EMILYE CROSBY

# Introduction

## *The Politics of Writing and Teaching Movement History*

My earliest exposure to civil rights movement history came informally, through community programs and my teachers' stories. Those early accounts provided a crucial introduction and alternative framework that helped offset the very different, sanitized narrative that has come to dominate textbooks, the popular culture, and too many accounts by historians. For example, I first learned about self-defense, a topic that has become particularly significant to my own scholarly work, from stories about the "Black Hats" or "Deacons for Defense" from my tenth-grade social studies teacher, Mr. Julius Warner. He taught world history, and a group of us would hang out in his classroom during his "free" period. He would question us about current events and we would pester him for his opinion and for stories about the local movement in our hometown of Port Gibson, Mississippi. In the mid-1960s, before he completed his college degree and began teaching, Mr. Warner was a factory worker and movement activist, canvassing for voter registration, supporting a boycott of white merchants, and sending his children to the formerly whites-only public school (where, because of white flight, we now studied in a virtually all-black environment). He was also president of the local self-defense group, known as the Black Hats, or the Deacons.

I was lucky to have this introduction—to the civil rights movement generally and self-defense specifically. Although I knew these stories when I first proposed a study of my hometown community for my dissertation, I argued

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Figure 1 Mr. Julius Warner (*far right*), former head of the Port Gibson "Black Hats" or "Deacons," pictured here as advisor to the Port Gibson High School Student Council on Crazy Sock/Faded Blue Jeans Day, 1983 (the year after Emilye Crosby graduated from high school). Coach Percy Thorton (*far left*), the Student Council's other advisor, taught Crosby her first Afro-American history class. From the collection of Sarah C. Campbell.

its significance primarily in terms of the Port Gibson Boycott and *Claiborne Hardware, et al. v.* NAACP, *et al.*, the Supreme Court case that emerged out of it. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously in 1982, the summer before my senior year in high school, that protesters could use economic boycotts for political goals. This was big news. After years of litigation, many local defendants (including some of my teachers, a former bus driver, and Mr. Warner's father) were exonerated from the charges that they had been part of an illegal boycott conspiracy. Moreover, national leaders from the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) came to town to celebrate and the case was covered by the news media around the country.[1] National media, national leaders of a major civil rights organization, and a Supreme Court victory—these made the Port Gibson movement significant . . . right?

Years later when I began doing research for my dissertation, a few oral history collections and first-hand accounts remained virtually the only published and easily accessible sources that addressed self-defense in the movement.[2] And yet, when I interviewed local residents (whether active in the movement or not) and scoured the archival records, including reports from the Mississippi Highway Patrol, the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, it was clear that armed self-defense and its more morally ambiguous sibling, boycott enforcement, were central to the local movement. I came to believe that understanding the role of self-defense and what it meant to African Americans and whites was just as important as the distant Supreme Court decision. And, in many ways, the local issues that had precipitated the litigation had been outpaced by events on the ground as blacks and whites negotiated new ways of interacting.[3] The successful national movement and new federal laws were an essential backdrop, but meaningful local change came through daily interactions that included confrontational rhetoric and individual and collective self-defense.



Though Mr. Warner only reluctantly agreed to a formal interview and never conceded to a follow-up, his stories got me started on the right path, long before I had any idea I would be writing this history. When I was distracted by the existing framework and traditional notions of what makes something historically significant (that is, the emphasis on the legal and political milestones of a "nonviolent" movement), he and others kept me on track with their accounts of both dramatic events and daily life. From them, I learned that self-defense was widely accepted and integral to the local movement. For example, when Marjorie Brandon was threatened because all six of her children were desegregating the white school, she put a gun in her purse and continued to attend mass meetings. She took the older children along, while her husband stayed home with the younger ones. Brandon also let the sheriff know that she intended to protect her family and property. When the children involved in school desegregation (including those of Mr. Warner and Mrs. Brandon) were having trouble with fights and threats at school, NAACP president Rev. James Dorsey met with school leaders and explained that if school personnel could not protect the children, the black community would be forced to do it themselves. School officials immediately took steps to limit white harassment, making black intervention unnecessary. In other incidents, Leesco Guster stood guard all night after a Klansman threatened her over the phone and organizer Rudy Shields returned fire when whites tried to drive him out of town by shooting at his temporary home. When white lawmen walked up to First Baptist Church during the regular Tuesday night mass meeting on a hot August evening in 1966, a group of armed black men stepped out of the bushes and confronted them.[4]

Mr. Warner also taught me that sometimes repression backfires. He went

from being a relatively passive bystander to a movement stalwart when white lawmen attacked a crowd of peaceful demonstrators, including his father (who had to be hospitalized for a week). Warner's experience also demonstrated that if blacks threatened retaliation, whites sometimes backed off. When the mayor tried to intimidate the movement with the Klan shortly after Warner became president of the self-defense group, he and others let the mayor know that "if you get one of us, we gon' get one of you all."[5] Because blacks had already made clear their commitment to self-defense, the threat carried some weight and helped keep the Klan from establishing a toehold. The Black Hats, organized by Rudy Shields and led by Mr. Warner, were all male, but as these stories suggest, women were quite active in protecting their homes and families.

Though many see self-defense and nonviolent protest as antithetical, in Claiborne County (and elsewhere throughout the South), most blacks saw no contradiction. Marjorie Brandon was probably typical, explaining that although she carried a gun, she did not want to "do anybody any harm." At the same time, she believed both that the movement "needed" protectors to keep whites from "doing us harm in the church" and that the movement "was nonviolent." Rev. Eddie Walls, who became NAACP president in 1969, asserted, "I always preached nonviolence. . . . [T]he NAACP stood for that nonviolence, like Dr. King always said, nonviolence. . . . But yet and still people always went prepared to take care of themselves."[6]

The Claiborne County movement also included psychological warfare. Playing on white fears, in June 1966 the local self-defense group took the name Deacons (borrowed from the Louisiana group then guarding the Meredith March from Memphis to Jackson) and created a fake minutes book that inflated membership numbers, referenced imaginary weapons caches, and detailed nonexistent plans for acquiring guns from Chicago. In another instance, when a few blacks spread a false rumor that they were going to burn the downtown, highway patrolmen flooded the community and a number of white merchants stayed up all night, armed to the teeth, waiting for "something akin to the Watts Riot." A local leader told an informant, "One thing about these people down here, we can put out anything, and with all that is going on all over the state, they will believe it." Real or implied threats, especially when accompanied by action like shooting back or openly drilling and carrying weapons, could sometimes translate into changes in policy or practice. In this instance, the town aldermen passed an ordinance banning guns



in public and the Claiborne County sheriff implored movement leaders to de-escalate, pledging to enforce the law equitably.[7]

I learned all of these stories and more as I was doing the research for my dissertation. None of them fit easily into the narrative of "*the movement*" as it was presented in the existing top-down literature that focused so heavily on Martin Luther King Jr., nonviolence, national organizations, and the legal and legislative victories that served as movement milestones—the story of the movement that my students still learn, in its most simplistic and, in their words, "sugarcoated" form.[8] In most of that literature, black self-defense was invisible. If it did appear, it was typically portrayed as a momentary aberration or, even more commonly, as part of a declension model that emphasized the "breakdown" of the "nonviolent" movement as it moved North and/or "deteriorated" into Black Power. I say that I *learned* all this about self-defense, but it is probably more accurate to say that I was gathering the evidence and developing the analytical tools that would help me make sense of it. I got quite a bit of help when, as I was writing my dissertation in 1994 and 1995, John Dittmer and Charles Payne published their accounts of the movement in Mississippi. Together with Adam Fairclough's 1995 monograph on Louisiana, their books helped make self-defense visible and demonstrate how integral it was to the story.[9]

Local studies, then (by Dittmer, Payne, Fairclough, and many who have followed their lead), have made it clear that if we look at the movement through the experiences of local people throughout the South, we have to acknowledge and understand the role of self-defense. And, like self-defense, we must also confront and reexamine many other aspects of the movement, including those that are dominant and those that remain invisible as long as we are overwhelmed by King's compelling presence or our attention is focused primarily on Washington. In this way, self-defense is a helpful illustration of the potential and significance of local studies both in providing details *and* in forcing us to rethink assumptions and frameworks.

Although William Chafe's groundbreaking 1980 community study of Greensboro, North Carolina, came a decade and a half earlier, the almost simultaneous publication of the local and state studies by Dittmer, Payne, and Fairclough in the mid-1990s marked a major shift in the field.[10] Collectively, these books called into question many of the top-down generalizations introduced and reinforced by studies of national leaders, major events, and pivotal legal and political milestones. In contrast, they highlighted how acknowledg-

ing and studying the importance of the movement's local, indigenous base fundamentally alters our picture of the movement and its significance. The subsequent decade and a half has seen a proliferation of local studies that range widely in terms of their emphases, approaches, time frames, conclusions, and location (including those focused on counties, states, and portions of states, as well as communities that are urban and rural and situated throughout the country, from the Deep South, to the Northeast, to the West Coast and in between). Collectively this work has laid a foundation for reshaping movement history, for changing our understanding of many things, including chronology, the role of women, the significance of self-defense, the nature and persistence of white resistance, the failures of the federal government, the differences between long-term organizing and short-term mobilizing, the development of Black Power, the importance of economics and human rights issues, and the possibilities and limitations of nonviolent tactics and ideology.

The past thirty years of southern movement-based local studies has clearly had a meaningful impact on the field. Despite this, the insights of the field remain too peripheral to historiographical debates and essentially invisible or nonexistent in popular versions. The pieces in this book literally refocus our attention. The local studies and bottom-up history here, including overviews, syntheses, and case studies, demand a rethinking of *what* and *who* we think is important. The transcripts and pedagogical essays in the final part of the book explore crucial questions of both interpretation and communication. How can we make sure that our history is as accurate as possible *and* that we are able to share it effectively with our students and the larger society?

