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ABSTRACT

Designed for teachers and curriculum developers in postsecondary education, this curriculum focuses on traditional modes of creative expression of Southern black women as they relate to broader social and historical phenomena. The first of six sections provides an introduction to the curriculum for teachers. Section 2 examines the Southern black female identity through a presentation of basic concepts and terms and an exploration of the experiences that have shaped the Southern black woman's coming of age. Section 3 traces the roots of this culture from West Africa to the American South and then throughout the United States in order to convey the context in which the creativity of these women has developed. Arts and crafts, music, religious customs, and oral traditions are considered. The essays in section 4 examine each genre of creative expression, considering its West African precedents, cultural continuity, connections with women's life situations within the black community, and individual creativity within the artists themselves. Each of the preceding three sections is composed of two parts: approaches, which offers suggestions for class discussion and student activities; and materials, which contains essays describing the best multidisciplinary scholarship and resources. Section 5 introduces students to fieldwork techniques. A final section lists print and media resources and distributors' addresses. (LP)

THE CULTURE OF SOUTHERN BLACK WOMEN:

APPROACHES AND MATERIALS

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Archive of American Minority Cultures
and
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The University of Alabama
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PREFACE

This curriculum guide emerges out of three years of collaborative effort by teachers, researchers, students, and staff from nine colleges and universities in the Deep South. Under a series of grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Education, Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) to the Archive of American Minority Cultures and Women Studies Program at The University of Alabama, scholars of black studies, women's studies, southern studies, and folklore came together to develop, pilot-teach, and evaluate materials and methods for teaching about the traditional culture of southern black women. The Culture of Southern Black Women: Approaches and Materials documents this work.

This Project had its beginnings in a series of activities initiated by Monica Walker, JoJo Caple Ludgood, Stella Shade, and Carolyn Cobb. Active on The University of Alabama campus as the Afro-American Performing Artists, these women, performing works by Ntozake Shange, Billie Jean Young, and others, became more and more conscious of and committed to their identity as southern black women, bearers of an African heritage. But nowhere at The University of Alabama, neither in the well-established Women Studies Program, nor in the handful of courses focusing on the black experience, nor even in the extra-curricular events offered by the student Afro-American Association, was there an avenue for continued exploration of their own, southern black female experience.

Their commitment, however, was so strong that they decided to explore other routes. With the assistance of the Archive of American Minority Cultures, Women Studies Program, and Dr. Margaret Rose Gladney from the American Studies Program, the students sought and received a grant from The University to hold a public conference, "Black Women in the South: Retrospects and Prospects." This day-long series of workshops and lectures took place in Tuscaloosa in the spring of 1980.

The conferees' response mirrored the students' enthusiasm. Those attending perceived a pressing need for continued research and curriculum development on the topic of the southern black female experience and urged that The University seek further support for such work.

As a result, the Archive of American Minority Cultures and the Women Studies Program undertook to secure funding for a regional effort to review and synthesize resource materials on the topic and were awarded a Comprehensive Grant by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) of the U.S. Department of Education beginning in September, 1980. The Comprehensive Grant was renewed in 1981, and in 1982 further successful application to the Fund made possible the dissemination of this curriculum guide.

The Project sought to address the following problems, in The University curriculum and in the region, as cited in the initial proposal to FIPSE:

1. The increased enrollment of black female students has not been met by a parallel increase in courses designed to explore the history and culture of black women in America;

2. There are currently no courses on black culture which are offered at the freshman-sophomore level so that, early in their post-secondary experience within a predominantly white institution, students might form their own intellectual support groups;

3. Courses do not encourage either the study of non-traditional ethnic material or the use of non-traditional modes of inquiry, where through a collaborative effort, students could share in the process of creating the history of black women and in the group pride that that results from their discoveries and products;

4. Few advances have been made in the investigation of the unwritten, unrecorded history and experience of southern black women in this country;

5. There is no specific network to provide a base for the dissemination of cultural resources and pedagogical materials in order to ensure the perpetuation and development of courses and research in this area.

Principle staff of the Project were the directors of the University's Archive of American Minority Cultures and Women Studies Program, white women who had dedicated several years to the study of southern folklife and women's literature. The first Project year was devoted to consultation, research, and interdisciplinary literature review. Project staff compiled extensive print and non-print resource lists and created a collection of secondary materials on southern black women now housed in the Archive of American Minority Cultures. A board of consultants, prominent black women artists and scholars, was assembled to assist the staff throughout the Project. At the advice of the consulting board a southern black woman was added to the Project staff as course instructor to assure that the pilot course to be offered through the Women Studies Program would be taught in a culturally-appropriate manner. The consultants correctly reasoned that a proper synthesis of scholarly research, academic pedagogies, sensitivity to the material, and culturally-based teaching approaches could be created only by having a bi-racial staff. The first "Culture of Southern Black Women" course was offered through The University Women Studies Program in Spring 1981 and, based on teacher and student evaluations of that material, curriculum guides were prepared for the larger-scale teaching experiment planned for the coming Project year.

In the second Project year the assembled resource materials were disseminated to 12 instructors from nine colleges and universities in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi. Each had contracted with her institution to offer materials from the Project in an existing or experimental course on her home campus. In October, 1981 participating teachers and consultants met at The University of Alabama to study these materials. In a two-day seminar highlighted by consultant Dr. Bertha Maxwell's lecture, "Teaching about Black Women: The Afrocentric Perspective," the previous year's pedagogical research was evaluated, revised, and prepared for distribution.

The courses in which the southern black women material was incorporated were taught in Winter and Spring 1982, and included a survey of black women in America, an introductory women's studies course, a history of the South, an upper-level black literature course, and several courses exclusively on the topic. They represented a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, institutional

settings, pedagogical approaches, and student populations. The Project research associate, instructor of The University of Alabama's upper-level course, "The Culture of Southern Black Women," visited each teaching site to consult with her colleagues. Additionally, the Project provided extensive print resource materials, blank tapes and film, and made audiovisual equipment available on loan for student fieldwork projects.

In the Spring of 1982 the Project staff met in Atlanta with several instructors to assess the results of the teaching experiments, based on their individual experiences and the replies to an evaluation questionnaire devised by Dr. Maxwell and distributed to all Project teachers. Their responses to the curriculum materials and to the pedagogical approaches derived therefrom form the basis for many of the recommendations in this curriculum guide.

In the third and final year the Project staff has worked to devise a document that could be disseminated to a wider audience of curriculum developers and teachers in academic and community settings. The Culture of Southern Black Women: Approaches and Materials is not intended to suggest any single course, or even a sequence of course segments. Rather, it is a synthesis of the Project staff's review of resource materials, refined to reflect the actual classroom experiences of the participating instructors. We hope that through this curriculum guide, the study of southern black women's culture will find its way into the curricula at institutions of higher education throughout the South and throughout the United States.

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PART I. THE CULTURE OF SOUTHERN BLACK WOMEN: INTRODUCTION TO A CURRICULUM

Disciplinary and Pedagogical Approaches

From the Project's inception in the activities of the Afro-American Performing Artists at The University of Alabama, through the development of this curriculum guide, its purpose has been to study and to teach about the life and history of southern black women from a humanistic and cultural perspective. We have adopted a dynamic and holistic concept of culture as those ideas, beliefs, behaviors, and activities that are learned and practiced in a small group or community context. While we recognize that the South, as a region, contains many different black subcultures (such as Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Cuban, Afro-Hispanic, and Creole), the development of Afro-American culture in the Deep South and its diaspora throughout the United States has provided the framework for our research. Further, our focus has been on traditional creative expressions--art and crafts, music, oral traditions, and spiritual and religious beliefs and customs--as they relate to broader social and historical phenomena. Through the Project we have assembled and reviewed materials about traditional Afro-American culture and examined the forms of creative expression which women preserved and developed in the community context.

The three directors brought to the Project backgrounds in humanistic scholarship (in folklore, literature, cultural linguistics, and women's studies); training in community-based fieldwork; and continuing commitments to multicultural research and education. Project research staff and consultants complemented the directors' specialities with backgrounds in black studies, American studies, and in other arts and humanities disciplines.

Thus the Project has drawn from a variety of perspectives to address the complex syncretism between African and Euro-American cultures that characterizes southern black women's creative expression. While the essays below take as their topics the traditional arts of Afro-American women, the approaches and materials through which they are studied derive not from the fine arts, but from scholarship and pedagogy developed in black studies, women's studies, and anthropology/folklore. We have drawn freely from these disciplines in our attempt to approach the subject matter in a pedagogically sound and culturally appropriate manner.

Briefly, the following assumptions have informed this Project's research and teaching:

- Women are primary transmitters and sustainers of culture and tradition. Their art embodies their expressions, values, and beliefs.

- o The culture of southern black women merits study as a topic in its own right. It is a central, not a peripheral part of American life. While aspects of southern black women's history and culture can and should be integrated into arts and humanities courses, the totality of the culture is best understood when studied as a whole, in a course devoted to the topic.

- o The actual creative expressions of these women themselves, and their representations in diverse media, should form the core of the curricular materials.

- o Because black women have traditionally expressed themselves in genres not encompassed by scholarly definitions of art, a non-elite, folkloristic approach must be employed to identify southern black women artists and to appreciate their art.

- o Afro-American art is a continuation from West African culture, and cannot be understood without a historical developmental approach. This heritage manifests itself in its most intact forms in traditional communities in the Deep South.

- o Artistic expressions in the southern black community are an integral part of daily life, rather than a separate, exclusive domain of a few practitioners, and therefore must be studied within the context of their natural community setting.

- o The study of southern black women's culture cannot be understood separate from broader social and historical phenomena and the politics of race, class, and gender in the South.

Throughout the Project, student-centered experiential learning and the discovery of new information through direct interaction with black women in or from southern communities has been emphasized. The community is viewed as the major research site and female community members themselves as the primary resource. Thus, the Project adopted the folkloristic emphasis on student-directed community fieldwork, to add to the store of knowledge about southern black women. Alternatively, Project courses brought community women themselves into the classroom as teachers, creating an interactive model of learning that honors the southern black woman as both the subject of study and source of information.

Related Curricular Materials

While the current Project differs from previous works in its regional focus and its cultural and folkloristic approach, readers may wish to consult related pedagogically-oriented works on black women in America. From the variety of materials that are cited in "Resources," at the conclusion of this volume, three major publications directed at teachers and students will be described here. Each is a highly valuable companion and source book for those making use of this curriculum guide.

In 1979 Joanna Allman, Patricia Bell Scott, Marian Hardin, and Sharon B. Lord of the Educational Psychology and Guidance Program at the University of Tennessee produced a "self-teaching/learning handbook," The Black Female Experience in America (Allman, et al. 1979). The volume is intended to inform readers about "the experiences of Black females in America, and particularly about psychosocial issues in black female development." The authors themselves note some limitations in their path-breaking work, particularly in attempting to represent the diversity of black women's lives in the United States. Curriculum developers making use of The Culture of Southern Black Women: Approaches and Materials will find many of the topics in The Black Female Experience in America excellent supplements, and may also make use of the "suggested learning activities" that Allman, et al. have created for their students. Because the Allman, et al. volume was designed as a complete, self-contained home study course, it also contains introductory essays on a number of topics which can serve as complements to the review essays contained herein. The lesson on "Role Models", for instance, offers brief biographical sketches of several eminent black women which might stimulate class historical study. Each lesson also includes an annotated bibliography, to which readers of the current guide can be profitably referred.

Throughout this guide readers will find reference to Lorraine Bethel's excellent essay "Black Women's Culture" (1982). In what is actually an expanded course syllabus, Bethel outlines a thought-provoking and pedagogically sound series of topics that she has designed in order to teach workshops for black women in alternative educational settings. Her stated course goals address questions posed by this Project as well:

- o To make students familiar with the existence of Black female culture . . .
- o To explore the elements of Black female culture in their everyday manifestations . . .
- o To introduce organizing tools and concepts that will enable students to discover the richness and variety of Black women's culture and, in doing so, to develop their analytic skills.
- o To examine and understand the racial/sexual politics of Black women's lives . . . and to develop in the course a Black feminist cultural criticism . . .

Following an introductory session, Bethel leads her students through the full range of black women's cultural expression, from culinary arts to fashion and music. Curriculum developers may want to adapt some of her classroom activities and student assignments for their own courses. Bethel also offers valuable suggestions for organizing and leading workshops, taking great care that they are structured around students' life experiences outside the classroom.

Another major publication of black women's studies materials also appeared in 1982. The anthology . . . But Some of Us Are Brave, edited by Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith (Hull, et al., 1982) is a diverse collection of materials with a pedagogical bent. It ranges from descriptions of research, to essays about teaching, to topical bibliographies, and to syllabi which have been used at schools across the country. Several highly influential essays in black women's studies have been reprinted here, for example Michele Russell's "Slave Codes and Liner Notes" and Barbara

Smith's "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism." These and several articles published here for the first time are suited for student use, while other essays and the sections containing syllabi and bibliographies are clearly directed at teachers who are developing courses of their own. The volume is particularly strong in its explorations of the relations between black studies and women's studies and between black women and feminism. It suggests ways in which barriers between the two disciplines can be broken down--how the student constituencies of each can be brought into a constructive common learning environment. Several pieces present the case for a non-traditional, interactive, and feminist classroom process. Hull, et al. is a highly recommended companion to The Culture of Southern Black Women: Approaches and Materials, providing as it does both an overview of black women's experience in other regions of the United States and a sampling of approaches to black women's studies from the humanities and social sciences.

Structurally this curriculum guide stands between Allman, et al. and Bethel, on the one hand, and Hull, et al. on the other. The former are organized as outlines for specific courses, the latter is a collection of wide-ranging teaching materials. The current volume synthesizes three years' research into topics about the culture of southern black women, offering lists of activities and readings among which curriculum developers can choose, either adopting individual sections as they stand or re-forming them to fit their own preferred pedagogical structures.

Organization and Use of The Culture of Southern Black Women: Approaches and Materials

This curriculum guide is directed toward teachers and curriculum developers in postsecondary education and is intended to fulfill the following objectives:

- To document the three-year interdisciplinary literature and media search of relevant topical materials.
- To select those best suited for teacher preparation and student use in undergraduate classes, with respect to scholarship, pedagogy, and accessibility.
- To suggest pedagogical approaches and student activities that can be adapted in a variety of institutional settings, student bodies, and academic disciplines.

The Culture of Southern Black Women: Approaches and Materials consists of six distinct parts: this introduction; three prose sections of varying lengths; a compilation of materials relevant to community-based student research; and a listing of resources assembled by the Project, many of which do not appear elsewhere in the volume.

Parts II, III, and IV constitute the main body of the text. They present selected topical resource materials assembled through Project research as well as suggested teaching methods and student projects derived from Project teachers' courses. These topics are not intended to suggest an outline for a

specific course. Rather, readers may find in any section resources from which to draw in creating courses on southern black women's culture or in integrating material on southern black women's culture into courses in their own disciplines. Because the resources on the topic are scattered and often scanty, the topical essays represent the differing states of scholarly research and some are more fully developed than others. Many topics beg further research, which we hope this curriculum guide will inspire.

The topical organization followed here is favored by many multicultural educators because it "allows for a multitude of materials, experiences, and techniques to be interwoven" (Gay 1977). Such an approach is avowedly interdisciplinary, addressing each topic from several perspectives, and applying an integrated methodology to widely diverse materials. This lends the subject matter an integrity often lacking in traditional study and offers a more comprehensive and holistic perspective from which to analyze differing but interrelated aspects of culture. This approach is particularly suited to study of the highly syncretic creative expressions of southern black women.

In the main text, Parts II and III address topics that are important as preparation for the study of southern black women's art, discussed at length in the six sections of Part IV. Part II, "Southern Black Female Identity," presents basic concepts and terms that are essential to the Project materials' community-centered emphasis and explores the experiences that shape southern black women's coming-of-age. Part III, "Women's Roles in Afro-American Culture and Community," traces the roots of the culture, from West Africa through the Middle Passage to the American South, and thence throughout the United States. This historical evolution is crucial to understanding and appreciating the context in which the creativity of these women has developed and flourished.

The essays in Part IV, "Continuity and Creativity: Cultural Expressions of Southern Black Women," take up genres of creative expression and draw even more heavily than the preceding sections on the art works of the women themselves. Each genre is examined for its West African precedents, for cultural continuities, for connection with women's life situations within the black community, and for individual creativity by the artists themselves.

Each section in this volume is composed of two distinct parts--Approaches: suggestions for class discussion and student activities and a set of pedagogical objectives, and Materials: review essays describing the most appropriate multidisciplinary scholarship and resource materials. The essays draw upon secondary literature and documentary and creative writings that represent southern black women in their own terms. Scholars and artists are quoted extensively to offer teachers a direct impression of the material and its suitability for their own courses. Suggestions for community-classroom interaction are included for each topic.

Part V, "Student Fieldwork: Documentation Methods and Techniques," is an introduction to the skills required for interviewing, tape recording, and photographic documentation. With these guidelines, student should be able to undertake small-group or individual field research projects and create products suitable for classroom or community presentation. This section also includes sample documentation and archival forms that teachers may wish to duplicate for distribution to their students.

Part VI is a four-part alphabetical listing of resource materials assembled by the Project. It contains the full citations for all references mentioned in the text of the guide. Part VI-A lists print materials--works of fiction and poetry by southern black women, and exhibition catalogs, as well as scholarly books and articles. Because so many works are applicable to

several curriculum topics, no attempt has been made to subdivide them by subject. Parts VI-B and VI-C list visual and audio resources, respectively, followed by a directory of distributors in Part VI-D.

Dissemination of The Culture of Southern Black Women: Approaches and Materials has been made possible through federal funding and the entire contents of this curriculum guide are in the public domain. It may be reprinted in whole or in part for non-profit educational purposes without permission of the authors. It is our hope that readers will make use of these materials in any way which might further their dissemination.

PART II. SOUTHERN BLACK FEMALE IDENTITY

Approaches

Most Project courses began with the study of southern black female identity to set the stage for further work in three important ways. First, the topic of identity raises questions about the lives of southern black women from girlhood to old age, from the past to the present, thus previewing the entire subject matter. Students are oriented to course materials and course goals. Project teachers particularly emphasized the environment--family, community, and the larger society--which shaped girls' and young women's experience and self-concepts. Particularly for colleges in which the majority of the student population is young adults, discussion of the transition from childhood to adulthood is a critical point of entry to a discussion of the entire female life cycle. Students learn to move from thinking about themselves (a primary preoccupation of adolescent years) to extending their knowledge to other women. Curriculum materials can move from self-examination to examination of mothers, grandmothers, and other female role models.

An overview of life situations for southern black women leads directly to questioning the reasons these conditions, and attitudes toward them, exist. The explanation will lie in the subsequent study of the history of women's roles in the southern black community. Thinking about lives and life conditions stimulates appreciation of the extraordinary accomplishments produced under extremely adverse circumstances.

The second motivation for beginning courses with southern black female identity was pedagogical, rather than structural. Issues surrounding identity raise very intimate questions. They touch each student personally and directly, opening up ideas and feelings that are too often submerged in academic syllabi. For students who are themselves southern black women, discussion of identity asks them not only to examine who they are and why they feel about themselves and their sisters as they do, but to reveal those ideas and feelings to their classmates. For men and non-black women, even non-southern black women, the topic requires questioning their own, differing, preconceptions and prejudices.

These may well be issues some students have never consciously considered before. They are very likely issues they have never discussed across gender and race boundaries. If students are to have an authentic learning experience, interpersonal honesty and mutual respect must be established in the classroom at the outset. Bringing these attitudes about race and sex--and also class, region, and occupation--into the open as legitimate subject matter is a necessary first step to open-minded teaching and learning.

Third, beginning with southern black female identity will initiate the process of recentering students' attention to the group of people who form the topic of the course. Students, like their teachers, have been trained that the important matters for study are the achievements of white men of the ruling class. Discussion of identity serves to legitimize an alternative subject matter in their minds, helping the class as a group to get "inside" the minds of southern black women and to see history, culture, and life as southern black women do. The topic of identity thus aids in shifting from "fact" to experience. Immediacy of understanding is a critical component for comprehending curricular materials by and about southern black women.

Specific pedagogical objectives for the section on southern black female identity, then, include:

*Establishing an open and comfortable classroom atmosphere in which students feel support from their teacher and classmates for honesty, criticism, and self-criticism and where "taboo" topics, especially racism and sexism, can be discussed in personal as well as political and cultural terms.

*Refocusing students intellectually and emotionally from a view of southern black women as a marginal, exotic, unimportant subgroup in American culture, toward a perspective in which these lives are an important, legitimate, central part of the national experience that all Americans should study, just as they now study "great white men."

*Working with students to break down artifical barriers between personal experience and academic subject matter, leading them toward a community/classroom integration that is crucial to analysis and appreciation of this largely unfocused culture.

*Analyzing the lives of the southern black women who are presented in the material, comparing and contrasting those characterizations with the women students personally.

*Beginning training in techniques of family and community history, starting with autobiographical exercises.

To facilitate the reorientation and self-examination process, Project teachers asked their students to think about a variety of terms that are used to describe southern black women and to discuss the associations they have with each of them. The terms raise the three dimensions of race, sex, and region. Some that provoked productive classroom discussion are: black, minority, colored, woman of color/colored woman, octaroon, quadroon, creole, mulatto, "country", girl, broad, mammy, Aunt Jemimah. What are the origins of these terms (e.g. mulatto from the Spanish for 'young mule', i.e. one who cannot reproduce herself)? What are their positive and negative connotations? Who uses which? What aspects of Afro-American history do they evoke? Is it all right for some people to use a term but not for others to do so? Have their meanings changed over time? Terms for color, e.g. high yellow, and for physical features, e.g. nappy hair, can be listed by class members and discussed. (Many are terms which non-black students really do not understand and which may occur in course readings.) Why are certain physical characteristics positively or negatively valued? How can black standards of female

beauty be established separate from white media hype? How do black men feel? Has black awareness really altered the situation for black girls? Have new unattainable standards been substituted for the old? How does the extreme American emphasis on youth affect older women? This discussion should direct students to identify, analyze, and discredit myths and stereotypes associated with southern black women and help them formulate goals for redirecting these images.

An assignment that some Project teachers used in association with the discussion of terms for southern black females was an informal survey among the students' friends and families. Each student was required to solicit reactions to a certain set of terms from five or ten people. Often this led to interesting differences in respondents' definitions of the terms and their associations with them, according to race, gender, and age.

The three dimensions of race, gender, and region are interwoven in the Project materials. It is important before moving on to their connections to look at each of these parameters defining southern black female life as a separate dynamic. To use just one example, what is southern? What is the region? How are the lives of blacks within the South similar and different (rural/urban, agricultural/industrial occupations, working/middle class, under segregation/integration)? Students should become familiar with the concept of diaspora and cultural diffusion. Enslavement brought about the forced migration from Africa and social and economic conditions have led Blacks to settle all over the United States. That exodus from the South is a diaspora as well, a migration from the Afro-American cultural heartland. What are students' connections with the South, if they are from outside the region? Have family members left the region? Why? Have they returned? Why? Do their families return to the South for visits, reunions, or homecomings? How is the southern past discussed in the family? How do Southerners feel about non-Southerners and vice-versa? Where is the center of contemporary Afro-American culture--urban/rural, southern/northern? Who are the spokespeople for black Americans? Connecting race and sex to region, what are the conditions for Blacks, for black females in the South vs. elsewhere? In occupation, family roles, family structure, standards for female appearance and behavior? How is the southern black woman portrayed in the national media? In the national black media? Parallel questions can be generated for discussion of race and gender.

These materials, as well as those that follow (see Part IV), also require that students share a definition of the concept of culture. Just as races are dichotomized in the United States, so have we falsely dichotomized the notion of culture. It has come to mean "art," as in "high culture," limited to forms of expression favored by the Euro-American ruling class such as "classical" music, certain forms of painting and sculpture, and forms of dance such as ballet. Subject matter as well as medium of expression is restricted. Culture as employed herein is a far broader term encompassing all forms of learned behavior. It is used in the holistic anthropological sense to include concepts, beliefs, values, skills, expressions, and behaviors, as well as the institutions and artifacts of the specific people whose lives we are examining. Try to define culture with the class in terms that are appropriate for the study of southern black women. How would they characterize Afro-American culture? How is culture related to class, race, region, and gender? What is a subculture, a minority culture? What is meant by enculturation? What is the difference between enculturation and socialization? What is acculturation? How is acculturation detrimental, how beneficial? Is it inevitable in a multi-ethnic society? How do you account for the differences, as well as the

similarities, among members of a single cultural group? Is Afro-American culture the same throughout the country; does it differ by the degree to which it is Afrocentric or in other ways? Is there a subculture or cultural realm peculiar to women within Afro-America?

Several Project teachers introduced the fieldwork component at the very outset of their courses, reorienting students to seek resources from their own experiences and communities as well as in their textbooks. Lively awareness of the richness of daily life and respect for individual experience is the first step toward a successful family or community research project. Students were asked to write an autobiographical essay in which the issues of race, gender, and region were addressed and in which they assessed the cultural context of their own coming of age. These essays, shared with the class, served as a first step toward acquisition of history skills and as a preparation for the study of a foremother to be undertaken while studying women's roles in Afro-American life (see Part III).

In sum, a balance of personal reflection/reaction and introduction of abstract, sometimes difficult concepts, set the stage for a learning experience that was both meaningful and challenging. The Project curriculum materials and the activities derived from them attempted to maintain this balance throughout the courses on southern black women's culture.

Materials

Project materials relating to this topic fall into two general categories. First are essays that provide background information on the concepts of race, gender, region, and culture that are fundamental to the topic. Second are different accounts of the experiences of being a southern black woman, especially first-hand descriptions in the forms of autobiographies, autobiographical fiction, and poetry written by black women of the South.

Documents and Essays. There are many sources of demographic information on black women in the United States, but few that focus specifically on southern women. Barbara Taylor, Cliff Kuhn, and Marc Miller's "Research Report after Twenty-five Years" (1981) summarizes economic, sociological, and political statistics about southern blacks in the 25 years following the Montgomery bus boycott, raising the question of whether the lives of southern Blacks have changed substantially. John Florin's "Varieties of Southern Women" (1977) offers a series of county maps from southern states showing fertility, infant mortality, sex ratio, marriage, divorce, female employment, and family income, with some differentiation by race.

Few sociological or psychological studies about black women take region into consideration. Still, a number of them are extremely useful for orienting students to the black female experience. An early and valuable collection is Toni Cade's The Black Women: An Anthology (1970). Project students and teachers found two essays particularly helpful as starting points for class discussion. Kay Lindsey's "The Black Woman as Woman" (1970) addresses the differences between treatment of and attitudes toward black women and black men. She notes that gender awareness precedes racial awareness:

> To be a black woman, therefore, is not just to be a Black who happens to be a woman, for one discovers one's sex sometime be-

> fore one discovers one's racial classification. For it is immediately within the bosom of one's family that one learns to be a female and all that the term implies. . . . One discovers what it means to be Black, and all that the term implies, usually outside the family . . .

Lindsey's essay can be used as a springboard for discussion of male/female socialization enculturation, the black family, and the black community within this multi-racial society. A second essay in Cade is Frances Beale's "'Double Jeopardy': To be Black and Female" (1970) which focuses on stereotypes as opposed to actual life situations for American black women.

The concept of culture is well presented in Lorraine Bethel's description of her series of Boston community workshops on black women's culture (1982). She takes a firmly Afrocentric cultural approach:

> African culture places a primary value on integrating art into everyday life and work; the artist's success is dependent on how many people she or he can involve in her or his music, dance, or story telling. In this participatory cultural view, everyone is seen as being capable of art, and of being cultured. Consider the conflict between Western and non-Western cultural values experienced when African slaves and their African-American decendants tried to express African cultural principles in this society through their art, and discuss the ways that such conflict has resulted in second-class treatment and a general derision of Black women's culture.

Bethel also suggests ways to communicate the critical point that "'Black women's culture' does not refer only to famous black women." With this perspective clearly in mind students can go beyond seeking role models among famous and successful black women and begin looking closer to home, at their families, in local communities, and in themselves and their classmates.

Gloria Hull and Barbara Smith's "The Politics of Black Women's Studies", the introductory essay to the pedogogical anthology . . . But Some of Us Are Brave (1982), is a provocative position paper on the intersection of gender and race. They suggest:

> As Black women we belong to two groups that have been defined as congenitally inferior in intellect, that is, Black people and women. The paradox of Black women's position is well illustrated by the fact that white-male academics, like Schockley and Jensen --in the very same academy--are trying to prove "scientifically" our racial and sexual inferiority. Their overt or tacit question is. . . . "How can someone who looks like my maid (or my fantasy of a maid) teach me anything?'"

Because their essay is directed at the potential for an academic field of study on black women, it raises important issues for students to consider about their own intellectual self-images and their attitudes about their teachers and "proper" academic subject matter. Discussion of this essay might introduce the importance of black women's roles as educators, particularly in establishing schools and colleges in the segregated South.

Ellen Pence's "Racism--A White Issue" and Doris Davenport's "The Pathology of Racism: A Conversation with Third World Wimmin" in the anthology This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color (Moraga and Anzaldua 1981) can be icebreakers for the difficult topics of racism and racial attitudes. The Pence essay--written by a white--would be a particularly appropriate beginning for a biracial or white class. It is a fairly gentle approach. The Davenport article addresses dislike of white women by black women and its causes, as well as racism in general. Parts of it are humorously overstated in ways that make it possible to hear hard truths. It was used very successfully by some of the Project teachers, enabling black women to articulate in the classroom setting their own frustrations, stereotypes, and attitudes for the first time. It should be read by white students as well.

Two other essays in This Bridge Called My Back proved to be especially useful. Andrea Canaan's "Brownness" is a thoughtful, personal chronicle of her developing consciousness as a brown person. She addresses hatred of white women and distrust of men, brown and white, and her personal transcendence to racial liberation and feminism. Canaan's essay raises a challenge: "The buck stops here as it did with a brown woman in Montgomery, Alabama." That is, racism and sexism can be overcome, brown women can achieve confidence and self-esteem and act bravely and creatively.

Mary Hope Lee's poem "On not bein" (also in Moraga and Anzaldua 1981) offers a seldom-raised point of view: the negative side of being light-skinned. This supposedly enviable girl was ostracized, "prayed for chocolate/semi/sweet/ bitter/sweet/dark chocolate nipples" and married a man who chose her because she was "the next best thing to white." Several black culture words in the poem (dechty, hinky, saditty) make interesting discussion in a racially mixed group, revealing to white students how little they really know about the world of black people and how much they have to learn.

A great deal has been written about the South as a region, much of which is exclusively about white culture and is highly racist in perspective. As I. A. Newby observes in The South: A History (1978), historians have helped perpetuate "the tradition of regarding whites alone as southerners." One essay that offers information about the region and its (white) conception of itself from the establishment point of view is Francis Butler Simkins' "The South" (1965). It describes the development of the notion of the Old South as a unique culture and regional attitudes toward the North, asserting that federal policies continued to adversely affect the area. Simkins goes on to outline the "truth" about southern blacks, an explanation which denies the long history of resistance, noncooperation, and revolt against slavery and segregation. The essay does serve as an overview of traditional information for teachers less familiar with the region and can also be used to provoke reaction among students while informing them of the white establishment perspective. Using a "know your enemy" approach, teachers can lead students to read critically, determining where legitimate history becomes slanted and propagandistic.

Some southern writers are now bringing to their work an awareness of race, class, and gender as vital forces in southern culture. Dolores Janiewski (1979), among others, has described the ways in which these dynamics have interacted in shaping the region. Janiewski's work documents the urban migration of black and white rural North Carolina women in the early 20th century, from the tobacco farms to the textile mills, and their resulting decline in status--a trend that is strikingly similar to that experienced by women in

present-day Africa (see Part III).

Fifty years ago anti-racist activist Lillian Smith articulated a consciousness of the interactive nature of racism and sexism, particularly in Killers of the Dream (second edition 1963; rept. 1978), noting:

> It is not easy to pick out . . . those strands of southern culture that have to do only with color, only with Negro-white relationships, only with religion or sex, for they are knit of the same fabric, woven into its basic design.

Autobiographical writing, upon which Project courses drew heavily in their study of southern black female identity, offer some of the most intimate and thus most honest glimpses into southern life. Two white southern perspectives which complement those of the black women discussed herein are Smith's Killers of the Dream and Shirley Abbott's class-conscious Womenfolks: Growing Up Down South (1983). Smith analyzes the contradictions which riddle white southern life as manifested in her own childhood, detecting the damage of "the warped, distorted frame" of racism on its perpetrators as well as its victims. Abbott recounts an oft-overlooked consequence of life in a strictly segregated society:

> With one exception, the only people I ever knew were white. I had no little black buddy to go fishing with me under the railroad bridge in the summertime. My copious black nurse had no wide-eyed, pigtailed offspring hanging around the kitchen wanting to play jacks; I had no black nurse.

The South where she grew up "didn't mean bourbon and hoop skirts, it meant red dirt and poor people." Teachers might wish to assign chapters from these works for contrastive regional analysis.

Personal Views. The most direct introduction to the identity of southern black women is through the voices of the women themselves. A wide range of autobiographical writing that addresses the coming-of-age of southern black women is becoming available as regional, women's, and black literature collections finally come into print.

One of the first and most important of these works is Maya Angelou's initial volume of autobiography, I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings (1970). It describes, in a highly personal, informal style, a rural southern girlhood under strict segregation, including scenes of family and community life and infrequent contacts with the white world. It is told from the point of view of the growing girl herself, directly confronting the reader with the world as she experienced it. The book raises many questions for discussion. For instance, students can evaluate the ways in which the behavior of the author's store-owner grandmother and crippled uncle were forms of resistance necessary for survival. Contrast these characters with the stereotypes of "Aunt Jemimah" and "Uncle Tom". How do the stereotypes reflect ideas about sex roles as well as about race? The actions of the storyteller and her brother can also be compared and contrasted. How do they illustrate coming-of-age for southern black girls and boys? How does racism act differently upon each of them?

Angelou relates in vivid, moving words her experience as an eight-year-old rape victim. She raises the issues of the power of men and powerlessness of women, a vital aspect of male/female relations that students should ex-

plore. This passage can function as an introduction to a topic which should be raised in the study of the history of black women under slavery and segregation: the relations between the violence perpetrated out of racial motivation and the violence experienced by women (see Part III).

Angelou explicitly directs readers to study their pasts. This can serve as a starting point for students' autobiographical and biographical efforts:

> What sets one Southern town apart from another, or from a Northern town or hamlet, or city high-rise? The answer must be the experience shared between the unknowing majority (it) and the knowing minority (you). All of childhood's questions must finally be passed back to the town and answered there. Heroes and bogy men, values and dislikes, are first encountered and labeled in the early environment.

In several Project courses this autobiography/novel began the study of the southern environment in which black women lead their lives. It provoked students' curiosity about their own backgrounds. Just as Angelou picks out only a few details from her girlhood that serve to illustrate the whole experience, students can begin to think about crucial experiences in their own lives which demonstrate how they experienced racial prejudice, gender relations, and their sense of their place. They can tell their own dream, as Angelou does:

> Wouldn't they be surprised when one day I woke out of my black ugly dream and my real hair, which was long and blond, would take the place of the kinky mass Momma wouldn't let me straighten?. . . . they would understand why I had never picked up a Southern accent, or spoke the common slang, and why I had to be forced to eat pigs' tails and snouts . . .

The pain of being a black girl is so powerful that she tries to deny her culture--from personal appearance to soul food--but reality cannot be kept away, even for the young: "If growing up is painful for the Southern Black girl, being aware of her displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat."

Project teachers made extensive use of southern black women's poetry because of its direct evocation of intimate thoughts and feelings. The anthology Black Sister (Stetson 1981) is a particularly fine collection of poems, many of which stimulate class discussion of identity. Among the earlier poets, Alice Dunbar-Nelson's 1920 "I Sit and Sew" articulates the difficulty of women's too familiar role on the sidelines of great events. Margaret Walker's 1942 "Lineage" offers an alternative view of her foremothers as powerful, active characters: "My grandmothers were strong/They followed plows and bent to toil. . . . /Why am I not as they?" Walker's ballads point to a history full of strong role models and suggest positive, humorous ways to see oneself. Gwendolyn Brooks' "The Bean Eaters" is particularly appropriate in a discussion of black women's culture and the female life cycle:

> They eat beans mostly, this old yellow pair
> Dinner is a casual affair . . .
> As they lean over the beans in their rented back room that is full of beads and receipts and dolls and clothes, tobacco crumb, vases and fringes.

Naomi Madgett's "New Day," Mari Evans' "And the Old Women Gathered," Carole C. Gregory's "The Greater Friendship Baptist Church," and Lucille Clifton's "Miss Rosie" also evoke respect for black women's diversity and variety of expression (all in Stetson 1981). Nikki Giovanni's "Nikki Rosa" (in Stetson 1981 and in Cade 1970) is a moving portrait of growing up with a wealth of love and community despite poverty and problems:

> . . . I really hope no white person ever has cause to write about me because they never understand that Black love is Black wealth and they'll probably talk about my hard childhood and never understand that all the while I was quite happy.

