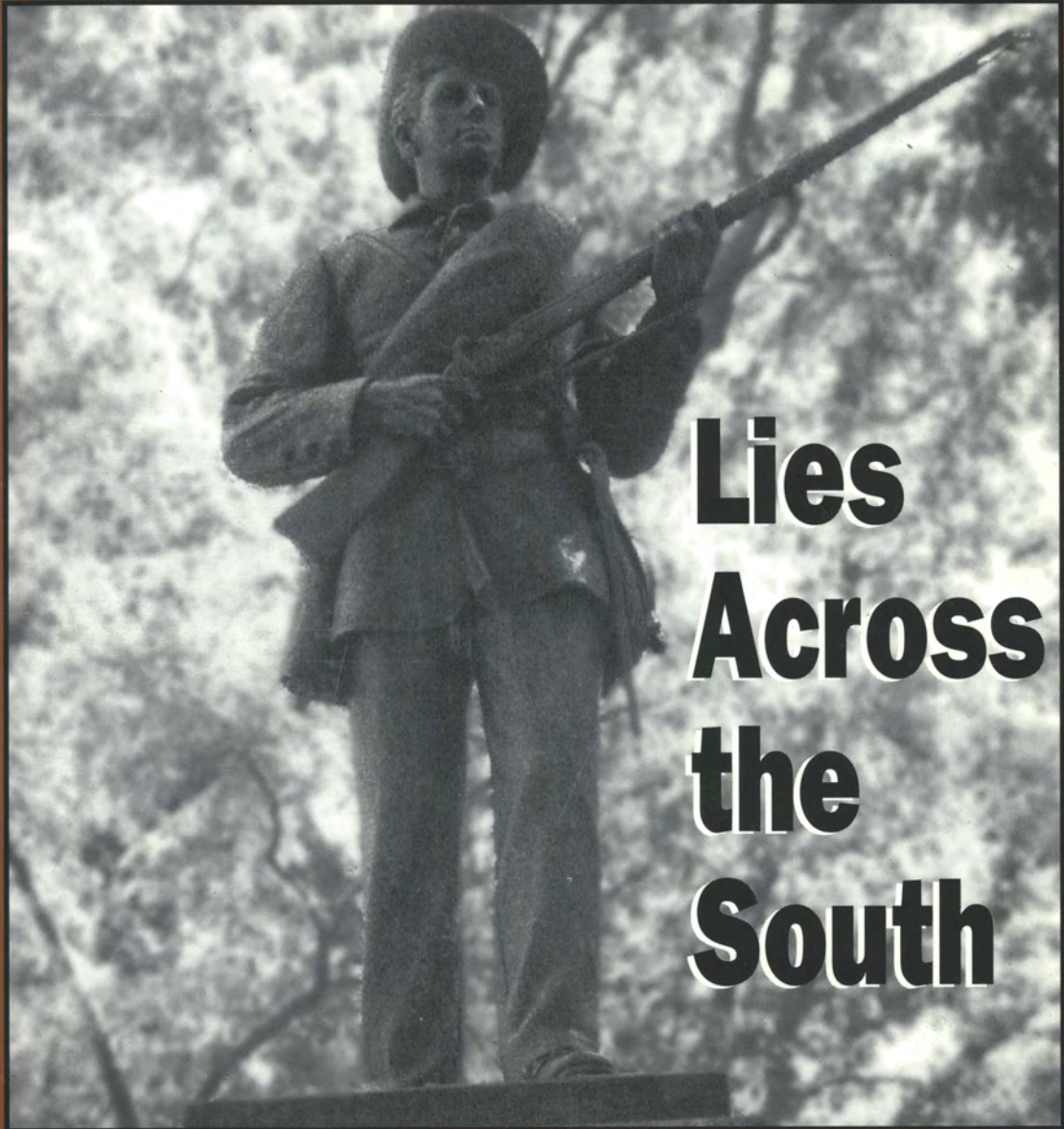


SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

A JOURNAL OF POLITICS & CULTURE

VOL. XXVIII, No. 1 & 2 \$5.00



Lies Across the South

James Loewen takes a journey through the region's museums, monuments and other historic sites — and discovers that many get the story of our past all wrong



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SOUTHERN EXPOSURE has been published since 1973 by the Institute for Southern Studies. With its combination of investigative reporting, historical perspective, oral histories, photography, and literature, the magazine has earned a national reputation. The magazine has received several Project Censored Awards; the Sidney Hillman Award for courageous reporting on racial injustice; two Alternative Press Awards for best regional publication; a National Magazine Award; and the John Hancock Insurance Company award for economic reporting.

THE INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHERN STUDIES is a nonprofit center working for progressive change in the region. Since its founding in 1970, the Institute has sponsored research, education, and organizing programs to (1) empower grassroots organizations and communities with strong local leadership and well-informed strategies, (2) provide the information, ideas, and historical understanding of Southern social struggles necessary for long-term fundamental change, and (3) nourish communication, cooperation, and understanding among diverse cultural groups.

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Cover photo by Keith Ernst

Lies Across the South

33 Lies Across the South ♦ *By James W. Loewen*

Our museums, monuments, markers and other historic sites say a lot about how we remember our past — with implications for the present. But by telling untruths, half-truths, or avoiding the issues, our public history all too often gets the story wrong. James Loewen takes us on a journey through the South's historical sites, showing what they get wrong — and how we can set the record straight.

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*"The Toppled Darky"
Baton Rouge, LA*

Photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress

On the cover:

"Silent Sam" — a memorial erected by the United Daughters of the Confederacy — greets students on the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill campus.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

SPRING/SUMMER 2000

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From the Editor

"History," wrote the Cold War diplomat Henry Kissinger in *A World Restored*, "is the memory of states." At least it was for Kissinger, who used his first book to tell the history of nineteenth-century Europe from the viewpoint of rulers in Austria and England, who "re-stored" a world upset by that pesky democratic uprising known as the French Revolution.

So it is for much of our history, which is still largely told from the perspective of the powerful. Of course, this makes sense for those in charge: as the thoughtful Texas scholar Lawrence Goodwyn once pointed out, the first job of any government that comes to power is to get the opposition to put down their guns. Such a task is sometimes accomplished by force, but usually control is maintained by inventing a shared culture and story of the past which justifies their existence. It is history told by the victors, for the victors – and all too often, the scholars of history tow the line.

Which is exactly what makes the mis-telling of the South's past – described in Jim Loewen's exhaustive and fascinating essay in this issue – so interesting. Today, neo-Confederates and others nostalgic for the Old South don't claim to be the victors at all. Indeed, the fall of the Confederacy and the South's defeat in the "War of Northern Aggression" are seen as the great "Lost Cause" by groups ranging from right-wing militias to the pseudo-academics populating the League of the South.

But if the Old South lost, how is it that our public history – the monuments, museums, and other sites that are the main way many of us learn about our past – still tells the story from the Old South perspective? As Loewen documents, monuments dedicated to "Confederate dead" – even showing up in places where there never were any Confederate dead – and Dixie's military leaders outnumber all others, while untruths and sins of omission mark our public history of Native Americans, African Americans, and others excluded from the Old Southern order.

Maybe these monuments, with their suspect stories etched in stone, tell us something. The Old South may have lost the battles of 1865, but it is winning the war over how we remember our past – and thereby exerts an influence in ways both subtle and stark over the hearts and minds of today. They've won a victory over history, which only reinforces the persistent strains of intolerance and injustice that poison our personal relationships and society's institutions.

That's why it's so important to get the story right: to create a landscape of public history that celebrates our home-grown heroes and fallen freedom-fighters who had a vision for what the South could be. Perhaps, surrounded by their spirit and memory, we'd have more faith in the possibility for a brighter future.

— Chris Kromm

Maybe these monuments, with their suspect stories etched in stone, tell us something.

G.W.'s Confederates in the Attic



attention, including two Associated Press stories, and coverage by dozens of newspapers, TV and radio stations. It also unleashed a minor tidal wave of responses to Southern Exposure, of which a representative sampling follows:

BIGOTS & PERVERTS

Your story, "George W. Bush Whistles Dixie," was rubbish, and your consultant, Edward Sebesta, is a long-standing joke.

What you've done, obviously, is hire a bigot for a writer, had him consult with another bigot and known pervert, then write a story falsely accusing OTHERS of bigotry. How clever.

How credible? Not very. How sickening? Hmmmmm.

Dave Gass
Atlanta

DIXIE FOREVER

I find your article seething with a hatred for the South. I don't know where you are from but I can tell you that I am going to spend the rest of my life defending the Confederacy. The South was right! Dixie forever.

John Hall
Roswell, Georgia

REVERSE RACISM

Don't you think you are a right neo-group? Looking at your organization, I think you are a little on the racial side of

On February 17 – the day before the Republican presidential primary in South Carolina – we pre-published our story "George W. Bush Whistles Dixie" on the Southern Exposure/Institute web-site

[www.isouth.org], before the print version appeared in the Winter 1999/2000 issue. The story, which detailed the Republican front-runner's links to neo-Confederate groups, attracted a flurry of media at-

things. We really don't need anymore racial hate groups out there. So please take a good look at where you are going and what you really stand for. I am an outsider looking in, and you don't really stand for anything, that is good for all the people, black, white, native American, Irish, etc.

William Walkup

HYPOCRISY & RACE-BAITING

I am not a supporter of Governor Bush, but articles with this intonation and specious allegations are enough to make any American Citizen with a modicum of understanding of the War Between the States defend anyone who honors their ancestors who fought in this tragic war.

I love Lincoln for his depth and strength through the trials of that time. I honor Grant for fighting for the cause of the North and I deeply honor Robert E. Lee for fighting for his state even though he did not agree with the concept of one man "owning another" man.

This article used to "defame" Governor George Bush, is the height of hypocrisy, the epitome of race-baiting and overtly some attempt to besmirch all of those who fought, not to retain slaves, but rather to affirm their 10th Amend-

ment Rights to secede from the Union of the U.S.A. under the Constitution of the United States.

Obviously, your organization is part of the socialist left whose main interest is the destruction of our Nation and negation of the History of America that makes this country so colorful and so strong today.

Professor "Whomever" is obviously a part of the Illuminati...but neither I (an ardent supporter of ALAN KEYES) would ever "buy into" this asinine perspective, nor should any person whom you seek to enflame.

Eileen Lane
Palmdale, CA

TOUGH QUESTIONS

This story is very interesting. It would pose the likes of Alan Keyes with tough questions. Can such blatant racism in their own party go unpunished? The whole subject of Neo-Confederatism and its links to other rightist groups is of intense concern to me.

Robin Winkel

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE RESPONDS

Groups like the Museum of the Confederacy, the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV), and the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) always try to project a veneer of professionalism and respectability – but call them on something, and out come the venomous shock troops, revealing the true colors of the neo-Confederate movement.

It's tempting to dismiss them as a fringe element. To be sure, their views – like statements that slave ships weren't really all that bad (as one UDC "scholar" said), or that the Confederacy had little to do with slavery (contradicting the stated views of Confederate leaders) – have made neo-Confederates the laughingstock of all serious students of Southern history.

But, as any Southerner knows, they are not marginal. As we showed in the last *Southern Exposure* ["The Day the Flag Went Up"], the UDC

led the charge to raise the Confederate battle flag over the South Carolina statehouse in the 1950s, and continues to defend its reign in defiance of public sentiment against it. And as James Loewen reports in this issue, it's groups like the SCV and UDC that continue to force fabricated history down the throat of the public – at taxpayer expense – at historical sites that deliberately mis-tell the story of the South's past.

Like other mouthpieces for the far-right around the country, the neo-Confederates wield influence far beyond their numbers thanks to generous backing from elites nostalgic for a time when African Americans, poor whites, and other have-nots knew their place in society. The disturbing neo-Confederate presence in politics was revealed this election season – from Senator McCain's South Carolina campaign leader, Robert Quinn (editor-in-chief of the neo-Confederates' leading journal, *Southern Partisan*); to G.W. Bush; to Pat Buchanan ("Senior Advisor" to *Southern Partisan*). There are more connections; interested parties should consult Ed Sebesta's meticulously-researched Temple of Democracy

[www.mindspring.com/~newtknight].

The influence of the intolerant South can be felt outside of politics, too. Outfits like the League of the South work tirelessly to install their ideologues on college campuses (with some success), while supposedly mainstream academics like John Shelton Reed of the Center for the Study of the American South – a long-time *Southern Partisan* contributor, and former editorial board member – maintain cozy relations with the far-right, but are let off the hook. Indeed, they are liberally quoted as spokespeople for Southern culture by CNN and other media gatekeepers.

Fortunately, as James Loewen writes in these pages, there's a proud history of white Southerners who – arm in arm with African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and others – have stood up for honestly confronting our past, inspiring us to create a more just future. This spirit of courage and vision of humanity is needed now more than ever.

Chris Kromm
Editor, *Southern Exposure*



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AnotherTake on documentaries

Photo by Matt DeVries



ANOTHERTAKE FESTIVAL ORGANIZER MARTY ROSENBLUTH LETS PEOPLE KNOW WHAT THE BUZZ IS ALL ABOUT.

After Robert Redford's hip "Sundance" film festival turned mainstream, the offshoots began to proliferate. First there was "Raindance," which was followed by "Slamdance," which gave way to "Slumdance" – all offering "alternatives to the alternative" in showcasing independent films.

It was in this spirit that, during Durham, North Carolina's widely respected DoubleTake documentary film festival this April, Durham-area filmmakers organized "AnotherTake" – "a documentary film festival with a political edge" co-sponsored by the Institute for Southern Studies.

"The idea for the festival started with the usual filmmakers gripe session when our films were rejected," admits Jen Schradie, director of the film *The Golf War*. "But, when we looked at the other documentaries DoubleTake rejected, we noticed that ... a lot of the documentaries they wouldn't show had more of a political edge to them than the documentaries shown on TV."

Among the films viewed by the hundred-plus attendees of AnotherTake was "Good Kurds, Bad

Kurds," directed by Kevin McKiernan, which investigates the U.S. government's "two-Kurd policy," which labels Kurdish people fighting for independence in Turkey as "terrorists," while praising Kurds fighting for independence in Iraq as "freedom fighters."

Other films, on topics ranging from the story a woman who was fired from her job at Cracker Barrel for being a lesbian, to the legacy of organizer Saul Alinsky, were also on display, and followed by panel discussions, including a media panel with *Southern Exposure* editor Chris Kromm.

If you missed AnotherTake this year, don't worry – the festival's first-year success has inspired organizers to hold AnotherTake again next spring, alongside the DoubleTake event. And who knows? Perhaps yet more documentary alternatives will bloom.

For more information about *AnotherTake*, contact Marty Rosenbluth at (919) 732-5864 or Matt DeVries at (919) 403-0601 or [info@anothertake.org]. You can also visit [www.anothertake.org].

Public Services for Sale?

Institute report reveals impacts of privatization

As hospitals, schools, prisons, and other public services and assets are increasingly turned over to private corporations across the South, the Institute for Southern Studies has released a report criticizing this growing trend: "Private Gain, Public Pain: How Privatization Harms Communities."

Based on three in-depth case studies – hospitals in Florida, prisons in Tennessee, and child support ser-

vices in Mississippi – the report found that "taxpayers across the nation are losing their ability to have a voice and hold accountable essential services as policymakers turn to the 'quick fix' promised by privatization."

"Privatization is not new, but the rate and extent of privatization over the last two decades is unprecedented," says co-author Kim Diehl, a researcher at the Institute. "As the South leads the nation in privatization, the region may well serve as a testing ground for other public policies and economic trends around the country."

Photo by Chris Kromm



DAPHNE HOLDEN, AN INSTITUTE RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, CO-AUTHORED "PRIVATE GAIN, PUBLIC PAIN" WITH KIM DIEHL AND KEITH ERNST.

Diehl, along with Institute researchers Keith Ernst and Daphne Holden, scoured records and conducted dozens of interviews with community residents and agency officials to document the impacts of privatization on public accountability, jobs, services, and long-term community interests. The study's results were carried by the Associated Press and several newspapers, and the report was distributed to Georgia state legislators by grassroots and labor organizations in anticipation of privatization legislation.

Articles based on the findings of "Private Gain, Public Pain" – along with other reporting on the growing privatization trend – will be published in an upcoming edition of *Southern Exposure*. Those interested in ordering a copy of the report (\$40; \$20 for Institute members) may contact Keith Ernst at [keith@southernstudies.org].



The Best of the Press

Southern Journalism Awards honor region's best reporting

In the face of recent reports showing the U.S. prison population skyrocketing to over 2 million people, the Institute announced on May 1 that reporters from four newspapers were honored for their outstanding coverage of injustices in the criminal justice and prison system in this year's Southern Journalism Awards.

The winning newspapers – published in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina – were entrants in the "Prisons and New Approaches to Justice" category of the annual Awards, now in their 12th year. The contest also honored papers in Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, and Tennessee for winning entries in the "General Investigative" category, which recognizes influential investigative journalism on a variety of issues. Cash awards totaling \$4,000 were offered in the two categories.

"The winning entries this year were outstanding efforts that com-

bined impressive empirical research with poignant anecdotes," said Keith Ernst, coordinator of the Institute-sponsored Awards. "They showed how subjects as complex as the privatization of prison health care affect everyone."

First-place prizes were awarded to the following authors and newspapers:

GENERAL INVESTIGATIVE CATEGORY

- **Large Daily Papers Division** (over 100,000 Sunday circulation) – Debbie Cenziper, Ted Mellnik, Celeste Smith, Jim Morrill, and Jennifer Rothacker at the *Charlotte Observer* (Charlotte, NC) for "Deciding Desegregation," on Charlotte's battles over school segregation.

- **Mid-Sized Daily Papers Division** (30,000-100,000 Sunday circulation) – Gina Edwards at the *Naples Daily News* (Naples, FL) for "Stadium Naples," an in-depth look at corruption of public officials.

- **Small Daily Papers Division** (under 30,000 Sunday circulation) – Scott Morris at the *The Decatur Daily* (Decatur, AL) for "Rolling Thunder," an insider account of the trucking industry.

- **Weekly Papers Division** – Eileen Loh-Harrist at the *The Memphis Flyer* (Memphis, TN) for "Disabling the Disabled," an expose of Tennessee's Medicare experiment that forced disabled people into group homes against their will.

PRISONS AND NEW APPROACHES TO JUSTICE

- **Large Daily Papers Division** – Jo Becker, Sydney P. Freedberg, and Adam C. Smith at the *St. Petersburg Times* (St. Petersburg, FL) for "Florida Prisons," a top-to-bottom investigation of the state's problem-plagued justice system.

- **Mid-Sized Daily Papers Division** – Leonora LaPeter at the *Savannah Morning News* (Savannah, GA) for "Dying Behind Bars," a look at privatized health care in prisons.

- **Small Daily Papers Division** – Tim Pryor at the *The Anniston Star*

(Anniston, AL) for "Time is Money: Justice is Killing Us," which used the story of one inmate to reveal the system's penchant for over-incarceration.

- **Weekly Papers Division** – Eric Bates at the *The Independent* (Durham, NC) – former editor of *Southern Exposure* – for "The Death Lottery," an investigation into the arbitrary application of capital punishment.

Congratulations to all winners! Selections from winning entries will appear in a future issue of *Southern Exposure*.

For more information about the Southern Journalism Awards, including next year's contest, call (919) 419-8311 x40 or [sja@southernstudies.org], or visit [www.i4south.org].

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Live (Satire) From Death Row

Texas protestors lead a cheer for G.W. Bush's capital punishment machine

HUNTSVILLE, Texas — Jay Martel wandered through the pro-death-penalty crowd outside the Huntsville prison on the night of January 24, 2000, without arousing suspicion. Wearing blue jeans, a baseball cap and a windbreaker that looked a lot like the state flag, he fit right in. He offered cans of ginger ale, passed out foam fingers, and praised George W. Bush. If there had been a baby, you can bet he would have kissed it. If there had been cheerleaders, which there were, you can bet he wasn't surprised.

It seemed as if everything was business as usual outside the Walls Unit just before the execution of Billy Hughes, a man convicted in 1976 of fatally shooting a state trooper. Justice for All, a victims' rights group, stood at the left end of the police line, holding signs that said, "No Murder Equals No Execution." The Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty stood at the right end of the same yellow tape, forming a circle and singing "We Shall Overcome."

Generally, they peacefully coexist like this until the witnesses emerge from the execution, indicating that everyone can



Photo by John Childs

MICHAEL MOORE'S PSEUDO-CHEERLEADERS GIVE IT UP FOR G.W. BUSH'S 117TH EXECUTION IN TEXAS — TO THE DISTRESS OF REAL DEATH PENALTY SUPPORTERS.

go home. They have the routine down pat: There were seven executions in just over two weeks in January; there have been 124 since George W. took office.

But when six cheerleaders and a makeshift marching band came prancing around the corner belting out "When the Saints Come Marching In," it became clear that number 117 was not routine. In pigtails, letter sweaters, and red-pleated skirts, the fresh-faced drill team chanted, "Go, George, Go." As the "antis" struggled to maintain their circle vigil, the "pros" turned into fans at a football game, cheering and waving their foam fingers.

*Two bits, four bits, six bits,
a dollar
All for the death penalty
stand up and holler!*



Photo by John Childs

A MEMBER OF THE FAKE PEP SQUAD COMMENTS ON THE PRO-EXECUTION PROCLIVITIES OF GOVERNORS JEB (FLORIDA) AND GEORGE W. (TEXAS) BUSH.

They were already standing, but they sure hollered.

*Florida oranges, Texas
cactus
We kill convicts just for
practice!*

You could actually see the realization come over the faces of those in the pro-death-penalty camp: Hey, wait a minute, these death row cheerleaders aren't on our side after all. Rick Lemmon, a man who has lost both his twin brother and only son to murder, shouted back through a megaphone: "We have never killed anybody for practice. Y'all don't forget the victim here."

*Kill 'em to the left
Kill 'em to the right
Here in Texas
We kill 'em every
night!*

David Atwood, president of the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, and Dudley Sharp, vice president of Justice for All, both visibly pissed off, yelled at each other at almost exactly the same time, "Did you do this?" then, "No!"

*We're number one,
can't be number two
If you don't agree with
us, we'll kill you too
Texas is good, Texas is
great
We kill more than any
other state!*

"Is this what George Bush wants?" asked Atwood. "The cheerleaders?" Sharp put his hand on Atwood's shoulder and said, "Anti-death-penalty and pro-death-penalty strongly believe in what they're doing, and that doesn't include

disrespecting the other side."

Meanwhile, a bare-chested, body-painted, football-helmeted man ran through the crowd with a "Death" pennant.

*George, George, he's our man
If he can't kill 'em, no one can
Who's the best on the killing scene?
George Bush, he's a killing machine!
He's a killing machine!
He's a killing machine!*

"It shouldn't have been this way," Atwood said, shaking his head.

"I bet you have Monica Lewinsky sex!" shouted a particularly rabid member of Justice for All.

"Desperate times call for desperate measures," muttered Martel.

After failed attempts to ignore the demonstration and shout down the cheerleaders, attentions finally turned to Martel, who seemed to be enjoying all the mischief a little too much. "You did this!" they shouted at him from both sides.

"They're not here all the time?" he asked, pushing the limits of playing dumb.

Tongue Tamers

According to the *Mitchell News Journal*, Western Carolina University's Speech and Hearing Center is advertising itself as a place to shed unwelcome accents: "Perhaps you're going into a career in which your Southern drawl, as endearing as it is to most folks, may be considered somewhat of a liability..."