Since the mid-1980s, historians have fairly consistently acknowledged the pivotal contributions of local studies (and pointed to the importance of more work in this vein). Local studies have also been crucial in raising many issues that are central to today's most visible historiographical discussions. These incorporate debate over chronology (including movement origins and end point), southern distinctiveness (or the relationship between northern and southern movements), definitions (including what we mean by "movement" and how we understand terms like civil rights, black freedom struggle, and Black Power), and the role partisanship or politics should play in historians' work.[11] Ironically, even though local studies have been recognized in virtually all of the significant recent historiographical essays and this approach has been embraced, even by those scholars whose own work fits more readily into the top-down category, the insights of local studies scholarship have been strangely sidelined and are virtually invisible in the specifics of the current arguments and conclusions.[12] For example, although both Charles Eagles and Jacqueline Dowd Hall give a nod to local studies in their influential historiographical overviews, in different ways they each push local studies (and the closely related bottom-up approach) to the side, reinforcing a somewhat top-down angle.[13]



In his 2000 *Journal of Southern History* essay, Eagles argued that historians should pay more attention to white opponents of the movement and extend the chronology backward and forward (beyond the *Brown* to Memphis framework), but he may be best-known for calling out movement historians for, in his words, sharing "a sympathetic attitude toward the quest for civil rights" and, consequently, for "telling the story . . . essentially from the perspective of the movement."[14] He insists that movement historians are not sufficiently "detached," and the result is an "imbalance" that, he suggests, grows out of historians' failure to be "critical of the civil rights movement" or to produce "sympathetic" accounts of segregationists. What is particularly important here is that in pushing this critique Eagles argues that this partisanship has resulted in an "immature" field without enough divisions or debate. He asserts that "the writing on the movement has yet to produce a range of strikingly different interpretive schools or consistently clashing interpretations."[15]

In making this argument, Eagles either does not see or does not acknowledge the extent to which movement historians were (and are) actually offering up competing interpretations, especially related to top-down and bottom-up approaches to the history.[16] Perhaps this has something to do with how he understands the movement and concepts of difference. For example, in praising Charles Marsh's *God's Long Summer* for including "activists on both sides of the freedom struggle," Eagles portrays divisions in fairly superficial ways—white against black, segregationist against movement. This seems to suggest that he sees the movement and its participants as largely monolithic, not acknowledging that there were considerable differences *within* the movement, not just between the movement and its opponents.[17] Perhaps this comes in part from not sufficiently recognizing or engaging in the complexity highlighted in local studies. It is almost as if he is looking for historians to restage something akin to the battles between the Citizens' Council and the NAACP. Short of that, he appears to miss or not take seriously either the differences within the movement or the well-developed debates among movement historians.

Moreover, at least some of what he calls for in 2000 was already present in local studies (and other movement scholarship). Sympathetic to movement goals or not, most of the published work evaluated and critiqued aspects of the movement, often from different angles and leading to different conclusions. In addition, local studies were consistently putting the 1950s and 1960s mass movement in a context that extended well beyond the *Brown* to Memphis time frame, often starting with World War II (or earlier) and extending into the 1970s or 1980s. For most, this chronology was not used to argue for a long continuous movement (something that Eagles appears to be simultaneously seeking and critiquing) but instead provided essential context for exploring precise questions of movement origins and evolution and for examining and understanding the period of the mass movement against the backdrop of long-term struggle and daily life.[18]

Similarly, though I certainly agree with Eagles's call for expanding the research agenda "within the 1954–68 model," his framework for arguing this need is so thoroughly top-down, it is hard to see how it can coexist in an essay that acknowledges Dittmer's and Payne's work on Mississippi and praises Chafe's *Civilities* and Fairclough's *Race & Democracy* as crucial models worthy of emulation. Eagles writes, "Currently scholars typically stress the importance of the NAACP only up through the *Brown* verdict and then shift the focus to Martin Luther King and the development of nonviolent passive resistance; beginning with Freedom Summer in the mid-1960s, SNCC [the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] and more radical activists gain nearly equal billing with King." This summary could come right out of a textbook and ignores virtually all of the complexity of the movement found in the scholarship he surveys, even though it comes several pages after his observation that "diverse later works further expanded coverage and broadened understanding of the black freedom movement beyond the traditional major events, individuals, and institutions."[19] In this regard, Eagles appears to establish a pattern that too many follow. He points to the value and important innovations of local studies work but then proceeds to marginalize them in assessing and synthesizing the field.

Perhaps some of the emerging debate around the long civil rights movement, most explicitly articulated by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall in her 2005 *Journal of American History* essay, is more what Eagles has in mind when he calls for scholarly differences. Hall, despite agreeing with Eagles on the need to extend the chronology and giving considerable attention herself to white resistance (especially in the years before and after the "classical phase" of the movement), would undoubtedly draw his ire for her forthright calls to wrest the movement narrative from political conservatives. In Hall's view, the key to reestablishing the movement's radical vision (and its related contemporary potential) is tied to what she sees as the centrality of "civil rights unionism," a coalition of "laborites, civil rights activists, progressive New Dealers, and black and white radicals, some of whom were associated with the Communist Party." She insists that "civil rights unionism was not just a precursor of the modern civil rights movement. It was its decisive first phase." Moreover, Hall sees the movement fundamentally in terms of "the link between race and class," which, for her, is an explicitly interracial vision rooted in "a national movement with a vital southern wing."[20] In highlighting civil rights unionism, the national nature of racism and civil rights struggle, the links between race and class, and the long-term persistence and effectiveness of white resistance, Hall addresses important points but simultaneously downplays what she refers to as the "classical" phase of the movement, the southern struggle from the *Brown* decision to the Voting Rights Act. In the process, she implies that the corrective to the conservative master narrative and to, in her words, the important work of making "civil rights harder" lie outside this aspect of the history.[21]



The implications of Hall's emphasis are reinforced by her contested claim that the southern movement of the 1950s and 1960s emerged "largely from the prophetic tradition within the black church," her assertion that the Cold War "diverted the civil rights movement into new channels," and her persistent focus on, it seems, *everything but the movement.* (She spends approximately three pages of thirty-one on the classical southern movement.) Whether intentional or not, together these contentions and emphases seem to imply that the southern movement of the 1950s and 1960s, not just the normative portrayal of it, was fairly narrow and conservative, focused primarily on pursuing the "civil rights" of political access and desegregation, not human rights or economic issues. Aside from a few passing references, Hall generally does not engage with community studies (or much of the literature of the 1950s and 1960s movement). As a result, she essentially fails to explore the ways that community studies and bottom-up history themselves offer significant critiques of the normative history and illuminate a messier, more complex, and more radical movement *centered within* the timeline of the southern classical phase.[22]

While local studies are obviously not Hall's particular interest or focus, they do provide a critical lens for evaluating various ways of framing and understanding the movement. It is important, for example, to consider how the six points Hall identifies as central to the long civil rights movement framing look when we turn our attention to the Mississippi movement, as portrayed by Dittmer, Payne, Todd Moye, Chana Kai Lee, Kay Mills, and others. How does the long civil rights conceptualization fit with our picture of the Alabama movement—in cities and in the rural—developed by Hasan Kwame Jeffries, Cynthia Griggs Fleming, Glen Eskew, Robert Norrell, and J. Mills Thornton? Or the movements in Georgia, Louisiana, Memphis, North Carolina, Maryland, Florida, and Kentucky chronicled by Stephen Tuck, Winston Grady-Willis, Adam Fairclough, Greta de Jong, Laurie Green, William Chafe, Christina Greene, Timothy Tyson, Charles McKinney, Peter Levy, Glenda Rabby, and Tracy K'Meyer?[23]

One of Hall's points is that a number of factors have, in her words, whitened "the memory and historiography of the Left." And yet, her own prioritizing of civil rights unionism itself leads to a whiter, more interracial history than you will find in virtually any southern-based local studies of the freedom movement.[24] Moreover, as any number of people have observed, one of the important contributions local studies have made to the historiography is to highlight some of the problems with a rigid adherence to a *Brown* to Selma (or Memphis) framework that obscures earlier roots and continuing struggle—the ways that the movement connects to what came before and after.

Consider Todd Moye's *Let the People Decide* on Sunflower County, Mississippi. Moye begins his account in the early twentieth century and extends it into the 1980s.[25] In this instance, his chronology is useful for challenging the master narrative and for adding to our understanding of how black organizing *before Brown* (both the year before and the decades before) helped inspire white organizing *after Brown*, while also highlighting the distinctions between the 1960s and 1980s movements in the community. Though his work is not confined to either a *Brown* to Selma timeline or a narrow definition of "civil rights," neither Moye's longer chronology nor his conclusions about Sunflower County fit easily with Hall's framework. For example, as Moye points out, the Sunflower movement was more about "human rights than civil rights" and this "radicalism" emerged from the lived experience of southern African Americans, including Fannie Lou Hamer. Moye writes that



Hamer's "first priority as a public figure was to make sure that her neighbors, many of them desperately poor and ill-educated, had clothes to wear, access to decent health care, and enough food to eat. As she understood it, having the bare material essentials of life was a human right that could be guaranteed only through political organizing in the political economy she inhabited." Similarly, Hasan Kwame Jeffries's work on Lowndes County, Alabama, makes it clear that we must take seriously rural southern African Americans' own traditions and conceptions of freedom as we define and analyze the origins and trajectory of movement radicalism. Though blacks in Lowndes were exposed to the New Deal coalition of civil rights unionists through the Sharecroppers' Union and the community's strong ties to Detroit, the local movement's radicalism was deeply rooted in what Jeffries identifies as "'freedom rights'—the assortment of civil and human rights that emancipated African Americans identified as the crux of freedom."[26]

Although they approach it from a somewhat different perspective than Hall, Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodward have also pushed to extend our sense of the boundaries and contours of the movement. In *Freedom North* and *Groundwork*, they highlight local studies and emphasize movements outside the South. Theoharis, in particular, has urged scholars to reconsider the declension model and take the nonsouthern struggle seriously. In work published before and after Hall's call for a long civil rights approach, Theoharis has drawn attention to the pervasiveness of racism, the overlapping range of tactics and ideologies that populated black activism in the South and North over extended periods of time, and the potential downfalls of ignoring the state's role in perpetuating "de facto" segregation.[27]

