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Editor's Note

This issue of *Vitae Scholasticae* is a testimony to the growth of the journal and the educational biographers associated with it. Since the publication of our last general issue in Spring 2011, *VS* learned that one of its articles received the Elizabeth Powell Award from the University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA) for the year's best article on distance learning. The article's title is "Correspondence Study and the 'Crime of the Century': Helen Williams, Nathan Leopold, and the Stateville Correspondence School." The author is Editorial Advisory Board member Von Pittman.

The two books featured in this issue were authored and reviewed by former *VS* contributors. Lucy Townsend was the primary author (with Gaby Weiner) of *Deconstructing and Reconstructing Lives: Auto/biography in Educational Settings.* Phyllis Povell wrote *Montessori Comes to America: The Leadership of Maria Montessori and Nancy McCormick Rambusch*. The books are reviewed by Lucy E. Bailey and Amy Freshwater, respectively.

In the current issue, the journal welcomes back Bart Dredge, who, along with *VS* newcomer Cayce Tabor, examines Langston Hughes' depression-era experiences at Southern universities. Edward Janak also returns to the journal with an oral history of a family of teachers in the Midwestern United States. Finally, *VS* newcomer Bruce Romanish rounds out the issue with a biographical piece on educational luminary George Counts.

Vitae Scholasticae's vitality can be seen in the ongoing submissions of longtime contributors, as well as the involvement of educational biographers who are new to the journal. Many thanks to all who contributed to this issue. Keep those submissions coming!

—Linda Morice

Dreams Deferred:
White Reaction to Langston Hughes' Depression-Era Educational Tour of the South

Bart Dredge
Austin College

Cayce Tabor
Texas Wesleyan School of Law

On November 11, 1931, newly-elected University of North Carolina president Frank Porter Graham offered as his inaugural address "The University Today," in part staking out a position on academic freedom he would find himself defending for years. To Graham, university faculty enjoyed and required the freedom to control the curriculum and establish scholarly standards, while teaching and speaking freely as "scholars and seekers for the truth." Along with university administrators, professors could express their views about issues of importance while "fearing no special interest."

Academic freedom also implied the right of university citizens to reject the "prejudices of section, race, or creeds," and the right to remain open to the "plight of unorganized and inarticulate peoples" in a world in which "high pressure lobbies" could and did impose their will on the general life of the state. A university community should be free to hear anyone speaking for the "unvoiced millions" and even the "hated minorities"—and no criticism of that freedom should tempt the university to prohibit speech or publications that were the resources of "a free university, a free religion, and a free state." No matter its challenges, academic freedom was gathering momentum and

through it democracy, "sometimes sleeping but never dead," would continually reassert intellectual integrity and individual moral autonomy. Widely heralded for this expansive view of intellectual and institutional freedom, within days of his inauguration President Graham faced his first major challenge with the arrival of the poet Langston Hughes on the Chapel Hill campus.[1]

Langston Hughes (1902-1967) was arguably the premier American poet, social activist, novelist and playwright associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Born in Joplin, Missouri, Hughes spent most of his youth in Lawrence, Kansas, later leaving to attend Columbia University which drew him to the Harlem that was to be such a major focus of his life and work. While successful at Columbia, Hughes nevertheless left for a period of odd jobs and world travel, returning eventually to attend and finish his studies at Lincoln University, the historically black institution in Pennsylvania. Hughes was an extraordinarily prolific writer of twelve volumes of poetry, several plays, novels, and other works that frequently "exposed the contradictions" of racial and class subordination.[2] Perhaps as a result, Hughes quickly developed a self-image of many hues, including a belief that he could serve as a "people's poet" who could reeducate himself and his audiences by lifting the theory of black art closer into alignment with the lived difficulties experienced by millions.[3]

Perhaps the best expression of this sense of self and mission began in 1931 when Hughes wrote to the presidents of Southern black colleges to inquire whether they would pay him to appear on their campuses. Receiving numerous positive responses, he applied to the Rosenwald Fund, later receiving a $1,000 grant. He then bought a Ford that he could not drive, and recruited Radcliffe Lucas, a former classmate at Lincoln University, to join him for his tour of Southern schools.[4] The two began the tour on November 2nd, stopping first at Dowington Industrial and Agricultural School for Boys, and then at Morgan College in Baltimore, Virginia Union in Richmond, the Hampton Institute, and Virginia State College where it is likely Hughes studied a portrait of John Mercer Langston, the first president of the college and a distant relative. Hughes was well received early in his tour, especially when his audiences got over their surprise that he was "short, slight and not particularly African."[5] Yet, soon after leaving Virginia he headed into the "troubled Jim Crow South of ever-present danger for Negroes."[6] Hughes' first stop in the South was at the University of North Carolina, the only white school he visited, perhaps thinking that a presentation at Chapel Hill would help publicize his tour, at least "if he wasn't killed first."[7] He had earlier written to Sociology Professor Guy Johnson, then teaching a course on black culture, who invited Hughes to campus, but apologized that "most of us white folks" were "too hypocritical or too crowded" to put him up for the night.[8]

Born black, Hughes was "stuck in the mud from the beginning," with Jim Crow grabbing him "by the heels" whenever he tried to "float in the clouds," and as a "social poet" he had experienced his own "skirmishes" with censorship.[9] In a way, the tour of the South was a direct challenge to Jim Crow as Hughes believed that his form of literary education could create "spiritual freedom" in the South.[10] Perhaps at no other time would that freedom mean as much to Hughes, and to the South, as his tour followed so closely the tragic events of the now infamous prosecution of the Scottsboro Boys. Arrested in March 1931 while traveling from Chattanooga to Memphis, the nine young black males were charged with having raped two white girls also traveling on the rails in search of jobs. In a series of hurried trials with little attention to due process, all except one of the boys was found guilty of rape and sentenced to death, the common sentence at the time in Alabama for young black males thought to have transgressed the racial divide. The complete story of the injustice at Scottsboro has been frequently and well told, so does not need to be repeated here, but it should be stressed that it was in the shadow of this case that Hughes began his educational sojourn into the American South.[11] In the "Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," Hughes saw the "common people" as the proper muse for the black poet. Yet, while he directed his poetry at blacks and other "low down folks" who struggle through life, he also wanted to transform the "ugly face of the Southland," and this would require him to reach white audiences as well.[12] Perhaps by exposure to his black intelligence and artistic flexibility, even white Southerners might come to help accelerate social and racial change.[13] Such a mission might well offend some, of course, and Hughes expected as much. He wrote that, "If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter." Likewise, "if colored people are pleased, we are pleased. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either." He understood that like all who educate, writers and poets "build our temples for tomorrow," and stand "on top of the mountain, free within ourselves"—a freedom he demanded for himself and his audiences as well.[14]

During the same week as his much-publicized visit to Chapel Hill, Hughes also published two contributions to a new literary magazine that had already begun to draw attention to itself at the University and beyond. Edited by two former UNC students, Milton Abernethy and Anthony Buttitta, *Contempo: A Review of Books and Personalities* joined other culturally radical magazines during the early 1930s including *Dial*, *Hound and Horn*, and the *New Masses*.[15] The editorial policy encouraged literary controversy, including the two issues devoted to the Scottsboro case. The journal published political and literary essays, book reviews, short stories, poetry, and excerpts from works in progress by such writers as Sherwood Anderson, Malcolm Cowley, Countee Cullen and Upton Sinclair. Editors Abernethy and Buttitta also

opened the Intimate Bookshop situated directly across from campus in an area most traveled to this day by students.[16] Certainly aided by the intellectual energy produced by *Contempo*, the bookstore quickly became an off-campus center of intellectual and educational life. One astute observer, in fact, later described the Intimate Bookshop as "an oasis in the Sahara of the Bozart," another the "guts of the town's intellectual life," and a third "North Carolina's Algonquin, its Greenwich Village, its Bloomberg, [and] its City Lights."[17] The bookstore quickly became a haven for those who absorbed the radical politics that "mingled with the bookstore's dust," a reputation decidedly gilded by *Contempo's* aggressive critique of Jim Crow and its tragic expression in Scottsboro.[18] No writer, however, generated as much controversy in the pages of the magazine as Langston Hughes with two short publications that dramatically altered his experience in Chapel Hill.

Certain to generate substantial hostility in a region dominated by the cotton textile industry, Hughes first directed "Southern Gentlemen, White Prostitutes, Mill-Owners and Negroes" to those most likely to be offended by its every word. Hughes claimed that if any of the nine Scottsboro boys were executed, the South should be ashamed of itself, and all should learn to "what absurd farces an Alabama court can descend." For the honor of "Southern gentlemen (if there ever were any)," the South should rise and demand the freedom of the "dumb young blacks, so indiscreet as to travel, unwittingly, on the same freight train with two white prostitutes." Also, why not let Alabama mill owners pay "decent wages" so their women won't need to be prostitutes; and why not provide schools for Alabama blacks so that the "mulatto children of Southern gentlemen (I reckon they're gentlemen)" won't be so dumb again? Otherwise, let "Dixie justice (blind and syphilitic as it may be)" take its course and let Alabama's men "amuse themselves" by burning the eight young blacks to death in the state's electric chair.[19] As would be expected by anyone familiar with the history of the textile industry in the South, this essay inflamed countless people, especially offered as it was by a Northern black who, like the Scottsboro boys themselves, clearly failed to understand his proper place in the prevailing racial hierarchy.

Perhaps worse, appearing on the same page as the Scottsboro essay Hughes published "Christ in Alabama"—a poem that could only have provoked the wrath of Southern Christians.[20]

"Christ in Alabama"
Christ is a Nigger,
Beaten and Black –
O, bare your back.
Mary is His Mother –
Mammy of the South,

Silence your mouth.
God's His Father –
White Master above,
Grant us your love.
Most holy bastard
Of the bleeding mouth;
Nigger Christ
On the cross of the South.[21]

The trope of Christ as a suffering black man, of course, was not original with Hughes. W. E. B. Du Bois had used the same image in his 1924 novel *Darkwater*, and other examples of a lynched black Savior appeared in Countee Cullen's "Christ Recrucified," in 1922, and Walter White's, *The Fire in the Flint* in 1924.[22] Hughes later wrote that "Christ in Alabama" inspired more criticism than the "Southern Gentlemen" essay, describing it as an "ironic poem" encouraged by the thought of how Christ, with no human father, would be accepted were "He born in the South of a negro mother." With its "malign caricature of racist justice" Hughes' poem was calculated to generate an angry response from all Southerners. The inflammatory first line of "Christ in Alabama" specifies Christ as a "dark-skinned man," against traditional portrayals of the "pale Savior."[23] Perhaps for that reason, one critic suggested, "Christ in Alabama" was a "modern poem we have wanted to forget." The three stanzas insist that Christ bare his back, Mary silence her mouth, and God grant His love, and turn the false accusation of rape back on the dominant culture of white power and privilege. The actual violence in Alabama was not a crime committed by nine young blacks, but the historical violence white men had long visited upon black women.[24] Implicit is a condemnation of modern Christians who "gather like Pontius Pilate's Romans" to murder Christ again. The victim is the product of the rape of a black woman by a white man, who then represses his paternity by murdering his own son. This "omnipresent and universally denied trinity" serves as the backdrop for the South's repeated crucifixion scenes—"Nigger Christ/On the Cross of the South." In every Southern town there is a Calvary on which hangs the "bleeding, ritualized product of denial and repression."[25] The earlier essay, coupled with the poem "Christ in Alabama" and the invitation to Hughes to speak to white students at Chapel Hill, ignited a public controversy that dragged on for months among elite and popular commentators alike.

Among the most vociferous critics who condemned Hughes was the racist demagogue and trade journal editor David Clark of Charlotte who first paid attention to Langston Hughes and *Contempo* on November 26, 1931. Editorializing in his privately-owned *Southern Textile Bulletin*, Clark reprinted the "scurrilous and blasphemous articles" by Hughes and pointed out that in

most of the South such a man would be "fortunate to escape bodily harm." Yet, it appeared that a negro communist could go to Chapel Hill after calling Christ a bastard, and declaring that there were no Southern gentlemen, and still have "students sit at his feet."[26] It should be noted that Clark's hint about "bodily harm" was consistent with views held long before Langston Hughes visited Chapel Hill. In 1922, for example, Clark had written that perhaps the Ku Klux Klan could be called upon to ensure the "purity of the blood" of mill workers against outside agitators from the North. Now it was clear that Hughes, one of those agitators, had "spit in the faces" of Southern whites.[27]

Even as late as January 1932, Clark criticized UNC for remaining silent about the insulting and blasphemous "negro author, Langston Hughes." In fact, the "negro communist" had been honored by those who praised him in an "exceedingly complimentary" student editorial.[28] After hoping the "insults of this negro" had affected only a few, Clark lamented that the student newspaper, the *Daily Tar Heel,* had found his writings the "expression of a clear and sincere spirit."[29] Continuing for months, Clark took every occasion to remind his readers that UNC had earlier brought to campus "the negro, Langston Hughes"—and here one begins to see the corrosive effect of such repetition—after he had insulted the South and had written sacrilegious poetry.[30] Such unending commentary finally led UNC student body president Mayne Albright to respond. In May 1932 Albright condemned the continuing attacks against academic freedom. Framed as an answer to Clark's charges that "radicalism finds nourishment" on the UNC campus, Albright insisted that there were no professors on campus who taught "communism, atheism, free love or the doctrine of other subversive forces." Moreover, no campus visitors or speakers sustained such doctrines, perhaps especially Langston Hughes who offered students a "respectful, restrained and humorous story of his life and work."[31] Clark persisted, however, even suggesting that UNC officials allowed Hughes access to the campus to avoid a "call-down" from the American Association of University Professors, known to be "allied with" the American Civil Liberties Union and a host of "other subversive forces."[32] Even two years after the controversy had finally died down, Clark returned to Hughes—that "paid worker for communism" whose "alleged poetry" was nothing more than a means for "furthering the cause of communism."[33]

Other elite commentators responded to the Hughes affair as well. In a lengthy exchange of letters, Kemp Lewis of the Erwin Cotton Mills in Durham agreed with Clark that the *Daily Tar Heel* sometimes published "wild statements" about which he did not approve, and undoubtedly some UNC students were "highly irregular" in their religious views or shared radical thoughts. Still, one could not expel them all. More importantly, the University was "much disgusted" by Hughes, but the controversy would have passed quietly had Clark himself not published inflammatory editorials that

undoubtedly pleased the *Contempo* editors and prolonged the life of the publication.[34] Perhaps worse, the "rather intemperate" editorials Clark offered were potentially "hurtful" to textile interests, never mind the University as well.[35] Others, however, failed to find any problem with Clark's assessment of the Hughes situation in Chapel Hill, including John Wilkins who wrote that Clark had been "perfectly right" about the teaching of "atheism-communism [sic] and socialism" on the UNC campus. Evidently students and professors alike failed to recognize that the Church was mankind's "best civilizer," and that one could not destroy the teachings of the "child born in Bethlehem." Only "small ignorant people" run down everything that "breathes of the Church," and they were widely understood to be the "stumbling blocks on the highways of life." As for reading the "negro Langston Hughes," Wilkins asked, why not read Tennyson, the Bard of Avon, and the English classics? If nothing else, those who enjoy "real literature" should not waste time with "modern trash," produced by "high intellectuals" forgotten in short order and soon adrift in the "Ocean of Lost Authors." It could not be clearer that the University had made a huge mistake when encouraging "Atheism, Socialism, Communism and the Negro Langston Hughes."[36]

Kemp Lewis later wrote to UNC President Frank Graham that the publications by Hughes made "the blood of every Southerner boil," and "propaganda sheets" like *Contempo* struck at the very "foundations of our civilization and our social relationships" in the region.[37] He wrote later still that he was "intensely worried" about the Hughes incident. David Clark had written editorials that "could not but irritate," but they had to resist striking out at him by approving "the *Contempo* attitude," or by praising Hughes. If nothing else, some parents had evidently decided to enroll their sons in other colleges because UNC had invited to campus such "undesirable citizens" as Langston Hughes. There were, again, certain fundamental ideals and doctrines in our "Southern civilization" that demanded protection.[38] Another important correspondent, attorney Kemp D. Battle of Rocky Mount, wrote to UNC executive secretary to the president, Robert House, that while he had "due regard for free speech," he wondered if loyalty to that principle required the university to provide campus support and facilities for "blasphemous" speeches.[39] House later responded that although both its editors had once been UNC students, *Contempo* was not under University jurisdiction. Clearly, though, they had "made a mess" of the freedom of inquiry so perhaps "we have failed." Besides, while on campus Hughes had behaved in such a "gentlemanly manner" it was unfortunate that *Contempo* had carried the two "horrible examples of bad taste" at the same time. Obviously, House concluded, this was what one could expect from "half-baked, uneducated, and wholly reprehensible adolescents."[40]

Soon after Hughes' campus appearance, textile industry executive J.