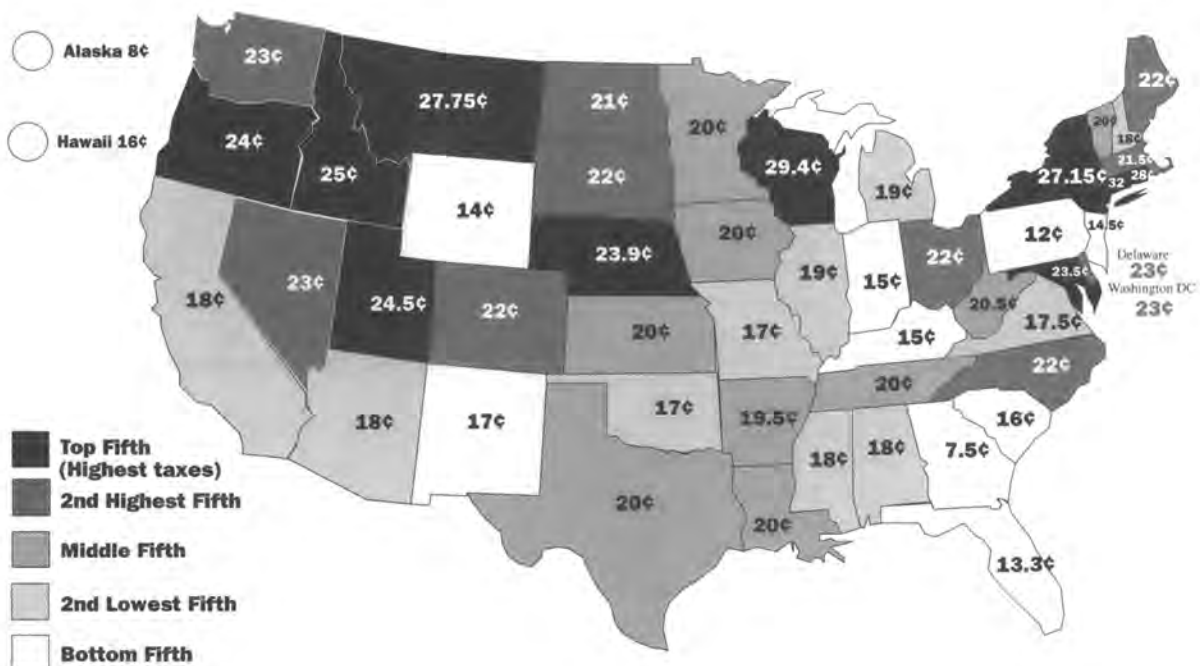
Graduate students in the university's speech-language pathology program would be doing the instruction: "The student counselors can assess clients' current speech and intonation patterns, vocabulary, and sentence structure, demonstrate alternatives in the target dialect they wish to acquire, and provide opportunities for the practice needed to speak the new dialect comfortably."

Source: *The Appalachian Journal*



A Tankful of Taxes

The map below shows state taxes charged on gasoline, measured in cents-per-gallon. Taxes range from a high of 32 cents in Connecticut, to a low of 7.5 cents in Georgia. Some analysts say that gas taxes are regressive and primarily hurt the poor, while others point out that U.S. gas prices are well below those found in European countries, which levy higher taxes to account for the environmental impact of petroleum use.



Source: American Petroleum Institute, January 2000

They wanted answers: "Are you pro or against the death penalty?"

"I'm pro Texas!" he whooped.

In a place where affiliations are always clearly delineated, this was as infuriating as the cheerleaders themselves. No one recognized Martel or his gonzo journalism as trademarks of Michael Moore's popular, populist, and political television show, *The Awful Truth*. The show that has invited an HMO to a funeral and put a 24-hour Web cam on Lucianne Goldberg this time recruited some like-minded actors/activists from Houston's maverick theater company Infernal Bridegroom Productions and descended on Huntsville.

The piece, which will include a segment shot in Florida and air on Bravo sometime next season, is "a celebration," says *Awful Truth* producer Dave Hamilton, "of two states who have long embraced the death penalty and turned their ability to kill Americans into a state pastime."

One man at the prison that night did know the score: Billy Hughes. Hughes' longtime friend, citizen provocateur and KPFT Prison Show host Ray Hill, was a gold mine of information for Moore's segment producers.

Hill was sworn to secrecy when he was contacted by the show, but during his last visit with Hughes before the execution, he says, "I had to confide in Billy what was go-



"DANA AND THE BOYS" BY ANYA LIFTIG.

ing on. My conscience required me to."

How did Hughes take the news that his death would be surrounded by satirical fanfare? According to Hill, he said, "Thank you."

— Lauren Kern

Elián Nation

Progressives Find Hope, Frustration in Cuban Boy's Case

MIAMI, Fla. — In the din surrounding the Elián Gonzalez case, progressive voices have often been drowned out by media clichés, cold war rhetoric, and right-wing opportunism. In Miami itself, a threatening and intolerant atmosphere predominates.



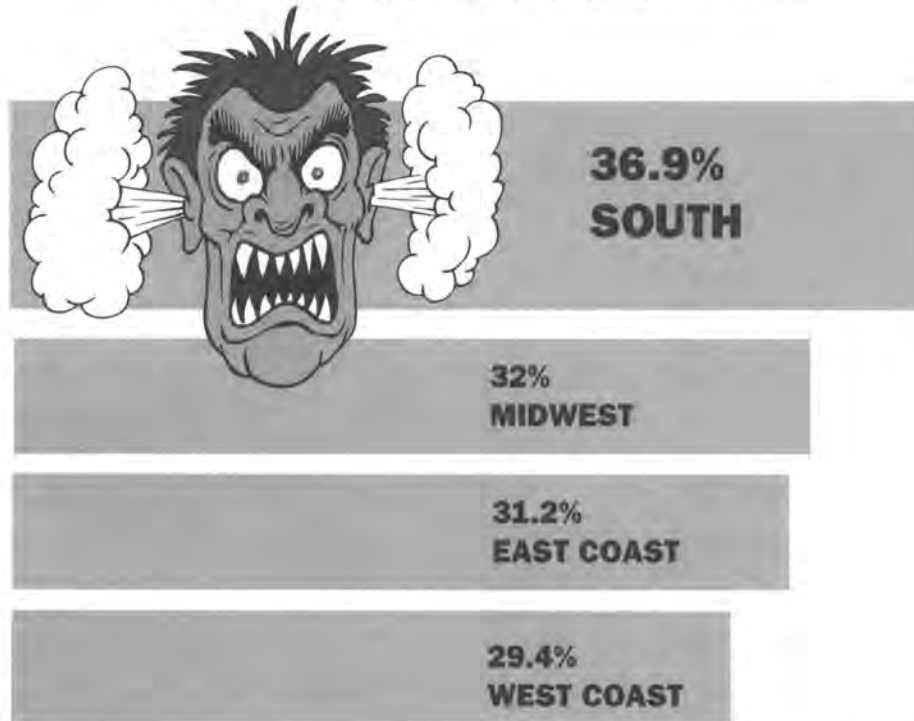
ELIAN: MIAMI'S PROGRESSIVE VOICES WERE DROWNED OUT

"People really don't speak in a normal tone of voice" when discussing the issue, says Denise

Makes Me Wanna Holler

A nationwide survey by Zogby America of 1,188 adults found that nearly one-third (32.6% of respondents) said they lose their temper at least once a week. The following chart shows those most likely to fly off the handle, by region:

Percentage of people by region who
"lose their temper" at least once a week



The survey also found Democrats (35.7%) to be madder by the week than Republicans (28.5%), who were madder than Independents (25.8%).

Source: Reuters/Zogby, April 2000

Perry, of the Family Advocacy Center in Miami. "It's a real physical reaction. Unless you know you're in a safe place."

Sheila O'Farrell, of the Academy for Better Communities (also in Miami), agrees: "Everybody's a little bit scared" of militant Cuban exile groups, which have been linked to violence in both Florida and Cuba.

Despite all this, some hope that the controversy will cause the American

public generally to see U.S.-Cuban relations and immigration issues in a new light. According to Carlos Prendes of Global Exchange, a San Francisco-based group that organizes reality tours of Cuba, the Miami exiles' tactics have "backfired," creating a "public relations disaster" for such right-wing organizations as the Cuban American National Foundation.

Exile leaders and conservative politicians

showered the six-year-old with toys, pets, and cell phones, and plied his working-class Miami relatives with financial support and jobs. Some believe that this spectacle has made the American notion of freedom as primarily a matter of access to consumer goods look ugly and manipulative.

"The Elián discussion has caused people to talk about the corruptions of capitalism, even though it's not usually called

that," notes O'Farrell.

This intense focus on an individual case has, unexpectedly, shed light on larger issues. "One good thing about Elián is that it has revived the whole issue of Cuban-U.S. relations," says Prendes, who lived in Cuba until two years ago. The controversy, he argues, has exposed the hypocrisy of those who profess to care about this particular boy's welfare while supporting the U.S. embargo, which he blames for most of Cuba's economic troubles. "Who in this country cares about the best interests of all the Cuban children who live in Cuba?"

Immigrant advocates have attempted to use the Elián controversy to help refugees from other Caribbean countries, such as Haiti and the Dominican Republic. "I have a long list of children in my district in similar or worse situations than Elián," says U.S. Rep. Alcee L. Hastings (D-Fla.). "Why should he receive preferential treatment?"

Hastings has introduced legislation to confer U.S. citizenship on one of these children, a 6-year-old Haitian girl now living in Lake Park, Fla. When her mother died last year, Sophonie Telcy was left in the care of a friend, and has no one to return to in Haiti.

"Refugees from Haiti and other countries are routinely deported, while those from Cuba get special consideration," says Hastings. "I introduced this bill not only to help

That Just Wasn't My Decade

Following are the results of the Harris Poll's "Alienation Index," released in December, 1999. The following are the percentage of U.S. adults who answered that they "tend to feel" the following things:

- The rich get richer and the poor get poorer: 74%
- What you think doesn't count very much any more: 68%
- Most people with power try to take advantage of people like yourself: 60%
- The people running the country don't really care about what happens to you: 63%
- You're left out of things going on around you: 46%

Total Alienation Index by Decade (% of Americans feeling "alienated")



Source: *The Harris Poll, December 1999*

this young girl, but also to illustrate the patently disparate treatment of refugees from different countries."

The racial implications of U.S. immigration policy may lead to closer ties between Miami's Haitian and African American communities. January protests at the Miami INS headquarters demanding fair treatment for Haitian refugees drew Haitian Americans, African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Anglos, despite obstacles to organizing across ethnic divides.

"The key thing that's missing within the black communities is good media," charges Denise Perry. "The media here has denied us an opportunity to use this issue to galvanize

discussion." Instead, she says, local newspapers, radio, and television mostly present pro-exile viewpoints.

Though she has seen little in the way of programmatic action, Perry feels that in the wake of the Elián saga, Haitians and African Americans are "beginning to recognize that they have more in common than not. People are standing up ... and starting to talk to each other."

— Gary Ashwill

Searching For Southern Hospitality

A visit by David Duke divides a Carolina town over its growing immigrant community

SILER CITY, N.C. — It was an unseasonably cold and overcast day, but the conditions did not deter the crowd that gathered in front of City Hall here last April. They were determined to raise an equal voice of peace and justice to counter the hate that arrived in the form of one of the first organized anti-Hispanic immigrant rallies in the South.

"We've been meaning to have this for a long time now," Rev. Barry Gray of

First Missionary Baptist Church told the gathering. "We walk on the same earth, we breath the same air, and we live from the same means. But we got to stop making a difference in color and nationality."

The Siler City United Pilgrimage for Peace rally was organized specifically to counter an earlier rally aimed against the growing Hispanic community in February featuring one-time Klu Klux Klan grand dragon and former Louisiana state representative, David Duke.

"What you have to understand is that this massive immigration in this country is changing the face of this community, and it will transform America into something alien to the principles and the values of the founding fathers of this country," Duke said at the February rally. "You will eventually be outnumbered and outvoted in your own land."

For the past six years, Siler City, a rural town of 6,000, has experienced a rapid influx of Hispanic immigrant workers from Latin America to work at two giant poultry processing plants. The workers have brought their families and are settling much to the dismay of the traditional population.

The story of the two rallies is a tale of change — those who accept the arrival and necessity of Hispanic immigrant labor, and those who want life to remain as it was.

The workers, many who are undocumented, have brought prosperity to a town that was slowly dy-



Photo by Paul Cuadros

RESIDENTS OF SILER CITY RESPONDED TO DAVID DUKE'S VISIT WITH A CALL FOR UNITY.

ing ten years ago. Hispanic immigrant labor is cheap, reliable, and dependable, making them highly desirable for small manufacturers. The population has begun buying homes, spurring a housing boom.

And they have considerable economic power when it comes to goods and services. Wal-Mart is just putting the finishing touches on a new superstore that no believes would have been built were it not for the buying power of the Hispanic population.

But while the town has prospered, the immigrants also have their struggles. Nowhere is this more evident than in the schools, which have been flushed with children who do not speak English.

The origin of the anti-Hispanic rally and the subsequent peace rally starts in the schools, that perennial barometer of race relations in the South. It's the schools where white children and Hispanic children are in closest contact and where the friction is most acute.

Siler City Elementary is

now more than 40 percent Hispanic, and the kindergarten class is more than 50 percent. The number of Limited English Proficient students in the county increased from 80 in 1990, to 458 in 1998. There are more than 6,000 students in the system. The state's LEP population has increased by 25 percent per year for the past five years.

The concentration of Hispanic children at the elementary school has resulted in white flight. This year, 34 kids transferred to other schools — up from 14 the previous year. The county's open transfer policy, which allows parents to send their kids to any other school that isn't overcrowded, is a sore point among teachers and parents who want the white flight to stop.

"The white population went through white flight when the Hispanic population started growing," says Becky Lane, a first grade teacher at the school, who has been with the school since it

The Lawyers Come Marching In

Mississippi law against same-gender adoptions is "an invitation to litigate"

JACKSON, Miss. — If anybody blinked, they would have missed it: without debate, by unanimous voice vote, on April 19 the Mississippi Senate voted to prohibit adoptions by same-gender couples. The House had previously given the same measure (SB 3074) its overwhelming support, and Governor Ronnie Musgrove is set to sign it into law, to go into effect on July 1.



Mississippi follows Utah as the second state this year to specifically prohibit adoptions by gay and lesbian domestic partners; previously only Florida had a similar law, which is currently being challenged with a class action lawsuit. A legal challenge to Utah's measure is in the works.

According to David Ingebretsen, director of Mississippi's American Civil Liberties Union, the state's move "is an invitation to litigate."

Source: Planet Out News

opened. "And rather than stay and be a part of the solution, they would write the board and say, 'we wish to transfer because children could no longer get an education at SCE,' which is untrue."

The situation at the school and in town escalated when the county commissioners sent a letter to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service asking the INS to come and remove undocumented workers. The letter divided the community and bolstered the hardliners who wanted all the Hispanics to leave.

But the letter also attracted a lot of media attention, and put the com-

missioners on the hot seat. Several commissioners, including the principle author of the letter, went to Mexico on a fact-finding trip sponsored by North Carolina Center for International Understanding, a program of the University of North Carolina. The commissioners came back with a change of heart and a new understanding of what was going on in their community. They decided to work with the Hispanic community instead of seeking to deport them.

In February, Richard Vanderford, a Siler City resident, applied for a permit to hold a rally to

The Haves vs. The Have-Nots

Despite a wealth of natural and human resources, the South suffers from the highest poverty rates in the nation. One explanation for this contradiction is income inequality — the fact that the divide between rich and poor is higher in the South than elsewhere in the country. Nine of the 15 most unequal states — measured by the gap between the richest fifth and the poorest fifth of the population — are located in the South. Nationally, despite strong economic growth, the divide between low- and high-income families widened in two-thirds of the states between the late 1980s and the late 1990s.

STATE RANKINGS FOR INCOME INEQUALITY

(1 IS MOST UNEQUAL)

- 1 New York
- 2 Arizona
- 3 New Mexico
- 4 **Louisiana**
- 5 California
- 6 Rhode Island
- 7 **Texas**
- 8 Oregon
- 9 **Kentucky**
- 10 **Virginia**
- 11 **Alabama**
- 12 **Georgia**
- 13 **Florida**
- 14 **West Virginia**
- 15 **Mississippi**



Rankings for other Southern states:

- 17 North Carolina
- 18 Tennessee
- 28 Arkansas
- 36 South Carolina

Source: Center for Budget Priorities and Economic Policy Institute, 2000

denounce the influx of Hispanic immigrants. Vanderford, whose car license plate reads "Aryan," invited speakers from the National Alliance, an Aryan group based in Virginia, and David Duke to appear at the rally and speak.

The rally attracted more than 400 people, with about two-thirds in support of the speakers. Duke took special aim at the poultry industry for selling out the town's heritage for

cheap labor.

"What's going on in this country is a few companies are hiring illegal aliens and not American citizens because they can save a few bucks," he said. "I guess they need someone to pluck the chickens" — although some observed that this did not deter Duke from eating chicken after the rally at a local restaurant.

But the rally also had the effect of organizing people who did not share Duke's

xenophobia. Church groups and other Hispanic advocates came together to organize the unity rally in April. Organizers tied the event to the Carolina Interfaith Task Force on Central America's Pilgrimage for Justice walk. More than 90 people gathered at the same spot where Duke stood to raise a counter voice of brotherhood.

"When one member of the human family is struggling to better his

life, a hard life because of economic reasons, when these people, the ones on the outskirts of our society, come and ask us for help, it is our duty before God to help them," said Audrey Schwankl at the unity rally. Schwankl represented St. Julia Catholic Church, which was vandalized the night before the Duke rally.

Since both rallies, feelings in the town have quieted down. But it remains to be seen whether the town will accept the changes that have been happening or stand firm against them.

— Paul Cuadros

Fighting "Jeb Crow"

Protesters call "One Florida" one bad plan

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— On March 2 of this year, over 11,000 protesters jammed Florida's Capitol grounds in Tallahassee, protesting Governor Jeb Bush's One Florida Initiative, a plan to end affirmative action in university admissions and state contracting. "One Florida" was initiated by Governor Bush in November 1999 and passed at the school system's Board of Regents in February 2000.

The protest, called "The March of Conscience," was the largest gathering in Florida's history. While the demonstration was co-sponsored by the Florida AFL-CIO and the NAACP,

it also brought together students, organized labor, feminists, black and Latino civil rights activists, and the Democratic Party under a unified umbrella to oppose the plan, whose slogans included, "Jeb Crow" and "One Florida, One Term."

According to Americans for a Fair Chance, Florida ranks among the states with the highest growth of women and people of color-owned businesses. However, Governor Bush asserts that Florida's current policy has failed because less than one percent of more than \$12 billion in state purchases are awarded to these businesses. While the state has fallen short of its goals to use these businesses for contracting, opponents to Bush's plan believe the exclusion of race, ethnicity, and gender is not the answer to failing affirmative action programs.

One problem facing Bush's opponents is devising an alternative. Denise Perry, a Florida resident and grassroots organizer in Miami, stated, "The affirmative action plan here did very little effectively and there was not a counter plan to One Florida. Supporting the status quo seems lame on the account that such a small percentage of government contracts went to minority contractors."

In 1970, the Office of Civil Rights concluded that Florida's system of higher education was segregated and applied federally-mandated standards which determined that states must do more than

adopt race-neutral policies to meet their obligation to dismantle segregated colleges and universities. Bush's Equity in Education Plan under the One Florida initiative is based on the premise that all students enrolling into universities are at a level playing field and that the decision-making bodies in Florida's schools are unbiased.

In an interview with In Motion Magazine, Florida A&M student body president, Cornelius Minor, observed, "The One Florida plan leaves a lot to those in power, elected officials, those hiring or those admitting students to higher ed. It assumes that inequities don't exist any more. There will be no system of checks and balances to make sure that people hire the correct number of women or the correct number of minorities."

— Kim Diehl

Bittersweet Victory

High School students in Baton Rouge won their fight for a Gay-Straight Alliance – but at a high price

BATON ROUGE, La. – This past March, high school students in the parish of East Baton Rouge won what they had been fighting for over the course of months: the right to form a Gay-Straight Alliance, to unite students in opposing homophobia and other forms of discrimination.

But the campaign also revealed deep racial divi-

sions in east Baton Rouge, creating rifts that have yet to heal.

The movement began at McKinley High, and spread to three other high schools, where principals approved the Alliances as official school clubs. The recognition came after heated school board meetings and a protracted postcard, letter-writing, and telephone campaign which drew on support from the city's older activists at the Lambda Center.

McKinley High is also the parish's historically black school – and some

African Americans in the community charged that the recognition of the largely-white Alliance was another sign of racial favoritism, in a city where the school board is still involved in costly litigation over a 40-year-old desegregation order. A protest against the Gay-Straight Alliance at McKinley led to a three-day suspension of over 60 African-American students, leading to even more frustration.

"Needless to say, we were very happy to see these clubs approved,"

Unequal Behind Bars

ALABAMA – This spring, the Supreme Court backed an 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling which affirms an Alabama prison policy that segregates HIV-positive prisoners. The ruling disqualifies such inmates from educational and recreational programming which may result in cutbacks to programs offered the nation's estimated 47,000 inmates who are HIV-positive.

"This ruling is very scary because we think other states will try to follow this policy," stated Rev. Jackie Means, the Director of Prison Ministry for the National Episcopal Church.

Currently, HIV-positive inmates in Alabama, South Carolina, and Mississippi are not allowed to take part in over 70 recreational, religious, and educational programs available to other inmates. The policy also bars HIV-positive inmates from work-release programs that grant many inmates early release from incarceration.

Lawyers from the National Prison Project of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) represented the Alabama inmates, arguing that their exclusion and continued segregation was a violation of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Source: *Texas Prison News*



said Stephen Donahue and Tim Vining of the Lambda Center in a statement. "A major part of the problem was that we have failed over the years to build a meaningful coalition among members of the gay rights movement and the more established civil rights

organizations... Too many white gay activists in these parts have been slow to acknowledge how they have benefited from racism."

The toxic mixture of homophobia and racial division has been disheartening, but there's still cause for hope.

"The hate inspired by homophobia knows no racial divide. Those who deal it out, and those who suffer its consequences come from every racial background," Donahue and Vining continued. "Those of us who are older are sure that, if given the chance, these

clubs will do what we have had the gumption to do; build alliances which cross over the specious categories of race, while confronting the evils of homophobia."

"The youth will show us the way, if we let them."

FOLLOW-UP

Don't Touch that Dial

Low-power radio won a victory in January, but corporate broadcasters still want to cut off the signal

Advocates for "low-watt" or "micro" radio gained an important victory since *Southern Exposure* last reported on the growing movement ["Distress Signal," Spring 1998]. At the time, micro-radio stations who were broadcasting on the public airwaves, but unable to afford a license, were still illegal, and while numerous small outfits from Florida to Texas to Kentucky were broadcasting, the threat of a government crackdown always hung in the air. Indeed, as investigative journalist Ron Holmes reported, many stations faced harassment, fines, or were shut down entirely.

All that changed in January, 2000, when the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) bowed to pressure and approved the licensing of "power radio service," also known as micro-radio. The FCC plan introduced two new radio licenses: one for 50-100 watt stations with a coverage radius of around 3.5 miles in diameter, and one for 1-10 watt stations with a range of 1-2 miles. Both classes are non-commercial – meaning no advertising – and licenses would be granted to community organizations, churches, high schools, labor unions, and others who would like to reach a small, concentrated group of people – for as little as \$1000 in start-up costs.

But this advance for community-based radio has drawn a backlash.

Leading the charge is the National Association of Broadcasters – including public radio stations – who contend that low-power radio will add interference to an already crowded radio dial. Micro-radio proponents counter that the FCC provisions are actually very strict, demanding several "spaces" between each licensed station to avoid clashing signals.