Sundiata Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang took up a number of the threads in this debate in a 2007 *Journal of African American History* essay. Responding primarily to Hall, Theoharis, Woodard, and Peniel Joseph (who has coined the term "Black Power studies" and, mirroring Hall, is putting forth a vision of a long Black Power movement), they made a compelling argument for more careful attention to context and for the importance of time and place. They assert that there is, in fact, something distinctive about the southern movement during the classical phase and that historians would do well to distinguish between the civil rights movement (with its mass activism) and its antecedents and legacies.[28]

I agree with much of Hall's compelling critique of the normative narrative, share her urgency about the need to replace it with a more accurate

"harder civil rights," and greatly appreciate the way she and others (especially Theoharis and Woodard) insist that we expand and refine our understanding of broad spacial and chronological context. It is indisputable that the problems of white supremacy were (and remain) national. This is well-documented in our nation's history, in the specifics of the burgeoning scholarship on the North, West, and Midwest, *and* in what southern-based histories reveal about the vast limitations to the national commitment to racial equality and economic justice.[29] But does this mean that what the public and scholars initially saw as a southern-based mass movement is better understood as one national in scope? Is there really a compelling argument for situating the mass movement's "first phase" in the 1930s, as opposed to the 1950s, or World War II or the moment of emancipation? Is it appropriate to locate movement radicalism in interracial "civil rights unionism" rather than in ideologies developed within black southern communities? Have we addressed sufficiently the key issues raised by considering top-down and bottom-up interpretations, or sufficiently incorporated local studies into our assessments and considerations?[30]

In fact, it seems clear that we have hardly begun to incorporate the insights of local studies into the movement's "big picture" at the popular *or* scholarly level. And while the local studies angle is insufficient on its own, it is crucial to any complex and realistic portrayal of what Clayborne Carson described as the "black freedom struggle."[31] I think the starting place for tackling problems with the master narrative and the (mis)use of that history actually comes from *within* the scholarship on the "classical phase," especially local studies that are grounded in the particulars of time and place, but also those works that explore the full range of movement topics from the vantage point of the bottom up. Part of the answer to Hall's call to make "civil rights harder[,] harder to cast as a satisfying morality tale[, and] most of all, harder to simplify, appropriate, and contain," must come, not primarily from privileging "civil rights unionism" or the Communist Party-influenced left labor coalition that she highlights, but from greater engagement with community studies, with works that are centered on (without being confined to) the classical phase.[32] As we consider various theories and possible frameworks, I think we need to hold them up to the light of local studies (individually and collectively) and, with local studies at the center, add up similarities, make sense of differences and change over time, evaluate the distinctions of time and place, and test out theories.



Perhaps now, with thirty years of local studies scholarship to draw on, we might consider revisiting and updating Steven Lawson's call for interactive movement history. Since we now know quite a bit more about the intersections between local and national in particular places, we should do more to develop an interactive synthesis, one that seriously engages the collective insights of local studies, while simultaneously considering the full range of movement-related scholarship—from top-down studies of leaders, organizations, and federal (in)action to those works addressing previously neglected or distorted topics, including analyses of women/gender, religion, segregationists, the role and impact of class, northern bases of structural inequality, community-based Black Power, civil rights unionists, and much more. As we work on creating a meaningful synthesis, we might also do well to consider the implications of Clayborne Carson's argument, made more than twenty years ago, that the phrase "black freedom struggle" was more appropriate than "civil rights movement" for accurately representing the full range of tactics, ideologies, visions, and radicalism of that intense period of southern mass movement activism *within* the 1954 to 1965 or 1968 period. While we certainly should not confine ourselves to a narrow look at the South in this period, neither should we ignore the centrality of the southern movement in the "classical" period. It must be at the heart of an accurate and usable movement history.[33]

Even a very brief look at William Chafe's seminal work on Greensboro, published in 1980, and Hasan Kwame Jeffries's July 2009 monograph on Lowndes County, Alabama, illustrate the need and potential of this type of narrative. Both books offer compelling models for looking at events of major national significance in the context of particular communities over an extended period of time. In the national story, Greensboro features polite, well-dressed college students who, on the surface, were seeking integration and the right to buy a Coke and a hamburger. On the other hand, you have Lowndes County, home to the snarling black panther and base for launching Stokely Carmichael's and SNCC's call for Black Power. In these superficial characterizations, Greensboro and Lowndes represent very different aspects of the normative national narrative.

Although these two communities *are* different in significant ways and point to the critical role of context, both places and both stories share a good bit. Both highlight the importance of communities and generations of resistance, the persistence and adaptability of white supremacy, and the ways

African Americans shaped and revised tactics in response to particular contexts/situations. In both places, the movement was based on a foundation of struggle that emerged in brief periods of mass movement, during and after the typical chronology. In both instances, the local movement worked for civil and human rights, what Jeffries calls "freedom rights." (Lowndes County tax assessor candidate Alice Moore campaigned on a platform of "tax the rich to feed the poor," while Greensboro African Americans highlighted the centrality of economic issues decade after decade after decade.)[34] And in both cases blacks insisted on self-determination and refused to accept white supremacy, whether it came cloaked in the civility of Greensboro or the violence of Bloody Lowndes. Moreover, both books add to our understanding of Black Power. Chafe provides not only one of the earliest, but one of the best explorations of community-based Black Power, taking us from the iconic sit-in moment into the mass demonstrations of 1963 and the late 1960s community organizing around housing, economics, and cultural autonomy. For Jeffries, Black Power is what draws the national attention. Putting SNCC's often-mentioned but little understood June 1966 call for Black Power in the context of the group's organizing work in Lowndes County, he illustrates how SNCC's Black Power program drew on the organization's strong ties to indigenous black communities and strategic efforts to translate the Voting Rights Act into meaningful political power in Lowndes County.[35] We need a synthesis that can convey all of what is important about the movements in Greensboro and Lowndes, not just what we get in narrow and typically distorted snapshots. The movements in Greensboro and Lowndes were national and local, unique and typical, and (as portrayed by Chafe and Jeffries), they represent well the potential of a synthesis that seriously engages with the insights of local studies scholarship and why it is so essential.

In fact, as Hall notes, these issues have considerable significance beyond historical debate. While we scholars might have differences over the centrality of the Communist Party-inspired Left, the extent to which the struggle in the South and North are similar and different, whether the World War II era is a precursor or part of the movement proper, and exactly how something we call the "civil rights movement" relates to something we call the "Black Freedom Struggle," our students and the larger public are largely divorced from any meaningful awareness of either the "classic" or the "long" civil rights movement. In the fifteen or so years I have been teaching at SUNY Geneseo, there has been a disturbing consistency and persistence in what my



students believe they know about the civil rights movement. In fact, today, in 2010, despite the explosion of scholarship that has added more and more complexity to our understanding of the movement, my students' perceptions seem more, not less, wedded to a very superficial, very normative view, one that helps set up and reinforces contemporary talk of a "post-racial America."

Like most undergraduates, my students arrive in class with a simplistic mythology that a former student captured perfectly with this short synopsis. "One day a nice old lady, Rosa Parks, sat down on a bus and got arrested. The next day, Martin Luther King Jr. stood up and the Montgomery Bus Boycott followed. And sometime later King delivered his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech and segregation was over. This is how the story was taught to me."[36] Another student extends the common story into the Black Power era: "Martin Luther King was a wonderful leader who single-handedly changed the course of history. Malcolm X was another leader, but a different kind of leader who hated white citizens and whose militant perspectives were dangerous."[37] When my students and I analyze survey texts and movement overviews, we see very little evidence that they are influenced by local studies and bottom-up history.[38] Moreover, as Jeanne Theoharis's essay on the memorializations of Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King makes clear, our students' high school history is amply reinforced by the popular culture (see chapter 13). Not just students, but journalists and politicians, including U.S. presidents, Cabinet members, and members of Congress, share (and help perpetuate) a distorted, mythological version of the movement untouched by local studies (or much other) scholarship.

Many of the most powerful members of our society, including policymakers and Supreme Court justices, act on these distortions in ways that reinforce and extend centuries-old inequalities. For example, a majority on the Supreme Court seems unable to distinguish between legally-required segregation in the service of white supremacy and race-conscious policies designed to offset the pernicious legacies of state-sponsored inequality.[39] Moreover, for many, Barack Obama's election serves as conclusive evidence that America has become a post-racial society, the fitting end to the triumphant story of a heroic, interracial America responding to the moral imperative of a King-led nonviolent movement to eliminate all vestiges of racial discrimination.[40] This distorted history lives side-by-side with a distorted present, allowing far too many people to ignore the extent to which statistics (and qualitative evidence) on race, income, wealth, education, health, health care,

and housing point to the persistence of white advantage. Moreover, Justice Sonia Sotomayor's nomination illustrates that, for many, white and male is still normative. Her perspective, as a Latina, is both visible and suspect in a way that Justice John Robert's white, male perspective is not. That is, the ways her experiences have shaped her perspective are perceived by many as being inherently political, while the experiences that have shaped her white, male counterparts are perceived as neutral, invisible, and not so much irrelevant as appropriate.

