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Lee Papa and Luke Eric Lassiter
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"*While their play had clearly initiated discussion of race past and present . . ., their ethnographically based representation was as much a political and ethical act as a documentary one.*"

The Muncie Race Riots of 1967, Representing Community Memory through Public Performance, and Collaborative Ethnography between Faculty, Students, and the Local Community

LEE PAPA
LUKE ERIC LASSITER
Ball State University

LEE PAPA is an assistant professor of drama studies in the English Department at Ball State University. A playwright whose works have been performed from Chicago to California, Papa also teaches community-based theatre workshops. He is currently working on a book about Class Pictures.

LUKE ERIC LASSITER is an associate professor of anthropology at Ball State University. His books

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In October 1967, a footnote in the larger national struggle over civil rights for African Americans occurred at Southside High School in Muncie, Indiana. On the nineteenth, a fight broke out between about 100 black and white students in the halls of the school, where the football team was named the "Rebels," and a modified Confederate flag flew just in front of the building. In spring 2001, a group of Ball State University faculty and students along with a group of more than thirty consultants from the Muncie community engaged in a collaborative ethnographic project to present the community's memory of the event as a theatrical performance. This essay details this process as well as its consequences for practicing reciprocal and collaborative representation.

Keywords: *African American studies; collaborative ethnography; memory; performance; race; community studies*

Lee Papa. The moment of explosion was probably inevitable. I had been in my office with four students, three of whom had decided they didn't want their real names on the play, and this decision angered the fourth student. They wanted to be writers, Jenny, Betsy, and Brett exclaimed, and if the play was a failure, they didn't want to be associated with it. I told them that I didn't care if they wanted to sign the play "Long John Silver," that to remember that if it was a success, then that success belonged to Mr. Silver and not to them. Then Betsy, my assistant, told me that we should cancel the upcoming presentation, that

Luke Eric Lassiter. The moment of explosion was probably inevitable. I sat in the audience for the first public performance of *Class Pictures*. The students had finished the first draft of the play and presented a public reading to the Muncie community. More than 150 people attended, both black and white, and I wondered how this historical representation of Muncie race relations would go over, in this, the students' first attempt to entertain large-scale feedback from the community.

In the first several minutes, the discussion was cordial and restrained as various community members aired congratulatory

include The Power of Kiowa Song: A Collaborative Ethnography *(1998),* The Jesus Road: Kiowas, Christianity, and Indian Hymns *(with Clyde Ellis and Ralph Kotay, 2002),* Invitation to Anthropology *(2002), and* Signifying Serpents and Mardi Gras Runners: Representation and Identity in Selected Souths *(with Celeste Ray, 2003).*

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the play was an embarrassment and would just enrage the community, that we were dredging up old wounds to exploit them. I threw up my hands and said to the three, "You're all full of shit. You know why you're full of shit? Because you don't even realize what a good thing you've done, and that pisses me off." And I stalked off. Not the best pedagogical approach, I'm aware.

But that, of course, was not the explosion I'm talking about. I'm talking about the moment in class right after my outburst when Diane talked to the class about coming together for the good of the project, that the class had divided into camps, and that the fifteen students were losing sight of our goals: to work with the community, to tell the story of the Muncie race riots of 1967, and to provoke community discussion about race through the play they were writing. In the spirit of Diane's honesty, Jenny spoke up about how Lois's ego had gotten in the way of her judgment. By this point, Carrie had already left the seminar room in tears, followed by Jarrod, who tried to console her. I had been accused of betraying the trust of some of the students. The more conservative white students proclaimed the erasure of working-class white characters from the play, and the more radical black students declared the play was a whitewash of the intense comments and pointed out slight discrepancies in the script. After some time, however, the mood suddenly shifted when one of the students' white consultants spoke up from the audience. "One of the things I was struck by was your talk about the Confederate flag," he said, referring to how the students had represented how the conflict had erupted around this issue. "What was inserted about it was not my experience when I was there [at the high school]. It's okay with me [how you've represented the conflict here], but there's a different opinion about what happened with the flag. It would be nice if there was some actual reference made to transmit [to the audience] that this historical fact is very much in skew. In fact, it's my understanding—and that of my brother here—that it was actually a black student who came up with the Rebel Flag [as the high school's sporting teams' emblem]. I know you guys had that as part of your information, but that wasn't transmitted either. I also remember from the riots that the black kids who were fighting against me had real problems. But I really think that the Rebel Flag thing is something that's needed by the race industry today, and is being made more of than what was actually happening at that time."