That hasn't stopped Rep. Michael Oxley (R-OH), who received nearly \$100,000 from communications and electronic industry PACs in 1997 and 1998, from introducing the "Radio Broadcasting Preservation Act," with the intent "To prohibit the Federal Communications Commission from establishing rules authorizing the operation of new, low power FM radio stations." To counter these efforts, two newly-formed groups – the Public Media Center and the Media Access Project – have launched a counter-offensive, charging that the broadcast lobby "wants broadcasting in the hands of a few corporations, which means that all radio, once the most diverse and local of mediums, sounds the same everywhere."

— Chris Kromm

For more information: **Federal Communications Commission:** www.fcc.gov
Media Access Project: www.mediaaccess.org
National Association of Broadcasters: www.nab.org
Radio4All: www.radio4all.org

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Policing the Police

As reports of abuse skyrocket, how do we hold the authorities accountable? Two reports from Tennessee.

From New York to Los Angeles, Seattle to D.C., scandals and charges of brutality and misconduct are shaking the police departments of the nation. Across the country, outrage builds with every report of police “riots,” excessive use of force, and similar abuses of power.

The South has not been immune to this national epidemic. As the following two reports from Tennessee find, officials have often responded to citizen demands for accountability with little more than window dressing and public relations stunts. Which leaves communities asking: How can we police the police?

CPR For A Troubled City

Citizens won their campaign for a police review board — but that didn't solve the problem of police brutality in Knoxville

By Rick Held

Virtually nothing would convince the city leaders of Knoxville, Tennessee, that the city's police department (KPD) had a serious problem. Not calls for reform by the city's NAACP chapter and the progressive religious community. Not the deaths of four men, three of them black, at the hands of KPD officers in the span of seven months. Nor the revelation that police had lied about finding cocaine in the car of one of the victims.

It would finally take a city brought to the brink of violent backlash to get the mayor, police chief, and city council to consider change. Indeed, Ron Davis, of the grassroots group Citizens for Police Review (CPR), still marvels at the intensity of the community's response to police brutality: “We had no idea the flame we were trying to keep lit would become a raging fire so quickly.”



A Rising Tide of Brutality

The drama dates back to the early 1990s, when the KPD's public relations arm began saturating the Knoxville media with drug-bust stories. At the same time, the department touted a steadily decreasing crime rate and national recognition of its community policing programs. But going largely unnoticed were skyrocketing complaints of police misconduct and an increased incidence of unsolved hate crimes.

As it became apparent that police brutality complaints made to the KPD's Internal Affairs Unit (IAU) were rarely upheld, complainants began turning to the Knoxville chapter of the NAACP.

"We documented about twenty cases of brutality and harassment over two to three years," says chapter president Dewey Roberts, "But IAU would never sustain them, even with our own investigations and people hospitalized because of police attacks."

The NAACP soon realized it did not have the capacity to handle the mushrooming number of complaints. At that point, the concept of an independent citizens' police review board started making sense to Roberts' group and others, as an alternative to the police policing themselves.

The NAACP first petitioned the Knoxville City Council to establish a review board in 1993. Minimal organized support and vehement police opposition guaranteed the proposal only a short political life. As public attention focused on the issue, police misconduct decreased, but not for long.

By 1996, a series of town hall meetings in County Commissioner Diane Jordan's inner city district were dominated by complaints of police harassment and violence. The year after, school teacher and videographer David Drews was working with Jordan, Roberts, and neighborhood activists to document stories of alleged police brutality.

"It was frustrating," says Drews. "So many were coming out of the woodwork with their stories that I was running out of money for videotape." Their work eventually resulted in the renewal of calls for a review board, and the establishment of Citizens for Police Review, or CPR.

Fanning the Flames

As CPR was born in the inner city, another anti-racist effort was in its embryonic stages across town. The ad hoc Faith Committee for the Prevention of Hate Crimes was a group of mostly white members of Knoxville's tiny assortment of progressive churches. Frustrated that the only organized response to cross-burnings seemed to be candlelight vigils, the group sought more pro-active, preventative measures. The committee focused on the KPD, since its dismal record on solving hate crimes seemed to encourage racists.

It did not take long for the black and white groups to discover each other. "It was after we talked with CPR folks that we realized police might be guilty of hate crimes themselves, through acts of brutality," said Margaret Beebe, whose fundraising efforts for the Faith Committee were soon transferred to CPR. The Faith Committee soon disbanded to become CPR members, willingly – but not easily – taking a back seat to African-American leadership.

The death of Juan Daniels in October, 1997, thrust the fledgling alliance into a firestorm of controversy. Daniels, reportedly drunk and suicidal, was shot nine times by two white policemen in his basement, after (police claim) he lunged at them with a knife. In the standoff leading up to his death, Daniels, a 25-year-old African American, asked to speak to several people, including his mental health case worker (now a CPR member), but was only allowed to talk to his roommate.

The incident occurred within four months of the shooting of James Woodfin, an African American who was shot with a twelve gauge shotgun in the bathroom of his public housing apartment by a KPD officer, who was trying to serve him a misdemeanor warrant.

The October city council meeting suspended its entire agenda when 400 angry people responded to the Daniels killing by showing up to demand a police review board.

Call for Action

Mayor Victor Ashe responded by ordering video cameras installed in every squad car, but insisted a review board was a bad idea. The mayor also appointed a task force to look at other ways to get citizen input. The task force meetings proved to be largely dominated by KPD Chief Phil Keith's reports on decreased crime rates. When asked about a review board, the Chief responded, "We already have police review. It's called a Grand Jury."

The task force had only met four times before the death of Andre Stenson rendered it moot. On January 9, 1998, the newlywed father and chef at Calhoun's restaurant died after fleeing a traffic stop and struggling with four white police officers. Having recently served jail time for burglary, he may have panicked about violating parole for driving without a license. KPD public information officer Foster Arnett Jr., speculated that Stenson died from a cocaine-induced heart attack, and claimed that crack had been found in his car. The medical examiner later ruled that he had died of a rare heart condition, triggered by the stress and extreme exertion of the incident. Cocaine tests were negative.

The news quickly spread through the inner city that the police had killed another black man. The more police denied their responsibility in relentless television

Photo by Rick Held

interviews, the edgier the mood became on the street. In a hastily-called press conference, a worried-looking State Representative Joe Armstrong pleaded, "We have heard reports that retaliatory action is going to happen, and we urge all of our constituents to remain calm."

Within 24 hours African-American ministers were on every station, calling for a massive turnout at the next city council meeting, once again to demand a police review board. With this call repeated Sunday morning on the Knoxville *News-Sentinel's* front page, as well as at most African-American church services, the 500-seat council chamber was standing-room-only for the first time in its history. Cries of "Justice!" rang out amid seven hours of calls for a review board and for the ouster of Chief Keith. Some public threats of armed retaliation expressed that evening were rebuffed by ministers and CPR members.

The following day, police spokesman Arnett recanted his claim that cocaine had been found in Andre Stenson's car. Arnett said an officer, whose name he forgot, told him a police dog detected drugs in the car. Arnett's superiors said he failed to "clarify" the information, and he was given a written reprimand.

Within 48 hours, Mayor Ashe and Chief Keith announced their decision to support a police review board.

"Watching The Watchdog"

Since the mayor appointed the Police Advisory and Review Commission (PARC) in 1998, the pace and intensity of KPD abuse has again subsided. But the Knoxville organizers who worked on police accountability before it was front page news are forced to wonder whether theirs was a pyrrhic victory.

"No doubt we needed something like PARC," says CPR's Ron Davis. "But we may be getting lulled into complacency. We don't see near the numbers of folks at CPR meetings that were there before we had PARC, yet excessive force complaints still look like a waste of time."

All the police who were involved in the deaths were exonerated, and with less than one percent of excessive force complaints leading to disciplinary action, the KPD is far behind the national average of 12–15 percent.

CPR is slowly adjusting to its new role, which some members describe as "watching the watchdog." The group usually has at least one of its representatives at each quarterly public meeting of the PARC. After a



RON DAVIS (PICTURED) AND OTHERS STARTED CITIZENS FOR POLICE REVIEW AFTER SEVERAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS HAD DIED IN POLICE CUSTODY.

year of slow action, CPR is demanding the PARC deal with several issues right away, including what is really behind the low rate of disciplinary action, identifying police who are repeat offenders, and verifying persistent reports that at least one patrolman is a member of a hate group.

Another source of tension comes from the makeup of the PARC. With a retired FBI agent (a white male) chairing a police review commission which includes the past president of the University of Tennessee (white male), two female lawyers (one white; one black), two male ministers (one white; one black), and one black male school teacher, most of them have not avoided being perceived as out of touch with the typical victims of police brutality.

While CPR tries to make the most of the public forum that the PARC provides, its members continue to look for better models of police accountability in other communities, especially where community organizing engages citizens to create ways to truly keep the peace with police.

"We can't afford any more public relations campaigns," Ron Davis warns. "If all this turns out to be window dressing, I don't like the odds of keeping the peace when the next atrocity happens."

Rick Held is a journalist and activist based in Knoxville, Tennessee.

No Justice; Disturbing the Peace

The Chattanooga Three are demanding police accountability — and changing a state-wide law that may threaten everyone’s free speech

By Jordan Green

Photo by Francois Graf

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. – Saturday, March 18, was a watershed day in the movement for police accountability in the border town of Chattanooga, Tennessee. It was on this day that the Coalition Against Racism and Brutality marched through the city’s downtown, capping almost two decades of struggle between the African-American community and a local police department, which activists have charged with a pattern of abuse and misconduct.

Away from the streets, in the Tennessee Criminal Court of Appeals, Saturday also brought another crucial development in the police accountability debate. The Court upheld a 1994 conviction of local activist Lorenzo Komboa Ervin for “disruption,” stemming from his anti-police brutality protests. The ruling spelled trouble for Ervin and two other activists – dubbed “The Chattanooga Three” – who were arrested in 1998, also on charges of disruption. It has also drawn attention to the entire “disruption” statute, which activists believe is a device used to squelch dissent.

“The demonstration today – after the court’s ruling – places me in legal jeopardy of being arrested just for the protests,” Lorenzo Komboa Ervin told the rally. “They denied us a permit to march, so we could all be rolled up into jail.”



LORENZO KOMBOA ERVIN ARGUES THAT CHARGES OF “DISRUPTION” AMOUNT TO AN ATTEMPT TO SQUELCH FREE SPEECH.

“Disrupting a meeting or procession”

Ervin, Damon McGhee, and Mikail Musa Muhammad of Black Autonomy Copwatch were arrested on May 19, 1998 for speaking out at a Chattanooga City Council meeting against two recent police killings. The Tennessee law they were charged with is referred to as “Disrupting a meeting or procession,” and it carries a sentence of six months in state prison.

They had been told that the City Council would hear their concerns about two recent deaths at the hands of police. Just two weeks before, on May 7, 1998, a young African-American man, Kevin McCullough, was shot by police who were serving him a warrant at work. Before that, on April 28, another young African-American man, Montrail Collins, was shot 17 times by Chattanooga police. Police Chief J.L. Dotson told *The Chattanooga Times* that both officers were defending themselves, under the protection of both city policy and state law.

Ervin says that he was put on the agenda of the City Council to speak to his concerns about the deaths. When City Council Chair Dave Crockett failed to acknowledge him, Ervin asked when he would be able to speak.

“They said, ‘Your request has been refused,’ so I got up and spoke,” relates Ervin. The result is that Ervin, along with McGhee and Muhammad — who stood up to express their disappointment with the Council’s decision — were arrested and charged with “disturbance.”

Crockett characterizes the incident as being “more than a disturbance.” He says that the group of 150 who came to express their grievance about police abuse was “boisterous” and that they refused to wait their turn to speak. “We don’t use the special presentation time for grievances,” Crockett explains. “I think there might have been some confusion about that.”

Crockett justifies himself in having the three removed from the room and arrested. “I had some concern for the safety of the people who attended the meeting and concern for the officers,” he maintains.

Dying in the Law’s Hands

Ervin’s testimony was important to this small city nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains of eastern Tennessee because of Chattanooga’s poor record on police brutality. A 1995 internal memo from the Department of Justice noted Chattanooga as number one for reported cases of police brutality of American cities with 200,000 people or less. The department’s internal investigations have consistently justified killings as self-defense. In fact no Chattanooga police officer has ever been convicted of murder.

Activists in Chattanooga fighting against police brutality have taken another blow in a struggle that has as much to do with the right to civic participation as the right to not be threatened with bodily harm. University of Tennessee law professor Dwight Aarons filed a

friend-of-the-court brief asking the Court to justify the constitutionality of the statute, which he suggested could be used at the discretion of the City to silence unpopular speech.

“A challenge to the constitutionality of a statute is normally a difficult endeavor,” says Aarons. “I’ve tried to point out to the court the difficulties involved in reading the statute to maintain that the statute, as presently written, does not infringe on a defendant’s constitutional rights.”

Aaron argues it is a hard law to defend, though. “Texas law, which is the model for the Tennessee statute,” he relates, “has been found to be over-broad.”

The Associated Press has reported two cases in which community members have successfully challenged such restrictions and won. Elizabeth Romine was found “not guilty” of obstructing government operations for speaking out of turn at a Florence, Alabama, City Council meeting. Similarly, a Michigan judge issued an injunction last year barring city officials from keeping critics of Battle Creek Police Chief Jeffrey Kruihoff from speaking out against him during open meetings.

Silencing Dissent

Ervin feels strongly that the City of Chattanooga is more interested in stifling dissent than keeping the peace. “This is a tourist town. Tourism is the number one industry. In their view,” he says, “they can’t afford to have a negative position about authority.”

“There is a long history of repression of radical activity and Black-led political causes in Chattanooga.” Ervin points to the prosecution of the four principal leaders of the Chattanooga Black Panthers in 1972, which effectively neutralized the local chapter of the party. Ralph Moore, Gerald Edwards, Ray Lindsay, and Madonna Storey were all charged and convicted of extortion by the Chattanooga Criminal Court. This was during the era of the FBI’s COINTELPRO program in which the agency carried on an intensive campaign of repression against the Panthers, as well as infiltrating the organization with provocateurs to engineer a national split between the east and west coasts. In smaller chapters such as Chattanooga’s, aggressive investigation and prosecution were used more effectively.

Ervin is only aware of the “disturbance” statute being used twice — in his current case and against him once before in 1993. At a police memorial, Ervin and eight others were arrested for counter-demonstrating to memorialize individuals who had died at the hands of the police. They were protesting the refusal of a Hamilton County grand jury to indict the law enforcement officers responsible for killing Larry Powell, who critics charge was a victim of “driving while black.” Powell was choked to death by the police.

Crockett agrees that the statute is rarely put into use. “I only remember one other incident when someone was asked to excuse themselves and that was amicable

POLICING THE POLICE

because the person was inebriated."

Aarons concurs that the case is a legal rarity. "My research of both reported and unreported cases has not uncovered any case involving a prosecution under the statute," he testifies. "Lorenzo's case appears to be a first."

The recent movement against police abuse in Chattanooga goes back to Concerned Citizens for Justice, founded in 1984 by Maxine Cousins. Cousins' father, Wadie Suttles, mysteriously died in a Chattanooga jail in December 1983. Cousins and others in Concerned Citizens felt strongly that Suttles had been murdered at the hands of the police.

A Community Comes Together

Cousins' quest for justice over the past 16 years highlights the dogged persistence of Chattanooga's struggle against police brutality. "My father was arrested for disorderly conduct," she says. "He was taken to the hospital three times in the seven days he was in jail. On the third time he was dead." She tells of an unbowed Black man who was beaten on the head with a steel rod wrapped in leather until his skull cracked and his head started bleeding internally. "He started screaming out for help and nobody came."

Initially, there was a strong organizational effort to respond to the tragedy. Cousins believes the NAACP, Operation Push, and other groups were disingenuously posturing for leadership instead of working together to build resistance to police brutality. She was frustrated that the lawyer who brought a criminal case against the Police Department, seemed to depoliticize the issue.

The next year she and a friend met the mother of Emmett Till at a conference in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Ervin stresses that the push to make the Chattanooga police accountable came from ordinary people. "Established Black organizations such as the NAACP were not in the forefront of the struggle and that's why the Coalition was founded. It was individual people in the community who had suffered from police brutality who stood up."

In their experience fighting police abuse in Chattanooga, the Coalition has seen its ups and downs. Copwatch programs have been used intermittently to put police brutality in check — but at a price. Cousins lost her job at the Tennessee Valley Authority because of harassment from her supervisor who disapproved of her defiant position against the police. At one point, Chattanooga instituted a police review panel but Ervin and others in the Coalition felt that it was ineffective because it was dominated by the police themselves. "The police cover-up had been compared to Emmett Till's case," relates Cousins. "Till's mother was describing some of the emotional things that come up, which I was also experiencing."

Frustrated with the lack of progress in the case and

determined to take charge of her life, Cousins decided to found Concerned Citizens for Justice. "We wanted to be able to move without getting anybody's permission," Cousins insists. "We started holding prayer vigils for my father's case outside the jail even though we didn't realize that it was a protest."

In 1988, this organization evolved into the Adhoc Coalition Against Racism and Police Brutality.

Even if the tide of police abuse has not been stemmed, Ervin feels that there is more awareness and willingness to acknowledge the problem. "100 people called into this local radio show to say that they'd been harassed by the police. I don't think that's changed (from the past). 35 people have been killed by the police in the past decade in Chattanooga. Four people have been killed in the past eighteen months. One person died in holding, and the police called it a suicide. People they kill right on the street they call a suicide."

The Chattanooga Police Department would not comment on any of statistics of police killings put out by Ervin and the Coalition ("I don't want to get into a war of words with that group," said Media Director Ed Buice.)

Ervin is a veteran of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which was founded in 1960. Much of his sense of local, grassroots struggle came from those years of organizing during the civil rights movement, but much has changed. "SNCC arose at a time when it was possible to organize around mass events; that can't be replicated."

"We thought of ourselves as organizers, not charismatic leaders," Ervin emphasizes. "That was our political education."

But most importantly, it's crucial to stay focused in the present. "The civil rights movement went past this place. That's why the activism of Maxine Cousins and the activism starting in the early '80s is important for Chattanooga."

Cousins comments that there "have been some concessions made because of the organizing." However, on the day after the acquittal of four New York City police officers charged in the Amadou Diallo case, she was dismayed at the current state of community-police relations on a national level.

"The Diallo case has brought back the Taney Ruling of 1896," says Cousins. "It reinforces for African Americans that 'a Black man has no rights which a white man is bound to respect.'"

"There has to be a national movement to make the police accountable," Cousins insists.

While unsure of his legal options for maintaining his freedom and continuing the struggle, Ervin remains committed. "Keeping a spotlight on the police and monitoring their activity is the only way to combat police abuse."

Jordan Green is a writer, activist, and poet from Kentucky, now based in Durham, N.C., and fiction editor of Southern Exposure.

Who Killed Martin Luther King?

Theories and conspiracies abound, but it took a Memphis jury only three hours last December to agree on one thing: the official story doesn't stand up

By Douglas Valentine

Photo by Joseph Louw/Life/Time Pix



On Dec. 8, 1999, a jury in Memphis, Tennessee, deliberated for only three hours before deciding that the long-held official version of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination was wrong. The jury's verdict implicated a retired Memphis businessman and government agencies in a conspiracy to kill the civil rights giant.

But should closure – or forgetfulness – follow a verdict that finds the federal government complicit in a conspiracy to assassinate one of this nation’s most historic figures?

Though the trial testimony had received little press attention outside of the Memphis area, the startling outcome drew an immediate rebuttal from defenders of the official finding: that James Earl Ray acted alone or possibly as part of a low-level conspiracy of a few white racists.

Leading newspapers across the country disparaged the December verdict as the product of a flawed conspiracy theory given a one-sided presentation. *The Washington Post* even lumped the conspiracy proponents in with those who insist Adolf Hitler was unfairly accused of genocide. “The deceit of history, whether it occurs in the context of Holocaust denial or in an effort to rewrite the story of Dr. King’s death, is a dangerous impulse for which those committed to reasoned debate and truth cannot sit still,” a December 12, 1999 *Post* editorial read. “The more quickly and completely this jury’s discredited verdict is forgotten the better.”

For its part, the King family cited the verdict as a way of dealing with its personal grief. “We hope to put this behind us and move on with our lives,” said Dexter King, speaking on behalf of the family. “This is a time for reconciliation, healing and closure.”

But should closure – or forgetfulness – follow a verdict that finds the federal government complicit in a conspiracy to assassinate one of this nation’s most historic figures? Are there indeed legitimate reasons to doubt the official story? And how should Americans evaluate this unorthodox trial, its evidence and the verdict?

A Reason to Doubt

Without doubt, the trial in Memphis lacked the neat wrap-up of a Perry Mason drama. The testimony was sometimes imprecise, dredging up disputed memories more than three decades old. Some testimony was hearsay; long depositions by deceased or absent figures were read into the record; and some witnesses had changed their stories over time amid accusations of profiteering.

There was a messiness that often accompanies complex cases of great notoriety. The plaintiff’s case also did not encounter a rigorous challenge from Lewis K. Garrison, the attorney for defendant Loyd Jowers. Garrison shares the doubts about the official version, and his client, Jowers, has implicated himself in the conspiracy, although insisting his role was tangential. Some critics compared the trial to a professional wrestling match with the defense putting up only token resistance.

Yet, despite the shortcomings, the trial was the first time that evidence from the King assassination was presented to a jury in a court of law. The verdict demonstrated that 12 citizens – six blacks and six whites – did not find the notion of a wide-ranging conspiracy to kill King as ludicrous as many commentators did.

The trial suggested, too, that the government erred by neglecting the larger issue of public interest in the mystery of who killed Martin Luther King Jr. Instead the government simply affirmed and reaffirmed James Earl Ray’s guilty plea for three decades. Insisting that the evidence pointed clearly toward Ray as the assassin, the government never agreed to vacate Ray’s guilty plea and allow for a full-scale trial, a possibility that ended when Ray died from liver disease in 1998.

At that point, the King family judged that a wrongful death suit against Jowers was the last chance for King’s murder to be considered by a jury. From the start, the family encountered harsh criticism from many editorial writers who judged the conspiracy allegations nutty.

The King family’s suspicions, however, derived from one fact that was beyond dispute: that powerful elements of the federal government indeed were out to get Martin Luther King, Jr., in the years before his murder. In particular, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover despised King as a dangerous radical who threatened the national security and needed to be neutralized by almost any means necessary.

After King’s “I have a dream speech” in 1963, FBI assistant director William Sullivan called King “the most dangerous and effective Negro leader in the country.” Hoover reacted to King’s Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 with the comment that King was “the most notorious liar in the country.”

The documented record is clear that the FBI and other federal agencies aggressively investigated King as an enemy of the state. His movements were monitored; his phones were tapped; his rooms were bugged; derogatory information about his personal life was leaked to discredit him; he was blackmailed about extramarital affairs; he was even sent a message suggesting that he commit suicide. “There is only one way out for you,” the message read, “You better take it before your filthy, abnormal, fraudulent self is bared to the nation.”

These FBI operations escalated as black uprisings burned down parts of American cities and as the nation's campuses erupted in protests against the Vietnam War. To many young Americans, black and white, King was a man of unparalleled stature and extraordinary courage. He was the leader who could merge the civil rights and anti-war movements. Increasingly, King saw the two issues as intertwined, charging that President Lyndon Johnson was siphoning off anti-poverty funds to prosecute the costly war in Vietnam.

On April 15, 1967, less than a year before his murder, King concluded a speech to an anti-war rally with a call on the Johnson administration to "stop the bombing." King also began planning a Poor People's March on Washington that would put a tent city on the Mall and press the government for a broad redistribution of the nation's wealth.

