

# CONNECTING MEMORY, SELF, AND THE POWER OF PLACE IN AFRICAN AMERICAN URBAN HISTORY

EARL LEWIS  
University of Michigan

**When asked to talk about the 1930s**, Susan J. somewhat anxiously and cautiously volunteered: “The Depression came on . . . and the taxes . . . and I lost it. That got to me more than I ever let anything get to me, leaving out death.” The “it” was her brother Luke’s (Bud Luke, she said) house.<sup>1</sup> Susan had paid the mortgage on the dwelling once, but her father needed money and refinanced so she was asked to pay the mortgage a second time. This experience, she maintained, she would remember forever.

When asked about Marcus Garvey, her memory clouded considerably. Although she was a young adult living in Norfolk when the famed leader made several trips to the city and adjacent municipalities, she had a vague memory of him at best. When I, in somewhat exasperated tone, proclaimed Garvey was one of the most important figures in African American history, she calmly conceded the point. From my questions she knew he was important and that she was expected to know him; yet she did not. Are we to question Susan’s memory of Norfolk? No, because in many respects her sense of place was unimpeachable. She knew Norfolk, its sights, sounds, and people; moreover, it was her home for more than fifty years. But she also knew the pain of losing a house that had twice belonged to her. Such memories loomed larger than others because they remained in the foreground of her experience and helped define who she was.

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This example illustrates the importance of examining the connections among place, memory, and urban history. It suggests that the memories that African Americans have of a particular place are defined from the inside out. Race, gender, class, ethnicity, age, and other parts of one's identity help situate those memories. As a result, larger historical processes, although important, are not how most people write their own individual narratives of place. Instead, they remember the pain and joy, triumph and despair, conflict and resolution that marked their daily lives.

Ironically, in our attempt to write social history from the ground up, urban historians, like most historians, have paid more attention to the accuracy of particular recollections and far less attention to interpreting those recollections. Yet phrases like race relations, ghettoization, and even proletarianization are not how people remember their lives in the urban setting; rather, such framing concepts reflect the intervention of the historian and highlight the interface of our imagination, understanding, and memory with that of the subjects of our study. Underscoring this point, David Thelen observed, "The struggle for possession and interpretation of memory is rooted in the conflict and interplay among social, political, and cultural interests and values in the present."<sup>2</sup> Because of this inherent struggle and conflict, memory functions as a contested area of deeply held but at times highly idiosyncratic beliefs. At the same time, a society's cohesiveness hinges on its ability to create national or group memories, which enlist the support of large segments of the population. Few have studied the nexus between individual memories and group behavior. More important, as this essay will attempt to highlight, we know less than we should about the conjunction between memory, identity, and the importance of place. Such an investigative pursuit should lead us to rethink key categories in urban and African American history and to reexamine the relationship between race and place.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF PLACE**

For some time "place" has been the imagined linkage between the present and the what-had-been for African Americans. After all, place

connected a diverse creolized population to an ancestral homeland that few had seen or would see, and that ultimately never existed. Long before African Americans were colored, or Negro, or black, or any of the names they were to be called, they were Ewe, Yoruba, Asante, Ibo, and Wangara. It was the imaginings of place that molded those disparate experiences into a corporate identity in the United States. Through names, music, poems, stories, dreams, and nightmares, Africa came to mean something. In time we would call this movement a diaspora, an African diaspora, which had profound social, spiritual, and political consequences for a people who had imagined ties to a special place.<sup>3</sup>

The themes of movement and place took a new and important turn in the twentieth century, leading to a new interest in African American urban history. For the last twenty five years, historians of African Americans who examined and analyzed the meaning of place in the twentieth century started with the mass migrations of blacks from the rural to urban setting. Between 1900 and 1920, roughly 1.5 million African Americans left the rural South; between 1940 and 1970, more than triple that number left. The staggering demographic transition had profound implications because the shift precipitated the general movement of blacks cityward. In 1900 the least urbanized segment of the population, African Americans, by 1960 were the most urbanized. As a result, beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, many inner cities became remarkably blacker, especially after the cathartic rebellions and eruptions of the mid and late 1960s. By the mid-1970s, therefore, many major cities featured black majorities.<sup>4</sup>

The dramatic redistribution of the twentieth-century African American population had the unintended consequence of blurring the meaning of place once again. In a number of urban communities, the new arrivals stood out and were signaled out. They clearly hailed from a different place. Sometimes their dress or speech gave them away; other times they were distinguished by their associations, housing arrangements, or employment. Migrants, although in a new place, wore the imprimatur of another place.<sup>5</sup>

Concerned as they were with migration to the city or settlement within the urban context, few historians stopped to ask what "place" meant to African Americans—migrants or long-time residents. Schol-

ars did not ignore the centrality of place, but as Hershberg remarked more than a decade ago, many viewed the city as a site or place to execute life's pedestrian affairs.<sup>6</sup> Seldom did scholars stop to ask how memory configured an understanding of place.

Proponents of the ghetto-formation approach sharply analyzed the social impediments that circumscribed opportunities for blacks. Despite some textual variation, they all concluded that occupational, geographic, and residential mobility limited blacks to major urban ghettos.<sup>7</sup> Ghettos in this context functioned as places marred by limited opportunity, privations, and social unease; moreover, in an ironic twist, because the ghetto came to embody all that is negative, sociologists and journalists identified it as a place to flee from or escape—very much like the rural South decades before.<sup>8</sup>

Neither the ghetto formation literature that grew out of the social concerns of the 1960s nor the proletarianization critique that followed satisfactorily questioned how African Americans thought about or mapped place. As Trotter, architect of the proletarian critique, mentions, few people self-consciously moved to the urban North to live in a ghetto—that was not the framing experience or motivation for their actions.<sup>9</sup> Most left to secure a better future for themselves and their families.<sup>10</sup> In the process, they made the journey from migrants to residents of the new places they called home.

