

NARRATIVE PATHS OF NATIVE AMERICAN RESISTANCE:  
TRACING AGENCY AND COMMEMORATION IN JOURNALISM TEXTS  
IN EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA, 1872-1988.

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## ADSTRACT

Lorraine Ahearn. "Narrative Paths of Native Resistance:  
Tracing American Indian Agency and Commemoration in Journalism Texts  
of Eastern North Carolina, 1872-1988."  
(Under the direction of Barbara Friedman)

The Lumbees of Robeson County, the largest tribe of Native Americans east of the Mississippi River, have persisted against the grain of Western historical narratives. A century of social repression left the sprawling Eastern Seaboard county, home to an estimated 50,000 American Indians, with among the bleakest economic outlooks in the South. Lacking full federal recognition, both the Lumbees and Tuscaroras nevertheless resisted marginalization, in part by invoking formidable historical identities that bind Indians to the land and to each other.

This dissertation is concerned with a particular mechanism in the performance of identity: self-representation in mass media. Four historical markers of Indian identity in the century under examination all involve Native American resistance to white supremacy, and in each instance, media played an operative role in portraying common themes that linked these historical eras, suggesting that intertextuality recirculates narratives back to the community, and that journalism itself becomes a formation of memory.

The purpose here is to gain insight into agency and the process of transculturation as

it applies to self-representation. A fundamental assumption is that journalism is a narrative form, seeking to impose structure on the chaos of reality. A parallel premise is the notion of cultural scripts, continuous templates that imbue the Native American landscape of the present with felt attachments to the past.

The question this research poses is how a racial isolate appropriated and subverted journalism narratives for the purpose of autonomy and as a site of memory formation. A broader project turns on mutual fulfillment of narratives. How might appropriation, by disrupting mainstream journalists' sense of distance as neutral observers, alter the form of journalism itself?

*To my mother,  
Lorraine Barbieri Ahearn*

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A number of professional journalists lent their time and insights, and I am most grateful to Bruce Barton, Connee Brayboy, and James Locklear, who accepted me as an outsider to the Lumbee world, but also an insider to the journalism world. As with all the great reporters I have known—many in the footnotes, all reflected in these pages—I am proud to have walked with you and to have been part of our profession.

To my family large and small—especially Kevin, Suzzy, Mickey, and Mary Kate—thank you for making my days a gift.

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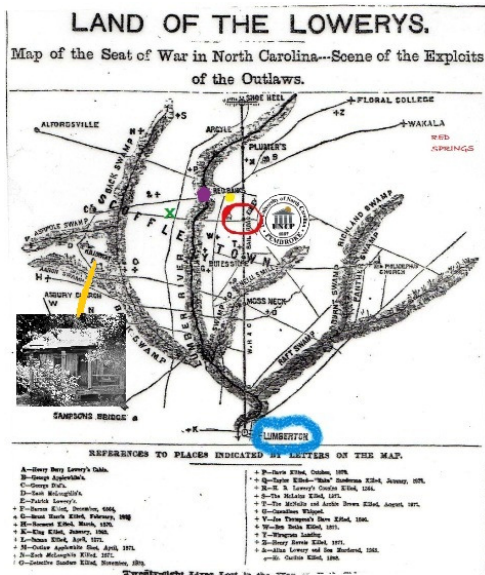
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**Figure 1-a.**

Edited *New York Herald* Map  
Source: lumbee.web.unc.edu

Scuffletown is near the current Town of Pembroke, bordered by Lumbee River and Back Swamp.

Lumberton, the county seat, is to the south and Shoe Heel to the north, on the railroad line.



**Figure 1-b.**

Current Township Designations.

Maxton is to the west.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION

In March 1872, a *New York Herald* correspondent traveled to the backcountry of North Carolina in quest of a journalistic coup. From a remote settlement amid the scorched turpentine scrub of the post-Civil War, a storied band of mostly Native American outlaws had eluded capture for nine years. While harassing Confederate Home Guard militia and the Ku Klux Klan, the Lowry Gang took part in a series of robberies, revenge killings, and a dramatic jailbreak chronicled in the *New York Times* and other national media. The gang's renown grew with the portrayal of its leader Henry Berry Lowry as a contemporary "Robin Hood," and the offer of a \$12,000 reward, the largest US bounty up to that time.<sup>1</sup>

As *Herald* reporter A. B. Henderson arrived at the outpost near Scuffletown, with Lowry now reputed to be dead or disappeared, the suspicious gang members considered shooting the journalist just as they had executed several spies previously. Henderson told the accused that the "great paper of America" had published previous accounts about them "as furnished by the white people of Robeson County," but now wanted to air the fugitives' side, to provide a "clear and just conception of the circumstances that had made them outlaws and how they lived."<sup>2</sup> The gang members reconsidered, Henderson wrote; they decided that they were

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Magdol, "Against the Gentry: An Inquiry into a Southern Lower-Class Community and Culture, 1865-1870," *Journal of Social History* 6, no. 3 (April 1, 1973): 259–283.

William McKee Evans, *To Die Game: The Story of the Lowry Band, Indian Guerrillas of Reconstruction* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> "The Swamp Angels: Our Captured Correspondent With the Lowery Outlaws," *New York Herald*, April 6, 1872, 4.

"glad of an opportunity to tell their story to the country," he reported, because, they said, "the papers were telling so many d--d lies about them."<sup>3</sup> They assured the reporter that he would be safe, and let him keep his pistol. They led him blindfolded through near waist-deep swamps to a secluded hideout.<sup>4</sup>

The encounter yielded a series of exclusive *Herald* dispatches reprinted in metropolitan newspapers around the country, reissued in dime novel format as *The Swamp Outlaws* by two publishers and adapted into an 1872 play that ran successfully in New York City, *Swamp Angels, Or, The Outlaws of Carolina*,<sup>5</sup> This was the first of a dozen retellings of the life of Lowry.<sup>6</sup> Whetting nineteenth century readers' appetite for larger-than-life outlaws and exotic locales, the Lowry War was a plum assignment for the up-and-coming Henderson and other correspondents the *Herald* dispatched to the swamps of eastern North Carolina.

Yet viewed from the reverse, the outlaws stood to gain as well. For a band of desperadoes caught in an increasingly hopeless web, the *Herald* offered a platform to redress white supremacy. Not only did Lowry emerge from this era of media coverage as a folk hero and totem of resistance by Lumbees; such interactions, this study argues, established a

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> George Townsend, *The Swamp Outlaws, or, The North Carolina Bandits: Being a Complete History of the Modern Rob Roys and Robin Hood* (New York: Robert M. DeWitt, 1872); "Bowery Theatre," *New York Herald*, June 17, 1872, 3; Thomas Allston Brown, *A History of the New York Stage: From the First Performance in 1732 to 1901* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1903), 151, 159.

<sup>6</sup> R. W. Reising, "Literary Depictions of Henry Berry Lowry: Mythic, Romantic, and Tragic," *MELUS* 17, no. 1 (1991): 87-103.

progressive narrative pattern that would be reenacted and performed through the century to come, when racial reconstruction and backlash again reached their zenith.

This dissertation argues that mainstream national media in the 1870s, operating in the outlaw tropes of the period, helped transform a chapter in local history—the Lowry War—into a mythic narrative of Native American resistance to white supremacy. Over time, newspapers, dime novel collections, and local histories recirculated this narrative back to the community, reinforcing it as a site of group cohesion and aspiration. During subsequent periods of particular oppression in Robeson County, Native Americans invoked and reprised this precedent of resistance, and in each instance used mass media platforms to construct social identity.

The four eras in which the study traces this template of historical agency in mass media span 116 years. First, in 1872, the *New York Herald* and *Harper's Weekly* published lengthy, illustrated accounts of the Reconstruction-era Lowry War. Second, in 1958, Lumbees engaged mass media to announce victory over the Ku Klux Klan, including an iconic *Life* photo spread that chronicled the routing of white supremacists at Maxton, North Carolina.<sup>7</sup> Third, a Lumbee publisher in 1973 founded the weekly *Carolina Indian Voice* newspaper, an independent alternative weekly in Pembroke that appealed to public memory and challenged establishment media.<sup>8</sup> Fourth, in 1988, an armed hostage-taking of the mainstream *Robesonian* newspaper in Lumberton by two Tuscarora activists forced media attention to

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<sup>7</sup> "Bad Medicine for the Klan," *Life*, January 27, 1958, 20.

<sup>8</sup> Oscar Patterson III, "The Press Held Hostage: Terrorism in a Small North Carolina Town," *American Journalism* 15, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 125-39.

allegations of injustice, an inverted narrative in which captives came to the active defense of their captors.<sup>9</sup>

In studies of the Native South, a growing body of literature has drawn connections between post-war Reconstruction and the Civil Rights era, which Manning Marable termed "the Second Reconstruction."<sup>10</sup> White lawmakers in the South reacted to abolition and the prospect of freed slaves by legislating rigid criminal justice codes.<sup>11</sup> In corresponding fashion, scholars argue, the advances of the civil rights era were accompanied across America by criminalization and control.<sup>12</sup> This study traces a parallel trajectory, but considers voiced resistance by a tri-racial isolate caught in the black-white binary of segregation: in this case, the most populous tribe of American Indians that remained east of the Mississippi River.

The strategy of resistance that is the focus of this study— communication—challenges a core epistemological problem of American history, how we *know* what we know, and the

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<sup>9</sup> "Siege at Newspaper Ends with Hostages Safe," *New York Times*, February 2, 1988, 19.

<sup>10</sup> Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1984).

<sup>11</sup> For examples of this argument, see, Mary Ellen Curtin, *Black Prisoners and Their World, Alabama, 1865-1900* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000); Alex Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South* (New York: Verso, 1996); Karin Shapiro, *A New South Rebellion: The Battle against Convict Labor in the Tennessee Coalfields, 1871-1896* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> See, Heather Ann Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline and Transformation in Post-War American History," *Journal of American History* 97, no. 3 (December 2010): 703-734; Donna Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Jonathan Simon, *Governing through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

conventional problem of journalism as history's first draft. This is the problem of silence, an omission of sources that results in a distorted view. As Willie Thompson noted, the study of history by definition poses the problem of "investigation into a reality that no longer exists."<sup>13</sup> As opposed to the remembered past, conventional history is an attempted reconstruction through surviving evidence, and that evidence is primarily written communication.

The problem of omission in Western-oriented historiography becomes an act of *commission* when people have been removed and replaced, if only symbolically, the rhetorical move Jean O'Brien termed "firsting and lasting."<sup>14</sup> Yet scholars argue that shifting the foci to place indigenous North America at the center of the map rather than the periphery changes the aspect of the silent past to communicative presence. This was how Gerald Vizenor, for example, advanced the historical alternative to victimhood and erasure in his reading of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, demonstrating resilience and "survivance,"<sup>15</sup> a term Vizenor used to suggest agency and strength of spirit, beyond subsistence.

In eastern North Carolina, the physical presence of Lumbees and Tuscaroras on its face invalidates the paradigm of Western master narratives. The Lowry War embodied armed Native resistance on the eastern seaboard four decades after the US Army carried out federal removal. Cutting further against the grain of Western narratives, the Lumbees' and

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<sup>13</sup> Willie Thompson, *What Happened to History?* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 104.

<sup>14</sup> Jean O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 145-166; Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), vii.



Tuscaroras' public routing of the Ku Klux Klan in 1958 expands the Cold War timeline of American Indian militancy, which scholars have tended to date from the late 1960s period of Alcatraz and Wounded Knee, or the 1961 formation of the National Indian Youth Council.<sup>16</sup> And taken together, the political influence of the *Carolina Indian Voice* and the impact of the *Robesonian* hostage-taking suggest insights into mechanisms by which the vernacular realigns the mainstream.

The fundamental project of this study is to interrogate the role memory plays in composing historical identities, and to examine the process by which mass media become an arena for performing those identities. Piscataway scholar Gabrielle Tayac termed the arc of Lumbee resistance, reaching from Reconstruction through the Cold War, "a premiere example of how Native Americans persist as tribes."<sup>17</sup> The purpose of this research is to explore, within that example of persistence, how historical narratives evolved through media, and to analyze the needs they served in the context of social oppression.

Following from Vizenor, the key issue in self-representation is not bare survival, but agency; that is, the capacity to act and narrate one's past and future as the subject of events rather than the object. At the meta level, the same issue holds true for scholarship. This is particularly true given the pressure to erase the indigenous past and the historical relationship

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<sup>16</sup> See, Troy Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Red Power and Self-Determination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 2008); Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press, 1996); Daniel Cobb, *Native American Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008); Scott Lyons, *X-marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Gabrielle Tayac, "The Making of An Exhibition in the Museum of the American Indian," in *Trauma and Resilience in American Indian and African American Southern History*, ed. Anthony Parent and Ulrike Wiethaus (New York: Peter Lang, 2012).

between American anthropologists and American Indians. The Smithsonian Bureau of Ethnology began as a publicly funded field of study in 1879, and as Frederick Hoxie noted, the conquered tribes of North America became the bureau's first, de facto research subjects, accessible and without legal recourse.<sup>18</sup> A longtime thrust of mass media research of subaltern groups, indigenous scholars observe, has been the deconstruction of dominant stereotypes by Europeans—Othering based on visible difference.<sup>19</sup> Critiquing these tropes, on the one hand, importantly illuminates the long history of white representation of Native Americans, and its genesis in American journalism. As John Coward and Mary Ann Weston demonstrated, the savage/noble archetypes of Native American portrayals reached from early print media and Euroamerican literature through Hollywood westerns, to the primitive-modern duality of today's pow-wow pictures juxtaposed with the implied taint of casino gambling.<sup>20</sup>

But deconstructing stereotypes alone stops short of a larger point, to the detriment of historiography. Deconstruction retains whiteness as the standpoint for interrogation, perpetuating the problem of historical absence. Accordingly, since the 1970s and the founding of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, a global "writing back" movement by formerly colonized people made one of its projects indigenous

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<sup>18</sup> Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians 1880-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press).

<sup>19</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Shelley Walia, *Edward Said and the Writing of History* (Cambridge: Icon, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> See, John Coward, *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-1890* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Mary Ann Weston, *Native Americans in the News: Images of Indians in the Twentieth Century Press* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996); Joe Allen, "The More Things Really Don't Change," *The American Indian and the Media* (New York: The National Conference for the Community and Justice, 2000), 20-21.

historiography.<sup>21</sup> The concept, advanced in North America by Native American scholars, not only altered the interpretation of historical events—the "who-did-what-to-who," as a character in the Borderlands<sup>22</sup> film *Lone Star* put it<sup>23</sup>— writing back also reclaimed the methodology for understanding and telling about the past. Challenging a widely held assumption that colonized people lacked the means to communicate resistance, scholars interpreted written and oral evidence of Native American expression, and approached the past as a relief map. In some cases, the evidence was in raised areas such as the *Phoenix*; elsewhere, it was intuited in shaded spaces such as "fugitive poses" or treaty "X-marks."<sup>24</sup> This study examines a case of conspicuous historical presence in mass media. If journalism can be considered a first draft of history, the experience of the Lumbees suggests that journalism was likewise a first site for writing back.

## **Background**

By sheer geography and continuance, Native Americans of the region that became Robeson County, North Carolina, dispel the myth of the "vanishing" Indian.<sup>25</sup> There are an estimated 40,000 Lumbees and 10,000 Tuscaroras in Robeson County, but as of 2016 they

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<sup>21</sup> Susan A. Miller, "Native Historians Write Back," *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 25–45.

<sup>22</sup> Borderlands theory refers to the psychological, sexual, or spiritual space between different groups where, as Gloria Anzaldua observed, "the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy." See, Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Meztiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 19.

<sup>23</sup> Ron Canada et al., *Lone Star [videorecording]* (Los Angeles: Warner Home Video, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses*; Scott Lyons, *X-marks*.

<sup>25</sup> See, Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1978); Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and US Indian Policy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982).

lacked full federal recognition or reservation land treaties. As East Coast Indians, they prevailed over a series of extreme threats to their survival related to European contact and ensuing subjugation in a tri-racial community, Robeson County, where Indians and African-Americans together outnumbered whites.

Scholars theorize that English settlers brought to North America patterns of colonization and violence from their experiences in Ireland and Scotland, and used these techniques to dominate indigenous peoples and open up territories.<sup>26</sup> Concurrent waves of smallpox plagues carried by European settlers decimated the nations east of the Mississippi. The Great Death reduced indigenous people from an estimated two million in 1492 to 250,000 in 1750,<sup>27</sup> destroying societies, traditions, and collective memory by simultaneously wiping out generations of elders. Along with wars, this led nations to migrate and join together for survival.<sup>28</sup>

Indians of Robeson County escaped removal to the west in 1830, but in 1835 the North Carolina Constitution disenfranchised them as "free persons of color." Quite apart from what Indians called themselves—"Our People"<sup>29</sup>—this was one of a series of shifting racial designations including "mulatto" and "octoroon" that stripped Native Americans in the state

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<sup>26</sup> See, Nicholas Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (October 1973): 575–598; Nicholas Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1976), 1565–76.

<sup>27</sup> Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> See, James Merrell, *The Indians New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989).

<sup>29</sup> Karen Blu. *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American Indian People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980, 2001), 134-148.

of the right to vote, bear arms, or attend white schools.<sup>30</sup> During the the Civil War, the Confederate Army forced Native Americans from the region to construct coastal Fort Fisher, a privation contributing to a revolt by Indians who fled back to the swamps, leading up to the Lowry War.<sup>31</sup> In 1885, the state recognized indigenous people of Robeson County as Croatan Indians with their own school system,<sup>32</sup> but the battle for enfranchisement in the poor, rigidly segregated community had only begun.

The second circumstance situating the tribes against mainstream history proceeds from the ability to endure and assimilate. The Lumbees, who are the primary focus of this study, do not manifest indigenous culture outwardly and, as such, do not conform to prevailing white conceptions of western Plains tribal customs, but are united by kinship. Enrollment in the tribe is determined by a member's ability to trace direct descent, and to maintain contact with the tribe.<sup>33</sup> Although the smaller group identifying as the Tuscarora Nation of North Carolina lays claim to a surviving language and traces its history to the tribe that migrated north to join the Five Nations Confederacy in New York State, Tuscaroras face similar issues to the Lumbees. At key points in the past century, the two communities have allied themselves. The

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<sup>30</sup> John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943), 79.

<sup>31</sup> Edward Magdol, "Against the Gentry: An Inquiry into a Southern Lower-Class Community and Culture, 1865-1870," *Journal of Social History* 6, no. 3 (Spring 1973): 259-283.

<sup>32</sup> See, Christopher Oakley, *Keeping the Circle: American Indian Identity in Eastern North Carolina, 1885-2004* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 21-23. Native Americans in Robeson County, refusing to enroll in black schools, prevailed upon local representative Hamilton McMillan to introduce the legislation. McMillan was eager to prove his belief that Indians in Robeson County were connected to the Lost Colony; legislators meanwhile sought to avoid a reprise of the Lowry War.

<sup>33</sup> "Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina Constitution," Article II, US Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

Lumbees, traditionally agrarian as a result of more than three centuries of proximity to Europeans, speak English and are majority Protestant. Neither their dress, occupations, housing styles, nor folk traditions such as music differ markedly from Euroamericans.<sup>34</sup> What constitutes their "Indianness," as Lumbee historian Adolph Dial wrote, stems from a refusal to accept narrow definitions of Native American identity, and instead derives from a shared sense of place and world view forged "from their unique past."<sup>35</sup> The definition of identity fundamental to this project is Linda Martin Alcoff's concept of a people's "interpretive horizon"<sup>36</sup> as opposed to shared domination. This horizon allows us to chart the seat of identity from two coordinates. One is embodied identities that are unchosen, for example race and gender. A second, more fluid coordinate is how people represent those ties to kinship, place, and history through shared characteristics, beliefs, and destinies.<sup>37</sup>

Lumbees, despite losing what Alcoff might term "visible" identities such as original language, successfully asserted their place socially, legally, and geographically, challenging white sociological and anthropological assumptions about how people maintain group identity. With racial differences more difficult for outsiders to discern, the use of history became one of the key racial identifiers. As anthropologist Karen Blu wrote, "History is not a frill, it is at the heart of a symbolic structure of ethnicity in the United States."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Adolph L. Dial and David K. Eliades, *The Only Land I Know: A History of the Lumbee Indians* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996) xiv-28.