A hush fell over the crowd, and some people were visibly nervous

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emotions felt in the town when the race riots occurred. So Jenny spoke up to clear the air, and Lois blew up, screaming at Jenny that she had given so much to the project: "How dare you? How dare you?" Lois kept saying, along with "Fuck you!" During the outburst, Carrie and Jarrod had reentered the room and looked confusedly at me, standing ready to leap in-between Lois and Jenny should that be necessary. It wasn't, and when Lois left, I decided to play the martyr and told the class to put any blame they had on me as the organizer of this whole project on race, Muncie, Indiana, and oral history. And then I told them to get back to work—it was Thursday and we had only three days before we presented our script to the Muncie community that Sunday. Afterwards, everyone dispersed in pairs, in groups, and I walked around to address each person to make sure the class wasn't about to go over the cliff entirely. By the end of the day, they had written three new scenes, worked out editing problems with the footage, and began talking to each other again.

as they shifted in their chairs waiting to hear what would come next.

"I disagree with that," responded one of the students' black consultants. Nervous laughter rose from the audience. "I was an eyewitness through the whole thing. And the flag was *definitely* one of the main reasons for the problems at the school."

"Were you a student there, sir?" retorted the white consultant.

"No, I'm a citizen of Indiana."

"See, that's what I'm saying. I think that some of these things you're saying that was happening in the school was actually happening among the adults. The kids were oblivious to it."

"I was chairman of the education committee of the Muncie Human Rights Commission and all complaints came to us. I know *exactly* what happened."

"It's a disputed fact, then."

Lee jumped into the fray: "We tried to show that there was dispute *about* it. . . . Believe me, in class, we argued back and forth if this was something that we should include."

THE MUNCIE RACE RIOTS OF 1967 (LEE PAPA)

In October 1967, a footnote in the larger national struggle over civil rights for African Americans occurred at Southside High School in Muncie, Indiana. On the nineteenth, a fight broke out between about 100 black and white students in the halls of the school, where the

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football team was named the "Rebels" and a modified Confederate flag flew just below the American flag on the pole in front of the building. School was dismissed early on that Thursday, and a heated public forum that night addressed the underrepresentation of African Americans in student organizations. The next day was a great deal more chaotic: After more fights in the halls, a group of black and white students who had participated in the previous day's actions agreed to meet to discuss the grievances. However, despite this movement toward a peaceful settlement, the students who left Southside for the day involved students from Central and other high schools in a racially motivated fight involving more than 250 students in downtown Muncie. Also, more than 150 white students held a kind of spontaneous pep rally in the parking lot outside of Southside even as the biracial committee attempted to resolve the situation. Football games in which Central and Southside were to play were canceled for that weekend. The following Monday, police patrolled the halls of Southside, and the students talked about bringing down the Confederate flag. Contained within this seemingly small incident are multiple revelations about race in America just before the 1968 Civil Rights Act, about prevalent ignorance, about prescient action, about the opening of dialogue against all odds, about discovering difference and commonality amid the outcries of polarized groups.

Two small observations about the press coverage of these events in the Muncie daily newspapers: not a single editorial or letter directly addressed the fights; one letter mourned the forfeited football game. And on the day that *The Muncie Evening Press* ran its coverage of the larger outbreak of violence, a seemingly unconnected cartoon ran on the page after the article: Named *First Call* by Ben Wicks, the single panel depicts a father in Ku Klux Klan robes and hood reading a book to his son, who is in bed and also wearing a Klan hood. The father reads, "Once upon a time, there was a big, bad civil rights worker . . . ."

