a means of communication, and the rhetoric of protection — like the rape of black women — reflected a power struggle among men. But impulses toward women as well as toward blacks were played out in the drama of racial violence. The fear of rape was more than a hypocritical excuse for lynching; rather, the two phenomena were intimately intertwined. The “Southern rape complex” functioned as a means of both sexual and racial suppression.<sup>16</sup>

For whites, the archetypal lynching for rape can be seen as a dramatization of cultural themes, a story of the social arrangements and psychological strivings that lay beneath the surface of everyday life. The story such rituals told about the place of white women in Southern society was subtle, contradictory, and demeaning. The frail victim, leaning on the arms of her male relatives, might be brought to the scene of the crime, there to identify her assailant and witness his execution. This was a moment of humiliation. A woman who had just been raped, or who had been apprehended in a clandestine interracial affair, or whose male relatives were pretending that she had been raped, stood on display before the whole community. Here was the quintessential Woman as Victim: polluted, “ruined for life,” the object of fantasy and secret contempt. Humiliation, however, mingled with heightened worth as she played for a moment the role of the Fair Maiden violated and avenged.

Only a small percentage of lynchings

revolved around charges of sexual assault, but those that did received by far the most attention and publicity — indeed, they gripped the white imagination far out of proportion to their statistical significance. Rape and rumors of rape became the folk pornography of the Bible Belt. As stories spread the rapist became not just a black man but a ravenous brute, the victim a beautiful young virgin. The experience of the woman was described in minute and progressively embellished detail, a public fantasy that implied a group participation in the rape as cathartic as the subsequent lynching. White men might see in “lynch law” their ideal selves: patriarchs, avengers, righteous protectors. But, being men themselves, and sometimes even rapists, they must also have seen themselves in the lynch mob’s prey.

The lynch mob in pursuit of the black rapist represented the trade-off implicit in the code of chivalry: for the right of the Southern lady to protection presupposed her obligation to obey. The connotations of wealth and family background attached to the position of the lady in the antebellum South faded in the twentieth century, but the power of “ladyhood” as a value construct remained. The term denoted chastity, frailty, graciousness.

“A lady,” noted one social psychologist, “is always in a state of becoming: one acts like a lady, one attempts to be a lady, but one never *is* a lady.” Internalized by the individual, this ideal regulated behavior and restricted interaction with the world.<sup>17</sup> If a woman passed the tests of ladyhood, she could tap into the reservoir of protectiveness and shelter known as Southern chivalry. Women who abandoned secure, if circumscribed, social roles forfeited the claim to personal security. Together the practice of ladyhood and the etiquette of chivalry controlled white women’s behavior even as they guarded caste lines.

Pro-slavery theorist Thomas R. Dew spelled out this dialectic. The “essence of manhood,” he wrote, is “predation.” The essence of womanhood is “allure.” Only the rise of gallantry and the patriarchal family offered a haven from male aggression. Stripped to its bare essentials, the difference between the sexes was the opposition between the potential rapist and the potential victim of sexual assault, and the family metaphor that justified slavery offered the exchange of dependence for protection to the mistress as well as to the slaves. Dew’s notion of female sexuality, however, did not

deny a woman passions of her own. On the contrary, because her role was not to seek, "but to be sought . . . not to woo, but to be wooed," she was forced to suppress her "most violent feelings . . . her most ardent desires."<sup>18</sup> In general, the law of rape expressed profound distrust of women, demanding evidence of "utmost resistance," corroboration by other witnesses in addition to the victim's word, and proof of the victim's chastity — all contrary to the rules of evidence in other forms of violent crime.

In sharp contrast, however, when a black man and a white woman were concerned, intercourse was *prima facie* evidence of rape. The presiding judge in the 1931 Scottsboro trial, in which nine

daughter of a prominent home of luxury and learning."<sup>19</sup>

Lynching, then, like laws against intermarriage, masked uneasiness over the nature of white women's desires. It aimed not only to engender fear of sexual assault but also to prevent voluntary unions. It upheld the comforting fiction that at least in relation to black men, white women were always objects and never agents of sexual desire.

Although the nineteenth-century women's movement for the most part advocated higher moral standards for men, not sexual liberation for women, opponents insisted that it threatened the family and painted feminists as spinsters or libertines, sexual deviants in either case,

responded with explicit attacks that revealed the sanctions at the heart of the chivalric ideal. William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, published in 1931, typified a common literary reaction to the fall of the lady. The corn-cob rape of Temple Drake — a "new woman" of the 1920s — was the ultimate revenge against the abdicating white virgin. Her fate represented the "desecration of a cult object," the implicit counterpoint to the idealization of women in a patriarchal society.<sup>21</sup>

## IV LADY INSURRECTIONISTS

*The lady insurrectionists gathered together in one of our southern cities. . . . They said calmly that they were not afraid of being raped; as for their sacredness, they would take care of it themselves; they did not need the chivalry of lynching to protect them and did not want it.*

— Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream* (1949)

On November 1, 1930, 26 white women from six Southern states met in Atlanta to form the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. Organized by Texas suffragist Jessie Daniel Ames, the association had a central, ideological goal: to break the circuit between the tradition of chivalry and the practice of mob murder. The association was part of a broader interracial movement; its contribution to the decline of lynching must be put in the perspective of the leadership role played by blacks in the national anti-lynching campaign. But it would be a mistake to view the association simply as a white women's auxiliary to black-led struggles. Rather, it represented an acceptance of accountability for a racist mythology that white women had not created but that they nevertheless served, a point hammered home by black women's admonitions that "when Southern white women get ready to stop lynching, it will be stopped and not before."<sup>22</sup>

Jessie Ames stood on the brink between two worlds. Born in 1883 in a small town in East Texas, a regional hotbed of mob violence, she directed the anti-lynching campaign from Atlanta,



Anonymous, "Hanging a Negro in Clarkson Street," originally published in *Harper's Weekly*, August 1, 1863.

black youths were accused of rape, had this to say: "Where the woman charged to have been raped, as in this case is a white woman, there is a very strong presumption under the law that she would not and did not yield voluntarily to intercourse with the defendant, a Negro; and this is true, whatever the station in life the prosecutrix may occupy, whether she be the most despised, ignorant and abandoned woman of the community, or the spotless virgin and

It may be no accident, then, that the vision of the black man as a threatening beast flourished during the first phase of the Southern women's rights movement, a fantasy of aggression against boundary-transgressing women as well as a weapon of terror against blacks.<sup>20</sup>

When women in the 1920s and 1930s did begin to assert their right to sexual expression and to challenge the double standard Thomas Dew's injunctions implied, inheritors of the plantation legend





capital of the New South. She drew eclectically on the nineteenth-century female reform tradition and advocated an implicitly feminist anti-racism that looked backward to the abolitionist movement as well as forward to feminists of our own times.

Ames had come to maturity in a transitional phase of the women's movement, when female reformers used the group consciousness and Victorian sense of themselves as especially moral beings to justify a great wave of female institution building. When Jessie Ames turned from suffrage to the reform of race relations, she looked naturally to this heritage for her constituency and tactics.

The association drew its members from among small-town church women who had been schooled for decades in running their own affairs within YWCAs, women's clubs, and missionary societies. These women were sensitized by the temperance and suffrage movements to a politics that simultaneously stressed domestic order and women's rights.<sup>23</sup> Ames's strategy for change called for enfranchised women to exercise moral influence over the would-be lynchers in their own homes, political influence over the public officials who collaborated with them, and cultural influence over the editors and politicians who created an atmosphere where mob violence flourished. Like Frances Willard in the temperance campaign, she sought to extend women's moral guardianship into quintessentially masculine affairs.

Ames's tenacity and the emotional energy of her campaign derived from her perception that lynching was a wom-

en's issue: not only an obstacle to regional development and an injustice to blacks, but also an insult to white women. Like black women leaders before her, who had perceived that the same sexual stereotyping that allowed black women to be exploited caused black men to be feared, she challenged both racist and patriarchal ideas.<sup>24</sup> Disputing the notion that blacks provoked mob action by raping white women, association members traced lynching to its roots in white supremacy.<sup>25</sup>

More central to their campaign was an effort to dissociate the image of the lady from its connotations of sexual vulnerability and retaliatory violence. If lynching held a covert message for white women as well as an overt one for blacks, then the anti-lynching association represented a woman-centered reply. Lynching, it proclaimed, far from offering a shield against sexual assault, served as a weapon of both racial and sexual terror, planting fear in women's minds and dependency in their hearts. It thrust them into the role of personal property or sexual objects, ever threatened by black men's lust, ever in need of white men's protection. By asserting their identity as autonomous citizens, requiring not the paternalism of chivalry but the equal protection of the law, association members resisted the part assigned to them.

If, as Susan Brownmiller proclaims, the larger anti-lynching movement paid little attention to lynching's counterpart, the rape of black women, the women's association could not ignore the issue. In 1920 Carrie Parks Johnson, a white interracialist and women's rights leader who had come to her understanding of racial issues through pioneering meetings with black women, warned a white male audience: "The race problem can never be solved as long as the white man goes unpunished [for interracial sex], while the Negro is burned at the stake. I shall say no more, for I am sure you need not have anything more said. When the white men of the South have come to that position, a single standard for both men and women, then you will accomplish something in this great problem."<sup>26</sup>

In the winter of 1931, Jessie Daniel Ames called a meeting of black and white women for an explicit discussion of the split female image and the sexual double standard. The women, she thought, should gather in closed session with no men present "because there are some vices of Southern life which contribute subtly to [lynching] that we want

to face by ourselves." The black leader Nannie Burroughs agreed: "All meetings with white and colored women on this question should be held behind closed doors and men should not be admitted."

The group explored the myths of black women's promiscuity and white women's purity, and noted how this split image created a society that "considers an assault by a white man as a moral lapse upon his part, better ignored and forgotten, while an assault by a Negro against a white woman is a hideous crime punishable with death by law or lynching." Relationships among women interracialists were far from egalitarian, nor could they always overcome the impediments to what Ames called "free and frank" discussion.<sup>27</sup> Yet on occasions like this one the shared experience of gender opened the way for consciousness-raising communication across the color line.

If such discussions of male behavior had to be held behind closed doors, even more treacherous was the question of sex between black men and white women. In 1892 Memphis anti-lynching reformer and black women's club leader Ida B. Wells-Barnett was threatened with death and run out of town for proclaiming that behind many lynchings lay consensual interracial affairs. More than 60 years later, in the wake of the famous Scottsboro case, Jessie Daniel Ames began delving beneath the surface of lynchings in which white women were involved. Like Wells-Barnett, she found that black men were sometimes executed not for rape, but for interracial sex. And she used that information to disabuse association members of one of the white South's central fictions: that, as a Mississippi editor put it, there had never been a Southern white woman so depraved as to "bestow her favors on a black man."<sup>28</sup>

But what of lynching cases in which rape actually had occurred? Here association leaders could only fall back on a call for law and order, for they knew from their own experience that the fear engendered in their constituency by what some could bring themselves to call only "the unspeakable crime" was all too real. "Whether their own minds perceive danger where none exists, or whether the fears have been put in their minds by men's fears," Ames commented, women could not but see themselves as potential victims of black assault.<sup>29</sup> It would be left to a future generation to point out that the chief danger to white



women came from white men and to see rape in general as a feminist concern. Association leaders could only exorcise their own fears of male aggression by transferring the means of violence from mobs to the state and debunking the myth of the black rapist.

In the civil rights movement of the 1960s, white women would confront the sexual dimension of racism and racial violence by asserting their right to sexual relationships with black men. Anti-lynching reformers of the 1930s obviously took a very different approach. They



abhorred male violence and lynching's eroticism of death, and asserted against them a feminine standard of personal and public morality. They portrayed themselves as moral beings and independent citizens rather than as vulnerable sexual objects, and the core of their message lay more in what they were than in what they said: Southern ladies who needed only their own rectitude to pro-

tect them from interracial sex and only the law to guard them from sexual assault. When Jessie Ames referred to "the crown of chivalry that has been pressed like a crown of thorns on our heads," she issued a cry of protest that belongs to the struggle for both racial and sexual emancipation.<sup>30</sup>

## V THE DECLINE OF CHIVALRY

*As male supremacy becomes ideologically untenable, incapable of justifying itself as protection, men assert their domination more directly, in fantasies and occasionally in acts of raw violence.*

— Christopher Lasch,  
Marxist Perspectives (1978)

In the 1970s, for the second time in the nation's history, rape again attracted widespread public attention. The obsession with interracial rape, which peaked at the turn of the nineteenth century but lingered from the close of the Civil War into the 1930s, became a magnet for racial and sexual oppression during that period. Today the issue of rape has crystallized important feminist concerns.

Rape emerged as a feminist issue as women developed an independent politics that made sexuality and personal life a central arena of struggle. First in consciousness-raising groups where autobiography became a politicizing technique, then in public "speakouts," women broke what in retrospect seems a remarkable silence about a pervasive aspect of female experience. From that beginning flowed both an analysis that held rape to be a political act by which men affirm their power over women, and strategies for change that ranged from the feminist self-help methods of rape crisis centers to institutional reform of the criminal justice system and medical care systems. After 1976 the movement broadened to include wife-battering, sexual harassment, and, following the lead of Robin Morgan's claim that "pornography is the theory, rape the practice," media images of women.<sup>31</sup>

By the time Susan Brownmiller's *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* gained national attention in 1975, she could speak to and for a feminist

constituency already sensitized to the issue by years of practical, action-oriented work. Her book can be faulted for supporting a notion of universal patriarchy and timeless sexual victimization; it leaves no room for understanding the reasons for women's collaboration, their own sources of power (both self-generated and derived), the class and racial differences in their experience of discrimination and sexual danger. But it was an important milestone, pointing the way for research into a subject that has consistently been trivialized and ignored. Many grassroots activists would demur from Brownmiller's assertion that all men are potential rapists, but they share her understanding of the continuum between sexism and sexual assault.<sup>32</sup>

The demand for control over one's own body — control over whether, when, and with whom one has children, control over how one's sexuality is expressed — is central to the feminist project because, as Rosalind Petchesky persuasively argues, it is essential to "a sense of being a person, with personal and bodily integrity," able to engage in conscious activity and to participate in social life.<sup>33</sup>

It is this right to bodily integrity and self-determination that rape, and the fear of rape, so thoroughly undermine. Rape's devastating effect on individuals derives not so much from the sexual nature of the crime (and anti-rape activists have been concerned to revise the idea that rape is a "fate worse than death" whose victims, if no longer "ruined for life," are at least so traumatized that they must rely for recovery on therapeutic help rather than on their own resources) as from the experience of helplessness and loss of control, the sense of one's self as an object of rage. And women who may never be raped share, by chronic attrition, in the same helplessness, "otherness," lack of control. The struggle against rape, like the anti-lynching movement, addresses not only external dangers but also internal consequences: the bodily muting, the self-censorship that limits one's capacity to "walk freely in the world."<sup>34</sup>

The focus on rape emerged from the internal dynamics of feminist thought and practice. But it was also a response to an objective increase in the crime. From 1969 to 1974 the number of rapes rose 49 percent, a greater increase than for any other violent crime. Undoubtedly rape statistics reflect general demographic and criminal trends, as well as a greater willingness of victims to report

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WOMEN'S HISTORY

Over the past 10 years, no trees in the whole orchard of Southern history have borne more fruit than those relating to women. The roots go deep. Eliza Lucas Pinckney in the eighteenth century and Mary Boykin Chesnut in the nineteenth century (both of whose journals have recently been published) are only the most famous among millions of women of different races and classes who have shaped the region and whose lives are now being rediscovered.

In the quarter century after the publication of Lillian Smith's *Killers of the Dream* (New York, 1949), a generation of scholars did much to lay the groundwork for the systematic study of women in the South. Changing roles in politics and public life received special attention. Articles by James P. Louis, Kenneth R. Johnson, and nearly a dozen essays by A. Elizabeth Taylor explored the suffrage movement state by state. Anne Firor Scott wrote *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago, 1970) and revived Julia Cherry Spruill's pioneering work, *Women's Life and Work in the Southern Colonies* (1938; repr. New York, 1972).

Race relations became an equally important theme. In 1967 Gerda Lerner published a biography of Sarah and Angelina Grimke, the abolitionist sisters from Charleston, and later she edited *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York, 1972). In

the past decade numerous general works on slavery by such authors as John Blassingame, Eugene Genovese, Herbert Gutman, Alex Haley, Vincent Harding, Nathan Huggins, Lawrence Levine, and Leon Litwack have shed further light on black women's roles. But there is more to learn from new works in this bibliography and from recent introductions to the study of women of color such as:

Nancy Faires Conklin, Brenda McCallum, and Marcie Wade, *The Culture of Southern Black Women: Approaches and Materials* (University, AL, 1983).

Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds., *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images* (Port Washington, NY, 1978).

Joanne V. Hawks and Sheila L. Skemp, eds., *Sex, Race, and the Role of Women in the South* (Jackson, MS, 1983).

Rayna Green, *Native American Women: A Contextual Bibliography* (Bloomington, IN, 1983).

Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (New York, 1981).

Below we offer a sampling, divided chronologically, of some of the best historical writing since 1974 on women in the South. It should be used in conjunction with the numerous broader studies of women in society that have appeared recently. For example, see Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise* (New York, 1976) and Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA, 1982).

Needless to say, this basket does not contain all the fruit that has fallen, and more is

ripening on the trees. We hope you can make use of what we have "put up" here and that you will send us additional references to "preserve" on our shelf. A more complete bibliography of works published before 1978 appears in "Generations," *Southern Exposure's* special issue on women.

— The Editors

### Before 1861

James Axtell, ed., *The Indian Peoples of Eastern America: A Documentary History of the Sexes* (New York, 1981).

Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, "The Planter's Wife: The Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. Ser., 34 (October 1977): 542-71.

Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York, 1983).

Cheryll Ann Cody, "Naming, Kinship, and Estate Dispersal: Notes on Slave Family Life on a South Carolina Plantation, 1786 to 1833," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 39 (January 1982): 192-211.

Carolyn Thomas Foreman, *Indian Women Chiefs* (Repr., Washington, DC, 1976).

Jean E. Friedman, *The Enclosed Garden: Women in the Evangelical South, 1825-1885* (Chapel Hill, forthcoming).

Michael P. Johnson, "Smothered Slave Infants: Were Slave Mothers at Fault?" *Journal of Southern History* 47 (November 1981): 493-520.

Jacqueline Jones, "My Mother: Was Much of a Woman? Black Women, Work and the Family Under Slavery," *Feminist Studies* 8 (Summer 1982): 235-70.

Allan Kulikoff, "The Beginnings of the Afro-American Family in Maryland" in A. D. Land, L.G. Carr and E.C. Papenfuss, eds., *Law, Society and Politics in Early Maryland* (Baltimore, 1977).

Susan Leacock, *Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York, 1984).

Frances Mossiker, *Pocahontas: The Life and Legend* (New York, 1976).

Mary Beth Norton, "What an Alarming Crisis is This: Southern Women and the American Revolution" in Jeffrey J. Crow and Larry E. Tise, eds., *The Southern Experience and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1978).

sexual attacks (although observers agree that rape is still the most underreported of crimes).<sup>35</sup> But there can be no doubt that rape is a serious threat and that it plays a prominent role in women's subordination. Using recent high-quality survey data, Allan Griswold Johnson has estimated that, at a minimum, 20 to 30 percent of girls now 12 years old will suffer a violent sexual attack sometime in their lives. A woman is as likely to be raped as she is to experience a divorce or to be diagnosed as having cancer.<sup>36</sup>

In a recent anthology on women and pornography, Tracey A. Gardner has drawn a parallel between the wave of lynching that followed Reconstruction and the increase in rapes in an era of anti-feminist backlash.<sup>37</sup> Certainly, as women enter the work force, postpone marriage, live alone or as single heads of households, they become easier targets for sexual assault. But observations like Gardner's go further, linking the intensification of sexual violence directly to

the feminist challenge. Such arguments come dangerously close to blaming the victim for the crime. But they may also contain a core of truth. Sociological research on rape has only recently begun, and we do not have studies explaining the function and frequency of the crime under various historical conditions; until that work is done we cannot with certainty assess the current situation. Yet it seems clear that just as lynching ebbed and flowed with new modes of racial control, rape — both as act and idea — cannot be divorced from changes in the sexual terrain.

In 1940 Jessie Ames released to the press a statement that, for the first time in her career, the South could claim a "lynchless year," and in 1942, convinced that lynching was no longer widely condoned in the name of white womanhood, she allowed the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching to pass quietly from the scene. The women's efforts, the larger,

black-led anti-lynching campaign, black migration from the rural South, the spread of industry — these and other developments contributed to the decline of vigilante justice. Blacks continued to be victimized by covert violence and routinized court procedures that amounted to "legal lynchings." But after World War II, public lynchings — announced in the papers, openly accomplished, and tacitly condoned — no longer haunted the land, and the black rapist ceased to be a fixture of political campaigns and newspaper prose.

This change in the rhetoric and form of racial violence reflected new attitudes toward women as well as toward blacks. By the 1940s few Southern leaders were willing, as Jessie Ames put it, to "lay themselves open to ridicule" by defending lynching on the grounds of gallantry, in part because gallantry itself had lost conviction.<sup>38</sup> The same process of economic development and national integration that encouraged the South to adopt



Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women 1750-1800* (Boston, 1980).

Marylynn Salmon, "Life, Liberty and Dower: The Legal Status of Women After the American Revolution" in Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett, eds., *Women, War and Revolution* (New York, 1980).

Marylynn Salmon, "Women and Property in South Carolina: The Evidence from Marriage Settlements, 1730 to 1830," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. Ser., 39 (October 1982): 655-85.

Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society* (Ithaca, NY, 1980).

Deborah G. White, "Ar'n't I a Woman?" Female Slaves in the Antebellum South" (PhD diss., University of Illinois-Chicago Circle, 1979).

Bertam Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1982).

Michael Zuckerman, "William Byrd's Family," *Perspectives in American History*, 12 (1979): 255-311.

#### 1861-1929

Neil K. Basen, "The Jennie Higgenses' of the 'New South in the West': A Regional Survey of Socialist Activists: Agitators, and Organizers, 1901-1917" in Sally M. Miller, ed., *Flawed Liberation: Socialism and Feminism* (Westport, CT, 1981).

Elsa Barkley Brown, "Uncle Ned's Children: Richmond, Virginia's Black Community, 1890-1930" (PhD diss. in progress, Kent State Univ.).

Paul E. Fuller, *Laura Clay and the Woman's Rights Movement* (Lexington, 1975).

Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter* (New York, 1984).

Melba Porter Hay, "Madeline McDowell Breckenridge: Kentucky Suffragist and Progressive Reformers" (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1980).

Dolores Elizabeth Janiewski, "From Field to Factory: Race, Class, Sex, and the Woman Worker in Durham, 1880-1940" (PhD diss., Duke Univ., 1979).

Julie Roy Jeffrey, "Women in the Southern Farmers' Alliance: A Reconsideration of the Role and Status of Women in the Late Nineteenth-Century South," *Feminist Studies* 3 (Fall 1975): 72-91.

Anne Goodwyn Jones, *Tomorrow Is Another Day: The Woman Writer in the South, 1859-1936* (Baton Rouge, 1981).

Lu Ann Jones, "The Task That is Ours: White North Carolina Farm Women and Agrarian Reform"

(MA thesis, UNC-Chapel Hill, 1983).

James L. Leloudis II, "School Reform in the New South: The Woman's Association for the Betterment of Public School Houses in North Carolina, 1902-1919," *Journal of American History* 59 (March 1983): 886-909.

Patricia Summerlin Martin, "Hidden Work: Baptist Women in Texas, 1880-1920" (PhD diss., Rice Univ., 1982).

John Patrick McDowell, *The Social Gospel in the South: The Woman's Home Mission Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1886-1939* (Baton Rouge, 1982).

Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (New York, 1977).

Darlene Rebecca Roth, "Matronage: Patterns in Women's Organizations, Atlanta, Georgia, 1890-1940" (PhD diss., George Washington Univ., 1978).

Marion Winifred Roydhouse, "The 'Universal Sisterhood of Women': Women and Labor Reform in North Carolina, 1900-1932" (PhD diss., Duke Univ., 1980).

Megan Seahold, "From Self-Culture to Civic Responsibility: Women's Clubs in Texas, 1880-1920" (PhD diss. in progress, Rice Univ.).

Virginia Shadron, "Out of Our Homes: The Women's Rights Movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1890-1918" (MA thesis, Emory Univ., 1976).

Dorothy Sterling, *We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1984).

Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "Discrimination vs. Afro-American Women in the Woman's Movement, 1830-1920" in Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds., *Afro-American Woman* (Port Washington, NY, 1978).

Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "The Historical Treatment of the Afro-American in the Woman's Movement, 1900-1920: A Bibliographical Essay," *A Current Bibliography of African Affairs* 7 (Summer 1974): 245-59.

#### 1929-Present

Barbara Woods Aba-Mecha, "Black Woman Activist in Twentieth Century South Carolina: Modjeska Monteith Simkins" (PhD diss., Emory Univ., 1978).

Shirley Abbott, *Womenfolk: Growing Up Down South* (New Haven, 1983).

Julia Kirk Blackwelder, "Women in the Work Force: Atlanta, New Orleans, and San Antonio, 1930 to

1940," *Journal of Urban History* 4 (May 1978): 331-58.

Julia Kirk Blackwelder, "Quiet Suffering: Atlanta Women in the 1930s," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 61 (Summer 1977): 112-24.

Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Women of the Great Depression: Caste and Culture in San Antonio, 1929-1939* (College Station, TX, May 1984).

Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York, 1979).

Mary Evans Frederickson, "A Place to Speak Our Minds" in Marc S. Miller, ed., *Working Lives: The Southern Exposure History of Labor in the South* (New York, 1980).

Mary Evans Frederickson, "A Place to Speak Our Minds: The Southern School for Women Workers" (PhD diss., UNC-Chapel Hill, 1981).

Margaret Jarman Hagood, *Mothers of the South: Portraiture of the White Tenant Farm Woman* (1939; repr. New York, 1977).

Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York, 1979).

Trudier Harris, *From Mammie to Militants: Domesticity in Black American Literature* (Philadelphia, 1982).

Robert Korstad, "Those Who Were Not Afraid" in Miller, ed., *Working Lives*.

Jane De Hart Mathews and Donald G. Mathews, *The Equal Rights Amendment and the Politics of Cultural Conflict: Feminists and Traditionalists in North Carolina* (New York, forthcoming).

Darden Asbury Pyron, ed., *Recasting: Gone With the Wind in American Culture* (Miami, FL, 1983).

Virginia Shadron, et al., "The Historical Perspective: A Bibliographic Essay" in Patricia A. Stringer and Irene Thompson, eds., *Stepping Off the Pedestal: Academic Women in the South* (New York, 1982).

Daniel Joseph Singal, *The War Within: From Victorianism to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919-1945* (Chapel Hill, 1982).

Lillian Smith, *The Winner Names the Age: A Collection of Writings by Lillian Smith*, ed. by Michelle Cliff (New York, 1978).

David E. Whisnant, *All That is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill, 1984).

Northern norms of authority and control undermined the chivalric ideal. Industrial capitalism on the one hand and women's assertion of independence on the other weakened paternalism and with it the conventions of protective deference.<sup>39</sup>

This is not to say that the link between racism and sexism was broken; relations between white women and black men continued to be severely penalized, and black men, to the present, have drawn disproportionate punishment for sexual assault. The figures speak for themselves: of the 455 men executed for rape since 1930, 405 were black and almost all the complainants were white.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, "the protection of white womanhood" rang more hollow in the postwar New South and the fear of interracial rape became a subdued theme in the nation at large rather than an openly articulated regional obsession.

The social feminist mainstream, of which Jessie Ames and the anti-lynching

association were a part, thus chipped away at a politics of gallantry that locked white ladies in the home under the guise of protecting them from the world. But because such reformers held to the genteel trappings of their role even as they asserted their autonomous citizenship, they offered reassurance that women's influence could be expanded without mortal danger to male prerogatives and power.

Contemporary feminists have eschewed some of the comforting assumptions of their nineteenth-century predecessors: women's passionlessness, their limitation to social housekeeping, their exclusive responsibility for child-rearing and housekeeping. They have couched their revolt in explicit ideology and unladylike behavior. Meanwhile, as Barbara Ehrenreich has argued, Madison Avenue has perverted the feminist message into the threatening image of the sexually and economically liberated woman. The result is a shift toward the

rapaciousness that has always mixed unstably with sentimental exaltation and concern. Rape has emerged more clearly into the sexual domain, a crime against women most often committed by men of their own race rather than a right of the powerful over women of a subordinate group or a blow by black men against white women's possessors.<sup>41</sup>

It should be emphasized, however, that the connection between feminism and the upsurge of rape lies not so much in women's gains but in their assertion of rights within a context of economic vulnerability and relative powerlessness. In a perceptive article published in 1901, Jane Addams traced lynching in part to "the feeling of the former slave owner to his former slave, whom he is now bidden to regard as his fellow citizen."<sup>42</sup> Blacks in the post-Reconstruction era were able to express will and individuality, to wrest from their former masters certain concessions and build for themselves supporting institutions. Yet they lacked



the resources to protect themselves from economic exploitation and mob violence.

Similarly, contemporary feminist efforts have not yet succeeded in overcoming women's isolation, their economic and emotional dependence on men, their cultural training toward submission. There are few restraints against sexual aggression, since up to 90 percent of rapes go unreported, 50 percent of assailants who are reported are never caught, and seven out of 10 prosecutions end in acquittal.<sup>43</sup> Provoked by the commercialization of sex, cut loose from traditional community restraints, and "bidden to regard as his fellow citizen" a female being whose subordination has deep roots in the psyches of both sexes, men turn with impunity to the use of sexuality as a means of asserting dominance and control. Such fear and rage are condoned when channeled into right-wing attacks on women's claim to a share in public power and control over their bodies. Inevitably they also find expression in less acceptable behavior. Rape, like lynching, flourishes in an atmosphere in which official policies toward members of a subordinate group give individuals tacit permission to hurt and maim.

In 1972 Anne Braden, a Southern white woman and long-time activist in civil rights struggles, expressed her fear that the new anti-rape movement might find itself "objectively on the side of the most reactionary social forces" unless it heeded a lesson from history. In a pamphlet entitled *Open Letter to Southern White Women* — much circulated in regional women's liberation circles at the time — she urged anti-rape activists to remember the long pattern of racist manipulation of rape fears. She called on white women, "for their own liberation, to refuse any longer to be used, to act in the tradition of Jessie Daniel Ames and the white women who fought in an earlier period to end lynching," and she went on to discuss her own politicization through left-led protests against the prosecution of black men on false rape charges. Four years later, she joined the chorus of black feminist criticism of *Against Our Will*, seeing Brownmiller's book as a realization of her worst fears.<sup>44</sup>

In the midst of this confrontation between the Old Left and the New, between a white woman who placed herself in a Southern tradition of feminist anti-racism and a radical feminist from the North, a black women's movement has

also brought its own perspectives to bear. White activists at the earliest "speakouts" had acknowledged "the racist image of black men as rapists," pointed out the large number of black women among assault victims, and debated the contradictions involved in looking for solutions to a race- and class-biased court system. But not until black women had developed their own autonomous organizations and strategies were true alliances possible across racial lines.

A striking example of this development is the Washington, DC, Rape Crisis Center. One of the first and largest

community against itself. In a society that defines manhood in terms of power and possessions, black men are denied the resources to fulfill their expected roles. Inevitably, they turn to domination of women, the one means of asserting traditional manhood within their control. Through consciousness-raising groups for convicted rapists and an intensive educational campaign funded by the city's public school system, and aimed at both boys and girls from elementary through high school, the center has tried to alter the cultural plan for both sexes that makes men potential rapists and women potential victims.<sup>45</sup>



Illustration by Felix Hoffmann/CPA

such groups in the country, the center has evolved from a primarily white self-help project to an aggressive interracial organization with a multifaceted program of support services, advocacy, and community education. In a city with an 80 percent black population and more than four times as many women as men, the center has recruited black leadership by channeling its resources into staff salaries and steering clear of the pitfalls of middle-class voluntarism on the one hand and professionalism on the other. It has challenged the perception of the anti-rape movement as a "white women's thing" by stressing not only rape's devastating effect on women but also its impact on social relations in the black community. Just as racism undermined working-class unity and lynching sometimes pitted poor whites against blacks, sexual aggression now divides the black

As the anti-rape movement broadens to include Third World women, analogies between lynching and rape and the models of women like Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Jessie Daniel Ames may become increasingly useful. Neither lynching nor rape is the "aberrant behavior of a lunatic fringe."<sup>46</sup> Rather, both grow out of everyday modes of interaction. The view of women as objects to be possessed, conquered, or defiled fueled racial hostility; conversely, racism has continued to distort and confuse the struggle against sexual violence. Black men receive harsher punishment for raping white women, black rape victims are especially demeaned and ignored, and until recently, the different historical experiences of black and white women have hindered them from making common cause. Taking a cue from the women's anti-lynching campaign of the 1930s

as well as from the innovative tactics of black feminists, the anti-rape movement must not limit itself to training women to avoid rape or depending on imprisonment as a deterrent, but must aim its attention at changing the behavior and attitudes of men. Mindful of the historical connection between rape and lynching, it must make clear its stand against all uses of violence in oppression. □

Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, a longtime friend of the Institute for Southern Studies, is professor of history and director of the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. She is the author of *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (1979).

This essay originally appeared, in a slightly different version, in Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds., *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York, 1983). The title of this article comes from Adrienne Rich, "Disloyal to Civilization: Feminism, Racism, Gynephobia," in Rich, *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966-1978* (New York, 1979).

