STEPPING AROUND THE DRAIN

By Mary Ann Villarreal

Recently, after reading a book that included Rosa Parks, our seven-year-old asked when the rules changed for African Americans. I gave her a simple synopsis of the Montgomery bus boycott. She had a puzzled look and then asked why it took so long for the Supreme Court to change the rule when it was “clearly a very silly and mean rule.” I had to pause, because sometimes I just give her too much information to process. I agreed with her conclusion and told her that one day she would have a chance to change silly and mean rules. It was the parenting moment of balancing truths with compassion.

I left that conversation reminded of the role we all play in honoring the work of social justice activists. Every day we read about the “very silly and mean” rules of exclusion that result in the violation of human and civil rights, and we ignore the silences of exclusion in the name of process or policy. One of the projects I currently research is looking at practices aimed at closing the achievement and leadership “gaps.” I live and breathe a strategic plan that hits at the many tensions and contradictions of higher education institutions. For example, goal two of our strategic plan provides a framework for closing the achievement gap for students who are first-generation college attendees, underrepresented populations, and Pell Grant recipients. Goal three calls for the university to increase its diversity among faculty and staff to be more reflective of its student body. Closing the gaps and creating structures of equity often mean working against a tide that presumes that if one gains, then another must lose in the process.

These are not new issues. They were part of the discourse in the late 1980s when I started my undergraduate journey. My friends and I sought out the faculty of color. We attached ourselves to white women faculty who spoke
to the challenges that we faced in isolation and that we were just learning to name. We had no idea the emotional drain we caused them; we just knew we needed them. Thanks to the work of organizations like CCWH, my generation started to see ourselves reflected in the faculty ranks, but that reflection faded in leadership positions.

The persistence of the pay gap between men and women faculty, while disappointing, should be no surprise when we examine where women are in the administrative and faculty ranks and what type of institution they populate. The higher the rank, the higher the pay, and women overall are crawling upwards in numbers. Women of color hold a steady line, but they certainly are not growing at the same pace as their white women counterparts or men of color.

In a recent article of the Chronicle of Higher Education, entitled “The Gender Divide in Academe,” the numbers reveal the problems of the “leaky pipeline,” in which women’s absence is startling in leadership ranks. The “leaky pipeline” that has failed to move women into the upper administrative and faculty ranks at a reasonable pace then impacts the pay gap. For example, the article notes, “Women only represent 29% of full professors in the U.S.” Among presidents and chancellors the percentage of women increased only from 10% in 1986 to 26% in 2011. Unsurprisingly, when we narrow the scope to women of color, those numbers reveal the problems of the gap. For example, the article notes, “Women in 1986 to 26% in 2011. Unsurprisingly, when we narrow the scope to women of color, those numbers reveal the problems of the gap.

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NEWS

• Women and Gender Historians of the Midwest announces their sixth conference taking place June 11–12, 2015, and preceded by an opening reception June 10 at Hotel Vetro, in Iowa City. The theme is “Philanthropy as Activism: Relationships & Power.” Dr. Nancy Beck Young will deliver the keynote address. “A Philanthropic First Lady: Lou Henry Hoover and the Challenge of Charity During the Depression.” For more information, please visit www.abwh.org.

• The 47th annual conference of the Western Association of Women Historians will be held at the Hilton Sacramento Arden West in Sacramento, California, May 14-16, 2015. This year’s keynote is an address by Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin entitled “Our Journey into the World of Women’s History.” This year’s conference offers panels on a wide range of topics and WAWH’s first ever graduate student poster session. Participants represent eighty-seven institutions from twenty-five states and five countries. For more information, see www.wawhom.org/conferences/current.

• The Association of Personal Historians (APH) will hold its twentieth annual conference from October 21–25, 2015 in Sacramento, California. Join APH members for their twentieth anniversary celebration as they meet to discuss and learn ways to preserve the personal histories of people, families, communities, businesses, and organizations around the globe. Contact Conference Program Chair Liz Salamy Abes at conferenceprogram@personalhistorians.org or visit www.personalhistorians.org/conference for more details.

