

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

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Targeting Youth

- Child Labor
- Tobacco and Kids
- School Tracking

Migrant worker,
17-year-old
Annabel, picks
tomatoes in East
Tennessee.

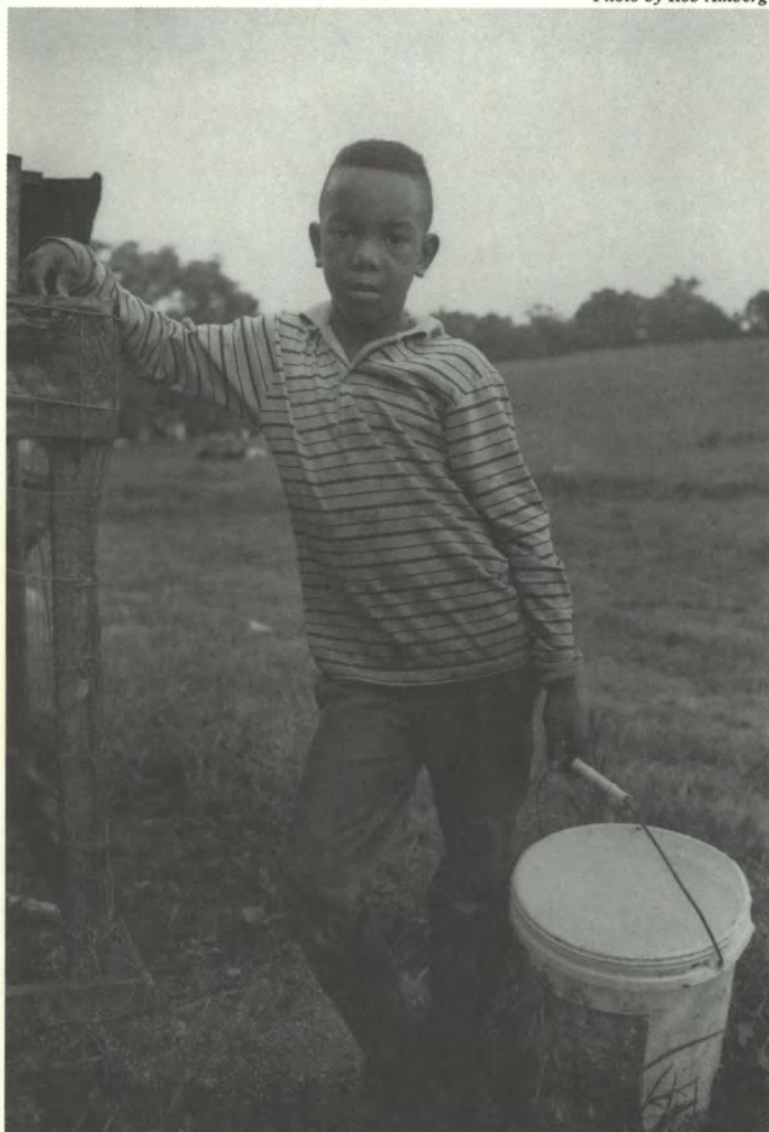
ALSO

THE OFFICE FROM HELL

Mi Diario—Diary of a Migrant Worker



5
9 22



Working hard with little regulation, segregated by tracking programs in schools, and seduced by tobacco companies — it's no wonder kids seem to grow up too fast.

Special Section, *Targeting Youth*, starts on page 15.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

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. In the past five years, the magazine has received a Project Censored Award, 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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FALL/WINTER 1995

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From the Editor

Social issues seem to go in and out of fashion. The national media take up disgraceful nursing homes, move onto child abuse, then over to police corruption. Appalachian poverty made appearances in the 1930s and '60s. Homelessness made a splash in the early '80s, but when the problem didn't clear up, the media moved on.

That's where magazines like *Southern Exposure* come in. We check out what the mainstream media are reporting, but we really check out what they're not reporting.

One of our staff members, researcher Ron Nixon, saw a big gap when it came to reporting on youth. Young blacks especially seemed to be portrayed only as dangerous criminals or pregnant teens. As a young black man, Ron felt maligned. He was seeing much more and better among his contemporaries.

He saw that institutions manipulate youth for their own purposes. In the cover section he developed about youth, he took on child labor, tobacco companies, school tracking programs, and the military in schools. Ron spent more than a year planning, researching, and working with other young people to produce our cover section on youth. Our offices filled with bright and enthusiastic interns who worked to shape an extraordinary section, which begins on page 15.

If it weren't for small, independent publications like *Southern Exposure*, who would investigate the youth issues we cover in this issue? Who would cover towns fouled by chemical companies or hazardous waste dumps, as we often do? Who would speak about the people who are usually ignored by the media, or marginalized or trivialized or demonized?

The problem for us is that while we may do a bang-up job of maintaining a free press, the term free has to do with expression, not cost. In this world of nonprofits (a term that does seem to refer to both philosophy and monetary condition), we rely on individual supporters and on foundations. It's always tight, but right now, it's tighter. That is why we need your support. If you bought the magazine at a newsstand or are reading it at a library, please become a member of the Institute for Southern Studies and help us keep publishing. If you are a member and receiving *Southern Exposure*, give a gift membership or make a donation. Ordering information is on the inside covers. Help us continue calling attention to the tough problems whether they're in or out of fashion.

— Pat Arnow

As a young black man, Ron felt maligned.

CORRECTION: The name of 19th century British scientist Francis Galton was switched to Mary Frances Galton in "Sterilization Survivors Speak Out," in our Summer 1995 edition. *Southern Exposure* regrets the error, which was ours, not the author's.

R O U N D U P

CRUDE TURPENTINE BAD FOR NEIGHBORHOOD

Vivian Singley sits at her kitchen table worrying about what is going on behind the metal and barbed wire fence in her backyard. A wall of green mesh conceals the work of machines clanging and grinding on the other side. But she can still see the tanks.

Rising like skyscrapers, these charred behemoths just 150 feet from her clothesline are the remainders of the worst chemical disaster in Savannah, Georgia, history. On April 10, Singley and her neighbors were jolted awake when tank 23 exploded, spilling 800,000 flaming gallons of crude turpentine at Powell Duffryn terminals, a chemical storage company.

For three days the fire raged as chemicals leaking from the damaged tanks created a toxic soup emitting poisonous bursts of hydrogen sulfide. In the explosion's wake, nearly 2,000 residents were evacuated, an elementary school temporarily closed, and acres of marsh were contaminated. Singley and her 200 Oaktree neighbors roamed

LEGISLATORS THREATEN TO SMOKE UNIVERSITY CRITICS

When the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill announced a summer Tobacco Control Institute focusing on ways to curtail the spread of tobacco use, legislators in the nearby state capital fumed.

Republican State House Majority Leader, Leo Daughtry, a tobacco farmer, said, "This is a guerrilla attack. It's frustrating. This kind of seminar doesn't need to be here."

He threatened future funding for the school. "It's definitely going to affect the budget process," he told Associated Press. "They say, 'Let's build a nice facility,' then they use it to beat up on a good corporate citizen."

Threats from the capital did not stop the institute, held for two weeks in July. Co-sponsored by the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention at the University of North Carolina and the national Centers for Disease Control, public health experts and officials from around the world discussed the spread of what has become known as a pediatric disease.

"It's such a big problem in our state," said Doug Matheny, a participant from the Oklahoma State Department of Health. "The state wants me to find out the latest ideas on how

to reduce youth access."

Institute organizers did introduce both sides of the story. Participants took trips to the Duke Homestead Tobacco Museum in Durham, the R.J. Reynolds factory in Winston-Salem, and various warehouses and tobacco auctions in the area. "We have really been exposed to tobacco farming," said Rick Kropp, director of the North Bay Health Resource Center in Petaluma, California. "We understand and are sympathetic. We don't want to cause an economic catastrophe. Our fight is with the manufacturers."

That sentiment did not smooth ruffled feathers in Raleigh. Representative Daughtry said that discussions of issues like litigation and excise taxes, which would target manufacturers, were beyond the boundaries of the university's scientific mission.

Another state representative, John Gamble, a Democrat and retired physician, was one of the few admitted supporters of the institute. "I don't think there's any question that tobacco's a public health issue," Gamble said. "It's a matter of academic freedom, freedom to explore things as they feel necessary. It's in their purview. They're doing their job, and I don't see that government should be getting up in the air about this."

— Sam Greene

from motel to motel for 32 days, unable to return home because

Photo by Scott Bryant



Vivian Singley had to leave home for a month after explosion of tanks behind her home.

of the deadly chemicals in their apartments. Many continue to complain about stomach pains, headaches, and breathing problems. They have filed a class-action lawsuit against the company.

As Powell Duffryn cleans up, nearby residents would like safeguards to ensure that they won't be poisoned or blown up in the future. But city, county, state, and corporate officials cannot allay concerns.

"They see what happened," Singley says, pointing to the tanks through her kitchen window. "They just don't care."

Too many disturbing questions remain. Minutes after the explosion, firefighters rushed to the scene, but didn't know what

was burning. Local officials say that a Powell Duffryn employee had to be tracked down at home for information. "They didn't violate any laws," says Robert Smith, director of the Chatham Emergency Management Agency, adding that company officials had orally informed local officials, but nothing was documented. "That is something we want to change real quick," says Smith. Weeks before the explosion, his agency began a study to determine what chemicals were stored throughout Chatham County.

County and city officials are undertaking a massive evaluation to improve their response should it happen again. Powell Duffryn officials, who want to

rebuild, are deciding whether it is economically feasible.

The absence of other local controls has been criticized. According to county staff, Powell Duffryn is located in a special "Heavy Industrial Zone," which provides tax breaks and few use restrictions. County officials say they do not have jurisdiction to police for environmental and related issues in this zone. "The only permit they need from the county is to construct. Anything environmentally sensitive comes from the state and federal governments," says County Manager Russ Abolt. "We will not go in and duplicate their efforts."

However, officials in the Hazardous Materials Division of the State Fire Marshal's Office, which gives permission for the storage of flammable liquids like turpentine, said that they rely on local officials to enact laws above state requirements to ensure the safety of their residents. "We oftentimes don't know the local concerns, be it traffic patterns, the location of fire hydrants, those types of things," says Pete Paulsen, Assistant State Fire Marshal. "Local authority has the final say."

John Northup, president of Citizens for Clean Air and Water, a local environmental group, scoffs at Abolt's assertion. "We are not an arm of the state. We have the right to pass laws. County commissioners have all the jurisdiction they want."

Adding more confusion is the fact that the low-income apartments are located in the city limits, while Powell Duffryn is governed by Chatham County. City Manager Michael Brown says his staff will closely monitor the rebuilding to ensure all possible safeguards are followed, including adding buffer and safety zones for Oaktree residents.

But the questions don't end in Chatham County. State Insurance Commissioner John Oxendine announced days after the explosion that Powell Duffryn did not have permission to store crude turpentine, the substance which caused the fire. However, Oxendine has since

reconsidered, and ruled that the company was allowed under state law to store the turpentine, but was negligent in causing the fire. The ruling could mean a difference of thousands of dollars in fines for the company.

Months prior to the explosion, Oaktree residents called another state agency looking for help. James Eason, an environmental engineer with the state Environmental Protection Division, says his agency received several complaints from Oaktree residents about leaking chemicals from Powell Duffryn. However, Powell Duffryn was never found to be in violation of any laws. The company installed vents and other equipment to be "good neighbors," not because they were required to, Eason says. Since the fire, Powell Duffryn has resumed construction on a new tank and has asked permission to store a hazardous air pollutant requiring special handling, Eason says.

From her window, Singley watches the construction of the new tank. She is angry about the fire and scared it will happen again. "We ain't no better off. They think more of their bill-folds than people's lives."

—Lynda Natali

NET LOSS

On July 1, a way of life passed into oblivion for Florida's commercial fishermen as the state's net ban took effect. The result of a constitutional amendment passed by an overwhelming 72 percent of Florida's voters in November 1994, the ban prohibits the use of gill nets and nets over 500 square feet in waters within three miles of the coast in the Gulf of Mexico and within one mile of the Atlantic shore.

The ban puts 6,000 commercial fishermen out of a job that has been in their families for

generations. Fishermen threatened blockades and other actions, but only four received citations for violating the ban.

On July 5, the first real business day after the ban took ef-

beds that serve as spawning grounds for many species of fish.

Fishermen claimed that it was coastal development and pollution, not nets, that dam-



fect, about 1,180 fishermen lined up in unemployment offices to take advantage of the state's offer to buy back nets. The offer is a "first come, first served" basis because the state has warned it will run out of money before all fishermen can be compensated. Retraining programs are also in place.

The ban has left those in the seafood business wondering how their lives will be affected. Ted Cook, who operates Ted Peter's Smoked Fish Restaurant in St. Petersburg, a business started by his grandfather more than 50 years ago, said he expects the price of mullet to rise as fish become more scarce. He is concerned he will lose "substantial business."

The emotionally charged referendum sparked a major battle between recreational and commercial fishermen prior to November's vote. Environmentalists joined the battle in support of the ban, citing the large nets as the major cause of declining fish populations in Florida's coastal waters. Critics of commercial net fishing said gill nets damaged fish hatcheries by disturbing the sea grass

aged fish populations. Over the years, walled marinas replaced natural estuaries, and waterfront housing developments replaced mangrove hatcheries with sea walls. Speed boats tear up the delicate sea grasses with their propeller engines. The fishermen argued that the sport fishing industry wanted them out of business so there would be more fish for the recreational anglers and tourists.

Was the problem serious enough to enact a constitutional amendment?

"It didn't have to come down to this," said restaurant owner Ted Cook, "but the commercial fishermen didn't want to compromise. And of course the recreational fishermen used the ecology thing to win. This is a tragedy in a lot of ways," he added.

"The management regime we had in place before the net ban seemed to be working," said Joe O'Hop at the Florida Marine Research Laboratory in St. Petersburg, part of the Department of Environmental Protection. "But people who saw turtle deaths wanted to enact regulations right away, espe-

cially on the pompano fishing on the east coast."

People on both sides of the issue used questionable tactics. Commercial fishermen cried foul when a pro-ban group ran a television ad showing footage of sea turtles apparently dying on the deck of a fishing vessel after being entangled in fishing nets. The film shown was actually of biologists tagging turtles for research, and all animals were quickly returned to the ocean.

Recreational fishermen howled when commercial fishermen tried to raise money to fight the ban by sending a letter soliciting donations for SOS (Save Our Seafood), using the same acronym as the better known Save Our Sealife. Save Our Seafood had to return the money.

The idea for the net ban came from Carl Wickstrom, a wealthy publisher of the influential *Florida Sportsman* magazine (circulation 108,000). For five years he pounded his readers with stories of how netting destroys coastal sealife. He also organized and financed the gathering of 400,000 signatures to get the amendment on the ballot.

Now the net ban reverberates around the Gulf Coast as fishermen in Alabama and Louisiana are concerned that Florida fishermen will invade their waters. O'Hop says that probably already happens as they follow spawning mullet, the major fish affected by the ban.

—Nano Riley

LETTING THE TRUTH BE HEARD

This past Memorial Day, the people of Honea Path, South Carolina, were able to confront a painful episode in their past, the general textile strike of 1934.

Elsewhere in South Carolina, learning about the strike has not been so easy.

BRINGIN' HOME THE BACON

Median family incomes in the South have differed significantly between races in the past 15 years. However, the disparity between incomes in the South reflects a general trend that is apparent throughout the nation.

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOMES, BY REGION

	Race	North East	Mid-West	South	West
1993	White	\$42,526	\$40,158	\$36,504	\$39,614
	Black	\$25,002	\$20,794	\$20,372	\$26,182
	Hispanic	\$19,580	\$27,501	\$23,651	\$24,781
1978	White	40,171	40,768	36,712	40,372
	Black	24,991	29,317	21,093	23,152
	Hispanic	20,881	30,955	26,545	29,347

Source: 1993 Poverty and Income Trends, based on the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population reports, unpublished data, March 1994, and prior reports.

South Carolina had been at the center of that strike, one of the largest labor actions in American history. But the state's public television network is one of the few in the nation that has not aired the documentary, *The Uprising of '34*, which attempts to explain it.

The May 29 event in Honea Path might seem minor to an outsider: Townspeople attended the dedication of a monument to seven men slain more than 60 years ago. Residents packed a local middle school to watch a film that explained the context of those deaths.

But in Honea Path, *The Uprising of '34* was not just a documentary. It was family history. The names of the seven now engraved in granite had been relegated to whispers and stories made more powerful by the seldomness of their telling.

During three weeks in September 1934, an estimated 400,000 textile workers from New England to Alabama walked off their jobs to protest low wages and high workloads. They wanted mill owners to recognize their newly formed unions as the law required.

Textile workers lost that

round. Many hundreds of workers were fired and blacklisted from future mill employment

and evicted from their mill-owned homes. At the very least, workers were brought



Kathy Lamb, organizer of the dedication of a memorial to slain workers 60 years ago in Honea Path, South Carolina, greets Sol Stetin, former president of the Textile Workers Union of America, and Joe Jacobs, a retired labor union lawyer in Atlanta.

SOUTHERNERS ON SOUTHERN MEDIA

from conversations with Wendy Grossman

John Hope Franklin

On lead editorial in the *Durham Herald Sun* on March 5, 1995.

The *Durham Herald Sun* was absolutely unequivocal in its support of affirmative action. They reminded us of how much preferential treatment there is in our society, including set-asides for athletes, that is, scholarships for athletes. Nobody raises much question about that. They speak of the old-boy networks that give preferential treatment. They said that children of alumni at our colleges get preferential treatment at admissions, and then went on down the line to how our society is suffused with that kind of preferential treatment.

We seem to get some kind of haranguing for making certain that equal treatment for women and minorities is guaranteed. Sometimes people get preferential treatment because of [their] national origins and so forth, and [the paper] concludes with saying that it's fair and reasonable for all the good it has done. I simply thought it was a very good editorial.

John Hope Franklin is a James B. Duke professor of history emeritus at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

Helen Lewis

On *Southern Appalachian Mysteries* by Sharyn McCrumb.

I just read Sharyn McCrumb's *She Walks These Hills*. It's one of her ballad mysteries. She's written a couple of others, *Pretty Peggo-O* and *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*.

These are mysteries, but they also have redeeming social value. She has some very interesting themes about the problems and issues in the region woven into these stories. Some of the particular problems such as the pollution of the Pigeon River by Champion Papers are in *The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*. This one has a very naïve academic folklorist. She takes off in the wilderness searching the trail of a historic figure and gets into all sorts of interesting problems. It's good summer reading. It's good reading anytime.

Helen Lewis came in from her garden to talk to us about her current reading. She's in the process of moving from Berea College in Kentucky, to New Market, Tennessee, to rejoin the staff of Highlander Center, so she hasn't been able to read any heavy intellectual material, she said. Lewis is a writer, filmmaker, and teacher. She has been involved in Appalachian issues and problems for many years.

into conflict with one another over their allegiances on the job. The repercussions made the later union organizing difficult.

In Honea Path, workers not only lost the strike, but also seven of their own in a hail of bullets fired by workers deputized by the town's mayor and mill superintendent, Dan Beacham. Two underlings were brought to trial on murder charges but both were acquitted.

Many younger residents of the area were not aware of the strike and their parents' and grandparents' involvement until filming for the documentary began about five years ago. (See Fall 1989 issue of *Southern Exposure* for a complete account of the strike in Honea Path.)

Kathy Lamb, a clothing worker in nearby Belton, whose grandfather had been a night watchman at the Honea Path textile mill, had never heard about the shooting until she attended a union workshop in Atlanta with the filmmakers. She and her husband, Robert, went on to raise the \$3,000 for the monument and organize the dedication with the help of the Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment, a Greenville-based workers' rights advocacy group.

Frank Beacham, grandson of the mill superintendent, was equally unaware until the film was nearly complete last year. Beacham, a freelance writer in New York, saw the film and fostered discussion about the shootings in his hometown by writing guest columns in the local newspaper and participating in local call-in radio shows that drew dozens of calls from listeners.

The Uprising of '34, produced and directed by George Stoney and Judith Helfand, had its premier broadcast June 27 as a part of the "POV" (Point of View) documentary television series. By the end of July, the film had been broadcast by most public television networks, reaching viewers in both larger and smaller markets. In the South the film has been shown in every state except South Carolina, said POV publicist, Diane Rostyak.

In July, Educational Television spokeswoman Kathy Gardner-Jones said that it was not certain that the documentary would be shown at all on the South Carolina network. "It's a scheduling problem," she said. The initial broadcast, which was bumped by a weekly talk show for the state's superintendent of

education, would now conflict with new fall programs, she said.

Meanwhile, the film's producers continue to organize screenings and discussions around the country. So far, 46 screenings have been held from Helena, Montana, to New York City's Chinatown, and another round is being organized for September, said associate producer Lori Castronuovo.

Those interested in having a screening of the film in their community can call the producers in New York at (212) 529-3328.

—Jim DuPlessis

AIDS AND WOMEN IN THE SOUTH

"I knew I was sick," said Tawana, a 25-year-old African-American woman from rural North Carolina. "I just didn't know it was AIDS."

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) may once have been an illness almost exclusive to gay or bisexual men in urban areas of the United States. Not anymore. AIDS has

increased dramatically in the heterosexual population over the last six years, especially in such places as the rural South. During 1993, the highest proportion of AIDS cases associated with heterosexual contact occurred in the South (42 percent). Florida reported the largest number nationally of heterosexually acquired AIDS cases (1,772).

Another change is HIV infection: the rate of increase is greater in women now than men. The Northeast and South are especially high. Women represented about 18 percent of the diagnosed cases of AIDS in North Carolina in 1991, compared to 13 percent nationally. North Carolina also collects data on the number of people testing positive for HIV, and women represented 27 percent of the total in 1991.

Martha Gwinn, an epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and her colleagues examined data from the national HIV survey of childbearing women which the CDC conducts with state health departments. The study found that, among nonurban areas, almost all of the states with the larger number of infected

women were in the South. Georgia, South Carolina, Texas, and Florida ranked second, third, fourth, and fifth for nonurban HIV-positive women in 35 states reviewed. (New York was first.)

Gwinn said, "Why this is happening is a complicated issue, but if I had to guess, I would point a finger at drugs."

Nationally, approximately 50 percent of women with AIDS from July 1993 through June 1994 attributed exposure to intravenous drug use. The sexual orientation of these women was not a factor because the means of transmission was injecting drugs. Another 39 percent of women responded that they were exposed through heterosexual contact. Half that number had sex with an intravenous drug user. In the study of women of childbearing age, over 66 percent in both urban and nonurban areas of the South who were exposed through heterosexual transmission attributed their infection to an intravenous drug-using partner.

Other risk factors for heterosexually transmitted HIV infection include adults with multiple sex partners and those with other sexually transmitted diseases.

Though race and ethnicity are not risk factors for HIV infection, more racial and ethnic minority women have the disease than white women. In the South, African-American women are seven times more likely to be infected than white women. Public health programs throughout the South are now assessing risk behaviors in these populations.

"There may well be problems that are unique to nonurban areas as well," Gwinn said.

Women in the rural South may not know that they have been exposed to HIV because there may be little awareness of HIV risk factors for women. Communities may not offer HIV counseling or encourage testing. Many women in rural areas are also eco-

nomically disadvantaged. Lack of money often results in delays in diagnosis and treatment and wider spread of the disease. Reluctance to treat HIV-infected persons in rural communities also forces many to travel great distances for care.

—Bernadette Carr

MEXICAN TOMATOES EAT UP FLORIDA'S MARKET

It wasn't the usual culprits — bugs and disease — that infected the Florida tomato market this time. It was NAFTA. When the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect this year, Mexico competed heavily with Florida's \$700 million-a-year tomato industry.

"The season is over now, but the damage was extensive," says John Van Sickle, Professor of Food and Resource Economics at the University of Florida. "We had what would be considered not-that-bad a season from a production standpoint, but Mexico increased their shipments dramatically this year, and in certain periods we had big surges in tomatoes that drove prices down."

Because of a huge increase in imports from Mexico in February, the price of tomatoes fell from nearly \$12 a carton to the shipper to less than half that. Prices rebounded, but another surge of Mexican tomatoes in early April drove the prices

RIKI TIKI TAVI'S NIGHTMARE IN FLORIDA



It was a routine demonstration at Reptile World Serpentarium, in St. Cloud, Florida: 51-year-old George Van Horn took the 12-foot king cobra out of its cage to show a group of children how to milk the snake's venom from its fangs. But the snake managed to bite its handler on the arm. Unconscious, Van Horn was rushed to the emergency room. The hospital had no antivenin on hand. This sort

of thing doesn't happen all the time, so the hospital wasn't prepared to help him. Police drove antivenin from the Birmingham Zoo to the Georgia state line where troopers rushed it to the Atlanta Airport.

A month after the June accident, Van Horn was released from the hospital and is recuperating at home. He's regained movement in his fingers, and physicians say he's healing nicely. He hasn't gone back to work yet, though. In the meantime, his assistant, Bonnie Watkins, keeps on milking the snake that almost killed her boss.

—Wendy Grossman

down again — to less than \$3 per carton.

"It was almost a roller coaster year," Van Sickle says. "There were some periods where revenues would be extremely good, followed by immediate market prices falling below cost of production, and those seem to happen with increases from Mexico."

Florida tomato farmers organized a petition asking the International Trade Commission to hike the tariffs 50 percent to punish Mexico for exceeding the quota on tomatoes. (Florida's Congressional delegation had agreed to vote for NAFTA in

1993 on the condition that such an emergency-relief provision was in the treaty.) They were turned down.

"I think they failed the Florida farmer," says Van Sickle. "The bottom line is that we saw surges of tomatoes coming out of Mexico. They did create lower prices and revenue, and in the cost of production, many people lost a lot

of money this year.

Tomatoes aren't the only crops being affected. Mexican farmers are increasing their exports of watermelon, eggplant, lettuce, squash, green peppers, tobacco, and other products grown in Florida and throughout the Southern United States, says Van Sickle.

NAFTA was supposed to prevent harm to U.S. farmers by placing quotas on the amount that could be imported. The problem Van Sickle sees is that the quotas are regulated by customs, whose system currently is too slow to be able to regulate tariff rates and keep trades balanced.

"They're totally ineffective for what they're designed to do; that's something that needs to be corrected."

—Wendy Grossman



LET'S DO THE TIME WARP AGAIN

Residents of Kenova, West Virginia, believe they can show the rest of the country what America will be like if Congress succeeds in

its plans to dismantle decades of environmental regulation. This small town on the banks of the Big Sandy River lies downwind of a sprawling oil refinery that has skirted many of the regulations that have been in place for years. Townspeople believe that the pollution and endangered health in their town could be the picture for many American towns if Congress abandons environmental rules. In June, Kenova residents held a news conference to tell about life across the river from Ashland, Inc., in Catlettsburg, Kentucky.