Covert government operations worked to disrupt both the anti-war and civil rights movements by infiltrating them with spies and agents provocateurs. The FBI's COINTELPRO sought to neutralize what were called "black nationalist hate groups," counting among its targets King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference. One FBI memo fretted about the possible emergence of a black "Messiah" who could "unify and electrify" the various black militant groups. The memo listed King as "a real contender" for this leadership role.

The Manhunt

With this backdrop came the chaotic events in Memphis in early 1968 as King lent his support to a sanitation workers' strike marred by violence. The government's surveillance of King in Memphis – by both federal agents and city police – would rest at the heart of the case more than three decades later. On April 4, 1968, at 6 p.m., King emerged from his room on the second floor of the Lorraine Motel. As he leaned over the balcony, King was struck by a single bullet and died.

As word of his death spread, riots exploded in cities across the country. Fiery smoke billowed from behind the Capitol dome. Government officials struggled to restore order and police searched for King's assassin.

One of those questioned was restaurant owner Loyd Jowers, whose Jim's Grill was below the rooming house where James Earl Ray had stayed and from where authorities contend the fatal shot was fired.

Jowers told the police he knew nothing about the shooting, but had heard a noise that "sounded like something that fell in the kitchen." (*The Commercial Appeal*, Dec. 9, 1999)

The international manhunt ended at London's Heathrow Airport on June 8, 1968, when Scotland Yard detained Ray for carrying an illegal firearm. Ray was



JAMES EARL RAY — PICTURED SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH — CLAIMED HE WAS MISLED INTO PLEADING GUILTY TO THE KING MURDER.

extradited back to the United States to stand trial as King's lone assassin.

The FBI insisted that it could find no solid evidence indicating that Ray was part of any conspiracy. But the authorities contended they had a strong case against Ray, including a recovered rifle with Ray's fingerprints. The rifle fired bullets of the same caliber as the one that killed King.

While Ray sat in jail, Jowers' name popped up again in the case. On Feb. 10, 1969, Betty Spates, a waitress at Jim's Grill, implicated Jowers in the assassination. She said Jowers found a gun behind the café and may actually have shot King. Two days later, however, Spates recanted. (*The Commercial Appeal*, Dec. 9, 1999)

On March 10, 1969, Ray accepted the advice of his attorney and pleaded guilty. He was sentenced to 99 years in prison. Three days later, however, he wrote a letter to the judge asking that his guilty plea be set aside. He claimed that he was innocent and that his lawyer had misled him into making the plea. Ray began telling a complex tale in which he was duped by an operative he knew only as "Raul." Ray claimed that Raul arranged the assassination and set Ray up to take

WHO DID IT?

Leading MLK Assassination Theories

The Lone Assassin: James Earl Ray

The FBI, the Memphis Police Department, and the Shelby County District Attorney's office quickly united around the theory that an escaped felon named James Earl Ray pulled off the plan, the shot, and the getaway all by himself. This single-suspect theory has been extensively developed by a Wall Street attorney, Gerald Posner, in his book *Killing the Dream: James Earl Ray and the Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Posner denies government involvement and the existence of a cover-up. Since Ray is the only suspect, the crime has been solved, and there is no need to examine who benefited from the murder.

The House Assassinations Committee: Other Players Involved

A congressional committee chaired by King's close friend, Rep. Walter Fauntroy, concluded that Ray probably murdered King, but that he probably had help from his brother and possibly a racist St. Louis businessman. The highly partisan committee members had strong political motives – on one side, to find a government conspiracy; and on the other, to buttress the government position that Ray acted alone. Not surprisingly, the conclusion was a sort of compromise: a small, controlled conspiracy involving the Ray family and one or two others, but no one on any government payroll was involved. The Assassinations Committee's report remains the best source of information on King's murder.

Dick Gregory and Mark Lane: "Proof" of Government Involvement

Investigative journalist Mark Lane and civil rights activist Dick Gregory believe that there was government action two hours before the murder when a black detective was taken out of his surveillance spot. Det. Ed Redditt had been posted in the back of a fire station a few yards from the Lorraine Motel, not far from where the fatal shot was fired. He was there ostensibly to protect King, but was called in to Memphis police headquarters at 4 p.m. the day of the murder, about two hours before it occurred. There he was introduced to "a Secret Service agent from Washington" who had apparently instigated his removal, on the pretext of protecting Redditt from threats on his life.

The King Family and William Pepper: The Jowers Conspiracy

The King family and their lawyer, William Pepper – a 60s activist who had influenced King's increasingly anti-war stance – have emphasized the testimony of Loyd Jowers, who owned Jim's Grill just across the courtyard from the site of the murder. Jowers claims that there was a conspiracy, and that he was paid to participate in it. The shooter was probably an off-duty Memphis police officer, now deceased. A Memphis jury found the evidence convincing, and ruled against Jowers in a civil suit brought by the King family this past winter.

– Compiled by Gary Ashwill.
Al McSurely contributed research to this story



REV. KING STANDS WITH (FROM LEFT) HOSEA WILLIAMS, JESSE JACKSON AND RALPH ABERNATHY AT THE MEMPHIS HOTEL WHERE HE WAS ASSASSINATED A DAY LATER.

the fall.

Government investigators rejected Raul's existence and insisted that Ray was simply spinning a story to escape a long prison term. The courts rejected Ray's request for a trial. As far as the legal system of Memphis was concerned, the case was closed.

But there did appear to be weaknesses in the prosecution case that might have shown up at trial. For instance, Charles Stephens, a key witness placing Ray at the scene of the crime, appeared to have been drunk at the time and had offered contradictory accounts of the assailant's description, according to a reporter who encountered him after the shooting. (For details, see William F. Pepper's *Orders to Kill*.) Outside the government, other skeptical investigators began to pick at the loose ends of the case.

In 1971, investigative writer Harold Weisberg published the first dissenting account of the official King case in his book, *Frame Up*. Weisberg noted problems with the physical evidence, including the FBI's failure to match the death slug to the alleged murder weapon. Questions about the case mounted when the federal government declassified records revealing the intensity of FBI hatred for King. The combination of factual discrepancies and a possible government motive led some of King's friends to suspect a conspiracy.

In 1977, civil rights leader Ralph Abernathy encouraged lawyer William F. Pepper to meet with Ray and hear out the convict's tale. Pepper said he took on the assignment in part because he had encouraged King to join in publicly criticizing the Vietnam War and felt a sense of responsibility for King's fate.

Responding to growing public doubts about the official accounts of the three major assassinations that rocked the nation in the 1960s, Congress also agreed to

re-examine the murders of President John F. Kennedy, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and King.

In congressional testimony, however, Ray came off poorly. Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Ohio, the chairman of the investigating committee, said Ray's performance convinced him that Ray indeed was the assassin and that there was no government role in the murder.

The panel did leave open the possibility that other individuals were involved, but limited the scope of any conspiracy to maybe Ray's brothers, Jerry and John, or two St. Louis racists who allegedly put a bounty on King's life. But others on the panel, such as Rep. Walter Fauntroy, D-D.C., continued to harbor doubts about the congressional findings.

The King Family Charges Conspiracy

After a decade of on-and-off work on the case, Pepper decided to press ahead. He agreed to represent Ray and filed a habeas corpus suit on his behalf. Also, in 1993, a mock television trial presented the evidence against Ray to a "jury," which returned the convict's "acquittal." Pepper asserted that the government's case was so weak that Ray would win a regular trial, too.

Jowers reentered the controversy as well, reversing his initial statement to police denying knowledge of the assassination. On Dec. 16, 1993, in a nationally televised ABC-TV interview, Jowers claimed that a Mafia-connected Memphis produce dealer, Frank C. Liberto, paid him \$100,000 to arrange King's murder.

But Liberto was then dead and the man named by Jowers as the paid hit-man denied any role in the murder. (*The Commercial Appeal*, Dec. 9, 1999)

In 1993, a mock television trial presented the evidence against Ray to a "jury," which returned the convict's "acquittal." Pepper asserted that the government's case was so weak that Ray would win a regular trial, too.

“Had we had [another] six months, we may well have gotten to the bottom of everything,” Fauntroy testified on Nov. 29. “We didn’t have the time to investigate leads we had established but could not follow.”

In 1995, Pepper published an account of his investigation in *Orders to Kill*. The book contended that the conspirators behind the assassination included elements of the Mafia, the FBI, and U.S. Army intelligence. Pepper located witnesses with new evidence. John McFerren, a black grocery owner, was quoted as saying that an hour before the assassination, he overheard Liberto order someone over the phone to “shoot the son of a bitch when he comes on the balcony.”

But Pepper’s credibility suffered when he cited anonymous sources in identifying William Eidson as a deceased member of a U.S. Army assassination squad that was present in Memphis on the day King died. ABC-TV researchers found Eidson to be alive and furious at Pepper’s insinuations about his alleged role in the King assassination.

Still, the King family – especially King’s children – grew increasingly interested in the controversy. On March 27, 1997, King’s younger son, Dexter, sat down with Ray in prison, listened to Ray’s story and announced his belief that Ray was telling the truth. In a separate meeting with the King family, Jowers claimed that a police officer shot King from behind Jim’s Grill. The officer then handed the smoking rifle to Jowers, the former restaurant owner said.

The authorities in Tennessee, however, continued to rebuff Ray’s appeals for a trial. Prosecutors concluded that Jowers’ story lacked credibility and may have been motivated by greed. Ray’s pleas for his day in court finally ended with his death from liver disease.

On Oct. 2, 1998, the King family filed a wrongful death suit against Jowers. The trial opened in November 1999, attracting scant attention from the national press. Jowers, 73, attended only part of the trial, and did not testify. His admissions of complicity were recounted by others who had spoken with him.

Former United Nations ambassador Andrew Young testified that he found Jowers sincere during a four-hour conversation about the assassination. “I got the impression this was a man who was very sick [and who] wanted to go to confession to get his soul right,” Young said.

According to Young, Jowers said he had served Memphis police officers and federal agents when they met in Jowers’ restaurant before the assassination. Jowers also recounted his story of Mafia money going to a man who delivered a rifle to Jowers’ café. After the assassination, the man, a Memphis police officer, handed the rifle to Jowers through a back door, according to Jowers’ account. (*Scripps Howard News Service*, Nov. 18, 1999)

A former state judge, Joe Brown, took the stand to challenge the government’s confidence that Ray’s rifle was the murder weapon. During one of Ray’s earlier court hearings, Brown had ordered new ballistic tests on the gun and the bullet that killed King.

The results had been inconclusive, with the forensics experts unable to rule whether the gun was the murder weapon or was not. In his testimony, however, Brown asserted that the sight on the rifle was so poor that it couldn’t have killed King.

“This weapon literally could not hit the broadside of a barn,” Brown said. But he acknowledged that he had no formal training as a weapons expert.

The jury also heard testimony that federal authorities were monitoring the area around the Lorraine Motel. Carthel Weeden, a former captain with the Memphis Fire Department, said that on the afternoon of April 4, 1968, two men appeared at the fire station across from the motel and showed the credentials of U.S. Army officers.

The men then carried briefcases, which they said held photographic equipment, up to the roof of the station. Weeden said the men positioned themselves behind a parapet approximately 18 inches high, a position that gave them a clear view of the Lorraine Motel and the rooming house window from which Ray allegedly fired the shot that killed King.

They also would have had a view of the area behind Jim’s Grill. But what happened to any possible photographs remains a mystery. Weeden added that he was never questioned by local or federal authorities.

Former Rep. Fauntroy also testified at the King-Jowers trial. Fauntroy complained that the 1978 congressional inquiry was not as thorough as the public might have thought. The committee dropped the investigation when funding dried up and left some promising leads unexplored, he told the jury.

“Had we had [another] six months, we may well have gotten to the bottom of everything,” Fauntroy testified on Nov. 29. “We didn’t have the time to investigate leads we had established but could not follow ...

We asked the Justice Department to follow up ... and to see if there was more than just a low-level conspiracy."

Other witnesses described a strange withdrawal of police protection from around the motel about an hour before King's death. A group of black homicide detectives, who had served as King's bodyguards on previous visits to Memphis, were kept from performing those duties in April 1968.

In his summation, trying to minimize his client's alleged role in the conspiracy, Garrison asked the jury, "Would the owner of a greasy spoon restaurant, and a lone assassin, could they pull away officers from the scene of an assassination? Could they put someone up on the top of the fire station?"

The cumulative evidence apparently convinced the jury. After the trial, juror Robert Tucker told a reporter that the 12 jurors agreed that the assassination was too complex for one person to handle. He noted the testimony about the police guards being removed and Army agents observing King from the firehouse. "All of these things added up, Tucker told the Associated Press.

The Media Backlash

Even before the trial ended, the media controversy about the case had begun. Many reporters viewed the conspiracy allegations as half-baked and the defense as offering few challenges to the breathtaking assertions. The jury, for instance, heard little about the gradual evolution of Jowers' story, which began with a flat denial and grew over time with the addition of sometimes conflicting details.

In a commentary on the case, history writer John McMillian reaffirmed his confidence in Ray's guilt and his certainty that the wrongful death suit was "misguided." But McMillian noted that the King family's suspicions about the government's actions were grounded in the reality of the FBI's campaign to ruin King's reputation.

"While King was alive, he and his family suffered needlessly from slimy government subterfuge," McMillian wrote. Though believing Ray was "justly punished for being King's assassin," McMillian wrote, "the FBI has never been held accountable for a much more lengthy, expensive and organized campaign to destroy King."

Other critics focused on Pepper. Court TV analyst Harriet Ryan noted that the King family's motivations appeared sincere, but "the same cannot be said for Pepper [who] stands to gain from sales of his book." Gerald Posner, author of the conspiracy-debunking book, *Killing the Dream*, argued that the trial "bordered on the absurd" due to a "lethargic" defense and a judge who allowed "most everything to come into the record."

Posner also cited money as the motive behind the

The larger tragedy may be that the serious questions about King's assassination have receded even deeper into the historical mist.

case. He accused Pepper of misleading the King family for personal gain and suggested that the King family went along as part of a scheme to sell the movie rights to film producer Oliver Stone.

Pepper responded that a film project that the King family had discussed with Warner Bros. had fallen through before the civil case was brought. He noted, too, that the family sought and received only a token jury award of \$100.

But the back-and-forth quickly muddied whatever new understanding the public might have gained from the trial.

Part of the confusion could be traced to the effectiveness of Posner and other critics in making their case in a wide array of newspapers and on television talk shows. Some of the blame, however, must fall on Pepper and his flawed investigation that did include some erroneous assertions.

The larger tragedy may be that the serious questions about King's assassination have receded even deeper into the historical mist. As Court TV analyst Ryan noted, "Whatever theories Garrison and Pepper get into the record ... it is not likely they will change the general belief that Ray was responsible."

Though Ryan may be right, another perspective came in 1996 when two admirers of Dr. King – the Rev. James M. Lawson Jr. and actor Mike Farrell – wrote a fund-raising letter seeking support for a fuller investigation of the assassination. They argued that the full story of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination was too important to the country to leave any stone unturned. They stated:

"There are buried truths in our history which continue to insist themselves back into the light, perhaps because they hold within them the nearly dead embers of what we were once intended to be as a nation."

SE

JDouglas Valentine is author of the 1990 book, The Phoenix Program. He has written for publications including Consortiumnews.com, where an earlier version of this story appeared. Valentine also worked as a researcher for the King family, and testified at the trial about U.S. government surveillance of King.

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Lies Across the South



Our monuments, markers, and other historical sites say a lot about how we remember our past – with implications for the present. James Loewen takes us on a journey through the South's sites – and finds that, all too often, they get the story wrong.

By James W. Loewen

As a region, the South is distinctively haunted by history, as observers from William Faulkner to the late C. Vann Woodward have noted. Actually, as its landscape makes plain, the South is distinctively haunted by mis-history.

All across the South, from Maryland to Texas, historical markers, monuments, and historic sites get history wrong, mostly on purpose.

Don't get me wrong: this is a national problem. But Dixie has it worse than any other region.

Some errors are fun, like the marker in Pittsburg, Texas, that tells of "The Ezekiel Airship," invented by Baptist minister Burrell Cannon. Texas claims it "was briefly airborne at this site late in 1902, a year before the Wright brothers first flew" — but it wasn't.



THE EZEKIEL AIRSHIP RELIED ON FOUR VERTICALLY MOUNTED PADDLES FOR LIFT AND FORWARD MOTION. SINCE VERTICALLY MOUNTED PADDLES DON'T WORK IN AIR AS THEY DO IN WATER, THE AIRSHIP NEVER GOT OFF THE GROUND.

Some errors are harmless, such as the battle on the landscape between Brunswick, Georgia, and Brunswick County, Virginia, over where Brunswick stew was born. Recently, Brunswick County, North Carolina has also put in a claim.

Many errors are not so innocent. What do we make of the courthouse square in Scottsboro, Alabama, for instance? It boasts four historical markers but omits any mention of the event that made Scottsboro famous around the world, the case of the Scottsboro Boys. Recall that in 1931, nine black youths riding a freight train through northern Alabama were accused of raping two white women. Neither woman had been raped, it turned out, but eight boys were sentenced to death anyway, and one, just thirteen years old, to life in prison. Appeals went to the U.S. Supreme Court four times; after international protests, all nine were freed, the last in 1950. The four markers imply that Scottsboro considers it

important to know about its past, but Scottsboro does not.

All too often across the South, communities that are notorious for a certain event make no mention of that event. Meanwhile, they put up historical markers and monuments that tell of incidents that are laughably insignificant in comparison. The result is a landscape of amnesia, of which Scottsboro offers only a particularly outrageous example.

Accounts of history on the landscape should begin with American Indians, but too often the landscape makes Native Americans invisible. A state historical marker in Baldwin, Louisiana, narrates the death of Hernando De Soto, who "was buried in the Mississippi River, which he discovered." Such language implies that American Indians weren't there or weren't people – which would have amused the Spanish, who buried De Soto in the river to keep the Indians from knowing he was dead. According to a Texas state historical

marker near New Caney in Montgomery County, "Permanent settlement in what is now New Caney began in the 1860s," but according to *The New Handbook of Texas*, "the area that now comprises Montgomery County . . . has been continuously occupied for more than 10,000 years." This marker's language implies that Indians weren't there or only "roamed."

Markers do give fuller attention to the almost-continuous warfare between European Americans and Native Americans that marked Southern history from 1526 – when conflict with Indians caused a Spanish colony to abandon their settlement in the Carolinas – to the 1830s. The 1715 Yamasee War, for example, which took the lives of some 400 whites – 6% of the white population in the Carolinas – is recognized in a South Carolina marker about Fort Moore, built "following the disastrous Yamasee War." Few history textbooks even mention this important war, which killed far more than 400 Indians and wiped out some smaller tribes entirely.

Several Georgia state markers treat what they call the "Southern Indian Wars" of 1836 as connected with the removal of the Cherokees. The battles they commemorate, such as the "Battle of Chickasawatchee Swamp" and the "Battle of Brushy Creek," have disappeared from our history textbooks. Conflict with Native Americans gets much attention in West Virginia (20.1% of 750 historical markers) and Texas. But most markers use biased terms to mischaracterize this history.

How many people does it take to make a massacre? Just two, if they're white, according to a Florida state historical marker titled, "The Bradley Massacre," about the 1856 killing of two children of Capt. Robert Duke Bradley. Meanwhile, incidents that killed hundreds of Indians, including noncombatants, are routinely labeled "battles."

THE PLANTATION HOUSES: MISSING THE SLAVES FOR THE SILVERWARE

Across the South, impressive antebellum plantation houses are so commonplace that their brochures engage in a battle of superlatives to lure the tourist dollar. Westover is “the nation’s premier example of Georgian architecture” while Agecroft Hall “is rich in hand-carved craftsmanship.” Belle Air is a “rare architectural monument” but Shirley Plantation is “an architectural treasure.” Tuckahoe is “the finest existing early 18th century plantation in America;” Carter’s Grove at Colonial Williamsburg is “the most beautiful house in America” – and we haven’t even left the James River valley!

Elsewhere in Virginia lie Kenmore, Belle Grove, George Mason’s Gunston Hall, James Madison’s Montpelier, “Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest,” and of course Jefferson’s Monticello. Granddaddy of them all is George Washington’s Mount Vernon, which claims to be “America’s most popular historic home.” But Mount Vernon is only granddaddy in Virginia. Perhaps the most visited plantation in the United States is Andrew Jackson’s Hermitage, outside Nashville.

South Carolina has its own plantation row, northwest of Charleston along the Ashley River, where visitors can choose among Drayton Hall, “the oldest and finest surviving example of Georgian Palladian architecture in the South,” Middleton Place, “America’s oldest landscaped gardens,” and Magnolia Plantation, “this hemisphere’s oldest major garden.” Even more mag-

nificent are the plantations farther west in Louisiana and around Natchez, Mississippi.

Most of these sites revel in what they call “our Southern heritage,” but omit most of their history. Nine of every ten people living at The Hermitage, for example, were enslaved African Americans. The audio tour gives them just one sentence, mentioning their number (130). At the gate to Magnolia Plantation a billboard offers “The Complete Plantation Experience” – yet Magnolia tells next to nothing about the experience of most of the people who lived there.

Indeed, antebellum home sites go to extraordinary lengths to avoid mentioning slavery. Guides supply minutiae about the things – silverware, portraits, porcelain – but volunteer nothing about the people who worked there to pay for them. At Hampton Manor, a National Park site just north of Baltimore, guides avoid speaking of slaves by having things done in the passive voice: the right-hand wing “is where the laundry was done,” while the left wing “was for the cooking.”

Slaves built their own houses and the owners’, too, grew their own corn and the owners’, too, butchered the hogs, and made their own clothing – or they raised the crops for sale that paid for the corn and nails and clothing. Nevertheless, the language at most plantations today makes them invisible.

Instead of telling this story, each plantation has its multi-talented owner who seems to have done all the work himself. At the Edmonston-Alston House in Charleston, South Carolina, Charles Edmonston “built his residence”; then “Alston modi-

fied the appearance of the house ...” In reality, neither Edmonston nor Alston laid hammer to nail. At Hampton, today’s visitors walk through a landscape cleared by slaves, past trees planted by slaves, and tour a mansion paid for and mostly built by slaves. Yet Hampton’s brochure claims, “Eliza Ridgely planted exotic evergreen and deciduous specimen trees...”

“Let me show you the builders of the house,” says a guide at the Hampton House. I imagine we’ll learn something about the slaves, perhaps also the free artisans, white and black, who labored here. Instead he leads us to stand beneath the portraits of Charles Ridgely, the first owner, and his wife. When workers *are* mentioned, guides and brochures euphemize to avoid the word “slavery.” Slaves become “servants” or even “antebellum workers.” Owners become “masters.”

Most antebellum home sites never tell of a single African American by name. Therefore, visitors never realize the incredible drama that a life in slavery often entailed. Some plantations do latch onto one “Tonto” figure. This is a hoary rhetorical device in white culture: by recognizing “the good” in one African American – always loyal to the white side – the narrator implies that the system was fair and that “good Negroes” liked their “masters.” At Magnolia, it’s Adam Bennett, who saved the silverware when Union soldiers demanded it. At The Hermitage, it’s “Uncle Alfred,” who was born in slavery but “chose to stay on after emancipation.” At Hampton, the guide and brochure tell of Nancy Brown Davis, “born a slave in 1838. She chose to stay on as a servant after she received her freedom.” All that

Slaves built their own houses and the owners’, too; grew their own corn and the owners’ too. Nevertheless, the language at most plantations today makes them invisible.



