# **DELTA EPSILON SIGMA**

# **ALPHA CHAPTER**

Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa

# **ALPHA 2001**

Vol. XVI May 2001

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The Delta Epsilon Sigma Alpha Chapter Writing Contest Winners is published annually at Loras College, 1450 Alta Vista, Dubuque, IA 52001. The annual deadline date for the contest, open to all Loras undergraduate and graduate students, is February 14.

Cover photo is of the Liberal Arts window in Christ the King Chapel.

Printed by Mastercraft Press, Platteville, WI 53818.

Special thanks to Helen Kennedy and Joyce Whelan in the Word Processing Center, our special helpers "to put things in order," and to Mary Kay Mueller, graphic artist and "artistic consultant." Thanks also to Dr. Joachim Froehlich, president of Loras College (1995-2001) and generous supporter of Alpha chapter.

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# Mute by Celia Venhuizen

Things wait for you. In a room of glass cases full of brooches from before the birth of Christ they sit anticipating

arrivals. Two paraffin tablets lie beside a bronze stylus broken by the prism of glass between it and ignorant eyes.

Backlit, the observers duck and dodge their own

reflections to peer into the quiet and steam the glass with their breath.

Elegant, slender letters buried in the top of the wax record a dying language. The lines stretch out—a monastery's iron filigree.

Someone desired words enough to race soft wax before it cured and refused to accept the point. There was never a draft

or a revision. The stylus moved rapidly to whisper each word out to every reader. When they pass, they are too deaf

to see the story. The man at the museum entrance jots down a note with a pen bleeding soft and black into thirsty paper.

A woman on the bench stares at a burial urn with a notebook on her lap and a short pencil in her mouth.

The bronze scalpel holds its place beside the wax squares that wear words like wounds and someone asks me the time.

# Today A New Sun Rises For Me<sup>1</sup> by Cassandra Sloan

The Sequel to Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun<sup>2</sup>

(In order of appearance)<sup>3</sup>

Ruth Younger<sup>4</sup>

Walter Lee Younger<sup>5</sup>

Tamika Younger<sup>6</sup>

Joanie Star<sup>7</sup>

The action of the play is set in a primarily "white" neighborhood in Clybourne Park, a suburb of Chicago. The play occurs during the 1960s.

### Act I

Scene 1: Tuesday morning. Scene 2: Tuesday afternoon.

#### Act II

Scene 1: Monday morning, seven years later.

Scene II: Wednesday afternoon.<sup>8</sup>

ACT 1

SCENE 1

The Younger living room is a comfortable, open area. The furniture appears worn, but it is apparent that great care is taken in keeping the room neat and tidy. A sofa table, adorned with pictures of the family, including Beneatha (Walter's sister), Mama (Walter's deceased mother), and Travis (the son of Ruth and Walter), sits in the corner of the room. Many windows, including a large picture window, constitute the left wall of the living room.

In stark contrast to the apartment where the Younger family lived in <u>A Raisin in the Sun</u>, this home, although nothing fancy, displays the family's pride in every corner. The weariness and slight despair of the apartment no longer exist; moreover, this house shines with life and hope.

To the right exists a type of hallway. One should assume several bedrooms are found in this

hallway. The kitchen is also to the right of the living room. Again, in great contrast to the old apartment, the kitchen holds a kitchen table and contains a generous amount of space for kitchen activities. A very well-lit space, the kitchen sparkles with pride.

Time: 1960.

Place: Clybourne Park in Chicago.

At Rise: The set glows from the brightness of an early spring morning. The sound of an alarm clock blares from the bedroom hallway. A sleepy-eyed Ruth enters the kitchen, puts on a pot of coffee and begins preparing oatmeal for breakfast. She is dressed for work, wearing a wool plaid skirt, a sweater and pumps. <sup>10</sup>

Because of the strain from earlier in her life, she appears older than her age of forty; however, something in her eyes hints at pride. As she prepares breakfast, she keeps checking the clock, apparently waiting for the rest of the family to rise for the day.

Ruth: Morning time! Let's go now. Get a move on Tamika and Walter. (She continues moving about the kitchen, setting the table and pouring the juice. The house remains otherwise dead silent.) GET YOURSELVES OUT HERE, NOW! (First scuttling steps move down the hallway, followed by larger, heavier footsteps. Tamika and Walter Lee appear. Tamika, an eleven-year-old with chubby cheeks, is a cute little girl who wears her hair in braids. She wears pink flannel pajamas and is shy and reserved, but very bright for her age. She is an observant child. Walter Lee, a man of about forty-five, also appears older than he is due to the stresses from earlier on in his life.) Finally!

Tamika: (Carrying a book under her arm.) Geez, Mama! I was coming, I was coming.

Walter: (Sleepily.) Let's just eat, or I'm gonna be late for work.

Ruth: (Ignoring the complaints of her family begins dishing out the oatmeal.) What are you reading now, girl? (With a hint of pride in her voice.) Always reading, you are. One book after another.

Tamika: (Waking up a little. Her father appears to do the same.) A book about Emmett Till, Mama. We're studying him in school right now. He's the little boy from the Southside of Chicago, just like us, who was murdered in Mississippi. 13

Walter: (Waking up a bit.) Ruth, you remember when his picture ran in Jet magazine? Shocked the hell outta me.

Tamika: (Replies in a matter-of-fact manner.) We talked 'bout the magazine in class. Ms.

Jackson said his mama wanted the picture in there so the whole world could see what'd been done to her boy.

Ruth: (With a sad look on her face.) I can't even imagine the pain that mother experienced . . . I would've done the same thing. Run that picture for all to see what those white men did to that boy.

Tamika: (*In an excited voice*.) Right now, in Nashville, there's lots of students sittin' at lunch counters so that blacks can eat beside the whites.

Walter: (Surprised.) Now 'Mika, you even know where Nashville is? How you know where it's at?

Tamika: (*Proudly*.) Mama taught me all the states, Daddy. Someday I want to be like those students in Nashville. I wanna go to college and learn things that'll help people get along better.

Ruth: (*Smiling*.) Tamika, if there's one thing that I've learned since we moved from that old apartment, it's that you just got to put your mind to the test. No one's telling me that I gotta clean some white ladies' houses no more. And look at your daddy. He moved his way up from being a limo driver to managin' all the other drivers . . . now you go run and get yourself ready for school. (*After taking a few more bites of oatmeal, Tamika exits to bedroom*.)

Walter: (*In a hushed tone.*) Ruth, I know that 'Mika's a smart girl, but we ain't got enough money to send her to college. You both just big dreamers. And I don't know if I like the idea of her wantin' to go be like those students in Nashville. She be our little girl.

Ruth: (Nodding her head) Yes, Walter Lee, she's our little girl – but little girls grow up. They all grow up.

#### Curtain

## SCENE 2

The light of the afternoon sun has fallen upon the house. Ruth, having changed out of her work clothes, now dons a housecoat. She is sitting on the couch, paging through a magazine, when Tamika is heard bursting through the kitchen door. Muffled sobs can be heard echoing from the kitchen. Soon, Tamika appears in the living room.

Ruth: (Tossing the magazine on the table, she immediately begins talking to Tamika.) Baby, baby! What's wrong . . . why the tears? Are you sick? Did you have a bad day at school? (She

begins softly rubbing Tamika's back.)

Tamika: (Still crying, she sits in silence, trying to calm down. After a few moments, they both sit down on the couch, and Tamika begins sharing her story with Ruth.) Oh, mama. We were talkin' about the Emmett Till book in school today and I said that someday I wanna be like those students in Nashville. (Her sobs start increasing once again.)

Ruth: (Continuing to rub Tamika's back, Ruth waits for Tamika to finish her story.) What then, 'Mika? What happened when you told your class that?

Tamika: (*Taking a deep breath, she prepares to finish her story.*) Well, no one even said anything during class, but then after school, on my way home, Joanie Star from down the street started yelling at me. She kept sayin' Emmett Till got himself in trouble for talkin' dirty to that white woman. (*Choking up a bit.*) She told me I could never be like the people in Nashville 'cause her daddy told her little black girls don't belong in school.

Ruth: (*In a strong, yet comforting voice.*) Tamika, let me tell you somethin' very important. When your daddy, Grandma, and I decided to move to this neighborhood some white man, name Mr. Lindner, tried to pay us money not to move here. But, Tamika, we didn't give into him. We knew he was just tryin' to keep blacks out of this neighborhood. We stood up for what we believed was right. We stood up for what we knew we deserved. (*Looking Tamika straight in the eye.*) You deserve respect 'Mika. I don't want no one to ever try to tell you any differently. You understand?

Tamika: (Wiping her eyes.) Yeah, Mama, I guess.

Ruth: (Giving Tamika a kiss on the cheek, Ruth gets up from the couch and starts walking towards the kitchen.) Now, I'm going to go get started on dinner. Why don't you take a little rest on the couch before dinner. (Ruth leaves the room, heading to the kitchen to begin dinner. She is heard moving around the kitchen, gathering supplies. The clanking and closing of cabinets and movement of pots and pans can be faintly heard coming from the kitchen. In the living room, Tamika lies on the couch flipping through a book she has taken out of her school bag. Suddenly, a scuttle can be heard and seen outside the picture window.)

(Coming from the outside is the voice of Joanie Star. Joanie is the white eleven-year-old neighbor of the Younger's. Several other white children also scuttle around the window.)

Joanie: (Joanie has a very whiny, bratty tone of voice. She sounds snotty and spoiled.) Little black girl thinks she's so smart. She thinks she's going to go to Nashville and change the world. My daddy said no little blacks belong anywhere except the kitchen or cleaning the white people's

houses. (The children begin laughing at Joanie and pointing inside at Tamika. Tamika gets up off the couch to go see what is causing the commotion. As she is walking across the room, half of a brick comes crashing through the picture window. Glass shatters everywhere, and Tamika falls to the ground in a state of shock. The rock does miss hitting her; however, out of fear, she begins crying again. The children run off.) <sup>14</sup>

Ruth: (Screaming loudly from the kitchen.) MIKA, BABY, MIKA. WHAT ON EARTH?! (Entering the living room, Ruth notices her child lying on the floor with the shards of glass surrounding her. Trying to hold back the tears, she leans over to pick Tamika up out of the glass when Walter Lee enters the living room, apparently just arriving home from work.)

Walter: (Very upset, Walter heads straight for Ruth and Tamika, picking up the child and setting her on the couch.) Ruth, 'Mika, what the hell is going on?

Ruth: (Very angry.) Ignorance, Walter Lee. That's what's goin' on. Children made fun of Tamika after school today, and I think they were the kids who threw that (pointing to the rock.) through the window. Thank God Tamika's okay, but we are going to go over to the Star's house and have a little discussion with them. (Walter wears an expression of hurt and anger on his face. He picks up Tamika and places her in his lap. Hugging Tamika, he replies to Ruth's statement).

Walter: (Nodding his head.) We'll call tomorrow, Ruth. You're right. We can't let this go.

Curtain

ACT 2

SCENE 1

Time: 1967, the middle of the night.

Place: Same as the first act.

At rise: The house of the Youngers is slightly different. The same furniture exists, but it may be moved around a bit. The scene opens during the middle of the night, so the house is dark. A soft spotlight shines on Tamika, asleep at the kitchen table. A copy of W.E.B. DuBois Souls of the

<u>Black Folk</u>, <sup>15</sup> along with several crumpled pieces of notebook paper, lie on the table next to Tamika. A sealed envelope rests between the pages of the book. Tamika has matured into a tall, lean young woman. Ruth enters the kitchen, appearing curious as to why Tamika is sleeping at the table.

Ruth: (After turning on the light in the kitchen, she begins lightly tapping Tamika on the shoulder.) Tamika, baby, Tamika. Why you sleeping in the kitchen? Come on, now, why don't you head to your room. Look's like you've done enough homework for tonight.

Tamika: (Slowly waking up, she answers sleepily.) Oh, hi Mama. I wasn't studying. I was just out here finishing something up and reading a little. I couldn't sleep.

Ruth: (Sitting down next to Tamika.) Couldn't sleep? Somethin' on your mind baby?

Tamika: (*Motioning to the letters.*) Mama, see all of these letters strewn about here. Well.... well, they're all scholarship essays. Actually, (*pulling the envelope from the book*), here's the final one. (*Pauses.*) Mama, I know Daddy wants me to go to school near here, but this essay . . . this essay is for Howard. <sup>16</sup>

Ruth: (Nodding.) For Howard University, 'Mika?

Tamika: Yes, Mama. The essay's for Howard University. Howard University in Washington, D. C. But, I've been sitting out here, reading and thinking. I really don't think I'm going to send it. I started thinking about how you and Daddy have helped me so much, and I just don't see how'd it be fair for me to go far from home.

Ruth: (*Placing her hands on top of Tamika's hands.*) 'Mika, you know we always wanted what's best for you. We want to see you grab good things that come your way. Why Howard? Everything I read about that school right now talks about the problems they been having there.

Tamika: (*Eagerly nodding*.) Exactly, Mama. That's just it. Things are changing at Howard. Students are challenging the old ways of the school. I want to be part of the change. I want to help make the change. (*Pauses*.) But even so, I would never disobey you and Daddy to jump into something like that.

Ruth: (*Not quite sure what to say.*) 'Mika, it's late. Why don't we leave this mess for the morning. You go get some sleep now. (*Leans over to hug her daughter.*) Don't worry about Howard or your daddy. We'll talk more about this later. Okay, baby?

Tamika: (Kissing her mother on the cheek.) Thanks for listening, Mama. 'Night. (Exit Tamika.)

Ruth: (Begins straightening out the items on the kitchen table. After some thought, she removes the envelope from the book and stuffs it into the pocket of her robe. Turning off the light in the kitchen, she exits.)

#### Curtain

#### SCENE 2

About one month after the nighttime discussion, the scene opens in mid-afternoon. Again, the lighting reflects the dimmer light of late afternoon. Ruth and Walter are in the kitchen discussing the Tamika matter as the curtain rises; however, they cannot be seen, only heard. Walter has aged somewhat over the last six years and is wearing a dress shirt and pants, having just arrived home from work. The focus is on the hallway next to the kitchen, where Tamika stands.

Ruth: (In a very serious tone) Walter Lee, I need to talk to you 'bout a phone call I received at school today.

Walter: (*Paging through the newspaper lying in front of him on the kitchen table*). What's that Ruth? What'd you say?

Ruth: (*Growing frustrated*.) Walter Lee, Tamika got accepted to Howard University. They're going to pay her way through.

Walter: (*Dropping the paper, he answers her in a shocked tone.*) Ruth, did you just say Tamika's goin' to Howard? I said there's no way she's livin' that far from home.

Ruth: (Shaking her head, she begins speaking in a very calm, rational tone.) Walter Lee, imagine if we hadn't taken a chance with buying this house. 'Magine if we'd accepted that cash from Lindner. You'd never have had the courage to change jobs. I know I'd still be cleanin' houses if we weren't livin' here. Don't you see, baby, 'Mika needs to do the same. She needs to take some chances.

Walter: (Frustrated.) But Ruth, we different. We're adults. 'Mika's only a child.

Ruth: Walter Lee, there ain't a good reason you can give me for that child to stay here. She told me that she wants to go there and be part of the changes. She wants to grow, Walter Lee. We need to let her do that. (As Ruth is finishing this statement, Tamika enters. She heads straight for her father.)

Tamika: (*In a determined voice*.) Daddy, I wasn't going to send that letter to Howard. Actually, I didn't send it. Mama, you sent it, didn't you? (*Ruth nods*.) I can't tell you I how feel right now knowing I can be part of Howard University. Both you and Mama have made me who I am today, and the person I am wants to go to Washington D.C. (*Walter Lee, seeing the excitement in his daughter's eyes, begins nodding his head in agreement*.)

Walter: (*Slowly*). 'Mika, I'm still not convinced 'bout this, but maybe you and your Mama are right. Maybe you're ready to go.

Ruth: (*In a determined voice*.) Tamika, I trust you, baby. I know you'll be part of something. Part of something real big. Respect your dreams, child. Respect your dreams or they'll dry out like raisins.

Curtain

### **Endnotes**

- This title, in my eyes, is supposed to conjure up an image different from that of a raisin drying out in the sun. The title of my play is meant to suggest a new beginning and another chance. The words of my title come from a quote by Anne de Lenclos in *Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul*, which reads "Today a new sun rises for me; everything lives, everything is animated, everything seems to speak to me of my passion, everything invites me to cherish it . . ." (23). In the spring semester of my junior year, I enrolled in a class entitled The Civil Rights Movement; this class greatly increased both my knowledge and awareness about the many aspects of the movement. In addition, I feel that my views on feminism have matured since the writing of this play's original draft; moreover, my mind has continued to open and develop through my various experiences as a college student. I hope to use this increased awareness to achieve my goals of deepening the conflict and strengthening my characters (Canfield 195).
- Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, one of my favorite plays, serves as the main source of inspiration for this drama that I am attempting to create. *A Raisin in the Sun* was Hansberry's first play and was an immediate Broadway success (Malpede 163). *Raisin* also earned Hansberry the New York Drama Critics' Award for the 1958-1959 season (Malpede 163). Along with the success of the actual play, this dramatic work also "establish[ed] her as the most prominent woman playwright in the country" (Malpede 163). Hansberry was troubled, however, by the label of "Negro" in connection to her writing. According to the foreword of her autobiography, "Nothing ever said about her, for example, more amused or alternately struck such sparks of wrath from her than the notion that she was 'a writer who happened to be a Negro. (An early, admiring interviewer . . . intended that misquote as a compliment; there was a hot exchange of letters concerning it, but the designation lingered because it was . . . what most Americans were only to eager to hear)" (Hansberry xxiv).
- This cast list appears in a similar fashion to that in *A Raisin of the Sun*. In *Raisin*, Hansberry placed the character sketches within the text of the play, as opposed to with the cast list. As I attempt to imitate Hansberry's style, I will also place my character sketches within the text.

- 4 Ruth Younger was a character from Hansberry's *Raisin*.
- Walter Lee Younger was a character from Hansberry's *Raisin*.
- Tamika Younger is a character from my imagination.
- Joanie Star is also a character from my imagination.
- This page, continuing in my endeavor to emulate the style of Lorraine Hansberry, corresponds to a similar plan in *Raisin*. The setting of this play occurs in Clybourne Park, the neighborhood where the Younger family moved to at the end of *Raisin*. The neighborhood is primarily white and the location also relates to a particular situation from Hansberry's life. Stay tuned . . .
- The Younger's "new" house, the one that I have "created," stands in great contrast to the apartment the family lived in during *Raisin*. In her stage directions for "Raisin," Hansberry describes the apartment living room as an area "that would be a comfortable and well-ordered room if it were not for a number of indestructible contradictions to this state of being" (Hansberry 23). I tried to create a very bright, open space with this new house. With all the natural light in the new house, it differs greatly from "the sole natural light the family may enjoy in the course of a day [that] is only that which fights its way through this little window" (Hansberry 24). The bright, optimistic nature of the house is set in contrast to the malevolence of society.
- Although Ruth cleaned houses in *Raisin* and did not have a job in my first draft of this play, I have decided to make her a school secretary. In revising this play, I am attempting to give Ruth more substance. Her job as a school secretary displays that she has taken pride in her abilities.
- Tamika! She is the "daughter" not only from my imagination but also the daughter of Walter Lee and Ruth. Ruth was pregnant at the end of *Raisin*, and I decided she deserved a daughter. Tamika is also a slightly altered version of a young Lorraine Hansberry. According to biographer Anne Cheney, Hansberry was a "fat, bookish . . . girl" (2). As a child, Hansberry was very observant and an outsider. As Cheney explains, though, these observant ways of Hansberry greatly benefited her as a writer. Here, in *Today*, young Tamika possesses these emotional and physical traits of a young Lorraine. I'd like to mention Tamika is the namesake for a special high school friend of mine.
- In *Raisin*, Walter Lee was a very gruff, pessimistic individual. He constantly felt sorry for himself because of both his job and his status in society. A constantly happy Walter Lee was at the center of my first play; however, in an attempt to strengthen my other characters, I allowed Walter to grow more slowly during this revision. In addition, he now owns the limousine service, as opposed to simply serving as a driver, as he did in *Raisin*.
- As I mentioned, I was enrolled in a Civil Rights class last year, and I really had a strong desire to incorporate some of my knowledge from that class into this play. The story of Emmett

Till fit well into the context of my play because, as stated, he hailed from the Southside of Chicago – the place where my play is set. According to *Voices of Freedom*, "In the forty years since World War I began, Chicago's black population had grown up from some forty thousand to half a million. Many blacks had moved up from the South, seeking jobs and a better way of life. Of those, 75 percent hailed from Mississippi. Emmett Till was part of the emigrant community and was closing the circle that summer, traveling back to his family's home place" (Hampton 2).

- According to Cheney, Lorraine and her sister "went inside to the living room, and a brick came crashing through the window" (4). Although Hansberry was not hurt, Cheney explains that the brick nearly missed hitting and killing her. Many critics say that this incident may have provided "the germ for *A Raisin in the Sun*" (Cheney 4).
- I have decided to allow Tamika to read W.E.B. DuBois simply because he was a good friend of the Hansberry family (Cheney 4). "Langston Hughes, Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, Duke Ellington, Paul Robeson, and other luminaries" often visited the Hansberry family (Cheney 2).
- From 1967-1968, the students at Howard University protested the school's traditional method of teaching about black culture. Students held sit-ins and the notion of "black is beautiful" swept across campus. Because of the many changes occurring at Howard, I decided it was the perfect school to have Tamika pursue. I feel the changes at the school reflect the transformations occurring in the Younger household (Hampton 74).
- As I have attempted to do throughout this entire play, I have once again tried to imitate Hansberry's style of *Raisin*. According to Karen Malpede, "Hansberry's ability to create not one central character but a network of many compelling personalities allowed her to end up, always on the side of freedom and hope" (164). Freedom and hope are the exact qualities that I feel complete the play. No one knows if Tamika's college experience will be successful. No one knows what the future holds with the Younger's house; however, an overwhelming feeling of hope is sparked by the closing of the play . . . at least in this playwright's eyes!

# **Annotated Bibliography**

Scene one: A Day in the Life of the Annotated Bibliography.

The setting is a small college library. The stale smell of old books fills the room, and the soft whispers of procrastinating college students quietly echo throughout the library. A table, completely covered with notebook paper, pencils, binders, and a yellow book, sits in the center of the stage. With no time to spare, Cassie, a strawberry-blond senior digs through the piles. Her annotated bibliography and play are due.