"I am not an epidemiologist. I am a retired beautician," said Pat Davis, one of the organizers of the news conference. "But believe me, all it takes is common sense to see what is happening in this town. My eyes are often burning. I have skin cancer. My throat is so irritated I frequently lose my voice. Two of my brothers died of cancer — one kidney cancer, one leukemia. My great grandson was born with no kidneys. My next



Hannah Nelson, age four, talks at the news conference that showed life downwind of Ashland, Inc. She spoke about her 4-year-old friend who had just died of cancer that may have been related to chemicals in the air.

door neighbor's girl died of brain cancer. On the farm down the road, the cattle, goats, and chickens have all died. The health experts on Kenova are us, the residents. We have our own neighborhood surveys. We can point out far too many houses in town with cancer tragedies."

permit from the state after they agreed to clean up violations. "It doesn't mean they're in compliance with everything," said Laura Forman with Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition.

Ashland has been forced to take some responsibility, news

Lawyer Ratliff, who lives a half mile from Ashland, agrees. "It seems like there is an epidemic of cancer in this town. In my small neighborhood, 15 people have died within the last three years."

The news conference was sponsored by the OVEC (Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition) Kenova Project Board. The group consists entirely of residents of this working class and low-income town. The Project Board is a chapter of a larger organization, OVEC, based in nearby Huntington, West Virginia.

Organizers reported how Ashland, a Fortune 500 company, operated with only a construction permit for more than 20 years. They recently received an operating permit from the state after they agreed to clean up violations. "It doesn't mean they're in compliance with everything," said Laura Forman with Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition.

Ashland has been forced to take some responsibility, news

conference participants said. They settled about 700 of approximately 2,000 health-related suits locals had filed against them. They also incurred the largest fine ever under EPA's Federal Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act (\$2.7 million for failing to report 27 major pollution releases from the Catlettsburg refinery).

"Agreed court orders" between the state of Kentucky and Ashland forced the company belatedly to install equipment that would stop blizzards of caustic particulate fallout so thick it looked like snow on the highway.

Less often now — thanks to Kentucky regulators and organized pressure from locals — does particulate blister the finish off cars in Kenova and raise welts on human skin. Visible evidence of pollution has lessened. The stench has not. Nor have the illnesses: the sore throats, malignancies, the asthma, and the rashes. It's "a slow-motion Bhopal" in the opinion of one chemical analyst.

Kenova residents at the news conference explained why the United States needs more environmental regulation, not less — and that regulations on the books must be better enforced by the EPA. They demanded that federal legislators vote down proposed regulatory "reform" bills. They asked that the EPA allow no more heavily polluting industries in the community. (The Huntsman Chemical Corporation is exploring the possibility of setting up two new chemical plants in the Kenova area. Residents also asked Ashland to "use some of your \$10 billion in sales and operating revenues to install a wet scrubber" that would remove 80 percent of the sulfur dioxide fumes and would go a long way toward relieving health woes.

After the news conference, which was held with a backdrop of a graveyard where makeshift wooden gravestones noted the names of hundreds of local citizens who died of chemical-related illnesses, local ministers led a memorial service. Family members placed flowers on the

MOURNING AND FIGHTING FOR YOUNG LIVES

Ron Hayes of Fairhope, Alabama, managed a hospital X-ray lab — until the death of his 19-year-old son Patrick changed his life.

Patrick had worked at an enormous chicken-processing plant in Florida for \$5 an hour. Although the father had cautioned the young man to walk away from dangerous assignments, when Pat was told to level out crests of corn in a silo, he followed orders. He died in that silo.

How? Why? Ron Hayes and his wife got no answers from the company or the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). So Hayes gave up his career to find out what had gone wrong — and to help other families deal with the difficulties that surround such accidents.

Hayes has met with great resistance from both the poultry processor and OSHA. When he asked for information about the company's safety record, OSHA took four months to get the report to him. The 426-

page document, revealing an abysmal safety record, arrived two weeks after Patrick's case was officially closed.

Nevertheless, Hayes eventually found out what happened. The company had sent Patrick into the silo while a machine was pulling corn down out of the silo. The young man was drawn under so much corn it took five hours for rescuers to dig his body out.

Hayes now campaigns to expose the industry's disregard for human life, especially young lives. And he and his wife Dot are organizing FIGHT — Families in Grief Holding Together — to assist families and prevent future deaths. Their motto is "Mourn for the dead and fight for the living."

For his efforts, the Giraffe Project of Langley, Washington, has commended Ron Hayes. This national nonprofit organization tells the stories of people like Hayes to inspire others to "stick their necks out for the common good."

— Marc Miller

graves of loved ones, and the names and photos of people with asthma, leukemia, and other illnesses linked to chemical exposure were taped to a memorial wall alongside the graveyard.

Praying along with Kenova residents were representatives from other chemically threatened Southern communities as well as ministers, priests, and nuns from around the U.S. Simultaneous prayer vigils took place in Bhopal, India, along Louisiana's "Cancer Alley," and at other locations.

—Jane Wholey

AN UNHEALTHY GAP

Members of minority groups in North Carolina, particularly African Americans, have much higher mortality rates and rates of illnesses than whites in the state. Findings from a year-long health study by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research also show that only one in nine African Americans has health insurance, while one in five whites does.

"North Carolina minorities have higher rates of illness. They die younger from everything from diabetes to AIDS, and they are less likely to get the preventive care they need to live a long and healthy life," says Mike McLaughlin, editor of the Center's journal, *North Carolina Insight*. The journal published the study.

Blacks are five times more likely than whites to be infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Their mortality rate from AIDS is 380 percent higher. They are also twice as likely to be infected with hepatitis B. Mortality rates for heart attack, stroke, and chronic liver disease are all higher, and the mortality rate of African-American males suffering from prostate cancer is among the highest of any state in the nation. Infant mortality rates for African Americans are twice as high as rates for whites (7.2 per 1,000 live births for whites; 15.7 for blacks).

The report included speculation from across the state as to the reasons for the gap in rates. Local health directors said lack of access to services was the "most significant health issue for minorities at the local level." Access issues included the lack of health insurance, inadequate or nonexistent transportation services, clinics open too few or inconvenient hours, the language barrier for Spanish-speaking clients, and lack of knowledge regarding the availability and importance of preventive health services.

Many of the health outcome disparities between whites and minorities come from behavioral and lifestyle differences, according to Delton Atkinson, director of the state Center for Health and Environmental Statistics. "If you could significantly change some of these things, you might see a difference in health outcomes," he said.

Whether to have special efforts for minorities is being debated. State Health Director Ron Levine supports targeted programs. He says, "I believe the state has a role in trying to close the gap and address the disparities in health status and outcomes." Yet nearly one-third of the local health directors say there should be no special focus. "Health department services should focus on a broad spectrum of the population," says one director.

—Terri Boykin

SWEEPSTAKES SWEEP AWAY

When West Virginia's attorney general's office asked 107 sweepstakes mailing companies to stop sending letters promising cash prizes into the state, 96 agreed. The Suarez Corporation did not, and it went on the offensive. Suarez did its best to discredit those who were trying to discredit the company.

"In a full page ad in the *Washington Times*, they accused me of being a convicted felon," says

Tom Rodd, assistant Attorney General of the Consumer Protection Division for the State of West Virginia. "They accused me of being a 'draft dodger' in the Vietnam War. They accused me of being a 'crude and crass attorney,' and they pointed out that in the 1960s, I had been arrested four times. They didn't put it down in here that it was for participating in civil rights and anti-war demonstrations. They called my boss, Darryl McGraw, a 'self-serving, crude politician' and a 'paranoid egomaniac.' They called Judge Todd Kaufman, the circuit judge, 'incompetent' and 'laughable.'"

Suarez took out more ads in the *Charleston (WV) Gazette* and distributed flyers in front of a meeting of the National Association of Attorneys General in Washington, D.C.,

a piece of junk. The mailings are designed to make a gullible person think that they've won a prize," Rodd says. "I think these are designed to be effective on less sophisticated people. Certainly in West Virginia we've had a disproportionate attack of these scams. We have one of the highest demographics of older people in the states, and older people are more vulnerable."

People in the state of West Virginia lost at least \$300,000 to the Suarez Company over the past few years, Rodd estimates.

"We'd found some of these people had sent Suarez over \$1,000 to try and get these prizes. It became sort of an addiction," Rodd says. "Some of these people come to their senses, and some people adhere to it until they don't have any



discrediting the attorney general and his assistant. Suarez also hired people to picket the meeting with signs reading, "Draft dodgers belong in prison, not on the public payroll."

Suarez was fighting to stay in a business that offered mainly older people cash prizes. All the recipient of the mailing had to do was send in a claim voucher. Many elderly West Virginians sent in the money, but the prizes never came.

"Of course they haven't won. If they've won anything, it's just

money left."

A judge issued an injunction stopping Suarez's contests in West Virginia. Suarez motioned to dissolve the injunction, but another judge upheld it. Suarez has appealed, and the case is being heard by the West Virginia Supreme Court.

—Wendy Grossman

Illustrations by Steven Cragg.

A Mirror Case

A police shooting of a South Carolina woman rekindles questions about the training of law officers to deal with mentally ill people.

By Kevin Alexander Gray

After a police officer in Fairfield County, South Carolina, killed a young black man, (see *The Death of Sammy Owens, Southern Exposure*, Fall 1989), statewide protests prompted law-enforcement officials to promise to review their procedures for dealing with people with mental disabilities.

But in this part of South Carolina, history repeats itself.

On June 19, 1993, Mary McCall went to the IGA Foodliner in nearby Cheraw to buy cigarettes. A short while later, McCall lay dying from a police bullet.

Her killing mirrors the case of Owens, down to the fact that a police officer placed handcuffs on the wounded victim. Owens had been in and out of mental institutions; medical records show that McCall suffered from depression and possibly paranoid schizophrenia.

The McCall incident began with an argument between her and store owner Nancy Kimrey, who had earlier refused to cash McCall's check. When McCall returned to the store for cigarettes, she brought identification. She told Kimrey she wanted "no more trouble cashing her check." The store owner asked McCall if she had a check to cash. McCall, who was shouting obscenities and behaving irrationally, according to an NAACP investigation, replied, "No." She picked up a pack of cigarettes, threw the money on the counter, and walked out the door.

Kimrey followed McCall outside, demanding that she return. The two women exchanged heated words before Kimrey retreated inside, locked the door, and called the police.

Officer Kenneth Williams, a white, three-year veteran of the Cheraw Police



Photo by Kevin Gray

Police shot and killed a mentally ill woman in front of this store in Cheraw, South Carolina, in June.

Department, responded. McCall argued with him and with two other officers who arrived later. When Williams attempted to grab McCall, she broke free, spilling the contents of her purse, including a rug cutter that she picked up.

At this point, reports conflict. McCall either tried to put the rug cutter back in her pocketbook, or she began swinging it. But all accounts agree that Williams ordered McCall to put the rug cutter down. She didn't and advanced instead. Williams, who one eyewitness says "was kind of like panicking," drew his pistol and shot McCall in the chest. McCall died an hour later at Chesterfield General Hospital.

Just as occurred after the death of Sammy Owens, many black citizens have questioned the use of deadly force to subdue a person known to have a history of mental illness. Moreover, the police apparently did nothing to subdue McCall, according to the report of an investigator hired by Hemphill Pride II and Larry Smith, attorneys for Oscar McCall, the victim's brother. Nor do witnesses say that the three officers were ever in danger, despite Williams' claim that he shot in self-defense.

After the investigator filed his report and the county coroner conducted an inquest, the case went to a grand jury. However, say McCall's attorneys, no one notified the family of the hearing, which is a violation of the South Carolina "Victims and Witnesses Bill of Rights." The grand jury failed to return an indictment, swelling the controversy over the case. Pride next filed a contempt lawsuit against Fourth Circuit Solicitor C. Gordon McBride, who had presided over the grand jury, claiming he had "manipulated the justice system, resulting in the charges against the police officer being dismissed."

Pride later dropped this complaint after Circuit Court Judge Thomas W. Cooper Jr. said that the solicitor could submit the indictment to a second grand jury. Cooper imposed no deadline for submitting an indictment, but the solicitor immediately asked the South Carolina Attorney General to appoint a new prosecutor. On the other hand, Williams is back on regular duty — with a promotion. And four years after the death of Sammy Owens, the court's decision to delay charging Williams has left doubts about the promised review of law-enforcement policies for dealing with mentally ill people.

"This is not over," says Zedia Williams, a black County Councilwoman. "McBride thinks by turning the case over to the attorney general that he can wipe his hands of this matter and it will all be forgotten, or at the very least ignored. The people want justice." §

§

Kevin Alexander Gray is president of the South Carolina ACLU and a Ph.D. candidate at American University.

The Office of Civil Wrongs

Photo by Charles Duke



Dallas Office of Civil Rights investigator Purnell Johnson and former investigator Olga Cardenez complained about their workplace. “One would wonder how we are able to enforce civil rights legislation when our own house is not in order,” said Johnson.

***The Dallas
Office of Civil
Rights knows
about
discrimination
and
harassment —
all too well.***

By Carol Countryman

Deborah Lott was shocked when she read the Ku Klux Klan flyers that had been left in the boys’ restroom at Young Junior High School in Arlington, Texas. Although poorly printed, their derogatory language and threats made clear what Lott already feared: that blacks and Jews were not welcome in the schools of suburban Dallas.

Lott and other concerned parents had been working for months to combat discrimination against minority students. Forming an organization called the Mid-Cities Community Council, they protested when administrators disciplined black students while failing to punish white students who used racial slurs such as “nigger.” They questioned why low-level and special education courses

contained a disproportionately high number of minorities. And they demanded that elementary schools stop using a computer game called “Freedom!” depicting black males as cotton pickers and black females as servants. When the “slaves” are caught on screen trying to escape to the North, they are whipped and returned to their white “masters.”

Unsatisfied with the response from school officials, Lott filed a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights in Dallas. The OCR — a regional office of the Department of Education charged with enforcing federal civil rights laws in five Southern states — conducted an investigation. But when the findings were made public, Lott and other parents couldn’t believe what they were reading. Investigators confirmed that black students were disproportionately disciplined in 11 out of 12 schools, but found no “pattern of discrimination” by school officials. They also determined that the school district had satisfactorily handled the clandestine distribution of white supremacist literature by providing “sensitivity training” workshops — even though fewer than 15 parents and students had attended. In short, the OCR concluded, black students in the Arlington schools faced no racial discrimination or harassment. The file was closed.

At the same time Lott was battling officials in her school district, Frank Ditto was waging a similar protest 150 miles to the southeast in Henderson. Ditto, the president and founder of the Rusk County Concerned Citizens, also felt that black students in East Texas schools were being unfairly disciplined and shunted into low-level courses, fostering huge discrepancies in standardized test scores between black and white students. The schools had openly flouted civil rights laws for 23 years, Ditto said, despite repeated warnings from the Office of Civil Rights.

Like Lott, Ditto turned to the OCR for help, asking the office to force Henderson schools to comply with federal law. And like Lott, Ditto could not believe the results. OCR

investigators once again documented the disproportionate placement of black students in low-level classes and the resulting racial gaps in performance. "In every instance," the report stated, "black students scored significantly lower than other students in achievement and educational ability." Yet the OCR once again concluded that the schools had not discriminated against minority students. As proof, the office cited newspaper clippings showing that the district had participated in Black History Month.

"That was the craziest thing I had ever heard," Ditto said. "This district had continually flouted its disregard of federal law, and they let them do it. I came close to filing a personal complaint against the OCR based on their hostility toward me and my group. From the very beginning they had no interest or concern whatsoever with our situation and made no effort to expose or confront racism and discrimination in the system."

Ditto and Lott knew that by failing to act, the OCR had effectively given schools its stamp of approval to continue discriminating against minority students. What the concerned parents didn't know, however, is that the civil rights office itself has been accused of racial discrimination and sexual harassment for the past 15 years. Since 1980, the Department of Education has received repeated complaints that supervisors at the Dallas OCR have rejected black and Hispanic staff members for promotions, demanded sexual favors from female employees, and assigned impossible case loads to disabled workers. Employees who protest have been threatened with retaliation and physical harm. The hostility and infighting are so severe, employees say, that the office can no longer perform its duty to the public.

"One would wonder how we are able to enforce civil rights legislation when our own house is not in order," Purnell Johnson, an investigator in the office, wrote to then-Education Secretary Lamar Alexander in 1992. "We consider the problems that exist within the Office for Civil Rights a moral disgrace."

The Dallas office was the most pathological work environment they had ever seen.

Lost Records

Alexander, who served as education secretary for two years before becoming a Republican candidate for president, took immediate action. After Johnson wrote him on behalf of a group of employees called the Equal Opportunity Alliance, Alexander sent a team of staff members from Washington to investigate. They interviewed employees and documented abuses — and then turned over their notes to Taylor August, the director of the Dallas office and target of most of the complaints. Johnson said he was told point blank he would be fired if he continued to complain.

Even before he ordered the fact-finding mission, Alexander was well aware of the problems that plagued the Dallas office. William Bennett, education secretary under Ronald Reagan, had dispatched a similar team of investigators from Washington in 1987. Dallas employees, feeling they were finally being heard, had shared their experiences of harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. Reams of information had been collected, boxed, and sent to Washington for review. Employees were later told that the material had been "lost" in transit. Bennett took no further action to address their allegations.

Employees continued to protest, however, and by 1993 they had filed so many complaints with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission that officials in Washington were once again forced to investigate. Norma Cantu, assistant secretary of civil rights,

contracted with the Harris Consulting Group, a Maryland-based firm, to conduct an emergency inspection.

"I was appalled by what we found," said John Harris, who oversaw the investigation with his partner, Robert Honig. "We interviewed a majority of the employees in person. We also gave them a questionnaire to measure their stress level. We were shocked at the degree of fear and intimidation these employees felt. The women were crying, some almost hysterically."

"There was a fear in the office," agreed Olga Cardenez, a former OCR investigator. "Everyone was always so fearful."

In a report submitted to Cantu, Harris and Honig concluded that the Dallas office was the most pathological work environment they had ever seen. The extraordinarily high number of civil rights complaints had virtually incapacitated the staff. Nearly half were being treated by physicians for work-related stress, and medical intervention for emotional and nervous disorders was twice the national norm. The report compared OCR employees to slaves: "Like involuntary servitude, the employee must tolerate much abuse and harm for the sake of his family and his survival."

The report also found that Taylor August, who had been regional director since 1979, was at the heart of most of the complaints. "The workplace is one characterized by hostility in which individuals must cope by alienation, denial, isolation and anti-social responses," the report concluded. "This workplace of hostility materializes not only in perceptions and attitudes, but in the policies and practices of management."

A Prison Camp

Some of the worst abuses, the report noted, involved supervisors who harassed disabled employees and used their medical records "in a way that violates the Americans with Disabilities Act." One of the employees targeted for reprisals by management was Robert Ramirez, a disabled Hispanic veteran of Vietnam who works as an investigator on the OCR staff. Ramirez had filed two complaints against Taylor August — one alleging discrimination on the

basis of national origin and disability, the other citing reprisals for having filed the first complaint.

Ramirez, who injured his arm in combat and suffers from severe depression related to post-traumatic stress disorder, required a word processor and dictaphone to aid in the writing of reports, as well as job assignments that could be completed within a 40-hour work week. Instead, he was assigned extraordinary workloads with immediate deadlines — all without the aid of the equipment he needed. His own doctor and physicians at the Dallas veterans hospital agreed that work pressure was aggravating his physical disability and depression. Management asked Ramirez to present medical records documenting his need for special accommodations, and he complied.

When Harris and Honig investigated, however, Taylor August told them that Ramirez had not complied with the request for documentation. The investigators then showed August the medical information, which his own secretary had pulled from the files. The director quickly reversed himself, saying George Cole, the division director, was supposed to keep him abreast of that kind of information. Cole, when confronted, stated that he believed Ramirez was still being diagnosed and that he had not seen any documentation from the Veterans Administration.

"We can only presume that either Cole's statement is intended to mislead or that he did not receive copies of correspondence," the report stated, nothing that three VA physicians had diagnosed Ramirez with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. "We found Cole's adoption of a passive role in developing an accommodation self-serving and at odds with the guidelines. We also note that Cole's perspective, which reflected views espoused by August, effectively established a discriminatory policy against disabled employees."

Other employees saw what was happening to Ramirez, but kept silent out of fear of reprisals. One OCR employee who asked to remain anonymous compared the atmosphere in the office to a prison concentration camp. "When the Robert Ramirezes

were being metaphorically beat up by the guards, we looked the other way because we, at least, weren't getting beat up by the guards."

R.E. Gatewood, another disabled Vietnam veteran who worked as an investigator at the Dallas civil rights office, said the stress in the office was often overwhelming. "Just by nature of what we did — investigating civil rights abuses — the stress is high and inconsistent, like a Chinese water torture. But when you add an element of bad management, you create a powder keg." Like Ramirez, Gatewood submitted medical records documenting his own partial disability from Agent Orange exposure and severe post-traumatic stress disorder from combat. But instead of accommodations for his disability, he received the worst performance rating of his government career.

Gatewood said the stress became so severe that he suffered a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized for 10 days. The day he returned to work, his supervisor and George Cole presented him with a memo requiring him to furnish a full medical history and asked that he adjust his therapy schedule so he could resume travel duties for the office. They also assigned him a heavier caseload and work schedule than other employees, despite letters from his doctor stating that he showed "suicidal ideation."

On March 4, 1993, Gatewood attempted suicide. "That shook up the office," he said. "When I came back after the suicide attempt, I made no bones about telling everyone it was the OCR that caused it. I was the poster child for stress there."

Perhaps the most disturbing section of the Harris report recounts the death of a quadriplegic employee who was given an extensive caseload without the necessary accommodations. The employee was forced to work nights at the office and pay personal attendants to help him complete his work. "He feared losing his job," a co-worker recalled. "That would have meant a return to Social Security disability and a return to a nursing home. For that reason, he was afraid to complain." The employee died from a bleeding ulcer, it's believed.

Punishing the Schools

Disabled workers aren't the only ones who have complained of mismanagement and abuse. The Harris investigation also found that 40 percent of the female employees in the civil rights office reported experiencing sexual harassment on the job. One woman said her supervisor intentionally grabbed her breast; another reported a male co-worker who offered lewd and boisterous descriptions of his genitals. Numerous complaints involved supervisors pressing female employees for dates.

Although the Department of Education "sanitized" two pages of specific allegations when it released the report to the press, the document still contains 16 individual reports of unacceptable sexual remarks and innuendoes, and 14 independent incidents of unwanted sexual advances or touching. Management knew about the incidents of sexual harassment, the report states, and yet took no action to discipline or deter the individuals who were responsible.

Frustrated by the inaction, Veronica Davis, an OCR lawyer, filed a \$7 million lawsuit last year against Education Secretary Richard Riley for incidents she alleges took place at the Dallas office. According to her suit, Davis was denied sick leave and passed over for promotion because she is black. The suit also alleges that Taylor August specifically discussed her promotion with her, seeking sexual favors in return for a better job. "It really is a case of Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill all over again," said one investigator who asked to remain anonymous.

When Davis filed a complaint against August, the lawsuit states, she was subjected to retaliation. Supervisors monitored her phone, canceled her pre-approved leave at the last minute, and lowered her performance evaluation. According to her suit, one supervisor even hit her. When she refused to resign, she was investigated by the Inspector General for fraud. Investigators monitored her mail and credit card records and interrogated her colleagues about her comings and goings.

When employees like Davis filed complaints, supervisors also retaliated

by failing to act on the cases of civil rights abuses they were documenting outside the office. "What they'd do if you filed a complaint," said Olga Cardenez, a former investigator, "was punish you by punishing the schools you were investigating."

Staff investigators in disfavor with management would find their reports picked to death by supervisors, Cardenez explained. "At first it would be minor changes. You'd have to go back and retype it. Then we would have to rework it to please upper management, and then legal would tear that up and make us go back to the original, first draft. It was all so trivial."

The report by the Harris Group also concludes that the public is the ultimate victim of abuses at the Dallas civil rights office. "Professionalism and performance," the report states, "is suborned by fear and obedience."

"There is no doubt in my mind," John Harris added, "no doubt at all, that the quality of the work was impaired by the work environment — one that pitted the legal department against the investigators, and managers against staffers."

"No Violation"

The Office of Civil Rights has always had a poor record of responding to public complaints — in the Dallas region and elsewhere. During the women's movement of the 1970s, women were filing complaint after complaint of discrimination and harassment in public schools and universities, but years often passed before the OCR bothered to investigate. Finally, the Women's Equity Action League received a court order in 1977 instructing the Dallas office to do its job in a reasonable and timely manner.

When the court order expired in 1987, nationwide spot checks conducted by the Congressional Committee on Education and Labor found that the office was still doing an abysmal job of enforcing civil rights legislation. "OCR's case processing statistics reveal that the agency had not vigorously enforced laws protecting the right of women and minorities in education since 1981," the committee

"They were all involved in cover-ups in the past. And the ones who are hurt are the citizens they are charged to protect."

reported. In a significant number of complaints that were investigated between 1983 and 1988, the committee added, the OCR found "no violation" of civil rights statutes.

A recent computer analysis of OCR records revealed that the Dallas office has been even more negligent. From 1991 to 1993 the office investigated 35 school districts in North and East Texas for racial discrimination — including the complaints at Arlington and Henderson filed by Deborah Lott and Frank Ditto. In all but one case, the office concluded that no violations had occurred.

When Harris and Honig filed their final report in late 1993, they noted that the Dallas office had the worst record in the Department of Education for meeting its goals, as well as the biggest backlog of cases. The report concluded that Taylor August, who had been reassigned to Washington during the investigation, should be relieved of his duties as director.

But that's not what happened. Shortly after the report was filed, August was reassigned to head the Dallas OCR. The move provoked an immediate outcry. Three members of the Texas congressional delegation protested to Education Secretary Riley, saying that reinstating August would have a "severely detrimental impact on the OCR." All but 20 of 76 employees on staff signed a petition asking Riley to reconsider. When they received no response, employees picketed outside

the regional office. One carried a sign that read, "Do the right thing — free our employees." Another placard asked, "Vice President Gore, when will you reinvent the Department of Education?"

"There is great hostility in the office — there always has been," said Robert Ramirez, the disabled veteran, who recently filed a lawsuit against the department. "But what I don't understand is why headquarters in Washington won't remedy the problem. This is the Office of Civil Rights. We are charged to make certain that these very types of egregious acts do not happen in schools and universities. Yet they are rampant in this very office."

Taylor August and the Department of Education refused to comment — but employees did get a response from William Webster, chief of staff for Secretary Riley. Webster told employees that August, who is black, was reinstated after he filed his own discrimination complaint against the department. Webster assured the staff that August would be given "sensitivity training."

Purnell Johnson and other black investigators were furious. Why, they asked, had the department acted on August's case so quickly, while ignoring decade-old complaints by employees? In a letter to David Wilhelm, chair of the Democratic National Committee, Johnson blasted administration officials for introducing August to members of the Black Congressional Caucus as "one of the best" regional directors at OCR. "It appears that Vice President Gore's call for the reinvention of government has fallen on deaf ears in the Department of Education," Johnson wrote.