Giovanni's "Knoxville, Tennessee" and Pinkie Gordon Lane's "Migration" recall the South as a home, a center for Afro-Americans, while Maya Angelou's "My Arkansas" offers the negative side of the southern dualism: "Old hates and/antebellum lace, are rent/but not discarded." These three poems (all in Stetson 1981) can be used together to discuss the love/hate relationship which American black people feel for the South--as the cradle of Afro-American culture and also of racism and cultural suppression. This dynamic proved a critical issue for some students to resolve within themselves as they moved through Project course materials. Their experience of the South, their feelings about it, may be similar to the process young women go through to accept pride in their womanhood--rejecting it and despising womanly weakness at first, then glorying in women's achievements, and finally coming to an integrated, mature self-esteem. The brief quote from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings above illustrates this self-hate stage in Angelou's childhood rejection of her blackness. Many other poems in Black Sister (Stetson 1981) also speak of the victory in physical and cultural survival. Angelou's "Still I Rise" shows students where her childhood pain eventually led her: "Bringing gifts that my ancestors gave/I am the dream and the hope of the slave/I rise/ . . ."

Some Project teachers chose other coming-of-age books. While Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye (1970) and Sula (1973) do not have southern settings, they are powerful, moving, and highly teachable descriptions of black girlhood and are very appropriate to a course on southern black women. They represent the continuity of black female experience in the American diaspora. Ntozake Shange's Nappy Edges (1980) draws on the author's segregated girlhood in St. Louis, depicting family life and growing up from a humorous, moving point of view. A few excerpts are included in Black Sister. Shange's for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf (1977) can also be used. This, her first choreopoem--a prose poem for dramatic presentation--takes the reader through critical life experiences for black girls and women, from adolescence to adulthood, marriage and loss. Both books are extremely popular with students. for colored girls. . . has wonderful passages about female/male relations which set the story straight from the girls' point of view.

Beauty in the Bricks is an excellent film for classroom use in exploring coming-of-age. Focusing on teenage girls growing up in a housing project, the film weaves girlish flirtation and gossip with the shadowy presence of rape, murder, and violence in a compelling and sensitive way.

Two recent books which explore the sexual politics of black women's coming-of-age are Rosa Guy's novel A Measure of Time (1983) and Marita Golden's autobiography Migrations of the Heart: A Personal Odyssey (1983). A Measure of Time tells the story of Dorine Davis, who in the 1920s leaves her

Montgomery, Alabama, home for New York City. The harsh realities of her youth in the South--rape by a white employer, the birth of a child out of wedlock--continue in the North. The lover she has migrated to join has become a hustler who disappears from her life when she refuses to let him pimp for her. Dorine supports herself by shoplifting, eventually spending five years in prison. Through all her struggles, including a series of unhappy love affairs, it is her female friendships that sustain her, and her recognition of this fact that marks a turning point in her understanding of herself and her life.

The central focus of Golden's book is her marriage to a Nigerian and their years together in Africa. A provocative look at the discontinuities in contemporary African and Afro-American cultures, Migrations of the Heart chronicles Golden's increasing restlessness with the limitations of women's lives in West Africa. Finding her life in Africa stifling to her own autonomy, she leaves her husband and returns to the United States:

> After a season of fitful migration I had come home. To rest against the bedrock inside myself. I have wandered. Will wander still . . . and take home with me wherever I go.

Finally, Project teachers highly recommended Zora Neale Hurston's short essay "How it Feels to be Colored Me" (in Hurston 1979). Hurston puts the questions of race--and by implication gender and region--into perspective:

> At certain times I have no race, I am me . . . I do not always feel colored. I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background.

PART III. WOMEN'S ROLES IN AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Approaches

Once a framework for study--terms, concepts, and attitudes, and a southern black female-centered frame of reference--has been established and the life patterns of southern black women examined, students are ready to explore the sources of that culture and that consciousness. Most Project teachers next turned to historical accounts and analysis to trace the evolution of Afro-American culture and the roles of women in traditional southern communities today. Part III is intended to offer suggestions for informing students about a history of which they have been kept woefully ignorant and re-forming perceptions and opinions based on fragmentary and inaccurate knowledge.

Here too Project courses sought to integrate academic analysis with personal reflection and student-centered research. Project students were challenged to consider the nature of "objective truth" in research created in a race- and gender-biased environment. Because the history of black women in the rural South is largely undocumented, Project students were asked to add to that store of knowledge by their own study. Much of the little that has been written is from a white and male perspective; students had to learn to read between the lines of existing accounts, inferring the truth embedded there. Critical, inductive, and analytic reading skills became essential tools for this work.

Thus study of southern black women's history requires careful reading, evaluation, and a critical interpretation of text excerpts, documents, and historical essays. Some Project teachers used the approach of parallel study of 1) traditional racist and sexist descriptions of the antebellum slave woman's life, 2) northern white abolitionists' accounts of the horrors of enslavement, 3) female slaves' own narratives, and 4) recent scholarship by Afro-American historians on the antebellum South. This practice honed comparative and critical skills and continued the process of re-orienting students' perspective to an internal rather than external view of southern black women's experience.

Project teachers also emphasized that women's lives are "hidden from history." We know of women's lives primarily through male eyes, but the aspects of women's lives that men can describe are only those that intersect with their own. For accounts of the experiences of childbirth and motherhood, of menstruation, menopause, abortion, victimization in rape and assault, and female love and friendship, we must look to descriptions by women themselves. Similarly, whites can only write about black lives as they see them, failing to know family life, personal feelings, religious experience, and other

aspects internal to the black community. Women tend to lead particularly private lives. They have rarely been public figures, so we know less of them through public documents. Women's writing--when done at all--is often in private modes such as letters to family, diaries, and personal prose and verse. For black women, whose culture is highly developed in the oral mode, writings are especially scarce. (See the essay on oral traditions in Part IV for further discussion of verbal art forms of southern black women.) The Project approach to the sources and growth of Afro-American women's culture began with this perspective of discovery, uncovering private lives.

Some Project teachers introduced historical research techniques to their students together with study of historical documents and oral testimonies and narratives. Others separated oral history research and the collection of oral testimonies from folklore research and the documentation of oral traditions such as stories and narratives about personal experiences. Many teachers undertook to coach their students in the fundamentals of field research and documentation in family and community history at various points throughout their courses. Both archival skills, e.g., how to find basic community documents in local libraries and in private hands, and interviewing and recording techniques were taught in most Project classrooms. Students learned to look for history in their own communities, how to substantiate it with other sources, how to interview, and how to record the accounts they gathered. Teachers found the technical skills outlines and sample documentation forms for pre-field background research and preparation; fieldwork, including interviewing, tape-recording, and photography; and post-field interpretation and presentation that are assembled in Part V of this curriculum guide to be useful at various points throughout their courses. Class assignments in which students themselves undertook field research were required on various topics.

While in their study of identity, Project students wrote autobiographies assessing their own lives in terms of race, gender, and region, for their study of women's roles, these analyses were expanded to include others in the southern black community--ancestors, family members, friends, community figures. Interviews were conducted with these subjects. Students wrote essays or presented their research findings in the form of photograph collections, slide-tape programs, edited field tape recordings, or combinations of these forms. Using questions such as those posed in Part V of this curriculum guide, they asked how the life they studied was a product of the forces of race, gender, and region and how the woman who was their subject both reflected and transcended these cultural categories.

Project teachers then used these materials in the classroom. In some cases they were shared only with the other students, but often community members, interview respondents, and friends were invited to special class events at which the products of student field research were presented--viewing of slides and films, readings from interview transcripts. Some Project classes decided on joint, rather than individual, efforts--looking at women in one family or at women in a selected organization, such as a club or a church group. The class at one university decided to produce a group slide-tape program on the history of black women at the institution and the quality of their lives, getting a first-hand look at southern black women in a changing cultural context.

Whereas in studying identity white students wrote about their own experiences with racism, and men wrote about sexism from a male point of view, in the study of roles all students were required to prepare biographies of southern black women. After examining southern black women from the standpoint of their own lives and coming to grips with their preconceptions and misconcep-

tions, students should be ready to apprehend the first-hand experience.

Objectives for teaching the evolution of southern black women's cultural roles include:

*Offering a basic introduction to the history of southern black women's lives from Africa through slavery and segregation and the civil rights movement to today, countering racial and sexual stereotypes which have been the basis for much of the public's views of these women.

*Tracing continuity in familial and community roles for women from the African tradition, pointing out ways in which Afro-American women have evolved a new culture in North America in response to social conditions and as expressions of their own creativity and selfhood.

*Examining the notion of "historical importance" to focus on the lives of "ordinary" women and those outside the mainstream of public life.

*Learning the techniques of oral history and women's community history through a project in family/community documentation, serving the community by bringing its own history and sense of self to life.

The re-examination of southern black women's culture must begin with the traditional West African context out of which their foremothers were wrenched. A critical concept in recent black studies is the Afrocentric perspective. The term connotes awareness of the role of personal agency and consciousness, of retention, maintenance, and active orientation toward the African past--rather than a perception of the enslaved Black as passively accomodating to the New World and assimilating into Euro-American culture. What does the term imply about how we should analyze historical sources? Students should come to view African culture as a source for much of southern black culture, a base upon which further layers--experiences in the Caribbean, with American Indians, with Euro-Americans, and in non-southern and urban environments--have been superimposed. Emphasis must be on the historic and multi-leveled process of cultural change, if these linkages are to be understood.

Afrocentrism precipitates many valuable questions for class discussion: Where, and in what ways, have blacks assimilated into or adapted Euro-American cultural patterns? What African cultural vestiges have survived/been retained intact in southern black culture? What retentions have been reinterpreted in new ways? What has been the role of women in the process of cultural maintenance? Women are generally thought of as the culture-bearers among American immigrant groups; have they played this same role in cultural transmission for the black family? Is black life in the South, particularly the rural South, more African or Afrocentric than Afro-American life elsewhere? In what ways? Is there a southern black culture? Are women the principal tradition bearers? Is there a black female culture? What is the evidence for this? How are these differences reflected in the daily lives of southern black women, in their plans and aspirations?

Students should also become familiar with political concepts such as colonialism and imperialism, with the distinctions between slavery and indenture, segregation and apartheid, with the meaning of Jim/Jane Crow laws. For the study of the earlier period, they should know the definitions of maroon, freedman, abolitionism, sharecropping; for the civil rights movement such terms as nonviolence and black consciousness as they were used at the time.

Several Project teachers constructed a timeline as a framework for students' study of historical material. Because their studies had been so exclusively limited to the "great white men" school of history, the students had no general context into which they could place African events or even the history of black women in America. The students compared well-known events in Judeo-Christian and European history and in conventional American history with African and Afro-American history. Standard Afro-American history texts such as those by John W. Blassingame (1972; rept. 1979), John Hope Franklin (1947; rept. 1980), E. Franklin Frazier (1963), Herbert G. Gutman (1976), August Meier (1976), Alphonso Pinkney (1969), and Elliott Rudwick (1976) are good sources for contextual information.

The black community holds untapped resources to which Project classes reached out. Local club women were invited to address classes on the history and mission of their organizations, offering lessons on women's community service, the anti-lynching struggle, voter registration drives, and women's roles in education. One college class invited the first black woman graduate of their formerly white institution to address their class and to celebrate her achievement and their heritage. Another held a luncheon honoring prominent local leaders in the struggle against segregation. Students' research projects turned up many speakers and honorees who had never been asked to tell their stories before.

Materials: African Traditions

Southern black women's attitudes about women's roles, men's roles, family life and child-rearing, and general social behavior have their origins in the West African cultures from which their foremothers came. Any one of several essays that gives an overview of American black women's history can be a beginning point for class discussion of continuity and change in Afro-American women's lives. La Frances Rodgers-Rose's brief introduction to her anthology The Black Woman (1980) is a well-written, thoughtful selection. She asks:

> Africans were able to retain parts of their cultures, although over the years the culture has been modified to fit the environment. What, then, were some of the values, ideas, beliefs, and behavioral patterns of African women in traditional African societies?

This is the central question to address in this section of a course. An alternative for introductory purposes is "Racism and Tradition: Black Womanhood in Historical Perspective" (1976) in which Joyce Ladner speaks to some of the scholarship, both accurate and inaccurate, that has shaped the contemporary view of Afro-American women. Both essays were successfully assigned to students. Each takes the reader up to the present day in just a few pages, with suggestions for further reading.

In the past decade scholarly study of West African anthropology, history, and sociology has greatly expanded our knowledge of these cultures. Work is beginning to appear by African as well as American and European scholars. And, very recently, attention has finally turned toward the West African woman. Unfortunately no synthetic work has yet been published that would offer the sort of overview most helpful to teachers in other fields.

Several anthologies were useful to Project teachers, including Filomena Chioma Steady's The Black Woman Cross-Culturally (1981), Alice Schlegel's Sexual Stratification: A Cross-Cultural View (1977), and Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay's Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change (1976). In the introductory essay to her anthology, Steady observes that black women in both Africa and the United States--indeed, throughout the entire diaspora--have been affected in similarly adverse ways by Euro-American imperialism. Margaret Strobel points out in her review essay (1982) that African women's historical productive role (as agricultural laborers) has enhanced their reproductive role, for throughout the precolonial period agricultural expansion was limited more by a shortage of labor than of land. This fact afforded women considerable power and prestige.

Inequities in the sexual division of labor in traditional African societies were exacerbated by colonialism. Women lost status in a number of important ways (Steady 1981). West African women have a long tradition of prowess as traders, and developed out of this role institutions of political authority such as the Iyalode among the Yoruba (Bolanle Awe, "The Iyalode in the Traditional Yoruba Political System," in Schlegel 1977). The Obu provided a similar function among the Igbo. Responsible for women's affairs in the community, she "regulated prices and competition, used ritual and magic to protect the market's prosperity, and generally was in charge of women's matters." (Kamena Okonjo, "The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Midwest Nigeria," in Hafkin and Bay 1976). As Strobel explains, "Below-subsistence wages paid to men [have been] predicated upon the existence of female labor in rural areas supplying the rest of the family's needs." Further, she reports that introduction of capital-intensive agriculture has continued to subvert women's economic security, intensifying their dependence upon men.

West African women remain today a small proportion of the wage labor force, "concentrated in semi-skilled jobs in secondary industries and in service industries." The migration of rural women to the cities in search of alternatives to their declining status is an increasingly widespread phenomenon throughout the continent. The changing role of traditional female secret societies, such as the Bundu and Sande among the Kono of Nigeria, are an example of another type of response. The rite de passage ceremonies, when young girls are recruited and intiated, which dominate community life during the fall harvest, have in the last decade become occasions for "broad attack upon local and regional economic arrangements" (Rosen 1983). The women began wearing, instead of the traditional ritual costumes, symbols of their agricultural authority, and using the occasion to denounce male authority and demand more land for their own production. As David Rosen remarks (1983), women in the countryside:

> have dug in their heels to defend spheres of independent production and exchange which have afforded them widescale independence and personal autonomy throughout much of the history of West Africa.

Students in Project courses were also introduced to famous African foremothers as a continuation of the rethinking and re-appreciation exercise begun while studying identity and roles. Using material such as John Henrik Clarke's "The Black Woman in History" (1975), a review of Cheikh Anta Diop's The Cultural Unity of Negro Africa (1959; rept. 1978), Project teachers demonstrated how black woman heroes can, and must, be reclaimed from the falsifications of white men's writing of history. The essay places figures

such as the Queen of Sheba and Hupatia into African context. Teachers noted, however, Clarke's highly traditional view of gender roles, for example his assertion that the Nzingha, a 17th-century queen, "possessed both masculine hardness and feminine charm . . ."

In her collection of autobiographical essays, Generations: A Memoir, poet Lucille Clifton (1976) seeks and discovers an African foremother as a model for her life and creative work--her great-great-grandmother "Caroline Donald Sale/born free in Afrika in 1822/died free in America in 1910." Anecdotes and stories about "Mammy Ca'line"--from her past as "a Dahomey woman" to her enslavement in Virginia from age eight to young womanhood--are presented by Clifton as she heard them throughout her childhood from her father:

> . . . sometime when I was a boy I would sit with her and Aunt Margaret Brown, who was her sister, while they rocked on the porch and I would hear them talking about do you remember different things. And they would say about Do you remember Nat Turner's forays when we just got here and Do you remember John Brown and the war between the States? . . . And they would just rock and rock . . .
>
> Later I would ask my father for proof. Where are the records, Daddy? I would ask . . . it may just be a family legend or something. Somebody somewhere knows, he would say. And I would be dissatisfied and fuss . . . about fact and proof and history until he told me one day not to worry, that even the lies are true. In history, even the lies are true.

Years later, after the birth of Clifton's first child, and the death of her mother, she comes to truly understand and appreciate the importance of her father's family stories:

> Things don't fall apart. Things hold. Lines connect in thin ways that last and last and lives become generations made out of pictures and words just kept . . . our lives are more than the days in them, our lives are our line and we go on. I type that and I swear I can see Ca'line standing in the green of Virginia, in the green of Africa, and I swear she makes no sound but she nods her head and smiles.

Geraldine Wilson's "The Self/Group Actulization of Black Women" in the Rodgers-Rose anthology (1980) challenged Euro-American-derived standards for women and men, also looking to African models after whom American black women can pattern themselves:

> Perhaps it is the very vitality and strength of [African] ideas and systems of femininity and womanhood that are responsible for their continued suppression by European colonial administrators, missionaries, and educational administrators in Africa, the Caribbean, and in the United States. For, having suppressed their own women, what white men don't need is another group around with a womanhood system that has some different, workable criteria in it . . . there is evidence that women of Africa had the care, love, protection, and institutional and societal support of men as they--the women--carried out major military, governmental, and family responsibilities.

Drawing on W. E. B. DuBois, Wilson asks a provocative series of questions about how black women (and, as the Project stresses, black women in traditional southern communities) think about family, children, men, work, and political structure. These questions can be used to lead students into contrastive

analysis of African culture and the dominant Euro-American culture. And finally, drawing on Lucille Clifton, Wilson (re)-introduces a series of African women whom students might use as role models when rethinking and rewriting their own personal histories.

Project teachers used the poetry of black American women inspired by the African heritage. In Black Sister (Stetson 1981) Gwendolyn Burnett's "Heritage" expresses longing and need for connection to Africa. Thadious M. Davis' "Asante Sana, Te Te" rejoices in a family custom preserved from Africa: ear piercing for young girls. Colleen J. McElroy's prose poem "A Woman's Song" creates a genealogy through space and time, tying her person to her entire people.

Contemporary southern black women novelists, too, are reaching back to Africa. Alice Walker's The Color Purple (1982a), discussed in more detail in Part-IV F, below, is an excellent text to use in relating Afro-American and African women's lives. Walker makes explicit the connection between southern black culture and West African culture by placing one of her sister-heroines in a traditional rural southern setting and the other in a mission village in West Africa. Their correspondence compares and contrasts women's lives on the two continents.

Film is a good medium for introducing students to African women. A wide variety of anthopological films are available, including Malawi: The Women, Women of the Toubou, West Africa: Two Lifestyles, and Boran Women. Alex Haley's Roots, as seen on national television, is also available on videotape for rental. The first segments of Roots focus on his reconstruction of African ancestors, though women do not feature prominently. Haley's work, however, is inspiring to beginning family historians and creates enthusiasm among students to go out and do their own community and family research.

Materials: Cultural Continuity In Slavery And Segregation

Slavery. Our knowledge of the experiences of enslaved black women has been corrected and expanded in the past few years. Historical scholarship by southern black women themselves has contributed greatly to this work. As elsewhere in western scholarship, even in Afro-American studies of the 1960s and early 1970s, the male case was taken to be the standard experience of all people. Angela Davis' "Reflections on the Black Women's Role in the Community of Slaves" (1971) dispelled this myth along with that of the black matriarch, which she labels a "cruel misnomer." In this essay Davis documents the unique --sexual--violence perpetrated on enslaved women, and analyzes its effects on the slave community and its continuing impact in the Afro-American community today. Rape of black women was not a simple response to the dichotomization of black and white women as whores and virgins, Davis argues, but a calculated component in the suppression of rebellion. Polarization of black and white women into super-sexual and asexual beings was an effect, rather than the cause of this particular abuse: "The American brand of slavery strove toward a rigidified disorganization of family life." Because exploitation of labor was the purpose of slavery, black women had at the same time to be "masculinized," so that they could be regarded as fit for the extreme physical brutalities of field work while kept in their "feminine" place. Rape by the master expropriated their reproductive labor, denying an intact family and:

> the white master could endeavor to reestablish her femaleness by reducing her to the level of her biological being. Aspiring with his sexual assaults to establish her as a female animal, he would be striving to destroy her proclivities towards resistance. . . . Indirectly, its target was also the slave community as a whole . . . Clearly the master hoped that once the black man was struck by his manifest inability to rescue his women from sexual assaults of the master, he would begin to experience deep-seated doubts about his ability to resist at all.

Davis establishes the importance of the caretaking work for their families that enslaved women were able to carry out. Domestic labor was "the only labor of the slave community which could not be directly and immediately claimed by the oppressor." This labor, then, would be highly valued by the community, and by women--a partial explanation for the resistance of Afro-American women to white feminists' call for rejection of housework as unimportant and demeaning.

The first chapter of Davis' book, Women, Race and Class (1981), addresses some of these same questions, placing them in the context of recent scholarship on American slavery. She expands her analysis of domestic labor to enslaved men, finding that they, too, performed acts such as hunting, gardening, and housework that were of value to the slave community itself:

> The salient theme emerging from domestic life in the slave quarters is one of sexual equality. . . . Within the confines of their family and community life, therefore, Black people managed to accomplish a magnificent feat. They transformed that negative equality which emanated from the equal oppression they suffered as slaves into a positive quality: the egalitarianism characterizing their social relations.

Davis' work, together with that of Jacqueline Jones (1980, 1981a, and 1981b), who has re-assessed the importance of black women, work, and the family during slavery and reconstruction, formed the core of analysis of women's roles under slavery for the Project courses.

Descriptive material was drawn from first and second-hand accounts by slave women themselves. These slave narratives constitute the oldest genre of Afro-American literature. John W. Blassingame's collection, Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews and Autobiographies (1977), offers many selections from which to choose. Project teachers used, among others, estate manager Lucy Skipwith's letters to her master, John Cocke; Betsy Crissman's story of the purchase of herself and her family; the account of Ellen Craft's daring and brilliant escape from slavery; the horrifying tale of Lavinia Bell; Sarah Fitzpatrick's account of the transition from slavery to segregation; Ella Shepard's escape to life in the North; Charity Bowery's story of the separation of mother and child; and the Alabama former slave, "Granny's", narrative. Blassingame's collection illustrates the variety of experience among slave women, from unspeakable cruelty, both physical and emotional, to successful escape and purchase of freedom. It was important for students to apply their critical reading skills to these selections. They vary from actual first-hand documents (e.g., Lucy Skipworth) to newspaper reports written for abolitionist journals and late 19th-century oral histories, done long after the the events actually occurred. Students discussed the perspective of the chronicler and its effect on what was written.

Project teachers also used documents from Gerda Lerner's Black Women in White America: A Documentary History (1972) in this and other sections on the Afro-American female heritage. Lerner includes a number of slave narratives and documents such as slave dealers' receipts that help to make the history real. Lerner's selections are much more abridged than those in Blassingame; students can read more cases, but gain a less full impression of particularized individual experience. Her book is a good supplement to the Blassingame accounts, broadening students' exposure without adding a much larger reading assignment.

The cultural account which formed the center for the study of the slavery period in Project courses was Margaret Walker Alexander's novel Jubilee (1966). In this book Walker Alexander offers a unique opportunity for analysis of the creative use of personal heritage because she has provided us with a booklet that tells How I Wrote Jubilee (1972). It is hard to imagine a more moving and inspirational model for students exploring the southern black female heritage than Walker Alexander's account of the 30-year research and writing project that started at her grandmother's knee:

> Minna in my story was my maternal grandmother, Elvira Ware Dozier. When my great-grandmother--Vyry in the story--died a month before I was born in 1915, grandmother was already in Birmingham waiting with my mother for my birth. Since my grandmother lived with us until I was an adult, it was natural throughout my formative years for me to hear stories of slave life in Georgia . . . My father would add, "Telling her all those harrowing tales, just nothing but tall tales." Grandma grew indignant then, saying, "I'm not telling her tales; I'm telling her the naked truth."

And so it was, as Walker Alexander discovered through decades of research. She studied at libraries and archives, and used private document collections all over the South and in other parts of the country. She interviewed family members and visited the sites of her family's sojourns in Alabama and Georgia. And she was able to trace her family history from slavery into freedom. Jubilee is that history:

> . . . I had enough material to fill ten books. My family story could cover five generations of Negroes living in the South. I had a superstructure of facts assembled from word-of-mouth accounts, slave narratives, history books, documents, newpapers; and now I had only to give my material the feel of a fabric of life . . . the basic skeleton of the story is factually true and authentic. Imagination has worked with this factual material, however, for a very long time. The entire story follows a plot line of historical incidents from the first chapter to the last . . . I had very little to go on, however with my white characters and many of them are composites.

Vyry's life story moves from slavery into love with a free black, then post-war emancipation and the family's search for a place to build an independent life for themselves and their offspring. Not only are the characters riveting and engaging, but Walker Alexander has embedded the story in the context of Afro-American culture which evolved under slavery. Jubilee features preachers and the traditional black church, with its vision of emancipation; folk healers and African-derived attitudes about spirituality and nature; domestic folkways, such as cooking, housekeeping, and childraising. This, too,

she researched and carefully composed to reflect her cultural heritage:

> I always intended Jubilee to be a folk novel based on folk material: folk sayings, folk belief, folkways. As early as 1948 I was conceiving the story in terms of this folklore. I also wanted the book to be realistic and humanistic. I intended this twin standard to prevail, and I wanted as well to press the leit-motif of the biblical analogy of Hebrews in Egypt with black folk in America. . . . Vyry echoes this then when she says she knows people must wander a while in the wilderness. Like all freed slaves they believed they were on their way to the Promised Land.

Used in combination with other slave narratives and the Angela Davis essays, Jubilee and How I Wrote Jubilee offered Project students a varied, in-depth, and immediate exposure to the lives of enslaved women and introduced them to the ways in which the slave community developed the culture from which contemporary Afro-American life is descended. Using Walker Alexander's methods, students went on to collect their own family stories of slavery time, and to study survivals of that culture in southern communities.

Pauli Murray's poem, "Dark Testament" (in Stetson 1981) was used by some Project teachers as a counterpoint to Jubilee. It recalls the history of slavery and the longing for freedom, using the same Exodus metaphor that Walker Alexander employed in the aspirations of her characters. Also in the Stetson volume, Alice Walker's "Early Losses: A Requiem" is a successful piece for classroom use. Its two voices are a woman whose child is sold away from her and the child who cannot remember its mother.

Segregation. A central text for the post-Civil War period and early 20th-century in Project courses was Pauli Murray's Proud Shoes: The Story of An American Family (1956; rept. 1978). Of her "family memoir" Murray says:

> Originally, I intended Proud Shoes for my small nieces and nephews, who had never known their Fitzgerald ancestors and were curious about their family. It was to be a children's story. . . . What changed my direction . . . was the political and social climate of the 1950's. The civil rights movement was gathering momentum . . . The fear of communism was rampant . . . As a civil rights activist fighting against a racial segregation when challengers of segregation policy were few and defeats were customary, I found it imperative to declare my American heritage.

Murray reaches back to her grandparents, Robert and Cornelia Fitzgerald, as Walker Alexander centered her family history on her great-grandparents. Murray tells the story of a North Carolina family in the latter half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, describing the transition from enslavement to an autonomous black commun ty, under even stricter racial segregation than in the period of enforced ser ide.

Whereas Walker Alexander has constructed a novel based on her knowledge of family history, Murray restricts herself to historical fact: "Proud Shoes is not fiction, although in a few instances I took liberties and drew conclusions which the facts seem to justify." She, too, found that the historical record corroborated family stories and provides us, in her introduction to the 1978 edition, with an essay about her research that is useful for

students in ways similar to Walker Alexander's How I Wrote Jubilee. Murray communicates the importance of family history for herself as an individual and for the black race:

> I like to think that while grandparents' story is the centerpiece of the book, Proud Shoes is also the story of a people involved in a crucial turning point in our nation's history. . . . Thus the writing of Proud Shoes became for me the resolution of a search for identity and the exorcism of ghosts of the past. No longer constrained by suppressed memories, I began to see myself in a new light--the product of a slowly evolving process of biological and cultural integration, a process containing the character of many cultures and many peoples . . .

The book--as it is written and as she describes its writing--serves as a guidepost for students' own family history research in vividly and insightfully depicting the life of a southern black community during the segregation period. Murray's primary informants were her elderly aunts; it is through the eyes of these daughters that the Fitzgeralds are revealed to us.

Proud Shoes confronts us directly with the issue of color, within the black community as well as between blacks and whites. On the one hand, is her grandfather--a northern freeman and a Union navy veteran come South to teach in a freedom school. On the other is her grandmother--acknowledged progeny of a master-slave relationship. The first is an ardent abolitionist; the latter ambivalent about the demise of antebellum society. Within the black community the color question shaped the lives of the five daughters. Their mother held that, unlike their neighbors, they were not children of slaves: their father's family free for a half century, their mother freed because of the blood tie to her white owner's family.

The contrast raises critical points for class discussion about the post-Civil War period: the Promised Land was not found. In some cases Blacks were less able to protect themselves than under slavery, for there was no property loss in working a Black to death as under slavery. Not even minimal subsistence food and shelter could be expected; Blacks were just as open to violence (especially sexual violence) as before, but with no protector at all. Project classes re-analyzed the position of women under slavery and discussed how the transition to a free, resistant culture was wrought and how roles for women changed during the period.

Another book that is useful for illuminating the legacy and lives of a black family, especially the women within that family during slavery and segregation, is Kathryn L. Morgan's Children of Strangers: The Stories of a Black Family (1980, discussed at greater length in Part IV-D). The third section of Morgan's book in particular, "Maggie's Stories of 'Color' and 'Race'," focuses on the experiences of a light-skinned black woman in a white world, exploring the question of color within both the contexts of family and of the larger society. Morgan's ancestors, like Murray's, had a racially-mixed legacy--calling themselves "children of strangers," they "were white by nature, black by law, African and Cherokee by choice." And, as in the Murray family, the primary tradition-bearers in the Morgan family have been the women. Beginning with the author's great-grandmother and continuing through the author's mother, family stories have been preserved and passed on through generations of women.

Using Murray's family history and Morgan's family stories, students were asked to rethink skin color and its relation to class, and to ideas of beauty with which they started their study, trying to see this issue in historical

context. How are these black women's lives dominated by the same issues?

The Fitzgerald daughters in Proud Shoes also served to introduce students to the expanding roles for women in post-emancipation society: in the church, in education, and in social and welfare services. As teachers, they exemplify the important position women played in the development of black educational institutions and their personal lives are examples of the community leadership that educated women undertook.

Essays and documents for this period illustrate as well the expansion of women's work into the public spheres of education and community service. They show how women contributed to the betterment of the black race and to its struggles against racist oppression through their development of new institutions.

As a supplement to Proud Shoes, documents in Lerner's anthology (1972) illustrate the formidable problems that black women educators had to overcome; an entire section of the anthology is devoted to "The Struggle for Education." Individual educators whose work is represented in the anthology suggest topics for further student investigation. Mary McLeod Bethune, for instance, relates her own life in these pages and documents bear witness to her dedication. To a patron she writes:

> I do feel, in my dreamings and yearnings, so undiscovered by those who are able to help me. I have been pulling along so long, fighting an unusual battle in an exceptionally difficult section of our country.

Students in Project courses pondered questions about the function of education in the southern black community and the role of black women in that educational process. How was this a logical extension of women's traditional roles? What was taught in segregated black schools? How did they serve to transmit culture? In her autobiography Angela Davis (1974), describing Black History Week celebrations in her Birmingham, Alabama, school in the 40's and 50s, writes that:

> Without a doubt, the children who attended the de jure segregated schools in the South had an advantage over those who attended the de facto segregated schools in the North.

Is she correct? What has the transition to integrated schools meant to the southern black community and its ability to pass its own culture on to its children? What other community-controlled institutions have had to take on that function? How has this affected black women's roles in cultural transmission and their roles as community leaders?

Gerda Lerner's "Community Work of Black Club Women" (1979) describes a variety of women's service organizations and the impulse that brought about their founding. "'Holding Back the Ocean with a Broom': Black Women and Community Work", by Cheryl Townsend Gilkes (1980), reports interviews with black women involved in community service organizations. It might serve as an example for students' own interviewing. Cynthia Neverdon-Morton's "The Black Woman's Struggle for Equality in the South, 1895-1925" (1978) offers a compilation of a large number of organizations and would serve as a good starting place for students looking for research topics or background information on organizations their interviewees are active in. The Lerner documentary anthology (1972) contains a wealth of short materials on women's service and community assistance organizations as well.

Project classes focused on black women's anti-lynching organizations in

particular. This movement is crucial for several reasons. First, it directly addressed the relationship between race and gender oppression that the racist white South had developed during the slavery period. The inviolability of white womanhood was the opposite side of the coin of sexual violence perpetrated against black women. Lynching of black men for alleged assaults on white women served to maintain the powerlessness of black men, kept black and white women enemies, and solidified the sexual and racial control of the white male ruling class. Second, the anti-lynching movement brought about southern black women's crossover from community service to political activism. It became the precedent for the civil rights movement and established black women's partnership with black men in political struggle. Third, the horror of murder committed in their names brought a minority of white women into the anti-lynching struggle, creating for the first time since abolition a multi-racial female coalition for civil rights. But this time it was spearheaded not by northern white women, but by southern black women themselves.

The fear of lynching is expressed in traditional beliefs and narratives from southern black communities recounted in Night Riders in Black Folk History (Fr 1975) and in many of the writings of southern black women. In I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings (Angelou 1970) Maya Angelou's uncle is hidden from night riders. Ku Klux Klan raids feature prominently in Proud Shoes and in Jubilee. Southern black women's poetry, oral tales, and music are all filled with deadly images of "strange fruit." The topic can be pursued as a theme, drawing together material from all of the creative forms that are discussed in the sections on cultural expressions which follow in Part IV. Some Project classes studied Ida B. Wells Barnett's autobiography (1895; rept. 1970), a brief selection of which is reprinted in Lerner's anthology. A number of other documents pertaining to anti-lynching organizations are also included there (Lerner 1972).

Project classes read novels by southern black women writers of and about the segregation period. Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937: rept. 1978) is one woman's odyssey. In this book, which Alice Walker (1983) calls "one of the most radicals novels (without being a tract) we have," Janie Starks sits on the front porch with her friend Pheoby, telling of the quest for fulfillment that is her life story. Raised by her grandmother, an ex-slave who arranged a loveless marriage between her young granddaughter and an older farmer whose 60 acres represent a security she herself has never known, Janie's search for self-realization leads her to a complete rejection of the sterile ideals of white culture. Of her grandmother, Janie observes that:

> She was borned in slavery time when folks, dat is black folks, didn't sit down anytime dey felt like it. So sittin' on porches lak de white madam looked lak uh mighty fine thing tuh her. Dat's what she wanted for me--didn't keer whut it cost. Git up on uh high chair and sit dere. She didn't have time tuh think whut to do after you got up on de stool uh do nothin'. De object wuz tuh git dere. So Ah got up on de high stool lak she told me, but Pheoby, Ah done nearly languished tuh death up dere. Ah felt lak de world wuz cryin' extry and Ah ain't read de common news yet.

After two economically secure but emotionally unsatisfying marriages--first to a man who tried to force her to enact the black woman's historic role as "mule uh de world" and then to an ambitious entrepreneur who wanted a "Mrs. Mayor Starks"--Janie meets the true love of her life, Tea Cake Williams, a

drifter who "looked like the love thoughts of women." "Dis ain't no business proposition," Janie finally decides of her life, "and no race after property and titles. Dis is uh love game. Ah done lived Grandmama's way, now Ah means tuh live mine."

Rather than chronicling the injustices of the segregated South, Hurston has written a profoundly affirming portrayal of black life. She weaves her own anthropological fieldwork on folk language, beliefs, and customs into a book which implicitly argues that white culture holds no positive examples or goals for black people.

Alice Walker's first novel, The Third Life of Grange Copeland (1970; see Part IV-F below) traces three generations through the grueling first half of the 20th century in the rural South. While portraying the injustice and dehumanization of tenant farming and sharecropping life as vividly as, for example, All God's Dangers (Rosengarten 1974), Walker brings distinctly female concerns to the center of her portrayal. It is the destruction of the family, its parent-child and husband-wife relations, and the inner nobility of individual souls that is the true tragedy of racism in Walker's eyes. Both . . . Grange Copeland and Their Eyes Were Watching God should be considered for use in the study of this historical period, since each offers a different perspective on the lives of southern black women under conditions of segregation and both are based on a thorough understanding and conscious use of women's experiences within the context of southern black history and culture.