FROM UNIVERSITY COURSE TO PERFORMANCE (LEE PAPA)

In the spring of 2001—along with historian Michael William Doyle, Muncie African American community activist Hurley Goodall, and ethnographers Luke Eric Lassiter and Elizabeth Campbell—I led a group of fifteen undergraduate students in an interdisciplinary

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exploration of these events. As part of the Virginia B. Ball Center for Creative Inquiry at Ball State University in Muncie, students from anthropology, history, telecommunications, English, theatre, education, and journalism worked solely on this project. Their goal was to create a multimedia stage play based on oral histories done in consultation with members of the Muncie community. Essentially, the play would contain video excerpts of the interviews, as well as actors on the stage. In this way, the play would be like the works of Anna Deavere Smith, a performer whose plays include *Twilight*, a piece based on interviews about the riots in Los Angeles after the Rodney King police brutality trial verdict, as well as the recent play *The Laramie Project*, in which a company of actors interviewed Wyoming residents about the murder of Matthew Sheppard and then performed those monologues. Ultimately, our play, *Class Pictures*, would be written by the students and given a staged reading including the multimedia elements in front of more than 300 people at the Muncie Center for the Arts. At the staged reading, we invited comment and critique from our audience—comment and critique that would be integrated back into the play. We will return to the collaborative component of the project below, but suffice it to say now that the course was designed as a kind of reciprocal and collaborative journey for the students: they would have to confront certain issues and ideologies before embarking on the interviews, and in the end, confront an open, public response to their representation of the community.

In an effort to properly prepare for their project, the students were first trained in the methods of oral history and ethnography. As part of this exploration of engaging with issues of race and racism, the class traveled to Birmingham, Alabama, to tour the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and visit sites associated with Martin Luther King, Jr., and the turmoil in that city during the 1960s. There, the students met with James Armstrong, whose children were among the first group of students to desegregate schools in the city, and they spoke with a woman whose child was in the 16th Street Baptist Church when it was bombed in 1963. The idea was for the students to encounter the real, lived history that many of them had not confronted or even thought about, for them to encounter the kind of history that they would attempt to represent.

In another trip, the class visited the Chicago Historical Society, where they toured an exhibit about the stark racial divisions in the city's neighborhoods. (They also viewed a number of plays in order to give

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them a better understanding of theatrical techniques.) Again, in this way, the students' own experiences became enmeshed with the experiences of those involved in the struggles against racism in the United States.

To trace this journey, the majority of the writing the students did was in the form of a journal where they could reflect on their lives, the class, the experiences, and other engagements with race and identity. For instance, the following entry, from the journal of Nicole, a white telecommunications major, was in response to a discussion about the Civil Rights Institute:

> In an earlier journal entry, I talked about how someone my dad was friends with unfortunately had his house burned down because his family was African-American. Well, it was strange to hear this story from my dad. My older sister once had a boyfriend who was half-black and she wanted to bring him over for dinner at our house. My dad did not want him to come over to the house because he was black.
>
> It is strange with my dad. He would tell us stories of how he brought us to an African-American co-worker's house for get-togethers and barbecues when my sisters and I were little. But then when his daughter was dating someone who was black he didn't approve. Finally, my mom coaxed my dad into letting Kim bring her boyfriend over and everything turned out okay.
>
> My dad has never made comments that were racist, but the fact that he didn't want his daughter's African-American boyfriend to come over shows that he is not very open-minded. My mom was very good friends with an African-American couple when I was younger. They come over all the time and my family went over to their house. My dad was always okay with that. The only time that my dad has dealt with race in a negative way, a racist way was with Kim. I still don't understand it, and maybe I haven't figured my dad out.

In this way, the students grappled with their increasingly complex understanding of race in Muncie and in the country. Earlier in the semester, Jarrod, who would prove to be the most radical of the African American students in the class, responded to one of the first class discussions with the following entry:

> The second half of the class was very interesting. We engaged in a conversation about roots and people's backgrounds. I was struck when Lee began discussing the fact that he was racist during his youth. This is the

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> second situation where I have been confronted with an instructor who has openly announced that in the past they had a problem with racial prejudice. It was quite interesting to hear his points of view that were considerably liberal and to know how conservative his roots were.

In reference to another African American student in class, Jarrod wrote:

> The fact that Bryant did not know he was "Black" until he was told so in the 4th grade and it was due to the fact that his hair was "nappy" was upsetting to me. There is so much more to being black. It is not only an appearance—it is also a way of life and a way of defining yourself.

During the second half of the semester, students interviewed Muncie residents, including those involved in the 1967 riots and current Southside High School students. While the interview period was confined to a short couple of weeks, the fifteen students managed to conduct more than thirty interviews, mostly on digital video. This process forced the class to confront the disparity in attitudes among black and white Muncie residents.