After investigating the department, John Harris was forced to agree. "It's an old boy network, and very well-connected," he said. "Basically, they circled the wagons to protect themselves because they were all involved in cover-ups in the past. And the ones who are really hurt are the citizens they are charged to protect." §

Carol Countryman is a freelance writer in Kemp, Texas.

Targeting Youth

By Ron Nixon

“Save the Children.” “Save our Youth.” Few slogans have been as used or misused. Senator Bob Dole, a Presidential candidate, uses the slogan to crusade against Hollywood and to run for higher office. C. Delores Tucker, president of the liberal National Political Congress of Black Women, teams with conservative William Bennett and proposes to “Save the Children” from the “pornographic smut” of gangsta rap music. Even the proponents of the Republican’s Contract with America invoke images of saving the children while cutting social programs aimed at helping youth. As Senator Bob Dole mentioned in his attempts to prevent childhood inoculation funds from moving through the Congress, “this new immunization spending and hundreds of other spending and taxing programs would rob them (the children) of their full potential.”

What do all these examples have in common? Very little other than the invocation of slogans about saving children. But as David Futrelle wrote in *In These Times*, the slogan of “‘save’ the children, however irrelevant to the topic at hand, is designed to evoke a feeling of guilt, a vague sense of responsibility evaded. We are left to wonder how we, through our own self-indulgence, neglected the younger generation.”

But beneath the rhetoric of “Save the Children” lie ugly truths:

- ◆ According to recent census data, the number of U.S. children living in poverty increased by 2.2 million between 1979 and 1990.
- ◆ Despite stated efforts to save our children, politicians and others often depict youngsters as the *cause* of many societal ills including violence and rising teen pregnancy. However, a

1994 report by the media watchdog group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) found that statistics do not support this position. According to FAIR, 83 percent of murdered children and 85 percent of murdered adults are slain by adults over 20, not kids. Furthermore, according to the U.S. Public Health Service, 71 percent of all teenage mothers have adult partners over 20.

- ◆ The Republican Contract With America will have a devastating effect on poor children, according to several reports by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Families USA and Congressional Urban Caucus. Under the contract, 1,992,550 babies and preschoolers would lose WIC (Women, Infant and Children) nutrition supplements; 6,604,450 children would lose Medicare coverage, and at least 209,050 children would lose the federal child-care subsidies that enable parents to work or get education and training.

In this special section of *Southern Exposure* we attempt to get beyond the rhetoric about saving America’s youth and the political smoke and mirrors of the debate. We look at what is happening to young people. We explore the conditions of youth in the workplace and current attempts to roll back child labor protection laws. In the schools we look at tracking — or ability grouping — programs that lead to segregated classrooms and a two-tier school system — one white, one minority. We also examine the current debate over youth smoking and the tobacco industry’s attempts to target kids for their products. Also in this issue, America’s premier child advocate Marian Wright Edelman talks with

us about the future of America’s youth under the new Republican Congressional majority. Finally, we profile youth groups from around the South that are engaged in real efforts to help themselves and to prepare a new generation for the reins of leadership.

This special section is not just about youth; it is by young people. All of the writers, except one, are 30 and under (except for one and he wants to remain anonymous).

Angela Brown, director of the Youth Task Force and Southern Toxic campaigner for Greenpeace told me, “Too many of us face the epidemic of drugs, the culture of violence, the sin of racism, the pain of miseducation, the divisiveness of classism and lack of commitment to end sexist oppression.” She has a mission for her fellow young people: “To work in and with and for the liberation of our communities. Our battle cry is always the same — ‘A call to struggle.’ We call on *all* young sisters and brothers to become actively engaged in that struggle to liberate our people, our communities, ourselves, and the future generation.”

As the people who are profiled in this section — and the writers — show, many of the youth across the South are dedicated to the work of liberation. S

Ron Nixon is a Research Associate with the Institute for Southern Studies. This special section was funded in part by the Fund for Southern Communities, a grassroots foundation based in Atlanta. It is a joint project of the Institute, the Youth Task Force, the Young People’s Institute in Louisburg, North Carolina, and the Samaritan Project, also in Louisburg.

Photo by Rob Amberg



Working in Harm's Way

Children across America have jobs. Too many of them are being injured, even killed. Government, industries, and farms aren't eager to know the extent of the problem.

By Ron Nixon

On June 11, 1993, 14-year-old Wyonnie Simons of Eastover, South Carolina, went to work on a local cattle farm in the nearby town of Hopkins. Originally hired to pick up paper and cut grass, Simons, a dedicated worker, was soon assigned other responsibilities. "He loved to work," said Betty Simons, Wyonnie's mother. "He was willing to help anyone." Just 10 days after beginning the job, Simons was killed while driving a forklift.

Four days after Simons' death, 17-year-old Jamie Hoffman of Rock Hill, South Carolina, was killed while moving explosives in a warehouse. Provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act could have shut the operation down after the accident, but Southern International, a fire-works company that owned the warehouse, was allowed to stay open because it was one of the busiest times of the year — the week of the Fourth of July.

Both incidents were clear violations of state labor laws and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the federal law which prohibits youths under 18 from working in hazardous occupations. Both companies could have faced penalties as high as \$10,000 under the FLSA, but neither company was fined. According to reports filed by investigators with the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, the agency that oversees child labor, both companies were issued warnings and "educated on child labor" laws. One of the youths' families has resorted to litigation: Betty Simons is suing the farm for her son's death. "It's not the money," Simons said. "It's the tragic loss of life."

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that there are five million youth in the work force. The federal agency does not collect data on workers below the age of 15. Most young workers have jobs in restaurants, retail, and farm work with most *reported* injuries in the first two. Farm work is notably unregulated when it comes to young workers, and there are no real estimates of how many young farm workers there are. Such a lack of oversight means that many of the nation's children may be working in situations detrimental to their social and educational development, health, and in some cases, their lives. But as long as there is so little information available and so little regulation, many of the uses and abuses of children in the work force will remain hidden.

The information that is available from numerous studies and news reports documents violations of child labor laws throughout the South:

- ◆ In North Carolina, researchers using data from medical examiners found that 71 children and teenagers died during

the 1980s as a result of injuries sustained on the job. Eighty-six percent of the deaths resulted from working conditions that violated the Fair Labor Standards Act.

- ◆ In Florida and Texas, investigations found rampant abuse of children in the garment industry. In one case, Jones of Dallas Manufacturing, Inc., a company that makes clothes for J.C. Penney and Sears, was fined for using a contractor who employed children. One child was 5 years old.

- ◆ According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Louisiana had the highest percentage of 16 to 19-year-olds killed on the job in the South from 1980 to 1989. The national average of all work-place deaths of 16 to 19-year-olds killed was just over 4 percent. The state ranked third nationally, behind Utah and Oklahoma.

- ◆ Nationally, a 1990 report by the General Accounting Office, the investigative wing of Congress, found that child labor violations had risen 150 percent between 1983 and 1989. The number of children caught working illegally during this time by the Department of Labor jumped from 9,200 to 25,000 nationwide.

- ◆ In 1992, a National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) report found that 670 youths age 16 to 17 were killed on the job from 1980 to 1989. Seventy percent of the deaths involved violations of the FLSA. A second NIOSH report found that more than 64,100 children went to the emergency room for work-related injuries in 1992.

Why do children continue to be injured, even killed on the job, despite state and federal laws regulating child labor and two highly publicized crackdowns on violators in 1991? Answers to this question are not easy to find but can be unearthed in data from federal and state departments of labor, reviews of numerous studies, and interviews with state and federal labor department officials, child labor advocates, and medical researchers.

At various times minor reforms have been made at both the federal and state

levels, but several barriers continue to prevent children from being adequately protected in the workplace. A patchwork of inefficient data collection systems fails to monitor the total number — much less the well-being — of youth in the workplace. Enforcement of the FLSA is lax. Cultural beliefs about the worth of work for children are strong. Perhaps most importantly, various business trade groups lobby successfully to keep child labor laws from being strengthened and, in many cases, to weaken existing laws.

"Child labor today is at a point where

“Child labor today is at a point where violations are greater than at any point during the 1930s.”

violations are greater than at any point during the 1930s.” said Jeffrey Newman of the National Child Labor Committee, an advocacy group founded in 1904. “It’s very sad, and it doesn’t speak well to our understanding and commitment to our children.”

The Law, The Court, The Law...

Efforts to protect children from exploitation in the workplace began in the early 1900s. Unable to get individual states to pass strong laws to protect the health and safety of young workers, reformers like Jane Addams, Lewis Hine, Mary “Mother Jones” Harris, the National Consumers League, and others turned their attention to the federal government. In 1916 they persuaded the government to pass the Keatings-Owen Act, the first piece of federal legislation regulating child labor. Signed into law



Child digs in coal refuse in Scott's Run, West Virginia, December 1936. Photographer Lewis Hine commented that the child "seemed used to" being barefoot in the snow. The photo was made as part of the National Research Project, a record of the Works Progress Administration. Hine had also made photographs of child labor for the National Child Labor Committee in 1908.

by President Woodrow Wilson, the bill prohibited the interstate commerce of goods produced by children under the age of 14 and established an eight-hour workday for youth under the age of 16.

The bill had tremendous support from the labor unions, churches, and the two major political parties. But two states that depended heavily on child labor, North and South Carolina, objected to the bill's provisions. After the bill became law, a judge in North Carolina de-

clared it unconstitutional, arguing that it interfered with interstate commerce. The federal Supreme Court agreed, and the law was struck down.

In 1919 reformers tried again. A bill similar to the Keatings-Owen Act passed, imposing a 10 percent tax on the net profits of manufacturers who employed children below the age of 14. Again the North Carolina judge declared the law unconstitutional, this time stating that the act infringed on the rights of

states to impose taxation measures. Again the U.S. Supreme Court sided with North Carolina.

Reformers then tried to pass a constitutional amendment. Opponents launched an all-out assault. Farmers were told that under the proposed amendment, children would not be allowed to work on the farms. Mothers were told that they could be fined just for sending their children to the store or to run errands. Though Congress approved the amendment, the states refused to ratify it.

Resistance to laws restricting child labor was most apparent in the South where booming textile industry depended heavily on children for a supply of cheap labor. In 1890 children numbered 25,000 in the textile industry. By 1900 the number was 60,000. Until the 1920s, one quarter of the region's textile workers were boys under the age of 16 and girls under the age of 15.

"The children of the South, many of them, must work," said one mill owner. "It is a question of necessity."

Hubert D. Stephens, U.S. Senator from Mississippi from 1923 to 1935, went even further, calling child labor reform a "socialist movement" designed to "destroy our government." The Senator warned Southern parents that under the proposed child labor laws, "the child becomes the absolute property of the federal government."

Despite such scare tactics, The National Recovery Administration, a federal agency created during the New Deal, banned employment of children below the age of 16 in most industries in the early 1930s. The U.S. Supreme Court invalidated the restriction in 1935.

Finally, in 1938, during a period of increased automation in American industries and declining child labor, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) passed. The act, which was drafted under the direction of labor leader Sidney Hillman, limited the maximum number of work hours for 14 and 15-year-olds, prohibited certain occupations, and raised the minimum age for full-time employment to 16. The FLSA remains the major piece of federal regulation governing child labor.

Untold Thousands

Today, 57 years after the passage of the FLSA, millions of children in the United States are in the work force, and a large number are exposed to hazardous working conditions. How many? "No one really knows," said Jeffery Newman of the National Child Labor Committee.

There is no comprehensive national data collection system that accurately tracks the number of working youth, their occupation, where they work, or how many are injured or killed on the job. (See "Who's Got the Information," right) "The numbers that you do get are relatively meaningless," Newman said. He believes that even the best figures underestimate the number of working children by 25 to 30 percent.

Charles Jeszeck of the General Accounting Office (GAO) won't go as far as calling the numbers meaningless, but says, "The data that we have on children's work are very conservative, because they are derived from woefully inadequate data systems."

To illustrate the extent of under-reporting by employers (to regulators), Jeszeck pointed out that the GAO's review of independent census data identified at least 166,000 youth age 15 and 16 working in prohibited occupations like construction.

"The number of minority children working may be the most under-counted," Jeszeck said. "We found that although white youth are more likely to work, minority children are more likely to work in unreportable jobs like agriculture or other 'hazardous' industries like manufacturing or construction. They also work more hours a week but fewer weeks a year than whites." Data on youth below the age of 14 are not routinely collected, he said, "So right off the top you have a distorted picture of working youth."

On the state level, things aren't much better. In response to the Freedom of Information Act requests, most state officials admitted that information on children in the work force is rarely collected in a comprehensive or even consistent format.

Kathleen Dunn of East Carolina University and Carolyn Runyan of the Injury

Who's Got the Information?

(such as it is)

Researchers and child labor advocates agree that there is a need for a national data collection system to get an accurate idea of the number of young people working, getting injured, or being killed. Among the various data collection systems:

- ◆ **Work permits** — Being issued in most states by the local school systems, work permits follow guidelines in the FLSA. However, most states have no central collection point for the number or types of work permits issued. Furthermore, since the FLSA does not mandate work permits, not everyone uses them. According to the Child Labor Coalition, 34 states have some kind of work permits. Fifteen do not require permits.
- ◆ **Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey** — Most information on the number of working children is taken from this monthly survey. However, the survey of 600,000 households only records employment data for youth age 15 and older.
- ◆ **National Traumatic Occupational Fatalities Surveillance System (NTOFSS)** — Maintained by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the NTOFSS contains information from death certificates for all work-related deaths reported to units across the United States. The minimum age for inclusion is 16, and the cause of death is often a judgment call by the medical examiner, severely limiting the number of reported deaths of children killed on the job. Information obtained from the NTOFSS should be considered conservative, said researchers at NIOSH.
- ◆ **National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS)** — The Consumer Product Safety Commission's NEISS contains information on product-related injuries collected from a national sample of hospital emergency rooms in the United States. Through a collaborative effort with NIOSH, data on work-related injuries to persons age 14 to 17 have been recorded since 1992. However, like the NTOFSS, the NEISS is limited. Data are maintained only for product-related injuries, and only for youth 14 and older. The information comes from just 91 hospitals and is extrapolated to national levels, but studies show that only about 36 percent of all work-related injuries are treated in emergency rooms.
- ◆ **OSHA Investigations** — Researchers have used investigations conducted by OSHA after work-place accidents to estimate adolescent fatalities. But since OSHA only investigates about 25 percent of all work-place fatalities, the data are limited.
- ◆ **Workers' Compensation Claims** — A number of researchers, including NIOSH, have used worker's compensation claims filed with state agencies to document the number of children injured. The data are limited because youth are less likely to file workers' compensation claims, eligibility varies from state to state, and not all workers are covered.
- ◆ **Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries** — This census, a cooperative venture between state and federal governments, is the most comprehensive data collection system available. States are responsible for collecting data, follow-up procedures, and coding. Reports include about 20 elements, including the demographic characteristics of the worker and circumstances of the fatal event. Information collected includes the employer's industry, worker's occupation, equipment involved, activity worker performed, and location of the incident. States obtain this information from death certificates, workers' compensation reports, and other reports provided by state and federal administrative agencies, such as OSHA, Employment Standards Administration, and Mine Safety and Health Administration. In 1993 state agencies collected approximately 20,000 individual source documents, or about three documents for each fatality case. Although this is the best data collection system available, its effectiveness is limited because the information is based on woefully inadequate data collected by the states.

Student Action with Farmworkers

By Laura Neish

The South's plentiful harvests of fruits, vegetables, and tobacco would be unthinkable without the labor of hundreds of thousands of migrant and seasonal farm workers. Working long hours for low wages, often in dangerous conditions, many farm workers have difficulty meeting their own basic needs even as they provide food for the nation's tables.

One organization working to improve conditions is Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF) based in Durham, North Carolina. Founded in 1992, SAF "brings students and farm workers together to learn about each other's lives, share resources and skills, improve conditions for farm workers, and build diverse coalitions working for social change," according to their mission statement.

SAF's main activity is a 10-week summer internship program which pairs college students with farmworker service agencies in North and South Carolina. SAF interns come from eight colleges and universities in the Carolinas, and from College Assistance Migrant Programs at universities in California, Oregon, Idaho, and Colorado. This summer, 10 of the 33 interns come from farmworker families.

The students work in Head Start, summer school programs, health clinics,

and legal aid offices. Interns act as translators in courtrooms and clinics, organize health fairs and presentations at labor camps, and teach English as a second language and driver's education classes.

Whether working with Mexican-American Christmas tree workers in the mountains of North Carolina or Haitian watermelon pickers in South Carolina, SAF interns provide support to understaffed agencies. In turn, they gain practical work experience.

Alma Rojas, an intern at Tri-County Community Health Center in Newton Grove, North Carolina, says doing health screenings at labor camps has helped prepare her for a career in nursing. Having grown up working in the fields herself, she also had "an opportunity to go back and help the people I used to be part of."

For other interns, SAF provides a glimpse at an often-invisible population. Through her advocacy work with the Farmworker's Project in Benson, North Carolina, Amy Fauver, a recent graduate of Duke University, says, "I've learned how many people in this country live the lives they do at the expense of the people who do the work."

It is SAF's goal to inspire such insights. They hope to go beyond providing services to educating the broader community about the human side of



Eusebio Herrera with Farmworkers Legal Services

agribusiness. "We are educating the next generation of farmworker advocates," says executive director Margaret Horn.

The experience even inspires some interns to rethink their career plans. Before working with South Carolina Migrant Health this summer, University of South Carolina-Columbia senior Fred Ortmann planned to pursue a career in a specialized field of medicine. "After this summer," he says, "I'd like to stay in rural health care."

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Prevention Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill had the same difficulty in 1992 when they began researching young workers. "There is no standardized method for keeping track of work-related injuries [for youth]," Runyan said. "North Carolina has a good system for keeping track of injuries and deaths in general, but for youth we don't expect to need the information, so the data are not routinely collected."

Part of the problem, Runyan explained, is the perception of doctors or

medical examiners who record the cause of injury or death. "Many medical examiners have in their minds some kind of age cut-off when it comes to work-place deaths or injuries," Dunn said. "So if a child is below a certain age they won't even consider an injury to the child as a work-related injury. This is a problem across the country," she said. "What we need is education for medical examiners and standardization of [criteria for] work-related injuries for youth."

Field of Teens

Counting or tracking the number of young farm workers is even more difficult. Most states exempt agriculture from requiring work permits or age certificates, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics' annual survey overlooks millions of children who work on the farm, since the minimum age reported is 15. "But under exemptions in the FLSA, it's legal for children as young as 10 and 11 to work. The problem is most people simply don't think that children under 12 work," said



Fourteen year old Salvadoran refugee works in egg house, Iredell County, North Carolina.

Diana Mull of the Association of Farmworkers Opportunities Programs.

The United Farm Workers Union and studies on migrant children estimate that 800,000 children work in agriculture. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, 23,500 are injured and another 300 die on the farm each year. All of these numbers are conservative, farm worker advocates say. "There is huge under-reporting in the number of children working in agriculture," said Mull.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission used to monitor the number of children's injuries caused by farm equipment and pesticides. But in 1994, the federal agency stopped collecting such data due to budget constraints, said Art Donovan of the commission staff.

Although the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that there are about 300,000 acute illnesses and injuries from exposure to farm pesticides for all workers, little data are available on the actual number of children exposed. According to studies, children are more susceptible than adults to the effects of pesticides. Children absorb more than adults per pound of body weight, but the EPA standards for protecting workers from exposure to pesticides are based on adults only. According to a GAO study, the EPA "believes that studies monitoring field exposure to pesticides and laboratory animal studies on age-related

toxic effects indicated no reason to specifically regulate children differently."

The GAO also found that all pesticide illness reports, except for California's, were limited in scope, detail, and quality of information. The study concluded that there was no way to determine accurately the national incidence or prevalence of pesticide illness in the farm sector.

Inspectors are unlikely to get even a chance to look for children working illegally on a farm. According to a provision in the annual appropriations bill, the U.S. Department of Labor prevents OSHA from inspecting farms who claim less than 11 workers. The provision is supposed to protect small family farms from regulations that apply to corporate agribusiness. But giant farms circumvent inspection by hiring contractors to provide labor instead of hiring workers directly. "The farm labor contractor is the only one that shows up on the books as an employee," said farm worker activist Mull, "giving the farm only one worker on its books. Therefore these big farms that can have as many as 50 or 60 workers are exempt from inspection, and the farm escapes responsibility for complying with the labor laws."

A farm owner can also record only one person on the books when in reality an entire family, including the children, could be working under that one

person's social security number.

"If we had better data and could flesh out the number of kids actually working legally and illegally, as well as those injured and killed, we might be able to raise the awareness of the public and Congress and get something done," said the GAO's Jeszeck. He advocates a centralized national data collection system.

Catherine A. Belter of the National Parent Teacher Association is more emphatic. Testifying before a congressional hearing in February, Belter warned legislators of the immediate need for a comprehensive data collection system for working children in order to form a strategy of prevention. "Until the U.S. has an accurate number of child[work]-related

"Businesses don't worry about being inspected unless there's some horrible incident."

injuries and fatalities, finding the appropriate statutory or regulatory policy that will protect youth is impossible," Belter said. "America must do a better job than continuing to take a patchwork approach to developing and amending child labor laws and regulations."

Enforcement Blues

Getting a national data collection system in place is just part of the solution to protecting young people in the workplace, advocates say. "Enforcement is a major problem," said Linda Golodner, executive director of the National Consumers League and co-chair of the Child Labor Coalition.

Few states have full-time child labor inspectors, and in Georgia and Alabama,

laws prohibit agencies from assessing fines even when they do find children working in violation of the law. Mississippi has no labor department and Maryland has no child labor enforcement division. But even when agencies have the ability to assess fines, the penalties are rarely significant enough to deter repeat violations. In South Carolina, the fine for violating the state child labor law is \$50. In Florida, the state agency can only issue a warning for the first violation regardless of the severity of the injury that may result — including death.

Further problems arise as local departments cut back on enforcement due to budget constraints. They turn over enforcement to the federal government, but a shrinking budget is causing cuts in enforcement by the U.S. Department of Labor as well.

The number of Department of Labor inspectors has dropped from 989 in 1991 to 791 in 1994, and the department has no full-time investigators assigned exclusively to child labor. Investigators in the Wage and Hour Division enforce 96 laws and regulations, including child labor, said Bob Cuccia of the Department of Labor. "Child labor is one of our major focuses," he added. But a GAO study in 1990 found that investigators spend only about 5 percent of their time on child labor.

Nationally, recorded child labor violations dropped from a high of nearly 40,000 in 1990 to just over 8,000 in 1994. Cuccia attributes the decline to the 1991 crackdown called "Operation Childwatch" and to "education and outreach to businesses from the Department of Labor." While child labor violations did decrease tremendously, inspections also decreased by two thirds. In 1990 the department conducted 5,889 inspections, fining businesses a total of \$8,451,268. In 1994 the number of inspections dropped to just over 2,000.

"Businesses don't worry about being inspected unless there's some horrible incident," said Darlene Adkins, coordinator of the Child Labor Coalition. "I'm not saying that anyone wants to harm children. It's just that child labor laws aren't a priority for most businesses."

A 1992 report from the National Safe

Child Labor Investigations and Violations

U.S. Department of Labor

	INVESTIGATIONS		VIOLATIONS	
	South*	Rest of U.S.	South	Rest of U.S.
1989	963	2,308	5,407	17,101
1990	1,710	4,220	9,613	29,738
1991	1,013	2,614	6,913	20,742
1992	1,258	2,665	5,531	13,912
1993	783	1,557	2,985	7,057
1994	616	1,414	2,419	6,025

*States included: Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Louisiana.

Workplace Institute bears out Adkins' observations. The report found that the average business could expect to be inspected once every 50 years or so by the wage and hour division. According to the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, it would take the Occupational Safety and Health Administration 23 years just to inspect all high-risk workplaces, including those where youth work.

Even when companies are inspected and violations are found, the maximum penalty of \$10,000 per violation is rarely enforced. A prime example is Food Lion, the supermarket chain based in Salisbury, North Carolina. In 1992, the company agreed to settle charges of 1,436 child labor violations with the Department of Labor. Most of the violations, according to the company's 10K form filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, were for allowing employees under the age of 18 to operate balers — machines that compress cardboard boxes that are rated as too hazardous for minors to use. Food Lion paid an estimated \$1,000,000 for the violations. The fines amounted to \$714 per violation — far below the federal maximum.

"If Food Lion had paid the maximum amount, the fines would have totaled over \$14 million," said Darlene Adkins

of the Child Labor Coalition.

Kids Sewing and Sowing

While restaurants and supermarket chains, two industries that employ large numbers of youth, have been scrutinized by state and federal regulators over the past several years, little attention has been given to the garment and the agricultural industry. "These industries are where you find the most vulnerable kids," said Linda Golodner of the National Consumers League. In Florida and Texas, many kids still work in "sweatshop" conditions reminiscent of the 1920s.

An investigation by the *Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel* found that the \$1.2 billion garment industry in Dade County, Florida, the nation's third largest garment center, is riddled with flagrant violations that go virtually unpunished by the government.

Jorge Rivero, Miami district director of the U.S. Department of Labor, concedes that children are working in the garment industry. But unless inspectors catch a child at work or someone admits that children are working in the industry, there is little that can be done, he said. Many garment workers are contracted by manufacturers and work at home where their kids help.

"We've never had any success in fin-

Far Afield

Young migrants workers labor long and hard.

At 19 years of age, Porfidio is accustomed to the nomadic life of a migrant worker. He has been on the migrant trail since the age of 13 when he first came to the United States, accompanied by his mother. They traveled and worked the fields together, starting in Florida and ending in the northern states by fall. In winter, they returned to their native Michoacan, one of the poorest states in Mexico.

The following year, Porfidio crossed the eastern United States by himself working in agriculture. At age 14, he was out of school and working full time. Once in a while, a contractor or farmer asked him how old he was, and his reply was always "16."

Porfidio's case is typical of many Mexican youths. Faced with a bleak economic outlook at home, he came to the United States in search of work. Reverend Tom Engle, of the First Presbyterian Church in Batesville, South Carolina, runs a migrant ministry program along with Sister Jean Schaeffer of the Holy Cross Catholic Church. Each year they see a handful of migrant workers who are not yet old enough to work full time. It is difficult to ascertain how many children work illegally in agriculture because nobody is much interested in finding out. But at least some young people labor in the fields.

ing the garment industry," Rivero said. "I don't know why it's so hard, but it is. We go out every year and do directed investigations, basically at random, without [waiting for] complaints. We've done this for the last 30 years. It's unusual to get a complaint."

State officials, Rivero said, have limited resources and in most cases turn over enforcement to the federal Department of Labor, which lacks the manpower to make a dent in the illegal employment of children.

"Many employers in Dade County

The understaffed federal Wage and Hour Division is responsible for, among other things, enforcing child labor laws. Children may work as agricultural workers in non-hazardous jobs at the age of 12 with the written consent of their parents or together with their parents on a farm. At 14, children may work full time in non-hazardous jobs outside of school. At 16, they can perform hazardous jobs and don't have to be in school.