• The Association of Black Women in History (ABWH) would like to announce our executive director Shennette Garrett-Scott, Far Western Regional Director Jessica Milbourn, Southern Regional Director Talitha LeFlore, Midwestern Regional Director LaShawn Harris, Eastern Regional Director Tiffany M. Gill, and Graduate Student Representative Nakia Parker. Also, we extend congratulations to our members on their recent contributions and scholarly efforts to the historical field. For more information, please visit www.abwh.org.

• The National Collaborative for Women’s History Sites (NCWHS) held their first fundraiser in Winter 2015. They successfully raised over $4,000, which included a match from an anonymous donor. They would like to thank everyone involved in the effort and encourage others to join. Erin Devlin, Pam Sanfilippo, and Heather Huyck participated in a panel at the 2015 OAH Annual meeting discussing various topics such as women and slavery at the Grant NHS, freedom suits in St. Louis, the role of the St. Luke building in resisting American apartheid, and Daisy Bates’ participation in the Little Rock Nine. NCWHS works to develop sessions for OAH and similar organizations and welcomes others who work with us. In partnership with the Women’s History Project, a lecture featuring Susan Ferentinos in celebration of Women’s History Month was held at the Evanston History Center on March 27. Dr. Ferentinos discussed her new book, Interpreting LGBT History at Museums and Historic Sites. Finally, NCWHS, in its partnership with government agencies, announces that further work will be done to interpret the lives of Annie Wauneka and Paul Murray. For more information, please visit www.ncwhs.org.

AFFILIATE NEWS

• Catherine Allgor is entering her third year as the Nadine and Robert A. Skohnstein Director of Education at the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, CA. She has also joined the Board of Directors of the National Women’s History Museum. Her latest article, “Believing the Ladies Had Great Influence: Early National American Women’s Patronage in Transatlantic Context,” has just been published in American Political Thought.


• Elizabeth M. Covart recently launched Ben Franklin’s World: A Podcast about Early American History. Ben Franklin’s World is a weekly show that introduces non-specialist history enthusiasts to the American past by interviewing historians who have fantastic research, books, and interpretive programs to share. You can find more information about the podcast by visiting www.benfranklinworld.com.

• Page Harrington, executive director of the Sewall-Belmont House & Museum, led a discussion at the National Archives on how the temperance and suffrage movements provide a fascinating study of the individuals who participated in both movements, the organizations they created, and women as the driving force behind significant change in the United States. Lori Osborne, archivist and president of the Frances Willard Historical Association in Evanston, IL, participated in the discussion. Dr. Roslyn Terborg-Penn, Professor Emerita of Morgan State University, was the third participant in the discussion. The program, entitled “Temperance and Woman Suffrage: Reform Movements and the Women Who Changed America,” was presented in partnership with the Sewall-Belmont House & Museum in celebration of Women’s History Month. See a video of the program at www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHwHZAufuYk&feature=youtu.be.
Jannelle Warren-Findley passed away on February 4, 2015 at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Phoenix, AZ, from pulmonary fibrosis attended by family and friends. She was 69 years old.

Jann, as she was known to her friends and family, was a third generation Arizonan, born in Tucson on March 15, 1945. Her roots and knowledge of the Southwest kept her bound to her birthplace but her adventurous spirit and travels took her to many different parts of the country and world to study, conduct research, and teach.

She grew up in Tucson and Phoenix, AZ. After graduating from Catalina High School in Tucson, she attended the University of Arizona and was a member of Phi Mu Sorority. She completed her undergraduate studies at Texas Woman’s University and earned a PhD in American Studies from The George Washington University. Jann spent three years as a Fulbright Scholar, teaching and doing research in Sweden, and then two years teaching for the University of Maryland in England. She then lived in the Washington, DC, area, teaching and establishing a professional historical research group. She moved to Arizona and was an Associate Professor of History at Arizona State University for more than 20 years. She taught graduate courses and later directed the Public History Program. She served as president of the National Council on Public History; on the executive board of the Organization of American Historians; as chair of the editorial board of the Public Historian; on the board of the Australian journal, Public History Review; and furthered the research, teaching, and mentoring of public history statewide as well as creating lasting links between the USA and Sweden, England, Australia, New Zealand, and China. In addition, she worked with the World Heritage Committee for Monuments and Sites administered by UNESCO. Her distinguished and outstanding achievements led to her being given the prestigious Robert Kelley Award, which, in part, recognized her invaluable support for establishing the International Federation for Public History.