#### NOTES

1. Quoted in Howard Kester, *The Lynching of Claude Neal* (New York, 1934).
2. Michael Stephen Hindus, *Prison and Plantation: Crime, Justice, and Authority in Massachusetts and South Carolina, 1767-1878* (Chapel Hill, 1980), pp. xix, 31, 124, 253.
3. For recent overviews of lynching, see Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia, 1980); James R. McGovern, *Anatomy of a Lynching* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1982); and Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York, 1979).
4. Quoted in William H. Chafe, *Women and Equality: Changing Patterns in American Culture* (New York, 1977), p. 60.
5. Margaret A. Simons, "Racism and Feminism: A Schism in the Sisterhood," *Feminist Studies* 5 (Summer 1979): 384-401.
6. Diane K. Lewis, "A Response to Inequality: Black Women, Racism, and Sexism," *Signs* 3 (Winter 1977): 341-42.
7. Jacqueline Jones, *Freed Women?: Black Women, Work, and the Family During the Civil War and Reconstruction*, Working paper No. 61, Wellesley College, 1980; Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (New York, 1977), pp. 87-103.
8. Gerda Lerner, *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York, 1972), is an early and important exception.
9. Robin Morgan, "Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape" in Laura Lederer, ed., *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography* (New York, 1980), p. 140.
10. Susan Griffin, "Rape: The All-American Crime," *Ramparts* (September 1971): 26-35; Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York, 1975). See also Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (Garden City, N.Y., 1970).
11. Nancy F. Cott, "Passionlessness: An Interpretation of Victorian Sexual Ideology, 1790-1850," *Signs* 4 (Winter 1978): 219-36.
12. Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise* (New York, 1977). See also Phyllis Marynick Palmer, "White Women/Black Women: The Dualism of Female Identity and Experience," unpublished paper presented at the American Studies Association, Sep-

- tember 1979, pp. 15-17. Similarly, British Victorian eroticism was structured by class relations in which upper-class men were nursed by lower-class country women. See Ellen Ross and Rayna Rapp, "Sex and Society: A Research Note from Social History and Anthropology" in Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds., *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York, 1983).
13. A statement made in 1901 by George T. Winston, president of the University of North Carolina, typifies these persistent images: "The southern woman with her helpless little children in a solitary farm house no longer sleeps secure. . . . The black brute is lurking in the dark, a monstrous beast, crazed with lust. His ferocity is almost demoniacal. A mad bull or a tiger could scarcely be more brutal" (quoted in Charles Herbert Stember, *Sexual Racism: The Emotional Barrier to an Integrated Society* [New York, 1976], p. 23.)
14. Philip Alexander Bruce, *The Plantation Negro as a Freeman* (New York, 1889), pp. 83-84; Jackson Daily News, May 27, 1937; Hortense Powdermaker, *After Freedom: A Cultural Study in the Deep South* (1939; New York, 1969), pp. 54-55, 389.
15. For a contradictory view, see, for example, S. Nelson and M. Amir, "The Hitchhike Victim of Rape: A Research Report," in M. Agopian, et al., eds., *Victimology: A New Focus, Vol. 5: Exploiters and Exploited* (1975), p. 47; and "Black Offender and White Victim: A Study of Forcible Rape in Oakland, California" in *Forcible Rape: The Crime, The Victim, and the Offender* (New York, 1977).
16. Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Baltimore, 1969); W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York, 1941), p. 117.
17. This reading of lynching as a "cultural text" is modeled on Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* (New York, 1973), pp. 412-53. For "ladyhood," see Greer Litton Fox, " 'Nice Girl': Social Control of Women Through a Value Construct," *Signs* 2 (Summer 1977): 805-17.
18. Quoted in William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (Garden City, N.Y., 1963), pp. 148-51.
19. Dan T. Carter, *Scottsboro: An American Tragedy* (Baton Rouge, 1969), p. 36.
20. Belle Kearney, *A Slaveholder's Daughter* (New York, 1900), p. 96; Myrta Lockett Avery, *Dixie After the War* (1906; New York, 1969), pp. 377-90. See also John E. Talmadge, *Rebecca Latimer Felton: Nine Stormy Decades* (Athens, Ga., 1960), pp. 98-124.
21. Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York, 1966), pp. 320-24.
22. Adrienne Rich, "Disloyal to Civilization: Feminism, Racism, Gynephobia," in her *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose, 1966-1978* (New York, 1979); Jessie Daniel Ames to Mary McLeod Bethune, March 9, 1938. Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching Papers, Atlanta University (henceforth cited as ASWPL Papers). For black women's prior activities, see Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago, 1970); Lerner, *Black Women*, pp. 194-215; Bettina Aptheker, "Lynching and Rape: An Exchange of Views, Occasional Paper No. 25, American Institute of Marxist Studies (1977); and Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York, 1982), pp. 169-98.
23. For this reform tradition, see Estelle Freedman, "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism, 1870-1930," *Feminist Studies* 5 (Fall 1979): 512-29; Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1780-1920* (Urbana, Ill., 1981); and Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, Conn., 1981).
24. Deb Friedman, "Rape, Racism — and Reality," *Aegis* (July/August, 1978): 17-26.
25. Jessie Daniel Ames to Miss Doris Loraine, March 5, 1935, ASWPL Papers.
26. Carrie Parks Johnson Address, Commission on Interracial Cooperation, CIC Papers, Atlanta University.
27. Jessie Daniel Ames to Nannie Burroughs, October 24, 1931; Burroughs to Ames, October 30, 1931.

- ASWPL Papers; "Appendix F, Digest of Discussion," n.d. [November 20, 1931], Jessie Daniel Ames Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
28. Jackson (Mississippi) Daily News, February 1931, ASWPL Papers.
29. Jessie Daniel Ames, "Lynchers' View on Lynching," ASWPL Papers.
30. Quoted in Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely, *Seeds of Southern Change: The Life of Will Alexander* (Chicago, 1962), p. 143.
31. Noreen Connell and Cassandra Wilsen, eds., *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women* (New York, 1974); Morgan, "Theory and Practice."
32. Interview with Janet Colm, director of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro (North Carolina) Rape Crisis Center, April 1981. Two of the best recent analyses of rape are Ann Wolbert Burgess and Lynda Lytle Holmstrom, *Rape: Crisis and Recovery* (Bowie, Md., 1979) and Lorenne M.G. Clark and Debra J. Lewis, *Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality* (Toronto, 1977).
33. Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, "Reproductive Freedom: Beyond 'A Woman's Right to Choose,'" *Signs* 5 (Summer 1980): 661-85.
34. Adrienne Rich, "Taking Women Students Seriously" in *Lies, Secrets and Silence*, p. 242.
35. Vivian Berger, "Man's Trial, Women's Tribulation: Rape Cases in the Courtroom," *Columbia Law Review* 1 (1977): 3-12. Thanks to Walter Dellinger for this reference.
36. Allan Griswold Johnson, "On the Prevalence of Rape in the United States," *Signs* 6 (Fall 1980): 136-46.
37. Tracey A. Gardner, "Racism in Pornography and the Women's Movement" in *Take Back the Night*, p. 111.
38. Jessie Daniel Ames, "Editorial Treatment of Lynching," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 2 (January 1938): 77-84.
39. For a statement of this theme, see Christopher Lasch, "The Flight from Feeling: Sociopsychology of Sexual Conflict," *Marxist Perspectives* 1 (Spring 1978): 74-95.
40. Berger, "Man's Trial, Woman's Tribulation," p. 4. For a recent study indicating that the harsher treatment accorded black men convicted of raping white women is not limited to the South and has persisted to the present, see Gary D. LaFree, "The Effect of Sexual Stratification by Race on Official Reactions to Rape," *American Sociological Review* 45 (October 1980): 842-54. Thanks to Darnell Hawkins for this reference.
41. Barbara Ehrenreich, "The Women's Movement: Feminist and Antifeminist," *Radical America* 15 (Spring 1981): 93-101; Lasch, "Flight from Feeling." Because violence against women is so inadequately documented, it is impossible to make accurate racial comparisons in the incidence of the crime. Studies conducted by Menachen Amir in the late 1950s indicated that rape was primarily intraracial, with 77 percent of rapes involving black victims and black defendants and 18 percent involving whites. More recent investigations claim a somewhat higher percentage of interracial assaults. Statistics on reported rapes show that black women are more vulnerable to assault than white women. However, since black women are more likely to report assaults, and since acquaintance rape, most likely to involve higher status white men, is the most underreported of crimes, the vulnerability of white women is undoubtedly much greater than statistics indicate (Berger, "Man's Trial, Women's Tribulation," p. 3, n. 16; LaFree, "Effect of Sexual Stratification," p. 845, n. 3; Johnson, "On the Prevalence of Rape," p. 145).
42. Quoted in Aptheker, *Lynching and Rape*, pp. 10-11.
43. Berger, "Woman's Trial, Man's Tribulation," p. 6; Johnson, "On the Prevalence of Rape," p. 138.
44. Anne Braden, "A Second Open Letter to Southern White Women," *Generations: Women in the South*, a special issue of *Southern Exposure* 4 (Winter 1977), edited by Susan Angell, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, and Candace Waid.
45. Interview with Loretta Ross and Nkenge Toure, Washington, DC, May 12, 1981. See also Rape Crisis Center of Washington, DC, *How to Start a Rape Crisis Center* (1972, 1977).
46. Johnson, "On the Prevalence of Rape," p. 137.

# ANTI-LABOR VIGILANTES

The cartoon "Scars and Stripes Forever!" appeared in the *Birmingham Age-Herald* on September 26, 1936, in response to the kidnapping and flogging of Joseph Gelders.



In 1929, on the eve of the Great Depression, Southern textile workers revolted. The wave of strikes that followed foreshadowed the labor conflicts of the 1930s. The pattern first emerged in Gastonia, North Carolina. Assisted by Communist Party organizers, workers walked out of Gastonia's Loray mill in April 1929. The weapons used to defeat this strike included National Guard troops, strike-breakers, mass arrests, red-baiting, and threats of vigilante action. An advertisement in the *Gastonia*

## THE SOUTH DURING THE 1930S

*Gazette*, paid for by "citizens of Gaston County," claimed that the strike was for "the purpose of overthrowing this Government and destroying property and to kill, kill, kill. The time is at hand for every American to do his duty."<sup>1</sup>

The threatened violence soon appeared, as a mob of vigilantes destroyed the strikers' headquarters while National

Guardsmen stood by. Gastonia was unusual only in that the workers there fought back. When police entered a tent colony of strikers without a warrant, someone opened fire, and in

the melee Gastonia's police chief fell dead. This led to the arrest of 16 strikers and union organizers, seven of whom were ultimately convicted of second-degree murder.

Anti-union vigilantes continued to attack at will. After the first trial of Gastonia strikers ended in a mistrial, one angry mob destroyed union offices,

BY ROBERT P. INGALLS



while another gang flogged Morris Wells, a British communist found in the area. On September 14, 1929, vigilantes fired at a truckload of union members on their way to a rally in Gastonia. One of the bullets killed Ella May Wiggins, a 29-year-old textile worker who had become the movement's minstrel. As in other cases of anti-labor violence at Gastonia, local juries failed to convict anyone for the murder of Ella May Wiggins. Against such enormous odds, the Gastonia strike collapsed.<sup>2</sup>

Leftist radicals and union organizers have frequently met defeat in the South. But the setbacks for labor and the left have not been due to an inability to attract a following among Southern workers. Indeed, some of the most radical mass movements in America, such as the Populist Party and the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, have had Southern roots. How can we explain their ultimate failure? Among the many reasons given, historians have generally underestimated the role of vigilante violence.

Simply defined as "taking the law into one's own hands," vigilantism is usually associated with the frontier, where it was often used to deal with common criminals. Vigilantism did not, however, disappear with the frontier. It has survived into the twentieth century as a method of social control directed at ethnic and religious minorities, labor organizers, leftist radicals, and anyone else who appeared to threaten the status quo. Although its victims have changed over time, vigilantism has remained (to varying degrees in various times and places) a well-organized and violent means of protecting the established order against dissident individuals or groups. Indeed, two political scientists have perceptively defined vigilantism as "establishment violence" — that is, illegitimate or illegal coercion directed at maintaining the existing socioeconomic order.<sup>3</sup>

Vigilante violence has erupted in every section of the country, but it has proven especially popular in the South. When the so-called "Southern way of life" has appeared to be under attack, vigilante movements have frequently emerged. This is particularly true when the challenge to the status quo comes from peaceful groups operating within the law. Faced with this situation, defenders of local power structures often resort to violence as an illegal but effective way of eliminating "undesirables."<sup>4</sup>

During the Depression, the South was plagued by vigilante violence directed

against leftist radicals and labor organizers. In 1937 an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) investigation of centers of repression in the United States reported that six of the country's 11 most repressive areas were in the South.<sup>5</sup> A survey of some of the decade's worst incidents shows a pattern of violent repression from which no Southern state was immune.

Several of the best-known cases of anti-labor violence occurred in Alabama and Arkansas, where sharecroppers attempted to organize. Founded in 1931 under the sponsorship of the Communist Party, the Share Croppers Union of Alabama attracted thousands of black members.<sup>6</sup> Although it was a perfectly legal group, the union encountered a wave of terror that resulted in the deaths of an unknown number of black sharecroppers. During a 1935 strike, for instance, the secretary of the Share Croppers Union charged that the Lowndes County sheriff had "personally organized a band of vigilantes," made up of deputies and landlords from the area. This well-organized group "raided strikers' homes, pulled them out of bed, rode them miles away and beat them unconscious." At least one of the sharecroppers was killed by vigilantes, and the strike ultimately collapsed.<sup>7</sup>

Similar tactics were used against the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU) in Arkansas. Organized in 1934, the STFU fought to improve the conditions of black and white tenant farmers who were especially hard-hit by both the Depression and the New Deal farm program that rewarded landowners for restricting production at the expense of landless tenants. As an interracial union that won support from the political left, the STFU was thrice damned in the eyes of plantation owners and their allies. In Arkansas, sheriffs' deputies began a campaign of harassment by disrupting STFU meetings and arresting union leaders on bogus charges, such as "criminal anarchy." When official intimidation failed to stop the growth of the STFU, vigilantes resorted to violence in an effort to destroy the tenant farmers' movement.<sup>8</sup>

Mob violence against the STFU swept eastern Arkansas during 1935. Two of the first victims were Lucien Koch, the director of Commonwealth College in Mena, Arkansas, and Bob Reed, a Commonwealth student and member of the Young Communist League. The two

young white radicals came under attack after speaking to black and white sharecroppers at a meeting held in a black church near Gilmore. While Koch was speaking to the group, a plantation riding-boss barged in, demanding to know what Koch was talking about. Upon hearing the four words "Southern Tenant Farmers Union," the riding-boss left and immediately returned with about four other men, who grabbed Koch and wrestled him into a waiting car. When Bob Reed rushed to Koch's defense, he too was kidnapped. Both men were released after being beaten with fists and pistol butts. The local sheriff dismissed the incident, explaining that Koch and Reed had attended a sharecroppers' meeting at a black church. Furthermore, he contended, "They were not hurt."<sup>9</sup>

Six weeks later, vigilantes struck again when Norman Thomas toured eastern Arkansas. The Socialist Party leader was accompanied by a group of STFU organizers, including H.L. Mitchell and Howard Kester. After several stops, the entourage arrived at the little town of Birdsong, where a crowd of some 500

---

## Cotton Pickers! STRIKE!

For \$1 per 100 lbs  
Refuse to pick a boll for less!

---

Strike on every farm or plantation where  
cotton is being picked for wages!

---

Accept No Less Than The Union Prices----  
\$1 per 100 lbs

---

Strike Call Effective TODAY  
Special Committee  
SOUTHERN TENANT FARMERS UNION

---

See Instructions for local strikes  
Committees

---

Please Pass This On

---

sharecroppers had gathered to hear the speakers. When Kester tried to start the meeting, however, he was immediately interrupted by a gang of 30 to 40 planters who surrounded the platform. Norman Thomas insisted that the meeting was legal and protected by the state's constitution. Someone from the mob shouted back: "There ain't gonna be no speaking here. We are the citizens of this county and we run it to suit ourselves. We don't need no Gawd-Damn Yankee Bastard to tell us what to do." The armed gang then pulled Kester and Thomas from the platform, forced them into their car, and told them to leave Mississippi County. A deputy sheriff in the mob repeated the warning, and the Thomas party, trailed by several cars of armed planters, made its way to the county line.<sup>10</sup>

In the weeks that followed, vigilantes continued to use violence and threats of violence in an effort to destroy the STFU. One gang left a note for W.H. Stultz, president of the union, warning him to leave his home or face death. C.T. Carpenter, a lawyer in Marked Tree who went to the defense of the STFU, also came under attack. One night masked men riddled his home with gunfire. Carpenter and his family escaped injury, but a similar attack wounded two sons of E.B. McKinney, a black organizer of the STFU. Fearing for their lives, a number of STFU leaders moved across the Mississippi River to Memphis, where they continued their union activities.<sup>11</sup>

Apparently no one died in the first wave of terror in eastern Arkansas, but vigilantes soon showed they would not hesitate to kill. Early in 1936 two masked men murdered Willie Hurst, a black sharecropper who reportedly was willing to testify against deputies who had attacked sharecroppers near Earle. Several months later another black sharecropper, Frank Weems, disappeared after a severe beating by a gang of planters and deputies. Investigation into Weems's presumed death resulted in one of the most widely publicized mob actions against the STFU.<sup>12</sup>

In June 1936 the Reverend Claude Williams went to Earle to look into the disappearance of Frank Weems (who later turned up alive in Alton, Illinois). Williams, a radical minister and organizer for the STFU, was accompanied by Willie Sue Blagden, who was a socialist from a prominent Memphis family. Soon after arriving in Earle, Williams and Blagden were forced by six men to drive into the country. There the gang administered the highly ritualized flogging that



Willie Sue Blagden

had long served as a means of disciplining challengers of the Southern status quo. "I wouldn't have believed this," Blagden told the floggers. "You'll believe it now," one of them countered, "and you'll stay out of Arkansas."<sup>13</sup>

The flogging of Claude Williams and Willie Sue Blagden caused a furor. Not only were the victims both white, but one of them was a minister and the other a woman. This proved too much for a number of Southern newspapers, which condemned the flogging as an outrage. National publicity also helped prod President Franklin D. Roosevelt into appointing a commission to investigate the plight of tenant farmers.<sup>14</sup> One Arkansas lawyer concluded: "The situation over there in eastern Arkansas is plain hell. One risks his life to be there."<sup>15</sup> The fears generated by the reign of terror continued to make it difficult to organize tenant farmers. By World War II, neither the STFU nor other tenant farmer organizations was a powerful force any longer (see *SE*, Vol. I, No. 3-4).

Most of the anti-labor violence during the 1930s occurred not in rural areas but in cities, where union organizers and radicals concentrated their efforts. Defenders of the existing order saw little difference between labor organizers and leftist radicals. On the one hand, strict trade unionists were often pictured as part of some communist conspiracy, especially when they tried to organize white and black workers in industrial unions. On the other hand, socialists and communists were frequently blamed for causing labor unrest. Moreover, the epithet of "outside agitator" was used to describe all organizers, even those

born and bred in the South. Branding unwanted social and political movements as non-Southern often served conveniently to justify any means, including violence, of eliminating advocates of change.

The notorious flogging of Joseph Gelders showed the lengths to which dominant groups would go in order to preserve the status quo. Gelders, the son of an upper-class Jewish family in Birmingham, discovered Marxism during the Depression. In 1935 he left his post as an assistant professor of physics at the University of Alabama to work full-time for the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, a left-wing group that included artists and writers such as Rockwell Kent and Upton Sinclair. From his hometown, Gelders openly defended Communist Party organizers who were being imprisoned for possession of allegedly seditious literature. Gelders took this stand at a time when Birmingham workers were trying, against enormous odds, to unionize steel and coal companies in a community dominated by the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company (TCI).<sup>16</sup>

In September 1936 Gelders was kidnapped by four men and viciously flogged with a strap. Public outrage forced local, state, and federal investigations of the attack, but none of the vigilantes was ever prosecuted, even though Gelders positively identified at least two of them — one a Birmingham lawyer and the other an employee of TCI. Despite some local editorial demands for justice, Birmingham's law enforcement establishment effectively blocked any action. The police showed little interest in the case. The city's chief of detectives privately observed, "We have had so much trouble with Communism in this district that I can not expect too much enthusiasm out of my own men."<sup>17</sup>

When the case was presented to a grand jury, the prosecutor emphasized Gelders's radical politics, his Jewish religion, and his support for the Scottsboro boys. In explaining the refusal to hand down any indictments, one grand juror declared: "I still don't think outsiders should take the law into their own hands, but what are you going to do when there's no law to deal with radicals and Communists?"<sup>18</sup> In short, vigilante violence was justified as a last resort in dealing with radicals, even when they operated within the law.

Birmingham's chief of detectives, G.C.



Giles, had another explanation for the city's reluctance to prosecute perpetrators of vigilante violence. Noting that U.S. Steel, the parent company of TCI, was planning to expand its facilities in the city, Giles pointed to obvious economic considerations. In a letter to the governor, Giles reported: "Due to the recent announcement of the U.S. Steel Corporation's expenditures of 31 million dollars in this district and rumors of many other contemplated investments here, there is a strong sentiment against any kind of agitation or labor disturbance in this district. This, together with Gelders's own attitude, places us at a great disadvantage in prosecuting this case at this time."<sup>19</sup>

**S**imilar considerations led to vigilante violence and official inaction in other Southern states, especially after the CIO began its drive for industrial unions. One of the CIO's most outspoken allies was Witherspoon "Doc" Dodge, a native Southerner and Presbyterian minister. Always a dissenter, even in his own church which had once found him guilty of heresy, Dodge had long taught at Southern seminaries and finally at Georgia's Oglethorpe University. During the early 1930s Dodge also operated an Atlanta radio program featuring "radical" preaching for freedom, justice, and clean government.<sup>20</sup>

In 1937 Doc Dodge became an organizer for the CIO's Textile Workers Organizing Committee (TWOC). His first assignment took him to Columbus, Georgia, where he witnessed anti-labor violence. Dodge himself was anonymously warned to leave town. Although he escaped attack, three fellow organizers were assaulted in front of a textile plant in broad daylight. Dodge was so outraged that he encouraged the victims to swear out warrants against more than 20 of the attackers. At a hearing before a local judge, the defendants' attorney, a noted mill lawyer, called for dismissal of the charges on the grounds that "this C.I.O. organization which has created so much trouble all over the country has now come to Columbus to disturb the peace and harmony of our contented city." The attorney argued that his clients "were simply defending the welfare of our community against these outside agitators and trouble-makers." The judge promptly dismissed the charges.

Despite the ubiquitous threat of violence, Doc Dodge continued to work for

the CIO. In August 1938 he went to the south Georgia town of Fitzgerald, where workers at the Fitzgerald Cotton Mills Company had voted overwhelmingly for a union but management was refusing to negotiate a contract. Although union members warned Dodge that he was on a dangerous mission, he remained convinced that the law would protect his legal right to pursue a contract for the workers. On his first night in Fitzgerald, however, Dodge was told by company president J.M. Cox that the firm would never sign a union contract. While talking to Cox on the porch of a local hotel, Dodge was approached by a dozen men who asked him to go with them. When he hesitated, he was hit with a blackjack and thrown into a waiting truck — in front of half a dozen witnesses, including Cox.

Dodge was hustled out of town and repeatedly beaten with a blackjack, while his captors debated what to do with him. Finally he was dumped in a deserted area and left with this warning: "Now, looker here, preacher, we don't want no union down here in Fitzgerald, and we ain't goner have none. Now, you got till daylight to git outer Fitzgerald. If you ain't out by that time, we're goner shoot you."<sup>20</sup>

Dodge left town, but he decided to fight back. After local and state authorities refused to take any action, he finally contacted the Department of Justice, which began an investigation that uncovered evidence of a well-organized conspiracy by the management of the Fitzgerald Cotton Mills Company. This led to indictments against J.M. Cox, his vice-president, two company foremen, and 11 mill employees. But at the conclusion of a highly irregular federal trial in 1940, a jury — selected six weeks before the actual trial began — found all the defendants not guilty. Department of Justice attorneys called the proceedings "a complete abortion of justice, extending all the way from the United States District Attorney's office in Savannah through the jury and the presiding judge of the court."<sup>21</sup>

**A**s in several other cases including that of Joe Gelders, the beating of Doc Dodge attracted national attention and an official inquiry because the victim was white and middle-class. During the same period, blacks received worse treatment at the hands of Southern mobs, but their plight usually received little notice. However, even the highly

publicized acts of violence against whites rarely led to indictments, since the federal government rarely intervened and local authorities showed little interest in protecting the rights of workers. Indeed, in some cities, elected officials themselves set the tone for anti-union violence. One of the worst examples of this official incitement was in Memphis, where the city's political boss, Edward H. Crump, strongly opposed the CIO. In this case, the victims were not so well supported by Northern liberal groups (as in the case of the STFU) nor so closely connected to the South's dominant white elite (as in the cases of Gelders and Dodge).

In September 1937 Mayor Watkins Overton issued a formal statement warning that "imported C.I.O. agitators, Communists and high professional organizers are not wanted in Memphis." The mayor pointedly added, "They will not be tolerated here." Three days later, CIO organizer Norman Smith was badly beaten on a Memphis street. Smith had been in the city for only a few weeks, but it was well known that his mission was to help organize the local Ford assembly plant for the United Automobile Workers (UAW). Just before the beating the city's police commissioner had declared publicly, "We know Norman Smith and his where-abouts and will take care of that situation."<sup>22</sup> No action was taken to bring Smith's attackers to justice. Even the governor of Tennessee dismissed the incident as an ordinary fist fight. In this atmosphere of official indifference, Smith received another beating two weeks after the first. At that point, the UAW withdrew Smith from Memphis.

**THE KU KLUX KLAN RIDES AGAIN**  
**Your Country Is Calling You**

The Klan Rides to Save America!  Stop! Look! Listen! Think! Pray!

**Communism Must Go! America, Wake Up!**

| YOUR COUNTRY  | COMMUNISM  |
|---|--|
| Love, Peace, Freedom, God, Home, Husband, Wife and Children, Free Schools of Reason, Thought, Free Speech and Free Press, Government of the People, The Show and Stage, Freedom, Right to Worship God as we Please. | Hate, Blood, Pain and Suffering, Free Love, Chastity, State Property, Distinct Thought is a Free, Free to Express Thought by Speech or Press, Government of All Government, The Red Flag of Dishonesty, Government of All Beliefs. |

You have read of "The midnight ride of Paul Revere," saving the British from its way to free its way.  
 This is the MIDNIGHT RIDE OF THE KU KLUX KLAN, saving you to save our country and its institutions.  
 The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is determined to drive out of the United States those vicious alien radicals and to eradicate their insidious thoughts from every home, class and group of the American people, through a nationwide concerted campaign. In this 24th day we appeal to the hearty support of every true American citizen.  
 The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan invites and urges its own folk to save our country before it is too late. We do not want money but we need YOU and your support.  
**MODERN COMMUNISM CHALLENGED ALL DECENCY AND CIVILIZATION**  
 This organization is determined to fight to the last inch and the last man against any and all attacks on government and its American institutions. If you see a Red, Black, Yellow, Brown, Mexican, Chinese and believe with us, fill out the proper below.

**F. O. Box 1915, Tampa, Florida.**  
 I want to help save our country and see reality to ride with you.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 OCCUPATION \_\_\_\_\_  
 RESIDENCE ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_



Mayor Overton had made good his threat that the city would not tolerate CIO organizers.<sup>23</sup>

New Orleans proved just as unfriendly to the CIO. During a 1938 recognition strike by CIO truck and taxi drivers, New Orleans police raided CIO offices and arrested dozens of union members on vague charges. The CIO also complained that some strikers were held incommunicado and beaten by police. The city's superintendent of police denied this charge but admitted that his men had escorted two CIO organizers to the parish line and left them with the warning to keep out of New Orleans. "Lawless police are acting as sappers and miners in an attempt to bring down the temple of freedom in the U.S.," national CIO director John Brophy told a meeting of several thousand strikers and their supporters in New Orleans. In the midst of the strike, the Louisiana state legislature passed a resolution condemning the CIO as "Communitic." One state representative openly called on New Orleans citizens to "dump Brophy into the Mississippi."<sup>24</sup>

The same lynch-law spirit greeted CIO supporters in Dallas. At a meeting in front of the Ford assembly plant there in July 1937, a company spokesman railed against the CIO and boasted, "A Jew in Germany lives in a bed of roses compared to that position in which such a CIO organizer would be in that plant." Another speaker told Ford employees, "I haven't seen any CIO organizers lately and I may not see any because walking down Grand Avenue for John L. Lewis is going to be just like slapping a grizzly bear."<sup>25</sup>

A month later, anti-labor violence erupted in Dallas. On the afternoon of August 9, three men assaulted George Baer on a downtown street. Baer, a vice-president of the AFL's Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers Union, was forced into a car and severely beaten with blackjacks. His kidnapers later dumped him outside the city. Baer could not explain the attack but claimed that two of the assailants were Ford employees. Several hours later, the Socialist Party held a previously scheduled meeting at Fretz Park in Dallas to show a labor film. As the program ended, its organizer, Herbert Harris, was attacked by a mob of several dozen men who knocked him unconscious and dumped him in a car. Fellow socialist George Lambert was hit and kicked when he tried to prevent destruction of a film projector and sound equipment. The vigilantes took

Harris to a lonely spot outside of town, where they alternately questioned and threatened him and tried to get him to confess that he worked for the CIO. The gang finally tarred and feathered Harris and left him on the steps of a Dallas newspaper office. Harris later observed: "The vandals wished my plight heralded to the world. They desired that all and sundry would take heed not to molest, in the slightest, the easy berth that employers of labor are enjoying in this deep south country." Harris also emphasized that the vigilante action had been well orchestrated. "It had been executed with the precision of meshed gears," he recalled. "It could not have been effected so expertly unless there had been much rehearsing by the mob." Despite the failure of Dallas police to find the guilty parties, Harris remained convinced that "the Ford Plant was the nesting place from which sprang the outrage."<sup>26</sup>

In October 1937 another man fell victim to Dallas vigilantes. Harry F. Bowen, a former Ford employee and UAW member, was seized in front of the Ford plant. Apparently mistaken for a CIO organizer, Bowen was taken to a remote place, whipped with a hose, and questioned about alleged CIO activities. Once again the Dallas police showed little interest in the case.<sup>27</sup>

CIO organizers fared little better in the state of Mississippi. "Citizens of Tupelo . . . have politely asked organizers to leave the city," a local newspaper reported in 1937, "and if it takes bloodshed to accomplish the removal of agitators then they stand ready for action."<sup>28</sup> Shortly thereafter, an organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union was escorted out of town and given a dire warning not to return. A year later, a Tupelo mob kidnapped Charles Cox, a local textile union leader, and beat him until he

## LABOR HISTORY BIBLIOGRAPHY

For a comprehensive bibliography of books, dissertations, and articles published before 1980, see *Working Lives: The Southern Exposure History of Labor in the South* (New York, 1980). The following bibliography covers works published since that date.

- Thomas F. Armstrong, "Georgia Lumber Laborers, 1880-1917: The Social Implications of Work," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 67 (Winter 1983): 435-50.
- Fred A. Bailey, "Tennessee's Antebellum Society from the Bottom Up," *Southern Studies* 22 (Fall 1983): 260-73.
- Alan Banks, "Coal Miners and Firebrick Workers: The Structure of Work Relations in Two Eastern Kentucky Communities," *Appalachian Journal* II (Autumn/Winter 1983-84): 85-102.
- Thomas S. Baskett, Jr., "Miners Stay Away! W.B.W. Heartsill and the Last Years of the Arkansas Knights of Labor, 1892-1896," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 42 (Summer 1983): 107-33.
- Ira Berlin and Herbert G. Gutman, "Natives and Immigrants, Free Men and Slaves: Urban Workingmen in the Antebellum South," *American Historical Review* 88 (December 1983): 1175-1200.
- James S. Bissett, "The Asheville Citizen Strike: An Example of the Ineffectiveness of Appalachian Labor," *Appalachian Journal* II (Summer 1984): 402-09.
- Orville Vernon Burton and Robert C. McMath, Jr., eds. *Class, Conflict, and Consensus: Antebellum Southern Community Studies* (Westport, CT, 1982).
- Orville Vernon Burton, *Toward a New South? Studies in Post-Civil War Southern Communities* (Westport, CT, 1982).
- David L. Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880-1920* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1982).
- James C. Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877-1984* (Lexington, KY, 1984).
- David Corbin, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1800-1922* (Urbana, IL, 1981).
- Paul Cromwell and Tom Israel, "1980s Sharecropping: Organizing Mississippi's Pulpwood Cutters," *Southern Exposure* 10 (March/April 1982): 58-66.
- Pete Daniel, *Breaking the Land: The Transformation of Cotton, Tobacco, and Rice Cultures Since 1880* (Urbana, IL, forthcoming).
- Ronald L.F. Davis, *Good and Faithful Labor: From Slavery to Sharecropping in the Natchez District, 1860-1890* (Westport, CT, 1982).
- Ronald D. Eller, *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville, TN, 1982).
- Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Urbana, IL, 1983).
- Charles L. Flynn, Jr., *White Land, Black Labor: Caste and Class in Late Nineteenth-Century Georgia* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1983).
- J. Wayne Flynt, "Spindle, Mine, and Mule: The Poor White Experience in Post-Civil War Alabama," *Alabama Review* 34 (October 1981): 243-86.
- Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1983).
- Jim Foster, "Health and Safety versus Profits in the Coal Industry: The Gateway Case and Class Struggle," *Appalachian Journal* II (Autumn/Winter 1983-84): 122-41.
- Walter J. Fraser, Jr., and Winfred B. Moore, Jr., eds. *The Southern Enigma: Essays on Race, Class, and Folk Culture* (Westport, CT, 1983).
- Mary Fredrickson, "Four Decades of Change: Black Workers in Southern Textiles, 1941-1981," *Radical America* 16 (November/December 1982): 27-44.
- Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York, 1983).
- Bob Hall, "Bucking the System: Workers Take on Union-Busters in Robeson County, North Carolina," *Southern Exposure* 10 (September/October 1982): 66-73.
- William H. Harris, *The Harder We Run: Black Workers Since the Civil War* (New York, 1982).
- Bennett M. Judkins, "Occupational Health and the Developing Class Consciousness of Southern Textile Workers," *Maryland Historian* 13 (Spring-Summer 1982): 55-71.
- Jack Temple Kirby, "The Transformation of Southern Plantations c. 1920-1960," *Agricultural History* 57 (July 1983): 257-276.
- Peter Kolchin, "Reevaluating the Antebellum Slave Community: A Comparative Perspective," *Journal of American History* 70 (December 1983): 579-601.
- Suzanne S. Lewis, "The Wheelbarrow Strike of 1915: Union Solidarity in Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 43 (Autumn 1984): 208-21.
- Charles H. Martin, "Southern Labor Relations in Transition: Gadsden, Alabama, 1930-1943," *Journal of Southern History* 47 (November 1981): 545-68.
- Johnny M. McCain, "Texas and the Mexican Labor Question, 1942-1947," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*

promised to leave town.<sup>29</sup>

Although most anti-labor vigilantes successfully concealed their identities, their actions reveal a common pattern. First, as their victims often pointed out, the vigilantes appeared to be well organized and their attacks carefully planned. Second, their purpose was clearly to preserve existing power relationships by discouraging or driving out individuals who challenged the status quo. Third, vigilantes escaped punishment largely because of the complicity of local — and sometimes state — law enforcement officials. Police involvement in vigilante violence varied from outright participation to indifference and toleration. Finally, despite some exceptions, this form of mob violence was usually either endorsed or passively accepted by community leaders, who apparently felt that violence was a necessary means of defending the local establishment against leftist radicals and

union organizers who operated within the law. This prevalent attitude helps explain why anti-labor vigilantes were so successful, at least temporarily, in achieving their aims during the 1930s.