At the same time, neither did most migrants think of themselves as proletarians nor view their life course through the lens of proletarianization. Most undoubtedly sought well-paying, secure employment, and at a certain level they understood the relationship between individual choice and structural change. As scholars ranging from Joe Trotter to Roger Lane have noted, from the late 1800s through the 1960s, African Americans throughout the nation were all too aware of the barriers to full occupational mobility and material comfort. But, as scores of residents in northeastern cities told anthropologist John Gwaltney in the 1970s, foremost they wanted to live a decent life. Edith Baker, one of Gwaltney's collaborators, retorted after a case-worker criticized her exacting housekeeping rules, "Lady, if I had a woman to clean my house while I'm out cleaning somebody else's, I could do what you say, but I'm not living in filth for nobody, least of

all a child that I have birthed and taught right from wrong.” Gwaltney called these learned “truths” core black culture. Because of the current interest in social construction, some might find such a conceptual orientation uncomfortably close to racial essentialism. But it is clear, as other examples in his and other studies reveal, that black urban dwellers understood all too well the two-sidedness of urban living. Another caseworker could have as easily reprimanded the woman for keeping an untidy house, had this been her style. For folks like Baker, place became inextricably tied to a profound sense of decency.<sup>11</sup>

### THE ROLE OF MEMORY

Meanwhile, the Susan J. example given at the outset suggests there is no single memory of a given place. Because Susan J. had no memory of Garvey should not lead us to question Garvey’s importance to a larger Norfolk. Scores knew him, followed him, and proclaimed him their Moses. Instead, the example forces us to ponder how memory rewrites the meaning of place. Place, after all, is a location on a map, an imagined belonging, the scene of a bitter memory or beautiful happening; place, though often fixed, was always transportable. Scores moved away from a place only to reclaim it in their new locations, forming clubs and associations that marked their ties. Most important, for many, *place* was home.

It is the centrality of home in understanding the power of place that urban historians must more effectively explore. Homeboys and homegirls are not mere creations of a hip-hop culture. For generations, African Americans, even those who despised the place of their birth, proclaimed their allegiance to that place. Richard Wright captured a larger sentiment when he wrote:

I was leaving the South to fling myself into the unknown, to meet situations that would perhaps elicit from me other responses. . . . Yet, deep down, I knew that I could never really leave the South, for my feelings had already been formed by the South. . . . So, in leaving, I was taking a part of the South to transplant in alien soil.<sup>12</sup>

In the process, the memories of a distant place fused with current conditions, forcing Wright and thousands of other migrants to expand the meaning of home.

As the social columns in black newspapers richly illustrate, thousands journeyed to and from communities in valiant efforts to stay connected. Surely some allowed unwanted memories to retreat from public awareness, including links to places no longer considered home. Others, however, celebrated rather than denied their earlier existences. Susan and Clifton J. regularly returned to Norfolk County to see family friends decades after they moved away. Norfolks who called New York home advertised themselves as members of the Sons of Norfolk association. State clubs in Chicago, the Bay Area, and elsewhere, organizations of affinity that advertised one place of origin, bridged the social and psychological distance produced by migration.<sup>13</sup>

In the urban context, especially in Norfolk, home meant both the household and the community. This is an important consideration because it forces us to probe the interior of historical construction. Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Jones moved to New York, often returning to Norfolk to see her sister Perlie Hall, as they did in 1925. Clearly, affective attachments brought them south. But we can also speculate that a part of them remained Southerners—perhaps, even Norfolks.<sup>14</sup>

We need at this juncture to further probe the constitution of the self because as psychotherapist Bruce Ross reminds us, in certain ways, all memory is autobiographical. And like the psychotherapist, he contends, the historian must consider the feeble ability of humans to recall the past. Ross writes,

History and personal memory have in common that they try to determine which facts and events are true. We can . . . label history as “objective” and memory as “subjective,” but such labels are relative at best; there are many parallels and much remains only probable in validating the contents of either.<sup>15</sup>

Ross's entreaty is useful as a point of departure. Literary scholars, meanwhile, have noted the remarkably structured nature of autobiographies.<sup>16</sup> Most detail a story of life-long progress. More than that, early slave narratives were characterized by the inordinate concern

with telling a recognizable story and authenticity. Frequently, prominent whites introduced the authors, attesting to their veracity and claims of authenticity. In so doing, they inserted the memory of their exalted social status as a marker. Remember, they seemed to say, you recognize me, I am a noted citizen and neighbor, one who has accumulated the proper social credits, and one you can trust.<sup>17</sup>

Memory is too structured in certain ways, although we have yet to understand the intricacies of those structures. As a result, some cognitive psychologists have attempted to distinguish between “semantic memory” and “episodic memory.” The former refers to the ability to recall things that have little to do with us personally; the latter pertains to the recollection of highly individual experiences. But as critics have noted, such a conceptualization is time and culture determined. In premodern, nonwestern societies, where time is neither linear nor cyclical but spherical, or in those societies organized in other ways, the universal and the individual are indistinguishable. We know, however, that no one locus in the brain stores all memory; instead, the brain functions as a super highway, transporting the discrete and global to access points for retrieval. Along the way, the information deposits itself at rest stops, encouraged to go on when associations in the conscious realm trigger a recollection. Those recollections cohere to form a broad memory, a trace of a memory, or no memory at all.<sup>18</sup>

As Fentress and Wickham remind us, “Memory is a complex process, not a simple mental act.”<sup>19</sup> Few people can or choose to reveal all of themselves—even to themselves. In fact, some events remain instantly retrieval, while others fade quickly and often permanently. Still, recalling the past, which begins as an individual endeavor, has tremendous social importance. Nations build monuments, create festivals and holidays, consecrate buildings and name battlefields for the purpose of securing a societal memory, a way of tying the most isolated resident to the larger fabric of society. And in many respects the veracity of those built memories are not as important as the process and purpose of memory construction. “For our purposes,” writes Thelen, “the social dimensions of memory are more important than the need to verify accuracy. . . . People develop a shared identity by identifying, exploring, and agreeing on memories.” Therefore, as we reformulate our critical understanding of the relationship between

place and memory, we must reconsider the factors that shape memory.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, to call history objective and memory subjective inflates the value of the former and unduly deflates the latter. History represents the coming together of many memories, including those of the scholar. In his recent book on public memory, commemoration, and patriotism, John Bodnar positions class and ethnic difference as salient features of the construction of public memory in the United States. He details, for instance, how European ethnic groups or the Knights of Labor proclaimed their own versions of a public memory.<sup>21</sup> In other areas, we have been asked to look more closely at the conjunction of race, class, and gender as the constitutive elements of the self.<sup>22</sup> Yet, as we think more critically about memory, we are required to go further and reassess our understanding of the overall construction of the self.