Searching for sources, she did not realize they would come alive for her – just as soon as she read them, that is.

Adams, Michael. "Lorraine Hansberry." The Dictionary of Literary Biography.

Ed. M. Thomas Hester. Vol. 26. Detroit: Gale Research, Inc., 1992.

• Cassie: Where on earth will I ever find a good overview source for this research paper? Suddenly the DLB jumps off the shelf into her hands.

DLB (proudly): I am here to serve you!

Sits down and reads the book.

Cassie: Wow. The DLB was a great overview source that provided me with tons of facts about Lorraine Hansberry's life. Not only did it have a picture, but also short criticisms of her plays and facts about her life. This book was definitely a great jumping off point for my final research paper.

Canfield, Jack. <u>Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul</u>. Deerfield Beach: Health Communications, Inc., 1996.

• Lying in bed late one night, Cassie stresses about how she will write her play.

Cassie: Inspiration... I need inspiration.

Suddenly her bolster knocks her in the head, and "Chicken Soup" lands in her hands.

Book: I am here to inspire you, complete with quotes, stories and more.

Cassie: Oh, thank you. You have just provided me with a title for my play.

Cheney, Anne. Lorraine Hansberry. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984.

• Cassie: (Wandering about the library): I really, really need a good source for finding out the inside scoop on Hansberry's life.

Book: I am here to save your day!

Cassie: Thank you so much. Not only do you include a well-organized time line of Hansberry's life, but you are filled with little anecdotes about her life. These really help me reach a more personal level in my research.

Hampton, Henry, ed. <u>Voices of Freedom</u>. New York: Bantam Books, 1990.

• Cassie: (Digging through her backpack): My Civil Rights book. I can't believe I still have this thing in here. Maybe I can use it for this play.

*Book:* Cassie, open me up right this second. I will provide a great deal of inspiration for you to help strengthen the plot. I am filled with oral histories from those who were connected with the Civil Rights Movement.

Hansberry, Lorraine. A Raisin in the Sun. New York: Vintage Books, 1958.

• As Cassie sifts through her piles once again, she finds an actual play written by Hansberry

and recalls reading it earlier in the semester.

*Play*: I'm what makes Hansberry who she is. I am the product of her life and her imagination. For this reason, I am probably the most useful source you have when it comes to figuring out what exactly Hansberry wrote about. I am the product.

Cassie: Yes...now, I remember. I absolutely loved you. Especially after reading some criticisms about you, I really do feel like you allow me to better understand who Hansberry is.

Hansberry, Lorraine. <u>To Be Young, Gifted and Black</u>. New York: Vintage Books, 1969.<sup>2</sup>

• Leaning over to book that dropped on the floor, she discovers this book.

**Book:** I am Hansberry's autobiography. Not only do I provide background on her life, but I also offer unique tidbits from her plays.

Cassie: I really think that you can help me discover an insight into Hansberry's unique writing style. Thank you!

Malpede, Karen. "Lorraine Hansberry: An Introduction." <u>Women in Theatre</u>. New York: Limelight Editions, 1983. 163-174.

• Book: Although I am just another criticism, I offer you actual letters written by Hansberry that deal with her plays.

Cassie: I know...I am so happy I found you. I really like reading the actual letters written by Hansberry because then I can actually see how she felt about what she wrote. It's like reading Hansberry's criticisms of herself. You are definitely an insightful source.

# **Erosion by Celia Venhuizen**

If I take off my socks,
I want my feet to be purple.
Just for today, repeat
the dark grains
of sand on the Massachusetts beach.

Added after 2000 revision.

Added after 2000 revision.

I walked miles of lavender sand into the ridges of callus and wrinkles of denim. My uncle spoke of how seaweed

grows green in youth and then bruises darkly past age. His hands rubbed a damp leaf with course white sand until the grass was gone

and the tiny amethysts scattered onto my toes.
I spotted something that grew into a starfish as we got closer.
Labeled rare, with

five points, he picked up the corpse. He told the elegy of mutated six, seven-point stars cut and tossed back by fishermen.

In my hand, it was a souvenir. My uncle remembered the yards of beach lost to ceaseless waves and development. The houses darkened

the fog on either side of the walled beach. The long planks patiently absorbed salt and sand upping the property values

with each shade deeper.
The nearer the beach,
the higher the price, and machines
blew the sand out to sea.

In Las Vegas

## While he spoke, I held out

my small perfection and his eyes looked into the fog. Lost in the rush of the water, I screamed when the starfish sucked on my palm.

## My Father's Vegas Showgirl by Peggy Lucas

my father's new girlfriend
blended in with neon lights
flashing from the Mirage.
Her painted face melted into the reflection
of the slot machines,
her black beaded jeans sparkled
over her three-inch heels.
Her wrinkled face was much too old
for her age and her hair was like teased
truffles of bleached curls crowned on top
of her head. Tanned to leather, her hand embraced
mine, and all I could say
was "Nice to meet you."

I think of my home and my mother, alone in the kitchen amidst the toaster crumbs and cooking sherry. She tucks a naturally curly strand of brown hair behind her ear. Wearing plain blue jeans and an extra-large Okoboji sweat shirt she bought in 1982, she fixes pot roast and mashed potatoes. Her milk-and-cookies smile welcomes me into her arms, mirroring who I will become.

As my father's show girl's pumps sink into the plush orange carpet of the swanky lounge, I smooth my blue jeans and finger my own brown curly hair. I resent this leggy blonde, towering over me, smoking her cigarettes one after the other and talking of her love for Chardonnay and her disgust for buffets.

## dead hearts roll over by Peggy Lucas

I sink into the left side of the double bed, my body indented into the springboard mattress. there is no weight beside me to balance my tired shape. the wind dances outside with branches and leaves, like lovers beneath a blanket of singing breeze. stillness seeps through my closed eyelids until I see the blackness and feel the emptiness of the room and the bed.

the door cringes as it is opened—

despising the presence
now tiptoeing
through the doorway.
slouching under
the covers,
he slips
a relieved sigh
for my closed eyes
and still body.
suddenly a choking perfume
permeates the air,
stinging my nostrils
and deadening my heart.
all I can do not to cry
out is to

roll over.

## Dishes by William Ryan

Janet shakes the pregnancy test in her right hand and glances at her watch. She slips the plastic stick back into the holder on the edge of the sink. It balances precariously on the cracked and yellowing porcelain, between the soap dish and plastic toothbrush cup. She rereads the side of the box: *Mix the two cups. Shake well. Wait 10-15 minutes*.

The small bathroom is filled with steam, but the warmth is escaping quickly, through the poorly insulated walls and into the cold, December evening. She reaches up and wipes condensation from the mirror, leaving a film of water on the tips of her thin fingers. She brushes her thick, brown hair, hard at first, wincing as the plastic brush rips through knots. The exhaust fan above the shower clamors, drowning out the Knicks' game that blares from a television in an upstairs apartment.

She glances down at the little window in the pregnancy test again. *Blue line for positive, white for negative*. It's still empty. She sighs and returns to her after shower activity. She pulls her hair back tightly into a ponytail, smoothing out the tiny wrinkles that have recently developed on her forehead. She likes to wear her hair this way. It stays out of her face, and it makes her look younger, like when she was in college, when she and David first met. He always said he liked when she wore her hair up, that it showed off her shoulders and neck.

Now she only wears it this way at night, at work, in a little diner in the Fordham neighborhood of the Bronx. She thinks that sometimes it helps her get better tips, with men at least. God knows they need all the help they can get, David and her. Maybe now more than ever.

She straightens her white uniform and a timer sounds in the kitchen. She looks at the pregnancy test one more time before sliding her wedding ring onto a pruned finger. Still nothing. On her way out of the bathroom she shuts off the light, and a Santa Claus night-light shines faintly against the darkness outside.

The smell from the kitchen floats down the hall as she walks. Pot roast is one of her specialties, and David's favorite. She had gotten up early today, at about two, just to get to the store and get it in the oven on time.

She hasn't made a pot roast in months. David says that it is too much, too expensive. More food than two people need, he always says. Ever since he stopped working at night to spend more time preparing for classes, their food budget has tightened. Him teaching high school part time and her waiting tables doesn't afford them too many luxuries. But he loves it just the same, and certainly he will understand tonight. After all, she thinks, it's a special night. He has a meeting with a professor at the University after school, and if all goes right he'll finally get started on his masters and even get the inside track on a college job.

The kitchen is warm with the smell from the oven. She turns the dial above the stove to "off" and opens the door. The light pops on and heat floods out, welcome against the cold air that creeps in through the windows above the sink. Her face lifts from the waves of heat, and she sees flakes of snow dancing against the windows. Seconds later the flash of yellow lights hit the window and a city plow rumbles down the street, grinding and scraping at the potholed pavement. She checks the roast, poking at a thick piece of meat to be sure that it's done. The fork slides easily into the stringy beef, and she shuts the oven.

Their kitchen is too small, an apartment kitchen in an old brownstone building, with antique white paint on the walls. About four feet of counter space stretches along one wall, wedged between the white stove and a single-welled sink. It's practically a hallway, just wide enough to accommodate a small Formica table with two matching chairs. Room for a third, she thinks, but then somebody would have to move every time the door opened.

The table had been her mother's. It was in her parent's kitchen when she was a child. Janet remembered it being much bigger, with a board in the middle to fit the whole family and three more chairs. Her mother always had flowers on the table: daisies, geraniums, or sometimes a haphazard collection of wildflowers from the field behind their house upstate. The scent mingled with the aromas of frying hamburgers and boiling sweet corn from her mother's stove.

After her mother died, David and Janet took the table because they needed a new one for their apartment. The two of them carried it up five flights of stairs that day, because the elevator was broken. It was hot that day, so hot the whole city smelled like rotting garbage and they had to take shower after shower just to get to sleep. She remembers taking the extra board and chairs, thinking they would need them some day, when they started a family. After David finished his master's, then he would get out of teaching high school and get a job doing what he really wanted: teaching college. Later they could move out of the city, and into a house. Then they could start a family: when there was enough room. When there was money so she didn't have to work nights anymore. Then they could start a life.

Now she wonders where the chairs could be. Maybe they got left behind the last time they moved. That's probably what happened, they accidentally got lost in the shuffle. Anyway, a new table couldn't be that expensive. She had seen one at a thrift store early today. A nice wooden one, nothing fancy, but with four beautiful chairs, high-backed and ornately carved. She put it on hold, hoping that maybe they could go pick it up tomorrow. He doesn't have school and it would be nice to spend a Saturday together. They haven't done that in a long time.

Above the table hangs a clock. It reads 6:30. David should be home soon, she thinks. She moves back to the stove and takes the lid off of a pot of mashed potatoes. Beads of condensation drop onto the counter before she sets the lid down. She stirs the potatoes rapidly and notices thick veins that stand out in her forearm with the exertion. Voices echo from below, and somewhere in the building, she's not exactly sure where, a baby cries. She smiles and puts the silver lid back on the potatoes.

She looks down the dark hallway at the bathroom. The night-light casts a dull glow onto the wooden floor of the otherwise dark hallway. She steps toward the light and a twinge of excitement grows in her belly.

As she crosses the kitchen towards the hallway, she hears a key working inside the lock to the door and stops. She listens to the key jiggle for a moment, working its way into the lock before it slides home with a click. The golden bolt on the inside turns slowly and the door pops open before being stopped by the chain.

Janet reaches up and slides the chain out. The door swings wide before bumping the table lightly, shaking the two place settings. Cold air from the hallway rushes in, bringing with it the smell of stale cigarette smoke.

David stands in the hallway and stomps his feet loudly on the mat just outside the door. Pieces of gray and brown snow bounce from his shoes and land on the dark carpet of the hall. He brushes flakes from his arms, smearing the already melting snow into his wool sweater.

"Come on," Janet says. "Come inside."

He steps through the door, over another welcome mat, and his feet land with a wet squeak on the linoleum. His round face is flushed, splotches of red coloring the space between his abundant freckles. The tip of his nose is bright red, and his nostrils glisten with moisture driven out by the cold wind. Flakes of snow are stuck in his thick red hair, even in his eyebrows. Janet smiles and reaches a hand up to wipe them out.

"You look like a big snowman, a big redheaded snowman."

David pulls away without responding and moves across the kitchen. He yanks the sweater over his head and tosses it into the living room before shaking his head, sending drops of water and wet snow across the kitchen.

"I'm so sick of this weather."

"Aw, come on," Janet responds. "We need some snow. It won't feel like Christmas without snow." She swings the door shut and then pushes it in with her hip.

"Easy for you to say, sitting in this apartment all day. Try walking home through it."

"Don't forget that I have to go out tonight, too, David."

He just looks at her, slumps down into one of the kitchen chairs and crosses his legs. His thick fingers begin work on the snow-crusted laces of his boots. A puddle develops on the floor beneath his feet as drops of melting snow gather.

"How was school? What did Dr. Jeffries say?" She moves back to the counter and opens a loaf of French bread. She slices it thickly, and places each slice in a wicker basket lined with a napkin.

"Not the best."

She waits for a moment, expecting more to follow. Nothing. "Why not, what happened."

"Nothing in particular," he says. "Some days are just bad." He finishes removing both shoes and places them neatly in a corner. He rubs his feet, massaging warmth into them. "I think I need new boots."

She nods her head and opens the oven. She slides out the pot roast, steam swirling above the pan. She carries the dish to the table and places it in between the two plates. She returns to the stove for the mashed potatoes and the bread, and begins to sit down.

"Could you grab the milk before you sit down?" David says.

"Sure." She opens the refrigerator and brings the plastic container to the table. David has already heaped his plate full of pot roast and is scooping potatoes onto the little space that is left. She sits down across from him.

"Didn't we have pot roast last week?" he asks.

"No, I don't think so," she grabs a piece of bread from the basket, tearing pieces off and balling them between her fingers. "Something bad happen at school?"

He swallows quickly and gulps his milk before responding. "Nothing in particular. The kids are always a pain this time of year."

"Getting pretty uninterested?"

"Yeah . . . They're looking forward to Christmas break. Not doing any work. Kids can be really lazy and it annoys the hell out of me. Pass the bread."

She hands the wicker basket over to him. "Well, teaching there is only temporary, right? College students will definitely be more involved."

"Yeah," he says, without looking up from his plate.

"Didn't you have to meet with Dr. Jeffries over at the University today?" she asks. "How did that go?"

He tears a piece of bread in half and looks up at her. "Oh, yeah . . . I didn't make it over to see him. I'll have to call tonight and reschedule no big deal."

"Oh." She looks down at her stomach for a moment, and then reaches for another piece of bread. "I went to the supermarket today. It was a nice afternoon. Bright. I had to wear sunglasses because the sun reflected off the snow so much. It's strange how sometimes the sun seems brighter in the winter than it does in the summer. Anyways, I walked there, but then on the way home I took the D-train because I had a couple bags and my legs were tired. It was cold too, really windy. Besides, I like sitting in the subway. It's neat to watch all the people, don't you think?"

"I've never really thought about it," he says.

"Well, I have," she responds, smiling. "I love to look at them all. So many different people, from all over the city. Sometimes I make up stories for them in my head, you know, invent their lives. It passes the time. Anyways, today there was this little boy. Probably no more than six, with a knit Yankees hat pulled down so low I wonder how he was able to see. He was sitting across from me, his legs dangling above the ground. He was all by himself. I couldn't believe it, a little boy like that all by himself, no parents. I almost asked him if he needed help, but then he got up and got off at 183rd street."

"A pickpocket," David says, cutting her off.

"What?"

"He was probably a pickpocket," he says again. "It's a good thing you didn't say anything. While you talked to him another one would've come up behind you and taken your purse. That's how those kids work. They just distract you and take your money. Nobody suspects it because they're kids, but that's how they get away with it."

He takes the napkin out of his lap and settles back in his chair, rubbing his belly the way he does when he's full.

"I never thought of that," she says.

"Well, you should have. I know you haven't lived here as long as me, but you should know how to watch out for yourself. You're lucky that kid didn't run off with your wallet."

"That's a pretty sad way to look at the world, guarding yourself; even from the children."

"Well, it's just reality."

She stares at him for a moment. The color has gone out of his face, and his skin looks almost yellow in the florescent light. Tiny wrinkles branch out from the corner of his eyes. His head is pushed back, accentuating a developing double chin. A dark shadow lingers on his cheek, a spot he missed while shaving.

"What?" he asks, breaking the silence. "What are you staring at?"

"Nothing. David, I was thinking that maybe tomorrow we could go to that thrift store down on the Grand Concourse. I was there the other day, just passing by, and I stopped in. Anyways, they had a nice little table. It was cheap. Wood, oak I think, with four nice chairs. I asked the woman to hold it for me and I thought that maybe we could head down there tomorrow and pick it up."

"What's wrong with this one?" he asks, motioning towards the table.

"We lost the boards and the extra chairs for it."

"Why do we need more chairs? Anyways, this table hardly fits the way it is."

"I just thought that maybe it would be nice to have the option, you know if we had company or something."

"Janet, now's not the time. Money's so tight right now we should limit it to things we really need. Besides, I kind of wanted to spend tomorrow relaxing. It's been a long week."

"Yeah," she says. "It has."

He gets up, carrying his plate with him, and scrapes the gravy and bits of potato into the

garbage can below the sink. He continues clearing the table, lifting dishes and each time exposing more of the gray surface. He works quickly, putting the food in the refrigerator and stacking their plates neatly next to the sink. Janet hands him her plate and turns on the water.

She holds her hand under the stream until it gets hot, and plugs the drain. She waits next to the sink and watches the water line slowly creep up the side. Steam hovers above the hot water and the jars in the refrigerator clink together as David opens and closes it. She turns off the water and reaches in with the tips of her fingers. She jerks them out quickly, burned by the heat.

"I'm gonna finish getting ready real quick while this water cools," she says. He nods at her, bent over the table and wiping off drops of gravy and breadcrumbs with a dishrag.

She moves away from the kitchen and walks down the hall to get her jacket. She stops by the bathroom and looks in. The pregnancy test still sits on the sink, barely visible in the red glow of the night-light. She switches on the overhead light and walks inside, away from the smell of the kitchen. She picks up the plastic stick, breathing once before looking at it. *Blue for positive*, white for negative. In the bright light a white line stands out.

She drops the test into the garbage next to the sink and shuts off the light. She walks through the hall and into the kitchen. The table and counters are clean and all the food is put away. Only the dishes remain, waiting for her to finish her half of the after dinner clean-up. David has moved into the living room, blue light from the television flickers in the otherwise dark room.

"I'm going to work," she says. She pauses and looks at empty water in the sink, steam rising and fading into the cold air. "You can do the rest."

# A Snag in the Fall of All Things by Andrew Neuendorf

The seven days rose and sank slowly.

Time loafed so well that it seemed everything was unfolding with the precision of a brilliant plan.

And then, I can only guess, something skipped

like a heartbeat after the flash of teeth and eyes inside the shadows of a pine. Suddenly confusion settled from above, wet leaves raining down the trees, a steady stream

rolling and folding over itself. But isn't this the way, I say but don't believe, this current of thought and circumstance always wrapping around itself in constant change, the deer lapping its waters

and keeping its clues curled inside a thin tongue?

I don't feel like waiting for that slim hope.
I'll never be direct and instinctual
like the brown mouse scrambling for the safety of his hole.

# The Present of the Present by Andrew Neuendorf

Impatience, the slow motion of mold exploding on bread, is the open sore of your days.

What are you waiting for

with the door half-propped, spotting ankles and socks while the visitor knocks?

But once again, it's a delivery, another box to stack with the others, another chance

to count your worth in bar codes and serial numbers, tracking packages with silent waves and lasers.

The sandwich is no good.

You've waited too long

and that freshness is gone.

We often forget the best dates arise and expire in an instant, blinking when we turn our heads

to what we think are footsteps. The furnace is knocking again. It sounds like pangs in the muffler of a fading car.

What were you waiting for?

Whatever was lost was lost so smoothly that it doesn't matter anymore.

# Where the Change of Season Comes From by Andrew Neuendorf

The lake at the foot of the mountain evaporates slowly. Rain will come

months from now. One day, the shell of a turtle will emerge from a cluster of lilies

and spring will gust and rush in heaves through the grass around our feet. But now, everything

settles. It is the time when what is low and drying must end and what is eternal must be observed.

So you walk away from the accident without turning your head, your back bleeding glass, passing the tortoise slowly,

wanting the world to read your shell and tell you what the pentagonal patterns say:

Something of change, a little remorse, but also the clear current of a self-contained river, burrowing the land and spilling over rocks,

wandering from the source, dissolving to gas and allowing the knowledge of being, like the seasons, to pass.

# **Pressures by Erich Haught**

Early, before she leaves for work, my wife stands over my side of the bed and pushes my shoulder. "I'm going now," she says.

"What?" I ask, keeping my eyes closed.

"I'm leaving," she says. "I'm going to work. They're coming to do the driveway today. Keep an eye on them — you know, if you're not too busy." She laughs a little.

"Okay," I say. "Sure."

"Calvin," she begins, and then just stands there. I open my eyes. I see her face silhouetted against the closet door. "What are you doing today? Are you just going to sit around?"

"No," I say. "Maybe I'll plant some bushes or something."

"Fine," she says, annoyed. "I'm taking the check book." She sticks up a finger like she's keeping tally. "I'm putting the garden tools in my trunk." She plants her right hand on her hip. "Any other ambitions?"

I roll over and face the wall, with much ruffling of sheets. "You made your point," I say. I listen for her answer, but don't hear anything. When I roll back over, she's gone.

It's about eleven-thirty. The new driveway is going in. I'm standing in the living room, watching out the window. A man in dirty jeans and a sleeveless white tee-shirt is compacting some gravel. The machine he's using makes a sound like two people flexing a sheet of tin. I walk to the window and take a look. The skin on his neck is vibrating. The house shakes as he gets closer. I hear the cups in the kitchen tingling together. A photo of my wife's family falls over. Outside, another man is kneeling to the side and pounding something with a hammer.

I'm hungry, so I go to the kitchen and open the refrigerator. One shelf is completely filled with strawberry yogurt. A sack of muffins and a carton of eggs sit on the shelf below. I can't eat this stuff. I look down and notice a bowl. I peel back the aluminum foil. Salad. "No food," I say out loud and quickly look around, half expecting my wife to pipe up with some remark.

No decent food? I think. Things like this can be solved. I head for the desk. In the drawer where we usually keep the checkbook, a Post-It note says, "Not until you get a job!" I imagine my wife's voice reading it, then crumple it up and shove the drawer closed with my knee.