She mentored graduate students by relentlessly encouraging them to network and volunteer and learn not just the theory of public history but also the nuts and bolts of practicing in the field. She steered students into Fulbright Scholarships and international internship positions. She directed graduate students into careers in historic preservation, cultural and natural resource management, cultural and historic organizational administration and leadership, research and policy formation, library science and archives, museums, and teaching public history.

Her son and light and love, Benjamin, traveled with her to teaching and research positions across the globe. After retirement in 2014, she made one final international trip to China to teach public history and cultural and historic organizational management, cultural and historic organizational administration and leadership, research and policy formation, library science and archives, museums, and teaching public history.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas was one of the nation's most significant environmentalists. Astonishing in its breadth, her writing and activism on behalf of South Florida's natural environment spanned much of the twentieth century and permanently reshaped the national understanding of the Everglades.

In 2014, the National Collaborative for Women's History Sites (NCWHS) and the National Park Service (NPS) began a collaboration that aimed to recognize Douglas's place in twentieth-century U.S. environmentalism as part of the NPS Women's History Initiative. In April 2015, Sally Jewell, US Secretary of the Interior, designated Douglas's lifelong home in Coconut Grove, Florida, a National Historic Landmark. The Marjory Stoneman Douglas House joins about 2,500 other National Historic Landmarks that have been recognized by the Secretary of the Interior as exceptionally significant in the nation's history.

Douglas was born in Minnesota in 1890 and raised in Massachusetts by her mother and grandmother, but she relocated to Florida in 1915. Douglas was immediately captivated by the state's subtropical environment and vibrant political and social scene. With striking clarity and a sharp wit, Douglas documented the natural and political history of early twentieth-century South Florida in countless articles and poems in a daily column for the Miami Herald. She also joined the community of Progressive clubwomen, arguing for women's suffrage and conservation. It was through her writing and advocacy that Douglas developed a deep understanding of South Florida's subtropical environment—its lush plants, diverse species of birds, and, later, the Everglades—as a regional strength that should be promoted and defended.

In the early 1920s, Douglas asked architect George Hyde to design her a small house on Stewart Avenue in Coconut Grove, a community in Miami. She would spend the next seventy years writing and organizing eloquent defenses of South Florida's natural environment from the Stewart Avenue cottage. By 1947 Douglas was a cornerstone of Florida's conservation movement. That year she sat as an invited guest behind President Truman as he dedicated the Everglades National Park, a unique addition to the National Park System. That same year Douglas published her masterwork, The Everglades: River of Grass, a canonical work of twentieth-century environmental literature. The book helped Americans permanently reimagine the Everglades as a valuable part of the interconnected South Florida environment rather than a useless swamp. The book's famous opening sentence powerfully encapsulates the importance of the Everglades in the global environment. “There are no other Everglades in the world. They are, they always have been, one of the unique regions of the earth.”

When she published River of Grass, Douglas was almost sixty years old and had enjoyed a long writing career that included fifty published short stories and twenty years of magazine writing. But it was not until twenty years later, at age seventy-nine, that Douglas became an activist, solidifying her place in the history of U.S. environmentalism. In 1969 Douglas met Judy Wilson, a Florida Audubon Society member who asked her what she had done recently on behalf of Florida's natural resources. Douglas mentioned writing River of Grass, to which Wilson replied: “That's not enough.” Douglas mumbled a promise to do what she could.