"We don't find a whole lot of (child labor) violations in agriculture. It is more common in other industries," said Jane Carter, a supervisor at the Wage and Hour Division office in Columbia, South Carolina.

The Wage and Hour Division, like every other federal office operating on an already overstretched budget, makes priorities. In the course of investigating wage violations, illegal paycheck deductions and living conditions, investigators sometimes uncover child labor violations. Investigators generally

have no fear of the Labor Department enforcement efforts," an International Ladies Garment Workers Union representative testified at a 1989 hearing. "They're not hiding."

Labor officials in the state of Texas experience similar problems. In the Dallas/Fort Worth area, officials estimate that 8,000 to 40,000 Asian immigrants are employed by the garment industry. Most work at home where children sometimes work alongside their parents late into the night. As in Florida, the state labor department has little success in curbing such violations because of lack of personnel. Recent Asian immigrants may have little choice in letting their children work and, would be unlikely to report violations. One Asian-American garment worker believes it is simply tradition in Asian families. "The family works together like always. Just like on the farm, the whole family, including the children, work."

Jeffrey Newman of the National Child Labor Committee disagrees. "Whenever you see a child working in the garment industry under sweatshop conditions, it is exploitation," he said.

Though legislation and enforcement

do not visit an area unless they have received complaints about wage violations. Migrant workers and farmers generally don't complain about working children.

South Carolina's Office of Labor Services, under the Department of Labor, is responsible for enforcing state child labor laws in the state, but issued no citations in fiscal year 1993-94. For the most part, young agricultural workers don't have much to fear when deciding to come to the United States in search of work. Whether stricter enforcement of laws would deter poverty-stricken children from going north in search of work is not at all clear. Yet, we must also ask ourselves what level of human sacrifice the United States is willing to tolerate to put cheap food on the table.

—Alex Todorovic

Alex Todorovic is associate editor with *Point*, a news monthly in Columbia, South Carolina.

in the garment industry are weak, children working in agriculture receive even less protection. Most states exempt agriculture from child labor laws altogether. And on the federal level, various exemptions in the labor laws allow farm children to work at much younger ages than in other industries.

For example, 16 and 17-year-olds can do hazardous work in agriculture, while the age for similar work in other industries is 18. Ten and 11-year-olds can be employed if the farmer gets a waiver from the Department of Labor, simply by proving that *not* employing 10 and 11-year-olds would cause severe economic hardship to the farm.

How can farming be so loosely regulated when the National Safety Council has defined agriculture as the most dangerous occupation, behind construction? The answer lies in the history of the FLSA. "The FLSA was a piece of New Deal legislation that had to appeal to Southern Dixiecrats," said Elaine Broward, a labor historian at Harvard University. At that time, farming was the lifeblood of the Southern economy. More than half the population lived on farms, and youth regularly worked. But

Photo by Kenneth Murray



ous activities. Harris also recommended the exemptions for children in agriculture be repealed.

"From a safety standpoint, there is no reason today for a farm/non-farm dichotomy in our child labor laws and regulations," Harris said.

Family Values: Get to Work!

The traditional American belief in the value of children working presents another obstacle to reforms suggested by Harris and others. Medical historian David Rosner of Baruch College in New York said that child labor has a long history that complicates attempts to restrict or regulate it. "We have deep-seated social and cultural values that play against serious attempts at protecting kids,"

Rosner said. "Americans are deeply ambivalent about child labor," he said. "We see work as redemptive and as a morally legitimate method of self-improvement."

Indeed, beliefs about the value of work permeate the American psyche. In 1925 the National Industrial Conference Board of the U.S. National Association of Manufacturers claimed that working as a child was "desirable and necessary for complete education and maturity, . . . as well as for the promotion of good citizenship and the social and economic welfare."

More recently, according to professor Dario Menateau of the University of Minnesota, groups such as the President's Science Advisory Committee in 1973, the National Panel on High School and Adolescent Education in 1976, and the Carnegie Council in 1979 have all asserted that work can contribute to adolescent learning of socially accepted norms, values, and behaviors.

"Working during the teen years is usually seen by these groups as a helpful medium available in modern society that facilitates the transition to adult life," Menateau said.

The myth is that these kids have to work to help support their families, said Linda Golodner of the National Consumers League. "Very, very few work to help their families," she said. "They're getting money to buy concert tickets, designer sneakers, cars, and things like that. We feel that it's OK [for them] to have a job, just so that their hours are limited and they're not sacrificing these educational years or their childhood." While it may be true that most children work for their own spending money, in agriculture it is a different story.

Diana Mull of the Association of Farmworkers Opportunities Programs said, "The myth is that in agriculture, children are simply doing chores and that they are helping out the family. For most of the work being done in agriculture, the wages are so low that everyone [in a family] has to work just to make ends meet. One should wonder how this in any way teaches kids the value of a dollar or work when they see their parents eking out a meager living moving from place to place. How to be exploited, how to be abused, that's something we want to teach kids, right?"

So what skills and responsibilities do kids learn at work? It depends on the job, experts say. In a 1992 study of learning in the workplace, researchers Ellen Greenberger and Laurence Steinberg observed that, "The typical jobs available to youth do little to inspire a high degree of commitment and concern."

The authors said that jobs for most youth do not require use of even the most basic academic skills. Food service workers, manual laborers, and cleaners spend an average of 2 percent or less of their time at work reading, writing, or doing arithmetic. Cleaning, carrying and moving objects from one place to another take up between 14 and 55 percent of the time of the average food service or retail sales job. "Adolescents . . . had few illusions about the degree of expertise their work called for," Greenberger and Steinberg concluded. "Nearly half felt

recent changes in agricultural production have radically altered the industry. It is no longer a small-time activity.

"In 1938 the dangers of agriculture were not as well-known as they are now," said Cynthia Schneider, staff attorney with the Migrant Legal Program in Washington, D.C. "The use of pesticides and the type of farm equipment used today make agriculture more dangerous than it ever was."

In North Carolina, state labor department officials made similar observations after reviewing a 1993 study by Kathleen Dunn and Carolyn Runyan. They found that 71 people age 11 to 19 were fatally injured while working on the job between 1980 and 1990. Twenty-seven percent of those who died were involved in farm activities. After a review of state policies, Tom Harris, director of the state wage and hour division, asked federal officials to add provisions to current child labor laws barring work in hazard-

that a grade-school education or less would suffice to enable them to perform their jobs."

Quality of work may be low, but quantity of work can be too high. Another study found that students who work more than 20 hours a week were less likely to do homework, earn A's, or take college preparatory courses. "While the drop in grades may be unimportant to a 4.0 student, for the marginal student it could be significant," said Maribeth Oaks of the National Parent Teacher Association.

Professor Menateau, who has studied working children for more than 20 years, said schools have changed their curricula to accommodate work. "I'd hate to say that education is being watered down," he said, "but the schools are adjusting. They simply aren't demanding the amounts of homework and the academics that they used to because students are doing so many other things."

Follow The Money

If lack of data, lax enforcement, and deep-seated beliefs hamper efforts to reform child labor laws, lobbying efforts by various business trade organizations make reform nearly impossible. In 1992, when former Senator Howard Metzenbaum introduced legislation to establish a national work permit system and national standards for reporting injuries suffered by minors, pressure from the restaurant industry successfully killed the measure in committee.

Likewise, when the House Judiciary Committee considered child labor laws that would have subjected employers to a \$250,000 fine and imprisonment for violations that resulted in serious injury to minors, a lobbying campaign from the restaurant industry again killed the bill in committee.

The restaurant industry has good reason to fear changes in the child labor laws. According to *Restaurant Business*, an industry trade publication, the nation's 400,000 restaurants employed over 1 million teenagers age 16 to 19 in 1993. The National Restaurant Association — Washington's other NRA — a trade organization of 200,000 restaurants and proprietors, has quietly managed to prevent any changes in the nation's child

labor laws. And with a Republican Congressional majority receptive to its agenda, the NRA seems poised to weaken existing laws.

The NRA is not alone. The Food Marketing Institute (FMI) has lobbied against strengthening child labor provisions in the FLSA. Representing the nation's supermarket chains and other food stores, FMI earlier this year lobbied to repeal a section of the FLSA that prohibits children under the age of 18 from operating cardboard compactors and balers. Bills to repeal the ban were introduced in both the House and the Senate.

The FMI may prevail despite testimony from child labor advocates, a NIOSH report that found 50 accidents as a result of operating balers, and support for the ban from Department of Labor officials. Supporters of the repeal on balers call it "a chance to create summer jobs in your district without spending a dime of taxpayer's money," as they wrote in a joint letter to potential sponsors. Repealing the baler ban would entice more supermarkets to hire young people without fear of being charged a penalty for letting kids throw boxes into the machines.

Supporters of the ban are stunned by the relative ease the FMI has had in pushing its baler repeal. "We have simply been reduced to commenting on the proposed changes," said Debbie Berkowitz of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, who is urging Congress to maintain the ban.

In the nation's capital, money talks, and both the NRA and FMI have talked generously to potential supporters of their agenda. According to the Center For Responsive Politics, the NRA gave a total of \$658,844 to 279 candidates in the 1994 election, making it one of the 50 largest PACs in the country. The NRA gave 73 percent of its contributions to Republican candidates, mostly to the U.S. House. Senators received larger amounts on average — \$5,089 compared to \$2,057 for House members.

In 1994 the FMI gave \$452,465, with more than 68 percent going to Republican candidates. More than 70 percent of the FMI contributions went to House members, with Senators receiving an

average of larger amounts \$3,061, compared to \$1,186 for House members. Rep. Thomas Ewing (R-IL) and Sen. Larry Craig (R-ID), both sponsors of the bills to repeal the ban on balers, received contributions from the FMI.

A representative of the trade organizations denies that the contributions influence voting. "Political giving helps," Herman Cain, chair and executive officer of Godfathers Pizza and a former president of the NRA, told the *Wall Street Journal*, "But it does not buy a

"I'm not saying that anyone wants to harm children. It's just that child labor laws aren't a priority for most businesses."

decision ... The only thing it has done in many instances is give us access."

This access has successfully stalled or killed any attempts to improve workplace protection for children. According to Federal Election Commission data gathered by the National Library on Money and Politics, members of both the House and Senate committees that oversee work-place laws have received \$109,350 and \$70,815 from the NRA and FMI, respectively, for 1991-1994.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich has been a favorite of both the NRA and the FMI. Since 1991 Gingrich has received over \$27,000 from both PACs. He

picked up another \$230,000 from other PACs in the restaurant industry for his extra-curricular fundraising operations including his nationally televised college class called "Renewing America." According to Federal Election Commission data, House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-TX) received \$6,500 and Rep. Tom DeLay (R-IL) \$8,500 from the FMI and NRA combined. In total, said *Common Cause*, the restaurant industry has given \$1.3 million to Republican candidates in recent years.

Republicans "cherish the restaurant

"How to be exploited, how to be abused, that's something we want to teach kids, right?"

folks for all the help that they have given the party," Rep. Armey told the *Wall Street Journal*. "That puts them clearly within the favored category. You know the old adage — dance with the ones that bring you."

Rep. Tom DeLay has taken this advice to heart. The NRA helped to plug DeLay's run for majority whip of the House by shoring up support and campaign contributions in the Republican freshman class. Earlier this year, when DeLay pulled together a coalition of anti-regulation groups called Project Relief, the NRA was awarded one of the seats on the task force. Chaired by Bruce Gates, a lobbyist with the grocery industry which includes the FMI, Project Relief, according to its mission statement, is "committed to changing fundamentally the process by which the federal government regulates."

If Project Relief gets its way, "past and proposed regulations governing such food industry areas as food safety, transportation, and occupational safety [including child labor laws] would be subject to much greater scrutiny," Gates told the *Progressive Grocer*, a trade publication.

According to FEC data analyzed by the Environmental Working Group in Washington, D.C., the 115 PACs that make up Project Relief gave House Republicans \$10.3 million in 1994. Most of Project Relief's contributions have been bestowed upon members of the House and Senate Regulatory Task Forces, committees set up under the new Republican majority to oversee changes in regulations. On the House side, Rep. DeLay, who chairs the House Regulatory Task Force, received \$38,423. In the Senate, Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) received \$331,733.

DeLay has fingered nearly 60 rules and regulations for weakening or outright abolition, including child labor restrictions, which the restaurant and grocery industries say are being imposed on them by the federal government. "We would like to give them as much flexibility as possible," Rep. Bill Goodling (R-PA), chairman of the committee in charge of overhauling child labor laws, told the *Wall Street Journal*.

Other plans of Project Relief are to do away with OSHA and NIOSH entirely or to reduce their functions, a move that would have a devastating effect on workplace safety as a whole and on child labor particularly.

"I'm not encouraged about activity that is being generated in the House and Senate this year," said Linda Golodner, of the National Consumers League. "We'd love to see some action. But with the anti-regulatory attitude in the Congress, I don't feel optimistic."

What to Do

Action on the state level may hold more promise, Golodner said. The Child Labor Coalition is using model state legislation to push for reforms on the state level. The Coalition is urging legislators to:

- ◆ Provide equal protection under the child labor laws for young migrant and seasonal farm workers. This provision would set a minimum age of 14 for employment of agricultural workers, the same as for non-agricultural workers. It would also set a maximum number of work hours while school is in session and prohibit minors from working in hazardous occupations and around hazardous substances.
- ◆ Require work permits for all working minors that will give information on the number of youth employed and the industries employing them.
- ◆ Require labor education about workplace rights and responsibilities under the FLSA prior to a youth's initial employment.
- ◆ Provide enhanced enforcement provisions and specific enforcement financing. Under this proposal, the state department of labor would publish and disseminate the addresses and names of each employer who had repeated and intentionally violated child labor laws and specify the type of violations. The information would be disseminated to students, parents, employers, and educators.
- ◆ Establish stiffer penalties for employers who are child labor violators. This provision would make anyone found repeatedly violating child labor laws ineligible for any grant, contract, or loan provided by a state agency for five years. Repeat offenders would be ineligible to employ a minor during this period. The Department of Labor would be required to disseminate a list of offenders to parents and authorities.

Several states are considering adopting all or portions of the legislation. "Just looking at the law and making a couple of regulatory changes can be helpful," Golodner said. "Regulatory changes on the state level put the focus back on education for youth and save lives." **S**

Intern Terri Boykin provided research assistance and additional reporting.

Wrong Side of the Track

School districts show how gifted and talented they can be when they want to figure out how to segregate students.

By Herb Frazier

In late 1987, a loosely organized group of citizens in Sylvania, Georgia, investigated a complaint from a black teacher who said she was being harassed by white students at the rural Southern Georgia Screven County High School, where 55 percent of the students are black.

The school's administration had failed to handle the issue after the 20-year veteran English teacher reported that some white students called her "nigger" and "bitch" and, in one incident, knocked her down. "The issue was ultimately resolved with some of the [white] children being suspended," said Karen Watson, coordinator of Positive Action Committee, the group that formed to look into the incidents. "While we were investigating what happened, we found out the problem went much deeper than this teacher being harassed."

The African-American students at the school were concerned about tracking in the school. "They told us they found themselves always being placed in lower-level classes. And when they got to high school, they were working at a much slower pace than other students," she said. "They also wanted to know more about unfair disciplinary practices and why the school did not have any black counselors."

The local branch of the NAACP had tried to address issues in the school system without success, the group found. Besides, life was made hard for black people who challenged the system. "People got harassed. They had nasty editorials in the local paper. People in

Photo by Keneth Murray



Education researchers are beginning to agree that students with different abilities have more to gain from learning together than learning apart.

Gifted and Talented and Advanced Placement: White and Minority representation in Elementary and High School

1992	Alabama		Florida		Georgia		Kentucky		Louisiana		Maryland	
	White	Minority	White	Minority	White	Minority	White	Minority	White	Minority	White	Minority
TOTAL STUDENTS	63%	37%	60%	40%	NA	NA	90%	10%	52%	48%	60%	40%
Gifted programs	89%	11%	85%	15%	87%	13%	93%	7%	80%	20%	72%	28%
Adv. Placement Science	73%	27%	70%	30%	72%	28%	91%	9%	53%	47%	62%	38%
AP Math	72%	28%	72%	28%	73%	27%	91%	9%	67%	33%	71%	29%
AP Computer Science	69%	31%	71%	29%	62%	38%	84%	16%	71%	29%	74%	26%

Information provided by Educational Compliance Report filed annually with U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Census.

our group have been followed and had lights shined into their houses," Watson said. "Notes were left at the building where we were during tutoring. One note said, 'I'd watch myself if I were you.'"

Last summer shots were fired into Watson's home. She was not injured.

Photo courtesy of Fund for Southern Communities



Karen Watson

"This is one of those small rural counties where certain things are supposed to be accepted," she said. Watson continued her full-time work with the committee, which is affiliated with the Center for Democratic Renewal in Atlanta. The

center gives the committee a budget that pays Watson's salary. The group also depends on volunteers and in-kind support from its members.

The threats and intimidation did not stop the committee during the eight years it took to gather information about tracking and file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education. They eventually got what they wanted. Earlier this year, after the Department of Education said it would investigate whether tracking created racially segregated classrooms within the district's three schools, the Screven County School District agreed to end tracking. The agency's Office of Civil Rights in Atlanta also found that the district's hiring and promotion practices and the way it disciplined students were racially biased against black people.

A Segregating System

Screven County's end to tracking was one small victory against the practice of separating students in the South by perceived academic ability. Critics contend that tracking maintains racially segregated classrooms within integrated schools 45 years after the United States Supreme Court outlawed segregated schools. In many cases, students within the same school are grouped regardless of ability, creating slower-paced classes of mostly minority children and college-bound classes of mostly white children.

Though hundreds of complaints have been filed with the Education Department's Office of Civil Rights alleging that minority students are still being bunched into low-ability tracks throughout the nation, the problem persists.

According to a 1991 report by the U.S. General Accounting Office, the problems of tracking continue due to the Office of Civil Rights' lax enforcement when it finds evidence of violations. (See "Office of Civil Wrongs," page 11) In 1992, when the Positive Action Committee filed its complaint with the Office of Civil Rights, the organization was unaware of the report criticizing the federal agency. But the committee did know that the OCR had received several complaints about Screven County schools and had failed to act.

Karen Watson believes that the Positive Action Committee won because it did extensive research, met with Office of Civil Rights officials in Washington and Atlanta, and brought evidence of discrimination in its 30-page complaint. "We worked the issue very hard and made it clear we were going to pursue it one way or the other regardless of what OCR found," she said. "We were diligent, and we got a good (OCR) investigator. And those were all the factors in why we were able to move this key issue a tiny bit further."

Mississippi		N. Carolina		S. Carolina		Tennessee		Texas		Virginia		W. Virginia	
White	Minority	White	Minority	White	Minority	White	Minority	White	Minority	White	Minority	White	Minority
48%	52%	66%	34%	57%	43%	76%	24%	48%	52%	68%	32%	95%	5%
84%	16%	91%	9%	84%	16%	87%	13%	71%	29%	85%	15%	97%	3%
77%	23%	82%	18%	81%	19%	71%	29%	49%	51%	76%	24%	96%	4%
78%	22%	85%	15%	76%	24%	72%	28%	48%	52%	76%	24%	97%	3%
77%	23%	74%	26%	67%	33%	81%	19%	68%	32%	73%	27%	98%	2%

A Bad Idea

While on the face of it the grouping of students by ability might make sense, there is little justification for tracking. "Generally, tracking is an excuse. Parents and supporters of kids who are perceived to have high ability feel that if these kids are in classes with so-called low-ability kids, their progress will be slowed," said Thomas E. Thompson of the Department of Education at the University of South Carolina. "What we know of teaching and learning does not support the practice of tracking." Education researchers like Thompson believe that students with different abilities have more to gain from learning together than from learning apart.

A leading education text, *Introduction to the Foundation of American Education*, found that tracking is actually damaging to the so-called low-ability children. "The potential for problems generated by ability grouping far outweighs the scant benefits to be gained by rigid grouping," wrote author James Johnson. "Low-ability groups become dumping grounds for learners with discipline problems, some of whom are not of low ability." In those classes, low-ability students tend to do badly "because of the teacher's low expectation of them." Minority children are particularly affected, he believes. "Problems associated with social class and minority group differ-

ences are usually increased with ability grouping . . . Negative self-concepts are more severe among minority group learners who are assigned to low-ability groups."

The statistics show that when students are picked for so-called gifted and talented programs, minority children tend to be left out. In fact, tracking has become "second generation segregation," according to Joel Spring in another text, *American Education*. Unlike the blatant segregation in the South before 1954, "Second generation segregation refers to forms of racial segregation that are the result of school practices such as tracking, ability grouping, and the misplacement of students in special education classes." It can be used, Spring contends, to maintain the white power structure, "a method of closing the door to equal economic opportunity for African Americans."

Tracking is losing favor, and the idea of putting together students of all abilities and with various handicaps is gaining favor. Spring notes that "in 1992, the National Association of State Boards of Education gave its support to the idea of full inclusion."

But various kinds of tracking are still very much a part of education in the South. Gifted and talented programs are telling. A small proportion of students enter these classes that are packed with

interesting projects intended to inspire interest and creativity. Good teachers like teaching in these programs, and valuable school resources go to support the special projects. These programs often tend to exclude minorities.

Tracking and the Gifted

According to 1992 Department of Education figures, West Virginia reported the lowest percentage of minority students in gifted and talented programs in the South. Only 201 — 2.6 percent — of the state's 7,518 students in gifted pro-

“Tracking is the number one enemy of poor children and black children.”

grams were members of minority groups, but West Virginia's minority population is less than 5 percent.

Texas reported the highest percentage of minority students in gifted programs, with nearly 30 percent of the 249,268 students in gifted programs. But more

than half of the children in school in Texas represent a minority.

Still, Texas does better than most Southern states in its level of minority participation in these programs, and they take pride in the level of success. Educators do not depend on just test scores to determine who gets into these programs, said Evelyn Hyatt, director of gifted and talented programs. "We use standardized measures such as tests and non-standard



Rose Sanders

measures such as teacher and parent recommendations. We are successful because the state board has ruled that the gifted and talented enrollment must reflect — not match — the population of that district," Hyatt said.

"We start in kindergarten, where the gifted and talented program best reflects the racial composition of the state." However, the percentage of minority students declines as students become older. "Far lower numbers of African-Americans and Hispanics pass standardized tests than whites. I see it as a problem of the public school system as a whole, not just the gifted and talented [programs]."

South Carolina is one Southern state attempting to do something about the school system as a whole. The state legislature abolished what is called the general track, a basic curriculum that has been considered unsatisfactory for a long

time by teachers and parents. In the new program, Tech Prep, students will be able to choose a liberal arts education or a vocational education.

Tech Prep needs to be carefully monitored, according to Luther Seabrook, the state's senior executive assistant for curriculum. "Tech Prep scares me because it could be a replacement for the general track." In addition, he believes that school administrators and teachers still must stop picking winners and losers even before school begins. He explained that it is assumed that white students are ready to learn when they enter school, and they must demonstrate that they are not. However, it is assumed that black children are not ready to learn when they enter school, and they must show that they are.

Vouchers as New Tracking

If Seabrook is concerned that Tech Prep could become another way to track students, Karen Watson in Sylvania, Georgia, is worried that the proposed school voucher plan could be tracking in disguise.

With vouchers, which are under consideration in several states, parents would be able to use their educational tax dollar in any school, public or private. Proponents say that poor and black students would gain an opportunity to attend private schools if they wished. The plan would put pressure on public schools to improve or lose students.

But Karen Watson is skeptical. If parents do not understand the rules, do not have time to find the better schools, or cannot afford the additional transportation cost to better schools, nearby public schools would be the only ones available to poor and black students, she believes. Those public schools would be strapped for funding because the more well-to-do residents would take their school funds to more distant and more expensive private schools.

A report by the education committee of the Pittsburgh Branch of the NAACP found that vouchers in Pennsylvania would be inadequate to cover the tuition cost of most private schools for most minority parents.

Vouchers would give parents about

\$1,000 for tuition. But the report found that the average cost of private schools ranged from \$3,000 to \$8,000. Since most black parents who send their children to Pittsburgh public schools are on public assistance, private schools would be beyond their economic grasp.

The Pittsburgh report also found that the voucher system would take money from the public school system and support schools that are not required to follow the same admission and testing guidelines as public schools.

"Such a system can only further splinter our community whereby the children of 'haves' will be afforded a good education, and the children of 'have-nots' will again be economically locked out," said Eugene C. Beard, chairman of the NAACP education committee.

The Alabama Experience

Though vouchers threaten the quality of education of students who are not well-to-do, the program is only in the proposal stage. Tracking programs are

Many parents do not know the truth about their child's academic status, and the school district does not make an honest attempt to assess students' needs.

alive and well and do provide a method of ensuring that the privileged retain their privileges. Rose Sanders, founder and project coordinator of the Coalition of Alabamians Reforming Education in Selma, said, "Tracking is the number one enemy of poor children and black children. It affects who gets the best teachers and the best books."

Societal ills stem from tracking,

too. "Drugs and crime can be tracked to an educational system that has low expectations for poor and minority children, and that leads them to have low expectations for themselves," Sanders said.

She advocates a replacement of tracking with a core curriculum for all students that is strong in math, science, and literature. Sanders also believes that na-

tional civil rights leaders need to become tracking opponents, but at present, most of them don't understand tracking.

Sanders is one civil rights activist who has not always seen the problems with tracking. A graduate of Harvard Law School, she worked as a cooperating attorney with the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund. It was not until 1989, when she learned of the case of a black

21st Century Youth Leadership

Training Network

By Angela Brown

Malika Sanders was a 16-year-old high school junior in 1990 when she and 85 other students walked out of school to protest the firing of a popular black principal by the mostly white school board in Selma, Alabama.

The principal, Noward Roussell, had offended many whites by dismantling an ability grouping or "tracking" system that steered white students to advanced college prep classes but kept blacks, who made up more than 70 percent of the student population, in less challenging classes.

For six days, under the eyes of the Alabama State Police and the National Guard, Sanders and other students demonstrated in front of the school. "We all felt that the new battle for the old civil rights movement had to be fought within the education system," Sanders says. "I knew that if our generation did not raise awareness of the issue of tracking as the 'issue' facing black youth, no one else would." Although the protest failed to completely end academic tracking in the Selma school system, it did elevate the issue of tracking to the national level.

Today, as a 22-year-old graduate of Spelman College in Atlanta, Sanders returns to Selma to continue the struggle started five years ago. In July she became executive director of the

21st Century Youth Leadership Training Network, a local organization founded by veteran civil rights advocates including her parents, civil rights attorney Rose Sanders and State Senator Hank Sanders.

The 21st Century Network grew out of the 20th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act in 1985 and the Selma to Montgomery Commemorative March. At a youth leadership camp conducted as part of the commemorative activities, veteran civil rights leaders shared their stories and wisdom.

Since that time 21st Century has developed into an organization that provides a holistic approach to youth development by focusing on leadership, academics, culture, and economics — they use the acronym L.A.C.E. to describe it. The organization is developing a program manual and course syllabus for youth leadership development and trying to encourage the public school system to adopt the L.A.C.E. model to ensure institutionalization of the 21st Century model.