Harper Erwin, Jr., of Durham wrote to Frank Graham on behalf of Greenville, South Carolina attorney James D. Poag, also a UNC alumnus. Having read Hughes' contributions to *Contempo*, Poag reprimanded Graham for allowing "communists and others of that stripe" to do their "preaching" at the university. To Poag, Graham should avoid a repetition of such events and insisted that claiming too little advance information about the Hughes presentation would appease no one.[41] Graham later conceded that many in Chapel Hill had condemned *Contempo* for its intellectual irresponsibility, as well as Hughes for his audacity. Still, such problems were the price that the University pays for its freedom, although in this case the price was admittedly very high. Nevertheless, Graham would not, as some had suggested, prohibit "representative Negroes" from speaking to students, as a better understanding between the races tended to be the result.[42]

One day later Thomas P. Graham of the Charlotte-based Crompton & Knowles Loom Works also wrote to President Graham that the entire state had been "stirred" because the "infamous negro" had been allowed to speak on campus. He had recently developed a closer understanding of God and Christianity, and thus found any teaching contrary to Jesus distasteful, and when a "blasphemous negro" speaks at the University he found it difficult to put words to paper. He had been loyal to UNC for decades, but if something did not change, he would support another university—preferably one with the "nerve and power" to stand in the "fear of God." President Graham must immediately deny campus access to "predators" like Hughes and weed out all professors who engage in "Communistic or Anti-Christian teachings." He wanted to continue helping UNC in teaching "Christian Ideals and Character," but his assistance was contingent upon removing the "disgrace and dishonor" brought to Chapel Hill by this "blasphemous and Anti-Christian negro."[43]

In another denunciation of Hughes and his writings, Anderson, South Carolina publisher Wilton E. Hall asked Governor O. Max Gardner on December 8, 1930 to "take a hand in the management" of *Contempo*. Publisher of the *Anderson Daily Mail* and the *Daily Independent* and a former United States Senator, Hall asked the governor whether a "White Democrat" could ever sanction the blasphemy and slurs against white mill women, or abide imputations that Southern justice was both blind and diseased. Had the governor ever seen the "red flag of Communism" so defiantly waved in the "face of Southern Democracy" as in this case? Something must be done about writings that left so many Southerners "busted open with rage" and Hall insisted that Governor Gardner at least close down *Contempo* for having given space for Hughes to express his venom.[44] Interestingly, even Upton Sinclair weighed in briefly on the Hall complaint, writing that the Governor of North Carolina should not "take over" the magazine, as there were

undoubtedly enough "dull publications" in the state already.[45] At minimum, a final critic added, no university should offer encouragement to anyone capable of writing such an "outrageous, unfair and unscrupulous denunciation of the South."[46]

Amid the countless other duties of a newly-appointed university president, Frank Graham also found time to comment on the Hughes controversy. He acknowledged that the essay and poem appearing in *Contempo* had grievously offended the religious sensibilities and racial prejudices of many. While he would refuse to censor anyone's "interpretation of life and its conflicts," he was equally adamant that journal editors themselves bore a "moral responsibility" to express a decent regard for honest religious convictions and improved race relations. The intellectual irresponsibility demonstrated by *Contempo* was antithetical to the educational approach of any modern university, but perhaps especially one leading a section of the country so deeply plagued by the delicate problems of race and religion.[47] Frank Graham wrote to Kemp Lewis that the irresponsible "antics of sensationalism and exhibitionism" of the *Contempo* staff had energized David Clark. They gave Clark just what he needed to "impute the University," and in exchange received the recognition they had "craved" and had been generally denied at Chapel Hill. As for Langston Hughes and his campus visit, Graham reminded Lewis that a representative Negro leader appeared on campus every year. Professor Guy Johnson was likely "horrified at the misuse of his purpose" by the editors of *Contempo*, but Graham insisted that Johnson remained "entirely innocent" of any blame in the growing controversy. As president, Graham could have simply closed the door on Hughes, but "not for the world" would he have done so. If others insisted on reprimanding anyone on campus, he would readily accept that rebuke even though he had nothing but contempt for "the language and the spirit" expressed in the Hughes poem and essay. Graham added that he would "take his punishment and not squeal," although he found it odd to be attacked by the editors of *Contempo* at one end and by the *Southern Textile Bulletin* at the other. Nevertheless, no matter the source of the denunciation, he would "bend to neither."[48] In fact, when Clark and others later demanded the dismissals of Guy Johnson and other professors for having invited Hughes to campus, Graham pointedly told the Board of Trustees, "I am responsible for what happens on this campus. You fire me."[49] Inevitably, on this and other principled positions he was to take in the future, Graham avoided an escalation perhaps desired by those who preferred to see him display "the martyr pose."[50]

To be sure, President Graham was not the only campus voice to weigh in on the Hughes controversy. The *Daily Tar Heel* offered its unalloyed support of Hughes and the University, insisting that the campus presentation had been an excellent "biographical, poetical, and philosophical disquisition," that

concentrated not only on those blacks who were "delimited" in their opportunities, but all in Depression-era America who were finding opportunities denied them and discovering that their only choice was to "submit or to struggle or perhaps die."[51] Later, aware of the relentless criticism lodged against Hughes and UNC by David Clark, the student newspaper wrote that Clark had once again "cast his horrified gaze" toward Chapel Hill and with his "trusty slingshot," gathered a "goodly supply of spitballs" as weapons in his campaign to destroy the "mythical Goliath of communism at Carolina." Having aroused himself to a "spasm of vitriolic activity" by Langston Hughes, it was clear to everyone that Clark was little more than a "ham actor" who loved the spotlight. Still, with Clark mischaracterizing academic freedom and intellectual experimentation as "socialistic policies," the University had no choice but to defend itself.[52]

Often during lingering controversies elite opinion eventually wends its way down into popular consciousness, and the Hughes affair offered no exception. While some congratulated *Contempo* and its writers for their courage in having stood against the "decaying throne of the Southern Bourbons," most were livid at UNC for inviting Hughes to speak on campus, and at *Contempo* for having published his criticism of the Scottsboro case.[53] For example, during Hughes' campus presentation, local police officers congregated around Gerrard Hall as Hughes felt the tension of race that is "peculiar to the South." While no trouble erupted, many were inclined to run Hughes out of town, including one of the police bodyguards who remarked that: "Sure he should be run out! It's bad enough to call Christ a bastard. But when he calls him a *Nigger* [sic], he's gone too far."[54] In other cases unsigned newspaper editorials focused on Hughes, as when the *Charlotte Observer* found the campus visit and his writings "utterly inexcusable" as he was clearly a "negro Communist and defamer of the South."[55] Likewise, the *Gastonia Daily Gazette* condemned Hughes and his writings as "common, filthy, obnoxious, putrid, rancid, nauseating, rotten, vile, and stinking"—opprobrium so offensive that Sinclair Lewis wrote that such "charming praise" had led him to subscribe to the magazine.[56] When reports of these reactions reached the North, his mother begged Hughes to abandon his plans to visit the Scottsboro boys at Kilby prison, and asked her local church to pray for her son, while his friend Elmer Carter wrote of his fears of the "hot-headed cracker types" in the South who might injure any black man who violated the prevailing social etiquette of white supremacy.[57]

Another critic posed a more serious threat to Hughes and the University of North Carolina by his ability to organize the anger of others into political action. In September 1932 the *Chapel Hill Weekly* reported that L. A. Tatum, a retired cotton mill executive from Belmont, North Carolina, had delivered to Governor O. Max Governor an address entitled, "The Anti-Religious Invasion

of Higher Education." In the form of a petition signed by over 250 state citizens, Tatum and his signatories had extracted from recent accounts and some college textbooks "pornographic paragraphs" that, in his view, proved that UNC was teaching "free love" and encouraging students to delve into "sexual filth." The local paper noted that while the University might on occasion produce intellectual offspring who are "veritable monsters to hard common sense," that did not justify Tatum's attacks. If listened to at the highest levels, Tatum would reduce UNC to a "timid association of boss-ridden pedagogues." Undoubtedly Tatum, who reduced his own prejudices to an anti-intellectual petition, and David Clark who advertised the South as a "paradise of low-priced labor," had damaged the region far more than any visitor like Langston Hughes could ever accomplish in a classroom with UNC students.[58]

Tatum asked the governor to join him and others as they prepared for battle in an effort to "rout the bureaucratic army" that had perverted the universities so much as to raise a "stench that is reaching to high heaven."[59] To ensure gubernatorial assistance in his campaign, Tatum suggested that the governor might himself be "the anointed of Israel"—Moses destined to lead North Carolina out of the intellectual and spiritual wilderness.[60] The petition itself "bristled with the pernicious outpourings" of Freud, Langston Hughes, and Bertrand Russell, and drew special attention to the "utterly inexcusable" presentation by Langston Hughes, again the "negro communist and defamer of the South."[61] About Hughes, Tatum insisted that the state of North Carolina had to make a clear choice as it could not serve "both Christ and Lenin."[62] As might be expected, the Tatum petition generated significant heat. The *Raleigh News & Observer*, for example, argued that if the state universities submitted to the petition, "they do not deserve to exist." Education could admit none of the limits proscribed by the "aroused brethren," as they had written what amounted to a "death warrant" for the University. To be sure, UNC had often provoked resentment among those who preferred to see professors and students confined to the "groove of tradition," but now hundreds of citizens had organized to demand that the governor spare the state from the "predatory acts" of these "so-called modern educators." As was often true, these reactionary censors relied almost exclusively on the "time-worn cry that the wind is blowing in Moscow" and thus remained ill-equipped to understand modern education.[63] Despite the energy Tatum devoted to his cause, and the support he seemed to have engendered among some, the governor ignored the petition.

Finally, in some ways one is more disturbed by a public reaction to the Hughes controversy expressed in letters often sent to the same newspapers that had excited the issue on their editorial pages. The overwhelming majority of such public commentary was negative in tone, spiteful in posture, and unreservedly critical of the University and the poet, and all who failed to see

the threat that his mere presence, leaving aside his writings and speeches, posed to fundamentally important Southern values. Not all critics, however, agreed. For example, Albert Snider condemned the Tatum petition and other attacks against UNC as a menace that threatened "another Waterloo" between the "forces of light and the forces of darkness." In another statement, he warned the North Carolina governor and University trustees to "not dare lay your hand[s] upon the faculty" over this issue. To do so "means war" of perhaps "a thousand years." After all, Tatum and his supporters were no better than "puny petitioners" intent upon requiring intelligent young Southerners to don Tatum's own "black cap of ignorance." Likewise, the *Charlotte Observer* later published an unsigned letter noting that it might be nice to constitute a "Committee of One Hundred, all bundled into one," like the Tatum petitioners, or to live as David Clark—a "one-man Spanish Inquisition" destroying others for "heretical beliefs"—but one prayed such days are past. After all, fair-minded Southerners recognize that they live "side by side, saints, sinners and all." Finally, to Wilton Cathey from Gastonia the Hughes dispute reminded him of Dayton, Tennessee and the "self-appointed censors" who had left the town forever branded as a "synonym for crystallized ignorance."[64] The University and Langston Hughes were not entirely alone.

Most public commentary, however, was different, ranging from the hortatory in purpose to the horrific in tone. One critic, for example, wrote that only a "hopeless moron," would teach students that Jesus Christ was a "black bastard." Everyone, perhaps even including the "collegiate moron," should agree that "pink-parlor socialists" as well as the "homeopathic social perverts" in universities bore direct responsibility for the generation of students who had "wrecked Russia." Unless willing to accept the same fate, the South could not accept the presence of more "notorious characters" like Langston Hughes who "defiantly expectorate" in the face of those decent people whose children went to college to learn the ideals of social and racial purity. Annie Ashcraft, also from Charlotte, agreed. She complained that too many college professors desired to be among the "intelligentsia and the intellectual high-brows" rather than among the "narrow-minded, the conservative and provincial," even becoming so broad-minded that they encouraged "a negro" to smear "that name that is above every name." Yet, she did not condemn the "negro"—only those whites who bowed before his "irreverence and blasphemy." Even more pointedly, S. S. Dunlap saw the Langston Hughes episode as new only in its "degree of boldness." Such was to be expected from those who enjoyed the "powers of darkness" and haunted modern schools with a commitment to "overthrow the truth." Inevitably, exposing students to Langston Hughes and others of his kind would yield the "bitter fruit of our previous sowing."[65]

J. E. L. Winecoff from Montreat, North Carolina supported the Tatum

petition as having been written by men competent to judge "what is good and what is bad, what is moral and what is immoral, what is wholesome and what is harmful."This was crucial as the average Southern student was incapable of thinking for himself, especially when confronted by professors determined to exploit their"pet or wild theories,"highlight the"lower impulses or animal nature" of visiting speakers, and encourage social decay among their innocent students. If Chapel Hill was to continue as a"real blessing"to the South, students must enjoy protection from the"wrong character, or the wrong moral or mental slant," and no character was worse for the students than that demonstrated by Langston Hughes. At the same time, M. Bullock of Lumberton focused on the insidious "self-indifference" and profound "mediocrity and degeneracy" often masked on college campuses as "tolerance" for radical ideas. He was angered by the absence of the "righteous indignation" that should have ignited a"state of rebellion" over the"blasphemous, unholy, degenerate remarks" offered by Hughes during his tour of Southern universities. Educators shared a moral obligation to protect their students from "degenerate infidels" like the Harlem poet and other "lowdown rascals." Yet, campus leaders had remained silent. Perhaps, Bullock warned, such"stark emptiness of life without morals" would someday bring on a"civil war"—a tragedy seemingly encouraged by the"cowards and ambitious demagogues" teaching and preaching in Southern universities. Finally, Walter C. Guy simply wrote to the *Charlotte Observer* that he feared that the young would be led into the"jaws of the vilest type of Communism" by university teachers and their invited comrades such as Langston Hughes.[66]

Reflecting in 1934 on his tour of Southern schools, Hughes denounced the"cowards from the colleges," too often led by"weak professors and well-paid presidents" willingly submitting to Southern white supremacy. Many of the faculty and administrators in historically black colleges produced among their students "spineless Uncle Toms" who, if informed at all, were full of "mental and moral evasions."[67] Hughes, however, was not alone in expressing this dismay. As early as 1930, addressing graduates at Howard University, W. E. B. DuBois chastised faculty and students alike:"Our college man today is, on the average, a man untouched by real culture….We have in our colleges a growing mass of stupidity and indifference."[68] In another instance, President Lafayette Harris of Philander Smith College in Arkansas castigated his students for their estrangement from most Southern blacks, and condemned the"fatalistic and nonchalant" attitude of too many college-educated blacks who"know nothing of their less fortunate fellows and care less."[69] The unwillingness to confront racial injustice on the part of young blacks and their educational mentors continued to disturb Hughes as he came to recognize that"the old abolitionist spirit" from which many Negro colleges had evolved had turned"strangely conservative" about contemporary problems,

including the horrors at Scottsboro.[70]

Following his trip to Chapel Hill and the violent response among whites to his short poem and essay condemning the Scottsboro injustices, papers all over the South covered the excitement at Chapel Hill, and yet, still troubled by the Scottsboro injustice, Hughes followed through on his plan to visit the defendants on death row at the infamous Kilby prison in Alabama. He later recalled his reaction: "For a moment the fear comes: even for me, a Sunday morning visitor, the doors might never open again…And I'm only a Nigger poet."[71] To Hughes his poems sounded "futile and stupid in the face of death," but the boys themselves listened quietly and then came to the bars to shake his hand. Touched by their reaction, and angrier than before about the grotesque injustice portrayed in the Scottsboro affair, Hughes traveled to the Tuskegee Institute and even there found only silence about the "unspeakable" Scottsboro, again a difficult lesson for someone who had "never known such uncompromising prejudices."[72] Years after his tour of the South, Hughes remembered again his educational visit to Chapel Hill and the storm that greeted his contributions to *Contempo*. As he left Chapel Hill, he went deeper into Dixie "with poetry as a passport," stopping to speak to overflow black audiences who knew he had "walked into the lion's den, and come out like Daniel, unscathed."[73] Yet, it was clear that his expedition taught him something of value as well. UNC students and faculty alike had treated him with courtesy as they distanced themselves from the hateful "anti-Negro elements" in the state. It was at the University of North Carolina, surrounded by the ever-deafening chords of anti-intellectual posturing, simmering racial fears, and defensive white supremacy, that Hughes discovered "how hard it is to be a white liberal in the South."[74]

Notes

[1] Reprinted in John Ehle, *Dr. Frank: Life with Frank Porter Graham*, (Chapel Hill: Franklin Street Books, 1993): Appendix F, pp. 275-276, 275; Also UNC *Alumni Review* 29 (December 1931): 110.