In a few cases during this decade, vigilantes created formal organizations that became widely publicized. In Atlanta, for instance, a group calling itself the Black Shirts carried on a brief campaign of threats against workers, and evidence shows that a self-styled White Legion was behind much of the anti-labor violence in Birmingham.<sup>30</sup> The best-known of the many vigilante organizations, however, was the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan's following was relatively small during the Depression years, but in some areas of the South it remained the chief enforcer of the established order which excluded industrial unions and radical politics. The Klan also tried to revive its fortunes through appeals to anti-labor and anti-communist sentiment.

In Greenville, South Carolina, the KKK resorted to vigilante tactics when communists tried to organize mill workers and the unemployed. In April 1931 Klansmen raided the headquarters of the local Unemployed Council and beat up several council members. During the next several months, robed Klansmen frequently marched and burned crosses in an effort to intimidate workers. When communists continued to operate despite harassment from Greenville police, five vigilantes kidnapped Clara Holden, an organizer for the National Textile Workers Union. Blindfolded and gagged, Holden was taken outside the city, lashed with a whip, and warned to leave town within 24 hours or face death. Despite her visible bruises, Holden was unable to convince local police that she had in fact been flogged.<sup>31</sup>

During the 1930s Klan publications repeatedly called attention to "the 'red' influence that has crept into labor organizations." The Klan newspaper, the *Kourier*, warned initially against a communist takeover of the American Federation of Labor. "Klansmen who belong to trade unions," advised the *Kourier*, "have a definite responsibility to maintain their union solidly behind their American leaders and to root out every radical alien agitator who worms his way in to wave the red flag of Communism."<sup>32</sup> Once the CIO was created, the Klan saw this as proof that leftist radicals were determined to use organized labor

as a communist tool. Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans declared that the CIO was "infested with Communists and the Klan will ride to wipe out communism." In addition to the "un-American" idea of industrial unions, the Klan naturally objected to the CIO's announced intention of organizing both white and black workers on an equal basis.<sup>33</sup> Summing up the CIO's reaction to Klan intimidation in the South, an organizer for the Textile Workers Union declared in 1939: "We did not think that we would have to fight the Ku Klux Klan. We felt it was dead and buried, but no sooner had we stepped into the field than they came with the Night Shirts and the fiery crosses."<sup>34</sup>

Klan action against the CIO was centered in the KKK strongholds of Georgia and South Carolina. Atlanta Klansmen held rallies and burned crosses to protest CIO activities, and in 1939 beat up two CIO organizers near the city. When the Textile Workers Organizing Committee began a campaign in Greenville, the city was plastered with posters that read:

C.I.O. Is Communism.

Communism Will Not Be Tolerated.

Ku Klux Klan Rides Again.<sup>35</sup>

After an outbreak of Klan violence in Anderson, South Carolina, a state investigation revealed that Klansmen had illegally spied on labor unions.

The most intense outbreak of Klan violence during the 1930s was in Tampa, Florida. Long a center of Klan activity, Tampa also experienced a variety of anti-radical confrontations. In 1931 more than half of Tampa's 10,000 cigar workers joined a communist union, the Tobacco Workers Industrial Union. City fathers went to the rescue of cigar manufacturers in a union-busting campaign that included police raids, arrests, a sweeping federal court injunction outlawing the union, and deportation proceedings against alien leftists. These official efforts were backed up by vigilante action. Communist organizer Fred Crawford was kidnapped and flogged, and leading Tampa residents formed a "secret committee of 25 outstanding citizens" to help cigar owners "wash the red out of their factories."<sup>36</sup> Under these pressures, the workers' communist union was broken.<sup>37</sup>

Four years later, another radical leftist movement emerged in Tampa. This time it was led by unemployed socialists who

erly 85 (July 1981): 45-64.

Randall Miller, "The Fabric of Control: Slavery in Antebellum Southern Textile Mills," *Business History Review* 55 (Winter 1981): 471-90.

Philip D. Morgan, "Work and Culture: The Task System and the World of Lowcountry Blacks, 1700-1880," *William and Mary Quarterly* 39 (October 1982): 563-99.

Gary R. Mormino, "Tampa and the New Urban South: The Weight Strike of 1899," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 60 (January 1982): 337-56.

Phaye Poliakoff, "Trying to Make a Living: Exploring the Economics of Prostitution," *Southern Exposure* 11 (July/August 1983): 14-18.

Valerie Quinney, "Childhood in a Southern Mill Village," *International Journal of Oral History* 3 (November 1982): 167-92.

Merl E. Reed, Leslie S. Hough, and Gary M. Fink, *Southern Workers and Their Unions, 1880-1975: Selected Papers, The Second Southern Labor History Conference, 1978* (Westport, CT, 1981).

Crandall A. Shifflet, *Patronage and Poverty in the Tobacco South: Louisa County, Virginia, 1860-1900* (Knoxville, TN, 1982).

Jerrell H. Shofner, "The Legacy of Racial Slavery: Free Enterprise and Forced Labor in Florida in the 1940s," *Journal of Southern History* 47 (August 1981): 41-26.

Jerrell H. Shofner, "Postscript to the Martin Taber Case: Peonage as Usual in the Florida Turpentine Camps," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 60 (October 1981): 161-73.

Philip Taft, *Organizing Dixie: Alabama Workers in the Industrial Era*, Revised, and edited by Gary M. Fink (Westport, CT, 1981).

Peggy G. Walls, "Grid Mining at Hog Mountain in the 1930s," *Alabama Review* 37 (July 1984): 202-20.

Michael Wayne, *The Reshaping of Plantation Society: The Natchez District, 1860-1880* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1983).

Stephen R. Wiley, "Songs of the Gastonia Textile Strike of 1929: Models of and for Southern Working Class Women's Militancy," *North Carolina Folklore Journal* 30 (Fall-Winter 1982): 87-98.

Robert H. Zieger, *Rebuilding the Pulp and Paper Workers' Union, 1933-1941* (Knoxville, TN, 1983).

Robert H. Zieger, "The Union Comes in Covington: Virginia Paperworkers Organize, 1933-1952," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 126 (February 1982): 51-89.



formed a political party, the Modern Democrats, to challenge the city's corrupt political machine. In the 1935 municipal election the Modern Democrats fielded a slate of candidates who ran on a mildly socialist platform calling for reforms such as public ownership of utilities. The Modern Democrats were defeated in the election, but they continued to organize and demonstrate peacefully on behalf of workers and the unemployed. Several weeks after the 1935 election, a gang of vigilantes kidnapped, flogged, and tarred and feathered three leaders of the Modern Democrats. One victim, Joseph Shoemaker, was so badly beaten that he died as a result of his wounds.<sup>38</sup> National attention focused on the attack and on the tensions in Tampa, and investigations by local, county, and state authorities and by the *Tampa Tribune* implicated the Ku Klux Klan. Shortly before the flogging, Joseph Shoemaker's brother had received a phone call warning, "This is the Ku Klux Klan. We object to your brother's activities. They are Communist. Tell him to leave town. We will take care of the other radicals, too."<sup>39</sup> In the wake of the brutal attack, Tampa Klansmen circulated a leaflet that declared, "Communism Must Go," and pledged "to fight to the last ditch and the last man against any and all attacks on our government and its American institutions."<sup>40</sup>

Tampa police were reluctant to press the case, but county and state officials, who had no political ties to the city machine, produced arrests and indictments. The accused included Tampa's police chief and seven officers, along with three men from Orlando. The Orlando men, allegedly members of a Klan "wrecking crew," had recently served as special policemen in Tampa. Prominent Tampa citizens went to the aid of the accused. Bail money was provided by local businessmen, including several cigar manufacturers. The mayor's brother-in-law, who also headed the city's political machine, served as chief defense attorney, and a lengthy series of trials followed. In the first, a jury in the nearby town of Bartow found five policemen guilty of kidnapping. Each was sentenced to a four-year prison term, but Florida's Supreme Court overturned the convictions on a technicality. In two subsequent trials, the accused were acquitted and freed.

Meanwhile, the Modern Democrats' organization collapsed, and vigilantes continued to operate in Tampa. In 1936

they prevented Earl Browder, the Communist Party candidate for president of the U.S., from speaking at a Tampa auditorium. The following year the ACLU put Tampa at the top of its list of centers of repression because the city was "dominated by the Ku-Klux-Klan."<sup>41</sup>

The Klan was perhaps the most powerful of the vigilante organizations that used violence to defend the established order during the 1930s. Throughout the South, however, a variety of local groups systematically took the law into their hands in order to prevent social change. These widespread campaigns of terror, either sponsored or tolerated by the local establishment, help explain why legal and peaceful challenges to the status quo by Southern labor and radical organizers met with little success, regardless of how much support they received from workers. □

Robert P. Ingalls teaches history at the University of Florida in Tampa.

#### NOTES

1. Quoted in Irving Bernstein, *The Lean Years* (Boston, 1960), p. 22.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-27.
3. Richard Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (New York, 1975), pp. 3-25; H. Jon Rosenbaum and Peter C. Sederberg, "Vigilantism: An Analysis of Establishment Violence," in Rosenbaum and Sederberg, eds., *Vigilante Politics* (Philadelphia, 1975), pp. 3-6.
4. For suggestive comments on the roots of Southern violence in "a siege mentality," see Sheldon Hackney, "Southern Violence," in Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr, eds., *Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (New York, 1969), pp. 524-525.
5. The six "centers of repression" in the South were listed as Tampa, Harlan County, Eastern Arkansas, Atlanta, Birmingham, and New Orleans. American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), *Let Freedom Ring!* (New York, 1937), p. 12.
6. Albert Jackson, "On the Alabama Front," *The Nation* 41 (September 19, 1935): 329-330; F. Ray Marshall, *Labor in the South* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), pp. 156-157.
7. Albert Jackson, "You Can Kill Me — But You Can Never Scare Me," *Labor Defender* 11 (October 1935): 6.
8. Donald H. Grubbs, *Cry from the Cotton: The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the New Deal* (Chapel Hill, 1971), pp. 62-71; H.L. Mitchell, *Mean Things Happening in This Land: The Life and Times of H.L. Mitchell, Co-Founder of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union* (Montclair, N.J., 1979), pp. 1-59.
9. *New York Herald Tribune*, February 2, 1935, clipping in ACLU Papers, Princeton University Library, Princeton, N.J., vol. 828.
10. H.L. Mitchell, "Norman Thomas Visits the Cotton Fields," n.d. [1935], Southern Tenant Farmers Union Papers (microfilm edition).
11. C.T. Carpenter to William B. Fennell, March 28, 1935, ACLU Papers, vol. 828.
12. Grubbs, *Cry from the Cotton*, pp. 90-91, 109-110; Mitchell, *Mean Things Happening*, p. 89.
13. Willie Sue Blagden, "Arkansas Flogging," *The New Republic* 87 (July 1, 1936): 236.
14. Grubbs, *Cry from the Cotton*, pp. 113-117.
15. Arley Woodrow to Roger Baldwin, June 17, 1936, ACLU Papers, vol. 925.
16. Robert P. Ingalls, "Antiradical Violence in Birmingham During the 1930s," *Journal of Southern His-*



Herbert Harris after being tarred and feathered in Dallas

- tory* 47 (November 1981): 521-529.
17. G.C. Giles to Bibb Graves, October 29, 1936, Graves Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery.
  18. *Birmingham Post*, November 14, 1936.
  19. Giles to Graves, October 29, 1936. For the full text of this letter, see Robert P. Ingalls, "The Flogging of Joseph Gelders: A Policeman's View," *Labor History* 20 (Fall 1979): 577-578.
  20. Witherspoon Dodge, *Southern Rebel in Reverse* (New York, 1961), pp. 68, 74, 98-99.
  21. Quoted in George Brown Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South*, (Baton Rouge, LA, 1967), p. 526.
  22. Quotes in Lucy Randolph Mason, *To Win These Rights* (Westport, CT, 1970), p. 104.
  23. Gordon Browning to Harry F. Ward, October 1, 1937, ACLU Papers, vol. 1059.
  24. *CIO News*, July 9, 1938.
  25. Herbert Harris, *Terror in Texas* (n.p., n.d.) p. 10.
  26. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 4, 15.
  27. George Clifton Edwards to ACLU, August 31, 1937, ACLU Papers, vol. 1060.
  28. Quoted in Tindall, *Emergence of the New South*, p. 525.
  29. Mason, *To Win These Rights*, p. 53.
  30. Charles H. Martin, "White Supremacy and Black Workers: Georgia's 'Black Shirts' Combat the Great Depression," *Labor History* 18 (Summer 1977): 366-381; Ingalls, "Antiradical Violence in Birmingham": 524.
  31. Clara Holden statement, n.d. [1931], ACLU Papers, vol. 499.
  32. *Kourier*, August 1934, p. 5 and October 1934, p. 23.
  33. *New York Times*, July 12, 1937.
  34. Quoted in Walter Galenson, *The CIO Challenge to the AFL* (Cambridge, MA, 1960), p. 341.
  35. *New York Times*, October 31, 1937.
  36. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, December 4, 1931.
  37. Robert P. Ingalls, "Radicals and Vigilantes: The 1931 Strike of Tampa Cigar Workers," in Merl E. Reed, et al., eds., *Southern Workers and Their Unions, 1880-1975* (Westport, CT, 1981), pp. 44-53.
  38. For a fuller discussion of this case, see Robert P. Ingalls, "The Tampa Flogging Case, Urban Vigilantism," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 56 (July 1977): 13-27.
  39. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 12, 1936.
  40. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, December 20, 1935.
  41. ACLU, *Let Freedom Ring!*, p. 2.



## AN INTERVIEW WITH ANNE BRADEN

By Sue Thrasher and Eliot Wigginton

# You Can't Be Neutral

*Anne Braden turned sixty this year. Many people who know her only by name or reputation often assume that she is older — that she belongs to that generation of 1930s radicals whose activism had its roots in the tradition of social gospel, the movement to organize labor, or the struggle for equal rights. But it was not the drama of the Great Depression and the halcyon days of American radicalism that nourished Anne Braden's commitment to social justice; it was the Cold War hysteria and the accompanying silence and chill of the 1950s.*

*Anne and her husband Carl were catapulted into the headlines in 1954 when they bought a house in Louisville, Kentucky, and resold it to a black man named Andrew Wade. Within a few short months they were both indicted for sedition — attempting to overthrow the state government of Kentucky.*

*It's hard now to even imagine the hysteria that could have prompted such a case; but not only was the McCarthy Era in full swing, the day of reckoning had also come to the South in the matter of school desegregation. Andrew Wade moved into his new house on May 15, 1954. On May 17, the Supreme Court handed down its historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision declaring that separate but equal educational facilities were not enough. The Bradens, like others who had waited for the decision, were euphoric. Anne recalls, "I'll never forget that day. I remember when I heard it on the radio. You know we all thought we had won; this was the great victory and everything was going to be different. I thought the schools were going to be*



Anne Braden dressed for a play at Stratford College, Virginia, c. 1942.

photos courtesy Anne Braden

## Oral History

Of a number of influences, two were critical to my own interest in Southern working-class and progressive history — and therefore, necessarily, *oral* history. One was Anne Braden, who reminded me, not so gently, that mine was not the first generation of Southerners to talk about creating a “new South” and even went so far as to suggest that I try to educate myself. The second was an accidental discovery of *These Are Our Lives*, the collection of 1930s interviews edited by W.T. Couch and published by the University of North Carolina Press. As I leafed through the Couch volume and read the voices — voices that were later to become known in oral history genre as

those belonging to “ordinary” people — it dawned on me that this was the first time I had ever seen in print an image of rural life that even came close to resembling my own.

It’s hard to understand sometimes why certain images stay with us, but I remember one woman in particular whose voice has never left me. “We ain’t had nothing, and we never will” she matter-of-factly proclaimed. And yet, almost as if she couldn’t help herself she also confided to the strange interviewer, “I’m gonna have lace curtains one day.” She was a North Carolina sharecropper. Her life was a constant series of moving from one shack to another, giving birth to one child after another, and constant, hard working in one field after another. How she managed to hang on to her dream of lace curtains I don’t know. But her stubborn insistence and belief that

one day she would have them has more than once become a metaphor for some rainbow chasing of my own.

Couch’s book soon led me to others. I simply pursued the subject index of “sharecropping” and found quite a number of ordinary people — ranging from the “involved” participant observer portraits of Arthur Raper and Jack Delano in Greene County, Georgia (*Tenants of the Almighty* and *Preface to Peasantry*), to the passion and compassion of James Agee’s breathless accounting in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. With the exception of the Agee book, I had the feeling that I was literally “uncovering” history. I discovered the books in libraries, and always my name was the first to appear on the check-out card for several years.

A number of factors combined to change this situation, however, and by

*desegregated in the South in the next year.”*

*They had underestimated the massive resistance that followed the Court’s decision. The night Andrew Wade moved into his house a rock was thrown through a window and a cross burned in his front yard. It was only the beginning of the harassment. Six weeks later his house was bombed, and in a bizarre turn of events the Bradens and five others who had formed the Wade Defense Committee were indicted for “conspiring” to blow up his house.*

*Experienced newspaper reporters and writers, the Bradens took their case to the public. For two years, they crisscrossed the country speaking out against the hysteria, using the notoriety of their case to draw attention to the underlying issue of racism. Finally in 1957 the case against them was dropped, but their lives were never quite the same. (Anne wrote a detailed account of their case in her book, *The Wall Between*, which carried an endorsement by Eleanor Roosevelt and Martin Luther King, Jr.)*

*Anne and Carl went to work as field organizers with the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF), and later became its co-directors. After Carl’s death in 1975, Anne began working with the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice (SOC) and has continued to travel, speak, and write on behalf of struggles for social justice and equality all across the South.*

*For almost 35 years now she has worked ceaselessly for “the Movement.” She has marched on picket lines, used*

*her powerful and articulate voice as a speaker at countless rallies and gatherings, and always, always, used her first love as a writer and reporter to document and organize. She seems never to tire, and long after most folks have gone to bed from exhaustion, Anne can be found in a corner somewhere involved in an intense conversation.*

*When the Institute for Southern Studies began in 1970, one of its first projects was an effort to document the lives of participants from the progressive movements of the 1930s, in particular a series of interviews with surviving members of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union (see “No More Moanin,” SE vol. 1, no. 3 & 4).*

*But Anne Braden didn’t belong to that generation, and she was so active I don’t think any of us would have had the temerity to suggest she sit still long enough for an oral memoir. The assumption was that Anne and Carl would be around forever — and that an oral history interview was something you did when someone retired. It turned out to be a bad assumption. Carl Braden never retired; he died in 1975 without a full life history ever being taped.*

*It wasn’t until 1982 when Eliot Wigginton and I began working on a collection of interviews to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Highlander Center that I got around to interviewing Anne. Throughout its history, Highlander has been a gathering place for an assortment of individuals who have risked a great deal in order to put their beliefs into practice. We wanted to produce a book*

*that would look at the social history of the past 50 years through the lives of such people, a book that would both celebrate and acknowledge their role in social change.*

*Thirty-six interviews were conducted, transcribed, and added to the Highlander archives. Somewhere between 25 and 30 of these will be published in a collection edited by Eliot Wigginton and scheduled for publication in the winter of 1986 by Doubleday & Company. Most of these interviews range from one hour to four. Two of them are extremely long, 12 to 14 hours. One is the interview I did with Anne Braden; the other is an interview Anne Braden did with C.T. Vivian.*

*The excerpt that follows is one portion of a 380-page transcript. There is neither space here — nor will there be enough in the book — to do justice to the life Anne Braden is living. Happily, however, we will be able to elaborate more in the forthcoming book. The material presented here focuses on Anne’s early years in Anniston, Alabama, her years of intellectual awakening at college in Virginia, and her growing consciousness about social issues as a young reporter.*

— Sue Thrasher

---

### FAMILY

---

In terms of family, I’m descended from what my family always said was the first white child born in Kentucky — white as opposed to Indian. First settlers

the late-1960s the South's forgotten people were on their way to being discovered. Due to an increasing interest in documentary photography, a number of books were published utilizing the huge Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographic collection at the Library of Congress. The publication of *Hard Times*, Studs Terkel's masterful oral history of the Great Depression, demonstrated both the value and the creative possibilities of oral memoirs. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, the history profession was looking for ways to expand. Professionalizing the methodology of oral history was one way; creating new departments around heretofore marginal areas such as labor history, black history, and women's history (and more recently local and community history) was yet another. We have all been the beneficiaries of such

is the point, at Fort Harrod, Kentucky, which is now Harrodsburg. That was the first permanent settlement in Kentucky. By my mother's standards that's a sign of great prestige, that you got here first; that's very important to her. I always thought it was terribly unimportant and not too good because they killed the Indians. As a child I wasn't sure that was something to be proud of, even before I thought about the slavery thing, because later on, two generations, they were owning slaves. But it was important to Mother and she wanted her children to be aware of their history, so she would take us to Fort Harrod and tell us about these things. I thought it was interesting at the time. I did have that little concern about the Indians, but I didn't go through any great suffering over it. Of course, when I began to develop a few ideas of my own, it really seemed ridiculous to think there was any great thing about my ancestry, but after I got charged with sedition and everybody was saying, "Go back to Russia," I found it was very useful. I said publicly in every forum I could that I'd been here longer than a lot of other folks and they could go back to Russia if they wanted to! It was kind of useful in that period with the outside agitator bit.

I've always been interested in this grandmother — five greats to me — who was the mother of the child I'm descended from. Her name was Ann Pogue, and I would love to know more about her. She brought the first spinning wheel into Kentucky over the Cumberland Gap, and she had five husbands — because they all

expansion. A quick glance at the titles published in the history field during the past 20 years will indicate that we have finally found other ways to approach history than just through the lives of "great white men."

Yet, in other ways I think we stand to lose. By professionalizing the practice of oral history, and basing it primarily in the universities, the subtle message is that it is a skill best left to the experts. That simply isn't true. Laying claim to the past is often best done by someone who has a stake in it. Surely no reader could enter the charmed circle of Aunt Arie Carpenter's life without pausing to reflect on the magical relationship between Aunt Arie and the Foxfire students who had come to learn what only she could teach them (*Aunt Arie: A Foxfire Portrait*, Foxfire Press/Dutton, 1983).

The practice of oral history should

kept getting killed by the Indians! One would get killed off and she'd marry another one. She had children by most of those husbands, which is why there are a lot of descendants; there's nothing exclusive about being descended from Ann Pogue! The husband that my family came down from was William Pogue and he was one that went off and got killed by the Indians. Her name when she died was McGinty — that was the last husband she had.

I think she was very strong; in fact, I think most of those pioneer women were. What I always heard — and this must have been word-of-mouth come down in the family — was that she ran the fort. Not only did she bring in the first spinning wheel, she also set up the first school in the fort. She insisted that they have a school so the children could get some learning. She was apparently considered something of a tyrant by the men, even though they kept marrying her, because she insisted they stick around the fort and till the land. Their inclination was to go out and fight the Indians, but she wanted the land tilled so they would have corn and whatever. So she became known as a tyrant in terms of making everybody fall to and work. I just really think I would have liked her.

---

#### ANNISTON

---

I was born in Louisville, Kentucky, July 28, 1924. My family on both sides came from Kentucky, but they moved to Mississippi when I was a baby. My

father didn't have quite the blue blood credentials my mother did, but he came from a substantial family. The result doesn't have to stand as the only record, or the official record, but it should stand as a part of the record. It might affirm or deny other sources. It might be trivial to the majority and of great significance to only a few. It might make some people proud of their own history, or that of their community, or that of their people. It might give some young person the idea that history can be fun. And it might give some adult the idea that it has as much to do with the present as with the past. Oral history is a way to learn. It's the kind of learning that should be denied to no one, and encouraged by all. □

— Sue Thrasher

father didn't have quite the blue blood credentials my mother did, but he came from a substantial family.

The first place I really remember is Columbus, Mississippi, and I started to school there. I started kindergarten and they put me in the first grade, so I was always a year ahead of myself. When I was in the second grade, we moved back to Kentucky for a couple of years and then to Little Rock, Arkansas, for a few months, and then to Anniston. That's where I grew up, Anniston, Alabama. My father was a salesman for Allied Mills, which is a feed company; I don't know why they moved him around so much. He was always a salesman as far as making a living, but finally settled in one spot. I went through high school in Anniston, graduated in '41. I was in college exactly the four years of World War II: Stratford Junior College in Danville, Virginia, for two years and then Randolph Macon where I finished in '45.

Daddy was a frustrated farmer. He really would have loved to have farmed all his life. Even before he retired, he bought a farm outside of Anniston and after he left Allied Mills, he was just constantly at the farm for years. Later on, after he finally sold the farm because it was so much work, he had half interest in an antique shop. He just simply couldn't retire; Daddy just worked like a dog all of his life. We have a joke in my family about the "McCarty drive" — that's my father's name, McCarty. The first person I ever heard refer to it was my mother; she said her husband and children all had the "McCarty drive"



and if she had known about it 50 years earlier she would have run screaming in the other direction! She was a widow to Daddy's work for years.

Anniston was a cotton mill town and also sold pipes — the Anniston Pipe Company made iron pipes. No steel mills like in Birmingham, but a lot of cotton mills. There was a right and wrong side of the tracks. There was a main street downtown, Noble Street; generally, east of Noble was the better off area, and west Anniston was where poor people lived, white and black but not particularly together. Then there was South Anniston where blacks lived and they had dirt streets. The whole town was so small you could drive it in five minutes — all of it — but it was definitely demarcated.

When we moved to Anniston, Mother joined the Episcopal Church, and Daddy, whose family was Southern Baptist, joined one of the big Baptist churches. There were only two Episcopal churches in Anniston. One was a little church on the "right" side of the tracks and she put us in Sunday School there. I remember as a child wishing I went to one of the other churches like the Presbyterian or the Baptist because they had more children and sounded like more fun. But she put us in the Episcopal Church; the people there were from some of the "first families," which Episcopalians usually are.

My mother wasn't always pleased with some of the people I associated with, because she didn't think they were socially acceptable. I was real close friends with a girl who Mother didn't think I should run around with. There wasn't anything wrong with the girl's "reputation"; it was a matter of social position. I remember her saying, "When we came to Anniston I had to be very careful to establish a social position for you and Lindsay [Anne's brother] here in Anniston." That was the first time it ever occurred to me that people consciously worked for those things. In that day in the South, as you know, it wasn't money, it was your social position; it was your ancestry that made the difference. I had always assumed that I was among the "better" people. Now I didn't put it in those terms; it was just part of my life. That's the world I lived in. I had no idea one had to work at it until Mother said that she had to do certain things to make sure I had the correct social position in Anniston.

I became deeply religious as a child and was worried that my family was not

religious enough. I just really got wrapped up in religion. I can't remember exactly why or even when it began, but I read the Bible a lot and I read other things.

There was a very interesting man who was minister of the church named Jim Stoney. He was a maverick, and I just adored him. He was very interested in poor people and he set up what was then called missions on the other side of town. He would have the children from the missions come to our Sunday School. Things like that were considered quite unusual. People just didn't mix up. I think he really tried to make the wealthier people in Anniston aware of what poverty was like. Somehow he managed to stay at the church and people liked him; they just thought he was a little bit cuckoo.

Jim Stoney had two young assistants; one, I remember quite well, had an inclination to get the kids to discussing social issues. By the time I was in my teens, I was going to these young peoples' meetings on Sunday. I think the first discussion I ever heard about the "race question" or the "race problem" was at one of those meetings. I remember once — I think it was the first time I ever heard the word communist — I asked a question that was slightly questioning of segregation. I'm not even sure I knew the term segregation; I just knew that people lived apart. And this person came up to me afterwards and said I shouldn't say things like that or people would think I was a communist. And I didn't even know what a communist was!

I had never been around poor people, just like I had never been around black people. But at the church, I would be with the children from the cotton mill villages, and would hear Jim Stoney talk, and I developed a feeling about religion as something that was supposed to *do* something about these things. There was enough of a caring atmosphere that I'm sure it influenced me.

I'm not sure how much of it was a fear of going to hell, although the preachers I heard never preached fire and brimstone — you don't do that in the Episcopal church — or whether I was really concerned about these things. I didn't believe the Bible literally and I don't even think I believed in hellfire, but I knew that people had to be responsible for their fellow human beings, even before I quite understood who they were, you know.

It was almost intuitive, you see, this awareness that the whole world wasn't in

the comfortable world that I lived in. To a certain extent it was the *noblesse oblige* psychology — you had certain obligations because of your position in society, and you were supposed to be socially responsible. All the people I grew up with thought they were in a privileged position because they were actually better than other people and therefore it was God's will. I think when you grow up with that attitude and you have nothing to measure it by, in the normal course of events you are going to assume those things too. In that situation, *anything* in that environment that lets you know there is another world somewhere is potentially radicalizing.

Looking back, you don't know what you superimpose later, nobody does. I've interpreted my own life differently at different times, but I've always thought Jim Stoney had a more humane and somewhat larger view of life than most of the people in Anniston. It was such a constricted world! What I got in the church, mostly from him, was the only window out. Most people wouldn't think of an Episcopal church in a little town as being a great opening to the world; yet, in a way it was, because there wasn't anything else. I think that's probably true of a lot of people who have come into the movement through religion. It was definitely the main factor in my life.

---

#### STRATFORD

---

Going to college was one of the big turning points in my life — not politically so much, but I think it led to politics later — because it was a tremendous intellectual awakening.

There weren't but a few hundred people at Stratford. It was mostly in one big building that had white columns and beautiful ivy-covered walls. The dormitories were upstairs and classrooms were on the ground floor and in the basement. But that was about all it was. There was a dining room in the basement. There were a lot of rules in those days. We had to go to meals and sit at the same table with one of the faculty. That's how we got to know them. People didn't wear slacks as much then; we wore slacks some, but we had to put on a dress for dinner. You had to have your lights out at a certain time. I finally got around that. I'd work late at night in the press room when I got to working on the paper. The rules didn't bother me particularly because I figured that's the way all schools were.

I won every honor in the world at Stratford because it was small. My second year I was editor of the paper, which was a good paper for a small college; it always won the prizes. I was vice president of the student body; then the student body president left during the middle of the year and I had to take over the presidency. I was kind of a big frog in a little pond. I had a chance to do things there I never would have had on a big campus; I couldn't have been editor of the paper probably, and I learned everything about putting a college paper together. I did a lot of drama; I was in all the plays. To graduate, to get a diploma in drama, I had to do a whole play by myself. So I did *St. Joan*. I did all the parts. I had to learn it all. I just got to do a lot of things I never would have on a big campus and developed some self-confidence, which I hadn't had that much of before.

It was at Stratford that I really began to develop this "McCarty drive." I worked very hard. It's always been a little bit of a conflict for me, not particularly wanting to drive so hard, feeling I really don't take time to enjoy life, except I'm not sure, because what I really enjoy is the working. My freshman year I was rooming with a young woman from over in the tidewater of Virginia, and several of us were going home with her for Thanksgiving. At the last minute I decided not to go because I had some papers to write or something to do for the school paper, so I stayed there and the rest of them went. And I look back on that sometimes; it was the first time I made that sort of decision, that I'd stay and work instead of do something pleasant. It was a turning point in my life and I've been doing it ever since — not always sure that was the way to live but it's mainly the

way I *have* lived.

The other thing was I made some close friends at Stratford. Usually the friends I made were people I was working with on something and where you just get into a conversation late at night after the paper was put to bed. But it was also where I met Harriet Fitzgerald, who I think was the most profound influence in my life except for Carl.

The dean of the hall was a woman named Ida Fitzgerald who lived there in Danville. Her father had owned the Dan River Cotton Mills, the one that Tom Tippet describes in *When Southern Labor Stirs*. They had a great big house right across the street from the college and every once in a while, Ida Fitzgerald would have some students over to her house for a cookout in the yard and I would go over. I always felt intimidated and was afraid to talk around her. I was still pretty shy. Her older sister, Harriet Fitzgerald, had finished at Randolph Macon. She was an artist by profession and by that time was living in Greenwich Village. Somewhere in there — probably late my second year — when we were over there having supper, Harriet was in town and I began to get to know her. Over the next year or two while I was at Randolph Macon I got to know Harriet very well, and she became sort of a role model for me. She was a generation older, I was about 20 then and she was about 40. I was doing a lot of looking and searching and she took an interest in me. She was the one who urged me to go to Randolph Macon. Harriet told me later that Ida had told her she had to meet me, that I was the most brilliant student who had ever been to Stratford and she had to persuade me to go to Randolph Macon Women's College.

Harriet was part of that generation of

women in the twenties that I call the earlier women's liberation movement who decided to seek careers instead of marriage. I remember her saying to me at one point, "You know, my generation couldn't do both, but yours probably can; we had to make choices." A lot of her friends all went off to be professionals of one kind or another.

She was on the Board of Randolph Macon. Usually on those college boards they get people with a lot of money, and they have a few alumnae. She was an alumna and very active on the board for years, so she would come down to Randolph Macon a lot. When she'd have exhibitions of her art in New York they would then be shown at Randolph Macon, so we were in pretty close touch. I'd have these long conversations with her. She introduced me to a lot of things including Karl Marx and Freud; she was very much into Freud and that was the thing in those days.