A recent incident at SUNY Geneseo (which has been replicated with variation at institutions across the country), offers one small example of how these historical and contemporary omissions and inaccuracies intersect and impact individual and institutional actions. When black students protested white students' use of blackface caricatures for Halloween (in the context of other racist incidents and pervasive "ghetto theme" parties"), many white students responded with surprise and, in some cases, anger. Many in our community, including some faculty, defended the white students, suggesting that they were not responsible, as their actions came from ignorance, not malice. While it is true that many of our students, whether white, black, Asian, Asian American, Latino/a, or multiracial, are poorly educated, even miseducated, about race, it is also true that many white students (and the adults in their lives) are deeply vested in maintaining their ignorance and preserving the myths that smooth the way for their sense that it is not whites, but African Americans and other racial minorities who experience racial privilege today. And for many, that certainty is grounded in and reinforced by the mythologies of the civil rights movement. As one student explained, "[W]e truly were raised in what we were taught was a post-racial world" where "racism is a quenched evil."[41]

While many college faculty, administrators, and students deplore explicitly racist name-calling, blackface, and offensive imagery in student parties, far fewer understand or are willing to examine how these outward manifestations are deeply connected to long-standing policies and practices, many of which continue to privilege curriculum, admissions, and hiring priorities that reinforce white access and a white-dominated worldview. Too many faculty, staff, and administrators, even those who are politically liberal or were young people during the movement years, readily accept and act on versions of the mythologies that so inform our students.[42]

As scholars and teachers, it is our job to give our students the best critical



thinking tools we can fashion as all of us confront an increasingly complex, multiracial society and world, with challenging problems grounded in differences in religion, race, worldview, and resources. Too often, young (white) people are taught that they have no responsibility for the white supremacy in our country's past, while being encouraged to believe that our society has fully addressed any problems associated with slavery or Jim Crow. This reinforces white students' sense of privilege and leaves all students ill-equipped to understand, much less work to address, the persistent inequalities that make a truly "post-racial" society impossible. For many students, learning a more accurate and complex history, especially one that looks at the civil rights movement from a bottom-up perspective, is an essential starting point for a more realistic approach. This history can provide the background that is crucial for understanding contemporary issues, while exposing students to a world beyond their immediate experience, and with it, the opportunity to understand more fully the power of perspective. (See the conclusion for more on teaching movement history.)

It seems imperative, then, that we take seriously the problem of conveying more of what historians know about the movement to young people and a general audience. To do this well, I think we must put local studies at the center of our historiographical analysis and begin developing a movement synthesis that truly engages with this scholarship. But, I believe we must also expand the conversation beyond the confines of the Ivory Tower. It is too important, too essential to our country's "racial literacy" and future, to be limited to academic conferences and esoteric scholarly debates. If we develop the history (and the strategies for sharing it widely) in conversation with movement activists, as well as teachers and students (from the earliest grades through graduate school, including those connected to formal educational institutions and those grounded more in community organizations and cultural arts centers), we will have a better chance of getting the history right and of making it relevant and accessible to many more people.

Of course, not everyone agrees that we should listen closely to the insights and perspectives of movement activists. In the midst of his overall criticism of movement scholars for being too sympathetic to the movement, Charles Eagles singled out Charles Payne. After observing that Payne reached "out to include the otherwise ignored and forgotten," Eagles asserted that Payne relied too uncritically on oral history, concluding, "Just repeating such stories, however compelling they may be, makes for incomplete history."[43] Alan

Draper, in a joint review of Payne's *I've Got the Light of Freedom* and Dittmer's *Local People*, makes an almost identical argument, asserting, "[B]oth Dittmer and Payne are uncritical of their sources and, consequently, of their subject. They both use oral histories and published reminiscences by civil rights activists extensively, so that civil rights activists effectively shape the history of the movement they made."[44] Draper concludes that Dittmer's is "a partisan account," while Payne "is so eager to offer a history that instructs, he is sometimes guilty of ignoring inconvenient facts that get in the way of the lesson he wants to impart."[45]

Few would argue with Draper's assertion that "[h]istorians need to examine the testimony of Movement activists skeptically, test whether activists interpreted their experience accurately, . . . and not prejudge the evidence."[46] Yet there are several somewhat interrelated issues that neither Draper nor Eagles (or others) acknowledge. First, they see some perspectives and voices, typically those that are at odds with the normative view (which tend to be the SNCC and local voices), as more suspect than others. Like those who identify Justice Sotomayor's Latina perspective as problematic while not even noticing Justice Robert's white male perspective, the critiques offered by Draper and Eagles, though framed as objective or neutral, emerge from a normative orientation. They fit easily with the larger political trends where top-down or white or male (or whatever the elite perspective is) is considered objective. It is essential that we recognize that *all* history, not just bottom-up movement history, is political. It is political in what we center and consider important, in the sources we use and prioritize, in the questions we ask and try to answer. What these critics ignore, then, is that the decision to rely primarily or exclusively on the traditional, written sources produced by elites is just as political as drawing heavily on and taking seriously oral history. Disregarding or downplaying the accounts of SNCC workers and their local allies is as political as the decision to listen to them. To take seriously the stories of movement participants, to engage in thoughtful discussion and exchange, does not require suspending the standards of scholarship.[47] Moreover, you can believe in racial justice, that our history matters to contemporary issues, and still produce rigorous and sound scholarship about the movement.

Second, it is not just that historical actors have important stories and details to share about their experiences, but they can often make insightful analytical contributions to framing the history they participated in. For example, in a 1978 interview, Bernice Johnson Reagon, who joined the Albany, Georgia, movement as a college student and went on to work with SNCC and earn a PhD in history (among many other things), offered an early and still relevant critique of the scholarship on the Albany Movement. She explains, "When I read about the Albany Movement, as people have written about it, I don't recognize it. They add up stuff that was not central to what happened." For her, the common emphasis on the local movement's meaning for Martin Luther King Jr., the tactics of white police chief Laurie Pritchett, and a short-term assessment of "specific achievements" was "not central." Instead, what mattered to her was that the Albany Movement gave "[me] the power to challenge *any* line that limits me. . . . And that is what it meant to me, just really gave me a real chance to fight and to struggle and not respect boundaries that put me down."[48] Here, in the late 1970s, before Chafe's pioneering community study, before Dittmer's and Payne's work on Mississippi, and when the field of civil rights movement history was in its infancy, Reagon (speaking from the vantage point of a participant—albeit one who had a PhD in history), identified many of the crucial differences in framing and emphasis that have come to reflect top-down versus bottom-up debates among movement scholars.



As Todd Moye's essay on local studies (see chapter 5) points out, these divergent perspectives on Albany persist and Reagon probably still does not recognize or agree with most of what has been put forward by scholars. But let's be clear: this is not simply a case of one (or many) activist/participant(s) disagreeing with an "objective" historical assessment. The dominant scholarly interpretation that emphasizes Albany as a failure (and learning experience) for King is one that closely follows the perspective held by King and others in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). And this, of course, is the version that makes it into movement syntheses and textbooks. But what makes that framework, that perspective, the correct one? Can we say, without question, that what makes Albany most significant is Chief Pritchett's nonbrutality, the federal government's inaction, and the lack of immediate, tangible victories? Is it accurate or objective to decenter and even disregard Reagon's view of the Albany Movement, one that focuses on its meaning for the many hundreds of local people who stepped up and provided the impetus for King to come in the first place?[49]

And if historians prioritize the movement's meaning for local participants, like those hundreds of African Americans in Albany who decided to directly challenge institutional white supremacy (even when it almost certainly meant going to jail), are they to be dismissed for simply accepting or

following an activists' perspective? The fact that the dominant, visible portrait of Albany is so consistent with King's and SCLC's view (one set of historical actors) reinforces just how much diversity there was *within* the movement. It also suggests that the issue for those critics is the bottom-up framing itself, not that scholars' interpretations are sometimes similar to those of activists. The problem for these critics, then, comes when scholars' interpretations too closely match those of a *particular subset* of activists, the ones who themselves have a bottom-up perspective. So it is historians who ask the questions and seek out the evidence that puts local people (along with their on-the-ground organizers) at the center of the story who are perceived as political and as too uncritically accepting of the accounts of activists.

In addition to pointing out that we need to be clear about what the objection really is, I think this example also illustrates that, more often than not, the problem is not that historians' scholarly standards are undermined by taking the views of activists/participants seriously, but that in our failure to hear the contributions activists have to make, our histories contribute to distorting the movement they helped create. It is not just arbitrary, but actually counterproductive to advocate for an immutable divide between historians and activists in constructing accurate movement history. In fact, I would contend that in some instances the vision and framing of activists/historical participants can help identify and counter historians' own unacknowledged or unseen biases, offering analytical insights that can help us more effectively make sense of all of the available evidence. My argument is not that either activists or scholars are always right or always wrong or that oral history is always the best source or the bottom-up perspective is always superior. As Charles Payne writes in the preface to the 2007 edition of *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, "[E]very way of seeing is a way of not seeing."[50] What I believe is that in working together, effectively using the fullest range of sources available, and being very aware of the consequences of our choices around framing and emphasis, we have the potential for a richer, more meaningful history that is both accurate and usable.[51]

Self-defense offers a good illustration of the importance of taking seriously activist voices and the evolving intersection between scholarship, firsthand perspectives, and popular culture. Even as the first generation of movement scholars were typically ignoring, overlooking, downplaying, or misinterpreting self-defense, activists were including it in their stories, their memoirs, and their oral history accounts. Then, and even today, these activist discussions of self-defense remain among the most nuanced and accurate available. I think my own experience in learning about self-defense is useful. It is not just that I was exposed to self-defense through personal stories when it was largely invisible in the scholarship, it is that what I learned from the stories of people I knew, the formal oral history interviews I conducted, and reading published oral histories and memoirs was as complex, nuanced, and accurate as anything I have read since from scholars.



This is not to say that scholars, led by John Dittmer, Charles Payne, Adam Fairclough, and Timothy Tyson, have not made important contributions in analyzing self-defense in terms of the broad patterns and important variations, all while grounding it in local, national, and international contexts. But it is to say that both the *details and the analysis* in the firsthand accounts hold up and are entirely consistent with the very best of the existing scholarship. Moreover, though we now have good work on self-defense, especially in biographies and community studies, the story is not simply one of ever-improving scholarship. Perhaps in their zeal to correct egregious earlier omissions, some of the more recent scholars who have focused explicitly on self-defense have gone too far in overemphasizing the centrality of a certain kind of visible and confrontational self-defense. Some of this work tends to valorize "armed resistance" and denigrate nonviolence.[52] (See my essay on the historiography of self-defense, chapter 7.)