While the black community in Muncie was, for the most part, welcoming and encouraging about this exploration, a great deal of suspicion existed in the working-class white community. Much of this animosity seemed to come from a maddeningly typical town and gown split in Muncie: Ball State University often excluded the rest of the community from its activities. But also relevant here was the fact that Muncie has been studied often by outsiders: the Middletown books by Robert and Helen Lynd created an image that Muncie has labored under since the 1920s (see Lynd and Lynd 1929).

More recently, two media incidents created a heightened suspicion of outsiders studying the Muncie community. In 1970, NBC's national evening news ran a series of reports over the course of the week that used Muncie as a way to take the pulse of the nation. In addition to highlighting the working-class white community and college students, one of the features focused on race relations in Muncie, and Southside High School in particular. The report showed the Confederate flag flying over the school, and featured a basketball game where black and white players shot hoops as the students and spectators—all white—sat in the stands waving small Confederate flags under two large Confederate flags attached to the wall behind them. Indeed, so provocative was this report that when I showed a video of it to the students in the seminar, a

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heated argument ensued about whether or not the Southside students should have known the symbolism of the flag.

In 1980, Oscar-winning documentary filmmaker Peter Davis, with producers from the area, produced a series of films for PBS called *Middletown*. Each film focused on some aspect of daily life that was similar to what the Lynds focused on in their studies: work, home, and government. The film on education, *Seventeen*, directed by Joel DeMott and Jeff Kreines, ended up focusing on students at Southside High School—and their drinking, drug use, interracial dating, and their apathy to the whole education process. Laced with profanity, *Seventeen* pulls no punches in its presentation of class and race. The four lawsuits that ensued as a result of this film, as well as the death threats against the filmmakers, led to *Seventeen* never being broadcast in the United States, although it was shown at film festivals. So strong is the effect of *Seventeen* on the Muncie community that several potential interviewees refused to talk to the seminar students because of a newspaper report that showed Peter Davis speaking to the students.

Ultimately, the challenge for the students was to create a sufficiently broad oral history examining racial and class differences in Muncie. The students thus interviewed a cross-section of people, both black and white, old and young, liberal and conservative. Included in this group were former students of both Muncie high schools, current students and teachers, community leaders, and others involved in the 1967 riots. Many told stories about their place in Muncie in the 1960s. Take, for example, Brad:

> At the church, Trinity Church, there was going to be a community meeting. And this was going to be between teens, blacks and whites. And we were going to get together to talk about things and really what was going on in Muncie and try to get good things happening. I remember going to the basement of that church, and things got ugly. And the problem was that the kids from Trinity were saying things about their experiences with whites and these were bad experiences. And they kept saying, "you," meaning the whites, and pointing at us. And I was not old enough to be able to separate the personal "you" from the white "you," you know, "we're talking about the white community." And so I thought they were really telling us that we were awful people and that we had done all these things when, in truth, if you looked at what they were saying I hadn't done any of those things, not that I knew of . . . .

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> I really got mad, and I remember some of the kids with me got mad, too. And I remember either at a break or at the end walking away, and I saw Reverend Williams, and I remember saying to him, "How can they say this to us, to me? They're saying that I'm doing this and I'm saying I'm not doing those things." And he said, "You have to remember that they are used to being judged by their skin color. And now you're being judged by your skin color."

One of the most divisive interviews involved Ernestine, who was one of the students whose protests against the administration in 1967 led directly to the racial unrest. She was interviewed by a black student and a white student, and in an interesting parallel to Brad's story, Jenny, the white student, felt like she was constantly being attacked by Ernestine, while Nataki, the African American student, believed Jenny was simply being spoken to as a representative of whites. Ernestine did not tell many stories; instead, she offered a glimpse into the anger and resentment of the time period. On racism in the United States, she said:

> Anybody as dark as I am, they hurry up to get them back to their countries. I just wonder what is the United States about? My Bible tells me I shouldn't have these feelings, and my parents raised me not to have these feelings. Indoctrinated through school, I have been taught not to have these feelings. But I still have those feelings and I still want to see justice and I want to see my grandchildren go through school without being treated with prejudice because they have an intelligence that is not appreciated by some.

Later, when asked what would make her feel more comfortable in the United States, she answered, "I want to feel like I'm white. I want to feel like I'm KKK. I want to have all the freedoms they have. Simple as that."

