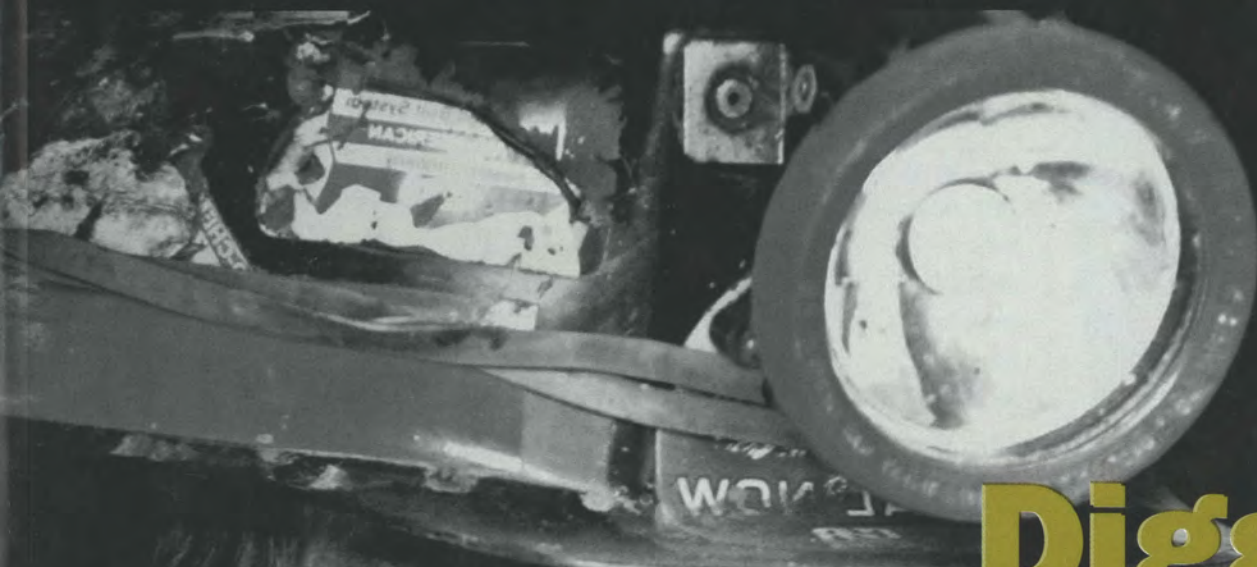


SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

A JOURNAL OF POLITICS & CULTURE

VOL. XXVII, No. 3 \$5.00



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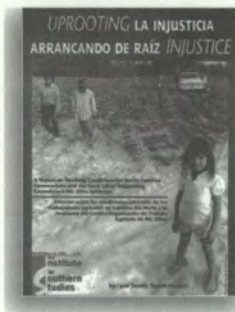


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**The 11th
annual
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SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

FALL 1999

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SOUTHERN EXPOSURE is published quarterly by the Institute for Southern Studies and is available with a membership in the Institute for \$24 per year. Manuscripts and photos may be submitted if accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Address correspondence to P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

Editorial department: (919) 419-8311 ext. 26, or email: southern_exposure@i4south.org
Subscription assistance: (919) 419-8311 ext. 21 or email: circulation@i4south.org

Letters to the editor: Mail to address above or email to: letters@i4south.org

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE is indexed in *Alternative Press Index*, *The American Humanities Index*, and *Access: The Supplementary Index to Periodicals*, and is available on microfilm from University Microfilm, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Periodical postage is paid at Durham, NC 27702 and additional offices.
ISSN: 0146-809X, Post Office No. 053470.

POSTMASTER: Send form 3579 with address changes to *Southern Exposure*, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702.

From the Editor

Not long ago, at a convention of colleagues in the editing and writing trade – most of whom work at media outfits with corporate budgets and mass-market appeal – I was asked: what's the biggest reward of editing a magazine like *Southern Exposure*?

While admitting that fame and fortune weren't part of the package (we're working on the fame part), I answered that what's most inspiring is how, each day, *SE* offers me a lesson in courage.

Every day I hear stories about people who, by all odds, should have given up or been driven away from the hard work of fighting to make their communities better. Yet in the face of relentless injustice, disheartening indifference, or outright terror, they are bolstered by a certain faith that things can be different, and common people find the courage to do uncommon things.

This issue of *SE* is no different. The featured stories by winners of the Southern Journalism Awards – an annual contest sponsored by the Institute for Southern Studies – are a testament to courage in reporting. In each of the stories, the writers took risks and challenged powerful institutions, received wisdom, and sometimes their own editors to deliver thoughtful and high-impact reporting.

An even deeper meditation on courage can be found in the special section, "The High Price of Commitment." In telling the stories of two deadly moments in our past – Selma, Alabama, in March of 1965, and Greensboro, North Carolina, in November of 1979 – it's a sobering reminder that acting on the courage of convictions has cost many their lives, and that, as Fannie Lou Hamer said, "freedom ain't free."

Heroes do not make history – it is the small and big acts of thousands and thousands of everyday people that has, and always will, determine what kind of world we live in. I hope that you, too, are inspired by these acts of courage.

Common people
find the courage to
do uncommon
things.

As we strive to follow in the tradition of courageous Southerners who speak truth to power and speak up for justice, we'd again like to turn to you, our readers, and ask for your support. Your support is what allows *Southern Exposure* carry on as an independent voice for change. This holiday season, please consider mailing a contribution to *SE* and the Institute for Southern Studies.

You can also help spread the word! Once again, we're offering our popular holiday special: sign up gift memberships for friends and family, and we'll cut your membership/subscription to \$18 a year (25% off the regular rate!).

Not a bad deal – and as a bonus, you'll be supporting some of the South's best writing and work for community change.

— Chris Kromm

U.S. Postal Service STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, ARRANGEMENT AND CIRCULATION		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 months	Actual No. Copies Single Issue Published Preceding 12 months
Reported by 35 U.S.C. 3685 (13) Issue date for circulation data: Summer 1999 Title of Publication: Southern Exposure Publication No. 0534-70			
Date of Filing: October 1, 1999 - Frequency of Issue: Quarterly - Published 4 times annually - Substitution: None - E24 - Mailing Address of known office of publication: P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702			
Mailing Address of headquarters or general business office: P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702			
Publication title for Southern Studies, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702			
Editor and Managerial Editor: Chris Kromm, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702			
Owner: Institute for Southern Studies a nonprofit 501(c)(3), P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702 Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1% or more of total amount of Bonds, Mortgages or other Securities: None			
The purpose, function and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during the preceding 12 months.			
Extent and nature of circulation			
a.	Total	4100	4326
b1.	Sales	3890	530
b2.	Office	2170	2263
c.	Carriers	3060	3193
d.	Other	55	70
e.	Street	0	0
f.	Home	85	70
g.	Other	3125	3263
h1.	Classified	903	1063
h2.	Unclassified	172	0
i.	Other	4100	4326
Percent paid and/or requested		97.92%	97.55%
(18) Printed in issue: Winter 1999			
(17) Date: October 1, 1999			
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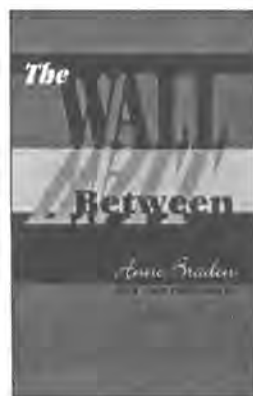
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PEOPLE AND PROJECTS AT THE INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHERN STUDIES AND SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

A GIFT for the Institute

Over the past few months, the Institute has been fortunate to have a dynamic new face on board: Cara Page, who is helping with fundraising for the Institute through the GIFT (Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training) program. She gives this report:

My work as an activist and artist of color has always culminated at the end of the funding line. GIFT has finally opened the doors of philanthropy and demystified the world of fundraising to me. It has taught me that it is both an activist and revolutionary agenda to redefine the path of who can fundraise and who will own the future legacies of our organizations.



GIFT INTERN CARA PAGE

GIFT has been in existence for the past three years, sponsored by the Center for Third World Organizing. Their goal is to strive towards people of color having ownership of their work by raising and managing their own money.

As an intern at the Institute I have been working on a major donor campaign, and looking at new strategies that ask community members to envision and become active participants in the Institute's work.

I have also been working with the board and staff to redefine the wealth of our own resources and ideas. It is our responsibility to make sure the Institute can stand on our community's shoulders

and not always on the indefinite pillars of financial change in the funding world.

You too can become a philanthropist by investing in the work of the Institute. A fundraiser is an activist that has the power to see her or his own wealth and bring about change through giving.

If you want to know how you can help with grassroots fundraising for the Institute and Southern Exposure, or to get more information on the GIFT training, please contact Cara at (919) 419-8311 x31 or [cara@i4south.org].

New Challenges for Farmworkers

We reported in the last SE that the Institute had launched the Farmworker Justice Project, based on the success of Sandy Smith-Nonini's report, "Uprooting Injustice."

This summer, Project coordinator Erica Hodgín used the report to reach hundreds of faith-based and community leaders across the South – building a base of well-educated activists to support farmworkers organizing in eastern North Carolina.

The Farmworker Justice Project has also sponsored a relief effort for farm laborers in the wake of Hurricane Floyd, which left many homeless and almost all farmworkers without the work they counted on to support their families. Readers can send their tax-deductible donations to Harvest Family Health Center, 9088 Old Bailey Highway, Spring Hope, NC 27882 (indicate that funds are to be used for "farmworker aid").

The Institute has also been active in a coalition including the NC Council of Churches, Student Action with Farmworkers, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee and over 30 others demanding that the nation's largest hiring agent for international seasonal farmworkers – the NC Growers' Associa-

tion – stop violating workers' human rights. The coalition publicly challenged the Growers' Association to stop controlling farmworkers' access to printed information about their rights and restricting their ability to speak with service providers and farmworker advocates. (In response to the excellent media coverage of the Coalition's challenge, the director of the Growers' Association called the effort a "union smear campaign.")



If you would like to receive a copy of "Uprooting Injustice" or find out how to get involved in the Farmworker Justice Project, please call (919) 419-8311 x25 or email [fwjustice@i4south.org].



Want to learn about writing, editing and publishing for social change?

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MEAN STREETS

Atlanta tops list of cities with toughest laws against the homeless

ATLANTA – On any given day, about 12,000 people in Atlanta, Georgia, are living on the streets. But according to a new study, get-tough laws enacted before the 1996 Olympics have made this bustling city one of the worst places to be for homeless people.

Decrying a growing trend towards “criminalizing” homelessness, the study by the non-profit National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty rates 50 cities on the severity of recent crackdowns, including laws against using public space for sleeping or sitting, restrictions on begging, and police “sweeps” designed to remove homeless people.

“While cities continue to crack down on homeless people,” the report charges, “resources to shelter homeless people or help them become self-sufficient are sorely lacking ... Moreover, in each city the availability of affordable housing is insufficient to meet the need.”

While there have been some changes in the way courts handle the homeless, Atlanta still has some of the harshest practices. According to the report, “The city ... imposes numerous restrictions on homeless people’s conduct; sweeps and crackdowns continue to occur with homeless people being removed from under bridges and moved along in the downtown area.”

The report does note that some of Atlanta’s most infamous policies – such as the city’s practice of giving homeless people free one-way bus tickets out of town – have ended.

Chicago, New York City, San Francisco, and Tucson, Arizona, rounded out the list

of cities with “mean streets.”

Cities that received high marks for either having a history of more constructive approaches to homelessness, or for recently reversing punitive policies, were Portland, Oregon; Omaha, Nebraska; and Dallas, Texas.

Other Southern cities studied in the Center’s report include:

• • •

Austin, Texas, has seen an intensified enforcement of a camping ordinance passed in 1996, including camp sweeps. The city had already spent 2,000 police hours and \$120,000 enforcing the law in the first year.

• • •

Charlotte, N.C., was viewed as more tolerant, with occasional sweeps and enforcement of an anti-panhandling ordinance, but a generally positive working relationship between the town and service providers.

• • •

New Orleans, Louisiana, has gotten tougher with a “zero tolerance policy” on an “unauthorized public habitation” ordinance, which critics say is selectively enforced to “clean the streets, not take care of the people and their problems.”

Homeless advocates deride such measures as bad public policy. They argue criminalization ties up the legal system, diverts resources that could be used for prevention, and may ultimately undermine homeless people’s efforts to escape poverty.

The laws may also be un-

LIFE BEHIND BARS



The South locks up more of its people than any other region. The ten states with the highest prison incarceration rates per 100,000 people:

1 – District of Columbia	1,913
2 – Louisiana	736
3 – Texas	724
4 – Oklahoma	622
5 – Mississippi	574
6 – South Carolina	550
7 – Nevada	542
8 – Alabama	519
9 – Arizona	507
10 – Georgia	502

Source: U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1999 (1998 data)

constitutional. Several courts have struck down broad bans on panhandling and sleeping in public areas.

The alternative? The Center recommends policies that assist rather than harass homeless people; ensure that

law enforcement protect the homeless, rather than target them; allows adequate help from service agencies; and most importantly, attacks root causes like the need for good-paying jobs and lack of affordable housing.

A NEW DAY FOR LABOR IN NORTH CAROLINA?

IN A STATE THAT POLITICAL AND INDUSTRY LEADERS STRIVE TO KEEP "UNION-FREE," WORKERS CLAIM RECENT GAINS

According to conventional wisdom, if one were to search for signs of labor's revival, the last place to look would be North Carolina. Due to employer resistance, "right-to-work" and other laws unfriendly to unions, and a political climate dedicated to keeping the Carolinas "union-free," the percentage of workers organized into unions in the Tarheel State stands at a mere four percent—the lowest unionization rate in the country.

But change may be in the air. As SE correspondents Daphne Holden and Becky Johnson relate in the following stories, North Carolina unions have scored a series of important victories in the last few months. Only time will tell if these recent signal a larger and lasting resurgence. For now, they show that labor is not down and out in the Carolinas—and unions are still a force to be reckoned with in the South.

LONG TIME COMING

After 25 years of organizing, textile workers win in the Fieldcrest-Cannon mills

KANNAPOLIS, N.C. — Perry Hopper, Sr., can run 650 "pics" a minute. At 200 lines of thread to the inch, that's three and half inches of some of the best quality sheets in the world.

For 19 years, Hopper's been with Fieldcrest-Cannon textile mills in North Carolina, working his way up from a warp job, to a nodder, to a loom technician to a maintenance technician of computer-monitored, air-powered looms.

And for 19 years, he's been uneasy about agitating for worker's rights. Even with almost 5,000 fellow employees, Hopper said that Cannon's old-school supervisor system makes workers feel like just another cog in the wheel of a profit-minded operation.

"It's not that they mean to

be that way," Hopper says. "They're just running a business."

For decades, the South has served as a haven for companies running from the unionized workforce of the North. National union membership sits at 14 percent,



UNITE WORKERS CELEBRATE

while the North Carolina workforce is only four percent unionized.

Battling the anti-union climate, it took the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) and its predecessor unions 25 years and five elections before getting the majority vote needed to represent Cannon workers.

"For years, employers have been able to play on

workers having no knowledge of unions," said Chris Hines, Organizing Director of the Southern region for UNITE. "What happens is the company fights tooth and nail to keep the union out because they know with the union comes better wages."

This classic Southern scenario is exactly what happened in the Cannon struggle. While UNITE organizers campaigned from the podium, plant supervisors were whispering rumors and spreading suspicion. They told workers that the plant would close if they voted 'yes' for the union, that rules would get tighter, that the union would get them nothing, that they would lose the few benefits they already had.

Four elections in a row, workers voted the union down. But the union claimed the company was using illegal intimidation tactics, and that a fair and open election would bring a different verdict.

UNITE repeatedly cried foul and took Cannon to the National Labor Relations Board. Each time, the Board agreed and ordered a re-vote. Finally, tired of UNITE's persistence, Cannon owner Chuck Hanson backed off.

The vote came up 2270–2102 in favor of the union. After 250 illegal votes from payroll employees, industrial engineers, bookkeepers, timekeepers and the bosses' personal secretaries are challenged, the union says the yes-to-no margin will be even higher.

"Most of the people have never worked for a union, never," Hopper said. "But once you get just 30 percent of your people to join a union, they'll see the benefits they're getting."

One of Hopper's co-workers has been with Fieldcrest-Cannon for 41 years. He voted against the union every time until now, Hopper said. With retirement heavy on his mind and memories of a past owner who sold the company and ran off with \$38 million of the workers' pensions, he discarded four decades of anti-union sentiment and company threats.

"People are seeing the best resource is no longer with the company, but with the person who works beside him," Hopper says.

But when only part of an industry is unionized, the company uses leverage of non-union workers to bring wages down everywhere. North Carolina has 167,000 textile workers, more than any other state in the country. The Fieldcrest-Cannon victory may lead to other textile workers joining UNITE, but it may not.

Hopper thinks they'll sign up if they are allowed to see what a union's really about.

"I'm for the union, always have been," Hopper said. "The textile industry as a whole needs to be unionized. Being union means not just getting better pay, but having more say-so in the daily operations of the job."

—Becky Johnson

"YOU CAN'T GET RID OF ALL OF US!"

Public service workers gather forces at union's constitutional convention

RALEIGH, N.C. — Despite record-breaking heat, over 100 members of the N.C.

Photo by Daphne Holden



THE PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS' RALLY AND CONVENTION MARKED AN IMPORTANT TURNING POINT.

Public Service Workers Union (UE Local 150) gathered on the steps of the state General Assembly on July 30th, 1999, to support a living wage and collective bargaining for public employees, and to oppose privatization, discrimination, and downsizing.

The rally was a kick-off for the union's landmark constitutional convention – and the first time low-paid public service employees have gathered to demand a voice in the halls of state government.

It was also a crucial moment for the union, as it built on the state's long history of service-worker activism and gathered forces for the future – so workers could “get together and work on issues together,” said Barbara Prear, UE Local 150 President.

After two years of building the union across 11 campuses in North Carolina, the time was right for UE Local 150 to meet to establish its constitution and bylaws. Housekeepers, groundskeepers, and shop workers from nine campuses in the UNC system – along with the newly-affiliated Durham City Workers and other state employees – attended the weekend-long

convention to shore up the growing union's organization, debate policy, elect officers, and set union priorities.

The convention also debated issues of pressing concern to public workers, such as the state's privatization plan and grievance procedure, which the union is credited with improving last year.

The setting of the convention – the recently privatized student center at the N.C. State University campus in Raleigh – offered a reminder of the threats public workers face. Housekeepers in the center and other buildings on campus who are subcontracted by a private company make only six dollars an hour with no benefits, compared to the \$8.03 starting salary for still-public jobs at nearby UNC-Chapel Hill.

“We deserve better wages,” says Eugenia Williamston, a housekeeper at NCSU. “They keep downsizing, making the workloads bigger. There were five workers here, now there's three. The building hasn't shrunk.”

The statewide union grew out of the struggle of the UNC Housekeepers Association at Chapel Hill against racial discrimination

BEAT THE HEAT WITH A COKE? It's gonna cost ya...

ATLANTA – Facing sagging sales and health scares overseas, Coca-Cola admitted this October that they are working on a new vending machine which would automatically increase the price of soft drinks when it senses hotter weather.

Doug Ivester, Chairman of the Atlanta-based soft-drink company, confirmed in the Brazilian magazine *Veja* that the company is experimenting with new technology which could insert a thermometer in its machines that would automatically hike the price when the temperature rises.

“Coca-Cola is a product whose utility varies from moment to moment,” Ivester said. “In a final summer [sports] championship when people meet in a stadium to enjoy themselves, the utility of Coke is very high. So it is fair to make it more expensive. The machine will simply make the process automatic.”

Coke recently grabbed headlines in Belgium, when it had to give away eight million drinks after supplies in Antwerp were contaminated with benzene. This contributed to a two-year financial downturn for the company, which now sees creative marketing in overseas markets as the key to prosperity.

Company officials note that while the average American drinks 395 servings of Coke's various drinks each year, the French drink 96, the British 37, and the Chinese only seven.

Source: The Times (London)



in the early 1990s. The first housekeepers on the campus were slaves, and current housekeepers argue that their low pay and low status is a vestige of slavery and therefore discriminatory.

The Association has won a legal settlement that included pay raises and monthly meetings with campus officials to address workers' concerns, although the union contends the administration still hasn't delivered on many of its promises.

Building on the momentum, Chapel Hill housekeepers allied with workers at campuses in Greenville and other public workers to form the N.C. Public Service Worker's Association. In 1997, the association affiliated with the national United Electrical Workers, and formed the statewide UE Local 150.

Organizers for UE see just getting the union off the ground as a victory of sorts. A state law enacted in 1959 prohibits any state institution to enter an agreement with a union, preventing collective bargaining. Union leaders also cite isolation, being spread out across the state, and the fact that “almost 90%” of the workers have no experience with unions as major barriers.

But despite the odds, UE 150 has persisted – and is growing. A key ingredient to this success has been convincing workers that the union isn't some outside force, but an organization they can call their own.

“[The union wants] workers to recognize that their collective actions are the starting point,” says Saladin Muhammed, UE's statewide organizer.

By that measure, says Evelyn Hill – a housekeeper and co-president of the N.C. State chapter – the convention was a resounding success. “To just sit in that room and to see all those folks in that room,” Hill says, “It was just overwhelming!”

According to Hill, just meeting other UE members dispelled fear, and has emboldened workers to speak out for the union.

“A lot of people wouldn’t acknowledge that they were a member because they were afraid,” Hill says. “[The convention] made people ... more free to talk about it and move around and say ‘yeah, I’m a member of the union.’ You can’t get rid of all of us!”

– Daphne Holden

UNION ROLLS ON AT CONTINENTAL TIRE

Year-long strike ends in better pay and “victory all over”

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Things were looking tough for tire workers in Charlotte, North Carolina, last winter.

Union members – 1,450 of them – had been on strike for months.

Eight hundred “replacement workers” had been hired.

And Continental General Tire, Inc. already laid down what they called their “final offer” – \$22 million and multiple benefits short of what the workers’ union, United Steel Workers of America (USWA) Local 850, was asking. General Tire even bought and fenced in a spare lot across the street from the plant to keep strikers from using the space.

Nine years had passed since the workers’ last raise – even though General Tire is

E-BARBARIANS

Execution photos posted on-line draw millions of visitors

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Almost a million surfers have logged onto the Florida Supreme Court’s web site to view color photos of Allen Lee “Tiny” Davis, the last convicted murderer executed in the state’s electric chair.

The high court posted the pictures, showing Davis’ bloody body and contorted face, who was put to death in July, because they figured in a case in which the justices were debating the constitutionality of using the electric chair.

Davis’ execution received national attention because the electric current caused blood to pour from behind his face-mask, soaking his white shirt. Photos of the electrocution were sent

to the U.S. Supreme Court, which will review the constitutionality of the chair for the first time in more than a century.

Many who visited on-line – particularly Europeans – have been appalled. A Frenchman sent a one-word email to the court: “Barbarians.”

Now, says sociologist Michael Radelet at the University of Florida, “When Europeans think of Florida, they think of Disney World, beaches, and fiery electrocutions.”

But the execution and the gory photos have received praise as well. A woman from North Redington Beach, Fla., emailed to say, “The photos on this website are WONDERFUL!”

Source: Associated Press

the fourth-largest tire manufacturer in the world. Workers at Local 850 wanted wages and benefits equal with tire employees around the country.

“For some reason they want to rationalize that since we live in the South, we don’t need the same wages,” said Gerald Dickey, editor of USWA’s *Steel and Labor* and previous Communications Coordinator for the Charlotte drive.

But General Tire was feeling pressure from every direction. Letters on the union’s behalf flooded the company’s desk, from North Carolina Sen. John Edwards, Rep. Melvin Watt, Sen. Ernest Hollings in South Carolina, and the local County Commissioners. The National Labor Relations Board even sent General Tire a court summons for unfair labor practices.

During the year-long strike, USWA members turned protesting into a full-time job, including taking over a meeting of General Tire shareholders in Hilton Head, S.C.

“We stormed in there and interrupted their meeting,” says Nellie Stevenson, who coordinates Local 850’s informational picketing. “We were

singing ‘Solidarity’ and chanting ‘we want a contract’, ‘When?’, ‘Now!’” The Charlotte workers repeated the performance at a shareholders meeting in Germany.

Meeting with workers around the country helped break the feeling that the Charlotte workers were alone. 200 General Tire workers went to Tilton Tire in Natchez, Miss., to help USWA members celebrate a union victory there one year ago. Stevenson organized protest trips all over the country to bring attention to the workers’ plight.

“It was exciting,” she says. “I experienced some things I never thought I’d see in the labor movement.”

But what finally broke the company were protests at car dealerships and stores that carry General Tire. From Sears and Wal-Mart to Ford and BMW dealerships, Local 850 organized three or four “hits” a week during the summer. They picketed at Ford dealerships in Spain, Rome and Berlin. When clients pressured General Tire about the people picketing their storefronts, General Tire listened.