And yet, as angry as many movement participants were with the ways that self-defense was obscured (in favor of a moralistic nonviolence) in both the early scholarship and the popular culture, they have largely failed to embrace this new wave of scholarship, which has its own distortions. The accounts of activist/participants remain consistent *and* point the way toward a more perceptive and nuanced framing for addressing the full range of movement tactics and philosophies. For example, Charles (Charlie) Cobb Jr., a SNCC field-worker who spent several years in Sunflower County, Mississippi, in the early 1960s, explains that self-defense was just a given. It was ubiquitous and local blacks felt no need to even discuss it. They had guns and they were going to use them to protect themselves. Period. But he also insists that "it wasn't the wild west." Self-defense was about "defense" and about providing the protection and space people needed to do the political work of voter registration and building up black institutions.[53] While his insights are reflected in local studies, they are lost in top-down works that generally see the movement either in terms of nonviolence alone or nonviolence versus

self-defense, a framework that is misleading and inadequate, obscuring quite a bit of movement work that does not easily fit in either category.

In my view, the best analytical framework for addressing the problems that emerge from this dichotomy comes, not from any of the many scholars who have studied and written about the topic, but from SNCC staffer Worth Long. He asserts that the movement was more "un-violent" than nonviolent. Robert (Bob) Moses, another SNCC organizer, makes a related point in insisting that the voter registration work that dominated the Mississippi movement did not require nonviolence and did not employ nonviolent tactics. At the same time, he and others sought to limit any kind of direct conflict or confrontation that would undermine their ability to function. This is essentially what Long was describing, a movement that was more un-violent than nonviolent. And even though self-defense was pervasive, it was practical rather than provocative.[54] These activists have provided scholars, if we are willing to listen, a useful blueprint and way of rethinking the intersections between various movement approaches and philosophies (and the ways that people understood them on the ground). These insights, this nuance, belong at the heart of our scholarship (not because it comes from activists, but because it is effective) and must be part of any attempt at synthesis.

Meanwhile, as we work on that synthesis, how can we communicate this complexity to our students and a popular audience? When I began teaching, the popular 1988 film *Mississippi Burning* was one of my students' most important touchstones for the movement. I initially struggled to effectively combat this egregiously normative and racist depiction of the movement, including its caricatures of white violence and complete obliteration of black agency. The only black character who picked up a gun was hanged for his efforts. At the same time, I found that my students were really wedded to the movement as nonviolent and many unquestioningly bought into a racist double standard that essentially expected African Americans to "earn" their (Constitutional) rights by remaining nonviolent (in word, thought, and deed). My students clung to this viewpoint no matter how much they learned about the violence movement activists faced from the Klan, the police, and their neighbors, and no matter how much they learned about the failure of the local, state, and federal law(men) to provide protection or prosecute perpetrators. I had little success making a dent in the views they had so thoroughly absorbed from the media, their social studies textbooks, and the New York State Regents curriculum *until* I put together a set of oral history interviews, primarily from rural Mississippians. These firsthand accounts, far more than my explanations or the scholarly passages I had assigned, got my students' attention and convinced them to use their own analytical skills to think critically about both the movie and the racist, "sugar-coated" history they had been exposed to. Through reading these firsthand accounts, my students were able to begin using the specific details and stories to grapple effectively with the larger concepts that were at odds with so much that they believed.



I still remember quite clearly, though, the many students who insisted that we had no business holding *Mississippi Burning* up to the light of historical analysis and, furthermore, that there was no other way to make a dramatic, compelling movie about the movement. Imagine how much easier my teaching became when the TNT (SNCC) movie, *Freedom Song*, became available in 2000. Made at least partially in response to *Mississippi Burning*, *Freedom Song* draws extensively on first-hand accounts, existing and new oral history interviews, and even community-based discussions about the history portrayed in the film. Former SNCC staff were crucial in choosing and framing the story and in connecting the writer/director with many of the local people who are portrayed in the film.[55] The result is both excellent history and a compelling story. Through focusing on SNCC's early organizing efforts in southwest Mississippi, *Freedom Song* brings to life many aspects of the movement, including—to mention just two relevant and interrelated examples—the realities of white violence and black self-defense. While *Mississippi Burning* assaults the viewer with scene after scene of hooded Klansmen beating and burning African Americans who cringe and run, *Freedom Song* shows that blacks were organizing and acting publicly, while armed and prepared to defend themselves at home. And, following the historical truth, it also illustrates the institutional nature of white violence. The deadliest attack in southwest Mississippi did not come from the Klan under the cloak of darkness, but from state legislator E. H. Hurst, who murdered Herbert Lee, an NAACP activist and farmer, in broad daylight. *Freedom Song*, then, shows the reality of white violence and black self-defense, without making a caricature of the one or glamorizing the other. *Freedom Song* also makes it clear that the costs of fighting for freedom were high, and in southwest Mississippi in the early 1960s the victory came through individual and community transformation, not a shoot-out at the O.K. Corral.

Created through a collaboration between movement activists, scholars,

and Hollywood stars, *Freedom Song* offers one model for how to present good scholarship and a compelling story in an accessible medium. My students love *Freedom Song and* they learn as much or more from it as they do from the more traditional primary and secondary sources I assign. (They learn best when they watch the film in conjunction with some reading.) While I would like to see everyone in our country read a couple dozen of my favorite movement books, I think a good start would be to use *Freedom Song* as the basis for what middle and high school students learn about the movement.

Through a variety of emphases and formats, the contributors to this book join the ongoing historiographical discussions about how best to *interpret* the significance of the movement and offer possibilities for how best to effectively *communicate* it beyond a small group of specialist scholars. This book illustrates that we have much more to learn about movement history and that local studies remain central to our still growing field. Scholarship that draws on oral history and activist insights (along with traditional sources) and that brings the specificity of time and place into dialogue with broad themes and a national context is crucial as we continue to engage in scholarly debates, evaluate newer conceptual frameworks, and do the related work of figuring out how to replace the superficial, sugar-coated narrative that persists in the popular imagination.

The ongoing significance of the movement and movement history may have been more immediately obvious twenty-five years ago in Mississippi than it is today in upstate New York. But as Barack Obama's election reinforces and intensifies talk about a "post-racial America," I think my students (and others) need this history every bit as much as my classmates and I did. And, based on their comments and reflections, many of them agree. This book will help ensure that scholars' history of the movement is as accurate and complex as possible and that more of what scholars know reaches students and the rest of our society. In bringing together syntheses and case studies, as well as interviews and pieces that address theoretical and practical issues, the contributors to this book illustrate the continuing importance of bottom-up, local studies and of expanding the conversation to include scholars, teachers, and activists.

Part 1 brings together case studies by John Dittmer, Amy Nathan Wright, Charles W. McKinney Jr., and Laurie Green, illustrating some of the crucial lessons of local studies and offering a glimpse of how much more we have to learn. John Dittmer's discussion of what the federal government did and did



not do in relation to the Mississippi movement offers a forceful rebuttal to the celebratory story that is so central to my students' mythology. Amy Nathan Wright uses a case study of the Mule Train from Marks, Mississippi, to the nation's capitol (part of the Poor People's Campaign that King was working on at his death) to explore a movement that was simultaneously local and national. Drawing on the Wilson, North Carolina, movement, Charles McKinney makes an argument about the connections between gender and what is defined as "the movement." He finds that in Wilson, a traditional narrative centered around male leadership and narrowly defined civil rights—voting and desegregation—obscures the late 1960s community organizing that relied on the leadership and activism of women and that focused on decent housing and other issues more explicitly connected to quality of life. Laurie Green draws both on her work on Memphis and that of other scholars to expose the ways that gender has shaped the civil rights narrative. In addition to revisiting leadership and the complex interactions between local and national, she offers new insight into the "politics of protection" through an examination of the intersections between gender and racial violence, health, hunger, and poverty. At the heart of Green's argument is the importance of grappling with the complexity of gender and shifting the frame so that women become more central to our analysis, not just fuzzy objects on the periphery.

Part 2 brings together a series of essays that draw collectively on local studies to offer overviews and critiques of significant topics. Todd Moye combines a personal account of how he came to write a book on the civil rights and white resistance movements in Sunflower County, Mississippi, with an overview of some of the most significant themes to come out of local studies scholarship. Among other things, he suggests that we need to acknowledge that the movement was probably "less incrementalist, more revolutionary" and "less successful than we like to tell ourselves."[56] Wesley Hogan's essay "Freedom Now: Nonviolence in the Southern Freedom Movement, 1960–64" and mine on self-defense provide complementary reevaluations of these important aspects of the movement, how they are interrelated, and the ways historians have addressed them.

Part 3 addresses methodology and theory, focusing on the ways we interpret and communicate movement history. Hasan Kwame Jeffries offers a compelling analysis of the ways that political cartoons addressing Barack Obama's presidential campaign reflect common distortions of movement

history. He gives us a glimpse of what is obscured and why it matters. Among other things, he touches briefly on the ways popular (and some historical) portrayals of white resistance too often frame it as isolated, individual, and distinct from larger white communities and those whites in power. The same is typically true of Black Power, which is too often marginalized and caricatured as angry and counterproductive, with no attention to its strong grounding in African American history and communities. There are two edited interviews with SNCC staffer Judy Richardson who, in addition to her movement activism, has done extensive work documenting and teaching movement history. The first interview highlights her involvement with the making of *Eyes on the Prize*. The second interview explores her approach and priorities in sharing movement history with teachers and popular audiences. Jeanne Theoharis's analysis of the popular response to the deaths of Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King provides a clear illustration of the mythology that passes for movement history. She also discusses some of what that myth obscures, about Parks and King and the movement more broadly. In "Telling Freedom Stories from the Inside Out: Internal Politics and Movement Cultures in SNCC and the Black Panther Party," Wesley Hogan and Robyn C. Spencer write in conversation with each other about the intersections between the personal and political and about the challenges and importance of unearthing movement culture. Charles M. Payne has contributed edited transcripts of two presentations from a Local Studies Conference at Geneseo in March 2006. In "Sexism is a helluva thing," he offers some cautions about the questions we ask, the sources we use, and the assumptions we make, especially as they relate to gender and radicalism. "Why Study the Movement?" is drawn from his closing keynote, a wide-ranging discussion that focused on teaching and learning movement history, movement values, and the movement's relevance to contemporary issues. It includes reflections from many of the conference participants. The book closes with my essay, "Doesn't everybody want to grow up to be Ella Baker?" I draw on students' reactions to the March 2006 Local Studies conference at Geneseo to reflect on some of the possibilities of teaching bottom-up history and the importance of not just what, but how we teach. Taken together, these pieces force a rethinking from scholars and teachers alike. What does the scholarship tell us about the history? What is most important for us to convey in our teaching? How does our understanding of the movement impact our actions today?