She was a good friend of Lucy Randolph Mason who worked with the CIO. Harriet moved in those circles. She was very pro-labor, very pro-Roosevelt, pro all those things that her cohorts in Danville were not. But she kept in touch with her roots certainly more than I did. She kept coming back to Danville and trying to shake up Danville and never cut herself off from her roots.

Carl was obviously the most important factor in my life — and Harriet was, too. If I hadn't known Harriet I don't think I could have ever formed a relationship with Carl. Those two things go together. She was just a profound influence in my life and I think was the first person I was ever in love with. It was not any overt homosexual relationship; that would have scared me to death because that just wasn't accepted in those days as it is now. I'm talking about love in that she was what made life exciting and interesting. Exploring a world of ideas with somebody else just made the world more exciting. Compared to this excitement, the relationships I'd had with men were so barren. I had learned the lesson well that one must appear to have no brains in order to be attractive to men. Until I met Harriet, I had never experienced the excitement of real intellectual companionship; I didn't know such relationships existed. And, of course, that's the kind of relationship I found with Carl later.

So far as I can remember, Harriet was the first person I ever sat and talked with who understood what the CIO was about and what the labor movement was about. She was the first person I ever heard who

1948: *Louisville Times*, Anne Braden at typewriter, Carl on telephone





was actively working against segregation. Except, of course, what I heard through the prism of my world in Alabama. There were strikes in Anniston in the '30s but I can't remember very much about them. The Scottsboro case was going on, but things like that hadn't impinged on my consciousness at all. I heard about them but what I heard was that outside agitators were causing trouble. I heard as a child that Eleanor Roosevelt was stirring up people, and I wondered about that. I really didn't think about these things a lot; I just accepted them. I had no way of finding out what was happening. But something bothered me about the relationships of blacks and whites, and also economic questions.

I really don't know when I began to wonder about these things. Looking back I have the feeling that I always knew something was wrong about some of this stuff. It was like ... if you've ever done photography and watched a picture come clear in the developing fluid ... it's there all the time and gradually becomes clear. I can't pinpoint any minute in time when I began to question, but looking back, I think I always did.

---

#### NEWSPAPERING

---

Between my freshman and sophomore years at Stratford, I went to a summer theater near Plymouth, Massachusetts. They had professional actors and actresses, but they had classes for young people and we could also be in plays. We traveled all over the Cape. It was during World War II; and everything was blacked out and we couldn't have any lights on the beaches. It was that summer I decided theater wasn't really the world I wanted. I was talking one day to one of the teachers who had been in the theater for years, and she said, "It's a hard life in the theater, and if you wouldn't rather be doing *something* in the theater — if it's nothing but sweeping floors — than anything else in the world, than a top job anywhere else, don't go into the theater." And I got to thinking about that. ...

And I decided I didn't really feel that way about the theater. I didn't have the passion she was talking about. But, I thought, *that's* the way I feel about newspaper work! I'd rather be sweeping the floor in a newspaper office, than holding the top job somewhere else. I like the printed word and I like to see things in print and I like to put things together — I just love that sort of work. So, somewhere along in there I decided

that's what I wanted to do.

So, the next summer after my sophomore year at Stratford I got my first job reading proofs at the *Anniston Star*. When I got my first check for \$15 it was the strangest feeling; I thought, "Somebody is giving me money to do something I think is fun! There's something wrong about that."

I worked at the *Star* the year I finished Stratford and the summer between my junior and senior years at Randolph Macon. Then I went back after I graduated and stayed over a year. Most of the men were away in the army, and because of the way they were short staffed I got all kinds of experience doing things a woman never would have gotten otherwise. And that happened for women in every field during World War II. I just did everything and covered everything in town — wrote editorials, even did sports which I knew nothing about. I didn't really cover sports events, but I would do the sports off the wire, and handle other stuff off the wire. I even wrote headlines. They just didn't have anybody there.

The owner of the *Anniston Star* was old Colonel Harry Ayers. He was a character, a real institution around there! He was considered a liberal; you know liberals in those days didn't oppose segregation, but they talked about justice and more opportunity. Colonel Ayers was a New Dealer, a Roosevelt liberal. He would probably have been for all the New Deal legislation, things like the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC). He was against the poll tax. I can remember writing editorials against the poll tax and my father saying, "That's ridiculous!" Old Colonel Ayers was a nice guy — sort of a character. He moved in political circles and had a lot of friends in high circles.

The summer of '46, after I had been out of school for a year, I decided I needed to get a different sort of experience, so during my vacation that year I went to a number of different newspapers to interview for jobs. I interviewed with several newspapers, but I ended up going to Birmingham. I went there in the fall of '46 and left in April. I wasn't in Birmingham a whole year, because along in March the [*Louisville*] *Times* wrote that they had an opening in the news department and I decided to take that. By that time I had, in just a few months, gotten to know an awful lot of people in the [Birmingham] courthouse. That was all I ever covered. The courthouse was my assignment the whole time I was there. I

did some general coverage, but mainly I spent my time in the courthouse. They had a little press room there, and I wasn't in the newspaper office that much. I would work from early morning till late at night. I would go to the courthouse early and phone in stories for the *Birmingham News*, which was the afternoon paper. After the courthouse closed I would go back to the newspaper office, or sometimes I'd stay there and write stories for the morning paper. It'd be nine o'clock when I'd get away. I didn't get paid any overtime. I was really exploited, but I didn't think I was because it was what I wanted to do. Nobody works those hours for newspapers now. But I still had the idea that if you like something, it doesn't matter how much you are paid, you work.

---

#### BIRMINGHAM

---

One of the things I remember seeing during this time was long lines of blacks at the [voter] registration office. They were veterans mainly, and there was an organized campaign to get them registered. None of them *were* being registered, but they would come down in organized lines to try and register. We never wrote that up, but they were there.

There was a big hassle that year about the Boswell Amendment, an amendment to the Alabama state constitution that was designed to keep blacks from voting. Jim Folsom was running for governor and I had gotten to know him that summer during his primary campaign when I was still working for the *Star*. The day after the primary Colonel Ayers sent me out with a photographer to ask people why they voted for Folsom. He was startled as could be because he wasn't for Folsom and Folsom wasn't, you know, "socially acceptable." Colonel Ayers may have gotten friendly with Folsom later, but he was shocked then. I remember riding up and down the country roads around Anniston interviewing people for a story about where all the support for Folsom came from. I'll never forget this one farmer who said, "You go back and tell that editor of yours, that Harry Ayers, he's been writing editorials for years about how everybody ought to vote. Now we done went and voted and he don't like the way we voted and that's too bad!"

The general election was that fall after I was in Birmingham, and I remember catching up with Folsom for an interview. It was kind of a scoop! Because I



had met him during the primary before he was such a big shot, he was willing to talk to me. He tried to seduce me too. He did that to all the women though; those stories about him were true, you know! Of course, it was one of his downfalls. But, anyway, I got this story in which he came out against the Boswell Amendment, which was a big controversy. People had thought he would, but I finally got him to say so and we made a big headline out of it. So that was a big issue.

It was in the primary where he started everybody. He was running around campaigning with a band and all that. He always carried a wash bucket and a mop and said he was going down to Montgomery and clean out all those rich folks so poor people would have a chance. The crowds loved it! They just thought he was wonderful. There were about five people running in the primary, and he won with a landslide. Nobody expected it. The professionals hadn't expected him to get anything. The party organization thought he was a joke. But I had been traveling around with his caravan; I had been in the rallies, had watched the crowds looking at him like he was God, so I wasn't that surprised.

I liked him a lot. He was a populist. From where I sat, he was good on the race issue. He wasn't as good as he seemed, but he was certainly better than a lot. He had some people working for him who came out of the old Southern Conference for Human Welfare — people who were much more radical and who didn't think he was perfect and didn't like some of the jokes he told, but still thought he was worth working for. I thought he was a sincere guy, and I still sort of think that. I don't know what he was trying to do by his lights, but I think he really thought he was trying to represent the poor people and he wanted to represent both black and white poor people.

---

#### RUNNING AWAY

---

I had very little social life in Birmingham because I was working long hours and didn't particularly want it. I had a lot of college friends there, women who had gone to Randolph Macon, and I never even looked any of them up. I just wasn't interested in that world. Some of them were daughters of judges whose courts I was covering and I'd run into them occasionally, but I never looked up that world in Birmingham at all. I pretty much lived

in the newspaper world.

The whole impact of the courthouse on me was tremendous. It exposed me to a whole new world, different from the sheltered world I'd grown up in, and one where I could see close up the crushed lives. I remember one case where a black man got 20 years in prison because they said he had looked at a white woman across the road in an insulting way; the charge was assault with intent to ravish. I began to feel that everything was wrong in the society I lived in, began to realize what it does to people, how it destroys people — both black and white. And then there were just a number of instances. . . .

I got very chummy with people around the courthouse because you do that as a reporter — that's the way you get news. If they like you they give you the news. I was chummy with the prosecutors; they considered me one of them. And the sheriff's deputies, I'd sit and talk to them and they would let me know when things were happening. One day this deputy sheriff — I can just see him now; he was really a nice enough guy on the surface — we were just sitting there talking and he said, "You know there's only been one murder in Birmingham since I've been working here that hasn't been solved." And I said, "Yeah?" I thought that sounded like an interesting story. "What was it?" He said, "Well, I'll show you." And he took me in a room and showed me a skull on the table. He said, "It never will be solved, because that man was a nigger and the man that killed him was white." He was kind of twinkling; he thought this was a nice little secret that he'd let me in on and that I would think that way too. I was just horrified! I looked at it and the skull just got bigger and bigger. I just turned around and ran almost to get out of there. I kept thinking about that skull, thinking about that skull; and thinking about that man because he had been chummy with me



1981: Anti-klan rally

and all that.

There were other things, but the morning that I think finally did it was. . . I always had to call the sheriff's office from home to see if there had been any big stories overnight. If there was I had to get right on down to the courthouse so I could get it in the first edition of the *News*. If there wasn't I would meet a friend for breakfast at one of those downtown cafeterias. Sometimes I didn't get time to call before I left home, so I would call when I stopped for breakfast. That morning I asked my friend to get breakfast for me while I called the sheriff's office. When I met him at the table he said, "Anything doing?" And I said, "No, just a colored murder." Which meant that I had time to eat breakfast; I didn't have to go to the courthouse to see about it because it meant one black had killed another black, you see. It just wasn't news when a black person killed another black person. They might put a paragraph about it in the paper but it wasn't anything to get excited about. Just as I said that — it was like a piece of electricity — a black waitress was putting our things on the table, and it suddenly dawned on me what I'd said.

I didn't want to look at her, but I looked up and her expression didn't change. I can see her face now. Her hand sort of shook as she was putting down my coffee, but her face was like a mask. And it just came over me how awful this was, and I wanted to say, "I didn't mean that. *I'm* not the one who says it's not news, the paper says that. I didn't mean that it didn't matter that one of your people was killed; I'm not the one who says what news is." But I didn't say anything, because as I sat there, it suddenly dawned on me that I did mean it! It was like an octopus, it was getting me too. I knew if I stayed that I was going to become a part of that world, that you can't be neutral. You are either part of it or you are against it. And I didn't know how to be against it.

It was that morning that I decided to leave! It was just this devastating sort of thing and I had to get away. It seemed like my whole world was just death and destruction. It was that skull. □

*Sue Thrasher is coordinator for residential education at Highlander Center in New Market, Tennessee. She is a co-founder and member of the board of directors of the Institute for Southern Studies. Eliot Wigginton teaches high school in Rabun Gap, Georgia. He is president of the Foxfire Fund.*

# The Varieties of History

“We like to think that we are shaping a new way of listening to Southerners that is more plural. We are convinced that our subjects are saying something about the South as a whole.”

— Nell Irvin Painter

“I find it almost impossible to separate my roots from my involvement in regional history and my professional life from my commitment to peace and justice. I am a Southerner because of heritage; I am an historian because of my concern for the present and the future.”

— Ron Eller

In the preceding pages, we presented a few samples of the history being written today. Any of these articles would have been groundbreaking — perhaps impossible — just a few decades ago. What created the possibility of a broader, more inclusive, more accurate approach to the past than magnolias and the Lost Cause are the events that occurred in the world at large over that same period: a revolution in consciousness about rights, democracy, race, culture, class, and our region. That revolution overturned the way historians look at themselves and their work, and challenged the dominance in the profession of conservative, white men. Today the writers of history are actively thinking not only of how they see the past, but also of how their work can influence what is happening today.

In the following pages, historians speak out on their profession, what moves them to study the past, and what they want for the future. These historians speak from a variety of perspectives, and they examine a variety of subjects. Together they are liberating the past.



# Rewriting Southern History

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
C. VANN WOODWARD

By James R. Green

Thirty years ago, the shrouds of myth surrounding post-Civil War Southern history were torn apart by the aggressive scholarship of C. Vann Woodward. Generations of Southern apologists and Yankee "reconcilers" had woven a tapestry of the Solid (white) South with yarns about the paternalism of slavery; the righteousness of the Lost Cause; the chaos and corruption caused by carpetbaggers and Reconstructionists; the elevation to hero status of the white "Redeemers" and New South entrepreneurs; the depiction of the Progressive Era as a swell of humanitarian reforms; and the denigration of poor whites and blacks and their protest movements.

It was a bedtime story, calculated to keep the South sleeping, put blacks in their place, console poor whites with white supremacy, while elites North and South profited.

Comer Vann Woodward's forceful revision of Southern history challenged the myth of an harmonious, solid South, and revealed the reality of conflict, disunity, and discontinuity. By 1951, three Woodward books — Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel; Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction; and Origins of the New South 1877-1913 — had demolished Old South romance and New South optimism. In so doing, Woodward inspired a subsequent generation of historians of the South to rewrite and retrieve our past.

Many of Woodward's own students have worked within a liberal framework, emphasizing the politics of reaction and

reform, as we can see in many of the contributions to a new book of essays written in the master's honor.<sup>1</sup> Others have carried on Woodward's work in a more radical vein. For example, Lawrence Goodwyn's studies of populism were inspired by the essentially populist, anti-elitist thrust of Woodward's work.<sup>2</sup> Socialist historians have extended the consistent class analysis of books like *Origins of the New South* and applied it to issues like racism, populism, and the rural economy,<sup>3</sup> while other Marxist historians have criticized Woodward's class analysis for ignoring the continuity of the Southern planters as a ruling class.<sup>4</sup>

Woodward offered a radical new interpretation of Southern history. Some of those heroic Redeemers were revealed to have been as venal as the carpetbaggers they overthrew, and to have been front men, as well, for Northern capitalists and Northern values against which the ante-bellum South had fought. The declining planter aristocracy, ineffectual and money-hungry, subordinated their Jeffersonian political and social heritage in order to maintain control over the black population. Poor whites suffered from malignancies of racism and conspiracy-mindedness; and the rising middle class was timid and self-interested even in its reform movement — Progressivism for whites only. The Democratic Party of white supremacy maintained itself in power against the challenge of white dissidents by subverting and manipulating black votes. The New South industrial gospel produced educational regression, rural poverty, and a colonial relationship with the North.

One newspaper reduced Woodward's themes to the succinct headline, "New South Fraud Papered by Old South Myth." Says Woodward, "Sure, I was attacked, publicly and privately. I didn't mind being attacked for my views, by the conservatives and the reactionaries. I welcomed it. It was part of the game, and I was on the other side."

Woodward's revision of Southern history has as many lessons for Northerners as for Southerners. After all, he pointed out, the South's experience of defeat and underdevelopment and poverty and guilt was shared by much of the rest of the world. In this wider perspective, the American experience, not the Southern, was the anomalous one.

(Additional material for this article comes from an interview with Woodward conducted by Tom Blanton.)

The part of Arkansas I grew up in in the early part of the century was very Southern. I lived in the Black Belt in the eastern part of the state. Cotton was the staple crop in all of the areas I lived in and that meant blacks as sharecroppers. Race dominated society.

I remember Klansmen who came in in robes to make a gift to the church in the course of the service. It made a profound impression. There was a lynching incident I didn't see, but I saw the mob gathering. I do remember these incidents very strongly; they affected my attitude. I was in adolescent rebellion, and part of my rebellion was against the church.

My Uncle Comer seemed to me a model in many ways. He was a minister himself, but he was very critical of the Klan, and for his time, forwardlooking



photo courtesy NEH

C. VANN WOODWARD



in the race business. He worked with and knew black leaders in Atlanta like John Hope, who was head of Atlanta University. I met him through my uncle along with other people of like mind [while in college at Emory]. My uncle was a mild-mannered man and not at all radical, but still he and his associates were doing things the culture didn't approve.

Rebellions take many forms, and I was very much a reader, and I came into contact with critical ideas. I remember the first movement I was a part of was the opposition to Marine intervention in Nicaragua in the 1920s when Sandino was rising.

I went to New York to study for a masters degree at Columbia. I got there in the fall of '31, and things were popping. I did participate in the sense of attending meetings and rallies. I was a spectator. I may have signed a petition or two, but I can't remember anything active I did. I knew the Communists and I knew the Socialists — some of them. I got an insight into Harlem through a friend who knew the poet Langston Hughes, who was then quite a young man.

In the summer of '32, I spent about a month in Russia. The Russian trip was inspired by a lot of things. It looked like the Depression was crumbling the Western system. I was told by Lincoln Steffens that he had seen the future and it worked. And I wanted to see how it worked. Russia had a lot of glamour. But



TOM WATSON AT NINETEEN

it turned out to be a bad year for Russia in 1932. There was famine and there was violence and there was oppression of kulaks.

It was a sobering experience, and not much of an encouragement to leap toward the Soviet system. I remember one incident: a man left the assembly line and came over and made a passionate speech about being a slave. I also remember a big peasant got up on a train and made an eloquent denunciation of the system. The guide sent up for a soldier, but the peasant jumped off the train. It was a confusing and sobering experience for some time. I think I was ready to embrace some such philosophy and I continued to be interested and sympathetic. But that experience was important in sobering me up.

*While traveling in the Soviet Union in 1932, Woodward found himself having to explain the famous Scottsboro case. In 1931 eight black teenagers were sentenced to death in Scottsboro, Alabama, for allegedly raping two white girls. For several years the case was an international cause, with the "Scottsboro boys" symbolizing victims of American racism and capitalism.*

They were making a lot of it. And there were posters not only in Russia but also in Germany, France, and England. And I felt it as I hadn't at home — that this case was an international scandal. I had known something about it before I left, but [my experience in Europe] inspired me to do something about such incidents when I got back. In fact, I became involved in a similar case [the Angelo Herndon case] in Atlanta.

*In 1932, Angelo Herndon, a young black Communist, was charged with sedition in Atlanta. Woodward had just started as a teacher at Georgia Tech. As a result of his work on the Herndon case, Woodward fell into "deep trouble" with the Georgia Tech administration. He was soon laid off with about 30 other faculty on "budget grounds."*

I was interested in the thing and somebody told me about a committee that was being formed. And I went. It was obvious they were looking for people with reputable credentials. They could say a professor from Georgia Tech was involved. I was suddenly catapulted into prominence by the resignation of the chairwoman. That left me holding the bag.

I was called in by the president and talked to very seriously about my in-

# History for a Change

## WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

In preparing *Liberating Our Past*, we asked a number of historians of the South, including many who have been friends of *Southern Exposure* over the years, to tell us why they are historians, what they do, what they dream of doing, who and what were important in their decision to become historians and their decision about how they do history. Here are their answers.

*Why are you involved in the study of Southern history? What does it mean to you? What teacher, book, place, experience, or event helped shape your approach to Southern history? What served as a significant turning point in your development as a historian?*

**GEORGE McDANIEL, Center for Southern Folklore, Memphis:**

Southern history is the study of my per-

volvement. He wanted my account of it. He never said he was going to fire me, but I did get fired.

After I got fired from Tech, I didn't have a job and thought I'd write a book. I started out to write a book about seven demagogues. I didn't know much about Tom Watson or any of the others, but as soon as I started to find out about Watson, he became the subject of the book.

Tom Watson had only been dead 10 years when I started. Everybody knew who Watson was, the demagogue who lynched Leo Frank, who persecuted the Jews and the Catholics and the blacks. I started with the assumption that this is what he meant. And then I discovered Populism.

*Loss of the Georgia Tech job sent Woodward, palm out, to the Rockefellers' General Education Board which came through with the princely sum of \$900 towards graduate school. Since the Watson papers resided at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Woodward went there.*

sonal heritage. Whenever I speak, people notice my strong Southern accent and inevitably ask, "Where are you from?" What is this culture that has shaped not only my values and behavior but also my voice? More broadly, the study of Southern history addresses questions of national and international significance: race relations, the development of class consciousness and conflict, colonization and imperialism, radical reform and reactionary resistance. The study of Southern history also addresses the "problems of the human heart in conflict with itself," as William Faulkner wrote, and deals with "love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice."

My first teachers were members of my family — my parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts, great uncles and aunts — who told me stories. In addition, there were black people who told me stories, so I grew up with a biracial heritage. In high school I had excellent history teachers, and at the University of the South I was a friend of Andrew Lytle, one of the Agrarians, who helped me understand the yeoman South. Upon returning from Vietnam, I went to Brown University for a Master of Arts in Teaching in history and learned more radical history of the South that led me to understand that my thoughts and feel-

*continued on next page*

I had written about four chapters before I went to Chapel Hill. I began to see Watson as a voice of courageous dissent in the Populist period, one that challenged a lot of sacred cows. The tragedy of his career came home to me when I saw how this kind of man wound up the way he did — as the very archetype of the racist demagogue.

It looked different in the mid-1930s than it does now, than it does after the Civil Rights Movement. The racism was so solid, so unyielding at the time I wrote the book, that one had to seize upon any departure from it, as I did, and doubtless overdid. I would not write it the same way now. I couldn't. But then I think I could not have written *Tom Watson* any other way. To have subordinated his role in trying to combine with blacks would have been to miss the most exciting potentialities of the story.

I was interested in the theme of dissent. Being a dissenter myself, I looked for evidence of it and found it. I am accused of exaggerating it, and I am proba-

bly liable to some such criticism. However, I wasn't picking typical Southerners. I considered working on a book about Southern abolitionists, which was the same theme. It was part of my rebellion against the dominant historiography I was exposed to — that is, the solidarity of the South and the continuity of the culture. I was saying it wasn't that solid and there wasn't all that much continuity. There was a good bit of change and discontinuity.

[Currently], I see a movement back to what I call the old orthodoxy of continuity in Southern history. It is manifested both on the left and on the right and in the center — for very different purposes. On the right it denies the dissent, the radicalism, the change that conservatives find unwelcome. For the liberals, it makes change more acceptable to say that the new is really like the old order in many ways. As for the radicals, take Jon Weiner as an example: [he said] the planters were continuous as a class; they persisted, proving there was no essential change, and therefore that drastic change was necessary.

When I arrived at Chapel Hill, it was a totally segregated university system. There weren't any blacks at UNC. Not a one. That was the law and the system and it was universal. There were dissidents who criticized it. I knew them. I criticized it myself but in no effective public way. But it was not peculiar to Chapel Hill. It was Southern, almost universally Southern.

Chapel Hill deserves some distinction for its openness and receptivity to dissidents. It had them and it kept them. There was a professor in the English department who was known as a Socialist and two or three of my graduate contemporaries were Communists or Socialists, certainly leftists. And these people were not excluded. But they were white.

*Woodward was not impressed by the regional social science research then going on at UNC under the leadership of Howard Odum and Rupert Vance.*

I read Odum but I couldn't make much of him. He was a terrible writer and I was often at odds with his academic views. I didn't go for the Regionalists too much, but at least they were interested in the South. And Vance in particular was an astute man and a very real influence. He was open, available, and easy to talk to.

As preached and practiced, Regionalism was bent on industrializing the

retarded region. That meant improvements in some respects — in education, welfare, and health. They were sincere about that. But they didn't want to rock the boat — to precipitate the issue of racial discrimination or segregation. They were also cautious about such manifestations as strikes.

W.T. Couch [editor of the UNC Press which published the Regionalists' works] had his problems with Odum about publishing. Couch was interested in substance and impatient with political bias against authors. If you had something to say he wanted to publish it. But he was taken aback when he invited this book on *What the Negro Wants*,<sup>5</sup> because they told him! He was shocked. It was a bit much for him. He got in trouble with it.

Still, Couch was more open than the others. He did not come from a privileged background but from the people. He had worked in a utilities shop, in a factory, and in the cotton fields. He had contact with the popular mind and he was not going to suppress writing about that.

*Among the other influences on Woodward were Charles Beard's class analyses and W.E.B. DuBois, whose Black Reconstruction struck down the prevailing racist interpretation of Reconstruction.*

Indeed, DuBois was the most vocal historian dissenting from the prevailing view. I read *Black Reconstruction* with great interest and wrote to DuBois about it and he was kind enough to reply. The work of Beard and [Howard K.] Beale ignored the aspect of black rights emphasized by DuBois. I saw that shortcoming.

*When Woodward finished his PhD in 1937, he sent the carbon copy of his dissertation on Tom Watson off to the Macmillan Publishing Company in New York. In 1938, the New York Times put Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel on the cover of its book review section; ever since it has been a classic in political biography.*

*Woodward's pioneering research on Populism has spawned several new works in recent years that take different views of that movement. James Green and Bruce Palmer see it as a movement that emerged from specific class interests, those of yeoman farmers, and not so much those of tenants, croppers, and wage laborers. Lawrence Goodwyn, however, sees these class distinctions as*



*Marxist abstractions that mislead students of Populism.*<sup>6</sup>

I am familiar with the controversy. I think the Populists were faced with a class contradiction that was insuperable, particularly in their gestures towards blacks. Blacks were sharecroppers; they were subordinates; they were employees; they were dependents. The movement was plagued by that class contradiction at least in its interracial aspects.

*In his acknowledgements in The Populist Moment Lawrence Goodwyn wrote: "I doubt that anyone can overstate the impact Origins of the New South had on those students who reached maturity in the '50s. Surrounded as we were by tomes of limp apology for the Bourbons, Origins opened new ways of thinking about the Southern and national heritage."*

*One of the controversial aspects of Origins is the thesis about the South as a colonial economy.*

The economic theorists have attacked that thesis. They say it was perfectly natural for the South to have a specialization of crops; they discount the domination of Southern industry by outsiders. The thesis needs critical attention but I think it is a valid shorthand expression.

The political scientists have quite a literature based on dependency theory; it centers on the character of the Third World's relationship to industrialized economies. They are using concepts and language that apply to the South's relationship to the metropolitan North and

*I don't think you can grapple with history without acknowledging and taking into account class differences, conflicts, alliances, and antagonisms.*

the way dominant forces work together. They did not conspire. They simply applied a system of railroad rates, highways, pricing, taxes, patents, and that concentrated economic power in one region at the cost of another.

*Another aspect of Woodward's work that inspired radical historians was his willingness to consider "forgotten alternatives." In fact, those are the words used as the title of a chapter of The Strange Career of Jim Crow. That book, in part, grew out of Woodward's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement.*

When I got to Yale in 1962, this place was a seething mass of missionary endeavor to save the South. They were off on Freedom Rides and all. And I was cheering, feebly, with divided mind. I was for the cause, and against the crusaders. And when I marched through the streets of Montgomery, I knew exactly what those people [watching the march] were thinking about me, and I shared those feelings: "That son of a bitch, coming down from Yale trying to tell us what to do."

[Nevertheless], I felt a part of [the Civil Rights Movement], identified with it, felt protective about it and its success or failure. I guess I registered those feelings without much equivocation. If you believed the conventional version of Southern history that I grew up with you didn't see much hope for anything different; this is the way it was and there wasn't any break in it. I was criticized for holding out false hope for a racial solution. I was simply saying that I did not believe in the inevitability of the system that developed. It didn't just happen; it was consciously constructed. There could have been other choices and other people made other choices. Not all of those who were subject to the dominant system were in accord with it; that is, they dissented from it.

*In a series of influential and controversial essays in such forums as the New York Times, Harper's, and the American Scholar, Woodward called equality between the races a "deferred commitment," and the new civil rights laws and court decisions "the Second Reconstruction." Woodward's main contribution was The Strange Career of Jim Crow, which a colleague called "the single most influential book ever written on the history of American race relations."*

*Originally delivered as a lecture series to a University of Virginia audience in the fall of 1954, Strange Career provided some usable history to back up that year's Supreme Court decision on school desegregation. The mostly white audience needed to know, Woodward thought, that the edifice of "Jim Crow" laws separating the races was not the immediate and inevitable consequence*

ings were not without historical precedent, thereby engendering a stronger sense of connection to the South. Upon returning to the South to pursue a Ph.D., I was disappointed with the conventional grad school I was attending. Turning for help, I set up an appointment with this reported "wild man" at Duke University, Larry Goodwyn. Immediately we got in an argument, then shared a few pitchers of beer, and I enrolled in Duke grad school and started doing oral history. I've been at it ever since.

**NELL IRVIN PAINTER, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill:** I became a Southern historian at Harvard, without much help, but blessed freedom. Coming to American history from French medieval and pre-colonial African history, I hit first on Afro-American history (being black, in 1969), then found that the subject didn't make good sense to me without the larger context of region. I have stuck because of the same interests I pursued in the non-American fields: the relationship between aristocracies and workers, feudal patterns of control and exploitation, oral traditions, cultural and economic contacts among various groups of people. In life, I've long been fascinated by colonialism, both as a system of exploitation and an ideology. There's a lot of that in the South. The turning point in my development as a historian was being

*of the Civil War and Emancipation, but rather the deliberate creation of elite and middle-class "Progressive" white supremacists at the turn of the century.*

*More than a half million copies of four editions of The Strange Career of Jim Crow have been sold.*

*In a 1971 review of Eugene Genovese's In Red and Black and George Fredrickson's White Supremacy Woodward took issue with Genovese's Marxist view "that economic developments are the main clues to the changes in the style and type of race and race relations" and that the Southern ruling class clearly determined the nature of racism.<sup>7</sup>*

I hope I didn't misinterpret Gene. In normal circumstances and in the long run the relationship between capitalism and racism was important. But in the particular circumstances in question, the post-Civil War South, I said race relations were more affected by political and



able to write and publish my own version of what happened and what it all means.

**PATRICIA GALLOWAY, Mississippi Department of Archives and History:** I was simply a documentary editor until I was asked to serve on the Choctaw Heritage Council and became aware of the fact that the whole histories of many ethnic groups have literally been wiped away by the dominant culture. That alone turned me into an ethnohistorian. What clinched it, and made me aware of the terrible responsibility that goes along with undertaking this particular specialization, was something a Choctaw friend said in a symposium on the meaning of historical research to Indian people. He said of my work: "The word in the tribe is that she knows what those Frenchmen said about us and she is going to tell us." Well, she is going to try, and she hopes that someday an Indian student will be inspired enough by what she has done to bring to the same study the insight she can never have.

**JEFF CROW, North Carolina Division of Archives and History:** My reason for studying Southern history probably reflects in large part my growing up in the civil rights era of the 1960s. Watching the treatment of black protesters on the news every night, living through the black power movement, and confronting the ingrained racism of a

*continued on next page*

social than by economic forces. The economic changes of the postwar era, the coming of the cotton mills, the heavy industry, the sharecropper system: those adjusted to the prevailing racial system. So the cotton mill owners excluded the blacks, tobacco mills excluded the whites, and concentrated on blacks; they adapted. So I don't see them and their new institutions or the landowners as changing the racial system for their benefit; they adapted to it. In the long run, the disappearance of cotton from the Southeast is an economic fact of great power and influence. It's the main thing that sent the blacks to the North in waves of migration of unprecedented size. But it wasn't planned, it wasn't policy — now that is a long-run economic force. The system of domination itself, the laws of disenfranchisement and segregation, Jim Crow segregation, were politically motivated to construct a system to control a dominated race; that's what the Jim Crow system was about. These people came off the farms,

into the cities; they were no longer subject to direct domination by the master; the whites had to get some abstract system to take over.

Genovese's overall impact on Southern history is a very powerful and on the whole salutary influence. His work on the ante-bellum economy and institutions and slavery opened up many views that had never been opened up before. I am impressed with the breadth of his views and his willingness to acknowledge all kinds of influences: religion, popular folk culture, paternalism, and the complexity of master-slave relations. This it seems to me is more important for the civilizing of Marxism in terms of historical realities and complexities than anything in American historiography I can think of. The old simplifications of heroic slaves versus masters of the past was predominant in the generation of the leftists of the '30s. And he broke through that, to the level of serious history dealing with ambiguities, complexities that had not been touched.

*Besides his research, Woodward has made a notable contribution to the study of history by his advocacy of challenges to the prevailing trends of his profession, notably the "consensus school" which emphasized social harmony and political agreement in U.S. history. In a 1983 paper Jon Wiener described consensus history as a paradigm of "normal history" — set up in the '50s and '60s — that excludes Marxist work from the body of "real history." He cites Woodward (and secondarily Richard Hofstadter) as major historians who argued for the inclusion of Marxist and New Left History. In 1968, when the New Left collection Towards a New Past appeared, Woodward gave it a serious review when it was being rejected as "non-history" by others. He objected to those who would dismiss the New Left and asked historians to give them "a full hearing and a close reading."<sup>8</sup>*

I felt that the tilt toward consensus history was a distortion of realities and I welcomed people who came along and said it wasn't that way, that there was conflict of many kinds, and class conflict was certainly one of them. That didn't comport with the simplifications of consensus history.

I don't think you can grapple with history without acknowledging and taking into account class differences, conflicts, alliances, and antagonisms. I think that to dismiss them is to dismiss very basic parts of the historical process. That

aspect of the historical process is important to my writing and analysis and understanding.

The last 15 years have been a highly productive period. Radical history of the South hasn't all taken the same line, but I would deplore it if it had. It's been critical of the predominant ideas, some of them my ideas. It's been independent, adventurous. Your [James Green] own work on the Socialists in the Southwest, Bruce Palmer on the Populists, the important work that's being done on the transition from slavery to freedom on the part of Michael Wayne, Steven Hahn, Barbara Fields, and other students, the study of racial politics and race policy of the whites. I think it's been a very productive few decades.