As executive director, Sanders says she intends to expand the role of 21st Century to cope with drugs, urban and rural poverty, miseducation (learning in school that Christopher Columbus discovered America, for instance), and the crises in the public schools. "Our community needs a systematic way of train-



Malika Sanders

ing young people with leadership and organizing skills," she says.

Returning to Selma is bittersweet for Sanders. Although she is happy to take over the reins of 21st Century, she describes her hometown as a personal "point of pain" for herself and her family. Though much has changed in Selma, many of the same attitudes remain, and the town is still largely divided by race. Still, Sanders says, "The struggles here in Selma helped to shape me into what I am today. I look forward to the challenge of another stage in my life and helping to improve the conditions of our youth."

Angela Brown is director of the Youth Task Force and a campaigner with Greenpeace.

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Selma student who was not allowed to take algebra, that she began to understand the insidious nature of capriciously grouping students. Her daughter, Malika Sanders, was one of the students who spearheaded the takeover of her Selma school after the firing of a principal who dismantled tracking. (See profile of 21st Century Youth Leadership Training Network, page 31.)

In Selma, students and parents won a victory against tracking. It was not as sweeping a change as the end to tracking in Sylvania. But the system is attempting to implement a federal judge's order to replace arbitrary tracking with a method that uses test scores and grades to track students, Sanders said.

The judge's order, issued in 1993, is part of a ruling that declared Alabama schools unconstitutional because not all schools received equal funding. "There will be tracking, but the tracking will be in line with the rest of the country. They will use criteria to track. But we want to do away with tracking [altogether]," said Sanders.

Derailing the System

While parents in Sylvania are moving toward ending tracking, there is little time to cheer, said Karen Watson of Sylvania. She sees a bigger problem — getting academically impaired students ready to take Georgia's high school exit exams. This statewide test has been instituted to make sure students have learned what the curriculum was supposed to include.

"The governor wants to have a minimal level of requirement so every kid can do the basics in math and English," Watson said. "I agree with the exit exam, but these students are going to be held responsible for knowing material that no one has been held responsible for teaching them."

Georgia Governor Zell Miller has said the state will fund a remedial program to help students who are at risk of failing the exit exam. Something is sorely needed. When a pre-exit exam was given to students in 12 counties, Screven County students scored second from the bottom.

"We are looking at students who have to pass an exit exam, and children who

have been tracked are given a watered-down curriculum. They have little or no chance of passing an exit exam now. How do you catch up a child who is two or three years behind?" said Watson.

She sees tracking as the culprit. It continues the miseducation of black and poor children. Watson pointed out that students aren't taught challenging literature — neither Shakespeare nor Richard Wright — that would encourage students to think on a higher level.

Parents may not realize that their children are not doing well. "The child might get high marks but what Little Billy's mother does not know is that Little Billy is in the fifth grade doing third-grade work," Watson said. "She is thinking that her child is on course, but that is far from the case."

Since studying tracking, Watson said she has seen how it works, though it wasn't easy to recognize at first. "First, often you find 'ability grouping.' It seems logical and harmless. But it should raise a red flag." It could be a way to separate children by race and class. Whatever the reason, if a child is placed in a low-ability grouping, it may be the beginning of a low-achievement trap.

The placement of children in specifically funded programs like Chapter One may cause similar problems, she said. Congress intended for the program to bring students up to grade level in reading and math. The children were then to be returned to the regular classroom.

In Screven County, however, statistics show students remain in Chapter One through middle school. Then they are placed in general courses in high school. Many parents do not know the truth about their child's academic status, and the school district does not make an honest attempt to assess students' needs, Watson said. Parents should become immediately suspicious if the school wants to put their child in any special class. "That is a huge red flag that should go up in your mind."

If there is a reason that the child needs special help, Watson recommends that a parent get a study plan in writing showing what teachers and administrators intend to do to bring the child up to grade level. "And parents should ask for a date

when Little Billy will go back to the regular fifth-grade math class. If you don't, there is a chance Little Billy won't see the regular fifth-grade math class again. He will go to sixth grade doing fifth-grade math.

"Our intention is to get state education officials to say to local school systems, 'This is a practice that will not be allowed, whether you are doing it blatantly or camouflaging it in some other special program so it does not look like tracking.'"

The committee has been working in the courtroom and with school officials. "It has not been high profile for reasons of [personal] safety. We did not set out to achieve that kind of attention. We set out to address a problem. Our success has been due to commitment, being willing to take a lot of chances and investing a lot of ourselves," she said. "We are happy [about the OCR's decision] because a lot of organizations have tried to get a grip on what is happening in the schools.

"But at the same time, we have bigger problems. We can win the battle with the school board, and the children can still lose. If that happens, we haven't accomplished anything."

§

Herb Frazier is a reporter with the Post and Courier in Charleston, South Carolina.

"The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worth while, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples."

*—Carter G. Woodson
from The Mis-Education of the Negro, 1933*

JROTC *Learning War*

By Sam Greene

In 1916, to help the recruiting effort for World War I, Congress gave its approval for the creation of the Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps, or JROTC. In 1919, the first of these high school military education and recruitment programs opened.

Now, after a massive revitalization and expansion of the program in 1992, JROTC has taken a foothold in many of

America's poorer high schools, touted by the military as the solution for "at risk" kids. And, as a new report from the American Friends Service Committee reveals, that foothold is centered disproportionately in the South.

"[JROTC has] an easier time installing in the South," explained Harold Jordan, coordinator of the Committee's National Youth and Militarism Program.

The military, and consequently JROTC, "has a uniquely strong basis of political and institutional support in the South. It's part of the establishment," Jordan said in an interview. He was a researcher for the report.

As the Committee's report, "Making Soldiers in the Public Schools," points out, JROTC programs tend to be aimed at poor kids in poor districts, and draw

Photo by Kenneth Murray



Members of high school Junior ROTC program drill, Knoxville, Tennessee.

disproportionately from the black community.

The South, then, which hosts numerous military bases and has a history of under-funded education, seems fertile ground for JROTC programs that promise to bring federal money and give students discipline and opportunities. And, as the report reveals, nearly 65 percent of the nation's 1,982 JROTC programs are located in the South.

"JROTC rarely is found in suburban high schools that have high rates of college-bound students, and still less frequently in affluent schools with a substantial white population," Colman McCarthy wrote in a *Washington Post* op-ed piece. "JROTC might as well be called Operation Poor Kids. With Congress giving money to the Pentagon for JROTC, the ruling class pays the warrior class to recruit from the lower class."

In New Orleans, for example, one of the nation's poorest cities, every school district has applied for a JROTC program, and military officials are beating down their doors, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* reported.

Does JROTC follow through on its

promises? In many ways, the report contends, it does not. First of all, while JROTC programs bring some Pentagon dollars, local school districts are expected to foot a large portion of the bill, often a quarter of a million dollars or more.

In Brownsville, Texas, according to the *Brownsville Herald*, the school district paid \$328,562 of the \$455,249 JROTC bill for the 1991-92 school year. That's not including an extra \$312,000 the district spent on new facilities for the program.

In struggling districts, that money often comes at the expense of other academic and support programs.

Furthermore, the Committee argues, the JROTC academic curriculum is heavily propagandized, avoids controversial issues, and generally is not held up to the same standards as traditional curricula.

The report also points out that there is no evidence to suggest that JROTC programs reduce dropout rates, increase college admissions, or better a student's vocational future — except in the military (45 percent of JROTC graduates do go on

to some sector of the armed services).

"My fear is that students are being channeled into the military, as opposed to being given a quality education," Jordan said. That fear is compounded in the South, he said, where heavy support for the military can make it harder for young people to resist the draw of a JROTC uniform. "Districts have a responsibility to ask that kind of question and demand accountability [from JROTC]."

But, Jordan said, school districts he looked at didn't ask those questions, and took JROTC and its promises at face value. "JROTC is a false guide. And as we know, when times are tough, people turn to false guides." **S**

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Sam Greene is a sophomore in the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University. He lives in Durham, North Carolina.

JROTCs by State

STATE/REGION	% of programs nationwide	# of ROTC programs
Alabama	4.7%	94
Arkansas	1.4%	27
Florida	9.3%	185
Georgia	6.1%	121
Kentucky	3.1%	61
Louisiana	3.9%	77
Maryland	2.4%	47
Mississippi	2.5%	49
North Carolina	7.5%	148
South Carolina	5.7%	112
Tennessee	3.6%	71
Texas	10.4%	206
Virginia	3.5%	70
Total	100%	1982
•South	63.9%	1268
•Rest of U.S. & Overseas	36.1%	714

Source: American Friends Service Committee/Dept. of Defense



Drawing in the Kids

**The ads make smoking attractive.
The organizations try to stop the habit before it begins.**

By Chris Richburg and Terri Boykin

Photo by Kenneth Murray



Fourteen-year-old Erica Rolls had no intention of becoming an activist. "I had a classroom assignment to find a newspaper article dealing with teen issues," Rolls said. After thumbing through the papers at school, she saw an article that caught her eye. "I found one about the American Lung Association making grants available to eight Kentucky schools for tobacco control," Rolls

said. "I ran to the phone to call them and apply."

Rolls, who lost all of her grandparents to tobacco-related illness, was eager to do something to educate her peers on the dangers of smoking. "I'm not anti-tobacco," she said. "I have respect for adults who want to smoke, but I want the kids to know what tobacco does before they start."

With the grant from the American Lung Association in 1994, Rolls founded Kentucky Youth for Healthy Futures at her high school. The organization is affiliated with Smokeless States, a national group based in Chicago that encourages youth groups to do peer education on tobacco through grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The students organize store "buys" of

Youth Task Force

By Paula Welch

In 1992 more than 800 young people from the South gathered in New Orleans as part of an environmental justice conference sponsored by the Southern Organizing Committee. During the meeting, they came up with the idea of a regional youth organization that would provide leadership training and organizing for youth activists. The Youth Task Force was born.

YTF now has 30 coordinators in 10 Southern states and is working with 85 campuses and community-based youth/student groups in the South. "The strength of YTF lies in the ability of the organizers who are part of it to call on a network of young activists

across the South to help in times of struggle," said Angela Brown, YTF's director.

One of the major focuses of YTF is Countdown 2000: the Black Youth Agenda. Young people across the nation will work collectively on issues affecting black youth. YTF will facilitate a regional gathering in the spring bring hundreds of youth together from around the South. "We want to be able to cultivate the leaders of tomorrow," said Olly Tall, outreach coordinator of the Task Force.

Another major focus of the Youth Task Force is environmental justice and health issues. The Task Force is planning a conference with the Black Women's Health Project, Greenpeace, and the Southern Organizing Commit-

tee in Atlanta. The Task Force and other conference planners hope to build a broad-based health and environmental justice movement dedicated to protecting future generations of African-Americans from toxic contamination and exploitation.

"The young people who live in contaminated communities will be the next generation to bear this burden if we don't start making links now," said Brown

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tobacco, in which children attempt (often successfully) to purchase tobacco. They conduct these projects to show just how accessible tobacco is to young people, even though it is illegal to sell to them. The group also made a commercial with junior high students. "The only flak we've had has been from some principals," Rolls said. "They are afraid that local stores which donate to the schools would stop."

Rolls' concerns about tobacco use and youth have merit. According to government studies, every day 3,000 adolescents in the United States begin to use tobacco.

An Institute for Medicine report found minors consume at least 516 million packs of cigarettes per year, and at least half of those are illegally sold to minors. The National Cancer Institute estimates that at current teen smoking rates, five million American adults who began smoking as adolescents will die prematurely.

"The earlier young people begin using tobacco, the more heavily they are likely to use it as adults," wrote Philip Lee, of the Public Health Service, and David Satcher, of the Centers for Disease Control, in the 1994 Surgeon General's Report on tobacco. "Preventing smoking

and smokeless tobacco use among young people is critical to ending the epidemic of tobacco use in the United States."

Curbing Access

Attempts to curb the sale of tobacco products to kids began at the turn of the 20th century. Reformers who were concerned about the demoralizing effects of tobacco on young people pushed state governments to enact laws prohibiting sales to persons younger than 18 years old. The laws, however, were rarely enforced. By the mid-1940s, the tobacco industry's political and economic clout caused several states to begin dismantling their laws altogether.

Despite the recent focus on smoking as a health problem and tobacco's appeal to teenagers, attitudes remain lax. In 1990, the Office of the Inspector General reported that though 44 states had youth access laws, none were effectively enforcing them. In 1992, the Department of Health and Human Services found that although all states prohibited the sale of tobacco to minors, only two states enforced their access laws.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services estimates that three-fourths of the approximately one million tobacco outlets in the United States sell to minors, garnering over one billion dollars

each year. The Surgeon General's office, in 13 studies of over-the-counter sales, found that 32 to 87 percent of minors were able to purchase tobacco products, mostly at small convenience stores, gas stations, or supermarket chains.

"The merchants don't really care, as long as they get their money," said Tierney Brown, a 14-year-old tobacco control activist from Greensboro, North Carolina.

In the absence of access law enforcement, several organizations have conducted their own campaign to curb teen smoking.

One such group, INFACT, a nonprofit organization based in Boston, began its activist work in 1977 by organizing a boycott against Nestle. That company was marketing infant formula to Third World countries that could ill afford it. INFACT won an Academy Award in 1992 for its documentary *Deadly Deception*, an expose of General Electric and the nuclear weapons industry.

In May 1993, INFACT launched its campaign against tobacco companies that target children. Earlier this year, members held a demonstration outside the entrance to Philip Morris' Richmond, Virginia, plant where board members

were holding their annual meeting. INFACT members stood outside holding a 150-foot-long banner decorated with photos of people who have died or are suffering from tobacco-related illness.

Kathy Mulvey, campaign development director for INFACT, participated in the demonstration from the inside. Philip Morris allowed Mulvey to speak for two minutes to the more than 700 stockholders, board members, and managers. Other demonstrators inside held up large photographs of people who had died from tobacco use. "We wanted to escalate tensions inside the company," she said. "We confronted shareholders with the human toll of tobacco."

INFACT is soliciting more photographs of anyone who has died or is suffering from a tobacco-related illness to be used in other protests. One such photo shows Tony Nicholson, of Andover, Massachusetts, with his wife and two of his three children. Nicholson died at 37 from lung cancer. He had begun smoking

at age 14, according to INFACT.

Easy to Buy

The American Stop Smoking Intervention Study (ASSIST) is a partnership between the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society. ASSIST works with local health departments and volunteer organizations to develop and strengthen tobacco use prevention programs in 17 states, including West Virginia, Virginia, and the Carolinas.

The group launched a campaign to test the ability of youth to purchase cigarettes. A series of buys completed in 1994 by the group in North Carolina showed that youths ages 11 to 17 could buy tobacco half of the time from retail stores and 91 percent of the time from vending machines. To publicize the result of the campaign, ASSIST arranged for children to visit the state legislature to talk about their experience.

Tierney Brown, who is also a member of North Carolina ASSIST, got in-

involved in the organization through her mother, who had picked up an information packet about the organization. "I didn't know it was that easy to buy cigarettes," she said, after reading about the buys. Looking through the information her mother had given her, she said, "I wanted to find out more about ASSIST. I think kids are more effective in getting the message through. They are more willing to listen to someone their age."

Project HUSH, an organization based in Greensboro, North Carolina, also uses buying operations to get its anti-smoking message across. Member LaShonda English says that Project HUSH does not report the stores it catches selling cigarettes to minors.

"Instead, we go back to the stores and hand out information, stickers, and posters so that customers can be informed," she said. "Most merchants follow the laws."

English joined Project HUSH because she didn't like to see kids her age

Black Student Leadership Network

By Lee Richardson

Founded at Howard University in 1991, the Black Student Leadership Network emerged from a Children's Defense Fund conference. Working with the child advocacy organization, the network developed to educate and mobilize black college students "to pick up on the legacy of the African-American struggle by keeping the youth at the forefront of activism," says Darriel Hoy, the Southern Region Field Organizer for the network.

The network is a group of more than 600 college students, community-based activists, and other young adults working to improve the lives of children. The organization has designed programs to work with children directly, "but service alone doesn't make change happen that will last," says Hoy. The organization also focuses on legislation, working with parents how to advocate for children.

"Youth have the energy, time, and resources to create a new generation of servant leaders. We (youth) have some responsibility, too".

The network is the place that Hoy has found to become a "servant leader."

The network sponsors the Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute, named for a leader of the civil rights movement. (She served as advisor for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Executive Secretary for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the 1960s.) The Institute aims to train 1,000 young African-American leaders by the year 2000.

The Institute also conducts Freedom Schools across the country. The name harkens back to the 1960s when Mississippi communities closed public schools rather than integrate. Volunteers staffed those schools to teach black children being denied their education. The new Freedom Schools, says Hoy, "provide children in impoverished areas with educational and recreational activities. They provide a safe space for children and provide a meal through the government's summer food service program" (a government program in jeop-

Photo by Elizabeth Broyles



Darriel Hoy

ardy due to budget cuts by the U.S. Congress). "In addition, college interns develop leadership tactics to mobilize local communities for grassroots activism."

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smoking. "It's not good for your health," she said. "It could mean a shorter life."

Despite the efforts of these groups, some youths continue to smoke. David Dubner, president and founder of the only youth-run anti-tobacco organization, Student Coalition Against Tobacco (SCAT), says youth either subscribe to the "invincible theory — it won't happen to me — or just don't care."

Dubner said his group tries to reach other youth through peer education. High school students create and perform skits for local elementary school students. The skits teach kids how they are targeted by the industry and a little bit about the health aspects of smoking, he said.

"We try to change attitudes, like what Students Against Drunk Driving has done for drunk driving — it's not cool, not everyone is doing it," said Dubner.

Money and Politics

Tobacco means big money, and the industry spreads its wealth generously among politicians. When a measure that would have strengthened laws prohibiting sales of tobacco to minors was proposed last year, the new Republican majority in the U.S. Congress pushed for a six-month moratorium on all new federal regulations, effectively killing the bill. When Republican Congressional Representative Thomas Bliley of Virginia took over as chair of the Health and Environment Subcommittee, he vowed to end the Congressional investigation of the tobacco industry that had taken place under Democrats. "I don't think we need any more legislation regulating tobacco," Bliley said in an interview. Bliley has received \$111,476 from tobacco-related interests since 1985.

He is not alone. According to an investigation by *Common Cause* magazine, tobacco industry PACs have poured more than half a million dollars into the campaign coffers of 18 of the 26 members of the subcommittee on health and environment. From 1989-1994, 73 percent of all senators accepted campaign contributions from the industry; in the last House election cycle, 66 percent of the House members took tobacco money. Since 1985, the industry has contributed more than \$16.6 million to fed-



Though all states prohibit sales of tobacco to minors, many young people find it easy to buy cigarettes.

eral candidates, PACs, and political party committees. Southern legislators were the primary beneficiaries of tobacco PAC money.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich, the man behind the recent Republican takeover of Congress, has been known to travel in an RJR Nabisco jet, according to *Common Cause*. RJR Nabisco is a food conglomerate and one of the top cigarette manufacturers in the world. Gingrich has received \$41,000 in campaign contributions from the tobacco industry since 1985. RJR Nabisco has contributed at least \$50,000 to GOPAC, a Republican political action committee that, until recently, Gingrich headed.

As eager as the industry is to reward those who support its policies, it is just as eager to punish those who oppose them. Oklahoma Democrat Mike Synar, a key anti-tobacco legislator, lost his House reelection bid last year. The tobacco industry heavily supported his opponent.

The tobacco industry also exerts influence on the state level. In June, a bill was introduced in the North Carolina

legislature requiring schools to teach character to elementary school students. The curriculum would include information about the health risks of premarital sex, drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Rep. Lyons Gray, a Winston-Salem Republican whose family once ran the tobacco company RJ Reynolds, drafted an amendment deleting tobacco as a health risk. The amendment passed easily.

Alexander "Sandy" Sands III, a former North Carolina state legislator and lobbyist for the tobacco industry, defended Gray's position, saying, "Despite what people say, tobacco is not the worst evil in the world today."

The industry supported a North Carolina bill which says that a merchant, in order to be held accountable, must "knowingly" sell tobacco to a minor. The minor can be charged a \$100 fine. The bill prevents local communities from making stronger laws (except in the case of vending machines). It also prevents "buys" by any group to check on compliance.

This bill, according to Mary Gillett, Project ASSIST coordinator, will penalize minors instead of merchants for buying cigarettes. "It will also make it illegal for groups like HUSH to conduct buying operations," said Gillett.

In response to harsh national criticism, the tobacco industry has decided to take action. According to a recent *USA Today* article, Philip Morris has unveiled its own program aimed at keeping kids from obtaining cigarettes. The program, referred to as "Action Against Access," includes banning free cigarette samples, penalizing merchants fined or convicted of selling cigarettes to minors, and supporting "reasonable" requirements that merchants obtain licenses to sell tobacco.

In a series of full-page newspaper and magazine advertisements across the country, RJ Reynolds, now a subsidiary of RJR Nabisco, said two of its own programs have been effective in educating kids about the dangers of smoking. According to the ads, the program has been sent out to thousands of retail outlets and high schools, reaching over 3.3 million students.

Some critics charge the companies

with waging a public relations battle while continuing to target their products to children. INFACT found that for nearly 40 years the Council for Tobacco Research (CTR), an industry-sponsored research group, has conducted what the *Wall Street Journal* called "the longest running misinformation business campaign in history." Portrayed as an independent scientific agency to examine "all phases of tobacco use and health," the CTR has actually been the centerpiece of a massive industry effort to cast doubt on the links between smoking and disease.

Dorothea Cohen, who worked at CTR for 24 years until her retirement in 1989, refuted the CTR's role as a purely research organization. "When CTR researchers found out that cigarettes were bad, [that] it was better not to smoke, we didn't publicize that," she said. "The CTR is just a lobbying thing. We were lobbying for cigarettes."

Peggy Carter, spokesperson for RJR, dismisses accusations that the tobacco industry targets kids. "We absolutely do not target children," she said. "Our market is adult smokers only. Our promos are limited to ages 21 and over, and we voluntarily place our billboards at least 500 feet from where children congregate."

However, at least one tobacco company has studied children and tobacco. Rep. Henry Waxman, a Democrat from California, recently opened to Congress secret research documents from Philip Morris, according to Associated Press. These documents showed that Philip Morris studied hyperactive third-graders in 1974 to see if, as teenagers, they would smoke to calm themselves, "show[ing] that smoking is an advantage to at least one subgroup of the population." Another study of college students in 1969 used electric shocks to see if the subjects smoked more under stress. "These documents make it crystal clear that we need regulation of tobacco to protect our children from becoming addicted to a life-threatening drug," said Waxman.

Selling the Smokes

No brand has been more controver-

"We wanted to escalate tensions inside the company," she said. "We confronted shareholders with the human toll of tobacco."

sial than Camel cigarettes and its Joe Camel character. Launched by RJ Reynolds in 1988, Joe is modeled after many of the "cool" characters seen in movies and television. Since his first appearance, sales of Camel cigarettes have increased from \$6 million in 1988 to \$12 million in 1991 among 12- to 19-year-olds, according to ASSIST.

A survey in the 1994 U.S. Surgeon General's Report, *Preventing Tobacco Use Among Young People*, found that 73 percent of kids age 10-17 recognized Joe and 81 percent of those who recognized him knew he was the symbol for Camel Cigarettes. In a survey by BKG Youth for *Advertising Age*, 90 percent of 8- to 13-year-olds named Camel as a familiar cigarette brand; 73 percent named Marlboro.

About four percent said they had already tried cigarettes at least once. Regardless of industry protest that advertising doesn't directly correlate to use, the top three brands among smoking youth — Marlboro, Camel, and Newport — are also the most heavily advertised, according to Project ASSIST.

The Federal Trade Commission began an investigation in 1991 of the Joe Camel campaign, and after three years,

by a vote of 3-2, found no evidence that RJR targeted youth. The majority of the Commission issued a statement saying, "While it may seem intuitive to some that the Joe Camel advertising campaign would lead more children to smoke or lead children to smoke more, the evidence to support that intuition is not there."

A California study in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1991, however, showed that the brand is much more noticed among children and adolescents than among adults and that the percentage of youth who smoke Camels is twice the percentage of adults.

"Joe Camel is just a convenient vehicle for the total advertising ban such anti-tobacco groups want," said Carter, referring to such studies.

Youth are also influenced by celebrities whom they see smoking. "Youth see many of the 20-something stars such as Johnny Depp, Madonna, Brad Pitt, and Winona Ryder smoking prominently, either in films or in their private lives," said Michael Erickson of the Office on Smoking and Health at the Centers for Disease Control. Tobacco companies also sponsor sporting events such as car racing and baseball, which many children attend.

Kelly Louallier, campaign director for INFACT, says that advertisers, through their use of cigarette emblems on T-shirts and other clothing, are "trying to turn our children into human billboards."

Louallier doesn't believe the industry is sincere in its recent efforts to prevent youth from smoking. She says the industry targets youth: "Absolutely," she said, "It's the key to their future success. The industry would have to go away [without young smokers] because they wouldn't have any customers."

Louallier says youth should understand three things about the tobacco industry: "The tobacco companies are lying to you. All they want is your money. Don't buy what they are trying to sell to you." §

Chris Richburg and Terri Boykin attend North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina, and are interns with Southern Exposure.

An Interview with Marian Wright Edelman

By Terri Boykin

Marian Wright Edelman is America's premier children's rights activist. She founded the Children's Defense Fund in 1973 and serves as chairperson. CDF is primarily involved in program and policy development. The organization also lobbies Congress for children's rights, educates the public about children's issues, monitors federal agencies, and assists in drafting legislation.

Born in Bennettsville, South Carolina, Edelman attended Spelman College in Atlanta and graduated from Yale Law School. Her new book, *Guide My Feet: Prayers and Meditations on Loving and Working for Children*, will be available in bookstores this fall. She discussed issues facing America's children with *Southern Exposure* in June.



Marian Wright Edelman, president of Children's Defense Fund

Q: What is the state of youth today? How do you think

America's children have fared under the current administration? Under the Bush and Reagan administrations?

A: CDF's most recent report, *The State Of America's Children Yearbook 1995*,

revealed that one in three children growing up today will fall into poverty, drop out of school, or be abused or neglected before reaching adulthood. Child poverty is at its highest level since 1964. Nearly 16 million children are poor. Al-

most 3 million children were reported abused or neglected in 1993. It's shameful and it is un-American that millions of children are being left behind when we should be protecting and investing in our children. Regardless of what political party is in the White House or Congress, CDF has always worked hard to impress upon lawmakers and national leaders that investing in children makes economic as well as moral sense.

Q: What effect do you think the Republican "Contract with America" and the Christian Coalition's "Contract with American Families" will have on the nation's children, especially the poor?

A: The "Contract with America" is just a Trojan horse for a relentless policy assault on children's programs that leaves non-needy constituencies virtually untouched. Not only is it morally wrong, it is economically wrong. Massive child disinvestment creates less

healthy, less educated generations of American children who will contribute less to the productivity of the nation. We can and must have deficit reduction and welfare reform that is pro-work and pro-family, and greater state and local flex-

ibility, without harming children, harming the economy, undermining work or families, or abandoning our fundamental morality as a society.