**"UNCLE ALFRED" GETS NO LAST NAME, EVEN ON HIS
TOMBSTONE, WHICH SAYS ONLY:
UNCLE ALFRED DIED SEPT. 4, 1901
AGED 98 YEARS
FAITHFUL SERVANT OF ANDREW JACKSON**

visitors learn about the lives of Bennett or Alfred or Davis is their choice to throw in their lot on the white folks' side.

That choice, in turn, prompts guides to claim that their master was kindly. To borrow a Minnesota metaphor, historic houses follow the Lake Wobegon principle: every owner was above average! An African American who visited Mount Vernon in 1998 reported, "They give the impression that the slaves at

Mount Vernon lived quite well. If you were going to be a slave, that was the place to be one." Julian Niemcewicz, a Polish poet who spent two weeks at Mount Vernon in 1798, took away quite a different impression:

Plantation houses never disclose that more than 90% of the people who lived there were held there against their will.

We entered some Negroes' huts for their habitations cannot be called houses. They are far more miserable than the poorest of the cottages of our peasants. The husband and his wife sleep on a miserable bed, the children on the floor..."

No antebellum house shows that slavery was a penal system, resting ultimately on force and threat of force. Never have I seen on display a whip, whipping post, chains, fetters, branding iron, or any of the technology of mobile human confinement that owners devised – bells that could not be removed from the neck. Only once in my experience, at Carter's Grove, has a guide mentioned that sometimes owners or overseers cut off a toe or even a foot to punish running away and prevent recurrence. Never have I heard a discussion of the appalling practice known as "seasoning," the forced resocialization imposed to break slaves' will to resist. Instead, guides and brochures present plantations nostalgically as vanished communities. They allow today's visitors to conceptualize living, working, reproducing, and dying on the old plantation as an idyllic retreat from the modern world. They never disclose that more than 90% of the people who lived there were held there against their will.

Most plantation sites happily display only the owner's lifestyle. Every house boasts a dining table with elaborate place settings. None mentions that "the slaves had to eat with mussel shells for spoons, and we sopped our gravy with our bread," as an ex-slave told a Mississippi researcher in the 1930s.

Plantation guides could intrigue young visitors by telling of the contrast in table manners between young slaves and their owners' children. On some plantations, planters had slave children eat from troughs, with or without wooden paddles or spoons. As one ex-slave remembered 70 years later,

There was a trough out in the yard where they poured in mush and milk, and us children and the dogs would all crowd 'round it and eat together. We children had homemade wooden paddles to eat with, and we sure had to be in a hurry about it, because the dogs would get it all if we didn't.

Such details might lead visitors to imagine the response of white owners and their elegant guests, witnessing slave children tussling over their morning or evening meal. In the nineteenth century, the scene "proved" that slavery was right: "They eat like animals!"

**DAUPHIN ISLAND,
ALABAMA &
AUGUSTA, GEORGIA:
CELEBRATES THE RAIDERS
& PATROLLERS**

The landscape omits two topics almost completely: the slave trade, including the international trade, and the patrol system. Every American knows of the era of lawlessness called Prohibition, 1919-1933, when for 14 years law enforcement officials in many parts of the

country turned a blind eye to the illegal liquor trade. But almost no one knows that for 53 years, from 1808 to 1861, law enforcement officials in much of the country turned a blind eye to the illegal slave trade. As with Prohibition or the drug trade today, making slave importation illegal, coupled with erratic enforcement, ensured that it would be profitable by increasing the price differential of slaves in the United States compared to West Africa. The inability of the federal government to enforce its own laws demonstrated the pervasive influence of what abolitionists called "the slave power." Even our foreign policy and armed forces were corrupted by the trade. Nothing the Mob could muster during Prohibition came close.

Americans learn in school that "slaves were imported until 1808 when the United States Constitution

banned the slave trade," in the words of one textbook. Actually, the Constitution never banned the slave trade; on the contrary, Article 1 Section 9 guaranteed that it "shall *not* be prohibited by the Congress prior to the year 1808." In 1807, Congress passed an act prohibiting the African slave trade, to take effect in 1808, but according to historian John R. Spears, the law "was a mere dead-letter," because the United States did not enforce it. In December, 1810, President James Madison wrote Congress, "American citizens are instrumental in carrying on a traffic in enslaved Africans, equally in violation of the laws of humanity, and in defiance of those of their own country."

In the 1850s, the illegal trade from Africa grew. In 1859 Stephen A. Douglas claimed to have seen 300 Africans in one slave pen in Memphis. After the Civil War Nathan Bedford

Photo by James Loewen



ON DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, GUARDING THE WESTERN ENTRANCE TO MOBILE BAY, STANDS FORT GAINES. THE FORT PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE BATTLE OF MOBILE BAY IN AUGUST OF 1864, WELL-TOLD BY ITS SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR. TUCKED AWAY NEXT TO THE COKE MACHINE IN A SIDE ROOM IS A LITTLE DISPLAY THAT MOST VISITORS MISS. SOME TIMBERS FROM THE SLAVE SHIP *CLOTILDE* PROVIDE ALMOST THE ONLY PHYSICAL EVIDENCE ON THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE THAT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE ILLEGAL INTERNATIONAL SLAVE TRADE CONTINUED. A SMALL LABEL TELLS THE STORY BUT PROVIDES NO DATE: "THESE ARE THE REMAINS OF THE LAST SLAVE SHIP TO DELIVER ITS CARGO TO A UNITED STATES PORT. THE SHIP WAS NAMED *CLOTILDE*. AFTER IT ENTERED MOBILE BAY IT WAS RUN AGROUND AND ITS CARGO WAS UNLOADED. THE SHIP WAS THEN BURNED TO THE WATERLINE."

Forrest told a reporter for the *Louisville Courier-Journal* that he and his associates had themselves "brought over 400 slaves from Africa." As the 1850s drew to a close, many Southerners, including J. H. Adams, Governor of South Carolina, Alexander Stephens, future Vice-President of the Confederacy, and the entire Southern Commercial Convention asked Congress to reopen the traffic. Texas, Mississippi, and South Carolina developed "legal" subterfuges, such as calling Africans "voluntary laborers," that allowed the illegal trade to continue more and more openly. At least in the Deep South and Texas, slave captains hardly feared conviction by juries of their peers. To the eve of the Civil War, slavers were constructing new slave ships, including *Clotilde*, built in 1858.

Clotilde entered Mobile Bay in July, 1860. Some Africans apparently escaped at that point; others were sold to Alabama plantation owners. After the Civil War many of these people reunited in a section of present-day Mobile and Prichard still known as "Africa Town." The last survivor of *Clotilde*, Cudjo Lewis, died in 1935, having lived more than a century. In front of the Union Baptist Church that he helped found is a bust of him with the simple inscription, "1859."

In fact, *Clotilde* was not the last slave ship to deliver slaves successfully to the United States. According to Daniel Mannix, historian of the slave trade, the last slaves brought to the United States from Africa landed near Smyrna, Florida, in the spring of 1861, shortly before Confederate shelling of Fort Sumter ignited the Civil War. On April 21 of that year, after the war began, an American slave ship was intercepted just north of Angola with 961 Africans on board; 160 died before they could be put ashore in Liberia. 270 Africans, possibly from Cuba, landed at a plantation on the Savannah River even later, on December 16, 1861. It took the Civil War to end the trade for good.

On U. S. 278 near Augusta, Georgia, is the only historical marker in the United States, as far as I know, that treats the notorious "patroller" system that controlled slaves when they left their owners' plantations. Its text is so cryptic, however, that no passerby would guess its topic. The marker says:

Beech Island Agricultural Club

On January 5, 1856, Governor James H. Hammond and eleven other farmers of this area organized the Beech Island Agricultural Club for the diffusion of agricultural knowledge and the regulation of illegal slave traffic. Monthly meetings and barbecues have been held almost without interruption since the club's founding.

The first thing the marker gets wrong is the full name of the "club," which was the Beech Island Agricultural and Police Society. The society did share ideas about agriculture - fertilizers, new crops, and the like - but its primary purpose, however, was to keep slaves in line. "The regulation of illegal slave traffic" does not refer to the international slave trade. Slaveowners wanted to stop slaves who were moving about, going to town, and even making money by taking goods from the plantation and selling them.

The founding document of the Beech Island Agricultural and Police Society makes clear that its purpose was to control slaves:

We, whose names are herewith subscribed, do hereby join, to form ourselves into a Society, for the purpose of communicating our opinions on subjects immediately connected with our best interests, and of

acting in concert with each other, and with the fine and determined object of assisting the regular constituted authorities, in enforcing the laws relative to the government of colored persons.

Like prison inmates, enslaved persons were under the control of others, and as with convicts, that control ultimately was physical and potentially violent. A large plantation might have only five or ten whites, including young children and an overseer or two, to control a hundred slaves. Because planters always feared slave revolts, they formed police societies for mutual support. Indeed, South Carolina required whites to organize patrol systems in all jurisdictions where blacks were a majority.

In the Beech Island area in 1856 more than 60% of all people were enslaved. Patrollers - volunteers and paid - stopped all African Americans to ask their business and see their passes. Even a wife visiting her husband, enslaved on the next plantation, had to have a written pass to see him. Writing after the Civil War, a white South Carolinian told of hearing acquaintances brag "with great gusto how in the good old times they used to hunt down runaway Negroes with hounds and guns, brand them, beat them till senseless, and while patrolling at night flog Negroes who had passes 'just to hear them beg.'" Throughout the South, even slaves on errands for their owners with legitimate passes feared the patrollers.

Historian Richard Zuczek tells that South Carolina planters briefly reinstated the patrol system in 1865, even though the Civil War had supposedly ended slavery. During Reconstruction, the night-riding of the Ku Klux Klan and Red Shirts was a further extension of patrolling, Zuczek notes, involving some of the same men. A marker about the Beech Is-

land Agricultural and Police Society that accurately portrayed their relations to their laborers would convey important information about how the antebellum South worked.

Slavery was central to the world history of the past 400 years, according to historian David Brion Davis. Yet even antebellum plantations, where slavery most prominently took place, treat it as a minor aberration, an atavism the nation was somehow outgrowing. Telling the truth about slavery is not so hard. A few places do better than the rest, including Carter's Grove in Virginia, Kingsley in Florida, Somerset Place in North Carolina, and Sotterley in Maryland, which I have visited, and perhaps Dickinson in Delaware, Levi Jourdan in Texas, and Tezucó, Laura, and Oakley in Louisiana, which I have not.

Other plantations tell some truths about slavery but tuck them away, so most visitors never see them. Monticello offers a 45-minute "plantation tour" down a path in front of the mansion, during which the guide pauses to discuss such topics as the nail factory, where enslaved boys made thousands of nails a day, and the garden, with its high fence to deter theft.

During the past five years I have watched this tour become more honest; my last guide began by specifically denying that Jefferson was a particularly kind or above average "master." The plantation tour operates only from April through October, however, and fewer than one visitor in 15 takes it, perhaps because Monticello labels it "African American history." The Hermitage has a small, hard-to-read display on slavery crammed into a corner. Its archaeology program has developed important information about the lives of enslaved workers, but it has not succeeded in getting this information into the tours that most visitors take.

JACKSONVILLE, ALABAMA & ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA: CELEBRATING THE WICKED

Whites who owned slaves are still esteemed for it, just as they were before 1861, and not only at antebellum homes. Consider the names on the Southern landscape. A historical marker in Jacksonville, Alabama, tells of the renaming of Benton County, which "originally was named for Col. T. H. Benton, Creek War officer, later U. S. Senator from Missouri. Renamed in 1858 for John C. Calhoun, champion of South in U. S. Senate. Benton's views by then unpopular in South." This marker accurately describes a renaming that needs now to be undone.

The careers of John C. Calhoun and Thomas Hart Benton show several parallels. Both were wealthy slaveowners. Both were important United States Senators. Both were national leaders of the Democratic Party, and both were considered for the presidency – Calhoun served as Vice President under Andrew Jackson. Gradually, however, Calhoun and Benton diverged in political philosophy until they became arch-enemies. Calhoun took ever more extreme positions favoring the South as a region and slavery as a cause. Benton, senator from Missouri from 1820 through 1850, came to believe that slavery was wrong and should not be allowed to expand.

Benton and Calhoun both opposed the Compromise of 1850, but from opposite perspectives. Benton denied that the Constitution protected slavery and urged Congress to admit California to statehood without bar-

gaining with radical slaveholders like Calhoun. A dying Calhoun threatened disunion one last time, claiming that the compromise didn't go far enough in guaranteeing slavery forever. It is doubtful that *any* compromise would have satisfied Calhoun at this point in his life. In 1858 pro-slavery extremists renamed Benton County for Calhoun precisely *because* Benton stood for the United States, while Calhoun did not.

Every year that Calhoun County remains Calhoun County, it declares on the landscape that John C. Calhoun was a hero worthy of the honor of having a county named for him. This statement insults every black resident of the county and every white who does not believe that treason on behalf of slavery made moral or political sense then or now.

The ideology of the Alabamians who renamed Benton County for Calhoun led to the Civil War three years later. Today the landscape misrepresents that war from start to finish. One of the first casualties in the East was Colonel Elmer Ellsworth, killed at an inn in Alexandria, Virginia, as United States forces took that town. Today the site is still an inn, the Holiday Inn in Old Town, and on its side a bronze plaque put up by the Sons and Daughters of Confederate Soldiers tells this story:

The Marshall House stood upon this site, and within the building on the early morning of May 24, 1861, James W. Jackson was killed by Federal soldiers while defending his property and personal rights, as stated in the verdict of the coroner's jury. He was the first martyr to the cause of Southern independence. The justice of history does not permit his name to be forgotten. Not in the excitement of battle, but coolly, and for great principle, he laid down his life, an example to all, in defence of his



ALEXANDRIA'S PENSIVE 1889 CONFEDERATE MEMORIAL. ON ITS BASE, NEO-CONFEDERATES IN 1900 ADDED "JAMES W. JACKSON" TO THE 99 NAMES OF CONFEDERATES FROM ALEXANDRIA KILLED IN BATTLE. UNLIKE ALL OTHER NAMES ON THE MONUMENT, HE GETS NO UNIT, AND THE ADDITION STILL LOOKS RAW AND NEW, AS IF DONE YESTERDAY.

home and the sacred soil of his native state Virginia.

The plaque completely omits Ellsworth, killed at this site moments before Jackson, one of the first "martyrs to the cause" of the United States in the Civil War.

After the fall of Fort Sumter, Union commanders knew they could not defend Washington without controlling the land across the Potomac. In late May they decided to take Alex-

andria. This was the first United States offensive against the Confederacy, so it "at once attracted the attention of the whole nation," according to Julius C. Burrows, who gave

the oration at the dedication of the monument to Colonel Ellsworth at Mechanicville, New York, in 1875. Ellsworth had become famous even before this incident. In 1859, his "U.S. Zouave Cadets" won the national drill championship; Ellsworth led them on a triumphant 20-city tour throughout the North.

Just after dawn on May 24, Ellsworth's regiment landed at the Alexandria waterfront. Over Jackson's inn waved a rebel flag, so large it was said to be visible from the White House. "That flag must come down," Ellsworth cried, as he entered the inn, climbed the stairway to the roof, and seized it. Descending the stairs, he was met by Jackson, who shot him through the heart. Immediately one of Ellsworth's men killed innkeeper Jackson.

Ellsworth had worked in Abraham Lincoln's Illinois law office. He accompanied the president-elect east, was in charge of his security, and lived for a while at the White House. Lincoln wept openly at the news of his death and ordered his body brought back to the White House for a military funeral. The incident may seem trivial today, but at the time it attracted the attention of the nation. Ellsworth's bloody shirt went on tour as a relic to rally money and troops for the Union and was used to recruit a new regiment named the Ellsworth Avengers. "Remember Ellsworth!" cried Union troops in early Civil War battles. On site, however, the Sons and Daughters of Confederate Soldiers have not only forgotten Ellsworth but have defamed him and converted his killer into a martyr.

Liston Pope, who grew up reading the South's historical markers, summed up the result: "I never could understand how our Confederate troops could have won every battle in the War so decisively and then have lost the war itself!"

WOODBURY, TENNESSEE
& RICHMOND, VIRGINIA:
THE MYTH OF THE
ALWAYS-VICTORIOUS
CONFEDERATE

Southern historical markers that tell of the next four years emphasize every Confederate victory and minimize every Confederate defeat – mystifying the outcome. In Woodbury, Tennessee, for example, Nathan Bedford Forrest gets a historical marker titled “Forrest Rested Here, July 12, 1862.” It tells how his brigade “halted for a short rest before making his successful raid on Federal forces at Murfreesboro.” Meanwhile, no marker tells how, a month later, Forrest attacked a federal stockade at Short Mountain Crossroads, outnumbering them nine to one, but was defeated. Liston Pope, who grew up reading the South’s historical markers, summed up the result: “I never could understand how our Confederate troops could have won every battle in the War so decisively and then have lost the war itself!”

When the tourist goes to the places that tell how United States forces took Richmond – Petersburg’s Siege Museum and the National Park Service museum at Richmond – funereal music announces the “fall” of those cities.

This is bad history. When the U.S. army entered Richmond on April 3, 1865, poor whites, free blacks, Southern civilians imprisoned by the Confederacy, and Union POW’s joined slaves in the celebration. A retreating Confederate, Clement Sulivane, wrote that he “heard the very welkin [vault of heaven] ring with cheers as the United States forces reached

Capitol Square.” A soldier with the 11th Connecticut wrote, “Our reception was grander and more exultant than even a Roman emperor, leading back his victorious legions with the spoils of conquest, could ever know.” Today the cheers are silenced because the point of view is Confederate.

In Virginia the end came at Appomattox cemetery, where the United Daughters of the Confederacy put up a marker that says:

Here on Sunday April 9, 1865 after four years of heroic struggle in defense of principles believed fundamental to the existence of our government Lee surrendered 9,000 men, the remnant of an army still unconquered in spirit, to 118,000 men under Grant.

The marker gets the date right, and the Confederacy did put up “four years of heroic struggle.” Otherwise, like most markers and monuments put up by the Daughters, it cannot be relied upon.

Consider “defense of principles believed fundamental.” Three weeks before the Confederacy attacked Sumter, Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens said what these were: “Our new government’s foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the Negro is not equal to the white man, that slavery — subordination to the superior race — is his natural and normal condition.” UDC leaders doubtless hoped that if they left those principles vague, readers might infer something nobler.


Were Lee’s troops “unconquered in spirit?” Much contemporary scholarship emphasizes that the Confederacy eventually fell because of a failure of spirit. In the months just before Appomattox, thousands of desertions sucked the life from Lee’s army and Confederate armies

everywhere.

A month before Appomattox, Confederate soldier Harry Hammond wrote from Petersburg, “We have had some 60 or 70 desertions recently from the Brigade, most of them going over to the enemy at night while on picket.” These men did not desert for lack of food, for Hammond went on to note, “Our supplies continue sufficient.” Carleton Beals notes that the Confederate army was breaking up by the spring of 1865 in Texas and other states, even without Union approaches. He concludes that its ideological contradictions were the Confederacy’s gravest liabilities, ultimately causing its defeat. White Southerners were fighting to preserve slavery partly because they believed it was good for blacks, or at least maintained they did. Yet during the war African Americans behaved in ways that expressed their clear dissatisfaction with slavery. The success of black United States troops led to proposals by Confederate leaders to arm slaves, which threw Confederate ideology into further confusion.

The UDC gets even the numbers wrong. When Lee surrendered, he asked that some sort of parole slip be given to his men so they would face no problems going through Union lines. Grant agreed, and during the next five days a small printing press churned out more than 28,000 slips given to soldiers in Lee’s surrendered army. Between 3,000 and 3,500 men who lived nearby just went home without waiting for their slips. To say “Lee surrendered 9000 men” is preposterous. Similarly, Grant did have about 120,000 men in his final Petersburg-Appomattox campaign, but only about 63,000 were at Appomattox Court House. United States forces did outnumber Confederate States forces by almost two to one throughout Lee’s flight from Petersburg to Appomattox, but that wasn’t good enough for the United

Daughters of the Confederacy. Of course, if Union soldiers outnumbered Confederates 13 to 1, as the Daughters would have it, one need look no further to learn why the Confederacy lost the war. So that's the motive for getting the numbers wrong.



MISSISSIPPI &
TODD, KENTUCKY:
THE PHANTOM
CONFEDERATES

Although many Confederates were conquered in spirit in 1865, between about 1890 and 1930, neo-Confederates declared victory on the landscape all across the United States, including places that never existed or never were Confederate during the war. A Confederate monument dominates the lawn of the east Bolivar County courthouse in Cleveland, Mississippi, for example, "To the memory of our Confederate dead, 1861-65." The only problem is, Cleveland, Mississippi, had no Confederate dead. Cleveland did not exist during the Civil War or for some decades afterwards. According to the *History of Bolivar County*, "until 1900 most of the interior of Bolivar County was a vast forest." The area around Cleveland "was a wild country, abounding in bear, deer, wild turkey, and wolves."

Across the state, the Confederate monument in Ellisville, Mississippi, exemplifies a different distortion of history. In 1912 the UDC erected an imposing monument in front of the courthouse for the southern district of Jones County. During the war, however, most residents of Jones County opposed the Confederacy. Newt Knight, a white farmer with a black wife, even led a revolt that

A monument on the lawn of the east Bolivar County courthouse in Cleveland, Mississippi, reads "To the memory of our Confederate dead, 1861-65." The only problem is, Cleveland, Mississippi, had no Confederate dead. Until 1900 most of the interior of Bolivar County was a vast forest.

briefly took over the Ellisville courthouse. He declared the county "The Free State of Jones"; Confederate officials had to dispatch troops to force the county back into line. But today, the courthouse is securely under Confederate control.

The border are held sway under neo-Confederates as well. Kentucky, for example, did not secede. Early in the war, Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston occupied Bowling Green, 40 miles east of Todd County, but he found "no enthusiasm as we imagined and hoped but hostility was manifested in Kentucky." Eventually, 90,000 Kentuckians would fight for the United States as against 35,000 for the Confederate States. Nevertheless, according to historian Thomas Clark, the state now has 72 Confederate monuments and only two Union ones.

In *Confederates in the Attic*, Tony Horwitz records the impact of one of these monuments, in Todd County. "Todd County wasn't rebel country, at least not historically," he points out. "Most Todd Countians supported the Union in the Civil War." But this history has been lost. "Almost all whites I spoke to ... proclaim[ed] their county rebel territory and believ[ed] it had always been so. As proof, they pointed to a 351-foot concrete spike soaring at the county's western edge. The obelisk marked the birth site of Confederate president Jefferson Davis." The United Daughters of the Confederacy dedicated it in 1924 and consider it "the greatest of all monuments built to the Confederate cause."

The state puts out an astonishing brochure, "Jefferson Davis State His-

toric Site," that is an unabashed apology for Davis. Every year on Davis's birthday, Todd Countians converge at it for what Horwitz calls "a bizarre rite: the crowning of a local teenager as 'Miss Confederacy.'" UDC and SCV members judge contestants on their "poise, hair, hooped skirt, and answers to questions such as, 'What will you do while holding the title to promote and defend Southern heritage?'"

Thanks to this monument, whites in Todd County invented a past in which their land was staunch rebel territory and their ancestors brave Confederates. Like many schools, their high school named its sports teams "the Rebels" and took as its mascot two cartoonish Confederates waving the Battle Flag of the Army of Northern Virginia.

One result is racial polarization. On January 14, 1995, four young African Americans pursued a pickup flying a large rebel flag from a pole in its truck bed. An occupant of the truck may have shouted "nigger" at them. Shooting blindly into the cab, 17-year-old Freddie Morrow killed its owner, 19-year-old Michael Westerman. Since the shooting, the races have grown still more polarized. *The Southern Partisan*, official magazine of the right-wing League of the South, calls Westerman a "Southern Patriot and Martyr." The Ku Klux Klan has marched and recruited in the county. Families of the victim and defendants have expressed sorrow and called for reconciliation. But an outpouring of white opposition prevented school officials from changing the high school's Confederate symbols.