“We demonstrated outside Ford companies around the country to let people know: If you buy a tire from Ford, you are probably buying a tire that was made by unskilled, untrained workers in Charlotte or from Mexico,” Dickey says.

A big reason people buy Ford is to support American auto workers, Dickey added.

Stevenson thinks General Tire underestimated the union, which saw only 15 workers cross the picket lines during the strike.

“We kept people informed – [that’s] the most important issue,” Stevenson says. Local 850 sent out a newsletter every week to all 1,450 strikers, plus the Central Labor Body, an affiliation of 30-40 labor unions all over North Carolina.

When the dust settled, General Tire workers had won \$2.97 an hour in raises and cost-of-living increases, an \$11 a month pension increase, better benefits and better incentive pay.

“It was a victory for all our membership, all 1,450 workers,” says Stevenson. “They [General Tire] gave us things they said they’d never give us. It’s victory all over.”

– Becky Johnson

ONE NATION, MANY PEOPLE**Black Seminoles claim their history – and rights to native land**

FLORIDA – Twenty years before the Civil War and slaves were freed, escaped Africans from South Carolina and Georgia rice plantations battled the U.S. Army to a bloody draw in the Florida wilderness. Resisting being enslaved again, the Africans fought along side Native Americans in a multi-ethnic tribe called Seminoles.

The Africans were such skillful fighters that a U.S. general called the war “a Negro and not an Indian war.” Unable to defeat them, the U.S. Army escorted the Black Seminoles, with their property and weapons, west to land that would become Oklahoma. That compromise ended the Second Seminole War.

Today, about 2,000 descendants of Florida’s early Black Seminoles live in Seminole County, Oklahoma. Called Seminole Freedmen, they’ve held seats on the tribal council of the Seminole Nation since 1866.

But even with that, the Seminole Freedmen are now fighting a new battle in federal court and in Congress. They want a share of federal money paid to the 14,000-member Seminole Nation for land taken from the tribe in Florida and profits from oil and natural gas found on their Oklahoma lands.

The Seminole Freedmen sued the U.S. government three years ago, charging that the Bureau of Indian Affairs excluded them from the \$57 million Florida land settlement. A federal judge dismissed the lawsuit in 1998 on technical grounds. Their attorney has appealed the ruling.

The U.S. government contends the Black Seminoles were slaves when the Florida lands were taken. Since slaves don’t own property, they merit no compensation.

But Velie argues the Black Seminoles were not slaves. The Seminole Freedmen also have asked Congress for \$100 million for mineral rights to oil and natural gas taken from their property.

Not all of the Black Seminoles of the 1800s trusted the U.S. government’s promise of land out west. To avoid being sold back into slavery, some fled to the Bahamas, Cuba and Mexico, where their descendants live today. Others returned from Mexico to Texas after the Civil War and joined the U.S. Cavalry.

Only recently have the far-flung Black Seminoles begun to learn about their ties to the Gullah people in coastal South Carolina and Georgia.

The Seminole Freedmen heard about that connection this summer at a Gullah Connection Symposium in Oklahoma, City, which brought together people from Sierra Leone, South Carolina, Georgia and Oklahoma.

The story was revealing for Seminole Freedman Luther Mason of Sasakwa, Okla., who said: “I knew more of my Indian side than my black side.”

The rest of the country also might hear more of this history, too. If Congress approves it, the National Park Service will receive funding this year to begin planning a six-state Gullah Connection trail. The park service will research, plan and implement the Gullah Connection program with the Penn Center in South Carolina.

– Herb Frazier

MISSING THE FOREST FOR THE CHIP MILL**Communities face off against timber clear-cutters**

RUTHERFORD COUNTY, N.C. – “The Southeast is heaven waiting to happen,” explains Lynn Faltraco. “That’s why they are in here greasing their paws and licking their chops.”

“They” refers to the handful of timber companies who run 18 high-capacity chip mills in the forests of North Carolina. Each mill grinds away 8,000 to 12,000 acres a year of oaks, sycamores, hickories and other hardwoods into sawdust slivers

the size of quarters.

Lynn Faltraco has been fighting chip mills with the Concerned Citizens of Rutherford County since 1995. She’s worried that chip mills will be North Carolina’s next hog farm problem – an unregulated industry that, combined with an unprepared public, could spell disaster for the beautiful forests of North Carolina and the rest of the Southeast.

Nine miles from Faltraco’s home in Rutherford County, N.C., Broad River Forest Products, a Willamette Industries chip mill, has been operating since March 1998. Tourism is an \$83 million dollar industry in Rutherford County, employing over 1000



CHIP MILLS GRIND AWAY 8,000 TO 12,000 ACRES A YEAR OF HARDWOOD FOREST.

people. But turn the area's landscape into a patchwork of clear-cut land, and that badly-needed income is put in jeopardy.

"A tourist is not going to come to North Carolina to look at a chip mill," Faltraco comments.

Meanwhile, critics note that the Willamette employs only seven people – a few to feed the trees to chipping machines and a few to load them on a truck headed for a paper factory in South Carolina. Tax revenue from tourism is sky-high compared to tax revenue from the chip mill. Plus, the county has already been forced to repave roads around the mill due to heavy logging trucks driving in and out.

Still, the county commissioners gave Willamette an industrial tax break last year to set up their mill in Rutherford County.

"A lot of our local issues have revolved around quality of life, like truck traffic safety," Faltraco says. Faltraco's son was run off the road by a logging truck last fall. He came around a curve to find a truck stacked with cut logs straddling the yellow line and heading right for him. "It was a big wake-up call to the whole community," Faltraco remembers.

Most of all, the Concerned Citizens of Rutherford County are in a race with the loggers. Eighty percent of the forests in N.C. are owned by private landowners. Often, industrial foresters with the paper industry or small-scale loggers seeking higher profits advocate clear-cutting as the only method of timber-harvest.

Concerned Citizens are trying to educate local property owners on alternative methods, like selective cutting and rotation cycles. The group began holding landowner outreach meetings, with 70 people at the first

meeting.

"We're not trying to tell the land owner what to do," Faltraco explained. "We just want to provide them with educational tools so they can make good decisions. Most landowners want to be good stewards of the land, of the earth."

Stopping a chip mill before it starts may be the best chance citizens have. The Hickory Alliance is protesting a Godfrey Lumber, Co., chip mill in Pine Hall, N.C. near Hanging Rock State Park. The chip mill was held up in N.C. Superior Court as of October 1999, due to wet land disturbance on the site.

The chip industry may be following a pattern when it comes to building new mills. Pine Hall fits the same profile as Rutherford, where the average salary is \$16,000, voter registration is low and illiteracy rates are 38 percent. Plus, neither town has zoning restrictions. A high-capacity industrial mill can set up in someone's backyard, lowering the property value and raising noise pollution with chip buzzing and logging trucks.

"It is an uphill battle," says Meredith McLeod, community coordinator with the Hickory Alliance. "Local citizens have little or no voice in the permitting and siting process of chip mills."

Each chip mill has to obtain a permit from the Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources, a process that does allow public comment. There might be a small blurb in the newspaper, she explained. But if people miss it, the county decides and it's a done deal.

But why, if chip mills bring in little tax revenue, few jobs, burden local roads and deface hillsides, do counties continue to open their doors to the industry? McLeod said chip mills make promises of

jobs and assets that never surface. Even the logging jobs don't benefit the local area because small-scale loggers will come from far and wide to log a county.

"Once these resources are gone, the county is left with little or nothing," McLeod says, calling the supposed short-term gain into question. "The industry continues to cloud the eye of public representatives."

The U.S. Forest Service just began a two-year Southeast Forest Assessment to look at these issues. By the time the study comes out, another half-a-million acres may be lost in North Carolina alone.

However, in March 2000, the Southern Center for Sustainable Forests will be coming out with the North Carolina Chip Mill Assessment Study, a collaborative project with Duke University, North Carolina State University and the N.C. Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources.

"We were requested to look at the economic and ecological impact of the wood chip industry in North Carolina," said Rex Schaberg, a principle investigator for the two-year study. From community and tourist impact to wildlife and water quality, all results will be turned over to the state.

"There certainly are all sorts of policies the state could enact if they found it necessary," Schaberg said. "We've tried to be as dispassionate and scientific as possible."

"States throughout the Southeast are looking to N.C. to see what kind of facts and figures they come out with," Faltraco said. "North Carolina is serving as a model for what's getting ready to happen in the rest of the Southeast."

– Becky Johnson

CONTRIBUTORS TO SOUTHERN NEWS ROUNDUP

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

Daphne Holden is a graduate student at North Carolina State University, and a research intern at the Institute for Southern Studies.

Becky Johnson is a writer based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Chris Kromm is editor of *Southern Exposure*.



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Roundup Editor,
Southern Exposure
P.O. Box 531
Durham, N.C. 27702
Email: SE@i4south.org
Fax: (919) 419-8315
Call: (919) 419-8311 x26

Will SOA Rest In Peace?

A Congressional victory against the School of the Americas was short-lived – but the infamous military school’s days may still be numbered

FORT BENNING, Ga. – If it’s true that everything has its season, this summer activists thought the time for peace may have finally come to the School of the Americas, or SOA.

On July 30, 1999, the U.S. House of Representatives took a roll-call vote and passed a measure (230-197) that would have partially cut funding for SOA – the military training school that peace activists have been trying to close for almost a decade. [See “The School of Assassins,” Spring 1998]

Activists at the watch-dog group SOA Watch point out that the School has produced a veritable rogues gallery of dictators and human rights violators, including such infamous alumni as Manuel Noriega of Panama, and graduates who were responsible for the assassination of



Photo by Dick Bancroft

OVER 7,000 MARCHED ON SOA IN NOVEMBER OF 1998.

Archbishop Oscar Romero. More than 56,000 members of Latin American militaries have attended SOA since its inception in 1946.

Bad press and popular pressure – which hit its peak in November, 1998, when 7,000 protestors demonstrated at the School – led to the July vote, which saw 58 Republicans, 171 Democrats, and one Independent pass an amendment to

strip away \$2 million of the SOA’s International Military Education and Training funds.

However, when the House went into conference to reconcile its budget with the Senate, the committee voted 8-7 to reject the funding cuts to the SOA – nullifying the House vote last July.

But Heather Dean, Legislative Director at SOA Watch, says the first-ever Congressional win gave them a taste of victory – and hope for the future.

“I’m very optimistic,” Dean says. “Especially given the margin [in the House vote] we had, things are looking good.”

Dean notes that both the House and Senate still have bills that call for the outright closing of SOA, and they’re confident they can line up enough co-sponsors to bring the measures to a vote in 2000.

SOA Watch is also planning another march on the School this November. While hesitant to predict numbers, Dean says they are hoping for “maybe 10,000” – an optimism based on last year’s rally, which drew more than twice what they expected, overwhelming police to the point that no arrests were made.

The time for peace at SOA may be near.

– Chris Kromm



Photo by Jonathan Moller

ADVOCATES OF CLOSING THE SCHOOL HAVE WON SUPPORT FROM CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AND CELEBRITIES LIKE MARTIN SHEEN, (LEFT).

The Greek Divide



Fraternities and sororities remain bastions of segregation on college campuses. Some schools are proposing to bridge the gap – but students don't agree.



By Diane Roberts

“We love everybody – we’re Christians. But that doesn’t mean that we want everybody to be our sister.”

– Sorority member at the University of Alabama

Right on time, into the August heat thick as honey, the Tri-Delts bounce out of their three-story wedding cake of a house, two lines of young women looking Jackie Kennedy-esque in sugary pinks, greens and blues, smiling with unimpeachable welcome. They greet the group of thirty church-dressed girls wilting on the sidewalk, calling them by name: “Courtney! Anna-Kate! Sarah!” They ask in voices like cream, “Are you enjoying rush? Are you having fun? Are you psyched for the football game?”

The girls disappearing gratefully, if nervously, inside the big air-conditioned house will go to seven parties today and seven tomorrow. Then the process of elimination begins: some sororities will invite them back, some not. The girls will accept some invitations and decline others until, in the end, they attend two highly emotional "Serious Night" or "Pref" parties. The next day they must commit, hoping that the sorority they want will also want them.

By day, gangs of girls in pearls with expensive shoes and discreet manicures roam the well-watered lawns of the University of Alabama campus, trying to choose between Chi Omega and Kappa, Tri-Delt and Pi Phi. By night, cohorts of boys in Ralph Lauren pastels wander Old Row, a section of University Boulevard that looks like a plantation house museum, heading for fraternity parties and working out if they want to be a Kappa Alpha or an SAE, a Deke or a Fiji.

These are not inconsequential decisions. Which house you join determines to a large degree your social world: whom you date, whom you befriend, even whom you marry.

It can also determine your political and economic worlds. Fraternities (and now sororities) at Southern universities are players in Southern politics: Andrew Young, former mayor of Atlanta and an Alpha Phi Alpha, got counted-on support from influential fraternity brothers. One-time presidential candidate Elizabeth Dole, a Delta Delta Delta at Duke, enlisted campaign help from sisters across the country. Don Siegelman, Alabama's new governor and a Delta Kappa Epsilon at Alabama, is but the latest alleged recipient of the power and pull of the "Machine," an elite super-fraternity that goes back to the days of Senator Lister Hill.

So university rush isn't child's play, however silly the lip-gloss and the platitudinous party conversations, the silver punch bowls and the tears might seem. And beneath ritual anxiety of rush, a more serious social drama is unfolding.

Although the University of Alabama has a substantial minority enrollment — 14 percent African-American — fall rush

No college presidents in the South suggest that fraternities and sororities go co-ed, but the problem of racial division exercises administrative brains at many Southern institutions.

is almost all white. There are four historically black sororities at Alabama (Alpha Kappa Alpha, Sigma Gamma Rho, Delta Sigma Theta and Zeta Phi Beta) and four historically black frats (Alpha Phi Alpha, Kappa Alpha Psi, Phi Beta Sigma, and Omega Psi Phi), but they seek new members during spring semester in a more sober fashion, akin to job interviews rather than fashion shows or cocktail parties. That rush is almost all black.

At this moment, there is not a single integrated fraternity or sorority at the University of Alabama.

But all this may change if the University of Alabama administration has its way. Last year, President Andrew Sorensen put together a Task Force for Greek Diversity, charged with finding ways to bring the racially-divided rush seasons together and encourage crossing the color line in membership. This would revolutionize a century-old system one University of Alabama professor calls "apartheid."

TWO WORLDS

While both rushes are theoretically open to everyone, regardless of race or religion, in reality almost no one crosses the color bar. In 1998, two young black women did rush, but neither received a bid to join a white sorority. Hank Lazer, assistant vice president for

undergraduate programs and a member of Alabama's Greek Diversity Task Force, says, "Sure, Greeks claim there's equal opportunity for membership, but when the races are so separate, how inviting is it to try?"

Citing racism, classism, sexism, binge drinking, date rape, and a less than serious attitude toward study, some colleges in New England such as Williams and Bowdoin have done away with sororities and fraternities. Dartmouth, known as the Ivy League's party school and home of the original "Animal House," plans to force its Greek houses to become "substantially co-educational." James Wright, President of Dartmouth, told *The New York Times* that he wants to "re-imagine" campus life, crossing "lines of race and of background as well as lines of gender." Dartmouth students are protesting vociferously.

No college presidents in the South suggest that fraternities and sororities go co-ed, but the problem of racial division exercises administrative brains at many Southern institutions. The University of Mississippi has deferred rush for the white fraternities and sororities until late September, giving students a chance to bond with their college and their classmates before disappearing into mostly all-white houses. According to Ron Bender, Director of Greek Affairs at UNC, rush in Chapel Hill has not only been deferred until after classes begin, but the university discourages expensive rush wardrobes and downplays alumni recommendations, trying to attack the class divisions — almost as important as racial divisions — that have always plagued the Greek system.

Alabama's task force is modest in its recommendations, encouraging a gradual shift in emphasis from fall rush to spring, sponsoring a convocation with the governing bodies of both white and black fraternities and sororities participating, and trying to foster "non-traditional" participation in rush.

The current set-up is Byzantine: white sororities are run by Panhellenic, white fraternities by the Interfraternity Council, and black sororities and fraternities by Pan-Greek. In addition, while white

fraternities and sororities rush freshmen and a few sophomores, black fraternities and sororities do not consider anyone for membership until he or she has been on campus at least one semester and established an academic and service track record.

TWO HISTORIES

And as if this clash of rush schedules isn't enough of a roadblock on the path to unity, white and black Greek groups grew out of vastly different social circumstances and ultimately have different goals. Herman Mason, an expert on black fraternities, national archivist for Alpha Phi Alpha (the oldest black Greek organization) and author of two books on the fraternity, says that while some of the fraternal ideals were taken from white models, "the symbols and names are very much connected to African-American history."

Alpha Phi Alpha was founded in 1906 at Cornell (the oldest black sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, was founded in 1908 at Howard) at a time, Mason notes, of terrible racism and violence towards African Americans. "Lynchings were abundant. Jim Crow was the law. Black fraternities supported each other and lifted people up."

In contrast, white fraternities were mostly an offshoot of Freemasonry, founded both to inspire high ideals in the young members of the ruling class and cement their hegemony. White fraternities have not been embattled minorities since the Masonic scare of the 1840s, which forced America's first fraternity, Phi Beta Kappa – now an academic honorary – to go public with its secret rituals.

White sororities, mostly founded between 1851 and 1910, were initially a feminist response to fraternities, appearing at mostly women's colleges. The late Miriam Locke, Professor Emerita at the University of Alabama and a founder-member of the Kappa Kappa Gamma chapter there, once remarked that girls used to join sororities to meet other girls passionate about learning.

"The men tended to get all the educational opportunities. In a sorority, girls could band together and study," Locke

We Greeks thought of ourselves not as rump segregationists but as an elite, upholding standards of ladyhood and scholarship, while partying hard.

said. "Nowadays I'm scared that all they're interested in is drinking and such."

It's fair to say that all Greeks, male and female, black and white, are into drinking and such. They all have theme parties, formal dances, swap dinners and socials. They all counter, with some justification, that they do a great deal of charity work for everything from Habitat for Humanity to diabetes research.

To the outsider, one frat boy or sorority girl might seem much like another. But that's like saying one Christian is just like another Christian. A high-church Episcopalian isn't the same as a foot-washing Baptist. There are differences in style and sensibility.

A former president of Kappa Alpha (KA brothers call themselves "the last Southern gentlemen") was recently quoted in *Salon* magazine saying, "I can't imagine why anyone would join a fraternity that did not celebrate his heritage."

Joycelyn Carr, a member of Delta Sigma Theta at the University of Alabama, concurs, saying that "black sisterhood" is at the center of her sorority experience: "Not every woman – regardless of race – is Delta material."

CAMPUS REBELS

I was – am – in a sorority (they teach us that sisterhood is forever). I pledged Sigma Kappa twenty years ago, when being Greek was uncool, especially at Florida State, "the Berkeley of the South."

We Greeks thought of ourselves not as rump segregationists but as an elite, upholding standards of ladyhood and scholarship, while partying hard. Of course, my house, like all the other Pahnellenic sororities on campus, was all white: no one who wasn't white even went through rush. We thought we were on the cutting edge of diversity when we pledged a Jewish girl. And we had five or six actual Catholics.

We would have rejected the idea that we were racist, that the system was racist. Most of us believed in integration, in equal rights, in social justice, even if we did laugh at mildly racist jokes, even if we were thrilled to get an invitation to Kappa Alpha's party, "Old South," to which our dates wore Confederate uniforms and we wore hoop skirts.

When I came to teach at the University of Alabama in 1990, it didn't look like much had changed in the Greek world. The white fraternities and sororities had huge plantation-style houses. The KAs still flew the Confederate battle flag. The black fraternities had step-shows attended by mostly black students.

White racism reared its head in more striking incidents. A cross was burned on the lawn of Alpha Kappa Alpha when they moved into a house on campus; a black homecoming queen was booed by white fraternity boys; and a couple of white sorority girls went to a "Who Rides the Bus?" social in blackface with afro wigs and basketballs shoved under their dresses.

But to its credit, the University of Alabama has grown since the days that George Wallace famously stood in the door of Foster Auditorium in 1963, trying to bar the admission of Vivian Malone and James Hood. The school actively (if incompletely) has taken steps to deal with its egregious Jim Crow past, building a thriving African American Studies program, boosting undergraduate minority enrollment to 18 percent, and aggressively recruiting African-American professors. But in a state that is 25 percent African American, nobody thinks that enough has been done.

Hank Lazer recalls that Greek integration was raised in the faculty senate over

fifteen years ago, and it's taken this long to address the issue formally. He says he's a bit disappointed in the tepid measures taken to bring black and white students together in one rush, but points out that "it is a mark of the maturity of the institution that we are able to discuss it at all."

Pat Hermann, a white English professor, takes a much harder line. Hermann has repeatedly called on the university to shut down all "apartheid" fraternities and sororities (some of whose houses are on university land) until they integrate.

Perhaps the biggest roadblock is that the sister and brothers – both white and black – don't agree. Delta Joycelyn Carr says, "diversity training is one thing, but forcing people to integrate is too extreme."

A member of Pi Beta Phi, a white sorority, who did not want to give her name, said that if integration occurs, "it needs to come from the students. If we're forced into it, we'll rebel."

Cedric Rembert, a chemical engineering major and president of the African-American Pan-Greek umbrella, says he has no problem with the university trying to promote mixing of blacks and whites under the Greek aegis: "It's certainly worth doing. Maybe Alabama will be a model for other places."

But Rembert, a member of the historically-black Omega Psi Phi fraternity, resists compelling Greeks to change their rush customs and membership traditions. "Opportunity to join is one thing," he says, "but no one should be forced to be in any one group."

RADICAL CHANGE

None of the students I talked to said they felt threatened by the university's push toward Greek integration. They don't believe it will happen soon – not during their time at Alabama, anyway.

Herman Mason, however, thinks African-American Greeks *ought* to feel threatened. "This whole thing endangers our traditions. Fraternities and sororities are private organizations, after all."

Mason speaks of how black fraternities and sororities have been instrumental in the fostering of a black middle class and

One of the *sub rosa* fears of alumni and some students (mostly white) is that integrating Greek houses will lead to interracial dating, still a taboo in much of the South.

invaluable networking opportunities for African Americans that have to live and work in a majority-white world.

"I would shudder to think that there would be a mandate to integrate," Mason says.

Besides, he points out, Alpha Phi Alpha has been integrated – a bit – since the 1940s, when the fraternity took its first white member at the University of Chicago. In fact, all the other historically black Greek national organizations are integrated, just in small numbers.

Outside of the South, white fraternities sororities are taking more and more Latino, Asian and black members. Every once in a while, a Southern white Greek chapter will have one, maybe two, black members. But this is rare and, for the University of Alabama administration, not good enough.

"The real world, the business world, is not all black or all white," says Dr. Charles Brown, co-chair of the university's diversity committee. "You need to communicate with people different from you."

While nobody is satisfied with the task force's recommendations, he feels Alabama is ahead of other large Southern universities. Indeed, the University of Georgia, FSU, Ole Miss and North Carolina have no concerted Greek integration plans.

Darrell Ray, assistant coordinator of Greek Life at Georgia and former vice-president of Pan-Greek at the University

of Alabama, says there's a "lack of desire" for Greek integration, though he points out that several new white fraternity "colonies" (re-established houses) have some African-American members.

Ron Bender says the UNC administration has chosen not to formally mandate integration. "There are many ways of being Greek and no one way is the right way," he says. There are the usual historically white and historically black sororities and fraternities at Chapel Hill, but also a Native American sorority, a multicultural sorority, and a Christian fraternity with a half-black, half-white membership. The white Sigma Nus and the black Alpha Phi Alphas hold a joint party every year, and a black frat has even taught a white one how to step dance.

At Alabama, the social lives of Alabama's Greeks remain segregated. One of the *sub rosa* fears of alumni and some students (mostly white) is that integrating Greek houses will lead to interracial dating, still a taboo in much of the South. But almost no one will say this out loud, preferring to talk about how political life in the student government remains segregated.

So it will be interesting to see what will happen at Alabama, if white Greeks remain white – and in charge – or if diversity slowly and organically prevails. Or maybe the administration, wanting to distance itself from the University of Alabama everyone remembers – George Wallace shaking his fist at Civil Rights, Autherine Lucy being attacked on her way to the library – will impose radical change.

"I do not intend to mandate integration within the Greek system on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion or gender," Alabama's President Sorensen insists.

But, he warns, if nothing changes, further steps will be taken.

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Diane Roberts is a writer, radio commentator, and the author of *The Myth of Aunt Jemima*.