Q: What did America gain or lose in the last election? As a result of proposals by the present Congress, do you believe the public at large will finally become outraged over the crisis our children face?

A: *I believe Americans who voted for change did not vote to balance the budget on the backs of children. The leaders in Congress want to dismantle guaranteed child protections in the name of balanced budgets. CDF is in favor of balancing the budget, but we are shooting ourselves in the foot by disinvesting in children and cutting programs we know will help children and families thrive.*

Q: How do you think the current debate over states' rights will affect children in the South, which has traditionally ranked low in taking care of children? Do you feel that the block grants to the states will make it easier or harder for local government to get pro-child programs in place?

A: *Congress wants to shred and weaken the federal safety net for poor, hungry, disabled, abused, and neglected children with block grants. These fixed-sum block grants tie state hands during economic downturns and do not even require states to maintain their current funding for children.*

I would ask Southern governors how they will serve their needy children and families with the next recession. How will they insure that children are better, not worse off? Governor Lawton Chiles of Florida and other governors across the country have very clearly expressed their concern with block grants and states' ability to serve their residents.

Q: In 1991, the National Commission on Children, on which both you and Bill Clinton served, issued a summary of the problems facing America's children and

Does cutting school lunches help children learn and achieve? Values are what we do for children, not just what we say.

made several recommendations for correcting the problems. Have any of these recommendations been implemented by federal or state governments?

A: *The recommendations proposed four years ago by the bipartisan National Commission on Children included support for the earned income tax credit, job training programs, health care for pregnant women and children, and food and nutrition programs. In 1993, President Clinton followed through on his pledge to invest significantly in Head Start, immunizations, nutrition programs, and expanded tax credits for the working poor, but Congressional budget cutters have targeted these and many other child welfare programs in their goal to balance the federal budget. Unfortunately they are doing it at the expense of this nation's future and children's present.*

Q: Where do Head Start, WIC (Women Infants and Children), and health care for children currently stand? Can private groups more efficiently manage these programs than the federal government?

A: *Programs like Head Start, WIC, and*

the federal-state Medicaid health care program have been effectively serving millions of children and pregnant women over the past three decades. Funding for these services has been increased over the years with a goal of serving all eligible children. While no program is perfect and periodically should be reviewed, the private sector is not a substitute for strong federal leadership, which works to ensure quality. And we should review corporate welfare and defense programs for their effectiveness in this post-Cold War era.

Q: In all the talk about balancing the budget and cutting costs, why is it so hard to convince budget-cutting politicians of the benefits of supporting prenatal care, education programs, and other programs to benefit children?

A: *Children don't vote, they don't lobby, and they don't make campaign contributions. Their voice and their needs have to rival wealthy interest groups who can afford high-priced lobbyists and [can] contribute to campaigns. Politicians are cutting [programs for] children because they think they can. Every parent, every caring adult has to stand up and say this is unacceptable.*

Q: What is the difference between the family values that you feel should be taught youth and the current ones pushed by Republican leaders?

A: *Family values are not liberal or conservative, and it's not the purview of only one party to preach values. I've always believed children need the support of their families, religious leaders, educators, and other community leaders. We need to make children a priority and tell them they are valued. We also need to make sure that our public values reflect our private values by holding our elected leaders accountable. Does cutting child care help families work and become self-sufficient? Does cutting school lunches help children learn and achieve? Do the*

values advocated by politicians leave children better or worse off? Values are what we do for children, not just what we say.

Q: In other interviews, you have spoken of students from historically black colleges and universities working with younger children to help link the generations, but can they reach the present teenagers? How do you convince a 16-year-old, who's making more money in a month selling crack than his parents do in a year, to believe in your dream of honesty, hard work, and service?

A: You can never assume failure or write off the future of a young person despite the tremendous odds. I have met so many young people who have grown up in hopeless circumstances, but succeeded. It was a caring adult, a family

member, or a teacher who reached out and told them they were important and valued and could succeed. It's never too late to try. Young people will often accept positive alternatives if offered.

I know one young woman who grew up in a tough Washington, D.C., neighborhood where crime, drug use, and violence were daily occurrences. She and her younger brother were raised by their drug-addicted mother, whose habit forced them to move from place to place, eventually forcing them into a shelter. For many years this young girl went to school hungry and poorly clothed. Eventually she went to live with her grandmother, and her life slowly turned around. Today this young woman is president of her high school's National Honor Society, president of her senior class, and she was recently honored by CDF as a young person who had

"beaten the odds." The lesson here is that you can never write off any child.

Q: What do you think the next five years will bring for our children?

A: I believe America will weather the current political storm threatening our children's future because the American people will not let the Congressional budget-cutters get away with shredding the safety net for our most vulnerable children. Meanwhile, we all must work together to build a movement for children and to reweave the fabric of community and reinstall the value of family and [of] neighborhoods caring for children. CDF will continue to work to leave no child behind.

SE

Black Men for the Eradication of Sexism

By Christopher Richburg

Last year at Freaknik, the annual Atlanta spring gathering that draws thousands of college students from historically black colleges and universities, 21-year-old Kevin Ladaris witnessed a young woman being sexually harassed. Ladaris, a junior at Morehouse College in Atlanta, saw a young woman who "got the attention of one guy. That one guy had turned into 20 guys, pawing and groping the young lady. She was very distraught, screaming, crying, and cursing."

Another witness to such events, Omar Freila, created an organization dedicated to empowering young people and other community members to resist abuse and prevent violence in their relationships, homes, and communities. He formed Black Men for the Eradication of Sexism — BMES after he returned to Morehouse from Freaknik. Today, the group has an active membership of about 20 men.

Ladaris says that he joined BMES to

confront his own sexism. "I felt it was important to deal with [sexism] institutionally and personally,"

The group opposes local strip clubs as well as sexist music and pornography. BMES holds bi-weekly discussions on the campus of Morehouse, where the group was chartered. "We educate ourselves as well as other men on campus and the community on how their activities contribute to misogynist behavior. Once we understand personally, then we begin to see that sexism is a symptom of a larger system of oppression towards people," says Ladaris.

BMES has formed coalitions with other organizations, including the Youth Task Force, the Black Women's Health Project, and Men Stopping Violence, a counseling group for men who abuse their wives.

In November, BMES will hold a conference, "Feminist/Womanist Men of African Diaspora" to educate men on sexism.



Kevin Ladaris

The group also plans to go to local schools to talk to children. Freila says that he would like BMES to set up mentoring programs that deal with the question of masculinity. "We feel that the best way to reach black men is to have the message come from other black men."

Black Men for the Eradication of Sexism
P.O. Box 11078
Atlanta, GA 30310
(404) 758-8340



RESOURCES FOR YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

CHILD LABOR

CHILD LABOR COALITION

NATIONAL CONSUMERS LEAGUE

1701 K Street, NW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 835-3323
Contact: Darlene Adkins

ASSOCIATION OF FARMWORKER OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS

1611 N. Kent Street, Suite 910
Arlington, VA 22209
(703) 528-4141
Contact: Diane Mull

NATIONAL CHILD LABOR COMMITTEE

1501 Broadway, Suite 1111
New York, NY 10036
(212) 840-1801
Contact: Jeffrey Newman

SMOKING

PROJECT ASSIST

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH & NATURAL RESOURCES

Direct Adult Health Promotion
P.O. Box 27687
Raleigh, NC 27611-7687
(919) 733-1881
Contact: Sally Malek

INFACIT

ANTI-TOBACCO ADVOCACY GROUP

256 Hanover Street
Boston, MA 02113
(617) 742-4583
Contact: Kelle Louaillier

KENTUCKY YOUTH FOR HEALTH AND FUTURES

P.O. Box 90067
Louisville, KY 40209-9067
(502) 363-2652
Contact: Lynn Carol Birgmann

PROJECT HUSH

ANTI-TOBACCO YOUTH ORGANIZATION

P.O. Box 3136
Greensboro, NC 27402-3136
(910) 373-2733
Contact: Terri Obermeyer
(910) 621-7256
Contact: LaShonda English

MILITARY

NATIONAL YOUTH AND MILITARISM PROGRAM

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

1501 Cherry Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102-1479
(215) 241-7176
Contact: Harold Jordan

ADVOCACY

CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND

25 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 628-8787

PUBLICATIONS

CHILD LABOR MONITOR

The bi-monthly newsletter of the Child Labor Coalition features updates on pending legislation affecting children in the work force, updates on child labor activities internationally, action alerts, and a resources section. Contact the National Consumers League for more information (*see address under Child Labor*).

THE STATE OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN YEARBOOK

The annual publication of the Children's Defense Fund provides data on the level of children's poverty, health care, teen pregnancy, education, and violence. The yearbook has a state-by-state ranking for each category (*see address under Advocacy*).

GROWING UP TOBACCO FREE: PREVENTING NICOTINE ADDICTION IN CHILDREN AND YOUTHS

Produced by the National Institute of Medicine, "Growing Up Tobacco Free" provides a readable explanation of nicotine effects and the process of addiction. It documents the search for an effective approach to preventing the use of cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and snuff by children and youth. For a copy, please write to the following address: National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20418.

MAKING SOLDIERS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ARMY JROTC CURRICULUM

This study examines the historic origins of the military's JROTC program and its success in recruiting Southern and minority youth into the military. It also examines the curriculum and the enormous funding that is allocated to this program every year. Contact the American Friends Service Committee for a copy of the report (*see address above*).

The Counting Time

By Anne Marie Yerks

"It's the fifteenth of October, you know," the doctor said as we were walking. "That might be of some significance."

Allegra was on my right, the doctor a step behind us, the nurse back on the porch with the pumpkin.

"You come back here," the nurse warned from the top step.

The doctor turned and smiled at her. The air was pale and misty with rain. "It's OK," he said, and pounded his chest lightly with both fists.

Allegra and I were at the magnolia tree by then. The holly bushes were guard enough, we had decided. And we were on the hill anyway. The megaphone man was curled on the pavement in the center of the driveway, just a couple feet from the old woman with the Virgin Mary poster. As usual, she was on her knees, counting her rosary beads and ignoring everything. The megaphone man was turned away from her, looking toward the sky. His steel-colored hair hung in thin damp strips from his scalp.

"He's only relaxing, girls." The doctor came up behind us, whispering in the space between Allegra's neck and mine. "He does this sometimes," he said for Allegra, since she had never seen it before. "Did someone call the police?"

The old man was mouthing silent words to the clouds. Around the rim of his orange and black striped megaphone was a blue bumper sticker: *Life*, it read.

"I think they've been called," said Allegra, who was chewing gum.

I turned; the nurse was standing stiff on the porch steps. "Did you call them?" I asked.

The nurse nodded a faint bob, which I took as yes.

"She said she called," I told the doctor. Allegra was right up close to the holly bushes, looking down at the megaphone

man and the old woman. The doctor was hovering behind the magnolia's tree trunk.

"Are they friends?" Allegra asked him.

"Maybe not today," said the doctor. "Maybe he's embarrassing her. You think so?" The doctor winked and reached around the tree trunk to pinch Allegra's elbow. She smiled.

"They don't come together," I said. "And she never says anything."

We all watched a second longer until the police arrived in a white patrol car. A black man and a white man dressed in uniforms emerged from the front seat. They left the blue lights flashing. The black man went to the megaphone man and leaned over him. "C'mon Reverend," he said. "We're gonna take a trip downtown." He pulled a pen from his shirt pocket.

The other policeman climbed the short hill; the doctor came from around the tree trunk to shake his hand.

"All of y'all should go back inside," the policeman said, taking off his cap. "We'll take care of this."

"We're going," said the doctor, stepping backward and holding his arms out in resignation. He turned his broad, friendly face up toward the magnolia leaves and breathed deeply. "C'mon girls," he said. "Fresh air is over. Back to work."

Down in the driveway the black officer was writing in a slender notepad, one booted foot resting lightly on the megaphone man's waist. The old woman was still counting rosaries, and the Virgin Mary's poster board was wilting in the soft rain.

The doctor and Allegra had a head start on me. "Hurry, Coll," said the doctor. He paused and nodded his head toward the nurse, who had sat down next to the pumpkin. "She's getting worried." He raised his eyebrows.

We were close enough then that the nurse could hear us. "I'm not worried," she said. "I don't worry about stupid people."

The doctor laughed softly and marched up the steps. He tapped the pumpkin with his knuckles; his stethoscope swung forward and he caught it with his wide hairy hand. In the gray light his wedding band shone dull copper-gold. "It's a good one," he said of the pumpkin and stood upright. "October fifteenth," he said, and opened the front door for Allegra. "Let's carve it."

By the time the nurse brought in the pumpkin, the TV people were in the lobby. I was behind the front desk, wiping cracker crumbs off the counter. A man who might have been a midget was standing on a chair, hanging a light above the doorway. In front of our snack machine, an anchorman knotted his tie.

The nurse had the pumpkin balanced on her hip, one arm curved beneath it. "Y'all need to get out," she said to the TV people. I could imagine her saying the same thing, in the same way, to a room of teenage boys. Her hair gleamed blue-silver under the midget's light when he moved it toward her face. A man with a crackling radio on his belt bobbed a microphone to

her chin. She leaned forward. "Get out now," she announced. Her voice lilted across the lobby. Nobody was there except for the TV people and us; all the women had been taken care of by then.

The nurse looked down at the pumpkin and over to me. "This will have to wait," she said.

*

In a small room, where the window was tinted purple, Allegra and I shredded papers. She had her shredder and I had mine, both of them white bins crowned with hissing metal teeth. The megaphone man was back on the sidewalk, and when he stole our garbage he would have paper strips and remnants of everyone's lunch.

"The police didn't keep him long, did they?" asked Allegra.

"Two days is longer than most of the time," I told her.

"I thought he looked rather peaceful," Allegra continued. The sun shifted a degree and the walls of the room colored lavender. Outside, the October sun was hot as August, so hot that those who were waiting in the parking lot couldn't sit on the cars and sat on the curb instead. Music from their radios thumped in a swelling beat.

"Peaceful?" I asked. "He looked crazed, if you ask me. But that old woman, she looks peaceful. She *is* peaceful. The man isn't. He's always yelling, in case you haven't noticed."

We both stopped shredding papers and fell quiet as if to prove something. Sure enough, I heard his shouting. Even over the car radios. His crackling, amplified voice carried toward us. I couldn't make out the words, but I had often enough heard what he had to say.

Allegra unplugged her shredder and leaned back in her chair. From a thin chain a gold crucifix shimmered in the hollow of her neck. Gold metal against her warm yellow-brown skin.

"Can you keep a secret?" she asked.

I shrugged and took up my stack of papers to count them. They weren't much, really, nothing that the megaphone man would get excited over. Just appointment slips and a few messed-up forms. But all of them had names. And names had to be protected.

"I'll tell you a secret," she said, and lifted her black hair into a horse's tail. "It's about the doctor."

"What is it?" I asked. The doctor was well protected. He wore a vest outdoors; the windows were bullet-proof and had been tinted so no one could see him or us.

"He is in an unhappy marriage."

I shrugged again. "That's not a secret."

Allegra tilted her head and looked through the window. Outside, two small boys were bouncing a basketball back and forth on the pavement. "Good, then. I'm glad it's not a secret. I usually wind up telling things I shouldn't. When I was little, my brothers called me the Walking Newspaper, because I was always going around telling everybody about everything. Even when I didn't know the whole story, I would make something up, just to get attention."

I smiled. "OK, Newspaper," I said. "I'll remember that."

Allegra laughed a little. "You know what?" she said. "You're OK. I thought you weren't, but you are."

I dropped the last of the paper into the shredder. "I am OK," I said, watching with satisfaction as the names were eaten.

*

The woman in the waiting room had a worry stone, a round flat pebble about the size and shape of a candy mint.

"You should go in with her," I whispered to Allegra, who was dropping pills into soufflé cups. "You haven't gone in yet, have you?"

Allegra shook her head and counted soufflé cups.

"Then you could go with her," I said. "She's worried, see?"

I looked over to the woman who was rubbing the worry stone. She had that look. I could not describe it. Something on the verge of something in her eyes. Not fear, not indecision. Just worry.

Allegra slid the tray of soufflé cups over to me. She lifted a stack of magazines from the counter and moved toward the row of chairs where all the women were waiting. She paused when she approached the woman with the worry stone. "Hey," Allegra said. The woman looked up. "You want someone to go in with you? When you see the doctor, I mean?"

The woman paused and nodded.

Allegra hesitated, then nodded over to me. "She'll go with you," she said. "Coll has been in lots of times."

The woman looked suspicious. "Have you?" she asked me. Other women were watching us now, the whole room of them. Everybody except for me and Allegra was dressed in surgical gowns and booties.

"I can go," I offered. "I can hold your hand if you want."

Another woman snorted. "You don't need to hold my hand," she said. "I've done this before." Some of the other women laughed and nodded.

"OK," said the woman with the worry stone, "that would be good."

Allegra turned on the TV. A game show was running. We all played along, giving answers to the trivia questions. Then the game show was replaced with a soap opera. In the opening scene, a woman in the back seat of a car was having a baby. She grunted and sweated and moaned until the baby was born. Everyone in the waiting room was silent for a moment until someone clapped her hands, and then someone else, and then someone else, until all of us were applauding.

"Look what was on my car," said Allegra. "Under the wiper blades."

"Pictures," I said. "A gift from the megaphone man."

Allegra handed me the brochure; I folded it out on my desk like a map. It was pictures of bodies. White knobby bodies floating in watery bubbles. Bodies with little bead eyes. Bodies magnified. *As small as a paper clip*, I always said to the women. That was one of those things I said over and over again, along with other things: *Three to five minutes, cash*

only, have someone drive you home.

I plugged my shredder into the wall socket. The pictures dropped into the bin: long narrow dark strips. It was morning and the light above us was warm and yellow. The purple windows were dark, but it was a dark morning and even the megaphone man was just getting started. It was easier to make decisions in the morning, I had read. It was a good thing, then, that we always opened early.

Allegra balanced herself on the edge of the shredder bin and watched the pictures fall. "I had a nightmare last night," she said.

I unplugged the shredder. "That's normal," I replied. "Everybody has that happen."

Allegra reached into the bin for a strip and wound it around her pencil. "But I've never even been in," she said. "I've never seen it done."

"Then you should go in."

"It won't stop the nightmares, though, will it?"

"Probably not."

"Do you still have them?"

"Sometimes."

"Tell me what happens." She leaned backward and closed the door with her foot.

The TV people kept coming back. One of them, a woman in a burgundy suit and big black glasses, wanted to interview me. We sat in the room with the shredders and the purple window. The TV woman had a microphone with a puffball at the end. She placed it in the center of the table and then aimed her pen at her notepad.

"Just tell me," she said, "just tell me what you think everyone should know."

My nightmares are about bodies. Purple bodies, red bodies. I dream I am the doctor, and the bodies come out alive and talking. Other times I am swollen and deflated, and things fall from me: a set of fingers, an ear, or nothing at all, when I've been expecting something.

I dream I'm under them, above them, that someone is taking them all away, I want to rescue them. They are being taken from me, stolen away, wheeled away on a big cart, stacked one upon the other.

In other nightmares the bodies are grown-up: a heavy, smothering load. They fall on me.

I can't support all of them.

"You and Allegra can do it today," said the nurse. The pumpkin was still not carved and Halloween was coming.

In the lounge we spread newspapers on the coffee table. "Look here," said Allegra, pointing.

On the newspaper page was a picture of the megaphone man, curled up in our driveway. I paused and scanned the page carefully.

"They forgot the old woman," I said. "She would have made a better picture."

Allegra found a knife and towel. She washed the pumpkin clean. I had the pencil. "I'll make a cheerful face," I said sitting on the sofa. "Nothing scary."

"A jack-o'-lantern is always scary," said Allegra.

"You're right, I guess," I said, and ran my hand over the pumpkin's blank face. "Do you think we should do this?"

Allegra shrugged; her lashes darkened the skin beneath her eyes. She exhaled a soft laugh. "Are we going to dress up, too?" she asked sarcastically. "The four of us. We'll be a witch, a skeleton, the grim reaper, and the devil. How's that?"

I put down the pencil. "You're right. We shouldn't."

Allegra sat beside me. She was thinking. "But we don't have to put it on the porch where they can see it. We can keep it back here."

The nurse came into the lounge; her spongy shoes scuffed the flat carpet. "How's it going, girls?"

"We're wondering if we should do this," I said. "Do you think it will scare them when they walk in? I mean, they're nervous enough already."

The nurse poured coffee. She had her own mug, which said *Paradise Travel* on the side. Her son was a travel agent. She leaned against the counter and took a sip. Her eyes were tight blue behind her frameless glasses. "You girls are silly," she said. Her face flushed pink like her turtleneck shirt. "Really ridiculous," she continued. "It's Halloween and we are putting a jack-o'-lantern on the front porch. It's nothing to be afraid of." She stood still for a moment, her eyebrows tensed, and then she left the room, balancing her coffee cup in her palm.

Allegra followed the nurse into the hallway. "OK," I heard her say. "Show me what's not scary."

*

The woman said that I was to hold her hand tight and not let go no matter what. The worry stone was a smooth orb nestled between our palms.

The doctor opened the door and walked in. A pair of clear plastic goggles hung from a strap around his neck.



Illustration by Jennifer Miller

"I'm just holding her hand," I told him.

"No problem," he said. All of us smiled.

The doctor sat on a small wheeled stool and viewed the woman's chart. "You've had one child?" he asked.

The woman nodded. Her eyes were shiny with trust.

"This will be nothing then." He slid around, flicking on a bright spotlight before he pulled the instrument tray toward him.

The woman closed her eyes. "Relax," I said, and remembered a word that Allegra knew: *Tranquilla*. A much prettier word. I recited it inside myself. The worry stone numbed my palm, and the woman breathed in fast and flinched when the doctor began.

"Hold on," I said. *Tranquilla*. I looked over to the doctor. "It will pass quickly," I told her.

The woman's fingernails sank deep into the top edge of my hand, right below the knuckle of my pinkie finger. "Relax," I said again. I was not watching the doctor anymore, but was looking toward the ceiling's edge, where there was a long square window that offered a simple view, a square of sky and a bit of electric line. But light passed through into the white room, clear light with no tinting.

"All finished," the doctor said finally. He covered his instruments with a paper towel. "Help her up, will you?" he asked me, and lowered the goggles back around his neck.

The woman opened her eyes. "Thank you," she said to the doctor. But he had already left, and the door was falling closed.

The TV woman's glasses flickered in orchid light. "What else do you need to say?" she asked me.

I had been talking little. My words were hasty words, like the fluttering music of a cat crossing a piano's keyboard.

I remained silent and considered Allegra, the Walking Newspaper. I was the opposite, the one who knew everything, but said nothing.

"Go on," said the TV woman, leaning forward, urging me with her eyes. Her pen was aimed tight and tense toward her notepad, the recorder was spinning obediently. When she got back to her office she would curse me as she listened to long intervals of tape-recorded nothingness.

"Tell me," she said again, "what people should know."

*

It was when I counted the money that I thought about the old woman who was on the other side of the window, I even watched her sometimes, just for a few minutes, before I started counting. I could watch her alone then, because when the counting time came, no one could come in the little room except for me. I locked the door. Allegra had to talk to me through the keyhole if she wanted something, and she asked me once: "What are you doing in there every day?" and I said "Counting." And she said "Counting?" and I said, "You know, doing the books." And then she understood, and was curious but quiet.

And so when I counted all that money, and there was a lot of it, I thought sometimes about the old woman who was outside counting prayers on her little plastic beads. If I turned toward the purple window I sometimes saw her there, her face gray and tight, fingers kneading. She was asking for something. And me? I was with the money, piling gray-green bills into stack after rubber-banded stack. Enough that I never got over the shock, never stopped thinking about how I could live for a year if I stole a day's worth. And that was why I thought about the old woman's prayers then: she thought they were something I needed.

The nurse was just taking the jack-o'-lantern to the porch when Allegra came back into the lounge. My hands were coated with pumpkin; the newspaper heavy with seeds and stringy yolk. I folded the printed pages and carried it like a baby's diaper to the trash. The smell was light and warm.

"I need to talk to him," Allegra said. Her face was pink, her eyes sparkling dark.

"To who?"

"To *him*," she said. "I was just in there." She leaned against the trash can. It flopped against the wall from her weight.

"Well then, you should have talked to him then. I'm sure he's gotten busy again now."

"Not *in there*," she said. "I was in the scrub room." She raised one hand up to her collar bone, massaging the ridge. She spoke quickly, spitting her words: "I saw everything there. Everything he does. Some doctor."

Our only dish towel was already wet on one side from a coffee spill. I cleaned my hands on the dry edges. "Why don't you go home and sleep, Allegra?" I said. "It's been a rough day."

Her bottom lip trembled. It was cracked and shiny. "You don't understand," she said. "It's not the same for you."

The doctor's whistling came from outside the door. "Coffee break," he said jovially as he entered. His gaze lingered on Allegra, his eyes asking a secret question.

I turned to the sink and ran a water stream to clean my hands. I would use soap even, to take a long time and not watch them. But when I heard Allegra open her locker door, I turned back in time to witness their lovers' huddle. The doctor's eyes probed hers. She focused her gaze downward, onto his stethoscope. "I'm leaving," she said softly. She withdrew her purse from her locker, ducked under the doctor's arm, and retreated down the back hallway.

My hand was bleeding: Four crescents shaped like smiling mouths. The nurse brushed them with cotton and alcohol.

"Look what she did to me," I said. "She pushed her fingernails right in, like I was a pillow or something." My anger stung much worse than the four little wounds. I did not deserve this injury. I had been helping and should not have been harmed. But the women, all of them *so needful*. Needing something was their crime, and they deserved their pain.

"Oh, it could be worse," said the nurse, who had been around long enough to have seen the worst of everything, to know all the stories. Everything that had happened and was told again always began with *the time*.

The time a TV reporter jumped over the front desk to get an interview with the doctor. The time a woman got in the stirrups and pulled a knife from her sock cuff. The time the megaphone man chained his neck to the front gate.

And then there were other stories, perpetual stories, preceded with *all the times*: all the times they called and played lullaby music into the phone. All the times they sealed the locks with glue. All the other times they robbed the dumpster.

"There you are," said the nurse, taping a bandage on my wounds. She was crisp and calm in her uniform, in her starched chlorine-white pants and jacket, the creases in the legs and arms so sharp. A tiny bird-shaped brooch — a nightingale — sparkled like crystal on her breast pocket. The nurse had told me once that the male nightingale sang its prettiest songs at nighttime, to lure the female into mating.

Imagine a dark, peaceful place. It is the warmest, safest, most comforting place you have ever been. Then you hear something, a soft hum, calling you away. All at once, without pain, you are there, going toward the call. Soon you find yourself in another dark peaceful place.

What could be wrong with that?

Three women agreed that nothing was wrong. They signed papers to prove their convictions.

"Now follow me," I said. I took them to the waiting room and passed out gowns, thin clean gowns so soft you could pierce the fabric with your thumbnail. I was offering comfort. After that, I would find blankets, magazines, cups of soda. I would give them what I could.