WHEN THIS MONUMENT WENT UP IN 1911, GAINESVILLE ALREADY HAD A CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS' MONUMENT IN LEONARD PARK, ERECTED JUST THREE YEARS EARLIER. THIS SECOND MONUMENT AT THE COURTHOUSE AMOUNTS TO A CONTINUING COUNTERFACTUAL COVERUP.

**GAINESVILLE, TEXAS:
"WHITE AND FAIR," BUT
SO FREE OF CRIME?**

One reason why many white Southerners (and some Northerners) identify with Confederate symbols today is to de-

clare themselves rebels against central authority. Neo-Confederates imagine that Southerners were rebelling against an authoritarian national regime. They do not know that the Confederacy brooked far less dissent, in part because of the lies on the landscape. On the Cooke County courthouse lawn in Gainesville, Texas, for example, stands an impressive Confederate monument with this inscription:

God holds the
scales of Justice;
He will measure
praise and blame;
And the South will
stand the verdict,
And will stand it
without shame.

Oh, home of tears,
but let her bear
This blazoned to
the end of time;
No nation rose so
white and fair,
None fell so free of crime.

All across America, Confederate memorials insist that their cause was without blemish. This verse in Gainesville is particularly troubling, since something grim happened on these very grounds.

During the early morning hours of October 1, 1862, Confederate militia scattered through Cooke County and neighboring counties, seizing Texans suspected of favoring the United States. In all, they arrested more than 200 people. By noon, they had locked 70 of them in a vacant store on the courthouse square in Gainesville. In the words of Richard McCaslin, whose fine book, *Tainted Breeze: The Great Hanging at Gainesville, Texas*, is the standard history of the event, "Vigilantes executed at least 42 of these prisoners for conspiring to commit treason and foment insurrection." It was the largest mass hanging in American history. According to McCaslin, "Few of the victims had plotted to usurp Confederate authority, and most were innocent of the abolitionist sentiments of which they were accused."

Nor were the 42 hangings the extent of the violence. Confederates hanged five more men in Wise County on October 18 and still others in nearby Grayson and Denton counties. Historian Richard Brown believes as many as 171 people may have been killed in all.

These North Texas events were

Photo by James Loewen



BY 1914, MOST WIVES, WIDOWS, AND MOTHERS OF CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS WERE NO LONGER ALIVE; CLEARLY THE OUACHITA COUNTY MEMORIAL WAS NOT INTENDED FOR THEM. INSTEAD, LIKE MOST MONUMENTS TO THE CONFEDERACY, CAMDEN'S IS FUTURE-ORIENTED. IN ITS WORDS, WHITES ERECTED IT SO THE "PATRIOTISM" OF THESE WOMEN "WILL TEACH THEIR CHILDREN TO EMULATE THE DEEDS OF THEIR SIRES." IN 1914, THE "LOST CAUSE" WAS NO LONGER LOST: REGARDING RACE RELATIONS, ALTHOUGH NOT SECESSION, CONFEDERATE IDEOLOGY WAS SECURELY IN THE SADDLE. THE MONUMENT IMPLIES THIS TRIUMPH: "THEIR INSPIRATION TRANSFORMED THE GLOOM OF DEFEAT INTO THE HOPE OF THE FUTURE."

hardly unique. Other mass killings of dissenters happened elsewhere in Texas and in Kansas, Tennessee, North Carolina, and other states. None of the perpetrators was ever charged with crimes by the Confederacy; several were promoted. In contrast, historian Mark Grimsley points out that the United States took a softer course and "applied the insurrectionary principle sparingly. Had it done so broadly and consistently, captured Confederate soldiers and civilians who gave aid and comfort to the Confederate regime might well have faced execution."

The United States did expel some dissenters to Canada and to the Confederacy and locked up others without trial for a time. On the whole, however, historian James McPherson summarizes the Lincoln administration's policy toward Confederate sympathizers and saboteurs as "remarkably lenient, under the circumstances. No Northern civilians were executed for such activities."

Many north Texans had opposed secession, including 61% of Cooke County voters in the secession referendum of February 1861. After the war, however, continuing neo-Confederate vigilante violence finally achieved in north Texas what secessionists could never accomplish before or during the contest: now a majority supported the Lost Cause. The erection of the Confederate monument shows that neo-Confederates controlled the courthouse in 1911, and in 1998 white Gainesville was still gathering there to celebrate its Confederate heritage. Speakers including the Mayor of Gainesville, Cooke County Judge, State Representative, a nearby professor of history and commanders of the Sons of Confederate Veterans "profess[ed] reverence for Southern history by those who wrote it in sacrificial blood," praised those who supported "a heritage of freedom and democracy" and recognized "those who fought and died for a just cause." The *Gainesville Daily Register* gave the event front page coverage

Photo by James Loewen

on March 10, 1998. The monument had worked its spell: not one speaker mentioned the Confederate history that really happened in Gainesville.

COLFAX, LOUISIANA: THE MURDER OF RECONSTRUCTION

During Reconstruction, 1866 to 1876, "America tried democracy," as writer Lerone Bennett put it: "All over the South, in these years, Negroes and whites shared streetcars, restaurants, hotels, honors, dreams." Indeed, Bennett believes "the right reading of [Reconstruction] might still mark a turning point in our history." But the Southern landscape conspires to make sure that we don't get that reading. It makes Reconstruction almost invisible. Reconstruction governors of Southern states get no statues; few even get historical markers. Instead, monuments, markers, and historic sites across the South celebrate the white racist Democrats who during the 1880s and 1890s reversed the democratic policies that interracial Republican administrations enacted during Reconstruction.

In Colfax, Louisiana, is one of the few historical markers that treats Reconstruction. Its text can most charitably be described as outrageous:

Colfax Riot

On this site occurred the Colfax Riot in which three white men and 150 Negroes were slain. This event on April 13, 1873, marked the end of carpetbag misrule in the South.

Calling the Republican government of Louisiana "misrule" is ludicrous, compared to the horrifying violence perpetrated by Democrats to end Republican control and to the

racist policies and fiscal scandals of subsequent Democrat officeholders. The old tag "carpetbag" implies that Republicans who came to Louisiana from the North were paupers carrying all their belongings in carpetbags, intending to plunder the state. The term is an affront to the whites and blacks, school teachers and government workers who came to Louisiana during Reconstruction to make it better. For that matter, the Colfax Riot did not mark the end of Reconstruction in the South. Republican administrations continued in Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and even Louisiana for two to three more years. The riot might be considered the beginning of the end of Reconstruction, however. At any rate, it shows how the end would come.

The Colfax massacre was "the bloodiest single act of carnage in all of Reconstruction," in the words of Eric Foner, a distinguished scholar of the era. That is saying a lot, because violence was emblematic of the period. In Louisiana in the summer and fall of 1868, white Democrats killed 1,081 persons, mostly African Americans and white Republicans. Across the Mississippi state line, whites killed an average of one African American a day in Hinds County alone, especially targeting servicemen. White Democrats mounted similar violent attacks from Virginia to Texas. The Colfax massacre was also a turning point because it showed the unwillingness of the United States to enforce Reconstruction laws, including the 14th and 15th amendments.

The United States did eventually indict 97 alleged perpetrators, charg-

ing a conspiracy to deprive the victims of their civil rights, but only got three convictions. Then the Supreme Court overturned even those three, holding that the 14th and 15th amendments only prohibited violations of black rights by *states*, not by individuals or organizations. Thus it gave a green light to private terrorism. Colfax accordingly became not only the spark but also the blueprint for the overthrow of interracial Republican rule in the South. Reconstruction was destroyed not because white and black Republicans were failing to establish viable governments and an interracial society, but because they were succeeding. That is the truth about Reconstruction, a truth that the Colfax Riot marker takes pains to obscure.

Antebellum homes might tell about Reconstruction, since they all existed throughout the period, but they freeze themselves in a historic moment some time before freedom came. What happened next? Did their enslaved labor force escape to the nearest Union-held lines? Did any fight for freedom in the United States Army or Navy? Historians write that the behavior of "their blacks" during and immediately after the Civil War was a moment of truth to owners — a truth that antebellum homes hide from today's tourists. What happened politically after the war? Did African Americans on this plantation vote for the interracial Republican coalitions that controlled most Southern states? Descendants of slaves still live near most plantations, but few sites have tried to involve them in telling this story. What did the former owners do? Were they white supremacist

Dominant groups use their power to force historic sites to present history from their viewpoint. Perhaps George Orwell would not mind this rephrasing of his famous couplet from 1984: "Who controls the present controls the landscape. Who controls the landscape controls the future."

Photo by James Loewen



WHEN NON-CONFEDERATES ARE RECOGNIZED IN PUBLIC PLACES, IT CHANGES HOW PEOPLE THINK. IN 1997, THESE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM BOSTON VISITED JOHN PRENTISS MATTHEWS' GRAVE AND WERE MOVED BY IT. "I WAS REALLY SURPRISED TO LEARN THERE WERE WHITE PEOPLE LIKE HIM IN THE SOUTH JUST AFTER THE CIVIL WAR," WROTE ONE.

Democrats? Did Ku Klux Klan activity play a role in returning Democrats to power?

The staffs at most plantations are silent about Reconstruction, offering not a word nor showing a single object that might tell what took place there then. "After the Civil War, the plantation became unprofitable" is all most antebellum sites say about Reconstruction. Visitors who do the math will discern that their vast antebellum profits, on display in their huge mansions and gardens, were indeed wrung "from the sweat of other men's faces," to quote Lincoln's "Second Inaugural." As soon as their workers had to be paid, plantations were no longer cash cows.

**SOUTHERN ARKANSAS:
TODAY'S POLITICS SHAPE
YESTERDAY'S HISTORY AND
VICE VERSA**

What difference does all this make today? Markers and monuments don't cause history, of course. It's more the other way around: dominant groups use their power to force historic sites to present history from their viewpoint. In turn, controlling what people say and think about the past is an important source of social power. Perhaps

George Orwell would not mind this rephrasing of his famous couplet from 1984: "Who controls the present controls the landscape. Who controls the landscape controls the future."

Three counties below Little Rock show these connections between the social structure of an area, its ideology, and the story its monuments tell. Camden, the county seat of Ouachita County, looks like a traditional plantation town, complete with columned mansions. Its courthouse sports a traditional monument, "To our Confederate Women," dedicated in 1914, that joined a Confederate monument put up in 1886 in the Confederate Section of Oakland Cemetery, that replaced an even earlier obelisk.

Neo-Confederates never took over the landscape in Dallas County, the next county north. The courthouse in Fordyce has no statue, and the town looks less traditionally Southern. Dallas County looks neutral — neither Confederate nor Unionist. The next county north is Grant, named for one Union general; its county seat, Sheridan, is named for another. The Grant County Courthouse grounds have a marker for the "Blue Star Memorial Highway" (a tribute to the Armed Forces of the United States) and a memorial for soldiers in the two World Wars — both lacking in Ouachita — and nothing for the Confederacy.

Different social structures in the three counties led to different ideologies, visible today in the names and monuments on the landscape. Before the Civil War, Ouachita County was good land for cotton farming, drawing planters with their slaves from

The monuments and names on the landscape symbolize and help maintain or decrease the racial disparities that still exist.

Photo by James Loewen



SCULPTURES IN KELLY INGRAM PARK DEPICT FAMOUS IMAGES FROM THE CIVIL RIGHTS PROTESTS IN BIRMINGHAM. SOME CRITICIZE THE DOGS AS TOO HARSH, BUT BIRMINGHAM PUTS THE MOST NOTORIOUS EVENTS OF ITS PAST ON DISPLAY, UNLIKE SCOTTSBORO.

Alabama. The land in Grant County was never conducive to large-scale plantations; its inhabitants were mostly white small farmers. Dallas County was intermediate, with some slaves and some independent white farmers.

The ideological clues on the landscape point to and reinforce these differences in society that persist even today. In 1990, only 62% of the black residents of Ouachita County owned their own homes, compared to 74% in Dallas County and 88.5% in Grant County. African Americans made just 49% as much as whites in per capita income in Ouachita and 48% in Dallas, but 76.4% as much in Grant County. These numbers confirm what the landscape implies: Grant County is the most hospitable of the three for African Americans.

Today, few people in the three counties make their living from the land, so the presence or absence of

plantation social structure no longer explains the racial disparities directly. Plantations left an ideological legacy, however visible on the landscape. When Confederates are heroes, as they are on the streets of Camden, then to argue for social or economic equality can seem a bit outlandish. Thus "Which came first, the statue or the oppression?" is more complicated than it seems. The oppression came first, clearly, for without slavery no Confederate cause would have arisen, hence no memorials. But the monuments and names on the landscape symbolize and help maintain (in Ouachita) or decrease (in Grant) the racial disparities that still exist. Changing the landscape is therefore one step toward relieving the oppression.

HISTORICAL LANDSCAPING: RECLAIMING OUR PAST

Some changes for the better have been made on the landscape. Professional staffs in state marker offices from Texas to Virginia are rewording some of the offensive old markers that mistold Indian history. Virginia changed "Last Indian Outrage," for instance, to "Last Indian-Settler Conflict," a much more accurate title. Since 1989, Tennessee has erected more than 100 markers that treat African-American history, including a hard-hitting description of Ida B. Wells's crusade against lynchings in Memphis. In Alabama, accurate markers tell of the work of Martin Luther King Jr. in Montgomery and the Selma to Montgomery march in Selma. Birmingham and Memphis boast impressive

Photo by James Loewen



SOME WHITE SOUTHERNERS ARE STILL HONORING FORREST. IN JULY, 1998, THE LEAGUE OF THE SOUTH DEDICATED A BIG NEW STATUE OF NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST AT A "CONFEDERATE FLAG PARK" ON PRIVATE PROPERTY SOUTH OF NASHVILLE.

Nevertheless, the Southern landscape still leaves out many other true heroes: those white Southerners who, in every era, worked for fairness for all. Samuel Worcester, missionary to the Cherokees, jailed by the governor of Georgia in the 1830s ... Elizabeth Van Lew, abolitionist and Union spy in Richmond in the 1860s ... John Prentiss Matthews Jr., anti-racist postmaster of Carrollton, Mississippi, murdered in the 1890s ... Helen Keller, socialist and anti-racist in the 1920s ... Adolphine Terry, Little Rock school supporter in the 1950s ... all are omitted from the landscape except Keller, whose radical positions are omitted.

civil rights museums.

In Greensboro, North Carolina, a marker tells of the first sit-ins, even though the Woolworth store itself has gone out of existence. North Carolina has also included women in its history, both on historical markers and at its new state historical museum in Raleigh.

Sometimes new markers result from the efforts of one person or organization. Marcus Phillips was the driving force behind a recent West Virginia marker that tells how Union Carbide disregarded workers' health while drilling the Hawks Nest Tunnel, resulting in the worst occupational disaster in U.S. history. Phillips's father was one of 764 men who died from silicosis contracted in the tunnel.

Perhaps most heartening of all, citizen groups in several places have come together to put up new historical markers and monuments that tell of events previously banished from the landscape and even from memory. In Wilmington, North Carolina, in 1998, community leaders came together to recall the race riot of a century earlier that ended interracial rule in Wilmington and the state. Included in the remembrance was a play, seminar, and an accurate historical marker about the expulsion of Alex Manly, black publisher,

and the destruction of his newspaper. In Georgia last summer an interracial group erected a state historical marker that noted the "Moore's Ford Lynching," in which a white mob killed two black couples in 1946.

All across the South, and indeed the nation, streets have been renamed and monuments erected to honor Martin Luther King. This approach results in a landscape memorializing white racists and black anti-racists. The University of Texas, for instance, features statues of Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, Albert Sidney Johnston, and a fountain claiming the whole thing was about states' rights. Last fall the university dedicated a new statue of Martin Luther King Jr. The most famous example of this practice stands in Richmond, where Arthur Ashe offsets a host of Confederates on famed Monument Row.

Gestures like these do desegregate the landscape. Since Ashe's statue went up on Monument Row in 1996, the United Daughters of the Confederacy no longer celebrate "Our President's Day" at the Jefferson Davis monument nearby. Instead they moved the event to Davis's grave in Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery. Thus Ashe has changed the nature of Monument Row from "our space" to "the space" — or even

"their space" so far as the UDC is concerned.

Nevertheless, the Southern landscape still leaves out many other true heroes: those white Southerners who, in every era, worked for fairness for all. Samuel Worcester, missionary to the Cherokees, jailed by the governor of Georgia in the 1830s ... Elizabeth Van Lew, abolitionist and Union spy in Richmond in the 1860s ... John Prentiss Matthews Jr., anti-racist postmaster of Carrollton, Mississippi, murdered in the 1890s ... Helen Keller, socialist and anti-racist in the 1920s ... Adolphine Terry, Little Rock school supporter in the 1950s ... all are omitted from the landscape except Keller, whose radical positions are omitted.

Thus much remains to be done. What person gets the most historical markers in any state? Not Lincoln in Illinois, it turns out, nor Washington in Virginia, but Nathan Bedford Forrest — slave trader, Confederate cavalry leader, and leader of the Ku Klux Klan in Tennessee. He gets a bust in the state capitol, a statue in Memphis, obelisks at his birthplace and at Nathan Bedford Forrest State Park near Camden, and 32 state markers, far more than any other person in any other state in America. No wonder his t-shirts outsell Robert E. Lee's, five to one!

And no wonder young white Southerners never identify with Worcester, Van Lew, Matthews, Keller, Terry, or anyone like them — they've never heard of them!

SE

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The Three of Them and Lucky



By Linda Dunlap

I feel it already. This will be one of those days. Samson, the fellow I've been with for a year now, tells me he'd like to be a fly on the wall. He says that about lots of days here in the Feed Room. He's right. There's always stuff going on you wouldn't want to miss.

Today Penny perches at one end of the counter while Silo leans, propped on his elbows at the other, the two of them like bookends. I've spoken to Penny, act like I don't see Silo settling Lucky, his blue tick hound, at his feet. As usual, he totally ignores the *No Pets Allowed* sign beside the door like Lucky is a special breed that's exempt. Every morning we have a go 'round. Not only is the dog inside when she shouldn't be, but primarily Lucky is a thief. I hate a thief, especially one that's a dog.

With my back turned to them, I line up the catsup holders on the counter and fill them with the fat packages that squirt down your front when you rip off the corner. We've used them since Minnie Roundtree from the We-Kare saw Tan Mason lick his knife then stick it in a bottle of catsup. Miss Minnie said it like to have turned her stomach.

I wonder about her sometimes. She's been to the Feed Room enough to know she's not putting her feet under a table at the Waldorf.

Things are slow. The breakfast crowd has thinned. Dinkins has picked up Miss Minnie and taken her back to the We-Kare. He brings her over in the van every morning, makeup caked in heavy streaks from her cheeks to her chin, but her forehead is bare like she's forgotten it's up there.

She orders The Deluxe, two eggs over light, toast and a sausage patty — links give her heartburn. I can sympathize with her. I have stomach trouble and shy away from spicy stuff myself. She says it's hard to face old man Harley at the nursing home on an empty stomach,

forking scrambled eggs into his mouth, missing more often than not. He puts his dentures in when he's done with his morning coffee, so other than breakfast, meals at the We-Kare are tolerable.

It's not often the Feed Room is a step up in anybody's estimation, although we do maintain a standard — no dirty talk, no jokes about blacks, Jews, Polacks. Naturally, that eliminates the majority of what some folks consider humorous.

Since we're not after the college crowd from across town, nobody looks twice when you put your elbows on the table. *Plenty of Good Food! Cheap!* as the sign says in the window.

Then Miss Minnie gets offended when Tan licks his knife. Go figure.

I stand up the catsup packages on their ends like I'm about to shuffle a deck of cards, hear a *chop, chop* sound from the kitchen. Today is Tuesday. That's Danny dicing onions for the liver special. As I fold the shutters across the pass-thru to keep the smell back there, I watch Penny in the mirror over the counter, the gold half-heart dangling, innocent as a cross around her neck. She blows on her coffee, taps a thumbnail idly on the counter and looks around like she's surveying the place.

I'm tempted to tell her, if you're looking for fancy, you won't find it here. None of those earth colors or deep dark booths for Jack. He took over the Feed Room when Jess, his mother, died. I think he'd have been satisfied to close it down but everybody made such a fuss. He gives me a free hand with the running of it.

Even though this is a no-frills place, I try to keep it bright. The tables are big enough for elbowroom and

space left over in the center for a potted plant, alive and mainly well. I have the knack. Crystal, my granddaughter, says, "Grandma, you can make a pencil grow." I've sprinkled stout hanging baskets about but nothing to block the sun from coming sharp in the windows. This leaves the Chinese restaurant across the street in full sight. Green-striped shutters cover a good portion of the dragon that curls in splashy reds and blacks out front.

The Red Dragon has been in decline since the bus boy disappeared with the rice cooker and Foo Wong served Minute Rice to the lunch crowd. Something sacrilegious about that. People put it in the same category as the incident with Tan and the catsup bottle. Still, folks on our side of town keep coming to The Feed Room. Either they don't care or being American is easier to forgive.

As I top off Penny's cup of coffee now, she pushes her thick hair, which glistens like an oil slick, back from her face and I get a view of her busy

ears. I see nine — that's nine, I count them myself — earrings dangling from each ear. They dance against her cheek, each ear-ring a string of beads in bright turquoise, rusty terra cotta, shades of copper like wet sand. I like them, picture all those southwestern colors sweeping against my cheek, each ear a little piece of the Painted Desert.

Then I brush back a strand of my own hair, a faded-out cork shade that I got from my mama. I finger one of my tiny stud earrings and know I lack the courage for anything fancier. Besides Samson would have a fit.

Penny is here early today, and by herself. That's unusual. Recently she and Merle moved to town and opened a paint and body shop in the old Goodwill Store on the corner of Vine. Ordinarily they close at five, then the two of them hightail it here in time for the blue plate.

Nobody knows much about where they came from. We don't ask, figure if we're supposed to know, we'll find out without having to. Lots of speculation though. They seem honest, did a good job repairing Franklin Pearson's Toyota when he got rear-ended out by the stockyard.

Penny's gaze lights on Silo now and sticks, not moving. I can tell she's spotted his nose and is trying to get past it. I want to say, *honey, I know the feeling.*

Silo looks like any ordinary guy with thinning hair except for that nose. It stretches out in front of him like a plank of flounder with freckles, a pale undernourished flounder with sprinkles of black pepper down both sides. The first time I saw him, his nose stopped me, too. I said to myself, if I was his mama, I don't care how much it cost, the nose would have had to go, even if it meant paying it off on the installment plan.

For a while after he closed his duct-sucking business, Silo worked Layman and Central as a school-crossing

guard. At rush hour, that nose backed up traffic as far as the eye could see. It still throws strangers for a loop, but once the initial shock wore off it didn't bother me in the least. Goes to show how you can get past anything once you get to know a person.

The whole time Penny stares at him, Silo doesn't look up. He's busy trying to keep Lucky out of sight, which is wasted effort. Like I don't know the dumb dog is there.

With a wet rag, I swipe at a stubborn spot of yellow caked hard on the counter. When it doesn't budge, I scrape at it with my fingernail. It's rough, like cement. Mustard? Egg yolk? Finally it disappears. I catch sight of some crumbs, get rid of them, then feel along the underside of the counter for wads of gum, stuff people like Miss Minnie spot in a heartbeat.

Eventually, my eyes travel back to Penny and the necklace. It's a fact that she doesn't try to hide it. Of course, figuring out where the other half dangles is a no-brainer.