[2] Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, *The Poetry of the Negro, 1746-1949*, (New York: Doubleday, 1949); and Nicholas Coles and Janet Zandy, *Working Class Literature: An Anthology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 370.

[3] For general treatment of Hughes and his work during the early period, see Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes: Volume I: 1902-1941: I, Too, Sing America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Faith Berry, *Before and Beyond Harlem: A Biography of Langston Hughes*, (New York: Citadel, 1992, reprint).

[4] Langston Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander: An Autobiographical Journey*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1956), 72-73. For more on the Julius Rosenwald Fund, see J. Scott McCormick, "The Julius Rosenwald Fund," *Journal of Negro Education* 3 (October 1934): 605-626; A. Gilbert Belles, "The College Faculty, the Negro Scholar, and the Julius

Rosenwald Fund," Journal of Negro History 54 (October 1969): 383-392.

[5] Rampersad, 223-224.

[6] Rampersad, 223. See also Mary Beth Culp, "Religion in the Poetry of Langston Hughes," *Phylon* 48 (3rd Quarter, 1987): 240-245.

[7] Rampersad, 226.

[8] Rampersad, 224; Guy Johnson to Langston Hughes, October 27, 1931, in the Guy Benton Johnson papers #03826, (hereinafter Johnson papers), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill..

[9] Langston Hughes, "My Adventures as a Social Poet," *Phylon* (3rd Qtr. 1947): 205-206.

[10] Anthony Dawahare, "Langston Hughes's Radical Poetry and the `End of Race'," *MELUS* 23 (Autumn 1998): 21-41.

[11] See, for example, Dan T. Carter, *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007); and James A. Miller, *Remembering Scottsboro: Legacy of an Infamous Trial*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[12] Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation* (June 23, 1926): 692; generally see Maryemma Graham, "The Practice of a Social Art," Pp. 213-235 in Henry Louis Gates and K. A. Appiah (eds.), *Langston Hughes: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*, (New York: Amistad, 1993): 213; Michael Thurston, "Black Christ, Red Flag: Langston Hughes on Scottsboro," *College Literature* 22 (October 1995): 30-49. Langston Hughes, "To Negro Writers," Pp. 139-141, Henry Hart (ed)., *American Writers Congress*, (New York: International Publishers, 1935), 140.

[13] Arnold Rampersad, Introduction, Pp. 34-40 in Alain Locke (ed.), *The New Negro*, (New York: Athenaeum, 1992), xvi.

[14] Hughes, "Negro Artist," 694.

[15] *Daily Tar Heel*, (April 28, 1931): 1. See this discussed in Colquitt, Clare, "`Contempo' Magazine: Asylum for Aggrieved Authors," *Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin* 27 (1984): 19-45, 22.

[16] *Contempo: A Review of Ideas and Personalities* (June 1931): 3.

[17] Quoted in Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 206. The image derives from H. L. Mencken, "The Sahara of the Bozart," in Mencken, *Prejudices: A Selection*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 69-81.

[18] Junius Irving Scales and Richard Nickson, *Cause at Heart: A Former Communist Remembers*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 45-46, 63; Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*, 207.

[19] Hughes, "Southern Gentlemen, White Prostitutes, Mill-Owners and Negroes," *Contempo* 1 (December 1, 1931): 1.

[20] Langston Hughes to Milton Abernethy, October 23, 1931, *Contempo* Records, #04408 (hereinafter *Contempo* Records), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[21] Italics in the original. See Langston Hughes, "Christ in Alabama," *Contempo* 1 (December 1, 1931), p. 1.

[22] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*, (New York: Washington Square Press), 2004; Walter White, *The Fire in the Flint: A Young Doctor's Tragic*

Confrontation with the Segregated South, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

[23] Thurston, "Black Christ," 31-33; see Langston Hughes, "Cowards from the Colleges," *Crisis* 41 (1934): 227.

[24] Cary Nelson, *Revolutionary Memory: Recovering the Poetry of the American Left*," (New York: Routledge, 2003): 70-75. See this also discussed in Thurston, "Black Christ," 34.

[25] Nelson, 70-71; On these points see also, William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left: African American Writing and Communism Between the Wars*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[26] Clark, "Lower and Lower," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, (December 3, 1931): 18. Clark, "Communist Paper at Chapel Hill," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, (November 26, 1931): 11. Also see Clark, "Two Examples of Student Journalism," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, (November 26, 1931): 11. For more on Clark's views on race, see Bart Dredge, "Defending White Supremacy: David Clark and the *Southern Textile Bulletin*, 1911 to 1955," *North Carolina Historical Review* 89 (January 2012): 1-34.

[27] Clark, "New England Operatives Not Wanted," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, (July 6, 1922): 18; and Clark, "How Strange?" *Southern Textile Bulletin*, (December 31, 1931): 19.

[28] David Clark, "A Discreditable Evasion," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, (January 28, 1932): 19.

[29] Clark, "Lower and Lower," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, (December 3, 1931): 18. As might have been expected, Clark was also angered when the *Daily Tar Heel* referred to Langston Hughes as "Mr. Hughes." See Clark, "Greensboro Daily News Evades Publication," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, (December 17, 1931): 19.

[30] See, for example, Clark, "Norman Thomas Again," *Southern Textile Bulletin*, (April 14, 1932): 18.

[31] "Students Defend Graham's Policy,""Answer Criticism Alleging Abuse of Free Speech Privilege at University," *Raleigh News and Observer*, (May 30, 1932), copy in Frank Porter Graham papers, 1908-1972, #01819 (hereinafter Graham papers), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill..

[32] David Clark, "Institution, Itself, All Right; Not with Some of the Things Going On," letter to the editor, *Charlotte Observer*, (April 29, 1932).

[33] David Clark, "No Ghost Hunter," letter to the editor, *Charlotte Observer*, (October 4, 1933).

[34] Kemp P. Lewis to David Clark, February 19, 1932, Graham papers. It should be noted that space allows for only a sampling of both popular and elite reactions to the Langston Hughes campus visit and his writings in *Contempo*.

[35] Kemp P. Lewis to John M. Booker, January 5, 1932, Graham papers.

[36] "Mr. Clark's Answer," John Grimball Wilkins, letter to the editor, *Charlotte Observer*, (October 3, 1932).

[37] Kemp P. Lewis to Frank P. Graham, November 28, 1931, Graham papers. At the bottom of this letter was a scribbled note: "Mr. Lewis phoned and said disregard this letter."

[38] Kemp P. Lewis to Frank P. Graham, December 7, 1931, Graham papers.

[39] Kemp D. Battle to Robert B. House, December 1931 [sic], Graham papers.

[40] Robert B. House to Kemp D. Battle, December 17, 1931, Graham papers.

[41] James D Poag quotes from J. Harper Erwin, Jr., to Frank P. Graham, December 6, 1931, Graham papers.

[42] Frank P. Graham to J. Harper Erwin, Jr., December 24, 1931, Graham papers.

[43] Thomas P. Graham to Frank P. Graham, December 18, 1931; Graham Papers. Another correspondent, attorney James A. Gray of Winston-Salem, later inquired whether there might be federal restrictions on postal delivery of magazines like *Contempo* because even though the University had no ties to the offensive magazine, most continued to see "Chapel Hill" and "University" as synonymous. See James A. Gray to Frank P. Graham, December 29, 1931, Graham papers.

[44] "Governor Gardner Declines to Give `Nut-Paper' a Kick," *Greensboro Daily News*, (December 8, 1931). See also "Officials Say University Not Connected with Paper," and "Magazine at Chapel Hill is Attacked by Publisher," *Greensboro Daily News*, (December 8, 1931).

[45] Upton Sinclair to Abernethy, December 16, 1931, *Contempo* Records.

[46] Tom Glascow to Frank P. Graham, January 25, 1932, Graham papers.

[47] Frank P. Graham to Milton Abernethy, December 10, 1931, Graham papers.

[48] Frank P Graham to Kemp P. Lewis, December 15, 1931, Graham papers.

[49] This comment appears in a number of locations, including Warren Ashby, *Frank Porter Graham: A Southern Liberal*, (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, Publisher, 1980); see also Guion Griffis Johnson, May 28, 1974, interview F-0029-3, Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007), Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[50] See this point in Virginius Dabney, "Reds in Dixie," *Sewanee Review* 42 (October-December, 1934): 415-422.

[51] "The Free," *Daily Tar Heel*, (November 24, 1931).

[52] "David and Goliath," *Daily Tar Heel*, (December 2, 1931). "Oh Tell Us Pretty Maiden," *Daily Tar Heel*, (April 21, 1932).

[53] See, for example, David Doren to Abernethy, December 11, 1931, *Contempo* Records.

[54] Hughes, "Adventure," p. 208. See also Langston Hughes, *I Wonder,* 46; and Faith Berry, 135.

[55] "Liberalism," *Charlotte Observer*, (April 21, 1932). The very next day the *Charlotte Observer* had to offer a partial retraction when it noted that Chapel Hill readers were surprised to learn that Hughes had read his poem, "Christ in Alabama" while on the UNC campus. Hughes had not read his poem. See "Deny Poem Recited at N.C. University," Privately Owned Magazine at Chapel Hill Printed Article to Which Editorial Exception Was Taken," *Charlotte Observer*, (April 22, 1932).

[56] Sinclair Lewis to Abernethy, December 14, 1931; See this description used later in an advertisement in *Contempo*, 1 (January 1, 1932): 4.

[57] Thurston, "Black Christ," 36; Thurston relies upon Rampersad, 225, who quotes Carrie Clarke to Langston Hughes, December 11, 1931, and Elmer A. Carter to Langston Hughes, January 8, 1932.

[58] The cover of the petition implored: "In Heaven's Name, Governor, Save Our State from Further Predatory Acts by These So-Called Modern Educators Against `Things of the Spirit'." See, "Tatum Spanked by the Press," *Chapel Hill Weekly*, (September 16, 1932). The concern for sexual and social filth appears frequently in

commentary about Hughes and others, including in Robert Madry, "Submits Emphatic Denial of Allegations of Falsity," letter to the editor, *Charlotte Observer*, (September 18, 1932).

[59] "Read by L. A. Tatum," *Greensboro Daily News*, (August 9, 1932).

[60] The list of signatories included mayor Charles Lambeth, of Charlotte, Bishop J. Kenneth Pfohl of Winston-Salem, publisher Col. Wade H. Harris of the *Charlotte Observer*, and businessmen J. D. Efird and W. H. Belk. Most importantly, the roster "abounds with the signatures of the textile barons." See "Chief Crusader Tatum Found to be a Roman Catholic – Crusaders Persuaded Devils Need Casting Out But They Will Not Let Mr. Tatum Be Chief Caster-Out," *Greensboro Daily News*, (September 12, 1932).

[61] "Read by L. A. Tatum," *Greensboro Daily News*, (August 9, 1932). See also "Presentation of Petition Fails to Arouse Village," *Greensboro Daily News*, (August 9, 1932).

[62] *Raleigh News & Observer*, (September 8, 1932); "State University Target in Attack,""Professor English Bagby Singled Out in Protest Made to Governor," *Raleigh News & Observer*, (September 9, 1932); also "Ask Governor to Purge University," and "Petitioners Assert that Freud and Other Liberalists are Emphasized," *Asheville Advocate*, (September 9, 1932).

[63] "Carolina Reaction," *Raleigh News & Observer*, (August 14, 1932).

[64] Albert Monroe Snider of Hoffman, North Carolina, "Concerning the Petition," letter to the editor, *Charlotte Observer*, (September 10, 1932); also see Snider, "An Oration Against Modern Educators," letter to the editor, *Charlotte Observer*, (September 13, 1932). Also see Anonymous, "Would Square Clark and Hughes," letter to the editor, *Charlotte Observer*, (October 2, 1932); and Wilton Cathey, "Confidence in Frank Graham," letter to the editor, *Charlotte Observer*, (September 18, 1932).

[65] Arthur Talmadge Abernethy, "A Discussion from the Standpoint of the People," letter to the editor, *Charlotte Observer*, (September 18, 1932); also Annie Bickett Ashcraft, "Intellectual High-Browing," letter to the editor, *Charlotte Observer*, (April 27, 1932); and S. S. Dunlap, "Liberalism," letter to the editor, *Charlotte Observer*, (April 28, 1932).

[66] J. E. L. Winecoff, letter to the editor, *Charlotte Observer*, (September 17, 1932). M. Bullock, "University Criticism," letter to the editor, *Charlotte Observer*, (May 3, 1932). "Advising Clark: Students Will Take Care of the So-Called Atheists in the Schools," Walter C. Guy from Durham, North Carolina, in the Open Forum section of the *Charlotte Observer*, (October 4, 1932).

[67] Langston Hughes, "Cowards," 226-228.

[68] Quoted in V. P. Franklin, "Whatever Happened to the College-Bred Negro?" *History of Education Quarterly* 24 (Fall 1984): 461-468.

[69] See Lafayette Harris, "Problems before the College Negro," *Crisis* 44 (August 1937): 234-236. On this issue generally, see James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), especially 276-278. Note that Hughes later published a small booklet, *Scottsboro Limited*, that included his one-act play, "Scottsboro, Ltd.,""Justice," and two short poems, "The Town of Scottsboro," and "Christ in Alabama," contributing the proceeds to the International Labor Defense to help fund the Scottsboro appeals. See Hughes,

Scottsboro Limited, (New York: Golden Stair, 1932). The one-act play appeared earlier in the *New Masses* 7 (November, 1931): 18-21. Also See Thurston, 40; Rampersad, 217.

[70] Hughes, *I Wonder*, 73.

[71] Ibid., 90.

[72] Quoted in Rampersad, 231-232.

[73] Hughes, *I Wonder*, 77.

[74] Langston Hughes, "Adventures," 208.

"Revelle"-ing in History:
Lessons Learned from a Family of Teachers

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In the summer of 2005, a young music teacher from Nebraska pursued a master's degree in music education. A mandatory course in her program of study was a Seminar in Foundations, focused heavily on the history of education in the United States. As the professor began describing schooling in the early 20th century, the stories began to sound all too familiar, and soon enough the music teacher began commenting in class "I know that's true, my Grandma told me about that." After hearing this comment several times over a few days, the professor pulled the young teacher aside and asked if anyone had ever formally interviewed Grandma. "No, but you're welcome to," came the reply. Amazed, the professor set forth on the high plains of Nebraska one blustery autumn weekend conducting a series of interviews with a remarkable family in which three out of four living generations became teachers. This article is a summary and reflection upon those interviews.

In addition to simply providing details to those historically curious about the state of teaching throughout the early 20th Century, this article fulfills three additional purposes. First, it will re-emphasize the ever increasing value of oral history as a means of historical data collection, particularly in the fields of life writing. Second, it will remind readers of the critical value and indubitable, if forgotten, worth of historical perspectives on contemporary discussions. Third, it will use the interesting stories of three generations of teachers, compared to some of those of their contemporaries, to demonstrate through comparison and contrast the lessons of social import not only for readers of life writing but all those affiliated with teachers and teacher education.

In almost every facet of education, the use of oral history has entered the conversation, if not gained outright acceptance. A handful of the recent academic studies reveal just how myriad is oral history's usefulness. It is used to track how schools have adapted their means of assessment and evaluation over time;[1] to examine college readiness of first generation students;[2] as a tool of critical theory discourse to measure curriculum and pedagogy used in marginalized cultures;[3] as a pedagogical "teaching tip" when working with children;[4] as a reminder of solid dance education pedagogy;[5] as a means of historical analysis of educational technology;[6] as a device in adult learning;[7]and as an assistive tool in preservice teacher training.[8] However, its primary usefulness is as a historical tool.