For example, throughout the twentieth century, black people in northern, western, and southern cities overcame the differences that separated them to fight in their own interests. At a certain level they recognized race as a construction, a way of organizing their world because of real differences in power based on skin color and social characteristics. Race, therefore, functioned as both a social fiction and a social reality. It was a social fiction because African Americans constantly delineated the factors that divided them, even challenging the efficacy of a biological explanation of race. It was a social reality because few could deny that racial membership influenced one's access to jobs, income, housing, education, and social services. Thus when historical actors tell us that class, color, gender, and religious differences are not merely artifacts of the historian's imagination, we should listen. After all, these other factors represent central aspects of the lives of city residents. Yet, it is also worth remembering that for most of the twentieth century, race became the vehicle for the public presentations of African American needs and demands in the urban setting.<sup>23</sup>

As important, for far too long historians have ignored the relationship between race and the other aspects of the self. Oftentimes, scholars have spoken as if people had a choice, or that the choice was simply between race and gender, or class and race. Indicative is the tendency to still use words like privileging to describe how people

organized their social worlds and access parts of their identities at discrete historical moments. Part of the problem is how we interpret events, and part of the problem is the current discourse on what motivates historical actors. For example, more than six decades passed before Charles Grandy shared his memories of slavery, and attempted to explain why blacks migrated to Norfolk. He told a WPA interviewer, "Nobody owned the niggers; so dey all come to Norfolk, look lak to me." In the concluding months of World War II, Dolly Jones told an interviewer she had taken steps to vote because "[f]ive thousand qualified voters would make a lot of difference in the attitude of other people toward us, and many of our desires for a better Norfolk."<sup>24</sup>

In broad outline, both comments draw our attention to the enabling actions of African Americans. They contextualize the struggles that began in the 1860s and concluded in certain ways in the 1960s. They even explain why most African Americans refused to flee the South during the age of Jim Crow, and instead stayed put to fight and improve local conditions. For Grandy, the memory of slavery functioned as an important counter reference: blacks fled to the city because it defined the meaning of freedom. On the other hand, coming of age in a Jim Crow city redirected the strategies Jones and her neighbors adopted. The franchise was no panacea but it could be added to the arsenal of the city's black communities.

### PLACE, MEMORY, AND THE SELF

Race, however, is only one element of the self that accounts for the comments offered. How people foreground and background other elements of the self must become part of our critical repertoire. Age, marital status, sexual orientation, and other social markers provide critical cues for us and for those we study. Grandy noted the number of blacks who came to Norfolk during the Civil War because of when it happened. He was a relatively young man who saw the war as an end to a painful existence; for him, movement to Norfolk represented a new beginning. As Litwack and others have observed, others felt more at ease in the place they called home and refused to migrate.<sup>25</sup>

Grandy's age, life cycle, gender, and work experiences are as important as his race in explaining his actions and possible motivations. In fact, to understand Grandy's racial self we have to keep in view subtle shifts in alignment of other elements of his person.

In thinking about memory it might help to think of the self as multipositional. Several critical theorists have advanced the notion of *multiple subjectivities*.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, each aspect of the self constitutes another subject. Such a formulation has the danger of obfuscating the ways in which we foreground or background aspects of the self. As a result, scholars sometimes come dangerously close to explaining the inevitable contradictions as irreconcilable and crazy. Few, however, are clinically schizophrenic. Most of us are engaged in the awkward process of simultaneously negotiating the past, present, and future.

As an alternative, the subject or self should be considered singular and positions of the self multiple—or multipositional. It is important, however, to remember that we can never see the total self. At best, we glimpse the totalizing self. It is a self that refuses to surrender to a simple mathematics. Race plus class plus gender does not approximate the complexities of the self because no one is simply additive. The notion of multipositionality takes into consideration a complex social calculus, a calculus that allows us to add, subtract, multiply, and divide parts of our identities at the same time. Such a perspective allows us to examine how race is shaped by other aspects of the self and, in turn, how race shapes those aspects.<sup>27</sup>

But we must also remember that the process of identity formation is neither linear nor always intuitive. At various times one part of our identity is struggling to displace another. Memories of losing a house during the depression pained Susan J. because it rekindled memories of her subordinate status within her own family, even as it revealed her firm commitment to the family's needs. Her parents had two sets of children; the oldest group could easily have been the younger ones' parents. In her family of eighteen, Susan came from the younger group and her brother, Luke, the older. Birth order combined with race, gender, and age to situate her place within her family and to frame her memories.<sup>28</sup>

In the sharp rejoinders to those who have highlighted the disintegration of African American family life, too many of us have failed to discuss the honest pain of Susan J. and others. Women of a variety of backgrounds sought refuge in the city, often as a way of altering familial responsibilities. Susan's sense of familial obligation is clear, however; so, too, is the power of the men in her life. After all, as an unmarried, working daughter she was forced to pay for a family house that was in her older brother's name. Luke did not lack resources; he worked as a teacher in the Titustown section of Norfolk, near his house. Yet her income was tied to the family's economy more than her brother's. Looking back on this episode from the distance of fifty years meant filtering through the anger, rage, and feeling of loss all over again. For her, it meant remembering an earlier episode about an important place marked by both conflict and resolution. Race, family, class, and gender became part of the mix of emotions, experiences, and memories that defined that moment.<sup>29</sup>

For those of us concerned with African American urban history, the need to problematize identity construction is clear and important. We know that in every city studied there was one community and several communities. When the black-owned *Norfolk Journal and Guide* complained about poor city services between 1920 and 1945, often it dramatized its concerns by highlighting the troubles of the black middle class, explicitly ignoring the plight of working-class blacks. Many black residents felt equity certainly escaped them when even the "best" among them were denied key rights or privileges. As one resident bemoaned:

We pay equal taxes, but because colored people live in these streets the city won't repair the roads. They are rich people living in these houses, all Negroes. Several of them own cars . . . Now look on the other hand at this street. It's a white street, all smoothly repaired. What a beautiful surface; see the difference!<sup>30</sup>

Read through the prism of race alone, important examples of intraracial class cleavages fade from view.