Silo looks like any ordinary guy with thinning hair except for that nose. It stretches out in front of him like a plank of flounder with freckles, a pale undernourished flounder with sprinkles of black pepper down both sides.

The name *Merle*, engraved in sturdy block letters, stares from inside the half-heart, like it's guarding the down shaft to a gold mine. Most everybody in town has the scoop on the situation. It's not the kind of thing that's seen much here in this part of Georgia, in a town as small as Clarkston, but they seem to have pulled it off.

Then I see Silo's face. When he turns, spots Penny, his eyebrows shoot up, stay arched

like they're hooked on something overhead. I stand with my mouth half open, think how I'm mistaken about everybody in town knowing although Samson swears we know such things even when we don't know we know. He says it's just how much we let drift up into our minds at the time. I'm not buying it. I know Silo. He doesn't have a clue.

I recognize the look on his face. It's one I haven't seen since Ruth died five years ago. He closed up like a fist then, sealed up that place in himself where those looks come from, like boarding up a house. Since then, he's walked around, out of step with the world, his shoulders slumped, like something heavy is riding them, something he needs to apologize for.

In his grief, Silo's life became divided into before Ruth and after Ruth. When he lost her, he forgot how the easy back-and-forth that never means much, but keeps people connected, works, too. I think this drove people away from him more than anything else.

I remember one day on his way out the door, Bert Thomas stopped beside Silo, who sat on his usual stool at the counter. He slung his arm across Silo's shoulders. "It's cloudy. Do you think we'll get a rain shower today, Silo?"

No big deal. Right? Bert's just making conversation. Right?

Silo looked up. "You mean outside?"

Bert's arm fell from Silo's shoulder. He stared like he'd dropped a link somewhere in the conversation but wasn't sure which one. Finally he said, "Yeah, Silo. Outside." He gave the shoulder a pat and stepped out the door, shaking his head.

After a while, people began to have business elsewhere as they passed his stool. Where before they'd acted like they wanted to help him grieve his loss, they took now to hurrying by without a word. Finally they stopped seeing him in his regular place at the end of the counter at all. They'd have noticed if he hadn't been there but they stopped noticing that he was. Not that I blamed them. After his comment about the chicken soup, I felt like clamming up myself.

The morning this happened, I was rolling silverware, feeling perky, out to save the world, starting with Silo. "You're looking a little peaked today," I said to him. "Try some of Danny's chicken soup. It'll make you feel better. It's good for you."

He was quiet for a minute then, without an ounce of life in his voice, he said, "But not so good for the chicken."

I took the silverware to the kitchen, finished rolling it back there.

He'd always been a fool about Lucky. After everybody took to leaving him to himself, he came to dote on her more than ever. He seemed to think if he let go of his dog, he'd lose his grip on life as well. Other than coming here for meals, his time was spent on his front porch with Lucky curled at his feet. The two of them, lively as doorstops, sat with their heads cocked to one side like they were listening in on something important, while his bug zapper sent moths and fireflies reeling into forever.

Suddenly, what Silo forgot in those years, he reinvents now in the time it takes him to scoot down the counter and straddle the stool next to Penny. His moves are smooth like he's polished them. This surprises me. I'd have thought when he forgot what being alive was all about, the actions that went with it would go, too.

Now when he zeroes in on Penny, something hot and proud flashes between them. Quick as a jolt of electricity, I see the fever of life and loving rush back into him.

The fierce new spark in Penny's eyes as she returns Silo's look brings me up short. I marvel at how she got past his nose in record time.

I gaze through the plate glass window. It's windy outside, as only Ground Hog Day in Clarkston is windy. Signs slap back and forth like they're carrying on a conversation with each other.

If ever I'm tempted to intervene, to say, *Silo, there's something you need to know before you get in over your head*, it's now. The right words might make a difference. He and Ruth never had children so no offspring is here to say, *Hey, Pop, I don't think this is such a good idea*.

Ruthie, as she was known back then, played tambourine in the church band. Silo took her out the first

time in his daddy's 1956 Nash with the fold-down leather seats, a tiny *s* in one of the back cushions where he'd carved his initial with his new pocketknife on a trip to the Cyclorama. When he parked on the dam at Cypress Pond, he opened the same knife and cut a Hershey Bar square down the middle.

"Take your pick," he said in a deep solemn voice that only the summer before rang in the church choir as a shrill tenor. "I'll be fair with you," he told her and he'd done like he said, even though Ruth expected him to make something of himself on the scale of Jesus Christ or Herman Talmadge and never got over the fact that he didn't.

"I never let my pride keep me from loving Ruth," he said once, studying the coffee grounds in the bottom of his cup. "She was a shy woman. If I'd waited for her to say it, I might as well forget it. But when I told her, she'd reciprocate in more ways than one."

Silo has the notion that anything come by too easily doesn't stand for much.

In the mirror over the back counter now, I meet his eyes, read the look in them that says, *Is this happening to me? Is it my turn again? I never knew you got but one*.

So I don't say a word. I whip a rag around and around the top of a sugar container. I shine until the stainless steel glistens bright as the sunlight that lays out tiny dots on the table tops next to the window, like a board set up for a game of Chinese checkers. At a corner table, Bert Thomas and his brother, Ray, polish off the last of their grits and eggs. Then they take their leave, each wearing a shirt with *Thomas Lumber Company* stitched across the back.

As I watch them, I think that to the outside world we probably don't seem like much, but in the Feed Room, we're real important to each other. We know the things to take note of, the things to overlook. I let Lucky steal food off the tables when nobody is around. Is it my fault she gets too brazen? We don't ask Tan to leave when he sticks his case knife in the bottle of tomato catsup—we change to packages.

I'm about to carry Ray and John's dirty dishes into the kitchen when Merle pulls up out front. I stop with my hands still full and dart a glance toward Silo and Penny. They sit with their heads close together at the counter.

I get a tight queasy feeling in my stomach as I watch Merle's hands with their fingers stout down to the nails, ease the door of the pick-up open with a groan outside. Then her head appears, big and round as a full moon, topped by a duckbill cap tilted to one side. She takes off the cap, runs her fingers through her hair. It's baby-thin and the wind tosses it about in ruffs that leave me staring at a bare scalp. She's heavyset with arms that are thick and hefty. Slapping her cap back on, she holds the bill, anchors the back with the other hand and rocks the cap back and forth, resettling it firmly on her head.

I strain forward, search for a glimpse but can't see it. Still, I know it's there—the necklace with the half heart dangling in the valley beneath her plaid flannel shirt. The

tight feeling in my stomach turns to a flutter like a hummingbird is inside, batting its wings to beat the band when Merle hitches up her jeans and slams the door to the pick-up.

From here, Penny and Silo look like a closed unit, whispering at the counter. Penny's face is slightly flushed. When she breathes, I see her chest go up and down. She takes short little hyperventilating gasps, like the spider plant swinging overhead is using up all the air in the room.

Setting the dirty dishes on the counter, I straighten the napkins into a tidy pile. Suddenly it seems real important that I keep them precision neat. One side of me wants to melt into a puddle and disappear behind the counter while the other, the side that wouldn't miss this for the world.

When I see Merle bend low and shade her eyes from the glare to peep in the window, my toes curl inside my crepe soles. Whether she's verifying what she already knows or just checking, I'm not sure. With her face to the glass, her eyes appear swimmy like she's looking from the inside of a goldfish bowl. When she spots Penny, she stands up, parts the door and steps inside. As she crosses the room, I admire how she moves, bouncing lightly on the balls of her feet, her hips rolling easily, gliding like a well-oiled machine.

I'm studying her so hard, I jump when Danny drops something in the kitchen. Then I hear him running water. The sound, a curling noise, loops in and out like rain on a tin roof as it hits the bottom of a pot, splashes over into the sink.

Silo sits facing the door. Penny has her back to it, hasn't seen Merle yet.

While she draws closer, I try to picture what Merle is seeing. A middle-aged man with a thunderous nose, balding, who spreads the half dozen hairs that are left out like a fan on top of his head and pretends he's not. Nice dog curled at his feet, quiet, not bothering anybody.

When he sees Merle striding across the room, Silo looks up. He follows her with his eyes, curious, like he knows this has something to do with him but can't figure out what.

Penny must have read this new look on his face. She turns. When she sees Merle, she sits up straighter, pushes away from the counter—from Silo. I see her switch gears, the flame in her eyes lowered like somebody's closed a damper. She looks down at her hands where, all of a sudden, I see she's giving her cuticles a fierce workout.

Try as hard as I might, I can't take myself out of what's going on here. That's the thing about a small town. Stuff gets right in your face and stays there. For once, I can't figure out what I'm supposed to take note of, what I'm supposed to overlook. So I fail miserably at closing my mind to the possibility of what's coming next. Will Merle

figure out what's going on between Penny and Silo or will Silo spot their necklaces first? It's a toss-up. So far, nobody's said a word. I stick a cup on the counter for Merle, fill it with coffee, top off Silo and Penny's, take what comfort I can from that.

Suddenly, as Merle nears the counter, her eyes glide past Silo like he's not there. When her eyes lock onto Lucky, they light up like she's won the lottery.

Amazed, I watch her bend down, scratch Lucky behind the ears

"Hey, girl. What ya know? Pretty dog, pretty dog," she says, snapping her fingers.

I come from behind the counter to make sure Lucky hasn't been replaced by some dog I'm not familiar with. Sure enough, it's her. She's in a frenzy, trying to unwind from around the post while she wags her tail and licks Merle's face at the same time. On her knees now, Merle stretches her neck, twisting her chin back and forth to escape Lucky's tongue. When she finally quiets down, Merle glances at Silo. "Blue tick?"

He nods.

"Don't think I've ever seen one with this coloring before. Brindle?"

He's about to answer when Merle leans over to examine the shading on Lucky's back. That's when

the half heart with the name *Penny* spelled out across it drops from Merle's shirt and dangles like a neon sign in front of Silo's face.

I take a deep breath and hold it. Now my stomach is throwing a fit. I picture two of those ulcer germs stationed on each side of it, chomping their way across to the center where they shake hands, congratulate themselves on winning the war.

Silo puts his coffee mug down in the saucer so carefully you'd think it had turned into a piece of fine china. Then he eases close for a better look. When his eyes fasten on that necklace, he blinks several times, fast and snappy, like he's making sure they're in focus. Then he leans back, cuts his eyes at Penny.

She fidgets on the stool, keeps her eyes lowered. She's watching him but sneaks the looks from behind the curtain of hair that drapes half her face. Neither of them says a word while their eyes dodge each other and the air between them fills up with a painful silence thick as clam chowder.

Merle and Lucky are in the middle of the restaurant now, romping and playing like two kids. Merle's cap flies off, lands behind a chair leg. She scrambles over to retrieve it with Lucky tugging at her shirtsleeve.

Silo sits still as a table lamp while he tries to digest what this means. I can see the pictures parading across his mind. When he finishes putting it together it's his turn to pull away. I feel the fresh new life in him wither-

When I see Merle bend low and shade her eyes from the glare to peep in the window, my toes curl inside my crepe soles.

ing, shriveling as he closes into himself again, tight as a peach wrapped around its seed.

I'm tempted to reach across the counter and take his hand, hold onto it with all my might. *I wanted to tell you, Silo, I really did. But I couldn't. I'm sorry for that now. But don't go back. Anything is better than that.*

Then Penny lifts her head, looks straight at him. She runs the tip of her tongue across her bottom lip to moisten it. Then her face breaks out in a big grin, like everything is as normal as piecrust. She gives a soft chuckle and shakes her head. It's like she's saying, *Hey, Silo. I didn't mean to spring this on you but you were bound to find out sooner or later. So, now what?*

I'm so busy watching Penny and Silo, I forget about Merle. When I notice her again, she's stopped roughhousing with Lucky and leans back, resting on her heels, watching them, too.

Penny holds the grin longer than I could have under the circumstances. Silo doesn't give an inch. He keeps her steady in his gaze, studies her like she's just sprouted a second head and he's curious about how she's managed to do that.

By the time the grin finally drains from her face, Merle catches on. Leaving Lucky sitting on her haunches, she tucks in her shirttail, comes over to the counter where she drapes an arm over Penny's shoulder. The way Merle does it, you'd think she's just arrived and is tickled to be there. She nods at Silo. I can see her taking a new interest in him now.

For the first time, I feel like I need to jump in, so I come up with something really brilliant. "How about some coffee, Merle?" I reach for the coffeepot.

"Penny?" Merle raises an eyebrow.

Penny nods, the flush drained from her face along with the grin. "Maybe we just better go."

"Whatever you say."

Merle doesn't stop to ask questions. She keeps her arm across Penny's shoulder while she eases off the stool. The two of them head for the door. Silo sits, following them with his eyes.

I stand behind the counter with the coffeepot poised over Merle's cup, like somebody has turned me off and neglected to turn me back on.

At the entrance, they stop. Merle glances back over her shoulder at Lucky who watches them from the center of the room. When the dog sees that Merle is leaving, she gives a feeble whine from deep inside her throat and looks back at Silo.

The dog is no favorite of mine, but I feel sorry for her now. She's baffled by what's going on.

They all have their eyes on Lucky. It's like everybody is taking turns. First one, then another. Now, it's Lucky's turn. After a second, she figures this out. Giving Silo a sideglance, she trots across the floor, her nails making a click, click sound on the tile floor. She wags her tail, licks Merle's hand. Merle bends, pats her on the head.

"Sit, pretty girl," she says with a twinge of a smile.

Lucky wheels, props on her haunches between Merle

and Penny. Silhouetted in the doorway, all three of them face the counter, their gaze fixed on Silo. Now it's his turn.

Silo's mouth drops open. He can't believe what he's seeing. Neither can I.

Finally, he closes his mouth and leans against the counter, his face drained of every expression I can read.

Then like she knows it's Silo's move but she's decided to go out of turn, Merle leans over, whispers in Penny's ear.

Penny glances up at her in surprise. Merle nods.

In a nonchalant tone, like she's asking him to pass the salt, Penny says, "Coming, Silo?"

Even though I know full well the Feed Room is empty but for us—and thank God for that—I look around frantically for somebody to testify to this. For a second, I feel like dragging Danny out of the kitchen. But what's going on here is between these three people and a hound named Lucky. It doesn't need witnesses because it's nobody's business but their own. Still, I catch myself holding my breath.

I see Silo struggling. I know he's trying to reconcile in his mind how some things in life stay true no matter how much we wish they'd be otherwise. He shifts on the stool, looks across the counter at me. I'm careful to keep a neutral face.

When he slides off the leather seat and squares his shoulders, I know he's made up his mind. As he crosses the room, Lucky's wagging tail pounds up and down on the door behind her like she's beating on a drum. I see Merle make a move to turn and push open the door for them. Suddenly she stops and glances at Silo. He reaches around her and slides it open. Stepping back, he stands, fine and manly, while she and Penny and Lucky go out ahead of him. Then with a swishing sound, the door closes behind them all.

I'm not sure how Silo will fit into Penny and Merle's formula. Probably he doesn't either. This is a leap for him. Who was it said, miracles come in an instant, not when they're summoned, but of themselves—and to those who least expect them. I forget. But I do know one thing, Silo thinks a man is judged by his convictions and he's always been true to his. That's not something that's likely to change.

Outside the wind, which had died down, picks up again. My eye catches on a stray piece of paper that skips past, dodging in and out between the parking meters like it's playing tag with them. I try to remember if the ground hog could have seen his shadow today or not. I can't remember. Samson will know.

Gathering up the dirty coffee mugs, I head for the kitchen so Danny can get them in the dishwasher. We'll need them for the lunch crowd that'll start pouring in any minute now.

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Linda Dunlap is a resident of Florida. Her writing has appeared in The Crescent Review, Calliope, and RE:AL. She is working on a novel called Digging Queen Esther's Grave.

Wild and Blue

The Politics of Country Music

By Sandy Carter

Photo courtesy of Austin City Limits

“He sings more sincere than most entertainers because the hillbilly was raised rougher than most entertainers.”

— Hank Williams

Through the century, country music has always had to contend with marketing strategies aiming to balance roots and mass appeal. But in the last two decades, as country music has exploded to unprecedented commercial success, this “balance” has become so laced with pop and rock influences, the very identity of the music has been called into question. What’s now being billed as “Real Country” is, in fact, an exclusion of most of the Grand Tradition’s historical and musical legacy.

In the 1920’s, when country music first began to feel the pressures of commercialization, rural traditions of all kinds were experiencing tensions and challenges brought on by industrialization. Country sounds suggesting older and more settled ways seemed inherently at odds with rapid social and technological change. The music expressed a longing for stability and order and deep-seated fears of the temptations of the modern world. At the same time, the music could not help but reflect hopes of escaping the hardships as-



WILLIE NELSON POPULARIZED THE OUTLAW-COUNTRY SOUND.

sociated with traditional rural life.

Conflicted feelings also derived from the Southernness of the music. While the music of Stephen Foster and the writings of Mark Twain fueled romantic notions of the South as an exotic land of enchantment, the region also evoked images of slavery and the Civil War, the Scopes monkey trial, and the Klan. Thus for many, country music, regardless of its subject matter, was nothing more than the sound of ignorance and racism.

Retaining a stubborn self-consciousness of its white, rural, Southern, working class origins, country

music today continues to attract and repulse listeners by stirring the same opposing images. Nonetheless, in a span of 70 years, country music has grown from regional to national and international popularity.

With mass popularity, however, some of the most distinctive qualities of country music have been diluted. Listening to the musical styles dominating country radio, one hears a generic McDonald’s styled product so stripped of “hayseed” connotations that it virtually erases the line between country and various forms of easy listening white pop and bland

’70s styled corporate rock. While more traditional sounds have not disappeared, the Nashville industry bias toward an urban-suburban contemporary sound has certainly muddled the definition and origins of the musical idioms known as country.

Like other music forms of our culture, country music is an amalgam of influences. Its sound, song structure, and lyrical text reveal a heavy debt to African-American musical styles, particularly blues and gospel. Rhythmically, country draws most on the dance meters of English and European country dance tunes. As to lyr-

Photo courtesy of Austin City Limits

ics and narrative style, country storytelling has roots in Southern Protestant sermonizing, barroom banter, front porch story swapping, and the general character of regional oral traditions.

Yet historically the most dominant and unmistakable quality of the country sound is sadness. One of the great stereotypes plaguing country music is the cry-in-the-beer loser drowning the pain of romantic loss in some dark tavern. But the heartbreak in country music runs deeper than cheating, drinking, and divorce. The sad tale country music has to tell goes back to the devastation the region suffered during the Civil War, the loss of rural identity, and the great migration of Southerners to urban centers in the Midwest and West during the 1940s and 1950s. These experiences have given country music a deeply embedded memory of social dislocation. Understandably therefore, country music is homesick music, permanently colored by feelings of longing and lost innocence.

The loss at the heart of the country song has been expressed through two divergent impulses. When the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers came to Bristol, Tennessee in August 1927 to perform before record scout Ralph Peer and a Victor Talking Machine, they brought with them distinct bodies of material representing seemingly contradictory themes and values. In the Carter Family's huge repertoire of traditional songs resided the morally decent old-time virtues of work, family, humility, and Christian fellowship.

By contrast, Rodgers, an ex-railroad brakeman from Meridian, Mississippi, penned tunes with roots in blues and jazz, folk and cowboy



THE RE-EMERGENCE OF EMMYLOU HARRIS IS A SIGN OF THE GROWING PRESENCE OF WOMEN IN COUNTRY, AS WELL AS THE BRIDGE TO ROCK AND FOLK MUSIC.

songs, work gang hollers and pop. Though Rodgers wrote his share of songs glorifying the home and family, his work also celebrated the lives of hell-raisers, hobos, wayward lovers, criminals, rounders and rambblers.

Both approaches proved immediately popular.

Though commercialization accelerated the homogenization of country sounds, by documenting the diversity of local and regional styles it also helped Southerners gain a fuller sense of their common cultural heritage. The music labeled "hillbilly" dramatized what they suffered, survived, and left behind. It offered solace and understanding, realism and escape. But most of all, it was music that responded to change with a reassertion of tradition.

Because of this emphasis on Southernness and tradition, country music has long been associated with all that is reactionary. However,

while country music generally expresses a conservative outlook, the view of country as an exclusively white, male-dominated, right-wing tradition is unfair and one-dimensional. At no point in its history has country music expressed a consistent political ideology. For every hard-headed patriotic diatribe like "Okie From Muskogee," there's a left-bent protest like Waylon Jennings' multicultural, egalitarian anthem "America" or James Talley's ode to populist rebellion "Are They Gonna Make Us Outlaws Again."

More importantly, since country music has always been a voice for small farmers, factory hands, day laborers, the displaced and unemployed, its harsh portraits of work and everyday life carry an implicit critique of capitalism. Instead of overt political protest, however,

country songs prefer to deliver social criticism through poignant descriptions of economic hardship and family sacrifice. Some of the best examples of this style of protest are Merle Haggard's "Mama's Hungry Eyes," Dolly Parton's "Coat Of Many Colors," and Loretta Lynn's "Coal Miner's Daughter."

As to the issue of race, country music's sentimental attachment to Dixie is often taken as an endorsement of white supremacy and slavery. Country music's glorification of the South, however, derives mostly from an idealized notion of working the land and the real life movement of millions off the land during the years of the Great Depression and World War II. Not surprisingly, hundreds of country tunes plead the case of the farmer and celebrate the beauty of Southern landscapes.

Still, it is obvious that "whiteness" is dominant in country music. De-

spite the tradition's enormous debt to African-American music and other ethnic music cultures, non-white performers are still exceedingly rare in country music. And when voices of color have gained popularity in the country field, it has generally been through songs and styles evidencing only traces of their racial origins.

Nonetheless, since the 1960s Mexican-Americans such as Johnny Rodriguez, Freddy Fender, Tish Hinojosa, and Flaco Jimenez and African Americans such as Charlie Pride, Stoney Edwards, and Big Al Downing have won acceptance with country audiences. And occasionally, there are tunes like Bobby Braddock's "I Believe The South Is Gonna Rise Again" suggesting a new progressive vision of racial unity:

*The Jacksons down the road were poor
like we were
But our skin was white and theirs was
black
I believe the South's gonna rise again
But not the way we thought it would
back then*

Some of the strongest stereotypes attached to country music revolve around the social and sexual roles of women. To many people Tammy Wynette's 1968 hit "Stand By Your Man" typifies the passive, long suffering mentality of the unliberated country woman. In truth, the female perspective in country music is much broader and far more assertive than this superficial stereotype can allow.

The richest and most authoritative evidence of this reality can be found in Mary Bufwack and Robert Oermann's *Finding Her Voice: The Saga Of Women In Country Music* (Crown Publishers Inc., New York). Exploring the folk origins of country music, Bufwack and Oermann argue that women were the primary folklorists for early rural music, memorizing the tunes and lyrics that provided the basic entertainment for the family and community. And in their

Country music may be one of the truest forms of popular music in the way it gives voice to the bitter realities of class and the sorry state of male-female relations. But in offering few avenues of escape and rebellion, country music tends to settle struggle in favor of the powers that be.

own original ballads, women expressed sexual fantasies and discontents in songs loaded with images of romantic longing, promiscuity, violence, and death. Bufwack and Oermann also reveal more active and socially oriented resistance in the depression era songs of Sarah Gunning, the composer of "I Hate The Capitalist System," and Aunt Molly Jackson, who began making up class conscious songs and walking picket lines before she was 10.

It was not until the 1950s, however, that women in country music began to gain commercial equality with men. Following Kitty Wells' surprising 1952 hit "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels" – a woman's retort to Hank Thompson's "The Wild Side Of Life" – women singers such as Patsy Cline, Loretta Lynn, Dolly Parton, and Tammy Wynette started achieving record sales and stardom rivaling men.