And Allegra had come back after all. She entered with a tray of medicine; each soufflé cup contained two little pills. I smiled as I took the tray.

"This is it," she whispered. She raised a finger to her crucifix necklace and stroked the gold bars. "After today," she said. "I am leaving."

*

My anger was sealed and wrapped as tight as my four little wounds. I went to the recovery room to see the woman with the worry stone.

"Thank you," she said when I sat down beside her. She was dressed in street clothes and drinking juice from a paper cup. The nurse was busy in the back closet, writing on a clipboard.

The late afternoon sun fell lazily through the windows. Soon it would be time to go home, to leave. But first there was cleaning, paperwork, money to count, and the trip to the bank next door to drop off the deposit.

"You are very brave to work here," the woman continued.

"Thank you," I said.

She set her juice cup on the small table, which was littered with torn-up magazines. She dug her hands into her jeans pocket and then opened her palm before me. The worry stone was nestled there, shiny and smooth. "I'll give you this," she said. "I won't be coming back here again."

I could have said: *You will have other worries. You should keep it.* Yet I lifted the stone from her palm. It was a little load I would carry, because she thought it was something I needed.

Allegra spun
around, her
hair snapping her
chin. "Don't touch me
again," she said. "You
murderer."

Allegra left as Halloween night emerged cold and blue. She and the doctor and the nurse stood side by side before the front desk, where the doctor gave her a paper to sign. The paper said she was leaving of her own free will, and was obliged to keep everyone's name a secret. She scratched her signature on the page and snatched her paycheck from the nurse's hand. I was standing by the doorway, huddled in my jacket. A patrol car was in the

drive, blue lights flashing gray through the purple window.

The three of them crossed into the lobby. The doctor held Allegra by the elbow. She pulled away when she saw the lights. "Why are *they* here?" she asked, her breath a gasp.

"Just a procedural thing," said the doctor. He was wearing his vest.

I opened the door. Cool air rushed. On the porch, the carved pumpkin shell sat, unlit, its jack-o'-lantern face pointed away from me.

Allegra came forward, still freed from the doctor's grip. "Coll," she said, and slowly extended a fist toward me. "Open your hand." I did so, and she dropped something onto my palm. It was her crucifix necklace. "Think about it," she said, and then the doctor took her elbow again, gently pushing her forward.

Allegra spun around, her hair snapping her chin. "Don't touch me again," she said. "You murderer." The doctor's face softened and he shook his head. Allegra wrapped her arms around her chest and stepped onto the porch. She paused one second before she raised her right foot toward the pumpkin, kicking it hard. The shell raised about the step and cracked into thick splinters, which fell soundly down the cement stairs.

We all watched as she ran lightly down the sidewalk to-

ward her car. The police lights churned; her body flickered in the colored light.

The TV woman closed her notebook, flicked off the tape recorder and rubbed beneath her glasses. "You've been very helpful," she said.

"Thank you," I answered. I considered how much of the tape was filled with my words, with my halting, meager sentences. Not much of it.

"It's often struck me as strange," the reporter continued, opening her purse to stash the notebook inside, "that people who work in the most interesting places often have the least to tell."

I nodded. "It is that way, isn't it?"

She paused. "Are you sure?" She was ready to hear more.

"Oh yes," I said. "The other side is much more exciting. In here, there's not a whole lot going on. We just have our jobs, you know. It's a job like any other."

"Thank you again," she said, resigning herself. She wound the tape recorder's cord into a loop. "And play it safe. It's dangerous for you," she said. "The other side isn't so boring. You need to protect yourself no matter what." She stood to leave.

"Don't worry," I said. "I'm always thinking about that first."

She paused again at the door. "About what, you say?"

"About protection."

*

The counting time was later in the day after Allegra left. Less people to do the work meant more of it for me. On the day before Thanksgiving, the old woman packed up early, and by the time I locked the door of the little room, she was gone.

The worry stone made a circular dent in the pocket of my white pants as I sat down to do the counting. The parking lot was empty, silent. The megaphone man had disappeared earlier, but for all the quietness outside, it had been a busy day.

I counted the money and stashed it in two canvas bags. Blue bags with silver locks. I placed one bag beneath each of my armpits and pulled on my jacket. I slid the keys to the canvas bags into my pants' pocket, and moved the worry stone to my jacket pocket. The crucifix necklace was there. I had never worn it. In fact, I didn't want it at all, and thought that I soon would find Allegra's address and mail it back to her.

In the hallway, I heard the TV playing. The nurse was in the waiting room, cleaning. "I'll be right back," I called. "I'm coming right back."

"I'll wait," the nurse replied.

Outdoors, the sidewalk was strewn with browning leaves. The cold had sapped their crunch and my footsteps were silent. The bank was right next door. Down the sidewalk, across the hill and then I would be there.

From behind the magnolia tree a figure moved forward

onto the faded grass. It was Allegra.

"Coll," she said, and moved forward a step. "Have you been thinking?"

The sun emerged briefly; Allegra's cheeks were bright with windburn. Her hair had grown longer and fell full across the shoulders of her crocheted jacket. I didn't question her presence. It was as if I had been expecting to see her. I stopped in my tracks.

"Thinking?" I asked. "Yes, I have." I reached into my jacket pocket and pulled out her necklace. "I have your necklace," I said. "Do you want it back?"

She lowered her gaze. "I'll take it back, Coll, if that's what you want." She looked back at me, her eyes alive, and I moved toward her. She opened her hand; I dropped the necklace inside. The gold sparkled once before she closed her fingers around it. That golden spark — that little light — was what I remembered most clearly before the grip came around my ankle and forced me to the ground.

The megaphone man pulled me hard around to the other side of the magnolia tree. Leaves and rocks scraped the uncovered skin of my neck. He clamped his hand over my mouth. I tasted leather and car grease when I tried to scream. He moved on top of me, his knees pressing into my shins. The silver locks were cold and hard in my armpits.

Allegra moved behind him. "Don't hurt her," she whispered, her hands hovering over his shoulders. "Just take the money." Her eyes shot back and forth between him and me.

"Listen to your heart beat," the megaphone man whispered. "It's loud enough that I can hear it." His face was lined and brown like a walnut shell. "Scream in silence," he said, and reached into the pocket of his coat. He pulled out a large jagged rock. Above me, the rock was a black outline, like a dark hole missing from the tender blue sky.

Allegra's voice came from the other side of the sky, shrill and scared; *Don't look!*

Then the hole in the sky fell over me, and everything opened into blackness.

Imagine a dark peaceful place. A place where anger and questions and doubts are stirring. It is in this place where you discover your choice: you have the power to draw open the curtain between blackness and colors you remember. And you know you can do it, because on the side you remember there is something that holds you, a little load you carry. A little load you needed, and can feel smooth in your fingers. And it's this little orb that pulls you forth, that leads all other loads — heavier loads — into nothingness, and brings a little bird to your heart. And when the loads are lifted, you recognize them as you recognize the colors stirring in your eyes, and you see that they are — like everything — a means of protection.

S
E

Anne Marie Yerks is editor of the feminist journal, *So To Speak*, and a teaching assistant at George Mason University.

Mi Diario

A Nicaraguan man keeps a journal of migrant labor.

By Erasmo Ramirez

Introduction and Translation by Alex Todorovic

Erasmo Ramirez was born in Leon, Nicaragua, in 1932. He received little schooling, though he learned the trade of a shoemaker. He spent three years in the Sandinista army, stationed in the mountains.

With unemployment rampant in his country, Ramirez left his wife and children and came to the United States to look for work. He had heard he could make \$800 a month working in the fields. I met Ramirez in 1994 while working on a story about migrant farmworkers in South Carolina.

In my research I found that conditions for migrant workers in South Carolina were deplorable. Workers were regularly cheated out of their wages. Housing and sanitation conditions were atrocious. Farmers who hired migrants had little to fear because laws designed to protect workers were not enforced.

The federal Wage and Hour Division was sorely understaffed and ineffectual. The Migrant Farmworkers Commission, which was supposed to look out for the interests of the migrant farmworker, was composed of farmers and others appointed by the governor. It did not advocate for migrant laborers. The workers were left in a lawless vacuum.

The prognosis for substantive change remains bleak. Lost in South Carolina's current legislative debates about budget cuts, nuclear waste storage, and welfare reform is the fate of the 40,000 migrant farmworkers who pass through South Carolina annually.

Anything I could ever write about the plight of migrant farmworkers pales in comparison to Ramirez's first-person account. Excerpts from his diary offer a glimpse of day-to-day existence for migrant farmworkers.

5/93 a 8 Compañeros, y dice que los muchachos necesitan descansar no al trabajo, no gané pero gaste en habitación 21.22. Ella se fue para Garga, algo cerca de Atlanta, Día martes, Salimos a las 8 1/2 para el plantillo, me parece que ay problema con el dueño, Nos regresaron al campamento No hubo corte de durarnos, a medio día dijo que talvez ibamos a estar 1.0.0...

6/5 I arrived in South Carolina at 5:30 a.m.

6/6 At 8:00, my acquaintances (from Nicaragua) took me to meet an intermediary for peach pickers. At 10:00 we left Columbia and went to a ranch called Monetta which is near a small town called Aiken.

We arrived at a quarter to 12:00, and about an hour later a man showed up looking for peach pickers. Four of us went with him, three Mexicans and myself. They paid us \$15 for three hours. At 6:00 the crew chief took me to a ranch where I was greeted by an-

other contractor, Miss Maria Matto. There were approximately 30 people, all of them Mexican. They looked very humble and sad. It was a horrible moment for me to see people who had fallen so low. They were poorly dressed and some didn't even have shoes. I

Advocates

Dan Bautista

In 1991, under a flurry of negative publicity about migrant labor problems in South Carolina, then-Governor Carroll Campbell created a Migrant Labor Division under the Department of Labor and in conjunction with the Migrant Farmworkers Commission. The Migrant Labor Division was staffed by Dan Bautista, a Mexican-American and the first state official to identify where migrant camps were located.

Over the course of two years, Bautista informed workers of their rights as migrant laborers and helped to bring the children of resident migrant workers into school systems. He was well-liked by migrant workers. But he did not have legislative or enforcement power.

The Migrant Farmworkers Commission stymied his efforts by not taking action on his proposals, and by failing to meet a quorum for important meetings. It was up to them to request funding for the Migrant Labor Division from the governor's office.

In 1994, when the commission failed to request support and it became clear that funds for his job would not be reinstated, Bautista resigned in protest.

— Alex Todorovic

Mary Ellen Beaver

Intrepid and tenacious, 64-year-old Mary Ellen Beaver blasts down country roads in her trusty Dodge, searching for labor camps hidden within a steamy maze of dense orchards. With a nun-like demeanor (and a medal of honor from Pope John Paul II), she apprises workers of their rights the while boldly confronting crew chiefs and farmers about the need for fair wages and improved housing.

This crusader's resolute efforts have not gone unnoticed. In Pennsylvania, Beaver's work led to the passage of one of the nation's toughest farmworker laws. For the past four summers, she has been ruffling the feathers of the good ol' boy system in South Carolina.

Due to Beaver's obstinacy, her employer, Florida Rural Legal Services, won a landmark trespassing case giving legal aid employees the right to speak with farmworkers on private property. The case began in 1991 when Beaver drove straight past a security gate on an Okeelanta sugar cane farm. Despite the attempts of five guards to remove her, she began distributing booklets detailing workers' rights.

In the trenches for 26 years, Beaver could easily retire on her 96-acre Pennsylvania farm surrounded by her seven children and five grandchildren. Instead, she drives the back roads of a thousand other farms, logging 40,000 miles on her car each year.

Why does she do it? "This is war," Beaver says.

— Alice Daniel

wanted to maintain some dignity even though I felt sad. I tried to talk with them, but they were cold and distant. That night I didn't sleep.

6/7 At 6:00 the boss pounded on the doors to wake us up. We had coffee and potatoes for breakfast, which weren't appetizing. We gathered at 8:00 to go to the peach orchard. They gave us each a ladder and a cloth sack three feet tall and two feet wide. That day I filled 22 bags at 40 cents each and made \$8.80. Maria has promised us free rent and food. The rooms are large, but the beds are filthy. We walk with the bags hung around our necks like horses pulling a carriage.

The yield of the peach trees is poor, and the work is deceiving. It seems that the three Mexicans have also been suckered, but

they're used to moving from one farm to the next because they're agricultural workers. Some of them are planning to leave tomorrow morning and look for work somewhere else. I would also like to flee. I use the word flee, because I feel like a prisoner. I'm in an unfamiliar place with no phone. Mail does not exist for us.

6/8 Breakfast was the same. We began work at 8:00, and there were only nine of us left. Near lunchtime we had a small meeting and agreed to ask for a raise. A peach bag weighs about 40 pounds when it's full. Maria offered to pay us 45 cents per bag. Today I filled 30 bags and made \$13.50. Three more men left.

6/9 Maria gathered us together before we went out to pick and offered us the same amount per bag, 45 cents, but she has also offered us

two dollars an hour on top of what we pick. But she will no longer provide food, and says that each one of us has to buy our own supplies and cook our own food. Today I filled 32 bags and made \$14.40 plus \$16 in wages for a total of \$30.40. But I had to spend \$10 on provisions.

6/10 I couldn't make breakfast because we all share one kitchen and there was no time. We worked half a day because the workers refused to continue. They say they're being robbed, and the yield of the fruit is poor.

6/11 This morning nobody wanted to work. They demanded more money, and when they didn't receive it, they left. I didn't want to go with them because they were going to spend all of their earnings for a bus ticket. I'm the only one left. There are 60 empty rooms and

it's absolutely silent. It looks like a deserted hospital. I don't know what to do. I'm isolated with no telephone, no mail. I spent \$9 for food and a pack of cigarettes.

6/12 Maria is worried and went to Florida to look for more workers.

6/14 Maria came back from Florida with eight men. We didn't work today because the new workers are tired. We worked late and the yield was good, but they lowered the price from 45 cents to 40 cents, and they're no longer paying us \$2 an hour. I made \$20.40. I'm beginning to realize that the figure of \$800 a month, what I was told I could make, is not realistic because we are working by piece rate.

6/16 I feel sick. I have a hoarse throat. I'm thinking about my country and my bad luck. We began picking at 7:00 a.m. At 12:00 they gave us lunch and said we had to pick spinach. They offered us \$5 an hour and gave us one hour free. We worked until 5:30. I returned to the cabin completely exhausted. I could hardly walk, let alone cook. The field where we picked the spinach was like a desert and, since we were receiving an hourly wage, we couldn't take a break. It was a tough day, but I made \$41.50.

6/17 We started at 7:25 and it was a hellish day. We picked spinach until 5:30. They lowered our wage to \$4.25 an hour without any explanation. I made \$38.25.

6/18 They woke us at 4:30 to begin work early. We were at the orchard at 6, but the yield was poor. Some of the men complained and the gringo got mad and there was a problem. We worked one hour. I made \$1.60.



Erasmio Ramirez

6/19 We didn't work. Maria treats us like her property. The abuse is too much, but that's the way life is out here. I've noticed that no gringos work in the fields, but there are some black gringos who drive tractors. The lowest level is made up of Mexicans and Haitians. They are the largest groups. There are two Nicaraguans. The other use to be a Somosan Guardia. He speaks English well.

At 7:00 in the evening, Maria told us to gather our miserable belongings, because we were leaving Monetta. It was just like being a guerilla in the mountains. She said we were going to Georgia. We arrived at this new place at midnight after a five-hour drive. I wound up in an ancient room. There are two beds, and I had the luck of getting one of them. One

man got the other bed, and two had to sleep on the floor. My other co-workers got drunk all over the compound. They vomited and made asses of themselves.

My sadness is great because it seems as though I am the only one that is conscious of everything that is happening. I've concluded that this is a life for vagrants. Some of the men have been doing this for years. I don't see any future in it. My room looks like it was abandoned a few months ago. There is dirt everywhere and no place to sit down. The furnishings consist of two mattresses thrown on the floor. There's one kitchen and a bathroom with dirty pieces of cardboard that are supposed to be floor mats. It's disgusting. There is no place to buy food anywhere in the area.

6/20 I have not had anything to eat. It is 10:00 a.m., and Maria has not appeared. There are three men in the room, three Mexicans and myself. They are all between 17 and 19 years old. I have not received any money since Friday of last week. Maria is holding it all. She told us the reason we have come to Georgia is to cut tobacco so that we can make more money.

Today was an unpleasant day. The toilet did not work, the refrigerator was useless. All I've eaten is corn flakes and crackers. I tried to find a phone today and finally found one miles from here. Maria came back at 5:00 with two new men. They moved me and the new guys to a place that is better, even though it's a trailer. The room has better air conditioning. They finally took us to buy food. My spirit is revived, but I still haven't been paid.

6/21 In the new room there are three beds, two chairs, a sofa, kitchen, table, and refrigerator. The bathroom is in good shape. At 7:00 they came to our trailer and told us that we were going to cut to-

bacco. Picking tobacco was not hard, but the heat was suffocating. The temperature was almost 120 degrees. They are paying us \$4.25 an hour. We worked 10 hours.

My new roommates are excellent. They cook and I wash the dishes and clean the house. Maria is being stubborn about paying me. She owes me since last Friday, and here we are in a new state working for a new farmer, and she keeps saying "later."

6/22 The tobacco fields are one hour from our residence. They picked us up today at 6:00 and we began working at 7:00. The work was the same. I worked nine and one-half hours and made \$38.25.

6/23 We did the same work for 10 hours and I made \$42.50. The sun and the heat make me feel like shit. One of my roommates is a drug

addict. I guess I was wrong.

6/26 We didn't work. It was a sad day for me. We didn't cook anything. Salvador bought 30 beers and got crazy. He went to town on an old bicycle. It's 9 p.m. and he hasn't returned. He loses control, and I can no longer trust him. He's too irresponsible.

6/27 Nothing unusual happened. I miss my country and am living only from memories.

7/1 Same number of hours, same work. Today Maria paid me the money she has owed me for a long time. It took a lot of effort to get her to pay me. It seems that she wanted to keep the money.

7/3 I woke up at 4:00 in the morning. Salvador wouldn't let me sleep. He kept coming and going all night, playing music. I made chicken soup at 10:00 to recover.

but unfortunately I never had a chance to eat it because Salvador gave it to one of his drug addict friends. We argued about it and I've decided I can't continue living here. I left at 4:00 in the afternoon and began walking along the highway. I couldn't make it to town, and slept on the side of the road.

SE

After spending several months in the United States, Erasmo Ramirez, returned to Nicaragua. He rejoined his wife and children and lives in Managua.

Alex Todorovic is a translator, freelance writer, and contributor to Point, a Columbia, South Carolina, alternative paper. "Mi Diario" was first published in a slightly different form in Point.

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So That's Where Junebug Came From

By Junebug Jabbo Jones

Hey!
Hey!
Hey Y'all!
All a Y'all!

My name is J.J.
J.J. what?
Just J.J.
That's all!

All right now
Don't you be no fool.
You don't know me
You better be cool!
You don't be interrupting people
When they trying to tell you something.

My daddy's name was J.J. too.
I'm a junior.

All right now,
I done told you once,
This makes twice,
Ain't going to tell you no more.

I swear!
Sometimes people'll give you a headache!

My granddaddy's name was J.J. too —
Now try to make something out of that!
Turkey!

Granddaddy J.J.
Now he was a hell of a man,
Six feet four inches tall
and he weighed two hundred thirty-two pounds
butt naked!
'N wasn't nair ounce
of fat on him.

He was three shades darker than midnite
and twice as mean
as a female bobcat
in mating season.



**Junebug
Jabbo
Jones tells
his stories.**

When he was thirty-three years old
He beat three white men to death
with his bare hands.
That's right!
Right up here outside of Magnolia, Mississippi!
And you know where that's at!

You don't believe me.
You can go up there and ask anybody.
Sheoot!
They still talk about it up there.

He was what they call
a "Crazy Nigger,"
a tee total
"Crazy Nigger"
Sheoot!

See, Daddy —
that's what we called him,
"Daddy" was coming home late from work one night —
he was always coming home late from work . . .
As he come past the widow Hammond's house
He heard her and her oldest daughter, Lucille,
Hollering for help.
He run up in the house
And found the three of them.
One of them was holding Miss Sarah
one of them was holding Lucille
and one of them was holding his pants down round his
knees.

The first time Daddy told them to leave they wouldn't.
The next time he told them to leave they stayed.
The third time he grabbed the one next to Miss Sarah.
In less than ten minutes' time
It was all over.

Lucille was crying all over her self and shaking like a leaf
in a thunderstorm.
Daddy told Miss Sarah to get some clothes on her and take
her to our house.
Then he turned around
and walked back to town
and told the High Sheriff
what he had done —
That's when they started calling him a "CRAZY
NIGGER."

I see you still don't believe me.
Well, truck on up to Magnolia and see.
Ask them about J.J. Jones
Anybody will tell you it's true.



What happened?

Well, Daddy took the Sheriff to Miss Sarah's house.
Then they came over to our house
and talked to Miss Sarah and Lucille in the kitchen.
And then they left.
Lucille cried all night long.
Daddy called all us boys around
and told us what had happened
and said,

"Boys
you got to be strong.
Don't you ever let nobody
do you or your people wrong.
Remember your Granddaddy,
J.J. Jones."

Did they get him?
Did he run?
Man, you got to be a fool.
Daddy died a natural death
right there in Magnolia, Mississippi
and never spent a day in jail.

I'm talking about my granddaddy, J.J.
J.J. Jones.
J.J. What?
Just J.J. that's all.

"So That's Where Junebug Jabbo Jones Came From" was the first story Junebug ever told to his good friend John O'Neal.

Bringing Water

Thousands of rural Southerners have indoor water and plumbing thanks to an organization that grew out of the War on Poverty.

By Monica C. Jones

Photo by Kenneth Murray



The Virginia Water Project brings water and plumbing indoors for rural residents like these women who must carry water in buckets to their home.

It's called the best place to live in the United States by *Money Magazine*. The Triangle Area of Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, North Carolina, encompasses the state capital, a quaint college town, modern executive business parks, beautiful homes, expensive cars, and lush landscape. Just a few miles away, in the small town of Pittsboro, Caroline Penny, a 41-year-old mother of two who takes care of her elderly parents, lives without plumbing.

Penny used to carry water in buckets a quarter of a mile from a local church. Recently, when the church locked its well, a four-mile journey by car into town became the only alternative. "It gets hard sometimes," Penny says, "but it's the only way we have to get water."

On Delaware's Rehoboth Beach, affluent people play in the sunshine. Right next door to the wealthy resort is West Rehoboth where a poor, mostly black community lives without basic plumbing

or safe drinking water. Every day, 280 families are threatened with contaminated wells and exposure to raw sewage. "Lots of people just 'straight-pipe' their sewage in back of their homes or into nearby creeks," says Bill Coleman, a water specialist in Delaware.

The problems of Caroline Penny and the community of West Rehoboth Beach are not especially unusual in the South. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, 1.1 million people in rural America live

without adequate indoor plumbing or running water. Of the 10 states with the most homes lacking indoor water or plumbing, nine are in the South.

Kentucky leads all states with 30,921 homes lacking indoor water or plumbing. Virginia follows with 30,003. In North Carolina there are 27,743 households, 26,028 in Texas, 19,438 in Tennessee, 15,812 in Alabama, 15,443 in Georgia, 14,926 in West Virginia, and 14,849 in Mississippi. The total number of people in these households is 502,518 — half of all people in the U.S. without adequate plumbing. (Ohio is the other state in the top 10.)

“The problem of lack of water is large and often hidden,” says Peter Kittany. He directs the North Carolina Rural Community Assistance Program, a community action agency in Pittsboro that works with water issues. The poor and people of color are most likely to be part of the hidden population.

The issue is not invisible to everyone. The Virginia Water Project/Southeast Rural Community Assistance Program is bringing water, plumbing, and other assistance to West Rehoboth Beach, Caroline Penny, and others in the Southeast. Based in Roanoke, Virginia, the program evolved out of Total Action Against Poverty, an anti-poverty agency that began in the mid-1960s. The organization went into rural communities around Roanoke to survey residents about their most critical needs. The surveyors found that the most pressing issue was the lack of safe drinking water.

The group decided to create organizations to help low-income families in the area gain access to safe drinking water. The local project has mushroomed in the past 30 years into a safe drinking water and waste water service agency with programs nationwide. The programs serve more than 300,000 rural residents in Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

Those involved with the program recognize that inadequate indoor

plumbing is often compounded by other adverse conditions in impoverished communities. Thus, they tackle economic instability, land loss, poor health condi-

tions, and inadequate education.

“Water and waste water issues unlock the door to a number of community economic justice issues,” says Cynthia Martin, director of the Southeast Rural Community Assistance Program. “When we address waste water issues, we also try to address housing, unemployment, and weatherization.”

With funding from both public and private sources, the Virginia Water Project/Southeast Rural Community Assistance Program works through local nonprofit community action agencies in the Southeast. These agencies provide a link between the communities, other agencies, and their states.

“We might get a call for our help from a community that’s heard about our work or a local government agency to tell us to help a community having trouble complying with water regs,” says Peter Kittany of the North Carolina Community Assistance Program. His group assesses needs of the community and provides on-site technical assistance, training, and advocacy in water, waste management, and related issues, such as housing and weatherization.

Local residents are involved in the process from the beginning, says Bernice Edwards, director of housing and rural development at the First Day Community Action Agency, the lead agency for the project in Delaware. “We ask people what their needs are instead of telling them,” Edwards says. “What’s happened in a lot of instances [in the past] is that things have come from the top down.”

Improvements in rural communities come through several programs provided by the Virginia Water Project/Southeast Rural Community Assistance Program:

◆ **Technitrain** — The Technical Assistance and Training Grant Program provides development and support. The Southeast Rural Community Assistance Program works with



TOOLBOX

For more information about water/waste water, contact:

Virginia Water Project, Inc.

P.O. Box 2868, Roanoke, VA 24001-2868
(703) 345-1184

Contact: Mary Terry or Cynthia Martin

First State Community Action Agency

P.O. Box 431, Georgetown, DE 19947
(302) 856-7761

Contact: David Hill

Maryland Rural Development Corporation

P.O. Box 4848, Annapolis, MD 21403
(410) 269-0910

Contact: Donald Curtis

Joint Orange-Chatham Community Action Agency

P.O. Box 27, Pittsboro, NC 27312
(919) 542-4781

Contact: Gloria Williams

Beaufort-Jasper Comprehensive Health Services, Inc.

P.O. Box 357, Ridgeland, SC 29936
(803) 525-8165

Contact: Roland T. Gardner or Thaddeus Coleman

Georgia Department of Community Affairs

1200 Equitable Building
100 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, GA 30303
(404) 656-3879

Contact: Winfred Owens

Tri County Community Council, Inc.

301 N. Oklahoma St., Bonifay, FL 32425
(904) 547-3688

Contact: Bettie Slay

its lead agencies in the seven-state area to construct or improve water systems. They help rural communities complete needs assessments, work with engineers, and examine funding options. The program also helps those communities that do have waste water facilities maintain them and stay in compliance with state and federal regulations.