Equally dangerous, however, is reading this example literally. Some, such as Michael Katz, have drawn a sharp distinction between

residential proximity and class-integrated neighborhoods in black communities. He insists that "most urban African Americans . . . always were poor, and the small middle class that did exist distanced itself from the its less-fortunate neighbors."<sup>31</sup> Such a claim is as incorrect as it is correct. As urbanists have noted for more than a century, in cities such as Philadelphia, Chicago, New York, Cleveland, Milwaukee, and Norfolk, real differences divided African Americans, among them class and status.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, internal conversations frequently blunted the recognition of sharply drawn class distinctions. After all, when teaching became a primarily female occupation after 1910, who did the women marry? From the skimpy evidence that is available, many married men with working-class jobs and better paying salaries. Moreover, if the autobiographical literature is any indicator, many African American households—or at the very least families—were not only intergenerational but housed members of an array of social classes.<sup>33</sup> Class in the black community must be viewed as part of an intraracial discourse. Oftentimes, a middle-class existence hinged on the community's agreement; as a consequence, most middle-class blacks lacked the luxury of removing themselves from their working-class relatives and neighbors, despite rhetoric to the contrary. During much of this century, but especially after 1920 and before 1970, they depended on working-class blacks for their livelihoods and acknowledged social status. Too much physical or social distance threatened the implicit racial covenant as well as their slightly elevated place in a race conscious society.<sup>34</sup>

Yet how do we strike the proper balance? In a recent discussion of the actions of the powerful and powerless, James Scott coined the phrase *infrapolitics*. This neologism pointed to the offstage or hidden transcripts that social actors used to critique the actions of their adversaries. Nonetheless, this thoroughly useful way of assessing power relations misses one important point: between the hidden and public transcript one can find the semipublic transcript—that is, a song, story, poem, folktale, or toast.<sup>35</sup> This coded public message is audible but indecipherable to those outside the community of reference because most outsiders do not understand the importance of certain symbols, cues, and events. Of course, the ability to interpret these symbols is learned behavior, passed from adult to child through

ritual, folktale, and social practice. Typical were the heroic tales of masculine figures such as Shine and John Henry, or the urban tales that paired African, Jewish, Irish, and Italian Americans.<sup>36</sup> As a result, certain public complaints not only set the middle class apart from the working class, but knitted them together through a language of shared suffering. To see the former and miss the latter means that we too quickly inflate the significance of public and private transcripts and minimize the importance of semipublic transcripts.

In large part, semipublic transcripts worked because of the way in which the accumulation of isolated incidents coalesced into a collective memory. First, residential patterns reinforced memory formation. In a city like Norfolk, municipal ordinances for racial zones controlled where one lived by the 1910s. Meantime, in northern and certain western communities steering by real estate agents, restrictive covenants, and the threat of racial violence worked as well as legal sanctions. As a result, regardless of location, through the 1960s, most upwardly mobile residents lacked the luxury of removing themselves—despite several court challenges. Consequently, through 1945, although a classic ghetto failed to materialize in most southern locations, legal and extralegal actions effectively defined the geographic character of urban black communities. And in both the North and the South, notwithstanding notable internal divisions, the urban layout increased the likelihood of residential proximity and communal action among African Americans.<sup>37</sup>

Second, the social construction of race led many blacks to define whites as the “other.” At home, for the period 1910-1945, many black residents lived in an almost all-black world, one shaped but not totally defined by limited interactions with whites. In such a world, notions about power changed. In churches, on windowsills, street corners, or other places of congregation, African Americans sermonized, joked, sang, and for moments at a time altered power relations. More important, in these settings concepts like *minority*, *difference*, and *other* meant something other than what we have come to accept. When read from inside the black community outward, place helped resituate the colored “other.”<sup>38</sup>

In these secured zones, for instance, black urban dwellers created mythic characters like the urban folk hero “Shine” or writer Langston

Hughes's everyday man, Jesse B. Simple (aka Semple). The former originated as an expression of the frustrated desires and hopes of the century's first two generations of black migrants. Fueled by dreams of beating the odds and securing a permanent foothold in the political economy, African Americans created "Shine," who invariably beat the odds to realize personal fulfillment. Originally recorded in Mississippi and Louisiana, the tale underwent subtle changes in wording and meaning as blacks migrated to urban centers.<sup>39</sup> Through humor, exaggeration, and misdirection, the storytellers in the process critiqued the pretense of white omnipotence. From his place in Harlem, meanwhile, Simple surveyed conditions in the United States and commented—often wryly and satirically—on the foibles of whites and blacks. Both characters dealt with the urban environment as a utopia and a dystopia, paralleling the efforts of prominent black authors like Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Toni Morrison.<sup>40</sup>

One favorite Shine story features him as a stoker on the luxury oceanliner Titanic, just before it retires to the bottom of the ocean. With death imminent, Shine makes plans to flee the doomed vessel. Before he can depart he is approached by the captain's wife and daughter, symbols of all that is within sight but out of reach. In an obvious commentary on the presumption of white male power and ability, the two decide that Shine is the only one capable of saving them; in exchange for their lives, they offer him sex. Shine teases that there is sex on land and on the sea, but at this moment he prefers sex on land to the sea, leaving the two to save themselves. In a final scene the captain, the symbol of white male power, begs for Shine's help. The captain promises all the money he has if Shine saves him. Again Shine prefers the comfort of land to the hazards of the sea. He leaves the captain to his own devices, jumps in the water, and races the sharks to the shore. In most versions of the story, Shine is on 125th Street in Harlem, in the company of several beautiful women, when the world receives word of the fate of the Titanic and its passengers.<sup>41</sup> To the thousands of African Americans who heard and retold this tale, Shine beat the white man and ignored the pleas of white women by finding and seeking comfort in his own surroundings. Through these stories, scores of black city dwellers critiqued their worlds and defrocked

whites at the same time. For moments at a time, they also changed the vectors of power by seeing themselves as other than subordinates.