45 Years After **BROWN**

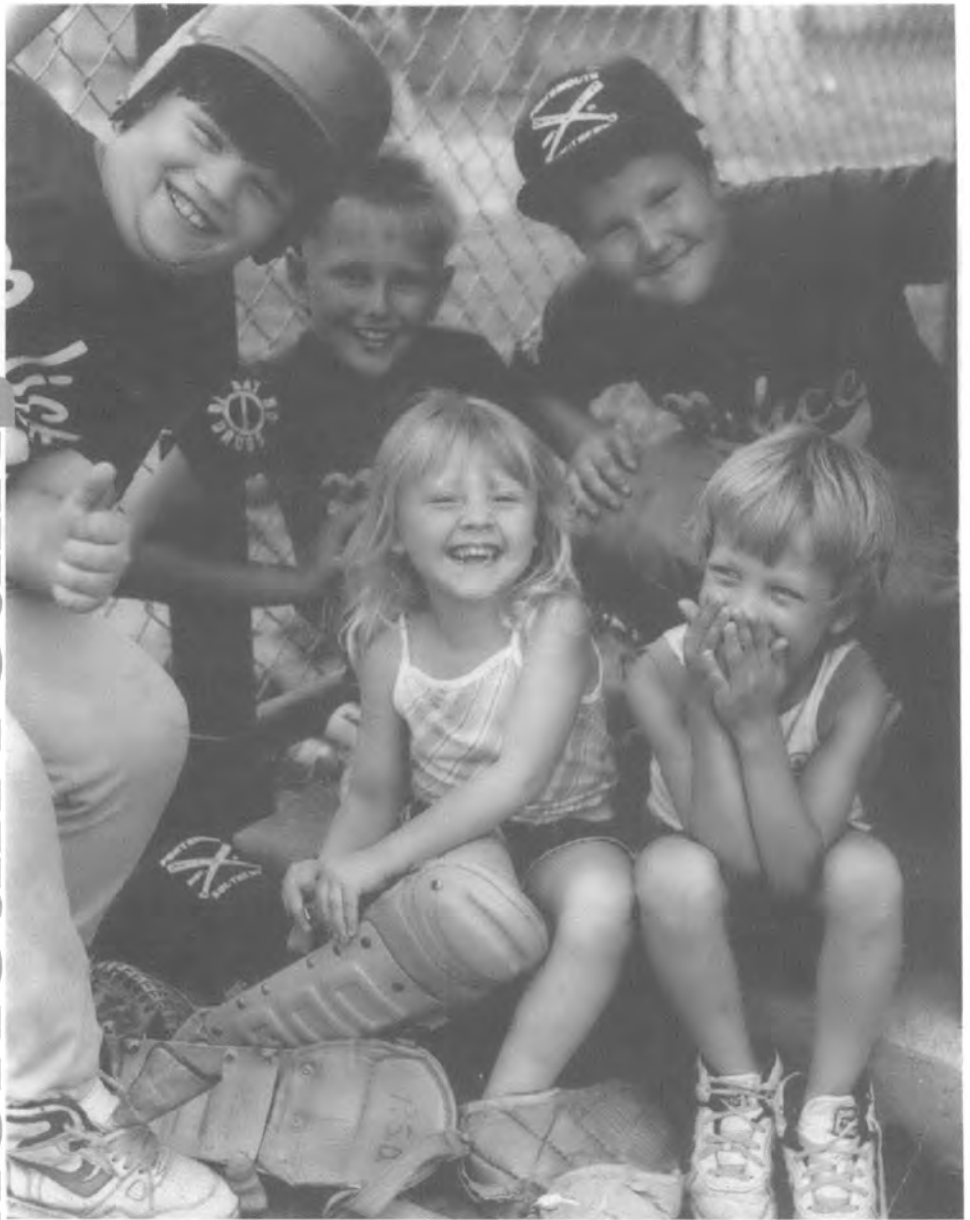
A photo essay by Alan Wieder



Alan Wieder finds, through his camera, that schools are two worlds—separate and unequal—from the very start



American reality



I had always viewed my street portraits of children in South Carolina as a celebration of the racial and ethnic diversity that exists in the state. My perception of these portraits conflicted with the overwhelming current literature that documents the segregation — both in where our children live, and where they go to school — that continues as the American reality.

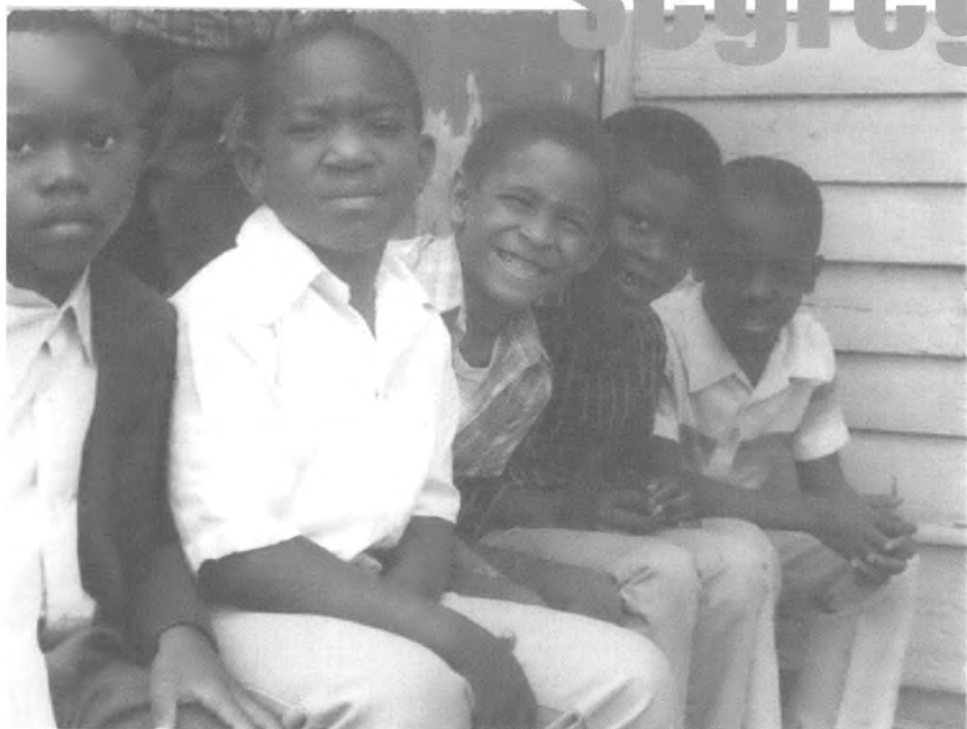


As I studied the hundreds of portraits of South Carolina children that I have made over the last ten years, I realized that they, too, document segregation as the present reality. The only photographs that could be referred to as multicultural were taken at the University of South Carolina childcare center.

I took pictures at schools, parks, churches, camps, little league games, rodeos, professional sporting events, and everywhere in the state. After studying the prints, it became clear that they document that segregation is not only present, it is poignant.

the beauty

documents the segregation



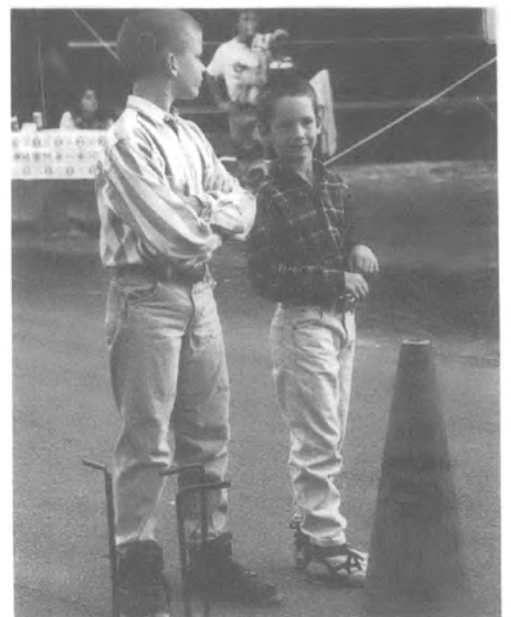
of childhood

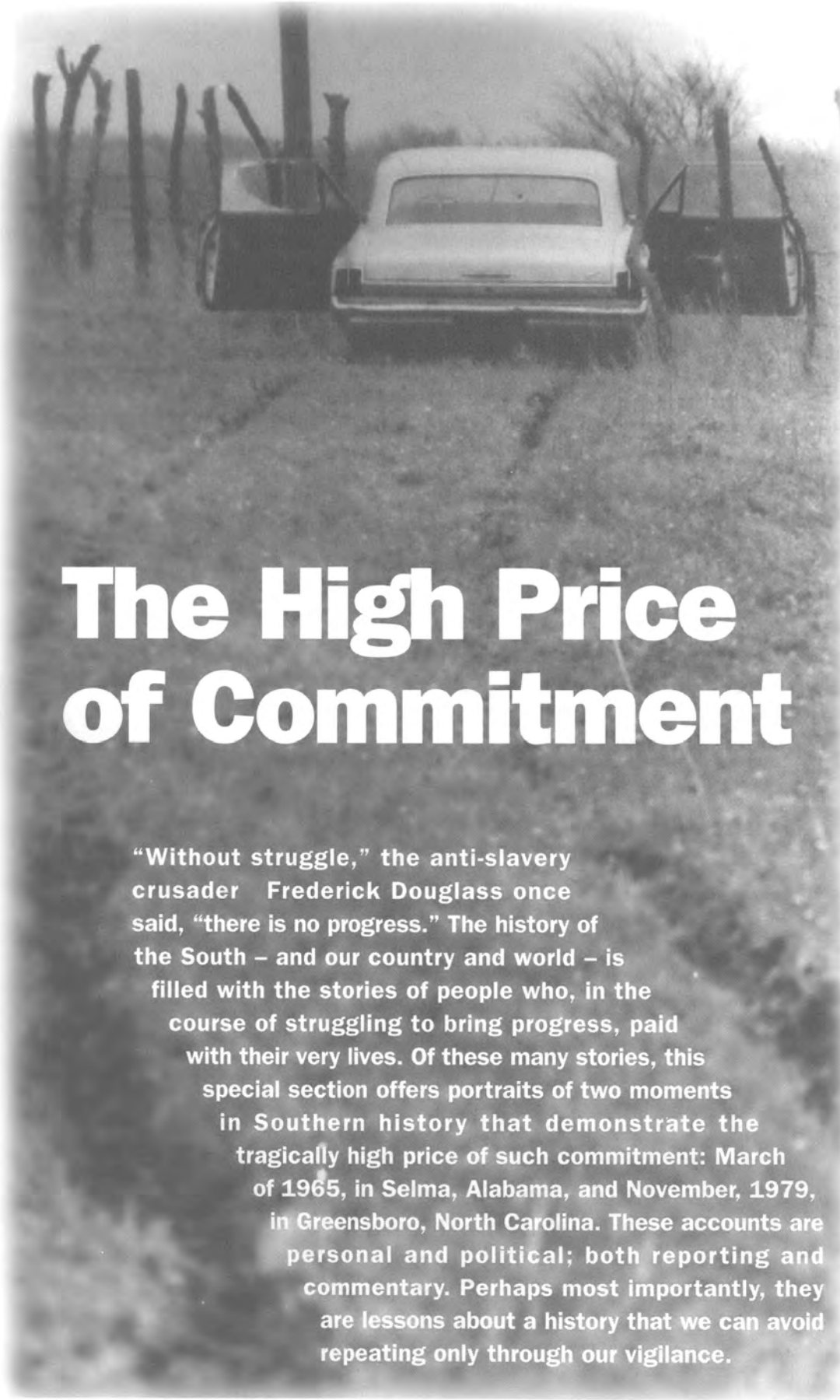


the “yet to be United States of America.”

These photographs picture children that are happy and sad, sweet and sour, energized and tired, poor and rich, black and white. Although they portray the beauty of childhood, they also portray the racial divide that still exists in what Dick Gregory has referred to as the “yet to be United States of America.”

Alan Wieder teaches at the University of South Carolina. He is currently in South Africa working on an oral history of apartheid era teachers. His photo essay, “The Redneck Shop,” appeared in the Spring 1998 issue of Southern Exposure.





The High Price of Commitment

“Without struggle,” the anti-slavery crusader Frederick Douglass once said, “there is no progress.” The history of the South – and our country and world – is filled with the stories of people who, in the course of struggling to bring progress, paid with their very lives. Of these many stories, this special section offers portraits of two moments in Southern history that demonstrate the tragically high price of such commitment: March of 1965, in Selma, Alabama, and November, 1979, in Greensboro, North Carolina. These accounts are personal and political; both reporting and commentary. Perhaps most importantly, they are lessons about a history that we can avoid repeating only through our vigilance.

Alabama, 1965

Viola Liuzzo died for her convictions in the 1960s

From

freedom movement, and is the only white woman

Selma

honored on the Civil Rights Memorial. But few

to

know her story – and why authorities conspired to

Sorrow

keep her from being known as a hero.

By Mary Stanton

Photo on previous page: Deep tire tracks trace the course of the car driven by Viola Liuzzo, after she was shot to death between Selma and Montgomery.

“This is not a monument to suffering. It is a memorial to hope,” says Maya Linn, designer of the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama. On November 5, 1999, the memorial which commemorates the many lives lost during the movement, celebrates the 10th anniversary of its dedication.

On the memorial’s circular black granite table, forty names are braided in gold block letters. They form a circular timeline, beginning with the Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision declaring school segregation unconstitutional, and ending with the 1968 murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. – space has been left between the first and last entry to honor the names that have been lost or forgotten.

A decade ago, six thousand people had gathered on Washington Avenue, in front of the Southern Poverty Law Center, to dedicate the monument. Many were relatives, friends or comrades of the forty martyrs etched in stone: 29 black and seven white men; four young black girls killed in the 1963 Birmingham church bombing; and one white woman, whose story remains virtually unknown: Viola Gregg Liuzzo.



A red and white Impala full of angry Klansmen prowled the streets of Selma, Alabama, on the evening of March 25, 1965. The Voting Rights March had ended that afternoon, and federal troops were everywhere. Frustrated by the tight security, the Klansmen decided to return to Montgomery. Maybe they could provoke some trouble there.

Turning onto Water Avenue, they spotted a white woman in a car with a black man stopped at a traffic light. Viola Liuzzo and Leroy Moton were also heading back to Montgomery, to pick up a group of marchers who were waiting to return to Selma.

"Will you look at that," one of the Klansmen said. "They're going to park someplace together. I'll be a son of a bitch. Let's take 'em."

Weeks later, one of the Klansmen – Tommy Rowe – would tell a grand jury that they followed Mrs. Liuzzo's car along Highway 80 for the next twenty miles. When she realized she was being tailed, she accelerated to almost 90 miles an hour. They tried to pull alongside her green Oldsmobile four times, but each time they were forced to drop back – first by a jeep load of National Guardsmen, next by a highway patrol unit, then by a crowd of black marchers trying to cross the highway, and finally by a truck in the oncoming lane.

"That lady just hauled ass," Rowe testified. "I mean she put the gas to it. As we went across a bridge and some curves, I remember seeing a Jet Drive-In Restaurant on my right hand side. I seen the brakes just flash one time and I thought she was going to stop there. She didn't ... she was just erratic ... Then we got pretty much even with the car and the lady just turned her head solid all the way around and looked at us. I will never forget it in my lifetime, and her mouth flew open like she – in my heart I've always said she was saying, "Oh God," or something like that ... You could tell she was startled. At that point Wilkins fired a shot."

Viola Liuzzo, a housewife and mother of five from Detroit, Michigan, was killed instantly. Leroy Moton, covered with her blood, escaped by pretending to be dead when the murderers came back.



1949: VIOLA LIUZZO AT 24 YEARS OLD.

I was eighteen years old, living in a white working class neighborhood in Queens, New York, with my parents when the news of the Liuzzo murder broke. I remember clearly the reactions in my house. "What was she doing down there, a woman like that, old enough to know better?" "Why would a woman with five children go to Selma? Was she crazy?" "Where was her husband? Couldn't he stop her?"

The evening news reported that Mrs. Liuzzo had been murdered near Montgomery a few hours after the Voting Rights March ended. Liuzzo was 39 years old. She was one of 25,000 demonstrators who had answered Dr. King's call to march to the state capital in support of a federal voting rights bill, and to deliver a petition to Governor George Wallace demanding protection for blacks as they tried to register to vote.

Because the Impala filled with Klansmen (including Tommy Rowe, who was on the FBI informer payroll) spotted Liuzzo leaving Selma with a black man sitting in the front seat of her car, she lost her life. And because the Birmingham FBI tried to cover up their carelessness in permitting Rowe – a known vio-



VIOLA LIUZZO'S FRIENDS AND FAMILY — INCLUDING SARAH EVANS, CENTER — SORT THROUGH THE THOUSANDS OF LETTERS THEY RECEIVED WITHIN HOURS OF LIUZZO'S DEATH.

lent racist – to work undercover and unsupervised during the march, she also lost her reputation.

FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover himself crafted a malicious public relations campaign to blacken Liuzzo's name in an effort to deflect attention from his Bureau. He successfully shifted the country's concern from a brutal murder to a question of Liuzzo's morals.

Hoover was desperate, and for good reason. He had to bury the fact that Rowe had telephoned the FBI on the day of the Liuzzo murder to report that he was going to Montgomery with other Klansmen, and that violence was planned. While Rowe claimed not to have known exactly what the plans were, he said Grand Dragon Robert Creel told him personally, "Tommy, this here is probably going to be one of the greatest days of Klan history." That remark later led to speculation (never substantiated) that the Klansmen were scouting for an opportunity to kill a much more prominent figure – possibly Martin Luther King, Jr.

Hoover eagerly accepted Klan assistance in generating ugly rumors about Viola Liuzzo, and seduced the American press with a series of carefully engineered "leaks." His caricature of Liuzzo as a spoiled, neurotic woman who had abandoned her family to run off on a freedom march took hold. Years of unrelenting accusations of her alleged emotional instability, drug abuse, adultery, and child abandonment nearly destroyed her husband and five children.

Until the Liuzzo family obtained access to the FBI files through the Freedom of Information Act – nearly fifteen years after her murder – they did not know that the slander had originated in the office of the FBI's director.

In 1982, during a campaign for renewal of the Voting Rights Act, *Washington Post* columnist Jack Anderson observed that

"evidently aware of the embarrassment the FBI would suffer from the presence of its undercover informer in the murderer's car, J. Edgar Hoover marshaled the Bureau's resources to blacken the dead woman's reputation. This came at a time when the Bureau was also trying to smear King and find links between the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Communist Party."



Despised as an "outside agitator," Viola Gregg Liuzzo was in fact raised in rural Georgia and Tennessee. She grew up during the Depression in a Jim Crow culture of segregated schools, movie theaters, department store dressing rooms, water fountains, and churches. Her family moved to Ypsilanti, Michigan, in 1941 in search of war work at Ford's Willow Run bomber plant. In 1942, 18-year-old "Vi" Gregg moved on to Detroit by herself, where she met Sarah Evans, who would be her closest friend for twenty years.

Sarah Evans, a black woman from Mississippi, encouraged Vi to join the NAACP, begged her not to go to Selma, and ultimately raised Vi's youngest daughter Sally, who was only six when her mother was murdered.

Until 1963, Vi Liuzzo lived a somewhat ordinary life. She kept house for her husband, Jim, a business agent for the Teamsters, and helped her five children with their homework, planned birthday parties, took the girls antiquing and the boys camping, and went back to work as a hospital lab technician when Sally started school. Realizing that more education would allow her to advance, Vi – a high school dropout – took and passed the admission test to Wayne State University.



1995: SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE/WOMEN MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS GATHER IN PRAYER AROUND THE RECENTLY DEFACED MONUMENT OF VIOLA LIUZZO IN HAYNEVILLE, ALABAMA.

At Wayne State, a wider world opened to her. She read Plato, who defined courage as knowledge that involves a willingness to act, and Thoreau, who believed that a creative minority could start a moral revolution.

Even though she was Roman Catholic, Vi began attending services at the First Unitarian Universalist Church just two blocks from the Wayne Campus. It was a congregation committed to social justice; many were former Freedom Riders. She also attended weekly open houses hosted by chaplain Malcolm Boyd, who defined himself as a "Christian existentialist:" "We are what we *do*," Rev. Boyd told his students, "not what we think or say."

In this morally-charged atmosphere, Vi Liuzzo made her decision to respond to Dr. King's national call for help. She volunteered for the transportation service with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. On her first day in Selma, she met fellow volunteer Leroy Moton, 19. She would later be accused of having an affair with this young man, who was the same age as Sarah Evan's grandson, Tyrone.

Mrs. Willie Lee Jackson, a member of the SCLC's food service committee, offered Vi a bed in her home along with six other women who had come to march. Vi stayed with the Jacksons all week, making arrangements for Mrs. Jackson's daughter,

Frances, and her five-week-old baby to come to Detroit and stay with the Liuzzos so she could finish high school. "She was very helpful with my children," Mrs. Jackson remembered. "Seems to me she really loved children."



Six hours after Viola Liuzzo's murder, Klansman Tommy Rowe called the Birmingham FBI to report that he knew who her killers were. Early the next morning, Rowe, 31, and three other white men were arrested – Collie Leroy Wilkins, Jr., 21; William Orville Eaton, 41; and Eugene Thomas, 43. Rowe was granted immunity for his testimony for the prosecution.

The trial of Wilkins, identified as the trigger man, opened on May 3, 1965, in Hayneville, Alabama. His defense attorney, Matthew Hobson Murphys, Jr., was Grand Klonsel of the United Klans of America. Robert Shelton, the Imperial Wizard, sat at the defense table throughout the trial.

"I'm proud to be a white man," Murphy told the jury, "and I'm proud that I stand up on my feet for white supremacy, not the mixing and mongrelization of the races."

For three days, Klonsel Murphy hammered away at two themes: that Tommy Rowe had broken his Klan oath of loyalty

in testifying against his fellow Klansmen and therefore could not be trusted, and that Mrs. Liuzzo was a white woman alone in a car with a black man at night, and whatever happened to her was her own fault.

The prosecuting attorneys – Arthur Gamble, Joe Breck Gantt, and Carlton Prudue – seemed either unwilling or unable to create sympathy for Viola Liuzzo as the victim of a brutal murder. “I’m a segregationist, too,” Gantt assured the jury, “but we’re talking about murder here.”

“I don’t agree with the purpose of this woman either,” Gamble offered, “but gentlemen, she was here and she had a right to be here without being killed.”

The trial ended in a hung jury. It wasn’t the outcome the Klonsel and the Imperial Wizard hoped for, and they had to cancel their “acquittal party.” But when journalist William Bradford Huie asked Murphy what he thought his chances were of getting an acquittal at a re-trial, the Klonsel replied: “Acquittal is certain. All I need to use is the fact that Mrs. Liuzzo was in the car with a nigger man and she wore no underpants.”

A second Alabama jury cleared Wilkins of all charges. None of the Klansmen were ever convicted of murder, but were sent to prison instead on federal charges of conspiracy to violate Mrs. Liuzzo’s civil rights.

Wilkins and Thomas were sentenced to ten years in federal prison and served seven. Eaton died of a heart attack before he could begin his term, and Tommy Rowe was slipped into the Federal Witness Protection Program.

In 1977, after using the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act to uncover the FBI’s role in destroying their mother’s reputation, the Liuzzo family brought suit against the federal government for negligence. They charged that the FBI knew Tommy Rowe and his fellow Klansmen were planning violence on March 25, 1965, yet did nothing to prevent it.

The case came to trial in 1983, but Federal District Judge Charles Joiner rejected the suit. In a 14-page opinion, he held that “Rowe did not kill, nor did he do or say things causing others to kill. He was there to provide information, and his failure to take steps to stop the planned violence by uncovering himself and aborting his mission cannot place liability on the government.”

Tony Liuzzo, wearing a white cardigan sweater that had belonged to his father (who had died five years earlier), burst into tears. Helen Fogel, reporting for the *Detroit Free Press*, summarized the situation succinctly: “For nearly a decade,” she wrote, “Tony Liuzzo lived and worked for the day when the word of a federal judge would show the world what manner of men his mother’s killers were, and make her heroism clear: even to doubters.”



Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney, the young men murdered during the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964, were already civil rights heroes by the time of Viola Liuzzo’s murder. They were all young men of promise. A white activist college student, a selfless white social worker, a black community worker determined to fight for the freedom of his people – these were positive images.

Viola Liuzzo, however, was too old, too pushy, too independent, and she trampled on too many social norms to be a hero.

She’d ventured beyond the role of wife and mother to demonstrate on behalf of a social movement that a majority of white Americans felt was already moving “too fast.” Viola Liuzzo’s activism couldn’t be chalked up to youthful idealism. Hers threatened the family, the protected status of women, and the precarious balance of race relations.

Ironically, she’d been murdered precisely because she afforded such a clear symbol to the segregationists – a white female outside agitator driving after dark with a local black activist. This all resonated for them. In choosing her, the Klansmen sent a clear message that Northern whites and Southern blacks would understand.