## NOTES

1. Emilye Crosby, *A Little Taste of Freedom: The Black Freedom Struggle in Claiborne County, Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 127, 130, 138, 183, 187, 235–7, 240, 255.

2. Some of the early published primary sources that discuss self-defense in the movement include: James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Seattle: Open Hand, 1972, 1985); Howell Raines, *My Soul Is Rested: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement in the Deep South* (New York: Penguin, 1977, 1983); Rural Organizing and Cultural Center, *Minds Stayed on Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle in the Rural South: An Oral History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991); John R. Salter Jr., *Jackson, Mississippi: An American Chronicle of Struggle and Schism* (Hicksville, N.Y.: Exposition Press, 1979); James Farmer, *Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement* (Westminster, Md.: Arbor House, 1985; New York: Penguin, 1986); Tracy Sugarman, *Stranger at the Gates: A Summer in Mississippi* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966); Cleveland Sellers, *The River of No Return: The Autobiography of a Black Militant and the Life and Death of* SNCC (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990; reprint of 1973 edition); Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954–1990* (New York: Penguin, 1991). Some of the early secondary works that contained brief references to self-defense include: David R. Colburn, *Racial Change & Community Crisis, St. Augustine, Florida, 1877–1980* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1985, 1991); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle:* SNCC *and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); George Lipsitz, *A Life in the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–1963* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988); Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

3. Two of the most important boycott demands were for "courtesy titles" and better jobs. By the time the Supreme Court ruled in *Claiborne Hardware v.* NAACP, many African Americans held jobs as cashiers, while merchants and other whites were typically careful to use courtesy titles in addressing blacks. See Crosby, *A Little Taste of Freedom*.

4. Crosby, *A Little Taste of Freedom*, 162, 163, 180; Emilye Crosby, "Common Courtesy: The Civil Rights Movement in Claiborne County, Mississippi" (PhD diss., Indiana University, Bloomington, 1995), 301.

5. Crosby, *A Little Taste of Freedom*, 127, 167, esp. 168.

6. Ibid., 169–70.

7. Ibid., 179, 183–6, esp. 184, 185.

8. Kristen Geroult reflection, Hist266, Spring 2009 (this and other student reflections in author's possession).

9. John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915–1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

10. William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

11. Clayborne Carson and Steven Lawson were among the first to highlight local studies in historiographical reviews. See Clayborne Carson, "Civil Rights Reform and the Black Freedom Struggle," in *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, ed. Charles W. Eagles (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 19–32; Steven F. Lawson, "Comment," in *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, 32–37; Steven F. Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," *American Historical Review* 96 (April 1991): 456–71; Steven F. Lawson, "Freedom Down to Now" (addition to "Freedom Then, Freedom Now") in Steven F. Lawson, *Civil Rights Crossroads: Nation, Community, and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2005), 19–28.

For the most influential and visible historiographical essays in the past decade, see Charles W. Eagles, "Toward New Histories of the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Southern History* 66 (Nov. 2000): 815–48; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91 (March 2005): 1233–63; Jeanne Theoharis, "Black Freedom Studies: Re-imagining and Redefining the Fundamentals," *History Compass* 4, no. 2 (2006): 348–67; Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Struggles," *Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (2007): 265–88. More recently, Eric Arnesen and David Chappell have responded to Jacqueline Hall's call for a long civil rights movement. See Eric Arnesen, "Civil Rights Historiography: Two Perspectives," *Historically Speaking* 10 (April 2009): 31–34; David Chapell, "The Lost Decade of Civil Rights," *Historically Speaking* 10 (April 2009): 37–41.

See also David Chappell, "Civil Rights: Grassroots, High Politics, or Both?," *Reviews in American History* 32 (Dec. 2004): 565–72; Peniel Joseph, "Introduction: Toward a Historiography of the Black Power Movement," in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. Peniel Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1–25; Peniel Joseph, "The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History* 96 (Dec. 2009): 751–76; Kevin Gaines, "The Historiography of the Struggle for Black Equality Since 1945," in *A Companion to Post-1945 America*, ed. Jean-Chrisophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2002); Stephen Tuck, "'We Are Taking Up Where the Movement of the 1960s Left Off': The Proliferation and Power of African American Protest during the 1970s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (2008): 637–54; William Chafe, "The Gods Bring Threads to Webs Begun," *Journal of American History* 86 (March 2000): 1531–51; Adam Fairclough, "State of the Art: Historians and the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American Studies* 24, no. 3 (1990): 387–98.



12. For example, Clayborne Carson, David Garrow, and Steven Lawson all point to the importance of local studies, although none have emphasized that perspective as part of their own primary work. Carson, "Civil Rights Reform and the Black Freedom Struggle," in *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, 19–32; Lawson, "Comment," in *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, 32–37; Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now," 456–71, esp. 456–59, 471; Lawson, "Freedom Down to Now," in Lawson, *Civil Rights Crossroads*, 19–28.

Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard have been particularly important in highlighting local studies scholarship in their two influential edited collections, *Freedom North* and *Groundwork*. The latter was conceived as a tribute to John Dittmer, acknowledging the importance of Dittmer's 1994 *Local People* in legitimizing local studies scholarship on the civil rights movement. Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South* (New York: Palgrave, 2003); Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2005). See especially, Theoharis, Introduction, *Freedom North*, 1–16; Payne, Foreword, *Groundwork*, ix–xv; Theoharis and Woodward, Introduction, *Groundwork*, 1–16. Charles Payne, in the preface to the 2007 edition of *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, comments on the significant expansion of movement scholarship since 1995, especially local, bottom-up studies that challenge normative work. He observes, "The last decade has witnessed a remarkable flowering of movement scholarship, much of it trying to dismantle the mainstream narrative, assertion by assertion. . . . [T]he scholarly literature has expanded and changed in ways that could not have been foreseen just a decade ago. Ideas which were oppositional then have a hint of a new orthodoxy about them now." Payne, Preface, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 2007, xiv.

David Chappell would undoubtedly agree, but from a somewhat more critical angle. In a December 2004 review of Steven Lawson's *Civil Rights Crossroads*, he suggests that local studies have supplanted top-down scholarship, writing, "While other historians of his generation made a great show of discovering and celebrating the once unsung folk heroes of the rural southern movement, Lawson ground on with unfashionable, often unappreciated, but vital work on national legislation, lobbying, and litigation. . . . Though Lawson resisted the fashion of grassroots historiography—the main trend in civil rights studies for the last 25 years—he did not object to it on philosophical or methodological grounds." He goes on to criticize Lawson for not being more vigorous (in this book and other work) in challenging bottom-up scholarship. For example, Chappell

asserts, "It does not seem to have occurred to him that he could do the grassroots historians a greater service by establishing a real debate with them than by echoing their principles, which after all requires no special talent or perspective." Chapell, "Civil Rights: Grassroots, High Politics, or Both?," 565–72. Despite this attention to local studies and Chappell's assertion that local studies work has "supplanted" other approaches, local studies still remain fairly marginalized when it comes to the framing and details that dominate recent historiographical debates and attempts at synthesis.

13. Eagles observed that the earliest community-based histories "marked a significant departure" and observed that more community studies would be "of even greater interest," including those on communities that were home to well-known events and "otherwise unknown centers of activities." Even as he notes the persistence of a *Brown* to Memphis time frame, Eagles appears to give community studies credit for complicating this chronology, noting their longer view, but concluding that "[t]he examination of events in individual communities and among ordinary people has failed to inaugurate a different chronological conception of the movement." Eagles, "Toward New Histories," 827, 836–37. Hall observes that "[e]arly studies of the black freedom movement often hewed closely to the journalistic 'rough draft of history,' replicating its judgements and trajectory. More recent histories, memoirs, and documentaries have struggled to loosen its hold." She adds in a footnote that "community studies tend to blur the boundaries of the dominant narrative." Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement," 1236, 1236n8.

14. Eagles, "Toward New Histories," 816.

15. Ibid., 840–41.

16. Eagles ignores this debate, despite Charles Payne's quite explicit bibliographic essay on the shortcomings of top-down, normative history, published in 1994, as well as his subsequent debate with Steven Lawson, first published in 1998. Payne, "Bibliographic Essay: The Social Construction of History," in *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 413–42; Steven F. Lawson and Charles Payne, with introduction by James Patterson, *Debating the Civil Rights Movement, 1945–68* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998, 2006). Even earlier, Steven Lawson's essay, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now," includes extensive discussion of historiographical debates. He notes in conclusion that "[d]ifferences of interpretations are as evident among civil rights scholars as they were among civil rights activists." Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now," 456–71, esp. 456–9, 471, quote on 471. See also, Carson, "Civil Rights Reform and the Black Freedom Struggle," in *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, 19–32; Lawson, "Comment," in *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, 32–37, esp. 32; Steven F. Lawson, "Freedom Down to Now," in Lawson, *Civil Rights Crossroads*, 19–28; Cha-Jua and Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire," 265–88, esp. 267.

17. Eagles, "Toward New Histories," 830–31. Scholars are also giving attention to the diversity among those whites committed to resistance. David Cunningham's work on the Klan in Mississippi offers one example. David Cunningham, presentation at the Porter



Fortune Symposium at the University of Mississippi, February 2010. Even before Eagles's essay, other scholars had begun to sketch out some of the differences and debates within the white community. See, for example, Dittmer, *Local People*; Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*; and Neil R. McMillen, *The Citizens' Council; Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954–64* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971).