As important, these stories and the location of their transmission encourage an examination of the sites of relaxation and leisure in the urban environment. Robin Kelley has suggested that

for members of a class whose long workdays were spent in backbreaking, low-paid wage work in settings pervaded by racism, the places where they played were more than relatively free spaces in which to articulate grievances and dreams. They were places that enabled African Americans to take back their bodies, to recuperate, to be together. . . . Despite opposition . . . black working people of both sexes shook, twisted, and flaunted their overworked bodies, drank, talked, flirted, and . . . reinforced their sense of community.<sup>42</sup>

We might extend his commentary to the stoops of Philadelphia rowhouses in the 1950s, where the Philadelphia sound originated, and the buses, parks, and public places in the 1970s, where urban youth brought their boomboxes and transformed the space and place, commandeering it for their own purposes. Kelley is no doubt correct in insisting that some of this behavior stemmed from a learned oppositional practice, but the learning and passing on of those practices brings us back to the importance of memory for understanding the salience of place. For on those stoops and in those public spaces, mythic heroes linked together several generations of urban dwellers. Anchored in time and connected in space, those generations learned and relearned what it meant to be black in America; in the process, they manufactured memories of the commonalities of their histories. Thus the *Shine* and *Simple* tales were both symbols of those memories and instruments of memory creation.

Third, racist comments, brutal police action, public embarrassments, or racial harassment became part of a social script. As Lawrence Levine, among others, has argued, the reading of this social script keyed African American survival and empowerment strategies before and after slavery.<sup>43</sup> The critical reading of this script did something else: it mediated the distance between individual actions and group imperatives. At its core the concept of multipositionality

works best at the individual level, explaining how individual actors foreground or background aspects of the self. But it also marks the intersection between individual experience and group relations.

In the political economy of twentieth-century Norfolk, for example, most Africans Americans occupied a similar social, political, and economic space. They were politically disfranchised citizens of working-class backgrounds who lived in one of four or five neighborhoods. Working-class and middle-class blacks shared a problem of inadequate city services. Therefore, the earlier quotation detailing inadequate city services, although class specific in character, was a general lament. Regardless of their station, most could verify the veracity of the complaint; this process of verification was influenced by the memory of other wrongs inflicted upon the group. In such instances, the racial self moved to the foreground as other aspects of the self realigned. As a result, Jerry O. Gilliam, a self-proclaimed member of Norfolk's black working class, told one interviewer in the late 1930s:

The whites deprive the Negro of privileges here like the mythical rat bites. I once slept in a back room in Washington, D.C., and big rats would run over me every night. A friend told me to get out of there or the rats would eat me to death . . . "The rat," he said, "will take a small bite off your toe, and then blow on it so you won't feel, then take another nibble and blow some more, until the blood starts flowing and you bleed to death in your sleep." That's the way white people lull Negroes to sleep in Norfolk and then bite them till they're bled to dry.<sup>44</sup>

Gilliam could in one moment be a biting critic of the "college-bred" boys he disdained and at another moment a judge of racial practices that affected all blacks. For him and others, such varied stances seemed natural. Each turned on the importance of improving conditions at home because home was a place worth improving.

At the same time, attentiveness to certain memories and not others blinds us to other interpretative possibilities. As Elsa Brown has noted, women were as active in the political affairs of reconstruction Richmond as men. If we rely solely on who held elective office, whose voices were recorded in the newspapers, and whose counsel was sought by whites, we miss the ways black women used church, labor,

and women's auxiliaries to direct the men in their communities and the affairs of those communities.<sup>45</sup> It is essential, therefore, to consider what we do not hear as well as what we are told.

Moreover, because the historian divides the world into work and home with a more perfect demarcation than most historical actors, the relationship between work and home must become part of any discussion of place. After all, the majority of black women who worked for wages in the urban South labored as domestic or personal servants. Going to work meant laboring in someone else's home. For the few who lived-in, home and work meant the same thing at a certain level. Yet, as the numerous studies of black domestics reveal, few were allowed to forget that they were hired help. Long and irregular hours, sexual harassment, and dismissal robbed all but the most fortunate of sentimental memories.<sup>46</sup>

In most urban settings African Americans sought employment, pursued labor activism, and agitated for change because they thought better working conditions, improved wages, and wider opportunities redounded to the entire community. From the 1870s through the present, from the tobacco factories of nineteenth-century Richmond through the docks of twentieth-century Norfolk and New Orleans, the automobile plants of Detroit, and the steel mills of Birmingham and Pittsburgh, black workers joined the cause of organized labor. Doing so was not always easy or advisable. Racism plagued the nation's labor associations just as it infected the body politic. Through the 1950s, some union brotherhoods barred blacks; in other cases, capital promised and delivered more than labor ever could. Still, where the benefit was clear, African Americans openly and earnestly pursued the cause of organized labor. Born in 1909, New Orleans native Sylvia Woods, later a union stalwart in Chicago, remarked of her father, "he was a union man."<sup>47</sup> This simple declaration defined what it meant to be working class. Even when some eschewed labor they could never comfortably separate what they did at work from their lives at home.

Of course, union and labor organizations were not the only ways that African Americans asserted control over their work lives. Politics spanned the spectrum from exercising the franchise to "goofing-off" at work. Without question, African Americans, endowed with memories of cruel employers and racist vengeance, found various ways of

empowering themselves at work. In some cases, building on the distinction between “stealing” and “taking” that had been part of African American survival tactics since slavery, they simply “took” what they needed to survive. On other occasions, they absented themselves from work, feigned illnesses and injuries, and sabotaged the work environment.<sup>48</sup> How we understand and interpret these actions hinges on our ability to analyze memories and their connections to place, to assess the politics of memory.<sup>49</sup>