*One of Woodward's most important essays, "The Irony of Southern History," was written at the height of the Cold War in 1952, and he suggested then that the lessons of Southern history might or should lead Americans to be more tolerant, less anxious to enforce conformity at home and abroad, less willing to stake all on a single institution like slavery or segregation or laissez faire capitalism, and to be more cautious about engaging in diplomacy based on moral bigotry or even preventive war.<sup>9</sup>*

The South has lately had its "Epitaph" written and its "Mystique" debunked. The implication would seem to be that the South's disputed "distinctiveness" and Southern identity inhere essentially in retrograde racial policies and prejudices. With the gradual disappearance of these, Southerners are expected to lose their identity in a happily homogenized nation. Quite apart from the South's preferences, there are other reasons for skepticism in this matter. The South has long served the nation in ways still in great demand. It has been a moral lightning rod, a deflector of national guilt, a scapegoat for stricken conscience. It has served the country much as the Negro has served the white supremacist — as a floor under self-esteem. This historic role, if nothing else, would spare the region total homogenization, for the national demand for it is greater than ever.

*Today there is a question whether the American people have learned the Southern lesson of defeat through Vietnam — that they no longer feel as immune from the forces of history?*

I wish I could give a ready assent to that, but I'm afraid I can't. Faced with a possi-

ble choice, the learners of the lesson will choose the wrong lesson, read the wrong meaning. It doesn't look like the memory of Vietnam is stopping the policy makers from adventures in Central America. But I think the experience of Vietnam has registered with the people, and it's giving the administration trouble. People are leery of intervention and don't want any more involvement in other people's civil wars and revolutions. Vietnam was a shock that brought the American people into opposition to their government in a dramatic way, brought down an administration in fact. I think it ought to have registered something against the legend of invincibility.

In 1960 I announced the end of the era of "free security" for the U.S. and tried to assess how this influence had shaped our history.<sup>10</sup> Insecurity has certainly been the successor to the age of security. The ironic thing is that today's powerfully military foreign policy is much more expensive than free security, and it is not effective. The more expensive it is, the less security it seems to bring. □

*James Green studied with C. Vann Woodward in the late '60s and wrote a dissertation under his direction later published as **Grass-Roots Socialism**. Green teaches history at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.*

#### NOTES

1. *Race, Region and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, edited by J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York, 1982).

2. See introduction to Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York, 1978).

3. See essays by Barbara Fields and Stephen Hahn in *Race, Region and Reconstruction*.

4. See Jonathan Weiner, *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885* (Baton Rouge, 1978), and Dwight Billings, *Planters and the Making of a "New South": Class, Politics, and Development in North Carolina, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, 1979).

5. Rayford W. Logan, *What the Negro Wants* (Chapel Hill, 1944).

6. See James R. Green, *Grass-Roots Socialism: Radical Movements in the Southwest, 1895-1943* (Baton Rouge, 1978), and Bruce Palmer, "Man Over Money": *The Southern Populist Critique of American Capitalism* (Chapel Hill, 1980). For the controversy over Populism, see Lawrence Goodwyn, "The Cooperative Commonwealth and Other Abstractions," *Marxist Perspectives* 10 (1980): 8-42, and James Green, "Populism, Socialism and the Promise of Democracy," *Radical History Review* 24 (1980): 7-40.

7. C. Vann Woodward, review of Eugene D. Genovese, *In Red and Black*, in *New York Review of Books*, August 12, 1971.

8. C. Vann Woodward, "Wild in the Stacks," *New York Review of Books*, August 1, 1968.

9. C. Vann Woodward, "The Irony of Southern History," in *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge, 1960).

10. C. Vann Woodward, "The Age of Reinterpretation," *American Historical Review* 66 (1960): 1-19.

#### Selected works by C. Vann Woodward

*Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel* (1938)

*Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (1951)

*Reunion, and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction* (1951)  
*The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955)  
*The Burden of Southern History* (1960)  
*American Counterpoint: Slavery and Racism in the North-South Dialogue* (1971)

## The Varieties of History

# Who Speaks for the South?

By Nell Irvin Painter

Dewey Grantham, Jr., is a good historian and a great gentleman, so I trust he'll indulge my use of his words of nearly 20 years ago to summarize a now discredited point of view which we need to listen to in order to learn about who speaks for the South. In 1967 Grantham explained that the anthology he had edited, *The South and the Sectional Image*, focused on the white South exclusively because whites had "determined the 'place' of the Negro in Southern life and regarded him as only a shadowy object and not [as] an actor or doer."

Although he was writing as an historian, presumably as a critic of a body of thought, Grantham chose to accept the assumptions of his subjects, as though still, in 1967, blacks had nothing worth hearing to say about the South. Women's views did not penetrate into the Grantham anthology of 1967, but their absence did not provoke an explanation even as cursory as that about blacks. Happily, the writing of history about Southerners is much broader now.

When Grantham wrote, the civil rights revolution had not made itself felt in the academy, where most histories are written, and feminism was barely beginning to be a force again in American life. Almost 20 years later, after two revolutions, we have abundant research and writing not only on blacks and white

midwestern urban community with integrated schools but vast social spaces between the races seemed to validate the centrality of race to the American experience. Exploring Southern history, slavery, pro-slavery thought, and Southern dissent not only was exciting but it also seemed crucial to understanding America's past. It still is.

**RAY GAVINS, Duke University:** Because Southern history, in this case "Negro history," was integral to my elementary and high school and college education, I pursued graduate study in it at the University of Virginia, whose campus then exhibited not only symbols of the heritage of slavery and segregation but signs of desegregation as well. Such changes over time, thankfully, are now more understandable to me. Scholarly study of the South also informs my activities, individually and with others, to foster racial and social equality.

Virginia's Paul M. Gaston, author of *The New South Creed*, encouraged and guided me into the study of race relations as well as black Southern institutional and intellectual life, the topical boundaries of my current work. A research paper about three influential but forgotten twentieth-century Virginia black spokesmen, written for Gaston's seminar in 1967, first introduced me to the black experience of segregation as a topic. Entwining biography, oral history,

women, but also on working-class Southerners of both races and sexes. While writing about Southern history in the period before 1967 focused mainly (with some brilliant exceptions, of course) on elite white men, we now have easily accessible books on many sorts of Southerners. By my count, nearly 30 books on the history of Southern blacks have appeared since 1981. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall counts about seven books on Southern women's history since 1979. There are monographs on Southern poor whites, agricultural and industrial workers, Indians, and Appalachian people. Clearly, new voices in Southern history are speaking and being heard.

While the writing of the history of Southerners has broadened considerably, I'm not sure that the question of who speaks for the South in history can be answered any differently. We now have white women speaking for themselves and black people speaking for themselves. But have their voices influenced the central issue of who speaks for the South? To answer that, we need to



and analysis of social movements, it would help to build the framework of a 1977 book on an older, unheralded black leader and his generation in the South.

**JOHN GLEN, Southwest Texas State University:** As a transplanted Northerner attending graduate school in the South, I became fascinated with the sense of time and place among Southerners, with their civility and respect for their region and its history. At the same time, I became aware that class differences, racism, sexism, and the capacity for violence were more overtly — perhaps more honestly — expressed than in other parts of the nation. Studying Southern history thus has become a means of understanding and appreciating the complexities and heritage of the South.

No one teacher, book, or experience has shaped my approach to Southern history. Three professors at Vanderbilt have made me a better historian: Dewey W. Grantham, Paul K. Conkin, and Henry Lee Swint. All of them have demanded clear, coherent writing and rigorous analysis of historical events. All of them are sensitive to the environment and culture of the South and have shared that knowledge with me. A more collective influence has been the people I've met during my doctoral study of the Highlander Research and Education Center, *continued on next page*

return to the black studies movement of the 1960s and the women's studies movement of the 1970s.

When black students began demanding courses on black history and culture, they often insisted on the creation of black studies departments as well. Understandably, the students did not trust the traditional departments which had ignored blacks for so long to bring the black experience into the curriculum in good faith; the traditional departments in predominantly white universities (where the demands were voiced most saliently) had faculties that were still lily-white and seemingly uninterested in blackness. The decision to back separate departments was based on an understanding of academic politics, but it also let many traditional departments off the hook. Faculty in many history departments felt no need to offer courses on the black experience or to integrate black materials into existing courses because, they could explain, the black studies departments would take care of all that. A new structure, black studies, was erected

alongside, but not touching, older departments like history. Black history may exist in the Afro-American studies department but may not change the way American history is taught in the history department.

The story repeated itself in the 1970s with women's history and departments of women's studies. The divorce of the new fields and the traditional teaching extends to Southern history. Instead of there being one entity — the South — there are now three. Black Southerners are part of black history, Southern women are part of women's history. Southern history still belongs to white men.

Four recent books on Southerners' ideas of the South illustrate this point: Michael O'Brien, *The Idea of the American South, 1920-1941* (1979); Richard H. King, *A Southern Renaissance: The Cultural Awakening of the American South, 1930-1955* (1980); Daniel Singal, *The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919-1945* (1982); and Fred Hobson, *Tell About the South: The Southern Rage to Explain* (1983). Lillian Smith figures in the Hobson and King books; Ellen Glasgow appears in Singal. But none of these books examines the thought of other female Southerners, like Jessie Daniel Ames or Mary McLeod Bethune, or of any black Southerners. It is as though women and blacks who lived in the South had no views on their region. This, of course, was not the case.

Let me give two random pronouncements I stumbled across while pursuing other trains of thought. First, in 1923 Walter White, a Negro Atlantan who worked for the NAACP at the time and became executive secretary of that organization in the 1930s, said that the white South had thoroughly "dehumanized and brutalized itself by its policy of oppression of the Negro." He called white Southern leaders "ineffectual," "depraved," and "rotten." In 1932, Charles S. Johnson, the Fisk sociologist who later became the first Negro president of that university, reacted to Allen Tate's cancellation of an interracial party in Nashville for NAACP official James Weldon Johnson and prominent poet Langston Hughes because Tate objected to interracial marriage. Johnson said, "The South as an institution can sink through the bottom of the pit of hell."

Are not these men speaking of the South as they knew it? If the four white male authors mentioned above are any indication, the views of White and John-

son could only tell us about black Southerners, not about the South. Howard Odum, Allen Tate, and Donald Davidson, according to those authors, speak for the whole South.

Obviously those of us who are black or female and who write about Southerners who were black or female do not mean for Southern voices to be limited to the likes of Odum, Tate, and Donaldson. We like to think that we are shaping a new way of listening to Southerners in the past that is more plural. We are convinced that our subjects are saying something about the South as a whole. So far, we have not been heard. Blacks may speak for blacks now, and women speak for women, but to judge from the books I have read, in 1984 as in 1967, elite white men still speak for the South. □

*Nell Irvin Painter teaches history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is the author of Exodusters: Black Migration After Reconstruction (1977) and The Narrative of Hosea Hudson: His Life as a Negro Communist in the South (1979).*

## The Varieties of History

# Bitterness and Pride

## APPALACHIAN HISTORY

By Ronald D. Eller

On the wall of my office at the little mountain college where I teach is a faded quotation — "This Land Is Home to Me" — from the early '80s from the Catholic Bishop's statement on Appalachia. Like the other memorabilia in the room — pictures of my sons, a mountain quilt, the bust of an old miner carved from a chunk of eastern Kentucky coal — that quotation reflects a great deal of my personal and professional life. It speaks to commitments which bridge my private and public worlds and symbolizes the ties that bind many other Southerners to a place and a people. I find it almost impossible to separate my roots from my involvement



in regional history and my professional life from my commitment to peace and justice in the mountains and elsewhere. I am a Southerner because of heritage; I am a historian because of my concern for the present and the future.

I became curious about my "ethnic" heritage as an undergraduate in a small Northern college. Being the first of my family ever to attend college, I was disheartened to learn that a tuition increase would far exceed my scholarship assistance and that I could not remain in school past my sophomore year. When I told the dean of my decision to go home to West Virginia, he assured me that additional assistance would be forthcoming because the institution liked to retain people like me "to provide balance to the student body." Since the college was already an elite academic institution, I quickly realized that it was cultural rather than intellectual balance that my scholarship was to provide. Along with a handful of black and international students, I was part of a cultural and economic minority being integrated into the American mainstream. The dean's words came as a shock to a white Protestant male who had spent much of the preceding few years trying to ignore and disguise his hillbilly heritage. His words sparked bitterness, pride, and curiosity, and it was then that my real education began.

Earlier that semester, I had enrolled in a course in Southern history taught by Jim Hodges, a young Alabamian who had recently joined the college faculty. I knew that my ancestors were Southerners. They had settled in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and North Carolina in the 1790s before migrating to the coal fields of southern West Virginia after the turn of the twentieth century.

But little in the books I read spoke to their history. They had not owned slaves and had fought for the Union in the Civil War. They seldom appeared in Southern history texts except as savages, ignorant poor whites or quaint romantic anachronisms in a New South. Jim Hodges had already demonstrated more sensitivity to history of the poor and disinherited than I had encountered in any other course, and after my conversation with the dean I asked Jim about the history of my people. He admitted that he knew little about the Southern mountains and like a good teacher challenged me to find out for myself.

I found that little had been written about the history of the mountains and almost nothing by historians. A plethora of books and articles by local color writers, journalists, and social scientists described Appalachia as a region beset by social and cultural pathologies, but most accounts described the mountains as a static land where years of isolation had generated poverty, and poverty had generated a strange and peculiar culture. Nothing I read spoke to the reality I knew, and such accounts stirred more anger and frustration. Then I discovered a new book by a young lawyer from eastern Kentucky who for the first time placed the region's poverty in perspective and provided the first historical explanation for the region's problems. For the next two years, I read and re-read Harry Caudill's *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* and carried a copy into remote coves and hollows as I worked as a case worker in child welfare at home during the summers.

As graduation neared, my friend and mentor Jim Hodges encouraged me to pursue my studies in graduate school and to test Caudill's analysis by provid-

which has introduced me to still another, more progressive side of the South.

**JOE REIDY, Howard University:** As a person committed to radical social change, I find numerous important lessons in Southern history. The Civil War and Reconstruction effected the most far-ranging social revolution in American history in the South. Understanding that process — of how one social system is replaced by another — is vital to understanding how society changes, an indispensable component of formulating contemporary political strategy.

Radical politics during the 1960s accounts for my intellectual development from that time. I studied with Herbert Aptheker and Otto Olsen to understand social process with respect to the South. With Ira Berlin, Leslie Rowland, Barbara Fields, and others, I worked for seven years on the documentary history of slave emancipation. I learned more in that association than anyone could hope to learn in a lifetime.

**ROBERT L. HALL, University of Maryland:** My interest in Southern history derives first of all from my parents' interest in and involvement with what used to be called "Negro history." I was surrounded by black historians as a child growing up on the campus of Florida A&M University in Tallahassee. Albert S. Parks was my next-door neighbor.

ing documentation for the rest of the Appalachian South. After teaching high school history for three years, I entered the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to study Southern history and to write the history of the mountain South. Despite the skepticism of a few professors (after all, as one senior



John W. Riley (co-author of a history of Florida A&M with another black historian, Leedell W. Neyland) was a family friend whom we visited regularly, and James N. Eaton (now curator of the Black Archives, Museum, and Research Center there) was also friendly with my family.

Traveling by automobile to visit a large and widely scattered extended family gave me an intimate familiarity with the Jim Crow South as a child (I was born in 1947). Then as race relations began to change in the region, the fish left water to get some of the presumably good Northern upper-crust prep school education and, simultaneously, to help "desegregate" one such school (St. Paul's in Concord, New Hampshire). When I was in the tenth grade, Henry W. Bragdon threatened to make a historian out of me. I laughed at first, but the idea began to grow on me to the point that when I applied to Harvard in 1964 I put down "history" as my prospective major. I was hooked on history generically before I knew or decided what kind of history I would specialize in. I decided to explore African history and became embroiled in the struggle for an Afro-American Studies Program at Harvard. I returned home to Tallahassee to regain some connectedness with the community of my origin and almost haphazardly enrolled in a doctoral pro-

*continued on page 98*

professor lamented, he had seen a copy of the Foxfire Books), I was able to demonstrate that Appalachia too had a history of struggle and change — one that was deeply integrated into the history of the South and indeed the nation. During those years of graduate study, George Tindall, my mentor at Chapel Hill, taught me how to write, and Larry Goodwyn, a friend at Duke, taught me how to write with passion. Peter Wood, first with the Rockefeller Foundation and later at Duke, taught me how to know what to write about. These fellow historians helped a fellow Southerner understand and interpret his part of the South.

Since 1970 the historiography of Appalachia has undergone dramatic revision which has not only opened a door previously closed to historians but has also almost completely redrawn much of the popular image of the region. This new history is partly the result of new methodologies, especially oral history techniques which have allowed mountain people a voice in portraying their own

past. But it is also the result of a new generation of scholars, many of them native to the region, who have applied their skills to interpreting the social and economic experience of the mountains. A selective bibliography on Appalachia since the Civil War follows; I would particularly recommend John Gaventa's *Power and Powerlessness*, David Corbin's *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields*, David Whisnant's *All That Is Native and Fine*, Harry Shapiro's *Appalachia on Our Mind*, and my own *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers*. Older books that have stood the test of time include John Stephenson's *Shiloh*, John C. Campbell's *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*, and of course the book that affected me so deeply, Caudill's *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*. □

*Ron Eller teaches history at Mars Hill College in western North Carolina. His current research concerns the history of social change and modernization in Appalachia since 1945, with special emphasis on the War on Poverty in Appalachia.*

#### APPALACHIAN HISTORY: A BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force. *Who Owns Appalachia?* (Lexington, KY, 1983).
- Campbell, John C. *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (New York, 1921).
- Caudill, Harry. *Night Comes to the Cumberlands: Biography of a Depressed Area* (Boston, 1963).
- Caudill, Harry. *The Watches of the Night* (Boston, 1976).
- Caudill, Harry. *Theirs Be the Power* (Urbana, IL, 1983).
- Coles, Robert. *Migrants, Sharecroppers, and Mountaineers*, Vol. 2 of *Children of Crisis* (Boston, 1973).
- Corbin, David A. *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922* (Urbana, IL, 1982).
- Day, John F. *Bloody Ground* (New York, 1941).
- Dykeman, Wilma. *The French Broad* (Knoxville, TN, 1965).
- Egerton, John. *Generations* (Lexington, KY, 1983).
- Eller, Ronald D. *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: The Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville, TN, 1982).
- Gaventa, John. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Urbana, IL, 1980).
- Green, Archie. *Only a Miner* (Champaign-Urbana, IL, 1972).
- Hicks, George. *Appalachian Valley* (New York, 1976).
- Kahn, Kathy. *Hillbilly Women* (New York, 1973).
- Lee, Howard B. *Bloodletting in Appalachia* (Parsons, WV, 1969).
- Lewis, Helen, et al., eds. *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case* (Boone, NC, 1978).
- Matthews, Elmora M. *Neighbor and Kin* (Nashville, 1965).
- McDonald, Michael, and John Muldowny. *TVA and the Dispossessed* (Knoxville, TN, 1982).
- McKinney, Gordon B. *Southern Mountain Republicans, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, TN, 1978).
- Montell, Lynwood. *The Saga of Coe Ridge* (Knoxville, TN, 1970).
- Ross, Malcolm. *Machine Age in the Hills* (New York, 1933).
- Schwarzeweller, Harry K., et al. *Mountain Families*

- in Transition* (University Park, PA, 1971).
- Shackelford, Laurel, and Bill Weinberg, eds. *Our Appalachia: An Oral History* (New York, 1977).
- Shapiro, Henry D. *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1978).
- Stephenson, John B. *Shiloh: A Mountain Community* (Lexington, KY, 1968).
- Van Noppen, Ina, and John Van Noppen. *Western North Carolina Since the Civil War* (Boone, NC, 1975).
- Walls, David, and John Stephenson, eds. *Appalachia in the Sixties* (Lexington, KY, 1972).
- Weller, Jack. *Yesterday's People* (Lexington, KY, 1965).
- Whisnant, David. *Modernizing the Mountaineer* (Boone, NC, 1981).
- Whisnant, David. *All That Is Native and Fine* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1983).
- Williams, John A. *West Virginia and the Captains of Industry* (Morgantown, WV, 1976).

## The Varieties of History

# Past and Present

By Gary McDonogh

In three years of fieldwork with Roman Catholics in Savannah, Georgia, I have studied the relations of "history" to current problems of identity and community. Contemporary divisions, whether by neighborhood, class, race, ethnic group, or gender, not only have shaped different historical experiences, but also have led people to distinctive interpretations of the past. Furthermore, how we look at a city's past reflects competition and power in the present as much as any earlier events.

A simple yet striking example clarifies this. In the summer of 1982, a re-enactment of "Historic Events Involving Blacks During the British Occupation of Savannah" was staged by the Savannah-Yamacraw Branch of the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History. The drama portrayed the British freeing of slaves and the foundation of the first black Baptist congregation. The audience was primarily black. The stag-

ing ended with a predominantly white re-enactment of the battle between the British and the American colonists.

The next day, a local newspaper detailed the event "from the perspective of a French soldier fighting alongside Americans in the year 1782." In an 11-paragraph story, the role of the black sponsors and actors was reduced to the observation that "Negroes who had sought shelter here throughout the British occupation watched in horror as the chance for an extension of their short-lived freedom disappeared along with the smoke from the battlefield."\*

Black and white visions of history

---

*By whose terms is  
a cannon charge  
in a Civil War  
battle more worthy  
of historical  
commemoration  
than the day-to-day  
struggle of the  
slave against  
degradation and  
dehumanization.*

---

came together briefly for the pageant itself. Yet what the souvenir brochure and black newspapers treated as a celebration of action and creation in Savannah history was for the daily news, a white event watched by some passive "Negro" spectators. Ownership of the past is not equally recognized or distributed.

Differences such as these are not surprising to anthropology, which has long seen variance in myths within non-Western societies as a sign of social differentiation. Yet the implications of pluralistic historical consciousness need more discussion in Southern historiography, both in abstract terms and concrete practice.

Is it enough, for example, to recognize that groups have been ignored or eclipsed, and merely to bring their data to light according to external norms,

\* R. Merkel, "Americans Win City Once Again," *Savannah Morning News*, July 12, 1982, p. B:1.

academic or journalistic? History is told in many ways. Historiography must learn to listen to other voices, and to value their meaning in their social contexts. Henry Glassie's observations in *Passing the Time in Ballymenone* on Irish society and history seem particularly relevant here:

I do not believe that the academic history of the West, founded as it is on the needs of an elite regional minority, can be directed through revision to satisfaction. It will never expand to true global democracy, nor will it alone provide a base for a full theory of human history. I believe a history useful to all humankind will come only if we first submit to the rigor of treating the world's many histories as independent cultural constructions. . . .

There is one past but many histories. We think of one of them — our own — as "history" and the others as "folk histories" but they are all either histories or all folk histories.

Even more important, this wider sense of history can incorporate the academic historian into the progressive application of his or her research and analysis and toward a critique of the structures by which power groups have expropriated history as much as any other aspect of society: their ownership of historical landmarks or genealogical connections to recognized "heroes," and even their definition of what is significant, whether in public pageants or academic textbooks. By whose terms, after all, is a cannon charge in a Civil War battle more worthy of historical commemoration than the day-to-day struggle of the slave against degradation and dehumanization? To learn to value other experiences, styles, and personal meanings, and to bring these forth as history, too, is to critique structures of expropriation and perhaps to challenge them.

Each year, as I go back to Savannah, I renew a dialogue about history — bringing my ideas and interpretations, listening, teaching, sharing, and learning to value others' experiences. Savannah has changed my sense of the role of an anthropological historian and a Southerner in his own society. All of us, professional historian or not, must understand the structures of ownership of the past, and critique them more completely, in order to understand and change the South. □

*Gary McDonogh teaches anthropology at the New College of the University of South Florida.*

## The Varieties of History

### PUBLIC HISTORY

---

# A Southern Sampler

### POPULAR HISTORY

By Cliff Kuhn

Because it has been comparatively impoverished, illiterate, rural, and Afro-American, the Southern citizenry has been relegated to the margins of popular historical consciousness. The world of the ordinary Southerner has rarely been brought to light, and with some notable exceptions serious historical treatment of such familiar regional themes as subjugation and racial torment has been sorely lacking. As a result our understanding of the Southern past is for the most part enshrouded in myth, sentimentality, nostalgia, and veneration of political and military leaders.

Of course, such traits are national as well as regional, but there does exist a history which is distinctly our own. The Southern historical experience of defeat and tragedy, a major aspect of white Southern consciousness, gave rise to what David Potter termed "the compulsive memories of the Lost Cause." These memories developed in conjunction with the movement to elevate Civil War leaders to heroic stature, the establishment of numerous United Daughters of the Confederacy chapters, the erection of war memorials in every Southern county, and the annual celebrations of Confederate Memorial Day. Generations of New South ideologues, from Henry Grady to the urban business-commercial elites of the 1920s, have skillfully manipulated the idea of the Lost Cause to prop up their own visions of Progress.

Alternatives to the dominant interpretations of the region's past do exist, and they come mainly from within the black community. During the era of segrega-



tion, black Southerners sponsored numerous activities to enhance appreciation of their Afro-American heritage. The smattering of black-oriented museums such as the "Colored Pavilion" at the 1895 Cotton States Exhibition can be seen in this light, as can the portrayals of famous individuals and events in quilts, paintings, and other folk art. Popular festivals, such as the "Juneteenth" celebrations in Texas commemorating emancipation in that state, have strengthened cohesion in the black community through observance of a common past.

More significant in terms of their potential to reshape both scholarly and popular interpretations of Southern history are the thousands of oral history interviews conducted with ex-slaves in the 1920s and 1930s. With the conviction that the memories of former slaves were critical in understanding the Southern past, black historians and social scientists at Fisk University and Southern University began gathering what Fisk researcher Ophelia Settle Egypt called the "Unwritten History of Slavery." A subsequent project of the New Deal Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) collected some 250 additional interviews in Indiana and Kentucky, while workers for the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) Federal Writers' Project conducted the majority of the ex-slave interviews between 1936 and 1938. The approximately 3,000 narratives, many of which have only recently been uncovered, are gathered in the 31-volume *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, edited by George Rawick, and in *Weevils in the Wheat*, featuring the recollections of Virginia's ex-slaves. These have formed the foundation for seminal works such as John Blassingame's *The Slave Community*, and helped pioneer the burgeoning discipline of oral history.

The collection of ex-slave narratives paralleled a number of popular Southern history ventures — popular both in terms of subject matter and in presentation — that emerged during the ferment of the 1930s. At the Highlander Folk School, Jim Dombrowski conducted interviews with veterans of the east Tennessee miners' rebellions against convict labor in the 1890s. An Atlanta FERA-sponsored workers' school, under the direction of labor educator and organizer Tom Tippet, directed a play, *Mill Shadows*, based on the Gastonia textile strike of 1929. Paul Green's outdoor drama attracted acclaim in North Carolina, and the WPA Federal Theater Project

developed several Southern-oriented productions such as *Triple-A Plowed Under* and *King Cotton*, though some of these never made it to the South.

Outside of the ex-slave narratives, the most extensive Southern popular historical effort of the New Deal era was the Southern life history project of the WPA. W.T. Couch, Southeastern director of the Federal Writers' Project and director of the University of North Carolina Press, developed the life history concept to get away from sociological abstractions about Southerners and the distorted creations of fiction writers and to move toward "an accurate, honest, interesting, and fairly comprehensive view of the South." Couch insisted that "somehow [the people] must be given representation, somehow they must be given voice and allowed to speak, in their essential character." Over a thousand Southerners in seven states shared their stories with WPA interviewers in 1938 and 1939. Yet until recently only 35 of these interviews had been made public. These appeared in the classic collection edited by Couch, *These Are Our Lives*. The demise of the Writers' Project under anti-communist attacks, along with the U.S. entry into World War II, forestalled any further popularization of the life history project.

The Southern life history interviews received scant attention for nearly four decades after the termination of the project. The past few years, however, have seen Southern life histories reprinted in such works as *First Person America* by Ann Banks, *Such as Us: Southern Voices of the Thirties* by Tom Terrill and Jerrold Hirsch, and most recently *up before daylight*, a collection of Alabama life histories, edited by James Seay Brown, Jr.

The renewed interest in the life history interviews of the 1930s is part of an enormous burgeoning of Southern popular history activities. Historians, folklorists, and others have generated popular magazines and books, exhibits, radio and television programs, oral history projects, plays, poetry readings, and even dance performances which have substantially enhanced public awareness and understanding of the contours of Southern history. The modern practitioners of Southern popular history are a far from homogeneous group; there exist wide differences in background, orientation, approach, resources, and relationship with community groups and the general public. Yet what is most striking is the unprecedented volume today of popular history efforts by and about Southerners.

In general, the reasons for this upsurge parallel national developments. Social and intellectual currents of the 1960s and early 1970s, most notably the Southern civil rights movement, directed attention toward the historical agency of ordinary people, the deep-rooted inequalities of American life, and the importance of cultural forms in empowerment. In response to these currents, government and foundation-financed projects have occasionally ed priorities somewhat to support more inclusive, unconventional, and even provocative public history presentations. The general impulse to preserve and document endangered traditional cultures has prompted some valuable Southern efforts, as has the desire of younger activists and intellectuals to root themselves in a heritage of struggle.

Since 1982 the Reagan administration's policies and cutbacks have severe-



"MRS. BURROUGHS TAKES IN THE MILK," BY WALKER EVANS — HIS PHOTOS APPEARED IN JAMES AGEE'S CLASSIC BOOK, *LET US NOW PRAISE FAMOUS MEN*.

ly curtailed popular history efforts. Some humanities councils abandoned projects after the first phase or planning grant was completed, while others now place applicants for grants in an almost impossible position by providing only a fraction of the funds necessary to carry out a given project.

The problems extend far beyond finances. Like their counterparts throughout the country, Southern popular history efforts have frequently been exercises in nostalgia for a traditional way of life, or uncritical tributes to prominent black leaders, the labor movement, mountain people, or other groups previously omitted from conventional historical sources. Popular history work in the South, as elsewhere, has only occasionally been solidly linked with community-based organizations on a meaningful, ongoing basis. Too often the practitioners of popular history operate in something of a vacuum, perceiving their work in narrow, individualistic terms rather than as part of a broader democratic movement.

Yet despite these problems some very vital history activities are taking place in the South, projects which portray common Southerners as historical actors in their own right, creating semi-autonomous cultures as well as interacting with the larger society. Racial, class, and gender divisions are squarely addressed in these efforts as are other political conflicts and social tensions. The creators of such projects try to convey a dynamic understanding of historical process and change. By and large, they are committed to making their products accessible, by actively involving people in the creative understanding of their own heritage and working closely with members of various community-based organizations.

What follows are some of the progressive popular history projects going on in the region. The list is by no means exhaustive. It is meant to suggest the subjects and forms of popular history taking place in the South today, and to serve as an introduction to some of the highlights, issues, and problems of the Southern people's history movement.

### GOLDEN SEAL

West Virginia has several public history projects. One of these is *Goldenseal*, a 10-year-old magazine documenting West Virginia's traditional life, and produced by the state's Department of Culture and History. One of the finest publications of its kind in the country,

*Goldenseal* combines oral history interviews, photographs, and other materials to provide a rich portrait of the state's heritage "from the Southern Coalfields to the Northern Panhandle." The articles feature traditional crafts and folklore, ethnic and racial minorities in West Virginia, work experiences, Appalachian heritage, and other topics. Those interested in contacting *Goldenseal* can do so through the Department of Culture and History, the Cultural Center, Capitol Complex, Charleston, WVA 25305.

The Cultural Center also houses an immense exhibit (covering 5,000 square feet), entitled "**The Mining Life**," portraying working and living conditions in the West Virginia coal fields over the past century. The exhibit was put together with the support of the Miners for Democracy and the Black Lung Association. With the assistance of a \$150,000 award from the state legislature, the exhibit traveled to three sites around the state in 1981, received tremendous publicity, and was well attended. Building upon the latest scholarship in Appalachian studies, "The Mining Life" depicts migration of outside capital to the region, life in company towns, work in the mines, and unionizing efforts in a manner that is "acceptable yet controversial," in the words of one of the exhibit organizers.

### THE JOHN HENRY FOLK FESTIVAL

Since Labor Day weekend in 1973, the **John Henry Folk Festival** has presented "the soulful side of mountain life." Named for the legendary ex-slave and steel driver who challenged and beat a steam powered drill on the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad line in the West Virginia hills, the festival is run by the non-profit John Henry Memorial Foundation. This group takes as its mission the portrayal of "the heritage and life history of minority groups in the Appalachian region and their participation in the growth and the development of the region and the country." Over the past decade the festival has included: lectures and folk sermons on the legend of John Henry, craft and farm-life displays, spike driving contests, a wide range of musicians, and the presentation of awards, including one in 1981 to the Land Ownership Task Force for its documentation of Appalachian land ownership patterns. In addition, the Foundation published *Black Diamonds* magazine and presses occasional records on the John Henry label. Those interested can

write P.O. Box 135, Princeton, WVA 24740 or call (304) 425-9356.

write P.O. Box 135, Princeton, WVA 24740 or call (304) 425-9356.

gram in history at Florida State University.

After completing my master's thesis on black churches in Tallahassee in 1972, I joined the faculty at FSU and thereby became its first full-time black teacher of history. This meandering slice of autobiography has not really confronted the issue of why I became a historian, perhaps because there are so many reasons for my involvement in Southern history. I like it. I think I'm good at it. I think that my variety of "Southern Exposures," Northern exposures, and non-American exposures (including a teenage summer living with a provincial French family) helps me bring a unique vision to the study of Southern history.

As for books that influenced me, the earliest that I recall were W.J. Cash's *Mind of the South* (which Bragdon assigned), Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life and Times of a Slave*, C. Vann Woodward's *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, Lerone Bennett's *Before the Mayflower*, John Hope Franklin's *From Slavery to Freedom* has grown up with me and I with it; it still remains the organizing principle for many of the materials in black and Southern and American history that I have accumulated since I first began teaching black history to black inmates at the Norfolk Prison Colony in Massachusetts during the spring of 1967. *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida*, by my major

write P.O. Box 135, Princeton, WVA 24740 or call (304) 425-9356.

### APPALSHOP

No popular history effort in the region surpasses the prodigious work of the **Appalshop** in the eastern Kentucky community of Whitesburg. Founded in 1969 by the Office of Economic Opportunity as part of a national film and television training program for minority youth, Appalshop has evolved into a major regional media center. Over the years Appalshop Films has produced dozens of documentary films about the region, ranging from biographies to celebrations of folk traditions to social commentaries. The three most recent films are: *Lord and Father*, which addresses the moral issues surrounding the western Kentucky tobacco industry as well as the system of sharecropping in tobacco farming; *The Big Lever*, which explores politics in Leslie County, Kentucky, the site where Richard Nixon



professor, was the springboard for most of my specialized research on black Floridians. I cannot close this short list of titles without mentioning a more recent book which has influenced and inspired me tremendously; Peter H. Wood's *Black Majority*.