<sup>35</sup> Adolph L. Dial, *The Lumbee* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1993), 23.

<sup>36</sup> Linda Martin Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 94.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 287-288.

<sup>38</sup> Blu, 202-15.

Self-determination, first on the contested question of kinship and second, self-naming anchored in place, was the bedrock issue to Lumbees, having withstood repeated attempts at erasure. In the twentieth century, the federal and state governments attempted to test their racial purity and classify them racially by applying changing and often conflicting administrative guidelines that included state residency and federal "blood quantum" measurements. By the time they took the tribal name Lumbee in 1956 from the Lumber ("black") River that winds through North Carolina's Great Swamp near the South Carolina border, the tribe had already borne a series of names, some self-imposed and some imposed by whites, including Croatan, Cherokee, and Siouan. The debate over naming was emblematic of a century-long crisis of official recognition that wrought legal, social, cultural, political, and psychological ramifications.<sup>39</sup> This contested status influenced Lumbees' strategies for seeking sovereignty and self-determination, alternately through adaptation and resistance, in the analysis of Lumbee historian Malinda Maynor Lowery.<sup>40</sup> Research on the Lumbee and Tuscarora tribes and the Catawba Indian Nation, who now reside in South Carolina, has traced the markers of ethnic identity. These include family and kinship, community and place, linguistic dialect, and networks of belonging such as churches, schools, sports, acquired artisan trades, and oral tradition.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Malinda Maynor Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South: Race, Identity, and the Making of a Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Anna Bailey, *How Scuffletown Became Indian Country: Political Change and Transformations in Indian Identity in Robeson County, North Carolina, 1865-1956* (Google Books, dissertation, 2008); Gerald Sider, *Lumbee Indian Histories: Race, Ethnicity, and Indian Identity in the Southern United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>40</sup> Malinda Maynor Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South*.

<sup>41</sup> James Merrell, *The Indians' New World*.

This study engages journalism as one additional site of memory and marking of identity, amid the tribes' struggle against invisibility or historicization by Euroamerican mythologies.<sup>42</sup> For Indians in Robeson County, there was a common denominator for how white-dominated society construed Native identity in systems of laws, treaties, anthropological theories, local histories, and newspaper accounts. The common denominator was the written word. The study asks a corollary question. Given the constitutive power of language, by what means did a historically oppressed minority in turn appropriate the written word and visual representation as tools of resistance, and how did this shape people's performance of identity?

### **Literature Review: Identity Formation and Memory**

The Lumbees of Robeson County have undergone a highly specific mode of dispossession, a diaspora in reverse. Although they successfully avoided physical displacement, their ability to endure left them exposed to social displacement, a different level of "vanishing" through denial of legal status and recognition by dominant society. In this way, a salient marker of historical identity remained place. The central importance of place in Native American histories, as explained by Vine DeLoria Jr. and Keith Basso, suggests that there can be no monolithic theory of Native communication, and that insights derive from geographically situated case studies.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, the process of imbuing place with meaning begins to provide a common footing for Native American and indigenous

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<sup>42</sup> Michael E. Harkin, "Time's Arrow: Violence and Ethnohistorical Surrealism in the Lost Colony," *Anthropology & Humanism* 34, no. 1 (June 2009): 11-20.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Vine Deloria Jr., *Red Earth, White Lies* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997); Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).



studies. This is the premise that place-making, memory, and racial identity itself are functions of agency. They are actively composed, not passively received.

This implies that race is contextual rather than nominal, biological, or essentialized. This concept of identity differs from the Aristotelian definition of what is "identical": two like objects that occupy the same space at the same time. These stable, objective "visible identities" in Alcoff's phrasing, are distinguished from the concept of identity as a series of "lived experiences" which individuals and groups use to make meaning in relation to experiences and narratives of the past.<sup>44</sup> This suggests that identity involves shared features and history but is not deterministic; it is perpetually transformed. Yet if identity can be represented in cultural performance—texts and rituals that interpret the meaning of a group's situation, as Jeffrey Alexander explained<sup>45</sup> — there is a complex, paradoxical association between the signifiers and that which is signified. When identity is defined as what is visible—for example, outward markers of race and gender—a relationship develops between what is performed and what is real. This notion builds upon Stuart Hall's view that embodied identities, while assigned to place, history, culture, and experience, are "a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being,'" and reach to the future rather than simply recover the past.<sup>46</sup> The alternative for formerly colonized people, as Frantz Fanon pointed out, was to become trapped by history, to internalize and be defined by an imposed subaltern identity, even in the

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<sup>44</sup> Alcoff, 44–288.

<sup>45</sup> Jeffrey C. Alexander, *Social Performance : Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 29-42

<sup>46</sup> David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, ed., *Stuart Hall, Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 441-447.

process of resisting it.<sup>47</sup>

This is by no means to argue that the past is not a usable part of Native identity. Instead, to paraphrase Jean-Paul Sartre,<sup>48</sup> existence precedes identity. As Basso demonstrated in a study of the Western Apache, place names and stories were a localized, non-authoritarian tool that linked people's historical imaginations to the land.<sup>49</sup> The landscape thus became symbolic, to the extent that these culturally mediated stories and commemorations were continually reproduced to express the sense of place. Cultural production, then, differentiates memory from history, defined as the study of archival documents. Memory, in contrast, is not simply stored data, but data that are rearranged over time. In this rearranging, John Frow wrote, memory assumes the orderly structure of narrative, and in that sense, its relationship to the past is animated not by truth, but desire.<sup>50</sup> The lack of a "hard edge," in Edward Casey's analysis, was not a defect but rather a strength, an elasticity that allowed the meanings, signifiers, and symbols to apply differently in different eras.<sup>51</sup>

Public memory, the legacy of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs,<sup>52</sup> is particularly useful to this inquiry because it proceeds from the idea that remembering is a social activity,

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<sup>47</sup> Frantz Fanon, "On National Culture," in *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Books, 1963), 170.

<sup>48</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956).

<sup>49</sup> Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, 5-7.

<sup>50</sup> John Frow, *Genre* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 94-95.

<sup>51</sup> Edward Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall R. Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 38.

<sup>52</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

like communication, and is a changeable set of beliefs about the past held by people expressing a common identity. Also useful in tracing historical narratives over time is the idea that public memory, while concerned with the past, is activated by concerns of the present and how they relate to the past, as Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian Ott explained.<sup>53</sup> Halbwachs advanced the idea that collective memory, derived from Emile Durkheim's *conscience collectif*,<sup>54</sup> gives groups cohesion and structure, and gives the present generation awareness of itself by counterposing its present to its constructed past.

In the case of the dispossessed, the desire animating memory work is two-fold: It is to commemorate and make sense of trauma, and in that commemoration, to manifest persistence. Freud theorized that individuals compulsively repeat a traumatic experience until they are able to narrate it and integrate it into the self.<sup>55</sup> The role of narration or bearing witness in prevailing over trauma is mirrored in philosopher Susan Brison's study of rape survivors, a phenomenon that circles back to Halbwachs' concept of how individual memory is shaped and reinforced by the collective.<sup>56</sup> Public memory, a construction of visible meanings around historical narratives, becomes a form and function of group identity. These historical markers become what Alcoff termed "a shared horizon" carried within the self and

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<sup>53</sup> Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, Brian L. Ott, eds., *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 6-34.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. W. D. Halls (New York: Macmillan, 1984) 69.

<sup>55</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through," in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 14, trans. James Strachey. (London: Hogarth, 1958), 145-51.

<sup>56</sup> Susan Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (Hartford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 54.

a "central feature of the map" of collective identity—for example, genocide of American Indians, US slavery, or the Holocaust.<sup>57</sup> The intergenerational continuity of this historical consciousness, highly relevant to this study, goes to what Cathy Caruth referred to as the “endless impact” of trauma.<sup>58</sup> Caruth’s key question regarding trauma and history could well describe Native American historical consciousness: “Is the trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it?”<sup>59</sup> Caruth argued that trauma, like history, is collective rather than individual, and is “precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas.”<sup>60</sup> This goes to the concept of historical trauma and historical grief at the core of much memory study. It is worth noting that the Holocaust model of intergenerational trauma has been applied in studies of the Lakota, notably by Maria Yellow Horse Braveheart.<sup>61</sup> Beyond metaphysics, researchers have begun to unlock genetic changes in the body passed from parent to child as a result of parental trauma.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Alcoff, 44.

<sup>58</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 5.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 23-24.

<sup>61</sup> Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, “Oyate Ptayela: Rebuilding the Lakota Nation Through Addressing Historical Trauma Among Lakota Parents,” *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 2, no. 1-2 (1999): 109-126.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, Rachel Yehuda et al., “Holocaust Exposure Induced Intergenerational Effects on FKBP5 Methylation,” *Biological Psychiatry* (in press, published online August 12, 2015). The Mount Sinai study of Holocaust survivors and their children concluded that this was the first demonstration, in the authors’ words, of how severe psychological trauma can have intergeneration effects.”

In the sense of collectives, the link between public memory and nationalism demonstrates that that recollection and commemoration are central to defining and legitimating identities.<sup>63</sup> Studies of Jewish memory books from the Middle Ages, books begun in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to memorialize communities that suffered ritualized murders during the Crusades, suggest the effect of repetition and pattern in narratives of past trauma. Yosef Yerushalmi pointed to a tendency in Jewish memory to view each subsequent catastrophe as a reenactment of an essential template.<sup>64</sup> This served as a counterweight to the argument that Jews lacked historical consciousness or wrote little or no history because they lacked a nation-state, on the order of nation-states as Benedict Anderson envisioned them in *Imagined Communities*,<sup>65</sup> socially constructed communities that gain a common language and understanding through print culture.

Highly relevant to this study is how memory for the vernacular is positioned toward the mainstream, particularly in relation to trauma. A tension in Holocaust remembrance, also exemplified in the conflict over traditional and modern approaches to the Vietnam Veteran's

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<sup>63</sup> Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins, "Social Memory Studies: From Collective Memory to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices," *Annual Review of Sociology* (24): 105-40.

<sup>64</sup> Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (New York: University of Washington Press, 1982). Books that recorded names of the victims of a series of massacres and pogroms in Central and Eastern Europe, beginning with the First Crusade in 1096, established a template of suffering and redemption through which subsequent events such as the formation and mass deportation from Lodz Ghetto of Warsaw could be interpreted. The books and their historical referents provided an archetype for Jewish historical consciousness, as well as a process and vessel for commemorating that consciousness.

<sup>65</sup> Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006).

Memorial,<sup>66</sup> brought into the discourse what Olick termed "the politics of regret."<sup>67</sup> This is the idea, Barry Schwartz and Horst-Alfred Heinrich agreed, that formalism was being challenged by progressivism, a trend in historiography that is especially relevant to the chronology of this study between the late nineteenth and late twentieth century. As Bellah et al. noted, new American history in the 1960s called to mind not only the memory of suffering, but also, "dangerous memories" of suffering *inflicted*.<sup>68</sup> Symptomatic in the United States, as in Germany, was the outbreak of culture wars over the writing and commemorating of history.

History was a political cause, and skepticism was an effect. In their opinion survey, Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen suggested that for members of the public, the past was the domain of neither the professional historian nor the mediator. A cross-section of Americans gave in-depth interviews about how they "used" the past to live in the present, in terms of knowing where they came from, and how to cope with the future. Survey responses revealed distrust of written and taught history, but a more intimate connection to artifacts, museums, and historical sites, affirming the idea that place is the most powerful site of memory, and secondarily, the oral history of eyewitnesses. The latter was notably true for groups with contested histories and territories, such as Native Americans. They relied in part on oral tradition and storytelling for a faithful rendering of memory, and forged a powerful shared

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<sup>66</sup> Patrick Hagopian, *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 49-110.

<sup>67</sup> Jeffrey Olick, *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>68</sup> Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 153-154.

identity bound up in adversity and loss.<sup>69</sup> If narrative is constitutive of identity, and societies normally construct heroic stories of their pasts, as Rosenzweig and Thelen also concluded, shared understanding of the past holds implications not only for the group's present, but for its future. And the more a group of people has been traumatized, the stronger the sense of identity.

Illustrating this idea, Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin showed that soon after the Holocaust, the paperbound memory books commemorating vanished communities of Polish Jewry were a symbolic burial of people who had no grave markers.<sup>70</sup> Such a collective response, and distinct genre, would not have been possible so soon after World War II had there not been a precedent of Jewish mourning literature. Moreover, Kugelmass and Boyarin argued, these storehouses of memory gave the dead a presence and intervening power over the living.<sup>71</sup> As Lucette Valensi wrote, Jews are a people of memory: To be Jewish is to remember.<sup>72</sup> This suggests that public memory is a function of culture, but also of commemorative traces that have come before. The performance of memory sustains the group, and reinforces the shared interpretations of the past embedded in the present. The Oglala Sioux of Pine Ridge Reservation, as well as those members of the tribe who were displaced, made a parallel claim about memory. The identifying fact given prominence was

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<sup>69</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 147-176.

<sup>70</sup> Jack Kugelmass and Jonathan Boyarin, *From a Ruined Garden: The Memorial Books of Polish Jewry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>72</sup> Lucette Valensi, "From Sacred History to Historical Memory and Back: The Jewish Past," *History and Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (1986): 283-305.

not trauma, but continuance, or as a Native American in Minneapolis summarized for Rosenzweig and Thelen in response to the question of what specifically about the group's past was important: "That we are still here."<sup>73</sup>

The way that memory forges such connections in the face of historical instances of enormous loss is through narratives that fulfill social needs. In short, reality is complex, ambiguous and open-ended; narrative imposes structure and meaning.<sup>74</sup> A historical example was the unprecedented carnage of World War I. Jay Winter, for example, rejected the interpretation of many historians that ordinary Europeans turned away from images of the heroic, Romantic, and patriotic to embrace modernist, nihilistic forms that reflected their despair and shattered world view. Winter points to classical World War I memorials, art, and writers such as Kipling, who projected valorized, ennobled images of war and patriotism. This was, Winter argued, a more comprehensible, consoling approach to mourning on an epic scale.<sup>75</sup>

But statues and war memorials chiseled in stone are a final resting place of memory, or as Pierre Nora argued, a stage of forgetting.<sup>76</sup> Malleable forms of social memory more immediately express themselves through a range of popular culture such as newspapers and film. In one sense, these forms are ephemeral. But a measure of the vitality of the narratives

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<sup>73</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 176.

<sup>74</sup> Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 4.

<sup>75</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>76</sup> Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).



they convey is how readily they are adapted to fulfill the needs of the present, and the facility with which they translate and travel between cultures, employing universal themes of good and evil, hero and villain, liberator and tyrant. Studies drawing upon Native American memory sometimes approach these cultural productions in the form of myth, song, dance, and prayer. Additionally, as journalism and visual communication scholars have observed, mass communication is the site of mediated memory work.

### **Outlaw Heroes**

In the current context, the archetypal Robin Hood narrative is an operative example. Eric Hobsbawm advanced the cross-cultural idea of "social bandits," young men with no fixed place in society and no social power.<sup>77</sup> Across history and geography, according to Graham Seal, there were a dozen strikingly similar criteria that these narratives applied in constructing outlaw heroes.<sup>78</sup> In some cases, the purity and moral nobility of such famous outlaws as Billy the Kid and Jesse James were less a function of reality, Richard Meyer noted, than they were a reflection of "the community's desire for such a hero."<sup>79</sup> For people rendered powerless, for example by the Civil War, this desire for a figure of bold action and unbroken spirit helps explain the appeal of newspaper accounts and dime novels, for example those that Cathy M. Jackson investigated in her study of print media surrounding Jesse

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<sup>77</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 37.

<sup>78</sup> Graham Seal, "The Robin Hood Principle: Folklore, History, and the Social Bandit," *Journal of Folklore Research* 46, no. 1 (January 2009): 67–89.

<sup>79</sup> Richard E. Meyer, "The Outlaw: A Distinctive American Folktype," *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 17, no. 2-3 (May 1980): 83.

James.<sup>80</sup> The popularity of these figures correlated with and was enabled by periods of distrust of law enforcement, either for its honesty or competence, and where there arose, in Richard White's estimation, "ambiguity about criminality and a question of the legitimacy of vigilante groups."<sup>81</sup>

This begs the question of which came first, the social bandits, or the narrative need for them? Seal theorized that they emerged simultaneously, the notion of "cultural scripts"<sup>82</sup> in which history and mythology coalesced. These scripts, templates of narrative of action, are understood here as Jerome Bruner's concept of cultural "tool kits" that reproduce shared repertoires of norms and meanings, for example, good and evil.<sup>83</sup> One of the older forms these narratives take, coexisting alongside newspapers and written material, is balladry. As Robert Darnton illustrated in the study of anti-monarchy expression in France illustrated, media came in a variety of forms, and too rigid a separation between oral and print culture neglects the complex circuits through which information travels.<sup>84</sup> Classically, William James Entwistle observed, ballads originate in small, localized communities "intensely

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<sup>80</sup> Cathy Madora Jackson, "The Making of an American Outlaw Hero: Jesse James, Folklore, and Late Nineteenth Century Print Media," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia, 2004).

<sup>81</sup> Richard White, "Outlaw Gangs of the Middle Border: American Social Bandits," *Western Historical Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (October 1981): 387–388.

<sup>82</sup> Graham Seal, "The Robin Hood Principle," 79-80.

<sup>83</sup> Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 21.

<sup>84</sup> Robert Darnton, "An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth-Century Paris," *American Historical Review* 105, no. 1 (February 2000): 1-35.

preoccupied with their own immediate dangers and success."<sup>85</sup> An example of textual analysis was a study of the ballad (*corrido*) that evolved around the Border-area hero Gregorio Cortez. Americo Paredes found that the narrative conformed to preexisting Border-hero traditions, but the analysis focused on the variants that revealed shifts in language, points of interest, and emphasis. As time passed, the ballad became less important for its immediate interest and face value, Paredes wrote, than as a "symbol, as a personification of the spirit of border strife."<sup>86</sup> So fitting was Cortez to the needs and desires of the vernacular, Paredes concluded, "It was as if the Border people had dreamed Gregorio Cortez...and had sung his life and his deeds before he was born."<sup>87</sup> Expanding on the idea of cultural scripts was Victor Turner's notion of productive formulation of social drama, a theory that uses the concepts and language of drama to explain cultural spectacle and political theater. This theory holds that oppressed people seek narrative structures, precedents, and modes of performance that help articulate and mobilize resistance, explaining their perceptions and shaping their responses.<sup>88</sup>

In Seal's view, the outlaw hero comes to have "afterlives" that are "regenerated and reinforced" back to the community through cultural production including folklore, drama, songs, art, and newspapers, as a cultural resource to be deployed "if a need for a Robin Hood

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<sup>85</sup> William James Entwistle, *European Balladry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939), 160.

<sup>86</sup> Américo Paredes, *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), 208.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>88</sup> Victor W. Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1988), 74-6; Victor W. Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 37-41.

arises again."<sup>89</sup> In the age of mass media, Kent Steckmesser demonstrated, these social heroes were partly the invention of "professional hero-makers" such as newspaper reporters, dime novelists, dramatists, and popular biographers who understood the "kinds of stories people wanted to read."<sup>90</sup> The claim is key to this study on two accounts. First, knowing what the public wanted implied a preexisting form, an understanding of the conventions because they applied with such uniformity. Second, this critique speaks to the role of newspapers and other mass media not as chronicles of events but rather, texts. As W. Eugene Hollon articulated, the exploits of larger-than-life heroes, actual or apocryphal, served as "a culturally valid metaphor of how we have viewed ourselves."<sup>91</sup> In analyzing them as such, the purpose of this study is not to "debunk" the particulars of these narratives, but to consider their evolving forms, and the means by which they were conveyed and consumed through media. They are an artifact of cultural production and a record of desire.