Contemporary oral history has come a long way since 1917, when Robert Lowie argued against its use in his article "Oral Tradition and History." Calling those who engage in such research "circle squarers and inventors of perpetual motion machines," Lowie argued that if history hadn't been written, the participants were too ignorant of events on a global scale to share anything of worth.[9] This take—arguably classist, sexist, and racist to name three—is thankfully no longer held in high regard. As Peter Whiteley argues in "Archaeology and Oral Tradition: the Scientific Importance of Dialogue," many of the reasons to not trust oral history are equally true for history—the sources are just as reliable and subject to the same biases and privileged lenses.[10]

Once it is assumed that oral history is a valid form of historical analysis, it is good to remember that the best history is local history. In his 1986 analysis of local history *Local Schools: Exploring Their History*, Ron Butchart provides three reasons to study what he calls "nearby history." First, it is convenient—the sources are close at hand, simple to find, and easy to use. Wyoming and Nebraska have much more in common socially and geographically than they do different, to say the least. Second, Butchart explains that the subjects are already familiar and/or interesting to the researcher. In the case of this study, one of the subjects was familiar to the researcher by way of attendance in an intensive summer class; the rest of the family spent much time over the weekend becoming familiar. Third, and most notably, Butchart argues that "studying nearby history is the most natural and logical way for us to understand the broader historical currents of our society and our world."[11] By using convenient, interesting sources (the voices of three generations of teachers) to understand the broader currents of schooling in the United States, it becomes obvious that teachers have been grappling with many of the issues in contemporary practice for years, and that there are valuable lessons to be learned from listening to these teachers.

Shifting focus slightly, Butchart further argues for the use of oral history when conducting local history, explaining that "historians, folklorists, and

others" in recent years "realized that the vast store of knowledge…would never be written down, that it would disappear with the deaths of men and women of all walks of life…As a result, the oral history interview is becoming a significant source of evidence in historical writing. For the nearby historian, it can be a major source."[12] Butchart's point is particularly relevant for those engaging in life writing; looking to local voices is critical.

Background: The Family and the Methods

The value of oral history, particularly in local context, is exemplified in the stories of one family of teachers. The extended Gifford family has been improving the lives of Eastern Nebraska's youth for six decades and two centuries. Four out of five generations in this family are teachers, and interestingly enough the one generation that skipped being a teacher currently is curator of the town's museum—including two functional nineteenth-century schoolhouses. All four's careers were in the state of Nebraska, though one started in suburban Colorado. Great-Grandmother Ethel Gifford taught from 1923-1926, then again 1942-53; mother Jeri Revelle began teaching in 1981 and remains in the classroom; her daughters, Shelly Revelle and Jennifer Bohnsack, began in 1999 and 2001 respectively. While the Revelles have had a continuous career, Gifford's was broken by social custom. As was the custom of the time, women teachers were not allowed to be married. Gifford took time off to get married and raise a family. However, with the advent of World War II, there was a shortage of teachers in the U.S. and most districts removed the marriage clause from employment contracts, allowing them to reenter the profession. Gifford's story is echoed by Virginia Hawkey Mueller, of Wyoming, in her memoir *Reflections of a Country School Teacher*. In that work, Mueller explains "[n]early every time I picked up a paper, I read how desperately teachers were needed. There just weren't enough to fill all the vacancies."[13] A variation on this same story is recalled by Sibyl Sutherland, of Texas, who got married and resigned in 1941. However, "Pearl Harbor was a year later. War broke out, and that's why my career didn't end at all. They started wearing the hinges off my gate at Center Point wanting me to come back and teach."[14]

Each Gifford family member participant was asked the same slate of questions, with some room for follow-up, over the same mild weekend in September 2005. The interviews were conducted in three locations: Jeri Revelle, in the Revelle home; Ethel Gifford, at the retirement community in which she resided, and Jennifer Bohnsack and Shelly Revelle at a local fast-food restaurant. All interviews were recorded onto cassette tapes, then converted to .wav files for upload to the internet. While tape hiss and background noise were digitally lessened, the voices on the recordings were not

edited in any way. Written interview transcripts were posted to the internet alongside the recordings for clarification, information, or citation.

The questions covered some of the more controversial elements of contemporary education—meaning some of the more controversial elements of post-No Child Left Behind schooling: highly qualified teachers/certification standards, student assessment, school accountability/teaching standards, and scientifically based research/sharing professional knowledge. While it is standard when conducting family histories to begin with a common slate of questions and then add some specific to each participant, the researcher allowed for the individuality of questions to come from the different historical context from which each respondent replied.[15] Questions were purposefully scripted to be open-ended and not framed in a way to suggest judgment about any of the topics raised.

Due to her age at the time of the interview, Gifford was given questions in advance; her son and daughter-in-law asked her the questions previous to the interviewer's arrival. By proxy, the other interview participants were made aware of the questions. Gifford's children were present during her interview to assist the interviewer in clarifying or amplifying questions, as well as providing prompts for her responses during the times she omitted particular details. Normally it falls upon the interviewer to provide assistance to an interviewee's ability to recall;[16] in this case, however, the interviewer determined gentle prompts from the interviewee's children were a reliable assist. The presence of Gifford's children also diminished the potentially unequal power relation between interviewer and interviewee; in addition, the interviewer attempted to construct the interview as a dialogue.[17]

Ultimately, the question of to what end emerges: why should contemporary educators care about the past? Or, as Peter Seixas asks, "[w]hat is needed in this culture at this time in the way of understandings of the past?" While discussing history education specifically, the argument holds true for all educators: the more a sense of history they possess, the more "factual data young people have at their disposal" as well as increased skills in "the sense they make of them, and the tools they have (or fail to have) for assessing their truth and significance." Without this knowledge, teachers are "not equipped to offer interpretive schemes that challenge conventional, easily communicated views of [the] past."[18] Their answers provide a chart of the development of the teaching profession and schooling in this region in order to give teachers a sense of being able to accurately assess educational trends and social opinions regarding education. Their answers serve as a reminder of the true value of the history of education.

The choice to post the interviews to the internet was not made lightly. Concerns about interview subject privacy, particularly for those still employed as teachers, were considered. However due to the enormous value of the sto-

ries, particularly to teachers working in a field that is increasingly devaluing historical foundations in its preservice training, it was a conscious decision to get the stories out in as direct a fashion for teachers to access. As explained by Donald Richie, posting oral histories to the internet has several benefits: ease of organization and links to related sites, returning oral histories to the communities that produced them, expanding the definition of community, and reaching students who would rather "surf" than read, let alone visit an archive.[19]

Not Much New: Cross-Generational Commonalities

Many contemporary debates and discussions are not new; most of these issues have been causing headaches for classroom practitioners for a century or more. While high-stakes testing and accountability measures appear to be new, in fact all three generations dealt with this issue in their own way. While there were neither state-wide nor national tests administered in her school, Gifford remembers working for a strict superintendent who required daily reports completed on student progress: "I had to have my reports in right on time. And if I couldn't of, I couldn't teach…I would take our, every morning, fifteen minutes, and I wouldn't teach that one because I needed to send in my [reports]."[20] In addition, Gifford completed report cards sent home to the parents each month, and students in the seventh and eighth grades had to travel to the county seat to take state tests administered by the county superintendent.

Again, this is fairly typical of the period. As depicted in Fuller's (1994) *One Room Schools of the Middle West*, teachers in Wisconsin had such features included in their contracts. Stated as pro forma language in the contract was Rule #5: "The Teacher is required to grade the school as far as possible according to the circular published by the State Superintendent, entitled 'Grading System for the Country Schools,' also to follow the course of study, as far as practicable, arranged in the above mentioned circular."[21]

Revelle also deals with a wide variety of assessments in her teaching. Teachers keep student grades in a computerized grade book program and have to complete "down slips" for students that are struggling. These are when "a student has a D or an F we have to send a form home. We fill it out in triplicate, we keep a copy, the school keeps a copy, and the parents get a copy." Teachers have to explain "what the student's grade is, and what caused it or what the problem is, or what we need them to do or whatever so we are communicating with the parents."[22] All students are additionally assessed both on the state's STARS program, which assesses the areas of language arts, math, science and social studies in fourth, eighth, and eleventh grades, and the national ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) test.

The idea of completing hand-written report cards is almost foreign to Gifford's great-granddaughters, both of whom described computerized grade books and report card procedures. As a kindergarten teacher, Jennifer Bohnsack had hand-written report cards, but mentioned the school was switching over to computerized reports that year; her sister described being allowed to write on the computer printouts that go home to the parents of her elementary students. However, both agreed that while computers helped the process,"it'll be less writing, but still paperwork."[23] In terms of testing, to Bohnsack and Shelly Revelle, assessment means almost exclusively state and national assessments. In addition to their IEP's and down slips, Bohnsack described students taking the DIBBLES reading tests in grades K-6, GORT-4 tests in grades 2 and 4, and Terra Nova tests in grades 3-6. S. Revelle described high school students taking the ASVAB and ACT tests as well as the STARS.[24]

While there were differences in the specific extra duties each generation had to perform, teachers have always been expected to go "above and beyond."Among Gifford's extra duties was keeping the school clean, fetching the water for drinking and washing each morning from a neighbor's farm (approximately 100 yards away), and maintaining the heating stove.[25] Such maintenance issues were common: Melvin Mack, a teacher in rural Pennsylvania 1935-37 recalls similar duties in his teaching placement. For example, while some teachers had a community member keep the fire in the school stove going over the weekend, he did not. "Then we had to worry about water. We got our water from a farm, which was about three hundred yards away. Somebody would have to go up there with an open bucket, and then bring it back and put it in a cooler."[26] Such conditions were not limited to the U.S.; in rural Alberta, Canada, teachers like Jessie Bissell dealt with the same situation in the 1930's, but in somewhat different fashion: including the students in the process. The teacher, Bissell,"carried water for her own use from the closest neighbor, a quarter mile south. The school's water arrived with the students. It was kept in a tin pail on a bench with a community dipper above it. Close by was a single wash basin and roller towel. Once a week the students took turns taking the towel home for badly needed washing."[27]

An additional extra duty for Gifford was to put on an evening's entertainment performance at least once each year. She recalls these school/evening activities included such things as "little plays, or, just, little readings, and sing a song, and so forth. And then we'd, in order to grow the crowd, we would have a basket supper." These basket suppers—meals prepared by local women to be auctioned off as a fund-raiser for the school—would sometimes fetch (pre-Great Depression) upwards of $25-30 each. Of course, as Gifford explains with a smile, "the teacher's would always go higher, because they'd think [motions writing, like a grade book]."[28]

Similarly, Louise McLean describes Friday evenings of the 1934-1935 school year at the North Beaver River School in rural Alberta, as nights when the "schoolhouse was the hub of activity" in the community as "the little building hummed to the sounds of music and dancing…desks were pushed against the schoolhouse walls to clear a space for dancing (and provide beds for sleeping children.)" However, the men of the community who moved the desks out and back again didn't pay attention to what belonged where so that each Monday morning the class would have to "take a fair bit of time…to straighten things out." However, McLean is quick to explain "the inconveniences were gladly endured for the sake of a good time…because happy times were not numerous" due to the Great Depression.[29]

Revelle's contract has remained the same (except for salary and administrator) for almost 30 years. In her mind, the only thing that "continues to stand out is the line at the bottom that says other duties as assigned… that's the one that really gets to you every time." Extra duties to Revelle include both during the day and after school:

> one of the real issues in this state and community especially has been lunch duty. Because if you have lunch duty, you have no time to sit down and eat and unwind before the kids…But we did lunch duty was expected and we did a rotating so it was one week a month or something like that. Um, to, um sell tickets like at ball games take your turn. My hall is right across from the rest room so it was sort of an understood that you know that you would monitor that…You had to be a high school class sponsor…Oh, school committees. You know like this we didn't have SIP [school improvement plan] then but you know…but any committees or any in-services that you had to attend and those kinds of things.[30]

Texan teacher Knowles Witcher Teel also had some complaints about teachers doing lunch duty in the 1920's. However, her complaint was that it upset her image of appropriate decorum for a teacher: "I didn't think it was right for a teacher to go back into the classroom all sunburned and wind-blown. Children notice small things and appreciate them."[31]

Revelle's daughters have additional duties on top of their teaching. Bohnsack serves on curriculum, technology, and building committees. As a music teacher, Shelly Revelle has the heaviest after school load by directing the choir, band, and summer band's performances in community and school concerts. In addition, she oversees her school's National Honor Society chapter and coaches the junior high volleyball team.[32] While these duties aren't quite hauling water across the distance of a football field each day, they still are burdensome in their own way.

Listening to the stories serves as a reminder that teachers have always measured victories one student at a time. In Gifford's case, it was the student whose parents didn't care if she ever attended high school, so they weren't going to send her to the county seat to take her seventh and eighth grade examinations. Seeing a good student, Gifford believed "that was terrible, because she had worked for it…so I took her."[33] Marian Stumb Renninger recalls the importance of these exams in her rural community of Richland Township, Pennsylvania. She describes one boy who would ride his bicycle to the township in which the tests were graded by superintendents, wait for the results to be posted on the door, then ride back and announce the results. Clearly this occurred in the days before the Family Educational Right to Privacy Act. However, those that failed "went to work. You could go to work at that time at fourteen if you had a paper signed by somebody at the school board and a teacher. Or I think if they stayed home and helped their father on the farm they didn't have to have working papers."[34]

For Revelle, who taught family and consumer science, it was encountering a pair of her former students in a grocery store who were "giving their mother instructions on how to buy their groceries when she went to visit them at college…the mother thought she was treating the boys to, you know, brand name stuff instead of all of the cheapest, ramen noodle type stuff. And, and they had become shoppers and they wanted her to know that's not how they did it."[35] Her daughter Shelly sees her victories in each public performance and the positive community reactions to them.

Time Changes: Differences

While all generations have shared experiences, there were marked differences amongst the family. One such area is in teacher training; their paths to certification were appreciatively different. Gifford attended normal school her eleventh and twelfth grades at Ragan Consolidated School, which offered her courses "from physics to geography, to penmanship, to everything."[36] Successful completion of this coursework enabled Gifford to begin her teaching career at seventeen years of age. Louise McLean of Alberta, Canada describes a similar path to teaching in 1934. McLean acknowledges there were basically two career paths open to young women of the period: nursing or teaching. Since her family couldn't afford the three year nursing program, they instead borrowed $100 for McLean to attend the ten-month program at the Saskatoon Normal School, from which she graduated with a First Class Interim Teaching Certificate.[37]

In the late 1970's, Revelle studied a four-year course of study in education from the University of Wyoming and has maintained continuing education credits beyond that. At the turn of the century, Revelle's daughters both

did five-year programs of study at the University of Wyoming for their initial certification. Bohnsack completed a master's degree from Leslie University in Massachusetts, and S. Revelle completed her master's from the University of Wyoming.[38]

In addition, not all three generations had to complete a formal examination in order to get certified. Gifford remembers having to make the twenty-mile trip to the county seat and take two days of "those horrible tests."[39] While many states in the contemporary field are struggling with the cultural exclusivity of standardized tests used as a certification tool, to Gifford the biggest challenge was being left handed. One of the tests involved her having to demonstrate her penmanship on the chalkboard, and when she approached the test administrator refused to allow her to take the test. Luckily for Gifford, her uncle was on faculty at the college administering the test; he intervened, and she was able to successfully complete her examination.