18. Eagles writes, "Most works, however, have presented only positive interpretations of the movement that shy away from searching criticism of its leaders, tactics, and strategies, as well as its larger failure to achieve the goal of racial justice. Again, the writing on the movement has yet to produce a range of strikingly different interpretive schools or consistently clashing interpretations." He goes on to use Martin Luther King Jr. as an example. Eagles, "Toward New Histories," 837–41, quote on 841. Steven Lawson disagrees with Eagles's assertion that scholars have not been critical of the movement and directly counters Eagles's assessment of King scholarship. Lawson, "Freedom Down to Now," 27. From a different political perspective, Alan Draper gives considerable attention to what he considers the unfair critiques by Charles Payne and John Dittmer of "middle-class" movement activists. Alan Draper, "The Mississippi Movement: A Review Essay," *Journal of Mississippi History* 60, no. 4 (1998): 355–66, esp. 360–3.

In terms of chronology, Eagles appears to acknowledge the significance of local studies work for evaluating chronology, noting that "the examination of events in individual communities and among ordinary people has failed to inaugurate a different chronological conception of the freedom struggle." He then asserts, however, that "while considerable variety exists among the publications on the civil rights struggle, most conform to a similar chronological outline. . . . [M]ost historians have apparently accepted a periodization that proceeds essentially from *Brown* to Memphis." He then notes that "[a]s a number of works have already indicated, students should at the very least be increasingly dissatisfied with the standard 1954–1968 scenario. . . . Too often, however, earlier people and events are viewed as precursors rather than parts of the actual civil rights movement; the relationship between the 1930s and 1940s and the more conventional 1954–1968 period needs to be clarified." He continues, "To balance the growing interest in the pre-1954 history, however, more attention needs to be paid to the period after 1968 and the legacies or ramifications of the movement." See Eagles, "Toward New Histories," 837–38. Thus Eagles acknowledges and overlooks the complexity of local studies' timelines. Moreover, Eagles's push to have historians extend the time frame for the movement beyond the typical end point is particularly ironic since he also argues that historians are too sympathetic *because* they have not yet "acknowledge[d] the end of the movement." Eagles, "Toward New Histories," 848.

19. Eagles, "Toward New Histories," 838–39, 831.

20. Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement," 1245.

21. Ibid., 1235.

22. Ibid., 1251. Hall observes that "[e]arly studies of the black freedom movement often hewed closely to the journalistic 'rough draft of history,' replicating its judgements and trajectory. More recent histories, memoirs, and documentaries have struggled to loosen its hold." This work she references is absolutely crucial, yet she cites only three community studies, along with several top-down overviews, and a range of work outside the classic movement. In a footnote she also notes that "[c]ommunity studies tend to blur the boundaries of the dominant narrative" and acknowledges that the normative narrative persists *despite* the efforts of recent scholarship. Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement," 1236, 1236n8. For the three pages of text on the classical period, she references only two works that are grounded in local communities: Charles Payne's, *I've Got the Light of Freedom* and an essay by Laurie Green, based on her study of Memphis, Tennessee. Other references that might fall into the bottom-up category are Barbara Ransby's biography of Ella Baker and Aldon Morris's classic, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement," 1251–54, see esp. 1251n48, 1253n453, 1253n54.

Hall makes a number of important observations that could point in a different direction. She notes, for example, that "black southerners were schooled in a quest *both* for access and for self determination that dated back to emancipation," that they utilized a wide range of tactics (including intraracial and interracial), and that the movement's success "depended not just on idealism and courage, but on a keen sense of understanding and ready use of the fulcrums of power." (Emphasis in original.) She cites Charles Payne's, *I've Got the Light of Freedom* several times, referring to a number of his critical insights on the movement and the historiography, including some that highlight different ways of seeing the movement than the one she is advocating. However, there is little evidence that Payne's insights influence her framing and her footnote referencing the diversity of the southern black struggle cites scholarship that focuses only on the era before the New Deal. Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement," 1251, 1251n49.

The Long Civil Rights Movement Conference, organized by Hall and hosted by the University of North Carolina in April 2009, had the same general emphasis. "The Long Civil Rights Movement: History, Politics, Memories," a conference hosted by the Southern Oral History Program in the Center for the Study of the American South, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, April 2–4, 2009 (program in my possession and available online at https://lcrm.lib.unc.edu/blog/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/lcrm-program.pdf, accessed February 27, 2010).

23. Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement," 1239. Dittmer, *Local People*; Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*; J. Todd Moye, *Let the People Decide: Black Freedom and White Resistance Movements in Sunflower County, Mississippi, 1945–1986* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Kay Mills, *This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (New York: Penguin, 1993); Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in the Alabama Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Cynthia Griggs Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma: The Continuing Struggle for Civil Rights in the Rural South* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); Glen T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Robert J. Norrell, *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Civil Rights Movement in Tuskegee* (New York: Knopf, 1985); J. Mills Thornton, *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006); Stephen G. N. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940–1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003); Fairclough, *Race & Democracy*; Greta de Jong, *A Different Day: African American Struggles for Justice in Rural Louisiana, 1900–1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Laurie B. Green, *Battling the Plantation Mentality: Memphis and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Winston Grady-Willis, *Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and the Black Struggles for Human Rights, 1960–77* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*; Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Charles McKinney, *Greater Freedom: The Evolution of the Civil Rights Struggle in Wilson, North Carolina* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2010); Peter B. Levy, *Civil War on Race Street: The Civil Rights Movement in Cambridge, Maryland* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003); and Glenda Alice Rabby, *The Pain and the Promise: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Tallahassee, Florida* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999); Tracy E. K'Meyer, *Civil Rights in the Gateway to the South: Louisville, Kentucky, 1945–1980* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009).



24. Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement," 1253.

25. Moye, *Let the People Decide*; Moye, "Focusing Our Eyes on the Prize: How Community Studies Are Reframing and Rewriting the History of the Civil Rights Movement," chapter 5, this volume.

26. Moye, "Focusing Our Eyes on the Prize: How Community Studies are Reframing and Rewriting the History of the Civil Rights Movement," chapter 5, this volume; Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes*, 26–27, 29–31, quote on 4. In this instance, even the Communist Party-affiliated Sharecroppers' Union was indigenous to Alabama.

27. With these points in mind, Theoharis insists that local studies help us rethink and reframe the dichotomies that grow out of the normative version of the history. Too often we see, in her words, "a nonviolent movement born in the South during the 1950s that

emerged triumphant in the early 1960s but then was derailed by the twin forces of Black Power and white backlash when it sought to move North after 1965." Theoharis, Introduction, *Freedom North*, 2; Theoharis, "Black Freedom Studies: Re-imagining and Redefining the Fundamentals," 348–67; Theoharis and Woodward, Introduction, *Groundwork*, 1–16. Unlike Hall, Theoharis explicitly draws on and emphasizes the importance of local studies.

28. Cha-Jua and Lang explicitly point to the significance of local studies, especially in highlighting the agency of southern African Americans. Moreover, their critique, with its emphasis on context and precision, implicitly reinforces the importance of local studies. At the same time, their framing of a fourth wave of scholarship as part of the "long movement" appears to obscure or subsume quite a bit of important work that does not appear to easily fit that category. They note, for example, that scholars are particularly attracted to the "Long Movement's focus on local movements, especially in the urban North." While I agree with this and with their follow-up, that some of the long civil rights movement work can go too far in "de-centering the southern-focused narrative," it is not clear how they would categorize the extensive outpouring of southern-based local studies (and other) work that counters that emphasis. For example, Cha-Jua and Lang argue that "[p]erhaps the most important contribution of fourth-wave scholarship has been its re-centering of African American women and gender into Civil Rights and Black Power narratives." Again, I agree with their assessment of the importance of the work that has given serious attention to women and gender, but it is not at all clear to me why Barbara Ransby's biography of Ella Baker, to give one example, would be categorized as part of the "long movement" scholarship. By framing recent scholarship, their "fourth wave," primarily or exclusively in terms of the "long movement," they appear to disregard much of the southern-based, bottom-up, local studies work that continues to strengthen our understanding of the southern freedom movement. Cha-Jua and Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire," 265–88, esp. 266–69.

29. For just a few examples, see Yohuru Williams, *Black Politics/ White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Panthers in New Haven* (St. James, N.Y.: Brandywine Press, 2000); Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003); Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Yohuru R. Williams and Jama Lazerow, *Liberated Territory: Untold Local Perspectives on the Black Panther Party* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); and Patrick D. Jones, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).



30. Eagles, as noted before, ignores the bottom-up versus top-down debate and bottom-up critique, while Hall, though she does not take it up explicitly, emphasizes the primacy of national institutions and the centrality of the government (whether for good or ill). Eagles, "Toward New Histories," 815–48; Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement," 1233–63.

31. Carson, "Civil Rights Reform and the Black Freedom Struggle," in *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, 27–28.

32. Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement," 1233–35, esp. 1235.

33. Carson, "Civil Rights Reform and the Black Freedom Struggle," in *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, 19–32, esp. 27–28; Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now," 456–71, esp. 457, 471.

34. Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes*, 197.

35. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*; Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes*.

36. Alex Waldauer, quoted in *A Little Taste of Freedom*, xiii.

37. Samantha Maurer reflection, Hist266, Spring 2009.

38. For just one example, see John Mack Faragher, Mari Jo Buhle, Daniel Czitrom, and Susan H. Armitage, *Out of Many: A History of the American People*, Combined Volume (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2009). See also, John Mack Faragher, Mari Jo Buhle, Daniel Czitrom, Susan H. Armitage, *Out of Many: A History of the American People*, Vol. II (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1994). A comparison of these two editions makes it painfully obvious how little impact the local studies scholarship of the past fifteen years has had on the textbook authors' approach to the civil rights narrative.

39. In a plurality opinion, the Supreme Court severely limited race-conscious school assignment policies, with some Justices equating them with the legally-mandated segregation overturned by *Brown*. Opinions of Justice Roberts, Justice Thomas, Justice Kennedy, Justice Breyer, Justice Stevens, *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1, et al.* and *Crystal D. Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education, et al.*, June 2007.

40. The following song lyrics, versions of which became popular among progressives during and after Barack Obama's election, provide a telling example of this tendency. "Rosa sat so Martin could walk. Martin walked so Obama could run. Obama runs so our children can fly." There are many variations on this. For this version, see http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address+132x7641350 (accessed March 1, 2010).