### **Journalism as Memory**

Where mass media are specifically engaged as rhetorical targets in memory literature, scholars have acknowledged that those materials are the "first draft," in the words of Carolyn Kitch.<sup>92</sup> Media shape dominant narratives, and they potentially erase competing narratives by omission. As Jill Edy demonstrated in *Troubled Pasts*, alternative narratives fall by the

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<sup>89</sup> Graham Seal, "The Robin Hood Principle: Folklore, History, and the Social Bandit," 80.

<sup>90</sup> Kent L. Steckmesser, "The Frontier Hero in History and Legend," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, April 1, 1963, 179.

<sup>91</sup> W. Eugene Hollon, *Frontier Violence: Another Look* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974) x.

<sup>92</sup> Carolyn Kitch, "Placing Journalism in Memory—and Memory Studies," *Memory Studies* 1, no. 3 (September 2008): 311-320.

wayside in favor of a uniform narrative "coherence," which substitutes for the authentic story.<sup>93</sup> Texts of commemoration, in the absence of historians to interpret what media scholars term "the continuous past"<sup>94</sup> or the "breaking present,"<sup>95</sup> also legitimate journalists' authority as custodians of collective memory. By their claim of having "been there," as Barbie Zelizer notes, they credential themselves. As would-be eyewitnesses, media become part of the story in commemorations as well as investigations.<sup>96</sup> But the meanings of these texts are not fixed, and they change over time.

Zelizer has viewed collective memory as an arena in which people interact to accommodate the needs of the present; accordingly, media are artifacts that reveal the existence of memory between people and events taking place. Because they possess technology to transmit and archive information, media become part of the retelling. Through this process of rhetorical legitimation, the mainstream media produce memories and narratives, which in turn become part of the official history.

The power of visual imagery is particularly important to media's role in communicating shared cultural knowledge. Pictures are worth a thousand words precisely because they do not require words. Iconic photos function, in classical rhetorical terms, as enthymemes: They embody a premise that is unstated and understood, and thereby reproduce ideology, model

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<sup>93</sup> Jill Edy, *Troubled Pasts: News and the Collective Memory of Social Unrest* (Philadelphia,: Temple University Press, 2006), 191-205.

<sup>94</sup> Betty Winfield and Janice Hume, "The Continuous Past: Historical Referents in Nineteenth-Century American Journalism," *Journalism and Mass Communication Monographs* 9, no. 3 (Autumn 2007), 156.

<sup>95</sup> Carolyn Kitch and Janice Hume, *Journalism in a Culture of Grief* (New York: Routledge, 2008), xiv.

<sup>96</sup> Barbie Zelizer, *Covering the Body: The Kennedy Assassination, the Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

citizenship, and provide resources for communicative action. Photographs become constitutive of audience, what Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites term “embodied identity.”<sup>97</sup>

With the ubiquity of mass media, and the ability to replay iconic images endlessly, images become monumental commemorative texts in themselves. Yet their meanings shift and change over time, and this has been demonstrated in particular with photographs that have disrupted the “official” in favor of the vernacular. As Hariman and Lucaites argued, photographs function through affect, for example eliciting pain, solidarity, and mourning, as in the Vietnam War-era Kent State shootings, or outrage and disgust, as in the degradation and torture of prisoners of the Iraq War at Abu Ghraib. Although these moments are ostensibly impromptu, they become framed and disseminated as resources for arguments, and become fused with the present, for example in the mirroring of Iwo Jima by a photo of firefighters raising the American flag at Ground Zero. They create webs of cognitive associations, and as they become and fewer and fewer, they take on a routine and can lose their original meaning. The power of iconic representation becomes concentrated when other details have faded away, along with print culture itself.<sup>98</sup>

### **Appropriation and Reclamation**

The idea that media are conveyors of identity and ideology aligns with James Carey's foundational assertion that communication is less about the transmission of information than

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<sup>97</sup> Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 17.

<sup>98</sup> Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 93-136.

it is about the affirmation of worldview.<sup>99</sup> But the ontological problem in these theoretical memory studies is comparable to the problem of media effects: As Jeffrey Olick observed, it is the question of who is doing the remembering. The implication of the term "collective memory" is that there is a group mind, or that cultural signs or symbols take on lives of their own independent of the meanings that living people impart to them. Instead, the consumer plays an active role, as Stuart Hall's model of encoding and decoding recognized. Most notably, Hall's oppositional model allows for the consumer to decode a message within a framework radically opposed to that in which the message was encoded,<sup>100</sup> famously, the "selective perception" hypothesis regarding the groundbreaking 1970s TV satire *All in the Family*.<sup>101</sup>

A step further is the process of cultural appropriation, one of the mechanisms of resistance and self-representation by subaltern groups. Guillermo Bonfil Batalla argued that for appropriation of an imposed, dominant culture to occur, subaltern groups had to take control of these foreign cultural manifestations (for example, Catholicism) and autonomously bend them to the group's own ends. Such appropriations, modifications, and innovations did not indicate lack of authenticity or weakness on the part of indigenous cultures; rather, Bonfil Batalla proposed, they suggested "dynamic continuity."<sup>102</sup> This belied the Western-oriented

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<sup>99</sup> James W. Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication," *Communication* 2 (1975): 8.

<sup>100</sup> Stuart Hall, "'Encoding/Decoding' In Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies," ed. in, *Culture Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 128-38.

<sup>101</sup> Neil Vidmar and Milton Rokeach, "Archie Bunker's Bigotry: A Study in Selective Perception and Exposure," *Journal of Communication* 24, no. 1 (Winter 1974): 38.

<sup>102</sup> Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, *México Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization*, trans. Philip A. Denis (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 47, 139.

attempt by the Mexican government to consign Mesoamerican civilization to a "dead world," even as the historicized Indian became an exalted national symbol.<sup>103</sup>

Key to the process of subaltern groups appropriating imposed culture is the issue of control. Applying this process to self-representation, control is also the core concern in what linguists term reclamation or "reappropriation," the strategy by which marginalized groups take negative epithets and subvert them. Thus, terms such as "queer," "nigga," and "bitch," used as insider language, signify not only a shared historical oppression, but also survival, agency, and power.<sup>104</sup>

The idea that meanings shift underlines the importance of intended audience in the performance of resistance, an issue Randall Lake raised in analyzing Red Power rhetoric. When American Indian Movement activists engaged in direct-action occupations at symbolic locations, for example Wounded Knee, mainstream media tended to belittle these actions in stereotypical or trivial terms ("Bamboozle Me Not at Wounded Knee,"<sup>105</sup> "Of Fallen Trees and Wounded Knees").<sup>106</sup> However, Lake argued that to focus on the mainstream interpretation of the rhetoric was misanalysis, because the primary intended audience for AIM protests was Native Americans themselves, not the white establishment. In this context, the rhetoric served what Lake termed "consummatory" persuasive function, in other words,

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>104</sup> Jacquelyn Rahman, "The N Word: Its History and Use in the African American Community," *Journal of English Linguistics* 40, no. 2 (June 2012): 137-171.

<sup>105</sup> Terri Schultz, "Bamboozle Me Not at Wounded Knee," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, June 1973, 46-56.

<sup>106</sup> "Of Fallen Trees and Wounded Knees: News Coverage of Wounded Knee," *National Review*, April 27, 1973, 464-465.



gathering the "like-minded."<sup>107</sup> Mainstream interpretations notwithstanding, Red Power rhetoric accessed and manipulated mass media to restore to the dominant narrative what Kent Ono and John Sloop term "the discourse of vernacular communities" that had been misrepresented.<sup>108</sup>

### **Media Representation of Native Americans**

Although deconstruction is not the goal of this synthesis, reappropriation, subversion, and counternarrative must be interpreted within their historical contexts. The "damned lies" that members of the Lowry Gang lamented to the *Herald* reporter had not been constructed overnight, but had a history that reached back through two centuries of print culture in North America. The organization of the construction was around racial hierarchy; the function it served, as David Copeland interpreted the "skulking Indian" and doomed primitive motifs, was to justify the needs of a "land-hungry" Euroamerican nation.<sup>109</sup>

Scholars trace the rough outlines of the noble/savage archetype to the early logs and journals of Columbus. The printing revolution that played out in Europe 50 years before North American contact enabled impressions to be reproduced endlessly, mechanically, and remotely of such abstract ideas as "Indians" from the Nuremburg etchings. This created the capacity to form expectations on the part of Europeans before they ever set sail.<sup>110</sup> This two-sided die was

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<sup>107</sup> Randall Lake, "Enacting Red Power: Consummatory Function in Native American Protest Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69, no. 2 (May 1983): 128.

<sup>108</sup> Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, "The Critique of Vernacular Discourse," *Communication Monographs* 62, no. 1 (1995): 19-46.

<sup>109</sup> David A. Copeland, *Colonial American Newspapers, Character, and Content* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 43.

<sup>110</sup> See, for example, Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian, from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 86-96; Tzvetan

cast in American print culture, as John Coward observed, with the first newspaper printed in New England. Benjamin Harris's *Publick Occurrences Both Forreign and Domestick* in 1690 contained references illustrating the two white conceptions of the Other, the first as bloodthirsty savage, the second as noble exotic. One paragraph speculated that two missing colonists' children had fallen into the hands of Indians; in another paragraph in the same story, Harris wrote approvingly of Indians observing Thanksgiving. The Indians were child-snatching enemies (or at least, the most likely suspects to fit the profile of child kidnappers) or Christianized, assimilated servants.<sup>111</sup>

Over the next 150 years, the captivity narrative became a dominant trope in the depiction of the American Indian.<sup>112</sup> An example is *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison*, a seventeenth-century frontier tale first published in 1824,<sup>113</sup> four years before the election of Andrew Jackson. The language of colonialism was often the pretext for violence, as Mary

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Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984); Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>111</sup> John M. Coward, *The Newspaper Indian: Native American Identity in the Press, 1820-90* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, Gary L. Ebersole, *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Postmodern Images of Indian Captivity* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995); Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College, 1999); June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

<sup>113</sup> James E. Seaver, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

Stuckey and John Murphy noted,<sup>114</sup> with bloodshed following in the case of Native Americans, as in the eighteenth-century role newspaper coverage of the vigilante Paxton Boys.<sup>115</sup>

Media history scholars argue that US newspapers did more than simply disseminate depictions of Indians as barbarous, torturing cannibals. During both the period of ongoing settler-Indian violence and the later era of removal, military attacks, and rapid assimilation, mass media *created* these representations, John Coward argued, then "used their newspapers to amplify and promote" them.<sup>116</sup> With the advent of the Associated Press, these representations spread exponentially. This is an important moment in the architecture of communication: By the mid-1840s the telegraph disseminated these solidified and codified representations to distant points, bypassing the former constraints of time and space.<sup>117</sup> The images, reproduced simultaneously in many US newspapers, established a cognitive monopoly. Race and mass media went hand-in-hand. During a later wave of xenophobia 78 years later, and a subsequent wave of new media technology, Walter Lippmann wrote of cinematic "pictures in our heads"<sup>118</sup> and coined the mass media term for them from printer's jargon: "stereotypes."<sup>119</sup>

Even the less sinister picture, what Coward termed the "double-minded" construction of the benign Romantic Indian, was the flipside to Manifest Destiny. The Native American,

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<sup>114</sup>Mary E. Stucky and John M. Murphy, "By Any Other Name: Rhetorical Colonialism in North America," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 25, no. 4 (2001): 75.

<sup>115</sup> Jeremy Engels, "'Equipped for Murder': The Paxton Boys and 'The Spirit of Killing All Indians in Pennsylvania,' 1763-1764," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8, no. 3 (2005): 355-82.

<sup>116</sup> John M. Coward, *The Newspaper Indian*, 31.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 99-100.

<sup>118</sup> Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922), 3.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

savage or noble, was destined to recede into antiquity. Whether by annihilation or extinction, the result would be a cleansing of the landscape to make way for progress. Culturally and ideologically, the vanquished Indian of Frederick Jackson Turner's profoundly influential Frontier Thesis<sup>120</sup> was a necessary part of a constructed white past, like an extra in Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show.<sup>121</sup>

Removal of Native Americans from the East Coast was not always physical, as Jean O'Brien emphasized, but occurred through narratives of vanishing, extinction, and "lasting" in an effort to legitimize Euroamerican claims to the land.<sup>122</sup> What Coward called the "double-minded"<sup>123</sup> savage/romantic construction of Indians, had its first draft in print media, then came to pervade popular culture, painting, fiction, and poetry.<sup>124</sup>

This self-justifying notion of the doomed primitive, comparable to the thesis of *Mexico Profundo*,<sup>125</sup> is based on the temporality of race. This is an underpinning of the European construct of modernity and the West, in which whiteness came to be defined in relationship to a chronological racial hierarchy. Philosopher Eric Wolfe summarized this as the idea that

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<sup>120</sup> Frederick J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, December 14, 1893.

<sup>121</sup> Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott, and Eric Aoki, "Memory and Myth at the Buffalo Bill Museum," *Western Journal of Communication* 69, (2005): 85-108.

<sup>122</sup> Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xxiv. O'Brien examined the narrative construct of American Indian extinction, what she termed the "last of the (blank) syndrome."

<sup>123</sup> Coward, 7.

<sup>124</sup> Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and US Indian Policy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982).

<sup>125</sup> Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, *México Profundo*.

societies were in a perpetual "race in time" toward progress or virtue.<sup>126</sup> Lewis Henry Morgan's social evolution theory divided humans into three stages of development: savagery, barbarism and civilization, with every society at one of these levels.<sup>127</sup> This hierarchical view of humanity was the cornerstone for Indian policy, and the anthropology on which it was based was reflected in journalism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

There was both a practical and a moral victory promised in the belief that the Indian Office could separate Indians from their lands and their past with "scientific precision" and assimilate them into Euroamerican society through means such as the Carlisle boarding schools, or Christian salvation. First, the pre-Civil War strategy of separating the races, especially relocating Indians to reservations west of the Mississippi, became less practical with technological change that required people to live in closer proximity. Second, assimilation also held the appeal of vindication in the promise of America, just as religious conversion vindicated Christianity. But there was an inherent paradox in rapid assimilation. How could Indians, as savages, have the capacity to assimilate?<sup>128</sup> The foot race metaphor, essentially, was invalidated as a naïve invention, replaced by a strict racial hierarchy with white at the top and black at the bottom, and other shades in between.

This established a historical double bind for Native Americans in representation and self-representation. To conform to white conceptions of what it meant to be Indian, to live in wigwams, have unbroken possession/defense of homelands, aboriginal language, to hunt, fish,

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<sup>126</sup> Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) 5.

<sup>127</sup> Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society, or, Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery Through Barbarism to Civilization* (New York: Henry Holt, 1877) 3-18.

<sup>128</sup> Frederick Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians 1880-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 83-244.

know native pharmacology and craft also meant they were fated to extinction. Conversely, if Indians lost distinctive ways and assimilated, they could never persist and survive because they were not truly "Indian," according to the evolving rules of blood quantum that excluded Indians from federal recognition.<sup>129</sup> This gave political and legal cover for the government to renege, first on treaty and land claims, then on educational reforms, and finally on the question of citizenship for Indians. As barbarians, Native Americans were ineligible to be US citizens, but at the same time lacked sovereignty. The Supreme Court had codified this paradoxical status as early as 1831 in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, when Principal Chief of the Cherokees John Ross sought an injunction against the policy that led to the Trail of Tears, the US Army's roundup and forced march of Cherokees from the southeastern US to what became Oklahoma. Chief Justice John Marshall had written that the Cherokee had no standing as a sovereign nation; but he rejected the reverse conclusion that Indians were therefore citizens. Instead, they were a third, other category, a "people in a state of pupilage; their relation to the United States resembled that of a ward to his guardian."<sup>130</sup>

White society's changing perceptions of American Indians toward the close of the nineteenth century reflected changes in scientific theories of race, and were also a function of the perceived level of threat. This accounted for why, at different points in the nineteenth century, white media represented a figure such as Sitting Bull in different ways.<sup>131</sup> Charting an attitudinal change over time, Frederick Hoxie reinterpreted the Indian exhibits at three

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<sup>129</sup> Lowery, 145.

<sup>130</sup> *Cherokee Nation v. The State of Georgia*, 30 US 1; 8 L. Ed. 25; 1831, 26.

<sup>131</sup> Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and US Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 361.

consecutive World's Fairs between 1876 and 1904, events at which anthropologists presented Indians in "living exhibits" residing in plaster adobe replicas on the midway. With the romantic-nostalgic narrative winning out by 1904, Hoxie noted that Secretary of War William Howard Taft pointed out the similarity between the Native American exhibit and that of the recently acquired Philippines, the annexation of which, Taft said, promised Americans a reenactment of the winning of the West.<sup>132</sup>

More than a stray analogy, this linking of domestic US policy to foreign policy revealed the gathering implications of Manifest Destiny. With the 1901 election of Theodore Roosevelt, whose Rough Rider philosophy attached not to social evolution theory but to racial hierarchy, the possession and development of what Roosevelt called "the world's waste spaces"<sup>133</sup> became part an exceptional American identity. With the white frontier closed and US expansionist ambitions turning to the world stage, scholars argue that domestic policy toward groups such as non-Protestant immigrants, African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, and particularly Native Americans became a dress rehearsal for foreign policy.<sup>134</sup>

The use of mass media in composing and underpinning white identity aligns with the cultural approach to communication that James Carey advanced. As Carey argued in "The Problem of Journalism History," journalism affords a view of changes over time in how people

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<sup>132</sup> Frederick Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 92.

<sup>133</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West: An Account of the Exploration and Settlement of Our Country from the Alleghanies to the Pacific* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 59.

<sup>134</sup> See, for example, Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign People at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

perceive reality, providing a text construed from shared cultural meanings and symbols between writer and audience.<sup>135</sup> In this way the mainstream media imposed values of a dominant society to alternately categorize or assimilate Native Americans as an exercise of cultural authority.

### **Objectivity and Alternative Media**

Representation is an important concept in journalism because it gives the semblance of truth. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith argued, dissonance occurs when people do not see themselves represented,<sup>136</sup> and as the following survey of literature suggests, these silences in mass media give rise to alternative media.

Given the premise that journalism reproduces worldview, a persistent problem in journalism history is the conflation of objectivity with official sources. Scholars argue that this misconception is at the heart of journalism's historic failures, complicating any progressive interpretation of advances in press freedom, technology, audience reach, and ability to perform the democratic function of the press, a watchdog against corruption and a champion of the dispossessed.

Press adherence to official sources negated this function, studies show, and this was in the name of objectivity. Objectivity, literally defined, assumes the existence of truth external to the self, as opposed to subjective interpretations of reality; importantly, objectivity is *not*

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<sup>135</sup> James W. Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication," *Communication* (1975): 8; James W. Carey, "The Problem of Journalism History," *Journalism History* 1, no. 1 (1974): 3-5, 27.

<sup>136</sup> Smith, 35.



neutrality, as the historian Thomas Haskell explained.<sup>137</sup> Erich Fromm characterized objectivity as the capacity to not distort and falsify what is empirically observed and evaluated.<sup>138</sup> But as both Fromm and Ken Macrorie argue, detachment is neither possible nor desirable. Impartiality is the ability to render all parts of the picture, but not necessarily to render all parts equally.<sup>139</sup>

In analyzing journalism as a community of practice, scholars have shown that professional routines of the news industry helped institutionalize a positivist bent that lent itself to the misconstruction of objectivity. Gaye Tuchman wrote of professional "rituals" journalists follow as a strategy to protect themselves against libel, missed deadlines, or accusations of bias. These strategies included cultivating official sources, basing reports on privileged proceedings, and conforming to conventional wisdom.<sup>140</sup> Normally, events served the media instead of vice-versa, which implied that news coverage did not reflect "objective reality" but simply rules and conventions of newsgathering.<sup>141</sup> Participant observation of TV news workers revealed that "news" centered around inert newsgathering practices of journalists

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<sup>137</sup> Thomas L. Haskell, *Objectivity Is Not Neutrality: Explanatory Schemes in History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

<sup>138</sup> See, Erich Fromm, *Man For Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (New York: Rinehart, 1947), 111; Erich Fromm, *The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 54-5.

<sup>139</sup> Ken Macrorie, "The Objective Reporter," *Antioch Review* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1956): 385-391.