**ELIZABETH A. FENN, Yale University:** I am interested in the study of Southern history because the people of the South have been misunderstood, ignored, and deprecated in the existent historiography. More than any other section of the country (with the possible exception of New York City) the South is culturally vital. It is socially vital as well. To understand the South is to understand reaction and rebellion alike in the U.S. For some reason I don't fully understand yet, the 1979 Greensboro shootings "brought me around" to Southern history. I still cannot pinpoint exactly how, why, or what the precise impact was.

**ED CABBELL, John Henry Memorial Foundation:** The history of America will be incomplete until more people are involved in the study of Southern history, particularly the history of the Southern mountains and diversity of culture within this isolated region. In fact much more needs to be done with regional history all over America. My  
*continued on next page*

made his first public appearance after his historic resignation; and *Coalmining Women*, which documents women's struggles to gain employment in the mines.

The Appalshop members, almost all natives of the region, have moved beyond film to a wide variety of endeavors. June Appal Recordings has produced some 40 albums of traditional and contemporary mountain music since its formation in 1974. Artists featured on the label include local, traditional, and nationally known artists, as well as activists of all ages who sing about social and environmental issues in the mountains.

Future plans for the Appalshop Recording Studio include the production of a 26-part record series called *Cumberland Mountain Memories*, which will combine music from the region with the storytelling of Appalshop's **Roadside Theater**. Founded in 1975, Roadside is a traveling repertory theater whose original plays draw from the history and cul-

ture of the central Appalachian coalfields. Productions include: *Brother Jack*, a blend of southern Appalachian songs, stories, and tales, many of which were collected by the WPA's Writers' Project; *Red Fox/Second Hangin'*, a multi-media performance about a legendary figure of the Cumberlands; and *South of the Mountain*, which portrays two generations of a mountain family's life as they interact with industrialization and other modernizing forces. Roadside was also featured in *Three Mountain Tales*, one of three audio-synched filmstrips produced by Appalshop in 1983. Another filmstrip is *Clinchco: Story of a Mining Camp*, which presents the boom and bust history of a biracial coal camp in Virginia.

*Clinchco* is one of the many offshoots of Appalshop's most ambitious project to date, a proposed seven-part film series on the history of Appalachia. Originally conceived in 1976, the project really got off the ground at a National Endowment for the Humanities-sponsored conference on History and Film in 1979. At that time regional scholars and Appalshop members decided that each of the films in the series would treat a given subject tracing the region's history from the presettlement Indians to the present. The presentation was to be varied, incorporating oral history, documentary use of photographs and film, narration, and storytelling. Eventually seven interrelated yet self-contained topics were selected: images of Appalachia, rivers and trails, ethnic groups and migration, land use, work and economic history, resistance movements, and religion.

Funding, writing, and production have all been lengthy processes. *Strangers and Kin*, the NEH-funded pilot in the series which depicts images of Appalachia from outside and within, was released in March 1984. Despite the recent decision by NEH not to fund production of the second film in the series, scripts for three of the other films have been written, and Appalshop still hopes to complete the series by the end of 1986. Those interested in learning more about Appalshop activities can write Box 743, Whitesburg, KY 41858, or phone (606) 633-0108.

#### HIGHLANDER RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER

East of Knoxville, Tennessee is the renowned **Highlander Research and Education Center**. Founded in 1932 by Don West and Myles Horton, a Tennessee influenced by the teachings of John

Dewey and the work of the Danish Folk Schools, Highlander is based on the premise that ordinary people can articulate their own needs and search for answers to their problems.

Cultural work has always been central to Highlander's activity. It was Zilphia Horton and others at Highlander who first brought the song "We Shall Overcome" — an old hymn transformed by striking black tobacco workers from Charleston, South Carolina in the 1940s — to the students involved with the early sit-ins of the 1960s. Part of Highlander's cultural emphasis from its earliest days has been the development of historical awareness among students. The labor history classes conducted regularly during the 1930s, for example, included Jim Dombrowski's oral history interviews with veterans of the east Tennessee coalfield wars of the 1890s.

For over 20 years, Guy and Candie Carawan of the Highlander staff have documented songs of struggle, producing three book anthologies of civil rights movement songs — *We Shall Overcome*, *Voices from the Mountains*, and *Freedom is a Constant Struggle*. They have also organized workshops on the cultural history of coalmining communities and other industrial areas, and have produced numerous record albums. One of the more interesting of these is *The Nashville Sit-In Story* (Folkways, FH 5590), where students involved in the Nashville movement recreate their story in dramatic form.

A recent Highlander project similarly demonstrates the connection between historical presentation and citizen involvement. In 1983 the center published a book length report, *Our Own Worst Enemy*, authored by Tom Schlesinger, documenting the impact of military production on the upper South. Among other things, the report details the development of ammunition production,





strategic mineral extraction, defense-related university research, and the community of Oak Ridge. In tandem with the report, Highlander supplied a guide to researching local defense contractors and made themselves available to community groups working on military production issues. Copies of the report and the guide can be obtained from Highlander, Route 3, Box 370, New Market, TN 37820.

### CENTER FOR SOUTHERN FOLKLORE

Across the state in Memphis is the **Center for Southern Folklore**. Founded in 1972 by Bill Ferris and Judy Peiser, the Center has issued dozens of films about Southern folkways as well as a valuable index to American folklore films and video tapes. In the past few years the Center has sponsored a major Mid-South Folklife Festival and has renovated an old theater in downtown Memphis where live performances of traditional music are now seen weekly. In addition, the Center has established an **Ethnic Heritage Project** which has featured oral history and photographic documentation of the Jewish community of Memphis. While scholarly and popular interest in Southern Jewish studies has increased recently, too often similar history projects have been quite conservative and narrow in focus, portraying Jews primarily as successful businesspeople or professionals. In contrast, the Ethnic Heritage Project has explored issues of assimilation, Southern identity, black-Jewish relationships, and anti-Semitism. Unfortunately, because its project grant has expired, the Ethnic Heritage Project is currently on hold while staff members seek additional funding. The Center can be reached at P.O. Box 40105, Memphis, TN 38174. **U.S. STEEL MINERS IN BIRMINGHAM AREA MINE, 1937**



photo courtesy U.S. Steel

### ALABAMA LABOR

Since Alabama is one of the South's most industrialized and unionized states, it is not surprising that many of its popular history projects focus on labor organizing and struggle. In 1983 the United Rubber Workers Local #12 of Gadsden brought out a history of the local which emphasizes its often bloody organizing days of the 1930s and 40s. Also in 1983, Ed Brown of the University of Alabama at Birmingham's **Center for Labor Education** published *The Painting Craftsman*, a history of Birmingham's Painters Local #57. These works, and others such as the forthcoming Southern Labor Archives-sponsored book on Atlanta's Sheet Metal Workers Local #85, provide an antidote to negative public impressions of organized labor — although they do run the risk of being too uncritical, especially with regards to race.

### THE SLOSS FURNACES

For nearly a century the blast furnaces of the Sloss-Sheffield Steel and Iron Company were a dominant feature in downtown Birmingham, the industrial center of the South. The skyward flames and molten iron of Sloss are still recalled vividly by many residents. When the ironworks shut down in 1971, some local citizens wanted to convert the site into a Disneyland, or Six Flags "theme park." Fortunately another group of residents, calling themselves the Sloss Furnace Association, sought to preserve the site, and in 1977 Birmingham voters approved a \$3 million bond issue to pay for the restoration of the site. The **Sloss Furnaces National Historical Landmark**, now a department of the city, opened for limited hours on April 12, 1982, marking the centennial of the ironworks' beginning. The historical landmark was opened to the public on a permanent basis on Labor Day 1983.

According to Sloss Furnaces director Randall Lawrence, the 35-acre park and museum is one of the very few twentieth-century industrial sites in the U.S. currently being preserved to present working-class history. For further information contact Sloss, P.O. Box 11781, Birmingham, AL 35202.

### ARCHIVE OF AMERICAN MINORITY CULTURE

Two other Birmingham-related ventures come out of the **Archive of American Minority Culture** at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. "Images of Work: Birmingham, 1894-1937" is an

study of the history of the Southern mountains connects me with my self and to the rest of the country and world.

Carter G. Woodson's classic essay, "Freedom and Slavery in Appalachian America" (*The Journal of Negro History*, April 1916), made me scholastically aware of the role of being black and Appalachian and the importance to me of developing a positive response to my experience and life-style in the Appalachian South. My research and study through the John Henry Folk Festival led me to John "Uncle Homer" Walker, who made all of the book work become very real. With the emergence of black studies, Appalachian studies, and my knowledge of Southern studies, I reached a turning point in 1969.

**EDWARD L. AYERS, University of Virginia:** The fundamental questions about our nation have always turned around the ways we deal with race and class. The South has provided both a crucible for the formation of the racial and class patterns of America and the persistent promise of an alternative to the rest of the nation. I didn't even know I was a Southerner until I went to New England for graduate school. There I was forcibly struck by the subtle but profound differences between Northerners and Southerners that had supposedly long since been destroyed by mass communication and mass consumption.

exhibit of 46 photographs depicting workers' lives in the Birmingham District. Prepared by historians Mike Williams and Mitch Menzer under an NEH Youthgrant, the photographs and accompanying text treat such issues as convict labor, life in company towns, occupational safety, work processes involved in mining and iron and steel production, and unionization struggles.

The Archive is also producing a 13-part NEH-funded radio series entitled "Working Lives," on the formation of a black urban industrial working class in the Birmingham District before World War II. The series will focus on ways that black people maintained continuity with rural traditions while at the same time making accommodations to the new urban-industrial milieu. The series is scheduled to be completed and aired in the spring of 1985. Founded in 1979 with a seed grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Archive also contains extensive photography, recording, and videotape collections of ethnic, folk, black, and women's history and culture.

Then I read C. Vann Woodward's *Origins of the New South* and felt it resonate with my own experience and concerns in a way I had not known history could.

**PEETE DANIEL, National Museum of American History:** More than any other factor, growing up in a small town and working in the tobacco harvest and at a saw mill shaped my view of the South. At Wake Forest University, David L. Smiley provoked me to start using that perspective to ask historical questions. I write Southern history because the questions that keep percolating to the top of my head drive me to answer them. I pretty much organize my life around reading and writing Southern history; it helps keep the world in perspective.

**VICTORIA E. BYNUM, University of California at San Diego:** My initial attraction to Southern history was personal in nature. My father was born and raised in Ellisville, Mississippi, but because of experiences as a foster child he has, as long as I can remember, been alienated both emotionally and geographically from his Southern roots. This sparked an early curiosity in me about Southern culture, especially the culture of the common people I met, such as my relatives, during very infrequent visits to my father's hometown in Mississippi.

*continued on next page*

The Archive can be reached at P.O. Box S, University, AL 35486.

### THE CULTURE OF SOUTHERN BLACK WOMEN

Archive Director Brenda McCallum is one of three principal authors of a recently published curriculum guide, *The Culture of Southern Black Women: Approaches and Materials*. The volume is the result of a three-year curriculum development project, originating in a student-initiated conference, "Black Women in the South: Retrospectives and Prospects," held in Tuscaloosa in the spring of 1980. Subsequently, the Archive of American Minority Cultures and the University of Alabama Women's Studies Program received funding from the U.S. Department of Education Fund for Improvement of Postsecondary Education.

The guide draws upon the interrelated disciplines of history, women's studies, anthropology, black studies, and folklore. The project was rooted in the assumptions that the culture of Southern

black women is a central part of American life, that the cultural expressions of Afro-American women are part of a historical continuum going back to Africa, and that these cultural traditions cannot be seen in isolation from broader social and historical developments and the politics of race, class, and gender in the South. Project participants also agreed that the subject matter demanded a non-elitist, folklorist approach in research and presentation. Copies of the guide may be purchased through the Archive of American Minority Culture.

### LIVING ATLANTA

Perhaps the most comprehensive treatment of local history has been community radio station WRFG's *Living Atlanta Project*, an NEH-funded series of 50 half-hour programs depicting life in Atlanta between the World Wars. *Living Atlanta* stemmed from the premise that the roots of the modern civil rights movement could be found in the seemingly static era of segregation. The programs feature excerpts from oral history interviews with over 200 older Atlantans, ranging from maids to millionaires, woven together with topical music from the period and accompanying narration. The subject matter of the series was equally broad, including programs on work, leisure, race relations, politics, education, living conditions, and early challenges to the status quo. More so than many oral history projects, *Living Atlanta* explicitly pointed out how blacks and whites remember the past differently.

Since the *Living Atlanta* series was completed in 1980, WRFG has produced hour-long documentaries on the Leo Frank case and on the 1906 Atlanta race riot. Both featured dramatizations in addition to oral history excerpts and topical music. All of WRFG's history programs can be obtained by writing P.O. Box 5332, Atlanta, GA 30307, or phone (404)523-3471.

### DEEP SOUTH PEOPLE'S HISTORY PROJECT

Perhaps nobody in the region has been more committed to developing progressive popular history than Ken Lawrence and Jan Hillegas of the *Deep South People's History Project*, based in Jackson, Mississippi. Long-time activists Hillegas and Lawrence have compiled a comprehensive library of civil rights movement-related documents, including students' applications for the Mississippi Freedom Summer project, a major col-

lection of materials of and about the Klan and other right wing extremist groups, and taped interviews with movement veterans. The holdings also include records of the development of the textbook "Mississippi: Conflict and Change" and extensive correspondence between Lawrence and Eugene Genovese after the publication of Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll*.

In addition to developing the library, Lawrence and Hillegas have been involved in numerous other history-related activities. Lawrence's essay, "The Roots of Class Struggle in the South," has appeared in several places and has been reprinted by the New England Free Press. During the 1970s Project members uncovered many previously "lost" WPA and other accounts of slavery, narratives that have since been published in five supplemental volumes of George Rawick's *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*. Project staff also contributed to a Mississippi Public Television documentary on "The Free State of Jones," an area that in effect seceded from the Confederacy during the Civil War. Despite this outpouring of activity from the Project, its lack of academic affiliation or credentials has meant that the financial difficulties faced by other popular history efforts have been magnified in this case. Those interested in learning more about the Deep South People's History Project can write to P.O. Box 3568, Jackson, MS 39207. □

*Cliff Kuhn is a popular historian and radio producer living in Atlanta. He is currently working on the Working Lives radio series and preparing a history of Atlanta based on WRFG's Living Atlanta interviews.*

MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI, 1964: MRS. MICHAEL SCHWERNER SHORTLY AFTER HER HUSBAND'S MURDER.





# The Varieties of History

## PUBLIC HISTORY

# History: Something that Happened To Me

By George W. McDaniel

From my experience as a student and a teacher, it seems that many people are encouraged to view history as something apart from themselves. They consider their major contacts with history to be made in two places: history classes and historical museums. A friend from Louisiana tells of taking her required high school course in state history, and as is typical, she was bored. Years later she learned her hometown was one of the earliest Euro-American settlements in Louisiana, yet her town had not once been mentioned in her course. She grew up thinking that she and her community were somehow apart from the history of her state.

Even at grassroots occasions of living history, like folklife festivals, all too often only old-timey music and crafts are featured, creating the impression that "tradition" is not a part of the modern, urban South. It is as if certain places or people have a monopoly on our perception of history.

I suggest that history is not something that happened somewhere else to somebody else, but rather that history is something that has happened and is happening to each of us. Our historical museums in the South offer a fine opportunity to teach this more democratic history. Because they reach a wide public audience, the history they teach is of vital importance.

I would like to discuss five common misconceptions perpetuated by muse-

ums that foster and strengthen the distance between the museum visitor and his/her history. In the process, I hope to be something of a devil's advocate, but do not intend to denigrate museums. I recognize that all of us working with museums have made mistakes and would like to do more thorough research and creative interpretation if we had sufficient funds and personnel.

The first misconception is that history belongs only to the affluent. When the historical museum and preservation movement began, only the homes of renowned figures were saved and exhibited, since the preservers thought these people represented symbols of our past that strengthened our national or regional pride. Indeed, much of the present-day historical preservation movement originated in the South. Mount Vernon was among the first sites in the nation to be preserved, and the Society for the Preservation of Old Dwellings in Charleston, South Carolina was among the nation's first preservation organizations.

While the preservation of beautiful homes did serve the purpose of galvanizing concern for the past, we need to develop this concern further and interpret the community context in which their residents lived. In the South, historical homes on exhibit are predominantly the main houses of plantations and the homes of the merchant class, to the exclusion of the dwellings of agricultural workers, whether slave or free, black or white, even though their houses often constituted the majority of homes on the site and were integral to the world in which affluent whites lived. For example, historian Peter Wood tells of visiting Thomas Jefferson's remarkable home, Monticello, and overhearing a visitor say to her friend, "It's a beautiful place. Do you suppose he had any help?"

The second misconception is that history is progressive. America is represented as the story of the triumph of democracy, the story of successful upward mobility. Nowhere is this more strongly illustrated than in the story of Abraham Lincoln—who in the land of promise, rose from a humble log cabin to the White House. This saga of "rags to riches" permeates our historical museums. Lincoln's log home is now enshrined in Kentucky, and at the Hermitage, the home of Andrew Jackson near Nashville, we see his original log cabin house juxtaposed against the elegant mansion to which he ascended.

What we do not see or learn about is

The experience that led me to *research* and *write* about Southern history, and thus to seek a graduate degree in it, was a friendship which I formed some 10 years ago with a black family who had always been told that their ancestors were free long before the Civil War. This led me into a year of fascinating research on free blacks, during which time I searched for and found my friends' ancestors through censuses and legal records. My current dissertation research on laboring and farming class women, both white and free black, is a direct outgrowth of that initial research project.

**JOHN EGERTON, Nashville, Tennessee:** I read W.J. Cash's *Mind of the South* when I was 25 and confined to a hospital for an extended stay; it awakened me to my native land. I read Lillian Smith when I was 30 and the South was living out her worst fears; *Killers of the Dream* awakened me to myself. I still think it's the best and most honest book ever written about the South. As I have matured as a writer and a person, I have found myself more and more attracted to history. I suppose I am looking for explanations and a better understanding of contemporary behavior (mine and other people's). In my view, history is the recalled and recorded memory of the human race, a blend of objective fact and subjective perception and self-conscious

the broader context which includes the story of struggles and failures, of farms lost due to crop failures or mortgage foreclosures, of houses abandoned due to rural poverty and prejudice, mechanization, and the lure of better jobs and a new beginning in the city. We do not see the preservation of sites central to the saga of farm labor and union organizers, nor learn of their defeats and triumphs in the South.

The third misconception is that history was designed by interior decorators. In so many historical homes, furnishings appear to be impeccably arranged, and I get the feeling that if I sat down with my newspaper and cup of coffee I would mess things up. Indeed, according to my wife, I "never put things up." Am I without historical precedent? And at historical battle sites we see re-enactments of battles that are theatrically designed and thrilling to behold. Soldiers are dressed in new, clean uniforms and have fun. We do not see or learn about what actually happens to people when they are wounded or killed, nor



attempts at distortion. That's the stuff of life — and of good books. With so much good material, any writer can entertain dreams of making a good book — and, once in a while, the dream can come true. That possibility makes me keep on trying.

**G. WAYNE KING, Francis Marion College:** As H.L. Mencken replied to a similar question, "Why do people go to zoos?" Not only is Southern history intrinsically entertaining, but as Howard Zinn demonstrated in *Southern Mystique*, it is also a fine microscope under which the whole nation can be usefully observed. There has been no "road to Damascus" experience for me, but I admire Zinn's acerbic approach to the South.

*Given unlimited freedom, amenities, and every resource you could name, what piece of Southern history would you like to create in the next 10 years? What other topics are ripe for research?*

**GEORGE McDANIEL:** A museum that creatively interprets the people's history of the South — or even a specific locale. It would have a fearless, committed board adept at fund-raising and would feature engaging exhibits and living history interpretations of Southern life.

*continued on next page*

witness their pain and terror. I was in Vietnam in the First Infantry Division, and I remember the first dead Viet Cong I saw. How strange it was that he could not somehow get back up — we were no longer playing army.

The fourth misconception is that history can be interpreted through artifacts alone. Too often guided tours of historical museums or houses consist primarily of the identification of its furnishings and architectural details. How many times have you visited a museum and heard the guide say while touring the rooms, "This mahogany table is of the Sheraton style, made in Philadelphia in 1805. And this couch. . . ." The major issues of American history contemporary to that period remain overlooked. For example, at restored plantation sites across the South, one wonders what the specific responses of the residents — of all colors — were to the Civil War and Emancipation. In North Carolina the Division of Archives and History has published a laudable history of the state interpreting such historical moments

through the story of specific historic sites, and it stands as a model for other Southern states.

The fifth and final misconception is that history is remote, something in textbooks or museums, something that has happened to other people. My clearest experience with this occurred while I was researching a farm tenant house from Maryland on exhibit at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. During the course of my research, I located families who had actually lived in the house and invited them to the museum to share their recollections for the reinterpretation. One of these was the Johnson family. Mamie Johnson visited the house with her son George, who had been born upstairs in that house in 1923. With them was George's son, Terrence, who had visited the Smithsonian earlier on a school field trip. He distinctly remembered visiting the house and was now amazed to learn that it was the home of his grandmother and the birthplace of his father.

Our major challenge then is *how do we connect people to their history?* My belief is that we can do so by opening up our museums so that they are not for the affluent only, but for everyone; so that they do not just tell the stories of success and progress, but also of struggles and failures, and do not just emphasize decorative arts, but the economic, social, and political issues of Southern history as well. In being more forthright in our interpretations we challenge visitors to think, to re-examine their easy, pat answers to the past. We develop their curiosity, their ability to inquire. It is by questioning that we learn. In these ways visitors can come to understand that history is not something that happened somewhere else to somebody else, but something that has happened to each of us, that has happened to me. □

*George McDaniel is Director of Research and Special Projects for the Center for Southern Folklore and the author of **Hearth and Home: Preserving a People's Culture**. This article was initially presented as a paper to the Dallas County Heritage Society, Dallas, Texas.*

## The Varieties of History

### PUBLIC HISTORY

# Theater and History

## EXPERIENCES FROM THE SOUTHERN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

By John O'Neal

Them that got shall get  
Them that's not shall lose.  
So the Bible says and it still is news.  
Mama may have  
Papa may have  
but God bless the child that's got his own,  
That's got his own.

— "God Bless the Child"  
by Billie Holiday

It's a terrible thing, but there's a certain inevitability to the tendency for those whose need is greatest to be the ones who give the most and get the least from the process of spontaneous social reform. The '60s civil rights movement is a case in point.

I don't mean to suggest that it was not good to win those small victories that we did win. It is good that segregation in

JOHN O'NEAL



photo by Rick Oliver

public accommodations and schools was pretty much ended. It is good that the right to vote was affirmed and that some protections were developed against employment discrimination and for affirmative action. All these things are good and need to be defended, but the fact is that most benefits from these changes in social policy don't trickle down to have substantial impact on the lives of ordinary poor people.

Ironically, pressure for the social changes comes from the bottom of the social structure and generally proceeds in spite of opposition (or with only faint support) from the social group most likely to receive the greatest benefit — the black middle class. The irony is heightened by the fact that those changes which benefit the black middle class benefit even more the whites who oppose social reform.

The members of the Play Group of Knoxville, Tennessee,\* songwriter Si Kahn, and I tried to look at the way this works out in human terms rather than broad social generalities in a play called *If I Live to See Next Fall*. This collaborative play is based on data about a particular effort to organize the Southern Tenant Farmers Union in the mid-South during the 1930s. It focuses on the dilemma facing a white tenant farmer, Isaac Ingram, who is pressured on one side by an old boyhood friend, Buddy Bolton, to join a Klan-type organization on the promise of considerable benefits from local landowners. On the other side he's being pushed by his wife's cousin, Ella Mae Biggs, to join the racially integrated Tenant Farmers Union.

The choice Isaac faces is whether to do what is clearly the "right" thing in supporting the union or whether to do the "wrong" thing and join the Klan. If he joins the union he places himself and his family at considerable risk. If he supports the Klan, it is possible he will be well rewarded by the landowners and merchants who oppose the development of the tenant farmers union.

Organizers and community leaders face this problem in more or less dramatic terms all the time. In the absence of legal or legislative authority, the issue normally depends on the conscience of the person facing the decision. It gets down to a question of ethics: do the

needs and interests of the relevant collective take priority over the needs and interests of the individual? Another play, *This Little Light of Mine*, provides an interesting and entertaining example of this general problem. Written and performed by Billie Jean Young, director of the Southern Rural Women's Network, it celebrates the life of Fannie Lou Hamer, a grassroots leader of tremendous charisma and outstanding oratorical skill.

During the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's challenge of the Regular Mississippi delegation to the Democratic National Conventions of 1964 and 1968, Hamer became a national figure. On into the late '70s, she continued to function as a militant, progressive leader. On more than one occasion Hamer had the opportunity to advance her own personal interests at the expense of the poor people of the Mississippi Delta whose confidence and trust she enjoyed, and whose interests she represented. At no point did she violate or abuse that trust. She went to an early grave because of injuries and privations suffered as a result of her commitment to the civil rights movement, but she never wavered from the course demanded by her own deep moral commitment.

I think the problem of how ideology and ethics must necessarily complement each other is of crucial importance, and can be appreciated through the medium of drama. If we don't develop leaders and organizations with sufficient ideological insights and strong ethical foundations, it will be impossible to make the transition from the modest successes of social reform to winning profound systematic social and economic changes that are required to remove the burdens of oppression and exploitation from human society. These structural changes require personal choices — away from self-serving personal advancement and toward a commitment to the collective welfare. The difficulty of such choices and their importance to the history of the success and failure of social change movements is the appropriate subject of some of the best drama now emerging from the South. □

*John O'Neal was a co-founder and director of the Free Southern Theater for almost 20 years. He is currently touring the nation in his one-person play, Don't Start Me Talking Or I'll Tell Everything I Know: Sayings from the Life and Writings of Junebug Jabbo Jones.*

**NELL IRVIN PAINTER:** I have been working on "American Views of the South" for eight years, with a couple of books intervening. I would love to get back to that. There's enormous scope in the area of Southern labor history, and any approach that looks at blacks and whites within similar classes. The tendency has been to respect the color line, and respecting class lines produces fresh insights but takes an independence of mind and enormous research. Many Southernists aren't ready for that yet.

If I had really unlimited time, I'd try to untangle Southern folk culture, trying to find out what's Scots, what's Irish, what's African, what's English, and how they interweave or separate since about 1700. Hard, but fascinating. It would require knowledge of all four mother countries, plus American cultural history, but what a work that would turn out to be!

**PATRICIA GALLOWAY:** I would like to reconstruct the Indian side of the story of the colonial period in the Old Southwest. The effort would include a lot of archaeological survey and excavation to fill in the necessary material evidence to explain such things as the attrition, amalgamation, and eventual disappearance of the many small ethnic groups present at first contact. It would also include a systematic and exhaustive search of European repositories for the reams

## The Varieties of History

PUBLIC HISTORY

# High-Tech History

TV HISTORY

By Jack Bass

A cadet at the South Carolina military college, The Citadel, serving as an attendant at an academic conference, viewed the pilot for a television series now called "The American South Comes of Age." He provided me with an image

\* The Play Group has faded away, but some of its members, under the leadership of Mac Pirkle, have relocated in Nashville, Tennessee, and recently mounted a new production of the play with considerable success.

of evidence known to exist but unavailable in this country, with special emphasis on the cartographic materials so crucial to demographic and locational studies.

There is also a need for a thorough study of the middlemen in European-Indian culture contact in the Old South-west — specifically, the traders, interpreters, and subalterns who had close daily dealings with Indians but all too seldom wrote about them. These men were the fathers of the mixed-bloods who were to a large degree to shape the futures of the Southeastern tribes.

**JEFF CROW:** In my opinion the most original work being done in Southern history at the present time is being written about the New South era, especially the rise of sharecropping and tenancy, the emergence of mills and the textile industry, and the implications of these developments for race relations, class, caste, politics, and economics. However, it would be easy to compile an agenda for all of Southern history. Our knowledge of the colonial South below the Chesapeake is scanty at best; we still view the Revolution's disaffected and dissidents as Tory supporters of the crown; slavery is often treated as a fully developed institution, circa 1860; the constitutional and early national periods remain imperfectly understood; the landless and urban working classes have

*continued on next page*

that sticks in my mind after four years' work developing the 14-part series.

An Atlanta native, he told me the program helped him understand for the first time "what things had been like." It is his generation that is the target of "The American South Comes of Age," to help their place in historical perspective the sweeping changes that transformed the region in the past three decades.

The first episode in the 30-minute pilot the cadet saw portrays the Montgomery bus boycott that began with the refusal of Rosa Parks to surrender her seat to a white passenger, an act that ignited a people. The bus boycott, of course, launched the 26-year-old Martin Luther King, Jr., into a leadership role in what became a mass movement based on nonviolent protest. The boycott also launched a handful of federal judges in the South on a trail-blazing road probing the full meaning of *Brown v. Board of Education*.

The pilot also showed the cadet the innocent idealism of the young King, Movietone footage of him preaching

his message of nonviolent resistance and his belief in the power of love to overcome the South's racist past. The film shows Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr., describing how he and Judge Richard Rives decided the *Browder v. Gayle* case: when asked by the older Rives what he thought, Johnson says he replied, "I don't think segregation in any public facility is constitutional. Violates the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, Judge." Johnson explains, "That's all I had to say. Didn't take me long to express myself. The law was clear." The reprisals of threats and ostracism suffered by the judges after their decision are also made clear.

Another section of the pilot mixes historical footage of the campus confrontation at the University of Mississippi when James Meredith enrolled, with narration, cuts from a recent interview with Meredith, and interviews with federal judges who ordered Meredith's admission.

Judge Elbert P. Tuttle, then chief judge of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, reveals how he admonished the Kennedy administration to determine how many troops would be needed to carry out the court's order, then to double that force and have it on hand. "That wasn't done," Tuttle says, "and instead, they had the riots and the 500 marshals were almost overrun; two men were killed, and they brought in three or four times as many military men later on to bring an end to it." Tuttle's advice to the Kennedys came from his personal experience commanding a company of Georgia National Guards who staved off a lynch mob in the 1930s.

In almost 500 interviews across the South researching my books *Unlikely Heroes* and *The Transformation of Southern Politics*, I met many of the major actors in the South's social and political transformation and gained insight into the interaction between that change and the region's economic development. And I saw the potential of television, despite its limitations, as a teaching tool. As a parent I realized that my children grew up in a South much different from that I had known, and they and their friends lacked the historical perspective to understand a period of exciting change.

Asked what is least understood by the generation that has grown up since the civil rights movement, Andrew Young argues convincingly that blacks and whites are both deeply affected by their

ignorance of history. Blacks, he says, "least understand how they got where they are. . . . Kids today can't imagine that it wasn't always possible to go to a movie or to a lunch counter. They can't conceive of the kind of racial violence and brutality that existed, nor do they understand the suffering that took place in order to make it possible for them to live as well as they do. And so they tend not to feel enough responsibility to the group and to change."

Whites, he continues, "don't understand that we're still in the process of overcoming almost 400 years of racism and segregation. There's a resentment of affirmative action because they see children who are going to school with them getting special consideration with scholarships and with college entrance. And they don't understand the 400-year history of exclusion that makes that almost necessary and moral."

"The American South Comes of Age" is designed specifically to address this problem: the historical footage and the presence in the classroom of historic figures can provide a source of stimulation that evokes understanding. A joint project of the University of South Carolina and South Carolina Educational Television, the series is designed for several different uses. One is as a "telecourse" for the "distant learner," in effect a correspondence course with a strong audio/visual component. In South Carolina it will be aired as a telecourse statewide over the ETV network. The series can also be used as a course in a classroom setting, or as an audio/visual aid in a wide variety of existing courses. Finally, it can be adapted for broadcast to a

#### CHET FULLER DISCUSSES BLACK POVERTY AND CLASS CONFLICT



photo courtesy Jack Buss



general viewing audience, possibly as a mini-series for public television.

The series opens with a program called "The Burden of Southern History" in which five historians — Dan Carter, John Hope Franklin, Jacquelyn Hall, Leon Litwack, and George Tindall — sit around a table and discuss the major themes of Southern history since the Civil War. The five alternate as host-narrators for the remaining 13 half-hour programs.

"The South of V.O. Key" introduces Key's classic study, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (1949), and offers an overview of the region's political history. The next five programs essentially cover civil rights, three focusing on the role of the courts in such areas as school desegregation, jury discrimination, voting rights, and the evolution of civil rights law. The other two cover "The Civil Rights Movement" and "Black Political Development." Two programs on political developments follow: "The Rise of the Republican Party," which emphasizes the impact of the Eisenhower campaign and the Goldwater movement in the South, and "Political Transition," which focuses on the Democratic Party's response to the departure of white conservatives for the GOP and a new biracial Democratic coalition that exists in precarious balance in much of the South.

The next three programs cover economics. "Cotton as King and Curse" offers an historical overview. "Economic Transformation" examines the transition from an agrarian-dominated economy to one based on industry. "Sun Belt — Myth or Reality?" explores the unevenness of economic development, some of the costs of growth, and the impact of foreign investment. The final two programs take a look at "Culture and Identity" and "The Emerging South."

Along with the video series, companion readings and study guide assignment for students at various levels are in preparation, and the 60-plus interviews I taped in doing the shows will be catalogued, transcribed, indexed, and permanently deposited at the University of South Carolina's Newsfilm Library. □

Jack Bass is director of American South Special Projects at the University of South Carolina (USC). The entire package of video and print materials will be available in the summer or fall of 1985. Full information and preview material will be available from the Office of Telecommunications Instruction, USC, Columbia, SC 29208.

barely crept into the literature; Southern progressivism, coming on the heels of disfranchisement, segregation, intellectual racism, and violence unprecedented since Reconstruction, is still a puzzle; the impact on Southern agriculture and industry of mechanization and electric power in the 1930s is little known; and, besides the Civil Rights Movement in a few discrete communities, the South in the post-World War II era is almost a blank sheet. How has air conditioning turned the Bible Belt into the Sun Belt? What about the rise of the New Right in Southern politics and its relationship to fundamentalist religion? I could go on. Clearly, and emphatically, the South remains an area ripe for study.