Here, as elsewhere, poetry can be used to good effect in the classroom. Stetson's anthology Black Sister (1981), contains examples of the powerful poems written about lynching and other aspects of southern black life. Carrie Williams Clifford's "The Black Draftee from Dixie" is an example of many that are based on actual incidents of violence. Speaking of World War I veterans she develops the irony of black men's patriotism for a country that wantonly destroys them: ". . . Where from the hell of war he never flinched/Because he cried 'Democracy' was lynched".

Materials: Public Places, Personal Power

Project courses devoted considerable attention to the growing public presence of southern black women, especially as manifested in the civil rights movement and, more recently, in re-analysis of gender roles. The courses analyzed both the black consciousness movement of the 60s and 70s and the contemporary feminist movement as outgrowths of civil rights activism and as movements led by former civil rights activists. Students were introduced to the civil rights movement both as a struggle of historic magnitude in which southern black women played critical public (and less-public) roles and as a period which changed southern black women's lives forever. Utilizing skills in the public arena that they had developed through service to the black community, southern black women stepped to the forefront, and fundamentally altered their life conditions and--in the process--the structure of black community life.

Students in Project courses were asked to ponder such questions as: What roles did southern black women play in the civil rights movement? How did they come to public notice or fail to receive it? Why have the major acknowledged heroes of the movement been men and is that changing now? How were women's roles in the movement extensions of their community activism and cul-

tural maintenance work? What have been the effects on family relations and male-female relations of southern black women's political and cultural work in the past two and a half decades? How did civil rights spawn black consciousness and feminism and why were both of those movements centered outside the South? How can southern black women meet the challenges of racism and sexism and changing social and cultural roles in the 1980s?

The materials in this section fall into two parts. First are those which pertain to the civil rights movement and women's roles in it. And second, following from that experience, are materials that address the contemporary questions of male/female relations in the southern black community and relations among women, black and white.

Civil Rights. The questions that face black women who seek full participation in public life are addressed in two excellent essays in the Rodgers-Rose anthology: Jewel L. Prestage's "Political Behavior of American Black Women: An Overview" (1980) and "Dilemmas of Black Females in Leadership" by Rhetaugh Graves Dumas (1980). Prestage's essay bridges the study of women's service organizations with their participation in the civil rights struggle. She discusses the "politicization of normally nonpolitical positions" that southern black women experienced during the segregation period, and contrasts male and female political attitudes and behavior in the North and the South. In one southern city, she reports, women were traditionally equally involved in political activities and protests, but were more dissatisfied with the political system than men--that is, more radical in their critiques. Dumes also notes that while proportionally fewer black women are elected to state legislative office in the South, most black women entering state legislatures throughout the country have southern roots. Non-southern students might consider the places of origin of leading black women in their own communities.

Dumas raises serious questions about the support of the entire community for black women's leadership. She formulates a "hydraulic systems principle" of male-female relationships: "that principle stipulates that Black males can rise only to the degree that Black women are held down." She challenges the roles to which black women have been relegated in communities, finding that black men, and many women, are more content when women are kept in caretaking duties. Taking as examples a series of case studies of black women executives, Dumas finds that:

> It is often difficult to separate the influence of race from that of sex; there is no doubt in my mind that the combination levies a heavy toll on the black woman who tries to exercise her authority and responsibility in groups.

The Dumas article provoked Project students' awareness of role separation and served to keep them conscious of this sexual dynamic as they studied the materials on southern black women's political participation.

For direct study of black women's roles in the civil rights movement, Project courses once again made use of the Lerner anthology (1972) as a starting point. Although there are relatively few movement documents in the collection, a number of them are good, and several of them are outstanding. Her references offer directions for further reading. Fannie Lou Hamer's talk on "The Special Plight and Role of Black Women" is an outstanding example of public rhetorical style. Daisy Bates' chronicle of her court battle with the city of Little Rock, Arkansas, is an excellent introduction to women's com-

munity leadership, unnoticed by the press and the outside world.

Project courses also used selections from Generations: Women in the South (1977), the issue of Southern Exposure which includes articles on Sallie Mae Hadnott of Prattville, Alabama (Gladney 1977), and Anna Mae Dickson of Grimes County, Texas (Watriss 1977)--moving illustrations of the work that hundreds of heroic southern black women performed, and continue to perform, in service to their communities. Their life stories raise issues about the basically white notion of public vs. private spheres and challenge students to redefine political involvement and community leadership in a culturally appropriate way. From another issue of Southern Exposure, Stayed on Freedom (1981), Project teachers used the "Freedom Chronology" (Waters 1981), as well as excerpts on the Montgomery bus boycott, Greensboro, and Nashville sit-ins, the Freedom Rides, and other aspects of movement history. Project teachers also used Eleanor Holmes Norton's "The Woman Who Changed the South: A Memory of Fannie Lou Hamer" (1971) and June Jordan's Fannie Lou Hamer (1972).

Another volume relevant for study of women in civil rights is the monumental My Soul Is Rested, a compilation of interviews with movement activists (Raines 1977). His "Chronology of the Civil Rights Movement in the Deep South, 1955-68" was highly useful for orienting students, although surprisingly few women are included among the interviewees.

Beardslee's collection of life histories of civil rights workers (1977) demonstrates the range of women's activities and the depth of their commitment. The editor's introduction contextualizes the narratives, noting that "The Movement people were not concerned with the past but with their needs in the present and the future." Among the women interviewees, Mrs. Washington stands out for her consciousness about the cultural context which enabled her to go forward:

> My mother disciplined us, and I really knew she tried the best she could. She gave me strength about my being black. I was with children who were lighter than me . . . My mother just kept saying to me, "Black is honest." I came to know what she was talking about in the later years of the Movement. It was my mother's words and teachings and fussing and making us go to church and Sunday school that gave me something to go back to eventually.

Other interviewees, including Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Anne Williams, evoke similar themes. These testimonies lend themselves also to analysis as samples of southern black women's traditional narrative styles.

Studies of Ella Baker, in print and recently on film, have finally placed this woman in her rightful position in the history of the civil rights movement. Ellen Cantarow and Susan Gushee O'Malley's interviews with Baker (Cantarow and O'Malley 1980a, condensed as Cantarow and O'Malley in 1980b) reveal the actual practices of an accomplished political organizer. According to Baker, they vary from traditionally male to traditionally female roles:

> Now, somewhere in the process the organizer may learn some other methods, and she may learn to articulate some of the program of the association. But whether she does or not, she feels it. And she transmits it to those she can talk to. And she might end up just saying, "You ain't doin' nothin' by spendin' your money down at that so-and-so place." She may shame him. Or she may say, "Boy, I know you mama." And so you start talkin' about what the mothers would like them to do.

The film "Fundi": The Story of Ella Baker brought this great woman fully alive to Project students. It traces her career in the general context of the civil rights movement, offering an excellent overall history of the movement itself, with compelling film footage from actual events. Baker and her political friends and opponents are seen assessing the value of her work. We are left with a clear sense of her leadership, individuality, and faith in her vision of an evolving southern black culture with a powerful future in store. With its extensive documentary footage the film serves well as an introduction to the history of the movement as a whole. Baker's own testimony illustrates her excellent command of black rhetorical language and styles of self presentation.

Some Project classes returned to the Fitzgerald/Murray family in this discussion of political and public life. As an addendum to her family history, Proud Shoes, Pauli Murray wrote a short article, "The Fourth Generation of Proud Shoes" (1977), in the Generations . . . issue of Southern Exposure. It brings readers up to date on her mother's and her own generation and the reverberations of civil rights through her family. Murray herself became a powerful attorney, then left the law profession to become one of the first women ordained into the Episcopal priesthood. Her own life history plays out the conflicting forces in her family's heritage, placed squarely in the changing southern black consciousness and shifting in gender roles. Murray's family can be viewed as an example of the ways women contribute to social change in an ongoing manner, by means that are sensitive to the developing needs of the black community.

Alice Walker's essay "Lulls" (1977; rept. 1983) asks her Georgia family and friends how their lives are the same and how different in the post-civil rights era. She documents continuing consciousness raising and ongoing social change. Walker also learns that integration has, indeed, brought about profound changes in the community. Her female cousin reports on one continuity with the past and its cultural transformation:

> . . . in the black community, the church has more power than any other institution. We no longer have our schools. We never did have "town hall." All we ever really had was the black church, and thank God it hasn't been integrated out of existence. It is church that sponsors the child-care center I run.

This essay can stimulate class discussion about how community institutions undergo change and how they continue to remain as vital cultural centers. In the comment above note that the church, while still primarily a religious institution, has expanded its traditional function to meet the newly-perceived social need for child-care centers. And that Walker's cousin, while taking on a profession--which her mother might not have done--remains firmly within the web of traditional community institutions and female roles.

Project teachers used accounts by civil rights veterans for southern black women's first-hand views of the movement. There are a number of published accounts by southern black women who were active participants in the civil rights struggle--short stories and novels, as well as autobiographies and personal essays. They not only document the movement, but also illustrate the religious and spiritual context in which these women came of age. Throughout such works frequent reference is made to the role of traditional cultural expression in the lives of individual participants and in the dynamic of the movement itself. For instance, traditional black American hymns and spirituals are chronicled as both a natural part of church services, and as con-

sciously used tools to organize and to galvanize people for specific actions. The authors describe the transformation of women's roles, particularly their roles in the church, into leadership in local community organizing and the ways in which their traditional cultural expressions are extended. Three books in particular were recommended by Project teachers.

Anne Moody's autobiography, Coming of Age In Mississippi (1968) is one of the most important documents to emerge from the movement. This book is ideal for cultural study, since Moody embeds her life story in the context of her family and community. The turning points in her life are related in terms of affirmation, rejection, and transformation of the ethics and mores of traditional southern black life and in distance from and rapprochement with her family, especially her mother. Moody relates graphically the conflict inherent in her decision to become a movement activist and the continual renewal that that decision required, as she faced ostracism, and ultimately physical danger. She communicates the irresistible pull of this great movement on a young woman with spirit, desire, and intelligence, making her student readers understand her progress and allowing them to see how they, too, might make these same decisions. She did not seek the movement for glory or excitment, but simply as an alternative to desperation and despair. Moody relates how her white mistress cross-examined the 14-year old Anne about her feelings toward Emmett Till's murder:

> I went home shaking like a leaf on a tree. For the first time out of all her trying Mrs. Burke had made me feel like rotten garbage . . . when she talked about Emmett Till there was something in her voice that sent chills and fear all over me.
>
> Before Emmett Till's murder, I had known the fear of hunger, hell, and the Devil. But now there was a new fear known to me--the fear of being killed just because I was black. This was the worst of my fears. I knew once I got food the fear of starving to death would leave. I was also told that if I were a good girl, I wouldn't have to fear the devil or hell. But I didn't know what one had to do or not do as a Negro not to be killed. Probably just being a Negro, period, was enough, I thought.

Moody moved through the major organizations of the movement, becoming more radical tactically as white violence increased. Finally, she rejected the nonviolent approach, coming to believe that passivity and fatalism, and those aspects of black culture that manifest them, are tools of the white oppressor:

> As long as I live, I'll never be beaten by a white man again. Not like in Woolworth's. Not anymore. That's out. You know something else, God? Nonviolence is out. . . . If you don't believe that, then I know you [God] must be white, too. . . .
>
> I'm through with you. Yes, I am going to put you down. From now on I am my own God. I am going to live by the rules I set for myself.

From her vantage point in 1968--four years after the events closing the book and as a woman approaching 30 years of age--Moody is skeptical, but not cynical; restrained, but not resigned. Project students learned a great deal from her perseverence in the face of defeat and danger and about the importance of faith in oneself and one's vision of the world, if individuals are to accomplish anything of value.

Moody's memoir raises many topics discussed elsewhere in this curriculum guide: family struggle and tensions and love between mothers and daughters; skin color as a determinant of status among black women; interracial relationships, both friendship and sexual; and men's and women's roles. Her growing understanding of the nature of racism alone merits study. She ultimately comes to think of it as a southern disease.

Project teachers also highly recommend Sheyann Webb and Rachel West Nelson's memoir Selma, Lord, Selma (1980) for classroom use. This small book, subtitled Girlhood Memories of the Civil-Rights Days, consists of interviews with the two women, who were eight and nine years old when they participated in the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, interspersed with factual summaries of the events that contextualize their remarks. Most striking are the vivid, precise memories that these women have of the historic events and the deep level on which, even as children, they took the struggle of the race into their hearts. They tell of inspiring courage in adults; of loss of friends and loved ones at the hands of racist terrorists; of meeting great heroes including Dr. Martin Luther King; and of their first interracial friendships--with the white civil rights activists their families housed. The book was an inspiration to students, both in suggesting the power all individuals can have through their own actions and in directing them toward the human resources in their own communities.

Meridian, Alice Walker's novel (1976a) of the civil rights movement period, draws on her own experiences in the boycotts and voting rights drives. While the book is discussed at greater length in Part IV-F, below, it is worth noting here that Meridian follows one woman's involvement in the movement from her girlhood in segregated southern black society and culture through the period of expulsion of whites from the movement and the complications between black men and women activists over the issue of interracial relations. This novel is truly a view from a single participant's perspective. While the two autobiographies contextualize well-known public events, in Meridian we see the movement as the protagonist saw it--partial, fragmented, and consisting above all in human relationships and human development. Like Anne Moody, Walker's fictional heroine wrestles with the question of nonviolence, but unlike Moody ultimately decides to remain committed to the nonviolent principle.

Several films were recommended to augment study of the civil rights period. In addition to Fundi: The Story of Ella Baker, Project teachers showed Fannie Lou Hamer: Portrait in Black, Rosa Parks: Rush Toward Freedom, and With All Deliberate Speed. Project students also read poetry and listened to Freedom Songs from the civil rights era. The songs lend themselves well to reading aloud or group recitation in the classroom. Poems inspired by the struggle have been widely printed. In Black Sister (Stetson 1981) Alice Walker's "Once" contrasts the solidarity among black women of several generations with the alienation from their families that was the price of white women's participation:

> "a nice girl/like her!"/ A Negro cook/assures her mistress . . .
>
> But I had seen/the fingers/near her eyes/wet with tears/--
> the letter/said "I hope you're/having a good/time/fucking all/the niggers."
>
> "Sweet," I winced./"Who/wrote it?"
>
> "mother."/she/said.

Thadious M. Davis' "Remembering Fannie Lou Hamer" is a moving complement to the essays by and about this great leader and orator. Margaret Goss Burroughs' "Only in this Way" addresses the inward growth that is the real basis for change, faulting those who think that revolutionary hairstyles, slang, or rhetoric can pass for an answer:

> Only by starting with self, by knowing and accepting who you are
> And what you are and where you've come from and where you are going
> And charting a course of how you're going to get there . . .

Studying the past and incorporating the best of it into their lives--this is what southern black women have been doing throughout their history.

Self and Others: Southern Black Women Today. In today's South black women continue the struggle to survive, personally and culturally, and to thrive in ways that validate their African-American heritage and that are consistent with community values, needs, and collective aspirations. Twentieth anniversary dates of critical incidents in the civil rights struggle approach and pass. While genuine integration is not everywhere a fact, certainly the dismantling of separate, black public facilities has been accomplished. The gains and losses, and the unwon goals of that convulsive popular movement are being carefully assessed today. There is a powerful recognition of the cultural and ethical strength in southern black life which fueled the civil rights movement and a deep appreciation of the importance of preserving those cultural resources. Perhaps now, in a period of reflection as well as action, cultural questions are receiving more, not less, attention than in the past decades. Among southern black women, as elsewhere in black America, social and cultural changes and challenges are being assessed carefully, and evaluated in terms of their congruence with the Afro-American heritage.

Writings by and about southern black women reflect this cultural questioning. It lies at the core of Angela Davis' autobiography (1974), in which the transition from segregation in Birmingham, Alabama, is chronicled and its effects on black lives evaluated, and in her monograph Women, Race and Class (1981) which subjects the history of American feminism to analysis through the prism of its effects on southern black women particularly. Toni Morrison considers the South in her most recent novel, Tar Baby (1981). A northern light-skinned, Europeanized, well-to-do professional black woman takes up a love affair with a dark, southern, somewhat disreputable man. Morrison heightens the contrast by placing the pair on a Caribbean island--the nucleus of the African-American diaspora--she in the home of her parents' wealthy white employer who cultivates temperate climate plants in his greenhouse, he emerging out of the ocean and tropical jungle, a sailor who has jumped ship. Morrison explores the respective values and cultures of her two lovers as their relationship develops and ultimately shatters over their differences. A trip to his deeply traditional, small town family brings the contrast of his Africanism and Southernism and her Europeanism and Northernism to the forefront. She cannot accept his community's norms against cohabitation by unmarrieds and urges him to violate them, dishonoring his family as well as himself. She objectifies his native culture, photographing the local people in their "exotic" dress and postures, as would a wealthy tourist visiting a Third World nation. Morrison is perhaps exploring the Afro- American and southern roots of her own family--reaching out to a black culture more intact and continuous than her own Ohio girlhood, rich as it was.

In her history of the contemporary feminist movement, white activist Sara Evans seeks to document the connection to the civil rights movement. Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left (1980) relates how young, northern white women became involved in southern black politics through the voting registration drives and learned, from their black sisters, new ways of living and thinking. According to Evans, the black women in the civil rights movement served as role models for white women who had never taken themselves and their own lives seriously, nor demanded personal integrity separate from their relationships with men. Watching black women function in the movement and stand up to its male leadership taught the white women activists that they, too, have important, independent contributions to make, that they might have their own culture and their own identity. It is these civil rights activists, Evans shows, who went back to the North to found the women's liberation movement, using arguments built on analogies with resistance to racism that they had learned in the South. Project teachers, especially those working in the context of women's studies courses, made use of Evans' book as a bridge to discussion of the relations between southern black women and feminism today.

Sid Cassese's interview with Angela Davis (Cassese 1981) focuses on the gap between civil rights days and today's young women. Questioned about young Blacks' commitment to the struggle for social change, Davis responds that she believes:

> There may be an even greater interest today than during that [civil rights] period. I don't mean greater involvement, because, in terms of the organized struggle, we don't have as vast a movement as we had then. But I suspect that over the next several years . . . that involvement will equal if not surpass the movement of the late sixties and early seventies.
>
> One reason there isn't as great a visible face of the movement as there was then is that the organizing skills have not yet been rebuilt. Organizing is very important, even though most people underestimate its value. But if one does not know how to call a meeting, mimeograph literature, and do all of that, then regardless of what the sentiment might be, it never achieves expression.

Davis' remarks offered Project teachers a specific connection between today's campus and community action and that of the civil rights days. Class discussion evolved from topics such as: What are our needs today? What is community organizing? What is women's role in community organizing and how are we continuing to do it today? Do we still need formal social and political organizations to effect change? The Cassese interview with Angela Davis also brings in the traditional women's club movement, leading students to rethink the community organizations they take for granted and whose political mission they may have overlooked.

Project courses also addressed the often difficult relationship between black women and the contemporary women's movement. As on so many other issues of importance, the focus of most writing on this question has been on urban, northern women. Both the black and the white women who are prominent spokespeople on feminist issues are overwhelmingly from outside the South. And, as Sara Evans points out (1980), it was northern civil rights women activists who took home their experiences from the South, who were primary organizers of the equal rights movement for women. In the South questions of the advancement of disenfranchised peoples have continued to focus first on race, integrating the

demands of women--black and white--for economic and social equity into that struggle. Teachers who wish to consider the relations between black women and the feminist movement, on the national scene, might assign Barbara Smith's "Notes for Yet Another Paper on Black Feminism, or Will the Real Enemy Please Stand Up?" (1979) which argues that "There is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual" a that:

> Feminism is potentially the most threatening of movements to Black and other Third World people because it makes it absolutely essential that we examine the way we live, how we treat each other and what we believe. It calls into question the most basic assumption about our existence and this is the idea that biological, i.e. sexual identity determines all, that it is the rationale for power relationships as well as all other levels of human identity and action. An irony is that among Third World people biological determinism is rejected and fought against when it is applied to race, but generally unquestioned when it applies to sex.

Ann Allen Schockley's essay on "The New Black Feminists" (1974) outlines the goals of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO), a group dedicated to the principle that "there cannot be half a liberation" and to the liberation of all black people. Schockley's explication of the NBFO's natural evolution out of the historic Afro-American struggle for self-determination is particularly valuable.

Charles Swain and P. Hollander's "The Roles of Black and White Women" (1980) traces the convergence of black and white, middle and lower class women's roles in American society. Starting from the very different places of slave owner and enslaved, the authors see white women gradually recognizing the importance of civil rights, as they separated themselves from Victorian morality and economic and political dependence on men. Black women, always economic equals of their men, have overcome the accusations (from black, as well as white, men) of dominance and "matriarchy." The authors find that:

> As white women come to a greater awareness of their human potential, and increasingly take responsibility for themselves, their children, and their community, they are arriving at a par with many Black women. As Black women suffer the second-hand oppression of the new Black macho, they are experiencing some of the confusion, hurt, and self-doubt of the pre-liberated housewife. It is possible that American women are coming closer to cultural unity than at any previous time in history. The economic and social gap is wide but there is much to learn from each other.

A personal recollection by one southern black woman (Washington 1977) would tend to substantiate Swain and Hollander's view of American women's history. Cynthia Washington was an activist in SNCC during the 1960s and continues to be active for social change in Washington, D.C. White women's protests of unfair treatment were incomprehensible at first, as she writes in "We Started at Opposite Ends of the Spectrum":

> Certain differences result from the way in which black women grow up. We have been raised to function independently. The notion of retiring to housewifery someday is not even a reasonable fantasy. Therefore whether you want to or not it is necessary to learn to do all of the things re-

quired to survive. It seemed to many of us, on the other hand, that white women were demanding a chance to be independent while we needed help and assistance that was not always forthcoming. . . . The white people I talked with often assumed the basic necessities. That gave them the luxury of debating ideology and many things I felt would not change the position of black women . . . Over the last two years, I find myself [illegible] more involved with women in Washington, discussing the impact of [illegible], class, and culture on us all and concrete ways women can help each other survive. I also find that the same black women I knew and respected during the 1960s are in the process of re-forming a network. Most of us have spent the greater part of our adult lives as single women involved in movement activities. We have been married, divorced, some have children; we have gone from town to town, job to job, talking to each other. The problems of womanhood have had an increasing impact on us, and the directions of our own, of my own, involvement in the women's movement are still unfolding.

Shirley Chisholm (1971) has put the connections this way:

> We must work for--fight for--the integration of male and female--human and human. Franz Fanon pointed out in Black Skins - White Masks that the anti-Semitic was eventually the anti-Negro. I want to point out that both are eventually the anti-Feminist. Furthermore I want to point out that all discrimination is eventually the same thing--anti-humanism.

The poet Audre Lorde reaches to the South and its heritage of sexually-based racial terror in "Afterimages" (1981), a poem whose power offers a moving, memorable conclusion for the study of the history of black women in the South. Lorde brings into dynamic relation two scenes from televised history: a flood of the Pearl River rendering a poor white woman homeless and the brutal assassination of Emmett Till, whose body was thrown into the Pearl at Jackson. Lorde's remembrance of Emmett Till is evoked by the scene in which:

> . . .
> a white woman climbs from her roof to a passing boat
> her fingers tarry for a moment on the chimney
> now awash
> tearless and no longer young, she holds
> a tattered baby's blanket in her arms.
> In a flickering afterimage of the nightmare rain
> a microphone
> thrust up against her flat, bewildered words
> . . .
> Two tow-headed children hurl themselves against her
> hanging upon her coat like mirrors
> until a man with ham-like hands pulls her aside
> snarling "She ain't got nothing more to say!"
> and that lie hangs in his mouth
> like a shred of rotting meat.
> . . .

I inherited Jackson, Mississippi.
For my majority it gave me Emmett Till
his 15 years puffed out lik bruises
on plump boy-cheeks
his only Mississippi summe
whistling a 21 gun salute ixie
as a white girl passed hi the street
and he was baptised my so er
in the midnight waters o arl.
. . .
A black boy from Chicago
whistled on the streets of Jackson, Mississippi
testing what he'd been taught was a manly thing to do
his teachers
ripped his eyes out his sex his tongue
and flung him to the Pearl weighted with stone
in the name of white womanhood
they took their aroused honor
back to Jackson
and celebrated in a whorehouse
the double ritual of white manhood
confirmed.

PART IV. CONTINUITY AND CREATIVITY: CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS OF SOUTHERN BLACK WOMEN

PART IV-A. INTRODUCTION

The previous parts of this guide have stressed continuities in black women's lives from Africa to America. In part by contrast, the following essays explore the creativity within those continuities that has been integral to their cultural experience. Part IV examines a variety of traditional cultural expressions: material culture, from crafts to gardening and hair-styling; music, from spirituals to contemporary gospels; oral traditions, from family tales to gossip; spiritual and religious beliefs and practices, from church socials to hoodoo; and the prose writings of Alice Walker, which draw deeply from the entire spectrum of her native southern black culture. All of these represent "a triumph of creative will over the forces of destruction" (Thompson in Robinson, et al. 1969) which have been ranged against black people for centuries. As Arna Alexander Bontemps and Jacqueline Fanvielle-Bontemps remark in Forever Free: Art By African-American Women 1862-1980 (Bontemps 1980), in the "broadest historical sense" black people were never defeated psychologically by slavery and its aftermath:

> Clearly they lost their battle to escape or destroy the peculiar institution and their struggle for cultural dominance in areas such as South Carolina where such dominance was feasible, but they never lost their will nor their ability to forge a world of their own in which they were able to give greater reign to their need for self-expression based on freely chosen aesthetic preferences; indeed, it could be argued that these were the terms on which a precarious peace was maintained thereafter. . . . The way they walked and talked and sang and danced and laughed and dressed and ate and cooked; how they were born and how they were buried; the medicines they used and the superstitions they believed; how they loved and who they hated; the games they played and the things they believed in that were larger than themselves.

Afro-American scholars begin with the precept, often discussed throughout this curriculum guide, that traditional black culture in America has resulted from a dual heritage--syncretism between West African and Euro-American cultural patterns. The existing scholarly literature, however, is fraught with problems for those trying to trace the direct evolution of specific Afro-American expressions, forms, styles, or techniques of cultural creativity from their African precedents. Both the long-standing political biases of Euro-

American researchers and field workers and the incomplete documentation of the material culture artifacts which have been appropriated by whites since the time of first contact--to cite one well-known example--have obscured important cultural differences. African culture is neither homogenous nor static, tribal, religious, and linguistic groups, which must further be par-

tries to identify those particular
by women, who are often invisible in
scholarly studies. Even otherwise meticulous scholars have grossly generalized about women in African society--masculinizing and obscuring the artistry and contributions of women by speaking generically of "African man." Only recently are the cultural experiences and contributions of African and Afro-American women beginning to be documented, reassessed, and analyzed from a bias-free cultural historical perspective.

Thus it is not surprising that it is not the scholarly theoreticians of culture, but its native interpreters--black female creative artists like Harriet Powers, Zora Neale Hurston, Margaret Walker Alexander, Bessie Jones, and Alice Walker--who have preserved and presented the best evidence of a dynamic, vital, southern black female aesthetic. In this part of the curriculum guide we continue to draw freely from southern black women's creative work, both for its own artistic value and to offset the paucity of reliable scholarly documentation and analysis of black female expressive culture.

Countervailing the problems inherent in such scholarly research, cultural historians such as John W. Blassingame (1972; rept 1979) and Lawrence W. Levine (1977) have demonstrated that a semi-autonomous Afro-American slave culture, with distinctive Afrocentric forms of art, music, language, and religion, had fully developed by the mid-19th century in the American South. Mary F. Berry and John Blassingame (1977), in fact, refer to the Americas as "an outpost of West African culture" during the centuries of slavery, and it is a culture still in evidence today. Scholars of the dynamics of culture contact and change--anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits (1941; rept. 1968) and art historian Maude S. Wahlman (1980) among them--reiterate that these African survivals in the creative expressions of black Americans are far more than non-functional, vestigial traits. They are evidence of conscious and creative cultural synthesis.

The essays which follow rest upon the concept of a cultural continuum linking precolonial West African societies through traditional southern black communities to the contemporary black urban North. The Deep South, the initial site of the diaspora to the United States, continues to be the heartland of Afro-America.

Within the South, the Sea Islanders of Georgia and South Carolina--variously referred to by scholars as Lowlanders, Low Country people, Afro-Carolinians, and Gullah speakers--offer a particularly vivid example of West African retentions. Because of their extreme geographical isolation, Sea Island Blacks have retained African cultural forms far more fully than peoples elsewhere in the United States. Crafts such as basketry, music, language form and structure, and religious beliefs and practices have clear West African analogues. Mary A. Twining refers to this "relic area" as "a prime living laboratory of African cultural survivals" (in Journal of Black Studies: Sea Island Culture 1980). In his essay, "Afro-Carolinian Art: Toward the History of a Southern Expressive Tradition" (1978), Gregory Day maintains that:

the coastal Low Country of South Carolina and Georgia is an important place to begin a search for the content and origins of traditional Southern arts. One of the earliest areas of settlement in the Southeast, this region has for over three centuries maintained a distinct cultural heritage that includes a creole language, religious beliefs, music, dance, art and architecture. It was in the Low Country that an early synthesis of African, Caribbean, and European traditions gave birth to a distinctly Southern culture that was taken inland and westward by those coastal people involved in the colonization process.

The dynamic cultural retention and cultural borrowing so strongly realized in the Sea Islands typifies Afro-American culture. This cultural syncretism is itself an important part of the African legacy, as H. H. Mitchell has pointed out in Black Belief: Folk Beliefs of Blacks in Africa and Afro-America (1975): "Historically, West African peoples have been adept at borrowing cultural elements from their conquerors and victims and fusing them with their own."

In addition to its fluid, improvisational nature, the African/Afro-American cultural continuum is characterized by the cohesive integration of diverse cultural expressions. A pronounced lack of distinction between the decorative and fine arts, as between public and private contexts, and among artistic media, parallels that in West African traditional societies. The arts are manifested throughout daily life in ways that do not create an opposition between an aesthetic and a utilitarian function. Even artifacts designed for temporary use may be carefully decorated, as are ritual objects. Genres are frequently combined, e.g., costume-making, jewelry-making, drama, and spiritual beliefs may all be fused into one multi-genre event, such as a community ritual. Further, the audience/artist dichotomy, common in Euro-America, is not present in West Africa.

Genres very distinct in Euro-American culture are frequently combined in the American South, where expressions of material culture, for example, are interwoven closely with other art forms--music, dance, literary and oral traditions--sharing common themes, styles, and symbols. The improvisational, polyrhythmic style of southern black quilters has deep affinities with jazz, dance, and poetry. Dominant themes in black spirituality are reiterated in the work of visionary folk painters, and the museum pieces of Faith Ringgold and Betye Saar, articulated by black women novelists, and echoed in the celebrations of gospel music. All are interrelated with each other and with everyday life, not separated by genre, context, and function in the Euro-American fashion.

The political biases of race, sex, and class have a great deal to do with what is generally regarded as "art" and what is not, and have determined which members of society have access to the resources, leisure, and education required to produce the fine art that is regarded as "real art". This dichotomy between the lives and work of an elite few and those of entire groups of less privileged people reflects a bias-fraught system of values, and thus no study of Afro-American culture can be separated from that of the struggle of black people against racism and that of black women against a double-bind of oppression.

It is critical that students understand the integrative quality of the African/Afro-American cultural continuum, if they are to appreciate the cultural expressions of southern black women. While we have isolated the arts into five distinct sections, we have also consciously interwoven disparate materials into the approaches to each topic. Themes are repeated from one

essay to another as they are in the culture, to illustrate that it is impossible, for example, to study traditional black music without becoming aware of the central role of spiritual and religious beliefs in southern black women's lives. The holistic interrelatedness of the culture lends itself to pedagogical approaches such as the one we suggest in the concluding section on Alice Walker. That essay attempts to illustrate the way one artist draws on the comprehensive body of southern black female culture.

Teachers will want to refer to Lorraine Bethel's curriculum (1982), which takes a parallel approach to black female culture. They may find it useful to begin this unit by reintroducing and discussing such important concepts in the study of culture as origin, diffusion, acculturation, assimilation, syncretism, adaptation, reinterpretation, cultural maintenance, tradition-bearer, transmission, and retention (see Part I).

Cultural materials from the Sea Islands are mentioned repeatedly in Part IV. John Stewart's collection Bessie Jones: For the Ancestors: Autobiographical Memories (1983); Bessie Jones and Bess Lomax Hawes' book Step It Down: Games, Plays, Songs, and Stories from the Afro-American Heritage (1972); the companion phonograph LP Step It Down: Games for Children by Bessie Jones, with 28 pages of detailed liner notes in booklet form; the LP So Glad I'm Here; and the film Yonder Come Day all feature Bessie Jones. Jones actively and consciously bears and carries forth Sea Island cultural forms such as song, dance, storytelling, and children's games. Thus her work is critical in helping students understand the entire spectrum of Afro-American cultural expression, particularly the roles of women as tradition-bearers. Jones lives the maxim of Afro-American traditional culture as stated by Vlach (1978): "To simultaneously express one's self and reinforce the image of the community." Her life and work stand as testimony to the strength and vitality of the expressive culture of southern black women.

PART IV-B. "OUR MOTHERS' GARDENS": MATERIAL CULTURE

Approaches

Because most students will have seen or will know something of such types of material culture as folk art and crafts, and because they are highly visible and comparatively easy to analyze, the study of material culture serves well as an introductory model for classroom study of other, less accessible aspects of cultural expression. As the term originated in archaeology, anthropology, and folklore, material culture refers to tangible, concrete objects (artifacts) that are made or modified by people and that are found within the context of a particular cultural group. A concise working definition for undergraduate classes might be traditional artifacts in a cultural context, which are studied as much for their documentary value as historical and cultural evidence as for their aesthetic characteristics. Material culture encompasses such things as quilts, clothing, cuisine, domestic environments, folk art and crafts--the physical creations through which members of a community express their cultural heritage. Through this study, Project courses sought to introduce students to traditional Afro-American cultural aesthetics and the ways in which they are manifested.

Project classes examined the roles played by southern black women in creating, maintaining, and transmitting material culture traditions. Those forms of material culture in which women have been most active were scrutinized for continuities and similarities. In traditional Afro-American culture, certain genres of the folk art and crafts, such as quilting and some types of basketmaking, have traditionally been dominated by women. In some, such as painting, women have been active, while others (for example, pottery and woodcarving) have been primarily associated with men. The domestic environment--from gardens and yards to interior arrangement and decoration--has been a major area for the expression of a southern black female aesthetic. Women have been the primary, active tradition-bearers in the culinary arts, sewing and clothing-making, and in the creation of such Afro-American hair styles as plaiting and corn-rowing. Teachers sought to help students consciously articulate the guiding aesthetic of all these endeavors--as Ntozake Shange (1980) says, to "pull the so-called personal outta the realm of non-art":

> that's why i have dreams and recipes, great descriptions of kitchens and handiwork in sassafrass, cypress and indigo. that's why in for colored girls . . . i discuss the simple reality of going home at nite, of washing one's body, looking out the window with a woman's eyes. we must learn our common symbols, preen them, and share them with the world.

Awareness of the existence of these common symbols is the goal underlying the study of southern black women's material culture.

In order to appreciate southern black women's material culture, students must be familar with the differences between fine and folk artists, used in a way that does not devalue or denigrate the latter's work. Fine artists are highly trained professionals working out of a formal, elite, and institutionalized tradition. Folk artists are individuals with informal training, who have learned their art form orally or by imitation, in face-to-face interaction, and who rarely make their living from their artistry. Some professional artists, like Faith Ringgold, Betye Saar, Barbara Chase-Riboud, Camille Billops, and Elizabeth Catlett also draw on traditional materials, form, style, and content (see Bontemps 1980). Working within a communal aesthetic, folk artists commonly use the materials at hand, and draw their forms, styles, and themes from their native culture. Students should be able to distinguish between traditional folk and visionary (or "isolate") artists--the latter whose work, inspired by personal dreams or visions, is often idiosyncratic and whose style is more highly individualized. All these artists reflect in their work the themes and symbols of southern black female culture.

The task of articulating and understanding the aesthetic values expressed in the daily lives and tangible creations of "ordinary" women lends itself to a wealth of classroom activities. As Project students read slave narratives, autobiographies, fiction, and poetry by and about southern black women, they examined them for evidence of varying forms of material culture. Students can do comparative photographic documentation or inventories of household environments, contrasting Afro-American and Euro-American aesthetics and senses of arrangement. As an introductory exercise to artifacts and their significance in all our lives, some teachers asked students to list the five objects that they would take from their home if it were on fire, to explain their choices, and to consider the objects their mothers and also their grandmothers would choose. From this simple exercise, many conclusions can be reached about the importance of material objects in creating and expressing value systems.