<sup>140</sup> Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity," *American Journal of Sociology* 77, no. 4 (January 1972): 661.

<sup>141</sup> Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester, "News as Purposive Behavior: On the Strategic Use of Routine Events, Accidents, and Scandals," *American Sociological Review* 39, no. 1 (February 1974): 101-112.

themselves, and their inherited frameworks of ethnocentrism, capitalism, and individualism.<sup>142</sup>

Historically, positivism in journalism derived from the empirical, scientific ethos of the mid-nineteenth century, when a professed doctrine of fact and fairness appealed to journalists, in contrast to partisanship and opinion that had dominated newspapers in the past. Michael Schudson argued that the value took hold with the advent of the Penny Press beginning in the 1830s, epitomized by Benjamin Day's *Sun*, James Gordon Bennett's *New York Herald*, and Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*. Schudson argued that the increasingly professional "information model" the *New York Times* developed in the 1890s, using reporting methods such as the interview, contrasted to the more sensational "story model" William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer developed in the era of yellow journalism.<sup>143</sup>

But the performance of the press on racial justice invalidates the nineteenth-century model of objectivity. In *News For All the People*, Juan Gonzalez and Robert Torres argued that newspapers played a pivotal role in perpetuating racist views of an array of ethnic and racial minorities by the general population throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>144</sup> A case study was

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<sup>142</sup> Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2004).

<sup>143</sup> Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 118.

<sup>144</sup> For parallel studies of media stereotyping of nonwhites during this period, see also, Juan González and Robert Torres, *News for All the People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media* (London, New York: Verso Press, 2011); Michael J. Fuhlhage, "Prehistory of a Stereotype: Mass Media Othering of Mexicans in the Era of Manifest Destiny," in *Identity and Communication: New Agendas in Communication*, ed. Dominic L. Lasorsa and America Rodriguez (New York: Routledge, 2013); John Maxwell Hamilton, *Journalism's Roving Eye: A History of American Foreign Reporting* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009).

David T. Z. Mindich's contrast of the *New York Times*'s coverage of lynching to the investigative crusade by African American muckraker Ida B. Wells. The *Times*, by foregrounding official sources and pretending "balance" where none existed, presented a false version of official facts that legitimized an embedded worldview. Wells investigated the reported rapes of white women by black lynching victims and found that the charges, as well as key "facts," had been fabricated. Importantly, the involved insider provided the accurate, impartial view of reality, and the detached outsider, the distortion.<sup>145</sup>

Scholars associate the reliance on official sources and conventional wisdom with myriad institutional failures in twentieth-century American journalism. Among the notable examples: failure to recognize the extermination of European Jews, stenographic treatment of Sen. Joseph McCarthy's HUAC hearings, reluctance to question US entry into the Vietnam War, and refusal to treat Sen. Eugene McCarthy as a serious candidate.<sup>146</sup> Challenging the long-held thesis of an oppositional press, Daniel Hallin showed that in a polarized climate of public opinion, the press relied on legitimized authorities as the true sources of information. Voices of dissent, in contrast, were only covered in the context of their protest, not for information or perspective on the source of their dissent. The version of reality, presented as neutral or apolitical, used official sources, while dissenting views were eschewed as "biased,"<sup>147</sup> a pattern contrary to the thesis American journalism historians and media effects

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<sup>145</sup> David T. Z. Mindich, *Just the Facts: How "Objectivity" Came to Define American Journalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 113-137.

<sup>146</sup> Tom Wicker, "The Tradition of Objectivity in the American Press: What's Wrong with It," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 83 (1971): 83-100.

<sup>147</sup> Daniel C. Hallin, "The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media," *Journal of Politics* 46, no. 1 (February 1984): 2-24.

theorists sometimes advanced.<sup>148</sup> The inherent problems with reliance on official news were that institutions presented themselves favorably, and that change did not originate with institutions. Therefore, as Ben Bagdikian noted, institutional reporters were out of touch and slow to spot trends until they reached crisis levels, forcing journalists to react.<sup>149</sup>

On the one hand, this view argues against drawing conclusions about the "mentality" or sensibility of an age from its journalism, because what journalism reflects most accurately is the mentality of the news workers and the conditions under which they worked.<sup>150</sup> This echoed Robert Darnton's experience in the newsroom: Reporters did not write for imagined audiences, but rather for editors, sources, and fellow reporters. They were attuned to archaic newsroom practices and mythologies, and shaped by feedback from editors and sources rather than the public.<sup>151</sup> Darnton viewed journalists as innately conservative, protective of the status quo, close to their sources, and to each other.

In related fashion, Richard Ericson analyzed how journalists "visualize fact" and arrange sources in a hierarchy of credibility. Source organizations predetermine who is an authoritative "knower" about an event (whether this is true or not), and journalists turn to experts who have no apparent stake in an outcome and are "objective." This has the effect of

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<sup>148</sup> See, for example, Michael Robinson, "American Political Legitimacy in an Age of Electronic Journalism," in *Television as a Social Force*, ed. Douglass Cater and Richard Adler (New York: Praeger, 1975); 430; Seymour Martin Lipset and William Schneider, *The Confidence Gap* (New York: Free Press, 1983); Samuel J. Huntington, "The United States," in Michael J. Crozier, Samuel J. Huntington, and Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy* (New York: New York University Press, 1975) 98-9.

<sup>149</sup> Ben Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990).

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Robert Darnton, "Writing News and Telling Stories," *Daedalus* 104, no. 2 (Spring 1975): 175-194.

marginalizing those who *do* have a stake, for example oppositional groups involved in the story. In the pursuit of neutrality, the story therefore bears no grounding in reality and no authenticity.<sup>152</sup>

Is this another way of saying that "official news" is a form of narrative? It allowed reporters to gather large quantities of information in a format that would be acceptable to both editors and the mass public, shielding reporters from risk and criticism, by its very format, Ralph Hanson argued, favoring a white, male point of view and foregrounding "important" events.<sup>153</sup> After World War II, a critique began to develop that an obsessive focus on objectivity had come at the expense of the type of socially responsible journalism that had been possible in the era of investigative reporters such as Wells, Lincoln Steffens, Ida Tarbell, and Upton Sinclair.<sup>154</sup> Not only did the modern conflation of objectivity render a detached observer rather than a vigilant watchdog; this form of mainstream journalism shaped both the ways reporters and newsmakers came to define news. In essence, journalists wanted sources and events that reflected the needs of the newspaper or broadcast, instead of the converse. The very form of American mainstream journalism, as Bagdikian observed, favors the official and the status quo and forces reporters to privilege events and conflict over social context.<sup>155</sup> Paul Weaver concluded that the news story has a bias that is not political

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<sup>152</sup> Richard V. Ericson, "How Journalists Visualize Fact," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 560 (November 1998): 83-95.

<sup>153</sup> Ralph E. Hanson, "Objectivity and Narrative in Contemporary Reporting: A Formal Analysis," *Symbolic Interaction* 20, no. 4 (1997): 385-396.

<sup>154</sup> John W. C. Johnstone, Edward J. Slawski, and William W. Bowman, "The Professional Values of American Newsmen," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (Winter, 1972-1973): 522-540.

<sup>155</sup> Ben Bagdikian, *The Media Monopoly*.

per se, in terms of left versus right, but is a reinforcement of middle-class, status-quo structures of power, and "event-oriented" stories that rest on a series of mindsets and values concealed under what Jack Newfield termed a "rhetoric of objectivity."<sup>156</sup> Hence, leaders of social reform were ignored unless they gained power to stage "events," but this had the potential for social turmoil. When activists including Native Americans did stage events, they were sometimes further belittled by the mainstream media, even though staging of protests by marginalized groups do, in effect, serve to upset news routines.<sup>157</sup>

To the extent that the mainstream press was associated with government, studies suggested that it lacked credibility and ignored systemic discrimination that alternative media exposed. Even when mainstream media proclaimed objectivity, studies found deep-seated sentiments embedded in the fabric of coverage, through sources, texts, and visuals.<sup>158</sup> White journalists, as Aimee Edmondson and Earnest Perry observed, approached the legal segregation of *Plessy v. Ferguson* from a standpoint of cultural bias. On the one hand, journalists are presumed to be indignant at injustice. But white reporters were acculturated to view civil disobedience as breaking the law, even when the law was unjust.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> See, Paul Weaver, "The Politics of a News Story," in *The Mass Media and Modern Democracy*, ed. Harry Clor (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1974), 85-112; Jack Newfield, "Journalism: Old, New, and Corporate," in *The Reporter as Artist: A Look at the New Journalism*, ed. Ronald Weber (New York: Hastings House, 1974), 56.

<sup>157</sup> John F. Cragan, "Rhetorical Strategy: A Dramatistic Interpretation and Application," *Central States Speech Journal* 26, no. 1 (1975): 11.

<sup>158</sup> Mark Anderson and Carmen Robertson, "The 'Bended Elbow' News, Kenora 1974: How a Small-Town Newspaper Promoted Colonization," *American Indian Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 410-440.

<sup>159</sup> Aimee Edmondson and Earnest L. Perry Jr., "Objectivity and 'The Journalist's Creed,'" *Journalism History* 33, no. 4 (January 2008): 233-240.

This ran counter to the impulse of the muckrakers, and their later counterparts in literary journalism, New Journalism, and investigative journalism.<sup>160</sup> Expressing that public service duty, the Society of Professional Journalists prescribed that reporters "give voice to the voiceless" and reflect the diversity of human experience "even when it is unpopular to do so."<sup>161</sup> Yet Carrie Packwood Freeman et. al observed that journalists incorporating these perspectives into mainstream discourse risk being marginalized or subject to the accusation of a "vested interest."<sup>162</sup> Closely related is the concept of "participant" journalism, a strict journalistic taboo against crossing the line between observer and actor, even in life-and-death circumstances. An example of the taboo operating in the extreme was *New York Times* freelancer Kevin Carter's iconic 1993 shot of a starving Sudanese child next to a waiting vulture, an enactment of journalistic detachment that critics found grotesque.<sup>163</sup>

Among several reactions against "objective" journalism, the development of concern to this study is alternative media. Not necessarily market-driven, sometimes associated with subaltern groups, ideologies, or social and political movements, some were adversarial to the status quo and took an advocacy position that was lacking in the mainstream. Beginning with

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<sup>160</sup> Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News, A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 189-194.

<sup>161</sup> Code of Ethics, Society of Professional Journalists, <http://www.spj.org/pdf/ethicscode.pdf>.

<sup>162</sup> Carrie Packwood Freeman, Mark Bekoff, and Sarah Bexell, "Giving Voice to the 'Voiceless,' Incorporating Nonhuman Animal Perspectives as Journalistic Sources," *Journalism Studies* 12, no. 5 (2011): 590-607.

<sup>163</sup> Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, "The Appeal of Experience; The Dismay of Images; Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times," in *Social Suffering*, ed. Arthur Klenman, Veena Das, and Margaret M. Lock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1-22.

the first black-owned newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, in 1827,<sup>164</sup> and the first Native American newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix* in 1828,<sup>165</sup> the alternative press provided marginalized communities with a counterbalance to the mainstream interpretation, and undermined mainstream media credibility.<sup>166</sup>

"Alternative" is a broad, potentially problematic term, but generally implies the voicing of those viewpoints not found in the mainstream and, as Tanni Haas explained, styles of discourse not subject to social control.<sup>167</sup> This picture of vernacular communities is similar to the decentralized role of the rural southern weekly Thomas Clark described, and how it served the twentieth-century reader coping with poverty, industrialization, and racial strife. Like alternative newspapers, weeklies had been neglected historical documentary source materials as records of everyday life, and as journalistic forums that did not gloss over personal opinion with synthetic objectivity.<sup>168</sup> Typically, as labor historian Jon Bekken noted, alternative media are associated with social outsiders: youth, minorities, immigrants, and

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<sup>164</sup> See, Timothy Vercellotti and Paul Brewer, "To Plead Our Own Cause: Public Opinion Toward Black and Mainstream News Media Among African Americans," *Journal of Black Studies* 37, no. 2 (2006): 231-250; Roland Edgar Wolseley, *The Black Press, USA: A Detailed and Understanding Report on What the Black Press Is and How It Came to Be* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989).

<sup>165</sup> Elias Boudinot, "The Cherokee Syllabary and Newspaper," in *American Indian History: A Documentary Reader*, ed. Camilla Townsend (Oxford: John Wiley and Sons, 2009), 99-101.

<sup>166</sup> Timothy Vercellotti and Paul Brewer, "To Plead Our Own Cause: Public Opinion Toward Black and Mainstream News Media Among African Americans."

<sup>167</sup> Tanni Haas, "Alternative Media, Public Journalism and the Pursuit of Democratization," *Journalism Studies*, 5, no. 1 (February 2004): 115-21.

<sup>168</sup> Thomas D. Clark, "The Country Newspaper: A Factor in Southern Opinion, 1865-1930," *Journal of Southern History* 14, no. 1 (February, 1948): 3-33.



members of social movements that oppose top-down approaches.<sup>169</sup> As Robert Hackett argued, these tend to challenge established media power and endorse social change, using a bottom-up, involved method of participatory reporting.<sup>170</sup>

This is the journalistic prohibition that Pilar Riano-Alcala has referred to as "praxis," learning by doing.<sup>171</sup> In the tradition of William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, and Ida B. Wells, it is an alternative definition of objectivity in the sense that the journalism is evidence-based and presents more than one side of the picture. But unlike the mainstream's "neutral" or "official" construct of objectivity, the alternative press weighs the evidence and takes a position. The paradox of alternative media, as Hackett observed, is that they flourish in more socially and politically repressed climates. Even though these conditions make it more difficult for alternative journalism to operate, Hackett argued that such circumstances make alternative media's existence critical as counterbalancing forces of opposition and investigation.<sup>172</sup>

### **Justification**

The pattern of both repression and journalistic failure due to reliance on establishment news sources did not end in the twentieth century. Echoed in the adventures of foreign policy

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<sup>169</sup> Jon Bekken, "Negotiating Class and Ethnicity: The Polish-Language Press in Chicago," *Polish American Studies* 57, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 5-29.

<sup>170</sup> Robert Hackett, "Journalism for Peace and Justice: Towards a Comparative Analysis of Media Paradigms," *Studies In Social Justice* 4, no. 2 (January 2010): 179-198.

<sup>171</sup> Pilar Riaño-Alcalá, *Dwellers Of Memory: Youth And Violence In Medellín, Colombia* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2006).

<sup>172</sup> Robert Hackett, "Journalism for Peace and Justice: Towards a Comparative Analysis of Media Paradigms."

has been the original domestic policy that informed US nation-building.<sup>173</sup> Indian removal and the journalism of representation that helped to underpin it was not a narrative at the frontier of Euroamerican identity, but a central monument to a shared American past. The problem this literature describes is that this monument rested on ground that was contested and decentered<sup>174</sup> by Native American counternarrative.

No conquest and dispossession can be complete when there are people with a physical presence and a history to undermine the process. To establish legitimacy, Euroamerican society by the late nineteenth century had used military force, science, law, schooling, religion, and the most all-encompassing means available—a narrative of either assimilation, conversion, or extinction. The identity of American Indian nations nevertheless persisted. The focus of this dissertation is to explore the mechanisms of Indians' deployment of media in the formation of collective memory and group identity at key points in history.

Given the constitutive power of language, including as a tool of oppression, by what means did a historically dispossessed group appropriate the written word and visual representation as tools of resistance? How did this shape people's performance of identity? And more broadly, what does the harnessing of media by Indians in Robeson County reveal about the function of journalism in how the vernacular counterbalances repression and writes back history?

The contribution of this dissertation to journalism and communication history is to expand

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<sup>173</sup> See, for example, Joyotpaul Chaudhuri, "American Indian Policy: An Overview," in *American Indian Policy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Vine Deloria Jr. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, 51-53.

<sup>174</sup> See, Geraldine Muhlmann, *A Political History of Journalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 28-33. Muhlmann defines the "decentring" journalist as one who as an outsider confronts, challenges, and potentially reconstitutes the reader, as differentiated from the witness-ambassador journalist who works toward a unified "we" at the center.

the conceptual approach to Native American rhetorical sovereignty in media. This study seeks a three-dimensional analytical model by a) integrating the performative function of public memory to uncover meanings in texts; b) employing narrative analysis to discover how texts connected across time; c) using methods of journalism history to explain how these texts were produced and consumed. The goal is not to understand how counternarrative and identity are composed as an alternative at the periphery. The study explores how these particular narratives constitute audience and *alter* the mainstream by their close proximity.

### **Evidence and Methodology**

The dissertation is divided into four selected periods spanning 116 years, beginning with Reconstruction (1872), Jim Crow (1958), the post-civil rights years of school integration and political activism (1975-77), and finally, a neo-conservative period of law enforcement violence and resulting unrest (1988). During each of these periods, a system of white domination posed various levels of threat to Indians in Robeson County, who engaged in strategies of resistance. These strategies were reflected in mass media beginning with the activities of the nineteenth-century Lowry Gang; the 1958 clash with the Ku Klux Klan at Maxton; investigations by a crusading community weekly newspaper, the *Carolina Indian Voice* in Pembroke; and finally, the armed occupation by two Indians of the white-owned *Robesonian* newspaper in Lumberton.

These incidents all took place during periods of social upheaval, involved a challenge by Indians to the white power structure, and engaged mass media. The purpose will be to analyze each mediated incident as a discrete discursive event, and how they were produced and received, and overlapping patterns in how these narratives were developed and maintained through time.

A textual analysis that will provide an inquiry into the meanings of language, visual imagery, and representation is appropriate to this study. Because this study traces a narrative trajectory, the thematic analysis is intertextual, meaning that texts will be considered in relation to, in answer to, or in anticipation of other texts. This relates to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogic chains, the idea that communications contain traces of prior utterances.<sup>175</sup> As journalism history, the purpose will be to consider not only language and imagery, but also the authorship and historical circumstances of these texts, the intended audience, and the response. A three-tiered approach seeks to avoid the tunnel vision and interdisciplinary incoherence that Bruno Latour and others observed.<sup>176</sup> Scholars have cautioned that the fields build separate silos as if life was similarly fragmented, and actor, network, and social context were disconnected fields of action.<sup>177</sup> To approach media texts at home in the way that ethnographers and anthropologists approach culture abroad is to weave together the real, the narrated, and the social into a "nature-culture," as Latour termed it.<sup>178</sup>

Excavating embedded meanings in the familiar renders modern assumptions primitive, and domestic occurrences foreign. Although a sentence-level linguistic analysis is not the aim of this study, the textual analysis is informed by theories of power dynamics created by language, useful within the context of social inequality. These include the theory of

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<sup>175</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).

<sup>176</sup> See, Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Linda Tuiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970, 2000).

<sup>177</sup> See, John Nerone, "The Future of Communication History," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23, no. 3, (August 2006): 254-262.

<sup>178</sup> Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*.

hegemony advanced by Antonio Gramsci, who held that dominance was achieved not only by coercion, but also by consent through cultural production projects such as pop culture, folklore and religion.<sup>179</sup> A common goal of anthropology, linguistics, ethnography, and sociology, is the laying bare of cultural assumptions so taken for granted that they are no longer plainly visible, as in Michel Foucault's notion of "history of the present." Foucault saw these discursive formations, things taken to be true, as historically situated. This dissertation proposes journalism as a set of social practices taking place in the public sphere that reveals governing rules of knowledge and power.<sup>180</sup> Inscribed as these texts are with power relationships, the seat of ideology and the promotion of worldview lie in what is unstated and appears second nature, common sense.

While this approach is critical, it considers a corollary neglected by methodologies such as critical discourse analysis. If representation through language and imagery can be used as a means of oppression, the oppressed can use parallel means as a form of resistance in the manifestation of sovereignty and identity. One of the key areas scholars have explored is adaptive strategy and narrative reclamation by counterpublics within dominant culture. Rhetoric and shared meaning are constitutive of identity and, as Foucault holds, power circulates within the network and is creative as well as repressive.<sup>181</sup>

In addition to textual analysis, the study will draw on oral history interviews collected using the methods and protocol of the Southern Oral History Project at the University of

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<sup>179</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

<sup>180</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

<sup>181</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

North Carolina. The purpose will be to ground the research in the perspectives of those able to interpret the places, times, and events concerned. This is in keeping with a 360-degree historical approach that considers texts and their received meanings as products of their times, the organizations that created them, and audiences that consumed them. In this way, media texts are prisms of memory through which meaning shifts and refracts over time.