**RAY GAVINS:** I propose to concentrate on two projects: (1) *Black Carolina: A History of the Negro in North Carolina*, which traces the black experience of slavery and freedom, of segregation and desegregation, in an important Southern state; and (2) *Southern Black Ideology and Strategy in the Age of Segregation, 1915-1955*, a major inquiry into local, state, and regional leadership patterns and struggles, including radical and working-class movements, between the death of Booker T. Washington and the rise of Martin Luther King, Jr.

**JOHN GLEN:** I would pursue further studies of the larger developments with which Highlander has been involved in its history: the Southern labor movement, particularly during the 1930s and 1940s; the Farmers' Union in the South; the Civil Rights Movement, focusing especially on grassroots protests; and Appalachia. As far as I can see, all of these areas are ripe for further research and sound scholarship. What seems to be needed most in the study of Southern progressive history is a greater rigor in covering various social movements in the region. The broad outlines have been established — the need now is for a greater understanding and analysis of what exactly has happened in the South and to progressives in it since the Civil War.

**JOE REIDY:** Given my interest in the transition from slavery to free labor, the most intriguing question now is that of comparative emancipation (European serf emancipation as well as New World slave emancipation). Some preliminary comparative work is underway among specialists on South America, the Caribbean, Africa, and the American South;

nonetheless, the work is in its infancy. It promises great things, however, and in the next 10 years I suspect will draw more interested scholars.

**ROBERT L. HALL:** The piece that I would like to create, help to create, and see created would be a thorough history of black religious life in the South, which would be built upon a firm foundation of local and regional studies. This task has only begun. And it should not be done in isolation from understanding of and comparison with religious phenomena among non-black populations in the region. Somebody needs to do a culturally oriented (rather than a primarily demographic) history of the slave trade from Africa to North America. And white migration out of the South is a neglected topic.

**ELIZABETH FENN:** The best stuff to come in the near future is going to be much more integrated and multi-disciplinary than current works. It will not entail separate studies of women, Hispanics, blacks, and whites. It will stress the cultural dynamism of the South, and it will probe the *interaction* of culture and society, society and culture. To be true to the world it describes, it will be inclusive rather than exclusive. And it will inevitably seem threatening to many with its unconventional methodologies and sources. It might be titled: *Breaking All the Rules: Society and Culture in the Making of the Modern South*.

**ED CABELL:** The history of blacks in the Southern mountains is ripe for research. Given unlimited freedom, amenities, and every resource I could name, I would write from my extensive research and study in this area since 1969, as well as encourage others to write and aid the development of this little-explored area of Southern history.

**PETE DANIEL:** The development of Southern agriculture in the twentieth century is so ripe that it begs for research and analysis. The entire structure changed, and no one has written about how commodities are exchanged (tobacco warehouses, cotton buyers, ginners, or cottonseed crushers, or rice millers, or peanut mills, for example) and how farm routine changed due to mechanization. Nor has the complex role of the federal government been examined, for when it comes to intrusion into daily life, Southerners resent it, but when it comes to redressing race rela-

tions, the role seems quite different. These are just a few of the questions that need to be investigated.

**EDWARD L. AYERS:** A history of the South at the turn of the century that would capture the true complexity of the region and the attempts of the various classes, genders, and races of the region to forge a satisfying life.

**JOHN EGERTON:** I have trouble thinking in such grand terms; perhaps a revisionist state history, or even a city history, or a biography. In spite of some excellent efforts in recent years (e.g., Vincent Harding's *There Is a River* and Harry Ashmore's *Hearts and Minds*), there is still room for more honest books exploring the mysteries of race and class.

---

*What books written in your field in the last ten years would you recommend? List two or three books published prior to 1970 which have stood the test of time.*

Alden, John, *John Stuart and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (New York, 1966).

Ashmore, Harry, *Hearts and Minds: The Anatomy of Racism from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York, 1982).

Blassingame, John W., *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York, 1972).

Campbell, Will, *Brother to a Dragonfly* (New York, 1980).

Carson, Clayborne, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA, 1981).

Cash, Wilbur J., *The Mind of the South* (New York, 1941).

Caudill, Harry, *Night Comes to the Cumberlandlands* (Boston, 1963).

Chafe, William H., *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Equality* (New York, 1980).

Crane, Verner W., *The Southern Frontier* (Durham, NC, 1928).

Douglass, Frederick, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Hartford, CT, 1881).

DuBois, W.E.B., *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York, 1935).

DuBois, W.E.B., *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York, 1903).

Dunbar, Anthony P., *Against the Grain: Southern Radicals and Prophets, 1929-1959* (Charlottesville, VA, 1981).

Dykeman, Wilma, and James Stokely, *Neither Black nor White* (New York, 1957).

Eller, Ronald D., *Miners, Millhands, and Mountaineers: Industrialization of the Appalachian South, 1880-1930* (Knoxville, TN, 1982).

Fields, Mamie Garvin, *Lemon Swamp* (New York, 1983).

Franklin, John Hope, *The Free Negro in*

*North Carolina, 1790-1860* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1943).

Franklin, John Hope, *From Slavery to Freedom* (New York, 1947).

Gaventa, John, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Urbana, IL, 1980).

Genovese, Eugene D., *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1974).

Goodwyn, Lawrence, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (New York, 1977).

Grantham, Dewey W., *Southern Progress-*

*sivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville, TN, 1983).

Hahn, Steven, *The Roots of Southern Populism* (New York, 1983).

Harding, Vincent, *There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York, 1981).

Hobson, Fred, *Tell About the South: The Southern Rage to Explain* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1983).

Holt, Thomas, *Black Over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina During Reconstruction* (Urbana, IL, 1977).

Johnson, Guion Griffis, *Ante-Bellum*



## Running Scared Silver in Mississippi By James W. Silver

The account of the forces leading a fierce opponent of segregation in the Magnolia State to write **Mississippi: The Closed Society** twenty years ago. Here's the rest of the story.

ISBN 0-87805-209-7, \$14.95

---

## Ambivalent Legacy A Legal History of the South

Edited by David J. Bodenhamer and James W. Ely, Jr.

Ten original essays attempting to define southern legal history for the first time as a distinct field.

ISBN 0-87805-210-0, cloth, \$20.00

ISBN 0-87805-211-9, paper, \$8.95

---

## The New Deal and the South

Edited by James C. Cobb and Michael V. Namorato

Six essays offering the first comprehensive treatment of the impact of the Roosevelt recovery program in the South.

ISBN 0-87805-218-6, cloth, \$15.00

ISBN 0-87805-219-4, paper, \$8.95

---

## Race, Reform, and Rebellion

### The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1982

By Manning Marable

A study of divergent elements for political, social, and moral reform in nonwhite America.

ISBN 0-87805-225-9, paper \$9.95



**University Press of Mississippi**

3825 Ridgewood Road/Jackson, MS 39211

North Carolina: A Social History (Chapel Hill, NC, 1937).

Jordan, Winthrop D., *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1968).

Joyner, Charles, *Down by the Riverside* (Urbana, IL, 1984).

Kennedy, Stetson, *Southern Exposure* (Garden City, NY, 1946).

Kluger, Richard, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York, 1977).

Kousser, J. Morgan, *The Shaping of Southern Politics* (New Haven, CT, 1974).

Levine, Lawrence, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York, 1978).

Lewis, Helen M., et al., *Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case* (Boone, NC, 1978).

Mitchell, H. L., *Mean Things Happening in This Land* (Montgomery, AL, 1979).

Owsley, Frank, *Plain Folk of the Old South* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1949).

Rosengarten, Theodore, *All God's Children: The Life of Nate Shaw* (New York, 1974).

Smith, Lillian, *Killers of the Dream* (New York, 1949).

Stampp, Kenneth, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1956).

Thompson, Robert Farris, *Flash of the Spirit* (New York, 1983).

Tindall, George B., *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1967).

Trigger, Bruce, *The Children of Aatensic: A History of the Huron People to 1600* (Montreal, Canada, 1976).

Wiener, Jonathan, *Social Origins of the New South* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1978).

Williams, T. Harry, *Huey Long* (New York, 1969).

Williamson, Joel, *After Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1965).

Wood, Peter H., *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York, 1974).

Woodward, C. Vann, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1960).

Woodward, C. Vann, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1951).

Woodward, C. Vann, *Tom Watson, Agrarian Rebel* (New York, 1938).

Zinn, Howard, *The Southern Mystique* (New York, 1964).

# History from Southern Exposure

Southern Exposure has been publishing liberating history since we began 12 years ago. The following list is a sampling of historical articles that have appeared in this magazine. Most issues are still in print; to order, write us at Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

Ansley, Fran, and Brenda Bell, "Strikes at Davidson and Wilder," *No More Moanin'* (1974).

Ansley, Fran, Brenda Bell, and Florence Reece, "'Little David Blues' and Interview with Tom Lowry," *No More Moanin'* (1974).

Ansley, Fran, and Sue Thrasher, "The Ballad of Barney Graham," *Here Come a Wind* (1976).

Baker, Ella Jo, et al., "Mississippi Movement," *Stayed on Freedom* (1981).

Banks, Ann, "Tobacco Talk [1930s]," *Winter's Promise* (1980).

Beck, Tom, "Building a New World: A Century of Black Labor Photos," *Not No Easy Business* (1983).

Berlin, Ira, et al., "The Moment of Freedom [1865]," *Prevailing Voices* (1982).

Berney, Barbara, "The Rise and Fall of the United Mine Workers Fund," *Sick for Justice* (1978).

Bishop, Bill, et al., "Special Report: Harlan County, 1931-1976," *Here Come a Wind* (1976).

Bishop, Elva, and Katherine Fulton, "Shooting Stars: The Heyday of Industrial Women's Basketball," *Through the Hoop* (1979).

Blackwelder, Julia Kirk, "Letters from the Great Depression," *Passing Glances* (1978).

Blackwell, Gloria, "Notes on the Early Black Press," *Focus on the Media* (1975).

Bolsterli, Margaret, "It Seems to Help Me Bear It Better: A Network of Women Friends in Watson, Arkansas, 1890-91," *Neighbors* (1983).

Braden, Anne, "American Inquisition: The McCurely Case and Repression in the 1960s," *The Meaning of the McCurely Case* (1983).

Braden, Anne, "Lessons from a History of

Struggle [with the KKK], *Mark of the Beast* (1980).

Braden, Anne, "A View from the Fringe" *Stayed on Freedom* (1981).

Brinson, Betsy, "The Shorter Workday," *Working Women* (1981).

Chafe, William, "The Greensboro Sit-Ins," *Passing Glances* (1978).

Clinton, Catherine, "Plantation Mistress: Her Working Life," *We'll Never Quit* (1983).

Cohen, Lucy M., "Early Arrivals: Nineteenth-Century Chinese and Their Descendants," *The Chinese* (1984).

Couto, Richard, "A Place to Call Our Own [the Douglas Community]," *The Future Is Now* (1981).

Dombrowski, James A., et al., "Miners Insurrections," *No More Moanin'* (1974).

Egerton, John, "A Case of Prejudice: Maurice Mays and the Knoxville Race Riot of 1919," *Not No Easy Business* (1983).

Egerton, John, "The Trial of the Highlander Folk School," *Packaging the New South* (1978).

Egerton, John, "Visions of Utopia," *Behind Closed Doors* (1979).

Faherty, Ray, et al., "Labor History Bibliography," *Here Come a Wind* (1976).

Falk, Leslie A., "A Century of Service: Me-harry Medical College," *Sick for Justice* (1978).

Fielding, Lawrence W., "Snowball's Chance [Civil War recreation]," *Through the Hoop* (1979).

Finger, Bill, "Looms, Loans, and Lockouts: Textile Men," *Facing South* (1976).

Forman, James, et al., "Freedom Rides," *Stayed on Freedom* (1981).

Gardner, Tom, "The Montgomery Bus Boycott," *Stayed on Freedom* (1981).

Gilbert, Dee, "Patchwork: Oral Histories of Grandmothers," *The Meaning of the McCurely Case* (1983).

Gleason, Gene, "The Wanderer: From Racing Yacht to Slave Ship," *The Poisoning of Louisiana*, (1984).

Green, Ben, "If We'd Stuck Together [organizing fishers in Florida]," *Coastal Affair* (1982).

Green, Jim, "The Brotherhood [of Timber Workers]," *Here Come a Wind* (1976).

Hackworth, C.B., "'Completing the Job' in Forsyth County: Two Weeks of Terror in 1912," *Winter's Promise* (1980).

Hall, Bob, "Journey to the White House: The Story of Coca-Cola," *Good Times and Growing*



photo courtesy National Cotton Council/Center for Southern Folklore Archives



*Pains* (1977).

Hall, Bob, and Sue Thrasher, "Julian Bond: The Movement, Then and Now," *Facing South* (1976).

Harding, Vincent, "The Challenge of the Children: The Black Freedom Struggle, 1865," *Who Owns Appalachia?* (1982).

Harding, Vincent, "History: White, Negro, and Black," *No More Moanin'* (1974).

Hunter, Tera, "The Correct Thing: Charlotte Hawkins Brown and the Palmer Institute," *The Meaning of the McSurely Case* (1983).

Ingalls, Robert, "The Murder of Joseph Shoemaker," *Mark of the Beast* (1980).

Jemison, Marie Stokes, "Ladies Become Voters: Pattie Ruffner Jacobs and Women's Suffrage in Alabama," *Behind Closed Doors* (1979).

Klores, Daniel, "Out of Bounds: Frank McGuire and Basketball Politics in South Carolina," *Through the Hoop* (1979).

Lawrence, Ken, "Oral History of Slavery," *No More Moanin'* (1974).

Long, Richard A., "Pan-Africanism: A Re-Evaluation," *Southern Black Utterances Today* (1975).

MacLeod, Duncan, "Racing to War: Antebellum Match Races between the North and the South," *Through the Hoop* (1979).

Moody, Robert, "The Lord Selected Me: Pine Bluff, Arkansas, May 29, 1903," *Tower of Babel* (1979).

Murrah, Bill, "Llano Cooperative Colony," *No More Moanin'* (1974).

Neely, Sharlotte, and Walter L. Williams, "Detour Down the Trail of Tears," *Our Promised Land* (1974).

Paulson, Darryl, "Masters of It All: Black Builders in This Century," *Building South* (1980).

Pfaff, Eugene, "Greensboro Sit-Ins," *Stayed on Freedom* (1981).

Pfister, Joe, "Twenty Years and Still Marching: The Albany Movement," *Who Owns Appalachia?* (1982).

Quinney, Valerie, "Three Generations in the Mill: Textile Women," *Facing South* (1976).

Raper, Arthur, "The Legacy of Sharecropping," *Behind Closed Doors* (1979).

Reagon, Bernice, "World War II Reflected in Songs," *No More Moanin'* (1974).

Rogin, Larry, "Labor Education: Uneasy Beginnings," *Here Come a Wind* (1976).

Rosengarten, Theodore, "All God's Dangers," *Our Promised Land* (1974).

Smith, Barbara Ellen, "Too Sick to Work, Too Young to Die: An Oral History of the Black Lung Movement," *Painting South* (1984).

Spier, William, "We Was All Poor Then: The Sub-Economy of a Farming Community 1900-1925," *Our Promised Land* (1974).

Sterling, Dorothy, "To Build a Free Society: Nineteenth-Century Black Women," *The Poisoning of Louisiana* (1984).

Stricklin, David, "Nothing Forced or Fancy: Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys," *Winter's Promise* (1980).

Sullivan, Pat, "Proud Days: Henry Wallace's Campaign for the Presidency," *Elections* (1984).

Terrill, Tom, and Jerrold Hirsch, "Such as Us: The Federal Writers Project," *Packaging the New South* (1978).

Thrasher, Sue, "Country Music, from Hillbilly to Hank Williams," *America's Best Music* (1974).

Thrasher, Sue, and Leah Wise, "The Southern Tenant Farmers Union," *No More Moanin'*

(1974).

Tullos, Allen, "The Great Hookworm Crusade," *Sick for Justice* (1978).

Usner, Daniel H., "Food from Nature: Learning from the Choctaw of the Eighteenth-Century South," *Our Food, Our Common Ground* (1983).

Vlach, John Michael, "Philip Simmons, Charleston Blacksmith," *Who Owns Appalachia?* (1982).

Watriss, Wendy, "Celebrate Freedom: Juneteenth," *Good Times and Growing Pains* (1977).

Weisbord, Vera Buch, "Gastonia 1929: Strike at the Loray Mill," *No More Moanin'* (1974).

Williams, Mike, and Mitch Menzer, "Southern Steel," *The Future Is Now* (1981).

Williams, Robert, "1957: The Swimming Pool Showdown," *Mark of the Beast* (1980).

Wood, Peter, "Beyond the White Columns: Painting in the South, 1564-1980," *Painting South* (1984).

Wood, Peter, "Digging Black History," *Neighbors* (1983).

Wood, Peter, "People's Medicine in the Early South," *Sick for Justice* (1978).

Wood, Peter, "Whetting, Setting and Laying Timbers: Black Builders in the Early South," *Building South* (1980).

Yale, Andrew, "Our Place Was Beale Street," *Passing Glances* (1978).

Young, Charles, "American Inquisition: The Trial of Alan and Margaret McSurely," *The Meaning of the McSurely Case* (1983).

## New Titles in Southern History from The University of Alabama Press

University, Alabama 35486-2877

### James Barbour, A Jeffersonian Republican *Charles D. Lowery*

"Absolutely first-rate. An outstanding biography of an important early-national politician."—Lance Banning, University of Kentucky

### Cannoneers in Gray *Larry J. Daniel*

The Field Artillery of the Army of Tennessee, 1861-1865

"Daniel's discussion is interwoven with larger issues such as command and strategy on the western front, Confederate war production, and other major topics. It is a very good book."—Thomas L. Connelly

### Death at Cross Plains *Gene L. Howard*

An Alabama Reconstruction Tragedy

Reconstruction is a much studied yet little understood epoch; in many areas it was marked by such violence to have been in all but name guerrilla warfare. This is the history of one such clash, and the story of one of its casualties.

now in paperback

### Lower Piedmont Country *H. C. Nixon*

(with a new introduction by Sarah N. Shouse)

"The region that lies in a triangle with its points at Atlanta, Birmingham, and Chattanooga is affectionately and accurately described by Dr. Nixon, who grew up among its hills and valleys, and who has never lost his love for and understanding of the land and its people."—NashvilleBanner

### Attack and Die *Grady McWhiney and Perry D. Jamieson*

Civil War Military Tactics and the Southern Heritage

"Ingeniously conceived, artfully researched, and gracefully executed. Whatever else, it is the best general exposition on Civil War tactics yet to appear."—*Journal of American History*

### Indian Place Names in Alabama *William A. Read*

(revised, and with a new foreword, appendix, and index, by James B. McMillan)

A pioneering toponymic work, as well as a fascinating historical tour of the state.

## Books on the South

This list, which is a regular feature of *Southern Exposure*, consists of books published through 1984. Dissertations appeared in *Dissertation Abstracts in May and July, 1984*. (Those which appeared in June were included in SE, Sept./Oct. 1984.) All dissertations are dated 1983 unless otherwise noted.

The entries are grouped under several broad categories for your convenience. Mention of a book here does not preclude its being reviewed in a future issue. Unsolicited reviews of publications of general Southern interest are welcome, recent works being preferred.

Copies of the dissertations are available from: University Microfilms International, Dissertation Copies, P.O. Box 1764, Ann Arbor, MI 48106; (800) 521-3042.

### HISTORY, POLITICS, AND ECONOMICS — BEFORE 1865

**Abolitionists and Working-Class Problems in the Age of Industrialization**, by Betty Fladeland. LSU Press. \$22.50.

**Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South**, by Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark. Norton. \$22.50.

**Chattanooga — A Death Grip on the Confederacy**, by James Lee McDonough. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$19.95.

"George Bancroft, Slavery, and the American Union," by Edgar Hutchinson Johnson III. Auburn Univ.

"Lee's Tigers: The Louisiana Infantry in the Army of Northern Virginia," by Terry Lyle Jones. Texas A&M Univ.

"Old Age and the Life Course of Slaves: A Case Study of a Nineteenth Century Virginia Plantation," by Janet Campbell Barber. Univ. of Kansas.

"Petty Commodity Production in the Cotton South: Upcountry Farmers in the Georgia Cotton Economy, 1840 to 1860," by David Freeman Weiman. Stanford Univ., 1984.

"Reconstruction through Regeneration: Horace James's Work with the Blacks for Social Reform in North Carolina, 1862-1867," by Stephen Edward Reilly. Duke Univ.

"Religion in the Quarters: A Study of Slave Preachers in the Ante-Bellum South, 1800-1860," by David Charles Dennard. Northwestern Univ.

"The Society of Friends in Indiana during the Civil War," by Jacquelyn Sue Nelson. Ball State Univ., 1984.

"The Spanish Conspiracy, 1783-1792: A Quest for Equality," by Judith O'Hare Smith. UC-San Diego.

"Strangers in the Land: The Southern Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South," by Kenneth Moore Startup. LSU.

**Victims: A True Story of the Civil War**, by Philip Shaw Paludan. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$11.95/5.95.

### HISTORY, POLITICS, AND ECONOMICS — 1865-1984

"An Analysis of the Wealth Effects of Property Tax Reform [in Texas]," by Charles Edward Gilliland. Texas A&M Univ.

"Assessing White-Collar Bias: A Study of Public Perceptions of Criminal Seriousness [in North Carolina]," by Susan Sybil Carley. Univ. of Georgia.

"Blacks in American History Textbooks: A Study of Selected Themes in Post-1900 College Level Surveys," by Reavis Lee Mitchell. Middle Tennessee State Univ.

"The Deterrent Effect of Criminal Sanctions on Homicide: Florida's Experience," by Watcharapol Prasarnrajkit. Florida State Univ.

**The Eastern Band of Cherokees, 1819-1900**, by John R. Finger. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$24.95/12.50.

**The Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights**, by Robert F. Burk. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$24.95.

"From Quarters to Castle: Home Ownership among Black, Sugar Cane Plantation Families," by Julia Burkhart. Texas Woman's Univ.

"A History of Louisiana's Rural Electric Cooperatives, 1937-1983," by Gary Alan Donaldson. LSU.

"Minority Business Enterprise: A Case Study of Korean Small Business in Atlanta," by Pyong Gap Min. Georgia State Univ.

**Mississippi Black History Makers**, by George Alexander Sewell and Margaret L. Dwight. Rev. ed. Univ. Press of Mississippi. \$25.00/14.95.

**Race, Reform and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1982**, by Manning Marable. Univ. Press of Mississippi. n.p.

**Rebuilding the Pulp and Paper Workers' Union, 1933-1941**, by Robert H. Zieger. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$19.95.

"The Refinement of Racial Segregation in Florida After the Civil War," by Wali Rasbash Kharif. Florida State Univ.

"The Socialization of Women into Politics: A Case Study of the League of Women Voters [in Florida]," by Evelyn Jean Davis. Florida State Univ.

"The Southern Homestead Act," by Michael Lawrence Lanza. Univ. of Chicago, 1984.

**Southern Politics in State and Nation**, by V.O. Key. New ed. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$29.95/14.95.

**Southern Progressivism: The Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition**, by Dewey W. Grantham. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$34.95/16.95.

**Twentieth-Century Richmond: Planning, Politics, and Race**, by Christopher Silver. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$29.95/14.95.

### LITERATURE

"The Black Novelist and the Expatriate Experience: Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Chester Himes," by Jacquelyn Logan Jackson. Univ. of Kentucky.

"The Burden of the Past in the Major and Minor Plays of Tennessee Williams," by William Robert Bray. Univ. of Mississippi.

"Eudora Welty's Aesthetic Principle: The Mind of the Artist," by Anne Carman. Univ. of Missouri.

"Faulkner's Theory of Relativity: Relative Clauses in *Absalom, Absalom!*" by Karen McFarland Canine. UNC-Greensboro.

"The Habit of Becoming: Some French Influences on the Aesthetic of Flannery O'Connor," by Linda Diane Schlafer. Northern Illinois Univ.

"Harry Crews: The Atmosphere of Failure," by Emmitt Wade Austin. Middle Tennessee State Univ.

"*La Prensa* of San Antonio and Its Literary Page, 1913 to 1915," by Onofre Di Stefano. UCLA.

"Mark Twain and the Tall Tale Imagination in Nineteenth Century America," by James Edward Curron. Univ. of Oregon.

"The Peculiar Sisterhood: Black and White Women of the Old South in American Literature," by Min-

rose Clayton Gwin. Univ. of Tennessee.

### BIOGRAPHY

"Carter G. Woodson and the Movement to Promote Black History," by Jacqueline Anne Goggin. Univ. of Rochester, 1984.

"George Fort Milton: The Fight for TVA and the Loss of the Chattanooga News," by George Arnold Miller. Middle Tennessee State Univ.

**John A. Quitman, Old South Crusader**, by Robert E. May. LSU Press, 1985. \$40.00/19.95.

"Scalawag Congressman: Charles Hays and Reconstruction in Alabama," by William Warren Rogers. Auburn Univ.

### EDUCATION

"An Analysis of State Equalization Aid Funded to the Texas Public Schools," by Frederick William Schubert. Texas A&M Univ.

**The Burden of Brown: Thirty Years of School Desegregation**, by Raymond Wolters. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$24.95.

"Higher Education, the State, and the Politics of Administration in Mississippi," by Eugene Welch Hickok, Jr. Univ. of Virginia.

"A Study of Methodist Higher Education in Texas," by Samuel Marvin Crossley. North Texas State Univ.

"A Study of Revenues for Public Schools in Louisiana," by Robert Wayne Strain. LSU.

**To Foster Knowledge: A History of the University of Tennessee, 1794-1970**, by James Riley Montgomery, Stanley J. Folmsbee, and Lee Seifert Greene. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$24.95.

### CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

**An Asian Anthropologist in the South: Field Experiences with Blacks, Indians, and Whites**, by Choong Soon Kim. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$12.50/5.95.

**The Black Spiritual Movement: A Religious Response to Racism**, by Hans A. Baer. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$18.95.

**Hollybush: Folk Building and Social Change in an Appalachian Community**, by Charles E. Martin. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$14.95.

"A Study of the Architecture of Augusta, Georgia, 1735-1860," by Linda Ellen Peters. Univ. of Georgia.

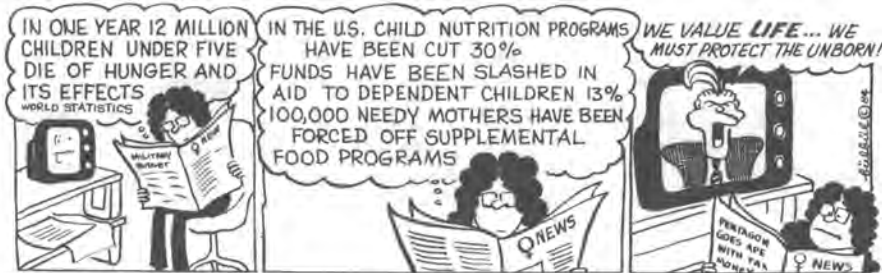
"Tangled Vines: Ideological Interpretations of Afro-Americans in the Nineteenth Century," by Gayle T. Tate. City Univ. of New York, 1984.

**The Traditional Pottery of Alabama**, by the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts. Univ. of Tennessee Press. \$7.95.

"Upward Mobility: A Historical Narrative: The John W. Jacobs Story," by Rosalyn Jacobs Jones. Middle Tennessee State Univ.

"Voices from the Heartland: A Cultural History of the Blues," by William Brook Barlow. UC-Santa Cruz.

# SOUTHERN NEWS ROUNDUP



## Terrorist attacks on abortion clinics

— by Ingrid Canright

Women visiting health clinics for advice, birth control, and abortions face abuse and attacks as anti-abortion activity becomes increasingly violent. Pro-choice clinics and their staff, formerly the objects of picketing and verbal harassment, are now the objects of death threats, firebombs, machine-gun fire, and dynamite. Once every two to three days an abortion clinic is attacked in the U.S., according to the National Abortion Federation (NAF).

The number of violent attacks against abortion clinics nationwide has more than doubled this year over last with as many as 150 incidents being reported by late fall, by some accounts. Both national and local coalitions of pro-choice groups are organizing in response to the attacks.

Abortion rights activists are working to convince the Reagan administration to come out publicly against the attacks. And in Washington, the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) is trying to get the Justice Department to define recent anti-abortion violence as terrorism in an attempt to dampen the ire of extremists who believe they've been given free rein by the administration.

Spokespersons for the clinics overwhelmingly echo the words of one of their colleagues who charges that President Reagan's policies "fan the flames of anti-abortion extremism rather than protect the rights of those performing a legal medical procedure."

In the South, attacks have been most numerous in the states of Texas and Florida. There have been five acts of

arson and bombing in Houston this year. The Ladies' First Choice Medical Group in Pembroke Pines, Florida was machine-gunned, and the Ladies' Center in Pensacola was dynamited.

Pro-choice clinics in the Washington, DC area have also been subjected to repeated attacks, often of the same nature and only days, or minutes, apart. On November 19, arson destroyed the Metro Medical Women's Center in Wheaton, Maryland; 15 minutes later, and only a mile away, an explosion damaged a Washington Planned Parenthood Clinic.

"The violence is encouraged by Reagan's statement that terrorism abroad will not be tolerated while he ignores the terrorism going on in this country," says NAF director Barbara Radford. Requests for a White House statement on the attacks on abortion clinics have received no response. "The political climate in the country today is particularly tolerant of [right-wing] lawlessness. We [NAF] have been collecting data on anti-abortion violence since '77. The numbers have been rising since then, but the dramatic increase came at the beginning of this year," said Radford.

"President Reagan sees terrorism as strictly a left-wing activity," concurs Marilyn Butler, the director of North Carolina's NARAL. "He has not addressed anti-abortion violence as terrorism. In fact, he hasn't addressed it at all!"

Pam Slayback of the Georgia Abortion Rights Action League says the attacks actually boost local support for the clinics. "The violence has had an overall positive effect on morale," says Slayback. "It's been a great politicizing tool. [Staff and clients] do feel victimized at first; but they get mad. We get memberships from women who were never political, but who get angry trying to walk into the clinic past the abusive picketers."

## South tops nation in unemployment

— by Carter Garber

The three states with the highest unemployment rates in the nation are in the South, according to a Southern Neighborhoods Network report compiled from the August findings of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. They are West Virginia at 13.6 percent, Mississippi at 11.1 percent, and Alabama at 10.9 percent. Michigan, with 10.3 percent, was the only non-Southern state with double-digit unemployment.

Louisiana had the fourth highest ranking in the South with 9.3 percent unemployment. This was followed by three states grouped closely in ranking: Tennessee with 8.8 percent, Kentucky with 8.7 percent, and Arkansas with 8.3 percent. The remaining Southern states fell below the national unemployment rate of 7.3 percent.

When the Bureau of Labor Statistics released its figures on the first Friday in November, groups in four Southern states joined with activists in more than 25 cities around the country to protest the continuing high unemployment and provide their own analysis.

The Southern protesters stated that the real national unemployment rate is 13.1 percent, rather than 7.3 percent. They figured this by adding into the formula those people officially listed by the bureau as discouraged at not finding work (1.2 million) and those working part-time because they could not find full-time jobs (5.5 million).

August's unemployment rates represent a decrease over July's rates for every Southern state except for Mississippi, which now has the highest unemployment in the deep South. Mississippi's recent rise in unemployment — almost double that of the 1979 level — is due to the strong dollar which makes foreign-made goods more attractive. This has particularly hurt apparel, textile, and lumber industries.

The same is true for the entire region,



where the rate of growth in unemployment during the recent recession was twice that for the country as a whole. The slow rate of recovery has not reversed this in the Southern states and for particular population groups in the nation the trend is no more encouraging. The disparity between black and white rates has increased, as has the disparity between rich and poor.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics on November 2 reported that the latest national unemployment rate for blacks is 15.4 percent, while 40.2 percent of black youth are unemployed. This black unemployment is significantly higher than when the Reagan term began (14.4 percent in January 1981). The unemployment rate for whites is just now dipping below where it was four years ago (6.4 percent in October 1984, compared with 6.7 percent in January 1981).

To draw attention to the high unemployment rates in the South, groups across the region have organized a protest campaign for the first Friday of every month when the Bureau of Labor Statistics releases its monthly unemployment reports.

In September, groups in four Southern states responded to the bureau's figures. In Atlanta, regional and statewide groups

held a press conference just down the street from the bureau's offices. In Alabama, a protest by the Greater Birmingham Unemployed Committee was held outside the local unemployment office. In Robeson County, the North Carolina Fair Employment Project released a detailed report of its own, showing the local level of under-employment and poverty. And the Tennessee Hunger Coalition joined with tenant leaders and held a press conference in Nashville focusing on black unemployment.

The Southern protests are part of a national campaign by groups including the Center for Community Change, Full Employment Action Coalition, Rural Coalition, and Children's Defense Fund. The national effort was modeled on a 1983 effort by Southern Neighborhoods Network and 10 Tennessee statewide groups.

*Carter Garber is the coordinator of Southern Neighborhoods Network, which has published materials on unemployment and done economic training and consulting for community organizations around the region. For a publication list and further assistance, write SNN, 2406A Albion St., Nashville, TN 37208.*

## SC reapportionment battles won't stop

— by Howard Schneider

HOPEs for a more fully integrated South Carolina Senate dwindled this fall when a court-approved reapportionment plan sent only four blacks to the state's upper chamber.

The plan, approved by a three-judge federal panel this summer, carved the Senate into 46 single-member districts, 10 with black majorities. However, during a special primary election held on October 2, white incumbents held onto their seats in six of those spots.