In the cases of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney, the families worked hard to ensure that their sons would not be forgotten. All three families had been supportive of their sons’ involvement in the movement, while Jim Liuzzo had been more ambivalent.

After Vi’s murder, Jim found himself continually defending her reputation, refuting the vicious rumors, and trying to protect his children. He told a reporter for the *Free Press*, “My wife was a good woman. She’s never done anything to be ashamed of.” Two days after her funeral, a cross was burned on his lawn in Detroit.

Viola Liuzzo’s children were taunted by their classmates, shunned by their neighbors, and shamed by the cloud of suspicion that hung over their mother’s activism. She became the single most controversial of the civil rights martyrs.

I never forgot about her, about how angry people were at her. And I never forgot how they seemed to lose track of just who the victim was.

And gradually, I understood that Viola Liuzzo’s story is of an ordinary woman whose simple desire to be useful collided with America’s belief that change was happening too fast – and lost her life and her reputation for her trouble.

In this sense, we can see clearly in her life what author Melissa Fay Green once observed: “After the fact, historians may look back upon a season when a thousand lives, a hundred thousand lives, moved in unison; but in the beginning there are really only individuals, acting in isolation and uncertainty, out of necessity or idealism, unaware that they are living through an epoch.”

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Mary Stanton is the author of From Selma to Sorrow: The Life and Death of Viola Liuzzo (University of Georgia, 1998).

North Carolina, 1979

The Klan's murder of five activists in

The Cry

Greensboro – and the movement that

Was

followed – was a turning point in our

Unity

country's struggle against racism.

By Anne Braden

The massacre of anti-Klan demonstrators on the streets of Greensboro, North Carolina, by Klansmen and Nazis on November 3, 1979, and the protest march that brought 10,000 people there on February 2, 1980, produced a major turning point in this nation's struggle against racism. These events created a new unity among people's movements and touched off a decade of activism at a critical moment.

Pictured in backdrop: The February 2, 1980, march on Greensboro.

THE GREENSBORO MASSACRE

A TIMELINE

NOVEMBER 3, 1979:

Nine cars carrying 35 self-avowed Ku Klux Klansmen and Nazis drive to an African-American housing project, where an anti-Klan demonstration, called by the Communist Workers Party (CWP), is assembling peacefully. About 100 demonstrators are singing freedom songs; some have brought their children. In the broad daylight and in front of four TV cameras, the Klansmen and Nazis fire 39 gunshots. Four demonstration leaders are killed at the site – Cesar Cauce, Bill Sampson, Sandi Smith, and Jim Waller. A fifth, Michael Nathan, dies two days later. Ten other people are wounded, one critically. Six demonstrators are later arrested on felony riot charges. Fourteen of the 35 Klansmen and Nazis are subsequently arrested.

FEBRUARY 2, 1980:

A march organized by an unprecedented coalition of civil-rights groups and endorsed by more than 300 national organizations brings 10,000 people to the streets of Greensboro. Organizers say

Five demonstrators were killed by Klansmen and Nazis on November 3rd, and several more critically injured.



constituencies in the thousands, and despite a curtain of fear that enveloped the city, an estimated 2,000 of the marchers were Greensboro citizens.

The historic rally was organized in the face of huge obstacles. Within hours after the November 3rd massacre, the city and state developed a position saying the tragedy was in fact a “shoot-out,” a confrontation between two equally reprehensible groups, the racists and the

Communist Workers Party (CWP), which had called the fall demonstration.

Despite the fact that TV footage showed Klansmen and Nazis shooting point-blank at unarmed demonstrators, this official version was picked up by the mass media in Greensboro and elsewhere; they never challenged it then or later. The November 3 survivors were depicted as villains, glad to sacrifice their loved ones to get martyrs for their cause.

In such a climate, the February march organizers had to fight the city for a permit and file court action to get use of the Greensboro coliseum. Agents of the FBI, the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI), and the Community Relations Service of the U.S. Justice Department visited campuses, churches, and individuals to tell them that there would probably be violence. Government pressure caused buses to cancel. The governor called out the National Guard, and the city declared a state of emergency. (On February 2, the marchers walked four miles in sub-freezing temperature in a spirited but peaceful fashion; the Klan did not appear.)

In a statement issued after the February 2 march, the coalition that had organized it said: “We believe we have tapped the sentiments of a new majority in this country – people who are alarmed at the new rise of racism in our land and who are willing to transcend the differences in theology, ideology, and philosophy that have previously divided them – and to act in unison in new crusades for justice in the coming years.”

This side of the Greensboro story – the renewal of a vital, anti-racist movement in this country – will probably receive scant attention in mainstream accounts as we come to the 20th anniversary of the 1979 murders. But the story of how that movement was built is especially important today, as the nation faces a new wave of racist violence.

The February, 1980, march responding to the Klan attacks was one of the most broad-based and diverse anti-racist actions ever mobilized in this country, and a symbol of changing times among social change activists. About 60 percent of the marchers were African-American, just under 40 percent white. They came from the entire Eastern Seaboard, the South, and the West, and represented countless civil rights groups, religious institutions, unions, students and many left political groups. Many of the more than 300 national endorsing organizations had



The Greensboro massacre came at time when social-justice activists in the South and the nation were splintered. After the movements of the 1960s were debilitated by government repression at the end of the decade, many young people – both people of color and white – turned to self-styled revolutionary organizations. Left-wing parties and politics proliferated; rivalry and sometimes hatred between them were intense. Most of them had thinly-concealed contempt for forces that had been movement allies in the 60s, such as groups based in the religious community. In turn, faith-based organizations were frightened of the radical groups.

I witnessed this period of splintering first-hand when an organization I had spent 17 years in, the Southern Conference Education Fund (SCEF), was destroyed by infighting in six months (I now suspect the government was involved). But I recall sitting at one of those contentious SCEF meetings with a friend, and saying, “You know, all these people will be back working together someday – because if you live and work in the South, whether you’re black, white or green, you know down deep that the main issue in this country is racism.”

Looking back, I think 1980 proved me right.

I first learned about the Greensboro massacre on Saturday night, November 3, when Rev. Ben Chavis called me from prison in North Carolina. Chavis was known as one of the “Wilmington 10,” who were serving long prison sentences on charges many thought were trumped up, accusing them of burning a grocery during protests against racism in the schools and violent attacks by Klansmen in Wilmington, N.C., in 1971. Chavis was the first African-American leader in the state to speak out in support of the victims and survivors of the Greensboro massacre.

The CWP scheduled a funeral march for Sunday, November 11. I did not know any of the CWP people, but I was a product of the civil-rights movement, where it was understood that “when someone is killed, you go.” I left a conference in Nashville Saturday night to drive over the mountains in the blinding rain. It was pouring rain in Greensboro, too, but almost 1000 people came out for the march, despite an intense campaign by public officials urging people to stay away. As we marched through the streets, the National Guard lined each side – with guns pointed at us.

When I returned to my home in Louisville, there was a message from an ex-SCEF colleague who had not spoken to me for three years. I returned the call, which came from Greensboro. The first words I heard were: “Well, what do you think?”



Photo by Steve Murray Photography

After the waning of the civil rights movement, the Klan re-asserted its presence and power. This sign “welcomed” visitors to Smithfield, North Carolina, for years and was only taken down in the late 1970s.

“What do I think about what?” I replied.

“What we should do about Greensboro,” came the answer. And that’s what we talked about. We worked together for a year, as did many others who had been estranged from each other. One day we finally decided to talk about the SCEF split, but the conversation was short – it didn’t seem important anymore.



While social-justice forces had been devouring themselves with internecine warfare in the 70s, the Klan had been organizing. Many of us had thought the Klan had been destroyed by the momentum of the 60s and some criminal prosecutions. But we became aware that it was far from dead – it was growing.

We sent observers to the Klan’s rallies and learned they had a new line. They weren’t against black people, Klansmen said, they were for white people. Blacks were now getting everything, and

the purpose of the march is to “say NO to racism” and “lay claim to the 1980s.”

JUNE-NOVEMBER, 1980:

Six Klansmen and Nazis are tried for murder in state court. Before the trial, the prosecutor tells the press: “I fought in Vietnam, and you know who my enemy there was.” The defendants plead self-defense. An all-white jury acquits them, despite viewing slow-motion videos that show the Klansmen and Nazis calmly taking guns from car trunks, loading them, and firing point-blank at unarmed demonstrators. The state never tries any other attackers; riot charges against the demonstrators are also dropped.

1980-1983:

Documentation emerges that agents and informants of the Greensboro police, the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms (BATF), and the FBI helped organize the November 3 attack, that their superiors may have been involved, and that they knew of the Klan/Nazi plans to fire on demonstrators. A police informant working inside the Klan led the Klan caravan to the demonstration site. Evidence also develops that the State Bureau of Investigation (SBI), Community Relations Service of the U.S. Justice Department, and FBI worked intensively to derail public protests against the killings. National pressure builds for federal prosecution of the killers.

JANUARY – APRIL, 1984:

Nine Klansmen, including the police informant, are tried in Federal Court in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The chief federal investigator is the same FBI agent who had investigated the CWP in the early fall of 1979. Again, an all-white jury acquits the Klansmen. The defendants again plead self-defense, and successfully argue that the civil rights law under which they were indicted requires proof of racial motivation, and that their motive was not racial but political: they were patriots who only wanted to confront communists.

FEBRUARY – JUNE, 1985:

A large civil rights suit filed in 1980 by widows and survivors of the massacre comes to trial in Federal Court. A six-person jury (this time including one African American), rejects many victim claims, but finds seven Klansmen and Nazis, two Greensboro police officers, and the police informant liable for Michael Nathan's death. His widow and daughter are awarded \$350,000. The city of Greensboro, while refusing to admit complicity, pays the entire judgement – for Nazis and Klansmen as well as the police.

it was whites who were discriminated against – and the Klan would fight for their rights. It was the first time we heard the concept of "reverse discrimination."

Despite their warmed-over image and sometimes-peaceful rhetoric, the new Klan was very violent. In May 1979, during a demonstration led by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Decatur, Alabama, Klansmen shot at Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) president Dr. Joseph Lowery and his wife Evelyn, and wounded three demonstrators.

The episodes of violence multiplied. North Carolina was a hotbed; several Klan factions were based there, and in September 1979, Klansmen joined with Nazis to form the United Racist Front.

The organized response started after the Alabama shooting. SCLC mobilized a march two weeks later that brought 3,000 people to Decatur. Walking along a road that day, Rev. C.T. Vivian, then on SCLC staff, and Marilyn Clement, director of the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), decided there must be a new coalition to mount a counter-offensive.

Bridge-building between erstwhile hostile groups began when Vivian organized a conference of people in Norfolk, Virginia, from diverse groups. The National Anti-Klan Network was born, adopting a four-point program: direct action, political action, legal action, and outreach to youth.



The barriers really fell, however, in December of 1979. The Rev. Lucius Walker of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), with SCLC's support, issued a call for a conference in Atlanta that December to organize an offensive against not only the Klan, but what we called "the Klan mentality" in high and respectable circles.

The events of November 3 provided an unprecedented sense of urgency. People from 100 organizations descended on Atlanta, including Greens-



In a prelude to the Greensboro killings, armed Klansmen confront demonstrators in China Grove, North Carolina, in July of 1979.

boro survivors. Movement activists who had not spoken for years planned together in workshops. Leftists no longer looked down their noses at the religious people, and the church people were not keeping the leftists at arm length. We called it "the spirit of Atlanta."

It was here that the call was made for all people concerned about the rise of the right to come to Greensboro on February 2 – the closest Saturday to the 20th anniversary of the civil rights lunch-counter sit-ins that began there in 1960. The call said we should reclaim that *other* Greensboro heritage which activated the 60s for justice.

Bolstered by the power of the February 2 march, the National Anti-Klan Network dug in to build a nationwide movement. It had no money, but it set up an office in Atlanta and soon was working with victims of racist violence across the country, helping communities organize, taking delegations of victims to lobby in Washington, pounding on Justice Department doors demanding action. It also got the National Education Association to develop a curriculum on the history of racism in America.

In North Carolina, where officials were still calling violent Klan incidents "isolated pranks," Rev. Wilson Lee of Statesville documented a statewide pattern after a cross was burned on his lawn. North Carolinians Against Racist and Religious Violence (NCARRV), led by Mab Segrest, built a broad campaign against the far-right onslaught, and by the 1990s, with legal help from the Southern Poverty Law Center, had pulled the fangs of the most virulent groups in that state. In the

Photo courtesy of Anne Braden



More than 300 groups across the country united for the February 2, 1980, march against Klan terror, despite the prevailing climate of fear.

meantime, the Anti-Klan Network broadened its mission, became the Center for Democratic Renewal, and today is a center of organization against the continuing epidemic of hate crimes in the nation.



The weakness – some would say a fatal one – in the unity that developed in response to Greensboro was that its relationship to the victims was always tenuous. Many committed anti-racists did not want the CWP involved because they felt that their tactics, while not the cause of the November 3 killings, had made it easier for the Klan to attack. The CWP was removed from the February 2 march planning committee the week before the event.

The stated reason was that the CWP's representatives refused to issue a public pledge not to bring guns to the march. CWP leaders said they refused because they, like all participating groups, had already pledged a non-violent march, no other group was asked for any further statement, and they felt an additional statement from them would give credibility to the government's line that the communists themselves caused the massacre.

I never agreed with the majority stance against the CWP. Maybe this was because, in the 1950s, I had been demonized in Louisville and painted a villain in similar anti-communist hysteria.

One could legitimately disagree with the rhetoric of the CWP which had announced its demon-

stration as a "Death to the Klan" event. But none of the rhetoric changed the basic danger posed by the fact that the Klan and Nazis could kill unarmed demonstrators in a broad daylight in front of TV cameras. I felt, although this was not the intent of those who rejected the CWP, that excluding them from the planning committee gave the government another excuse for failing to bring the killers to justice.

Because the Greensboro survivors were vilified in the media, most of the public never knew much

about those who died. The CWP always believed they were deliberately selected through collusion of the FBI with Klan and Nazis. At the trial of their civil suit, the survivors introduced an affidavit from a textile worker who swore that she was visited by FBI agents shortly before November 3 and asked to identify photos of two of those later killed. But this woman died before the trial, and the FBI denied her story, so the CWP was never able to prove their contention of collusion in court.

But if someone had indeed hand-picked who to shoot, they could not have done a better job. Those killed were obviously remarkable human beings.

All five had been activists for civil rights and against war in the 60s. Like many youth who lived through that era, they began looking for deeper answers and turned to Marxism. These five found their way to the Communist Workers Party which, like revolutionary groups before it, wanted to organize the working class, and its members got jobs in textile mills and hospitals.

The five victims were college educated. Many such people can't relate to working people, but these activists seemed different. Jim Waller organized a successful strike in his textile mill and was elected local union president. He was a doctor and set up an informal free clinic in his home in the evenings. Bill Sampson, who had graduated from Harvard Divinity School, became a leader in another textile mill and was a shoo-in for election as union president when he was killed. Michael Nathan was a doctor who orga-

Michael Nathan's widow, Marty, divides her share of the judgement with other plaintiffs, who each donate a portion to the Greensboro Justice Fund. Starting with this seed money, the Fund goes on to support dozens of groups working for racial, economic and social justice – thus, the 1979 survivors say, creating a living memorial to those who died.

FALL, 1999:

The Justice Fund, in cooperation with the Beloved Community Center – a faith-based coalition – prepares for a week of events marking the 20th anniversary of the massacre. They host "conversations" across the city, asking citizens to look at what really happened November 3, and stating that Greensboro can never move forward constructively until it comes to terms with this chapter of its past.

For more information about the events on November 3, 1979, there are several sources available. The Institute for Southern Studies report, "The Third of November," was one of the first studies to detail the complicity of the FBI and law enforcement officers in the Greensboro killings. For copies, send \$8 to the Institute for Southern Studies, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702, or call (919) 419-8311 x21. A pamphlet describing the history and legacy of Greensboro is available from the Greensboro Justice Fund, P.O. Box 4, Haydenville, MA 01039-0004, or by calling (413) 268-3541.

nized support for workers at Durham County General Hospital. These three were white.

Cesar Cauce was the son of anti-Castro Cuban refugees; he joined the 60s movement and in 1979 was working at Duke Medical Center and organizing workers. Sandi Smith was a respected African American leader, who had been president of the student body at Bennett College. She had just relocated to Kannapolis to work in Cannon Mills. Nelson Johnson, who was badly beaten but not killed on November 3, was a recognized youth leader in the African-American community in Greensboro in the 60s and became the CWP leader there in the 70s.



Feeling marginalized by the new anti-racist movement that was being built, the Greensboro survivors had to mount their own campaign to establish the accountability of those responsible for the murders, and eventually they did — creating one of the broadest support operations against repression this country has ever seen.

They did it by knocking on doors throughout the country and talking to people, one by one. (Marty Nathan, one of the widows, personally visited every member of the Congressional Black Caucus). Rev. Tyrone Pitts, then staffing the Racial Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches, came to Greensboro and publicly announced support, opening the way for many religious bodies to follow suit.

Eventually, scores of organizations supported a Greensboro civil suit for damages, hard-working lawyers volunteered, and a huge mailing list was built. This mailing list provided the base for on-going fundraising by the Greensboro Justice Fund, now a people's foundation that supports local organizing against racism, thus turning tragedy into a creative vehicle for the future.

Later in the 1980s, the CWP went out of existence, as did most of the 1970s revolutionary groups. Some Greensboro survivors today are very critical of some of their own methods in the '70s — believing that, like most groups that considered themselves vanguards of the revolution, they were too rigid, too convinced that only they had "the truth," and too given to rhetoric out of touch with the people they wanted to reach.

But virtually all the Greensboro survivors went on to lead activist lives. The four widows work steadily to make the Justice Fund more effective. Others work with unions or as community organizers. Nelson Johnson, who comes from a Baptist tradition, studied theology in Richmond for four years and came back to Greensboro in 1989 to found the Faith Community Church. He is again a recognized leader of that city's movements for justice — for worker rights, educational equity, affordable housing, and support for African Americans and the poor who are filling the prisons.



We did prove that huge numbers of people across our nation can be mobilized to say "NO" to racism.

The Greensboro survivors are convinced that the unfinished business of this chain of events is for citizens of Greensboro to recognize and come to terms with the truth about November 3 — perhaps most importantly, the overwhelming evidence of the government's involvement in the massacre. In mid-1980, for example, a *Greensboro Record* reporter revealed that an agent of the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, & Firearms (BATF) was intimately involved. The Institute for Southern Studies documented the role played by the Greensboro police in its fall, 1980, report *The Third of November*, and in July of 1980, Pat Bryant reported in this magazine's pages the efforts of the Justice Department to undermine protest. Even more evidence of FBI and BATF involvement came out in the civil trial (see time-line, pages 29-30).

It is always a wrenching experience for people to believe that their own government can commit crimes, and even murder. But the Greensboro survivors believe this is the road to healing and reconciliation. They have hoped it would begin to happen as the city marks the 20th anniversary of the massacre.

As for those of us who helped organize the movement that came from the Greensboro events, we can hardly say we laid claim to the 1980s as our leaflet for the February 2nd march said we would. We certainly did not rid the nation of racism, or perhaps even begin to touch its deeper manifestations in our institutional structures.

But, in 1980 and in the decade that followed and on into the '90s, we did prove that huge numbers of people across our nation can be mobilized to say "NO" to racism. Today, as almost every day brings news of racist violence — either by vigilantes or the police — we again need the unity and the commitment that fired the movements in the wake of November 3, 1979. To think what might have happened if we had let the Klan and Nazis go unchallenged in their brazen attack on the streets of Greensboro in November of 1979 is to contemplate the unthinkable.

Anne Braden is a long-time activist and frequent contributor to Southern Exposure in Louisville, Kentucky. She was active in the anti-Klan movement before and after Greensboro as a member of the Southern Organizing Committee. Her 1958 book, The Wall Between — the runner-up for the National Book Award — was re-issued by the University of Tennessee Press this fall.

Best of the Southern Press



The 11th
annual
Southern
Journalism
Awards

Each year, *Southern Exposure* and our publisher, the Institute for Southern Studies, honor reporters whose stories broaden the range of issues, voices, and sources covered in the region's daily newspapers through the Southern Journalism Awards.

According to Kynita Stringer, coordinator of the 1999 Awards, the contest is designed "to recognize reporters whose articles demonstrate top-notch research and writing. Winning journalists asked tough questions and wrote difficult stories that helped a community better understand and react to important issues."

This year, the Awards provide samples of the region's best writing in two categories: general investigative reporting, and this year's special category, hate crimes. Winners were selected in divisions based on the size of the newspaper's circulation.

"In part, the making of an award is also a tribute to a reporter's newspaper, for allowing the author the time and resources to develop a story," Stringer says. "These stories demonstrate the best potential of the media to analyze a community's problems—and contribute to positive change."

This year's judges were an impressive cross-section of reporters, editors, and community leaders. We'd like to thank them for their time and effort: Betsy Barton, Cathy Howell, Mike Hudson, Abbie

Illenberger, Jeriann King, Isaiah Madison, Marc Miller, Ron Nixon, Chris O'Brien, Howard Romaine, Sandy Smith-Nonini, and JoAnn Wypejewski. We would also like to thank Gary Ashwill for his meticulous editing, and Kynita Stringer for coordinating another successful year of the Awards.

Following are excerpts from this year's award-winning stories. They stand out as stories that combined up-close investigations with thoughtful analysis of the the issues at hand.

Next year, in addition to our annual awards for investigative reporting, we will present prizes for a new special category: prisons and new approaches to justice. As prison incarceration rates soar in the region and country, this category will look for stories that offer critical reporting on prison conditions and prison policy, as well as analysis of creative alternatives to incarceration and new approaches to crime prevention.

Entry forms will be mailed to newspapers in late November; the deadline for entries is January 15. All inquiries and requests for entry forms should be directed to: Southern Journalism Awards, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702. Fax: (919) 419-8315. Email: [sja@i4south.org].

—The Editors

*First Prize
Investigative
Reporting
Division One*

Dust, Deception and Death

Despite regulations, black lung still claims the lives of thousands of miners each year. Here's why.

By Gardiner Harris

The Courier-Journal (Louisville, Ky.)

Photo by Stewart Bowman/Courier-Journal



In a five-part series featuring articles by Gardiner Harris and Ralph Dunlop, the Louisville Courier-Journal uncovered a quiet but deadly tragedy unfolding in the nation's underground coal mines: 30 years after Congress placed strict limits on airborne dust and ordered mine operators to take periodic tests inside their mines, black-lung disease still contributes to the deaths of almost 1,500 miners every year, largely because of widespread cheating on air-quality tests. And under Kentucky's new workers' compensation law, almost no coal miners qualify for black-lung benefits.

The Courier-Journal's investigation involved interviews with 255 current and former miners and computer analysis of more than 7 million government records. As a result, the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration began spot inspections of mines with impossibly low dust ratings. Several state legislators are pushing for changes in the state workers' compensation system. Kentucky and federal mine-safety officials have agreed to cooperate more fully in the future. Plaintiffs' attorneys and the United Mine Workers of America are exploring whether to file class-action lawsuits against the coal industry. And U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone, D-Minn., has called for Senate hearings into the newspaper's findings.

LOUISVILLE, Ky. – Hundreds of coal miners nationwide die each year of black-lung disease because many mine operators, aided by miners themselves, cheat on air-quality tests to conceal lethal dust levels. And while the federal government has known of the widespread cheating for more than 20 years, it has done little to stop it because of other priorities and a reluctance to confront coal operators, an investigation by *The Courier-Journal* shows.

“Yes, even a cursory look (at federal dust-test records) would lead one to believe that inaccurate samples continue to be submitted in large numbers,” said J. Davitt McAteer, the government’s top mine-safety official.

The result: Many underground miners toil in coal dust so thick that over the years their lungs become choked with scars and mucus, and they eventually suffocate.

In 1969, Congress placed strict limits

on airborne dust and ordered operators to take periodic air tests inside coal mines. The law has reduced black lung among the nation’s 53,000 underground coal miners by more than two-thirds. But because of cheating, the law has fallen far short of its goal of virtually eliminating the disease.

The number of sick miners is unknown, but government studies indicate that between 1,600 and 3,600 working miners – and many retirees – have one of the lung disorders collectively called black lung.

In a year-long investigation, *The Courier-Journal* interviewed 255 working and retired miners in the Appalachian coal fields and analyzed by computer more than 7 million government records. Unearthed was a mountain of evidence that cheating is widespread.

The findings:

■ **Widespread fraud:** Nearly every miner said that cheating on dust tests is common, and that many miners help operators falsify the tests to protect their jobs.

“I’ve never known of one to be taken right, and I was a coal miner for 23 years,” said Ronald Cole, 52, of Virgie, Ky., who left the mines in 1994. Like many of the miners interviewed, Cole has black lung. Two dozen former mine owners or managers acknowledged that they had falsified tests.