Using the suggestions for interviewing, collecting, documenting, and presenting materials which are found in Part V of this guide, Project students studied a wide variety of artifacts from their families and communities. Family and local community members, as well as residents of senior citizens' homes, represent a rich mine of information. For classroom study of traditional foodways or culinary arts, family recipes can be collected, as well as the stories that go with them. Students might prepare a class buffet or conduct a bake sale, using only traditional recipes that have been handed down by the women in their family. Food rituals can be compared and observed: Who eats together? When? Where? How do meals begin? Is grace said? What behaviors form the family or group's body of manners? What kinds of topics comprise table talk?

Community women noted for their talents as gardeners, quilters, crocheters, or cooks can be interviewed and their creations, and the process of making them, photographed. Different generations of women can be questioned

about their attitudes and lore about hair, or about changing clothing styles.

Specific objectives for the study of material culture include:

*Examining the development of a distinctly Afro-American material aesthetic, combining African retentions with Euro-American forms and American experiences.

*Exploring the particular aesthetic of southern black women in the genres in which they have been the primary tradition-bearers.

*Analyzing the different genres in which southern black women have found creative expression--needlework, basketmaking, domestic environments, foodways, personal dress, and hair styles.

*Becoming familiar with the work of noted southern black female folk and visionary artists.

*Exploring the connections between traditional folk and fine artists working out of a shared southern black folk tradition.

*Becoming aware of the common aesthetic that links all creative cultural expressions of southern black women.

Materials

Available resource materials for the study of tangible artifacts created by black women in the South range from books, articles, and monographs by folklorists, anthropologists, and cultural historians, to exhibition catalogs and pictorial surveys by art historians, to oral histories or film and videotape documentaries which feature particular artists. As discussed above, the scholars and interpreters of both African and Afro-American material culture have usually been white, and most often have been male. Notable exceptions, whose recent careful documentation and scholarly analysis will be utilized throughout this unit, are the writings of Lorraine Bethel (1982), Arna A. Bontemps (1980), Mary A. Twining (1975-1976, 1978, and 1983), Gladys-Marie Fry (1976), and Roslyn A. Walker (1976). In addition, novels, short stories, and poems by black women creative writers are often valuable resources for the study of the material culture of southern black women, and selected works of poetry and fiction are highly recommended for classroom use.

It is through the integrated use in the classroom of such creative writings, with scholarly analyses and audiovisual materials, that students can gain easier access to understanding artifacts, their creators, and the contexts for their use and enjoyment. Audiovisual resources that are particularly recommended include the films The Afro-American Tradition in the Decorative Arts (in conjunction with Vlach 1978), Made in Mississippi (in conjunction with Ferris and McCallum 1982 and Ferris 1983), Nellie's Playhouse (in conjunction with Livingston and Beardsley 1982) and Spirit-Catcher: The Art of Betye Saar; the videotapes African Origins and Traditions in Crafts, African-American Folk Art and Craft Traditions, and "Learned It In Back Days and Kept It"; the videotape series Folk Artists Teach . . . ; and the slide

set, Black Women Artists.

Literature on the range of genres, contexts, and functions of the material culture artifacts of women in Africa is just beginning to emerge from the work of feminist-oriented scholars and art critics, but as yet no comprehensive overview of the traditional arts of either West African traditional or contemporary women is available. Teachers wishing to do further reading on the African cultural backgrounds of the material culture of black women in the American South are referred in particular to the essay by Roslyn A. Walker, "Woman as Artist in Sub-Saharan Africa" (in Bontemps 1980; see also Walker 1976) and to the writings of Denise Paulme (1956 and 1963), Rene S. Wassing (1968), Clara Odugbesan (1969), Louise E. Jefferson (1973), Thelma R. Newman (1974), Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay (1976), Mona Etienne (1977), Bennetta Jules-Rosette (1980), Christine Obbo (1980), and Filomina Chioma Steady (1981). In addition, Judith Friedlander (1978), while focusing on Mexican women's traditional arts, offers a highly provocative conceptual framework for analyzing "the aesthetics of oppression"--the art of Third World women in terms of the economic and sociopolitical biases of sex, race, and class.

Basketry. One of the clearest and most well-documented examples of the continuation of African practices and the preservation of African forms in southern black culture is the coil basketry tradition of the Sea Island region of South Carolina and Georgia. These baskets, made from grasses gathered from the surrounding woods and marshes, and sewn together with an awl, closely resemble those found throughout West and Central Africa. As discussed above, the Sea Island people exhibit a marked degree of Africanisms in music, speech, lifestyle, cooking, as well as in their crafts.

Project teachers used several essays on Sea Island material culture. A chapter of the exhibition catalog, The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts (Vlach 1978), is devoted to Sea Island basketry, as are two essays in the Ferris anthology (1983). Mary Twining's "Harvesting and Heritage: A Comparison of Afro-American and African Basketry" is an excellent article for classroom use, describing the evolution of basketry in the Sea Island region, its African precedents, the process of basket sewing, and the role of basketmaking today in that culture. Although during the pre- and post-Civil War periods, baskets were produced primarily for local use, the tourist trade currently comprises the major market for basketmakers. At one time used for a variety of functional purposes--"fanning the rice, winnowing corn or other grains, measuring food allotment, travelling and harvesting, sewing, and collecting money in the churches"--with the exceptions of the church collection baskets, patterns are now determined by their popularity on the roadside stands that dot South Carolina's Highway 17 (Twining in Ferris 1983). Twining also cites studies of the Bambara-Djula-speaking people of Mali that report techniques of coil basketry similar to those of the Georgia and South Carolina Sea Islands, noting:

> Among the Bambara-Djula speakers, the basket containers are associated with females and their roles in the society, specifically the holding capacity of the baskets is equated with the women's carrying children. It seems interesting that there is an obvious connection among the Mount Pleasant people, as well, between women and basketmaking.

Gerald Davis (also in Ferris 1983) remarks as well upon the role of women in the basketmaking community in his article, "Afro-American Coil Basketry in

Charleston County, South Carolina: Affective Characteristics of an Artistic Craft in a Social Context":

> Each family unit has at least one, or, frequently, two or three "master" basketsewers, nowadays usually a female member of the family, who prepares the baskets for the commercial market. It is her obligation to pass the basketry techniques on, usually to younger women, daughters and granddaughters.

Other information as well is passed on within the aesthetic community formed by the basketmakers, including family and regional histories relating to basket sewing, jokes, legends, tales, and a wide variety of folkloristic materials and commentaries. Davis' analysis is of basketweaving as a cultural system; of the basketweavers themselves he concludes that they manifest "a high degree of self-consciousness and personal power within a loosely collective community."

Gregory Day discusses basket sewing, along with fishing, furniture making, architecture, and quilting as key features of the Afro-Carolinian expressive tradition, in which the production of traditional arts continues to play an important role. He notes that the Afro-Carolinian arts are similar, particularly in the degree of improvisation and innovation which characterizes them, to other Afro-American expressive traditions.

Quilting. Among the needle arts, quilting has perhaps been the most widely and carefully documented, and excellent classroom materials are available from both written and audiovisual sources. The catalog from the exhibition Black Folk Art in America 1930-1980 (Livingston and Beardsley 1982) includes a brief discussion of quilting, and John M. Vlach (1978) also devotes a chapter to this art form. The Ferris anthology (1983) contains a number of articles on quilting. One chapter, by editor William Ferris, is entitled "Pecolia Warner, Quilt Maker" and consists of edited oral history interviews with this black Mississippi quilt maker whose life and work are also explored in Ferris and McCallum (1982) and in Ferris' films Made in Mississippi and Four Women Artists, which are available with accompanying teachers' guides. These combined resources allow teachers to utilize contextual information about the maker and her community along with visual illustrations of her life and work, for enriched classroom study of this topic. Judith Wragg Chase's Afro-American Art and Craft (1971) and Middleton Harris, et al.'s The Black Book (1974) are particularly useful for their excellent photographs of examples of southern black needle arts and quilting styles. These sources discuss quilting in terms of the retentions of African techniques, stylistic principles, and outstanding examples of the genre, such as the remarkable quilts of 19th-century Georgian, Harriet Powers, in the Smithsonian and Boston museums.

Southern black women, incorporating features of African textile arts, have evolved a quilt-making style that contrasts sharply with the Euro-American aesthetic, which is rigid and uniform in pattern and highly predictable in design. "Euro-American forms were converted so that Af[illegible] ideas would not be lost," Vlach obse[illegible]s. Enslaved women who created the Afro-American style "simultaneously served the requirements of their masters [that quilts be made] and preserved a cultural 'memory' of African textile aesthetics. This memory lives today in the work of contemporary quilters.

Maude Southwell Wahlman and John Scully's article on the "Aesthetic Principles of Afro-American Quilting" (in Ferris 1983) isolates five aesthetic

principles which offer a framework from which the individual quilter chooses elements and within which she evolves her own distinct style. They list:

> 1) strips to construct and to organize quilt top design space; 2) large-scale designs; 3) strong, highly contrasting colors; 4) off-beat patterns; 5) multiple rhythms.

The use of strips (long, narrow, rectangular shapes of cloth which are used to piece a quilt) in particular reflects a textile aesthetic which has been passed down for generations among women who are the descendents of Africans. The asymmetrical repetition of form, off-beat placement of pieces, variable color schemes, and controlled sense of rhythmic movement in Afro-American quilts exhibit an emphasis on improvisation remarkably similar to that of jazz, and which is, in fact, characteristic of Afro-American cultural forms as a whole.

The well-known quilts of Harriet Powers are depicted and discussed by Vlach (1978), Wahlman and Scully (in Ferris 1983), and in separate essays devoted to them by Marie Jeanne Adams (in Ferris 1983) and by Gladys-Marie Fry (in Wadsworth 1976). Harriet Powers' work is also featured in the film Missing Pieces, which was based on the 1976 Georgia folk arts exhibition produced by Wadsworth. The Powers quilt now in the Smithsonian Institution illustrates eleven Biblical scenes, beginning with the Garden of Eden and ending with the Nativity. A second Powers quilt, now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (reproduced on the cover of this guide), combines Biblical scenes with depictions of meteorological events that occurred during and before Powers' lifetime. Powers supplied an interpretation of her illustrations of local events and oral history when she sold her quilts in c. 1890, which has been widely reprinted (e.g. in Ferris 1983). Both quilts are stunning examples of artistic syncretism. The applique techniques are strikingly similar to those used in old Dahomey, by the Fon of Benin and the Ewe, Fanti, and Ashanti of Ghana. Affinities between Dahomean textiles and Powers' work include the use of patterned figures in the quilt top design, the shared motifs of birds, fish, crescents, and rosettes, and the simple, direct, and iconic quality of the scenes.

Wahlman and Scully (in Ferris 1983) note that women quilt for different reasons, and that the role of quilting in the lives of the quilters themselves merits further attention:

> Additional research must also be done on the social context for Afro-American quilts: the home. Although Afro-American quilts are being appreciated in art galleries, the real art galleries for hundreds of years have been Afro-American homes . . . We need to know how quilts were used by the people who made and needed them. We need to remember the women whose hands warmed, loved, protected, healed, and reassured. Quilting is an extension of those hands.

Alice Walker's short story "Everyday Use" (1973a), [illegible]l to those hands. Dedicated "for your grandmama," the story is told [illegible] who descri[illegible] as "a large, big-boned woman with rough man-wor[illegible]g hands." This rural woman is the mother of two daughters, Dee and Maggie. After years of fleeing her origins and pursuing upward mobility, Dee returns to the family farm in African dress, with a new African name (Wangero). She spends her time acquisitively looking about her mother's home for family belongings to take home, display, and "transform" into art objects. Deciding she wants two quilts pieced by her great-grandmother and great-aunt, and discovering that

her mother has promised them to Maggie, who has never left home, Dee "gasped like a bee had stung her."

> "Maggie can't appreciate these quilts!" she said. "She'd probably be backward enough to put them to everyday use."
> "I reckon she would," I said . . . "I hope she will!" I didn't want to bring up how I had offered Dee (Wangero) a quilt when she went away to college. Then she had told me they were old-fashioned, out of style.

The mother denies the quilts to Dee, the daughter for whom she has sacrificed for years, and for the first time embraces Maggie as her own beloved child. Leaving, Dee accuses her mother of cultural ignorance:

> "You just don't understand."
> "What don't I understand? I wanted to know.
> "Your heritage," she said.

Even in her embrace of African ways, Dee (Wangero) is still caught in the dichotomous vise of the Euro-American value system that separates aesthetics from utility. Art for "everyday use" is the African heritage. Walker's story can serve as provocative means for stimulating classroom discussion of the polarities in Euro-American art that are integrated within Afro-American expressive culture: art/craft, elite/folk, formal/informal, beauty/utility, form/function, display/use, special/everyday, and public/private.

Painters. The major sources used by Project teachers for the study of folk and visionary painters from the southern black tradition were the Livingston and Beardsley exhibition catalog (1982) and selections from Elinor Horwitz's Contemporary Folk Artists (1975). In an introductory essay, Jane Livingston (Livingston and Beardsley 1982) observes that of the major traditions in American art history:

> one important episode has been dominated, in authenticity and in sheer numbers of practitioners, by black artists. That aspect of American art is a certain kind of self-generated or "folk" expression. It is an aesthetic paradoxically based in a deeply communal culture, while springing from the hands of a relatively few, physically isolated, individuals. This phenomenon has effloresced particularly in the present century. It cannot be coincidental that perhaps fully half of the truly great artists in the recent American folk genre, from the early 1920s to the present, are blacks and predominantly Southern blacks.

Among these artists are a number of gifted women, including Sister Gertrude Morgan, Nellie Mae Rowe, Inez Nathaniel Walker, and Clementine Hunter.

Sister Gertrude Morgan, born in Alabama in 1900, was talented as a preacher, a singer, and as a visionary painter whose themes are celebratory and imagery apocalyptic. At age 37 she received a divine message to preach, upon which she moved to New Orleans and worked as a street preacher. With two other women, she started an orphanage, and joined a sanctified church which emphasized music and dancing as avenues of communion with God. Sister Gertrude did not begin painting until she was 56, and her artistic production increased greatly after the orphanage was destroyed by a hurricane a decade later (Horwitz 1975; see also Livingston and Beardsley 1982 and Alexander 1970).

Nellie Mae Rowe, born in Georgia in 1900, also flowered as an artist when she was in her mid-60s. Rowe's prodigious output included drawings, oil paintings, wood and chewing-gum sculptures, quilting, and the dolls she had made since childhood (Livingston and Beardsley 1982; see also the film Nellie's Playhouse). Inez Nathaniel Walker, born in South Carolina in 1911, began to draw in prison, as a means of personal therapy (Livingston and Beardsley 1982). Clementine Hunter, one of three black women featured in Elinor Horwitz's Contemporary Folk Artists (1975), is a native of Natchitoches Parish in Louisiana. She created paintings that are:

> naive in execution, joyous, spontaneous, radiant with color. They depict all aspects of life in the rural South. Like so many folk artists, Clementine Hunter paints only happy memories. Even her funerals have an air of festivity. The women are wearing their best hats, the flowers are superb, the corpse rests in a sky blue coffin under a sunlit sky.

As well as painting, Hunter was known for her quilts, cooking, and making rag doll dresses.

Domestic Arts. Jane Livingston remarks (in Livingston and Beardsley 1982) on the "radiant force of will, palapable sense of courage and self-knowledge" which are evident upon meeting artists such as these women. "These are artists," she continues, "for whom the forging of a major body of work, and the creation of a serenely productive life, both occurring against monumental odds, constitute a feat which could seem nearly inconceivable." Project teachers used Alice Walker's important essay, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" (1974; rept. 1983), to discuss the creative spirit as manifested in ways that are perhaps less spectacular. "How was the creativity of the Black woman kept alive, year after year and century after century?" Walker asks. She finds the answer to her question in the life of her own mother:

> During the "working" day [my mother] labored beside--not behind--my father in the fields. Her day began before sunup, and did not end until late at night. There was never a moment for her to sit down, undisturbed, to unravel her own private thoughts; never a time free from interruption--by work or the noisy inquiries of her many children. And yet, it is to my mother--and to all our mothers who were not famous--that I went in search of the secret of what has fed that muzzled and often mutilated, but vibrant, creative spirit that the Black woman has inherited, and that pops out in wild and unlikely places to this day.

She realizes that it is in her flower gardens, renowned for miles around, that her mother's artistry is expressed. Carole Clemmons Gregory's poem "Revelation," in Conditions Five: The Black Women's Issue (1979), also celebrates the everyday, domestic artistry of her mother:

> the earth in her fingers planting red morning glories/petunias, sunflowers, dec ating our yard,/braiding our hair . . . /she held her head up we moved into the projects.

In their discussions of cooking as a domestic art, Proj ers found

Lorraine Bethel's treatment of "Black Women's Culinary Arts" (1982) to be extremely valuable. Bethel suggested that her students consider the de-valuation of the cooking done by women (as compared to the great status accorded to male cooks), the role of black women as cooks for their own families as well as those of white masters and employers, and that they carefully ponder the origins of soul food as that which was once considered unfit for consumption by whites. Bethel also recommends that classes prepare and sample food together. Among other resources used to spark students' insights as to the cultural significance of food is the anthology Black People and Their Culture: Selected Writings from the African Diaspora (Shapiro 1976). Shapiro includes an article by Diana Ameley Ayensu on African cooking and the role of food in African social life, which provides an interesting contrast to cookbooks by southern black women in America. Norma Jean Darden and Carole Darden's Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine (1978) is a cookbook which combines traditional recipes with family history, photographs, narratives, and commentary. Edna Lewis' collection of traditional family seasonal and holiday foodways, The Taste of Country Cooking (1978), was also used. Such books--which Bethel (1982) calls "a classic genre in black women's literature"--are valuable as classroom resources, to demonstrate the role food plays in solidfying bonds between people, and to stimulate students to examine the role of foodways in the culture of their own families and communities. Molly C. Dougherty discusses "The Ceremonial Meal" as community ritual in Becoming A Woman In Southern Black Culture (1978), making salient points about special, holiday, and festival meals and the role of foodways in communities that are larger than the family unit. Her remarks reiterate memories of church socials and "dinner-on-the-grounds" described in readings used in other sections of Project courses, such as Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (1970) and Carole Ann Gregory's poem, "The Greater Friendship Baptist Church" (in Stetson 1981). Nikki Giovanni's "Legacies" (in Fisher 1980) suggests the way food symbolizes the bonds between women. Giovanni recalls the time her grandmother told her:

> "i want chu to learn how to make rolls," said the old
> woman proudly
> but the little girl didn't want
> to learn how because she knew
> even if she couldn't say it that
> that would mean when the old one died she would be less
> dependent on her spirit . . .

Project classes also explored fashion and hairstyle, and the norms, values, beliefs and customs associated with them, as forms of female cultural expression, as does Bethel (1982) in her sessions on "The Racial/Sexual Politics of Appearance: Black Women's Fashion" and "The Politics of Black Women's Hair." The Shapiro anthology contains a photo-essay on corn-rowing. Some teachers assigned Bebe Moore Campbell's "Color Struck" (1978), which relates issues and attitudes surrounding black women's hair to color prejudice. Vercamae Smart-Grosvenor addresses these issues in "Skillet Blond" (in Baraka and Baraka 1983) depicting the destructive effects of being judged by alien standards:

> rever menting on how you look. What they say hurts
> gs. Spe ly when the h are entirely too
> r red. d is your favor or. like crying

when they predict that you will never be able to wear lipstick.

"How come she always grinnin and showin her teeth, look like a african with them big liver lips."

"Aint it the truth, she'll never be able to wear lipstick. They dont make lipstick for two-toned lips."

"Umm dont that bottom pink lip look like a monkeys behind?" It's all you can do to hold it in and not cry.

"Nose flat as a aunt jemina pancake and not nough hair in the kitchen to even think bout curlin."

"Aint it the truth, look at them nappy edges."

Willie Coleman's poem, "Use to be," in Conditions: Five; The Black Women's Issue (1979), offers a look at black beauty parlors as an important setting for informal communication and the expression of the rituals of a black female aesthetic--the sharing and preening of common symbols called for by Ntozake Shange:

lots more got taken care of/than hair./Cause in our mutual obivious dislike/for nappiness/we came together/under the hot comb/to share/and share/and share.

PART IV-C. "REPLACING HEARTS WITH GOD AND SONG": TRADITIONAL MUSIC

Although most college-age students, female and male, black and white, have usually had a great deal of informal exposure to black women in music, dance, and drama, a course unit on traditional music can formally introduce the intellectual concepts, interpretive frameworks, and research skills necessary for re-assessing the place of southern black women in the performing arts. Although some Project courses included study of other performing arts such as film and theatre, in this curriculum guide we will focus exclusively on music. From the wide spectrum of Afro-American music, this essay reviews only thoses genres--on the entire continuum from secular to sacred--that exist within or derive directly from the folk or traditional context. A non-elite cultural approach is again taken, one that emphasizes informally trained but highly skilled artists, usually performing in a face-to-face interpersonal context within the black family, neighborhood, or community. Thus, the blues, lullabies, play songs, work songs, spirituals, gospel music, and protest songs are the primary focus, rather than operatic arias, chamber music, symphonic works, or commercial "Top Ten" hits. Key southern black women who achieved widespread public exposure, sometimes accompanied by commercial success, but whose style was traditionally-rooted--"classic" blues singers like Gertrude "Ma" Rainey and Bessie Smith and gospel singers like Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Mahalia Jackson--are highlighted for their significance in the history and development of both mainstream black and white American popular music. This review first focuses on the history and development of southern black music within the traditional context, and second, examines the aesthetic, roles, and contributions of southern black women as its creators, performers, and transmitters.

Approaches

The major objective of such a course unit is to survey the historical background of black women's music, from Africa to America, from the rural Deep South to the urban North, and to examine its evolving functions within changing sociocultural contexts. Teachers are encouraged to bring filmed and recorded musical examples into the classroom to illustrate and enliven discussion. Films and videotapes such as From Jumpstreet, Black Music in America, or other multi-part surveys of Afro-American music and phonograph records such as Negro Folk Music of Africa and America or Roots of Black Music in America, should be integrated with discussion of assigned readings throughout the study of the traditional music of southern black women. Teachers should refer to

sections B and C of Part VI for audiovisual source materials for classroom use.

In addition to utilizing films and phonograph records in the classroom, teachers should emphasize direct student contact with or participation in Afro-American women's music-making. A variety of both in-classroom and off-campus activities can be used to encourage an experiential approach to this topic. Some students might themselves be talented amateur or semi-professional singers, who would be willing to perform medleys of traditional songs such as spirituals or gospels for other class members. Students could conduct a mini-celebration of black women's music in conjunction with Black Heritage Month or Women's History Week at their sorority or dormitory or at the university student center. Many Project classes found that within their own families or communities there were usually talented female singers--such as a student's mother or grandmother--who were willing to come into the classroom to discuss and perform traditional lullabies or other songs. Students' younger sisters were also asked to sing and demonstrate play and game songs. Often campus or community organizations, such as glee clubs, choruses, and interdenominational choirs perform in local programs throughout the year, and some Project classes visited such concerts. Local female singers also perform regularly at area churches or special musical programs at community centers, and classes might attend such events, comparing and contrasting the music used by different denominations. Women sing gospel music in a wide variety of contexts--in congregations, choirs, quartets, and other ensembles. Live or recorded examples of the most well-known and commercially popular southern black women soloists, whose performance styles are most traditionally-rooted, might be analyzed for continuity and change. Another approach would be for interested students to focus on the popular gospel music compositions of black women--such as Lucie E. Campbell, Lillian Bowles, Sallie Martin, Roberta Martin, Dorothy Love Coates, Anne C. G. Brooks, Mary Lee Carr, Wynona Carr, Mattie Moss Clarke, Ruby Sims Crocker, Ruth Davis, Louise McDonald, Cora Martin.

Watching and listening to performances of traditional music was supplemented in Project courses by assignments asking students to compare renditions of the same song--a traditional blues or lyric song, for example--as it has changed over time, or how variant texts are sung by different women. Contemporary gospel songs as well as popular secular songs played over commercial radio stations were analyzed by Project students, who kept logs of the songs receiving the most frequent airplay. These were discussed in terms of their titles, lyric content, message, carryovers of traditional stylistic elements, and the regional origin, race, and gender of the singer. For black-oriented gospel radio stations in particular, the differences between genres and styles of songs performed by female soloists or groups were contrasted to those performed by men. Similiarly, biracial classes contrasted the gospel music traditions of southern Blacks and whites, comparing repertoires, lyrics, and performance styles.

Pedagogical objectives for the study of southern black women and traditional music include:

*Understanding the general history and development of black music, from Africa through contemporary black America, highlighting the roles and contributions of southern black women as creators, performers, and tradition-bearers.

*Examining the traditional, small group or community, grassroots contexts out of which Afro-American music continues to develop, and the seminal role of the South and of women within this context.

*Examining the diaspora to the North and throughout the world and the impact on mainstream music of southern black traditional music and of southern black female performers.

*Understanding the commonalities and continuities between traditional music and other forms of creative cultural expression, such as oral traditions and verbal art, literature, visual arts, and material culture.

*Analyzing the racial politics of black and white popular American music and the sexual politics within black American music.

*Examining historical and contemporary images of southern black women in music, challenging their authenticity and understanding why those specific images have been created and maintained.

Materials: The African Background

Fundamental to an understanding of Afro-American music is a basic introduction to the highly-developed musical artistry of West and West Central African tribal societies and to the roles of women within African musical culture. Eileen Southern, in the first chapter of her important music history text, The Music of Black Americans (1971a), describes how music played an integrative function in tribal societies. Music accompanied or commented on all activities of daily life--birth, childhood, rites of initiation, marriage, healing, death, work, war, religious ceremonies, harvest festivals--and it was also used for purposes of social commentary, criticism, and protest. These wide-ranging functions of African music, many of which were retained by southern slaves and assimilated into Afro-American musical culture, will be discussed throughout this section of the curriculum guide. They are important to emphasize in the undergraduate classroom--to help students go beyond simple appreciation of musical style and performance to gain a deeper understanding of music's relationships to other aspects of culture, and to larger social phenomena.

Southern also points out a number of important characteristics of African music, and defines several key terms that should be introduced to students early in their study of music. Among them is the pattern of call-and-response--or vocal alternation between soloist and group--that was a carryover from Africa into slavery in America, and is one of the most significant features of Afro-American music. Another is the emphasis on communal activity or group participation. She notes while "generally, only males played musical instruments [and] the women joined in on the singing and dancing," that "exceptions to the all-male instrumental groups seem to have been associated with the music performed in connection with rites of birth, marriage, and death," and offers several examples of female instrumentalists (1971a).

While Southern's text is useful for providing an introductory overview of

black music in general, Irene V. Jackson's "Black Women and Music: A Survey From Africa to the New World" (in Steady 1981) takes a more female-centered approach and is highly recommended. She sets out to counter "the invisibility of women in studies of music of African and African-derived societies." Using as her examples certain rites of passage associated with the female life cycle--childbirth, puberty, adulthood, marriage, and death--Jackson discusses examples from several African tribal societies where women have been active as creators, makers, and transmitters of music, as both singers and instrumentalists.

Both The Music of Black Americans (Southern 1971a) and Readings in Black American Music (Southern 1971b), a collection of primary source materials which is often used to accompany the music history text, include the earliest-known example of an African song text, translated in the late 18th century from the singing of his female Mandigo or Malinke hostess by Scotsman Mungo Park. It is sung extemporaneously by a group of family women who return to spinning cotton after they have fed and provided shelter for their guest:

[Verse:] The winds roared, and the rains fell;
The poor white man, faint and weary,
Came and sat under our tree;
He has no mother to bring him milk,
No wife to grind his corn.

[Chorus:] Let us pity the white man.
No mother has he to bring him milk,
No wife to grind his corn.

The song is structured in one typical African textual form--alternating a verse sung by the leader with the chorus on which the group joins in--that is also quite common in Afro-American work songs.

The song texts and music of slave women in America were also written down by many early collectors, among them John Wesley Work from Fisk University, who documented one traditional work song that accompanied slave women's labor on a southern plantation (1940; rept. Smith 1979):

Look-a yonder! Hot boilin' sun comin' over,
Look-a look-a yonder, Hot boilin' sun, comin' over,
An' he ain't goin' down
An' he ain't goin' down.

It is important to point out here that in African, as in Afro-American music, the words of a song are often more important than the melody, and songs are also characterized by the dynamic existing between their formal structural framework, established by cultural tradition, in contrast to the individual singer's freedom for spontaneous creative variation and improvisation.

In addition to repetition contrasted with improvisation and variation, the call-and-response technique, emphasis on dancing and other body movements, and communal participation, several other distinct characteristics of African music that have been assimilated into Afro-American music are listed in Pearl Williams-Jones' essay "Afro-American Gospel Music: A Crystallization of the Black Aesthetic" (1975). These African-derived traits were pointed out to Project students, as they listened to recorded examples of both African and Afro-American music: varying vocal tone and timbre and the use of falsetto,

shouting, moaning, roughness, and other vocal special effects to communicate meaning and emotion; emphasis on complex and dynamic rhythms with percussive dominance; a dramatic concept of the music; and immediacy of communication.

Eleanor Smith's provocative Heresies essay, "And Black Women Made Music" (1979), is another important resource for exploring the adaptation of African idioms to the musical language of Afro-America, and their significance in southern black women's music. In this essay, which is particularly accessible to students, Smith emphasizes the integrative cultural approach to music, and points out the void in available literature about the experiences and contributions of black women.

Materials: The Legacy of Slavery

The Smith essay (1979) is also useful for illustrating the continued integration of music into all aspects of life--work, play, and worship--and for tracing African cultural continuities in Afro-American slave society. She comments:

> . . . After arriving in this country, [Afrikan women] were not allowed to speak their language, worship or follow any of their customs and cultural traditions. The first generations of Afrikan women were not removed from the memory of home and so were able to participate in those Afrikan traditions familiar to them when not under the watchful eye of their captors. It was not until several generations of Afrikan women were born in the colonies that the slave experience in America influenced the Afrikan to create an Afrikan American music.

The musical traditions of blacks during slavery have been documented through several extant primary sources--particularly slave narratives, newspapers, official records, travel accounts, and the journals and diaries of the white plantation owners or their wives (see Epstein 1977). The early written records by such collectors of the music of slaves and ex-slaves as Mrs. Natalie Burlin Curtis and Nathaniel Dett from Hampton Institute, Thomas W. Talley and John Wesley Work from Fisk University, and Howard Odum and Guy Johnson from the University of North Carolina also provide important first-hand resources for information on black women's music during slavery. (See Curtis 1919, Dett 1927, Talley 1922, Work 1915 and 1940, and Odum and Johnson 1925 and 1926). Southern (1971a) includes a chapter on "The Southern Colonies," and her collection of readings (1971b) also contains numerous contemporaneous accounts of both the secular and sacred music of slaves.

The retention of African musical elements in the New World was particularly powerful in New Orleans, where the city's secret voodoo cults and famous "voodoo queens" incorporated music into the heart of many forbidden rituals and ceremonies (Cavin 1975; Placksin 1982). It was also in New Orleans that the custom of slaves' Sunday afternoon music, chanting, and dancing in the Place Congo continued throughout the first half of the 19th century. Perhaps the most famous account of women's participation at the Place Congo is that of architect Benjamin Henry B. Latrobe, who visited New Orleans in 1819. Selections from his journal were first published in 1905 and are included in Southern's Readings in Black American Music (1971b):

> . . . They were formed into circular groups, in the midst of four of which that I examined (but there were more of them) was a ring, the largest not ten feet in diameter. In the first were two women dancing. They held each a coarse handkerchief, extended by the corners, in their hands, and set to each other in a miserably dull and slow figure [sic], hardly moving their feet or bodies. The music consisted of two drums and a stringed instrument. . . . The women squalled [sic] out a burden to the playing, at intervals consisting of two notes, as the negroes working in our cities respond to the song of their leader. . . . In the same orchestra was . . . also a calabash with a round hole in it, the hold studded with brass nails, which was beaten by a woman with two short sticks . . .

The continuum of the music of southern black women during the later slave period is also surveyed in the Eleanor Smith (1979) and Irene V. Jackson (in Steady 1981) essays. Students should become acquainted with the diverse and interrelated genres of music during slavery: work songs and shouts, field hollers, play and game songs, protest songs, ring shouts, spirituals, hymns, and lullabies. Like other forms of Afro-American cultural expression, musical genres overlap, although there are contextual and sometimes semantic differences among them. There are significant musicological and functional similarities between the various song types.

Women's roles in slave society included agricultural field work, as well as other plantation work tasks such as shucking corn, threshing rice, spinning, weaving, cooking, cleaning, washing, sewing, healing, and childcare--all of which could and did become occasions for song (Southern 1971a). Irene V. Jackson (in Steady 1981) cites several examples of work songs that were specifically associated with female slaves and that derived from the patterns and rhythms of women's work: songs that accompanied food preparation, such as pounding corn or churning, clothes-washing songs, spinning songs, quilting songs, and songs for healing, or to "lift" conjures or hoodoos. Lullabies or cradle songs are a particular example of slave women's music which "comprise the single most important part of black feminine song tradition and constitute a notable portion of women's work songs" (Jackson in Steady 1981). The few opportunities for social and recreational activities--feasting, dances and parties ("frolics"), visiting friends, holidays, such as Christmas, the Fourth of July, or harvest time, and childhood play were other contexts in which black slave women made music (Southern 1971a).

Southern black recreational songs, games, and "plays" that have been maintained from slavery times through the present day by blacks on the isolated Georgia Sea Islands have been carefully preserved and documented by traditional song leader Bessie Jones and folklorist Bess Lomax Hawes in their book Step It Down: Games, Plays, Songs, and Stories From the Afro-American Tradition (1972). Recorded examples of this material, which encompasses song, speech, dance, and drama, can also be heard on the phonograph records Afro-American Blues and Game Songs, Georgia Sea Island Songs, and Been in the Storm So Long, as well as on the albums featuring contemporary song leaders Bessie Jones and Ella Jenkins. The films The Georgia Sea Island Singers, Yonder Come Day, Pizza Pizza Daddy O, and Children's Games from Afro-American Tradition can also be rented for classroom use. Taken together, this unique and comprehensive set of materials comprises an important classroom resource for examining the secular music of southern black women within the naturally-occurring social context and for recognizing distinctive Afro-American characteristics and African carryovers.

Jones and Hawes' book Step It Down includes a wide range of traditional black lore: stories, lullabies and other songs, baby games and hand clapping plays, rope jumps and skips, ring plays, house and outdoor games, and dances. It is particularly useful in helping students to recall traditional folkways that may have been a part of their childhood and to recognize them as legitimate and valid areas for study. Project students were often interested in recreating such childhood games in the classroom, and in organizing small teams to teach them to young black children in community Head Start, YMCA, or day-care programs, or to local groups of elementary school students. Each section of Step It Down is preceded by comments by both the song leader and the scholar, and complete texts and tunes are included for each example. An introduction, technical instructions for performing the game or song, glosses, notes to scholars, annotations, bibliography, and discography make this a comprehensive book for the study of traditional rural black secular music and other oral traditions, primarily those maintained and transmitted by women and children. A related article, "Folksongs and Function: Some Thoughts on the American Lullaby" (Hawes 1974; rept. in Brunvand 1979) also focuses on the repertoire of Bessie Jones and is useful to aid in the interpretation of such folklore materials by context and use, rather than by form or content.

Black female slaves also made music while worshipping in "brush arbors" and "praise houses" on Sunday, the one day of free time allowed by the ruling plantation masters. The literature on slave religious music--principally the unaccompanied traditional spirituals--is so vast and well-known that it will not be reviewed here. Teachers should be familiar with the major primary and secondary sources on the origins, history, development, meaning, and transformation of the Afro-American spiritual (see Vada E. Butcher et al. 1970, Dena Epstein 1977, John Lovell, Jr. 1972, Mary Allen Grissom 1930, Mary F. Armstrong and Helen Ludlow 1874, James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamund Johnson 1925 and 1926, John W. Work 1915 and 1940, William Francis Allen et al. 1867, Robert Nathaniel Dett 1927 and 1936, and Robert E. Kennedy 1924). For quick review, Eileen Southern's The Music of Black Americans (1971a) includes several chapters which discuss brush arbors and other religious worship on the plantation, the holy shout, camp meeting songs, lined hymns, and the antebellum spiritual, stressing the prevalent carryover of African traits. One of the earliest and most important essays about the antebellum spiritual, W.E.B. DuBois' "Of the Sorrow Songs," from The Souls of Black Folk, is reprinted in Southern's companion volume, Readings in Black American Music (1903; rept. in Southern, 1971b). John W. Blassingame also includes an extended discussion of the meaning and function of traditional antebellum spirituals in The Slave Community (1979), focusing on the relationship of spiritual texts to the slaves' actual experiences, and on symbolic content and themes of stress, deliverance, protest, and escape to freedom. Teachers can return to Eleanor Smith's essay (1979) for a discussion of the religious musical experiences of black women during the slave period--both the psalms and hymns patterned after the Euro- American form, but presented in the African idiom, and the spirituals, the unique creation of black slaves.