By 1984 about one-fourth of the top country singles and albums were by women. And today's country and pop charts are overflowing with country women – Reba McEntire, Wynonna Judd, Mary Chapin-Carpenter, Trisha Yearwood, Suzy Bogguss, Patty Loveless, Pam Tillis, and the hugely popular Dixie Chicks, to mention only a few. Most significantly, the commercial appeal of the current generation of country women seems directly linked to a feminist-oriented lyric.

While the politics of country music eludes many popular prejudices and neat categories of left and right, however, the fundamental conservatism of the message cannot be denied. Country music may be one of the truest forms of popular music in the way it gives voice to the bitter realities of class and the sorry state of male-female relations. But in offering few avenues of escape and rebellion, country music tends to settle struggle in favor of the powers that be.

Nonetheless, country's stoic acceptance of things as they are cannot be taken as an unqualified endorsement of the status quo. The great strength of country music has been its ability to capture white working class life as it really is and without the projection of false hope. And in this realistic assessment of limits, the music contradicts societal ideals of progress, success, and fairness. Accordingly, throughout most of its commercial history, country music has been dismissed as something beneath and apart from mainstream culture.

Fully aware of country music's "negatives," the Nashville music establishment has periodically re-groomed the sound and image of the tradition with hopes of winning respectability and crossover appeal. In the 1950s and '60s, it was the smooth, urbane "Nashville Sound," in the 1970s it was the tasteless pop country of John Denver and Olivia Newton-

John, and in the 1980s it was Urban Cowboy role playing. Although all of these trends gave country a temporary commercial boost, hardcore country fans and musicians reacted to each with a purist backlash (bluegrass, the Bakersfield sound, Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings' "out-law" movement, neo-traditionalism) that eventually brought the market back around to traditional sounds.

In the Reagan-Bush-Clinton era, country music has slowly ascended again to mainstream popularity with sounds and images revealing few traces of country's old-time hickishness. This time around, country's new audience seems to come from aging white boomers and younger middle-income suburbanites who've tired of classic rock and can't tolerate aggressive youth sounds (metal, hip-hop, alternative rock) or easy listening pop. For these listeners (one survey indicates that over a third of the country audience has postgraduate degrees and incomes exceeding \$100,000), country supplies a guitar based rock influenced sound, adult subject matter, and yearning for a more simple and decent way of life.

Unfortunately in meeting this demand, the music industry has again resorted to formula: muscles, big hats, starched boot cut Wranglers, choreographed sexy moves, and pale, twang-free impersonations of heartbreak. Today's country music is embarrassed by its past. And despite all the promotional claims for "Modern" and "Young" country, mainstream country lyrics give little hint of present day social and economic reality.

In response, another vaguely defined movement of non-mainstream country has reared its head and slowly carved out a small but growing national audience. Sometimes called roots music, alternative country, insurgent country, or Americana, this loosely defined mutant country, has evolved through the 90s while pulling together a mongrel community of music listeners and

musicians attracted to Appalachian folk music, blues, depression era country, post-World War II honky tonk, bluegrass, country rock and punk. In short, music that carries a sense of time, place, class, tragedy and resilience.

No surprise then that some of the greatest heroes of the current "not Nashville" wave include country and folk legends such as the Carter Family, Jimmie Rodgers, Dock Boggs, Woody Guthrie, Bob Wills, the Louvin Brothers, Hank Williams, Kitty Wells, Tammy Wynette, George Jones, Johnny Cash and Merle Haggard. But since this is a largely rock-informed crowd, influences also include Bob Dylan, Gram Parsons, Neil Young, the Clash, Charles Bukowski and X. With such a wide range of inspirations, so-called "alternative country" is stylistically all over the place.

From the singer-songwriter camp come distinctive voices like Jimmie Dale Glimore, Steve Earl, Gillian Welch, Iris Dement and Lucinda Williams. Established country performers with strong tradition based styles, such as Dwight Yoakam, Emmylou Harris and Alison Krauss, are included. The fresh swinging

Though the varied brands of offbeat country may never coalesce into a next big thing, all the ill-labeled twangers going about their business below the Top 40 are forging vital links between tradition and today.

barroom sounds of Wayne Hancock, BR-549 and Junior Brown make a natural fit. And from the younger breed of country rockers come bands such as Son Volt, Wilco and Whiskeytown.

So far, however, this unclassifiable movement seems to have too many rough edges to make a mainstream crossover. To begin with, most of the musicians are far too scruffy to win over audiences weaned on an army of slick "hat acts." Beyond problems of image, there's music and words that are a little too fresh and lived in to be easily absorbed by Young Country fans unaccustomed to unpolished singers howling their misery and desire.

Still country music has always returned to its roots following periods of pop like homogenization. In the mid-90s, country music record sales topped two billion dollars and nearly seventy million people reported they listened to country music on the radio over all other styles of music. Yet since that time, country record sales and the country radio audience have been sliding steadily downward. While this trend may not signal the end of "cookie cutter" country, it's at least a sign that Nashville's current formulas are wearing thin.

Though the varied brands of off-beat country may never coalesce into a next big thing, all the ill labeled twangers going about their business below the Top 40 are forging vital links between tradition and today. In the progressive new voice of women, left-of-center hillbilly folk, Bakersfield rooted hard country, bluegrass, and punk informed country rock, you can still hear the raw emotions and wild and blue stories of a truly populist art form. The "old" story country music has to tell is simply too real, too rooted, and too timeless to be forgotten.

Sandy Carter was born in Gulfport, Mississippi and grew up in Amarillo, Texas listening to the music of Bob Wills, Lefty Frizzell, and Hank Williams. He writes the "Slippin' & Slidin'" column on music and culture for Z Magazine.

Saving White Southern Souls

The re-issue of Anne Braden's classic links the movements of the past and present

By Al McSurely

The Wall Between (reprint ed.)
Anne Braden. Nashville:
University of Tennessee Press,
1999. Foreword by Julian Bond
and new epilogue by Anne
Braden.



ANNE BRADEN REMAINS ACTIVE IN THE LOUISVILLE COMMUNITY THAT SHUNNED HER AND HER HUSBAND ALMOST 50 YEARS AGO.

“Why don’t you go to bed early tonight?” Carl Braden suggested to his wife, Anne, as he left for his evening shift at the newspaper. “Everything’s over,” he said, referring to the violence against the their African-American friends, Andrew and Charlotte Wade. The Bradens had helped the Wades buy their home in a white neighborhood in Louisville, Kentucky. There had been shots fired into the house, a cross burned in front of it, and the Wades had endured much harassment. But in the last few weeks, things seemed to have quieted down.

Anne was tired. “I’m beginning to snap at the children,” she said. “It’s not right to take this thing out on them.” “Not only Jimmy and Anita but Mike,” Carl said. “You’ve got to look out for him too.” Anne had just become conscious she was pregnant. They had already named him, guessing his gender. “Oh, don’t worry about Mike,” she said.

Anne went to bed at 10 on Saturday night, June 26, 1954. About three hours later the phone awakened her.

It was Andrew Wade. “Anne. . . We’re all right. . . but they just blew the house up.” (*The Wall Between*, 1999 Edition, pp. 134-5)

In the weeks following the bombing, Anne miscarried in the weeks following the bombing. Thirty-one at the time, she “recovered quickly—in body, but it took longer for the spiritual wound to begin to heal.” (159)

I had forgotten about this miscarriage. I cried when I re-read her words in 1999. My thoughts immediately went to Margaret Herring’s deep feelings about her pregnancy when she was also 31 and we were in the Pike County jail in 1967. Margaret and I, Joe Mulloy, and then Anne and Carl (for the second time) had been arrested for sedition against Kentucky. Then, as opposed to 1955,

the movement was strong, and we benefited from the support of left and liberal groups and the media. We experienced a torrent of red-baiting, but nothing like the isolation Anne and Carl endured with their first sedition arrest 13 years before. Four days after Christmas 1967, Margaret gave birth to our son, Victor.

Go back 12 years to 1955. Anne Braden sits at her typewriter before daybreak, writing *The Wall Between*. Carl is in jail for “sedition” — for supposedly advocating the violent overthrow of the Kentucky government. Anne is under indictment for the same crime. Not unlike Hitler’s classic frame-the-victim strategy of accusing Georgi Dimitrov for the 1934 Reichstag fire, Louisville’s Commonwealth Attorney accused the Bradens of bombing their friends’ house!

Rather than immediately demanding a sanity hearing and commitment of the prosecutor (he committed suicide in 1959 after a family argument), Louisville’s “liberals” tip-

toed away from the Bradens. The racist Southern Democrats and the Nixon-McCarthy Republicans tested out their new alliance of targeting Southern whites who dared to stand up for Negro rights with a devastating attack on the Bradens. The unholy alliance relentlessly hammered away at my good friends for over a decade.

To fight out of their isolation and fight back against the rightist attack, Anne and Carl literally had to start from scratch. Anne, my dear comrade, sat at her typewriter each morning and pried out of her soul this book of truths. I know that getting this stuff down on paper was a labor of necessity, more than of love.

During 1966 the torch of the Freedom Movement was grabbed (not passed) from the older generation by the younger generation. Many of the older civil rights leaders, who had helped to set the stage for the mass uprisings of the 1955-1965 decade, were unprepared for the social, political, and cultural creativity of the masses. New leaders in 1966, in their 20's and 30's, had been prepared to accept the dangers, if not the creative challenges, of regional and national leadership. The older leaders found it difficult (as I must admit I sometimes do today) to understand, much less appreciate, the "attitude" of the younger leaders.

King and Braden were bridges in this classic political generation gap. They knew most of the younger leaders. They had helped to inspire and train them, had gone to jail with them, and helped get them out. At the same time, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Braden understood the older generation of leaders' worries. I have some dear memories of Braden, patiently explaining the meaning of Black Power to old Movement people, and the to younger people explaining the absolute necessity of black-white alliances and friendships.

If only a few historians have mentioned King as the critical Movement

bridge, none have written about his white counterpart, Anne Braden. There weren't many white people of Anne's generation in the Southern Freedom Movement. There were several 10-20 years older, and thousands 10-20 years younger. But her generation had been hammered by twin waves of anti-Communism and racism that swept across the South in the early 1950s.

The Bradens stood up to this double tidal wave in their hometown of Louisville. They weren't going anywhere. Carl died in 1975 on the couch in front of his beloved books in his West End Louisville neighborhood. Anne is going strong out of the same house as the century ends.

In the late 1950s, King and Braden took the helms of what would become two critical organizations in the southern freedom movement: the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF). History placed King and Braden back in their homeland when their friends and neighbors made movement-starting decisions. Rosa Parks decided to remain in her bus seat. The Wades decided to buy a home. The respective families of Martin Luther King and Anne Braden, their Christian upbringing, spouses, and friends all came together to throw these two people, body and soul, into the struggle for freedom.

Braden and King were motivated by the same idea: saving warped white souls. It sounds weird, but saving white souls worried them all the time. This frustrated some of us who had concluded, on good evidence, that many white souls weren't worth the trouble.

King's ideological meld of liberation theology-African American Baptist-Marxism-Buddhism-Hinduism-Freudianism has stood the test for 32 years since his murder. Anne Braden's similar ideological meld has weathered those years well also. I cannot close without pointing out

Braden's unique contribution to this meld – one that sets a high standard for all white people who daily contribute, by our silent assent if nothing else, to the system of racism which grows stronger each day in our society.

Like Eric Fromm, the German psychoanalyst who devoted his life work to understanding how so many of his peers and friends accepted Fascism, Anne Braden focuses our attention on the central question: Why do my Southern intellectual peers condone, accept and often openly support the racist system and acts against African Americans? Unlike Fromm, however, Braden's writings have not enjoyed widespread use in college courses. Her words hit too close to home. Demagogues continue to get elected on the thinly disguised fear-mongering of "reverse discrimination," "violence (read: African-American boys) in our schools," "tough on crime," "death penalty," and other code words that hit the tap-roots in the collective unconscious of the white Southerner. The continued airing of this devil's chorus can only happen with the quiet assent and broad support of some of our friends and neighbors.

The Wall Between – nominated for the National Book Award in 1958, and now reprinted by the University of Tennessee Press should become the main reading for hundreds of high school and college courses across the South. Her 1964 pamphlet, "House Un-American Activities Committee: Bulwark of Segregation;" her long 1967 article, "The Southern Freedom Movement;" and her monthly news reports and analyses in *The Southern Patriot* from the 1960's deserve to be compiled and published in a book.

If we are to silence the devil's chorus, we must help Dr. King's 1955 prediction come true; that Anne Braden's work "will live to become a classic on the Southern situation."

Al McSurely worked with the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF) and is now a civil rights attorney in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

A Book with a View

"Between the Flowers" opens a window to Appalachian writing

By Meredith Sue Williams

Between The Flowers.

Harriette Simpson Arnow.
East Lansing: Michigan
State University Press, 1999.

It is cause for celebration that Michigan State University Press has brought out a new book by the late Harriette Simpson Arnow, best known for *The Dollmaker* and *Hunter's Horn*. This new novel, *Between the Flowers*, was actually her second novel, and its publication history as described in the introduction gives insight into what commercial publishers in the late-1930s expected from a young writer they perceived as talented but "regional."

Between the Flowers centers on a passionate but flawed marriage in a world of traditional Kentucky folkways, newly homogenizing American popular culture, and economic distress. It is a mature and highly-crafted novel with the breadth and universality that Arnow's readers look for. I have some reservations about the way the novel ends, but this is a book that richly deserves publication and a wide readership.

Arnow has been identified as an expert on the people of the Southern Appalachian mountains, but she herself was never anything like a simple hill woman. (Maybe there have never been any simple hill women outside of the stereotypes on television and in the Sunday comics.) Arnow's father worked in factories, and her mother, a former teacher, raised her daughter to be a teacher, too. From girlhood, Arnow wanted to write. She loved cities and spent crucial periods of her life in Cincinnati and Detroit. She married an urban man, the son of Jewish immi-

grants, and lived much of her adult life in Michigan. She is now claimed by both Kentucky and Michigan.

The female protagonist of *Between the Flowers* is a young woman named Delph, who is by family inheritance and personality eager for wide experience. The founder of Delph's family was a Daniel Boone-type character who stayed only a dozen years in the valley he claimed before moving "west into new wild country, leaving his wife and children to care for his land and hogs and mules." Like her ancestor, Delph wants to move on: to go to town for high school, to travel in exotic places – and she mistakenly confuses her wanderlust with her passion for the man she marries, Marsh.

He works in the oil fields, specializing in explosives. The child of economically displaced farm workers, he hungers after exactly what Delph appears always to have had: an honored position in a stable community. He dreams of the day when he can sit in a country church and have all the congregation "look at him in respect; a respect built on the knowing that he could farm and hold his own in their world with the best of them."

Marsh's effort to succeed as a farmer is not a crass desire for ownership but a struggle for his place in the community. To Delph, such a place in the community as well as the skills of farming are so ingrained that she hardly values them.

Arnow carefully gives her novel the broadest historical setting, explicitly mentioning the history of the Europeans who left Ireland for the coastal regions of America, then crossed the Cumberland Gap and

went even farther west. Arnow sees these travelers as lovers of land, always drawn to see the view from the next ridge. The descriptions of nature in this book are as beautiful as any American writer has written, but Arnow's precise knowledge of plants and farming practices is even more striking. For example, she describes "the cunning of tobacco leaves when it rained; come a shower and the broad leaves stiffened and lifted themselves until they were like gutters, sending all water down the stalk to the roots of the plant."

Arnow also loves the Southern Appalachian folkways, which she unsentimentally presents as complex and fragile. The novel has excellent set pieces about life in that time and place. There is an interesting passage where people of various ages, races, and social stations work together on the tobacco harvest in an ideal of community and physical labor. There is a chapter about a small child's happy and free existence on a well-tended farm; a darkly humorous story of Kentucky justice in which a young lawyer is called to represent a man who announces in advance that he intends to kill his son-in-law; a grimly unforgettable flood; and an equally powerful narration of a case of typhoid fever. There is also the delicate story – a microcosm of the main plot of the novel – about the first night and day that a young married couple spends alone on their new farm. They love each other deeply, but hold back many things from each other. The book would be worth reading just for these passages.

But *Between the Flowers* is not a collection of set pieces: it is a dynamic

Cyber South Online Resources



Executive Paywatch

[www.paywatch.com]

This eye-opening site, sponsored by the AFL-CIO, documents the skyrocketing income of corporate millionaires, compared to the stagnating wages of most Americans. Plug in your current salary, and find out how much money you'd be making if your paychecks had mushroomed like those of the business elite.

Democracy Resource Center

[www.kydrc.org]

The Lexington, Kentucky-based Democracy Resource Center is "a multiracial, anti-racist organization working to make government more democratic." Their website allows you to access the Center's many useful publications, including *Citizen Power* – a new study about grassroots organizing in Kentucky – and "Kentucky's Low Road to Economic Development," a report blasting business giveaways in the region.

On The Lege: Campaign Finance in Virginia

[saturn.vcu.edu/~jcsouth/on-the-lege/]

At Virginia Commonwealth University, students in Prof. Jeff South's class on Legislative Reporting didn't just learn about money and politics this semester – they decided to share their research, educating us all with this excellent website. In 42 stories based on campaign contribution data, 10 students have traced the big money filling the coffers of politicians – with 54% of the donations coming from just 1.4% of the contributors. They also expose the political pay-offs, ranging from tax breaks to support for laws. As a legislator admitted to one of the young sleuths, "Anyone who tells you that these contributions don't affect the legislative process is lying."

The Blue Highway

[thebluehighway.com]

"The blue highway," according to the opening page of this exhaustive site for fans of the blues, "winds past the plantation houses of the Mississippi Delta to the south-side clubs and tenements of post-war Chicago. While it's a somber trip, humbling, and even distressing, it's also enchanting and joyful." Take a trip on this site for tributes, history, radio and concert listings, audio broadcasts and tons more on this site "for the 'buked and scorned."

Project Vote Smart

[www.vote-smart.org]

It's election year, and there's no better place to find out where candidates stand than Project Vote Smart. Enter your zip code, and find out issue positions, voting records, campaign finances, and rankings by interest groups across the ideological spectrum for your state and national aspiring politicians.

CyberSouth is a new, occasional Southern Exposure column. To nominate a website for review in *CyberSouth*, send an email to: editor@i4south.org

A Book with a View *continued from previous page*

created world driven forward by the tension between Marsh's determination to make a place for himself and his family and Delph's need to break away. There is a calm moment late in the novel when Delph reads aloud to Marsh. She loves books for the unfamiliar worlds they offer, but Marsh's favorite is *Silas Marner*: "He never seemed to tire of the lanes of Raveloe or the slow talk of the English farmers concerning weather and cows."

This is a typical Arnow moment: it turns over stereotypes (farmers reading George Eliot); it captures the gap between people who love each other; it is at once humorous, true, and excruciatingly sad. This is the greatest virtue of Arnow's best work: she maximizes the potential of the novel for keeping many balls in the air at once. Her writing is strongest when it has this mixing of genres and breadth of vision.

My one disappointment in *Between the Flowers* is its single-minded insistence on a tragic closure. Arnow prepares carefully for her tragedy, laying in Delph's fatal flaw of wanderlust. For a while, Delph puts her hopes for the future on her son, but little Burr-Head loves best to follow his father behind the plow. At one point, Delph looks around the county seat and finds nothing "of the city, or of anything except her own sky governed world, and that was built on fields and men in overalls. They came and choked the life from the town." She looks for escape in Sam Fairchild, a handsome Kentucky man with a talent for chemistry who is home for a visit. Sam uses his education and talent not to improve local farming but to create weapons of war. He draws Delph with his physical beauty and his

aura of adventure and the city.

Delph's desire for Sam and new places clashes with her troubled love for her husband and her deeply held Appalachian moral values. Arnow chooses to end the novel with a fateful, even melodramatic, scene of Delph's destruction. Oddly, though, as if that ending were only one possible ending, I came away with the conviction that Delph and Marsh and Burr-Head and are still living somewhere along the Cumberland – striving and struggling, unsatisfied and failing one another, yet having moments of wholeness and joy in the expansive, open-ended world of *Between the Flowers*.

Meredith Sue Willis, a native of West Virginia, is the author of the short story collection In the Mountains of America as well as of a brand new edition of Personal Fiction Writing: A Guide to Writing from Real Life.

Outdoor Dramas

By Mary Lee Kerr

Southerners like to tell stories, and the more spectacular the story the better. Through outdoor dramas, Southern communities have found a way to tell their proudest tales with actors, music, dance, and special effects ranging from real floods to fireworks.

"The reason there are so many outdoor dramas in the South," says Todd Lidh, director of communications for The Institute of Outdoor Drama based at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, "is that Southerners may have a greater attachment to the history of 'my town.' Outdoor dramas speak to the feeling of who shaped our beliefs and affected our history."

The first American Outdoor Historical Symphonic Dramas, as they are officially known, were performed on the coast of North Carolina. The citizens of Manteo worked with playwright Paul Green to develop a drama to commemorate the 350th birthday of Virginia Dare. Performed on the historic site of Roanoke Island and only scheduled to run one year, "The Lost Colony" attracted President Franklin Roosevelt and hundreds of visitors, who had to get to it by ferry. It has been in production ever since, and played a major role in bringing tourism and development to the Outer Banks of North Carolina.

Interest in outdoor drama spread as more and more people saw "The Lost Colony." Green became a consultant to groups starting their own dramas, and by the 1960's, The Institute of Outdoor Drama had evolved at UNC-Chapel Hill to study and support outdoor drama. Today, there are over 100 outdoor dramas in 34 states with annual attendance of 2.5 million. The South still takes the lead; 16 dramas are performed in North Carolina, 13 in Texas, and more are scattered across Kentucky, Georgia, and Virginia.

What makes outdoor dramas unique, says Lidh, is the combination of music, spectacle, and history. Performed outside in the evening with either live or piped music, many dramas include "spectacles" that are impossible for indoor theater, such as fireworks, floods, simulated lightning strikes, horses, and trees. The stories seem more immediate and alive because they are performed on or near the site where the event happened.

Outdoor drama themes range from overcoming adversity and fighting oppression to individuals uniting in a cause. According to Lidh, the longest running dramas tell the bad as well as the good, of crimes and massacres as well as proud moments. In "The Floyd Collins Story," a Kentucky farmer is trapped in a cave for two weeks while a nationwide effort is launched to free him. Snow



INDIANS CELEBRATE THEIR ALLIANCE WITH THE BRITISH AGAINST LOCAL SETTLERS, LED BY DANIEL BOONE, IN THE OUTDOOR DRAMA, "HORN IN THE WEST," IN BOONE, NORTH CAROLINA.

Camp, NC's "The Sword of Peace" and "Pathway to Freedom" tell the story of Quakers and the slaves they freed in the underground railroad, while "Unto these Hills" describes the Cherokee Indians' forced removal from North Carolina.

"Incident at Looney's Tavern," performed summer evenings in Double Springs, Alabama, tells of poor Winston County hill people who didn't care about preserving slavery and just wanted to be left alone during the Civil War. They decided if Alabama could secede from the Union, Winston County could secede from Alabama. They met at Looney's Tavern to resolve to become a "free state." Looney's Tavern Productions stages the outdoor musical "within a stone's throw" of the original tavern site, using singing, dancing, humor, and fireworks to bring the story to life.

The stories outdoor dramas tell make their communities proud, but so do the dramas themselves. "Local families bring their out-of-town visitors to see 'Incident at Looney's Tavern,' and a lot of our resources and manpower come from volunteers," says Pat Taylor, Public Relations Manager for Looney's Tavern Productions. "Local folks are proud we're here."

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Mary Lee Kerr is a freelance writer and editor who lives in Chapel Hill, NC.

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