The study's key primary sources, representing a purposive sample, are the *New York Herald* articles on the Lowry War reprinted in dime-novel format,<sup>182</sup> supplemented by microfilm newspaper and magazine articles and local histories from the Southern Historical Collection of Wilson Library and the Native American collection at UNC-Pembroke; *Life* magazine's coverage of the KKK incident<sup>183</sup> and related national and state media coverage and iconic representation through song, commemoration and imagery; complete *Carolina Indian Voice* issues from 1975-1977, a period of intense political activism; a two-month sample of the *Robesonian* newspaper and *Carolina Indian Voice* from 1987 and 1988, designed to show the function of the newspapers before, during and after the community crisis; related newspaper and broadcast coverage from outside the community; the documentary film, *Takeover: The Trials of Eddie Hatcher*;<sup>184</sup> *United States vs. Eddie Hatcher* and *United States vs. Timothy Jacobs* and defense legal files from the Southern Justice Institute at Wilson Library North Carolina Collection; oral history interviews and

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<sup>182</sup> George Alfred Townsend, *The Swamp Outlaws, or, The North Carolina Bandits: Being a Complete History of the Modern Rob Roys and Robin Hoods* (New York: Robert M. DeWitt, 1872).

<sup>183</sup> "Bad Medicine for the Klan," *Life*, January 27, 1958, 20.

<sup>184</sup> Taylor Sisk, *Takeover: The Trials of Eddie Hatcher* [videocassette] (Morrisville, NC: Take One Productions, 1997).

related field notes; and for the conclusions section, a participant field observation at the present-day publication *Native Visions*.

## Organization

Following this introductory chapter's overview of the study's purpose, background, and explanation of methods, Chapter Two is a reading of the nineteenth-century depiction of Henry Berry Lowry coverage, primarily by the *New York Herald*. Following the 360-degree discourse-historical analysis, this reading considers the producers and the conditions of the instance of discursive practice by the *Herald* and the reprinting of the *Herald* articles as an amplified, illustrated dime novel ; the meanings of the text; the audience that received the text as social practice; and the intertextuality of the discursive event. This includes notions of inclusion and exclusion, related to Bakhtin's theory of dialogic chains.<sup>185</sup> It is the idea that communications contain traces of prior utterances, and anticipated answers.

Chapter Three is a multi-modal close reading of the 1958 *Life* magazine coverage of the Lumbees' routing of a Ku Klux Klan rally at Hayes Pond, and puts the coverage into historical context through local media coverage, subsequent commemoration, and evolution of narrative. The chapter explores the social position of Lumbees in the 1950s in relation to the Klan and to the white and African-American community in Robeson County. What meanings emerge about Native agency and sovereignty leading up to the event and in the aftermath, as signified in the narrating and commemoration of the incident?

Chapter Four focuses on two early years in the rise of the *Carolina Indian Voice*. Incorporating memory study and self-representation, the chapter examines how an alternative

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<sup>185</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*.

Indian newspaper deployed public memory in the form of constitutive rhetoric and legible symbolism to further a counternarrative of the Lumbee past during a period of further, dramatic social upheaval. Amid this turmoil, how did alternative media serve as a drawing board for Lumbee memory work?

Chapter Five concerns "dangerous memories," and the collision between alternative and mainstream journalism, represented by the armed occupation of the *Robesonian* newspaper in 1988. The occupation is explored as a platform for bearing witness, as a discursive event that undermined the rhetorical stance of "objectivity" on the part of a mainstream news organization, and as an opportunity for Indians to use mass media from outside Robeson County for memory work.

Chapter Six offers further discussion and project conclusions. Within the context and perspective of contemporary Pembroke, the dissertation explores themes connecting the four markers, and what these connections imply about historical identities and the role of journalism.





**Figure 2:** Frontispiece of one of three dime novels produced in 1872, this version a reprint of the *New York Herald* series, with sketches of Scuffletown that George Alfred Townsend drew from the train.

George Alfred Townsend. *The Swamp Outlaws, or, The North Carolina Bandits: Being a Complete History of the Modern Rob Roys and Robin Hood.* (New York: Robert M. DeWitt, 1872)

## 2. THE LOWRY ERA: MEDIA TEXTS IN THE FORMATION OF IDENTITY

As a passenger train clattered through Shoe Heel, North Carolina, in early August 1872, a pair of Indian performers traveling with Deerfoot and Pierce's Wild West Show caught the attention of a *Wilmington Morning Star* correspondent. The company had already caused a stir while staying at Rich's Hotel in Laurinburg, and gave a Rockingham tent performance that a letter to the editor complained was "disgusting and disgraceful."<sup>1</sup> Another witness had spotted the extras passing through Lilesville on a Sunday night, "all drunk and yelling like demons."<sup>2</sup> Two of the Indian actors, the paper reported, deserted the show at Shoe Heel, the closest junction to the remote, multiracial settlement known as Scuffletown, and "expressed the intention of joining the outlaws in the swamps of Robeson County."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Accident at Rockingham—A Swindling Concern," *Wilmington Morning Star*, August 13, 1872, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Although the *Star* never indicated what became of the circus Indians' revolt, the report in the conservative newspaper was telling on several counts. The incident took place during the closing months of the seven-year Lowry War, a conflict that had received so much ink that the *Star* editor felt no need to specify which "outlaws" were in question. They were the Lowry Gang, carrying out a vendetta against the murders of Lowry's cousins, and later his father and brother<sup>4</sup> by civilian authorities. Although the outlaws led by Henry Berry Lowry consisted of just seven Indians (including Lowry, his brothers, and cousins), two blacks, and one white member, they had eluded posses, fought off Army regiments, broken out of jails, successfully raided a cache of militia arms at the courthouse, and had been implicated in a series of robberies and revenge killings of 22 prominent white residents. Among their victims: the former sheriff, clerk of court, captain of the militia, a private detective posing as a schoolteacher, and a former Confederate official reputed to be the leader of the Ku Klux Klan. By 1872, these rivers of ink carried the story far beyond North Carolina, ultimately to the newspaper that is the prime concern of this chapter, the *New York Herald*, transforming a backwater vendetta into a larger-than-life cultural script. Whether in fact or in the imagination of the media, Henry Berry Lowry<sup>5</sup> held the power to incite rebellion, even among the cast of a Wild West show. In a frontier plot turned inside out, life and art imitated one another. But it was difficult to say where one left off and the other began.

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<sup>4</sup> William McKee Evans, *To Die Game; The Story of the Lowry Band, Indian Guerrillas of Reconstruction*. (Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 1-18.

<sup>5</sup> The spelling of Henry Berry Lowry's surname varied widely in legal documents, local histories, and newspapers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with common spellings also including Lowrey, Lowery, and Lowrie. This project, unless quoting primary sources, uses Lowry, the spelling favored by Lumbee bibliographer Glenn Ellen Starr Stilling.

The script in part was the word-of-mouth creation of the vernacular, but in another aspect a media creation, by turns trimmed and embellished to fit the pattern of outlaw hero. In the study of a more famous outlaw contemporary, Jesse James, Cathy Madora Jackson identified a comparable intersection of folk tradition and print journalism.<sup>6</sup> The forces that created Lowry had little in common with what drove his Missouri contemporary. Yet as with James, the chaotic post-war setting and the need for a redemptive hero help explain Lowry's appeal, and the favorable turn of his treatment in major media. In a period of crisis where oral traditions united communities, Jackson wrote of Jesse James, "it was easier for audiences to accept the media's version of James as a Robin Hood-type folk hero rather than a murderer and outlaw."<sup>7</sup> Lowry, this study argues, not only satisfied such a need for media; media then fed back into cultural formations of people trying to compose identity and reclaim autonomy.

The script was as old as the legends journalists invoked. Outside the margins of polite (but corrupt) society, a daring and enigmatic leader who was the youngest in his clan had risen from the ashes of a civil war to avenge a father's death. Providing the staples of violence, romance, and plot twists, Lowry and his band waged active resistance beginning in 1864, with the killing of a despised Confederate conscription officer and distiller. The gang's reputation for flouting authority grew with a bold raid on the Lumberton courthouse, and Lowry's capture of the local militia's supply of guns and ammunition in early 1865. That spring, Lowry's activities intensified after the executions of Lowry's father and brother by the Confederate Home Guard. The guard was the wartime draft authority and ostensible keeper

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<sup>6</sup> Cathy Madora Jackson, "The Making of an American Outlaw Hero: Jesse James, Folklore and Late Nineteenth-Century Print Media." (Ph.D. diss. University of Missouri-Columbia, 2004), 4-9.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 16.

of civilian law and order, a precursor to the post-war civilian police guard and later the Klan, all three using vigilante terror tactics to maintain white supremacy.<sup>8</sup>

Regularly reporting on the deeds and movements of the gang was the local Democratic weekly newspaper, the *Robesonian*, begun in the county seat of Lumberton in 1870 by a prominent planter and sawmill operator.<sup>9</sup> As the *Robesonian* began to connect isolated incidents, newspapers elsewhere in the state, reprinted them,<sup>10</sup> diffusing and amplifying the story. Spreading Lowry's repute, then, was the process of exchanges— newspapers that traded free subscriptions enabling rural editors to clip, reprint and recirculate articles, a common practice in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> The papers ranged from small country weeklies to the *Wilmington Morning Star*, the state's largest newspaper in its largest city, a port that served as the transmission point for news in and out of North Carolina.<sup>12</sup>

The gathering coverage was not lost on Henry Berry Lowry, even though it was likely that he could "barely read," as he maintained in one of the few statements directly attributed to

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<sup>8</sup> Dial, 47-48.

<sup>9</sup> After 1874, founder W. J. McDermiad's brother, W. W. McDermiad became editor. See, *The E. S. C. Quarterly* 9, no. 1-2 (Raleigh: North Carolina Employment Security Commission, 1951); *Report*, (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Labor and Printing 1905), 120.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, "Colored Outlaws in North Carolina," *Baltimore Sun*, October 11, 1870, 3. The report originated in Richmond, was reprinted in the *New York Evening Post*, then published in Baltimore.

<sup>11</sup> See, Richard Burket Kielbowicz, *News in the Mail: the Press, Post Office, and Public Information, 1700-1860s* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 150-151; Ellen Gruber Garvey, "Anonymity, Authorship, and Recirculation: A Civil War Episode," *Book History* 9 (2006): 160.

<sup>12</sup> Evans, *To Die Game*, 4.

him.<sup>13</sup> Evidence suggests that he and his associates monitored what the press wrote about them. Authorities searching Lowry's abandoned hideout reported finding a copy of the *Robesonian* with the weekly subscription form cut out.<sup>14</sup> A man allegedly confessed to receiving money from Lowry to take to Lumberton and "subscribe vicariously" to the *Robesonian*.<sup>15</sup> The newspaper's editor at one point printed a story about the discovery of witchcraft in the county, a report "intended to be read by the Lowerys, [sic] and to fill them with apprehension."<sup>16</sup> Lowry, according to the *Robesonian*, had warned the editor to be careful of how he wrote about the gang, and ultimately, the editor fled Lumberton at the height of the gang's activities.<sup>17</sup> Despite the outlaws' isolated location, they were aware of daily events in Wilmington by the following evening.<sup>18</sup> And immediately after Lowry's death or disappearance in 1872, his gang members confronted a reporter about a *New York Herald* story that had appeared the day before.<sup>19</sup>

Lowry and his gang revealed not only awareness but also concern for their image. In a mutually arranged meeting with the adjutant general tasked with their capture, the outlaws gave what the sympathetic official termed an "elaborate" justification for why they resorted

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<sup>13</sup> "The Swamp Angels: The Blood Trail of the North Carolina Outlaws," *New York Herald*, March 8, 1872, 4.

<sup>14</sup> *The Swamp Outlaws*, 56.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *The Swamp Outlaws*, 57.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-57.

<sup>19</sup> "The Swamp Angels: Our Captured Correspondent with the Lowery Outlaws," *New York Herald*, April 6, 1872, 4.

to violence.<sup>20</sup> And when finally given the chance to make their case directly to the largest newspaper in the country, the outlaws were reported to be "glad" of the opportunity to rebut what they called "d----d lies" about them that filled the newspapers.<sup>21</sup>

Yet most of the North Carolina-generated news reports offered little context to what started the Lowry War, let alone the history of repression, deprivation, and white-initiated violence that preceded it. Mainly, these were incident briefs of robberies, killings, or sightings of the outlaws, with no explanation to connect them but the culprits held responsible. Over a period of years, the headlines took on the weary futility of routine: "The Reign of Terror in Robeson,"<sup>22</sup> "The Robeson County Outlaws Again at Work,"<sup>23</sup> "Another Murder in Robeson."<sup>24</sup>

On the smoldering landscape of Reconstruction-era Robeson County, which had been in the path of Sherman's Army when it passed by Cheraw in 1865, the seeming inability of local, state, and federal troops to stop Lowry became the subject of outrage, suspicion, and political recrimination. Conservative Democrats, seeking to maintain the economic and racial caste system of the antebellum through Presidential Reconstruction (1865-68) blamed Republicans, who in 1868 gained political control and undertook Radical Reconstruction in

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<sup>20</sup> "Letter from Adj't. Gen. Gorman," *Wilmington Morning Star*, October 28, 1871, 3.

<sup>21</sup> "The Swamp Angels. Our Captured Correspondent with the Lowery Outlaws," *New York Herald*, April 6, 1872, 4.

<sup>22</sup> "The Reign of Terror in Robeson," *The Statesville (NC) American*, Statesville, NC, April 4, 1870, 2.

<sup>23</sup> "The Robeson County Outlaws Again at Work," *Southern Home*, (Charlotte, NC), May 16, 1871, 3.

<sup>24</sup> "Another Murder in Robeson," *Tri-Weekly Era* (Raleigh, NC), May 9, 1872, 2.

the state. This power struggle manifested itself in coverage of the Lowry War by the state's newspapers, twenty-six of which were Democrat-controlled, seven Republican.<sup>25</sup> The fractious partisan discourse, in which Conservatives sought to exert control in the state, inflected newspaper coverage of various issues, a continuing phenomenon in American journalism.<sup>26</sup> This included the front-page saga of the Lowry War, beginning with how journalists represented the gang's fundamental identity.

### **Depictions of Lowry in the Press**

In mass media, Lowry gained notoriety in stages, and representations veered erratically on particulars, in a colorful, evolving narrative. The most obvious discrepancy between reports, as previous studies have documented,<sup>27</sup> was the gang's racial makeup. The first known newspaper-generated description of the racial identity of the band, after Lowry escaped from the Robeson County Jail in 1868, was "mulatto,"<sup>28</sup> contradicting a widely published 1866 description of Lowry as "Indian like," from a state bounty posting circulated repeatedly in North Carolina newspapers.<sup>29</sup> Later reward postings called him mulatto<sup>30</sup> and

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<sup>25</sup> William McKee Evans, *Ballots and Fencerails: Reconstruction on the Lower Cape Fear* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 16, 47.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Mario Castagnaro, "Embellishment, Fabrication, and Scandal: Hoaxing and the American Press," (Ph.D. diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 2009) 111- 143. This study traced the competing models of story-driven and "informational" journalism in the late nineteenth century.

<sup>27</sup> Anna Bailey, *How Scuffletown Became Indian Country: Political Change and Transformations in Indian Identity in Robeson County, North Carolina, 1865–1956* (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> "Robberies in Robeson," *Fayetteville Eagle*, December 3, 1868, 1.

<sup>29</sup> See, "State of North Carolina, \$300 Reward," *Daily Journal* (Wilmington, NC) December 14, 1866, 2. The notice and description not only appeared widely in North Carolina newspapers; the newspapers published the legal notice over multiple editions, for example,



“negro,”<sup>31</sup> a claim which served the political agendas of Conservative Democrat publishers.

To portray the gang and the lawlessness that followed it as the deeds of "negroes" was to further discredit the Union League, an alliance between blacks and Republicans that created a voting majority in areas like Robeson County, and played to white fears.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, an 1869 Raleigh brief, reprinted from the pro-Klan<sup>33</sup> *Wilmington Journal*, reported that the seven outlaws arrested for the killing of the sheriff were "all colored."<sup>34</sup> Revealing the ambiguity surrounding Lowry, another report published the same day in the *Journal* described the gang as "mulattoes with the exception of Shoemaker John," referring to Eli Ewin, "who is a full-blooded negro,"<sup>35</sup> although another writer for the same publication referred to the gang as "negro, mestizo, or mulatto."<sup>36</sup> A Charlotte newspaper described Lowry as "nearly white,"<sup>37</sup> while the adjutant general who met with the gang, and relayed to the public what he termed a "mental daguerreotype" of them, described the outlaws' clan as

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appearing in the *Daily Journal* twenty-one times between December 14 and January 15, 1866.

<sup>30</sup> "\$100 Reward," *Wilmington Post*, December 31, 1868, 2.

<sup>31</sup> "Are the Robeson County, N.C. Outlaws Kuklux?" *New York Times*, May 16, 1871, 1. This item offered a correction to a previous dispatch suggesting that the gang members were white.

<sup>32</sup> Bailey, *How Scuffletown Became Indian Country*, 44-49.

<sup>33</sup> The editor of the *Journal* was the former state leader of the Ku Klux Klan. See, Joseph Gregoire de Roulhac Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1914), 461.

<sup>34</sup> *Raleigh Sentinel*, September 3, 1869, 3.

<sup>35</sup> "The Robeson Outlaws," *Wilmington Journal*, September 3, 1869, 2.

<sup>36</sup> "Look Here Upon this Picture and on This," *Wilmington Journal*, December 15, 1871, 4.

<sup>37</sup> "Look Out for the Outlaws," *Charlotte Democrat*, October 3, 1871, 2.

"mixed breeds between the white man, black, and Indian, many of whom retain in a remarkable degree the Indian characteristics in face, color and form."<sup>38</sup>

This compounded the media's confusion. In 1871, the *Times* ran a page-one correction regarding the identity of the Lowry Gang, which "some of the Northern newspapers, based on a telegram of the Associated Press" had identified as "Kuklux;" the *Times* corrected the report by stating that Lowry, Applewhite, and Strong "are all negroes,"<sup>39</sup> a description the newspaper repeated in subsequent accounts.<sup>40</sup> Later the same year, the *Times* ran a report, originating in the *Washington Chronicle*, that described Lowry's father as "full-blooded Indian" and his mother as a "bright mulatto woman."<sup>41</sup> By early 1872, the *Herald* described Lowry from afar as "a sort of cross between a half-breed Indian and a mulatto,"<sup>42</sup> and once on the scene that spring, described Lowry as having the "strangely commingled" blood of white, black, and Tuscarora origin.<sup>43</sup>

A combination of circumstances contributed to the shifting descriptions. One was the erroneous way that white journalists applied race during the nineteenth century. This followed the changing contours of the law. Racial labels were in flux regarding the identity

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<sup>38</sup> "Letter from Adj't. Gen. Gorman," *Wilmington Morning Star*, October 28, 1871, 3.

<sup>39</sup> "Are the Robeson County, N.C. Outlaws Kuklux?" *New York Times*, May 16, 1871, 1.

<sup>40</sup> See, "Negro Outlaws: Lowry's Band in North Carolina Still At Large and Active" and "Full Details of the Outrages by the Lowry Gang- Murders and Assaults," *New York Times*, July 18, 1871, 1.

<sup>41</sup> "The North Carolina Outlaws," *New York Times*, October 7, 1871, 11.

<sup>42</sup> "The Scuffletown Settlement in North Carolina- A Band of Organized Robbers and Murderers," *New York Herald*, January 29, 1872, 3.