Materials: Blues

Eleanor Smith's essay is useful as well for introducing study of the blues--black women's songs "about the new freedom, new occupations, current events and ways of the city" (1979). While blues began to evolve as an

indigenous Afro-American musical form sometime before the end of the Civil War, it emerged after Emancipation as "an expression of the new Black experience, and the content . . . changed to reflect the new status and different circumstances" (Smith 1979). The vast majority of the earliest professional blues singers were women, and the music that they sang, in travelling tent, minstrel, and vaudeville shows, often accompanied by jazz-like instrumental duos or ensembles, was called the "classic" blues--although it was sometimes more popular than traditional in content and style. Placksin, in her book American Women In Jazz (1982) devotes an entire chapter, "The Twenties," to the lives and work of these blues women, including: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, the acknowledged "Mother of the Blues" (1886-1939), born in Columbus, Georgia, trained in the rural blues tradition and promoted as a "southern-styled singer;" Bessie Smith (1898-1937), Rainey's protogee, born in Chattanooga, influential jazz-blues stylist, and the innovative "Empress of the Blues;" Mamie Smith (1890-1946), born in Cincinnati, the first black, male or female, to make a vocal recording of the blues, with her phenomenal 1920 hit, "Crazy Blues"; Ida Cox (1899-1968), born in Knoxville, and a transitional figure between folk and popular composed blues who wrote and sang the well-known "Wild Women Don't Have the Blues;" Clara Smith (1894-1935), born in Spartanburg, South Carolina, the "Queen of the Moaners," whose first recording was "Every Woman's Blues"; Victoria Spivey (1910-), born in Houston, and a skilled pianist and practitioner of Texas blues-style moans, who produced nearly 1,500 songs and in 1983 continues to run her own record company; and Alberta Hunter (1895-), born in Memphis, who at age 82, after 20 years' absence from public life, made a spectacular comeback in New York City.

Once Project students had been introduced to the music and lives of several of these "classic" blues singers, Project teachers assigned two essays that they found essential for understanding the full social and cultural meaning of the songs of these southern black women: Daphne Duval Harrison's "Black Women in the Blues Tradition" (in Harley and Terborg-Penn 1978) and Michele Russell's "Slave Codes and Liner Notes (1977; rept. in Hull, et al. 1982).

Harrison poses important questions about the images of black women in blues, in contrast to the realities of their life experiences under the double bind of racism and sexism:

1) What circumstances influenced black women to pursue the itinerant life of a tent show and theater performer?
2) How were black women blues performers perceived by other segments of the black population?
3) How did their music reflect their lives?
4) How did their music shape the blues in general?

She also offers a concise analysis of the socioeconomic backgrounds, lives, career patterns, and exploitation of several "classic" blues singers, revealing shared experiences and common musical themes. Harrison's essay is valuable for its critique of earlier scholars of Afro-American music who failed to either accurately or comprehensively document the lives of female performers or to consider their significance as artists. She does note, however, that Eileen Southern, in The Music of Black Americans (1971a), discusses the paradox of racism that created the background for many talented young southern black women to enter the world of segregated road shows "in their attempt to escape the poverty and hardship of black life in the rural south. . . " (Harrison 1978).

In "Slave Codes and Liner Notes" (1977; rept. in Hull, et al. 1982) Michelle Russell looks at the lives and art of Bessie Smith and Bessie Jackson (Lucille Bogan), among others, analyzing the lyrics of some of their best-known songs as primary documents, which:

> . . . talk to us, in our own language. They are the expression of a particular social process by which poor black women have commented on all the major theoretical, practical, and political questions facing us and have created a mass audience who listens to what we say, in that form. . . . They all re-create our past differently. But each, in her own way and for her own day, travels the road from rape to revolution. Their rendering of that process is high art.

Another article Project teachers used to study the blues of southern black women was Rosetta Reitz' "Mean Mothers: Independent Women's Blues" (1980), in conjunction with the record album of the same name, which includes reissues of the 1920s songs of Ida Cox, Lil Green, Mary Dixon, and others. Reitz' focus is on the independence and assertiveness of women's blues songs--with their forthright lyrics expressing the "real concerns of the women who sang them and those who regularly listened to them." Reitz counters the prevalent stereotype of the female blues singer as victim and of her songs as laments of passive suffering:

> There was a kind of blues for every kind of life experience. There were blues about trains and sex and food and natural disasters and death and prisons, blues about love and hate and sad times and happy times, and there were arrogant blues and submissive blues and blues about the absurdities of life--and there were independent women's blues.

Reitz also stresses the "classic" blues singers' adaptation of vernacular language and musical idioms from the traditional African-rooted country blues of their birthplaces, and the ways singers combined them with the newer, more Euro-American influenced city blues and early jazz.

A number of black women poets have drawn on the blues form and idiom in their work. Project teachers found that examining the blues influence on other art forms was an excellent way to illustrate the continuities of theme, style, and presentation in varied forms of creative cultural expression. "As writers," editor Dexter Fisher remarks in an introductory essay to The Third Woman (1980), black women have sought "to render oral expression in written forms, to translate the minor key of the blues and the complexity of jazz into poetic diction, and to affirm the function of folklore in both literature and society." In the Fisher anthology, Mari Evans' poem "I Am A Black Woman" comes out of the "blues mood" of black female experience, in which the blues are sung "to establish a relationship with one's pain": "the music of my song /some sweet arpeggio of tears/is written in a minor key/and I/can be heard humming in the night." Sherley Williams' poem "Any Woman's Blues" (also in Fisher 1980) borrows the blues structure, with its "repetition of phrases, the simple story line, and the rhythm of 'worrying' a line through its minor key of feeling." In her essay, "The Blues Roots of Afro-American Poetry," Williams (1977) discusses the results of this syncretism between Afro-American oral traditions (the blues) and Euro-American literary traditions (poetry) describing how new forms of poetry have been developed by black writers. Through the works of several black poets, Lucille Clifton prominent among

them, Williams analyzes the ways writers have borrowed and transformed many other devices, techniques, forms, and structures of the "classic" blues and how Afro-American poetry and blues share similiar functions and themes: the vocation of "the particularized, individual experience rooted in a common reality."

Other poems used in Project classes to relate music to other art forms were Ntozake Shange's "i live in music" (1977) and Hattie Gossett's prose poem "billie lives! billie lives" (in Moraga and Anzaldua 1981). Gossett, like many other black women writers, places Billie Holiday squarely in the long-standing tradition of black female strength and power:

> s i wanna see if she w explain how she did it. did the juju
> en give her some kind of special herbal potions to purify her throat
> vocal chords and lungs and what not. did the wise women teach her
> an ancient way of breathing enunciating. did she have a certain type
> of dream the night before the recording session during which the god-
> desses appeared and gave her a sign and said go ahead on in that studio
> tomorrow sister and turn that shit around on them bigtime blank t blanks
> so we can get them off our backs and move forward to a brighter day.
> i wanna ask billie about it. and i wanna see if she would teach some
> of us how to do it too. do you think she would?

Materials: Gospel

In studying traditional music, some Project teachers chose comparative study of southern black women gospel singers--remaining within the time period of the 1920s and 30s, but shifting performance contexts from the black theatre stage to the black evangelical church. An important resource for college teachers who are themselves unfamiliar with pedagogical approaches to the history, development, and stic characteristics of Afro-American religi is the curriculum guide titled Development of Materials for a One Year Course in African Music for the General Undergraduate Student (Butcher, et al. 1970). It is widely available on microfiche or in a hard-copy reprint through the ERIC clearinghouse system (ED-045-042). Other useful introductions for college teachers may be found in the published articles by black musicologist Horace Clarence Boyer, which survey historical and analytical concepts and approaches for music educators to teach about black gospel music (1973, 1978, and 1979).

While teachers will find the Butcher, et al., and Boyer works helpful for preparatory reading, Eleanor Smith's essay, "And Black Women Made Music" (1979) is useful in providing a brief introduction to the continuing evolution of Afro-American music suitable for students. She points out the correspondences between cultural expression and social context--the sexual/racial politics of black migration and urban life in the first quarter of the 20th century that impacted on southern black women in gospel music, as in the blues. Project students enjoyed Hettie Jones' similar approach in Big S Fallin' Mama: Five Women in Black Music (1974), which includes biograph chapters on Gertrude "M y, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, and Aretha lin. Project teachers often assigned Jones' book to their students, for comparative analysis of the life experiences and artistry of women in blues,

gospel, and soul music. Jones also focuses on the continuation of African religious rituals and celebrations in Afro-American life: "In African culture there had been no division of life into religious and secular moments--any event of significance was an occasion for "praise" songs . . . [and] musically this tradition continued in America" (Jones 1974). Pearl Williams-Jones, in her survey of "Afro-American Gospel Music" developed for the Butcher, et al. curriculum guide, stresses that while there are significant differences between Afro-American secular and sacred music in terms of their texts, messages, and contexts, the performance of gospel music is closely connected to Afro-American secular styles. In fact, Eileen Southern has called gospel music "the sacred counterpart of the city blues, sung in the same improvisatory tradition with piano, guitar, or instrumental-ensemble accompaniment" (1971a). As Williams-Jones observes, gospel performers, as individuals and as Christians, however, often maintain quite distinct points of view from those of blues or soul singers. John F. Szwed makes the same point in his widely-quoted essay, "Musical Adaptation among Afro-Americans" (1969; rept. 1970 in Whitten and Szwed):

> The significance of the sacred-secular distinction lies not only in perceived differences between the two categories as music, but also in their mutual exclusiveness in defining the social character of the individual performer. . . . The essential difference between the two means of psychological release focuses on the "direction" of the song: church music is directed collectively to God; blues are directed individually to the collective. Both perform similar cathartic functions but within different frameworks.

Gospel songs, like blues songs, are intense personal expressions in response to the vicissitudes of life, but unlike the blues, which often communicate suffering, hopelessness, and despair, Williams-Jones (in Butcher, et al. 1970) states that:

> [gospel] songs relate in the contemporary vernacular of black Americans the very personal expressions of faith and hope in salvation. Some are testimonies of everyday life experiences--trials, tribulations, troubles, but always with an optimism that things will get better.

Project teachers made use of assigned readings in conjunction with recorded examples to help students understand commonalities in Afro-American musical cultures. As is true for the entire culture, all genres of Afro-American music, even the most contemporary, emerged from the same roots and share many of the same African and southern black American characteristics. There is an ongoing interplay and appropriation of tunes, rhythmic patterns, harmonies, singing styles, or performance techniques between various musical genres, such as the blues, jazz, soul, and popular music. Just as African work and "praise" songs influenced Afro-American field hollers, work songs, and spirituals, these, in turn, influenced blues and jazz, which, in turn, influenced gospel music. Contemporary rhythm and blues, soul, and rock and roll owe important debts to black gospel music. Spirituals and gospel songs share many musical and stylistic techniques in common, as Williams-Jones notes--syncopated hand clapping and foot tapping, vocal improvisation and variation, and the call-and-response pattern--although there are equally important semantic and functional differences between the two genres (in Butcher, et al. 1970). Alberta Thomas' essay, "Singing Praises: Women in

Gospel Music" (1980) is easily accessible to undergraduate students and focuses on black women as the dominant audience for and artists of black gospel music. Her essay can be used to draw together materials on traditional music since she points out analogies between gospel music and the "classic" blues as contemporaneous avenues through which southern black women could achieve, to a limited degree, personal power and independence.

Alice Walker ties music as experienced in the traditional black American church with popularized gospel, rhythm and blues, and soul in her poem "Hymn" (1968; rept. 1976). All derive from the same source and the same experience, hoping for salvation while struggling to survive in the American South:

> I well remember/A time when/"Amazing Grace" was/All the rage/In the South.
>
> . . .
>
> My God! the songs and/The people and the lives/Started here--/Weaned on 'happy' tears/Black fingers clutching black teats/On black Baptist benches--/Some mother's troubles that everybody's/Seen/And nobody wants to see.
>
> . . .
>
> Mahalia Jackson, Clara Ward, Fats Waller,/Ray Charles,/Sitting here embarrassed with me/Watching the birth/Hearing the cries/Bearing witness/To the child,/Music.

PART IV-D. "TALES I HAD FORGOT": ORAL TRADITIONS

Verbal art holds an important place in Afro-American culture. In West Africa verbal lore, proverbs, stories, and orally-transmitted histories continue to hold an important place today. In the 17th and 18th centuries, at the time of slave trading, these cultures relied entirely on verbal transmission of knowledge, history, and values. Tribal elders were revered for their long and fine memories; talented storytellers were welcomed in every village; group singing and recitation were common on formal and informal occasions. Thus Blacks brought with them to America a strong tradition of verbal arts which they expanded, altered, and adapted in their new home. Even today, Afro-American styles of storytelling, teaching, and verbal repartee are traceable to models. In fact, specific content of some stories and tales can be found in contemporary West African society.

Blacks were thrust upon their oral acuity to sustain themselves in America because of harsh prohibitions against teaching literacy to slaves. Just as slavers separated members of a tribe from one another in order to prevent large concentrations of Africans who shared a common language and thus a common tool for organizing rebellion and resistance, so they laid powerful punishments against those who would teach the written word. Reading and writing would enable slaves to inform themselves about local and national conditions and printing would enable them to communicate widely with other slaves and with abolitionists. Further, Blacks' demonstrated ability to acquire literary and arithmetical skills would have put the lie to southern whites' racial theories.

This section suggests approaches and materials for study of southern black verbal arts, emphasizing the traditional oral styles, especially narrative, and their transformation into contemporary literature and music.

Approaches

Verbal creativity, manifested in many forms throughout southern black

women's culture, held an important place in Project courses. Some teachers focused on lyrics and s style in Afro-American women's music. Others emphasized storytelling, songs, family sayings, or proverbial lore. Still others chose to explore connections between verbal and literary art forms. Examination of any [illegible] is a good way to illustrate these women's dual contribution of personal [illegible] maintenance of cultural continuity.

Study of oral traditions provides an excellent opportunity for students to conduct fieldwork in their own families or within local communities. Teachers should refer their students to Part V for guidelines to collecting and tape recording women's oral narratives and life histories. A class or individual project might be the collection and analysis of such oral traditions as stories, lullabies, religious testimonies, children's games, or humor.

Storytelling is a highly refined art among southern black women and the collection and analysis of women's narratives or oral histories serves here as an example of the sort of work students might undertake on any of the genres of oral traditions. Students can locate respondents or narrators among their family or acquaintances--verbal artists always have a reputation which precedes them--or seek them out in the settings in which they perform. A visit to a local senior citizens' center will often yield some fine narrators, particularly of local legends or personal experience narratives. Classmates and roommates or other campus friends might also be recorded, to document stories about conversion and baptism, high school graduation, or dating and courtship, for example. Students' own families and kin often provide the best storytellers for fieldwork projects.

Stories might be collected according to specific topics such as family events (weddings, births, holidays, reunions, deaths) or practices (naming rituals, childrearing, dating, chores and household work, work outside of the home, games and amusements). Students might undertake to collect oral histories that add to the reconstruction of the past experiences of southern black women within their local community or own family. Families will usually have stories that date back to slavery time and recounting them often is a major feature in family or community get-togethers. In fact, family reunions or church or community homecomings are an ideal time for students to try collecting, since the sharing of oral traditions is a natural and unselfconscious part of the occasion. In such a setting, storytellers respond to one another's creativity, using formalized presentational devices and embellishing and telling alternate versions (variants) of the same story. Within a family or local community, narratives from women of all ages can be collected, then compared and contrasted for a glimpse of former times and changing images, roles, and values.

Women of all ages might be asked for accounts of important community events--floods or other natural disasters; visits by famous people (e.g., a great civil rights or religious leader); a traumatic event such as school integration or a strike; or major community celebrations. There are almost always stories associated with important family or community figures that show their private and personal sides during important community events as well as everyday occasions, pointing out the qualities that made them so outstanding among their peers. Such stories can be collected and analyzed by students to reveal what the community values and respects in its members.

Often very personal and seemingly ordinary events or activities yield the best stories: When were you ever really frightened? How did you feel on your first date? At the birth of your first child? What do you do and who do you see during a typical day? Personal viewpoints or opinions about major events

provide perspectives on history that are omitted from conventional accounts: What were you doing when you heard about Dr. King's assassination? What happened to your family during the hurricane of 1979? Stories of events remembered from childhood are often particularly poignant.

If [illegible] groups of students are working on a particular creative woman or a type of cultural expression, they might seek stories or anecdotes specific to that topic. For instance, a class focusing on the material [illegible] circulates in the oral tradition about a [illegible] How did she work on them, i.e. with what sort of frame, with what [illegible] she complete them, were there quilting bees, did she teach you, girls to help? Family traditions and stories associated with quilts are also often quite common. Were they made as wedding or engagement or coming-of-age gifts? Were some made especially for marriage or mourning use? How have they been handed down?

Once collected, stories can be analyzed by content: What do we learn about family life and the history of the local community? How are tales of important family or local events like and unlike formal or published histories of the event? How do variants of the same stories differ and how have certain stories changed over generations? What is the function of various types of stories within the culture? How do the storytellers themselves explain the meaning of their tales? Style is equally as important as content in the study of oral narratives. A good story, poorly told, is not art. Nor is it remembered and repeated. But well told, a tale can captivate the imagination, enter oral circulation, and become verbal art.

Some aspects of verbal style that teachers focused on are:

- o Narrative structure: is the story humorously, suspensefully, respectfully told? What is the storyteller's purpose (entertainment, instruction, etc.) and how does she structure and present her stories to achieve the desired effect?

- o Are there set phrases or words (formulae) that the storyteller uses and what is their effect? Sometimes a teller uses a special marker to show when she begins ("now," "there was one time"), or when she makes her important points ("this is the truth"). Are these commonplace within the culture or unique to her? Are there specific verbal techniques (such as repetition or variation and improvisation) that she employs--to what affect? What about the rhythm of her voice, her intonation?

- o What aspects of her language are specific to Afro-American English: words, phrases, pronunciation, intonation? To southern varieties of that language? Are there especially female forms that she uses that men might not use?

- o Are special expressions or vocalizations used, e.g., imitations of animals, of elements such as the wind, of other people's voices? Do body movement and non-verbal expression occur as presentational devices? These are often marks of a truly fine storyteller. Imitation, direct quotation, and non-verbal gestures may be liberally employed to keep up variety and maintain attention, and also create a much more immediate and emotionally compelling effect.

Students should consider the role of stories and other verbal art forms within the context of women's everyday lives. Lullabies, rhyming, rhythm

games, storytelling, gossip, proverbs, and worksongs are interwoven with all of domestic life. An understanding of the setting or context in which a story is told is as important as content and style in discovering its full meaning. In what settings and at what times are stories told: around the kitchen table, on the porch, in the churchyard, after supper? Who is the audience and how do the listeners behave? Are they passive or active, silent or verbally responsive? What is the speaker expecting from them; how do they communicate their interest or lack of interest? Is it all right for them to interrupt or take up part of the story, or is the story a one-woman-show? Are these interactions like or unlike ordinary communication in the community?

Another highly successful activity in Project classes was oral presentations by guests invited to speak or perform and by groups of students who rehearsed pieces to present to their classmates. Invitees might be well-known storytellers or singers, who can demonstrate rhetorical or presentational styles employed by southern black women in the church, community organizations, or other public arenas.

Selections for student presentations might be taken from slave narratives or from southern black women's prose writing or poetry, particularly where they are written in the first person. Students might also present stories, games, or songs they have collected themselves. Some Project teachers invited students from their schools' theatre and music departments to offer presentations of black women's music and drama to the class, or worked with these other departments to prepare public presentations of verbal art collected by the class.

If dissemination of collected material is a goal for the class, as it was in most Project courses, the verbal arts offer an excellent vehicle for sharing class research projects with the community. A prepared reading or recitation of collected materials, as suggested above, is one obvious way. Often drama and music students are eager to get opportunities to train, coach, and put on a show and their teachers are always looking for good placements for interns.

Other class activities might include recordings of especially fine stories or other verbal art forms being assembled and placed in libraries, archives, on the radio, or in high school classrooms. Some students actually carried out "bookings" for talented women verbal artists, bringing them to the communities' young people themselves. Students might adapt oral materials from their own or others' collections for use with local elementary-age or younger children, teaching traditional southern black women's games and stories to a younger generation and keeping the heritage alive.

Class sessions on the verbal arts lend themselves to combination with other cultural genres. Study of music can be extended into analysis of lyrics. Collections of material artifacts can be contextualized with texts from oral history interviews. A slide-tape show is made far more interesting with recordings of folk speech, rather than straight narration. And analysis of literature is deepened when the sources for stories, sayings, turns of phrase, and dialect forms attributed to characters are traced to their roots in the folk speech.

Pedagogical objectives for the study of southern black women's oral traditions might include:

*Introducing Afro-American speech styles and bringing students to appreciate the consistency, expressiveness, and beauty of the folk speech.

*Becoming familiar with some of the important verbal genres used by southern black women, e.g. proverbs, coming-of-age stories, game rhymes, signifying, gossip.

* [illegible]ing and analyzing verbal lore and coming to appreciate the wisdom contained in traditional forms of expression and the roots from which it springs.

*Understanding the connections between women's speech styles and roles such as mother, daughter, and culture-bearer.

*Analyzing the connections between verbal art and other forms of cultural expression, particularly southern black women's literature.

Materials

Afro-American English. A basic understanding of the form and structure of Afro-American English is essential to analysis and appreciation of southern black women's verbal arts. Linguists have researched black language in the United States, the Caribbean, and in the source cultures in West Africa, reconstructing the evolution of contemporary Afro-American styles of English (see, e.g., J.L. Dillard 1972). They pose a continuum model with West African languages at one pole and standard English at the other. Along this continuum range the various styles of English spoken in the Caribbean, in the culturally conservative Sea Islands region, in the Deep South, and, finally, in the urban North. This evolutionary model demonstrates how the African diaspora has progressed: the Caribbean varieties of English exhibit more African words, grammatical structures, and intonations than are generally found in the United States. On the continent, the greatest number of African retentions are found among the Gullah-speaking population of the Georgia-South Carolina Sea Islands region. And Blacks in traditional communities in the American South retain far more Africanisms in their speech than do their contemporaries in middle-class society and northern locales. The concept of a linguistic continuum also emphasizes the role of individual creativity in the verbal process, illustrating how individual speakers select from among the repertoire of styles available to them to express themselves uniquely with differing listeners, settings, and topics.

A readable summary is offered by Geneva Smitherman's introduction to her anthology Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America (1977). The author traces words and grammatical structures from their West African source languages and outlines the processes through which Afro-American varieties of English developed over four centuries. Smitherman defines essential linguistic concepts including pidgin, creole, decreolization, and hypercorrection, explaining why such a wide variety of styles can be found in the speech of black Americans. Her description of the push-pull factors affecting Afro-Americans' attitudes toward standard English is clear and concise, and makes good student reading. Unfortunately, with the exception of Sea Islands creoles, no regional distinctions are drawn. Smitherman's essay also addresses negative stereotyping of black English and makes a fine introduction for

students who are not themselves speakers of Afro-American English, or who may harbor negative attitudes about nonstandard dialects.

Margaret Lourie's "Black English Vernacular: A Comparative Description" (1978) provides more detailed information about the specific features that distinguish Afro-American English. This article, while somewhat more technical than Smitherman's, features an excellent summary table that can be used as a guide for students who are interested in identifying the Africanisms in speech they are recording or in texts they are reading and collecting. Lourie also shows somewhat more clearly--albeit still indirectly--the relation of southern and northern varieties of Afro-American speech and the likelihood of stronger African survivals in the speech of southern women.

There is unfortunately little research on male-female differences in Afro-American speech, and virtually nothing on southern women, with the exception of occasional short pieces such as Patricia C. Nichols' "Black Women in the Rural South: Conservative and Innovative" (1978). One study of black Detroiters' speech (Wolfram 1969) found that women in that community exhibited a wider range of styles than men. Women spoke a more standard English than men when interacting formally or with non-blacks, but were at least as traditionally Afro-American in their word choice and grammatical structures in natural family and community settings. This would be an interesting area for student investigation. It begs many questions relating to gender roles in childrearing, in the workplace, and in contact with the external society.

Gesture and posture, too, are critical components in communication. Studies such as Benjamin G. Cooke's "Nonverbal Communication among Afro-Americans: An Initial Classification" (in Kochman 1972), while focused exclusively on northern urban blacks, primarily males, is fully illustrated and might serve as a springboard to discussion of how to analyze nonverbal language.

One essay that directly addresses the issue of the African derivation of southern black nonverbal behavior is John and Angela Rickford's "Cut-eye and Suck-teeth: African Words and Gestures in New World Guise" (1976; rept. in Brunvand 1979). While students would be unlikely to be able to do the kind of intensive contrastive study that the Rickfords have undertaken, the article is an excellent example of the re-creation of African heritage and a model for the sorts of things that students should look for and evaluate in studying oral traditions. The Rickfords offer an innovative and thoughtful approach to analysis of the "everyday" in community life and communication.

There have been many articles in the past decade or so that describe such uniquely Afro-American speech acts as testifying, signifying, marking, and the dozens. Again, most of the work has taken urban, northern men as the primary object of study. And, it is just in these areas of humor, storytelling, verbal gaming, and repartee that men's and women's differing oral skills and oral styles emerge most clearly. These are areas in which students can explore for themselves the special skills of southern black women, using the standard studies as guides. Particularly recommended by Project teachers are the essays by Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, "Signifying" (1971; rept. in Dundes 1973) and "Signifying and Marking: Two Afro-American Speech Acts" (1964; rept. 1972). Various essays are also found in the anthologies edited by Alan Dundes (1973), Thomas Kochman (1972), Norman E. Whitten and John F. Szwed (1970), and in William Labov (1972).

In her long-term community study of a black textile-worker town in the Carolina Piedmont Shirley Brice Heath (1983a and 1983b) records the ways in which spoken and written language is used by mothers with children, by children among each other, among neighbor women, and in the black church.

Heath documents the continuing tradition of reliance on oral language, even though the community adults are all literate, highly committed to education for their children, and fully capable of functioning in writing.

Heath offers a variety of examples of preference for oral and especially for group interaction. A formal notice to one woman about her child's school attendance is brought out to the porch where it is read aloud and discussed, bit by bit, so that her friends help her decide how to respond. Rather than being read set stories by their parents or older siblings, young children in the community compose their own ever-changing stories, songs, and poems, following adult models. The church congregation departs from the written text in the hymnal, personalizing its song. An elder composes a written text for her lead prayer, but extemporizes it into a complex, highly rhetorical, far longer spoken version. "In a majority of cases," Heath (1983a) writes of this community, "adults show their knowledge of written materials only through oral means." It is difficult to separate the literate from the oral, for:

> Literacy events which bring the written word into a central focus in interactions and interpretations have their rules of occurrence and appropriateness according to setting and participants. The joint social activity of reading the newspaper across porches, getting to the heart of meaning of a brochure on a new product, and negotiating rules for putting an antenna on a car produce more speaking than reading, more group than individual effort, repeated analogies and generalizations, and fast-paced, overlapping, syntactically complex language. The spontaneous recomposing of written hymns, sermons, and prayers produce no parables, proverbs, and formulaes, but re-creations of written texts which are more complex in syntactic structure, performance rules, and more demanding of close attention to lexical and semantic cues than are their written counterparts. For these recomposing creations are, like community literacy events, group-focused, and members of the group show their understanding and acceptance of the meaning of the words by picking up phrases, single words, or meanings, and creating their own contribution to a raised hymn or prayer.

Verbal Lore. Classes can make use of the many published collections of slave narratives, folktales, folklore, and family stories, some of which are described elsewhere in this curriculum guide. The John W. Blassingame anthology, Slave Testimony (1977), and Daryl Cumber Dance's Shuckin' and Jivin': Folklore from Contemporary Black Americans (1979), for instance, include many stories told by women, either first-hand or as recorded from their narration. They can be used for studying southern black women's word choice, grammar, and style of language.

Family and community histories are also excellent choices for beginning collection and analysis of verbal lore. A monograph-length, detailed study, William Lynwood Montell's The Saga of Coe Ridge (1971), chronicling the oral history of an isolated black community in southern Kentucky, is a model of collecting and recording oral history. His preface, prologue, and epilogue to the study are particularly valuable; he argues for the importance of folkloristic evidence in reconstructing community history and analyzes the historical validity of the stories themselves.

Elizabeth Rauh Bethel's Promiseland: A Century of Life in a Negro Community (1981), based on oral history interviews and documented by meticulous scholarship, is the history of a rural black South Carolina farming community over three generations--from its establishment in the Reconstruction era

through the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Bethel's book is particularly useful in serving as a model for contemporary cultural historical scholarship--combining the data-collecting techniques of history and the social sciences, interviewing skills from folklore, and ethnographic description from anthropology. Her "Essay on Sources and Methodology," like the sections of the Montell text mentioned above, addresses the issues of the validity and reliability of oral sources and outlines her careful methodology--comparison of oral data from tape-recorded interviews with that collected from more conventional historical sources, such as census, property, tax, and probate records. Both the Montell and Bethel sections on methodology, as well as the excerpts from Gladys-Marie Fry discussed below, may be utilized by teachers wishing to better understand the often fine line between oral history testimony and folklore narrative. Bethel's chapter, "Turn Outs and Granny Women," which treats birth, infancy, childhood, coming of age, courtship and marriage, adulthood, and death in the South Carolina Promiseland community, may be assigned to undergraduate students, as an example of the kind of thematic organization a project on the life histories of southern black women could take. It could also be read in conjunction with other course materials, especially those on identity or spirituality.

Another important class source for the study of family and community history is Carole Merritt's Homecoming: African-American Family History in Georgia (1982). Merritt's monograph is based on the tradition in southern black communities of the homecoming, also discussed by Bethel in her chapter "On Coming Home"--an annual pilgrimage back home that usually occurs in rural farming communities in August, a time of communal rest, rejuvenation, and revival after the crop has been "laid by" and before the harvest season begins. Merritt's beautifully-designed book, combining photography with documents and interview excerpts from both oral testimony and archival sources, takes the life cycle as its organizing principle. It presents "a slice of family life that cuts across time" in celebration of "the process by which African-Americans established home and family in a hostile land." Like Bethel's "Turn Outs and Granny Women," Merritt's book uses "the events from birth to death that occur generation after generation" as a vehicle for viewing continuity and change in Afro-American history and culture.

Proud Shoes (Murray 1956; rept. 1978), discussed above in "Cultural Continuity in Slavery and Segregation," can also be effectively used to study oral traditions of southern black women. How does the author characterize her female family members; how does she tell their stories herself? Students can use such models of family history both to plan their field research projects and to organize their own field collections, extracting familiar or frequent subject themes and historical topics, comparing verbal styles and narrative structure, and contrasting story variants with the well-known texts.

An excellent example of family story collection and documentation is found in Kathryn L. Morgan's essay, "Caddy Buffers: Legends of a Middle-Class Negro Family in Philadelphia" (1966; rept. in Dundes 1973). Morgan shows how stories about slavery told by one of her foremothers, Caddy Gordon, have functioned as "buffers"--an antidote to racism--for her family for four generations. One had only to think of what Caddy would have done or said to be buoyed up in face of trouble, and to diminish feelings of racial inferiority. Morgan's 1966 essay and collection of nine of her great-grandmother Caddy's stories and legends have been revised and incorporated as the first section of her book entitled Children of Strangers: Stories of a Black Family (1980). It also includes "Our Childhood," a section of second-and-third-generation family stories, anecdotes, sayings, and proverbs that served to

inculcate the Gordon family's philosophy of life, spiritual beliefs, and manners and mores to younger generations, and a final section, "Maggie's Stories of 'Color' and 'Race,'" a collection of narratives about being a light-skinned black woman in a white world, by the author's mother. Through the some 40 stories included here students can learn how such family stories originate, how variants of a single story develop, and how analogues to similar stories from slave narrative collections, autobiographies, and essays can be found. Morgan's book is also particularly effective in describing the social context in which the family stories would originate and be told, the impact the stories had on four generations of family members, and what familial and social functions they continue to serve.

Students will also find in Sheyann Webb and Rachel West Nelson's (1980) memoir of childhood in the civil rights movement a model for work they might do themselves. Using Selma, Lord, Selma as an example, students could set out to collect unusual viewpoints on significant historical events, such as this one, the Selma to Montgomery march. They might start with some event they themselves participated in or observed as young children and seek versions of that experience from others who represent different generations or perspectives.

Some classes chose to collect more unusual genres of verbal art, such as local legends, ghost stories, and narratives of the supernatural, tying these into class study on traditional beliefs and spirituality. One such example of the sort of projects students might undertake is Patricia Rickel's "Some Accounts of Witch Riding" (1961; rept. in Brunvand 1979), based on stories on that topic collected from the author's folklore students. It is a rare example of southern black lore--from Louisiana creole storytellers. The author has contextualized the collected stories, drawing comparisons and contrasts to other story collections. From the Project perspective, the essay is particularly powerful in illustrating the resources that are represented by the students themselves, an excellent departure point for any analysis of the verbal lore of the people from whom many of the students come.

Beverly Hawkins' "Folklore in a Black Family" (1973) is highly recommended as an example of the sort of work students can accomplish. The author reports on the group class project undertaken by her Afro-American folklore class, which studied stories and games in one family, reporting many specific texts and outlining the methodology used by the students. It serves as an example, too, of how students might report their work.

Gladys-Marie Fry, in Night Riders in Black Folk History (1975), takes a different approach to folktale collection. She studies a single theme widely found in the verbal lore of southern black communities and analyzes its origins. Her book is particularly strong in pointing out the social function of terrorism by the night riders and the folklore that grew up around their attacks: to control blacks' movement and to sustain an ongoing climate of fear. In her introductory "Survey of Historial Source Material" Fry reviews the major studies of southern black folklore and collections of stories, from the 19th century onward. It is an excellent resource for teachers looking to direct their students to collections from a specific region or on a specific theme.

For students interested in games and southern black women's roles as mothers and childrearers, the work of Bessie Jones (discussed above in "Traditional Music") should be required reading. As a tradition-bearer from the Georgia Sea Islands, Jones has dedicated her life to preserving and disseminating the songs, tales, and games of the sole remaining creole-speaking population in the United States (see Introduction, above). In a section of

Step It Down: Games, Plays, and Stories from the Afro-American Heritage (Jones and Hawes 1972) entitled "Baby Games and Plays," for example, Bessie Jones' own versions of lullabies, finger and toe games, and lap games are given in whole, with alternative texts familiar to her, and explanations of the settings in which each is used is explained, along with historical and social commentary. The book might be used as a resource for a student group that is interested in understanding women's verbal lore and teaching it to local children. In the film Yonder Come Day Jones performs stories, songs, dances, and games before and with a group of young children, using traditional verbal arts and music to understand the Afro-American slave experience and to transmit cultural beliefs, values, and mores. It is highly recommended for classroom showing, and can serve as an excellent introduction to the function of cultural expressions such as oral traditions in black folk culture.

Fiction and poetry by southern black women writers are also good sources for the study of verbal art. Many of the authors noted throughout this curriculum guide consciously and carefully record the styles and stories of women's verbal interaction. Teachers can take the opportunity to discuss oral traditions as they come across them in literature, or assemble representative passages to study as a group.

Some Project teachers undertook a major section on various forms of conversational female interaction in the southern black community. Works of fiction, such as Alice Walker's novel The Color Purple and Maya Angelou's autobiographical works, give insight into the role of women's talk and network of shared references concerning their coming-of-age, survival, familial relations, and general happiness. Toni Cade Bambara's short stories, particularly "My Man Bovanne" and "The Johnson Girls" (1972), also draw extensively on black women's oral style and presentational devices, and can serve as excellent student readings on the topic of oral traditions. As on so many topics, Zora Neale Hurston's work is a valuable resource. Included in Mules and Men (1935; rept. 1970) is the essay "Why Women Always Take Advantage of Men." Hurston relates a folktale of Adam and Eve somewhat different from the Genesis version. Adam secures physical superiority of women from God, but women receive gifts that offset that advantage. God, the story goes, gives woman three keys:

> Now dis first big key is to de do' of de kitchen, and you know a man always favors his stomach. Dis second one is de key to de bedroom and he don't like to be shut out from dat neither and dis last key is de key to de cradle and he don't want to be cut off from his generations at all. So, when the men argue that "Her tongue is the only weapon a woman got," the women are, in their womanly, gossipful manner, ready with a story that tells the larger truth in a typical southern, black female fashion--a story that says it all.