■ **Tainted tests:** Most coal mines send the government air samples with so little dust that experts say they must be fraudulent.

■ **Lax enforcement:** The Mine Safety and Health Administration ignored these obviously fraudulent samples for more than 20 years, until *The Courier-Journal* began asking about them late last year. The agency also paid little attention during the 1970s and 1980s to government auditors and outside experts who repeatedly warned about dust-test fraud.

■ **Botched inspections:** Agency inspectors oversee tests at least once a year, but these tests also have been inaccurate. Many inspectors fail to closely supervise the miners taking these tests, and since 1992, 11 inspectors have been convicted of taking bribes. In recent years, the gov-



ernment has improved its test monitoring because the agency is now headed by McAteer, a longtime mine-safety advocate. Yet even today tests that are overseen by inspectors rarely measure the dust levels that miners actually breathe.

■ **The union factor:** Dust tests tend to be taken more accurately at union mines than at non-union mines.

■ **Dirty surface mines:** Dusty conditions and cheating on tests are also common at surface coal mines, and strip-mine drillers are especially at high risk.

■ **Betrayed miners:** Many miners who develop black lung feel betrayed by the state and federal governments when, after years of helping mine operators cheat, they are denied disability payments.

In Kentucky, legislators – at the urging of Gov. Paul Patton, a former coal operator – passed a workers' compensation law in 1996 that made it tougher for black-lung victims to qualify for benefits. The law has cut insurance premiums of

some coal companies almost in half.

"The dust-testing system has been rife with fraud from day one," said Tony Oppgaard, directing attorney of the Lexington-based Mine Safety Project, which represents miners with safety complaints. "It's a national tragedy and a national disgrace."

But coal industry representatives say cheating and dangerous dust levels are isolated problems. They blame most miners' lung disease on smoking. While smoking is common among miners, medical research shows that coal-mine

dust damages lungs in similar ways.

"We have been the victims of allegations of fraud and cheating and not caring about miners since day one," said Bruce Watzman, vice president of health and safety for the National Mining Association. "That's not true in this industry."

Mine-safety advocates and small numbers of miners have said for years that cheating on dust tests was the reason black lung had not been wiped out. But the coal industry has always fiercely denied that, the government has largely ignored them, and most miners have been afraid to ac-

But coal industry representatives say cheating and dangerous dust levels are isolated problems. They blame most miners' lung disease on smoking.

cuse their employers of cheating.

The mine-safety agency did accuse hundreds of mine operators in 1991 of tampering with dust tests during the previous two years, but it failed to prove its case in court, and most of the civil charges were dismissed.

Miners: Tests were always rigged

The *Courier-Journal* has now amassed evidence that dust-test cheating is widespread and has existed much longer than the mine-safety agency ever alleged or openly acknowledged.

That new evidence includes 234 current and former miners who said in interviews that they, or others they witnessed, routinely falsified tests.

Common practices they described include running sampling pumps less than the required time or placing them in clean air away from working areas. Scores of miners said they had never seen a dust test done correctly. Just 21 of those interviewed said they had no knowledge of cheating. While some miners said they are bullied into falsifying tests, many others said they participate because they think mines will close.

"You either do it or the mines shut down," said Elmer Causey, 43, of Viper, Ky. He left mining in 1992 with black lung. "And if the mine shuts down, you ain't got no job. And if you ain't got no job, you got no food on the table."

Few other jobs in the coalfields pay nearly as well – the state says the average Kentucky coal miner made about \$40,000 last year working 49 hours a week.

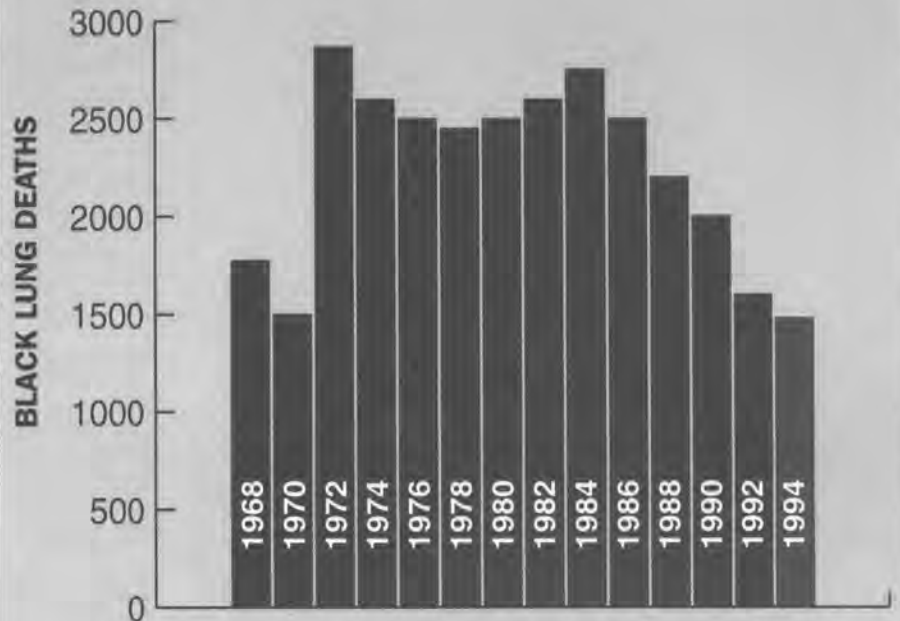
The evidence includes the finding that, in 1997, at about half the nation's underground coal mines, at least 15 percent of the air samples taken in working areas were almost dust-free.

"When you go to Louisville and have your lungs checked and you come up with second-stage black lung, and them (dust-testing) machines are showing it's dust-free, something's wrong," said Jerry Cornett, 40, a miner from Baxter, Ky.

And the evidence includes 25 former mine owners or managers who told The *Courier-Journal* that they cheated on the tests because they would have been at a competitive disadvantage if they had not.

BLACK LUNG DEATHS

Chart shows coal miners whose death certificates listed black lung as a cause of death. Data since 1994 are not available.



Source: National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

"The health of the men never entered into it," said Gordon "Windy" Couch, 58, of Clay County, Ky. Couch was the safety director of giant Shamrock Coal from 1977 to 1992. "Controlling the dust just wasn't part of the calculation. Production was number one."

A lawyer for Shamrock said he wouldn't respond to Couch's accusations. The company has been sued by 19 of its former employees, who allege that cheating on dust tests caused them to get black lung.

While the government said in the 1991 crackdown that no miner had been hurt by the cheating, The *Courier-Journal* found that thousands of miners have been disabled or died. Between 1972 and 1994, the deaths of 54,248 U.S. miners – 3,007 in Kentucky – were blamed at least partly on black lung. The precise number harmed by cheating is unknown because many were exposed to high dust levels before 1972, when the strict dust limits ordered by the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969 went into effect. Recent research also suggests that some

miners would get black lung even if dust levels were consistently low.

But black-lung researchers said the lower incidence of the disease among British miners – who worked in government-owned mines where dust-test cheating was rare – is strong evidence that hundreds of American miners fall ill every year because of widespread fraud.

Safety vs. disease

Black lung's grisly toll has been ignored largely because mine explosions and cave-ins have gotten most of the attention from the federal mine-safety agency and the public. But regulators' focus on accident fatalities ignores a simple fact: Black lung displaced accidental deaths as the principal killer of miners at least 50 years ago.

Only 30 coal miners died in accidents nationwide last year – five in Kentucky – making 1997 the safest year ever. In 1994, by comparison, the death certificates of 1,478 former miners nationally – 81 in Kentucky – listed black lung as one of the causes of death, according to the Na-

IMPOSSIBLY LOW DUST LEVELS

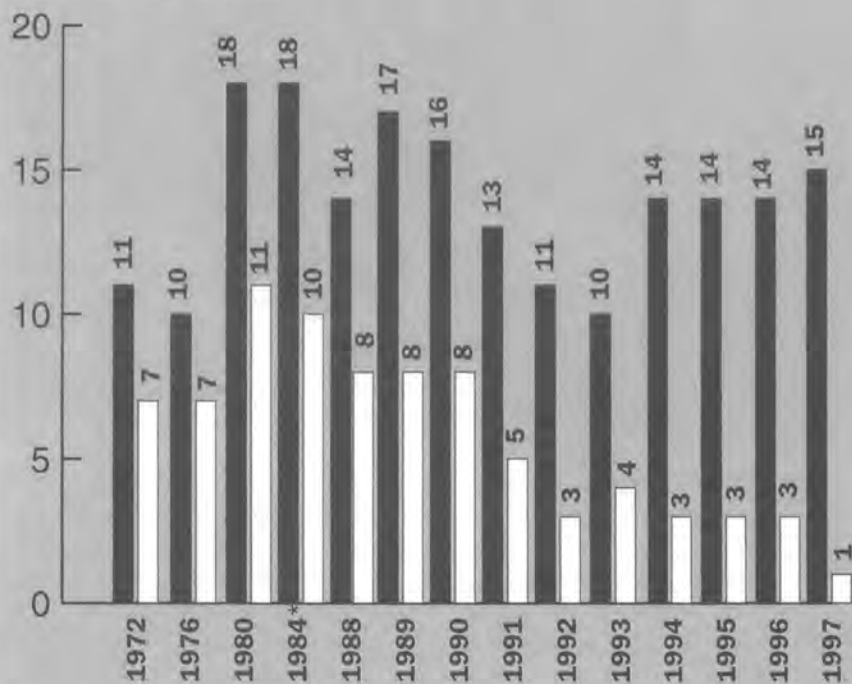
OPERATOR

Percentage of dust tests that underground mine operators took where miners dig into the coal that contained just 0.1 mg. of dust per cubic meter of air — an amount that experts say is impossible to achieve.

* Results for 1984 and 1988 include the handful of anthracite coal mines in the United States, because the data for those years did not identify mines by type of coal. It is plausible that anthracite mines could have 0.1 mg. dust readings. In other years, only data for bituminous coal mines are included.

INSPECTOR

Percentage of dust tests supervised by government inspectors that had impossibly low readings of 0.1 mg. of coal dust per cubic meter of air.



Source: Courier-Journal computer analysis of U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration records.

tional Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, or NIOSH. (More recent national numbers aren't available, but 1995 and 1996 figures from the four states that account for most black-lung deaths didn't change significantly.)

Two NIOSH studies of black lung's prevalence provide another picture of its impact. The last reliable study, done from 1985 to 1988, showed that 7 percent of miners had the disease. MSHA officials now say about 3 percent of miners have black lung, but that figure is based on an unscientific survey of miners who volunteered for chest X-rays from 1992 to 1995.

While that survey was flawed, it did find numerous black-lung victims who had started work after the new dust limits went into effect in 1972.

For example, Ben Vanover didn't start mining until 1973. By 1985, after working for seven different coal companies, his breathing was so bad that he would often drop to his knees and lean against the mine wall to catch his breath. He quit. The Mine Act proclaims that miners should be able to work their entire adult lives — 45 years — without fear of getting black lung. Vanover, 57, of Stanville, Ky., made it just 12 years.

The Floyd County resident, who says

“You can't run a mine, make money and pass a dust test. The profit margins are too slim.”

he quit smoking in his 20s, now sleeps with an oxygen mask but still wakes up two or three times a night, gasping for air. In a recurring nightmare, he's being pulled underwater.

“You don't think too much about it when you go into the mines, but once your breathing gets bad you realize you made a mistake. By then you already got it, and it's too late.”

Vanover will join his father, father-in-law and generations of Appalachians who have died of black lung. This tradition has bred a fatalism in the coalfields that helps explain why miners help operators cheat and don't complain openly about dust.

“Almost every family in Central Appalachia has a family member who died of black-lung disease,” said Ron Eller, director of the University of Kentucky's Appalachian Center. “It's as ordinary as diabetes or high blood pressure or cancer in the region.”

Lives vs. profits

Researchers, safety advocates, and union officials insist that coal can be mined safely and profitably — something the industry says it is doing — but most miners and mine managers interviewed said underground mines would close if operators had to pay the costs needed to keep coal dust within federal limits. The managers say they are squeezed by cheap coal from huge strip mines in Wyoming.

“You can't run a mine, make money and pass a dust test. The profit margins are too slim,” said Paul Gilliam, 46, of Mayking, Ky., who retired in 1991 after 22 years working as a mine superinten-

dent and foreman.

Controlling dust requires more workers and slows production. It takes time to hang plastic ventilation curtains that direct clean air to a mine's working areas. The curtains are constantly knocked down by equipment, and miners leave them down because they reduce visibility. Water lines and sprays that hold down dust often clog.

Hundreds of miners said they scramble to put up curtains, fix water sprays and perform other required dust-suppression tasks only when a supervisor calls from the surface to warn them that a federal inspector has shown up.

How mines cheat

Underground coal-mine managers are required to test the air for five consecutive days or shifts every two months. They do this by pinning a pump about the size of a brick on the belts of miners who work in the most dust. A tube attached to a miner's collar snakes down to the pump – weighing one to two pounds – which draws dust through a filter inside a plastic cassette. A government laboratory weighs the cassette to determine the amount of dust in the mine's air.

Miners are supposed to keep the pump running for eight hours while they do their normal work. Most miners interviewed say they don't.

"I'm not going to lie to you," said George Bevins, 49, of Jenkins, Ky., who left the mines in 1992. "Most of the time, we just turn them off."

Often miners take off the pumps and hang them where the air is clear of dust, they said. That can be an intake passage-way, where fresh air is blown in from the surface, or the power center, where much of the mine's equipment gets electrical power and where most miners leave their lunch pails.

"I've seen the men put them in their dinner buckets, and I've seen the superintendent put them at the power center where there is no dust," said Lenville Bates Jr., a 24-year-old miner from Thornton, Ky. He said he has worked for three coal companies in the past year.

Many miners said they never get a chance to test the air because their bosses

don't distribute the pumps. Instead, they said, tests are run in the intake air or outside of the mine – or not at all.

Many mines hire a contractor to supply dust-testing equipment. "The operator would have some contractor drop them off after we went underground," said Earl Shackelford, 37, of Wallins Creek, Ky., who was a foreman until he was injured in 1993. "We would never know they was there until quitting time."

Connie Prater McKinney, who runs a contracting company based in Floyd County, Ky., was convicted in 1995 along with a co-worker of doctoring dust tests for five mines. They put the samples in coffee cans filled with coal dust, shook the cans and pulled out the samples when they had the right amount of dust.

McKinney refused a request for an interview, saying she has put the conviction behind her. She still works as a dust-sampling contractor.

Some miners agree to cheat because of a simple threat: "If you turn them on, you are fired," said Crawford Amburgey, a miner for 30 years who retired in 1993 and lives in Letcher County, Ky. "I was told that many times."

But most miners interviewed said their foremen never threaten them directly. Instead, the mine superintendent or safety director weighs every sample. If a sample looks as though it might have too much dust, many superintendents void it and make the miner who took the test wear the dust pump every day until he gets a test that will pass.

Troy Weaver of Coldiron, Ky., remembered the only time he actually wore a dust sampler correctly. "I got a bad sample, and they told me in front of everybody that I would be carrying that thing for the rest of my life if I didn't get a good sample," said Weaver, who worked underground for 18 years until 1991. "So I took it in there the next day and set it at the breaker box (in clean air) and got them a good sample."

Choking dust levels

The result of all this cheating, say miners, is choking levels of dust.

Billy Ray Stidham of Slemp, Ky., who left the mines in 1993 after 20 years, said, "You'd get dust balls in the corner of your

"His face was black when he'd come home. You could see his eyeballs, and that's about it."

eyes. Your throat gets dry and scratchy and full of grit. You'd vomit because it made you sick. You'd get dizzy because you can't get enough air. You'd start aching between your shoulder blades because you'd cough so much."

Dozens of miners described dust so thick they couldn't see their feet or the head lamps of other miners. Those who are still working spit up coal dust every morning.

Watzman, of the National Mining Association, said claims that mines are routinely dusty are "hearsay."

"I've heard these accusations in the past," Watzman said. "If those conditions exist, MSHA inspects them and, if there are exceedences (in dust levels), they write citations."

Indeed, MSHA cited 32 percent of the nation's underground mines in the 1996 fiscal year for excessive dust and related violations – even with all the problems with dust sampling.

Dusty conditions have been routine for so long that many miners see nothing wrong with them. Buddy Lilly, 53, of Cool Ridge, W. Va., said the dust where he worked was not all that bad.

Lilly's wife told a different story. "His face was black when he'd come home," Brenda Lilly said. "You could see his eyeballs, and that's about it."

Last year, after experiencing shortness of breath, Buddy Lilly got a chest X-ray. He had worked in the mines for only 19 years, and he had never smoked. But the film revealed that he had an advanced form of black lung. It usually kills quickly.

"It was quite a shock," said Lilly.

SE

Mystery Illnesses

*Second Prize
Investigative
Reporting
Division One*

Interviews with over 400 people living near federal nuclear weapons facilities reveal serious health concerns — will the government fully investigate?

By Laura Frank, Susan Thomas, and Robert Sherborne
The Tennessean

Photo by D. Patrick Harding/The Tennessean



A FORMER WORKER AT SOUTH CAROLINA'S SAVANNAH RIVER SITE, FREDDIE FULMER, 41, HAS TROUBLE CARING FOR HIS SON JESSE DUE TO MULTIPLE HEALTH PROBLEMS.

In a series of articles published on September 29, 1998, The Tennessean reported the medical sufferings of some four hundred people living in the vicinity of federal nuclear weapons facilities in eleven states, recording an array of unexplained and sometimes bizarre ailments. The reporters avoided making any assertions about the cause of these illnesses, and did not label what they had uncovered an epidemic. Instead, they emphasized the sufferings, struggles, and puzzlement of the victims as well as the government's unwillingness to provide medical help or even to commission studies to find out what was wrong, and whether the weapons facilities played any role in the illnesses.

Critics attacked at once. The Wall Street Journal accused the newspaper of fomenting hysteria, costing "millions of dollars in wasted scientific studies," enriching trial lawyers through "billions of dollars in lawsuits," and even threatening the nation's nuclear deterrent. But the articles moved many to ask the very questions the Journal wanted to squelch. In the wake of the series, Senator Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) called for a congressional investigation of the illnesses, and the Department of Energy reversed its longtime policy, announcing that the government would help obtain medical assistance, even without direct proof of a "plausible connection."

A mysterious pattern of illnesses – from immune systems gone haywire to brain malfunctions doctors can't explain – is emerging around this nation's nuclear weapons plants and research facilities. The ill live in places unlike others, where poison bomb ingredients wafted into the air, sank into the soil and leaked in the water for half a century.

No one has ever taken a comprehensive look at their health – not the federal government that owns the sites, the public health agencies charged with protecting their well-being, nor the politicians

who represent them in the nation's capital. Scientists have been concerned for decades about radiation from nuclear production and its link to cancer. But the illnesses emerging now are something different.

In 1997, *The Tennessean* found scores of people suffering a pattern of unexplained illnesses around the Oak Ridge nuclear reservation in East Tennessee. This year, the newspaper found hundreds of people with similar illnesses around 12 other nuclear weapons sites nationwide.

"It's like the devil has been let loose in

"It's like the devil has been let loose in my body."

my body," says Freddie Fulmer, 41, a former worker at the U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River nuclear site near Aiken, S.C. Fulmer, declared disabled in 1995, suffers from a degenerative joint and spine disease, kidney ailments, and a rare disorder that causes his immune system to attack, rather than protect, his internal organs.

"Every single morning my whole body hurts so badly I can barely get out of bed to go stand under a hot shower until I can move around using my cane," Fulmer says. "And then there's the weird stuff, like once I had a fever for seven months straight. But, like everything else, the doctors couldn't tell my why or help me."

Fulmer is not alone

He is one of 410 people in 11 states interviewed by *The Tennessean* who are experiencing a pattern of unexplained immune, respiratory and neurological problems attacking their bodies and minds. The newspaper found ill residents and workers in Tennessee, Colorado, South Carolina, New Mexico, Idaho, New York, California, Ohio, Kentucky, Texas, and Washington state. Activists believe many more people are suffering from the illnesses at these and other weapons sites across the nation.

The illnesses, including tremors, memory loss, debilitating fatigue, and an array of breathing, muscular, and reproductive problems, mirror those found in Oak Ridge.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the nation's premier disease tracking agency, is investigating the Oak Ridge illnesses at the state's request. The CDC began its probe in the neighborhood closest to the reservation and so



DONZETTIA HILL OF CLINTON, TENN., WHOSE BRAIN SOMETIMES TELLS HER HEART TO STOP BEATING, BELIEVES SHE IS ALIVE TODAY BECAUSE SHE GOT SPECIALIZED CARE.

far has found severe respiratory problems in a third of the children there. The probe continues. In a separate inquiry, DOE has found higher than expected levels of bomb-grade uranium in the Scarboro community.

They want answers

Top scientists say the newspaper's finding are disturbing.

"Four hundred people is a lot of people," says George W. Lucier, director

of the environmental toxicology program at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, one of the National Institutes of Health. "It's not just two or three. It is something widespread ... At least the wheels should be set in motion in which a team of physicians can go in and look at things more systematically."

Many of the ill believe their ailments stem from exposure to dangerous substances that were released into the environment around the nuclear weapons

sites. They have no evidence. Their belief stems from what they see happening to themselves and others. Their stories are anecdotal, not scientific.

And that lies at the heart of their struggle.

The government has traditionally required proof of harm before medical help is offered. So either the ill must prove toxic exposure has hurt them – which scientists say they have little chance of doing – or hope the nation will take action now on anecdotal evidence and try to help them. Leading scientists differ on that issue.

"I empathize with people who are sick. They want answers," says John Till, president of the scientific research firm Risk Assessment Corp. in Neeses, S.C., which conducts studies for DOE. "But you still have to go back and see if any releases could have caused health problems."

Top DOE officials say that is exactly the tack the department has chosen.

"Where there's a plausible connection we'll follow up on it," says Peter Brush, an attorney who, as acting assistant secretary for environment, safety and health, is the department's top health official. Through ongoing studies, "we're looking for some plausible connection between the work that went on at these sites and health consequences for workers or neighbors."

But these studies have not asked about these ill people – instead they've focused on such things as the levels of poison in ants in Idaho and turtles in Tennessee.

CDC Deputy Director Dr. Claire Broome says "Establishing an association between exposures to environmental hazards and chronic diseases is a complex area of scientific investigation." But it is necessary to continue attempts "to detect and investigate health problems that may be associated with hazardous exposures..."

Other top scientists say it is time to consider helping the sick. "It's really inappropriate for us to simply use science as an out, and say 'We just don't understand this, we'll come back when we do,'" says Dr. Bernard D. Goldstein, a member of the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine. "We have to

at least be responsive to people now."

Dr. Howard Frumkin, chairman of environmental and occupational health at Atlanta's Emory University, who has seen some of the ill, agrees: "The more I hear about communities with self-identified health problems, the more the anecdotal evidence satisfies me. One could argue it's neglectful of the government not to look at whether harm has been done to these people. These aren't abstract health worries."

A responsibility to care

Many of the ill are longtime workers at complexes opened during World War II or the Cold War to produce more than 70,000 nuclear weapons for the nation's defense.

"We were saving America," says Ray Guyer, 60, who worked at the Rocky Flats complex near Denver more than 30 years. Doctors found radioactive plutonium in a bone spur from his knee, but they can't explain his dizziness, numbness, rashes, or other health problems.

"We were young and believed in what we were doing," he adds, his voice cracking with emotion. "Now we just need some help."

Political leaders, like scientists, have differing views about what should be done, or when. U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., whose state is home to a major nuclear weapons site, says: "I've been a strong proponent of assuring people injured by their government receive medical advice and assistance. I will encourage the Department of Energy to carefully review these findings and deter-

mine how best to act."

U.S. Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tenn., the only physician in the U.S. Senate, says, "It's important that we find out if there is any

So either the ill must prove toxic exposure has hurt them - which scientists say they have little chance of doing - or hope the nation will take action now on anecdotal evidence and try to help them.

BILL FRIST
TENNESSEE

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4205

November 2, 1998

COMMITTEES
Committee on Health and Transportation
Subcommittee on Labor and Human Resources
Subcommittee on Safety and Health
Foreign Relations

The Honorable Donna E. Shalala
Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Shalala:

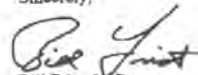
On September 29, 1998, reporters from *The Tennessean* described reports of a pattern of illnesses among residents living near nuclear plants. The *Tennessean* staff interviewed 410 people living in 11 states. The people report ailments including neurological problems, fatigue, respiratory illness, and musculo-skeletal problems.