<sup>43</sup> *The Swamp Outlaws*, viii.

of Scuffletown<sup>44</sup> residents, who after disenfranchisement in 1835 were grouped under the category of “free persons of color,” a paradoxical designation R. W. Reising termed “an instrument of denial.”<sup>45</sup> Second, southern Democratic newspapers saw political advantage in blaming lawlessness on Republicans and emancipated blacks,<sup>46</sup> and would later express outrage when drawings in *Harper's Weekly* seemed to portray most of the gang not only as sympathetic, but as white.<sup>47</sup> The malleability of the gang’s racial portrayals made the story a convenient political wedge, and conservative newspapers, through which much of the region’s news funneled to the North, claimed that the government would not try to capture the outlaws “so long as they did not kill any but democrats.”<sup>48</sup> The Democratic *Wilmington Journal* chided the governor, “his accidental excellency,” for the humiliating defeat of US artillery forces sent to Robeson to hunt down Lowry.<sup>49</sup> The report, reprinted widely,

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<sup>44</sup> Scuffletown, also referred to as The Settlement in the nineteenth century, later became Pembroke.

<sup>45</sup> R. W. Reising, “Literary Depictions of Henry Berry Lowry: Mythic, Romantic and Tragic,” *MELUS* 17, no. 1 (1991): 89.

<sup>46</sup> William McKee Evans, *Ballots and Fencerails*, 16, 47. Evans observed that news from the region traveled through Wilmington, and that the two major newspapers were Conservative Democratic publications, the *Wilmington Daily Journal*, and the *Wilmington Star*, which began in 1867. See, for example, “‘The Lowry Gang.’ Who and What They Are— The Robin Hood of a Dismal Swamp,” the report, circulated in southern newspapers, identified the band members as comprised of several races, and Lowry and his brothers as “by instinct and appearance more Indian than anything else.” Casting the war in partisan terms, the report concluded that the gang members all belonged to the Union League, and that their victims had been almost exclusively Democrats.

<sup>47</sup> “Specimens of Yankee Truthfulness and Correctness,” *Raleigh News*, April 3, 1872, 2.

<sup>48</sup> “The Scuffletown Settlement in North Carolina—A Band of Organized Robbers and Murderers,” *New York Herald*, January 29, 1872, 3.

<sup>49</sup> *Wilmington Journal*, October 15, 1871, 1.

contrasted the army setback to more effective actions the state had lately taken against the Ku Klux Klan: "White men are arrested by the hundred, but it is impossible to secure a dozen mulatto outlaws."<sup>50</sup> Newspapers including the *Southern Home* in Charlotte ridiculed the adjutant, Maj. Gen. John Gorman, for his failure to stop the Lowry gang, by 1871 down to five members, and for Gorman's statement that 200 troops had been "entirely inadequate in numbers."<sup>51</sup> The newspaper facetiously concluded that "the failure of the grand campaign was a natural result."<sup>52</sup>

But the mystery and sensation the story generated transcended such regional partisan brinksmanship, and a final source of confusion as to Lowry's identity was the gang's actual tri-racial makeup. Originally, there were seven Indians—Lowry, his brothers Steve and Thomas, his wife's brothers Andrew and Boss Strong, his cousins Calvin and Henderson Oxendine, and another Indian member, John Dial.<sup>53</sup> Two more associates were black former slaves, George Applewhite and Eli Erwin (also known as "Shoemaker John,") and as of 1870, a white Scuffletonian, Zachariah McLaughlin.<sup>54</sup>

Against the backdrop of congressional testimony about the Ku Klux Klan, in which southern whites testified about violence, spies, and informers in former Confederate states

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<sup>50</sup> "The War is at an End," *Eagle* (Fayetteville, NC), October 19, 1871, 1.

<sup>51</sup> "The Grand Campaign," *Southern Home*, October 31, 1871, 3.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Evans, 72-73.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

including North Carolina,<sup>55</sup> the language of the early incident reports about Lowry invoked racial and moral panic. The trope had a history in white southern media that reached back a generation to the era of slave insurrection fears, fanned by the 1821 Denmark Vesey revolt in Haiti and the 1831 Nat Turner rebellion in Virginia.<sup>56</sup> In this vein, a story about the Lowry gang, reprinted in a Statesville weekly from the *Wilmington Journal*, implored the governor to put an end to "degradations...so bold and outrageous" that citizens were afraid to leave their homes. Even worse, the newspaper reported, robbers had been discovered "under beds in the chambers of residences" so that there was "no certainty on going to sleep at night, that one does not have his throat cut ere morning."<sup>57</sup>

Lowry's notoriety increased in 1872 with a \$12,000 bounty<sup>58</sup> second only to the reward offered for the capture of Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy.<sup>59</sup> The reward, and the publicity it entailed, put the outlawed leader under as much scrutiny as regional mass media in the nineteenth century could muster. The *frisson* of fear and fascination surrounding the Lowrys was such that even a lack of information was topical. "No news in regard to Lowrey [sic] or his gang," the *Wilmington Morning Star* reported in 1871, as part of an

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<sup>55</sup> *Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire Into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States* (US Government Printing Office, 1872), 505-508. The published report included testimony regarding Lowry's politics and activities.

<sup>56</sup> Michael Kent Curtis, *Free Speech: "The People's Darling Privilege," Struggles for Freedom of Expression in American History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 134.

<sup>57</sup> "The Reign of Terror in Robeson," *Statesville (NC) American*, April 4, 1870, 2.

<sup>58</sup> *Public Laws of the State of North Carolina Passed by the General Assembly at its Session 1871-72* (Raleigh, NC: State Printer and Binder, 1872), Chapt. 122, Sec. 2, February 8, 1872.

<sup>59</sup> *Miscellaneous Documents of the Senate of the United States for the Third Session of the Forty-Sixth Congress, and the Special Session of the Forty-Seventh Congress 1880-'81* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1881) 191.

unrelated brief about a "colored man" found dead near Shoe Heel.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, another unrelated item about a US Army recruit who drunkenly shot and killed "a mulatto" in Scuffletown ended by noting, "There is nothing new from the Lowrey [*sic*] gang, who appear to be keeping very close."<sup>61</sup>

For southern newspaper editors, generally hungry for any news content after the severe shortages and logistical challenges of the Civil War,<sup>62</sup> even the smallest scraps of information about the Lowrys met the threshold. For instance, the *Raleigh Weekly Era* not only reprinted a report from the *Robesonian* that the desperadoes had stopped for a leisurely lunch in Moss Neck, leaving witnesses in "mute astonishment,"<sup>63</sup> the paper also carried an item from the Marion, South Carolina, *Star* that the outlaw leader's wife had gone on a "shopping expedition" in Shoe Heel: "After purchasing two dress patterns, she departed per Railroad for Scuffletown."<sup>64</sup>

This appetite for news of the outlaws had unintended effects. Any violent occurrence in the area near Scuffletown was assumed to be related, unless proven otherwise. But at the same time, the celebrity that began to accrue in the more pedestrian details about Lowry—shopping, attending church, having a picnic—contradicted the boldface headlines

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<sup>60</sup> "From Robeson," *Wilmington Morning Star*, August 11, 1871, 1.

<sup>61</sup> "Fatal Shooting Affair in Robeson—A US Soldier Does the Deed," *New-Berne (NC) Daily Times*, October 5, 1871, 1.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, Ford Risley, "The Confederate Press Association: Cooperative News Reporting of the War," *Civil War History* 47, no. 3 (September 2001): 222-239. Before the war, most southern newspapers relied on the free exchanges; the interruption of Associated Press service to the South after Fort Sumter forced southern newspapers to form their own news cooperative.

<sup>63</sup> "The Outlaws in Roberson (*sic*)," *Weekly Era* (Raleigh, NC), June 8, 1871, 3.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

Democratic newspaper editors assigned it, particularly editors outside Robeson County. The particulars of these stray sightings were mundane, conceivably of interest to bounty hunters tracking Lowry. But they also appeared so harmless and cavalier as to create an amusing dissonance. There was the official narrative of army regiments, militias, and posses foiled in their best attempts to apprehend a fiendish killer. But meanwhile, there was the parallel counternarrative, a vernacular picture of an outlaw casually going about his business.

The media, whether to make a political point or to sell papers, were valorizing Lowry's bold exploits and narrow escapes, and also endowing him with a persona that was at worst cunning, and at best, intelligent and strangely honorable given the charges against him. Even southern newspapers that otherwise used racially and politically charged language regarding Lowry became captive to the intrigue. The *Journal*, for example, printed a *Robesonian* report under the ominous headline, "Again on the Warpath;"<sup>65</sup> however, the substance of the story was that the Lowry Gang arrived at an elderly man's home and, rather than committing violence, "merely ordered that food be prepared."<sup>66</sup> In another instance, Lowry arrived at a Red Banks house and "very politely" asked for meat from the smokehouse, informing the owners that the gang had quit the practice of stealing.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, the *Southern Home* reprinted a *Robesonian* report of the gang having robbed a farmer of a wagonload of corn. After distributing the corn to neighbors in Scuffletown, the newspaper reported, the gang

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<sup>65</sup> "The Outlaws Again on the Warpath," *Wilmington Journal*, July 7, 1871, 2.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> "The Latest from Lowery," *Wilmington Morning Star*, December 23, 1871, 1.

returned the mule team and wagon to the farm later that afternoon with "no questions asked."<sup>68</sup>

Some Democratic newspapers began to object to these items as tall tales. Months after the *Robesonian* reported on the wagonload of corn, the *Southern Home*, which had ridiculed Maj. Gorman's "touching account of his interview with the outlaws" also jeered at a report of a folksy encounter Lowry had with a coon-hunter.<sup>69</sup> Still more ambiguous was Republicans' position on the Lowry story. Although Republicans vocally denounced the tactics of the outlaws, even the denunciations advanced the idea that Lowry was no common criminal. Articulating this mitigating view was a Republican letter writer from Robeson County who in 1870 argued in the conservative *Raleigh Standard* that Lowry, though a "bold, bad, and bloody criminal," was being blamed for crimes the gang had not committed.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, the "appalling" experience Lowry had in witnessing his father and brother executed and his mother terrorized, the writer argued, would have turned "a good man into an incarnate fiend."<sup>71</sup> Those who most loudly blamed "bad government" for allowing Lowry to remain at large, the writer alleged, gave little outcry for the murders committed by the klan, some of these under the pretext of hunting for Lowry.<sup>72</sup> Further, these critics asked, where was an impartial version of events to be had amid the blood sport of Reconstruction-era politics? Observed the *Wilmington Post*, in disputing an incorrect report that soldiers were needed to

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<sup>68</sup> *Southern Home*, May 9, 1871, 3.

<sup>69</sup> "The Grand Campaign," *Southern Home*, October 31, 1871, 3.

<sup>70</sup> "Letter from Robeson County," *The Daily Standard* (Raleigh, NC), June 8, 1870, 2.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*



protect the railroad from the Lowry Gang:<sup>73</sup> "The trouble has been greatly exaggerated by democratic papers for political effect."<sup>74</sup> Although the feuds had been bad enough, the *Post* reasoned, "One poor colored man destroying the peace of the State is too absurd."<sup>75</sup> Each side, then, had a stake in whether Lowry was portrayed as brutal, honorable, or a creation of the opposing party's propaganda machine. The net result of the lunges and ripostes was to fuel the story and enlarge the gang's reputation. Lowry had become such a household name in the state—and the story such a default political punch line—that by 1871, when the *Greensboro Patriot* acerbically proposed that "the next Radical candidate for Gov. of N.C." should be Henry Berry Lowry, there was no context or explanation necessary.<sup>76</sup> For North Carolina authorities, Lowry was nowhere to be found, yet his reputation was everywhere, a product of the people, and beyond control. This gave the story a novelty and complexity that propelled it to a broader audience, first in the *New York Times*, but most importantly, readers of the *New York Herald*. The counternarrative had emerged in close proximity to Scuffletown—in oral tradition and in the columns of the *Robesonian*. These same details were picked up in a major northern newspaper, transmitted to other metro newspapers and national magazines, embroidered in dime novels and popular literature, and eventually recirculated back through local histories.

### **From a Regional to a National Story**

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<sup>73</sup> See, Evans, *To Die Game*, 201. Evans noted that the Lowry Gang and the railroad appeared to have a cooperative relationship, each allowing the other passage in and out of the territory Lowry controlled.

<sup>74</sup> "False Report," *Wilmington Post*, February 9, 1871, 1.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Greensboro (NC) Patriot*, March 2, 1871, 2.

What raised the profile of the Lowry story from that of an incremental, politically fraught regional crime wave to a national matter was the intervention of northern media. By October 1870, the *New York Times* took notice of "Henry Berry of Lowry," when a posse pursued Lowry's "band of negro outlaws."<sup>77</sup> The *Times* ran several subsequent accounts of "a gang of notorious outlaws of Robeson County,"<sup>78</sup> Not all these reports mentioned Henry Berry Lowry by name. But reflecting growing interest, the articles referred variously to the "Lowery gang," "the North Carolina outlaws," or, as a headline from the best-selling *New York Herald* read, "Those Desperate Brigands of North Carolina."<sup>79</sup>

During a post-war period when breathless yarns of outlaws such as the James and Younger gangs fed the burgeoning demand for pulp fiction,<sup>80</sup> Lowry's bold exploits were prime grist. At various times, Lowry had robbed the safe from the county courthouse, casually served whiskey to travelers on a train platform, and dictated a ransom note threatening retribution if jailers did not release the gang members' wives, making good on the threat by routing the sheriff's posse in a gun battle. By the time these reports moved regularly on the national Associated Press wire in 1871, the vendetta had lasted a remarkable seven years, the killings of prominent residents had escalated, and there had been a series of dramatic jailbreaks. Two involved Lowry personally, and a third jailbreak of several gang members occurred in Lumberton while garrisoned federal troops were stationed there to stand watch. Still more

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<sup>77</sup> "Pursuit of an Organized Band of Negro Robbers and Murderers—and Encounter with the Outlaws," *New York Times*, October 8, 1870.

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, "A Notorious Desperado Killed in North Carolina," *New York Times*, December 18, 1870, 1.

<sup>79</sup> "Those Desperate Brigands of North Carolina," *New York Herald*, February 19, 1872.

<sup>80</sup> See, for example, Madeline B. Stern, ed., *Publishers for Mass Entertainment in Nineteenth Century America* (Boston, MA: B. K. Hall, 1980), x-xix.

developments in 1871 made the story newsworthy: the posting of larger bounties on the gang members<sup>81</sup> and the activation of the North Carolina militia to intervene.<sup>82</sup> The *Herald*, with the headline "The Lawless Lowrys," prominently played a report that after the jailing of Rhoda Lowry and the wives of the other outlaws, Henry Berry Lowry threatened "to deluge the county in blood" if the women were not released.<sup>83</sup> Another report that caught the attention of the New York wire editors was Lowry's reported infiltration of an Army camp, where he purportedly carved his initials on the general's rifle stock.<sup>84</sup> But the story that caused the most interest was the execution of a Lowry associate, leading to the dispatch of a correspondent from the *Herald*, the newspaper that James Gordon Bennett sought to make the "biggest, sauciest, newsiest newspaper the world had ever seen."<sup>85</sup>

The 1871 trial and eventual hanging of Henderson Oxendine, the only member of the Lowry Gang to have been captured and publicly executed,<sup>86</sup> presented the first official chance for journalists to cover what had been a sporadic, elusive story. The hanging brought the first of three reporters the *Herald* assigned to the Lowry story, Richmond-based correspondent Eccles Cuthbert. His coverage of the Lumberton hanging, which appeared in

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<sup>81</sup> "\$2,000 REWARD," *Raleigh Daily Telegram*, February 18, 1871, 3.

<sup>82</sup> *New York Times*, August 6, 1871, 6.

<sup>83</sup> "The Lawless Lowreys: They Demand the Release of Their Women from Lumberton Jail," *New York Herald*, July 18, 1871, 5.

<sup>84</sup> "The Lowrey Bandits," *New York Times*, November 1, 1871, 4.

<sup>85</sup> Louis Morris Starr, *Bohemian Brigade: Civil War Newsmen in Action* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 16-17.

<sup>86</sup> Evans, *To Die Game*, 221.

the newspaper four days later,<sup>87</sup> began with a lengthy, lurid account of "Immorality and Depravity of a Mongrel Settlement," as one of seven decks of headlines above the article cried. The report, which erroneously put the size of the gang "at from eighty to one hundred," gave shocking details that conflicted with other reports and gave no attribution other than the phrase "from all the information I can glean."<sup>88</sup> For example, without citing a source, Cuthbert wrote that a favorite amusement of the Lowry Gang had been "cutting off the ears" of citizens who did not submit, and that the "rape of white females was not an uncommon event."<sup>89</sup> For emphasis, the newspaper set both these alarming phrases all in capital letters and pulled them out from the body of the story.<sup>90</sup> This report, offered excerpts of Oxendine's purported confession, which included no mention of rapes or mutilations, and had been printed days earlier in the *Robesonian*.<sup>91</sup> The *Herald's* execution coverage was only the opening round for the New York newspaper's direct involvement.

The *Herald's* coverage was in three distinct parts, like the concentric circles of a target. Cuthbert was at the outer ring, relying on accounts in other newspapers. His successor on the story, George Alfred Townsend, traveled to Shoe Heel and interviewed those closer to the story, and his work comprised some of the material in the dime novel, *The Swamp Outlaws*.

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<sup>87</sup> "The Gallows: Execution of Henderson Oxendine, a North Carolina Outlaw," *New York Herald*, March 21, 1871, 4. Cuthbert had spent the previous week covering violence in Chester, South Carolina, between the Klan and an armed black militia. According to the front page of the *Wilmington Morning Star*, March 18, 1871, Cuthbert had missed the Oxendine execution and was forced to rely on accounts from other newspapers.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> The files of the *Robesonian* were destroyed in a fire in 1900, but the Oxendine execution story was reprinted in a 1951 historical edition. At the time of the Lowry War, the *Robesonian* stories were reprinted in a number of state newspapers.

Finally, A. Boyd Henderson, at the bull's-eye, interacted with the gang members still at large, reporting which the *Herald* published as a series, "The Swamp Angels." Only selected parts of Henderson's firsthand reporting were included in the dime novel, and there were significant differences between Townsend and Henderson in method and approach. For clarity, this study examines Henderson's work for the *Herald's* "Swamp Angels" series. Townsend's work, in order to include his preface to the collection and the illustrations, will be examined as it appeared intact in the dime novel *The Swamp Outlaws*. These are fertile sources for this study, in that they provide a view of print culture at the time of the Lowry War, and an example of how and why Lowry's representation in media evolved.

### ***The Swamp Outlaws***

George Alfred Townsend was thirty-one years old when a new managing editor at the *Herald* in February 1872 tersely ordered him to Robeson County to "find out about all the homicides!"<sup>92</sup> Townsend was already one of the most famous reporters in the US, and his career reveals much about news organizations and journalistic practices of the time. He also illustrates a key progression in this study: how daily journalism fed into other forms including story papers, illustrated magazines, dime novels, stage plays, fiction, popular biography, and histories.

On the one hand, American metro newspapers of the 1870s tended to be potluck concoctions of disconnected topics and headings—what David Paul Nord termed “an

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<sup>92</sup> George Alfred Townsend, "Hearing My Requiem," *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, October 1892, reprinted Melville Philips, ed., *The Making of a Newspaper* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), 188-201. This account appeared as a journalism memoir by Townsend, by then a man of letters.

incredible mélange of miscellany” that bumped long reports with single-paragraph briefs.<sup>93</sup> This was partly a function of resources, as well as new technology. As Nord observed, “Anything that arrived by telegraph was automatically declared ‘news’ and shoehorned into the paper.”<sup>94</sup> But at the same time, the eyewitness style of journalism that took shape out of necessity during the Civil War gave a new efficacy to the press as conveyors of more than arbitrary events. The catastrophic war years were in some ways glory days for the press. As Hazel Dicken-Garcia observed, both the public and national leaders depended on newspapers more than ever before.<sup>95</sup> During the Civil War, Alice Fahs demonstrated, readers so urgently anticipated the news that they waited at bulletin boards outside newspaper offices to read the news immediately.<sup>96</sup> This importance also extended to the reporters supplying the content, whereas the pressroom side of the business had previously been in the foreground. Reporters, in Andie Tucher’s view, began to “craft their public image, to present to the world their own picture of who reporters were, what reporters did, and why the public should care.”<sup>97</sup> This persona did not apply to the lowest run of Victorian newsgathers, who scoured barrrooms, holding cells, and hospitals for morsels of intelligence—pieceworkers Kevin Barnhurst and

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<sup>93</sup> David Paul Nord, “The Urbanization of American Journalism,” *OAH Magazine of History* 6, no. 4 (Spring 1992): 21.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 21-25. Nord noted that the trend began to change with the *Chicago Daily News*.