The students combined all of this information—the history, the interviews, the journals—into *Class Pictures*, a play in which eleven actors portrayed a multiple number of characters (including themselves, as the interviewers) from the past and present. But the students did not present *Class Pictures* as a final product. They presented a reading of the play's first draft, a reading meant to invite critique and commentary from the Muncie community.

On stage, the students presented the stories of several students from Southside in the late 1960s: a young white female and African

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FIGURE 1: Students Read a Draft of *Class Pictures* for the Muncie Community.
Photo by James W. Miles © 2001. Courtesy Virginia B. Ball Center for Creative Inquiry, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

American male who flirt with an interracial relationship, a confused white male who wants to stay out of the fights, an African American male who ends up quitting school to go to Vietnam, and an African American female who is radicalized by the riots. Other characters included two teachers with different sympathies in the fight and a former student commenting on the riots. As a part of the reading, three large monitors on stage played excerpts from interviews of nearly two dozen people, including one conducted with an eight-year-old girl, who reflected on the consequences of having a white mother and black father: "I think there should be two whites and two blacks [in marriage]. Because if it was two blacks and two whites, it would be better for them to talk . . . if we had a white father then all our children could be white. Because once your mom has a baby, it's all brown because of the dad."

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The students presented *Class Pictures* in two separate forums with more than 150 people attending each—an audience including a healthy mix of both white and black "town" and "gown." The performance had been bumpy, but in the end, the students (and several actors who participated in the staged reading) carried off the integration of performance and video with great success because it had sparked an open and honest dialogue about race.

THE FORUMS: REPRESENTING MUNCIE AND RACE (LUKE ERIC LASSITER)

The first forum ended with a continued discussion about the various ways that community members had viewed the race riots, in many cases along racial lines. All told, however, the students, faculty, and community members agreed that this was a difficult topic to represent publicly. But instead of opening new wounds as some of the students thought it might, the performance seemed to engender a refreshing discussion about ongoing race relations, not just in Muncie, but in the country as a whole. Indeed, many said, "So few forums take up race like this." In fact, community members pushed the students to consider emphasizing racial conflict even more in their final production so as to encourage further open discussion about race relations. "Why don't you mention the South Carolina rebel flag issue," wrote one forum participant on a response sheet (also handed out by the students). "I agree with the comments tonight that the play could be 'edgier'," wrote another forum participant, "and [that you could have] emphasized the actual conflict a little more."

The second staged reading and public forum echoed many of the themes and issues that emerged in the first. After the performance was complete and all the students had gathered on the stage to field questions and comments, Lee Papa once again explained the purposes and intentions of the staged reading as he had done in the first forum: "What we'd like to do is just open things up. This is a work in progress. We're interested in how to make this a better, more complete, piece. . . ."

"I thought this was extraordinary," said one forum participant soon after Lee finished. "I had tears in my eyes. I especially liked the part of the play with the black and white families."

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FIGURE 2: Students listen to the Muncie community respond to *Class Pictures*.
Photo by James W. Miles © 2001. Courtesy Virginia B. Ball Center for Creative Inquiry, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

"Did you ever find out exactly *why* there was a fight?" another forum participant interjected.

One of the students, Lew, responded: "Well, the issue is very complex. . . ."

"The most exciting part of the whole project," interjected Brett, another student, "was watching how, in our research, one person would say, 'This is what caused it'; and then we'd have another person say, 'This is what caused it'—and it would completely contradict what the first person said.

CLASS PICTURES: SCENE 3

(Lights up on two kitchens. Morning, breakfast time before school. White mother, BRAD and NANCY at a kitchen table. Black mother, JOE, and TONYA at same kind/size kitchen table.)

Brad's Mom

You going to finish that?

Brad

Ma, you know I get nervous before a math test.

Joe *(overlap)*

before a math test. My stomach hurts too much to eat.

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And it would go back and forth. So one [single] reason was impossible to find."

"I thought it was really good, too," said another forum participant after some more discussion. "I really liked the family parts, too, because I really think it showed the commonality that both 'sides' felt. . . . I think the feelings were really important there. And I think you bring that out. And when you see the conflict there, you realize that there are more similarities than differences. I think it gives a good message for what you guys are trying to say. I think that's important."

"Yeah, that ought to be explored more," someone else said, "where you actually have both families [represented]. Somewhere in there, there ought to be a little more of that. But it *really* was effective."