In the bedroom, I hear the compactor stop outside. I head to the window. The guy is now doing something by the garage with a shovel. The air conditioner comes on and the vents by the wall start blowing. I stand for a moment over one and let the air bloat my shirt. Then I do what I came in there to do. I pull the sock drawer out of my dresser and sit down on the bed with it, taking out some money I have stashed in there. Carefully, I slide it into my shirt pocket and fasten the button. I grab my keys off a doily.

I slip the key into the ignition and start my car. I tap the garage door opener that's clipped to the visor. The door jerks up and an angle of sunlight slowly spreads over the trunk. When the car idles down, I put it in reverse and ease up on the brake. I look into the rearview mirror. In miniature, behind my car, one of the guys is standing there waving his hands at me. His mouth is open, his eyes are wide, and the tendons in his neck are sticking out. I jab the brake and the man stops waving his arms. I wait a few seconds, then shift into drive and ease forward again. When I stop, the man holds up both hands, looks up, and shakes his head, like he's thanking god or something. I close the garage door.

Outside, I try to pass him quickly. "Hey, Mr. Reynolds," he says.

I freeze and say, "Yeah?"

- "If you need your car, we can put some boards up for ya."
- "Thanks," I say. "I'll just walk."
- "It's no big a deal, if you want."
- "Thanks, really. I'm just getting a few things at the store."
- "In that case," he says. "I need to ask you something." He nods, indicating that it's about the driveway.
  - "I'm not the one to ask," I say.
  - "Oh," he says, seeming confused.
  - "This is my wife's thing," I say.
- "Well," he says. "We need to know if you want the approach concaved or flat." He points to the sides of the curb. "We can't set up the forms out here until we know. She say anything about that to you?"
  - "She never says anything to me," I say.

He laughs a little.

- "Call her," I say. I offer to give him the number.
- "Hold on," he says. I follow him to his truck. He takes out a cellular phone and enters the numbers on the keypad as I tell them to him. Each time he presses a button, the phone makes a tone. "Okay," he says after he's got it. "Thanks," he says. He hits a button and puts the phone up to his face. I turn and look over the driveway and then decide to go. As I start down the sidewalk, I hear him talking and then chuckling in little spurts.

The supermarket's about five blocks away. When I'm almost there, I realize I have to cross the highway. I watch until the right side clears and run to the cement divider, and then watch for the left lane to clear and run across to the other side. Then I walk through a small field and a parking lot. The automatic doors spread as I enter.

I take one of those yellow shopping baskets from a stack by a cork bulletin board and head through the fresh produce section. Down the soda aisle, I get a two-liter of root beer. I stop by the candy and pick up two huge bars of milk chocolate. In the frozen foods, I take my time picking out the perfect pizza, a supreme with self-rising crust. I head for the checkout aisle.

While I'm waiting for a lady to write out a check, I look at the covers of several tabloids. On one, an ape is running for president. The picture shows the ape at a debate with another guy, who I assume is somebody else who's also running for president. On another, the headline reads, "You'll Burn in Scorching Weather Hell." The picture is of a bearded old man pointing forward reflectively. Then the belt starts to move and I look up. The lady writing the check is gone. I step up to the little podium with a credit card scanner on it.

"Savers card?" asks the cashier, whose name tag says, "Hope."

- -"No," I say, feeling around my pants. I hinge my head to the side and say, "I didn't bring my wallet."
- "Oh," she says like she's not used to hearing that. She takes out a paper bag and puts in the root beer. "Do you want me to hold your stuff while you run out and get it?"
  - "I walked here," I say.

She laughs. "Nobody walks here," she says.

"Five blocks," I say, shaking my head.

She begins to put the rest of my stuff in the bag. The pizza won't quite fit so she takes the root beer out and pushes the bag together some. Then she puts the pizza in.

"Cross the highway?" she asks.

I nod. "Almost died," I say.

"Nine eighty-one," she says. I hand her a ten from my pocket. She punches that in, the drawer pops open, and she hands me change. "Here's your receipt," she says, after it prints up.

"You keep that," I say, grabbing the bag from the counter. She lets it fall into a small trashcan under the register.

In the parking lot, I stop in the garden section that has been set up for the summer. There's a little dome-like green house, plants up on boards, and a row of bagged mulches. I set my sack on a picnic table and walk around. The potted plants look healthy. The dirt in them is moist and deep brown like they have been recently watered. I go and retrieve a cart, put my groceries in it and set in two small pines from the perennial section. Then I set a bag of pine bark mulch on the shelf underneath.

Back inside the store, I choose the same checkout lady because her lane is empty. She takes a small scanner gun and comes around by the cart. She says, "I hope you went and got your car." She looks up and smiles at me.

After a minute, I say, "I'll tell you what. Let's just have one of these pines."

"You don't want the other one? Or the bag of mulch?"

"I guess not," I say.

She goes back around to the register and begins to void the things.

"Receipt?" she asks.

"Nope," I say.

"I thought so," she says.

My wife's car is parked in front of the house. The men are sitting under a tree with two small coolers resting next to them. They look up when I pass. I enter the garage through the side door. I set the pine down by my car and the bag of groceries on a bench with running shoes on it.

I walk through the living room to the kitchen, pause, and listen. I hear the shower running. I walk back to the garage to get the groceries. The two chocolate bars are at the bottom of the sack. I place them in my car, under the seat. Back in the kitchen, I put the root beer in the refrigerator. I set the pizza on the counter. Then I fold up the bag and put it where we keep them under the sink.

On the back of the pizza, it says to turn the over to 375. I reach up and turn the dial. A small red light comes on. Then I open the box and rip the pizza out of the plastic. Some cheese falls on the counter top. I cup my hand and scrape it into the box. I place the pizza on a cookie sheet and slide it in the oven. Then I take the box and the plastic to the garage and put them in the trashcan. When I come back inside, my wife is standing in the living room, drying her hair with

a towel. She's wearing a blue bathrobe. She turns and says, "Where were you?" She stops drying her hair.

"I went for a walk," I say, and without waiting for a comment, I go to the window and look at the driveway. The men have started working. A long two-by-four is placed across the forms, spanning the width of the drive, and the two of them seem to be gauging their work with it. One of them holds a level. I put my hands on my hips. When I turn around, she's drying her hair again. "What are you doing home so early?" I ask her.

She rolls her eyes and says, "I got fired today." She laughs. Then she gets serious gain. "I had to come home to look at the approach," she says. She points to the front window. "I didn't want them screwing it up or asking you anything about it."

"I didn't tell them anything," I plead. "I told them to call you."

"I know," she says. "That was good. You were a good husband. I'm proud." She throws the towel at my head. I catch it. "Take that to the hamper, will ya?"

"When are you going back?"

"Tomorrow. I took the rest of the day off."

"What are you going to do here?"

"I'm taking a nap, if that's all right."

I take the towel, which is damp in places, and put it in the hamper in the bathroom. It smells like shampoo in there. The mirror is still fogged in the center from her shower. I push aside the knitted shower curtain and the plastic liner and look in the stall. Everything is damp. The sunflower shaped soap my wife uses has small brown hairs embedded on its surface. As I go back into the kitchen, I see her peeking in the oven. She closes it and turns and sees me. "Pizza, huh?" she says.

"Yep," I say, going for a glass in the cupboard.

"Can I have a slice?" She leans back against the counter, crosses her legs, and looks down at her toes.

"Sure," I say, taking the glass down.

"Hey," she says. She looks up at me. Her face is shiny from the lotion she puts on after a shower. "Was that in the freezer? I mean we had that here, right? You didn't get it somewhere?"

"My car is blocked," I say. I press the ice dispenser on the refrigerator and let several ice cubes fall into my glass, and then begin to fill it with water.

"I heard about that," she says, over the sound of the tap. She smiles and then looks at my glass and says, "You don't want root beer?"

"No thanks," I say.

"The oven was on broil, by the way. It has to be on bake to cook a pizza."

"No kidding," I say.

"Yeah," she says, laughing. "No joke."

After pizza, and after putting the plates in the sink, my wife goes to take a nap. I go outside and watch them work on the driveway. The sun is very powerful. The two men have shed their shirts. I watch the muscles in their tanned backs as they move. As I look down at my shoes and

the churned up dirt I'm standing in, I remember the pine.

In the garage, I set the pine bush on the trunk of my car. I walk to the front wall where the shovel usually hangs, but it's gone. So are the spade, the rake, and the hoe. I look around under the bench for a minute, moving a few boxes, and debate going and getting my wife's keys. But the keys, I realize, could be in the bedroom where she's sleeping. I take the bush from the trunk and go outside.

I step up to one of the workers. He has a measuring tape in his hand. The other guy is holding the end of it to the edge of the form. He looks up at me and says, "Hey, Mr. Reynolds."

"Hi," I say. "Are you the one I saw using a shovel earlier?"

"Uhh," he says. "Yeah. Why? You need it?"

"Yeah, if you would."

"Sure," he says. He goes and gets it. I nod and smile at the other guy. He nods back and then looks at the ground.

"Thanks," I say, when he's back with the shovel.

"No problem," he says.

I take the shovel to the edge of the drive, and then bring the bush over from where I had abandoned it. The bush, down against the dirt, looks very green and soft, like a mound of fresh trimmed grass. Stepping back to take a look, I notice how it seems to compliment the mailbox, which has a small painting on it depicting a red bird and a pine tree. The bush looks appropriate in the yard and I can almost see it after it has filled out, how it will brush against the post of the mailbox, and how maybe our mail carrier will notice it from her window as she shoves in our bills. I circle the bush, checking out how it will look when it's planted. I walk back to the bush and move it to the side. I sink my shovel into the ground. I pile the dirt on the grass and dig in again.

In front of me, I have a view of the driveway, and I see that the two-by-four has been removed, and that one of the men is pouring gas into the compactor from a small red container. I watch him pull start it and push it around the drive in a circle. I can hear the sound of the compactor echoing off the garage door. I look to the bedroom window and think I see the curtain settle, as if my wife has been peeking from behind it. I throw down the shovel and stride up to the driveway. When the man completes a circle, he sees me standing there, and indicates this with a slight nod and smile.

"Hey," I yell. He shakes his head and puts up his index finger like he wants me to wait, then reaches down and turns a little knob on the engine. When the sound dies, I say with force, "Do you have to run that thing?" He puts up his index finger again, looking a little annoyed, and takes a small yellow earplug from each ear.

"Sorry," he says. "You need something?"

I say, having lost some of my initial nerve, "I guess I was wondering what this whole thing involves?" He looks a little puzzled, so I add, "With the driveway." I flip my wrist in that direction.

"Ah," he says. "We'll be leveling it the rest of the day," he points behind him to the other

guy, "We should be ready to pour by tomorrow morning, with the way things are moving." He looks at the garage door and then adds, "You'll be able to drive your car on it as early as Friday afternoon." He looks to the other guy; but he just shrugs and smiles.

"And this thing," I say, indicating the compactor. "This is part of it. You can't do the drive without it." I look up at the bedroom window.

"Absolutely," he says. "If we were to pour on, say, just dirt, we'd be back here in three years putting in another."

"God," I say, looking at his face. "We don't want that."

He nods and says, "So, yeah. We've got to compact it." He reaches down and takes hold of the starter, watching to see if I'm through talking.

Back by the mailbox, I take the shovel and clean up the edges of the hole. I place the bush inside and take a few steps back to judge it. The hole seems to be too shallow, I decide. I can see a quarter of the plastic pot over the grass. I take the bush out, setting it beside the hole, and begin to excavate. As I'm lifting a scoop of dirt, I look up and see my wife coming down the lawn. She has on a small pale shirt with cork colored buttons, a pair of khaki shorts, and white shoes. Her hair is trailing behind her. Her face looks sunburned.

"Got some bushes?" she says to me in the tone she often uses on telemarketers. She stops walking and puts her hands on her hips. She stares right at me, squinting in the sun.

"A bush," I say, looking down at it. "One bush."

"Why do you do this to me?" she asks.

"What?" I say.

"Oh," she says, annoyed. "I suppose, what?— Maybe these guys gave you that bush? Hey, maybe you found it in the attic?"

"All right," I say. "I went to the store."

"Oh, really," she says, laughing.

"It's no big deal. I can go to the store if I want to." I squat down and run my hand over the bush.

"Yeah," she says. "If it's no big deal, then why did you lie to me?"

"I didn't lie really," I say looking up at her.

"I asked you if the pizza was in the freezer and you say it was. I buy the groceries. I know if there's a pizza in the house or not. Do you think I'm stupid?" She stomps the ground with her foot for emphasis.

I look at her knee. "Listen," I say. "Don't fool with me."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"How should I know?" I say.

"You said it," she says, shaking her head.

"I say lots of things," I say, standing back up to face her.

"Tell me what you meant by that." She shifts her weight like she's becoming impatient.

"It means I just wanted some pizza, and some damn root beer, and to plant this bush, okay?

That's all. Don't fool with that. Do something else."

"Oh, I think I get it now," she says. "Poor Calvin," she says, mocking me in a childish tone. "Feeling inadequate without a job."

"Is it okay that I do that?" I ask, ignoring her comment. "Can't I have some things?"

"Calvin, honey, I don't care," she says, revoking her tone for something serious and emotional. "Plant your bush. Just don't lie to me. This is an equal partnership, remember? Fifty, fifty."

"Sure," I say, tapping the pot with my foot.

"Actually," she says, looking down. "I wanted to put a flower bed there. I've been considering hiring a landscaper. Why don't you plant your bush out back? Will that be all right? By the air conditioner? We'll go back there in a while and get you a spot for your bush."

"All right," I say. "Fine. What's the difference?"

"Good," she says. "Why don't you come inside now and help me get back to sleep, get out of the sun for a while." She turns to let me pass and watches me set down the shovel. "Where did you get that?" she asks me.

"From them," I say.

"I'll give it back," she says. "You go on inside. I'll be right there." I watch her shorts hike up her thighs as she bends to pick it up, and then head for the door. As I sit in a chair in the living room waiting, I hear the compactor stop. Then the door opens and my wife walks in. "I told them I'd bring them some drinks. It's really hot out. Do you mind if they have some of your root beer?"

"No," I say, looking at the carpet.

"I'll be just a sec," she says, walking past me.

In our room, she pushes back the bedspread and then lies down, pulling the sheet to her chest, sinking her head into the down pillow. The light is soft coming through the curtains over the window, diffused and white, almost like moonlight. I can hear birds singing outside on the tree. She adjusts her head and looks up at me, her eyes sort of wide and innocent. I sit down on the edge of the bed and stare at her legs and the tiny pastel flowers on the sheet that covers them. "I'm sorry I lied to you, okay?" I say.

"It's okay," she says.

I lean over her torso and bend down to her head, kissing her lips. She closes her eyes. I kiss both of them very softly. She smiles a little. I kiss her ear, the small lobe, the fuzzy hair that covers it. Then I kiss down her neck, which smells like her soap, over the ridges of her slight Adam's apple, around her firm collarbones, and then, unbuttoning her shirt, begin to descend between her breasts. Her arms flinch at her side. "Okay," she says. "I'm tired."

"No?" I say, looking up at her. I kiss her lips before she can answer.

"Stop," she says, pushing me off.

"Sorry," I say, standing up and adjusting my pants. Then I say, "Get some sleep."

"Hmmm," she says softly, already trying.

I flip the light switch in the garage, memorize the path to my car, and then flip the light off again. The garage goes black as I slowly shut the door. I feel my way along the side of the car, around the trunk and then over the smooth glass, finally discovering the door handle below the trim. When I open it, the dome light comes on. Out past the car, several boxes and a coiled-up hose are suddenly dimly lit. I get inside and pull the door shut carefully, not wanting to make a loud sound. As the dome light goes off, everything goes black again. I reach up and turn on a map-light. Then I find one of the chocolate bars under the seat. Under the thin light beam, I tear the paper wrapper and fold back the gold foil. I break off a small piece and study it for a moment before placing it in my mouth. It's soft. I let it dissolve inside my mouth, swallowing the liquid until the piece disappears. I stare at the volume knob on the radio, shiny chrome, and then a long time at a piece of lint on my pants. Outside, I hear the compactor start up and begin to move around the driveway. I feel the vibrations through the seat. I quickly kill the map-light and reach over and lock all four of the car doors with the button. Then I wrap the chocolate up in the foil, and lower the seat back flat. For a moment I look up at the headliner, but I can't see it, so I give up and close my eyes. After a while, I go to sleep, despite the irritable noise. I think, during a dream, the light came on in the garage and I heard movement, but I kept very still and it went away.

# The Restaurant Business by Cassandra Sloan

I taste salty tears remembering the night in the Baker's Square when no one knew that inside your body you were running a restaurant where the customers went hungry because the waiters and waitresses refused to serve.

Our server rushed, grabbing us extra napkins, taking our orders for healthy slices of French Silk, refilling our half-full glasses of water and soda. As we waited for the sugar feast to arrive, the conversation, sweet and light, filled the fleeting

moments with college memories you and mother shared. I leaned back in the booth, knowing your restaurant would not last because ill-run places shut down. You refused to wear the "going out of business sign" on your sleeve, so the Baker's Square waitress brought you your pie.

Your servers have all quit now. Would our server have aided you if she'd known about the other business deals pending inside you? Would she have filled your glass if she'd seen the picture of you, the one that made you look like a propped-up skeleton?

## Metamorphosis by Cassandra Sloan

# \*In memory of a woman emigrating to Spain

I've missed my fluid rose for eight months and now my soft, swelling torso pulses to the cadence of the waves. I feel my chest hardening as I arch towards an invisible

breath. When the inhale finally fills me, a scream releases from the depths of my body. Startled, he turns, rocking the boat, and becomes my echo as he looks

to the void between my legs. He bawls the word *blood*, *blood*, *blood*. I only plead, *Where's the life?* The final moment of my question is soaked with a spray

of wet salt. I close my eyes as he holds me, knowing the others look away from Africa and search for a view of the new land they pray will be their life change. I know only one word in the Spanish

language, *mariposa*. I force its softness to flow over my tongue as I picture the smooth, quivering wings fluttering. I can feel the blood pouring from me. I allow myself to go unaware, but awake

to feel his arms carrying me. His hard running pounds the land and hurts my head. I can feel the wetness when his hands touch me, and I know I still bleed. He stops running and lifts

me up to a cold, hard wall. The Spanish commands drown his whisper of *get to a hospital. I'm sorry*. A final hoist leaves me at the height of the wall. I play I am cocooned. I imagine this as I make

what I believe will be my deadly descent to the ground. He tried to help. He wanted to save me. He needs to rescue himself. On landing, I release from my shelter, piecing two lives into one butterfly.

## **Climbing Out by Lacianne Schmidt**

It had been like dying, stumbling into that dark cave, where no matter how hard my eyes focused, I could see nothing but black, like the inside of my eyelids when I slept at night. For some time, after I crept down on my rear end, I didn't breathe. Absorbing all that blackness seemed to take the air from my lungs. My chest felt tight, like a rubber band was wrapped in circles around my upper body. Everywhere I moved, whatever I touched, I could feel pimpled rock sear my hands, face, legs. We had come to this field, literally in the middle of nowhere, so our Irish professor, Daragh, could lead us to a small hole in the corner of the fenced-in lot. Our class had laughed when he talked about how dangerous finding this cave was, how we didn't have to go into it, but to be prepared if we did. Out of a group of over thirty, only seven of us would find the bottom of the dark hole Daragh presented us with.

I stood tight to the wall, my full glass of Bulmer's spilling onto my hands, later that night. My foot tapped in rhythm to the guitar singing and crooning by the blind man with long dark hair. He must have been the only show around, ever, because we had danced to his music the night before in the other pub in town. Leaving my tight place by the wall, I slid through a row of locals slumping alongside the filled tables and bar. They nodded as I passed, and then resumed talking about livestock, crops, and the weather. Cycles that were the topic of conversation thousands of miles away in Montezuma, Iowa, as well, only instead of holding pints of Guinness, my old men would be nursing cups of black coffee at the local café or truck stop. I smiled at these men and offered a "how are you doing tonight?" as I passed by.

Moments like those, just passing by a string of people whose faces blend together softly, stick. Now, months later, though the feeling of that weekend remains woven close together, the details are only frayed threads falling onto the floor. I don't know what those men looked like, what their names were, though I was told several times that night. Certainly they told me about their land, their wives, what they were drinking, even if they only uttered a few sentences to me. I don't remember and the reality of that moment is as far gone as the smoke which blew from the lips of many that night.

To get to the ragged mouth of that cave, which looked more like snake hole than the caves I had crept into at home, we had traveled all day, mostly by foot. My morning had started with strong instant coffee and damp clothes. I was in a self-serve house in the country with six other girls, all from the States or Spain. The walls were a deep salmon, turquoise, blue. The woman who rented it out to us revealed that we were the first to have occupancy, the first to emerge in the slim morning light to set self-timers on our cameras and snap a photo of ourselves against the black painted house with yellow shutters.

We weren't given breakfast. "No time, no time, we must get to Roscommon to hear the Bronze Age music," Daragh had insisted, with bits of egg and sausage sticking to his gray-white beard. Despite having "no time," we snuck to the small grocery to try to find film, and maybe some bread. Quickly we discovered how little this town really was: film wasn't sold anywhere and bread? Forget it. Instead, there was a small shelf filled with rows of cookies. I grabbed butter cookies and paid my 89 pence. Before the day was over, and we were finally given a meal late in the afternoon, I would think I was starving. After climbing out of the cave, the cookies would stain my hands human again, the oil from a single one wiping clean the mud caked on my fingers. In awe, I would grab a cookie from the tight pack and hold it before eating it quickly, just to discover the clean spot of pink that would emerge on my hand's tips.

In the pub, I talked to many old men who passed out drinks to all of us like they would have handed out pieces of pink and green candies only ten, fifteen years before. While dancing on the sticky wooden floor to the hollow sound of the blind man with dark glasses, the men with a night's shadow on their faces or untucked country shirts would jump in between us, sliding through the Spanish couples on the floor shouting "Espanola! Espanola!," to try to rub against young thighs and buttocks. One man, his eyes an empty blue, wouldn't leave me alone. His greasy hair stuck in midair as he stumbled around the floor and tried to wrap his hands around my waist. "Another pint! Another pint!," he hollered. "Do you want something?"

No, no thank you, I responded. "Oh, c'mon, let me get you a drink. You haven't had enough yet, eh?"