I am concerned about the number of people and the spectrum of illness described in the newspaper articles. I would like the agencies at Health and Human Services - the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry - to evaluate the data on which the report is based. In particular, I request that the agencies:

- assess the quality and usefulness of the data on which the report is based;
- examine the data for any patterns of illness and assess whether there is sufficient data to establish a relationship to the nuclear plants;
- summarize the current HHS studies that are currently underway at the 11 sites, and whether the ongoing studies will address the health issues raised by the report;
- estimate how the key question raised by the newspaper articles - i.e. whether there is a pattern of illnesses near nuclear plants - could be addressed in a potential study. The response should include the likelihood of a study's ability to find a pattern of illness and whether it would be able to relate health outcomes to exposure to toxic products from nuclear plants and a rough cost estimate for such a study; and
- describe any existing programs at the three agencies that may help address the medical needs of people living near nuclear plants.

The Tennessean has placed the data on which the story is based on their Internet site (www.tennessean.com). I appreciate your efforts to help address this important health issue.

Sincerely,


Bill Frist, M.D.
United States Senator

common denominator in the illnesses reported by some area residents. The health complaints gathered from people living in communities near nuclear plants certainly raise questions. Before drawing any conclusions, however, we must be careful to rely on scientific evidence."

Yet no one knows what can happen to the human body if it is exposed to low levels of many different toxic agents over time. That, experts say, is the most likely kind of exposure these people could have.

They live in places contaminated by an array of exotic metals and chemicals, a spectrum of radioactive substances, and common toxic agents used in wholly uncommon quantities. Among these: radioactive elements like plutonium and cesium; chemical compounds, such as the

solvent carbon tetrachloride and cancer-causing PCBs; toxic metals, such as lead, mercury, and arsenic.

Government officials acknowledge the nuclear development sites are highly contaminated and have launched billion-dollar cleanup plans. But, they say, the contamination rarely reached workers or residents in amounts high enough to harm them.

Hard to show cause and effect

A few of the ill said their health problems began three or four decades ago. Most said symptoms began in the 1980s and 1990s.

Why would people be getting sick now, years after Cold War weapons productions ceased? And why would only some be getting sick? Certainly, most people around these sites remain healthy.

"Those are two hard questions because we don't know what controls the start of disease, says David Ozonoff, chairman of Boston University's Department of Environmental Health and widely considered a top expert in tracking disease and its causes. "The easy part is conceiving that it happens."

"Not everyone who smokes gets lung cancer. And not everyone who gets sneezed on gets a cold."

Few of the doctors to the ill will discuss their health problems – and those who will are at a loss to explain the cause.

"I have patients who live around Rocky Flats," says Dr. Joseph Montante, a Boulder, Colo., physician. "They have chronic cough, immune system suppression, joint pain. But that's an area where it's really hard to show cause and effect."

Dr. W.A. Shrader, a specialist in environmental medicine in Santa Fe, N.M., near the nation's first nuclear bomb lab, says, "A lot of these patients have these bizarre symptoms ... I feel the patients aren't getting the information they need to get to the specialists to get the help they need."

Today, the ill have neither a national network nor a united voice to find out what is going so terribly wrong with their health.

"I rarely leave the house, except for go-

"The government has both an ethical and moral responsibility to come forward and help them as a public health policy, whether specific links between the illnesses and the weapons centers can ever be established."

ing to the doctor or the hospital – that's a pretty lonely life," says Gay Brown, 57, who grew up near the Oak Ridge nuclear reservation. She was a special education teacher before becoming totally disabled in 1977 by illnesses she describes as "weird things going on in my blood and immune system. My bones and muscles hurt so bad at times, I can't stand to be touched. I've got awful skin rashes that won't go away. There's the thyroid problems, memory loss, blackouts...oh, just about everything is breaking down, inside and out."

In many cases, the ill were not aware scores of others in their own communities are suffering like them.

As news of the health problems around the nuclear complexes inches its way to the nation's top medical and scientific communities, more and more experts have begun to call for immediate action.

"It is criminal – there is no doubt these people are sick and need help," says Dr. Victor Sidel, a former president of the American Public Health Association and distinguished professor of social medicine at New York City's Albert Einstein College of Medicine at the Montefiore Medical Center.

Sidel, who is also a co-founder of the Nobel Prize-winning activist organization Physicians for Social Responsibility, adds: "The government has both an ethical and moral responsibility to come forward and help them as a public health

policy, whether specific links between the illnesses and the weapons centers can ever be established."

Nuclear engineer Arjun Makhijani, president of the nonprofit Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, is equally direct: "These nuclear weapons establishments may have harmed the very people that nuclear weapons are supposed to protect. Exposure to these poisons has posed severe health problems for thousands of people living in and around weapons production and testing sites."

"It is time for the U.S. government to take that responsibility, to take these illnesses realistically and to help the sick people."

Emory's Frumkin says these people are different: "They were exposed to excess risk on behalf of the country. If the government did something that might have harmed them, it owes a special debt to these people."

Fulmer, from his Aiken home in the shadows of the Savannah River site's now-still reactors, reflects on what could be. "I'd love to be well," he says finally. "I'd love for the government to look into all these problems and maybe find a way to figure out what's going wrong – and to help us, if anyone can."

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Mining the Mountains

*First Prize
Investigative
Reporting
Division Two*

Strip mining and mountaintop removal has communities facing off against King Coal

By Ken Ward, Jr.

Charleston Gazette / Sunday Gazette-Mail

Photo by Lawrence Pierce/Sunday Gazette-Mail



In his series "Mining the Mountains," Ken Ward, Jr., of the Charleston Gazette (W. Va.), assembled an enormous amount of previously unavailable information about the growth of strip mining in West Virginia and the failures of government to properly regulate mine operators.

Drawing on Ward's research, the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and a group of private citizens, successfully sued federal and state agencies, forcing them to admit that have not properly enforced strip-mining laws. The following article, the first in the series, introduces several of the important issues and players in this ongoing struggle.

SHARPLES, W.Va. – On a cold rainy night last December [1997], more than 125 people gathered to talk about a strip mine. They came from Blair, Clothier, and Sharples to pack the bleachers of an elementary school gym.

Just over the ridge from the school, Arch Coal, Inc. had stripped 2,500 acres of the Logan County hills around Blair Mountain. The company has applied for a permit to mine 3,200 more. If state regulators approve the new permit, giant shovels and bulldozers will eventually lop off the mountaintops of an area as big as 4,500 football fields.

Residents of the tiny communities along W.Va. Highway 17 complained Arch Coal's existing mine already makes their lives miserable. Why, they asked regulators at the hearing, should the company get a permit to mine more?

Melvin Cook of Blair was the first to walk across the gym floor to a microphone and speak up. He complained about the blasting. Arch Coal dynamites rock formations to loosen them, to make it easier to get at the coal underneath. Residents say the blasts toss rocks and dust into neighboring communities. Residents also say blasts shake their homes, crack foundations, and damage water wells.

"You can't bear it," Cook said. "It has torn my house all to pieces."

James Weekly told regulators he's worried the new mine will spread problems toward his home up Pigeon Roost Hollow north of Blair. "We need some laws changed on this stripping," Weekly said.

Dozens of United Mine Workers also filled the gym bleachers. The miners said they wanted jobs at the new mine. But they agreed the company should make sure mining doesn't disturb area residents.

"I think you need to spend a whole lot more time and appoint a committee or something or somebody to check this out," said Charles Kimbler, a UMW local president.

More and more coalfield residents are turning out for hearings like the one in Sharples. Regulators and the media are paying more attention, too. Strip mining is a big issue again.

Larger than Logan

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, people complained about strip mining all the time. Activists packed courthouses to lobby against it. Housewives sat down on dirt roads to block coal trucks and bulldozers.

By 1977, Congress was forced to pass the Surface Mine Control and Reclamation Act to protect coalfield residents and the environment. Since then, strip mining

has boomed. Thirty years ago, only about 10 percent of West Virginia coal production came from strip operations.

Today, strip mining accounts for roughly a third of all coal produced in the state.

Earth-moving machines used by coal companies have gotten bigger and bigger. They tower over old-time shovels and bulldozers that stripped coal off hillsides. Today, a few skilled miners working these machines can literally move mountains.

Since 1981, nearly 500 square miles of the state – an area larger than Logan County – has been strip mined, according to the U.S. Office of Surface Mining. In the last five years alone, the average size of new mining permits issued each year has doubled, to more than 450 acres, according to the state Division of Environmental Protection. Last year, DEP issued new permits totaling 31 square miles, an area larger than the city of Charleston.

For the most part, this mining boom went on without public outcry. A few environmental activists and industry lobbyists wrangled about mining rules in Capitol corridors. Government regulators and company lawyers negotiated permits in obscure court hearings. But most people thought the 1977 federal law would rein in the strip miners.

In the last two years, that changed.

Dozens of activists turned out for a "Citizen Strip Mine Tour" to see firsthand the effects of mining on coalfield communities. Hundreds attended a forum in Huntington to learn about environmental dangers of "mountaintop removal" mining.

Residents of Mingo, Logan, and Boone counties came to Charleston several times this year to lobby the Legislature for tougher mining laws. A group of them drove to Washington, D.C., in January to complain to their congressman.

Coal operators say all this attention is unwarranted. Some have hauled out standard jobs-vs.-the-environment arguments. Others insist the fight over stopping strip mining ended decades ago—and that they won.

Officials of a few strip-mining compa-

nies welcomed a closer look. Arch Coal, for example, says scrutiny will show they mine without permanently scarring the land.

"I want everybody to understand that we have been trying to work with the community," said John McDaniel, a top Arch Coal engineer. "It's not as one-sided as everybody tries to make it appear."

Government officials offer mixed views. Some regulators turned to publicly touting their own hard work. Others are offended by the suggestion they do not adequately protect the environment. A few have privately regrouped to see if more needs to be done.

"We think we're doing a daggone good job, but we could always do better," said John Ailes, chief of the DEP Office of Mining and Reclamation.

There's little doubt the federal strip-mining law has made improvements. All mines must get permits from the state or federal government. Operators are required to protect water quality and reclaim mined land. Regulators conduct frequent inspections. Renegade operators are banned from the business.

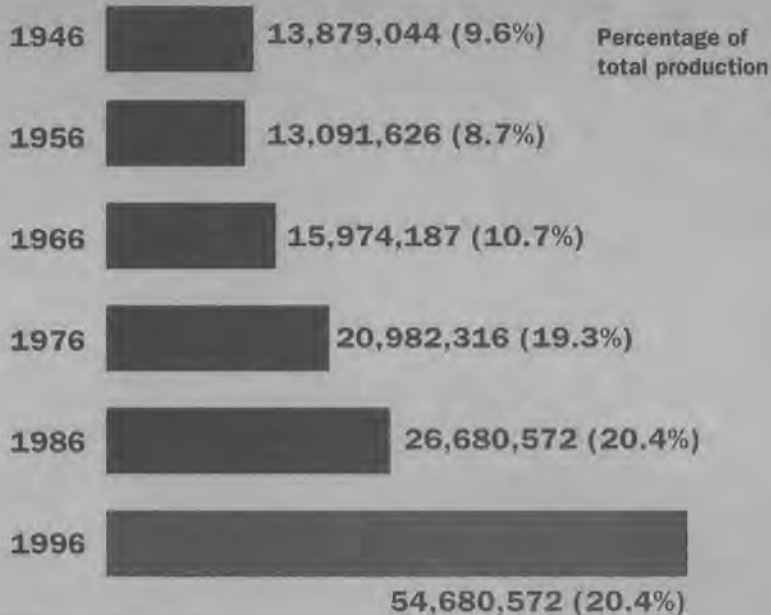
But coalfield residents, environmental lawyers, and regulatory experts have raised serious questions about whether this program works. They ask:

- Is the mining law properly enforced by state regulators? Is more federal oversight needed? Or is the law obsolete and unable to control today's huge mountaintop removal jobs?
- Are operators making coalfield communities unlivable? Does blasting diminish the quality of life? And what about the threat that large valley fills will collapse onto or flood homes?
- Can much of the state's valuable low-sulfur coal only be economically mined by huge machines? Or could operators get at this coal without doing as much damage? Could they use underground mining instead and provide more jobs?
- Can company engineers literally turn mountains upside down and return the land to a usable form? Would sharp peaks be better if they were flattened for shipping malls, factories, and schools? Or

STRIP MINING BOOM

For decades, strip mining accounted for only one-tenth of the coal produced in West Virginia. An industry boom in the last 20 years has pushed that amount to roughly one-third.

Tonnage figures for strip-mine coal production



is strip mining forever ruining West Virginia's hills and streams?

"It's no longer something that is just happening in a little hollow where two or three people are being hurt," said Cindy Rank, mining chair of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy. "It's a bigger issue now."

Spoil and overburden

By late 1995, Arch Coal subsidiary Hobet Mining, Inc., had strip-mined nearly 10,000 acres of Boone County hills and hollows. The company was ready to move west across the Mud River into Lincoln County. In January 1996, Hobet proposed a new operation. The Westridge Mine would strip 2,000 acres and produce more than 3.2 million tons of coal every year for about a decade.

Hobet needed somewhere to put the mountains removed to reach the coal. Coal operators call these mountains overburden. Much of this rock and earth – operators call it spoil once they dig it up – is normally dumped into nearby hol-

lows in piles called valley fills.

In this case, Hobet wanted to fill 2 1/4 miles of Connelly Branch with enough spoil to fill 1.1 million railroad cars, a train that would stretch from Charleston to Myrtle Beach, S.C., and back a dozen times.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency objected.

"Connelly Branch is the longest stream in West Virginia that has ever been proposed to be covered by a valley fill to our knowledge," EPA Region III water division Director Al Morris wrote to the state in September 1996. "The loss of Connelly Branch could possibly affect aquatic life in the Mud River, particularly in combination with other existing and proposed valley fills in the watershed."

Morris said EPA would not allow the permit to be issued unless Hobet Mining considered alternative ways to dispose of the mine spoil. He also said the state must agree to study long-term valley-fill environmental impacts.

In February 1997, EPA backed off. Hobet agreed to make a few minor

Vicky Moore said blasting dust is often so thick she can't see her neighbors' homes. She has to turn on headlights to drive.

changes in the valley fill. The company, for example, would do periodic testing to see if the fill harmed the Mud River downstream. No one performed any in-depth studies of valley-fill environmental effects.

Four months later, in June, EPA objected to another valley-fill permit. A.T. Massey wanted to fill in a two-mile segment of James Creek along the Boone-Raleigh county border. This time, EPA officials suggested Massey should consider "not mining parts of coal seams where stream filling is necessary for excess overburden disposal."

In August, EPA backed off again. The agency "concluded that there do not appear to be options for further reducing the fill length, other than significantly changing the amount and type of mining.

"[But] we are still very concerned about the disturbing trend toward larger fills and increased stream impacts by coal companies, and wish to work closely with DEP to prevent these impacts where possible," EPA added.

More than seven months later, EPA officials still say they are worried about the growing size of valley fills and cumulative effects of strip mining on water quality. (Asked for his general impression of strip mining, Gov. Cecil Underwood said it would be good for long-term economic development efforts. "My view of mountaintop removal is it creates a lot of artificially flat land in places we don't have flat land.")

"More than a headache"

For years, DEP and coal industry lobby groups co-sponsored an annual mine tour. It focused on successful reclamation projects and advances in

mining technology.

Wendy Radcliff, DEP's environmental advocate, wanted to show the other side. So in mid-August, reporters, citizens, and DEP officials piled into four-wheel-drive vehicles and visited coalfield trouble spots.

In Logan County, the group parked in the gravel lot at the Blair Post Office. Carlos Gore told them about an Arch Coal blast that tossed rocks bigger than softballs into his backyard.

"If a rock this big hits you or your car or your house, you're going to have more than a headache," Gore said. "It's going to ruin your whole week, because there's going to be a funeral."

Vicky Moore said blasting dust is often so thick she can't see her neighbors' homes. She has to turn on headlights to drive.

"The surface mining law is designed to protect people," said Pat McGinley, a WVU law professor who represents Moore in a suit against Arch Coal.

"It's designed to protect communities and it's designed to protect the environment," he said. "But it's not being enforced."

Coal industry lobbyists Bill Raney and Ben Greene stood at the edge of the post office parking lot and listened to the residents' stories.

"Of course you have sympathy for them," said Raney, who is president of the West Virginia Coal Association.

"But the one thing that strikes me is that there was no malice intended," Raney said. "No one in the industry sets out in the morning to do something like that."

A few weeks later, Greene's group, the West Virginia Mining and Reclamation Association, attacked the DEP tour.

"The citizens' tour appears to be the culmination of a well-coordinated, summer long, anti-coal campaign," the newsletter said. "All signs point to a regional campaign, with West Virginia as the focal point. Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you."

"Blasting scares me"

Kayla Bragg and Dustin Moore could barely reach the microphone in the House of Delegates chamber. They drove to Charleston with their parents for a public hearing in late February. The Braggs, the Moores and other coalfield residents wanted the Legislature to crack down on strip-mine blasting.

Currently, it's almost impossible to prove that mine blasting damaged nearby homes. A bill sponsored by Delegate Arley Johnson (D-Cabell) would have fixed that. Under the bill, any structural damage that did not exist prior to mining would be presumed to have been caused by blasting. The bill would apply to homes within 5,000 feet of blasting sites.

"Blasting scares me and I can't breathe good when it stirs up the dust," said Dustin, an 8-year-old asthmatic whose mother is Vicky Moore. "One day a blast went off and knocked my school picture down."

Kayla, a 10-year-old from Beech Creek in Mingo County, said, "When a blast goes off, I get scared because the windows shake. I would very much appreciate it if you would pass this blasting bill."

The blasting bill did not pass. The Legislature agreed to study the issue for a year in monthly interim committee meetings.

"The coal industry killed our blasting bill, and then they fought hard to kill this study resolution," said Jack Caudill, a West Virginia Organizing Project activist. "It's about time the Legislature did at least one small thing for the common people."

Coal industry lobbyists had a bill they wanted the Legislature to pass, too. The measure would make it much easier for companies to fill in streams with excess rock and earth from big strip mines.

Federal regulators opposed the bill.



ARCH COAL, INC.'S HOBET 21 MINE HAS STRIPPED MORE THAN 10,000 ACRES OF HILLS IN BOONE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA.

Citizens and environmental activists fought it. Top state DEP officials, including Deputy Director Mark Scott and water office chief Barb Taylor, testified against it.

Two days before the session ended, DEP Director John Caffrey intervened. Caffrey said publicly that his agency wasn't opposed to the bill. Scott and Tay-

lor weren't speaking for the agency when they testified against it, Caffrey said.

House Speaker Bob Kiss, D-Raleigh, pushed the legislation. K.O. Damron, lobbyist for A.T. Massey, was its biggest advocate among industry officials. On the last night of the session, the bill was approved.

Rank, the Highlands Conservancy

member, wasn't surprised. But she said the fight over strip mining is nowhere near over.

"I think the industry is losing the fight," she said last week. "They're losing in the public eye. They're losing on legal grounds. They're losing on technical grounds and scientific grounds. So they chose to take the battle to where they have the most power the political process at the Legislature and among the people who run the DEP."

"But the rest of the world is beginning to understand there are problems," she said. "Everyone has to become more aware of what's going on. If people don't see it, [coal companies] will just keep doing what they're doing."

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Coal industry lobbyists had a bill they wanted the Legislature to pass, too. The measure would make it much easier for companies to fill in streams with excess rock and earth from big strip mines.

*First Prize
Special
Category:
Hate Crimes*

At 11, Littlest Shooter had a Life of Guns

One community's story in the tide of school violence

By Jim Adams

The Courier-Journal (Louisville, Ky.)



In the midst of the recent wave of school shootings, but before the tragic killings in Littleton, Colorado, the Louisville Courier-Journal decided to explore possible answers through a massive project of "shoe-leather journalism." Without preconceived ideas, without even a working title for the series, the Courier-Journal sent teams of reporters into the field in four towns – Paducah, Ky., Pearl, Miss., Jonesboro, Ark., and Springfield, Ore. – to seek out "the roots of school violence."

In 28 articles by Jim Adams, James Malone, Rochelle Riley, and C. Ray Hall, the series covered a vast array of subjects, explanations, and solutions. The following excerpt covers one of the most important issues raised by the shootings, the problem of gun proliferation and control, but also addresses the stereotyping of Southern culture as "irresponsible" and "gun-happy."

JONESBORO, Ark. – On his way to school, the small, skinny boy was struggling through the pines, oaks and sweet gums when he and his pal came to a fence in the woods. It was all he could do to climb it, so heavy was the load they were hauling: three rifles, seven handguns and at least 487 rounds of ammunition.

Two bullets for every child enrolled at Westside Middle School.

The wiry boy with the fragile looks, Andrew Golden, was merely 11 years old, and he seemed a full head shorter than his 13-year-old friend. But he'd played no small role in a burglary by crowbar that morning at the home of a sworn lawman for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission – his own grandfather, Doug Golden. The boys had walked out with seven guns. Before that, they'd lifted three handguns from Andrew's home while his parents were at their jobs as small-town postmasters.

Each boy – Drew, as he is called, and Mitchell Johnson – was known for a love

of shooting. But with Golden, the passion for hunting, shooting and weaponry was a deep family tradition.

So after the boys had lugged the Golden family arsenal over the fence in the woods and opened fire upon Westside Middle School, the big issue for a lot of people was guns – an 11-year-old and his life with guns.

At the time, the boy's grandfather thought he could shed light on things. Doug Golden began talking to the press about Drew – the boy who had just carried his surname and his carbine into an ignominious place in Arkansas history.

The family photo album was opened, and a nation was aghast:

Toddler Drew in full grin, circa 1990, dressed in camouflage and hugging what appeared to be a firearm.

Clean-cut Drew, circa 1992, in a two-handed firing position, aiming what appeared to be a pistol.

Young Drew, dressed in cowboy garb, holding what appeared to be a shotgun that was almost as long as he was tall.

A myopic Doug Golden had controlled the facts, but not the spin. He'd wanted the world to see the child inside the shooter: the trumpet player, the boy who knew and respected the power of weapons. To see that guns weren't the issue.

But, even if the guns in the photos weren't real – at least one was a studio prop – much of the outside world still saw a gun-happy child being raised in an irresponsible Southern culture. Now the culture had a poster boy.

"Armed & Dangerous," declared the cover of *Time* magazine, showing a tiny, camo-clad Arkansan, Drew. Doug Golden may now wish he'd never opened his mouth.

One recent autumn afternoon, a great cloud of yellow dust trailed Doug Golden's official green pickup truck along the gravel road as he arrived at the headquarters of a state wildlife management area he oversees near this northeast Arkansas town. Waiting for him were a couple of visitors from a newspaper in Kentucky, wanting to talk about his grandson.

"Let me get out of this truck so I can whoop both of you," Golden said, leaving his sidearm on the console and his shotgun propped against the passenger's seat. Then a broad smile crossed his face. A leathery, barrel-chested man inside a khaki uniform, Golden lit a cigarette, buried it deep between two beefy fingers, and listened to a reporter's plea. Finally, he said his lawyer advised him not to discuss Drew anymore.

The following evening, supper was interrupted by a knock on the door of Drew's parents, the only home Drew had ever known, a one-story, ranch-style house with a stone facade. Nothing on the exterior says it's also the registered office of a local pistol-shooters' club.

At the front door, the man who had taught his boy how to shoot listened to yet another request to talk about Drew and his life here. One hand on the door, Dennis Golden stood patiently, chewing a bite of his meal, while behind him the house was still, except for the noiseless movements of a woman seated at a table. It's an empty nest, now that Drew is gone.

Arkansas Shooting: THE FACTS

When: Tuesday, March 24, 1998, about 12:30 p.m. It was the second day of classes after spring break.

Where: Jonesboro, Ark., at the Westside Middle School, in the center of the 75-acre Westside school district complex about four miles west of the city limits. The campus is in a distinctly rural setting. The curving road along the front of the campus is paved, but dusty, gravel county roads run behind the campus, and fields of soybeans and rice dominate the landscape. The terrain is flat. The schools are brick and modern in design.

What happened: Andrew Golden, an 11-year-old sixth-grader, and Mitchell Johnson, a 13-year-old seventh-grader, hauled 10 guns and a large amount of ammunition to within 100 yards of the middle-school building. Golden entered the middle school, pulled a fire alarm and then ran from the school to rejoin Johnson on a sloping, wooded piece of ground. After many of the students responded to the alarm and filed out of the school, the boys opened fire. Police think the boys fired at least 22 times, because that's how many spent casings were found.

The toll: Five dead, all female; four of them students and one a teacher. Ten others – nine students, one teacher, nine female – were wounded.

The case: At a final “adjudication” hearing Aug. 11, 1998, Mitchell pleaded guilty to delinquency and tearfully expressed remorse. Andrew, silent and dispassionate, was declared delinquent by the judge, a ruling his attorney has appealed. Both boys are to be confined until age 18, and possibly 21.

– Jim Adams

“I ain’t got anything to say,” Dennis Golden finally said.



Twyla Clevenger has fond recollections of her years living next door to Dennis Golden, who is now 41 years old, and Patricia Golden, now 45. “Real nice people,” Clevenger said. “They had a very typical family life.”