◆ **ACTTT (Achieving Compliance Through Technology Transfer)** —

This program helps rural communities comply with federal drinking water standards. They provide on-site technical assistance, workshops on water and waste water management, and information about funding alternatives. The technical training includes guidance about sampling and reporting water tests to the federal Environmental Protection Agency, leak detection in existing water lines, and how to search for new water sources when the present source is polluted.

One of the most innovative parts of this program is community-to-community peer exchange which enables community leaders to meet and share knowledge with other leaders who have solved water and waste water problems.

◆ **Technical Assistance-Seeking Solutions** — Under this program, the Virginia Water Project gives grants to low-income families and individuals to pay for water connection and hook-up fees. These grants can also help pay for the cost of constructing community wells for low-income, isolated communities which have no other water source.

◆ **Rural Water and Waste Water Loan Fund** — This program aims to increase access to federal and state funds for small and low-income communities for water and waste water facilities by providing affordable, low-interest loans from the federal government. The program also has a million dollar loan from the Ford Foundation to provide sewer line extensions, storage tank repair, and construction of community wells. Local governments, public service authorities, and nonprofit organizations engaged in rural housing or economic development

are eligible.

◆ **Groundwater Protection Program** — This service, which began in 1985, provides technical service and education to rural communities on groundwater protection, well testing, groundwater pollution potential mapping, and groundwater protection management.

Photo by Kenneth Murray



More than a million rural Americans live without adequate indoor plumbing or running water.

Nationally, the Rural Community Assistance Program spends more than 5 million dollars a year providing on-site technical assistance to more than 800 communities in 48 states. Their work impacts more than a million rural residents.

Their work certainly has helped West Rehoboth, Delaware. Thanks to the Virginia Water Project, residents have gotten a grant through the First Day Community Action Agency to provide running water. The group provided funds for housing rehabilitation and

weatherization.

Pittsboro resident Caroline Penny, who had to haul her water four miles, has also benefited. With the aid of VISTA volunteers from the federal government, the North Carolina Rural Communities Assistance Project has helped more than 28,000 people in more than 100 communities in North Carolina replace their out-houses and failed septic tanks. The organization is helping people in Chatham County — like Penny — apply for a Department of Housing and Urban Development grant for water services.

Life is improving in other Southern communities as well. The Maryland Rural Development Corporation has helped provide water and sewer services and housing rehabilitation to the Bellevue community, a black community affected by coastal development.

Duvall is a black community less than 100 miles from Washington, D.C. in one of Virginia's poorest counties. The Virginia Water Project, through its environmental justice project, is helping the community to find affordable alternatives to critical water and waste water issues. Over 30 homes in the community are currently without safe drinking water, waste-water treatment, and indoor

plumbing.

Twenty years ago, households in need of water and waste water facilities were far more widespread. In Virginia alone, more than a quarter of a million households had no indoor plumbing. Now, the total is down to only 20 percent of that number, thanks in large part to Virginia Water Project/Southeast Rural Community Assistance Program. **S**

Monica C. Jones is a staff writer with the Southern Organizing Committee in Atlanta, Georgia.

Children's Books and the South

Children's literature can be a cultural bellwether.

By Roberta Herrin

We live in a world shaped by polls and indicators. Hoping to foretell the future or assess economic trends, we monitor the Gross National Product, hemlines, and woolly worms. Even bestseller lists are regarded as cultural indicators because what adults read is of major import. But what children read — and what adults write for children — is usually ignored, though children's books command a major market share in today's economy.

Yet children's literature may be a more reliable cultural indicator than adult literature. If it is true that a society communicates to its children the ideals it cherishes, then children's books ought to render the best evidence of our values and our vision. A noteworthy cultural trend in current children's literature is the astounding number of books about the South.

In the 1970s three Newbery Award winners launched a new era in Southern fiction for children — Paula Fox's *The Slave Dancer* (Bradbury, 1973, gr. 6-10); Virginia Hamilton's *M. C. Higgins, the Great* (Macmillan, 1974, gr. 6-11); and Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Dial, 1976, gr. 6-9). Taylor and Hamilton captured the racial and ethnic tensions that had long simmered in the South, but more importantly, their

I envisioned a renaissance of realism for children that would mirror the complexities of the South and carry readers beyond shortsighted cliché.

fiction was substantial, grounded in history, and reflected the ironies and subtleties of Southern culture.

Following her 1975 Newbery Award, Virginia Hamilton gave us a host of exemplary titles which amplified her reputation. With *The Magical Adventures of Pretty Pearl* (Harper, 1983, gr. 5-up) and *The People Could Fly* (Knopf, 1985, gr. 5-up), which won a National Book Award, Hamilton took Southern children's fiction to a new level — blending African mythology, black history, and the American dream with exquisite artistry.

During this period, I saw in Southern fiction for children and young adults the brightness of "life-as-we-know-it" rather than the shadow of "magnolias-and-

moonlight" (as my colleague Herb Thompson put it). I envisioned a renaissance of realism for children that would mirror the complexities of the South and carry readers beyond shortsighted cliché.

I have not been disappointed. The tradition of Fox, Taylor, and Hamilton is thriving; out of approximately 150 titles surveyed for this essay, all published since 1980 (by no means a complete listing), more than three-fourths have to do with slavery, the Civil War, the subsequent racial and civil rights issues, and ethnic pride.

Among so vast a number of books, Southern clichés and 19th-century stereotypes can still be found. So can vague, generic settings. Too often children's books are set "somewhere in the South," or "rural Georgia," the "conservative South," or, like Kathleen Hershey's nostalgic *Cotton Mill Town* (Dutton, 1993, gr. K-2), in a "cotton mill town." The implication is that the South is a vast, homogeneous landscape.

Reviewers frequently perceive a generic South, too, describing Southern texts as having "a faultless ear for Southern dialect," or reflecting "cadences of Southern speech." Anyone who has traveled from south Georgia to tidewater Virginia knows there is no such thing as a Southern dialect. But like all regions, the South suffers from misguided descriptions.

There are other flaws, such as the disproportionate number of titles devoted to stereotypes of an antebellum South, dis-

honest portrayals of race relations, and glorifications of the Civil War.

The recent trend toward multiculturalism may account for a lopsided emphasis on ethnicity and the Civil War, but — ironically — out of this glut of books, I don't find much ethnic diversity. The number of children's books on Native Americans in the South, for example, doesn't approach the number of titles on black Americans. Luke Wallin's historical novel *In the Shadow of the Wind* (Bradbury, 1984, gr. 6-10) is an exception in that it treats the Creek settlements in Alabama in 1835. But even this book is ultimately a story about Indian enslavement of blacks and the Creek involvement in the Civil War.

No genre has escaped the Civil War snare — not even fantasy. A number of recent titles, though set in the 20th century, are linked to the Civil War through time shifts and ghosts. Reviewing Elaine Marie Alphin's *The Ghost Cadet* (Holt, 1991, gr. 5-7) in the *Bulletin*, Betsy Hearne observed, "there is little children's historical fiction from such a fiercely Southern, proudly military point of view, and Virginians especially may find this of regional interest." *Publishers Weekly*, on the other hand, called the book a "romanticized, white Southern view of the Civil War." These opposing reviews raise two questions: What do publishers think Southerners want in stories about the Civil War? And does contemporary children's fiction peddle a 19th-century Southern viewpoint?

Not entirely. Writers are beginning to abandon entrenched 19th-century clichés. The result is good literature which is honest about contemporary life as well as history. Forthright contemporary depictions include Katherine Paterson's *Flip-Flop Girl* (Lodestar, 1994, gr. 4-6), set in Brownsville, Virginia; Sue Ellen Bridgers' novels of Southern life, including her most recent *Keeping Christina* (HarperCollins, 1993, gr. 8-12); Barbara Hall's *Dixie Storms* (Harcourt, 1990, gr. 7-10), set on a fictional Marston, Virginia, tobacco farm, and *Fool's Hill*

(Bantam, 1992, gr. 7-12), set in Preston, Virginia, both of which have been compared with Bridgers' work. These are good stories with well-drawn adults and complex family dynamics.

Another author of this caliber is Katherine Martin; her *Night Riding* (Knopf, 1989, gr. 5-8) deals concretely with illegitimacy and incest (though its setting is vague, rural, west Tennessee). Another title with a nonspecific, "small-Georgia-town" setting is Fran Arrick's *God's Radar* (Bradbury, 1983, gr. 7-10). Its subject, however, is unique: Southern Baptist religious evangelism. Elizabeth Starr Hill's *The Banjo Player* (Viking,

1981, gr. 8-up). Another 1963 story, Jan Marino's *The Day that Elvis Came to Town* (Little, 1991, gr. 7-10), combines Elvis worship and the shame of "mixed blood." Gloria Jean Pinkney paints lovely pictures of Lumberton, North Carolina, in *Back Home* (Dial, 1992, gr. K-4) and *The Sunday Outing* (Dial, 1994, gr. K-4). Luke Wallin's gritty portrait shows alcoholism and the KKK in *The Redneck Poacher's Son* (Bradbury, 1981, gr. 8-up).

Like the fiction, factual and informational books also feature 20th-century racial and ethnic issues, such as Fred J. Cook's *The Ku Klux Klan: America's Recurring Nightmare* (Messner, 1980,

gr. 7-12). *Growing Up Black in Rural Mississippi: Memories of a Family, Heritage of a Place* (Walker, 1991, gr. 7-12) is Archer Chalmers' memoir of life in Jim Crow Mississippi from the Depression through the 1950s. This book can be paired beautifully with Mildred Taylor's fiction about the Logan family in the same era. Another valuable volume is Marilyn Miller's *The Bridge at Selma* (Silver Burdett, 1985, gr. 6-9), based on the first march and confrontation at Edmund

Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, 1965.

The growing recognition of black artists is also a promising trend. Mary E. Lyons' *Stitching Stars: The Story Quilts of Harriet Powers* (Scribner's, 1993, gr. 3-6) is a beautiful biography, set in Clarke County, Georgia. Its depiction of Powers' artistry — her narrative in quilts — is a fresh ingredient in the story of the South. Another excellent title is Gwen Everett's *Li'l Sis and Uncle Willie: A Story Based on the Life and Paintings of William H. Johnson* (Rizzoli, 1992, gr. 5-8), a fictionalized, first-person narrative by Johnson's niece. The importance of both these books is their specificity for the young reader — the group for whom it is hard to write history and biography without generalizing.

Based on a photo by Elizabeth Broyles



1993, gr. 5-8) deals with an often-overlooked part of Southern history — orphan trains. These books examine Southern culture and history without the soft-focus 19th-century lens.

More importantly, because the lens is now focused from the eye of the 20th century, it exposes the 19th-century legacy of racial strife. The range of these recently published stories is broad. William H. Hooks' *A Flight of Dazzle Angels* (Macmillan, 1988, gr. 7-10) shows the racism in a small North Carolina town in 1908. Dirlie Herlihy's *Ludie's Song* (Dial, 1988, gr. 6-8) deals with the consequences of interracial friendship in the early 1950s. Yvette Moore's *Freedom Songs* (Orchard, 1991, gr. 7-10) exposes the Jim Crow laws of 1963 North Caro-

While there may be a disproportionate number of books about the Civil War, the Fox-Taylor-Hamilton renaissance — aided by revisionist criticism — is producing Civil War fiction, history, and biography that abandon the worn, 19th-century perspective. Of particular note is the growth of black protagonists in books like *Which Way Freedom* (Walker, 1986, gr. 6-9), by Joyce Hansen, and *Taney* (Houghton/Clarion, 1984, gr. 8-10), by Belinda Hurnence.

These writers have also achieved distinction by employing varied points of view. Patricia Clapp's *The Tamarack Tree: A Novel of the Siege of Vicksburg* (Lothrop, 1986, gr. 7-9) presents the North/South conflict through the objectivity of a 14-year-old English female narrator. Another balanced view — but a strong condemnation of war, nevertheless — is Norah A. Perez's *The Slopes of War* (Houghton, 1984, gr. 7-10), which presents the battle of Gettysburg as an equal tragedy for both sides.

Also encouraging is the growing number of informational books and biographies about the Civil War. *The Boys' War: Confederate and Union Soldiers Talk About the Civil War* (Clarion, 1990, gr. 5-9), by Jim Murphy, makes an excellent companion to *Cadets at War: The True Story of Teenage Heroism at the Battle of New Market* (Shoe Tree Press, 1991, gr. 5-7), by Susan Provost Beller. Sometimes a bit romanticized, and sometimes fictionalized for the young reader, these books are nevertheless significant because they make information accessible to children that has previously been unavailable to them.

Giving women equal time is Bryna Stevens' fictionalized biography *Frank Thompson: Her Civil War Story* (Macmillan, 1992, gr. 6-10), based on the autobiography of Canadian-born Emma Edmonds, who disguised herself as "Frank" Thompson and fought with the Union. Mary E. Lyons' *Letters from a Slave Girl: The Story of Harriet Jacobs* (Scribner's, 1992, gr. 7-10), is a well-researched epistolary novel, also based on autobiography. Though its themes are familiar, the personal quality of the letters triumphs. In *Anthony Burns: The Defeat and Triumph of a Fugitive Slave*

(Knopf, 1988, gr. 7-12), Virginia Hamilton seasons the facts of Burns' life and the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act with enough fiction to make the story germane and arresting.

A number of excellent factual books about the Underground Railroad have appeared, not the least of which is Hamilton's *Many Thousand Gone: African-Americans from Slavery to Freedom* (Knopf, 1992, gr. 6-9). Hamilton never disappoints.

Just when we think we cannot endure another Civil War biography, Manfred Weidhorn's *Robert E. Lee* (Atheneum, 1988, gr. 7-12) is hailed by Betsy Hearne in the *Bulletin* as "the best young people's biography of Lee available." Albert Marrin's *Unconditional Surrender: U.S. Grant and the Civil War* (Atheneum, 1994, gr. 7-12) makes a nice companion volume. The *Bulletin* review of this work says, "Readers may find this book turning them into Civil War buffs or turning them on to history, leading them to Barbara Tuchman and others." Such is what we wish for in children's books.

As we approach the year 2000, I am encouraged that the tradition of Fox, Taylor, and Hamilton will continue to render two hundred years of Southern life and history with honesty. A few publishers, writers, and reviewers may continue to see the South as a monolithic landscape tinted with a Southern dialect. Some may still prefer 19th-century cliché to 20th-century realism and honesty.

The general public may continue to favor adult literature as a cultural indicator. If so, it will miss a significant Southern viewpoint because contemporary literature for children shows a self-critical, evolving South — struggling to shed its 19th-century onus, valuing children so highly as to expose them to the struggle. One could do worse than watch children's literature as a cultural weather vane.

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Roberta Herrin is associate professor of English and associate dean of the graduate school at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee. She teaches children's literature, lectures, and conducts

workshops for teachers and media specialists. In 1992, she was awarded a Howard Fellowship from Brown University to conduct research in Appalachian children's literature. For the spring 1996 issue of Southern Exposure, she plans to review the oral tradition in children's literature of the South.

GROWING UP SOUTHERN Southern Exposure Looks at Childhood Then and Now

Edited by Chris Mayfield
Pantheon Books, New York
\$8 hardback, 273 pages

This moving and revealing book draws on oral histories and some of the South's best writers to explore two centuries of coming-of-age in the South. Growing up gay, growing up Jewish, growing up black and more. Chapters include:

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Unflinching Eyes and Redeye

Historians, novelists, and playwrights cast a new look at the Old and New South.

NEW WOMEN OF THE NEW SOUTH: THE LEADERS OF THE WOMAN SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT IN THE SOUTHERN STATES

By Marjorie Spruill Wheeler
Oxford University Press, 1993
\$19.95 hardback

Until now, most studies of the woman suffrage movement in the United States have focused on the North. Such a regional perspective might be assumed to represent the totality of this national movement in the absence of more comprehensive information. In *New Women of the New South*, Marjorie Spruill Wheeler gives us the Southern piece to the suffrage puzzle.

Wheeler describes the indelible mark made by Southern women on the national woman suffrage campaign. These suffragists had an even more difficult struggle than their Northern peers, for it was in the South that women met the greatest resistance from those committed to traditional women's roles. But the white, upper-class women involved in women's suffrage in the South shared an intensity of feelings about the white South's loss of sovereignty after the Civil War. Thus, questions of race and states' rights circumscribed the suffrage movement in the South.

Wheeler's story focuses on two generations of women, the "pioneers" engaged in the late 19th century struggle for the vote and beyond, and a younger generation involved in the post-1910 efforts. Descendants of the South's most powerful families, these women could maneuver the complicated social and political waters of the suffrage move-

ment while being treated "decorously" by the primarily male anti-suffragists.

Their tactics, however, were far from decorous. Suffragist leader Kate Gordon, for example, pursued a strategy of winning woman suffrage by exploiting racist fears. Born in 1861, and one of Wheeler's "first generation" suffragists, Gordon summarized her stance: "I would rather see my right arm withered in its socket than to raise it in behalf of vitalizing the Fifteenth Amendment, and above all destroy the safeguard of our liberty, state sovereignty." This vehemence about states' rights promoted bitter conflict within the National American Woman Suffrage Association, particularly after 1910, when support grew for a federal suffrage amendment. Wheeler adeptly weaves these disparate threads into a thoughtful work rich in controversy, compromise, disappointment, and victory.

— Betsy Ellsworth

REDEYE: A WESTERN

By Clyde Edgerton
Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1995
\$17.95 hardback

Although Clyde Edgerton's fifth novel is set in turn-of-the-century Colorado, the issues that propel the plot are natural material for a Southern writer: religious bigotry, racial conflict, and the weight of the past. *Redeye* is a fictional epilogue to the Mountain Meadows Massacre of 1859, a Mormon-instigated slaughter of settlers traveling through Utah.

Edgerton employs an array of narrative voices, among them an orphan boy

who must learn to cope with both the hazards of cowboy life and the hormones of adolescence; a proper young woman from North Carolina who flirts with the freedom of life on the frontier; and a Native American who must constantly compromise to survive in the new white man's world.

Although the individual voices are fragmented, their cumulative chorus lays bare the deeply felt human need to explain — or rationalize — events after the fact. They also hint at the futility of explanations.

The intermittent presence of the title character — an attack dog that mauls animal and human faces — suggests that the characters are ruled as rigidly by base instinct as by upbringing.

— Kevin O'Kelly

TOWARD PEACEMAKING: PRESBYTERIANS IN THE SOUTH AND NATIONAL SECURITY, 1945-1983

By Rick L. Nutt
University of Alabama Press, 1995
\$19.95 paper

Toward Peacemaking is a solid, informative work of church history that misses an opportunity to be much more. Nutt's thesis is that after World War II, the Presbyterian Church of the United States abandoned its traditional conservative hawkishness to become a consistent voice of dissent in American foreign policy debates, questioning not only individual wars but also the justifiability of war itself.

For anyone wishing a chronology of the visible signs of this political shift and

an introduction to some of the names and places important in the development of a Southern political alternative to Goldwater Republicanism, *Toward Peacemaking* is a helpful work. However, Nutt leaves one big question unanswered. He notes that some Presbyterian congregations seceded from the Church to form the Presbyterian Church in America, a denomination dedicated to its own idea of traditional Calvinism and conservative politics. He makes no effort to explain why so many congregations stayed behind. Admittedly, these churches have nurtured liberals and activists — but not enough to account for their entire membership. If every small Southern town with a white frame Presbyterian church had a liberal contingent as large as that church's congregation, voices for social and political change in the region would be more frequent and less lonely. How has a denomination with such a vocally liberal leadership and an apparently conservative laity avoided complete dissolution?

—Kevin O'Kelly

AROUND THESE TRACKS

By William L. Brown and Mary Ray
Delmar Publishing Company, 1993
\$18.95 hardback

When William L. Brown wrote this book about growing up in the cotton mill town of Mooresville, North Carolina, he intended it as a tribute to the people he grew up with. Both his parents, "good and proud people," worked in Mooresville's cotton mills; William eventually served as superintendent of Mooresville city schools. Like many local histories, the book is part scrapbook, part narrative. But unlike many local histories, *Around These Tracks* is the product of an unflinching eye. Brown is willing to confront the trauma and injustice of the Depression-era labor struggles at the Mooresville Cotton Mill while being equally drawn to evidence of the town's powerful sense of community. In a very personal way, Brown vividly captures the paradox of life in Southern cotton textile towns.

—Janet Irons

ALTERNATE ROOTS: PLAYS FROM THE SOUTHERN THEATER

Edited by Kathie deNobriga and Valetta Anderson
Heinemann, 1995
\$20 paper

Since its founding in 1976, Alternate ROOTS (Regional Organization of Theaters South) has helped to nurture playwrights and theater companies that have ventured from traditional form and content. The seven plays in this memorable collection represent some of the best of the creative output from nearly 20 years of work.

The plays truly do show an alternative vision of the South, coming from hilly lands and lowlands, from the experience of mountain whites, African Americans, and lesbian activists. The characters speak with different cadences, tell different stories, but theirs are all true Southern voices.

"What all the work shares is a strong evocation of place," says Ruby Lerner in her introductory essay. "The underbelly of New Orleans is palpable in Jim Grimsley's *Mr. Universe*. One can sense the closeness of the central Appalachians enveloping *Red Fox*, the oppressive heat and racism of the Mississippi Delta in *Junebug*, the strip mall of contemporary East Tennessee in *Blind Desire*, and the union battle-fatigued coal mining region of eastern Kentucky in *Preacher with a Horse to Ride*."

The playwrights experiment with form, time, voice, dream, and fantasy, and with the rich addition of song and dance that evokes the time and place.

Many of the playwrights will be familiar to *Southern Exposure* readers. They include John O'Neal and Nayo Barbara Watkins ("Junebug" contributor and "Voices" editor, respectively), Jo Carson (fiction editor), and Rebecca Ranson (editor of "Theater in the South" issue in 1986). Linda Parris-Bailey of Carbetbag Theater, Don Baker and Dudley Cocke of Roadside Theater, and members of the Road Company ensemble are also represented. The collection includes three essays on Southern culture and drama by John Egerton,

Ruby Lerner, and Betty Jean Jones,

—Pat Arnow

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MORE NEW BOOKS

Kicking Back with Elvis and Hillbillyland

HILLBILLYLAND: WHAT THE MOVIES DID TO THE MOUNTAINS AND WHAT THE MOUNTAINS DID TO THE MOVIES

by J.W. Williamson
University of North Carolina Press, 1995
\$15.50 paper, \$39.95 hardback

Excerpted in our last issue. Williamson explores why hillbillies are so popular in our culture — particularly in our film culture — and what purposes they serve.

THE ULTIMATE ELVIS: ELVIS PRESLEY DAY BY DAY

by Patricia Jobe Pierce
Simon and Schuster, 1994
\$14 paper

The king comes alive in this day-by-day calendar that records every important event related to Elvis's life and legacy. It is destined to become the authoritative encyclopedia on the music, the man, and the myth.

KICKING BACK: FURTHER DISPATCHES FROM THE SOUTH

by John Shelton Reed
University of Missouri Press, 1995
\$22.50 hardback

"A writer this funny is dangerous," said the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution's* Michael Skube. Reed explores the cultural differences between the North and the South from manners to the treatment of pets.

Death Penalty

Capital Punishment is Alive and Well in the South

By Molly Chilson and Wendy Grossman

Down South, we'll fry up just about anything: chicken, possum, steak — and people.

"Many would argue that in the old Confederacy, a place where it was believed to be acceptable at one time to own another human being, the popularity of capital punishment is not surprising," says Malcolm Hunter, the Appellate Defender for North Carolina.

The tradition of tough justice continues today in the South. Every Southern state except West Virginia allows the imposition of the death sentence (13 of the 38 states in the rest of the country do not execute prisoners). Of the 289 prisoners executed in the United States between 1976 and 1995, the South put to death 236. Texas topped the list with 97 executions. Florida, Virginia, Louisiana, and Georgia each put more than 20 prisoners to death. Texas also has the most prisoners on death row — 398. Florida ranks second for inmates awaiting execution with a total of 342.

As in other aspects of Southern culture, race plays a role in punishment. While blacks make up only 12 percent of the general population, they occupy nearly half of the spots on death row. But according to Beth Daniels, Administrative Coordinator with the Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, "The biggest racial disparity is related to the victim. A person is much more likely to get the death penalty if their victim is white than if their victim is black." The majority of people who are sentenced on death row were there for killing white people. If a white person kills a black person, it's much less likely for him to be on death row. "It's comparatively heinous," Daniels says. "If you're black and kill a white person, you're 11 times more likely to get the death sentence than any other combination of races."

The South's tradition of racial discrimination in handing out punishments is rooted in slavery. Under Georgia's statutes of 1816, the crime of rape or attempted rape of a white woman by a black man was made punishable by death while whites faced only two years in prison for the same crime. In

People on Death Row, Spring 1995

By State	Prisoners*	% of all prisoners on death row
Alabama	135	4.5%
Arkansas	39	1.3%
Florida	342	11.4%
Georgia	104	3.5%
Kentucky	27	1.3%
Louisiana	45	1.5%
Mississippi	55	5.5%
North Carolina	155	5.2%
South Carolina	59	2.0%
Tennessee	102	3.4%
Texas	398	13.2%
Virginia	56	1.9%
West Virginia	0	0
South	1517	50.4%
All Other States	1492	49.6%

By Race		
White	1455	48.4%
Black	1217	40.4%
Latino	233	7.7%
Native American	52	1.7%
Asian	22	0.7%
Unknown	30	1.0%

*Only 49 women are on death row, just 1.6 percent of the death row population of the U.S.

1848, Virginia enacted a statute requiring that African Americans be executed for crimes for which whites would only be imprisoned three years.

In 1970, discrimination was still an issue. The U.S. Supreme Court heard the claims of a black Arkansas man charged with rape who pointed out that while the rape of white women by black men was consistently punished with death, rape by whites was not. The court failed to act in his favor.

The Supreme Court did encourage uniform state death penalty statutes that would increase the probability of equal justice, but many Southern states kept their laws regarding capital punishment vague, allowing judges a great deal of leverage in assigning the death sentence.

In response to continuing harsh and unequal punishment, groups have worked outside and inside prisons to protest the death penalty and promote the humane treatment of prisoners.

The National Coalition's Beth Daniels says her organization wants to see the death penalty eliminated. "We see the death penalty as a moral and policy failure," says Daniels. "We want to spend money, energy, and time to make the country really safe through organizing and education." To those ends, the National Coalition encourages public debate in states that consider instituting capital punishment. In Iowa, their efforts helped stop attempts to institute the death penalty.

Just as important, the prisoners themselves have worked to show the outside world that they have a face and a voice. The *Angolite*, a magazine published by and about prisoners, is available by subscription to the general public. Writer Michael Glover, a prisoner at the Louisiana State Penitentiary, says the magazine is "the only uncensored prisoner publication in the nation. We offer the prisoners' perspective on criminal justice issues. And you can't get that any place else."

§

Molly Chilson and Wendy Grossman are interns with the Institute for Southern Studies.

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