I could still smile, nod, try to be polite. His buddies rolled their eyes behind his back. I understood the politics of a small town and accepted his offer, hoping that after he tripped across a table full of empty glasses and cigarette wrappers and tried to squeeze through the shoulder-to-shoulder lines of people, that he wouldn't make it back, that he would forget where I had been standing or that I could find someone else to talk to me.

"This, my friends, is the Gateway to Hell. In the ancient times, it was said that it was the Gateway to Hell and the fairies and banshees and so on traveled through here, under the road, to get to Sligo. I will be going into it and it will be dangerous. Very, very dangerous. You may break your leg, your arm, trying to climb into the cave and I won't be able to help you. I have been in here many times and it is very slippery. It's very dangerous, I must warn you. So be very, very, very careful if you go in. But I will go first. Simon, the music!" Daragh commanded. His hands were tucked into the pockets of his long tweed coat and his gray old man's hat was shoved onto his head.

I shifted my feet and looked down at the muddy ground. And snickered. We were in the middle of a patchwork quilt of fields, with no special stitches to mark the way. What we stood in front of was not the Hill of Tara, where each mound of grassy knoll was marked by a small brown sign, the words first in Gaelic, then in English. This, this was just a hole in the side of a ditch in the edge of a field, no bigger than then gaping mouth of a yawning snake stretched across the muddy ground.

In the pub, I spent several early evening hours talking to Miguel. We picked one of the empty tables scattered in front of the bar and I worked to teach him more English. Shorter than I, he wore thin black glasses, a preppy sweater, and cologne. Silly, but that's one of the things I remember most about Miguel...the sweet musk of his cologne. That and how he barely could complete an English sentence then, the first weekend I knew him. For the first few hours of the night, before the blind man's music started, I sat with Miguel and tried to talk. My shoulders strained over the wooden table and my feet kept slipping off the rungs of the stool. Some of the people we were traveling with stared, or at least I thought they stared. *They are looking at me and wondering how I can be talking to a guy.* I twirled a chunk of brown hair in my finger...and kept talking.

I had stopped running by the time we made it here. Just simply stopped, despite getting up early on the Aran Islands, getting lost along the river in Dublin, finding the sea by myself in Dingle, slapping through wet streets in the morning, in the night, through places where I never saw another runner. My hips started to hurt too much; I could feel the muscles yanking at my pelvis through my legs, making them into a long, hitched up shape they weren't supposed to be. Sometimes in the shower, I would lean into the hot water and push my fingers into the dark, knotted muscles, which I could only imagine as craggy, slippery, steep.

We had listened to Bronze Age music for well over an hour by the time we got to the Gates to Hell. Despite the wet, whipping weather, Daragh had tromped us through a long stretch of hole-filled land, set off a gravel road. Our tourist vans were left at the side of the road, tilting between the mashed rock and the ditch. The light paint was dusted with a fine gray color and inside, the vans were so dark, it was difficult to discern if I had left my camera in the seats or not.

Freezing as soon as the outside air brushed my body, I already wondered why in the hell Daragh continually insisted on leading us out into rough ground, muddy tracks and miles of walking in places that had no directive signs. But he wanted to show us sites of Ancient Ireland, and in this weather, we felt it at its most brutal. How else could we have imagined what it was like for the first monks to walk these desolate lands with little clothing and less shelter. They would have struggled to monasteries miles away from civilization, to creep into solid beehive huts, some of which, hundreds upon hundreds of years later, would still not leak a single drop of rain, but would stay pitch black even in the few days of brilliant sun. These people may have known of the Bronze Age music Simon produced on the round mounds of the sacred site of Roscommon. His instruments were replicas of the originals encased in glass at the National Museum in Dublin. Many of them had been pulled from the preserving bogs, like green beans out of a dusty pint jar in a farmhouse cellar. But now, Simon brought all of that to us. His horns

varied in size, and shape, and had no keys or pedals. One was even a piece of old bone from a dead animal I would never know. His favorite one seemed to be a long curved horn that stretched high above his head, reaching to the sun gods. When he blew his air out, the instrument moaned across the inside out air. *Uhhhh...ummmm...ur..ur..ur..ur..ur..aaaooohaa...*ummmmmmmuuhhhhhhhhhhhh...

When Daragh finally slid into the small cave, he did not take off his long coat or his hat. He did manage to find a piece of ragged plastic to lie down on the chocolate mud. Before Daragh left us, Simon started to make his music and a goat popped up onto a rock fence lining the field and the cave entrance. The goat tapped on top of the stones, his little horns bucking the empty air. Daragh's squat, white dry fingers poked towards the animal and his body stiffened, rounded. "The goat, the symbol of the devil!" he cried out and then crab crawled into the cave.

In ruptured words bleeding like a broken scab, Miguel told me about his family in Spain (two brothers, one who was a priest, and a mother), why he came to Ireland (to learn English) and how long it had been since he had taken an English class (high school for about two years; he was now in his mid-20's). He spoke of his living arrangements (an old woman who would only let him use the washer and dryer when she said he could), his work (computers, and he stayed late in the lab or out so he would not have to spend much time in his room) and ways he was trying to learn the language (a pass which allowed him to go to all the movies he wanted for two full weeks). At least this is all that I think we talked about. After an hour or so of this startled conversation, my head zinged with unsaid letters that floated in the air, asking to be pulled down and made into voiced words.

After the cave, we hiked farther into the countryside to find Connemara horses and piles of dung. A small mound would mark another part of ancient Ireland and Daragh would once again speculate what was underneath. Artifacts of jewelry, toothbrushes, and pots? Curled up bones of the dead or sacrificed, long ago invaded by leeches and earthworms poking in and out of the calcified human? Ancient indentations of ritual and fire?

Laughing, we all clamored to the top and watched our shadows lengthen and stretch in the sun, like bubble gum pulled by a fingertip. The black turned to gray, to fuzz, to gray, to black again, all because of a movement of a body or a shift of the light.

Many of my thoughts revolved around Miguel that weekend. The letters I wrote, their words still whisper about how the time I spent with him, trying to talk. We decided to take dance lessons together in Dublin, he promised to see me around the college, and we would go out for coffee sometime. He was trying to learn English and was delighted that anyone would spend so much time talking with him, though getting a single sentence out could take several minutes, or more. Often I switched subjects, from my life to his, just because it was easier for him to speak elementary words than try to listen to me.

In my mind, I thought of him calling around Dublin trying to find a room to let, and people hanging up because his English was so poor. I saw him in an airport in Spain, hugging his mother who would call him everyday in Ireland. *My mother. I worry. She work too...too...the word? Hard? She work too hard.* I heard him speaking his own language in a Spanish bar, club,

while he sipped at a glass of whiskey.

I hadn't intended to go into the cave. No siree, not me. I was not going to go into a hole I couldn't see into with a crazy Irish man. I would never forget our first trip with Daragh. We got caught in a hailstorm in the middle of a stone island, with only a rock fence to protect us, and he had hollered for a flask of whiskey. He was incredulous when he discovered not a one of us had brought any alcohol along.

After Daragh disappeared, the rest of us stood uncertainly for a moment. He was like Alice's Rabbit, just gone. Who knows if he even remembered to carry something like a flashlight with him.

Inside the pub was dark, smoky, a moist gray of a worn out washcloth. And packed with people like no other pub I would find in Ireland. The whole town seemed to have turned out for us, and it was amazing. Some were dressed in heels and pearls, other in a ragged sweater and trousers. Some wore lipstick, hair grease, jewelry. I don't know. I didn't pay that close attention. I was too busy trying to see through the dimness to find their forms, their hands holding pints, their mouths forming words.

Quietly, one of the Spaniards walked to the cave and slid in. Several Americans followed suit, not saying a word, just hiking hoods up a little higher and squealing when the mud pushed inside their fingernails. A German, more Americans, another German. Quickly, they all dropped down like gumballs. The mouth of the cave almost seemed to widen with each person who fell into the darkness.

With each person who became absorbed by black, my coat tightened and warmed my face more to a blotted red. I felt again like the little girl who didn't get picked for the kickball team, left to shuffle cheap shoes in the cracked pavement. Only this time it was my fault; climbing down into that cave required no special invitation from anyone, no long finger pointing into my chest, saying, *I pick you*.

In a year, Mike, my boyfriend, would spend a semester in Spain. He always said he wanted to go to learn the language, learn Spanish; that's why he was going. Sitting in the pub with Miguel, I imagined Mike in a similar situation, only a year from now, his Spanish-English dictionary spread out on the table, dampened by wet glass rings. Only a few days away from home, he would be trying to talk, and I hoped that someone would be trying to listen.

Miguel walked over to me, his hands jammed into his pockets. His head jerked towards the cave. "You go?"

I shook my head no, keeping my eyes on the ground to watch our shadows intermingle. "You?"

"No, no, no, not me. Too...too dark. Small. Not me. No," he said with a sort of smile. He rubbed his shoe into the mud.

Nodding, I looked back at the cave. The murmurs of the people inside sounded like the Irish sea on my early evening runs—soft, rolling, soothing.

Minutes passed. Hours, even. This weekend was daylight's savings time, the chair of the tourist board announced to the pub that he hushed with drunken slurs and a microphone. And

thank you to the students who traveled here to be our guests and see what we have to offer. You stand as the first visitors to the Roscommon center, hopefully loads more will come.

Roscommon should be as great as the Hill of Tara near Dublin. Tonight the clocks spring forward an hour and in honor of that event and our guests, we have a special treat. Please pay attention now for our special music of the Bronze Age!

"Becky, let's do it," I begged, nudging my weekend roommate.

Risks, risks, it was all about risks. What you do, what you don't do; they both define you like a charcoal pencil on a pastel drawing. Make a mark, don't make a mark, either way, you will make a difference.

"Okay, okay. No more talking," she replied, shoving her purse and camera at the nearest person.

We scrambled down to the cave, and I could hardly feel my legs inside my jeans. Only the material, bunching between my thighs, sticking in bent ridges of stitching, seemed real.

"You go first."

No, no I can't. "Okay. Should I just slide down on my butt? We are going to get so muddy." "I know. But just go, Lacey."

And then it was dark. And then it was dark. Dark as black, dark as night. No light. Flashlights broken. Feel in the dark for someone's back. The voices, the voices, echo. Then it was dark. Still it was dark. Keep crawling down. Mud on hands. Mud through clothes. Muddy water dripping down in hair, eyes. Or not. Rock above head. Scrapes, gently. Empty stomach turns inside out. Inside out. Smells like a basement, a cellar, a large hole in the garden. Dark, dark.

The biggest form of trust is to be able to close your eyes, cross your arms and let someone catch you as you fall back. You will look like a tipped domino and fingers will release your fear right before you hit the ground. But, but if you don't trust, you will stop your own fall to stumble forward, stumble back, miss the fingers who were outstretched, waiting to hold you.

I had never done that falling back experiment. Well, maybe once in high school for a team building exercise, but I really didn't know who I was then, or the person who was going to catch me, even though we used to read books together on carpet slabs in kindergarten. It was just a test anyhow, you know. Not just a test about how much you trusted the person behind you, but how much you trusted the person inside of you. Fear rises, like green bile after long hours of vomit. You throw it up, it hits the toilet in long spittles, and stays chunky, stringy, solid. Keep it down and it goes away, fizzles back into the large intestine and settle back into the digestive system, to work for you, not against you.

Out of the crowd of shoulder-to-shoulder people, Simon swung his long horn up to the ceiling. He stretched it out into the pub and the crowd waved down to avoid the instrument. A lad I had just met stepped back and nudged me. "Is this guy for real?"

"You better believe it. We sat through this stuff all morning," I told him, nodding at the glinting horn.

The guy laughed. Ugggggghhhhhh. Umm..ummm...ooohhaaahhooooaaa humm. Um. Um.

*Um Oooeiiaoohhh*. My laughter came out too, tightening my stomach like the bars of a cage. Simon kept playing until he was swinging his Bronze Age instrument around the pub, in a circle, slicing through the air where people once stood.

What can I tell you about the inside of that cave, once we got through the darkness and the two flashlights started to work? We stumbled down steep, shedding rock until finally we found a place we could crouch, then stand. The rock opened up to be a tent pointed meters high above our heads. Water pooled the ground, and another trail in the cave could be reached by climbing up some more rocks and clay. There, the roof slanted down again and we could see very little; Daragh told us that most of that part of the cave had collapsed and would be impassable. Nevertheless, a few of us still climbed up and peered down the way with a small flashlight, looking for something. Nothing moved, except for us, and everything glistened, glittered.

During my layover at the Dublin airport, Miguel came out to visit me, and keep me company. I gave him a gift, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. He waited with me until I walked through the door to the departure gates, and there, he cried. But before all of that, he gave me a photo he had taken that first weekend we had met. Weeks before he had started giving me Spanish lessons, now it was a photo. *You help me learn English. I want to do something for you.* Over big cups of coffee, he passed me the glossy picture, his fingerprint stamped sweetly on the corner. The lines curved, shifted, stopped, a maze that could not be solved, but they led me to the center of the photo. It was a snapshot of me, disappearing into the cave. My coat was still white, my hair clean, my face away from the camera. What I could see was the small dark hole I was lowering myself into, the arch of my body trying to ease itself in. The hole no one would believe I entered, climbed down and discovered beautiful through the clay mud and dripping rock. The Gates to the Underworld.

It had been like being born, coming back out of that cave and into the soft sunlight cast down from the clouds. What I could see was gray and the shadows until I again felt the mud, the silt streaking my face, my hair, my clothes. Already drying, the brown mash of sand, dirt and vegetation crumbled in my fingers. The rest of my companions from inside the cave stumbled through the crowd of students, laughing and waving dirty hands to try to explain what we had just experienced. I laughed, already thinking that words would never adequately tell about how we had sunk so deep into the dark to emerge, chastened by the light, or lack of it. We knew we would never be here again, we would never re-feel the light, the dark. My mouth stayed shut and I reached down and pulled a clump of mud from the earth. The cool Playdoh hardness clung to my hand and I eyed the closest cave explorer. With a whoop, I charged towards her brown-streaked body to smear the mud wherever it would land.

# **Last Harvest by Marianne Rockney**

Children's cheeks, cherry, like the last tomato left dangling from a limp vine—

it snowed too early this year.

Jack O' lanterns blew December's breath through the amateur gardener's wind breaker. She frantically shrouds her plants under a sheet to shelter this tenth of an acre farm, resembling the unborn snow fort sparked in the child's imagination.

Eagerly rooting through the closet, the boy overlooks the ghosts, skeletons, and costumes; he reaches for gloves and a hat. The child, showing last year's growth in a stretched-out snowsuit, now enjoys this seasonal death with every snowball—oblivious to the gardener's trouble.

His mother, inside preparing lunch, disregards the candied apples, slices into the last rescued tomato, and tends to the ripening of her youngest child.

## where she can celebrate/her soul by Peggy Lucas

This choreopoem is based on Ntozake Shange's For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When The Rainbow Is Enuf. The cast consists of 7 women. Each woman is to be unique. She can identify and dress herself as she, or the director, sees fit. This way, each time this play is performed it will be a little different. None of the characters have names; they are identified by numbers. 1

The stage is dark. As Woman #1 begins to speak, a blue light begins to shine upon her—illuminating her.

Woman #1<sup>2</sup>

exploitation of a world of nurture/warmth/truth/ of a story of love exploitation of a woman's world

feelings only that cd<sup>3</sup> be established by a second-class society PMS/"it's her time of the month"/hysterical/crazy myths a man's excuse for bein out of line

Woman #2 shrieks from offstage. she is miserable & marginalized

With each panging word: isolation, mutilation, exploitation, a glaring light illuminates Women #2&3, 4&5, 6&7, respectively. Each woman is frozen in a posed, distressed manner.

Woman #1 this is her story of isolation/mutilation/exploitation

let her live a life/
give a life
where she finds her voice
finds her beauty
finds her peace
finds her soul
in a world of hateful chaos
let discrimination
be replaced
by love

The women come alive.

Woman #2
i cry for equality
Woman #3
i cry for energy
Woman #4
i cry for the chance to be human

Woman #5
i cry for relief
Woman #6
i cry for freedom
Woman #7
i cry for love
Woman #1
i cry so that my daughter won't have to
All women
one voice
one voice
one voice
one voice
one voice

The stage goes dark except for the blue light on Woman #1.

"Love Child" by the Supremes begins to be heard. She begins to dance, and then the music abruptly stops when she collapses to her knees.

She then raises her shoulders and her chin.

Defiantly she speaks the first line—the same tone that all the women take when saying the first line. The rest of the poem is spoken more emotionally.

Woman #1
with no right to choose
his kisses were like chocolate
that intoxicated my soul
i waz 14 that summer
the moonlight scorched our skin as the dew from the grass soothed our existence
he talked me into loving him
he talked me into giving him my sacredness
the man in the moon watched as i cried
and i waz 14 that summer

i woke up to Andy crying my baby boy who has only my memory for a father The stage goes black. Then the blue light illuminates Woman #2 who is standing at another point on the stage. "Jagged Little Pill" by Alanis Morrisette begins to be heard, and she begins to dance along. Again, the music abruptly stops when she collapses to the floor.

i waz 19 with no right to choose
never mind god or religion
in college/where boyz were supposed to love me
but never did
my mother said it's probably time/might as well/part of being a woman/
better safe than sorry
never-mind a Catholic's guilt/a rosary/a penance/a prayer
so a little blue pill every morning for breakfast
a woman liberated
no worries
supposedly a safe guard/but
did i remember?
imprisoned by a little blue pill

The stage goes dark, and once again a blue light illuminates Woman #3. She begins to dance playfully around the stage as she sings a nursery rhyme as if she were a young child. Suddenly the large, ominous shadow of a man is shown reaching out for her. She gasps, and takes steps backward until she crumbles to the ground in fear. The shadow disappears.

i waz 12 with no right to choose alone in the dark
he entered
uninvited
unwanted
but loved
my father
i screamed and waz shushed
i drew and waz ignored
i spoke and waz unheard
my mother ignored me &

Woman #3

the signs until my body showed what my eyes had spoke for 3 years, 6 months and 8 days my mother had always resented the love my father gave to me/ resented or repulsed?

but the doctor made it go away

the love stopped growing with the vacuum/sucking away the nasty secrets but the new hole in my stomach waz not as big as the one in my soul and in the years to come i tried to fill it up with kevinanthonybillyjoeygavinterrancejasonjeffbrenttoreydylanjoshmichaelquinntrevorluke but the emptiness was a massive weight and i waz crushed

> The stage goes black. Woman #4 stands alone in the middle of the stage as a red light illuminates her. Her head is down until she begins her poem.

Woman #4

and i was 5 with no right to choose on becoming a somalian woman everyone knows that there are terrible things between a girl's legs dirty/oversexed/& unmarriageable parts parts of me/parts of me that i need/that i need to be me on becoming a woman i must be married paying the gypsy woman is the greatest expense on a household/ greater than the daughter's expense? but so worth it/

i must be married

it is a mystery to a young girl

it's special/i anxiously await the ceremony

on becoming a woman

on becoming a woman

"your father ran into the gypsy woman/she should be here any day now"

i awoke to darkness and to my mother/i grabbed my blanket and sleepily stumbled/ following my mother who knew/

on becoming a woman

"we'll wait here"/click-click of the gypsy woman's sandals/she was beside me before i saw her in the daybreak

"sit over there"/on a rock/cold/hard/dirty/business

mama positioned me on the rock/she sat behind me & pulled my head against her chest/ her legs strangling my body/i circled my arms around her thighs/a root for an old tree between my teeth/"bite on this"

on becoming a woman

between my legs was the gypsy woman/old/stern/dead eyes/

A woman

razor blade/dried blood on the jagged edge/my world went dark as my mother tied a blindfold over my eyes

the feeling of flesh bein cut away/the sound of the blade sawing back and forth through my skin i tell myself/"don't move/the more i do/the longer the torture"

but my legs quivered & shaked as if they were not really a part of my body

on becoming a woman

i prayed/"please god!/let it be over quickly"

and it was/i passed out

and she was gone when i opened my eyez/but my legz were tied together with strips of cloth binding me from my ankles to my hipz/I cdn't move

i turned my head toward the rock/drenched with blood/as if an animal had been slaughtered there But it waz no animal/it waz me/i waz slaughtered

#### IT WAZ A WOMAN WHO WAZ SLAUGHTERED

pieces of my flesh lay on top/drying in the sun

pieces of a 5 year old child

of a woman

of me

mutilated

"all i knew is that i had been butchered with my mother's permission," 5

There is a pause. Then all the other women process out as Woman #4 continues her poem.

you make me bleed
bleed out my impurities & imperfections
my vulnerabilities & insecurities
fears & lies
my thoughts & ambitions
(yes—a woman has ambitions)

Woman #1
you make me bleed out my faith

Woman #2
you make me bleed out my hurt

Woman #3

you make me bleed out my love

All Women

bleed
bleed
bleed
you make me bleed out my love

Woman #4

blood red

The lights fade. The "second part" of the play begins with the blue light illuminating Woman #5 as the refrain from the song "Love is Blind" by Eve is heard. The woman is dancing to the music.

Woman #5

suicide of the soul/i gave you my best years at 19 we married/true love outta high school me in my size 5 wedding dress/pure as snow/ the dress that is/ and you in yr sunday suit true love?/no/suicide of the soul poppin out babies 6 months later no time for learning who i was/what i liked/what i dreamed for myself no/i waz ricky and katie's mom/tom's wife/angela's neighbor i was no longer me it wazn't long til i grew into a size 16 & you grew sick of me til ricky grew sick of me/til katie grew sick of me/til i grew sick of me nothing i did waz good enough nothing i said waz right in my son's eyes i cd see that he thought i waz a fool/i taught him what a good woman should do/ cook/clean/be submissive/ i taught him a lie

and katie did not understand how i could be fulfilled with no education & just dirty diapers/she

And you/love?/no/not love/soon my "hysterics" were too much/not normal i must be crazy you say/i must be depressed you tell the neighbors/ prozac says the doctor/suicide of the soul say i depression you say/oppression says i out of love?/i say a mistake so now who am i? your wife/ricky & katie's mother/zombie/me? who am i kidding/i didn't have a chance to be me

was so smart/yet she resented me for it/rolled her eyes/she thought i waz a fool

The lights fade on Woman #5. The blue light illuminates Woman # 6 as the refrain from a Smashing Pumpkins song is heard: "For every chemical you trade a piece of your soul, and those you thought you knew do not know you at all."