Clevenger watched as both Golden families filled weekends with garage sales, yard work and Sunday dinners. Dennis sometimes rode Drew on an off-road vehicle up and down Royale Drive – a ramrod-straight dead end with one Baptist church and 21 small and medium-sized houses, the kind of place teachers and police officers call home.

Clevenger said that after she and her husband separated, Dennis Golden

helped her son, Josh, with the nuances of lawn mower repair and go-cart maintenance. Dennis also at times set up a bale of hay in his back yard and taught Clevenger’s two older children how to shoot a bow and arrow.

Clevenger said Pat Golden had two children from a previous marriage, but Andrew was the only child she and Dennis have had in 16 years of marriage. Drew, now 12, and Clevenger’s daughter, Jamie, “basically grew up together,” until Twyla Clevenger and her children moved away in 1995.

Jamie’s older brother and sister “would eat dinner at the Golden’s a lot,” Twyla Clevenger said. “When I found out Dennis had guns, that was a big issue with me.” But she said her worry eased when she learned that “he was very strict with those guns” and kept them locked up.

Twyla and Jamie Clevenger both recall problems with Drew, although nothing anyone saw as omens of major crime.

Drew sometimes cursed. “I know Pat hated it,” Twyla Clevenger said. Drew also was once asked to leave a day-care center because of misbehavior – vulgar language and fighting, as Clevenger understood what Pat Golden told her. “She was embarrassed about it,” Clevenger said.

And there was the thing about Fluffy.

Jamie said that when she was about 7, she found her favorite cat lying in a trash can and picked him up, not realizing Fluffy was dead. “Drew told me he shot the cat with a pellet gun,” Jamie Clevenger said.

Two other children came running when they heard Jamie scream: neighbor Jenna Brooks and her visiting cousin, Brynn Brooks. Jenna Brooks, some six



FIVE DIED IN JONESBORO, ARKANSAS, ON MARCH 24, 1998 — FOUR STUDENTS AND ONE TEACHER.

years later, would be shot through the thigh in the Westside assault, and Brynn Brooks' younger sister, Natalie, would be killed.

Whether Drew really killed Fluffy with a pellet gun isn't an established fact. Jamie said she saw no blood, and there were no witnesses.

But not long before, Twyla Clevenger said, she did watch Drew push kittens belonging to the Clevengers head-first into the diamond-shaped openings of a chain-link fence, then tap them with the heel of his hand to pop them through. Clevenger said they weren't hurt.

Since the shootings, several people in the neighborhood have described Drew as quite typical. "Drew's just like all the other little boys I've ever had," said neighbor Judy Crowell, a first-grade teacher at Westside Elementary.

But Twyla Clevenger came to view Drew as "a little more uncontrollable . . .

Drew's not just high-activity. It was more mischievous."

And another neighbor, Debbie Wisdom, came to view him as flatly sinister. Wisdom's home is a gathering spot for children, but "I'd tell my two (children), 'You're not to play with Drew, I don't want him in my yard,'" she said.

"There was something about Drew's eyes I didn't trust. I'm telling you, there was evil in his eyes." On two or three occasions, when he was very young — 5, she guessed — Drew made obscene gestures to her when she drove past, Wisdom said.

For years, she said, it seemed that Drew's parents would not allow him to leave their yard without them. The Golden's "are sweet people," Wisdom said. "But they don't need to deny that their child has a problem."

Other episodes, innocent enough in isolation, have taken on almost legend-

ary proportions around town:

Drew sometimes wore a sheathed hunting knife around Royale Drive. In the first grade, Drew was paddled after shooting a sand-and-pea-gravel mix into a girl's face with a popgun. On another occasion, for a school project, he invented a script for a "Quick Draw McGraw" puppet show that ended with a gun battle.

Jonesboro debates whether all that means Drew was obsessed with guns or not, but clearly he was around them. The Golden home is registered with the state of Arkansas as the office of the Jonesboro Practical Pistol Shooters Association, and Dennis Golden became its registered agent when it incorporated in 1995. It's affiliated with a national group, the U.S. Pistol Shooters Association, and today meets many weekends in an old gravel pit in nearby Bono, Ark. Shooters are timed as they fire from behind obstacles at cardboard or metal targets, which may be rigged to move, bob or swing.

While they seem to come and go with their heads down a lot these days, Patricia and Dennis Golden did reflect publicly on their son once, through their lawyer's pleading in a lawsuit filed against them: "Despite their (the Golden's) best efforts, something went terribly wrong in the mind of Andrew Golden to cause the infliction of such tragedy and horror."

In other words: Andrew's mind is the issue. Not guns.

The day of the Westside shooting, the two boys tried and failed to get into Dennis Golden's combination-lock gun safe, which held his long guns and at least one gun belonging to Drew. A family friend said the fact Drew didn't know the combination is evidence of Dennis Golden's prudence.

Another person familiar with the day's events said that after the boys broke into the home of Doug Golden, they found a rack of rifles with a padlocked steel cable threaded through the guns' trigger guards. But, this person said, Drew knew the key to the lock could be found above the rack.

In boyish hands, then, were the rifles that would kill five and wound 10.



At the front door, the man who had taught his boy how to shoot listened to yet another request to talk about Drew and his life here.

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Stand by Your Man

By James Ladd Thomas

"I told Drenda we'd come over tonight, but I'd have to check with you to be sure you didn't have plans in the works," I said as I handed Roy a bourbon and Coke. "Thanks," he said right before he took a big swig of his drink. "Billy's coming over." "That's fine, Billy can go with us over to Drenda's." "But Billy isn't coming over here to go to Drenda's. I don't think he would want to go. They don't really know each other."

"So?" I asked.

"So what?"

"So what if they don't know each other. We'll have a few drinks. Drenda's boyfriend will be there, they live together. I don't see a problem."

"You know what I mean, Cindy."

"I know what you mean? Sure Roy, I know what you mean. Oh dear, what if your buddies found out you spent Friday evening with a black couple? Would your reputation as a good ol' boy be ruined? Would they make you read a book for punishment? I never thought it ran that deep."

That's how it started. A nice, simple Friday evening normally spent relaxing, letting the week's crust slowly melt away, was suddenly a power struggle. Though I'm not sure if power struggle is really the correct term. A difference of opinion? A collision of egos? A man/woman thing?

Roy and I were at it again. Arguing. Giving our sides. I won't lie and say this is how it's always been. At first, when we started dating in college, I have to admit I went

along with everything he said. Whatever he wanted to do, I did. "Let's go to Bill's party." We did. "Let's not go to Pam's party." We didn't. "Let's go to Florida this weekend." We went to Florida.

But drip by drip, things changed. I started sticking up for myself, voicing my views. Why? Where did this come from? Hard to say really. I had a girlfriend who was very strong willed, some might call her a feminist, though in the South that's blasphemy.

Mary was her name. She was from Wetumpka, a small town not far from Montgomery. I met her the spring of my junior year through a mutual friend, Barbara, who lived in the same apartment complex as me, a few blocks from the campus of the University of Alabama. Mary didn't go to school, she just drove over to Tuscaloosa to visit Barbara every now and then.

Barbara was kind of a free spirit, a little bit of a hippy (faded jeans, a purple VW bug, the Beatles, pot, lots of boyfriends, long straight blond hair), but she didn't hold nothing to Mary. Mary shaved her head, a lot of people thought she had cancer. She never wore a bra; though her

breasts weren't huge, they were big enough to make a point. She never missed the opportunity to gnaw on peoples's heads when they made sexist remarks.

More than once she gave it to Roy. "I'm so glad you decided to attend the party. You're such a special guy to allow Cindy to come here." Roy, needless to say, didn't particularly enjoy Mary's company, though he did find her spunk interesting. Mary opened up a new world for me, showed me a different lens to see the world. No longer did I stand by my man.

I felt comfortable with Mary's admonitions, which explains my position on this Friday night. Why shouldn't I go over to my friend's house on Friday night? Drenda was black. We were white. We lived in Dothan, Alabama. South Alabama. Not just the heart of Dixie, you're at one of the valves. I'm not crazy, I know the implications to all that.

"I wish I was in the land of cotton, old times there are not forgotten." George Wallace. Little George. In the doorway at the U of A. Though over thirty years ago, the fires still smolder. Fire bombing Freedom Riders. Rosa Parks causing chaos because she wanted to sit down. Bulldog Connor. To Kill a Mockingbird. These people believe there are differences. DIFFERENCES. Keep to your own, what you know.

Nothing more was said on the subject for the next hour as we went through the routines of dinner and showering. As always, when we disagree, our positions were quickly put forth, then a sudden retreat on both sides for a thorough analysis of each move. The opposing argument would be thoroughly combed for weaknesses. Any slight break in the enemy line would be exploited for maximum gain. Even a misused word or a mispronunciation was quickly turned onto the opposition.

A silly game? Without question. But through our five years of marriage we had managed to mold our confrontations into a manageable battle. We did not fire nuclear missiles at the first instance of provocation like some couples will do. No shouting matches, no slamming of doors. I had heard of husbands screaming at wives because she "didn't have the meal cooked when he came home from work," "didn't want to stay home on Friday

night while he went out with the boys," or "wanted him to keep the baby while she went to the hospital to see a sick friend."

We were exempt from that lunacy. Rarely did we go to bed with our differences. Neither were we a couple to pretend that things were smooth at all times. Whenever I heard someone exclaim, "Oh, we never fight. I don't think we've even had an argument," I have this teeth-clenching desire to say, "You are a psychopath. You're either lying to me or lying to yourself. Disagreements, conflicts, arguments are part of the human condition, you idiot."

I finished a small portion of the taco pie I had prepared when I got home from my librarian job. I'd been working

there ever since I had graduated from Alabama five years ago with a degree in Library Science. Roy had been working at my uncle's accounting firm for the same amount of time. We met at the University when we were sophomores and became engaged a few months before we graduated. Dothan's my hometown. Roy's from Scottsboro.

Nothing special in our brief history, except I had an abortion our junior year. It was a close call. Roy wasn't too sure

about taking that way out, but I persisted and he eventually agreed, for whatever that's worth. I never did really think about what would have happened if he had said no to it. I think he understood we weren't ready to be parents, so it wasn't a matter of who was going to get their way.

I got up from the kitchen table, walked over to the sink and cleaned my plate, then I made myself a bourbon and coke. Roy sat there at the table reading the paper. I stood at the counter sipping my drink, eyeing Roy.

Finally, I said I was going to take a shower. I had hardly spoken a word during dinner. As I mentioned earlier, everything was being weighed for effect. Silence during the meal was like the silence of a chess match. Keep the emotions at an even keel, let logic and reason have the upper hand. Our confrontations many times followed no pattern. A strategy would help, but could just as easily be utterly useless.

Which brought me to my sad state. My peaceful, easy-going Friday night was now gone. The picnic plans were

Oh dear, what if your buddies found out you spent Friday evening with a black couple? Would your reputation as a good ol' boy be ruined?



Illustration by Van Howell

over. Though acceptance brings its own tranquility, I now braced for a possible tumultuous confrontation.

I quickly bathed and dressed. There would be no whining about me not being ready. Show him I was prepared to leave. When I walked into the den, Roy was lying on the couch with his shoes off listening to a Steve Miller CD. He was digging in, making a stand.

"I am so worn out. What a week," he said while rubbing his face with both hands.

"Me too. It will be good to get out and relax."

"I guess I need to grab a shower before Billy gets here."

"Go ahead and jump in, you'll feel a lot better."

Roy was bathing when Billy arrived. He had tried to quickly quell the storm as he readied for his bath, but I had my mind made up. He had asked me if I couldn't call Drenda and cancel, tell her we'd make it another time.

"I'm just not up to going out tonight," he said.

He was thinking a retreat from the racial aspect would soften my tone. He was standing naked in front of the bathroom mirror when I told him, "I'm going to Drenda's with or without you."

Silently, he slowly stepped into the shower. A shower is one of the cocoons of meditation, I find it easy to sink into reflection and contemplation. Maybe it's the running water, which seems to always make you feel at ease.

I knew he would run through his possible choices of recourse. What came to mind first was the obvious: "Well, just go on without me. I'll just stay here with Billy and enjoy my Friday evening at home." A strong reply. A manly reply. A reply that I would bludgeon him with Saturday morning.

I'm sure he thought of playing the ace of race cards:

"Billy is an extreme racist, Baby, and he's liable to cause an ugly scene at Drendra's." Miles from probable, but who knows? An instant save if I bit, though Billy would be left dancing the racist tango. I knew a facetious interpretation would just add thickness to my armor. "Ha, ha, boys."

Sudden illness, drunkenness, Drenda cancelling, all went through his mind I'm sure, but his brainstorming shower was halted when I walked into the bathroom and said, "Roy, Billy is here. I'm leaving in 45 minutes."

I was confident I had him by the short hairs. Not only was he working with the "with or without you" ultimatum, now there was a time line. He quickly finished bathing, dried off, and dressed.

"Hey, you made it through another week," said Roy as he walked into the den. Billy was sitting on the couch, a small sack with a six pack of beer was on the floor by his feet. He was drinking a bottle of beer.

"Barely. Another day with that bur head would have sent me over the edge."

"Uh, oh."

"What's the uh, oh, for?" Billy asked.

"Well, Cindy has made plans for us to go over to her friend Drenda's place. Drenda is black, Mr. Archie Bunker."

"Big deal."

"See, I told you Billy wouldn't have a problem with it," I said while sitting on the other side of the room in an easy chair facing Billy.

"Sure, I don't have a problem going to a spear chucker's house."

Roy started laughing. "You're crazy, man. You better watch it. Cindy'll cut your heart out."

"If you really feel that way, Billy, I don't want you going over there," I said.

"I'm only kidding. So what, your friend is black. I like eating fried chicken."

Roy chuckled and shook his head.

"Billy Dickinson!" I said.

"Cindy, you know I'm only playing. Who is this Drenda anyway?"

"She works with Cindy at the library. There's one more thing you should know, her boyfriend will be there," Roy said.

"I've only known her a couple of weeks. She just started working at the library. She and her boyfriend just moved up from Orlando. We kinda clicked from the moment we met. She's a nice person."

Billy gave Roy a quick wink. "Why are we arguing over this? If we're going over to this Drenda's place, then

let's go. Where does she live?" asked Billy.

"Over on the west side of the circle, in those new apartments. Pine View, Pine Crest, something like that. It's no big rush, I told her we'd be over around 7:30 so we've still got about 30 minutes."

We drank beer, talked about the Alabama-LSU football game the next night in Baton Rouge, and how the rich controlled the world, but we let the race issue just dangle out in front of us. Like a pinata filled with rotting potatoes, each of us saw it, but no one wanted to touch it.

I was reminded of what a good friend of mine said in high school. Danny Jackson was black and the star half-back on the football team. One afternoon after cheerleading practice a few of us were sitting around talking about racism when some of the football players stopped by to talk and look at our legs in short shorts. The team had just finished practice. Danny jumped right in, which didn't surprise me since he had dated a few white girls, even asked me out once, but I wasn't ready to fight that war. He said most white folks treated race like a bad dog. They keep it in the back, but they're quick to bring it out when needed. At the time I just laughed, though I'm sure he had a few scars from several nasty bites.

Roy looked over at me as he laughed at Billy's jokes. I figured Roy had decided to suffer through the night for the sake of using his compliance for a trump card later down the road.

A little before 7:30 we finished our beers and left our house. We drove over to Drenda's in Billy's '76 white Cadillac convertible. "Shouldn't we stop and get a watermelon," said Billy.

"Don't you start that," I said. "Y'all have got to promise me you'll behave. You cannot say things like that over here. You both know better. Drenda is a friend and I don't want anything like that said."

The top was down, Billy was driving, but all three of us were sitting in the front seat. I was sitting in the middle, but there was plenty of room to spare. Billy loved big cars. He had a natural inclination to bigness. He was fond of big dinners, big tv's, big drinks, and most of all big women. Not husky, chunky or even chubby women, but big women. He was very particular. His taste didn't include huge women, circus women, women who could whip his butt, but women, as he told me one morning, "who were born big."

He had come up to visit Roy in Tuscaloosa during the fall of our senior year. Alabama was playing Tennessee at home that weekend. I was ordering a beer at the bar in the club we were in that Friday night when I looked over

and saw Billy waving at me as he walked out the door with one of his big women. The next morning I wanted to get to the heart of his big woman desire, so I asked him.

"What I mean by born big is I don't like average size women who have put on lots of weight, but rather a big person who isn't real fat. In other words, even if they tried to get thin they couldn't. They're just big, real thick people. Maybe that's really it. They're naturally big. A person who is really fat isn't really a big person, unless of course they're big and fat which is a sad sight to see. Those people are like Great Danes, they die early, too much for the heart. Those poor things never have a chance. It's the heart, you always gotta think of the heart. Most fat people are average size with lots of fat. Take me, I'm a big person. I'm not a skinny fellow, but I don't have a whole lotta fat. I'm big like my momma and daddy."

Roy nodded his head. "I will be a gentleman of the highest order. You have my word."

"Billy?" I asked as I looked over at him.

"You're taking this much too serious. I do have a little class."

"You do? I've never seen it," Roy said.

"Oh yeah, remember that time I threw up on the bar at Cooter's. I cleaned it up myself. You tell me that didn't take some class."

"That's true, that was a classy move. Most people would have felt shame and left."

"I'm a classy guy." Billy finished off another beer and let out a bullfrog burp.

"Do you think we should stop and get some beer?" Roy asked.

"Perhaps wine would be more appropriate, old chum," Billy said in a strained British accent. "Shall I stop and purchase a half gallon of Mad Dog? I've heard this is a very good month."

"Yes, William, Mad Dog or a fine malt liquor would more than suffice," Roy said.

"I know you two are playing and part of it is to get me riled, but I'm begging you to be civil over here. If you don't think you can then let's just turn around and go home," I said.

"Victory! Turn this beast around," Roy said.

Billy turned into a plaza.

"I'm kidding. Don't turn around, man. Everything'll be fine. We'll have a nice evening over there."

"I'm not turning around. I'm stopping at the grocery store to get some beer."

"Why didn't you bring your beer?" I asked.

"What beer? We drank it all."

"I'll go in and get some good beer and then we'll go over to Drenda's for a nice, pleasant evening. I promise. The night will be a model of civility and fellowship," said Roy.

And that's the way we left it, at least for the next few minutes. Roy bought the beer, then we drove over to Drenda's. As we got out of the car to walk to the apartment

I uttered a sentence without really thinking about it. The words were so foreign coming from my mouth that I thought someone else had spoken them.

I said, "All I want is peace." Right out of the blue. I would expect Mother Theresa to say such a thing. Or perhaps one of the leaders in the Middle East after a bomb has ripped apart a couple of dozen people in a bus. Maybe any citizen living through the pains of a civil

war would utter such a plea. But a young woman in Dothan, Alabama, on an October Friday night? I started to say something else, at least address these words, clarify their meaning, but I said nothing. I was at a loss. I didn't know what to say.

Drenda's apartment was located on the second floor of a complex that consisted of four buildings built in a square with parking spaces on the exterior, next to the buildings. A small pool was located in the center of the courtyard. I knocked on the door while Roy and Billy stood on each side of me.

Drenda opened the door, hugged me, asked us in where introductions were made just inside a den. She told us Howard was just getting out of the shower and would join us in a few minutes.

After the brief formalities, she asked us to sit, took the beer from Billy and then handed us each one before she left the room to place them in the refrigerator. The three of us sat on the couch with me in the middle.

When Drenda walked away I took a sip of my beer and

I'm sure he thought of playing the ace of race cards: "Billy is an extreme racist, Baby, and he's liable to cause an ugly scene at Drenda's."

looked at Billy. He did not return the look. There was no raising of the eyebrows, no devilish grin, not the least hint of a smirk.

I then looked at Roy. He was looking at me. I expected a look of disdain. My "All I want is peace" kept playing in my mind as if on a looped tape.

Again, from nowhere, questions unfolded. Were we at the end? Too chaotic? Too conflictive? Were we just too different? Our worlds much too far apart, the chasm far greater than I had at first believed?

From a doorway across the room walked in a young man. A zebra walking into the room would not have startled me any more than this man. His skin was as white as Drenda's was black. The dynamics of the battle had dramatically changed. I was off balance as if the world had suddenly tilted. He walked up to coffee table and extended his right hand.

"Good evening, I'm Howard. You must be Cindy. Drenda's told me a lot about you."

"Nice to meet you, Howard. All good I hope. This is my husband, Roy."

Roy shook Howard's hand. "Nice to meet you, Howard."

"And this is a friend of ours, Billy."

"How you doing, Billy?"

"Good to meet you, Howard."

As we finished shaking hands Drenda walked back into the den from the kitchen with a tray of broccoli, mushrooms, sliced carrots and peppers surrounding a bowl of dip. Suddenly, there we were. I looked at Roy, hoping for a read. Nothing. I sat there with a pain inducing smile.

"It's a beautiful night, isn't it?" said Drenda as she placed the tray on the coffee table in front of us.

"It's gorgeous outside. There's just a tinge of coolness in the air. We rode over here in Billy's Cadillac convertible. I wasn't cold at all. It just felt refreshing," I said as I grabbed a piece of broccoli and swirled it in the white dip.

From the corner of my eye I noticed Billy placing his hands on his knees, then he stood with what seemed an enormous effort. Everyone was looking at him. I didn't know what he was going to do. I had known him for over five years and I fully understood the uncertainty of the moment.

He picked up his beer from the coffee table and raised it to his lips, draining the remaining half bottle of beer. I felt as if I was stepping into a muddy creek.

Without saying a word he walked in front of me and Roy on his way into the kitchen. I heard the refrigerator door open and close. Trying to ease the tension that had blanketed the room I said, "Billy likes to drink beer, especially on Friday night."

He walked back into the den carrying an unopened bottle of beer, in front of us once again, but instead of stopping at the couch he walked to the front door, turned to Roy and said, "I need to get some fresh air. I'll be back in a few." He opened the door, walked out, and closed it as if trying not to wake a sleeping baby.

Were we just too different? Our worlds much too far apart, the chasm far greater than I had at first believed?

I didn't look at Roy because I was fearful of what I would see. Instead, I looked at Drenda and Howard. They had sat on a loveseat on the other side of the coffee table. Howard was looking at the dip. I knew what was going through his mind. Another reaction. Another incident. How many times had he faced it. Swallowed it down with its razor edges and acrid flavor. Deep in his mind I knew he questioned it. Was

it worth it? Drenda was looking at me with her beautiful brown eyes. No animosity. She didn't even look uncomfortable. Her eyebrows tightened slightly when she said, "Is your friend going to be okay?" Seemingly sincerely concerned.

Her words poured through my head. I opened my mouth, but could not speak. My muscles went slack. I had never felt this way before. I looked at Drenda. "I'm not sure," I said. Then I said, "The fresh air will do him some good."

"Do you think it's something in here? Is it too hot? Should I open a window?" Drenda asked.

"No, everything's fine here. Really," I said. "Don't you think, Roy?"

He stood and walked over to the front door. Telepathically I begged him to sit down. Please sit down. He opened the door, then turned to face us.

"I'm with Billy, I just need a little fresh air." I closed my eyes as the door slowly shut.

S

Higher Calling

The Politics of Gospel

By Sandy Carter

Although the political messages resonating through gospel music have long been obvious to most African Americans, most white Americans still don't get it.

When the Original Five Blind Boys of Alabama launched the reveries of "I'll Fly Away" and Mahalia Jackson implored the faithful to "Move On Up A Little Higher," they were surely singing of a glorious afterlife flight to the heavenly kingdom. But they were also triumphantly proclaiming an earthly mission of achieving freedom and equality on the soil of America.

This fusion of spiritual and political concerns is a long-standing tradition in black American music. Ever since the days of slavery, black cultural expressions have employed irony, humor, and double meanings that could be heard by white society. Unable to communicate yearnings and discontents directly and openly, black folklore, storytelling, and song offered coded forms of resistance.

Ironically, it was the teachings of pro-slavery Christianity, counseling passivity and servitude in this world in exchange for everlasting life in the next, that slaves employed to cover messages of struggle and empowerment.

Among the many twisted rationalizations for slavery was the notion that blacks' souls could only be saved by being "civilized" through Christianity. Although it was illegal for blacks to read and write, the Bible and hymnals furnished tools of literacy. As white slave-owners and ministers imparted their Good Book vision of slavery as the natural station of people of color, black Americans translated the words of Biblical texts and traditional hymns as allegorical tales expressing the horrors of black suffering and the dream of freedom.



Mahalia Jackson

Although whites generally looked upon black spiritual singing as a sign of contentment, African Americans tended to favor texts and tunes that expressed sorrow, anger, and a fighting spirit. Accordingly, it was the words of God's Old Testament that inspired many early black spirituals.