For the next several minutes, the audience and students continued to discuss the various ways that the students had represented race relations in the Muncie community, from interracial dating to racial conflict. But soon the conversation turned to what the students had learned. Many of the Muncie community were curious if the students (both black and white) had carried away anything from this. "Have any of your lives changed for the better or worse

Joe's Mom
That bacon ain't cheap. You think your father works in that factory for fun? No. He works to support our family.

Brad's Mom *(overlap)*
support our family. So you better clean that plate *(starts to clean up the table)*. So besides that test, how is school going?

Brad
It's okay I guess.

Brad's Mom
(to Nancy) Any more talk about the flag?

Nancy
(shrug) I don't know.

Brad
Me and my friends aren't talking about it.

Joe
(overlap) aren't talking about it.

Joe's Mom
Well you should be. That flag is a disgrace.

Joe
Ma, it's just a flag.

Joe's Mom
Joseph! How could you say that? That flag is about whites always puttin' us down.

Joe
It's just a symbol of school pride.

Brad
(overlap) symbol of school pride.

Brad's Mom
It is so much more than that. The Rebel flag is about where we come from. The flag is something to fight for.

Joe's Mom
to fight for. We have to stand up for ourselves, no matter what.

Joe
I don't know Ma.

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since you started this project?" one forum participant asked pointedly.

Irving was the first to respond: "Our class, we've had our own debates, like how it [i.e., the riot] started. We had come to that point where we [realized] that we're not trying to prove what happened—you know, where two people contradict each other—it doesn't matter, really. 'You can believe what you want to believe, and I can believe what I want to believe', you know. But I think everyone has grown. Actually, the conversation [in the play], 'You Don't Know What It's Like to be Me' (scene 19), that was an actual conversation our class had. And it was edited down a lot."

The students and audience burst into laughter. "Yeah, we've had problems within the group discussing things," said Diane. "It's a touchy subject. It gets personal. But I think we've all grown—as people—from it, too. It's definitely been a learning experience in a lot of ways."

Brad

(simultaneously) I don't know Ma.

Joe's Mom

Well you better know.

Brad's Mom

(simultaneously) Well you better know.

Joe's Mom

Any black kids on student council? Or in the honor society? Can Tonya be a cheerleader? When I go to the school board meetings, they won't listen to me. It takes 50 other black parents for them to even let us speak.

Brad's Mom

(overlap) them to even let us speak. We aren't one of the rich families around here, and they don't listen to us, so we have to shout until they hear us.

Joe's Mom

(overlap) shout until they hear us.

Brad

What if I don't want to shout?

Joe

What if I don't care?

Brad's Mom

Little boys don't care. Grown men shout.

Joe's Mom

(overlap) Grown men shout. I'm trying to teach you something boy.

Brad

We're gonna be late. *(All kids stand and grab books from the table. They begin to exit to opposite side of stage)*

Both moms

Good luck on your test!

(Moms exit. Lights fade except on boys crossing at center. Audio of school bell. They see each other, their pace slows. They meet eyes, then pass with out saying anything and continue to walk offstage in opposite directions. Lights out.)

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TRANSFORMING NEGOTIATED ORAL HISTORY AND MEMORY INTO COLLABORATIVE REPRESENTATION (LUKE ERIC LASSITER)

The use of oral history and ethnography as the basis for public, community performances is commonplace (see, e.g., Bouvier 1994; Pollock 1990; Wolf 1994). Translating these models as pedagogical or research tools is also well known and articulated (see, e.g., Allen and Garner 1995; Jeffries 1999; Mienczakowski 1995; Turner and Turner 1986). But what remains less developed (in the literature at least) is an approach that combines ethnography and performance into a common thread of reciprocal and collaborative practice—a reciprocal and collaborative practice that involves academic faculty, students, *and* community members in the processes of representation from beginning to end, from ethnographic research to performance.

Several ethnographers have written about implementing collaborative ethnographic research (see, e.g., Belgrave and Smith 1995; May and Pattilo-McCoy 2000; Trujillo 1999) or on the need to more fully develop a collaborative ethnographic practice (see, e.g., Marcus and Fischer 1999, xvii). But what these ethnographers often mean by "collaborative ethnography" is the bringing together of multiple ethnographers into a common research and writing project (cf. Gottlieb 1995). The collaborative practice used by the Ball State students in *Class Pictures* was much more than this.