The next day, environmentalist Joe Browder arrived at Douglas's home to encourage her to oppose a proposed jetport that Dade County was planning to build.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas House
Home of Marjory Stoneman Douglas, Everglades Defender, Becomes National Historic Landmark
By Antonio Ramirez
Graduate Column

BLUE COLLAR IN THE IVORY TOWER

By Melissa Johnson

Summer is looming, and with it the clenched stomachs and sleepless nights of graduate students everywhere who are still wondering how they will pay their bills until classes (along with fellowships or partners) pay their rent. Most shrugged and said “something always works out.” Some summers I was lucky enough to be granted funding. Other summers I worked full-time, sacrificing academic progress so that I could be sure my bills would be paid. What I thought of as proof that I would do anything to stay in school was seen by some as a sign that I wasn’t really “committed” to my work. Those who face the financial challenges of graduate school without a safety net in the form of family support and/or those who enter graduate school with additional expenses, like student loans or parenthood, are forced to make decisions based on money that can create an impression that they are not “serious” students. These decisions include everything from taking a part-time job to adopting living situations that limit the ability to work at home to delaying research travel. And the financial stresses of graduate school have real consequences. Graduate students are no strangers to eating poorly or not getting enough exercise (yoga classes cost money!). They may face emotional challenges from not being able to see family as often as others. Absolutely none of these problems are insurmountable, but they do impose restrictions that, in the absence of honest conversations about our financial circumstances, can make some students appear less committed.

The stigma of being economically less privileged can make navigating these discussions with our faculty advisors incredibly tricky and uncomfortable. Graduate students without economic privilege tend to speak to one another in hushed tones about their financial struggles, with good reason. I was slow to learn that money wasn’t supposed to be a topic of open conversation, and I made few friends by voicing anxiety and frustration about it in ways that were normal in the economic culture I came from but absolutely not acceptable in my new environment.

Financial anxiety was, for me, compounded by culture shock. Graduate students who come from less privileged backgrounds are often, like me, woefully unprepared for the culture of a PhD program. My own experiences attending community college and then a non-elite undergraduate university were vital to my success, allowed me to build confidence, to catch up and make mistakes, and to do so surrounded by people from diverse backgrounds. I was also fortunate to have been a participant in two different programs designed to help less privileged students transition to graduate school, one at the end of my undergraduate program and another the summer before I began PhD studies. These programs made me confident that I was prepared, so I was blindsided by what became the real challenge for me. The real challenge was not the work—which I expected to be difficult, and it was—but instead it was in all the unspoken rules surrounding the work. I didn’t know what a response paper was. Seminars seemed to run on a logic of their own that I couldn’t decipher. I didn’t know that the culture demanded feigned confidence rather than a willingness to admit ignorance. Suddenly the values that I’d learned as a hyper-curious undergrad became liabilities, and I lost my intellectual footing at the same time that I was thrust into a social world unlike any I’d experienced. I became more and more convinced that everyone knew the rules except me. Unfamiliarity with the
We need to take ownership of our own (in my case, many) mistakes, but we also need to consider the structural barriers in place that in some ways made those mistakes easier to make. As graduate programs make strides to increase diversity among their incoming cohorts, they should also give attention to diversity in faculty hires—that is, among programs fortunate enough to still be hiring—and professors who advise and mentor graduate students need to make themselves aware of the economic and cultural burdens students bring with them. We do not begin graduate school with a clean slate. Attention to social justice in our intellectual work needs to be mirrored in our interpersonal practices, and privilege needs to be acknowledged as much in the real circumstances of our classrooms as it is in the abstract.

I say all of this knowing that I am in a much better position than many PhD students—my program is well-funded and the students are cared for financially with much more stability than most. I cannot imagine the stress carried by students in programs for which funding is insecure from semester to semester, or for whom no funding is available. Economic inequality among graduate programs hugely complicates the circumstances of low-SES and first-generation graduate students.

There are those who will probably say that economic instability is simply part of the graduate school experience, that financial sacrifice is part of the price we pay for these tremendous opportunities, and that students who complain about finances are ungrateful for the huge outlay programs make on us. I cannot imagine the stress carried by students who appear to be struggling with the work may actually be suffering from a form of culture shock. We need to resist making assumptions about students’ lives—for instance, what their lives might look like when they go home, or that their families can visit, that they share the same cultural touchstones, and that they’ve been exposed to the same experiences.