In the story of Moses leading his people from bondage, the victories of Daniel, David, and Joshua, and the many tales of God calling his wrath down upon the wicked, slaves found the muse for tunes such as "Go Down Moses," "Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho," "My Army Cross Over," and "Singing With a Sword in My Hand." Where whites heard songs like "Steal Away to Jesus" and "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" as harmless pie in the sky, blacks imagined and plotted a life on the free soil of Canada, Boston, or Philadelphia.

Aside from the transformation of Christian texts, slaves also brought to their spirituals the musical traditions of Africa. Through the use of repetitive choruses, call and response, and intense interlocking rhythms, the black spiritual forged a powerful communal statement bonding body and soul, Africa and America, self and community. Hundreds of years later, gospel music still makes its connections in the same way.

Music scholars date the early 1800s as the starting point of the black spiritual as a distinct musical form. But the music known as gospel only began to find its shape in the 1930s. During the worst years of the Depression, Thomas A. Dorsey, a reformed blues singer and son of an itinerant preacher, committed himself to the task of creating and popularizing a new black religious music rooted in African-American folk expression.

Records reviewed in this story include:

Testify! The Gospel Box
Various. Rhino Records, 1999.

The Gospel Sound of Spirit Feel
Various. Spirit Feel, 1991.

Greatest Gospel Gems
Various. Specialty, 1991.

Gospels, Spirituals & Hymns
Mahalia Jackson. Columbia, 1991.

The Gospel Soul of Marion Williams
Marion Williams. Spirit Feel, 1999.

Amazing Grace: The Complete Recordings
Aretha Franklin. Rhino, 1999.

Although Dorsey's tunes evinced a wide spectrum of influences ranging from jazz to early vaudeville, his core ingredients were blues and sacred music.

To Dorsey, the church singing of black Baptists seemed stiff and far too indebted to European religious music. In his new gospel songs, he aimed to "liven up the churches" with a repertoire based on folk imagery, parables, and proverbs familiar to African-American Christians for over 100 years. He wanted music that left space for variation and interpretation.

Recalling childhood memories of the "moan" he heard in old-time black religious music (cries, groans, and subtle shades of vocal texture, tone, and intonation), he encouraged singing that could carry feelings and ideas beyond the meaning of words. Finally, Dorsey's songs strived to combine the harsh and worldly message of the blues with the good news of the church.

Explaining his goal to gospel historian Anthony Helbut, Dorsey commented: "We intended gospel to strike a happy medium for the downtrodden. This music lifted people out of the muck and mire of poverty and loneliness, of being broke, and gave them some kind of hope anyway. Make it anything other than good news, it ceases to be gospel."

Gradually over decades, through performing, writing, teaching, and advocating, Dorsey's gospel sound became a common vocabulary for black churches around the country. By the 1950s, gospel recordings and performers had established a small but thriving gospel music industry independent of crossover (white) appeal.

During the music's golden era from 1946 to 1960, the tradition provided inspiration for the civil rights movement while also laying down blueprints for R&B, soul, and rock and roll. In 1998, according to the Recording Industry Association of America, sales of gospel music generated more than a half-billion dollars.

Those seeking a musical overview of this evolution might begin with Rhino Records' recently released 3-CD anthology, *Testify! The Gospel Box*. Featuring 50 tracks by soloists, groups, and choirs and

spanning styles from the 1940s to the 1990s, *Testify!* is the only gospel compilation tracing the tradition from early pioneers to contemporary superstars.

The sampling of gospel elders includes legends such as Mahalia Jackson, the Original Five Blind Boys of Alabama, Clara Ward, Dorothy Love Coates, the Swan Silvertones, the Caravans, the Staple Singers, Rev. James Cleaveland, Marion Williams, and Thomas Dorsey. For examples of more modern sounds, there are performances by Aretha Franklin, Andrae Crouch, Sounds Of Blackness, The Winans, Take 6, and Boyz II Men.

Leaving out the Soul Stirrers (with R. H. Harris and Sam Cooke), Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the Sensational Nightingales (with Julius Cheeks), and the hugely popular gospel hip-hopper Kirk Franklin, *Testify!* can hardly be called definitive. But the box does manage to highlight the common threads and rich diversity of a glorious sound that remains under-appreciated and misunderstood.

In the rousing freedom anthem "Don't Let Nobody Turn You Around," the Fairfield Four echo centuries of struggle and a battle not yet won. Rev. Maceo Woods' mesmerizing organ rendition of "Amazing Grace" (a tune penned by a repentant white slave owner) is a profound statement of dignity and strength.

The tough and resolute singing of Dorothy Love Coates and Clarence Fountain (with the Original Five Blind Boys of Alabama) and the majestic vocal fires of Mahalia Jackson, Marion Williams, and Aretha Franklin are fierce reminders of why Martin Luther King referred to this music as "the soul of the movement."

However, perhaps the greatest contribution of *Testify!* is the light it throws on contemporary gospel. Devoting nearly one full disc to gospel in the 1990s and offering selections that range from the a cappella gospel-jazz of Take 6, to the all-woman choir of the Gospel Music Workshop of America (featuring Mimi Redd), to the broad stylistic weaves of the ensemble known as Sounds of Blackness, *Testify!* reveals gospel as a dynamic, ever-evolving tradition that can still ig-

nite visions of power and glory.

For traditionalists and older black gospel fans, these newer styles may seem too polished and pop to measure up to "real" gospel. But to younger generations who have grown up with funk, R&B, rock, and hip-hop, spirituals and golden age gospel have little appeal.

Since the 1960s, the black Christian church has come to play a lesser role in African-American life, political and spiritual idealism has diminished, and many young people (like the Black Power movement of decades past) now view Christianity as the religion of white supremacy. In recent decades, in search of a spiritual alternative, many African Americans have started to explore Islam and various African religious traditions. In response, the black Christian community has gradually adapted to changes in the gospel sound that can draw young people back to the church.

The most surprising (and for some disturbing) innovation in Christian music is Kirk Franklin's merging of hip-hop and gospel. In the 1990s, the Dallas, Texas, pianist/composer's million-selling records and sold-out concerts have brought gospel into the musical mainstream through sampling Funkadelic's "One Nation Under a Groove," guesting rapper Cheryl James (of Salt-n-Pepp), and convening "holy ghost parties" charged with preaching raps, grunts, wailing, call and response, traditional gospel singing, and heavy thumping rhythms.

Like Sam Cooke, Curtis Mayfield, and Marvin Gaye before him, Franklin has melded the secular to the sacred in a way that speaks to the here and now. Although less startling, other performers of contemporary gospel are doing the same.

By adopting the standards of modern recording studios and drawing influences from the full spectrum of black music traditions, modern gospel has discovered unprecedented appeal. Still, in its new dress, you can hear the essentials of tradition: awesome deep soul singing and a message that binds the struggles of self and community.

Testify!, however, provides only a very basic primer on the artists and styles who

laid the foundation of the gospel tradition. Those interested in a fuller immersion in gospel's old school should track down *Father and Sons* (1987), *Gospel Warriors* (1987), and *The Gospel Sound of Spirit Feel* (1991), all on the Spirit Feel label. Loaded with sublime performances by most of the movers and shakers of gospel's formative golden age (1946-1960), these albums capture essential trends and innovations in the gospel sound and label founder Anthony Heilbut's informative liner notes supply the social context.

No less essential are the Specialty label's treasure chest of golden age recordings, which contain voices included and absent from *Testify!* For a sample, try *Greatest Gospel Gems* (1991) and *The Great 1955 Shrine Concert* (1993).

For those looking to dig deeper into the gospel grandeur of the great Mahalia Jackson, Marion Williams, and Aretha Franklin, recent compilations abound.

Mahalia Jackson brought a heavy dose of the blues into gospel and then as gospel's most popular star from the 1950s through the 1990s, brought the music's freedom message to the secular world. As introductions to the overwhelming power of her singing, *How I Got Over* (1976) and *Gospels, Spirituals & Hymns* (1991) – both on Columbia – are recommended.

Hailed by many as the greatest singer who ever lived, the late Marion Williams' towering artistry is well-documented on Spirit Feel. *The Gospel Sound of Marion Williams* (1999) compiles some of her best performances of the 1980s.

For folks who may have forgotten, in 1972 Aretha Franklin returned to her gospel roots in live performances at the New Temple Baptist Church in Los Angeles and created a gospel masterpiece. Recently re-issued as *Amazing Grace: The Complete Recordings* (Rhino), this double CD is a smoldering and flamboyant document of great gospel singing.

Classic proof of gospel's belief that, despite life's burdens, humanity can and should move on up.

Sandy Carter writes the "Slippin' & Slidin'" column on music and culture for Z Magazine, where an earlier version of this story appeared.

Blue Notes in the Delta

By Dave Lippman

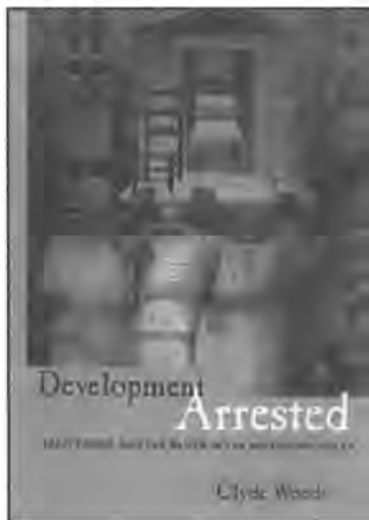
How timely that the publication of *Development Arrested* occurs at the moment when President Clinton is conducting a publicity circus in what he calls the "untapped market" of the Mississippi Delta. More than timely – it is fortunate, for the book takes on the history of the cotton empire as an important foundation of U.S. economic power, and as a key element of the oppression of African-Americans.

Clinton's attempt to woo industry to the Delta is not a new gambit. Delta residents who testified at an earlier incarnation of this attempted seduction, says author Woods, "did not speak of the region as a bountiful resource; rather they viewed regional relations as a structure that was both crippling and deadly." Therein lies the tale.

Woods traces the several organizations that represent the Delta's planter bloc, most important among them the Delta Council, founded in 1934, and the Na-

Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta

By Clyde Woods
Verso, 1998



tional Cotton Council. Down through the decades they maneuver, conceal, dissemble and rule by fiat. It is a harrowing tale that compels us to revisit history, and in particular the civil rights movement and its aftermath.

The book also shines an ironic historical light on today's affirmative action battle, quoting Mississippi Senator John Stennis in 1964 on the then-pending civil rights bill: "It would take the basic human and individual rights away from the majority and transfer them to a favored group in the form of special privileges." Any comment on this quotation would be redundant, but it should certainly be re-broadcast to the generation currently struggling with – or acquiescing to – the latest assaults on redress of racial grievances.

The book is full of intriguing nuggets, such as the participation of Langston Hughes on the Colored Advisory Commission created by Herbert Hoover to in-

Civil Rights Roots

Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality

Paul Goodman. Berkeley:
University of California Press,
1998. \$35

By Rene Hayden

In the 1830s, as the struggle against slavery gained steam, abolitionism was a conflicted movement. The mainstream of the movement passed from the mostly white, often racist colonialists – who hoped to solve America’s race problem by shipping former slaves back to Africa – to the more militant and interracial immediatists, who called for the rapid destruction of the slave system.

In his posthumously published *Of One Blood: Abolitionism and the Origins of Racial Equality*, Paul Goodman writes a celebratory and resonant history of early



abolitionism.

The book explores the origins of immediatist abolitionism, its troubled relation to colonizationist anti-slavery, and the rise and composition of the movement membership in the 1830s. In doing so, Goodman has managed to clarify much that was unclear in earlier histories of the movement, and to present abolitionism as a pioneering moment in the struggle for racial equality.

A fundamental and distinguishing contention of Goodman’s book is that the marrow of abolitionism stemmed directly out

investigate the treatment of Blacks in the wake of the Mississippi River flood of 1927. The gems Woods unearths range from the amusing (Ralph Abernathy riding to the Poor People’s Campaign in a wagon pulled by two mules named Stennis and Eastland) to the startling (William Faulkner vowing to join other whites in “going into the street and shooting Negroes”).

The central proposition of this work is that the African-American working class historically responds to the plantation bloc’s hegemony through a variety of strategies of resistance, and that these strategies cohere around a defense of independent expressiveness, however deeply coded it often is. He finds what he calls the “blues epistemology” to be the defining ethos and aesthetic of resistance.

I’m not convinced Woods accomplished what he set out to do; the ping-ponging between blues and development history is more dizzying than syncretic. His description of the blues songster as “musical, literary, religious, and

political performer/investigator” certainly casts the performer in a larger role, more the griot than the entertainer, more a prophet than a clown. And his description of the blues as “the counter-narrative of the American dream” rings true, though not necessarily on all the levels Woods would have the reader believe.

But his central metaphors sometimes seem more like conceits. If by “blues bloc” he means, as he often says, an “African-American working class perspective,” or “African-American development agenda,” what does the snappier shorthand add besides snap? When he has Martin Luther King, Jr., experiencing, in 1968, a “blues transformation,” I am unconvinced that this does justice to King’s deepening class and internationalist understandings. For me, it doesn’t work. For others it might.

There are also worrisome tendencies: his oversimplifying of the relationship of different classes; attributing motives to events without proof; and his general aversion to multiple factors of social

events in favor of conspiracy and monolithic racism. For example, I would like to have seen more attention to the actual differences between opposing white Southern blocs and the struggles of conflicted whites over their roles, without summary dismissals of the significance of those differences and struggles.

The alternations between music and economics often seem precious and strained, but eventually they lead to a deeper understanding of African-American working-class consciousness as based in the concrete history of cotton, caste and persistent plantation rule. There is good, painful, nitty-gritty exposition of the workings of the system, and the welts it has raised on black skin and in black communities.

In the end, what I found myself retaining and reflecting on was the history of the plantation bloc, not the blues response. Whether or not that’s how others will read it, I certainly recommend spending some time with this book.

Culture critic Dave Lippman recently moved from North Carolina to the Arkansas Delta.

of a close engagement with black Northern activists, and that it was free African Americans who galvanized abolitionists into a broader radicalism.

In the years following the Revolutionary era, freed blacks founded communities in many Northern cities. Concurrently, an organized movement among whites pushed for the removal of all blacks from America as a solution to the national conflict over slavery. Activists within the Northern free black communities vigorously opposed colonization, and sought to convert sympathetic colonizationists to their cause in the late 1820s and early 1830s.

Both by the arguments of black activists, and by visiting black community churches and schools, white abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison were made to see that colonizationism reflected the vitriol of an unexamined and monolithic white racial prejudice. To resolve the slavery question meant to deal with blacks as equal American citizens, entailing both an immediate end to slavery and the eradication of white prejudice.

Having firmly established the racial radicalism of abolitionists, Goodman goes on to contend that abolitionism was far more of a popular movement than

previously thought. Alarm over the changes wrought by the market revolution spurred ordinary, tradition-minded Americans from many walks of life to embrace the radicalism of the abolition movement.

Using abolitionist society rolls and city directories, Goodman shows that abolitionists, although heterogeneous, shared a common social status. Most were part of mainstream religious denominations, and labored as "middling" sorts: skilled workers, master artisans, farmers, and small businessmen. These men feared that greedy, slave-holding, speculating aristocrats sought to subvert the Revolutionary ideal of a Christian republic of small producers.

As Northern elites sought to quash abolitionism, enlisting the support of racist wage workers in anti-abolition violence, the struggle against slavery also led abolitionists to a broader support of skilled labor movements and a denunciation of aristocracy and immorality in economics and society at home.

For women as well, the constraints of a new ideal of women as domestic and consumerist ornaments chafed with the traditional role of women as moral leaders. In extending sisterhood and domes-

tic virtue to slave women, abolitionist women transcended the private sphere to find a radical feminist public voice.

In all cases, the abolitionist acceptance of racial equality went hand in hand with a broader championing of moral reform in economy, politics, and society, and the embrace of a wider conception of equal rights for all.

Finally, Goodman makes clear the central contributions of African-Americans in transforming the abolition movement from one of racist exclusion to one of profound and important progressive racial change.

Of One Blood is a history worth reading both by specialists in the field and the general public. It is surprisingly engaging and clearly written, balancing biographical accounts with larger historical narratives about the forces shaping and driving the movement.

The book has obvious and perhaps not unintentional relevance for the present, if only in arguing that awareness of, and popular struggle against, white racism in America is a necessary and necessarily radical struggle.

Rene Hayden is a PhD candidate at the University of California at San Diego. He is writing a dissertation on political violence in the 19th century South.

Confessions of a Home-Grown Bigot

By Michael Powelson

David Duke, the former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, first gained national attention in 1989 when he was elected to Louisiana's House of Representatives from the state's 81st district. Duke has since run for office a number of times, and he nearly won a U.S. Senate race in 1990.

Ten years after his rise as a nationally recognized spokesperson for the far right, Duke has released his autobiography, *My Awakening: A Path to Racial Understanding*, in which he attempts to explain to readers how he arrived at the political and racial positions that have made him so (in)famous.

At over 700 pages (including notes and

My Awakening: A Path to Racial Understanding
David Duke. Covington, LA:
Free Speech Press, 1998.



index), well over half the book is devoted to Duke's views on race, ethnicity, and gender. With chapters titled "Race and

Reason," "A Question of Intelligence," "Jewish Supremacism," and "Jewish Evolutionary Strategy," Duke elaborates on his belief that a species-like difference exists between blacks and whites, men and women, Jews and Gentiles.

The remaining third of the book covers his own personal odyssey, from his youth in New Orleans to his world travels (including India and Israel), his resignation from the Klan, his founding of the National Association for the Advancement of White People (NAAWP), and his well-covered political campaigns.

Duke leaves no doubt about his racism and anti-Semitism; in particular Duke sees a world-wide Jewish conspiracy lurking in every corner. On whether

In Brief

By Chris Kromm

You've Gotta Have Faith "Why Unions Matter" National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, June 1999

At last, labor and churches seem to be working together in pursuit of their common goal of justice for all. Groups like Jobs with Justice have united workers and people of faith to mobilize for economic fairness, and the AFL-CIO recently sponsored a "Labor in the Pulpit" campaign to strengthen the alliance.

Now the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice brings us this short but powerful guide, spelling out in easy-to-digest language what unions are, and why workers need organizations to speak and act in their interests. Highlights include statistics that demonstrate the "union advantage" in pay and benefits, and honest answers to questions like "What about union corruption?" and "What about racism and sexism?"

In short: a great guide for getting your faith community behind the cause of worker's rights. Contact (773) 728-8400 or nicwf@igc.org.

Digital Democracy Campaign Finances On-Line

It's no secret that money corrupts politics. But just how bad is it? And what can people do about it?

Fortunately, people yearning for a day when politicians aren't for sale to the highest bidder now have access to a host of on-line sources to track the flow of money to their political candidates – as well as links to groups mobilizing to clean up elections.

To see what powerful interests your U.S. Senators and Representatives are indebted to, www.opensecrets.org – sponsored by the Center for Responsive Politics – is a gold mine, offering searchable databases of the total amount raised and biggest contributors for all federal level officials. Their on-line *Capital Eye* newsletter is an essential companion, offering all-important context with articles on subjects like "The NRA's Political Giving."

Another way of getting at the same information is to consult the **Harden Political Info Systems** [hpi.www.com] site, which allows you to search by zip code to get the goods on your elected official.

No such comprehensive site exists for state politicians, although states are under growing pressure to post data on legislative members. So far, there is on-line campaign contribution information available in five out of 13 Southern states:

- Florida [election.dos.state.fl.us/campfin/cfindb.htm]
- Georgia [www.sos.state.ga.us/elections/disclosure.htm]
- Louisiana [www.ethics.state.la.us/cgi-bin/la98/contrib.html]
- North Carolina [www.sboe.state.nc.us/test/cro.htm]
- Virginia [www.crp.org/vpap]

The quality and accessibility of information varies widely; easily the best is the Virginia site, run by the non-profit Virginia Public Access Project with the goal of informing voters in mind. (Texas has a nearly worthless "voluntary" site.)

So now that you've got the raw data, what next? Southerners are fortunate to have the **Democracy South** site [www.all4democracy.org/demsouth], which showcases this center's efforts to build a united force for democratic elections in the South, complete with reports on money and politics battles primarily in North Carolina. Contact Democracy South and they can probably hook you up with reform efforts in your state.

Public Campaign [www.publiccampaign.org], meanwhile, reports on national initiatives for clean elections, and is where you can sign up for the well-named *Ouch!* newsletter, "a regular e-mail bulletin on how private money in politics hurts average citizens."

Duke is a closet Nazi, his autobiography suggests not. At the height of his popularity in the late 1980s and early 1990s there were thousands willing to march behind Duke, Brown Shirt style, yet he chose to hitch his wagon to the Republican Party, of which he is still the chairman for Jefferson Parish.

Duke's opponents have always stretched the analogy with Nazi politics, and his writings make it clear that Duke's real agenda isn't death camps and lamp shades of human skin, but trying to rebuild the old Democratic Party's white

supremacist coalition which dominated the U.S. from Reconstruction to Civil Rights. Opponents don't need to go across the Atlantic for Duke's political inspiration; racism and anti-Semitism are as American as – well, you know.

While it is tempting to dismiss him as a right-wing kook, Duke is no fool. His book is well-researched, and, when compared to the writings of other pols who have put pen to paper, even well-written. I recommend his book for all those that want to explore the mindset of an intelligent, educated, white, middle class male

who sincerely believes that race, ethnicity, and gender are the three variables that play the greatest role in who we are and what we have done or will do.

Duke is no American Hitler, but the views expressed in *My Awakening* are unfortunately shared by too many of his fellow citizens, even if most of them would never consider voting for him.

Michael Powelson has a Ph.D. in history from Columbia University, and was an activist in the anti-David Duke campaigns of the late 1980s and early 1990s. He is currently working on a documentary concerning David Duke's influence on American politics.

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Snake Handling

By Pat Arnow

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

— Mark 16:17-18

They are called sign followers, and in fundamentalist, Pentecostal churches, the Holy Ghost moves some adherents to enter a trancelike state that allows them to speak an unknown, unknowable language. Some congregations, mostly in the rural South, demonstrate their faith in a more dangerous way: handling deadly snakes and drinking poison.

Some succumb to the poison. Most defy death, as well as some laws and the other fundamentalists who disapprove—even Rev. Jerry Falwell has condemned snake handling.

Though worship of snakes has roots in pre-Christian history, the modern practice sprang up less than a hundred years ago, in east Tennessee, according to Thomas Burton, author of *Serpent-Handling Believers* (University of Tennessee Press, 1993). A minister, George Went Hensley, inspired by the Biblical verse, took up a rattler and was not bitten. He brought the snake to his church, and others adopted his manner of showing faith in God.

Burton, who is a retired professor from East Tennessee State University, recently estimated that 2,500 people handle poisonous snakes as part of their religious practice. Most are white and attend small unaffiliated churches in Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, Virginia, Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina, Indiana and possibly Texas.

Carl Porter, pastor of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in Kingston, Georgia, about an hour north of Atlanta, participates in snake handling with a congregation of 50 to 100 people, including his wife and two sons. A retired truck driver, Porter became inspired to handle snakes after he saw the practice at a church service. "I seen the Lord move on them. I wanted the Lord to move on me, and He did—told me to handle the serpent," said Porter in a telephone interview.

With no state law prohibiting snake handling in Georgia, Porter welcomes reporters to his services. No laws hamper religious snake handling in Alabama or West Virginia, either, but Tennessee, Kentucky, and North Carolina do have laws restricting the practice. Prosecutions in the 1970s led to court challenges by snake handlers and the American Civil Liberties



Union. State courts upheld the laws, holding that public safety overrides religious freedom. The U.S. Supreme Court refused to take up the issue, so the statues stand.

Few sheriffs bother parishioners, however. Injury is a more frequent problem. Carl Porter has been bitten by snakes repeatedly. He says that at times he has fallen ill from the bites, other times not. Worshipers say that if their faith is strong enough, they will not be harmed by snakebites. Those who are bit do not generally seek medical treatment. Snakebites have proved lethal to about 75 practitioners over the years.

The most recent death was of 34-year-old Tennessee evangelist, John Wayne "Punkin" Brown, Jr. A rattler bit him during a service in northeastern Alabama in 1998. His wife died of snakebites in 1995.

Despite the seeming extremism of snake handling, Burton emphasizes that "these folks are normal people." Psychological testing has confirmed his statement—a study of a West Virginia congregation of snake handlers showed mental health status comparable to a nearby conventional congregation.

The only difference, according to Burton, is that snake handlers "are willing to die for their beliefs."

§

Pat Arnow, former editor of *Southern Exposure* and *Now & Then*, is a writer in Durham, N.C.

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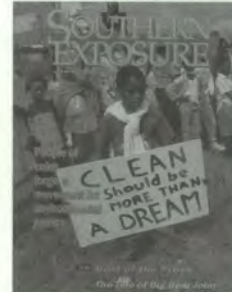
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