Although the interdisciplinary team of students—all from a diversity of majors from anthropology to journalism to theatre—worked together to collaboratively research the Muncie race riots of 1967, they also sought to extend the fullest meaning of "collaboration" to the very process of representation itself. Importantly, because they sought community commentary through open, staged readings, the public forums, in turn, informed the students' re-writing of the final play, which continues as we write this.

This was no accident, of course. The students—advised by Papa and the team of other researchers—consciously sought to push into practice the reciprocal and collaborative ethnographic approaches advanced by Elaine Lawless (1992, 1993), Glenn D. Hinson (2000), and me (Lassiter 1998, 2000, 2001)—among others. To put it simply, this approach extends the dialogic metaphor—which now informs the writing of most contemporary ethnography (Marcus and Fischer 1999)—to

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the actual practice of writing ethnography (see Lawless 1992 for a fuller discussion). It invites commentary on the ethnographic representation itself—not to add just another layer of bureaucracy to the research process, but to invite deeper co-interpretations from both the "researchers" and "the researched."

In engaging this collaborative practice, the students took the opportunity to merge performance and everyday life (Read 1995). Indeed, they came to realize that their work to represent the Muncie race riots to the Muncie community was much more than representing the memory of a past event on stage. While their play had clearly initiated discussion of race past and present among themselves and the Muncie community in a open, public forum, their ethnographically based representation was as much a political and ethical act as a documentary one—political in the sense that they engaged a community and national discourse on race; ethical in the sense that they realized their moral responsibility to the community to represent the race riots in a way that would invite commentary and reciprocal exchange instead of shutting dialogue down (as was the case in other representations of the Muncie community, like *Seventeen*).

As a pedagogical tool, combining ethnography and performance within a collaborative framework emphasizes that doing community-based research and representation is much, much more than just "understanding culture"—which seems to be the standard approach to teaching ethnography. Collaborative practice brings the deeper complexities of doing ethnography and representing others to the forefront. In the context of their collaboration with the community (and to a lesser extent, their collaboration with each other), the students' project was placed squarely within a political and ethical milieu. And the community commentary and discussion helped to solidify the project's location within this milieu.

The representation of the Confederate flag is a case in point. Through their collaborative practice, the students learned that memory is not just a process of "remembering" and "forgetting," of being "correct" or "wrong." Memory is a process of engaging the past through metaphor and analogy—constructions that can give powerful meaning to the present. Community memory, in particular, is not a thing or an event or point in time; it is a negotiated process that emerges in the context of narrative and dialogue (Teski and Climo 1995). Representing the Confederate flag meant engaging the memory of that symbol on several

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levels, not just between black and white community members, but between past and present. Moreover, they realized they had to engage the issue within a moral and ethical responsibility to the community—just like collaborative ethnographers do. In the end, they had learned what most ethnographers come to understand: while we learn about others, we come to learn about ourselves.

SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS (LEE PAPA)

One of my areas of study is workers' theatre, a theatre movement that develops plays within a community for that community. In my research on Clifford Odets' 1935 play *Waiting for Lefty*, about the strike meeting of a group of taxi drivers, the excitement over the play's opening night impacted me: members of the audience were too thrilled to let the actors leave—they stayed and shared stories and calls to activism with the performers (Clurman 1945). I always think about that when I doubt the potential for theatre to have importance to an audience, and I never thought I'd be part of something that, for me, would have a similar impact. When the performance of *Class Pictures* ended and the forum was finished after thirty minutes of solid talking, many in the audience still stayed behind to talk to the actors, the students, the interviewees. They told us about all the other people who should have an opportunity to see the play, and they also gave us suggestions on how to improve it. I don't want to call this part of the evening "cathartic" because catharsis allows you to leave the emotions behind in the theatre, but the urge to talk and listen, hear and be heard, was strong in that auditorium. And the students recognized this: almost as a whole, the class realized what we had worked the entire semester for and what they had almost willingly lost friendships over.

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This past June, I was driving down a street in Muncie that becomes a large bridge over the many railroad tracks that crisscross the town below. The bridge also marks the border between north and south Muncie. This brief bit of road had been dedicated to Martin Luther King, Jr., and it was marked with a sign that placed King's face in front of a waving American flag. When I drove past, the sign had a swastika spray painted on it, and it had been shot full of holes. Shortly after, the

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sign was taken down with no marker left to indicate the road's designation.

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