Gifford's experiences are similar to those of Virginia Hawkey Mueller, who first became certified in Wyoming in 1932. In her 1994 memoir *Reflections of a Country School Teacher*, Mueller recalls getting hired as a teacher soon after her 18th birthday, then having to travel to Sundance, Wyoming to take summer school to learn teaching methods. There, she took three subjects: Tests and Measurements, Geography, and Music methods. After a few months of training with other young women from around the state, Mueller travelled to a small school located on the Whedon sheep ranch. While many contemporary newly certified teachers often choose not to leave their home towns in search of a job, Mueller travelled to a part of the state with which she was unfamiliar to live with strangers and teach their children. The idea may be daunting to many today, but not to Mueller: "Scared? Not me. Wasn't I prepared with some new teaching methods, and wasn't I fresh out of school? Such confidence."[40]

In fact, as Fuller explains, Gifford and Mueller were very typical of teachers of their period. For women of the time, teaching was the best career available as "the Midwest offered few job opportunities equal to that of teaching." While the pay was low, there were other, less tangible rewards; "[s]hort school terms, status, respectability, and even the feeling of accomplishment" drove "an army of young women" to go out "to slay the dragon 'ignorance' throughout the Midwest."[41]

However, her granddaughter Revelle simply had to mail in her trancripts to the state of Wyoming to get certified, then send that certificate to the state of Nebraska to gain certification there. Interestingly, Revelle believed she "was before that time" of testing to get certified—clearly not the case after listening to her grandmother's story. Revelle's daughters both had tests to complete for their certificates—Bohnsack taking the PRAXIS, and Revelle taking

the PLACE, a test specific to music educators in Colorado. Ongoing testing was also an issue for Virginia Hawkey Mueller, who recalls having to take correspondence courses through the University of Wyoming to maintain certification.[42]

Upholding community standards is nothing new to teachers, but how we define those standards of moral conduct has changed over time. Gifford had to leave her classroom for the first time in 1927 because her district didn't allow married teachers. In addition, it was in her contract that she was not allowed to "dance on week nights" and had to attend church at least "one morning a month in the community."[43] Such standards were not as formalized in Revelle's district, though the community did appreciate seeing the teachers get involved in a variety of organizations. Bohnsack cited being involved in her local church as a means of community involvement, but neither she nor her sister mentioned any issues with morality clauses in their contracts.

The issue of homework is another difference between the generations. Gifford recalls that occasionally the girls in her class would get some, but never the boys as there were too many chores to do at home. Revelle not only gives homework, but often helps students with their homework from other classes as well. True to her sense of community, she continues this assistance even after the students are enrolled in various universities. While not assigning homework in kindergarten, as a music teacher Shelly Revelle expects students to practice outside of school and attend concerts year round.

Discussion: Lessons Learned and Implications for the Present

Listening to the stories of this family covering nearly a century's worth of teaching experience serves as an additional reminder that the lessons from the past can most definitely be applied to the present. It serves notice that even the most contemporary dilemmas facing teachers have, in some means, been facing the profession for generations. Indeed, oral history is living history: listening to the details provided by the subjects is the creative equivalent of walking through a series of old schoolhouses, using the ears to "see" the changes in teacher preparation, curricular materials, and expectations.

Schools throughout U.S. history have served as community centers, both as places for gathering and as leaders of their communities. Accordingly, rural districts, in particular, feel a strong sense of partnership, if not ownership, over their schools. As described by Revelle: "The patrons are very proud of their school, and want to be involved…but…most don't butt in. I guess that's the best way to describe that. They're very protective and they still want control, of…not control of what I teach as a, as a classroom teacher, but they still want to be in charge of what happens to their school district." When

asked who the patrons are, Revelle elaborated that patrons are "[a]nybody in the community. Parents, elderly people in the community that still pay taxes, you know anybody that supports the school in any way. I guess that's a term we use a lot out here."[44]

The stories of all generations of teachers in the family warmly emphasize the strong interrelationship between school and community. However, many contemporary teachers may believe the notion of school as community leader is one whose time has passed. Others may criticize this practice of using the school to build local community, citing that teaching for community and utilizing the public schools as community centers is counterintuitive to the global economy in which the United States operates today. Such critics need to be reminded, however, that solid intellectual development and the development of a good citizen transcend place; while thinkers such as Patricia Bauch cite education "aimed at the improvement of local community provides an immediate and richer educational context than that of the global economy."[45]Yet it does not have to be either/or. Indeed, becoming a good, community-minded citizen teaches lessons from which teachers can lead their students into becoming global citizens.

Since schools are the social centers of their communities, it is natural to expect the teachers to live within the communities in which they teach. The participants agreed with this value. In Gifford's case, she didn't have a choice: "that was the contract I had, to stay in the district. And I paid a dollar a day, had no car or anything like that." If she was able to cross the field, it was a one-mile walk to the schoolhouse; if she took the road, it was a mile and a half. When the weather was particularly bad, the family she boarded with would allow her to borrow a horse to ride to school; she would release it, and it would walk home on its own. However, to Gifford, "teachers have to know who they're teaching. And how can they when they come from everywhere? How are they going to know?"[46]

While Revelle admits that the time to mandate this amongst new teachers has passed, in a perfect world teachers would live in the community in which they teach. In the county in which she teaches, the schools are "the source of all…the hub of the community. If there is an activity that is happening in the community it has to happen at the school." Community members there are viewed as "patrons," not "parents," and remain involved in the school: "we have some people who have lived in the community for ever and they have no grandchildren even in school anymore and they still come and watch the games. [They] can hardly get up and down and the stairs…[so] I go out and get them popcorn and concession stand [items] and bring it in to them because it is too far for them to walk. They still come because the community activity is what happens at school." Beyond attending games, Revelle views teacher involvement in the community as a valuable pedagogic tool:

"kids need connections to adults and especially to their teachers. And parents respond more favorably when they see their children's teachers involved in talking to them in the hall and supporting their activities. You know I just think it's huge." To help with this, her district even goes so far as to provide apartments for teachers to rent "at a very small fee."[47]

In terms of the youngest generation, neither of the sisters believed teachers should be forced to live in the districts in which they teach (though Revelle mentioned administrators should). However, both agreed it was a good idea—and both practice what they preach in this area. Bohnsack mentioned an advantage was being able to "see the results" of her teaching in contexts outside of school, while her sister mentioned that by living in the community, "because you are seen, parents feel like they know and trust you more."[48] Clearly, the lessons of this family resonate rural and urban: whether working in Chicago, Illinois or Gering, Nebraska, if teachers choose to live in the community in which they teach, it creates more meaningful relationships which will increase their ability in the classroom.

It is helpful to find that teachers throughout the years have claimed their victories and restored their motivation one student at a time. This is of particular import to remember in a nation that is perceived as being increasingly anti-public school and anti-teacher in its sentiment. When contemporary teachers lament the greater negative social context that surrounds the field, they must have some perspective on the matter. In spite of the Norman Rockwell images of teaching and teachers that many nostalgically envision, it has never been a profession entered into for high wage or high levels of social respect; indeed, teachers have historically served under trying conditions—whether those be having to haul their own water or tolerate annual legislative "reforms"—and for little salary. However, contemporary teachers should consider the challenges faced by their predecessors and place what they are going through in its appropriate context.

If nothing else, teachers must remember that their lives serve as inspiration for the next generation. As the researcher was getting ready to leave, Jeri Revelle asked him to wait for a minute. With that, Jennifer Bohnsack's daughter was shepherded up to meet the reviewer, a bit shy as pre-teens tend to be. "Why don't you tell him what you want to be when you grow up?" asked Grandma Jeri. The little girl paused, smiled shyly, and then responded "I want to teach."

"Of course," thought the researcher, "isn't this cute?"

"If I don't go into music education," the little girl finished to the researcher's surprise, "I'm thinking special education. I want to help people with disabilities, but I know it's a lot more school." The family watched as she trotted off to play with her siblings, collectively smiling knowing that soon enough there would be a fifth generation improving the lives of the youth of

Eastern Nebraska.

Note Finis

Those interested in listening to the stories of the family can hear them and read the transcripts by visiting the website "Not Just a Teacher" at http://uwlib5.uwyo.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/digital_audio/oral_histories/educ_interviews. Other teacher stories are actively sought: to contribute to the archive, please see the designated page on the website or contact the author. Students/preservice teachers are actively encouraged to participate as interviewers in order to engage in what is defined by Howard Levin as "authentic doing." Acknowledging that his approach "represents a paradigm shift to both the field of oral history and to the notions of the limitations of students' contributions to society," Levin defines "authentic doing" as "student authentic work that has meaning, virtue, and purpose to a wider audience outside the school."[49]

Notes

[1] Robin Lyn Miller, Jean King, & Melvin Mark, "The oral history of evaluation: The professional development of Daniel L. Stufflebeam," *American Journal of Evaluation* 29 (2008): 555-571.

[2] M. Jeanne Reid & James L.Moore, "College readiness and academic preparation for postsecondary education: Oral histories of first-generation urban college students," *Urban Education* 43 (2008): 240-261.

[3] John Gabriel, "Refugee community oral histories: Issues in pedagogy and curriculum development," *Teaching in Higher Education* 13 (June 2008): 265-277.

[4] In order, David Gruenewald, Nancy Koppelman, & Anna Elam, " 'Our place in history': Inspiring place-based social history in schools and communities," *Journal of Museum Education* 32 (Fall 2007): 231-240; Eric Langhorst, "Golden oldies: Using digital recording to capture history," *School Library Journal* 54 (March 2008): 50-53; and Lisa A. Lark, "Learning early Twentieth-Century history through first-person interviews," *Social Education* 71 (Oct 2007): 308-311.

[5] Colleen Porter Hearn & Kacy E. Crabtree. "Preserving our legacy for future generations of educators," *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 79 (April 2008): 18-23.

[6] Rebecca P. Butler, "Oral history as educational technology research," *TechTrends: Linking Research and Practice to Improve Learning* 52 (July 2008): 34-41.

[7] Sarah Housden, "Forward into the past," *Adults Learning* 19 (Dec 2007):12-13.

[8] Edric C. Johnson, "Involving preservice teachers in collecting and performing oral stories," *Social Studies* 98 (Sep-Oct 2007): 197-200.

[9] Robert H. Lowie, "Oral tradition and history," *The Journal of American Folklore* 30 (April-June 1917): 161.

[10] Peter M. Whiteley, "Archaeology and oral tradition: the scientific importance of

dialogue," *American Antiquity* 67 (July 2002): 405-415.

[11] Ronald Butchart, *Local Schools: Exploring their History* (Nashville, TN: The American Association for State and Local History, 1986), 5.

[12] Ibid, 76.

[13] Virginia H. Mueller, *Reflections of a Country School Teacher* (Hyrums, UT: Downs Printing, 1994), 31.

[14] Diane Manning, *Hill Country Teacher: Oral Histories from the One-Room School and Beyond* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 23.

[15] For more on conducting family histories, see Donald Richie, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 230-233.

[16] Ibid, 99.

[17] For a more thorough discussion of techniques used when interviewing older subjects, see Cherry Russell, "Interviewing vulnerable old people: Ethical and methodological implications of imagining our subjects," *Journal of Aging Studies* 13 (Winter 1999): 403-418.

[18] Peter Seixas, "Collective memory, history education, and historical consciousness," in *Recent Themes in Historical Thinking: Historians in Conversation*, ed. D.A. Yerxa. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 31.

[19] Richie, *Doing Oral History*, 81. Richie presents a brief, but very compelling, case for posting interviews online as well as a primer in what to consider when developing an online archive on pages 80-83.

[20] Ethel Gifford, Interview by author. Tape recording. (Gering, NE, September 24 2005). Transcript available http://uwlib5.uwyo.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/digital_audio/oral_histories/ interview_gifford.

[21] Of additional interest was Rule #10: "The teacher shall see that the school house is kept neat and clean and forbid the use of tobacco in any form." Wayne E. Fuller, *One-Room Schools of the Middle West: An Illustrated History* (Lawrence,KS: University Press of Kansas,1994), 61.

[22] Jeri Revelle, Interview by author. Tape recording. (Gering, NE, September 23 2005). Transcript available http://uwlib5.uwyo.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/digital_audio/oral_histories/ interview_revelle.

[23] Jennifer Bohnsack and Shelly Revelle, Interview by author. Tape recording. (Gering, NE, September 24 2005).

[24] Ibid.

[25] Gifford interview.

[26] Robert L. Leight & Alice Duffy Rinehart, *Country School Memories: An Oral History of One-Room Schooling* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press,1999), 66.

[27] Elizabeth McLachlan, *With Unshakeable Persistence: Rural Teachers of the Depression Era* (Edmonton, AB: Newest Press, 1999), 28.

[28] Gifford interview.

[29] McLachlan, *With Unshakeable Persistence*, 80.

[30] Revelle interview.

[31] Manning, *Hill Country Teacher*, 35.

[32] Bohnsack and Revelle interview.

[33] Gifford interview.

[34] Leight and Rinehart, *Country School Memories*, 88.

[35] Revelle interview.
[36] Gifford interview.
[37] McLachlan, *With Unshakeable Persistence*, 74.
[38] In order, Revelle interview and Bohnsack and Revelle interview.
[39] Gifford interview.
[40] Mueller, *Reflections of a Country School Teacher*, 66.
[41] Fuller, *One Rooms Schools of the Middle West*, 59.
[42] Mueller, *Reflections of a Country School Teacher*, 10.
[43] Gifford interview.
[44] Revelle interview.
[45] Patricia Bauch, "School-community partnerships in rural schools: Leadership, renewal, and a sense of place," *Peabody Journal of Education: Reexamining Relations and a Sense of Place Between Schools and Their Constituents* 76 (2001): 207.
[46] Gifford interview.
[47] Revelle interview.
[48] Bohnsack and Revelle interview.
[49] Howard Levin, "Authentic doing: Student-produced web-based digital video oral histories," *The Oral History Review* 38 (Winter/Spring 2011): 8.

George S. Counts:
Leading Social Reconstructionist

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Introduction

There is probably no legacy more flattering to a scholar than to have one's ideas maintain their relevance for generations to come. That clearly is the case with George S. Counts. Some of his most impactful writings, including one of his best-known tracts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?,* published in 1932 at the depths of what is termed the Great Depression, were clarion calls for the nation to address its economic and social inequalities as part of its commitment to a democratic system. The parallels between then and now are striking in economic and political terms with the current Great Recession, which is described as the worst economic downturn since the 1930's.

This biography begins with a sketch that gives context to the subsequent review of Counts's educational outlook, which in turn forms the basis for his characterization as a social reconstructionist. The biography further provides an analysis of important segments of Counts's career that have received limited attention or are underdeveloped in the literature. One is his leadership and activism in forging the teacher union movement in the U.S., including his tenure as President of the American Federation of Teachers during a critical and formative period, which calls attention to the recent moves to severely curtail teacher unionism across the country. Another realm is his scholarship as an expert on Soviet Education and the Soviet system, which was an important focus of his work almost his entire career. Finally, a discussion of

his FBI file, which is presented here for the first time, is included.

The paper employs an historical and descriptive approach that brings an interpretive and critical lens to the subjects at hand, particularly his position on indoctrination and imposition. In addition to using the primary sources of Counts's publications and related primary and secondary sources, it incorporates important information and perspectives garnered by the author via personal interviews with Counts's colleagues and associates who were contemporaries. These sources, and Counts's FBI file, have not been employed by other scholars. Taped interviews of Counts, housed in his collection at Southern Illinois University and not cited in the major publications about Counts, are also incorporated.