Woman #6

consumed with bitterness and alienation/limitation and rage/is suicide in itself suicide of the soul there waz a man who told me who i waz and stupidly/i believed him when he no longer loved me/i cd no longer love me either i cd not go on/for i waz alone so alone i stuck my head in a gas oven/i drank chemicals/i slashed my wrists/i took an overdose of Valium/ and i drove my Volvo into the Pacific 7 / suicide of the soul but nothing worked/my pain did not cease/my loneliness did not terminate and stupidly/i believed he waz the only one who cd love me

The stage goes black. A blue light illuminates
Woman # 8 who is in the corner. She looks content and,
perhaps, shy. Then another blue light illuminates
Woman # 7 who is cross-stage from her. She
directs her poem to the audience as if the audience
is her best girl friend. She is vindictive. And with every hateful
thing she says, Woman # 8 shrinks in
insecurity and self-hate.

*Woman # 7* 

until i realized/I cd love me

O my god/did you see what she was wearing today?/
it made her butt look so huge/why would josh even want to date her/
he could do so much better/(like me)
O my god/she is totally gainin weight/I saw her eat that snickers/
what is she thinkin wearing those jeans with those thighs/
maybe I should slip her a laxative into her locker/maybe she would get the hint/
(she laughs)
o my god/didn't she wash her hair today/I mean c'mon/ick/
o well/I guess it just adds to her ensemble/(snicker)/
it kind of goes with that new zit on her nose/that she tried to cover up/
nice try honey (she smiles devilishly)

A school bell rings as if to indicate

the start of a class. Woman #7 walks cross stage past Woman #8 as she heads for her next class.

Woman #7

(*Pleasantly*) O hello there/how are you/i simply love those jeans/and yr hair looks simply fabulous/u must tell me who does it

Without even waiting for any reply, Woman # 7 walks offstage leaving Woman #8 in the spotlight.

Woman #8

suicide of the soul/i am no longer me

i am a slave to what others think/i am a slave to models in the magazine/i am a slave to my jean size/i am a slave to my toilet bowl after every meal

why don't you like me?/why don't i like me

slowly i am dying

dying to be loved

dying to be accepted

dying to be pretty

dying to be thin

it is a form of suicide/not only physical suicide/not only mental suicide

but suicide of my soul<sup>8</sup>

All the other woman are illuminated in the background.

They are in a semi-circle around Woman #8.

Woman #1 is on one of the ends and she steps forward.

Woman #1

why must we do this to ourselves/

why must we do this to each other/

we are all in this together/

we are all sisters/

if we do not have each other in the world/

who can we turn to?

Woman #2

you can turn to me for support

Woman #3

you can turn to me for companionship

Woman #4

you can turn to me for someone to trust

Woman #5

you can turn to me for hope

Woman #6

you can turn to me when you hurt

Woman #7

you can turn to me for understanding

Woman #8

you can turn within yourself for love

Woman #1

it is good to be a woman/

from now on/unveil yr masks/

be yourself/love yourself/love bein a woman

celebrate

All Women

together

together

together

together

Woman #1

celebrate bein a woman/& lovin it 10

#### **Endnotes**

- "Much in the history of *colored girls* contributed to Shange's discovery of the open form. For example, she evidently originally conceived of the women as anonymous entities: 'the women were to be nameless & assume hegemony as dictated by the fullness of their lives' "John Timpane, "'The Poetry of Music: Politics and the Open Form in the Drama of Ntozake Shange,' "Modern American Drama: The Female Canon ed. June Schlueter (Rutherford: Association University Press, Inc., 1990) 201.
- The Woman #1 is like the Lady in Brown in Shange's <u>For Colored Girls...</u> in that she, like the Lady in Brown, is the first one the audience sees and hears and who establishes the play. Jane Splawn, "Change the Joker[r] and slip the yoke': Boal's "Joker" system in Ntozake Shange's *for colored girls...* and *spell #7*, " <u>Modern Drama</u> (Toronto: 1998), 388.
- Shange does not use standard spelling or punctuation in her poems. She says, "I like the idea that letters dance.... I need some visual stimulation, so that reading becomes not just a passive act and more than an intellectual activity, but demands rigorous participation." "She wants her words in print to engage the reader in a kind of struggle, and not be 'whatever you can just ignore.' The spellings, she said, 'reflect language as I hear it. . . The structure is connected to the music I hear beneath the words.' "Also, "'[Shange] feels that as a black performer/playwright/ poet, she has wanted 'to attack deform n maim the language that i was taught to hate myself in. I have to take it apart to the bone.' "Scott Peacock, ed. "Shange, Ntozake 1948—present," Contemporary Authors New Revision Series Vol. 74 (Detroit: Gale Group, 1999) 399.

- This ritual of chanting allows the women to "recover a sense of unity and oneness." Just as Shange focuses upon women of color's experience, my choreopoem focuses on all women's vulnerabilities. And in both cases, by sharing their experiences of vulnerability, it shows how "forming 'a closed tight circle' of community allows them to gain strength" (Splawn 388).
- Based on <u>Desert flower: The Waris Dirie Story</u> <a href="http://www.fgmnetwork.org/articles/">http://www.fgmnetwork.org/articles/</a> Waris.
- Shange on feminist drama: "'societies that usedta throw us away/or sell us/or play with our vaginas' and calls for a new international cultural history in which being born a girl—as well as growing up to be a woman—is cause for celebration" Enoch Brater, ed. "Drama of Black American Women," Feminine Focus: The New Women Playwrights (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 238.
- Like in the beginning of For Colored Girls... where the Lady in Brown confesses "it's funny/it's hysterical...," "[t]he images associated with the word *hysterical* in this passage show the multilayered and interdependent qualities of the 'black girl's' experience [and as far as my choreopoem goes, all girl's experience]: *hysterical* connotes a laughter which has gone out of control, a madness historically—if not accurately—connected with femaleness" Deborah R. Geis, "Distraught Laughter: Monologue in Ntozake Shange's Theater Pieces," Feminine Focus: The New Women Playwrights ed. Enoch Brater (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 211.
- Ntozake Shange attempted suicide in these ways. These attempts seemed to be caused by a "suppression of rage against society limiting her" and because she was "consumed with bitterness and a deep sense of alienation. Elizabeth Brown, "Ntozake Shange" <u>Dictionary of Literary Biography Vol. 38: Afro American Writers After 1955: Dramatists and Prose Writers.</u> Ed. Thadious M. Davis and Trudier Harris (Detroit: Gale Research Company, Book Tower, 1985) 241.
- One way that I perceived Shange's title, <u>For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf</u>, is that the suicide she speaks of is not necessarily physical. It is an internal suicide that says the person is not good enough, pretty enough, or valued enough. It is a suicide of the soul.
- Self-love was the major focus of Shange's For Colored Girls. . .
- The moral of my choreopoem: the bringing of women together and acknowledgement of the strength they derive from each other (Geis 216).

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## **Once Changes Become Clear by Erich Haught**

Microwave pizza again. You can't distinguish the hum of a garage door from a dryer tossing towels, a shower from the water that refuses to drain and floods over your toes. This is life inside. Outside, ice seals the trees like sausages

in the freezer, but you still want a fresh shave, something clearer, like a pumice bar scratching Tupperware, molasses sinking in a mug of coffee, or a small dog begging its way to the fenced backyard. The boy steers his radio-controlled truck under yours parked

by the sidewalk. Watching him is like waiting for return; the peephole is a fisheye lens, curving the world into bushes and gas meters. The only battle is choosing pants and you continue to misjudge a win for a lose, jeans for corduroys, and go out unprepared.

## **Seeking the Source by Erich Haught**

What a disaster life is, like a sinking skate jabbed in the last ice before spring. I cannot see one circuit's connection to the next. All that said, I still move through each day and manage to make mental notes

about badges on cars and fingers sticking to slices of bread; I do what I'm supposed to do. But mostly I'm afraid. People and their questions scare me. I can't say when God was real, but he had one hell of a job in accounting

at Microsoft, in the thick of it, as they say. On his birthday, everyone chipped in on a marble cake. When it rained, he had the best matching slicker and boot set around. But now he's parted. What's left of what was is us and all of the other, the carpet flipped

under the door, and the grill outside. Naturally,

I don't have to accept that. I have every constant moment united with truth to cultivate doubt. But when I get there, above atoms and beyond facsimile, I'll forget again and glide back down.

## An Extension of Mind: Meditations on Poetry By Dave Smith by Cara Lynch

#### Disclaimer:

I have tried to be authentic. These are now the thoughts of Dave Smith. Do not mistake them as my own. When two people become so familiar with each other it is strange how their thoughts mingle. In trying to be Dave Smith I have used some of his phrases. I have noted where the quotes were intentional. As far as possible, I hoped to create poetry that was inspired by Smith, and which attempted to show my understanding of his image and technique.

# Where to go if not to return, Billy?

Today, the eyes of all the watermen are down and their feet clunk on the wood.

Although they do not talk, they know the thoughts of everyone else. It is late October and the night before, Billy Liss had not returned home.

It was no secret that Billy liked the bottle, the round openness of it pressed against his lips.

When the other fishermen would tie up on Saturday nights and head into Lou's for loud music and whores, he would sit on the edge of the dock, with the silver flask of Wild Turkey beside him, dangling his feet over the speckled, black bay.

"That son of a bastard," Jeddie Smith said one Saturday night, looking out of the window reflections of red and yellow lights.

"I told him not to look straight on, <sup>2</sup> but the bitch couldn't help himself. Now look at him. Gone changed just like one of those limp fish."

Against the black sky, he did look like one of those faded,

blue fish with muddied grey eyes; tired from the battle 3 — of rummaging through old wreckage of ships at the bottom, where warped sterns and decks of buried men swayed— and of gasping for oxygen through the silicone surface of

"The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal" thick now with sludge from years of suburbs, with toys, fenders, wine bottles, tampons, skeletons of possums.

I write to Billy Carmine in "An Honest Tub" I write to him because it is his way of life I admire. We had a disagreement when I left Bull Island to go to graduate school. He and his wife, and my wife and I all sat up through the night together, talking about life and change and meaning. Billy was upset that I would be leaving, and intoxicated, we started yelling into the night. Looking past me, into the softening sky, he screamed, "You son of a bitch! Don't you know people are the same everywhere? Why the fuck do you want to go?"

A few summers ago, Billy's father, Peter Liss died. Billy and I had known each other well from teaching together and partying, but I never expected that he would invite me out to bury his father's boat. It was George (Billy's alcoholic brother), Billy and I taking the

Peter Liss for its last ride. I had never been a fisherman, but I guess Billy saw something. When I read at night, I often think of Peter, and of his steadiness on the sea. Heroic. Rugged, passionate, and dignified he was the definition of a hero. Like Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, he was courageous enough to "face the darkness," or like The Wanderer in Anglo-Saxon poetry, he lived above the threshold of survive. 8

Although I use Billy's name in "Where to go if not to return, Billy?" I only wish to invoke the respect I have for him, and the life fishermen lead. I also want to show the relationship that exists between the fisherman and the environment. I can remember the way Billy handled the Peter Liss, steady like his father. Before I left he asked, "Will you ever come back?" I hope he hears I have returned, or rather, that I never left my place. The South is my life. And I am a poet. Southern life is my work, my obligation. 11

## **Visiting the Fishing Spot**

Between the moon and ebb, fishermen look for the place unmoving, where the water shows only murkiness and expanding O's of fish biting through—

A silence like the reconciliation room of God's forgiveness, of Son and Father seeking that place of primary meeting and parting. The water births an enigma, sharp and slippery as life and time combined, where death is as waking as history's ghosts returning

with lure and Smithfield ham, and scissors to cut apart the flesh and mangled lines, strangling the catch

As life is experimentation, so is poetry. We search for meaning and when it seems as though we have found something, we expose it.

"Visiting the Fishing Spot" was inspired by "Night Fishing for Blues." I hope to call up some of the same images; although, it is considerably shorter when compared to "Night Fishing for Blues." It has also moved away from a focus on the racial tensions of the South. Instead, I concentrate on the universal "catch." 13

Yet, I have retained the ghost image of the South, which is intimately related to the Black culture. <sup>14</sup>

I have also chosen to include the persona of the fisherman because he/she is, I guess somewhat obviously, connected to the water and fishing. Again, I can not help but to think of Peter Liss, and his way of life, lonely and content on the sea.

Smithfield ham is Thanksgiving dinner— and common fishing bait. There is something about it that circles and swirls in the water, attracting fish, pulling things and people together. It is like a hunter, a beagle summoning its prey. 16

# **Building a Southern Highway**

Rolling hot tar on gutted dirt

they say they are expanding the highway to transport people
to far off places, beyond the point
where once parallel lines converged in my sight.

The horizon blazes in the west—
blood flooding up from thick fields,
then thinning, until the sky bursts
into miniscule specks of flesh

stretching light over shadows

doused in blue oil, singing

with splintered ropes that hiss in the wind, and still hang, now lodged in the white hearts of wood knots covered over by years of bark and ants scurrying

on forged paths to the eternal ooze

of an agitated wound simultaneously carving out the middle to form a hardened crust.

"Living in the South you realize intensely that life of the past around you." In "Building a Southern Highway" my intention is to tightly fuse the past to the present. It is interesting how personal and universal the image of the rope has been for my poetry. It seems to swing back and forth, retrieving moments from a past so interconnected that I become my youth and my ancestors.

In an earlier poem I have written, "The Tire Hangs in the Woods," I liken the image of the rope and tire to a pendulum, "ticking." It takes me back to adolescence—the girls, fistfights, and parties. 18

In "Building a Southern Highway," I retreat to a farther time. Similar to "Night Fishing for Blues" I want to explore the wound of slavery. The American psyche is still deeply affected by this history, and it seems that the "wound" has never been allowed a proper healing. "In 1862 the Civil War came to stay forever, ripping open that agrarian, and feudal society, and, inch by inch, wheel by wheel, it yielded to mobile Americans." As Bruce Weigl comments on my book of poetry *Cuba Nights*, I am trying to "juxtapose the past to the filth and stink and the modern world." <sup>20</sup>

Again, I am trying to use form and content dependently. And my language is rough, but life is rough and poetry is supposed to be "stoney." This does not mean our "beasthood" overtakes us. "One mark of excellence to be sought in a contemporary poem is the balance of civilization and the beast, of disciplined form and passionate expression."

## Fragmented Pieces and a Stuck Piano Key

The piano is heavy, but my son, you push as hard as you can, and you pound down the keys in a rush and scream like the horn of a train coming or going.

My ears feel the screech and I am suddenly jumping through the mischief of your eyes and coal cars in the railroad yard, where I was once a boy unburying glass marbles for luck and where baseballs rolled.

You laugh higher and higher and I am back, swinging a bat. The ball floats up, arching over everything is slowed in the moment I never thought of growing old, of having children, or writing poems.

All I wanted was uncle to show me how to swing at fast balls, so I could crack them over.
But, he never warned me of trying too hard, and so I swung once, with all my weight

and adolescent muscle tearing into the ball. Before I was able to open my eyes, glass shattered the roundhouse window, and I ran, afraid to see the fragmented pieces.

The room is quiet now, except for the muffled tap of a stuck piano key. Growing angry you look at me and say, "Why won't this piece play?"

Similar to "Roundhouse Voices" I am trying to lapse into my past, playing baseball and "jumping through" railroad cars. Running from the fragmented pieces of the shattered glass, I am bringing sense of identity into question. Unable to comprehend pieces,

brokenness, and a whole exploded, I cannot see myself. Who the hell are you, kid?<sup>22</sup>
In contrast, it is my son, young and innocent who wants to hear, and experience that piece. I thought it peculiar that one piano key, silenced, could distract his seemingly

random pounding of the keys.

Paul Christensen calls recovering wisdom and innocence through youth the puer eternus

—"the eternal boy whom the Greeks worshipped."<sup>23</sup> I agree there is an unattainable truth found in children, but there is also something powerful in being conscious of action; of coming to a recognition, and that is the power of the poet. There is a circular motion of seeking and finding that marks the movement of the poets psyche, and that is what pushes him/her. Simply knowing is not enough. Questioning is our obligation.

#### **Endnotes**

- I am trying to mimic Smith's narrative style. Many critics have claimed that Smith is a storyteller. Philip K. Jason says, "Smith is a brooder, a storyteller, and a moralist" (1064).
- The line in my poem, "I told him not to look straight on" was inspired by the lines in Smith's poem, "Welders," that say, "You look aside . . . you'll see."
- Along with the image of the fisherman, I also tried to incorporate Smith's ability to bring the past into the present (Balkanian 233). I hope the use of "battle" will allow some readers to think about the Civil War, and Southern history.
- The italicized section of this poem is taken directly from Smith's poem, "The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal."
- <sup>5</sup> "An Honest Tub" is an essay by Dave Smith that is both personal and critical. In the original, Smith wrote it for his friend Billy Carmine. Smith reconciles the differences between the lives of the poet and the fisherman.
- Dave Smith, "An Honest Tub," <u>Local Assays</u>, Ed. Dave Smith (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985) 187-202.
- 6 Smith 202.
- 7 190
- 8 188
- 9 202
- Smith has found that his poetry is more authentic when he is in the South, writing about the southern life. It is where he grew up.
- Smith adheres to the notion that everyone has an obligation in life. For him, it is poetry (Suarez, 12).
- Smith has experimented with many forms of poetry, some being more successful than others. In fact, critic Michael True comments "Smith still appears to be a poet in progress" 1031.

- The context of "Night Fishing for Blues" has been explained by critic Philip K. Jason as one that "links the present experience with the long shadow of the Civil War" 3069.
- Jason comments, ". . . the region's historical ghosts drift through the poem, helping to universalize its experience and revealing an unexpected theme" 3069.
- Smith has written a poem titled "Smithfield Ham," dealing with Thanksgiving and aging. However, in some of his fishing poems he uses ham as bait.
- This is a reference to Smith's essay, "Beagling," in which he talks about the circular motion of the poem, and of the relationship between hunter and beagle and hunting. It is the sport of hunting that is artistic, not the kill. Likewise, the ham and people (or fish) work together to form the context of Thanksgiving (or fishing) (Heyen, 302). Hopefully this poem, although heavy, is like "Night Fishing for Blues" in that it is a poem seeking truth. DeMott tells us that Smith believes poetry should be a moral act (254).
- This is almost a direct quote from Smith, found in <u>Local Assays</u> (235).
- Jason 3070; Smith also comments in an interview with Suarez that "Poetry is an act of recovering my own life . . ." (5).
- A direct quote from Smith's essay, "There's a Bird Hung Around My Neck: Observations on Contemporary Southern Poetry" (122).
- 20 Weigl 37.
- In "Part I" of Local Assays, Smith shares his journal of what he believes defines poetry. One element he focuses on is the balance of form and content. The last sentence of the paragraph is a direct quote (15).
- Quote from the poem "Roundhouse Voices." Several images from "Roundhouse Voices" can be found in "Fragmented Pieces and a Stuck Piano Key." And similar to many other Smith poems, I use an ordinary experience to trigger the lapse into adolescence.
- Christensen 156.

#### **Works Cited**

Balakian, Peter. "Heroes of the Spirit: An Interview with Dave Smith." <u>Local Assays</u>, Ed. Dave Smith. Illinois: University of Illinios, 1985. 233-251.

Balakian asks Smith about the characters and images in his (Smith's) poetry. I liked using this essay because of Smith's clear voice. I understood his connection to place and that it is necessary for one to encounter history.

Christensen, Paul. "Malignant Innocence." <u>Parnasus: Poetry in Review 12</u> (Fall/Winter, 1984): 154 182.

I really enjoyed this essay because it provided both a literary context and historical perspective of Smith's poems. I wish I could have elaborated on the *puer eternus*, but that would have been a discussion beyond the scope of this paper. Christensen provided depth and dynamism in his analysis.

DeMott, Robert. "Dave Smith." <u>Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 5, American Poets since World War II, part 2: L-Z.</u> Ed. Donald Greiner. Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1980. 253-262.

This source combined biographical data with critical analysis. I liked how life and work were brought together in this piece.

Jason, Philip. "Dave Smith" <u>Critical Survey of Poetry, Vol. 6</u>. Ed. Frank Macgill. California: Salem Press, 1992. 3063-3071.

Jason writes critically about Smith's poems. I used some of his ideas to understand "Night Fishing for Blues" and "A Tire Hangs in the Woods."

Smith, Dave. "An Honest Tub." <u>Local Assays</u>. Ed. Dave Smith. Illinois: University of Illinois, 1985. 187-202.

A collection of essays by Dave Smith, this source has opened up his psyche for me to see. This collection is a meditation on poetry, especially as Smith reflects on poets that affected his writing (James Wright, Robert Penn Warren, Richard Hugo and others). He explores the meaning of poetry by reacting to the definitions of poetry made by other great and well-known authors, such as Coleridge, Dickinson, and Flannery O'Connor. I used <u>Local Assays</u> as an exploratory source for Smith's poems. Some of my "journal entries" attempted to imitate some of his essays by reflecting on his thoughts as they relate to the poems.

—. "Beagling," <u>The Generation of 2000: Contemporary American Poets</u>. Ed. William Heyen. Princeton: Ontario Review Press, 1984. 312-315.

"Beagling" allowed Smith another outlet for his ideas on poetry and the poet. I like the movement of this piece. It is like hunting, not for the kill, but for the challenge. In addition to Smith's essay, Heyen also provides many poems that I allude to in my journal/essays. For example, "Night Fishing for Blues" and "Roundhouse Voices" are included.

—. The Wick of Memory. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000.

The Wick of Memory is a compilation of Smith's poems written from 1970-2000. To understand his development as a poet I originally sought out the books of poems he had published over the years. However, as it so often happens, after ordering a selection of books I came across this one.

—. "There's a Bird Hung Around My Neck: Observations on Contemporary Southern Poetry." Five Points: A Journal of Literature and Art, 1, (1997): 115-135.

This essay is about Southern Poetry, and the importance of region, or using what you know to construct universal poetry. Of all my sources, "There's a Bird..." gave the most autobiographical information on Smith.

—. "An Interview with Dave Smith." Ernest Suarez, <u>Contemporary Literature</u>, 37, (1996): 349-369.

This is a personal interview that mainly asks Smith's opinions of poetry. The interviewer and Smith discuss the author's themes and style. Similar to <u>Local Assays</u>, I used this source to apply Smith's ideas of poetry to his poems.

True, Michael. "Smith, Dave." <u>Contemporary Poets</u>. Ed. Thomas Riggs. Detroit: St. James Press, 1996. 1029-1031.

True provides an overview of Smith's poetry, showing evidence of Smith's dynamic ability, and his experimentation with form and content.