<sup>95</sup> Hazel Dicken Garcia, *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth-Century America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 26.

<sup>96</sup> Alice Fahs, *Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001) 19.

<sup>97</sup> Andie Tucher, “Reporting for Duty: The Bohemian Brigade, the Civil War, and the Social Construction of the Reporter,” *Book History* 9 (2006): 132.

John Nerone termed "scavengers."<sup>98</sup> The persona of the journalist instead focused on the correspondent, typically a gentleman writing under a pseudonym as a "manly observer of events and personages in distant and (usually) powerful places."<sup>99</sup>

Townsend, who wrote that he was paid by the column, had been the youngest of the *Herald's* sixty-three correspondents or "specials" assigned to the field during the Civil War, a period of journalistic innovation that profoundly transformed American journalism in general and Bennett's *Herald* in particular.<sup>100</sup> The *Herald* was the first newspaper to report the firing on Fort Sumter and the start of the war, an edition that sold 135,000 copies, a doubling of the normal run which the newspaper claimed was the largest issue ever printed at the time.<sup>101</sup> Danger was a stock in trade, with three *Herald* correspondents killed during the war; nevertheless, orders, according to an internal *Herald* memo, were that "in no instance and under no circumstances must you be beaten"<sup>102</sup> by a rival publication competing for a story.

More than ever, news became a commodity that served the competitive needs of the press, instead of vice-versa. Townsend, revealing a trace of the cynicism that became emblematic of the occupational culture, described the mentality of an editor visiting the field from the home office: "Battles and sieges were simply occurrences for (the newspaper's)

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<sup>98</sup> Kevin G. Barnhurst and John Nerone, *The Form of News: A History* (New York: Guilford, 2001), 16.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>100</sup> David W. Bulla and Gregory A. Borchard, *Journalism in the Civil War Era* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 89-104.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>102</sup> Jason Crouthamel, *Bennett's New York Herald and the Rise of the Popular Press* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1989), 116-20.

columns. Good men, brave men, bad men died to give it obituaries."<sup>103</sup> In the years after the war, one challenge for newspapers was to remain indispensable, maintaining a level of danger and excitement. As the *Herald* reminded readers, correspondents' wartime valor was "sadly illustrated by the hand of Death," but peacetime reporters were "just as deserving of honor" because they continued to "risk perils from which ordinary men would shrink."<sup>104</sup>

Such was the mystique cultivated by reporters like Townsend, who signed stories with his initials to form a *nom de plume*<sup>105</sup> and wrote special reports for newspapers including the *Chicago Tribune*, which headlined these dispatches "from our own correspondent."<sup>106</sup> By 1872 he was an affluent Capitol Hill correspondent who aspired to emulate the success of his Washington housemate Mark Twain.<sup>107</sup> Townsend, who throughout his career showed a penchant for repurposing journalism, in 1861 tried his hand at playwriting, using material at hand. Drawing from his time as a reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and drama editor for the *Philadelphia Press*, his first play made reporters the center of the story, lightly satirizing their eccentricities and fakery. In the opening scene of *The Bohemians*, the publisher demands copy, and a reporter protests that he has already filed three stories that morning, all

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<sup>103</sup> Jerry Knudson, *In the News: American Journalists View Their Craft* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000), 61.

<sup>104</sup> "The Outlaws of the Swamp—The Enterprise and Daring of Herald Correspondents," *New York Herald*, March 20, 1872, 3.

<sup>105</sup> See, Ruthanna Hindes, *George Alfred Townsend: One of Delaware's Outstanding Writers* (Wilmington: University of Delaware Press, 1946). Townsend modified his initials to form "GATH," a name from a Biblical passage in Samuel.

<sup>106</sup> "From Washington Southward," *Chicago Tribune*, March 8, 1872, 4.

<sup>107</sup> John Muller, *Mark Twain in Washington, DC: The Adventures of a Capital Correspondent* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2013), 145-156; For an example of Townsend's emulation of Twain during this period, see, George Alfred Townsend, *Lost Abroad* (Hartford, CT: S. M. Betts, 1870).



of them elaborately fabricated. Replies the publisher: "Very good! I think you will write for the N.Y. Herald in time,."<sup>108</sup> an inside joke suggesting that the path to success, and to the *Herald*, was sensation rather than truth.

Unexpectedly, Townsend's familiarity with theater gave him an advantage in covering the most consequential story of his career, the assassination of President Lincoln. Townsend was long acquainted with John Wilkes Booth and had spoken to him in Washington only weeks before the assassination. At that point working for Pulitzer's *New York World*, Townsend remained ahead of his competitors on the story, offering dramatic accounts of the capture of Booth, published as an offprint in 1865 in a twenty-five cent paperback.<sup>109</sup> During this period, development of high-speed "lightning" presses, stereotype technology, and new engraving techniques enabled production of cheap, illustrated literature, for which demand soared during the Civil War.<sup>110</sup> A prevalent format was dime novels, four-by-six pamphlets of about 100 pages, usually featuring colorful illustrated covers and stories of pirates, cowboys and Indians, highway robbers, and romances.<sup>111</sup> In terms of subject matter, the discord and powerlessness left by the Civil War created an appetite for what John Hall was described as the outlaw hero who was "an exemplar of daring and defiance."<sup>112</sup> Hall was's

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<sup>108</sup> George Alfred Townsend, *The Bohemians*, 1861 (unpublished).

<sup>109</sup> George Alfred Townsend, *The Life, Crime, and Capture of John Wilkes Booth* (New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1865).

<sup>110</sup> Bulla and Borchard, *Journalism in the Civil War Era*, 89-104.

<sup>111</sup> J. Randolph Cox, ed. *Dashing Diamond Dick and Other Classic Dime Novels* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), ix-xxix.

<sup>112</sup> John E. Hall was, *Dime Novel Desperadoes: The Notorious Maxwell Brothers* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 258.

study of the Maxwell Brothers of Illinois revealed how the diffusion of newspaper stories to a national readership gave way to dime novels on these same outlaws.<sup>113</sup>

From the standpoint of audience and literacy, it is important to recognize that American periodical readers did not live by news alone. Like dime novels, the nineteenth century genre of story-papers (from which many dime novels originated)<sup>114</sup> was an example of how journalism and popular literature intersected in serialized form. Story-papers—national, large-circulation weekly publications such as the *New York Ledger*—mixed fiction, columns, and news in a marriage of convenience. By printing in newspaper-sized format, they qualified for reduced postal rates. But beyond the mode of delivery, the content and consumption of story-papers held intertextual implications for journalism. As Sari Edelstein wrote, they “broke down the binary of fact and fiction,”<sup>115</sup> making the boundary permeable. First, they were more visual than conventional newspapers, pointing to a counterintuitive innovation—the appeal to illiterate or semi-literate audiences.<sup>116</sup> Second, they popularized the phenomenon of serialization, at times over many months.<sup>117</sup> This convention figures

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Christine Bold, "The Voice of the Fiction Factory in Dime and Pulp Westerns," *Journal of American Studies* 17 no. 1 (April 1983): 34.

<sup>115</sup> Sari Edelstein, "Metamorphosis of the Newsboy: E. D. E. N. Southworth's *The Hidden Hand* and the Antebellum Story-Paper," *Studies in American Fiction* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 33.

<sup>116</sup> Robert Scholnick, "'Scribner's Monthly' and the 'Pictorial Representation of Life and Truth' in Post-Civil War American," *American Periodicals* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1991): 48.

<sup>117</sup> Carla L. Peterson, "Frances Harper, Charlotte Forten, and African American Literary Construction," in *Challenging Boundaries: Gender and Periodization*, ed. Joyce Warren and Margaret Dickie (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 44.

prominently in chapter 4, on the writing back of history in a Native American newspaper, through the serialized retelling of the Lowry War.<sup>118</sup>

What drove the media was technology, profit, and reader sensibility, and this also shaped storytelling forms. It is a fact that the last quarter of the nineteenth century saw a journalistic transition from literary storytelling to the drier, impersonal, standardized voice typified by the *New York Times*, but this was not the whole story.<sup>119</sup> As late as 1893, as Karen Roggenkamp demonstrated in a case study of coverage of the Lizzie Borden murder trial, premier journalists still regarded the news as a “marketable literary invention” that drew critical power from blurring narrative boundaries of literature and non-fiction.<sup>120</sup> Employing fictive tones and motifs not only served a social agenda; it also constructed the reporter as a self-referencing character in the drama—a “dear reader” narrative voice—someone with proximity to the action and a working knowledge of local color and dialects.<sup>121</sup>

All of these trends were in play in the 1870s with the *New York Herald's* treatment of the Lowry War. The story presented an opportunity for a Stanleyesque expedition to a conquered territory, albeit domestic, and the reporting and writing anticipated (and arguably, created) the marketable exoticism and drama of the tale. With *Herald* reporting repurposed in formats

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<sup>118</sup> See, Garry Barton, *The Life and Times of Henry Berry Lowry* (Pembroke: Lumbee Publishing Co., 1979). The book is a reprinted collection of the 1970s serial by the same name, published weekly in the *Carolina Indian Voice*.

<sup>119</sup> Karen S. H. Roggenkamp, “A Front Seat to Lizzie Borden: Julian Ralph, Literary Journalism and the Construction of Criminal Fact,” *American Periodicals* 8 (1998): 61. This article offers the waning years of the *New York Sun* under Charles Dana as a third alternative to the objective chronicle of the *New York Times* and sensationalism exemplified by the *Boston Globe*.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 68-73.

such as *Harper's Weekly*, dime novels, and a Broadway play—all within three months of publication of the newspaper serial—the Lowry saga shows how journalism fed downstream into illustrated periodicals, pulp literature, and popular entertainment. However, it is the *upstream* impact on journalism that is the larger inquiry connecting this chapter to the overall study. How did the representational platforms available affect the performance, as they did for the circus Indians on the train? In other words, how did the particular lens being focused on the subject alter the orientation and agency of journalists and their subjects?

### **Expeditionary Journalism**

In topic and approach, Townsend's Lowry assignment belonged to a kindred genre of nineteenth-century journalism known as "local color."<sup>122</sup> Typical of the genre was his elaborately rustic 1872 magazine series "Tales of the Chesapeake," published in the British *Chambers's Journal*<sup>123</sup> and later reprinted in the US in book form.<sup>124</sup> Stateside, *Scribner's* (later, the *Century*) popularized the trend, and frequently used the South as a setting of exotic backwardness. A characteristic treatment of the region was in an April 1872 edition of *Harper's Weekly* (which carried the secondary billing, "*A Journal of Civilization*"), an issue that included an update on the Lowry story. Among the pen-and-ink illustrations was an

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<sup>122</sup> Jennifer Rae Greeson, "Expropriating The Great South and Exporting 'Local Color': Global and Hemispheric Imaginaries of the First Reconstruction," *American Literary History* 18, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 496–52.

<sup>123</sup> John P. Reid, "George Alfred Townsend 'Gath,'" in *Collecting Delaware Books* (Dover: Delaware Heritage Commission, 1991).

<sup>124</sup> George Alfred Townsend, *Tales of the Chesapeake* (New York: American News Company, 1880).

essay on "life in the backwoods of North Carolina." One engraving was a country store where "the poor whites and negroes go to dispose of the products of their industry, if their indolent shifts to pick up a living deserve the name."<sup>125</sup>

The style, embraced by the *Herald* in the 1870s, not only indulged lingering sectional hostilities, it captured more broadly the zeitgeist of late nineteenth-century modernity, particularly on the part of the post-war North. Picaresque and condescending at the same time, this was a genre of journalism articulating, in subject and tone, what historian George Winston Smith termed "carpetbag imperialism."<sup>126</sup> This was the northern attitude that the conquest of the South opened the region to industrialization, modernization, and a superior way of life. The North-South dynamic was colonialism on a smaller hemispheric scale, what Jennifer Rae Greeson termed a domestic "New Africa" offering a narrative of "discovery" by explorers from New England, or the North.<sup>127</sup> Reporters, by acting as tourists of the primitive, reproduced the positivist ideology by which the Western civilization generally differentiated itself in time and space. For print media, swashbuckling adventures at home and colonial expeditions abroad showcased the emerging prowess of the form and its associated technologies, reflecting imperial aspirations of the ascending nation.<sup>128</sup> In 1872 came the epitome of this exhibitionist genre, with the *Herald's* greatest promotional coup. This was Welsh explorer and correspondent Henry Morton Stanley's tracking of missionary

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<sup>125</sup> "North Carolina," *Harper's Weekly*, April 20, 1872, 315.

<sup>126</sup> George Winston Smith, "Some Northern Wartime Attitudes Toward the Post-Civil War South," *Journal of Southern History* 10, no. 3 (August 1944): 553-274.

<sup>127</sup> Jennifer Rae Greeson, "Expropriating The Great South and Exporting 'Local Color': Global and Hemispheric Imaginaries of the First Reconstruction," 496-520.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

David Livingstone in Africa, a lucrative venture on the part of the new, more internationally oriented publisher, James Gordon Bennett Jr.<sup>129</sup>

The Lowry story, as Townsend treated it, was a domestic analogy. In both his introduction to the dime novel reissue *The Swamp Outlaws* and his memoir published two decades later in *Lippincott's*,<sup>130</sup> Townsend compared his expedition to that of Stanley in Africa. The same newspaper that had sent "a corps of brave men in the dense tropical forests of Africa," and correspondents to question Bismarck and Gladstone, Townsend wrote in the dime novel preface, had meanwhile found the resources to send a journalist "into the heart of the country where the red-bowie knife and death-dealing rifles of the Swamp Outlaws are carrying dismay into the hearts of men, women, and children."<sup>131</sup> In his memoir, Townsend employed similar hyperbole, boasting that his Lowry adventure was "something of a foretaste of what my old contemporary war correspondent Stanley was about that time doing in the wilds of Africa."<sup>132</sup> But Townsend intimated that Stanley's assignment had been less dangerous because Stanley had no war to impede him, and "could command an audience of the wild tribes" where

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<sup>129</sup> See, Clare Pettitt, *Dr. Livingstone, I Presume? Missionaries, Journalists, Explorers & Empire* (London: Profile, 2007).

<sup>130</sup> Reprinted in Melville Philips, ed., *The Making of a Newspaper* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), 187-201.

<sup>131</sup> George Townsend, *The Swamp Outlaws, or, The North Carolina Bandits: Being a Complete History of the Modern Rob Roys and Robin Hoods* (New York: Robert M. DeWitt, 1872), vii.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

he traveled.<sup>133</sup> Even in the conquered terrain of the post-war South, Townsend implied, the *Herald* was not guaranteed an audience with the deadly Lowry Gang.<sup>134</sup>

At a time when southern newspapers used front-page items to report on visits by prominent northern journalists much the way they noted comings and goings of foreign dignitaries, editors in Wilmington and Lumberton in late February 1872 tracked the arrival of George Alfred Townsend, famous to his southern counterparts not only from his coverage of the war and the Lincoln assassination, but as a prolific syndicated columnist, author, and lecturer.<sup>135</sup> Townsend, well-traveled and imposing, approached the assignment as if he were going on safari to uncharted territory, conferring with a series of guides before venturing into what he termed "one of the interior counties."<sup>136</sup> He met with the governor of Virginia, whom he described at length as "the handsomest man in the South."<sup>137</sup> Next, he consulted with the president of the Wilmington, Charlotte, and Rutherford railroad, who warned him of the perils of the *Herald's* mission. Townsend later reflected on what he saw when he finally arrived in Robeson County, a place he perceived as remote not only in geography but chronological evolution, a people that time forgot. "It seemed to me," he wrote, "that if I had been in some distant province of Asiatic Turkey I could have hardly found a general society

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Townsend simultaneously wrote for multiple newspapers in New York, using the bylines "Johnny Bouquet" or "The Broadway Notebook," and sent weekly correspondence to newspapers in Cincinnati, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. See, for example, "Scraps," *Indianapolis News*, February 24, 1881, 2; "The Man About Town," *Atlanta Constitution*, March 9, 1884, 3.

<sup>136</sup> Townsend, "Hearing My Requiem," 188.

<sup>137</sup> Jerry Shields, ed., *Gath's Literary Work and Folk: And Other Selected Writings of George Alfred Townsend* (Wilmington: Delaware Heritage Press, 1996), 342-344.

so unaware of any greater world and so disconnected from its methods and understandings."

Townsend compared the booths of the market in Lumberton, the largest town, to what "one might encounter in the oases of the sandy Sahara Desert at the times of caravans and fairs."<sup>138</sup>

The *Herald's* rendering of Scuffletown was an example of how northern journalists sought to exoticize and primitivize rural southerners, and non-whites in particular in. This was visible in how the *Herald* described Scuffletown homes, manners of speech, music, food, and sexual mores. Part of the measure of local color journalism was how elaborately and intimately it contrasted its subjects with bourgeois white society. Townsend, along with his successor on the story from the *Herald*, adorned his dispatches with colloquial dialects and accounts of folk dance and banjo music—in the late nineteenth century, nostalgic markers of the rustic, the backward, and the different.<sup>139</sup> The peripherized sense of place Townsend sought to convey was pronounced in his descriptions of ramshackle cabins and barren plots.

Wrote Townsend:

A mongrel dog is always a feature of the establishment.  
The two or three acres of the lot are generally plowed and  
planted in potatoes and maize, both of which come up sickly.  
The yellow woman commonly has a baby at the breast, and  
from half a dozen to a dozen playing outside on the edges  
of the swamp.<sup>140</sup>

The scene, painted with broad-brush strokes such as "always," "generally, and "commonly," was indicative of this genre. But more important than the content of the passage is its lineage.

The scene, with an accompanying map, appeared first in the *Herald*, then an illustrated

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Karen Linn, *That Half-Barbaric Twang: The Banjo in American Popular Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 56-57.

<sup>140</sup> *The Swamp Outlaws*, 45.



feature in *Harper's Weekly*, then the dime novel offprint, then, in Mary Norment's local history, cited as a primary source of subsequent studies. As with Norment's physical descriptions of Lowry and accounts of his exploits, the passage came almost word for word from the *Herald* (and hence, the dime novel *Swamp Outlaws*.) Wrote Norment:

A poor, half-starved fice dog, used for hunting "possums" and "wild varmints," will generally be found inside of the inclosure. The two or three acres cleared are ploughed and planted in corn, potatoes and rice, which come up puny, grow puny and mature puny. The woman of the house commonly has a baby at the breast, and from a half dozen to a dozen children playing outside of the enclosure in the woods.<sup>141</sup>

Putting travelogue aside, much of Townsend's newsgathering consisted of rearranging previous reports from the local paper. Here again, this reveals narrative lineage in a chain of communication, traveling from the close proximity of the local and the vernacular to outside audiences. The first stop Townsend made on arriving in Lumberton was the *Robesonian*, where he borrowed the editor's clip file on Henry Berry Lowry, which stretched back multiple years.<sup>142</sup> He then spent several hours in his hotel room annotating each paragraph in the interest, he later recalled, of "making this ragged narrative tangible" and satisfying the demand of his editor that Townsend "serve up something red and spicy for his columns."<sup>143</sup> Townsend attempted to do both, producing five long, florid correspondences based on his two-night visit, which also yielded a magazine feature for him, a dime novel and multiple

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<sup>141</sup> Mary Norment, *The Lowrie History, As Acted in Part by Henry Berry Lowrie* (Lumberton, NC: Lumbee Publishing, 1909), 28.

<sup>142</sup> Townsend's work borrowed liberally from previously published reports. What might later be considered plagiarism was a minor concern in the nineteenth century. See, for example, Melville Stone, *Fifty Years a Journalist* (New York: Doubleday, 1921), 61-64; William S. Walsh, *Handy-Book of Literary Curiosities* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1909), 891-900.