A passage from Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye (1970) illustrates the author's careful understanding of and fond feeling for women's language, turning gossip into a positive, life-sustaining action:

> . . . Two evenings later Aunt Jimmy had gained much strength. When Miss Alice and Mrs. Gaines stopped in to check on her, they remarked on her improvement. The three women sat talking about various miseries they had had, their cure or abatement, what had helped. Over and over again they returned to Aunt Jimmy's condition. Repeating its cause, what could have been done to prevent the misery from taking hold, and M'Dear's in-

> fallibility. Their voices blended into a threnody of nostalgia about pain. Rising and falling, complex in harmony, uncertain in pitch, but constant in the recitative of pain. They hugged the memories of illnesses to their bosoms. They licked their lips and clucked their tongues in fond remembrance of pains they had endured--childbirth, rheumatism, croup, sprains, backaches, piles. All the bruises they had collected from moving about the earth--harvesting, cleaning, hoisting, pitching, stooping, kneeling, picking--always with young ones underfoot . . . the lives of these old black women were synthesized in their eyes--a puree of tragedy and humor, wickedness and serenity, truth. . . .

Morrison brings the vocabulary of music to her characters' language, an apt metaphor for the rich and melodic oral tradition carried on in the verbal lives of southern black women.

PART IV-E. "GIFTS OF POWER": SPIRITUALITY

Approaches

Perhaps the first and most profound creative work of the enslaved Africans in America was that of forging, out of a welter of tribal backgrounds and in a hostile and alien environment, a distinct religious perspective--one that borrowed compatible elements from the European legacy and blended them with African traditions to create a vision of the universe that was based on hope and affirmation and the knowledge of justice. For centuries, religious belief and spiritual expression have been, in the description of Bert Loewenberg and Ruth Bogin (1976), "pivotal" in southern black culture. In the lives of southern black women, they have fulfilled vital functions: through their religion women have created opportunities for personal spiritual transcendence, creative self-expression, and the exercise of power and strength, and have built networks of woman-to-woman support.

The Project's definition of spirituality was broad, encompassing a wide range of both formal and informal expressions of spiritual power and belief. Classes examined diverse manifestations of women's participation in Afro-American sacred life--traditions of healing, power, and worship from midwifery to rootwork, conjure, hoodoo, and voodoo, to those embodied in the black Christian churches.

All are rich, varied, and abundant within the culture. Though they speak eloquently of the creativity and resourcefulness with which southern black women have nurtured their own spirits and those of their communities--and while no consideration of southern black culture could be complete without them--Project teachers found spirituality a difficult subject to integrate into their courses. The vastness and complexity of the subject is itself formidable: myriad West African traditions have been retained in a staggering variety of ways, ranging from the polytheistic voodoo rites of Lousiana to the devout Christian orientation of traditional midwives. However, while initally Christian beliefs were not a substitute for but simply an addition to those involving magical elements such as conjure, the pressures of acculturation have steadily deepened the chasm between Christian and non-Christian elements. Further, Afro-American Christianity itself is as little monolithic as the African religious heritage, with great disparity in practice, perspective, and constituency existing among denominations. Unfortunately, there is no single source that examines the diverse African elements which have shaped the variety of southern black spiritual and religious traditions, nor one that addresses in detail the special roles of women in the spiritual life either of Africa or Afro-America.

Given these obstacles, many Project teachers chose to narrow their focus to a well-defined topic (e.g., women's roles in a particular Afro-American church) or to weave spirituality as a theme into the entire fabric of the course (e.g., examining the religious aspect of the vocation of traditional midwifery at one point, the sacred dimension of a number of folk beliefs and practices at another, and the religious roots of black music at still another). With the latter approach students' attention was drawn repeatedly to the rich and vibrant inner world the body of religious beliefs and practices represents, and the degree to which it permeates the culture.

Whatever strategy is adopted, it is important that students be acquainted with the fertile West African heritage from which southern black sacred beliefs have sprung--a topic about which they are probably completely ignorant. In sharp contrast to Euro-American religions, diverse West African traditions share a holistic perspective free of the rigid dichotomies between mind and body, humans and nature, individual and community, sacred and secular that are the burdens of the European legacy. Nowhere in traditional life on the African continent does religion exist as a separate institution, walled off spatially and temporally from the rest the culture. Religion, healing, art, music--all are interrelated, contextualizing and coloring the whole of life. This orientation, emphasizing healing, communality, affirmation, and the continuity of human existence, has strongly influenced the evolution of southern black spirituality, forming the context within which women have worked as midwives, gospel singers, rootworkers, conjurers, and as the backbones of the churches.

Specific African retentions introduced to Project classes included spirit possession and trance, the laying on of hands, the holy shout, the hand clap, and body movement as features of worship; funeral customs and styles of graveyard ornamentation; the many customs and rituals of midwifery. Students may be laden with ethnocentric and racist distortions of such Afro-American practices, regarding them as "heathen" or "ignorant." Study of southern black women's spirituality can lead them to an increased recognition of the great vitality of those spiritual traditions to which women have made enormous, if largely undocumented, contributions: the psychologically healing aspects of spirit possession and the laying on of hands; the process of binding one individual to another, and all to the natural and divine worlds, that the shout, handclapping, and call-and-response techniques represent; and the traditional practices of midwives only recently "discovered" by American obstetricians to be medically advantageous for both mothers and infants.

The integration of personal reflection and academic analysis which marked Project courses as a whole is particularly appropriate here. In the Fall 1981 seminar for participating Project teachers, Project consultant Linda Holmes drew inspiration from Alice Walker's suggestions in "A Letter of the Times" (1981a) to offer a number of strategies for approaching the topics of spirituality and healing in the classroom. Holmes suggested that these subjects be used as mechanisms for intensive self-reflection on the students' part, in order to develop a sense of relatedness to and personal appreciation of southern black women's rich spiritual tradition: by attending church services and keeping a journal of their responses to them, recording as well their own experiences of the meaning of such terms as holy, sacred, prayer, dream, vision. She recommended that these journals be used as springboards for discussion of the great variety of spiritual beliefs and practices, and the functions they serve in individual lives.

Only when students are able to realize, Holmes stressed, how much they have to learn about siritual resources from the culture should they go from

the classroom into the community to observe, question, and learn first-hand. Once they do so, there is a wealth of topics to investigate, either individually or in groups.

The wide variety of women's roles and relationships to their churches is a largely unexplored area. The following topics can stimulate fruitful class discussions, following which students could collect additional information using methodologies suggested in Part V of this guide. A student project focusing on the female presence in one church or in several, on one area of activity or on a number, could easily be presented to a church or other community group as a tribute to women's efforts. Teachers may wish to have their students attend churches of different denominations, comparing and contrasting women's roles (as deaconesses, choir members, etc.), their participation in and responses to the services, or styles of dress. Are men and women segregated? In which church activities are women most active? In which are they not? Marriage and funeral customs can be documented, and baptism experiences described. Religious foodways are also a good topic for analysis. What are the similarities and differences in the church dinners of various denominations? What domestic foodways have religious significance (e.g., Lenten and Easter meals)? What religious artifacts are in the home? How are religious precepts instilled within the home? Is there a religious significance to the names of family members? These and other aspects of religious life can be compared and contrasted among Protestants and Catholics, and among Blacks and whites. The experiences and traditions of black Christians can be compared with those of Muslims and Afro-Cubans, for example.

Attitudes towards hoodoo, voodoo, conjure, and rootwork are excellent discussion and fieldwork subjects. What are the definitions of these terms in local communities? What stories are told about them? Alice Walker's short stories "The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff" and "Strong Horse Tea" make provocative reading assignments for class discussion. What connections does Walker make between the female healers and their social contexts? Teachers can ask their students to collect recipes for home remedies that have been used with their own families and communities, as well as the stories associated with them. Are these still used to treat illness? Why or why not?

Although all collections of slave narratives contain a wealth of information on black religion, none have been separated by sex, nor have the accounts of men and women compared and contrasted. Other fruitful topics for student research include similarities and differences between Afro-Caribbean, Afro-Brazilian, and Afro-American adaptations of voodoo, contributions of African and Afro-American herbal lore to the science of pharmacology, and childbirth practices.

Specific objectives within the study of spirituality might include:

*Identifying West African retentions, both in general perspective and in specific practices, which have helped form a distinct Afro-American religious tradition.

*Examining diverse expressions of religion and spirituality as sources of strength, power, and protection in women's lives.

*Analyzing women's roles as community-based physical and mental health practitioners of midwifery, of hoodoo and conjure, of rootwork.

*Investigating the role of religious belief in nurturing black women's visions of social justice and in fostering their personal creativity.

*Examining the social, political, and economic contexts in which black women's spiritual activities in their churches and communities have been carried out.

Materials

Materials on black religion and spirituality fall into two general categories. On the one hand are secondary, usually scholarly, accounts by sociologists, anthropologists, folklorists, and students of religion, often white, and frequently flawed by condescension, paternalism, and ignorance. On the other are the accounts of black women themselves, in autobiography, fiction, poetry, and song, as well as the first-person narratives collected by oral historians in the early part of the century.

While there are a number of texts on African and Afro-American religion, almost none give specific attention to women's special presence within--and without--the church. A number of recent works on black women refer to various sacred activities, but often in a fairly cursory manner. Thus instructors must sift and sort in order to create a contextual framework in which to place the rich body of writing by black women themselves about the centrality of religion and spirituality in their own lives and those of their foremothers.

Among texts Project teachers found helpful in doing so were John W. Blassingame's The Slave Community (1979), Mary F. Berry and John W. Blassingame's Long Memory: The Black Experience in America (1982), Lawrence W. Levine's Black Culture and Black Consciousness (1977), H. H. Mitchell's Black Beliefs: Folk Beliefs of Blacks in Africa and Afro-America (1975), and Newell S. Booth's anthology, African Religions: A Symposium (1977). Both Levine and Blassingame discuss at some length the African spiritual legacy and the ways it was reinterpreted to form a distinct and autonomous tradition in America. Loewenberg and Bogin's Black Women in Nineteenth Century American Life (1976) includes a chapter on "Sources of Inner Wholeness," of which religion is primary. "Religion was pivotal to black American life," they point out:

> Womanhood in each of its phases was sanctioned by religious values. The religious experience was a group heritage and a creative personal impetus. At once secular and holy, a religious sentiment suffused black thought and generated a dynamic for black action.

Their assertion that religion formed "a psychological center" for women is borne out by a number of black women's fictional and autobiographical works.

Margaret Walker Alexander's Jubilee (1966), for example, which begins with the midwife Granny Ticey tending Vyry's mother as she dies in childbirth and ends with Vyry herself a midwife, is a living demonstration of the ways in which the many different strands of religious and spiritual belief and expression are woven into black women's lives. Vyry's entire existence is pervaded by a deep religious faith, a primary source of emotional sustenance in a life filled with hardship and suffering. From her perspective we see the slaves' secret prayer and praise meetings at the Rising Glory Church in the woods, the conjuring of the abusive overseer's wife and children--just punishment for his cruel treatment of the Africans--and learn of Vyry's skill in herbal medicine.

Jubilee dramatically illustrates Laurence W. Levine's (1977) point that:

> the religion and folk beliefs of the slaves provided them with crucial alternative standards and possibilities . . . they were instruments of life, of sanity, of health, of self-respect. Slave music, slave religion, slave folk beliefs--the entire sacred world of the black slaves--created the necessary space between the slaves and their owners and were the means of preventing legal slavery from becoming spiritual slavery.

The Church. Maya Angelou's grandmother, Momma, a central character in her autobiography I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings (1970), is a woman of enormous spiritual power. One of the strongest characters in contemporary literature, Momma draws her almost transpersonal strength from her deep religious convictions:

> Her world was bordered on all sides with work, duty, religion, and "her place." I don't think she ever knew that a deep-brooding love hung over everything she touched. In later years I asked her if she loved me and she brushed me off with "God is love. Just worry about whether you're being a good girl and He will love you."

In one of the book's most emotionally gripping passages, Angelou recalls a vivid childhood episode: the lewd taunting of her strong, dignified grandmother by two neighboring "powhitetrash" girls. Momma responded with characteristic impassivity: "from the waist up she seemed to be pulling for the top of the oak tree across the road. Then she began to moan a hymn . . . " and continued to do so while her young granddaughter watched the scene in agony and humiliation. After the departure of the young tormentors:

> She looked until I looked up. Her face was a brown moon, that shone on me. She was beautiful. Something had happened out there, which I couldn't completely understand, but I could see that she was happy. Then she bent down and touched me as mothers of the church "lay hands on the afflicted," and I was quieted.
>
> "Go wash your face, Sister." And she went behind the candy counter and hummed, "Glory, glory, hallelujah, when I lay my burden down."

I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings is replete with recollections of the church-centered activities of Angelou's childhood. Her memories begin, in fact, in the children's section of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Stamps, Arkansas. Her detailed and often humorous descriptions of baptisms, picnics, and worship services, are all examples of Jacqueline Jones' observation (1981b) that:

> the impulse for mutual solace and support among rural Afro-American women culminated in their religious institutions and worship services. At monthly meetings women and men met to reaffirm their unique spiritual heritage, to seek comfort and to comfort one another.

Angelou's evocation of her grandmother is eloquent testimony to Jones' analysis of women's influence:

> "Spiritual mothers" served as the main pillars of Methodist and Baptist churches, but they also exercised religious leadership outside the formal

institutional boundaries; elderly women in particular commanded respect as the standard-bearers of tradition and as the younger generation's link with its ancestors.

This reverence for ancestors and elders reflects African traditions, and is embodied in spiritual beliefs and practices of funerary embellishment discussed by John M. Vlach in The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Art (1978) and by Robert Farris Thompson in "African Influence on the Art of the United States" (in Robinson, et al. 1969) and African Art in Motion (1974).

A number of poems in Black Sister (Stetson 1981) reiterate the salience of the church in women's lives. Carole C. Gregory's "The Greater Friendship Baptist Church" describes the pervasive presence of women in the church's life: "mothers/cranking the machine" for ice cream while other "women sell golden fried chicken to buy new choir robes/our grandmothers carry switches from the trees." Mari Evans' ". . . And the Old Women Gathered (The Gospel Singers)" evokes the legacy of power: "It was fierce/and/not melodic and/although we ran/the sound of it/stayed in our ears." In "It's All the Same" Thadious M. Davis pays tribute to "my righteous grandmama . . . [who leads] the Amen chorus." They hold up these spiritually tenacious women as models for younger generations. In "This Child Is the Mother," Gloria C. Oden recounts the drama of spirit possession--which H. H. Mitchell (1975) calls "the supreme act of worship in African and Blackamerican tradition"--witnessed in the church of her childhood: "This, that awesome time/when, more profoundly/than by pigment, I am/informed of my/blood heritage."

The title essay in Zora Neale Hurston's posthumous essay collection, The Sanctified Church (1983), is a lively analysis of the vital Africanisms retained in southern black worship services. A number of essays in Holding On to the Land and the Lord (Hull and Stack 1982) explore the African background of the southern black religious ethos, among them Bruce Grindal's "The Religious Interpretation of Experience in a Rural Black Community" and Charles Williams' "The Conversion Ritual in a Rural Black Baptist Church." Jacqueline Grant's "Black Women and the Church" (in Hull, et al. 1982) offers a contrasting perspective--a challenge to institutionalized sexism within black churches.

Black women, Theressa Hoover states in her essay, "Triple Jeopardy: Black Women and the Churches," (1974) have been:

> truly the glue that held the churches together. The women worked, yet found time to be the Sunday school teachers, sing in the choir, and support the church's programs in every way. The women found the time and energy to be active in the women's missionary societies and to serve as counselors or sponsors for the youth group. They were the domestics of the community and the teachers in the black schools.

This role has been performed by black women since slavery, and continued to be true--if largely undocumented--in the civil rights movement, which was fostered and nourished in black churches across the South. Black women organized mass meetings, raised money for the movement, and otherwise lent their tireless efforts to the cause of freedom. Project teachers used a number of essays and books to explore the participation of church women in civil rights activities. In Selma, Lord, Selma (Webb and West Nelson 1980), Rachel West explains:

> Shey was a Baptist, I was a Catholic. But no matter what we were, we all went to the meetings, and the rallies at the church, Brown Chapel

AME Church. And Catholic priests and nuns were there, too, because the movement was above what faith you were. It was a thing that was of the people. We put a lot of faith in ourselves in those days. But we knew our deepest trust had to be in the Lord, because what we were doing was in the Lord's hand. We really believed that, Shey and me.

And Fannie Lou Hamer (in Collum 1982), one of a long line of women whose visions of social justice and harmony have been fueled by her own religious faith, said of her freedom work:

> We have to realize just how grave the problem is in the United States today, and I think the sixth chapter of Ephesians, the 11th and 12th verses helps us to know . . . what it is we are up against. It says: "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." This is what I think about when I think of my own work in the fight for freedom.

Gwen Patton's brief essay, "Going Home" (1977) was also used by a number of Project teachers to discuss "the dynamic for black action" generated by black religion. Returning to the church in which she was raised after a ten-year absence, devoted to secular political work, Patton realizes, "I have returned to the source of my political roots."

Many Project teachers explored the spiritual dimensions of varied forms of cultural expression--examining, for instance, the Harriet Powers quilts, the visionary paintings of Sister Gertrude Morgan, and the gospel music black women have composed and sung as evidence of the depth and range of the roles spiritual belief has played in their lives (see also the preceding essays on material culture and traditional music). These approaches recognize the impossibility of confining southern black women's spirituality within the walls of the churches. Mitchell observes this in Black Belief (1975) with respect to spirit possession:

> The African possession tradition survives outside the church's institutional trappings . . . The plain fact is that some form of ecstatic possession has always been present in the branch of African cultural roots which surfaced in the jazz world. And the communal creativity of an instrumental, vocal, or dance "soul session" in a night club has the same possibilities for human healing that a church service might have. . . . A Black Baptist preacher's daughter named Aretha Franklin can "get loose" and celebrate in one context as well as another.

Mahalia Jackson's autobiography, Movin' On Up (Jackson and Whylie 1966), also testifies eloquently to religion as a powerful and liberating force in the lives of southern black women. Jackson describes not only her voice, but her entire body being engaged when she praises the Lord:

> How can you sing of Amazing Grace? How can you sing prayerfully of heaven and earth and all God's wonders without using your hands? I want my hands, . . . my feet, . . . my whole body to say all that is in me. I say, "Don't let the devil steal the beat from the Lord!

The Lord doesn't like us to act dead. If you feel it, tap your feet a little--dance to the glory of God."

The film Say Amen, Somebody vividly illustrates the role of spiritual belief in self-expression. Other films used in Project classes included Living the Life We Sing About, Let the Church Say Amen, Black Delta Religion, and Two Black Churches.

Healing and Conjuring. In Africa spirituality and healing have been intimately linked; in the American South this tradition has been carried on by the midwife, the rootworker, and the conjurer. Beatrice Mongeau, et al.'s "The 'Granny Midwife': Changing Roles and Functions of a Folk Practioner" (1961) and Molly Dougherty's "Southern Lay Midwives as Ritual Specialists" (1973b) document the ways in which medical professionals and health departments have over the last half century systematically driven black "granny" midwives from their position as acknowledged masters of the art of childbirthing to the verge of extinction. Both essays, however, exhibit the authors' marked ambivalence towards the midwives themselves. A comparison of Mongeau, et al. and Dougherty's accounts could be fruitfully made with a work such as Suzanne Arms' Immaculate Deception (1977). Arms analyzes, from the perspective of the feminist healthcare movement, the limited knowledge and anti-woman practices implicit in standard obstretical practices and thus can sensitize students to the highly politicized nature of the issue of midwifery.

Both Dougherty and Mongeau, et al., as well as Marie Campbell in her extremely paternalistic book on Georgia midwives in the 1940s, Folks Do Get Born (1946), speak of midwifery as a vocation to which a woman receives a divine call, and one which is regarded by its practitioners as a spiritual duty far more than simply a "job." Campbell reports 20th-century midwives tracing their knowledge back to African foremothers, who passed their lore down through generations of daughters and granddaughters.

The conjure woman as a powerful and feared figure looms large in Charles Chesnutt's The Conjure Women (1899; rept. 1969) and Alice Walker's short story, "The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff" (1973a). Chesnutt's "Aun' Peggy" possesses formidable supernatural powers; Walker's Tante Rosie has equally formidable psychological acuity. Both act on behalf of the powerless to bring to justice perpetrators of racist cruelty, instilling fear in the hearts of both blacks and whites. These stories are good bases for discussion of different types of power and different ways of wielding power, and the forceful personalities required to wrest power in any form from a repressive society.

Accounts such as these--and Alice Walker's "Strong Horse Tea," (also in 1973a) in which Aunt Sarah, "an old neighboring lady who wore magic leaves round her neck sewed up in possum skin next to a dried lizard's foot," is the only human who cared at all for the plight of poverty-stricken Rannie Toomer's dying baby--can be contrasted with the anthropological literature--such as Loudell Snow's (1973, 1977, and 1978) studies of folk medical practitioners in the South, Southwest, and urban North and with such historical accounts of women under slavery as those in John W. Blassingame's Slave Testimony (1977). Jacqueline Jones (1982) follows the development of conjure and herbal healing from the Civil War to the early 20th century, connecting the rise of folk medical practitioners among rural women in the late 19th century to the communal ethos of Afro-American culture. A woman who was "particularly skilled in the art of herbal medicine . . . might serve as a conjurer or herb doctor and prescribe cures for her neighbors suffering from anything from a

toothache to a heartache." Jones reports that this trend continued in the urban North in the first decades of this century:

> The discriminatory practices of northern urban hospitals together with the fact that many migrants had neither the money nor the inclination to seek formal medical care, sustained reliance on elderly women skilled in the ways of healing. Grannies continued to dispense potions and advice to cope with a multitude of ills: a baby's teething pains, a straying spouse, headaches and impotence.

She speculates, in fact, that "two sources of religious authority--one dominated by men, the other by women--co-existed uneasily" in the period of segregation, commenting that examples of discriminatory treatment of women within the church (where men invariably comprised the leadership elite):

> must be contrasted with equally dramatic cases of women who exercised considerable influence over their neighbors' spiritual lives, but outside of formal religious bodies, and indeed, Protestant denominationalism altogether. Elderly women in the long line of African and Afro-American conjurers and herb doctors were often eagerly consulted by persons of both sexes . . . the possiblity that some communities had two (in all probability competing) sources of spiritual and secular guidance--one a male, and formal, the other female and informal--suggests that the term "patriarchal" oversimplifies the issue of gender-based authority in post-war Afro-American life.

The works of Zora Neale Hurston and Toni Cade Bambara also explore this separate tradition of female spiritual power. Hurston's pioneering folklore collection, Mules and Men (1935; rept. 1970) documents her observations of non-Christian folk beliefs and practices in the rural South, ranging from hoodoo to conjure to voodoo. Bambara's fictional works seek to reconnect contemporary consciousness to those ancient traditions. The short story "Maggie of the Green Bottles," in Gorilla, My Love (1972), is a fond and passionate reminiscence by the child Peaches of her eccentric great-great grandmother Maggie, who is versed in occult mysteries, to the great consternation of her proper Christian family. Peaches' loyalty to Maggie, and her sense of being "chosen" to carry on the older woman's tradition, are similar to the ways in which many black women report having inherited their gifts from a mother or grandmother. In The Salt Eaters (1980) Bambara examines the connections between contemporary secular and traditional sacred belief systems through the character of Velma Henry, who moves in a world where faith healers and voodoo worshippers intermingle with politicized radicals. Sophie Heywood, Velma's godmother and midwife, observes that in time Velma would find her way back to "the roots of life:"

> . . . And in doing so, be a model. For she'd found a home amongst community workers who called themselves "political." And she found a home amongst the workers who called themselves "psychically adept." But somehow she'd fallen into the chasm that divided the two camps.

It is this chasm that Bambara questions throughout the novel, reluctant to accept the schism of "the roots of life" which have been passed on through centuries of folk belief. Reading The Salt Eaters, students become highly aware of the rich alternative view of reality offered by Afro-American

[illegible]

PART IV-F. "ART FOR EVERYDAY USE": ALICE WALKER'S PROSE

> . . . as I read the narratives of black people who were captured and set to slaving away their lives in America, I saw that this inner spirit, this inner capacity for self-comforting, this ability to locate God within that they expressed, demonstrated something about human beings. . . . It was as if these women found a twin self who saved them from their abused consciousness and chronic physical loneliness; and that twin self is in all of us, waiting only to be summoned.
>
> To prepare my class to comprehend God in this way, I requested they read narratives of these captured black women and also write narratives themselves, as if they were those women, or like them. At the same time, I asked them to write out their own understanding of what the inner voice, "God" is.
>
> It was an extraordinary class, Lucy! . . .

In this brief short story "A Letter of the Times" (1981a), Alice Walker lays out for us the theme that dominates her work--continuity and creativity in southern black women's lives--and the avowedly exploratory manner in which she has developed this theme in prose works spanning two decades.

It is little wonder that so many Project teachers devoted their class time to Walker and to her concerns: they embody the central issues the teachers were seeking to bring forth in a fashion at once analytic and artistic. Alice Walker writes about southern black female survival and transcendence. Her work itself is an outstanding example of that transcendence.

Approaches

A body of work such as Alice Walker's suggests the merits of in-depth study of single artists or particular groups of artists. Such detailed attention makes a direct contribution to discovery, documentation, and reaffirmation of southern black female culture. Some Project courses concentrated on just a few major southern black female artists, primarily literary figures. Others, however, selected a local artist or collective for their focus. These unrecognized artists might be a well-known local singer,

basket maker, or quilt maker, or another group of artists such as a particular generational family of musicians or a community organization such as the Piece for Quilting Bee of Boaz, Alabama.

Among the outstanding artists who have emerged from southern black communities Alice Walker is an obvious choice for purposes of cultural study. Her entire body of work is an expression of (and hymn of praise and thanks for) her heritage. Conscious self-examination stands at the center of her writing. And, like Margaret Walker Alexander and Pauli Murray, she has given us a history of her own journey to that center. Through Alice Walker's work the basic themes of these curriculum materials can be reviewed and explored: what is it to be Black, to be southern, and to be female.

This section offers some approaches to Alice Walker's prose work, suggesting how a single artist's work can be used to draw out the themes and topics found throughout this curriculum guide. Walker was only one of several artists whom Project teachers singled out for special study. Curriculum developers will have their own favorites, perhaps working in other media, or in their own locales. This discussion of Walker's work should offer some techniques that can be applied generally to deeper consideration of the lives and works of southern black female artists.

Project teachers maintained the close connection of art and life throughout their courses. While always looking to the context of family, community, and culture from which the artist draws her ideas, values, and mode of expression, Project teachers took the opportunity of detailed study of such a major writer to discuss how an artist takes what she, and we, all know and share and turns it into an art work that communicates in a unique, compelling way.

Understanding and appreciation increase with prolonged exposure, careful discussion, and a sufficiently detailed analysis to recognize the breadth, depth, and development of one writer's thought and of her craftsmanship. Further, Walker's professional and personal development may serve as a model for students. Seeing an artist "up close," becoming familiar with her minor writing as well as her fully-formed successes, enables students to appreciate that great art does not just happen, but is the product of long, hard work--work that they, too, might undertake. Walker, particularly, has made no secret of her personal life and it as well is a study in learning, maturation, and a growing sense of self.

The sum of a body of work such as Walker's can be explored in the classroom to gain insights into one woman's interpretation of a culture. Through her students have an opportunity to see how an artist draws on the same elements time and again, offering a new view, a deeper insight in each re-examination. They can be exposed to notions such as theme, motif, and fictionalization. They will be able to follow Walker as she explores the processes through which individuals and a society maintain themselves and transcend mere survival, to express the beauty of truly moral personal integrity within the context of their native culture. Work such as Walker's constitutes a history of the writer's culture. Students who have studied, or study simultaneously, the segregation period or the civil rights movement can experience it through the artist's eyes, gaining that personal insight that is necessary to true understanding of historical events. They can also see how life becomes art.

Project consultants and teachers suggested several approaches to study of the work of Alice Walker, predicated in part on their own disciplinary training. In a course devoted primarily to literary study, Walker's development of parallel themes in novels and short stories offered an excellent vehicle for a deep analysis of her development of strong, archetypal yet highly individual

[illegible] letters and diaries.

[illegible] histories, but critical studies of [illegible] periods were ignored and entrusted to historical [illegible] teachers [illegible] teachers frequently juxtaposed the literature unit's [illegible] oral histories. Students were [illegible] between the lines of a [illegible] or dialogue to discern the [illegible] to study a individual's experience can be understood. [illegible] characters [illegible] people, so are students' local interviewees. And, like Walker's characters, their lives are unique, fascinating, and critically important to the events in which they have taken part. Study of [illegible] Walker [illegible] "just folks" stand for the experience of an entire culture can direct students who are reading or creating oral histories to see how [illegible] events are the sum of individual experiences. They can study Walker to realize how the most mundane experience may be a key to understanding the [illegible] of social change.

Some Project teachers linked the study of Walker with that of Zora Neale Hurston, illustrating not only the ways both women make use of their black heritage, but also how a younger scholar/artist learns from and draws inspiration from her predecessor. For students who would gain from learning how to learn from others, the Hurston-Walker story is an excellent role model. Walker demonstrates that the best, most exciting research topics may be found close to the students' own homes and environments, among as yet unappreciated southern black women, at the same time helping female students gain positive self-identities.

Walker's work is exemplary in making artistic use of Afro-American folklore and custom. Her stories can be integrated into a section on material culture; on religion, spirituality, and hoodoo; on oral traditions such as storytelling; on the particularization of African survivals in the South. Walker's characters live their culture. The details of church services, household customs, dress, retelling and reinterpreting folktales, music-making, language, and gesture are all meticulously delineated, testifying to the writer's astute ear and eye and also to her tireless research. Excerpts from Walker's work might be integrated into students' slide-tape programs, course journals, or project field notes, since she speaks so eloquently of the grace and heroism of the everyday life that students should seek to appreciate and understand throughout a course on black women in the South.

Specific pedagogical objectives for the study of Alice Walker's works are:

*Becoming familiar with the prose work of a major writer and her personal vision of southern black female culture.

*Learning more about southern black female culture through prose work which is based on life-long, careful study of Afro-American and African heritages.

*Examining the process by which an artist draws on folklore and folk culture in her art.

*Learning how to assess such a major artist's work, in aesthetic and in cultural and folkloristic terms.

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* Re-examining historic events in Afro-American history, artistic documentary materials and the recollections and reconstructions that the artist creates to make them immediate to her readers.

* Presenting students with a role model, an expressive, fulfilled artist who acknowledges the importance of role models in her own life, suggesting a community of southern black women who teach, support, and learn from one another.

* [illegible]

Materials

These suggestions will focus on Alice Walker's prose work, including the three novels, The Third Life of Grange Copeland (1970), Meridian (1976a), and The Color Purple (1982a); short stories in the collections In Love and Trouble: Stories for Black Women (1973a); and You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down: Stories (1981b), in Washington 1975 and 1980, and uncollected stories; and essays, most of which have been collected as In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose (1983).

Teachers will find certain secondary resources helpful in preparing their classwork on Walker. Barbara Christian's Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976 (1980) offers a fine analysis of . . . Grange Copeland and Meridian under the title "Novels for Everyday Use." Christian draws out the ways in which Walker has depicted the dilemma of southern black life, in which the inhumanity of whites seeks to destroy the humanity of blacks:

> It is as if Walker consciously selects all the nasty bits and pieces about black people that they as well as white people believe. Then she examines each bit, lucidly arranges the pieces so we might see the savage nibblings of everyday oppression at the souls of black Southerners.

Christian discusses Walker as a Southerner, as a Black, and as a woman, carefully illustrating how the author conveys the sex-role component of white racism and its impact on black families and black female-male relationships. She also describes Walker's historical view, including generational dispute in . . . Grange Copeland and the wrenching changes in black life during Meridian's civil rights period setting.

Two essays in Sturdy Black Bridges: Visions of Black Women in Literature (Bell, Parker, and Guy-Sheftall 1979) address the work of Alice Walker. Mary Helen Washington's "An Essay on Alice Walker" is particularly important because it analyzes Walker as a chronicler of women's lives. Discussing . . . Grange Copeland and Meridian, Washington describes Wilker's women as undergoing a process of self-realization:

> They begin existence in a numb state, deadened, insensible to a life beyond poverty and degredation; they are awakened to life by a power-

and political force; in discovering [illegible], there is a consequent effort to reinterpret [illegible] in order to discover its value.

Chester J. Fontenot (1979) traces Walker's [illegible] DuBois' notion of "double consciousness," i.e., internalizing [illegible] identity of the oppressor. [illegible] transcending racism [illegible] become more positively [illegible] nourished by their community and capable of [illegible] it.

Walker's three novels are a chronicle [illegible] South. The Third Life of Grange Copeland [illegible] three generations, from sharecropping [illegible] movement. It is a harsh, violent book in which [illegible] murder one another, in which father [illegible] Walker [illegible] critical statistics only report: why [illegible] violent people, how economic and social deprivation [illegible]. She forces her readers to abandon simplistic "good" and "bad" [illegible] dichotomies as she leads us through the life of Grange Copeland, [illegible] wife-killer. Grange ultimately becomes a loving, caring person [illegible] his own life to rescue his granddaughter from re-entering the [illegible] hate and self-hate that destroyed him. Grange's [illegible] "lives" are stages [illegible] his own self-recognition and also the lives of himself, his son, and granddaughter. His son he ultimately murders, just as he destroys the hateful, violent part of himself.

For Walker, slavery is a system which dehumanizes by removing responsibility from the enslaved individual. [illegible] are not answerable for their own actions and are thereby genuinely diminished. Southern white racism continues to separate action from responsibility by punishments that are not commensurate with crimes, by violating family and individual integrity, by generally removing blacks' control over their own lives. Grange's son Brownfield represents the internalization of racism by Blacks. In prison for the murder of his wife, he "realized an extraordinary emotion:"

> He loved the South. And he knew he loved it because he had never seriously considered leaving it. He felt he had a real understanding of it. Its ways did not mystify him in the least. It was a sweet, violent, peculiarly accommodating land. It bent itself to fit its own laws. One's life, underneath the rigidity of caste, was essentially one of invisibility and luck. One did not feel alone in one's guilt. Guilt dripped and moved all over and around and about one like the moss that clung to the trees. A man's punishment was never written up somewhere in a book before his crime was committed--it was not even the same as someone else's punishment for the same crime. The punishment was made to fit the man and not the crime.

In his old age Grange contradicts his ex-wife and son, who argue that he, like they, "used to blame the white folks too. For they is the cause of all the dirt we have to swallow." Turning to his granddaughter, his third "life", he says:

> By George, I know the danger of putting all the blame on somebody else for the mess you make out of your life. I fell into the trap myself! And I'm bound to believe that that's the way the white folks can corrupt you even when you done held up before. 'Cause when they got you thinking

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> [illegible] they're to blame for everything they have on this [illegible] [illegible] You can't do nothing wrong without them being behind it [illegible] as [illegible] as water, no feeling of doing nothing yourself. [illegible] begins to think an evil and begins to [illegible] everybody around [illegible] you blames it on the crackers. Shit! Nobody [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] got our souls don't we.

Walker's first two generations are men; the third, [illegible] is a young woman. Through [illegible] Brownfield we see the pattern of male oppression of their wives [illegible] who are the only figures less powerful than themselves. The men's [illegible] is taken out on their wives sexually. The men's inability to [illegible] self-respect brings about loss of respect for the women who [illegible] [illegible]. Above all, Walker makes clear, the fatal mistake of the [illegible] is to internalize white values. They do not respect themselves [illegible] white men do not. They do not respect their women because [illegible] like white women. And black women are caught in the impossible paradox that Angela Davis described so articulately (1981): southern white standards for "ladies", i.e. weak, dependent, refined, at leisure, are in direct juxtaposition to the hard-working independence that black women have maintained [illegible] must [illegible], if their families are to survive. Brownfield, nearing the final confrontation with his father and daughter, thinks back over his family life:

> He wouldn't repent. None of what he had done mattered any more. It was over. What had to happen happened: the beautiful faded, the pretty became ugly, the sweetness soured. He had never believed it could turn out any other way. But what had she thought, his quiet wife, when he proved to be more cruel to her than any white man, or twenty? She was not a fighter, and rage had horrified her. Her one act of violence against him, which she must have considered an act of survival, brought her lower than before. Instead of rage she had had an inner sovereignty, a core of self, which, alas, her husband had not had. She had possessed an embodied strength that Brownfield could not match. He had been, at the best times, scornful of it, and at the worst, jealous.

Thus Walker brings the reader not only to understand the nature of racism and its devastating effects, but also its connection with sexism. Brownfield, through his inability to [illegible] the racial system is set up against his own family:

> Instinctively, with [illegible] [illegible], he had denied the possibility of a better life [illegible] children. He had enslaved his own family, given them [illegible] strength, made them powerless before any [illegible] [illegible] him. Now [illegible] they thought [illegible] their [illegible] struggle [illegible].