Weigl, Bruce. "Forms of History and Self in Dave Smith's *Cuba Night*." <u>Poet Lore</u>, 85, Winter, 1990/1991: 37-48.

Weigl's analysis exposes how Dave Smith is affected by racism and modernity. He also includes comment on Smith's romantic style and insight.

## What we talk about when we talk about poetry by Jennifer McCarthy

Our lyric conversations flood the phone. Mixed metaphors and similes abound in phrases filled with words like ode and tone. I smile to hear the vowels and the sound of you, the way your tongue meanders free through syllables and images that I have always felt were more than mean, but be. You make me want to grasp a pen and try to conjure lines Petrarch would have found real. I know precisely how the thoughts about your mind should ring when voiced. It's like you peel the words away, and with them, any doubt. Amid Sappho and Keats, we hope so much for future days of not just speech, but touch.

## when the water grows colder by Jennifer McCarthy

walking along a february coast i paused, and used my boot to smudge his name into the sand. the gesture seemed sufficient penance for my sin of forgetting him.

turning away, i scaled a rock slab that jutted into the ocean, barely clutched by an anchor of stolid land. with woolen arms around my knees i sat, surrounded by rhythmic silence.

the shifting ocean seduced my eyes, luring my thoughts from the shore. irish fog curled around my shoulders and grazed my cheeks, as i smiled at the appeal of a grey horizon.

for a moment, i glanced back at the sand and thought of him waiting in a midwest home. but the water whispered my name in undeniable invitation, and distracted me with blown kisses of icy spray.

i inhaled lungfuls of clean wind and remembered the cozy smoke of last night's pub, crowded with warm bodies and beer. his memory was charred by the heat of brazen eyes over friendly stranger smiles.

the rock's frozen face seeped through my skin when his insistent eyes stormed my reverie. i envied this loose stone, nearly adrift in a shadowy sea. stinging swells numbed the remnants of him in my mind.

as the sky hardened from iron to steel, the water grew colder, and so did i. buttoning my coat, i strode toward the path wrapped in fog.

almost as an afterthought, i noticed the unyielding cycle of frigid waves had washed away his name. humming, i walked up the beach and left the sand behind.

# SNCC & Vietnam: Two Trains Destined to Collide by Brian Kallback

On August 4, 1964, people in the United States woke up in the morning and read about two significant events in their newspaper: the finding of the bodies of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner and the "attack" of U.S. warships in the Gulf of Tonkin by North Vietnamese forces. Seemingly unrelated, these two events ironically happened on the same day. From this day on, the United States increased their forces in Vietnam and the civil rights movement increased their activity in the South.

During the 1960s, the United States was in two conflicts: one at home and one abroad. At home, the United States government was fighting against the civil rights movement, which was fighting for the freedom of African Americans in the United States. Abroad, the United States was fighting the North Vietnamese in Vietnam. The considerable scale of each of these battles led to the inevitable reaction of one conflict to the other. In 1966, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) issued a statement in opposition to the Vietnam War. Why did SNCC oppose the war? Also, what type of criticism did SNCC receive from other civil rights organizations in response to the issuing of their statement? A philosophy of nonviolence, a

general distrust in the governments' motives, sympathy for Third World struggles, and an opposition to the draft led to SNCC's statement of dissatisfaction of the war in Vietnam. Despite the numerous reasons for opposition to the war, the SNCC was isolated by the civil rights community in their opposition to Vietnam.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was formed in 1960, with "the decision of four black college freshmen from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College in

Greensboro to challenge segregation by requesting service at their local Woolworth's counter."

They were denied service, but the movement spread like wildfire throughout the South. The main component of their sit-in protests was the philosophy of nonviolence. Practiced in these sit-ins, nonviolence can be seen as "passively aggressive behavior – stepping over the line and

waiting, rather than exhibiting overtly hostile or revolutionary behavior." Nonviolence, as a philosophy, played a large role in the opposition to the war.

In 1964, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, virtually giving President Lyndon Johnson a "blank check" to carry on a war in Vietnam. He followed this with the introduction of marines to Vietnam in 1965, with the goal of defense of American interests. However, the mission was soon altered, as the number of marines soon escalated. On March 4, 1966, the State Department stated their defense of troops in Vietnam in "The Legality of the United States Participation in the Defense of South Vietnam." This declaration stated that United States troops were needed to defend the American bases, and that use of force, or an armed attack, is essential to the defending of these bases. It also stated that aggression might not be enough. Stokely Carmichael expressed the commonly felt SNCC position that Johnson was "...at this time

carrying on a war in Vietnam which flagrantly violates the life of colored people."5

One of the reasons why SNCC opposed the war in Vietnam was their philosophy of nonviolence. Nonviolence is a philosophy that has been successful in bringing down the walls of segregation and oppression for many years. Mostly responsible for the popularization of the nonviolent tactics, Mahatma Gandhi offered many SNCC members a basis from which to use their nonviolent actions. Gandhi believed that "…[nonviolence] is the greatest and the activist force in the world. One cannot be passively nonviolent." Many historians often see Martin Luther King, Jr. as the spokesperson for the civil rights movement. He felt that nonviolence

should be a way of life, not just a tactic. Though not a member of SNCC, their philosophies were closely tied in the early 1960s. In his "Letter From Birmingham City Jail," King states that "...[nonviolence] seeks to create a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue." He also said that nonviolence needs to create a tension that will "help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to

the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood." John Lewis, one of the leaders of SNCC, stated that anybody who believed in the nonviolent philosophy "was welcome to march

and ride and sit in with us." He also said, "warfare of any kind contradicts my position of nonviolence – my belief that the means must be consistent with the goal and that the goal must always be, ultimately, the creation of the Blessed Community."

SNCC represented the philosophy of nonviolence through sit-ins, freedom rides, and marches. Their cause was mainly fighting against the segregation of the South and fighting for the attainment of rights as regular United States citizens. However, many SNCC members had to reflect on their beliefs when the United States began escalating their involvement in Vietnam. Nonviolence, as a philosophy, was strictly against violence, so SNCC members began to individually speak out against the war. John Lewis said that he was "...against war, war of any kind." Many debates about the war took place during the meetings of SNCC, and many felt

they had no option other than to condemn the war due to their commitment to nonviolence.  $^{12}$ 

In addition to the philosophy of nonviolence, many members of SNCC were suspicious of the motives of the federal government's involvement in the war. Why would the United States involve itself in a war when it had problems at home that needed to be fixed? John Lewis expressed this feeling when addressing a group of students and faculty at Winston-Salem State College on February 8, 1966. "Money spent in Vietnam could be better used in the United States," he said. "America could use her resources, might, and energy for a really all-out war on poverty here. We should have as much concern for fighting ghettos in this nation as we do

fighting communism in Vietnam." <sup>13</sup> Many Americans felt this opinion during this time, and SNCC tried to strengthen that feeling through pamphlets and fliers. One such pamphlet said, "... the money that should be spent in the fight for a decent life for black people in America is being spent to destroy the lives of Vietnamese people. The four million that was cut from the D.C.

'War on Poverty' this year is just about the cost of fighting one hour of the war on Vietnam." 14 SNCC used those statements to attempt to turn the tide of public opinion toward the anti-war idea.

Along with this notion that the money and resources of the United States could be used on the home front was the feeling that the United States was becoming an imperialist nation. SNCC believed that by fighting a war in Vietnam, the United States was simply exhibiting her imperialist goals. In their statement of opposition to the war from January 6, 1966, SNCC stated,

We question, then, the ability and even the desire of the United States government to guarantee free elections abroad. We believe that our country's cry of "preserve freedom in the world" is a hypocritical mask behind which it squashes liberation movements which are not bound, and refuse to be bound, by the expediencies of United States cold war policies. <sup>15</sup>

Some in SNCC went even further in their controversial rhetoric concerning United States imperialism. When Stokely Carmichael arrived in Hanoi to meet with the leaders of North Vietnam, SNCC issued a statement concerning his visit. As a justification of his visit to North

Vietnam, SNCC said that they had a right to visit. The statement explained:

As long as imperialism is raping, plundering and murdering in Asia, Africa and Latin America, it is our responsibility to meet with anyone who is fighting against this. Imperialism is international. The United States thinks that it has the right to interfere in the affairs of any country in the world. We therefore reserve the right to meet with the leaders of those countries who are fighting against this intrusion. <sup>16</sup>

Despite SNCC's view that America was an imperialist power, they didn't have much evidence from the government that would justify their case. However, on June 30, 1964, Henry Cabot Lodge, Ambassador to Vietnam, commented on the American involvement in Vietnam by saying it signified a direct move towards an imperialist policy. <sup>17</sup> If America's involvement in Vietnam signified a move towards imperialism, then it was definitely evidence for the war becoming immoral.

People from SNCC also began getting support from other groups adding to their arsenal of evidence that the United States government committed illegal acts through its involvement in the war. The Lawyers Committee on American Policy Towards Vietnam, which kept in close contact with Carmichael, presented evidence in their paper that the United States was in violation of its own laws by involving themselves in a war with Vietnam. They stated that the power to wage war was inherently a power of the legislative branch, and not the executive. 18 Lyndon Johnson had never formally asked Congress for a Declaration of War, so he was illegally overstepping his boundaries in Vietnam. William Standard, a lawyer in the New York bar, responded to reports that the United States intervention in Vietnam was legal. He said in his article that the defense of South Vietnam is not an action that is legal by the United Nations Charter, as South Vietnam is not a member of the United Nations. The Charter states that an armed defense is only applicable in the defense of a member country. 19 Therefore, the United States actions were not legal. Despite this evidence, Bertrand Russell, SNCC's representative at the War Crimes Tribunal, said that 'by examining and exposing American war crimes in Vietnam, we do no more than ask to be counted on the side of those who are struggling in a just In other words, they can accuse the United States of illegality in their motives in Vietnam, but they cannot do much to punish the United States or stop the involvement.

The war in Vietnam was not only being protested simply on the lack of practical issues, but also on the lack of moral grounds. This war was quickly becoming unjust, and many SNCC members began to speak out on that aspect of the movement. Lewis did not agree with the reasoning behind a just war, as the philosophy of nonviolence did not account for any type of war. More specifically, he said:

Our [American] actions [in Vietnam] were illegal, immoral, and criminal. The wholesale bombing of villages with innocent people being slaughtered, the use of toxic chemicals to defoliate huge sections of forests, measuring victories by body counts – there was nothing

noble or honorable about any of these things. There was nothing that was just. <sup>21</sup>

Many SNCC members felt a connection between the arguments for a just war and Christianity. A woman from Woodstock, Connecticut, wrote to Carmichael, "if the so-called 'Christian' follows the teachings of Jesus – would our government dare drop napalm on the darker-skinned Vietnamese? And if America ever pays for all the evil she has done the American Indian, the Negro, the immigrant and the poor – what a bill she will have to pay."

SNCC members soon began to say that the war in Vietnam was getting to be a case of genocide. On April 15, 1967, Carmichael talked about the two Americas – one built on the principles of the home of the free and brave, and another America built on racism. He said that this America "whose basic policy at home and abroad can only be called genocide...was built on genocide and it continues to wage genocide." Later, in that same speech, he stated, "...we [black Americans] must sustain our declaration of war on the Vietnam War, on racism, on genocide." Going further than Carmichael, H. Rap Brown said that black people were faced with genocide as a result of...the drafting of young blacks to fight in Vietnam. At the War Crimes Tribunal in Copenhagen, where the United States was being put on trial for their actions in Vietnam, Bertrand Russell said that the Vietnamese race have never known peace or freedom in modern times. They have consistently been fighting against either the French or the

[Vietnamese] cannot offer any compromise, for they possess nothing to concede."25

Americans. Therefore, "the war knows no middle course between salvation and genocide...

Along with the philosophical disagreements and the distrust of the federal government, many SNCC members felt sympathy, or a connection, to the struggles of the Vietnamese. They felt a bond to all of mankind who were involved in a struggle. Carmichael summed their position up eloquently in a speech to students at the University of Puerto Rico in 1967. Quoting the poet, John Donne, Carmichael said: "The death of any man diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. Therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls – it tolls for thee." More specifically, a pamphlet released by SNCC entitled, "America is the Black Man's Battlefield," relates the struggle of the Vietnamese to the African Americans in the South. "...The same racist America that has tried to smash the black man's struggle for freedom in the United States has tried to destroy the movement liberation in Vietnam."

The sympathy for the Vietnamese also brought about a connection to the deaths of many civil rights workers and the deaths of the Vietnamese peasants. Bob Moses was one of the earliest SNCC members to speak out against the Vietnam War. He felt that he was a member of the Third World, and that he had a right to speak out against the injustices that America was involved in. At a teach-in on the campus of the University of California-Berkeley in 1965, Moses compared Vietnam with the Southern towns where murderers of civil rights workers and Negroes were not convicted of their crimes. He stated, "you can learn when it is that a society gets

together and plans and executes and allows its members to murder and then go free. And if you learn something about that, then maybe you'll learn something about this country and how it plans and executes murders elsewhere in the world."<sup>28</sup> He said that if people could understand the differing public reactions between the deaths of Rev. James Reeb and Jimmy Jackson, then they could begin to see this country in relation to Vietnam and other Third World countries. <sup>29</sup> In SNCC's official statement on Vietnam, they claim that the murder of Samuel Younge in January 1966 is no different than the murder of the Vietnamese, as both were fighting for the rights guaranteed them by law. <sup>30</sup> SNCC wanted to show the people of America that the killings occurring in Vietnam had a connection to those in the South. Courtland Cox was quoted in *The Nation* as saying,

We have to convince the country that civil rights workers get killed in the South because the government has a certain attitude toward killing in Vietnam. The concept that it is all right to kill an 'enemy' affects the morality of the country so that people can be murdered here. 31

Many critics of the war in Vietnam said that it was simply a war for American economic interests. A form of imperialism, referred to above, was the wealth of the United States. SNCC members began to see that if the United States people were to have sympathy for the Vietnamese people, they would need to see what it was like to live in a Third World country. Carmichael, in *The Nationalist* newspaper, said that if,

...you want to create a revolution inside of the United States where white working class people will fight, you must first reduce their economic security. You must make them economically insecure. It is an inevitable part of our struggle that we join with the third world. It is inevitable that we join the Vietnamese. 32

While Carmichael was talking about bringing the American people down, Julius Lester was giving examples of the economics of the United States in Vietnam. In his paper entitled, "On Vietnam," he said that the largest United States base in Vietnam, Cam Ranh Bay, used to be a fisherman village. However, it is on its way to becoming one of the leading industrial centers in

Asia. SNCC members generally took both arguments into consideration, and simply argued that Vietnam was a war waged to increase the wealth of the United States. One pamphlet from SNCC issued in 1965 shows that view as it states, "...no one has the right to ask us to risk our

lives and kill other colored people...in Vietnam, so that the white Americans can get richer."34

The main push from SNCC involving the Vietnam War was the opposition to the draft. Many SNCC members spoke out vehemently about the need for the conscription. One reason for the SNCC opposition to the draft was the fact that African Americans were being drafted at unequal numbers than their Caucasian counterparts. SNCC's pamphlet, "America is the Black Man's

Battlefield," states that a black man has twice as great a chance of being drafted after a white man has. <sup>35</sup> Of the African Americans who are drafted, the official SNCC statement on Vietnam suggests that sixty percent of the draftees are black. <sup>36</sup> After they had been drafted, African Americans also suffered a greater fatality rate than other races. Carmichael told a group of students at the Citizens Conference on Education in 1968, that forty percent of the casualties in Vietnam are of the black race. <sup>37</sup> This disproportionality among the draftees and casualty figures provided enough evidence that the conscription process was not in favor of the African Americans. Opponents of SNCC argued that students simply needed to get a deferment. However, may of the deferment opportunities that white students were offered were just simply not available for blacks.

There was a distinct difference when receiving a draft card between white, middle-class students and members of SNCC. While the white, middle-class students could apply for deferments, many SNCC workers generally lacked the deferments available to college students. <sup>38</sup> John Lewis spoke on this issue in the fall of 1965, when he said, "...most of our people didn't qualify for student deferments – they were out of or away from college – and they certainly couldn't expect their draft boards, most of them in the South, to give them a sympathetic ear." One SNCC member, Bob Moses, changed his name to Bob Parris as a result of his inability to gain a deferment. SNCC members could not gain a deferment due to the fact that many of them were not in school, and a majority of whites did not see their work as that which should be eligible for a deferment. However, SNCC members felt that they were needed in the South. Deferments were needed to keep the African Americans in the South. One SNCC pamphlet summed it up when it proclaimed,

Your son, brother, husband or sweetheart must not be slaughtered in the front lines first, while Whites stay home to work and study! Our boys are not responsible for social injustices in America! It is not their fault that they cannot find better employment! It is not their fault that they cannot attend the places of better education!<sup>41</sup>

Deferments were needed, since the African Americans were defending the rights given by the Bill of Rights, when they did not enjoy the benefits of those rights. One black soldier on his way to Vietnam expressed the reality of the situation after a fellow African American soldier made some jokes about the racial composition of their company. He said that sadly,

...it is no joking matter when black men are exploited, oppressed, and legally murdered and denied the right to participate in the making of their destinies. Only in time of war do Black men suddenly become "citizens" with "duties" to God and country. We are then expected to help put other colored people under the political and economic control of this whitemacracy that they call a democracy.

Another black soldier expressed the same views when he was talking about the injustice of fighting in Vietnam alongside the whites. He states, "…[the injustice] lies in the fact that the black G.I.'s are fighting and dying for the so-called freedom of the South Vietnamese when black people in this country are not yet free." This issue was directly attacked by Stokely Carmichael on "Face the Nation" in June of 1966, when he was telling Martin Agronsky, the interviewer, that there is absolutely no reason why the black man should be fighting in Vietnam when he does not have free elections his own country. They [the black soldiers] did not decide if they wanted to be there or not. 44

Many SNCC members felt the need to serve in the South, as opposed to fighting in Vietnam. Rather than die overseas, some felt that they would rather die on the roads of the South, fighting for the rights in their own country. 45 This feeling of fighting for the rights of people in another country when the fighting should be done in the South was the strongest of the feelings in SNCC at the time. There was no need to go overseas to a country where the goal of the opposition was the same as the goal being fought for in the South. One SNCC Pamphlet, entitled "America is the Black Man's Battleground," says, "...the black men who should be fighting for liberation in America have been hired to kill their colored brothers who are fighting for liberation in A SNCC memo addressed to the entire SNCC staff proposed a motion that would Issue a call for soldiers to refuse to serve in the armed forces, because of Vietnam, and to commit themselves to serve in the struggle for freedom in the South. Their commitment would take the form of signing our draft list, stating that they would be willing to "serve" in the South. Efforts would be made to contact Negro soldiers who have served in the army in Vietnam, to commit themselves to work in the South, i.e., to fight in this country – which they should have been doing all along.<sup>47</sup>

H. Rap Brown went a step further and said that rather than dying for America the black soldiers should be home dying for their mothers.<sup>48</sup>

SNCC members, particularly Carmichael, felt that by participating in the conflict in Vietnam, black soldiers were actually mercenaries. Black soldiers are citizens of the United States fighting for the United States, how could they be mercenaries? Stokely Carmichael was particularly adamant about this point. He strongly believed that since blacks were not fighting for their rights, but to protect white America's interests, they were mercenaries. In a SNCC Pamphlet, entitled "On Black Power," Carmichael was quoted as saying,

We have talked about the wars and soldiers and just what this means. A mercenary is a hired killer and any black man serving in this man's army is a black mercenary, nothing else. A mercenary fights for a country for a price but does not enjoy the rights of the country for which he is fighting. A mercenary will go to Vietnam to fight for free elections for the Vietnamese's, but doesn't have free elections in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia,

Texas, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Washington D.C. 49

On *Meet the Press*, Carmichael extended his opinion by saying that the United States takes these black youths from the ghetto, and tells them that their only chance for a decent living is to join the army, and become a hired killer. Carmichael was not the only person calling the black soldiers mercenaries. A black soldier in Vietnam said that, "as a black man in a white army, he could not help but feel like a black mercenary fighting to maintain a white privileged class rather than for the political freedom of black people."

Along with this feeling of fighting for the white man's rights, it was also a well-supported idea that blacks should not be fighting against their colored brothers. They did not discriminate against any other colors – black or yellow. Carmichael describes this as fighting "our own brothers." He adds during a speech on April 15, 1967, "...[the United States] is sending black people to make war on yellow people in order to defend the land they stole from the red people." Blacks not wishing to fight against other colored people showed their ability to connect to other colored people around the world. They believed that it was wrong for them to fight against their own kind. In a *Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC*, Paul Lauter talks about the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's (MFDP) leaflet, entitled "No Vietnamese Ever Called Me a Nigger!" The basis of this leaflet was that no black man should be fighting another colored man. It was the first anti-war leaflet issued by a branch of SNCC during the sixties. S4 Carmichael felt that the United States Army used blacks to fight against their own colored brothers for the cause of a so-called democracy. In addition to colored people fighting against

In other words, SNCC was upset that the United States was using the war to kill SNCC's

other colored people, SNCC felt that the killing of colored people in Vietnam was simply

continuing the white domination of the world.

workers, thus eliminating the opposition to the white dominated society. The drafting of SNCC workers to fight in the jungles of Vietnam was thought, by some members of SNCC, as a way to disintegrate SNCC as an organization. SNCC workers resented the military draft for it threatened to deprive the organization of many of its male personnel. In August of 1966, SNCC began talk of an anti-draft program for blacks. In the preamble, they state that SNCC must oppose the draft on grounds of the survival of the organization and the survival of the African Americans as a race. It says,

It is obvious to any person in SNCC that the best way to break up the organization would be to draft all the young men who are of draft age and send them to Vietnam and have them shot. If the country is able to get away with busting up SNCC by drafting its young members and also by drafting young people in general, the pattern will be clearly set for our destruction as a race in this country...There will be no one here to carry on effective protest and we will be slaughtered both at home and abroad consequently. <sup>57</sup>

SNCC was not about to be disbanded as an organization due to the United States involvement in Vietnam. They felt that the only way to protect themselves from this occurrence would be to support draft dodging, and inform the public about the abuse of the draft toward African Americans.