By the time of his death in 1974, David Daniel Alston had earned the title “a giant in labor relations.” The North Carolina native migrated first to Richmond, where he married and started his career as a member of the urban working class, arriving in Tidewater just before World War I. After working for a dredging company for twenty-five cents per day, he moved to Baltimore, where he landed a better paying job as a longshoreman. His wife opted to stay on the south side of the Chesapeake Bay, so they still called Norfolk home. As he recalled, “It was hard coming home every weekend and going back to Baltimore for work, but I was able to get a job on the Norfolk and Western coal piers in 1918 and stayed there 28 years.”<sup>50</sup> During this period, Alston replaced George Millner as the leading black labor figure in the Hampton Roads area. Within two years of leaving the docks, he had become president of the District Council of the International Longshoremen’s Association (1946), and International Vice President of the ILA (1947). He would also serve as vice president at-large of the Virginia State Labor Federation (1939) and the first full-time black organizer for the state body (1945). Alston, who said, “I have always felt that if a man has the right to tell me how much a pair of shoes cost, I have the right to tell him how much a day’s work will cost,” ended his career as Senior Vice President of the ILA.<sup>51</sup>

The evidence is growing that David Alston represented the bulk of black laborers in key respects. Certainly, few shared his level of accomplishment. He negotiated some of the most difficult contracts in the history of Hampton Roads longshoremen; he had a building named for him; and he was the recipient of four testimonial dinners. But like the majority of his contemporaries, he tied the improvement of his community, his home, to improving the status of black workers.<sup>52</sup> Because of this, he readily took an active role in the affairs of his

community. Alston belonged to several fraternal organizations including the Elks and the Masons; he regularly offered a tithe at First Baptist of Lamberts Point; and he offered his services to both the NAACP and the Boy Scouts.<sup>53</sup> To study what Alston accomplished at work in isolation from his view of the home distorts more than it clarifies. The result is a partial portrait of the confluence of memory, self, and place in African American urban history.

### THE HISTORIAN'S MEMORY

It is important to remember, moreover, that memory is the joint possession of the historian and the historical actor. Although some of us may be troubled by the current practice of self-reflection, we should not shy away from a full discussion of our roles as partial architects of the histories we write. "Objectivity" and "subjectivity" are not polar extremes along a continuum.

Pinpointing the historian's place in the project of recovery and analysis means examining our relationship to the power of place as well. Presumably, personal experience influences the subjects we choose to study and the histories we opt to write. This is not to say we abandon the training learned in graduate school; rather, we must differentiate between objective and subjective and biased and unbiased. After all, none of those examined by Peter Novick who questioned the worth of objectivity recommended the substitution of bias; in part, this offends the process of socialization so key to becoming a professional historian.<sup>54</sup>

Still, local memory and urban history are not the exclusive properties of historical subjects. As someone born and raised in the Norfolk area, I brought a certain memory to my research and writing as well. The city's sights, sounds, and smells were not only revealed in the documents but observed over a short life. Even though I tried to carefully separate my memories from those discussed in my book on Norfolk, there were moments of intersection. As a child I witnessed streets overwhelmed by rain-choked drains. I can never forget the humbling act of rolling up my pants leg and wading through dirty, thigh-high waters to reach my grandparents' house in the heart of black

Norfolk. Even if it were not true, I (and many like me) believed our group, our community, endured such penalties of life far more than other groups, other communities. Evidence of earlier complaints simply reinforced the notion of inequities. At no time was I overwhelmed by my memories, but neither could I erase them.

Ironically, African American residents of the city trusted me because I had my own memories. Memories established me as a member and not an outsider, in much the same way that participant-observation researchers must gain the trust of those they study. Of course, the meaning here is of far greater significance. Vincent Harding observed a decade ago, "The responsibility of the black scholar is constantly to be alive to the movement of history and to recognize that we ourselves are constantly being remade and revisioned."<sup>55</sup> Residents, who valued examples of prodigious research, sound judgements, and keen analytical skills, embraced me because I was one of their own coming home to tell their story. As someone's child, grandchild, or friend, they trusted that I too had an understanding of *home*.

Susan J. understood this as well. She recognized the value of my personal and scholarly memory. She tolerated my intrusions and encouraged my efforts. The final product was important to her, I believe. No one had written a history of the successes and failures of African Americans in Norfolk. Far better than some academics, she knew my memory was as important to them as their memory was essential for me.<sup>56</sup>

In sum, as historians reexamine the importance of place, closer attention must be paid to how memories facilitate the writing and rewriting of utopian and dystopian meanings of home. As part of this process, we must display a greater interest in how people construct their identities. This means that we must view historical subjects as multipositional actors, who foreground and background aspects of themselves depending on the social context and historical period. Moreover, since most memories start as individual recollections, then through a process of socialized learning they become attached to group or national perspectives, it is imperative that we interrogate those memories with a fresh attention to what they say as well as what they do not say. As we do so, we must take care to analyze how our memories rewrite the experiences we document, describe, and ana-

lyze. Then, and only then, will we be in a position to fully appreciate the memory, the self, and the *power* of place in African American urban history.

## NOTES

1. As quoted in Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Twentieth Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Berkeley, 1991), 120. Interview, 2 January 1981.

2. David Thelen, "Memory and American History," *Journal of American History* 75 (March 1989), 1127.

3. Work has been done on the making of an African diaspora or Africa as an imagined place in the cosmology of nationalist ideology. These studies have explored cultural transformation, continuity, and discontinuity, but few have puzzled over the intergenerational process of group creation and identification. For an example of the former, see Vincent Bakpetu Thompson, *The Making of the African Diaspora in the Americas, 1441-1900* (New York, 1987).

4. For an effective review of this literature and the particulars see Kenneth L. Kusmer, "The Black Urban Experience" in *The State of Afro-American History*, Darlene Clark Hine, ed., (Baton Rouge, 1986), 91-122, and Joe W. Trotter, Jr., ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective* (Bloomington, 1991), 1-21.

5. This literature is immense. A sample of those works include Emmett J. Scott, *Negro Migration During the War* (New York, 1920; reprinted Arno Press, 1969); Charles S. Johnson, "How Much is Migration a Flight from Persecution?" *Opportunity* I (September 1923), 272-274; Louise V. Kennedy, *The Peasant Turns Cityward: Effects of Recent Migration to Northern Cities* (New York, 1930); H. G. Hamilton, "The Negro Leaves the South," *Demography* I (1964), 273-295; and Karl and Alma Tauber, "Changing Characteristics of Negro Migration," *American Journal of Sociology* LXX (1964), 429-441. Some of the recent works include Florette Henri, *Black Migration* (Garden City, 1976); Neil Fligstein, *Going North: Migration of Blacks and Whites From the South, 1900-1950* (New York, 1981); Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930* (Urbana, 1987); and James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago, 1989).