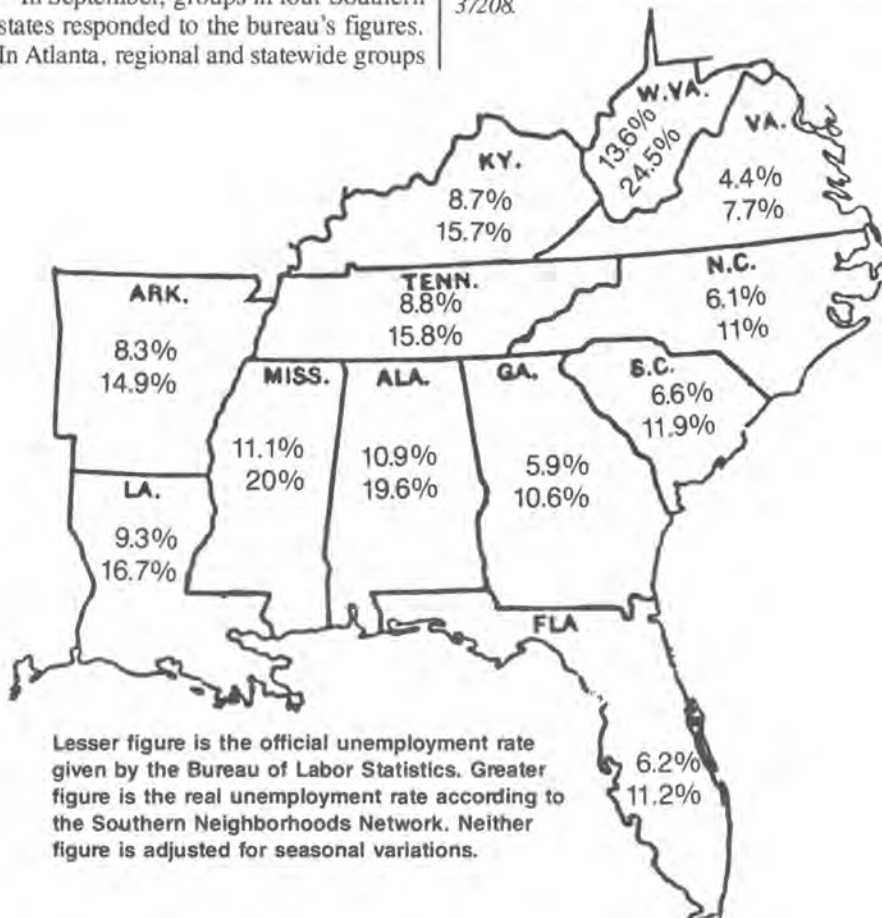
While the four blacks who were nominated went on to win the general election, the result nevertheless reflected serious division within the Democratic Party and the black community, and prompted the threat of federal litigation.

"New litigation will charge that the recently enacted and court-ordered redistricting plan for the South Carolina Senate is, in fact and in effect, racially discriminatory . . . and dilutes minority voting strength," proclaimed Lenny Springs, chairman of the state NAACP's legal redress committee. There are 948,000 blacks in South Carolina, representing some 30 percent of the population.

The election outcome, while discouraging from the standpoint of black political participation, did not come as a surprise. State NAACP president William Gibson contended during the fight over Senate reapportionment that the plan wasn't going to produce anywhere near 10 black senators, despite the existence of 10 majority-black districts.

The primary results were no less controversial for having been predictable. The state Senate, which was the last one in the South to settle reapportionment of its legislature following the 1980 census, also avoided the switch to single member districts in the 1970s through shrewd legal maneuvering. Consequently, the chamber remained all white until last year when long-time civil rights leader I. DeQuincey Newman was elected in a special election. Newman thus became the first black elected state senator since 1890.

Divisions within the state Democratic Party surfaced when blacks charged Democratic officials with manipulating



Lesser figure is the official unemployment rate given by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Greater figure is the real unemployment rate according to the Southern Neighborhoods Network. Neither figure is adjusted for seasonal variations.

the primary in favor of white incumbents. But criticism was not limited to white party leaders alone. NAACP's Gibson also blasted the willingness of other black candidates — particularly those interested in running for the Senate seats — to compromise during the reapportionment process.

"We had a lot of people running who were so anxious to make a run, regardless of the necessity of getting districts in a winnable position, that they gave aid and comfort to those who didn't want them to have winnable districts," Gibson said.

As a result, racial division continues to plague the state Democratic Party, while the threat of an NAACP court suit threatens to keep reapportionment in the limelight.

## Florida citrus canker: politics vs. agriculture

Since the discovery of citrus canker in Ward's Nursery in southern Polk County on August 24th, more than 2,272,000 trees in Florida's citrus groves have been destroyed in an effort to prevent the spread of the highly virulent disease.

With the canker threatening to destroy the entire 760,000-acre crop by causing defoliation and premature dropping, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) responded by ordering a quarantine and inspection program, bringing the Florida industry to an abrupt halt.

Economic analysts are already predicting that the \$2.5 billion citrus industry will take 10 years to recover from this latest disaster and the cumulative effects of a series of problems over the last five years which have cut the state's orange production almost in half. Freezes have devastated the state's crops for three of the past four years. Florida's farmers have also had to switch to expensive pesticides as the more commonly used ethylene dibromide and Temik were banned last year following public outcry against their harmful effects.

This latest destruction of the Florida fruit crop highlights the dangerous practice of planting vast acreages of seed with so little range of genetic diversity. The frozen and canned orange and grapefruit

juice industry accounts for more than 90 percent of Florida's citrus production. The USDA, which is almost solely responsible for citrus breeding, has concentrated on producing fruit which meets processors' demands for low water content fruit, rather than on developing disease-resistant strains. This practice, typical of Green Revolution agriculture, leaves entire harvests vulnerable to disease. According to the Rural Advancement Fund's International Genetic Resources Programme (IGRP), 87 percent of Florida's commercial orange crop this year was planted in just three varieties: Valencia, Hamlin, and Pineapple



orange; while almost two-thirds of the state's grapefruit come from one strain, the Marsh variety.

Elaine Chiosso, a spokesperson for the IGRP says, "The USDA hasn't even talked about the problem of gene diversity in the crop. They haven't recognized that resistance to disease and genetic diversity go hand-in-hand." The IGRP, which is working to rescue and retrieve endangered germ plasm, has found international politics to be a major stumbling block to their efforts. "The place to search for orange varieties with genetic resistance to citrus canker is in South China, where the fruit and this disease have been co-evolving for thousands of years," the IGRP said in an October announcement designed to draw attention to the problem of monocropping.

Such a search had indeed been planned by the USDA for this November, when a second meeting between Chinese and American citrus growers was to have

taken place in the People's Republic of China as a follow-up to a similar meeting held in Orlando, Florida, in 1983. But the embryonic exchange program was brought to a halt by the USDA late last year, apparently in retaliation for China's decision not to purchase from the U.S. all of the six billion tons of wheat it had previously agreed to. Although a recent report in the *Wall Street Journal* indicates that China's record breaking soybean and corn crops have left them with a surplus of these commodities, U.S. officials have interpreted China's failure to meet its commitment to buy 8.2 million metric tons of wheat and corn from the U.S. this

year — 2.2 million more tons to fulfill this year's obligation, and 2.2 million tons to make up for last year — as a response to the failed negotiations to increase Chinese textile exports to the U.S.

"As a result of this political poker game," the IGRP asserts, "further talks and exchanges between U.S. and Chinese scientists on citrus germ plasm have come to a halt."

Meanwhile, in Polk County, where unemployment is already at 11.5 percent, due to fruit crop reduction, fruit growers are locking their gates, burning their trees, and spraying their workers with disinfectant in a desperate attempt to prevent the spread of the dreaded citrus canker.

*The International Genetic Resources Programme publishes a newsletter four to six times a year to help you stay informed of important information and events pertaining to both plant and animal genetic resources. Write to IGRP REPORT, P.O. Box 1029, Pittsboro, NC 27312.*

## MS town "beautifies" at expense of blacks

— by Joseph Delaney

Tunica, Mississippi, has received more than \$1 million dollars in federal money for neighborhood development, but won't spend one dime in the worst area of town, according to officials of the National Association of Health Services Executives (NAHSE) who represent several hundred black health professionals.

"We are writing to express our shock, dismay, and concern about the fact that revenue sharing money, as well as other federal funds, are being expended for purposes other than intended by Congress," NAHSE officials wrote in an October letter to Rep. Don Edwards, chairman of the Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights in Washington. The letter requests that the committee conduct a broad-based civil rights investigation into the allocation and distribution of funds which have been awarded to the town and county of Tunica. NAHSE contends that federal money will be spent on beautifying the main street of Tunica at the expense of the town's black residents, who live in desperate poverty along the so-called "Sugar Ditch." The county of Tunica is 73 percent black and the poorest county in the nation.

It is reported that the federally funded beautification project includes plans to brick-up those spaces between buildings on the main thoroughfare to keep the poverty of the Sugar Ditch area out of sight. Meanwhile, there are no current plans to eradicate the health threat emanating from the ditch.

Sugar Ditch alley is a collection of almost 50 shanty-type dwellings located behind Tunica's main street. The majority of the houses in the alley have no indoor bathrooms and 10 have outdoor privies. The majority of the black townspeople deposit their waste products into nearby "Sugar Ditch," from which the alley derives its popular name. The ditch is roughly 20 feet by 10 feet and is within inches of the nearest house.

Compounding the health problems which result from the lack of sanitary facilities, is the alleged practice by Tunica County Hospital officials of turn-

ing black residents away from the emergency room. Many of those who are turned away go without medical attention because they are unable to travel the 30 miles to Tennessee's City of Memphis Hospital. A complaint has been filed against the Tunica hospital with the Office of Civil Rights of the Department of Health and Human Services asking that an intensive on-site investigation be conducted into the allegations of racial discrimination in Tunica.

Sugar Ditch residents, meanwhile, are faced with an eviction problem following a recent decision by city officials to condemn their houses.

## Gulf Coast tenants begin to fight back

— by Richard Boyd

Marrero, Louisiana, public housing tenants confounded the skeptics and walked across the Greater New Orleans Mississippi River Bridge on October 29, bringing their grievances to the doorstep of the regional office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The event marked the first time in the awesome span's 26-year history that it was the centerpiece for political protest. The bridge walk, pulled off by 114 members of the Marrero Tenant Organization (MTO), of Jefferson Parish is seen by tenant organizers as a powerful symbol to mobilize long-passive residents of the 90,000-unit housing projects in nearby New Orleans. It climaxed a three-day march for "Housing and Peace" organized by the Marrero tenants, who live in the Acre Road Housing Project.

The march protested Reagan administration policies which call for demolishing some public housing projects and selling others to private developers.

In the eight months before the march, the MTO, with assistance from the Gulf Coast Tenant Leadership Development Project and veteran organizer Pat Bryant, won a number of victories, including:

- crashing two secret meetings between HUD officials and members of the Jefferson Parish Housing Authority;
- winning a decision by state judges in Jefferson Parish and New Orleans after the tenants sued to force an end to the

secret meetings; a Jefferson judge even threw out a counter-suit which sought an injunction to bar the tenants from interfering with the housing authority;

- forcing the resignation of Jefferson Housing Authority Executive Director Joseph Werner, whom tenants claimed they rarely saw and could never find;

- prodding HUD officials from the New Orleans offices out to the Marrero project for a stormy three-hour meeting which led to a HUD review of the Jefferson Parish Housing Authority; released in August, the review revealed 39 major deficiencies in the operations by past and present Housing Authority members;

- obtaining a commitment from HUD Regional Director Richard Franco to try to obtain federal rebates of some \$2 million which the Marrero tenants have been overcharged for utilities since 1980;

- receiving a confession from HUD that since 1980 it has been woefully remiss in not forcing the Jefferson Housing Authority to adopt a required utility allowance for the Acre Road Project.

"We have just begun to fight," says Rosemary Smith, president of the MTO. "We see 1985 as the year to force, either through the courts or with negotiations with HUD, a rebate of the \$2 million in utility overcharges and the rebate for the illegal rodent charge, a figure we haven't even computed yet."

In 1985 the tenants will also keep up the pressure to get MTO members named to the Housing Authority. "That will constitute the major fight," says MTO secretary Patricia Landry. "This is still a male authority. They don't think black women can run a housing authority or a project, but Rose Smith and I know HUD regulations now better than they do."

### SEEN ANY GOOD NEWS?

There's no reason to let us be the ones who sift through the press to choose the material to include in the Southern News Roundup. If you see a feature article in your local newspaper or a magazine that sheds light on what progressive Southerners are doing — or are up against — send it to us. Send the complete article, date and name of publication (with its address if possible) along with your name and address, and whatever additional comments or interpretations you care to include, to: Southern News Roundup, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.



# BULLETIN BOARD OF THE SOUTH

## Announcements

### Reparations

Black Reparations are your due. Act now! For more information send SASE to: African National Reparations Organization, 1330 North Bond Street, Baltimore, MD 21213; (301) 563-1533.

### Stop Paying for Executions!

Send stamped envelope to: Penny Resistance, 8319 Fulham Court, Richmond, VA 23227.

### Authors!

Need an aggressive Literary Agent? High rate of success over the past 10 years! Write the Peter Miller Agency, Inc., 1021 Avenue of the Americas, NYC, NY 10018 and receive a free copy of our information pamphlet.

### Rural Network Project Launched

The Rural Southern Voice for

Peace (RSVP) has announced the launching of a year-long project this fall to respond to special difficulties faced by people working on peace, justice, and other progressive social change issues in small isolated Southeastern communities. For more information about the project and RSVP write: RSVP/RNP, Rt. 5, Box 335, Burnsville, NC 28714, or call (704) 675-4626.

### Join the Harvest

Volunteer work brigades leaving for Nicaragua from November to March to help with coffee and cotton harvests. Two (2) weeks or one month period. Approximate cost \$700 from Miami, FL (one month). To apply, contact: Nicaragua Exchange, 239 Centre Street, New York, NY; (212) 219-8620.

## Jobs

### Director Sought

The Institute for Southern Studies, publisher of *Southern Exposure*, is seeking a Director. Qualifications include: successful fundraising and administrative experience in a progressive organization, writing and speaking skills, and knowledge of the South. \$11,000 plus benefits. Write/call Search Committee for job description. P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702; (919) 688-8167.

## Merchandise

### Note Cards

*Southern Exposure* announces, in time for this card sending/giving season, a new series of greeting cards. Handsomely designed for us by renowned artist Peg Rigg, each 12-card set features quotes from the pages of *Southern Exposure*. The three designs are printed in color ink on quality paper. Packages of 12 cards and envelopes (four of each design) are only \$4.50. Write to us at: P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702; (919) 688-8167.

### Viva La Causa

Send a message that shows you care on Triangle Friends of the United Farm Workers foldover note cards with four original designs by

Durham artist Grace Richardson Igelhart! To order a package of 12 cards (3 of each design) printed on heavy stock with envelopes, send \$6.00 ppd. to: TFUFW, 2722 McDowell Street, Durham, NC 27705.

### Posters/Calendars & More

"Sistersongs of Liberation" poster by Jane Norling, "Can't Kill the Spirit" 1985 Peace Calendar, Brenda Mayer's "Fruitfulness" poster are just a few items available from the Syracuse Cultural Workers Project. For a complete catalogue write: Syracuse Cultural Workers Project, Box 6367, Syracuse, NY 13217.

## Publications

### Rainbow Politics

Special issue of *Radical America*, radical history journal, now in 18th year, 128 pages on Mel King campaign in Boston and black electoral movement. \$5 postpaid. Back issues on Environment, Feminism, Labor. Subs \$15/year for 5 issues. Sample: \$2. Write: 38 Union Square, Box S, Somerville, MA 02143.

### Magazine for Homesteaders!

Covers: gardening, small stock, bees, and much, much more. Free information. Write: Farming Uncle, Box 91E96, Liberty, NY 12754.

| U.S. Postal Service<br>STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION<br><small>Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685</small>  |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 1A. TITLE OF PUBLICATION<br>SOUTHERN EXPOSURE   | 1B. PUBLICATION NO.<br>0 1 4 6 8 0 9 V  | 2. DATE OF FILING<br>9-28-84                                       |
| 3. FREQUENCY OF ISSUE<br>BIMONTHLY  | 3A. NO. OF ISSUES PUBLISHED ANNUALLY<br>6   | 3B. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION PRICE<br>\$16.00                           |
| 4. COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF KNOWN OFFICE OF PUBLICATION (Street, City, County, State and ZIP Code) (Not printers)  |   |  |
| 604 West Chapel Hill Street, Durham NC 27701  |   |  |
| 5. COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF THE HEADQUARTERS OF GENERAL BUSINESS OFFICES OF THE PUBLISHER (Not printers)   |   |  |
| Same as Above   |   |  |
| 6. FULL NAMES AND COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF PUBLISHER, EDITOR, AND MANAGING EDITOR (This item MUST NOT be blank)  |   |  |
| PUBLISHER (Name and Complete Mailing Address)   |   |  |
| INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHERN STUDIES  |   |  |
| EDITOR (Name and Complete Mailing Address)  |   |  |
| BOB HALL  |   |  |
| MANAGING EDITOR (Name and Complete Mailing Address)   |   |  |
| 7. OWNER (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual must be given. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, its name and address must be stated.) (Item must be completed.) |   |  |
| FULL NAME   |   |  |
| Institute for Southern Studies  |   |  |
| a non-profit 501(c) (3)   |   |  |
| COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS  |   |  |
| 604 W Chapel Hill St  |   |  |
| Durham NC 27701   |   |  |
| 8. KNOWN BONDHOLDERS, MORTGAGEES, AND OTHER SECURITY HOLDERS OWNING OR HOLDING 1 PERCENT OR MORE OF TOTAL AMOUNT OF BONDS, MORTGAGES OR OTHER SECURITIES (If there are none, so state)  |   |  |
| FULL NAME   |   |  |
| COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS  |   |  |
| 9. FOR COMPLETION BY NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AUTHORIZED TO MAIL AT SPECIAL RATES (Section 4212 DMM only)<br><small>The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes (Check one)</small>   |   |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (1) HAS NOT CHANGED DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (2) HAS CHANGED DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS (If changed, publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement.)  |   |  |
| 10. EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION  | AVERAGE NO. COPIES EACH ISSUE DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS                            | ACTUAL NO. COPIES OF SINGLE ISSUE PUBLISHED NEAREST TO FILING DATE |
| A. TOTAL NO. COPIES (Net Press Run)   | 8169  | 8318   |
| B. PAID CIRCULATION   |   |  |
| 1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales   | 3146  | 1624   |
| 2. Mail Subscriptions   | 4440  | 4447   |
| C. TOTAL PAID CIRCULATION (Sum of B1 and B2)  | 7586  | 6071   |
| D. FREE DISTRIBUTION BY MAIL, CARRIER OR OTHER MEANS SAMPLES, COMPLIMENTARY, AND OTHER FREE COPIES  | 150   | 205  |
| E. TOTAL DISTRIBUTION (Sum of C and D)  | 7736  | 6276   |
| F. COPIES NOT DISTRIBUTED   |   |  |
| 1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing   | 253   | 2010   |
| 2. Return from News Agents  | 160   | 32   |
| G. TOTAL (Sum of E, F1 and F2 - should equal net press run shown in A)  | 8149  | 8318   |
| 11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete   | SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF EDITOR, PUBLISHER, BUSINESS MANAGER, OR OWNER                |  |
|   |  |  |

## Reach Out to 20,000 Southerners and their neighbors for as little as 20 cents a word in *Bulletin Board of the South*.

Now you can reach more than 20,000 readers — chiefly in 13 Southern states — with your announcements, messages of upcoming events, merchandise, job openings, and other items of importance.

### Bulletin Board Rates

30 cents/word 1 insertion  
25 cents/word 2-3 insertions  
20 cents/word 4-6 insertions  
Letter groups (acronyms) and number groups (dates, addresses, zip codes, and prices) count as one word.

A bold face heading of up to 4 words is used in all classifieds at no additional charge. Additional bold face words in title or within copy are 50 cents/word.

### Closing Dates

*Southern Exposure* is published six times a year. Copy is due six weeks prior to issue date. Cancellations are not accepted after closing dates. Closing dates are Jan. 15, Mar. 15, May 15, July 15, Sept. 15, and Nov. 15.

Payment must accompany order. Send check and copy to: **Bulletin Board**, *Southern Exposure*, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

## The expulsion of the Jews from Thomasville, Georgia

— Louis Schmier

On August 30, 1862, a group of frightened citizens met at the courthouse square in Thomasville, Georgia. They had gathered to take action against Jews living and peddling in the area, who they believed had “no abiding interest or fraternity with us . . . who are not identified, in the strictest sense, with the permanent interests of our soil and institutions.” Convinced the Jews could not have any “feeling common with the Confederacy,” these citizens were ready to blame them for rising prices and a scarcity of commodities caused by a Union naval blockade and an inadequate industrial base. They resolved that itinerant Jewish peddlers and the three resident Jewish families were responsible for their economic plight. The citizens of Thomasville were determined to show no quarter to extortioners who would through “exorbitant and ruinous price” and without conscience reduce families to “intolerable want.” They passed a series of resolutions by which resident Jews were given 10 days notice of expulsion, Jewish peddlers were prohibited from entering Thomas County, and a Committee of Vigilance was appointed to enforce the resolutions.

The attack on the loyalty to the Confederacy of Jews struck a sensitive nerve among Jewish soldiers in various units stationed around Savannah. Their responses echoed a common theme among Jews in many countries: a desire to be full citizens of the nation in which they live, while maintaining their religion. Those in the Tamall Guards wrote a fiery letter to the Savannah Republican:

The resolutions adopted by that meeting, couched as they are in the language of unqualified and indiscriminate proscription, and striking as they do at the honesty, integrity, and patriotism and loyalty of the community, betray in illiberality of sentiment, a hostility of feeling and bitterness of prejudice, strangely at variance with the precepts of religion, and which we had scarcely expected even from our worst revilers. . . . An urgent and imperative sense of duty to ourselves, and our own character as a constituent portion of a much injured and unjustly proscribed class, constrains us to enter . . . our earnest and indignant protest against this unfounded and unwarrantable attack upon the resident German Jews of the Confederacy. . . . Once sanction such a precedent as these Thomasville resolutions would introduce — establish the principle that an entire class in the community, however free the great majority of them may be from all complicity with the guilty few, must nevertheless by an arbitrary edict be compelled to share their ignominy — and you inaugurate a system of proscription and ostracism, from which humanity shrinks back with horror, and which would speedily tend to undermine and overthrow all the foundations of society. . . .

*The Jews of the 32nd Regiment of Georgia Volunteers heard Private Charles Wessolowsky express similar sentiments, but he went further:*

Let us look at the gentlemen from Thomasville who claim nativity to Thomas County, and are entitled to citizenship of their village, and see if they themselves don't partake of this extortion. Behold them coming to market, the one with fowls and the other with eggs; ask their price, and “two dollars for a pair of chickens and 70 cents for a dozen eggs,” will be the reply. . . . What is the cause of those high prices? Is it the scarcity of the articles, originated by our blockaded ports? Does it take more labor, expense, and time now to raise those articles than usual? Or is it their zeal and patriotism towards their country in elevating the suffering of the sick and dying soldiers in hospitals? . . . Only the love for money, and the knowledge that necessity compels us to buy the same, is the sole cause of this extortion! . . . If you ask the gentlemen of Thomasville who are the extortioners, they will push the whole of the crime upon the German Jews and clear their own skirts by asserting their nativity.

*Wessolowsky's listeners then adopted a resolution he had helped draw up earlier:*

Whereas, We have read with astonishment and surprise the proceedings of a meeting . . . wherein German Jews and foreigners were denounced in unmeasurable terms — the former accused of all faults and vices of human society, and the latter even held as unfit for train hands, etc., etc.: Be it therefore

*Resolved*, That we esteem the members of the meeting held on that day at Thomasville with contempt, and deem the motive of the same based only upon selfishness and envy.

*Resolved*, That we advise all German Jews and foreigners henceforth to cut off all communication and friendly ties between them, and be separated for the future, as we deem them unworthy of the same.

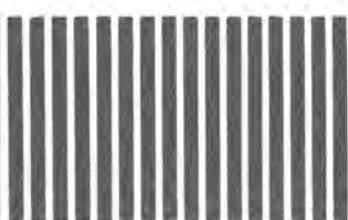
*Resolved*, That we regard the resolutions adopted at that meeting in Thomasville as unbecoming and unworthy of gentlemen.

*And be it further resolved*, That the Savannah Republican, and all other papers in our State which are opposed to such foul slander, be requested to publish the above. □

*This article is adapted from two articles by Louis Schmier: “Notes and Documents on the 1892 Expulsion of Jews from Thomasville, Georgia” in American Jewish Archives, April 1980; and “An Act Unbecoming” in Civil War Times Illustrated, October 1984.*

*At Southern Exposure we listen to the voices of many people for guidance and inspiration. We want to recapture the indomitable spirit of those in the past who have spoken for human dignity, for egalitarianism, and for collective social action. We welcome submissions from our readers for this feature. Send ideas to: Voices From the Past, Southern Exposure, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.*

NO POSTAGE  
NECESSARY  
IF MAILED  
IN THE  
UNITED STATES



**BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**

FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 938 DURHAM, N.C.

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

**Southern  
Exposure**

P.O. BOX 531  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA 27702

## Southern History From A Different Perspective

For a view of Southern history "from the bottom up," order these issues and books for yourself, your students, and your friends. Put the quantity desired inside the appropriate box. And take advantage of the discount to order several as gifts!

- No More Moanin'/\$4     Mark of the Beast/\$4  
 Here Come a Wind/\$4     Social History Set/\$6  
 Our Promised Land/\$4     Stayed on Freedom/\$4  
 Working Lives/\$6  
 Speaking for Ourselves/\$9  
 Growing Up Southern/\$6

Additional copies of *Liberating Our Past*/\$4 each

25% discount if your order for the items above is \$10 or more

40% discount if you are an Institute Sustainer

**One-year *Southern Exposure* subscription (6 issues)/\$16**

Total Due \$ \_\_\_\_\_  Payment enclosed     Bill me

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_



# Southern History From A Different Perspective

For a view of Southern history "from the bottom up," order these issues and books for yourself, your students, and your friends. Put the quantity desired inside the appropriate box. And take advantage of the discount to order several as gifts!

- No More Moanin'/\$4     Mark of the Beast/\$4  
 Here Come a Wind/\$4     Social History Set/\$6  
 Our Promised Land/\$4     Stayed on Freedom/\$4  
 Working Lives/\$6  
 Speaking for Ourselves/\$9  
 Growing Up Southern/\$6
- 
- Additional copies of *Liberating Our Past*/\$4 each
- 
- 25% discount if your order for the items above is \$10 or more  
 40% discount if you are an Institute Sustainer
- 
- One-year *Southern Exposure* subscription (6 issues)/\$16**

Total Due \$ \_\_\_\_\_  Payment enclosed     Bill me

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_



**BUSINESS REPLY MAIL**  
FIRST CLASS    PERMIT NO. 938    DURHAM, N.C.

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

**Southern  
Exposure**

P.O. BOX 531  
DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA 27702



NO POSTAGE  
NECESSARY  
IF MAILED  
IN THE  
UNITED STATES



# "Popular history at its best"

— Herbert Gutman

Use the handy tear-out card at left to order these *Southern Exposure* issues and books as gifts — or for your own library.

**NO MORE MOANIN'** 225-page oral history special on Southerners in the Depression: 1936 Atlanta auto-workers strike; Southern Tenant Farmers Union; 1929 Gastonia strike; coal mining wars (1890-1930); socialist town in Louisiana; 1919 Knoxville race riot; blacks in WWII; Vincent Harding on black white and Negro history.

**MARK OF THE BEAST** 100 years of the Ku Klux Klan. First person accounts from Reconstruction-era Congressional testimony to Studs Terkel's poignant interview with a former Klansman. Chronology of Klan activity since 1866; analysis of Klan's periodic resurgence; government complicity; youth recruiting; labor and the Klan.

**HERE COME A WIND** Double issue on industrialization and modern labor movement, plus 400-item bibliography. J.P. Stevens, Oneita, Farah, runaway shops, who is the Southern worker. Harlan County (1930-74) and state-by-state profiles of workers, employers and unions.

**FIVE-ISSUE SOCIAL HISTORY COLLECTION** (600 pages for \$6) History of Southern railroad; Coca-Cola's birth; Juneteenth; Beale Street's demise; excerpts and analysis of Federal Writers Project & Federal Theater Project; Highlander's 1959 trial; health care from Indian cures to miners clinics; James Agee's Gudger family, 1936-79; Tennessee's utopian communities, 1890s; women suffragettes; sports history

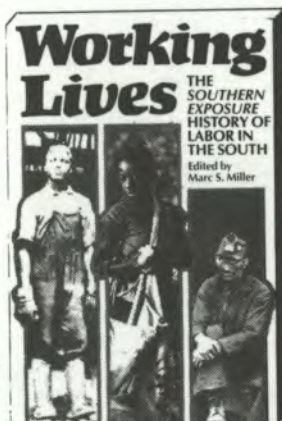
**OUR PROMISED LAND** 225 pages on impact of land-based resources for the South's development. State-by-state analysis of agriculture, mineral and timber wealth; interviews with three generations of tenant farmers; coops and agribusiness; land loss from Cherokees to black farmers; planned growth and land-use regulation in the South.

**STAYED ON FREEDOM** Interviews, photography, songs and analysis capture the history of the Freedom Movement since 1955, case studies on Montgomery, Nashville, Greensboro, Mississippi, Alabama, SW Georgia; also Freedom Rides, voting rights, movement art, black power and a 350-year chronology of blacks in U.S.

## PANTHEON BOOKS FROM SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

"Enjoyable, powerful material, with first-rate reporting told by those who helped make history."

— Alex Haley



**WORKING LIVES** 414 pages of little-known labor history: Jim Green on Louisiana timber cutters (1911), Valerie Quinney on first generation mill workers; Eric Frumin on Gauley Bridge massacre (1930-32); Bob Korstad on tobacco workers strike (1943); Steve Hoffius on Charleston's hospital strike (1969); Mimi Conway on brown lung organizing (1970s); and 26 more chapters.



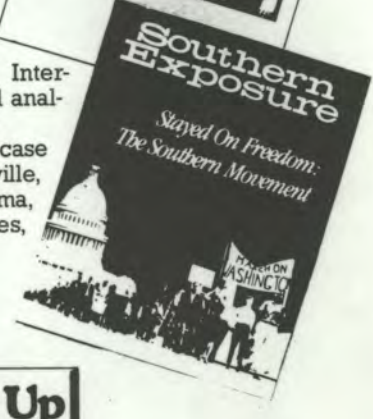
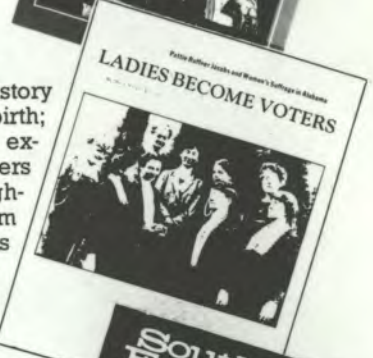
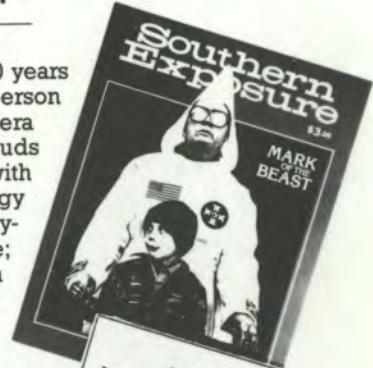
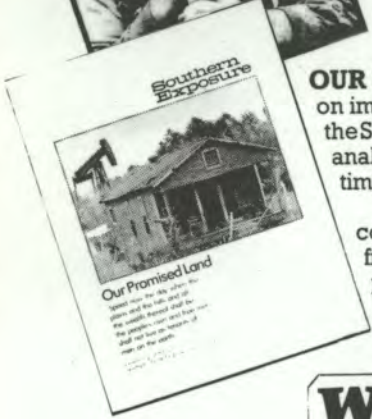
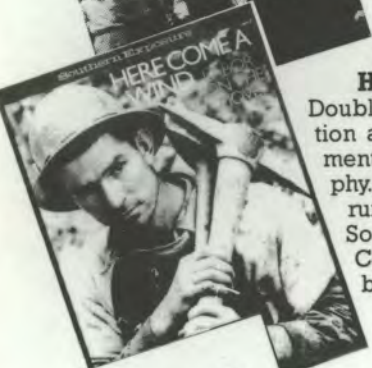
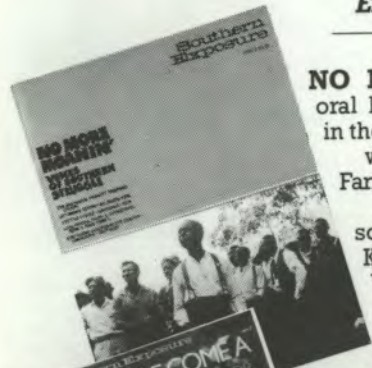
**SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES** 40 pieces form the rich tapestry of women's lives: Grandmothers' bawdy lore to feminism and civil rights; voices of debutantes and sharecroppers, poets and coal miners on work, family, race and sex roles in the New and Old South. "The Southern woman's legacy of folktales, wisdom, and work experiences... Frank and revealing."—Kirkus Reviews



**GROWING UP SOUTHERN** 200 years of child rearing practices & recollections of a changing rural and small town South, from Louisiana Indians of 1770's to desegregating Little Rock High School in 1957; growing up Jewish, growing up gay, remembering Jim Crow, and more. "A rich assortment of memories moves us beyond the sentimental."—Eliot Wigginton.

"An indispensable source on the little-known aspects of Southern culture, history, and modern life."

— Anne Firor Scott





*At the Cabin Door*, by Winslow Homer

The scene on the cover, painted at the conclusion of the Civil War, is one of Homer's least familiar works, in part because white collectors and critics have never wanted to deal with its explicit subject matter. The picture was originally entitled "Captured Liberators," and it shows a young black woman who clearly has her "mind set on freedom;" in the background Confederate soldiers are returning from the front with captured members of the Union Army whose advance would spell her release from legal bondage. To undercut the picture's quiet power and shelter the nation's "art lovers" from its dramatic implications, purchasers changed the title of Homer's picture to "At the Cabin Door."

The painting has special meaning for this issue of *Southern Exposure*, for Homer adopted the same radically different vantage point toward historical events that revisionist Southern scholars have rediscovered in recent decades. People long considered non-actors on the basis of race, sex, or class, have been moved to the center of the picture.