Many Americans opposed to the Vietnam War were avoiding the draft legally through conscientious objector status. SNCC, however, was advocating the opposition to the draft through any means. Though they hadn't spoken as a united group yet, SNCC officials took it upon themselves to influence young blacks into avoiding the draft. John Lewis, SNCC chairman at the time, answered a newsman's question about the legality of burning draft cards. He stated that he would approve the action "if it was their [the draft card burner's] individual desire." Lewis was not the only SNCC official publicly stating his opposition to the draft. Carmichael, when asked by a reporter if he would fight in Vietnam, said, "No, I would not fight in Vietnam,

absolutely not, and I would urge every black man in this country not to fight in Vietnam."<sup>59</sup>
Up until 1966, SNCC had not taken an official public stance on the Vietnam War. All the feelings, emotions, and opinions about the war by the various SNCC members had not been put into one universal opposition to the war. What caused those feelings to be released like too much air in a balloon? Why wait until January of 1966? On the night of January 3, a SNCC volunteer named Sammy Younge left a party at an apartment in Tuskegee to pick up some mayonnaise and bring it back for some tuna sandwiches he and his friends were making. He was only twenty-one and had served in the U.S. Navy. He was a leader of several student protests in Tuskegee, and was a current student at the college, both a student and a veteran. After he picked up the mayonnaise, he stopped by a gas station to buy some cigarettes, and to use the bathroom. The attendant told Sammy to go around back to use the bathroom for blacks only. Sammy asked the man if he had heard of the Civil Rights Law. The man pulled out a gun and told Younge to leave

the property. This same man was waiting for Younge a short time later at the Greyhound station next door. Words were exchanged, and the man shot Sammy on a bus in the back of the head.  $^{60}$ 

SNCC reactions to the Sammy Younge incident ranged from anger to more anger. Cleveland Sellers said that the "absolute absurdity of a man having to die for attempting to do something as basically human as using a toilet filled us with rage." Other SNCC members professed the same feelings at the situation. The murder prompted James Forman to dispel the nonviolence philosophy for a more aggressive ideology. John Lewis had many questions about the murder and the society in which the murder took place when watching the American flag draped over the coffin, a fixture in veterans' funerals. He wondered, "Here was a man who had served his country, a military veteran, and what had it gotten him?" High-up SNCC officials were not the only ones to react to Younge's death. John Jackson, a SNCC field secretary from 1964 to 1966, said that the idea of Sammy Younge being murdered over the use of the bathroom prompted him and other SNCC members to make a total commitment to themselves and to their organization, offering themselves up as "living sacrifices."

Younge's murder gave SNCC the push it needed to publicly condemn the Vietnam War. On January 6, 1966, SNCC issued their official position paper against the war in Vietnam. SNCC leaders felt that SNCC had a right and a responsibility to disagree with the United States foreign policy on any issue and charged that the United States government had been deceptive in its claims of concern for the freedom of the Vietnamese people. Just as the government has been deceptive in its claiming concern for the freedom of colored people in other countries where the United States was exerting their power. The paper linked the murder of Younge with the murder of innocent Vietnamese peasants, saying that the United States is no respecter of persons or property when they interfere with national interests or desires. 65 It let loose a firestorm of criticism towards SNCC from the administration and from within the civil rights community; however, SNCC members felt confident that their paper was grounded in their beliefs. Gloria House, the SNCC field secretary who drafted the statement on Vietnam, said that "...[the SNCC position on Vietnam] came out of our growing consciousness of ourselves as a people, as a nation oppressed, and understanding our identity with the Vietnamese and other third world nations also fighting for national liberation."66 Adding to that defense was Mary King, a member of SNCC's communication staff, when she said that SNCC's position on Vietnam was based on

racial implications of a superpower inviting themselves into the internal struggles of a Third World country. SNCC members obviously felt that their statement was needed, and were ready to withstand the tidal wave of criticism that would ensue.

Criticism towards SNCC's statement began before January 6, 1966. Debates within SNCC were prevalent as to whether or not this was a matter of concern for a civil rights group. James Forman was quoted as saying that the war, up until 1965, was "not irrelevant, but simply remote." No other civil rights group had come out about the war before SNCC, so they had been testing new waters. No one in the organization knew what would happen after they released their official statement. Some SNCC members did not feel that their opposition would create any difference. For example, Dona Richards wrote that although SNCC had the opportunity to make a difference,

...[SNCC's opposition to the war] would not have any impact on current policy decisions in Vietnam, and the help of all the civil rights organizations can't change that...While we care a great deal about both Vietnam and civil rights, we can't do anything to help the Vietnam situation, and we can hurt ourselves by trying.

Richards' statement echoed many SNCC members' feelings at the time, but a loss of many seemed to be the main vocal opposition the statement. Danny Lyon, the official SNCC photographer, said that the anti-war movement took the wind out of the sails of the civil rights movement. If everybody had the same enthusiasm for the civil rights movement as they did the anti-war movement, the outcome of the civil rights campaign would have been much more spirited. <sup>70</sup>

Much of the funding that SNCC received was from white, northern liberals. A public break from the quiet of the other civil rights organizations would force SNCC to lose more financial support as a result of the anti-war statement than it would gain. In his speech on April 15, 1967, Carmichael meets this issue head on, when he says to those who question whether or not it will damage SNCC's fundraising ability, "What would it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" SNCC felt that the Vietnam War was not something that they could ignore.

Although some SNCC members felt that the Vietnam War was not a situation that SNCC

should undertake, a majority of SNCC members opposed the war on moral grounds, and soon authorized the Executive Committee of SNCC to draft a statement. John Lewis felt that SNCC had a moral obligation that they could not talk about the problems in the South, and at the same time, ignore the plight of the Vietnamese who were fighting for the same rights. Attempting to create a parallel between the South and Vietnam was a main objective of those in support of a public opposition to the war. Courtland Cox, at a particularly heated discussion on the topic summed up the argument with these eloquent words,

I want you to think with me, to see some parallels. Mississippi and Vietnam; they are very much alike. Think about Vietnam's Ky and Senator James O. Eastland; they are very much alike. Think about the problems of Mississippi's poor, disenfranchised blacks and the problems of Vietnam's poor, disenfranchised peasants; big business is making a killing in both places. Also, consider the similarities between Vietnam's National Liberation Front and SNCC. They ought to be very much alike!<sup>74</sup>

The criticism from outside the organization began with the attempt by the Johnson administration to isolate SNCC from the other civil rights groups through their stand on the war. Administration officials tried to urge moderate black leaders to detach themselves from SNCC position. Clifford Alexander, a Johnson aide, privately advised the President that a possible course of action would be to "have six Negro Congressmen issue a statement expressing the wholehearted support of the Negro people for our actions in Vietnam." Johnson and his officials were not the only ones who were interested in SNCC after their public statement. The FBI office in Atlanta immediately sent a copy of the paper to their headquarters in Washington. Atlanta congressman Charles Weltner asked the House Un-American Activities Committee to investigate the matter. SNCC definitely had the attention of the Johnson administration, but their allies in the civil rights field were conspicuously in opposition of the statement.

The most influential civil rights leader in opposition to the statement was Whitney Young of

the Urban League. Many SNCC members saw Young as an ally to Johnson, and his opposition was no surprise to them. Young, after the statement was released by SNCC, said that the "Vietnam issue was not germane to the civil rights movement." Statements like that gave Johnson much credibility among the black population. Included in one of Young's syndicated newspaper columns, he wrote that no matter what a person's personal feelings were about Vietnam, it did the country no good by forcing a decision between civil rights and the war. He goes on to say that civil rights and the war should be separate issues, not interconnected into

one. This greatly differs with the SNCC statement, as they believe that there was a connection between the Southern struggle and Vietnam freedom. On *Meet the Press*, Young summed up the Urban League's stance on the war, with Carmichael present in the debate. He stated, ...the Urban League takes no position on Vietnam. We know this, that we had a race problem in this country before Vietnam; we will have a race problem after it is gone. We know well that the resistance, ...unemployment,... is not related to Vietnam. We think that, as an individual, one has the right to take a position....we want to see when they come back that these men...are respected, because one man throwing a rock seems to upset more people in Watts than the hundreds of Negro boys who are dying in Vietnam.

The greatest point of controversy involving SNCC and Whitney Young was Young's visit to Vietnam. Young went to Vietnam in order to assess the situation of the black soldiers in the region. During his visit, he studied the conditions of the black servicemen in various situations and environments. Upon return from his visit, Young praised the military and the conditions in which they were operating under. Despite his questions about desegregating the high-ranking officials and the promotion process, he basically gave the black community a high commendation to the Johnson administration and their military personnel. 80 SNCC was not against Young's trip to Southeast Asia, just in the unfairness in the allowing of the Young to visit the troops. Carmichael attempted his own legal visit to the country, but was not allowed through the United States government. On July 23, 1966, a SNCC letter stated that Young was going to Vietnam to raise the black moral of the troops. It goes on to explain that Carmichael should be allowed to go, and tell the black soldiers about the SNCC view on what is going on at the home front. They hint at some favoritism that the government may hold for particular civil rights leaders when they ask,

If the government doesn't let Stokely go there, how come they allow Whitney Young to go? What is this favoritism? The black G.I. has the right to hear the truth about the struggle here at home. How dare anyone say that a black G.I. in New York can't read SNCC material and discuss it and distribute it? 81

SNCC felt that this rift in the civil rights structure could start the revolution in Vietnam by the soldiers.

Whitney Young was the most influential and outspoken critic of SNCC and their opposition to the war, though he was not the only one. Roy Wilkens, director of the NAACP, was also against the SNCC actions, and spoke out frequently on the issue. Using the same method as Young, Wilkens condemned SNCC in his nationally syndicated newspaper column. He also met with the Johnson, and expressed his dissatisfaction with the administration seeing all civil rights groups behind SNCC's disapproval of the administration's handling of the war. He, as other leaders also felt, did not like that all civil rights groups were seen on an even plain, when SNCC was the group that publicly denounced the war. This was seen, as John Lewis stated, as "... rushing to the side of Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey, shaking their heads at our outrageous attacks on the administration." James Meredith, the civil rights worker who helped to desegregate the University of Mississippi, joined Wilkens. Meredith, being a veteran of the military, stated his view on *Meet the Press* along with Carmichael, Young, and Wilkens. He backed the use of military action in Vietnam, saying,

I fully support the war effort....I personally think that one of the greatest things in America today is the war in Vietnam,...I think that if we lose in Vietnam, this nation will go down... I want to be part of a great nation, and I think the Negro wants to part of it. Consequently – Stokely hasn't been in the military....I mean, they can believe anything they want, but I am

a military man, and I support soldiers fighting. I think that everybody should support soldiers fighting. 84

Meredith basically told Carmichael that he did not, and could never, understand the war because he had never been in the military. During the remaining part of the program, Carmichael went on to counter by saying that the war was immoral and that he would encourage all black men to avoid the draft and stay out of the war. <sup>85</sup>

A matter of national concern, which emerged from the firestorm that was the SNCC position

on Vietnam, was the case involving Julian Bond. Bond had run for a House of Representatives seat in Atlanta and won. During the ensuing controversy surrounding the SNCC statement, he was caught by a reporter stating that he was in support of the statement, which was in contradiction to the majority of the Congressmen. When Bond appeared at the Georgia statehouse to take his oath of office, he was already being chastised in many southern newspapers. 86 His plight soon became national news, and the civil rights community backed Bond in his efforts. Bond's admittance that he was behind the SNCC opposition to Vietnam was the most influential event concerning the effect of the statement from SNCC. John Lewis saw this as the ultimate irony. "...the same government that was on one hand only too happy to send young black men to die in Vietnam," he said, "but on the other hand would not dream of allowing a young black man to hold office."87 Many members of SNCC, and the public, agreed with Lewis on this statement. If blacks were good enough to die in Vietnam, then they were good enough to make their own decisions in office. The Julian Bond situation took most of the publicity off SNCC's statement, but it was an effect of the controversial position.

In January 1966 the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee issued their statement voicing their opposition of the Vietnam War. This statement divided the civil rights groups along

a fine line of support for the war or opposition to the war. SNCC was the first group to cross the proverbial line drawn in the sand, to speak out against the war. They received criticism and a loss of funding; however, they continued to remain steadfast in their disfavor with the United States government. The statement brought up the question of whether or not a civil rights group has the right to involve themselves in the foreign policy of the government. Howard Zinn, in an article entitled "Should Civil Rights Workers Take a Stand on Vietnam?", says that civil rights workers have an obligation to involve themselves in the opposition to oppressed people everywhere, not just in Vietnam. He says that movement people are in the best position to understand just how this nation's actions are in Vietnam, as they have withstood beatings and oppression only to gain a insignificant Civil Rights Bill which has not been enforced. As he says, "They [civil rights workers] understand just how much hypocrisy is wrapped up in our claim to stand for the free world," if we [as civil rights workers] do not take a stand on Vietnam. 88 Zinn was saying that unless the workers took a stand on Vietnam, they would be victims of their own ideology. They fought for the defeat of oppression against colored people, but if they did not take a stand on Vietnam, they would be denying the Vietnamese the same defense.

SNCC spoke out against the war due to their philosophy of nonviolence, a general distrust in the governments' motives, sympathy for Third World struggles, and an opposition to the draft. They received a lot criticism from black leaders and other civil rights groups, but they held strong and held their position. People such as John Lewis, Stokely Carmichael, James Forman, and Cleveland Sellers all risked their livelihood for the cause of freedom. They protested, marched, and spoke out against the tyranny of the United States in order to preserve black lives in the South and in Vietnam. Mary King said that inadvertently through the protest of the Vietnam War, SNCC influenced and began the women's movement and the free speech movement. John Lewis, in 1966 at the Memorial Dinner for American-Soviet Relations, asked the members of the audience, "How could we fight for real and free elections in Alabama and Mississippi and ignore the U.S. role in Vietnam to deprive the Vietnamese of this right." This statement answers the flood of questions and criticism that SNCC took after their statement. How? How could they oppose the war in Vietnam and continue their jobs in the South?

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### **Unraveling Sense by Cressant Swarts**

When letters escape
the words as the words
escape me, I dive
into the chaos of pure ideas,
that vat of sound
and resound, images
that wrap like seaweed, and metaphors
that thrash in the net, all blended
into a whirlpool of possibilities.

into the hollow of o, between the tree and pole of t and l, into the crack of r. For a moment, I cower in the curve of c, then unburden into the cup of u.

I swim

If I could escape through the domed tunnels of *m*'s and *n*'s, burst out of the swelled belly of *b*, see clearly through the glasses of *g* with the eyes of *ee*, if I could only discover *y*, I could unravel this net of words into sense.

## **Disconnections by Cressant Swarts**

Mom was so proud when she finally caught your smile on film, since year after year the school photographer had failed.

Beaming, she copied and gave away the natural pose instead of the normal school-day grimace.

The school kept the scowl, of course, and I imagine they always will.

They wouldn't want something so filthy, so healthy, tracking mud and life down their sterile halls.

Anyway, no one would recognize a smiling you, unless they had watched you blur by on your 4-wheeler, the two of you a living collage of dirt and plastic and skin. Analyzing from inside, I barely recognize you myself. But I've seen you painting yourself/the machine with the graceful arc of a roostertail of mud flung high and dribbling down like thick strings of rain,

so maybe the grin flashing through that mask of dirt shows your close connection

with the earth: in your eyes and ears and mouth and hair and probably seeping through a few layers of skin. But I've also seen you skim the sand at 40, 50, 60 mph, barely grounded. Only then do I let myself wonder which of us is more real.

# One Good Movement Deserves Another by Kelli Klapatauskas

As a result of its formation, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) produced a plethora of topics that can be explored more thoroughly when considering the origins, societal implications, and future impact SNCC had as a result of its existence. SNCC served as a starting place for many female activists who became concerned not only with civil rights issues, but also gender equity issues. Two women in particular, Mary King and Casey Hayden, utilized SNCC to gain self-confidence and confront unfair and discriminatory gender issues. The civil rights movement of the 1960s brought to light discrimination on many levels, including gender inequity. The adversity faced by women participating in SNCC, including violence and gender discrimination, pushed these women to initiate the women's liberation movement. Some of the female activists of SNCC possessed qualities that enabled them to recognize gender discrimination in SNCC and society and to act against it.

When women chose to be involved in the civil rights movement, they were taking a risk that could mean injury or death just by being involved. Scholar Vicki Crawford writes, "Examination of SNCC's newsletters in 1962 and 1963 suggests that some of the most violent incidents of reprisals took place against women. Women who were even rumored to be part of the movement lost their jobs. . . . The homes of women activists were regularly shot into. Any woman in the

Delta who contemplated joining in the early movement had to be aware of all this." After the first events in the south became public knowledge, fears of the first women involved became known and women realized that to become involved could mean facing violence and even the possibility of death.

One issue women faced, unlike their male counterparts, was needing to obtain the oftentimes unwilling parental permission to join the civil rights movement. In a study of summer volunteers in 1964 and 1965, "many more women than men spoke of the difficulties in getting parental approval and, unlike male volunteers, women were not allowed to work on any COFO (Council of Federated Organizations), or FDP (Freedom Democratic Party), project without parental

approval if they were under twenty one years old." Cleveland Sellers and Stokely Carmichael discovered that although the possibility of violence may not have deterred volunteers, it did have an effect on their parents. While sitting on the porch in Mississippi with recent recruits, the

mothers came by and warned their daughters, "'If you don't come home with us tonight, don't come home at all. If you go to Mississippi with these people, you can consider yourself

homeless!"<sup>3</sup> Serving as a reflection to many of the parents' concerns, Mrs. Katherine Schwarz told a reporter in 1964, "We were reluctant to let her go—not because we don't believe in it, but because it's a dangerous business. On the other hand we are very proud that she wanted to go. We tried to discourage it until she was older and more mature, but I don't think we ever would

have stopped her."<sup>4</sup> One female volunteer's mother tried numerous unsuccessful tactics in order to try and convince her to return home. She remembered,

Every night in complete fear and anguish I waited to see my mother on the [TV] screen. She had sent me a telegram signed with my brother's name saying that she had had a heart attack and I must come home immediately (none of which was true). Telephone calls, with her screaming, threatening, crying until I hung up, came every day. Long vituperative letters came from her for me. After the phone calls I would disappear into the ladies' room and cry out the engulfing rage accumulated frustration. <sup>5</sup>

Another female volunteer tried to respond to her parent's disapproval in a letter from Mississippi, "It is very hard to answer your attitude that if I loved you I wouldn't do this—hard because the thought is cruel, I can only hope you have the sensitivity to understand that I can love you very much and desire to go to Mississippi." Once a female made the decision to become involved in civil rights work, the implications were often knowing that she could face violence, even death,

After the initial decision was made to join the civil rights movement, women faced numerous challenges created by their involvement. Ruby Doris Robinson and Annelle Ponder illustrate the strength required to be a female dedicated to civil rights. When Ruby Doris Robinson worked for SNCC, often the Atlanta police would issue parking tickets to cars, whether they were illegally parked or not. Ruby did not give in to this harassment and one day, as a white officer was placing a ticket onto her car, she ripped up the ticket right in front of the officer. She was eight months pregnant at the time and the officer made no attempt to stop her.

Fannie Lou Hamer recalled the boldness of Annelle Ponder when she was in prison with Annelle Ponder and a prison guard demanded she use a title of respect when addressing him, "Cain't you say yessir, nigger? Cain't you say yessir, bitch?" Ponder answered, "Yes, I can say yessir." When the guard demanded that she say it, Ponder replied, "I don't know you well enough." The guard proceeded to beat her repeatedly, but Annelle just prayed for them and asked

God to have mercy on them for what they were doing. The female volunteers faced danger with character that was untypical for the "stereotypical" 1960s woman. Although they often faced danger and exclusions from previous groups or roles, these were the very things that empowered women.

The civil rights movement, and groups involved in the movement like SNCC, created an

and most likely, disapproval from her parents.

atmosphere of inquiry. SNCC's structure of nonviolence and openness to questioning established notions and beliefs was a crucial component in setting the stage for the feminist movement to develop. In 1992, the former Democratic National Committee Chairman, Ronald H. Brown wrote, "The most important thing we should remember and understand about the civil rights movement is that it finally began the transformation of America into a more open and just society."8 In her biography of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson, Cynthia Griggs Fleming admitted that some stereotypical notions of gender roles did exist, but also that the fluid atmosphere of SNCC and the shared assumption that people had a right to challenge stereotypes, created an egalitarian atmosphere within SNCC. The operating style of SNCC also came into play. "One factor that should be considered is SNCC's operating style. SNCC was the most active organization in the Delta and it was relatively open to women. . . . Women were always involved in the development of policy and the execution of the group's program." <sup>10</sup> The nonviolent stance that SNCC took was also an important aspect of empowerment. Casey Hayden looked back on the role of nonviolence in shaping individuals. "Nonviolence took one out of the role of

victim and put her in total command of her life. By acting in this clear, pure way, in which the act itself was of equal value to its outcome, and by risking all for it, we were broken open, released from old and lesser definitions of ourselves in terms of race, sex, class, into the larger self of the

Beloved Community.",11 The openness of SNCC internally and its premise of nonviolence was a crucial difference compared to other organizations that excluded women.

SNCC became a source for new questions about society. These questions provided a pathway for proposed societal change. Casey Hayden looked at the two issues of power and the effect the movement had on looking deeper into our country's culture as forces that placed SNCC in the larger concept of society at the time:

A lot of people makes power. In Mississippi, the mass character of that movement is what created a completely new power base where there was no power before. And what happened there was that a completely new set of power balances were created, because of the activity of thousands and thousands and thousands of people in very risky situations. To me, that's the main thing that happened. The other thing that happened was that in splitting that culture open, many questions were released, very provocative questions; the questions which are still at the root of social problems in this culture. 12

Mary King, who worked closely with Casey Hayden, felt that SNCC had an open atmosphere that fostered change, "And I want again to point out what was so unique about SNCC was its openness to these questions, that it could nourish Casey and me and others to ask these questions, to write these papers, to pose these things." 13 John Lewis also felt that SNCC went beyond fighting racism to changing society in other ways, "A whole thought pattern, a whole culture has been influenced by SNCC...People in SNCC may never receive the credit—maybe people never

really wanted credit—but a lot of the good things that are happening not just to black people but to the whole society can be attributed to SNCC." In her biography on Ella Baker, Joanne Grant also looked at the way society was constructed in relation to the impact SNCC had on society. Grant writes,

I think at this stage the big question is, what is the American society? Is it the kind of society that either black women or black men or anyone who is seeing a dignified existence as a human being that permits people to grow and develop according to their capacity, that gives them a sense of value, not only for themselves, but a sense of value for other human beings. Is this the kind of society that is going to permit that? I think there is a great question as to whether it can become that kind of society. <sup>15</sup>

It is the way in which SNCC challenged the norms of society and made numerous women in the movement look at society in a larger light which contributed to the way SNCC made its impact on individuals.