Counts—A Biographical Background

Though it was a day about which Counts personally claimed to have recalled little, he was born George Sylvester Counts on December 9, 1889, on a farm in rural northeast Kansas near Baldwin.[1] This was a watershed period in U.S. history marking a shift from an agrarian, rural society to one rapidly becoming industrialized and urban. It was a time when the country moved to the city and his presence in part of the old yet part of the new society during his life, meant both shaped his outlooks.[2] But more than frontier America shaped his perspectives in his youth. His mother was a descendant of the Pilgrim leader William Bradford, signer of the Mayflower Compact and governor of the Plymouth Colony for thirty years. His family also tied him to the struggle for human freedom. When Virginia, by a margin of one vote, decided to retain the slave system, his paternal great grandmother became a "conscientious objector," sold her land, freed her slaves, and moved west to Ohio.[3]

Raised in a Methodist family, religion was an important part of Counts's life. His parents were ardent Christians, thus George and his five siblings were nurtured in the faith. At the age of six he earned a dollar from his grandfather for learning the Books of the Bible in order. Church and Sunday school were part of every Sunday. Once he reached college age his aunt was determined he become a minister, having set aside the money for a seminary interview, which she also arranged.[4]

In the end Counts chose the podium over the pulpit by attending Baker College, a Methodist institution. But his undying commitment to the worth and dignity of each individual along with his devotion to the brotherhood of man [sic] throughout his life reflect the Judeo-Christian values rooted in frontier traditions. His almost missionary zeal for social justice no doubt reflects these influences. Though he adhered to these values to the end of his life, in time other factors caused him to reject Christian theology. The revolutionary ideas he later encountered while studying at the University of

Chicago, and in his estimation the convincing theory of organic evolution, which he readily adopted, caused him to embrace a new Weltanschauung.[5]

Counts graduated at the head of his class at Baker and displayed signs of future leadership as president of his class and fraternity along with other organizations and athletic associations. In 1913 he was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship but in between his application and the award he married Lois Hazel Bailey. Marriage at that time was a disqualifier for Rhodes Scholars. They later had two daughters, Esther and Martha.[6]

His professional life in academe began at Delaware College, now University of Delaware, where he led the Department of Education for two years. In 1918 he went to Harris Teachers College in St. Louis but after a year took a position at the University of Washington in Seattle where a year later he was lured away by Yale University for a six-year stint. He then went to the University of Chicago before settling at Teachers College Columbia University in 1927 where he remained until retirement. But retirement meant something different for him as he then taught at the University of Pittsburgh, University of Colorado, Michigan State, Northwestern, and finally Southern Illinois University in 1962. He ended his career in Carbondale in 1971 at the age of eighty-two.[7]

Counts's Educational Outlook

For much of his career George S. Counts was a radical force in American educational thought. His ideas coupled with his oratorical skills would on occasion bring a room full of academics to their feet. A contemporary of John Dewey at Teachers College for many years, Counts was a leading voice among a cadre of scholars known as "social reconstructionists." This school of thought viewed the education of the young, in important respects, as a means to an end. That is, their education, and by extension the students themselves, was to be aimed at ameliorating societal ills as part of a democratic commitment. He wanted to see education treated as a social study in part as a counter-force to the dominance of psychology and child study.[8]

Based on his reading of human history he believed education is always a representation of a particular culture in a particular setting. According to Counts, "There have been as many educations in history as there have been societies. It is as much an integral part of a culture or civilization as an economic or political system. The very way in which education is conceived, whether its purpose is to enslave or free the mind, is an expression of the society which it serves…of necessity education is a most intimate expression of a particular civilization."[9] Therefore, to fashion an educational ideal appropriate for American society as it existed required a careful assessment of the society in its historical and worldly setting. If this was done, he believed edu-

cation in the U.S. would, at its base, have a desire to achieve a democratic ideal. Democracy, as a system and process, implicitly gave life to the idea that society would and could seek to better itself.

The ultimate value in a democracy was, then, the worth and dignity of the individual. Writing in 1949 he stated, as he had many times, "probably the most distinctive feature of a democracy is the value which it places on the individual human being, regardless of race, creed, family, or other social category…in the measure that individuals are treated unequally and arbitrarily with respect to educational advantage, economic opportunity, administration of justice, enjoyment of rights and responsibilities, or access to social rewards and honors, the society involved violates this basic principle."[10]

Counts was more a social and educational theorist than he was concerned with the practical implementation of an educational outlook. The application of his ideals was manifested more by how he executed his life, than it was in any concrete educational applications. But one area of thought deserves additional attention here because it underscores his activist inclinations and how they manifested themselves in his educational outlook.

Imposition and Indoctrination

While many progressive educators of his era focused their attention primarily on instructional methods and the nature of the child, Counts directed his efforts to the social aims and purposes of schooling. His perspective reflected a belief that the future would be more collectivist in nature and therefore it was critical that it be organized with fundamental commitments to a democratic ethos.[11] In fact, he concluded that by this gauge many "progressive" educators were not progressive at all.

His critique was anchored in the proposition that education cannot be a neutral undertaking and efforts to prevent any impositions upon the life of the youngster were futile and misplaced. Rather, he called for a close examination of the forces at work in an attempt to direct them towards positive ends. This contrasted with many progressive schools that followed child-centeredness in part as a reaction against the traditional subject-centered curriculum that tended to ignore individual student interests and talents. But the focus on the child alone lacked direction and orientation, as Counts saw it, and did not reflect genuinely progressive social and political aims. In Counts's view, child-centered advocates too often lacked deep and abiding loyalties, possessed few convictions for which they would sacrifice much, would find it hard to live without their customary material comforts, were insensitive to accepted forms of social justice, were content to play the role of interested spectator in the drama of human history, rarely moved outside the pleasant circles of their social class, and, in the day of severe trial, would "fol-

low the lead of the most powerful and respectable forces in society and at the same time find good reasons for so doing."[12] He did not disparage the idea of being child centered, per se, but rather took issue with the movement's lack of a solid social foundation. A school could not become progressive by mere resolve. He likened the difficulty of founding a progressive educational movement to that of creating a progressive political party. If it was not rooted in some profound social movement or trend, it could be but an instrument of deception.[13]

His use of the term indoctrination as a desired educational approach naturally troubled many educators who feared it would devolve into little more than blatant mind control or the inculcation of a mindless patriotism. And it was never sufficient to the case that he chose the use of the term in its historic and more literal sense. He leaned on a Webster definition, which meant to instruct in doctrines, principles, theories, or beliefs; to instruct; to teach. It derived from the Latin doctrina—to instruct. Counts was somewhat in agreement with his challengers—if they agreed on the meaning of their terms. He acknowledged that indoctrination was possibly too strong and uncompromising in its vernacular and that imposition might be a better term to use. Yet he warned that even this term needed to carry its milder connotations. Curiously, when civic education inculcated ideas of national solidarity and patriotism, Counts's opposition did not feel indoctrination had occurred.[14] Counts held that cultural evolution, nor indeed its basic maintenance, would be impossible if the achievements of one generation were not transmitted to the next by the process of teaching and learning.[15]

He placed the matter in proper perspective when, years later, he related an experience he had with his colleague John Dewey in 1932 in which they had a robust debate over the issue of indoctrination. Though Counts's position, again, was to reject the proposition that anything should be taught as fixed or as dogma, he defended the idea of "imposition" as a basic and inescapable aspect of the process of rearing the young in any society. A few weeks later Counts gave an address to a group of New York City teachers and Dewey was present. When it was time for Q & A, "the great philosopher rose and said he had checked the meaning of the word indoctrination in Webster's Dictionary and discovered it meant 'teaching'."[16]

During the Second World War, when pressure increased for the inculcation of patriotic values not only in schools but in public life everywhere, Counts opposed attempts to bring what he saw as despotism into public schools under the guise of teacher patriotism. Patriotism, if it was democratic by nature and concerned with the interests of the people as a whole, could be appropriate as he saw it.[17] But this would be distinguished from mindless indoctrination of the flag-waving variety. Indeed he warned that the teaching of blind loyalties to democracy's traditional machinery would doubtless

be the surest way of destroying it.[18]

But Counts cannot have it both ways. It's not possible to simultaneously avoid, yet directly engage in indoctrination, no matter how much definitional gymnastics are employed. There is a great difference between the socialization everyone receives by virtue of being born into a given culture or civilization, and the political education one receives through a formal school curriculum. Sociologists distinguish between what are termed covert and overt socialization and that in essence is what is at issue. "Think of the old cliché about the mind being an excellent servant but a terrible master."[19] Counts failed to incorporate the necessity of critical thought as part of democratic citizenship, and as something to serve as a counterbalance to socialization or imposition. This critical dimension, common to nearly all notions of autonomy, is also at the core of a democratic education.[20]

Counts was not troubled by the apparent conflict between his devotion to democracy as an end and his comfort level with viewing students as a means, despite an axiom of democratic theory that democratic ends are tied to democratic means. I find it too easy for him to argue that some forms of imposition on the young are inevitable, unavoidable, and to a degree necessary if not desirable, and then to use that as a basis to support direct, overt imposition or indoctrination. It's one thing to assert that culture by definition socializes its members. It's another huge step to then categorize certain other forms of socialization as necessary.

By viewing the young predominantly as a means to an end, laudable though it may appear in serving democratic goals, Counts was curiously much closer to the forms of education used in political systems he would characterize as authoritarian. Moreover, his view stands alongside the passionate and deeply committed forces of all political stripes whether they be religious fundamentalists around the world, or ultra right-wing groups, or radical leftists, who have a blueprint for how the whole of society should be organized. These groups don't quibble about indoctrination or imposition as an educational tool—they accept and embrace the concept. For them, true believers all, the fight is over "what" needs to be implanted in young minds not whether such means are problematic. It is on this point that Counts's educational position is most deserving of critique, in my judgment.

Yet Counts never abandoned his view that the young needed to be given a vision, a future to embrace, to identify with, and to engage in ways that would make it realized. Writing during the same time frame, Walter Lippmann lent support to Counts's perspective with his own when he wrote, "If a civilization is to be coherent and confident it must be known in that civilization what its ideals are. There must exist in the form of clearly available ideas an understanding of what the fulfillment of the promise of that civilization might mean, an imaginative conception of the good at which it might,

and, if it is to flourish, at which it must aim."[21] In this statement Lippmann set forth the very essence of Counts's position. Only through an adequate vision anchored to democratic values could the young find their place in the world and at the same time improve upon it. Counts clearly favored the development of inquiring and independent minds among the young, but hastened to note that even this worthy aim implied a form of imposition since possessing a critical mind is not a characteristic at birth.

American Federation of Teachers

From his earliest days as an educator Counts was supportive of teachers and their professional rights. He favored an elevation of their status and believed that if the school was to be an agency on behalf of social betterment, teachers would be the vanguard. For this mission to be realized, however, teachers would have to struggle to achieve it. In order for teachers to be in a position of school and social transformation, they would need to be organized to gain adequate compensation, to have a voice in the formulation of educational policies, and to obtain tenure. If the ancient doctrine of academic freedom were to be upheld, teachers would have to do it.[22] Teachers would have to break away from the nineteenth century tradition that held a genteel view of the teacher and expected him or her to be quiet, moral, apolitical, and penniless.[23]

This meant the progressive minded teachers of the nation would have to unite in a powerful organization, militantly devoted to the building of a better social order and to the fulfillment, under the conditions of industrial civilization, of the democratic aspirations of the American people. This organization would need the material resources, the legal talent, and the trained intelligence necessary to wage successful campaigns in the press, the courts, and legislative chambers across the country. It would have to defend its members against the ignorance of the masses and the malevolence of the privileged.[24] Because private and special interests pressured the public schools with regularity, teachers' organizations would have to safeguard intellectual freedom against external encroachments. Counts's perspective, in the words of Lawrence Cremin, was that "in the absence of a powerful profession, the most representative control in the world could not save the schools from the demoralizing buffeting of partisan popular passions."[25]

So committed was Counts to the teacher union movement that he accepted the challenge of seeking the Presidency of the AFT, and prevailed. While John Dewey was issued card #1 in the AFT and coined the slogan of its masthead "Education for Democracy and Democracy in Education," it was Counts who was called upon to rescue the union during one of its darkest hours.

The importance of Counts to the AFT story can be summarized as a battle to save the union from communist influence. During the depression, and especially during the 1930's, enmity towards capitalism rose significantly. In many circles growing numbers of Americans became increasingly intrigued by and drawn to socialist ideas, and considerable numbers developed a genuine curiosity concerning theoretical communism. Still others became actively involved with the Communist Party whose fortunes were tied largely to the dictates of Moscow. The trade union movement became fertile ground for communist advances and this extended to the AFT as well. In addition to infiltrating the teachers' union movement, communism found an ideological appeal among some members of the intellectual class.

New York City was a source of great strength to the AFT since the organized teachers were employed in the nation's largest public school system. Within the New York local there was a College Section of university faculty that had become fairly radicalized. The vocal attacks on free enterprise by some caused a split within the group. Some viewed these assaults as unwarranted and unnecessary and soon many leading academics withdrew their membership from the AFT, including John Dewey. Their dissatisfaction with communist control and the growing tendency to place party line above the interests of the public schools as they saw it, left them no choice but to depart. One of the few who remained among those considered to be social reconstructionists was George S. Counts.

William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, and his organization, had actually lost control of the New York Local No. 5 by the mid 1930's. And communists held sway in the Cleveland union and Madison, Wisconsin as well. The issue was further complicated by efforts within the labor movement to join the CIO with the AFL and where advocates stood in relation to their overall political persuasions was critical in many cases. Increasingly the AFL was concerned that the AFT was not only giving the labor movement a tarnished reputation, the growing fear was it would join a different labor movement.

By this time Counts himself had completed his own metamorphosis regarding the promise of the Soviet Union. As with many others during the depths of the depression, Counts, who was far more knowledgeable than most on the subject, saw the Soviet experiment as providing some answers to the inability of American capitalism to deal with its economic crisis. In the 1920's he was hopeful the dictatorship would disappear in the Soviet Union. During his visit there in 1927 Soviet educational leaders told him that by his next visit they would have freedom, causing him to be somewhat sanguine about their future.[26] But after Stalin began his infamous purges and consolidated his power Counts lost faith that the Soviet people would soon

have freedom.[27]

Despite the view of some (including the FBI)[28] that Counts harbored communist sympathies or worse during this period, his record of private and public actions support the contrary.[29] Nonetheless, as a matter of principle and a commitment to democratic civil liberties he opposed mass expulsions from the AFT even though he recognized the level of communist involvement in various locals and as importantly, the harm they were doing to the teacher union movement.

After losing an election to lead the College Teachers Union, and with the support and cajoling by others, he was persuaded to stand for election in 1939 as President of the American Federation of Teachers. In an extremely close outcome decided by two-dozen votes Counts emerged victorious.[30] He would fulfill the role from 1939-1942. In retrospect the choice was a good one from the standpoint of the union. In addition to being a long time member of the Federation, he was certainly a nationally prominent educational figure and his position at Teachers College made him keenly aware of the circumstances in New York. Finally, while many of his colleagues, and some very close friends, had abandoned the union earlier, his enduring commitment was a significant credential.

It's difficult to determine how important this AFT election was for the future of the teaching profession and indeed the labor movement itself. But it is clear that William Green was concerned about communist developments within the labor union and announced to the press in 1939 that the AFT should not permit itself to remain "a breeding ground for communists."[31] There was speculation Green issued an ultimatum to the AFT that gave it three months to clean itself up. Counts's rise to President gave the AFT someone with the courage and intellectual heft to withstand the continuing challenges within the AFT because by 1940 the opposition mounted a challenge to his re-election. When the ballots were counted he defeated John DeBoer of the University of Illinois.[32]

Following the election Counts set in motion the machinery to oust all the Communist-dominated locals in the AFT. The AFL favored the revocation of their charters and the re-establishment of new bona fide local unions of teachers. The effort by Counts to remove the Communists was not precedent setting within the labor movement. Recognizing the tactic of "bore-from-within" the AFL had refused, for example, to seat a Communist delegation from Butte, Montana, at its 1923 convention.[33]

Counts and the AFT pursued a very open process that provided ample opportunity for both sides to make their case via hearings, through discussions in the AFT journal, through newspapers, etc. As a result of the due process provided in the AFT Constitution, in the spring of 1941 the AFT Executive Council moved to expel Locals No. 5, No. 537 (College Teachers in

NY), and Philadelphia Local No. 192. The final vote to remove was by a referendum of the entire membership that prevailed by a very slim 5 to 4 margin.[34] As satisfying as this victory was to Counts and the AFT leadership on certain levels, it came at a heavy cost. The total membership was reduced by a third and there was ample repair work to be done. But in 1941 Counts was once again nominated for the Presidency and this time he was unopposed. When the 524 ballots in his support were counted and announced (8 others were cast as blanks), the convention rose and gave a thunderous applause with cheers.[35]

Counts extended his political activism launched by his AFT Presidency by going on to found the Liberal Party in New York in 1944, a result of a split with the Labor Party owing in part to its communist and far left influences.[36] He was then recruited to be the Liberal Party's candidate for U.S. Senate in 1952. The split among the field of candidates on the left enabled Irving Ives to retain his seat as New York's Republican U.S. Senator, with Counts garnering just under a half million votes.

Counts the Soviet Expert

During much of Counts's career he was one of the leading American experts on the Soviet Union, its schools, and its society. Because his politics were on the left coupled with his political activism, his scholarly pursuits as a Soviet expert lent grist to the mill of those reactionaries who unreflectively connected the dots to support their suspicions of his communist pedigree. His gravitational interest in the Soviet Union was far more innocent and originated when, in 1927, he joined Teachers College, Columbia University as Assistant Director of the International Institute and discovered that no one at the Institute had made the Soviet Union their topical focus. Counts visited the USSR as part of a labor delegation prior to his appointment at Columbia and since he needed his own part of the globe as a specialty the Soviet Union was a logical choice.[37] He visited the Soviet Union again in 1929 when he drove a new Ford over 6,000 miles throughout the country and published the account in *A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia*.[38] During this period, little more than a decade after the Bolshevik revolution, there was a sense of optimism in the U.S.S.R. and Counts saw in person what was termed "socialism with a human face" and he was generally impressed by what they were trying to achieve in their schools.[39]

But the greatest appeal to Counts was the Soviet effort to plan and control their economy. It was an enigma to him that the technological and industrial power of the United States was rendered powerless while great human suffering was mounting due to the very lack of ability to move the machinery of the economy. The context was the depression and Counts believed if

their experiment would fail it would not be due to its system of planning and economic coordination.[40]

Counts wrote about the Soviet Union and its education system for over three decades until 1959. He spoke fluent Russian and read *Pravda* daily throughout his career until his "final" retirement from Southern Illinois University. Though he was somewhat infatuated with the Soviet experiment, he never sought to import its ideas. By the latter part of the mid-1930's he understood the true nature of their goals and became disenchanted.[41] He concluded the new giant posed a great danger to the free world.