Her [illegible] in his granddaughter, directing her toward full realization of [illegible], away from bonds of white-promulgated racial attitudes and also [illegible] whites' damaging sex-role prescriptions. Near the end of [illegible] grandfather's life, Ruth finally meets young people who attract [illegible] civil rights workers [illegible] voter registration drive. Touched by their hopefulness and commitment, [illegible] himself [illegible] war

[illegible]

. . . [illegible]

[illegible] of the traditional oak tree with strong limbs and sturdy trunk, broad-shouldered black men . . . Perhaps it was, after all, the only place left for black people to congregate, where the problems of life were openly discussed fraudulently and the approach to the future was considered [illegible], and moral questions were taken seriously.

Her sense of renewed community with her people brings Meridian a new sense of her own role in their future. She is, she discovers, a ritual figure--too rooted in the old perceptions to be able to learn the personal distance that enables radical change and too committed to cease to stop trying to be one of those who bring it about. Meridian is the conscience, the mentor, the sustainer of the revolution:

> I will come forward and sing from memory songs they will need to hear. For it is the song of the people, transformed by the experiences of each generation, that holds them together, and if any part of it is lost the people suffer and are without soul. If I can only do that, my role will not have been a useless one after all.

Walker has cast her protagonist in a crucial, and womanly, role. In the end Meridian has become Truman's teacher, guiding him back into the center of black life and into a full sense of himself. To him she leaves her activist mission.

The role of woman as translator and transmitter has a long and honored history in Afro-American culture. Other sections of this curriculum guide have suggested ways in which southern black women have been the tradition bearers and conservators of heritage. Here Walker has expanded this notion

[illegible] Celie [illegible] Grange Copeland, [illegible] marital violence [illegible] rural poverty. [illegible] losing the life [illegible] daughter, rather than a son, of such circumstances, Walker finds [illegible] whose life becomes very different from Brownfield and Grange's. Celie is much more firmly rooted in Afro-American religion, family, and culture; she can not only sustain herself, but reach out to others. She has suffered physical and emotional abuse just as did the Copeland women yet helps her sister Nettie escape to a middle-class black pastor's family and protection from abuse:

> I spend my wedding day running from the eldest boy. He twelve. His mama died in his arms and he don't want to hear nothing bout no new one. He pick up a rock and laid my head open. The blood run all down twoom my breasts. . . . The girls hair ain't been comb since their mammy died. I tell him I'll just have to shave it off. Start fresh. He say bad luck to cut a woman hair. So after I bandage my head best I can and cook dinner--they have a spring, not a well, and a wood stove look like a truck--I start trying to untangle hair. . . . They cry themselves to sleep. But I don't cry. I lay there thinking bout Nettie while he on top of me, wonder if she safe. . . .

In her turn Celie finds love and support through Shug, her husband's lover. Others, particularly women, come into her sphere and are strengthened by the depth of caring and the centeredness they find there. It is a network of women whom Walker portrays as being the core of Afro-American racial survival.

Placing the sister Nettie in West Africa, and fashioning the book as a correspondence between the sisters, Walker creates an internal dialogue, comparing and contrasting, and finally reconciling poor and middle-class, educated and uneducated, African and Afro-American heritage. From vastly different points of view--Celie rooted in rural Georgia, experiencing a loveless marriage and a passionate relationship with Shug; spinster Nettie travelling as nanny and maid and finally beloved wife to a respected black missionary--the two sisters gradually come to identical realizations about the nature of

life, oppression, and men and women. They reject the capitalist material[illegible] that dominates southern lives and spoils African villages; white America[illegible] black African sex-role proscriptions; racial and ethnic hatred on any [illegible]; and European Judeo-Christian conceptions of an unforgiving, white, male God. They embrace positive affirmations of womanhood and manhood in their African and Afro-American cultures; their own talents and creativity, expressed through traditional arts and through family life; love of others [illegible] freely given; and a concept of God that places the spirit within each of us.

Celie learns to [illegible] her own spirituality through her friends, [illegible] especially Albert. Nettie's parallel lessons are learned from the [illegible] people. Celie learns [illegible] [illegible] church:

[illegible] I say.

[illegible] say, Celie! Take [illegible] your life, your health, [illegible] I [illegible] that I love you to death.

[illegible], I say, all he give me is lynched daddy, a crazy mama, a lowdown [illegible] a step pa and a sister I probably won't ever see again. Anyhow, I say, the God I been praying and writing to is a man. And act just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgitful, and lowdown. . . . All my life I never care what people thought bout nothing I did, I say, but deep in my heart I care about God. What he going to think. And come to find out, he don't think. Just sit up there glorying in being deef, I reckon. But it ain't easy, trying to do without God. Even if you know he ain't there, trying to do without him is a strain.

. . . Here's the thing, say Shug. The thing I believe. God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. . . . She say, My first step from the old white man was trees. Then air. Then birds. Then other people. But one day when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me: that feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all. I knew that if I cut a tree, my arm would [illegible]d.

Albert grows from a tyrannical husband to a loving friend for Celie. [illegible]nking back over a life that in many ways like the Copeland men's, he re[illegible]ts:

I tried to do something bout my children after you left me. But by that time it was too late. . . . Anyhow, he say, you know how it is. You ast yourself one question, it lead to fifteen. I start to wonder why us need love. Why us suffer. Why us black. Why us men and women. Where do children really come from. It didn't take long to realize I didn't hardly know nothing. And that if you ast yourself why you black or a man or a woman or a bush it don't mean nothing if you don't ast why you here, period.

So what you think? I ast.

I think us here to wonder, myself. To wonder. To ast. And that in wondering about the big things and asting bout the big things, you learn about the little ones, almost by accident. But you never know nothing more about the big things than you start out with. The more I wonder, he say, the more I love.

The Color Purple is as carefully researched as a scholarly study. Walker

[illegible]

[illegible] The Color Purple. [illegible]

[illegible] Brown- [illegible] pregnancy is the means to force his wife back [illegible] When she becomes weak and ill with the chill and is unable [illegible] factory job, he removes the family back to a sharecropper's [illegible] and ultimately murders the child she bears. Meridian's brief liaison [illegible] Truman results in a pregnancy she aborts. Truman has been repulsed by her sore fertility; he leaves upon learning she is a former wife and mother who has given her child away. Meridian not only has herself sterilized, she never engages in sexual relations again, not even when Truman's attraction to her is renewed. Black-white sexual relations dominate Meridian and they are always tragic contacts. Truman and Lynne's interracial child does not survive; it is interracial rape that destroys their marriage.

In The Color Purple, however, Walker depicts sexual fulfillment, in and out of marriage, among women as well as between men and women. And there is fertility. Celie has two children through rape by her stepfather. She later secures a position for her sister as maid in the home to which he gave the children and Nettie raises them. The children represent cultural continuity and evolution. When Nettie returns from Africa she brings her family: a northern black husband and three young people. Celie/Nettie's daughter returns eagerly to the United States; their son first marries an African woman and reappears with a ceremonially-scarred face, an ordeal undergone to demonstrate his dual commitment to his wife and to her heritage.

In her postscript to The Color Purple Alice Walker identifies herself as "author and medium." In speaking of her writing (unpublished lecture, Ann Arbor 1983) she describes her characters as spirits who appear for her and whose direction she follows in writing their stories. An artist, Walker would have us understand, is only a medium through which a culture can express itself. She does not create it, she merely gives it form. (See also "Writing The Color Purple . . ." in Walker 1983.)

This highly African concept of the role of artist pervades Alice Walker's

quotations work as well. A recent all Project readers signed the essay "In Search of our Mothers' Gardens" (1974; rept. 1983). In this essay Walker describes her own search for the roots of southern black female creativity and the joy of finding them in the everyday expressions of women in the folk culture. Walker's search for art to model for herself leads her back to her own mother whose creativity and spirituality find outlet in gardening flower culture. She writes:

> I realize that it is only when my mother is working in her flowers that one is radiant, almost to the point of being invisible--except as Creator: hard at love. She is involved in work her soul must have. Ordering the universe in the image of her personal conception of Beauty.
>
> Her face, as she prepares the Art that is her gift, is a legacy of respect she leaves to me, for all that illuminates and cherishes life. She had broiled down respect for the possibilities--and the will to grasp them.
>
> For her, so hindered and intruded upon in so many ways, being an artist has still been a daily part of her life. This ability to hold on, even in very simple ways, is work Black women have done for a very long time.

In folk artists Walker seeks, and finds, "Black women whose spirituality was so intense, so deep, so unconscious, that they were themselves unaware of the richness they held."

This essay was critical in opening up students' minds to a larger concept of "art" than the traditional academic "fine art" definition and in leading them toward appreciation of folk expression so that they, too, could discover women artists within black culture. This particular odyssey is an inspiring example for students who are struggling with identity and seeking ways to become separate, mature individuals without losing the cultural ties that will enable them to survive.

In her search Walker contemplates what it would mean to be a southern black woman with the creative drive that she herself experiences. Drawing her analogy from A Room of One's Own (1929; rept. 1963), Virginia Woolf's classic essay on the difficulties presented a woman who aspires to be a writer, Walker believes that many women thought of as "crazy" in times past were no doubt lost artists:

> What did it mean for a black woman to be an artist in our grandmothers' time? In our great-grandmothers' day? It is a question with an answer cruel enough to stop the blood.

Creativity and spirituality are conjoined in Walker's analysis, as they are in southern black life:

> For these grandmothers and mothers of ours were not "Saints" (mad women), but Artists; driven to a numb and bleeding madness by the springs of creativity in them for which there was no release. They were Creators, who lived lives of spiritual waste, because they were so rich in spirituality--which is the basis for Art--that the strain of enduring their unused and unwanted talent drove them insane. Throwing away this spirituality was their pathetic attempt to lighten the soul to a weight their work-worn, sexually abused bodies could bear.

Walker's tale of her discovery of a literary foremother also was used as a basis for discussion about the connections among black women artists and between them and their culture. "Looking for Zora" (Walker 1975; rept. 1983) is at the same time a memoir of the senior writer and a chronicle of Walker's own search for identity. Finding and marking Zora Neale Hurston's grave was for Walker a necessary step toward understanding her own roots and the source of her creative abilities. Both women make explicit use of folklore and folk culture in their work and both are eager to acknowledge their own roles as "mediums." The Hurston-Walker story proved genuinely inspirational to students, making both writers more human and accessible.

The essay "The Black Writer and the Southern Experience" (1973; rept. 1983) is central to understanding Walker's ties to her regional heritage and to traditional Afro-American culture. Relating a story of community cooperation that helped her family survive the Depression (a family tale later reworked into the short story "The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff," anthologized in Walker 1973a), she writes:

> What the black Southern writer inherits as a natural right is a sense of community. Something simple but surprisingly hard, especially in these days, to come by . . . I am nostalgic for the solidarity and sharing a modest existence can sometimes bring.

She finds that southern blacks, because they have grown up in a bifurcated world--the public, white world and the "strictly private, hidden existence" that is the South have a "double vision":

> . . . not only is he [the southern black writer] in a position to see his own world, and its close community ("Homecomings" on first Sundays, barbecues to raise money to send to Africa--one of the smaller ironies --the simplicity and eerie calm of a black funeral, where the beloved one is buried way in the middle of a wood with nothing to mark the spot but perhaps a wooden cross already coming apart), but also he is capable of knowing, with remarkably silent accuracy, the people who make up the larger world that surrounds and supresses his own.

This "double vision" underlies Walker's studies of racism and its effects on black and white Southerners in . . . Grange Copeland, The Color Purple, and other works of fiction.

Walker attributes the deep insights about social structure and the penetration into personal anguish and triumph in ordinary lives that characterizes southern black writing--and especially her own--to her people's will to resist: "In large measure, black Southern writers owe their clarity of vision to parents who refused to diminish themselves as human beings by succumbing to racism," because those parents refused to be blind to the truth about individual people. For "blindness about other human beings, especially for a writer, is equivalent to death." Walker finds that the southern black heritage imposes a peculiarly powerful obligation on its spokespeople:

> No one could wish for a more advantageous heritage than that bequeathed to the black writer in the South: a compassion for the earth, a trust in humanity beyond our knowledge of evil, and an abiding love of justice. We inherit a great responsibility as well, for we must give voice to centuries not only of silent bitterness and hate but also of neighborly kindness and sustaining love.

In a more recent essay, "Lulls" (Walker 1977; repr. 1981), the writer describes a visit--now as an emigre from the South, from rural life--to her home, family, and the sites of her civil rights era activism. Taken up warmly by relatives and old friends, the trip confirms Walker's feelings of certainty about the South. While much is difficult and much unchanged (and some things even less intact than before, during the struggle), she draws a sharp contrast between North and South:

> The bond of black kinship--so sturdy, so resilient--is virtually broken in the cities of the North. There is no mutual caring, no trust . . .
>
> My fear is part grief, and if I were ever attacked or robbed by another black person I doubt I'd recover. This thought itself scares me. There is also the knowledge that just as I'm afraid of them, because I no longer know what behavior to expect, they're afraid of me. Of all the vile things that have happened to us in America, this fear of each other is to me the most unbearable, the most humiliating. . . .
>
> "All those people from the South," says Lorene, "probably miss their gardens."
>
> "Miss going fishing."
>
> "Miss trees."
>
> "Miss having people smile at them out of true affection."

This last is the most human reason, and perhaps it is the truest of all. "Lulls" is useful to demonstrate what is critical about the southern experience for all black Americans. Once more Walker comes back to the necessity of cultural and familial context for survival as an ethical person. The journalistic form in which "Lulls" is written also served as a model for students, both in preparing journals of their reactions to readings and class experiences and in recording their field notes in their community research projects.

In "If the Present Looks Like the Past, What does the Future Look Like?" (1982b) Walker once more takes up the question of the relation between racism and sexism in this country. She probes discrimination against "black black women" and finds that black men and women, political and social leaders, artists and writers, have internalized stereotypes about skin color that derive directly from the racist, "whiter is better," slave-holding and slave-raping South. Walker points out this discrimination among Afro-Americans, not to lay blame, but because:

> the duty of the writer is not to be tricked, seduced, or goaded into verifying by imitation, or even rebuttal, other people's fantasies . . . To isolate fantasy we must cleave to reality, to what we know, we feel, we think of life.

This essay, while obviously appropriate to discussion of southern black female identity, is also valuable as a reminder of the role that the artist plays in not just depicting, but leading community life.

Project teachers also frequently used selections from Alice Walker's short stories. Almost all of the stories in the collection In Love and Trouble (1973a) were included in one or more Project courses. "The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff" and "Strong Horse Tea" are particularly good for presenting folk beliefs; "The Welcome Table" can be included in discussion of religion and the black church; "Everyday Use" is a superb short tale of family ties, folk craft, and the violation and dehumanization that result when people, and

[illegible] separated from their culture. The collection as a whole is a study of male-female relations and the littering effects of sexism on men and women. "Roselily," in which a traditional southern woman marries a Chicago Muslim in order to provide for her children, is heart-rending. In "Poor Sweet Jerome" a traditional working-class woman destroys herself because of her husband's listlessness and disregard as he becomes more involved in black consciousness study.

Other short stories used by Project teachers include "Advancing Luna and Ida B. Wells" (in Walker 1981b), which examines many of the themes developed in Meridian; "A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring" (also in Walker 1981b), which describes a young woman's struggle to maintain her sense of identity in the alien world of an elite, northern girls' college; and "A Letter of the Times" (Walker 1981a), a short-short story also examining relations among black and white women. The latter two stories are especially valuable in illustrating the unconscious racism of white women that stands in the way of any genuine relationships that they might wish to have with black women. In "A Letter of the Times" Walker offers us her own pedagogy for a class on race and sex, at the same time attacking trends in the white feminist community which she regards as fundamentally racist in nature. These stories are excellent for study of identity, as well as feminism and black women.

An excellent course on the culture of southern black women could be constructed around the writings of Alice Walker. By extending the readings to her poetry, to the writings of her spiritual and artistic mentor, Zora Neale Hurston, and to other creative and documentary writing about the periods in 20th century southern black life in which her novels are set, all the crucial themes in this curriculum guide might be easily drawn in. Walker addresses southern black female identity in physical, cultural, and moral terms. She takes apart, examines, and reunites the components black, southern, and female. She places herself, as an artist, explicitly, in the southern black creative tradition.

Drawing direct and thankful connections to the folk artists among whom she came of age, Walker speaks of her gardener-mother (1974; rept. 1983) as more than a muse, as a collaborator:

> . . . no song or poem will bear my mother's name. Yet so many of the stories that I write, that we all write, are my mother's stories. Only recently did I fully realize this: that through years of listening to my mother's stories of her life, I have absorbed not only the stories themselves, but something of the manner in which she spoke, something of the urgency that involves the knowledge that her stories--like her life--must be recorded. It is probably for this reason that so much of what I have written is about characters whose counterparts in real life are so much older than I am.

Interviewed (1973c; rept. 1983), Alice Walker explains:

> You ask about "preoccupation." I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the survival whole of my people. But beyond that, I am committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties, the triumphs of black women. . . . For me, black women are the most fascinating creations in the world.

PART V. STUDENT FIELDWORK: DOCUMENTATION METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

PART V-A. INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

This section of Approaches and Materials has been designed to help teachers familiarize their students with the basic methods and techniques for primary research in local communities. Emphasis is placed herein on teaching simple skills to allow students to become active participants in the process of field research and in the collection of information about southern black women. Suggested class exercises and assignments which introduce and then build on acquired student research skills have been described throughout the "Approaches" essays in Parts II through IV.

To aid teachers introducing the concept of primary research to their classes, the first part of this section provides an overview, in outline form, of various types of both primary and secondary source material available to students researching the history and culture of southern black women, and briefly assesses some of the considerations to weigh in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of each. This survey of source material concludes with the recommended use of primary oral or aural material--tape-recorded interviews or artistic performances--collected by students engaging in first-hand fieldwork, the research technique most often used in Project classes. This section then focuses on the parallel fieldwork methods and techniques developed by social historians for collecting oral histories or testimonies and by anthropologists and folklorists for collecting oral narratives, songs, and speech.

As a starting point in most undergraduate classrooms, fieldwork may be defined as the first-hand observation, study, and collection of information about cultural phenomena as they exist or occur in their natural context and environment. Documentation is used to describe this collection process by means of tape recording and photography. The field refers to the interview location. Respondent (or informant) refers to the interview subject (also interviewee); collector refers to the interviewer. Oral history may be defined as tape-recorded interviews with first-hand participants or historical witnesses who relate personal accounts of the present and the recent historical past.

As Lynn Z. Bloom comments on the value of interview work in the special issue of the journal Frontiers (1977) devoted to women's oral history:

> . . . Every oral interview with a woman is a [illegible] of enhancing not only that woman's individual place on this earth but the significance of women generally. The oral historian can raise the self esteem of the woman interviewed, for in talking about themselves, women can recognize the worth of their roles, their efforts, their contributions, their lives. Through the medium of oral history, other women can identify with their sisters, mothers, grandmothers, daughters; men can come to know women better.

It was an objective of this Project to utilize oral and community history projects undertaken by student researchers to expand areas of intellectual inquiry and to break down barriers between academia and the general public. In this process, both student interviewers and their community respondents are assigned an active role in the collecting and making of historical and cultural information. This student-centered, public outreach approach to culture underlies the descriptions which follow for teaching students the basic skills necessary for field research, documentation, and presentation.

In contrast to the format of preceding parts of this curriculum guide, Part V is addressed directly to the student and includes simple reproducible outlines and sample documentation forms that may be used to teach the basic methods and techniques of 1) Pre-field planning, background research, and preparation; 2) Fieldwork, including interviewing techniques, and simple tape-recording and photography skills; and 3) Post-field classroom or community presentation, deriving from field research, and archival documentation and preservation of research data.

PART V-B. PRE-FIELD: PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Types and sources of research material to consider. Before deciding what type of research to undertake, you should consider the various types of both primary (original) and secondary (second-hand) source material available to you. The following outline describes various types among print, visual, and oral/aural media. Often a combination of both primary and secondary materials from all three types is employed by researchers.

For example, plantation records and slave narratives (primary documents) may be read and analyzed for historical references to women's needlework, such as quilt making, as may fictionalized accounts of domestic life during slavery, such as novels (secondary publications). Actual 19th- or 20th-century quilts (artifacts) that are in private collections or museums may be directly studied or photographed, or may be viewed in documentary films (secondary visual media). Contemporary scholarly essays (secondary publications) about women's needlework may also be read. Finally, interviews may be conducted with elderly quilt makers in your local community, and their recollections and stories about their foremothers or their own skills in the needle arts may be tape recorded. The artists, their art works, the process by which they are made, and the contexts in which they are used may also be photographed, filmed, or videotape recorded. This first-hand fieldwork with living practitioners will help to trace both continuities and change in this form of cultural expression, as well as place this art form within its native cultural context.

PRINT

Primary Documents

Sources: archives, historical societies, newspaper "morgues," government agencies, organizations, associations, businesses, churches, etc.

Types: personal correspondence, letters, diaries, journals, unpublished writings, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, travel accounts, slave narrative

and runaway accounts, plantation records and journals, family papers, geological records, census data, court records, city registers and directories, church and cemetery records, commercial records, trade catalogs, advertisements, house organs, ephemera (posters, handbills, broadsides, pamphlets and brochures, etc.).

Problems: Women, especially poor, working class, or third-world women, come from highly verbal cultures and tend to create fewer written records; materials may have been discarded or may be "undiscovered" in attics and basements; repositories in the past have lacked interest in acquiring and preserving such materials; what was collected and saved probably represents biases of institution's archivists and curators (who are rarely black women); materials will probably be inadequately catalogued and indexed; materials may be "hidden" in collections of family (male-headed) papers or those of male-dominated institutions or organizations; existing collections often focus on the "exceptional" black woman who achieved national public recognition; collections are often only of women who are now dead, or organizations that are now defunct; major archival collections are in the North (i.e. New York City, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Boston, New Haven) and operate with limited staff and funds and restricted hours.

Secondary Publications

Sources: Libraries, bookstores.

Types: Novels, short stories, plays, poems, memoirs, autobiographies, essays, treatises, texts by black women; women's popular magazines and mail-order catalogs; fiction and non-fiction by others.

Problems: First-hand experiences of artists/writers are combined and distilled by their creative imagination to heighten, but possibly distort and express a "composite" reality. Biases, generalization, and insensitivity by writers about southern black women who are neither southern nor black nor women. Limitations of the commercial marketplace. The written word (literary texts) may not be the best evidence of non-literary (i.e., verbal) cultures.

VISUAL

Primary Materials

Sources: Homes, private collections, museums, art galleries.

Types: Paintings, photographs, sculpture, handicrafts, needlework, gardens, house decorations, clothing, etc. created by black women.

Problems: Lack of sophisticated methodological concepts or tools for analyzing and interpreting material culture (artifacts); inaccessibility of materials except through first-hand fieldwork.

Secondary Materials

Sources: TV, radio, movies, libraries, museums, art galleries.

Types: Films, videotapes, TV programs, photographs, exhibits, art done by others.

Problems: Racism, stereotyping, and other problems, as above.

ORAL/AURAL

Primary Recordings

Sources: Archives, oral history programs, first-hand fieldwork.
Types: Tape recorded interviews, music, and other artistic performances.
Problems: Same as above, but the best solution to collecting information about southern black women of today and the recent past.

Secondary Recordings

Sources: Libraries, record stores, radio.
Types: Commercial and documentary phonograph records.
Problems: Same as above.

Planning your project. Students planning to undertake field-oriented research projects should first take note of several key points. Be realistic in the goals you set for your research project, in terms of the time frame within which it must be accomplished, as well as the resources that are available at your institution and in your local community. Make sure that you thoroughly plan your project in advance. It is always helpful and often required that you prepare a brief research proposal or prospectus which asks you to state your goals/objectives and proposed methods to achieve them, schedule a timetable, list available resources (both human and material), and justify your research topic. Certainly, you should conduct background library or archival research and prepare in advance a detailed outline of interview questions (see below).

You should develop a project that is carefully focused in scope and that is closely tied to your course curriculum. Ideally, project topics should also be readily connected to your own life and experiences. Your topic should be of sufficient significance and appeal that any resulting class or community presentations will be of interest to an audience of others on campus or in the community. If the latter is one of your goals, you should also plan in advance how you propose to analyze and interpret the research data that you collect, and how you plan to present your research findings to your audience.

Preparing for your field research. Several kinds of community organizations and institutions might be contacted to serve as resources for your oral or local history project, leading you to potential respondents. Some of them might provide sites to preserve collected materials or to hold public presentations. These include: local and state historical societies, museums, archives, and libraries; historic preservation agencies; local and state government archives and records centers; nursing and other senior citizens' homes; clubs and civic organizations; churches and church auxiliaries; and local businesses and union locals and auxiliaries. Individual members of such groups can be invaluable as liaisons between teachers, students, and other

community members.

Potential respondents (interview subjects) should be contacted well in advance of your planned fieldwork, to explain your class assignment or project. Set up a specific appointment time to conduct the interview; phone the day before to confirm and as a reminder. Make sure you have directions to your respondent's home or other location for the interview.

Keep a daily log or journal beginning with your advance preparations for fieldwork. Use it to note contact people and potential respondents' home addresses and phone numbers, directions, appointment times and dates, etc. During your fieldwork, use it to record data (field notes) and your first-hand impressions (while they're still fresh in your mind) about the context, environment, house interior, landscape, mood, and other aspects of the interview. You can also use this journal to record in advance your outline of interview questions and to jot down brief follow-up questions or comments that will occur to you during the actual interview.

Constructing interview questions. The "Women's Oral History Resources Section" by Sherna Gluck in Frontiers: Women's Oral History (1977) offers an excellent guide for constructing questions for interviews with women. The topical categories included there are in a comprehensive outline form that can well be utilized by students doing fieldwork on the history and culture of southern black women. The Frontiers outline covers basic background information, such as family history, description of early social environment and family life; childhood and adolescence, including education, social relationships, family relationships and responsibilities, and puberty and sex education; early adulthood, including work history, social and community relationships, and living arrangements; adult roles/life, covering courtship and marriage, daily life, relationship to husband, childbirth, child rearing, family life, and social life outside the home, as well as information on single, separated, divorced, or widowed women; and later years, covering activities and experiences after children are grown or husband's death. General questions are also included which ask the respondent to reflect on her life's experiences, her perceptions of the changing roles of women, and her attitudes toward, for example, the Depression, World War II, the civil rights movement, and the women's movement, as well as any events of significance in her community, town, or region. (You may also wish to study the "Oral Traditions" section of The Culture of Southern Black Women: Approaches and Materials.)

Assembling and practicing with your equipment. Well before you go out to do your first interview, set up and practice with your tape recorder and camera at home, interviewing, photographing, and recording family, friends, or roommates. Assemble your equipment and supplies: tape recorder, AC (electrical) cord, extension cord, batteries (if needed), microphone with appropriate plug, plenty of blank cassette tapes, archival or other documentation forms, notepad and pens (permanent ink); also camera and film, with batteries and flash unit, if needed.

The following outlines will help familiarize you with the parts and operation of portable cassette tape recorders, microphones, and 35mm. manual or automatic cameras, the supplies you will need to use them, and their care and use while in the field.

HOW TO OPERATE A PORTABLE CASSETTE TAPE RECORDER:

1. Plug the AC (electrical) cord into a wall outlet or insert fresh

batteries.

4. Punch (gently) the "stop eject" button to open the lid of the cassette compartment.

5. Install the cassette, with the tape-path side facing you and side "one" or "A" up. Close the lid.

6. Push the small button to reset the counter at 000; depress the "play" button until the clear plastic leader winds off (in about 10 seconds, at about counter 010).

7. Plug a hand-held microphone into the recorder's mic/remote jack(s) or use the recorder's internal (built-in) condensor microphone. (See following note on using a hand-held microphone.)

8. Depress the "pause" button to keep the machine on standby if there is one on your machine.

9. On two-button machines, simultaneously press the "play" (or "forward") and "record" buttons. On one-button machines, you need only press the "record" button which is usually red.

10. Speak into the microphone and adjust the volume level, by keeping the indicator needle just <u>barely</u> touching the "red zone" during the loudest sounds being recorded. Your recording will be distorted if the needle swings into the red area too often; it will be overly hissy if the needle never approaches the red area. Adjust the tone level to mid-range (at approximately the "12 o'clock" position).

11. Release the "pause" button to take the machine out of the standby mode and to actually start recording.

12. Record an <u>audio label</u> (see below) at the beginning of the tape.

13. About five minutes into the interview, it sometimes is a good idea to stop, note the number on the counter, rewind, and playback your tape to check the machine and make sure that it is recording properly. Be sure to cue it back up again to your stopping point, and follow steps 6 through 9 before continuing your interview.

14. Other features you'll be using: The "rewind" (REVIEW/REW) button moves the tape quickly backward; the "fast forward" (CUE/FF) button advances it rapidly. The "stop/eject" button stops the tape in any mode, a firmer push on the same button opens the lid and ejects the cassette.

NOTE: Most portable cassette tape machines record at the standard 1-7/8 inches per second, so you do not have to set a separate speed control. Some two-speed cassette recorders will also record at 15/16 inches per second (double speed), which saves tape costs, but is not generally recommended because of poorer sound quality.

[illegible] AN EXTERNAL, [illegible]

[illegible] "remote" input jacks, respectively). In the microphone you're using has this [illegible] it's best to turn the mike switch to "on" and leave it there. Otherwise, on the target, record it's on, all those you're actually recording. If you have one, put the mike [illegible] and, or improvise one by setting the mike on a stack of books in the center of a table, taping it to the back of a chair, or suspending it from a ceiling light. Always cushion the mike from hard surfaces, by using a newspaper, towel, sponge, cushion, or piece of clothing. Sound rises, so it's best to place the microphone facing your respondent but slightly above the voice or music level--about 12" to 15" is just right for most instances, for record[illegible] speaking voices. Your response should [illegible]ss, [illegible] the mike [illegible] have to hold the microphone [illegible] and don't [illegible] it [illegible]ily, don't let any rings or jewelry click or rub against it, and don't [illegible] it "off" by mistake. If you have to record outdoors in the wind, cover the microphone with a foam windscreen (or substitute a heavy woolen sock) to eliminate recording wind sound. A microphone "hears all and tells all" and will pick up [illegible] sound, especially when close to the mike.

CASSETTE TAPES:

Use a medium-priced 1.5 mil (thickness) standard brand cassette tape, not the prepackaged "bargain" ones from discount stores. Sixty minute cassettes (C-60's) have thirty minutes of recording time on each side, and are a good choice for interviews. Longer tapes are thinner and tend to stretch, tear, and jam in the recorder; they also don't store as well over long periods of time. Look for cassettes with screws in the corners, instead of the cheaper "sonic weld" ones. Some good brands for the price are the "low noise" varieties of Memorex, Scotch, TDK, Maxell, BASF, Sony, and other name manufacturers. Be sure to date and label each tape in permanent ink (with the same information you recorded on your "audio label") as soon as it's recorded, to avoid later confusion.

Remember that tape recorders are designed so that by recording you will automatically erase any previously-recorded material on that tape. To prevent an accident like this occurring with one of your interview cassettes, use a screwdriver or knife to gently punch in the small rectangular plastic safety tabs on the top right (side 2) and left (side 1) edges of the cassette, as side 1 is facing you. This will prevent the tape from accepting re-recording.

[illegible]

1. [illegible]

2. [illegible]

3. [illegible] button. [illegible]

4. [illegible] cassette safety tabs. [illegible] erasure, they can be covered with cellophane tape, and [illegible] can be reused for recording.

5. [illegible] and reinsert [illegible] cassette [illegible].

BASIC PHOTOGRAPHY SKILLS:

1. LIGHT:

To record a photographic image, film must be exposed to light. For good pictures, you must expose the film in your camera to the proper amount of light. If too little light reaches the film, your pictures will be too dark (underexposed). If too much light reaches the film, your pictures will be too light (overexposed).

2. FILM:

If you are shooting color slides (positive transparencies) with a 35mm. camera, you should use Kodak Ektachrome (Daylight) film, with an A.S.A. speed of 200. It is a relatively high-speed medium-grain color film that is ideal for using existing light or flash indoors, or for shooting any subject outdoors in daylight. It comes in rolls or "cassettes" labelled EH-135-20 for 20-exposure rolls or EH-135-36 for 36-exposure rolls. If you want black-and-white prints, you can use Kodak Tri-X film, with an A.S.A. speed of 400. It is a fast medium-grain film that is often used for shooting in existing light, as well as for general purposes. It also comes in rolls, labelled TX-135-20 or TX-135-36.

3. THE CAMERA CONSISTS OF:

a. A light-tight box to keep light out and serve as a frame to hold the other parts.

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b. A lens to collect the light reflected from a subject which forms an image on the film. The lens may be factory set for normal picture-taking distance or it may be of the focusing type. The focusing type of lens is adjustable for the correct distance between the camera and the subject.

c. A lens opening (aperture) to control the intensity of light reaching the film. The size of the lens opening may be fixed or adjustable. On adjustable (manual) cameras, the lens opening is marked in "F" stops on the aperture ring. The higher the F number (i.e. F16), the smaller the lens opening (less light enters), and the greater the depth-of-field (area of sharpness in front of and behind the subject in focus).

d. A shutter to control the length of time that light reaches the film. The shutter keeps all light out until you take a picture. Simple automatic cameras have one or two shutter speeds. More versatile manual cameras have a wide range of shutter speeds. The shutter speed numbers on manual cameras indicate fractions of a second (i.e., 125 = 1/125 second). The larger the number, the faster the shutter speed. A fast shutter speed has the advantage of letting you capture action scenes.

e. A film-advance mechanism to advance the film for the next exposure.

f. A viewfinder to frame your picture area. If your camera didn't have a viewfinder, you wouldn't be able to tell what your camera "sees" when you take the picture.

4. POINTERS:

a. Holding the camera: Hold the camera horizontally or vertically, but hold it levelly and keep at least one elbow close to your body to steady the camera and to allow the sharpest possible focus. Wherever possible, steady yourself against any nearby support, such as a wall, chair, fence, or tree.

b. Composition and Continuity (Framing your subject in the viewfinder): Select, simplify, emphasize, contrast, and unify. Don't try to tell more than one "story" at a time, in a single photograph. Use a sequence of photographs, perhaps progressing from the general, overall context to specific details, or from the exterior and public to the interior and private view. For example, take a broad overall "establishing" shot of a kitchen interior, followed up by closeups concentrating on the food being cooked, utensils, hands at work, facial expressions, etc. Remember that visual continuity, with smooth transitions, will be a major factor in the success of a slide-tape program photo exhibit, or other visual presentation. Keep in mind that the audience will be viewing a sequence of images in a linear progression that should "add up" to create the visual impression or express the idea or theme that you intend. Your slides will function symbolically, as fragments of the whole, that you must combine to tell a complete story. Keep this constantly in mind as you are photographing--you will need to shoot complete documentary coverage of your subject.

But also remember that, in general, the closest possible view of your subject is best and contains the least amount of uncoordinated and distracting detail. This is especially true in doing photographs destined for public presentation, where dramatic power and communicative effect are important con-

sideritions. Don't be vague; you must abstract from any scene and select the specific emphasis for your picture. Look for telling detail to document your subject. Remember the camera records everything seen through the viewfinder, even the irrelevant or distracting details that you fail to notice. Also try for variety in contrast (light and dark), texture, sense of depth, scale, color, and form. Don't always shoot symmetrical pictures, or ones with your subject "dead center" in the viewfinder. Use contrasting views and angles as well--a variety of closeups, medium shots, and broad views from high and low as well as an eye-level vantage point. But remember you are using photography to communicate--to express a theme, subject, or idea, and to share your vision with others. So keep your composition clear, simple, and straightforward, even though the total number of shots is varied.

c. Lighting: Avoid extreme contrasts between light and dark. Early soft, flat, but bright light is best outdoors--for example, sunlight shining through thin clouds is preferable to brilliant sunlight with extreme areas of shadow and contrast. Early morning or late afternoon gives warmer colors, and cloudy overcast days are good for close-ups. Look for the dominant light source falling on your subject, and watch where highlights and shadows fall. Don't allow heavy shadows to fall on your subject, unless you are aiming for and controlling that kind of artistic effect. As a working rule, photograph with sunlight coming toward your subject, and behind the camera. Remember that the human eye evaluates colors subjectively--for example you may know that your subject is wearing a white dress even though she's standing under a leafy tree that filters sunlight onto her dress and makes it appear pale green. Color film, however, will record a pale green dress. Do not photograph into a strong light source such as the sun or an unshaded light bulb.

d. Exposure Compensation: The automatic electric-eye meters in some automatic cameras cannot discriminate between the great extremes of lightness and darkness that you can see through the viewfinder. When the most important area of the picture is much darker than the rest (i.e., dark skin against a blue sky, window, or white wall), the meter will have a tendency to "read" the brightest part, leaving the main subject underexposed. Alternatively, if a bright subject is against a dark background (i.e., light skin against dark shadows), the meter will "read" the darkest part of the scene, leaving the main subject overexposed.

To compensate for this problem, move in closer to your main subject so that the subject fills most of the viewfinder area to shoot the picture, or use the flash unit to fill in and even out the light imbalance.