6. Theodore Hershberg, ed., *Philadelphia* (New York, 1981), 4-7.

7. Representative works include Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto* (New York, 1963); Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1880-1920* (Chicago, 1967); and Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana, 1976).

8. For an example of this new trend, see Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Migration and How It Changed America* (New York, 1991). Recently, sociologists Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton extended this argument. According to Massey and Denton, the fortunes of the underclass turn on the abilities of inner-city residents to escape the malevolent conditions of the ghetto. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, 1993).

9. Joe William Trotter, Jr., *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat* (Urbana, 1985), especially appendix 7.

10. Trotter, ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective* provides a nice overview of the motivations and variations in experience and expectation.

11. Trotter, *Black Milwaukee*, chapters 1, 3, 4; Roger Lane, *The Roots of Violence in Black Philadelphia* (Cambridge, 1986), argues that exclusion from industrial employment forced Philadelphia blacks to turn to petty crime and prostitution. As Gavin Wright has noted, at times the structure of the labor market created employment opportunities for blacks, but most often in the poorer paying sectors. Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in The Southern Economy Since the Civil War* (New York, 1986), chapter 6. John Langston Gwaltney, *Drylongso: A Self-Portrait of Black America* (New York, 1993), 188. Similar perspectives are suggested in Bob Blauner, *Black Lives, White Lives: Three Decades of Race Relations in America* (Berkeley, 1989); Elijah Anderson, *Streetwise: Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community* (Chicago, 1990); and Mitchell Duneier, *Slim's Table: Race, Respectability, and Masculinity* (Chicago, 1992), although each also discusses the ever changing meaning of decency and ensuing conflicts between the "d heads" (Anderson's phrase) and the streetwise youth who have staked a claim to many inner-city communities.

12. Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (New York, 1966), 284.

13. Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*, 102-109; Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 156; and Shirley Ann Moore, "Blacks In Richmond, California, 1930-1945," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1989).

14. Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*, 104.

15. Bruce M. Ross, *Remembering the Personal Past* (New York, 1991), 151.

16. See, for example, William L. Andrews, *To Tell A Free Story: the First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865* (Urbana, 1988); and William L. Andrews and Nellie McKay, Guest Editors, *Black American Literature Forum* 24 (Summer 1990).

17. Andrews, *To Tell A Free Story*, 1-31.

18. James Fentress and Chris Wickham elaborate on the general themes in *Social Memory* (Cambridge, 1992), especially 20-23. Thelen offers a nice description of the physiology of memory processing in "Memory and American History," 1120-21.

19. Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, x.

20. See, for example, John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, 1992); Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South* (New York, 1987); George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis, 1990); and Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York, 1991). Thelen, "Memory and American History," 1122.

21. Bodnar, *Remaking America*, chapters 1-5 and conclusion.

22. The call for a race, class, and gender approach has been signaled so often that it has the character of a mantra. While an important intervention when first issued, it now has the effects of stunting other equally rewarding developments. Most useful is the developing literature on identity construction emanating from the scholarship in critical theory, postmodernism, and poststructuralism. For examples of useful discussions, see Gerald Early, ed., *Lure and Loathing* (New York, 1993); Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies* (London, 1992), especially chapters 6, 12, 19, 24, 27, and 38; and Linda Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory," *Signs* 13 (1988): 405-36.

23. Differences and solidarity have been twin themes in the historiography from the very beginning. See, for example, W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (New York, 1967; originally published 1899), which discusses class, criminal, status, and social behavioral differences among blacks as well as the search for community cohesion. Building on the pioneering study of differences among black families by E. Franklin Frazier (*The Negro Family in the United States* [Chicago, 1967 edition; originally published 1939]), St. Clair Drake and

Horace Cayton continued this line of investigation in *Black Metropolis* (New York, 1945), detailing the considerable differences among black Chicagoans. Although somewhat muted in the early years, historians in the ghetto school explored internal differences as well. See, for example, Osofsky, *Harlem*, particularly chapter 9; Spear, *Black Chicago*, chapters 3, 4, 8-10; and Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, chapters 5, 6, and 11. Trotter, Lewis, and others have both expanded the discussion of differences among blacks and explored the tension between group solidarity and group unity. For evidence of race as a nonbiological, social fiction see Alain LeRoy Locke, *Race Contacts and Interracial Relations*, ed., Jeffrey C. Stewart (Washington, 1992), 1-14.

24. Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*, 9-10 and 196.

25. Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long* (New York, 1979), chapter 1.

26. See Ben Agger, "Critical Theory, Poststructuralism, Postmodernism: The Sociological Relevance," *Annual Review of Sociology* (1991), 112. Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism versus Poststructuralism," 420-21; see also, Nicola Gavey, "Feminist Poststructuralism and Discourse Analysis," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 13 (1989), 459-475, especially 464-66; and bell hooks, *Yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics* (Boston, 1990), chapter 2, for a small but representative sample of approaches.

27. A fuller discussion of the implications and mechanics of this approach are outlined in Earl Lewis, "Invoking Concepts, Problematizing Identities: The Life of Charles N. Hunter and the Implications for the Study of Gender and Labor," *Labor History* 34 (Spring-Summer 1993), 292-308.

28. Interview, 2 January 1981.

29. Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Chicago, 1988); interview, 2 January 1981.

30. Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*, 80.

31. Michael Katz, ed., *The Underclass Debate: Views From History* (Princeton, 1993), 446. Katz may have simply meant physical distancing, but a degree of social distancing is an assumed result of physical separation.

32. See, Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*; E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States*; St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis*; Osofsky, *Harlem*, particularly chapter 9; Spear, *Black Chicago*, chapters 3, 4, 8-10; and Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, chapters 5, 6, and 11; Trotter, *Black Milwaukee*, chapters 2-6; and Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*, chapters 2-3, 5-7.

33. The best source on household construction, marriage among teachers, and autobiographical data is Russell C. Brignano, *Black Americans in Autobiography* (Durham, 1984). He catalogued and abstracted more than 600 autobiographies, memoirs, and personal narratives. My assessment of the marrying patterns of teachers stems from a close analysis of more than three dozen autobiographies and reviews of pertinent oral histories.