Counts believed the Soviet challenge to the west and to the United States in particular came not from the Red Army or the Communist International but rather from the State Planning Commission and the system of Soviet education. In a conversation with the famous historian H.G. Wells, Joseph Stalin revealed something vital to keep in mind about Soviet education at the time. He said: "Education is a weapon whose effect depends on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed."[42] As a result the Central Committee devoted significant time and energy not only to the broad philosophical and ideological aspects of education, but also to textbook preparation, teaching methods, classroom organization, etc. Nothing was too small or insignificant to engage the Committee's attention, right down to the number and length of the recess periods in primary schools.[43]

Behind the power of the Kremlin could be seen the power of Soviet education, something to be seen as the key to understanding Soviet strength. It was the first great state in history, according to Counts, to employ the full force of organized education to achieve a distant apocalyptic goal.[44] All educational agencies were placed under the auspices of the state. It was a comprehensive system, which included practically all of the cultural and formative influences of society, save the church and family—both of which had their influence reduced. Education was connected to major divisions of the press, other media, literature, art, libraries, museums, institutions tied to family and community, youth groups, party organizations; movies, theater, even the circus, were all part of the apparatus.[45]

As unsettling as this comprehensive marshaling of forces to shape the human mind is to most of us, it reveals the elevated status of education within the Soviet framework. But without the development of its educational system, Counts was convinced the Soviet Union would have remained a backward nation, incapable of challenging the rest of the world. And their accomplishments were almost without parallel in some respects. In 1917 when they began, illiteracy was at 60%. In a short span of years they could boast of "eradicating" illiteracy.[46] And in educational terms their pedagogy was in the early years progressive and experimental. Later, in 1957 when Sputnik was launched and sent terror throughout the U.S., delegations were sent to

observe what the Soviets were doing in their schools to accomplish such scientific prowess. But as with the philosophical saw that a foot cannot be dipped in the same stream twice, the Soviet schools of the 1950's were not the ones their space scientists attended. Many of them were products of the earlier period of progressive educational reform.

No heresy or dissent was tolerated in any form. The acceptance of the faith had to be absolute. The entire apparatus of the state and society was employed to prevent outside ideas from entering. In the end it is easy to see the inherent contradictions. Any society seeking to capitalize on the intellectual potential of its people cannot at the same time corral the human mind. Obviously short-term aims may be achieved such as building basic literacy and generating allegiance to a system, but the mind doesn't achieve boundless potential in a bounded setting. And while Counts saw the danger and the problems with this scenario, he credited their design as a remarkable effort in size and scope given the lofty aspirations of the regime.

Counts explained by example the level of monolithic control over education that developed. In 1934, at the behest of Stalin himself, at a meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party (CEC), they decided to re-write the history books. Outlines for new books were developed by scholars, which were referred back to the CEC. It in turn sharply criticized the outlines and appointed a review committee to go over them and make corrections. The committee was composed of the three most powerful men in the Soviet Union: Stalin, Kirov, and Zhdanov. Kirov was second in command to Stalin and later became the first victim of the Great Purge that began in 1936. Zhdanov was an important member of the politburo.[47] These powerful men examined and criticized the outlines of textbooks for teaching history in the schools. Their "Remarks and Outlines" were published and served as guiding directives for the writing of history textbooks used in Soviet schools.[48]

Counts and the FBI

Owing to Counts's left-leaning ideology, his career interest in and his travel to the Soviet Union, and his political activism, the U.S. paranoia of the "red menace" made him a prime prospect for FBI tracking and investigation. Based on my examination of Counts's FBI File obtained through a Freedom of Information request, the work of the FBI reflects more on the way U.S. citizens were investigated than it does on Counts's actions. By that I mean the ease by which accusers could smear someone, without the target of the smear having any knowledge of the claims, and the readiness of the FBI to assume credibility on the part of accusers, represent a sad chapter in the history of a great nation. I'll discuss two events housed in the file that illustrate the point.[49]

One summary by the FBI dated October 20, 1942, which includes a thorough biography of Counts's academic and personal life, after years of inquiry and investigation that proceeded from assumptions of guilt regarding Counts's membership and support of communism, concludes with this statement: "In view of the results of the above reported preliminary investigation, it would appear that subject is not sympathetic to the Communist cause. For this reason, no further investigation is being contemplated in this office, and this case is considered closed."[50] Yet further portions of the file reveal that FBI file activity continued through the 1950's and 1960's in part reflecting the increased intensity of the "red scare" in the post war U.S., but also resulting from the efforts of groups such as the American Council of Christian Churches and The General Federation of Women's Clubs, which appear in multiple portions of the file.

One episode, reported to the Director J. Edgar Hoover in 1951, involved a Mr. Louis Gibarti, who was a former Comintern agent who operated in the U.S. between 1928 and 1938 and was himself a communist in Hungary. He was interviewed in Paris by the FBI in 1951. The document asserts, "Informant believed to be reliable who has furnished accurate information in the past" yet a hand written insertion on the same page dated June 3, 1955 states his "credibility is not known since he has in the past furnished both reliable and unreliable information." Nonetheless, he identified Counts as being a "member at large" of the Communist Party, which meant he wasn't linked to any nucleus because those members had to carry out additional duties, such as recruitment, which required divulging their identity as party members. Instead, the postulate went, "at large" members would engage in other organizations and advance the communists' interests without having to reveal their true sympathies. So, they were secret members and were subject to Party discipline but would not be known as a Communist. Gibarti then adds credibility to his claim by adding in 1934 Counts told Gibarti personally he was a Communist Party member.[51]

In a separate memo dated December 3, 1951, however, following a subsequent interview with Gibarti in France, Gibarti then was more circumspect in his ability to identify Counts and said he could not identify Counts any further. He was in fact unable to verify a picture of Counts as the person he previously claimed was the person who spoke to him personally about his communist activities.[52]

A second portion of the file I want to address focuses on Counts's writings and public speaking. Two books that received the most attention were *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* and *New Russia's Primer*.[53] At points Counts is held accountable for statements in the Primer when in fact he was merely a translator. Had Counts's other writing on the Soviet Union been consulted the record would reveal a perspective that warned about the

threats posed by Soviet Education and the Soviet system rather than a voice championing communism and its virtues. There were also newspaper articles or clippings of some his public lectures that attributed things to him which were inaccurate regarding his stance towards the Soviets. But no citations were ever provided from the books or newspaper pieces or by other detractors leaving the audiences to take things at face value or to take it upon themselves to read Counts's books in their entirety.

The FBI was very thorough in assembling a full dossier of Counts's organizational memberships and related involvement as well as his political activities. It also thoroughly catalogued all his scholarly work. It is obvious Counts was a person of interest whose life and activities were tracked for several decades by the FBI.

Summary

The legacy of George S. Counts has many layers. A towering educational scholar known internationally; a progressive voice for American society, American education, and American democracy; an activist and politician who lived out by example the clarion call he made for teachers to move to the vanguard of political and social change; and a leading expert on Soviet society and education; these are categories that best capture and describe his life and career. He was a pioneer in advancing the sociology of education. Several of his seminal works represent some of the first attempts to analyze the effects of social class on the nation's schools, including *The Selective Character of American Secondary Education* (1922), *The Senior High School Curriculum* (1926), *The Social Composition of Boards of Education: A Study in the Social Control of Public Education* (1927), and *Secondary Education and Industrialism* (1929). Yet with all his accomplishments and successes, he remains best known for the fifty-two-page tract *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* (1932).

According to those who knew him well, he was a magnificent teacher. Lawrence A. Cremin knew Counts as a lecturer, a seminar leader, a dissertation advisor, and "later as a mentor, faculty colleague, and treasured friend. He was extraordinary in every one of these roles…"[54] According to Cremin students at Teachers College respected him profoundly. "He was no saint to be venerated but rather a wise, learned, and dedicated teacher, who professed in the field of education superbly. His example remains lively in my mind even today."[55]

While he lost his early hope that the Soviet Union would provide a model for using central planning as a way to moderate the vicissitudes of economic boom and bust, Counts remained convinced that some degree of centralized economic management was sound. Though he was a Norman

Thomas supporter for President in 1932, he voted for FDR in the next three elections as a more pragmatic path. He can safely be termed a democratic socialist for much of his career but only if the term is applied in its historic rather than contemporary American mistaken vernacular.[56] But, in the main, he falls within the tradition of American progressivism and populism.

During the 1930's and 1940's Counts was considered by many to be the leading intellectual figure at Teachers College, Columbia University, following the departures of John Dewey and Edward L. Thorndike.[57] He edited the *Social Frontier* during its most influential years and was its first editor.[58] For reasons not understood or known, he burned most of his papers when he left Teachers College in 1955. The only remnants of his work at Teachers College available to me were in an old filing cabinet stuck in the back of a secluded storage room that contained mostly early hand written drafts of various articles, program proposals for Teachers College, and other later publications.

As President of the American Federation of Teachers he gave the teachers' union movement a social purpose and social conscience and he believed fervently that the school could not rise much above the level of the teachers. Though not the language of his era, he was one of the earliest proponents of teacher empowerment and championed teacher rights and voice.

His progressive politics coupled with his interest in the Soviet Union garnered the attention of the FBI. Friends and neighbors were interviewed, phone calls were accessed, etc.[59] In the end FBI investigations and surveillance yielded no evidence that he was ever a communist or a sympathizer. But that was insufficient to eliminate FBI suspicions.

Notes

[1] George S. Counts, "A Humble Autobiography," *NSSE 70th Yearbook* (1971): 151-154.

[2] George S. Counts, Recorded Interview No. 13, Southern Illinois University-Carbondale(1966). In the Counts papers, Morris Library Special Collections.

[3] John L. Childs, *American Pragmatism and Education* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1956), 212.

[4] Counts, Recorded Interview, No. 13.

[5] Counts, Recorded Interview, No. 13.

[6] Counts, "A Humble Autobiography."

[7] Childs, *American Pragmatism and Education*, 215.

[8] Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, "Prophecy or Profession? George S. Counts and the Social Study of Education," *American Journal of Education*, 100 (1992): 137.

[9] George S. Counts, "A Rational Faith in Education," *Teachers College Record* 60 (1958): 257.

[10] George S. Counts, "Educate for Democracy," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 30 (1949): 194.

[11] Gerald L. Gutek, *The Educational Theory of George S. Counts* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1970).

[12] Counts, *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* 6.

[13] George S. Counts, *Secondary Education and Industrialism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929).

[14] Gutek, , 1970, 117.

[15] George S. Counts, *The Social Foundations of Education* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), 536.

[16] George S. Counts, "Should the Teacher Always Be Neutral?" *Phi Delta Kappan*, 51 (1969), 186.

[17] George S. Counts, "The Teaching of Patriotism," *American Teacher*, 24 (1940), 7.

[18] George S. Counts, "The Prospect of American Democracy," *NEA Addresses and Proceedings*, 1937.

[19] David F. Wallace, *This Is Water* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co. 2009), 53.

[20] Claudia Bloser, Aron Schopf, and Marcus Willaschek, "Autonomy, Experience, and Reflection. On a Neglected Aspect of Personal Autonomy." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 13 (2010):239-253; and Judith Herb, "Report of Student Success Rate According to Licensure Programs for Required Social Foundations of Education Course," Submitted for NCATE Accreditation Reporting, Ohio: University of Toledo, 2007.

[21] Walter Lippmann, *A Preface To Morals* (New York: Macmillan, Co., 1929), 322.

[22] *A Call to the Teachers of the Nation*, by the Committee of the Progressive Education Association on Social and Economic Problems (New York: John Day Company, 1938).

[23] Marshall O. Donley, *Power To The Teacher* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976).

[24] *A Call to the Teachers of the Nation*.

[25] Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School* (New York: Vintage books, 1961), 226.

[26] Robert W. Iverson, *The Communist and the Schools* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1959).

[27] George S. Counts, Recorded Interview #94, N.D., Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, In the Counts papers, Morris Library Special Collections.

[28] FBI File of George S. Counts, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act.

[29] Gutek, 84.

[30] Convention Proceedings, *23rd Annual American Federation of Teachers Convention*, August 21-25, 1939, 725.

[31] William E. Eaton, *The American Federation of Teachers*, 1916-1961 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), 99-102.

[32] Convention Proceedings, *24th Annual AFT Convention*, 19-23 August, 1940, 416.

[33] Eaton, 85.

[34] Carl J. Megel, "A.F.T. Action on Communism," *American Teacher*, 4 (1953), 20.

[35] Convention Proceedings, *25th Annual American Federation of Teachers Convention*, August 22-26, 1941, 505.

[36] John E. Vargo, "End of the Line for the New York Liberal Party?" http://www.liberalparty.org/vargoarticlep1.htm (1997-2011).

[37] Personal Interview with William H.E. Johnson, March 8, 1980. Johnson was then Professor Emeritus at the University of Pittsburgh, was a Soviet scholar himself, and knew Counts well.

[38] George S. Counts, *A Ford Crosses Soviet Russia* (Boston: The Stratford Company, 1930).

[39] Personal Interview with William H.E. Johnson, March 8, 1980.

[40] George S. Counts, *The Soviet Challenge to America* (New York: John Day Company, 1931).

[41] Personal Interview with William H.E. Johnson, March 8, 1980.

[42] George S. Counts, "Soviet Education and the Democratic Ideal in Education," *American Teacher*, 6 (1951), 18.

[43] George S. Counts, *The Country of the Blind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), 259.

[44] George S. Counts, "The Real Challenge of Soviet Education," *Educational Forum*, 23 (1959), 263.

[45] Counts, "Soviet Education and the Democratic Ideal," 18; *The Country of the Blind*, 245.

[46] George S. Counts, *Khruschev and the Central Committee Speak on Education* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1959).

[47] Sydney Harcave, *Russia a History* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1964).

[48] George S. Counts, "Some Recent Tendencies in Soviet Education," *American Teacher*, 32 (1947), 17.

[49] The FBI File is not arranged by any pagination except for selected pieces within the file. It is a compilation of separate segments and correspondence. I've cited each in this paper by descriptions and other identifiers and included page numbers where available. The contents of the file, minus deletions, were de-classified in 1981. It totals 201 pages with several redundancies, albeit different time periods.

[50] Counts FBI File, "Memorandum for Mr. Mumford," 6.

[51] Confidential Letter to the FBI Director, March 29, 1951, 3.

[52] Memo to the FBI Director, December 3, 1951.

[53] M. Ilin, *New Russia's Primer* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931). Translated by Nucia Lodge and George. S. Counts.

[54] Craig Kridel, Robert V. Bullough, Jr., and Paul Shaker, *Teachers and Mentors: Profiles of Distinguished Twentieth-Century Professors of Education* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 237.

[55] Craig Kridel, Robert V. Bullough, Jr., and Paul Shaker, *Teachers and Mentors: Profiles of Distinguished Twentieth-Century Professors of Education* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 243.

[56] Personal Interview with Ben Davidson, January 4, 1980. Davidson was a Labor Party and Liberal Party member, and a close friend of Counts.

[57] Interview with Teachers College President Lawrence A. Cremin in his office, Sept. 25, 1979.

[58] Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, "Prophecy or Profession? George S. Counts and the Social Study of Education," *American Journal of Education*, 100 (1992): 137.

[59] Personal Interview with Counts's daughter, Martha L. Counts, January 5, 1980.

Book Review:
Townsend and Weiner, *Deconstructing and Reconstructing Lives: Auto/Biography in Educational Settings*

Lucy E. Bailey
Oklahoma State University

Lucy Forsyth Townsend and Gaby Weiner. *Deconstructing and Reconstructing Lives: Auto/Biography in Educational Settings*. The University of Western Ontario: Althouse Press, 2011. ISBN 978-0-920354-69-8. 384 pages.