I don’t have an answer for all of this. I only know what I have done, which is that I made a lot of mistakes and worried about the wrong things and talked to a lot of the wrong people before I finally found a group of like-minded peers with whom I can discuss my challenges and questions without fear of reprisal. For these peers I am more grateful than I can say. With their help I have learned to stop being angry and start being proactive by treating academic culture as another field of inquiry, studying its shapes and methods and learning about its structures. I hope that the entry of scholars like me and my friends into the academy will help to slowly change the culture, but until our collective commitment to increasing all kinds of diversity in department faculty catches up with our intentions, and until we are able to become more outspoken about our diverse challenges and our triumphs, less privileged graduate students will continue to reinvent the wheel, or break themselves upon it.

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I say all of this knowing that I am in a much better position than many PhD students—my program is well-funded and the students are cared for financially with much more stability than most. I cannot imagine the stress carried by students in programs for which funding is insecure from semester to semester, or for whom no funding is available. Economic inequality among graduate programs hugely complicates the circumstances of low-SES and first-generation graduate students.

There are those who will probably say that economic instability is simply part of the graduate school experience, that financial sacrifice is part of the price we pay for these tremendous opportunities, and that students who complain about finances are ungrateful for the huge outlay programs make on us. I cannot imagine the stress carried by students who appear to be struggling with the work may actually be suffering from a form of culture shock. We need to resist making assumptions about students’ lives—for instance, what their lives might look like when they go home, or that their families can visit, that they share the same cultural touchstones, and that they’ve been exposed to the same experiences.

I don’t have an answer for all of this. I only know what I have done, which is that I made a lot of mistakes and worried about the wrong things and talked to a lot of the wrong people before I finally found a group of like-minded peers with whom I can discuss my challenges and questions without fear of reprisal. For these peers I am more grateful than I can say. With their help I have learned to stop being angry and start being proactive by treating academic culture as another field of inquiry, studying its shapes and methods and learning about its structures. I hope that the entry of scholars like me and my friends into the academy will help to slowly change the culture, but until our collective commitment to increasing all kinds of diversity in department faculty catches up with our intentions, and until we are able to become more outspoken about our diverse challenges and our triumphs, less privileged graduate students will continue to reinvent the wheel, or break themselves upon it.
women’s “strong tradition of dissent,” documenting a chronology of their early involvement with the NAACP. Black and white women risked much to participate in one of the only integrated organizations in the South. As plaintiffs, black women defined the future of local civil rights struggles from the 1920s through the 1940s by focusing on the vast inequalities present in Louisiana’s segregated school system. This shaped the way other women led their communities through the violent resistance to the Brown decision, which Frystak details in the third chapter.

In the second chapter, Frystak traces the statewide networks that pushed the region to directly address racial and economic inequalities in the tumultuous years during and after World War II. The focus is on individual women who organized within their own racial communities, but also used broader organizations to forge strategic interracial connections, enhancing their local efforts. Especially after the Brown decision, Louisiana lawmakers did nearly everything to prevent voter registration and school desegregation efforts, including outlawing interracial organizations. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 focus on the most prominent civil rights struggles—school desegregation, the unions, and the Freedom Rides. Centering the organizing efforts across rural and urban Louisiana, Frystak’s research gives readers a thorough local view of these campaigns. In her coverage of the New Orleans school desegregation crisis, Frystak follows women leaders from the previous chapter, such as Rosa Keller, who were experienced activists by 1954. Pushing from within the white community and network with other black women, Keller connected with black audiences by stressing gender solidarity and sympathy with black mothers. Frystak notes that an appeal to conservative gender norms worked to win over more reticent whites, especially white women.

Chapter 5 follows primarily African American women as they joined the quickly escalating sit-in movement, starting in 1960 at Southern University in Baton Rouge. As direct action organizations evolved, the young women who joined the movement, Frystak argues, were of a different stock than their activist foremothers. Many came from working-class or poor communities outside urban centers, parishes where women had taken up leadership positions in the various boycott and school desegregation fights of the previous decade. Building on this experience as well as the loosening of stringent gender norms, women of the 1960s participated with a ferocity not seen in previous decades.

The sixth chapter addresses the way the New Orleans CORE chapter navigated the turn away from the interracial “beloved community.” By following the actions of black chairwoman Orltha Castle, Frystak is able to complicate the traditional historiography of this crucial moment. Instead of a history that follows black men’s ousting of white men, Frystak demonstrates how black women also argued for all-black membership in these prominent organizations.