41. As I write this, the University of California, San Diego, is trying to deal with a number of similar and highly visible racist incidents, including the so-called "Compton Cookout," an off-campus party mocking black history month, and the presence of a noose hanging from a campus library. In response to these incidents or, perhaps, the unwelcome publicity surrounding them, UCSD reported that it is accepting recommendations

from the Black Student Union that it take steps to address recruitment of faculty of color, examine declining black student enrollment, and look for space for a Black Resource Center. "UCSD Frat Denies Involvement in 'Ghetto-Themed' Party: UCSD Officials Condemn 'Compton Cookout' Held Last Weekend," February 17, 2010, http://www.10news.com/news/22588063/details.html (accessed February 28, 2010); "Student Admits Hanging Noose in Library," February 26, 2010, CNN, http://www.cnn.com/2010/us/02/26/california.noose/index.html?iref=allsearch (accessed February 28, 2010). Kevin Muller, Honr203 journal, November 25, 2008 (in author's possession).

42. "Conflicted Histories: Geneseo and the Struggle for Justice," keynote presentation for Race and Campus Culture Teach-In, Spring 2008 (in author's possession); Daniel Bailey, final reflection, Hist220, Fall 2009; Kevin Muller journal, Honr203, November 25, 2008; Joseph Cope, teach-in reflection, Spring 2008; Ronald Herzman, teach-in reflection, Spring 2008; Jasmine Montgomery, teach-in reflection, Spring 2008. These teach-in reflections (and others), along with general readings and information, can be found at http://eres.geneseo.edu/library/cdc/race.shtml (accessed February 28, 2010). News coverage, editorials, and letters to the editor can be found in the student newspaper, *The Lamron*, online at http://www.thelamron.com. There is considerable coverage of blackface, race, the Race and Campus Culture Teach-In, and related issues throughout the 2007–2008 academic year, especially following a Halloween 2007 blackface incident.

43. Eagles, "Toward New Histories," 836. In offering this critique, Eagles offers no examples or evidence to support his conclusions.

44. Draper, "The Mississippi Movement: A Review Essay," 355–66, esp. 356; Charles Payne, responding to such critiques, argues, "Giving young people a history they can use doesn't require any bending of the record. Quite the contrary. The more precisely and completely we can render the history, the longer it will be useful." Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom* (2007), xxi. Suggesting the ways that oral histories were considered suspect, William Chafe explained and justified his use of oral histories in the introduction to his 1980 community study on Greensboro, writing, "[T]his book is based up on a combination of oral and written sources. Only through extensive use of oral interviewing, grounded in written sources, has it been possible to gain even a glimpse of the rich multiracial fabric that is Greensboro's civil rights history. Oral sources are used here not as a substitute for other historical research techniques—rather as a supplement. But without a combination of the two there would be no possibility of discovering what happened in Greensboro." Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 10.

45. Draper, "The Mississippi Movement: A Review Essay," 363–64.

46. Ibid., 366.

47. Howard Zinn addresses this in his essay, "Knowledge is a Form of Power." He writes, "Our values should determine the questions we ask in scholarly inquiry, but not the answers." Howard Zinn, *The Politics of History* (Boston: Beacon, 1970), 10. There are,



of course, challenges in developing effective collaborations between scholars and activists. At least some activists are intensely critical of historians. For an example of both the anger and some of the reasons for it, see the comments by historians and activists at a 1988 SNCC reunion at Trinity College. "SNCC and the Practice of History," in *Circle of Trust: Remembering* SNCC, ed. Cheryl Lynn Greenberg (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 177–99. Although some movement people are very conversant with the current scholarship and how it has evolved over the years, many judge the history based either on the first generation of scholarship published in the 1970s and 1980s or through the lens of popular culture, assuming that since the normative story is so unchanging, historians must be reinforcing, not challenging, it. Anger over this popular version and the sense that historians are both distorting and controlling movement history has been expressed publicly on a SNCC listserv several times in recent years (copies in author's possession). Reflecting on the gap between the popular portrayals of the movement and the reality, one of my students wrote, "I wonder what it means to some of these people who risked their lives in towns all across the country, to have their histories simplified and glossed over and their heroism become part of someone else's myth" (Joseph Zurro reflection, Spring 2006). In response to a discussion that emerged around the Long Civil Rights Movement Conference in Chapel Hill, N.C., in April 2009, Patrick Jones offered a thoughtful discussion of the existing divisions between scholars and activists and the ways we could each benefit from closer collaboration. Patrick Jones to SNCC-List, February 24, 2009 (in author's possession).

48. Bernice Johnson Reagon and Dick Cluster, "The Borning Struggle: The Civil Rights Movement: An Interview with Bernice Johnson Reagon by Dick Cluster," *Radical History* 12, no. 6 (1978): 9–25, esp. 21.

49. During a question and answer session following a presentation in March 2009, Reagon was asked if she ever marched with Dr. King. She responded that she had not and then explained that in December 1961, King came to Albany, Georgia, *because* she was in jail (along with hundreds of other black residents), and that by the time she came out of jail, he had left town. In other words, King responded to the collective action of people struggling before he arrived and those same people continued to struggle after he left. Bernice Johnson Reagon, "She Said: Women's Words Featuring Bernice Johnson Reagon," March 15, 2009, Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, Bynam Theater, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. For a few sources by activists that reflect or include a King/SCLC-centered perspective, see Ralph Abernathy, "Albany," in *The Walls Came Tumbling Down* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 201–29; Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, eds., "Albany, Georgia, 1961–62," in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 97–114, esp. 104–6, 111–13; and Coretta Scott King, *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969), 187–92.

50. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom* (2007), xx.

51. Charles Payne, in his talk "Sexism is a helluva thing," reflects on the issue of framing, while giving an example that illustrates the diverse views of movement participants and how important it can be to hear and take seriously as many of those perspectives as possible. He explains how his use of the SNCC papers and interviews with SNCC staff contributed to his conclusion that Freedom School work was "devalued" in the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project. Years after he published that assessment, a Freedom School teacher called his conclusion into question by directing attention away from SNCC staff and toward the local African Americans whose children attended Freedom Schools. As Payne explains, her critique resonated, leading him to rethink the framework he employed and sending him back to look again at the evidence (see chapter 10, this volume).

Among those who critique oral history, there tends to be an assumption that scholars simply accept what they are told at face value. These critics also tend to ignore the fact that all sources require critical analysis and corroboration. Any serious oral historian evaluates and verifies interviews as rigorously as any other source. There are, of course, problems that can be more pronounced with oral history, including the potential for failed or distorted memories. For example, Judy Richardson realized, after years of thinking (and telling oral historians) that male SNCC workers (including Stokely Carmichael) rescued her and others from a white mob outside a hospital in Greenwood, Mississippi, in summer 1964, that in fact, it was actually the local white police who eventually came to escort them home. She "discovered" this when I shared an archived copy of an affidavit describing the incident. In this instance, Richardson's memory is not accurate, something that was possible to check. At the same time, the fact of her altered memory is interesting in its own right, for what it says about how she has made sense of the history for herself.

52. The best example is Lance Hill, *The Deacons for Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). See also, Emilye Crosby, "'It wasn't the Wild West': Keeping Local Studies in Self-Defense Historiography," (chapter 7, this volume).

53. Charles (Charlie) Cobb Jr., July 2009, speaking at "Landmarks of American Democracy: From Freedom Summer to the Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike," NEH (National Endowment for the Humanities) Institute for Community College Teachers, Hamer Institute, Jackson State University; Charles Cobb Jr., e-mail to author, June 17, 2010.

54. In a tribute to Worth Long, Charlie Cobb writes that one of his "favorites" of Long's words "is 'unviolent' rather than 'nonviolent' to describe the tactics of the 1960s Southern Civil Rights Movement." Charlie Cobb (Charles Cobb Jr.) in *A Tribute to Worth Long: Still on the Case: A Pioneer's Continuing Commitment*, by Roland L. Freeman (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, 2006), 43. See also, Worth Long, quoted in Moye, *Let the People Decide*, 102, 233n35; Molly McGehee, "'You Do Not Own What You Cannot Control': An Interview with Activist and Folklorist Worth Long," *Mississippi Folklife*, 31 (Fall 1998), 15; Robert Parris Moses, interview by Joseph Sinsheimer, November 19, 1983, Joseph Sinsheimer papers, Duke University, transcript, 19, 20; Charles Cobb Jr., quoted in Joanne Grant, *Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker* (Brooklyn: First Run/Icarus Films, 2005); Cobb, July 2009, "Landmarks of American Democracy," Hamer Institute.



55. The egregiously racist and historical inaccuracies of *Mississippi Burning* were at least part of the impetus for the making of *Freedom Song*. *Mississippi Burning* brought together Mississippi movement activists who had not seen each other in decades. Moreover, Charles (Chuck) McDew describes calling the producer of *Mississippi Burning*, asking that a disclaimer be added to the end of the film. Flatly rejecting the request, the producer showed no awareness of who McDew was and, among other things, suggested that if SNCC workers did not like the movie, they should make their own. So, in conjunction with some allies in the film business, they did. As they began working on the project, SNCC workers insisted that the movie focus on the years *before* Freedom Summer, in an attempt to counter the persistent Big Event/white focus that tends to dominate popular understanding of the Mississippi movement. Charles McDew, presentation, SUNY Geneseo, Spring 2003 (video in author's possession); Charles McDew, presentation at NEH Institute "Civil Rights Movement: History and Consequences," Harvard University, Summer 2000; David Dennis, Forward, *Radical Equations: Math Literacy and Civil Rights*, by Charles E. Cobb Jr. and Robert P. Moses (Boston: Beacon, 2001), vii–viii. Jefferson Graham, "'Freedom Song' fulfills a dream," February 23, 2000, *USA Today*. TNT (Turner Network Television), which produced the film, has some information on its website, including some support for teachers. See http://alt.tnt.tv/movies/tntoriginals/freedomsong.

56. Moye, "Focusing Our Eyes on the Prize," chapter 5, this volume.