Lucy Townsend and Gaby Weiner explore the promise of auto/biography as an educational resource in their text, *Deconstructing and Reconstructing Lives: Auto/biography in Educational Settings* (2011). The authors' focus on researching, writing, and teaching educational auto/biography contributes a valuable perspective to life writing scholarship. The co-authored text integrates decades of auto/biographical research and reflection to teach readers core elements of these intertwined genres, strategies for interpreting texts, approaches for conducting auto/biographical research, and models for incorporating life-writing into classrooms. Integrated throughout are narrative snapshots of figures such as Emma Willard, Harriet Martineau, Sojourner Truth, and Lance Armstrong to facilitate the process of "deconstructing and re-constructing" auto/biographies. Weiner, a gender and justice scholar at Edinburgh University, and Townsend, a retired professor of education and member of the International Society for Educational Biography, have crafted a rich resource that is gracefully aligned with *Vitae Scholasticae*'s mission—to honor and explore the educative value of lives.

The authors weave their previous scholarship with new exemplars into

four sections and eleven chapters. Part One provides an overview of auto/biographical genres, core concepts in the field, and theoretical traditions influential for analyzing and writing auto/biography. In Chapter 2, the authors detail an "analytic framework" (21) for use in engaging with narratives and—significantly—understanding them as *created* rather than unmediated *reflections* of The Real. The productive imprint of a range of intellectual traditions, including deconstruction and poststructuralism, is discernible in the authors' rendering of four key categories integral to auto/biography (22): first, the politics of the auto/biographical subject, which includes theorizing identity, the auto/biographical self, and the role of the body/embodiment; second, the nature of the individual/social truths on which texts and audiences rely, which includes interrogating the notion of experience, the politics of sources (including memory), and the "conditions of truth" (39) operating in a given milieu; third, the role of the narrative form, conventions, and narrator voice; and fourth, the ethics of auto/biographical relationships with subject and audience. Chapter 2 thus provides key conceptual grounding for the text, traversing textured theoretical terrain in 25 pages, interrupting realist conceptions of auto/biographical sources and narratives, and nourishing the reader's critical skills for the chapters that follow.

In Part Two, "Deconstructing Auto/biography," the authors present diverse auto/biographical sources and excerpts with interpretive questions and commentary that enact the critical, "flexible" (46) stance articulated in Part One. Readers encounter chapters on documentary sources (obituaries, dictionary essays, and chronologies), biography and life writing, collective biography, and auto/biography and memoir. Intriguing examples range from broad historical inquiries into the "professional field" of Swedish teachers' using prosopography (159) to brief excerpts from 19th century women's epistles and diaries. With each exemplar, the authors model interpretive processes that readers might adopt for their own endeavors, including critical questions about "selves," sources, plots, audience, and the role of education: "What kind of self emerges in this text?" (108); "Whose voice predominates? How is education highlighted?" (118); "How is bodily development emphasized?" (206). Themes from Chapter 2 animate this section: the importance of capturing accounts of marginalized voices, of analyzing both biographers' and subjects' values and context (60), and of considering forces that shape the documentary record upon which life writing is based. As the authors suggest, data sources may appear neutral and authoritative, but, like narratives, they are saturated with the racial and gendered mores of their day and the varied allegiances of their creators.

The third part of the text turns to the art and labor of "Reconstructing Auto/biography" through four essays that detail the messy particulars of teaching, researching, and writing auto/biographies. Using the framework

and examples from previous sections, readers may ponder the meaning of truth in life stories, the "concentric circle" method of researching lives, accounts of representational choices and ethics, and approaches for integrating life stories in teaching. Townsend includes compelling excerpts from a previously written narrative with retrospective comments about her writing experience to illustrate the challenges of this genre, among them: which selves to present (23), which voice to embrace (251), which events to "disclose" (253), the implications of the account, and the "constructed quality of memory" (151). The final section of the text, Part Four, summarizes the authors' mission in surprisingly few pages, reiterates the value of auto/biographical work for educational missions and outlines issues scholars might consider in evaluating the usefulness of accounts.

"A Consciousness about Revelation and Erasure" (186)

Townsend and Weiner's strategies offer educators a comprehensive resource for integrating life story research, analysis, and examples in their classrooms. The authors artfully balance their advocacy for auto/biography as a worthy source of knowledge and a potential social justice tool with skillful avoidance of the hagiography often lurking in the auto/biographical genre. Their theoretically-grounded critique of sources and accounts models a rigorous approach to the auto/biographical endeavor. Although life stories might perform the "authentic" voice and tidy tale—reminiscent of Haraway's "god trick"[1]—they are created by historically-situated embodied beings immersed in power relations who inevitably practice "conscious selection" (96) and selective erasure (186) in their construction. Like any qualitative project, subjects/writers must wrestle with available evidence and thorny decisions about what to preserve, what to claim, and what to let go. Recognizing auto/biography as an "ideological project" (133) allows readers to relish in a given story while also critically engaging with "methods, [and] ideas, by which each narrative is produced" (132).

A particularly useful aspect of this text is the authors' broad theorizing of education beyond brick-and-mortar schools, which gestures to the racialized and gendered contours of educational access and highlights diverse lives and learning spaces. For example, working-class British servant Hannah Cullwick absorbed her most valuable service lessons through her early years as an apprentice; African-American author Richard Wright acquired knowledge about race, masculinity, and power from his peers (206); and 19th century reformer Jane Addams forged her vision of Hull House from traveling abroad and witnessing the suffering of the European poor. Such a "mosaic of voices" (141) broadens the scope of educational analysis and directs attention to the formative power that diverse educational experiences can have for individual

lives.

The authors draw excerpts primarily from accounts of women's lives, reflecting their previous scholarship and domains of expertise as well as their feminist investments in correcting the general exclusion of "ordinary" lives (146) from the auto/biographical record. Biographers' early preoccupation with Hannah Cullwick's eccentric husband, for instance, utterly obscured her extraordinary character and valuable insights as a working-class woman in the 19th century. At times, the rationale for selecting the specific figures, time periods, and narrative styles for the text felt unclear to this reviewer. At other times, I became so thoroughly immersed in a given account that time simply slipped away—illuminating clearly, in the process, the potentially intoxicating draw of life stories.

Every Day Use (Alice Walker)

The author's pedagogical goals in this text remind me of a theme in Alice Walker's classic short story, "Everyday Use."[2] Walker's story explores an African-American family's conflicting perspectives on the roles household items such as butter churns and quilts play in preserving heritage. The hand-stitched quilts in Walker's story have weighty symbolic power in representing family, identity, and heritage—beloved family members stitched them; wrapped them around their children; fashioned them from the colorful scraps of familiar materials threaded from different generations. Yet, Walker conveys that the quilts' value for preserving heritage not only rests in the lives and labor they embody, but in their "everyday use"—from people continuing to weave them into the rhythm of their everyday lives.

Townsend and Weiner's text shares a similar spirit with this short story: life narratives should be written, savored, shared, discussed, analyzed—indeed, used. Like Walker's quilts, auto/biographies can preserve traces of lives, weave the present with the past, and represent versions of selves and experiences continually open to new meanings and new uses. But their lasting educative value lies in part in their everyday use: circulating them in classrooms; collecting them in oral histories; learning about valued mentors and family members (313); comparing and contrasting educational experiences (318); capturing and experimenting with different versions of selves; "fostering students' personal engagement" with their courses (318); thinking critically about lives in context. And, to the authors, they have particular transformative potential: "I want to position students at the centre of the study of important educational issues. I want students to realize that their voices matter, that their thoughts and activities are worthy of representation and analysis, and that they can be knowledge producers, not mere consumers. Most important, I want students not only to learn about others but

also to care enough to take responsibility for transforming the world" (324).

This text could help educators incorporate auto/biographies into any college course as well as serve as a text for an upper-division or graduate level course in auto/biographical methods. The pedagogical apparatus will cultivate students' critical engagement with and initiation of auto/biographical projects. Combining the text with a book-length account (such as Liz Stanley's biography of Hannah Cullwick or Paula Salvio's account of Anne Sexton) would allow students to apply the strategies in depth. Townsend and Weiner's text suggests how educational biography can 'promote insight, illuminate practitioner issues, [and] improve education' (190) and thus adds a unique perspective to research and to educational studies.

Notes

[1] Haraway, Donna. Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Autumn, 1988): 575-599.

[2] Walker, Alice. *Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973).

Book Review:
Povell, *Montessori Comes to America: The Leadership of Maria Montessori and Nancy McCormick Rambusch*

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Phyllis Povell. *Montessori Comes to America: The Leadership of Maria Montessori and Nancy McCormick Rambusch*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 2010. ISBN: 978-0-7618-4928-5. 154 pages.

Povell has collected material from letters, speeches, lectures, interviews and biographies to piece together a narrative about Maria Montessori and Nancy Rambusch, the person credited with bringing Montessori training and pedagogy to the United States. Although the story sounds simple enough, the text is full of drama and conflicts associated with leadership and change. Povell explains what it means to be an agent for change, and contends that Montessori and Rambusch each played an important part in influencing public and private education in the United States. Rambusch is quoted often about her perspectives regarding being a change agent.

Povell's objective is to describe the leadership styles and processes of Montessori and Rambusch in a feminist context, to examine what makes an effective leader and to speculate about how that leader has an impact on society. Povell grapples with how to "generalize the phenomenon of individual leadership characteristics" (20). She aims to present a biographical portrait of each woman and to explain the birth, growth and rebirth of the Montessori movement in the 20th century.

She then leads us into her own journey as it related to understanding gender discrimination and feminism. She firsts asks a serious question: Was Montessori a feminist? She then asks, "What is feminism?" Povell's attempt

to define and clarify the meaning of feminism is an example of her ironic sense of humor. She quotes Catharine Simpson as simply calling feminism "the F word." And she labels Montessori as being a radical.

Then she weaves Montessori's biography, and it is a fascinating story. Montessori seemed to continuously challenge the conventions of her time. As a very young woman she studied Latin, Greek, natural sciences, mathematics, engineering and medicine, all disciplines typically pursued by men. Povell describes what life must have been like for Montessori as she worked "under great adversity, unable to view a naked body in the presence of men, compelled to form autopsies alone at night without the benefit of direct instruction from her professors, enduring taunting from her fellow students and receiving little encouragement from her family…" (31). Povell's use of biographical resources is superb in that they contribute to the compelling tone of the story. We feel great empathy for Montessori herself, who fought, spoke and advocated for universal justice principles for working women and education for young children.

Montessori's educational and experiential credentials are stunning. In Povell's descriptions we gain a sense of the woman who boldly ventured into unknown territory and insisted on going there regardless of obstacles in her path. Montessori interned at a pediatric ambulatory clinic and a psychiatric clinic as a young woman. She conducted research and completed her dissertation at the psychiatric clinic, where she also wrote and published with the director, Giuseppe Montesano. The couple's child, Mario Pipilli, was sent to live in the Roman countryside where he was cared for by a nurse. Montessori continued with her education and work, establishing women's groups and speaking about economic, social and political equity for Italian women. Her speeches explained the plight of working women who lacked the privileges of middle class and wealthy Italian women, and she emphasized pay equity issues and women's unceasing domestic and child rearing responsibilities (37). In addition, she tirelessly explored educational efforts with children who were poor and had special needs, and she worked to establish open-air schools for them.

Povell's depiction of Montessori especially as an impassioned innovator of the art and science of teaching young children is particularly compelling. An example of a dramatic moment in the book is when Povell describes Montessori's encounter with Benito Mussolini. She explains how she researched the scenario of which she writes, then recounts a story about Montessori "taking him on" while he sits in his office. Mussolini was reputed to keep lion cubs tethered to the legs of his desk. Montessori was a strong, outspoken pacifist. She believed in children's freedom and peace, and she was uncompromising in the face of Mussolini's fascist ideology. She told him unequivocally that she would not allow the children in her schools to partic-

ipate in militaristic ceremonies or wear uniforms. Povell artfully leaves the visualization of Montessori facing Mussolini while lions prowl around them to the imagination of the reader. Suffice it to say that Montessori immediately left Italy after her verbal skirmish with "Il Duce" and her schools in Italy were all closed the next day. In Nazi Austria and Germany, Montessori schools were closed and Montessori's effigy was burned over a pile of her books.

Povell creates memorable and stunning descriptions of events in the lives of both Montessori and Rambusch. Nancy McCormick Rambusch, like Maria Montessori, was well educated and seemed driven to pursue as much learning and as many experiences as she could. Povell explains that, upon meeting Rambusch herself, she was impressed with her use of written and spoken language. Rambusch was a synthesizer of ideas. She had a physical disability as a child that, Povell notes, contributed to an independent spirit of competence and self worth. She attended all girls parochial schools as a youngster, and sought her degree in English language and literature at Dominican University and the University of Toronto as a young adult. She studied French Literature and Romance Philology at the University of Paris. At the age of twenty, she read her first book about Maria Montessori and while studying in Paris she visited Montessori schools there. Rambusch completed her master's degree in Early Childhood Education and her Ed.D. at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

The birth of Nancy's first child prompted her to examine the quality of early childhood education in the United States. She was motivated to take both the Montessori Primary and Elementary courses recommended by Mario Montessori, then set up a Montessori play group in her home for her two children and a few others.

Rambusch dedicated her energy to bringing Montessori teaching practices to the United States because she wanted the best education for her own children and for other children as well.

The parents with whom Rambusch worked were middle class Catholics who were unhappy with the parochial schools attended by their children. Their efforts brought about a re-emergence of Montessori education in the United States.

In 1958, the first "Montessori Revival" school was opened in Greenwich, Connecticut with Rambusch as its headmistress. Supported by affluent parents, Whitby school grew rapidly. In 1959, Rambusch started teacher training efforts at the school with the help of Mario Montessori. In 1960, Rambusch founded the American Montessori Society (AMS) and applied for admission to Association Montessori International.

Even after resigning from the leadership of the American Montessori Society, and retiring as headmistress of the Whitby school, Rambusch sup-

ported Montessori teacher training efforts for decades. Her struggles and frustrations related to two issues. One difficulty was that when Maria Montessori died she left her own son to manage the Montessori movement and the subsequent establishment of International and U.S. national societies that supported Montessori teaching methods. Protecting the purity of Montessori pedagogy was Mario's goal. He wanted to continue to have control over teacher training and education and, as Povell seems to imply, was not as concerned with the cultural context of teaching in the United States. Rambusch's encounters with him were frustrating and disappointing for her. She seemed to put her whole heart into the work only to be disappointed by years of political infighting. Disagreements over context, the Americanization of Montessori methods, and teacher training seemed to be proverbial sticking points between the AMS and the AMI. Rambusch quotes Mario as writing to her about meetings, explaining that their meetings, "though pleasant, were never productive" (132).

A second issue was that the re-emergence of the Montessori movement in the U.S. was built on the interest of a middle-class, educated, Catholic group of parents. Originally Montessori herself had worked with children and parents who were not privileged people. Ironically, in spite of Mario Montessori's insistence that the maintenance of "Montessori method purity" be upheld, the method was finessed by an American context anyway.

Povell's intent is clearly to describe the two women rather than provide insight into why Montessori teaching techniques were innovative and passionately sought. The statement that addresses early childhood teaching is buried in the text, but there is a clear assertion that the children in Italian Montessori schools were reading and writing by age four. This is an enticing reason for seeking more knowledge of the Montessori method, and for wanting to adopt and emulate it. Povell does not emphasize this aspect of the re-emergence of Montessori practice enough, even though today parents, teachers, political figures and administrators continue to search for pedagogical techniques that would more effectively educate all children.

Povell compels the reader to respect both women who played key roles in the establishment of alternative offerings for children's learning in Europe and the United States. She had the benefit of meeting Rambusch and interviewing her, and I wondered if her writing of Montessori would have been different had she been able to meet her as well. Had that been the case, then Montessori might have been portrayed as being a human being with foibles rather than an iconic figure.

At times Povell's text is difficult to follow, partly because there are so many support characters in the narrative that it's difficult to keep track of them all and partly because, in a few places, the book reads like a dissertation with tangential pieces. In many places, the reader must take in every

word so as not to miss out on anything that might be funny or ironic or dramatic, and Povell can indeed be very funny, ironic and dramatic! I enjoyed this book and Povell's writing and was excited to be learning more about Montessori and Rambusch.

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