In the last two chapters, Frystak incorporates a new set of oral histories and delves deeply into the history of rural voter registration drives. She does not shy away from the violence visited upon black women by local vigilantes and police officers. Instead, she allows the evidence to demonstrate the courage displayed by Louisiana women in the face of virulent white supremacy. By the mid-1960s, rural CORE groups faced similar internal fissures to those of their New Orleans counterpart. As the monograph comes to a close, Frystak narrates the denouement of the desegregation movement as part and parcel of a larger regional decline in direct action. In the late 1960s, black and white women built a broadly diversified plethora of organizations focused more narrowly on issues of local concern. Louisiana women continued to take leadership roles within and outside of formal organizing, modeling the “strong tradition of dissent” evident throughout the mid-twentieth century.

Frystak is at her strongest when she adheres closely to her archive, following the stories of individual women and local community organizing. She is less finessed when linking these stories with secondary source material, with which she provides the national or historiographical framework. Additionally, Frystak does not push forward analysis of gender in the civil rights movement. In utilizing well-established sociological texts from which to produce the theory used to analyze the material, her analysis does not offer any new tools for the movement historian. But Frystak should be commended for her archival research and the ways she allows the evidence to do the heavy lifting. With such compelling histories, there is little need for theoretical enhancement.
In Between Slavery and Freedom, noted scholar Julie Winch provides a comprehensive narrative of the experience of free people of color from the early colonial era to the beginning of the US Civil War. Although the research for this book is not new, Winch provides a powerful synthesis of the current state of historical works on this topic that is a useful introduction to those new to the subject. The arc of the book follows the arrival of Africans and the institutionalization of chattel slavery to the Americas, the gradual process of emancipation (by region), and the claims for civic standing that culminated in the Dred Scott decision (1857), which closed the judicial route to citizenship for African Americans. The book concludes with the coming of the Civil War, which offered political and military answers to the status of African Americans.

Winch explains in her introduction that her goal is to "probe the ill-defined space between black freedom and white freedom," and she does so through an impressive mix of traditional political and legal history with cultural and social approaches that never let the reader forget the agency of her subjects (lv). The book is divided into five chapters and in addition includes over thirty-five pages of documents. One of the greatest strengths of this book is her attention to regional differences in the experiences of people of color. The first chapter does not merely retell the beginnings of slavery in British North America, but also offers an explanation of the development of slavery in Spanish, French, and Dutch America. She recognizes that colonial powers offered different (limited) rights to the enslaved and freed by region, andWinch never loses sight of her subjects, and she highlights the ways in which African Americans were instrumental in negotiating their own freedom and status.

As I read this book, I became excited about its potential for use in the classroom. In particular, I believe that it would be useful to assign in a US survey course alongside a more traditional textbook. Chapters could be assigned throughout the semester (as opposed to students reading the entire book at once) and students would be able to more fully contextualize the American experience. The tables included in this book are sure to generate discussion among students as they demonstrate the changing demographics of the enslaved and freed by city, state, and territory. Between Slavery and Freedom begins with a substantial timeline for easy reference for readers. The primary documents included at the end of the book are a perfect length for classroom instruction. Winch has included examples of laws, speeches, advertisements, letters, narratives, and regional experiences of slavery and emancipation in British North America and eventually the United States. Chapter 2 assesses the American Revolution and how it offered different routes to freedom based on allegiance to the British or the colonists. Chapter 3 focuses on the era of the early republic and describes how slavery and freedom were experienced throughout the new nation. At this time emancipation came to the US North in a jumbled fashion through state legislatures and the courts. However, Winch astutely points out that emancipation did not result in citizenship, or at least an equal citizenship with white Americans. This patchwork of laws across the new nation meant that civic standing was influenced by voting and property rights as well as “soft” civic rights such as access to jobs, education, and social mobility—rights that varied throughout the nation. Chapter 4 covers 1820 to 1850 a time frame that was critical for coalition building and the creation of African American organizations. The final chapter examines the 1850s when the status of slavery reached a political and social crisis point. Importantly, throughout the book, Winch never loses sight of her subjects, and she highlights the ways in which African Americans were instrumental in negotiating their own freedom and status.
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