As women became involved in SNCC, their self-perceptions changed and they were self-empowered through those changes. Bernice Reagon, a participant in the movement who was even suspended from Albany State College for participating in civil rights demonstrations, felt that the movement gave her the power to challenge limitations that were put on her:

I had grown up in a society where there were very clear lines. The older I got, the more I found what those lines were. The Civil Rights Movement gave me the power to challenge *any* line that limits me...I learned that I did have a life to give for what I believed. Lots of people don't know that; they feel they don't have anything. When you understand that you do have a life, you do have a body, and you can put that on the line, it gives you a sense of power. So I was empowered by the Civil Rights Movement. <sup>16</sup>

Mary King looked at it like this, "If you are spending your time thinking about how to expand the decision making process by enlarging the vote, by community organization, by generally lifting or opening people's awareness to their own power in themselves, it inevitably strengthens your own conceptions, your own ability. Grant, in her biography of Ella Baker, also argued, "But one of the guiding principles has to be that we cannot lead a struggle that involves masses of people without getting the people to understand what their potentials are, what their strengths are." Women were changing their self-perceptions, and questioning their role within SNCC, which led to the examination of the atmosphere of SNCC and how some of the roots of feminism developed from within the organization.

One of the biggest organized events of the civil rights movement was "Freedom Summer." SNCC played an important role in helping to organize one of the largest voter registration drives that had ever taken place in the South. Freedom Summer gave white women a new dimension in the civil rights movement. As a result of Freedom Summer, white women were traveling to the

south in the largest numbers ever. This influx of women to the south was a new doorway for the female gender. Mary Aiken Rothschild found that, "In 1964, approximately 300 white women went to Mississippi as volunteers, and in 1965 around 350 white women fanned throughout the entire South. Women were nearly half of all the volunteers." John Lewis, a SNCC leader, wrote in his memoirs that he felt the Freedom Summer of 1964 had a great impact on the breakdown of previous social, racial, and gender barriers:

The atmosphere of openness and breaking down barriers that we developed that summer extended far beyond issues of race. They extended into everything from sexuality to gender roles, from communal living to identification with working classes. And they live on today. I have no doubt that the Mississippi Summer Project, in the end, led to the liberating of America, the opening up of our society. The peace movement, the women's movement, the gay movement—they all have roots that can be traced back to Mississippi in the summer of '64.

Freedom Summer was a monumental step forward in the civil rights movement. The hundreds of volunteers that came to the South changed the dynamics of the movement and left an impact on the future.

Freedom Summer also brought experiences of sexism to the attention of white female SNCC activists. A majority of female volunteers felt that they could contribute to Freedom Summer because they were college-aged and were not yet tied down to families. These single women often found themselves faced with a sexual dilemma during the Freedom Summers of 1964 and 1965.

But women volunteers had an additional problem many simply did not know how to handle. . . described as a "sexual test" which became a sort of "rite of passage" before women could be considered serious workers. This test was whether or not women volunteers could deal with sexual advances from black men in the movement. . . in every orientation session project leaders counseled volunteers to be discreet in their sex lives. . . . Interracial sex for some women took on a kind of totality of integration in their lives which represented a unity of belief; work and life. For others, sleeping with black men was a way to "prove" their "commitment" to black and white equality . . . It has also been suggested that white women expiated their "guilt" about racism by sleeping with black men. . . Whether women volunteers accepted or rejected the advances of black men, sex became the metaphor for racial tensions, hostility and aggression. <sup>21</sup>

Sometimes the pressure that female volunteers felt in the "sexual test" went beyond just accusations and verbal abuse. "Black men 'in search of their manhood' were persistent and aggressive. . . Some white women were raped by black men in the movement. In 1965, before the Jackson demonstrations, one black man, whose father had been shot by a white man and who

was a long-time SNCC worker, violently attacked at least three women in one evening."<sup>22</sup> The sexual dilemma that white female volunteers faced during the Freedom Summer was one for which they were unprepared, but also the impetus that started women thinking about gender.

When looking back on her experience in SNCC, Mary King clearly felt that the civil rights movement directly influenced female leaders as an impetus to the women's movement:

Well, the women's movement in the modern sense was clearly the successor movement to the civil rights movement and, of course, there are civil rights issues at the core. It's an error of historiography not only to fail to recognize the role played by SNCC in the civil rights movement, but also not to realize the role of the civil rights movement in building a larger concern for the rights of women in our society.<sup>23</sup>

Clayborne Carson, a historian and former member of SNCC, compared the abolitionist struggle inspiring the nineteenth century women's rights movement to SNCC and the civil rights movement influencing the modern movement, "In both cases, women gained from the struggles of black people an increased sense of their own potential political significance and a heightened sensitivity to the restrictions placed upon them because of their sex." The atmosphere of SNCC within the civil rights movement can be paralleled to the way self-empowered women were influenced by the civil rights movement to go beyond limitations they had previously felt.

In response to the incidences of gender discrimination apparent during Freedom Summer, King and Hayden wrote a position paper and memorandum to publicly voice their concerns. Their premise was that women were being denied rights and not being given the respect that they deserved. Although women were focused leaders and active participants in the civil rights movement, sexism still existed. The anonymous memo was first presented at the Waveland Conference in 1964. Casey Hayden viewed the memorandum as "an internal educational document. . . The conference was full of them. Everyone was educating everyone else about their pet concerns. The paper aimed to bring forward the fact that sexism was comparable to racism, a novel idea at the time—so novel, in fact, that the word *sexism* didn't exist in our lexicon."

In the spirit of Waveland, I desperately wanted to share some of my thinking on our organizational direction and within that context life the question of how my growing perception of myself as a woman might affect the structure and program of SNCC. When it came time to sit down at the typewriter, I was shaken with doubt. The issue was enormous.

I was afraid. The reaction, I was convinced, would be one of ridicule. <sup>26</sup>

Mary King recalled her justification for writing the memo:

The anonymous memo was approximately two pages long and was presented along with many other position papers at the retreat. After listing eleven instances where women were discriminated against because of their gender, King tried to point out how sexism can be paralleled to racism. The memo stated:

The average white person finds it difficult to understand why the Negro resents being called "boy," or being thought of as "musical" and "athletic," because the average white person doesn't realize that he assumes he is superior. And naturally he doesn't understand the problem of paternalism. So too the average SNCC worker finds it difficult to discuss the woman problem because of the assumption of male superiority. Assumptions of male superiority are as widespread and deep rooted and every much as crippling to the woman as the assumptions of white supremacy are to the Negro. <sup>27</sup>

Mary King tried to relate the position paper on gender to issues which faced SNCC workers daily. In her memoirs, Mary King recalled the reaction to the memo:

When the document on women was distributed informally at the meeting, the reaction to the anonymous position paper was one of crushing criticism. I had been right about the ridicule. People quickly figured out who had written it. Some mocked and taunted us.

There were, however, some exceptions. 28

The memorandum, although it did not remain anonymous, was one of the first steps women took within SNCC to voice their concerns over sexism.

Clayborne Carson argued that although SNCC may not have changed any of its policies because of the paper, it still spurred on the feminist movement of the 1960s. "A year later Hayden and King would raise similar concerns for a wider audience in a manifesto addressed to 'other women in the peace and freedom movement.' They and other women brought many of the values and tactics of the civil rights struggle into the nascent women's liberation movement."

In sharp contrast to the first paper was the second position paper written by Hayden and King, this time not anonymously and sent out to forty groups of women organizers around the country. Casey Hayden recognized a real need for communication among women to provide them an opportunity to share mutual concerns. Hayden remembered, "I realized, working in Chicago, how difficult it was to organize women within a setting that lacked feminist consciousness. The

first step, therefore, was to create that consciousness." Mary King recalled the reaction of one woman, Barbara Raskin, "Oh, Mary, I'll never forget the day that your memorandum arrived in the mail. We organized a group here in Washington, a consciousness-raising group it was called later, and we studied that memo and we restudied it and we passed it around amongst ourselves

and finally the thing was so dog-eared that we could no longer read it." King felt that the paper was a spark to set off the women's movement in a large effort because of the reaction it received after circulation.

When we look back upon the Civil Rights Movement we can see a period of change in our country's history. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was a group at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement. The structure and unique atmosphere of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee enabled women like Casey Hayden, Mary King, and many others to go beyond the civil rights movement and begin to question gender discrimination.

For women that sought involvement in SNCC and other civil rights organizations, they had to first obtain parental permission and often found themselves with an opinion on their involvement differing from that of their parents. Numerous parents feared for the violence that their daughters would face. Parents and daughters alike knew that for women, especially white women in the south, the possibility of getting hurt or even killed was something that had to be acknowledged.

The fact that women were able to get beyond the barrier of parental permission and other obstacles that they faced as a result of their gender, empowered them within the context of the civil rights movement and in their lives after the movement. As women addressed issues of racial discrimination, the gender inequities in their society became apparent. Freedom Summer brought a huge influx of white women to the south for the first time and issues of interracial relationships and women's abilities also forced women to prove themselves personally and professionally.

Mary King and Casey Hayden were two prominent female leaders in SNCC. King and Hayden were both strong organizers and were inspired by powerful women and authors like Beauvoir. The strong influential roots that led the path King and Hayden took grew to create a network of young women that were, in turn, inspired by Mary and Casey.

The two position papers written by Mary King and Casey Hayden were initially viewed in a variety of ways by both males and females. The interpretations of the two papers do not hide the fact, however, that SNCC was an organization that allowed the issue of gender discrimination to be discussed, and even compared to the struggle of racial discrimination. The openness of SNCC and the community of its members allowed discussions and papers on the topic of feminism to be looked at for the first time.

Mary King and Casey Hayden were among the first women involved in SNCC and later served as role models for younger women activists. "Veterans like Casey Hayden and Mary King whose involvement had pioneered the way for these young volunteers now served as experienced and capable models. Their easy access to the SNCC leadership made them seem very powerful and their confidence in their own commitment and in the cause excited admiration and emulation." Cathy Cade said about Casey Hayden, "I was really awed by her; I was so

impressed. Hayden seemed so knowledgeable, together, influential, and also beautiful." King and Hayden, initially were inspired by powerful women and they, in turn, went on to inspire others.

Although SNCC did not survive the 1970s, the committee had changed and inspired individuals who were a part of the group of SNCC activists in ways that lasted beyond the end of the committee. Clayborne Carson wrote,

Whatever they have made of their lives since leaving SNCC, the process of self-discovery

that took place during the 1960s remains a special part of their lives... SNCC's staff scattered like seeds in the wind after their radicalism no longer found fertile ground in the southern struggle...SNCC's principal legacy consists not of the leaders it produced or even of the civil rights reforms that it helped to bring about. Instead, its legacy consists of the lessons learned in ongoing struggles that did not begin with SNCC's emergence and did not end with its demise. 33

Making a similar point, *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis wrote, "The most important legacy of the civil rights movement is the character of its participants: their commitment, their imagination, their incredible courage." Hayden and King both worked on social challenges even after their SNCC days were over and both have also written books on their experiences. Casey Hayden's daughter asked her what it was about the movement that empowered the individuals to do all these things? Hayden answered, "We embodied, not as an abstraction, but actually, the struggle and the stress, the ambiguities and the paradoxes, of creating new social realities. Giving ourselves completely, we were as lambs. The unity we achieved transcends any political differences we might have had in the past as well as the distance between us now in space and time. We were many minds but one heart." The women involved in SNCC and the civil rights movement faced challenges they had never encountered before and learned that they had it within themselves to succeed, and initiated the women's liberation movement out of their experience in SNCC.

#### **Endnotes**

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# One Of The "Old Guard" Still Lives by Donna Bauerly, Ph.D.

Frank Lehner, Ph.D. Born: October 5, 1921 Died: January 26, 2001

"Dr. Frank Lehner is in his twenty-sixth teaching year at Loras. He has seen his poems published in *The Spoon River Quarterly* and the *Delta Epsilon Sigma Bulletin*. His most recently published poem, 'The Burial,' appeared in the *North American Mentor* (Summer, 1981). . . . Dr. Lehner was re-elected to the Faculty Senate and the Senior Honors Luncheon and has recently been elected to the Academic Scholarship Committee" ("Faculty Briefs" from *The Newsletter of the English Department*, May 1982).

At the present time, I am teaching *In Country* by Bobbi Ann Mason. Sam, a young high school graduate whose father was killed in Vietnam before Sam was born, struggles to put together the parental *person* she never knew. Finally she finds a diary that her father kept in Vietnam and in the bald prose of objective description, she begins to **see.** 

The connection, the "transition" between paragraph one and two? as Dr. Lehner would have demanded of any student of writing. It's there, in the idea of the "bald prose" from the *Newsletter*. For those of us who truly knew Frank Lehner, we need no information—we just need our vivid memories. Or, as Toni Morrison would say in *Beloved*, we need to "rememory." But for those who never knew Frank in person, consider again paragraph one with its "bald prose."

Dr. Lehner at that time had already dedicated 26 years of his life blood to Loras College students, faculty and administrators. Eventually he would give 31 years to us before completely retiring in 1986. He was a scholar; he was a poet. The poet was his "dark side," the deeply sensitive side he showed to very few. It took many years before I knew he wrote poetry, and when I did learn, it was only rarely that I found one or two to read. So, before you look at more of the "bald prose" of his life, consider this very fitting poem of his. Read, if you will, the "Parting of Casual Lovers" as Frank's "goodbye (as well as our own, eventually) to a world he loved:

# A Parting of Casual Lovers in War Time

We did not note September Leaves, the wrinkled skin of old Spring, nor farmers reaping their Crops toward a cold tomorrow— We'd spend our now, Kayyam's cash For us, and if immortal Locusts sang summer's brief flesh, We'd smile a painless farewell.

We joked away love's last hours, Laughed elegies—but as we Strew the ash of memories, Unquenched embers set afire The Romeo who'd say goodbye Till winter. And earth was white.

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Returning to "bald prose" after such powerful words is not easy, but in the seemingly objective listing of Frank's professional involvement at Loras, you do return to "loves" that were definitely NOT casual to him. Frank's re-election to the **Senate** marked an ongoing central concern for him. He was part of the "old guard" at Loras College who were very influential in carving out real rights and privileges for the lay faculty. They were the men who framed our Faculty Constitution, and Frank was a leader among those who guarded those rights with zeal and fervor. He cared that others, certainly any new faculty member green to the ways of proper negotiation, would not only know but also become dedicated to making sure that the principles of subsidiarity never weakened the powers of a knowledgeable and dedicated faculty.

In his work for the Senior Honors Luncheon and the Academic Scholarship Committee, his commitment to true and honorable scholarship helped others, particularly students and faculty alike, receive recognition and recompense for their achievements and ambitions.

In the epigraph to Toni Morrison's novel *Sula*, you find these words:

It is sheer good fortune to miss somebody long before they leave you.

I had that good fortune. I began "missing" Frank when he finally cleaned out his office next to mine after teaching full time for 30 years (1955-1985) and part-time for us in 1986. What did I miss?

\*camaraderie. Frank never treated anyone like a second-class person. I have always maintained that the "old guard" at Loras were like the first women (I was one of three) hired in 1971. The "old guard" were among the first lay faculty and played a kind of second-class role at that time. They knew what it was like to be pioneers in creating respect and trust. They

gusto.

welcomed us and gave vocal and even monetary support. Without telling me, Frank arranged that his own raise in salary for one year be added to my raise. He was a man of justice as well as mercy (even though he would never admit the latter).

\*professional encouragement. I came to Loras ABD (all but dissertation). From the very first week, Dr. Lehner (I called him that for a year!) met me in the corridor each day with these words: "What about your dissertation? Are you working on it?" When I tried to counter with my work load of preparation, he only replied, "Well, get at it." And then he arranged for a second office space for me so that I could spread out and keep moving forward. He arranged my schedule so that I taught three days a week, and he would not let me teach summer sessions until I had completed my Ph.D.

\*special encouragement of writing for publication. Frank asked me, specifically, to write about Rev. Raymond Roseliep. At that time, Frank was Editor of *The Delta Epsilon Sigma Bulletin*, and Ray Roseliep was at the height of his poetic career. So began a long and fruitful relationship among the three of us, resulting (hopefully) in my own plans for a biography of Roseliep. Frank Lehner and Ray Roseliep could wield red pencils like no others I have known. I learned a great deal from both of them about precise and *correct* prose.

\*generosity. In addition to what I have already said, Frank was a leader in showing hospitality. I remember fondly the many times that English faculty members were invited to his home. Maybe his wife Betty was the force behind those invitations, but he had the great "good sense" of falling in love and marrying her. Knowing his choice of someone as outgoing and friendly as Betty finally gave me the courage to call him "Frank" and to begin to know the soft and loving side of this wonderful man.

\*humor. It could be biting at times, but biting only when it was needed. He was the one who defined the following for me: "Sarcasm wounds to wound; satire wounds to heal." His was a satirical wit at proper times. He truly was an 18<sup>th</sup> century professor. A bit of that humor comes through in the talk he gave at a February Faculty Meeting in 1982, the year he was recognized for his 25 years at Loras College: "Obviously, no human life goes along for twenty-five years on the high plateau of existence. There are valleys as well as peaks. As I tell my students, I like to make up those metaphors. The students usually don't laugh because they have not heard the cliches before." But I remember well, that any time someone didn't catch his subtle humor, Frank would himself supply an uproarious laugh—and then you just had to laugh along with his

\*his gentle ways and demeanor. Over the years, this was the quality in Frank I loved the most and miss the most each day. When a family member, a friend, a mentor dies, you go on a treasure hunt to find their verbal, behavioral or oral footprints along the trails you walked with them in their lives. You search through photo albums and wish you had actually snapped that vivid yesterday which comes crashing through the underbrush of memory. You find that last piece of writing they left for you—a letter, a few phrases on a Christmas card; even a grocery list will do. After all, it's something left of their touch on that paper. You comb your memory to recover their last words with you, treasuring that message of hope, of consolation, of humor.

You go back to find the beginning of friendship, that great good gift among colleagues. A beginning, yes, a middle—and then, finally, an end.

And memory, "rememory," hoping to create the live person for someone who did not know but might still learn from a great and caring pro-fessor. So be it, Frank. Someone once said, "A man is not dead until he is forgotten." And so, you live.

## The Seed Took Root by Francis C. Lehner, Ph.D.

In October 1938, Rev. E. A. Fitzgerald, then Dean of Studies at Loras, prepared the soil for a national Catholic academic honor society when he sent a questionnaire on the issue to one hundred and twenty Catholic colleges and universities. Encouraged by the strongly favorable response to his poll, Father Fitzgerald was ready to plant the seed; in April 1939, in an address to the National Catholic Education Association, he reported the results of his probe and talked up the idea of an honor society. The seed took root quickly. A Committee of Founders, consisting of thirty-two prominent educators, was formed, and Father Fitzgerald, elected chairman, appointed three committees: one on constitution, one on name and motto, and one on insignia. In March 1940, a constitutional convention convened in Kansas City. There a provisional one-year constitution was adopted, to be followed by a permanent one, and chapters were granted to thirty-two schools that had previously applied for membership. Delta Epsilon Sigma had blossomed into being. In recognition of Father Fitzgerald's generative efforts, Loras College was designated Alpha Chapter.

In the half century since that time, Alpha Chapter has been a vital unit in the society. Over the years several Loras educators have filled national offices. Rev. E. A. Fitzgerald, Rev. F. J. Houlahan, Rev. Norbert C. Barrett, Rev. Clarence W. Friedman, Rev. Robert L. Ferring and Rev. Neil W. Tobin all served as National Secretary-Treasurer. Father Friedman, after he had left Loras to take a position with the NCEA, served as a member of the Executive Committee. After he had left Loras to become pastor of Sacred Heart parish in Dubuque, Rev. Neil Tobin was elected National Vice President in 1982 and President in 1984. From 1963 to 1978 Dr. Frank Lehner edited the *DES Bulletin*. Dr. Donna Bauerly was a member of the Executive Committee from 1995 to 2000.

On the local level, the record is equally impressive. There can be no doubt that over the years members of Alpha Chapter have contributed considerable intellectual and cultural leaven to life at Loras. More specifically, one can point to the annual DES seminars and to the tutoring service provided by the chapter for students needing academic assistance. In 1985, under the leadership of moderator Dr. Donna Bauerly, the chapter preceded (one would like to say anticipated) the national officers by some five years when it launched a college-wide writing competition in four areas—fiction, essay, non-fiction, and poetry. Each year winners' works are printed in a journal. Last year, 2000, was a phenomenal one for Alpha Chapter. Students won three prizes in this National Undergraduate Writing Competition: first place prizes went to Kristyn Kuennen for her

poems, "The life you create on the front lawn" and "Office Visit," and to Melanie Mausser for her fiction, "Reveille." Honorable Mention was awarded to Elizabeth Loebach for her narrative non-fiction, "Broken America." This year, 2001, Alpha Chapter again garnered three prizes: second place event to Katherine Leventhal for her non-fiction "Saturday" and to Cressant Swarts for her poem "Grass Fires." Honorable Mention was awarded to Melanie Mausser for her fiction "The Crate." Second place winners receive \$250. Alpha Chapter winner for the Fellowship was Celia Venhuizen who received \$1,000 for academic pursuits. Elizabeth Rogers received the Delta Epsilon Sigma National Student Award. Only one award is given per Chapter, based on an overall grade point average of 3.9-4.0. The annual chapter dinner, long a tradition here, not only serves as a function for the induction of new members but in a sense honors all chapter members who attend. Father Fitzgerald's idea of an honor society to foster intellectual and academic achievement is alive and well at Loras College.

In a composition class many years ago, during a digression on, as I recall, overemphasis on high school sports, a student remarked on the great thrill of winning an important football or basketball game. I asked if it had ever occurred to him that other people might get a similar thrill of achievement from composing a sonnet or writing a short story. He just looked at me. But the entrants in this year's writing competition, and especially the winners whose work appears in this publication, surely know whereof I speak. Samuel Johnson was wrong when he said, in what must have been a cynical moment, that only a blockhead ever wrote for anything but money. For writers, seeing one's work in print ranks high among the pleasures of life.

(Alpha will continue to include Dr. Lehner's ever-timely article as a tribute to this dedicated DES member who was Editor of the Society's Journal for fifteen years.)

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DES "It is the mission of a wise person to put things in order."