CARE OF EQUIPMENT:

- o Avoid hitting or dropping the camera or tape recorder.
- o Always load and unload your camera in subdued light.
- o Have the film processed promptly after exposure. Film, expecially color film, is very sensitive to the environment and deteriorates rapidly once removed from its packing and exposed to the light.

- Store the camera, film, and tape recorder in a dark, cool, clean, and dry place. (Never in your car window, glove compartment, or trunk!) Use the protective case and lens cap. Keep the tape recorder in its case or a box when travelling.

- Don't ever rub or even touch the camera lens; wipe off any accidental dust or fingerprints with a soft, clean cotton cloth or a special photographic lens tissue or camel's-hair brush. Use a cassette head cleaner to keep the recorder clean.

- Don't place the camera or tape recorder near radios or TV sets or any electrical equipment for any length of time.

- Remove batteries from the camera, flash unit, and tape recorder if they are not to be used for a long period.

- Allow all equipment to warm up above 32°F before use. If equipment has been kept in an air-conditioned room for some time, allow it to warm up and condensation to evaporate before using it in a hot and humid atmosphere.

PART V-C. FIELDWORK: INTERVIEWING AND PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION

Preliminaries. On the day of the interview, make sure you arrive on time and with all the necessary equipment and supplies. Introduce yourself and describe your class assignment or project. Explain why you've come to talk to your respondent, that she has valuable information on a general subject or particular topic not available by any other means. Explain how you're going to use the tapes and photographs, where they will be kept, and how they will be used. Obtain permission to tape record the interview, and have your respondent sign a release form (see sample which follows), agreeing to the purposes of the interview and to the future disposition of the collected materials.

Try to set up the interview to be recorded at a time and in a room where there will be few interruptions or distractions (like TV, radio, visitors, phone calls). An ideal acoustic setting for an interview eliminates all superfluous noise: alone (just you and your respondent) in a quiet, carpeted, curtained interior room, minimizing possible disturbances (phone, TV, radio, front door, children, and pets). Doors and windows should be closed. Stay away from fans, air conditioners, heaters, clocks, or florescent lights--any of which will add electrical hum to the tape and can obscure your voices. Try to keep the tape recorder relatively inconspicuous, but never hide it. You'll need to monitor it and make sure the tape isn't running out, but don't constantly fiddle with the machine once you've adjusted the volume levels.

Beginning your fieldwork session. As an easy equipment check and recording level test, once you've set up your equipment, record an audio label at the beginning of the tape: include your name, class or project title, respondent's name and address, and the date. Explain yout project on tape and get your respondent's verbal permission to tape record the interview and use the tapes later for non-profit educational purposes. This is also a good time to have your respondent sign a release form. Try to limit your interviews to no more than one-and-a-half to two hours at a time, so not as to tire out your respondent, or monopolize her time. Several interviews with the same person are usually preferable to one or two long conversations, although the most exciting and productive interview is often the first one.

Help your respondent feel relaxed with the tape recorder. Chat informally to "warm up" and help her feel at ease. "Mike fright" is usually much less of a problem than you might anticipate. Once you've started talking, respondents rarely "freeze" in the presence of the tape recorder and microphone.

Briefly go over biographical data with your interview subject. This is a good lead into the actual interview, by beginning with specific, objective facts. Mention the general subjects you will want to talk about with her later.

Conducting an interview. Begin the actual interview by using the outline of questions you have prepared in advance--as a general frame of reference--but don't let yourself be too dependent on it.

As suggested above, ask simple, short, and specific questions, one at a time, at the beginning, such as those about biographical information. Then continue to more subjective, topical or thematic questions. It often works best to use a combination of non-directive (generalized) and directive (specific) interview techniques and questions. Remember to jot down brief notes and questions that occur to you while your subject is talking. Go over statements your respondent makes that seem to be inaccurate or questionable. Follow up with variations on "Why?," or "What did you say/do then?," to bring out longer responses to unclear or incomplete statements. Make your questions open-ended so that they will elicit more than a simple "yes" or "no" answer. Ask "What kind of job was that?," or "How did you feel about it?," instead of "Was that a good job?". Rephrase any questions you don't think your respondent understands. Establish a chronology (time sequence) for events by asking your subject to relate them to some other event--"About how long after World War II was that?," "Was that just after you were married?," "Was that around the time of Hurricane Frederic?," for example.

Sample interview questions. Although many guidebooks for student interviewing often recommend that classes focus their oral history projects on a particular historical era or theme, interviews with women are often more significant if you take a less linear approach. Try inquiring about attitudes, beliefs, expectations, dreams, and values, as well as about little-known (outside of the local context) aspects of daily, domestic, or family life. Sample interview questions to elicit this kind of information might include some of the following as openers:

What were your parents' views toward the education of a daughter? Did they have a different attitude/expectation for their sons?

Do you remember any family stories (narratives) from your forbears in slavery?

What were the circumstances or reasons determining your choice of occupation? How did being black and female affect the options available and the choices you made?

Tell me about your membership and activities in clubs or organizations such as Eastern Star, Senior Choir, Missionary Society, etc.

Describe both your informal and formal education: high school, night school, union classes, reading/discussion groups.

How often did you have disagreements with your parents: over what? How were they resolved?

What have been your expectations, attitudes toward marriage/parenting?

What were your responsibilities/chores around the house as a child?

Tell me about your memories of the house/neighborhood/town where you were born and raised.

What did you daydream about becoming when you grew up? Whom did you most admire?

What did/do you do at home when you come home from work?

What were/are the most significant influences on your life?

What kind of family celebrations (special meals, reunions, homecomings, weddings, funerals, baptisms, graduation ceremonies, etc.) were/are held? Where? Who attended? Describe them.

Were babies born at home? With the aid of midwives? In hospitals? What kind of home remedies were used for infant and childhood ailments?

At what age did you cease to be a "girl," and become a "woman"? How was this recognized/acknowledged by you, your age-peers, your parents? How did attitudes, expectations, responsibilities change?

Do you remember "Jim Crow" ("colored only") signs on city streetcars and buses? How often did your family ride them and on what kinds of occasions? Tell me about the segregated school system when you were a student.

Describe your family's home and its organization of space (layout) and compare it to that of previous generations.

Do the women in your family undertake spring cleaning prior to Easter Sunday every year? Other traditional household chores or routines?

Describe changing styles in clothing and hair styles--hair combing, plaiting, straightening as a young girl.

Interviewing style. Try to keep the interview informal, flexible, relaxed, and intimate--allow for spontaneous discourse, but don't let your subject digress too far off the topic. With an unusually forthright respondent you can even sometimes ignore your outline of questions if that seems to be the best approach. Take cues from your respondent. You're aiming for a complete and comprehensive interview, so try to keep a conversational and unconstrained flow of information, ideas, perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and meanings. You may wish to refer to the suggestions for collecting narratives in the section on "Oral Traditions" in this curriculum guide.

Refrain from asking leading ("loaded") questions, like "Don't you think men have always exploited women?," and thereby over-directing the interview. Don't assume you are the expert. Remember you're doing this interview because you think your respondent is knowledgeable about a topic on which you lack information. In an interview situation you are the inquirer and are dependent on and subordinate to your respondent. Don't try to educate or correct her. Don't "bait," "cross examine," antagonize, or provoke your subject. Don't try to imitate professional television interviewers who "read" prepared questions into the mike whether or not the answers or opinions they're seeking are

likely to be forthcoming. Don't be afraid of short silences on the tape. Let your informant pause to catch her breath, reflect, or gather up her thoughts. Don't be afraid of "wasting" tape. Tape is cheap but the interview situation cannot be repeated. Try to avoid "off-the-record" information. Don't switch the tape recorder off and on, unless, for example, your respondent leaves the room to answer the telephone.

Be a good listener and focus all your attention on the speaker, not on your equipment or notes. Be a catalyst for the conversation--it shouldn't be a dialogue, but a kind of "trialogue" between her as the respondent, you as the inquirer, and the tape-recorder as a "silent" and "blind" third party. On the other hand, your role is to elicit her story, so don't be overly afraid of having your own questions and comments on the tape. But try to keep quiet as much as you can when she is talking. Don't say "uh-huh" or "yeh," too often, but smile, nod your head, or use other encouraging non-verbal gestures of support.

Be patient, empathetic, and sensitive. Remember that you're talking to a person, and that the interview is a complex interaction between the two of us people. Some of her memories will evoke anger, pain, sadness; don't press topics if it's clear to you that she doesn't want to discuss them. Always respect her wishes. But do try sensitively to elicit personal emotions and feelings. You are interested in much more than just "objective" facts and data. Ask, for example, "How did you feel as the only black woman doing that?" Always try to establish her personal role in the event/topic being discussed, for example, "Where were you when that happened?," "What did you think of it?," "How did it affect you and your family?"

Remember that most people are not consciously introspective or reflective and the "pieces" of their life experience may seem jumbled and confused. Many people find it difficult to sort out and articulate--especially in an interview situation--their feelings, values, and perceptions. You may find that the discourse appears to be a string of seemingly unconnected thoughts, anecdotes, and events. It is <u>your</u> job to interpret these and to organize the content into a timeframe and coherent pattern.

<u>Comprehensive documentation</u>. Ask your respondent to explain or define any unusual, technical, or colloquial terms or expressions that she uses. Have her spell out unfamiliar proper names. Get her to physically describe the people, places, and things she mentions. Remember that the tape-recorder is "blind" and can't see her gestures, so you will have to phrase them verbally and repeat them for the tape. "You're saying that the first basket you ever made was about two feet in diameter, is that right?," for example. Ask your informant if she has any scrapbooks, photo albums, newspaper clippings, needlework, family heirlooms, etc. that you could see. Use them as stimuli for the interview. Ask her about them and describe them on tape. Photograph them.

<u>Concluding the interview</u>. Watch for signs of the conversation slowing down, or of fatigue. End the interview courteously; thank your respondent for her time and for sharing her experiences and knowledge with you. Set up a time and place for a follow-up interview, if necessary. Ask if she knows any other women who might be willing to be interviewed. Reiterate why you're doing this project and how the information you've recorded will be used. Pack up your equipment and help put the room back in order if you've re-arranged it to conduct the interview. Make an effort to keep in touch with your respondent, and be sure to let her know when and where the results of your class

research will be shown. Invite her to come and see the presentation in which she is featured. Ask if she belongs to any local organizations who might want to show it to their members. Volunteer to come and do this for her.

PART V-D. POST-FIELD: INTERPRETATION, PRESENTATION, AND PRESERVATION

Interpretation and communication of research results: types of class or community presentations. It is important to remember that a field research project is not complete once the data has been collected--interviews tape recorded and photographs developed. Tapes and photographs or slides must be organized and indexed, and tapes must be logged and transcribed so that the contents will be accessible to you and to others. Your primary research data is raw material which you must evaluate, analyze, synthesize, interpret, and communicate--by means of a conventional research report or term paper or other presentational mode.

There are a number of ways to present the results of your field research project. Students who kept detailed journals and field notes chronicling their field research activities could share and discuss these with the class at large. Others might choose oral research reports, or written term papers, based on a combination of archival, field, and library research. Selections from your interview tapes and/or photographs or slides could be shared in class for group critique of interviewing skills and analysis of documentary content. Actual interview respondents could be invited to the classroom to share in this process. Classes could arrange panels composed of life history interview respondents, arts and crafts demonstrators, or other community members, such as family storytellers or former civil rights activists. Local crocheters or quilt makers could be invited to demonstrate their artistry in class and in conjunction with a local fair or festival. Demonstrations of hair styling, such as corn-rowing, could be done. Similarly, a library exhibit of the creative writings of southern black women could be created during Black Heritage Month or Women's History Week, or a group of students could do a class or community dramatization of readings from novels and poetry. A local female culinary artist could be honored by the class preparing and serving a whole meal from her family recipes. Students could assemble a scrapbook containing traditional recipes from a local neighborhood or community, including photographs of each dish and stories or anecdotes (excerpted and transcribed from interview tapes) associated with them.

Other students might wish to attempt to produce small-scale media presentations to share with the class and with the community. If you are considering an audio-visual presentation, however, you should plan ahead, and prepare an organizational and production aid, such as a script outline or media treatment, well in advance of actual assembly or production. Such pre-production aids should clearly state your targeted audience, objectives,

suggested interpretive approach, proposed mode of presentation, and available resources/skills for and means of production. Slide-tape programs are a format often chosen by students who wish to share the results of their research projects with each other and with other campus and community women. Other forms of media presentations that could be successfully produced by students within the time span of a regular school term include 15 to 20-minute radio programs, perhaps for broadcast over the school's student station; displays of artifacts, for exhibition in the community or university museum; or photographic exhibits, for installation in the campus library or student center.

Color slides of contemporary quilts could be combined with edited interview tapes to show the artifacts, their makers, the process, and the context of their work. A slide-tape program could similarly be made of local traditional singers, such as gospel soloists or a youth choir. Excerpts from interview tapes and recordings of musical or dramatic performances could be combined to produce a feature program for campus or community radio broadcast. Actual artifacts, such as folk arts and crafts, could be exhibited on campus or at a local community center. A black-and-white photographic exhibit could be created, focusing, for example, on various images of contemporary black women.

Archival documentation and preservation of research data. Before beginning their oral history interviewing project, students should contact their local oral history office or archives* to see what materials are available on their topic, to ask for suggestions for potential respondents, and to inquire about depositing collected materials there for future preservation. Each repository (archival institution) will have its own preferences and requirements for the kinds of materials they will accept, the type of documentation which should accompany it, and the system by which they are able to store and retrieve it. The sample archival forms below can serve as examples of the kind of careful, complete documentation that it is your responsibility as interviewer/collector to provide in order that your work will continue to be of value for future researchers. Such standard archival forms generally include the full name, address, and biographical information about the respondent (unless the respondent wishes to remain anonymous); the collector's log, journal, or field notes; a detailed log, summary, catalogue, or index (the terms are synonymous) of the information on the taped interview or content of the photographs; a verbatim transcript of the text of the interview, clearly indicating changes in speakers, and verbatim (use quotes) vs. paraphrased (use square brackets) sections; a legal release form signed by both the collector and the respondent; and a listing of all materials which comprise the complete project (i.e. 20 slides, 1 cassette tape, 4 archive forms, 1 release form, 10-page course paper written by the collector).

Samples follow of such standard archival forms, and blank versions are included, which may be reproduced and used by students as needed. Basic oral history texts such as Ives (1974; rept. 1980), Baum (1977), Davis (1977), or Shumway and Hartley (1973) should be consulted for further details, in particular, on the process of tape logging and transcribing.

*A complete list of folklore archives in the United States and Canada is available by writing the Archive of Folk Culture, The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

[Sample]

ARCHIVE OF AMERICAN MINORITY CULTURES
The University of Alabama
P.O. Box S
University, AL 35486
(205-348-5712)

RELEASE FORM

We, _____ (respondent) and _____ (interviewer)

do hereby release for deposit with the Archive of American Minority Cultures of The University of Alabama all the items (audiotape recordings, photographs, motion picture film, videotape recordings, etc.) recorded on _____ (Date/s)

which may be used for such scholarly and educational purposes as the Archivist shall determine. Said material is given as an unrestricted gift and we hereby transfer to The University of Alabama legal title and all property rights including copyright, to administer in perpetuity. This gift does not preclude any use which we may want to make of the information in the recordings ourselves. Any restrictions on this material are listed below and it is understood that these restrictions will be honored fully. This agreement may, at a later date, be revised or amended by mutual consent of all the parties undersigned.

RESTRICTIONS: _____

_____

RESPONDENT'S SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

RESPONDENT'S ADDRESS & TELEPHONE: _____

_____

INTERVIEWER'S SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

INTERVIEWER'S PERMANENT ADDRESS & TELEPHONE. _____

_____

INTERVIEWER'S LOCAL ADDRESS & TELEPHONE: _____

_____

Understood and agreed to: _____ DATE: _____

(Archivist, Archive of American Minority Cultures)

[illegible]

QUALITY OF RECORDING (indicate background noise, field sounds, microphone

hiss, extraneous talking, or any other interference):

good; some music in background from daughter's record player

EQUIPMENT USED FOR RECORDING: TAPE RECORDER Superscope C200

MICROPHONE(S) Realistic OTHER

HAS AUDIO LABEL BEEN RECORDED AT HEAD OF TAPE? yes

RESPONDENT RELEASE(S) OBTAINED? yes DATE 3-16-80 BY Denise Jones

COLLECTOR AGREEMENT SIGNED? yes DATE 3-22-80 BY Denise Jones

NOTE ANY RESTRICTIONS FOR ACCESS TO and/or USE OF TAPE none

COMPLETE SUMMARY PREPARED? yes DATE 3-20-80 BY Denise Jones

[Sample]

TAPE SUMMARY SHEET

ACCESSION NUMBER: [leave blank] ACCESSION DATE: [leave blank]

PART OF A SERIES:

RESPONDENT: [illegible] LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Lowndes County, AL

COLLECTOR: [illegible]

DATE RECORDED: October, 1981

SIDE A

[illegible] family background; childhood

33 present hospital job; recent job history

respondent's first job as babysitter

[illegible] move to Chicago in search of work; her jobs there as maid

082 return to Alabama; birth of her first child

090 move to New York; her work as a maid

163 return to Alabama; work as a cook

187 return to New York; work as a maid

223 her marriage and separation

315 her next job, as a maid

336 bargaining for pay

522 her experience as a maid in Alabama

561 job in a cotton mill

SIDE B

005 continued description of cotton mill job

057 discussion of the cotton mill employees and working conditions

070 work as a substitute teacher

080 job history with local hosptial

313 attitudes toward work; her career goals; her current; job problems there

509 advice to someone just starting out

530 end of interv

[Excerpt From Sample]
ARCHIVE OF AMERICAN MINORITY CULTURES
The University of Alabama
P.O. Box S
University, AL 35486
TAPE TRANSCRIPT

RESPONDENT: Vivian William , Bessemer, AL

DATE: November 5, 1981

INTERVIEWER: Gloria Grant

TRANSCRIBER: Gloria Grant

Tape #1 - Side A:

Q [Grant]: If you were sitting down thinking back over your life and there was something you could change, what possibly would you change?

A [Williams]: Well, I don't know, My parents lived until I was grown...My children was grown before either one of them passed. I don't have to regret being left without parents. I can just look back over my life and feel thankful that it was as good as it was. Just accept it like it is.

Q: What was some of your most happiest times when you were coming up?

A: I guess...my mother was matron of the Eastern Star Chapter from the time I was big enough to know anything until she passed away. And for her to go away and come back...I imagine when she got back home was the happiest time with me.

Q: What were some of your most unhappiest times?

A: When one of my children would be ill. That would cause me to be very unhappy. [Phone rings; respondent leaves to answer it; she returns five minutes later]

Q: Do you remember any superstitions about marriage or birth?

A: No, I never did think too much about things like that. I never could understand how it could do...Well, I just didn't believe it. No. Uh-uh.

Q: Your kids...Were delivered by midwife or doctor?

A: Doctor...All three of them.

Q: In a hospital or at your home?

A: At my home. Yeah, ah...they was at home.

Q: [illegible] Rights Movement.

A: [illegible].

Q: [illegible]...did you participate in any of them?

A: I, unfortunately went to Montgomery to several meetings that Dr. King called [illegible]. But I didn't participate in any of them.

Q: I was just curious about [illegible] his experiences at some of [illegible].

A: [illegible] Dr. King.

Q: What is your opinion of the Civil Rights Movement?

A: I still feel like we are a long ways from the goal, but on the other hand, I feel like we are on our way. I believe we'll get there one day.

Q: If you were sitting down talking to a young person, and they asked you about some advice on life... how to live, .the right way to live, what kind of advice would you give them?

A: Well, I tell you what I did tell some youngsters...two were my granddaughter[s] and one was just one of their friends. They were talking to me about what I thought about people courting and getting married, and what not. I told them to be nice, use good English and not vulgar, and to always be pleasant to whoever they were in company with and not demanding was my policy of being able to get along with the opposite sex.

Q: What kind of advice did you give your children when they were coming up?

A: The same thing. Mmm...yes, the same thing. Yes.

Q: How old did your mother and daddy live to be?

A: My daddy was eighty-six. My mother was sixty-nine.

Q: Well, uh, let's see... [illegible]

A: He had a farm, but most of his work was public work. He did a lot of logging. Build railroad tracks for junket lines. Always had a bunch of men he worked, even[?] on a farm...

Q: What did your mother do...Did she work?

A: Yes, she worked. She done laundry work and house work.

Q: Did she take it in, or did she go out and to it in [illegible]'s homes?

A: She would take it in...
[End of Tape #1 - Side A; interview continued on Side B...]

[Sample]
ARCHIVE OF AMERICAN MINORITY CULTURES
The University of Alabama
P.O. Box S
University, AL 35486
SLIDE/PHOTOGRAPH IDENTIFICATION SHEET

ACCESSION NUMBER [leave blank] ACCESSION DATE [leave blank]

IS THIS IMAGE PART OF A SERIES TAKEN OF SAME SUBJECT AT SAME SESSION?

(Indicate 1 of 10, etc.) 1 of 36

IF PART OF A PROJECT WITH MATERIALS IN OTHER MEDIA FORMATS, SEE ALSO:

CT-81-100 to 104, four cassette tapes of interview with Mrs. Williams

COLLECTOR/PHOTOGRAPHER: Gloria Grant

RESPONDENT: Vivian Williams

HAVE RELEASE FORMS BEEN OBTAINED FROM BOTH ABOVE? (Note restrictions below)Yes

LOCATION OF PHOTO. SESSION Bessemer, AL

DATE TAKEN Nov. 11, 1981

SOURCE (If copied from a printed source, borrowed, or a commercial duplicate):

N.A.

MEDIUM: Kodak EH-135-36 TECHNICAL QUALITY: Excellent

ORIGINAL OR DUPLICATE? slide (original)

IF DUPLICATE, LOCATION & COPYRIGHT STATUS OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE N.A.

NOTE ANY RESTRICTIONS FOR ACCESS TO and/or USE OF IMAGE:

Access open to bona-fide researchers; may not be copied or published without written permission from the photographer.

SUBJECT (Visual Content): Gospel soloist singing at church service.

[Sample]
ARCHIVE OF AMERICAN MINORITY CULTURES
The University of Alabama
P.O. Box S
University, AL 35486
SLIDE SUMMARY SHEET

PHOTOGRAPHER: _____

PERMANENT ADDRESS AND PHONE: _____

_____

_____

DATE PHOTOGRAPHED: 9-9-80

PROJECT: paper on Freedom Quilting Bee (Epes, AL) for Women's Studies course, Fall 1980

slide #:	description:
1 through 3	Members of the FQB filling a pillowcase order for Sears.
4 through 5	Piecing the quilt tops by machine.
6	The quality control inspector checks on potholders.
7 through 8	Bolts of material used in making the quilt tops.
9 through 12	Quilting the "Grandmother's Dream" quilt.
13 through 17	Mrs. K. quilting the "Bear Claw" quilt.
18	A stack of quilts, to be hemmed.
19 through 23	Mrs. P. hems a "Coat of Many Colors" quilt.

130

AUDIOTAPE IDENTIFICATION SHEET

ACCESSION NUMBER _____ ACCESSION DATE _____

IS THIS TAPE PART OF A SERIES RECORDED AT THE SAME SESSION? (Indicate "1 of 4," etc.): _____

PRINCIPAL RESPONDENT & ADDRESS _____

_____

OTHER SPEAKERS ON RECORDING _____

_____

MAIN SUBJECTS DISCUSSED/MUSIC PERFORMED _____

_____

LOCATION OF RECORDING _____ DATE OF RECORDING _____

INTERVIEWED BY _____ RECORDED BY _____

TYPE OF TAPE:

CASSETTE OPEN REEL

BRAND OF TAPE _____ RECORDING SPEED

QUALITY OF RECORDING (Indicate background noise, field sounds, microphone hiss, extraneous talking, or any other interference):

_____

EQUIPMENT USED FOR RECORDING: TAPE RECORDER _____

MICROPHONE(S) _____ OTHER _____

HAS AUDIO LABEL BEEN RECORDED AT HEAD OF TAPE? _____

RESPONDENT RELEASE(S) OBTAINED? _____ DATE _____ BY _____

COLLECTOR AGREEMENT SIGNED? _____ DATE _____ BY _____

NOTE ANY RESTRICTIONS FOR ACCESS TO and/or USE OF TAPE _____

COMPLETE SUMMARY PREPARED? _____ DATE _____ BY _____

TAPE SUMMARY SHEET

ACCESSION NUMBER: _____ ACCESSION DATE: _____

PART OF A SERIES: _____

RESPONDENT: _____

COLLECTOR: _____

DATE RECORDED: _____ LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: _____

SIDE A

COUNTER #

SIDE B

COUNTER #

140

TAPE TRANSCRIPT

RESPONDENT: _____

DATE: _____ LOCATION: _____

INTERVIEWER: _____

TRANSCRIBER: _____

Tape #1 - Side A:

SLIDE/PHOTOGRAPH IDENTIFICATION SHEET

ACCESSION NUMBER _____ ACCESSION DATE _____

IS THIS IMAGE PART OF A SERIES TAKEN OF SAME SUBJECT AT SAME SESSION?

(Indicate 1 of 10, etc.) _____

IF PART OF A PROJECT WITH MATERIALS IN OTHER MEDIA FORMATS, SEE ALSO: _____

_____

COLLECTOR/PHOTOGRAPHER: _____

RESPONDENT: _____

HAVE RELEASE FORMS BEEN OBTAINED FROM BOTH ABOVE? (Note restrictions below)___

_____

LOCATION OF PHOTO. SESSION _____

DATE TAKEN _____

SOURCE (If copied from a printed source, borrowed, or a commercial duplicate):

_____

_____

MEDIUM: _____ TECHNICAL QUALITY: _____

ORIGINAL OR DUPLICATE? _____

IF DUPLICATE, LOCATION & COPYRIGHT STATUS OF ORIGINAL NEGATIVE _____

_____

NOTE ANY RESTRICTIONS FOR ACCESS TO and/or USE OF IMAGE: _____

_____

_____

SUBJECT (Visual Content): _____

142

SLIDE SUMMARY SHEET

PHOTOGRAPHER: _____

PERMANENT ADDRESS AND PHONE: _____

_____

_____

DATE PHOTOGRAPHED: _____

PROJECT: _____

Slide #: Description:

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African Cultural Carry...overs... ...es. Black series. 1975. Dist.: PBS Video. Videotape.
African Origins & Traditions in Crafts. 1979. Dist. S... ...ity College. Videotape.
African-American Folk Art and Craft Traditions. 1979. Dist.: Shelby State Community College. Videotape.
Afro-American Dance. 1971. Dist.: Time-Life Inc.
The Afro-American Tradition in the Decorative Arts. 1978. Dist.: North State Public Video. Videotape.
Afro-Dance. 1969. Dist.: Black Filmmaker Foundation Cooperative Distribution Service.
Alex Haley: The Search for Roots. Dist.: Films for the Humanities.
The American Woman: Portraits of Courage. 1977. Dist.: University of California Extension Media Center.
Angela Davis: Like It Is. 1970. Dist.: Ames Documentary Films.
Angela Davis: Portrait of a Revolutionary. 1971. Dist.: Pyramid Films.
Aretha Franklin: Soul Singer. 1969. Dist.: McGraw-Hill Films and University of Michigan Media Resource Center.
The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman. 1973. Dist.: McGraw-Hill Films and University of Michigan Media Resource Center.
Beauty in the Bricks. 1981. Dist.: New Day Films.
Bessie Smith. 1968. Dist.: Canyon Cinema Co-op and Film-Makers' Cooperative.
Black Art and Black Literature. From Blacks, Blues, Black! series. 1975. Dist.: PBS Video. Videotape.
The Black Church. Dist.: Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting. Videotape.
Black Delta Religion. 1973. Dist.: Center for Southern Folklore.
The Black Family. Dist.: Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting. Videotape.
Black Literature. 1971. Series of 3 parts. Dist.: NETCHE. Videotapes.
Black Modern Art. 1976. Dist.: Unifilm.
Black Music in America: From Then Till Now. 1971. Dist.: Florida State University Regional Film Library.
Black Music in America: The Seventies. 1979. Dist.: Learning Corporation of America.
Black Music in Passage. From Blacks, Blues, Black! series. 1975. Dist.: PBS Video. Videotape.
Black Natchez [Mississippi]. 1967. Dist.: Ed Pincus.
Black Organizations. Dist.: Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting. Videotape.
Blacks, Blues, Black! Series of 10 parts. 1975. Dist.: PBS Video. Videotapes.
The Black Theatre Movement. 1978. Dist.: Black Filmmaker Cooperative Distribution Service.
Black Woman. 1970. Dist.: University of California Extension Media Center.
Black Women Artists. Dist.: Contemporary Crafts, Inc. Slide set.

Body and Soul. 1968. Dist.: BFA Educational Media.
Born Women. 1973. Dist.: Wheelock Educational Resources.
Bush Mama. 1975. Dist.: Unifilm.
But Then, She's Betty Carter. 1980. Dist.: Black Filmmakers Foundation Cooperative Distribution Service.
Children's Games from Afro-American Tradition. [Bessie Jones]. Series of 3 parts. 1980. Dist.: Office of Folklife Programs, Smithsonian Institution. Videotapes with teachers' guide.
Contine Hunter: Artist. [In production; contact: Madeline Anderson, 83 Sterling St., Brooklyn, NY 11225].
Colored Girls or Black Women? 1977. Dist.: WNET/13 Media Services. Videotape.
Activity With Bill Moyers: Maya Angelou. From 12-part series. 1982. Dist.: PBS Video. Videotapes.
Dance: A[illegible]. Dist.: PBS Video. Videotape.
Della and the Snakes. 1967. Dist.: Blue Sky Films.
The Dick Cavett Show: Alberta Hunter. 1979. Series of 3 parts. Dist.: WNET/13 Media Services. Videotapes.
The Dick Cavett Show: Honi Coles and the Copacetics. 1979. Series of 2 parts. Dist.: WNET/13 Media Services. Videotapes.
Dimensions of Black. Dist.: PBS Video. Videotape.
Divine Drumbeats: Katherine Dunham and Her People. Dist.: WNET/13 Media Services. Videotape.
Drawings From Life. 1980. Dist.: Pyramid Films.
Dry Wood and Hot Pepper. 1973. Dist.: Flower Films.
Fannie Bell Chapman: Gospel Singer. 1975. Dist.: Center for Southern Folklore.
Fannie Lou Hamer: Portrait in Black. 1972. Dist.: Rediscovery Productions, Inc.
Fear Woman. 1971. Dist.: McGraw-Hill Films.
Folk Artists Teach - Basketry. 1979. Dist.: Shelby State Community College. Videotape.
Folk Artists Teach - Quilting. 1979. Dist.: Shelby State Community College. Videotape.
Four Women Artists. 1977. Dist.: Center for Southern Folklore.
From Jumpstreet. Series of 12 parts. 1979-1980. Dist.: GPN Educational Media. Videotapes.
"Fundi": The Story of Ella Baker. 1981. Dist.: New Day Films.
Georgia Georgia. 1971. Dist.: Swank Motion Pictures.
The Georgia Sea Island Singers. 1965. Dist.: University of California Extension Media Center.
Gettin' To Know Me. 1979-1980. Series of 9 parts. Dist.: GPN Educational Media. Videotapes.
Good Mornin' Blues. 1979. Dist.: PBS Video. Videotape.
The Gospel Journal. 1978. Series of 5 parts. Dist.: Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting. Videotapes.
Got To Tell It: A Tribute to Mahalia Jackson. 1974. Dist.: Phoenix Films and University of South Florida, Division of Educational Resources/Films.
Hallelujah. 1929. Dist.: Films, Inc.
Happy Birthday, Mrs. Craig. 1976. Dist.: Richard Kaplan Productions. Videotape.

Harriet Tubman & The Underground Railroad. [19--]. Dist.: Pennsylvania State University and Florida State University Regional Film Libraries.
Josephine. 19[illegible]. Dist.: University of California Extension Media Center.
Keepsteelers. Dist.: PBS Video. Videotape.
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Upper Visions: Beah Richards. Dist.: PBS Video. Videotape.
Up The Rapture. Dist.: Indiana University Audio-Visual Center.
"It'll Be Gone When I'm Gone": Lucreaty Clark, White Oak Basketmaker. [19--]. Dist.: Florida Folklife Program. Slide-tape program.
The Jazz of Marian McPartland. Dist.: PBS Video. Videotape.
Just Briefly. 19[illegible]. Dist.: Phoenix Films.
King: A Filmed Record, Montgomery to Memphis. Sidney Landau. Dist.: Film Images.
Kwanza. 1973. Dist.: Black Filmmaker Foundation Cooperative Distribution Service.
The Land Where The Blues Began. 1980. Mississippi Authority for Educational Television. Dist.: Phoenix Films.
"Learned It In Back Days and Kept It:" A Portrait of Lucreaty Clark. 1981. Dist.: Florida Folklife Program. Videotape.
Let The Church Say Amen. 1973. Dist.: Chamba Educational Film Services.
Living the Life We Sing About. 1980. Dist.: Western Kentucky University. Videotape.
Mable Godwin: Somebody on My Mind. 1979. Dist.: Lydia F. Benitez-Brown. Videotape.
Made in Mississippi: Black Folk Arts & Crafts. 1975. Dist.: Center for Southern Folklore.
Mahalia Jackson. 1974. Dist.: Phoenix Films.
Malawi: The Women. 1972. Dist.: Churchill Films.
Mary Church Terrell. Dist.: Afro-Am Educational Materials. Filmstrip, record, and guide.
Mary McLeod Bethune. Dist.: Afro-Am Educational Materials. Filmstrip, record, and guide.
Mary McLeod Bethune - Courageous Educator. 1966. Dist.: BFA Educational Media. Filmstrip.
Me and Stella. [Elizabeth Cotten]. 1977. Dist.: Phoenix Films.
Missing Pieces: Contemporary Georgia Folk Art. 1976. Dist.: Georgia Council for the Arts.
Modern Protest. Dist.: Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting. Videotape.
Mrs. Mixon. 1969. Dist.: Ohio State University Motion Picture Division.
Nellie's Playhouse. c. 1983. Dist.: Center for Southern Folklore.
No Handouts for Mrs. Hedgepeth. 1968. Dist.: Pennsylvania State University.
Old, Black and Alive! 1974. Dist.: University of Michigan Media Resource Center.
The Performed Word. 1983. Dist.: Center for Southern Folklore.
Pinky. 1949. Dist.: Films, Inc.
Pizza Pizza Daddy-O. 1969. Dist.: University of California Extension Media Center.
Quilts in Women's Lives. 1980. Dist.: New Day Film Co-op, Inc.
Rainbow Black. 1976. Sarah Webster Fabio. Dist.: Black Filmmaker Cooperative Distribution Service.

Ramparts of Clay. 1970. Dist.: Cinema-5.
Roosevelt City [Alabama]. 1969. Dist.: Pennsylvania State University.
Roots. 1977. Series of 12 episodes. Dist.: University of Michigan Media Resource Center. Videotapes.
Rosa Parks: Rush towar' Freedom. 1970. Dist.: Warren Schloat Productions, Inc.
Say Amen, Somebody. 1982. Dist.: GTN Productions.
Sounder. 1972. Dist.: Films, Inc.
Southern Accents, Northern Ghettos. 1967. Dist.: University of Michigan Media Resource Center.
Spirit-Catcher: The Art of Betye Saar. 1977. Dist.: Pennsylvania State University and Films, Inc.
St. Louis Blues. Bessie Smith. 1929. Dist.: TCB Releasing, Ltd.
Stigmata. 1979. Dist.: Eleanor Dickinson. Videotape.
Taking Care of Mother Baldwin. 1973. Dist: Perspective Films.
Tale of Two Ladies. 1961. Dist.: Indiana University Audio-Visual Center.
This Is The Home of Mrs. Levant Graham. 1970. Dist.: Pyramid Films.
Toni Morrison. Dist.: Coronet/Perspective/Centron.
Two Black Churches. 1975. Dist.: Center for Southern Folklore.
Valerie [Maynard], A Woman, An Artist, A Philosophy of Life. 1975. Dist.: Black Filmmaker Foundation Cooperative Distribution Service.
We Ain't What We Was. [Isy Monk]. Dist.: Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting. Videotape.
West Africa: Two Lifestyles. 1970. Dist.: BFA Educational Media.
What Time Is De Meetin'? 1978. Dist.: Lance A. Williams. Videotape.
With All Deliberate Speed. 1976. Dist.: Florida State University Regional Film Library.
Women of the Toubou. 1974. Dist.: Phoenix Films.
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Note: Unless otherwise designated, entries are phonograph records available for sale from the distributor indicated.

A Celebration of Black Women in Literature: Alice Walker. Producer. Dist.: National Public Radio. Audiotape.

Africa: Ancient Ceremonies, Dance Music and Songs of Ghana. Dist.: Electra/Asylum/Nonesuch.

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African Journey: A Search for the Roots of the Blues. Dist.: Down Home Music.

Afro-American Blues and Game Songs. Library of Congress.

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