34. The literature on intraracial class negotiations is voluminous and growing. For example, see Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*; "The Talented Tenth," in *The Negro Problem*, ed., Booker T. Washington (New York, 1903); Allison Davis, Burleigh B. Gardner, and Mary R. Gardner, *Deep South: A Sociological Anthropological Study of Caste and Race* (Chicago, 1941); Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*; E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (Glencoe, 1957); Nathan Hare, *The Black Anglo Saxons* (New York, 1965); Oliver C. Cox, *Caste, Class and Race: A Study in Social Dynamics* (Garden City, 1948); Sidney Kronus, *The Black Middle Class* (Columbus, 1971); John H. Bracey, August Meier, Elliot Rudwick, eds., *The Black Sociologist: The First Half Century* (Belmont, 1971); James E. Blackwell, *The Black Community: Diversity and Unity* (New York, 1975); Loretta J. Williams, *Black Freemasonry and Middle-Class Realities* (Columbia, 1980); Michael J. Bell, *The World from Brown's Lounge: An Ethnography*

of *Black Middle Class Play* (Urbana, 1983); Annie S. Barnes, *The Black Middle Class Family: A Study of Black Subsociety, Neighborhood and Home in Interaction* (Bristol, 1985); Bart Landry, *The New Black Middle Class* (Berkeley, 1987); Alice F. Coner-Edwards and Jeanne Spurlock, eds., *Black Families in Crisis: The Middle Class* (New York, 1988); Sharon M. Collins, "The Making of the Black Middle Class," *Social Problems* 30 (April 1983), 369-82; Noel A. Cazenave, "'A Woman's Place': The Attitudes of Middle-Class Black Men," *Phylon* (March 1983), 12-32; Lynn Weber Cannon, "Trends in Class Identification among Black Americans from 1952 to 1978," *Social Science Quarterly* (March 1984), 112-26; Thomas J. Durant, Jr. and Joyce S. Loudon, "The Black Middle Class in America: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives," *Phylon* 47 (December 1986), 253-63; Shelby Steele, "On Being Black and Middle Class," *Commentary* 85 (January 1988), 42-47.

35. James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven, 1991), 1-27.

36. Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (New York, 1977), 370-440. Daryl Cumber Dance, *Shuckin' and Jivin'* (Bloomington, 1978), chapters 10 and 12.

37. Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 47, 48, and 76.

38. The writings of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gaytri Spivak, and others need to be reconsidered, as does the notion of minority discourses so essential to the work of Abdul JanMohamed and a generation of cultural and literary scholars. Locality, bound by intense temporal specificities, has greater meaning than currently noted.

39. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, 427-429.

40. Early Simple tales appeared in the *Chicago Defender*. They were subsequently collected into five books of verse: *Simple Speaks His Mind*, *Simple Takes a Wife*, *Simple Stakes a Claim*, *The Best of Simple*, and *Simple's Uncle Sam*. Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes: I Dream A World*, vol. II, 1941-1967 (New York, 1988), 62-67. Charles Scruggs, *Sweet Home: Invisible Cities in the Afro-American Novel* (Baltimore, 1993), 1-12.

41. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, 427-429.

42. Robin D. G. Kelley, "'We Are Not What We Seem': Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *Journal of American History* 80 (June 1993), 84.

43. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*.

44. Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*, 167.

45. Elsa Barkley Brown, "Constructing a Life and a Community: A Story of the Life of Maggie Lena Walker," *OAH Magazine of History* 7 (Summer 1993), 28-29. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, 1993).

46. David Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York, 1978); Susan Tucker, "A Complex Bond—Southern Black Domestic Workers and Their White Employers," *Frontiers* IX (1987), 6-13; Elizabeth Clark Lewis, "This Work Had an End: African American Domestic Workers in Washington, D.C., 1910-1940" in *To Toil the Livelong Day: America's Women at Work, 1780-1980*, Carol Groneman and Mary Beth Norton, eds., (Ithaca, 1987), 207-208.

47. Eric Arnesen, "Following the Color Line of Labor: Black Workers and the Labor Movement before 1930," *Radical History Review* 55 (1993), 53-87; Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*, 46-65, 137-148, and 173-187; Peter Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South* (Philadelphia, 1984); August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW* (New York, 1979); Eric Foner, *Nothing But Freedom: Emancipation and its Legacy* (Baton Rouge, 1983); Joe William Trotter, Jr., *Coal, Class, and Color: Blacks in Southern West Virginia* (Urbana, 1990); Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans* (New York, 1991); and Alice and Staughton Lynd, eds., *Rank and File: Personal Histories by Working-Class Organizers* (Boston, 1973), 113.

48. Kelley, "We Are Not What We Seem," 75-112.

49. The politics of memory is discussed in Scott A. Sandage, "A Marble House Divided: The Lincoln Memorial, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Politics of Memory, 1939-1963," *Journal of American History* 80 (June 1993), 135-167.

50. *Ledger Star* 8 November 1974; *The Virginian-Pilot* 9 November 1974.

51. *The Virginian-Pilot* 19 June 1967, 9 November 1974; *Norfolk Journal and Guide* 25 April 1959, 16 November 1974. *Norfolk Labor Journal* 6 September 1945.

52. The most recent evidence of this is Bruce Nelson, "Organized Labor and the Struggle for Black Equality in Mobile during World War II," *Journal of American History* 80 (December 1993), 962-988; Michael Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers* (Urbana, 1993); Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*; James R. Grossman, "The White Man's Union," in Trotter, ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective*, 83-105.

53. *The Virginian-Pilot* 19 June 1967, 9 November 1974; *Norfolk Journal and Guide* 25 April 1959, 16 November 1974. *Norfolk Labor Journal* 6 September 1945.

54. Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, 1989), chapters 15 and 16.

55. Vincent Harding, "Responsibilities of the Black Scholar to the Community," in *The State of Afro-American History*, 280.

56. This point was reiterated on March 5, 1993, when I delivered a public lecture in Norfolk on black life during World War II. Several area residents reclaimed me as one of them and applauded my decision to write the book.