<sup>143</sup> George Alfred Townsend, "Hearing My Requiem," 196.

syndicated columns in metropolitan newspapers other than the *Herald*.<sup>144</sup> From the same travels and set of interviews, for example, Townsend wrote a lengthy dispatch for the *Chicago Tribune* that was billed as an up-close look at the post-war South. Folding in the story of the “mulatto outlaws,” Townsend used the Lowry War as evidence of North Carolina’s backwardness, economic collapse, and political anarchy: “The spirit of the community,” he wrote for the *Tribune*, “is disorganized, querulous, and without the convalescing energies of a modern State.”<sup>145</sup> He meanwhile sold sketches with an accompanying article to *Harper’s Weekly*. The more condensed *Harper’s* article repeated key phrases and paragraphs from Townsend’s *Herald* dispatches, but added a commercial plug: “The adventures of these bandits would make a volume of thrilling interest,” Townsend wrote.<sup>146</sup> In this case, at least two dime-novel publishers agreed.<sup>147</sup>

Despite the fact that Townsend never met any of the gang except for the jailed Calvin Oxendine, who was Lowry’s cousin and a brother of the condemned Henderson Oxendine, the reporter produced ink sketches of the outlaws, Rhoda Lowry, the Home Guard, a map, and scenes from Scuffletown, some of which he later sold to *Harper’s Weekly* for an

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<sup>144</sup> See, for example, GATH, “Washington,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 15, 1872, 4.

<sup>145</sup> “From Washington Southward,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 8, 1872, 4.

<sup>146</sup> “The North Carolina Bandits,” *Harper’s Weekly*, March 30, 1872, 249-251.

<sup>147</sup> See, *The Swamp Outlaws of North Carolina: A Full, Authentic and Thrilling History of the Adventures, Exploits, Battles and Ferocious Deeds of the Lowery Gang of Bandits* (Philadelphia: Old Franklin Publishing House, 1872). This 62-page dime novel, with six original illustrations, was unrelated to Townsend’s reprint, but at one point mentioned “Mr. Henderson” of the *Herald*. This more fictionalized account provided, nearly a century later, some of the material for an action-adventure story published in *Male Magazine*. See, Claude Dunnagan, “Henry Lowery’s Private Six-year War Against the South,” *Male Magazine*, August 1961, 32-35, 39-45.

illustrated story <sup>148</sup> Townsend wrote that he drew these on the day-long train ride to and from Wilmington, the conductor sometimes holding the train so that Townsend could finishing sketching various scenes.<sup>149</sup> However, as detailed below, Townsend could not have drawn at least one of the sketches, because it had already been used to illustrate an unrelated 1859 murder trial in Washington, DC.<sup>150</sup>

Townsend's principal dispatches for the *Herald*, between slashes of purple prose, quickly sketched the political dimensions of the Lowry story and fashioned a hero with superhuman abilities, able to "run like a deer, swim, stand weeks of exposure in the swamps and not rest, walk day and night, and take sleep by little snatches, which in a few days, would tire out white and negro,"<sup>151</sup> another passage lifted virtually word for word in the Norment history. Even while portraying Lowry as a fiend, Townsend foregrounded the idea that the Lowry War was a justified retaliation for the Democrats having tried to "annihilate" Scuffletown. Evoking not only Robin Hood but also Rob Roy Macgregor, William the Conqueror, and a "young Mars," Townsend's composite tailored the outlaw-hero archetype to fit Lowry like a custom-made cape.<sup>152</sup>

Central to the design was Lowry's rationale for killing: revenge and self-defense. This was the notion that Lowry, however bloodthirsty, had come from a good, hard-working family, and had taken the law into his own hands because there was no other justice available. As

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<sup>148</sup> "The North Carolina Bandits," *Harper's Weekly*, March 30, 1872, 249, 251-252.

<sup>149</sup> George Alfred Townsend, "Hearing My Requiem," *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, October 1892, 494-495; 497.

<sup>150</sup> "New York Correspondences," *Observer* (Raleigh, NC) September 10, 1878, 1.

<sup>151</sup> *The Swamp Outlaws*, 14.

<sup>152</sup> Townsend, *The Swamp Outlaws*, 14.

Townsend related in the words of "Aunt Phoebe," an ex-slave who purportedly waited on the reporter at his Shoe Heel lodging, Lowry was just "paying those white people back for killing his old father, brothers, and cousins."<sup>153</sup> The implication, in other words, was justifiable homicide. Townsend developed the same argument in describing Lowry's killing of Hugh MacLain, who had been "second in command" at Lowry's father's execution. In killing MacLain, Henry Berry Lowry "had shed the blood of one of the highest youthful spirits in the region," Townsend wrote, but also a man "unfortunately, whose record against the colored race was long and hard and dark."<sup>154</sup> Similarly, the first white official Lowry killed was portrayed as a corrupt, misogynistic brute reviled by all, including whites.<sup>155</sup> Nominally, the victim represented the law; substantively, the narrative framed him as a predator whose killing represented justice, however rough. When the institution of law was compromised and racialized, the relative position of the "outlaw" changed. As Lowry was quoted as saying, when a magistrate set bail at \$500 for a white man accused of killing one of Lowry's in-laws, "There is now no law for us mulattoes."<sup>156</sup>

The same rationale applied to the gang's robberies. Lowry presented as a noble thief who, in his own words, was denied the opportunity to ply an honest trade, and was thereby forced into crime to support his family and protect his community from starvation and intimidation. Placed in the context of social and economic injustice and the resultant poverty, hunger, and squalid living conditions the *Herald* described as post-war Scuffletown, robbing from the

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<sup>153</sup> "The Blood Trail," *New York Herald*.

<sup>154</sup> Townsend, *The Swamp Outlaws*, 59.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

rich and giving to the poor was, arguably, a worthy gesture and a logical response. Even though Townsend professed to disapprove of this logic, he painted a picture of the outlaws that led to the same conclusion. A section of Townsend's narrative titled "Incidents of Outlawry" gave four examples, cribbed from the *Robesonian* file, each reflecting favorably on Lowry's character. The first example Townsend gave was the "theft" of the corn in the borrowed wagon, to be "equally distributed" to the poor folk of Scuffletown, retelling, to the detail, the return of the wagon, suggesting a thief's version of the honor system. This was no small consideration in the post-Sherman South, when arson and theft of livestock had particularly cruel effects on the civilian population. A report that Lowry had stolen a mule team, for example, did not find its way into Townsend's annotations.<sup>157</sup>

Townsend's next exhibit of "outlawry" was an account of a raid on a homestead. The male occupants of the house fled into the woods, dispensing with chivalry, and left the women behind while the gang stayed all night in the house. Even though the women were defenseless, the story implied, Lowry left them unharmed and "bolted away in a retired apartment."<sup>158</sup> Another instance Townsend cited as "outlawry" was hardly that: When Lowry found a raccoon trapped in a tree by another man's bloodhound, Lowry brought the raccoon to the man, complimented him on his dog, "and walked off demurely as any honest neighbor." The last example of outlawry was in fact what Townsend termed "fearlessness." Lowry, in another raid, threw down his weapons and waited, unarmed, while the family made

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<sup>157</sup> "Capture of a Thief and Recovery of Stolen Property," *Wilmington Daily Dispatch*, April 14, 1867, 3.

<sup>158</sup> *The Swamp Outlaws*, 56.

him dinner, another set of details Townsend selected to inspire admiration in readers, rather than contempt.<sup>159</sup>

"His Chivalry," was the title of a similarly detailed section Townsend used to aggrandize Lowry, a banjo player said to have drunk whiskey (but never to excess) and to have rescued his wife when she was unjustly imprisoned solely because of her connection to Lowry. Contradicting the gallows story that Cuthbert had filed for the *Herald*, Townsend relayed the general conviction that Lowry had never committed arson or rape, and always "sends warning before he kills."<sup>160</sup> There is an element of mitigation even in the worst accusation against Lowry, the slow, gruesome killing of the private detective who plotted to betray the gang by living among the Indians as a schoolteacher and pretending to help the gang members and their families "escape" to Mexico. Townsend wrote that the Lowry Gang, killing the detective after exposing his plan to betray them, followed "a grim and military observance of justice" with a proper burial and the mailing of the detective's final letter home to his wife.<sup>161</sup> These details implied that although the gang executed the northern spy, this occurred in battle and followed protocol, a kind of honor among thieves that Townsend attributed to "universal testimony."<sup>162</sup> As to the authorities who hunted Lowry, however, Townsend conferred no corresponding code of combat or sense of fair play. For example, Townsend suggested that the adjutant's troops hunting Lowry were themselves guilty of rape in the settlement, with the troops "driving the husbands forth to insult and debauch their

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<sup>159</sup> Townsend, *The Swamp Outlaws*, 56.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

wives."<sup>163</sup> This foil served to foreground Lowry's heroic traits further, as a figure to be admired by both men and women.

The contrast was also reflected in the account of the Home Guard's execution of Lowry's brother Bill and father Allan as alleged thieves and Yankee collaborators. Townsend particularly emphasized the merciless aspect of executing "an old man," as the reported cast Lowry's father, who along with his son met his fate with "Indian stoicism."<sup>164</sup> Even though Townsend followed the passage by making an obligatory comparison of Henry Berry Lowry to Nat Turner, the details the writer employed drew a bright line between the two. Turner, the writer observed, was a "praying ignoramus [*sic*]" who believed himself divinely inspired to kill whites, and who after the brief insurrection was caught and hanged.<sup>165</sup> Lowry, Townsend offered in contrast, acted out of "eternal vengeance against the perpetrators of the act" he witnessed against his family. Townsend's ultimate judgment of Lowry was as "cold-blooded, malignant, murderous," but the Delaware-born correspondent argued that there was a greater stain of guilt upon the Old South: "the blotched background of an intolerant social condition, where the image of God was outraged by slavery through two hundred years of bleeding, suffering, and submitting."<sup>166</sup> Lowry, though not blameless, was neither entirely to blame in Townsend's estimation. He was a "bloodthirsty, remorseless, able bandit leader" who had never been caught.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 52.

The capture of Henry Berry Lowry at his own wedding ceremony was one of the highly visual examples Townsend used that conceivably would have resonated with both men and women readers, and this was a scene that would be much repeated. Surprising Lowry in a rare vulnerable moment, when he was taking his wedding vows at a family feast described in sumptuous detail, the posse "took the outlawed husband from the side of his wife." Lowry nevertheless made his way back to his bride, Townsend's retelling of this story stressed, breaking out of jail and fleeing into the swamps "with the irons still on his wrists,"<sup>168</sup> risking his life, needless to say, for love.

Lowry always maintained the upper hand in Townsend's tableau, a trickster in the Robin Hood tradition, outwitting the authorities through disguises, narrow escapes, and almost mythic invulnerability. A persistent example included in the Townsend account was the incident on North Carolina's Lumber River at Wiregrass Landing, in which a company of soldiers ambushed Lowry as he was fishing in a boat. Rather than flee, Lowry reportedly overturned the boat to use it as a shield, grabbed his rifle, and advanced through the water toward the soldiers, firing on them with supposed deadeye accuracy until they were forced to retreat.<sup>169</sup>

White southern newspaper editors, infuriated by this burnishing of the Lowry name, accused Townsend of being a "Munchausen," referring to the tall tales of the eighteenth-century German baron. And regardless of Townsend's professional or political motives, some of his claims did not bear close scrutiny as journalism. For example, although Townsend did

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 58.



produce rough pencil and ink sketches over the course of his career,<sup>170</sup> the Lowry etchings that the enterprising Townsend sold to *Harper's Weekly* were remarkable both in their volume and fine detail. Four of the *Harper's* drawings of individual gang members were genuine likenesses, copied from a series of portraits by Wilmington photographer Charles W. Yates, later sold as postcards, of gang members Thomas Lowry, Henderson and Calvin Oxendine, and George Applewhite, one of two African Americans in the group.<sup>171</sup> But years later, when a Raleigh newspaper complained of the "humbugs" involved in the *National Police Gazette's* coverage of a North Carolina homicide, the writer pointedly recalled one of the drawings that accompanied Townsend's Lowry story, captioned, "View of principal street in Scuffletown."<sup>172</sup> Asked the *Observer*, "What mattered it to the publishers or their readers that there was no street at all in 'Scuffletown,' and that the picture had previously done duty in the 'trial of Sickles for the murder of Key' in Washington City! People were willing to be gulled, and they were."<sup>173</sup> With a different caption, the identical ink drawing had, in fact, appeared in an 1859 true crime dime novel written by Felix Gregory de Fontaine and published by R. M. DeWitt, the same New York publishing house that produced *The Swamp Outlaws*.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> "George Alfred Townsend Sketches of Port Royal (1880s)," (Port Royal, VA: St. Peter's Episcopal Church Archive).

<sup>171</sup> See, C.W. Yates & Co. *cartes de visite*, circa 1870, Wilmington, NC. (PictureHistory.com). John Dial and Eli Ewing were also part of this series of images, but there is no known photograph of Henry Berry Lowry.

<sup>172</sup> *The Swamp Outlaws*, 21.

<sup>173</sup> "New York Correspondences," *The Observer* (Raleigh, NC) September 10, 1878.

<sup>174</sup> Felix Gregory de Fontaine, *The Trial of the Hon. David E. Sickles for Shooting Philip Barton Key* (New York: R. M. DeWitt, 1859). The 106-page pamphlet consisted of de Fontaine's coverage of the sensational murder trial of congressman Daniel Sickles, the first

This is significant to this study, but not for the reasons that prompted Townsend's southern Democratic critics to sniff out evidence of fakery. Dime novels, which began in the Victorian age and remained a predominant form until they were replaced by cinema, were typically associated with mystery, adventure, and romance. Evidencing the quasi-literary status of the dime novel genre, writers such as Louisa Mae Alcott wrote for them, occasionally under pennames, to support their more serious efforts.<sup>175</sup> A familiar subgenre consisted of fictionalized retellings of events, the Victorian equivalent of "made-for-TV" movies. These were true-crime utility vehicles, such as the Lizzie Borden murder, that served to convey normative social morality.<sup>176</sup>

Yet de Fontaine and Townsend represented an additional aspect of dime novels; that is, the encroachment of journalism, which ostensibly *was* a serious effort, repackaged under the imprint of popular literature. The two reporters moved in similar spheres. Both de Fontaine and Townsend were preeminent war correspondents, and briefly worked for the *Herald* at the same time.<sup>177</sup> Their two journalistic efforts reprinted by DeWitt were opposites, in one sense. The Washington homicide took place at the epicenter of power, across from the White House. The salacious details of a Washington hostess having an affair with the best friend of

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use of the insanity defense. Sickles was accused in the fatal Lafayette Park shooting of a US attorney who was the son of Francis Scott Key and who was having an affair with Sickles's wife.

<sup>175</sup> J. Randolph Cox, ed., *Dashing Diamond Dick and Other Classic Dime Novels* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), xxv.

<sup>176</sup> Kathleen Chamberlain, "Capitalism, Counterfeiting and Literary Representation: The Case of Lizzie Borden," in *Pioneers, Passionate Ladies and Private Eyes: Dime Novels, Series Books, and Paperbacks*, ed. Larry Sullivan and Lydia Cushman Schurman (Binghamton, NY: Haworth Press, 1996), 175-192.

<sup>177</sup> Crouthamel, 116. De Fontaine was the only reporter able to file a live story on the firing of Fort Sumter, with Townsend assigned rewrite.

her congressman husband, who in a rage shot his federal-prosecutor friend in the groin, revealed to the masses the society pages' seamy backstory. Townsend's tale, on the other hand, *was* the backstory, dispatched to "the newspaper of civilization" from the far reaches. But in this case, the plot twists were romance, honor, and retribution by the hand of the *villain*.

The stories were two sides of the same coin, both catering to the desires of the reading public. That a stock image of a down-at-the-heels street scene doubled as both the address of the tawdry Washington love nest and "a view of the principal street" in Scuffletown is unsurprising, given the volume of production at DeWitt, which printed 1,200 titles from 1848-1877, and was only one of some fifty such publishing houses.<sup>178</sup> Other images in *The Swamp Outlaws* likewise had a stock quality, and are of questionable origin. A sketch depicting the "advance of the troops in the swamps" represented dress and weaponry belonging to the Jacksonian age. The troops defending a wagon train were firing upon naked men hurling spears, hardly a scene from Robeson County, and the drawing was signed "Orr SC."<sup>179</sup> Likewise, the portraits of "the outlaw's wife" and "the bandit in jail" bore no resemblance to descriptions of Rhoda and Henry Berry Lowry. Rhoda's was a Victorian cameo of the same style and snow-white hue as, for example, the image of Sickles's wife; a

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<sup>178</sup> Madeleine Stern, *Publishers for Mass Entertainment in Nineteenth Century America*, 95.

<sup>179</sup> *The Swamp Outlaws*, 45. The illustration was likely by the prominent New York engraving firm of Nathaniel Orr, a leading woodcut engraver for dime novels and travelogues (the letters "S.C." denoting "engraved by.") See, Michael A. Chaney, *Fugitive Vision: Slave Image and Black Identity in Antebellum Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008) 30-31.

jailed Henry Berry appeared as a seaman, clean-shaven, with muttonchops and sailor's pants, tunic, and wide-brimmed straw hat.<sup>180</sup>

The point of interrogating pulp illustrations is not for period accuracy, but for what they reveal about the period *template* in which the writer operated. For Townsend, who repackaged the *Herald* stories and added a preface for the dime novel, the *Robesonian* clip file and the supplemental interviews he conducted on site supplied the variables of a time-honored formula: A corrupt sheriff murders a beloved and upstanding patriarch; a young lion swears vengeance; a damsel must be rescued from a dungeon; a long-suffering peasantry provides cover to the hero, keeping his memory alive after his suspiciously convenient demise. With minor scene and costume alterations, *The Swamp Outlaws* would have been interchangeable with any of a myriad of contemporary dime novels in the catalog of DeWitt (or other dime novel publishers) such as *Red Wolf*, *The Pirate*, and *The Veiled Lady*, or, *The Throne and the Scaffold*.

Townsend was able to bend the Lowry saga to fit the Robin Hood mold and serve the *Herald's* need to provide readers excitement, romance, intrigue, and sympathy, rather than the revulsion and dread evoked by Cuthbert's previous reporting. But part of this narrative malleability was a function of the material given the correspondent. Townsend, already widely published by 1872, showed an awareness that the storyline he was crafting was an oversimplified version of reality. Despite his frequent avowals that opinion on Lowry was universal and "to a man" in Robeson County, Townsend also reported that Lowry's family was itself "divided in verdict upon his conduct." Townsend reported that Lowry siblings Patrick, Sinclair, and Purdy, whom he described as Methodists, repudiated Henry Berry's

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 53.

methods. The gang accused Sinclair of cooperating with law enforcement, to the extent of informing officials of the time and location of the outlaw's wedding. Townsend meanwhile quoted Patrick as saying that all ten brothers had been provoked by the execution of their father, but that Henry Berry was a "bad man" who would be better off dead.<sup>181</sup>

At the same time, Townsend was conscious of what fit the narrative *too* well. Though frequently reminding the reader of the "literal truth" of the statements given him, Townsend recognized that some of the vernacular accounts were embroidered. "People have told me that he wore fine clothes," the reporter wrote about Lowry, "but when questioned to the point of re-examination, admitted that he had nothing on but a woolen blouse and trousers, and a black wide-brimmed stiff woolen hat."<sup>182</sup> The correspondent found attitudes toward Lowry on the part of whites especially confounding. The effusive physical descriptions given to Townsend, rather than communicating repulsion, betrayed attraction. This was strange to Townsend, considering the sources: "The very relatives of white men killed by Henry Berry Lowery admitted to me," Townsend wrote, "that 'He is one of the handsomest mulattoes you ever saw.'"<sup>183</sup>

Moreover, the eagerness locals showed to help Townsend with his work struck the reporter as odd. For instance, the current sheriff along with the son-in-law of the murdered sheriff offered to act as go-betweens for Townsend to secure interviews with Lowry. "Strange as it may appear for county officers," Townsend wrote of the willingness of the officials to arrange an audience with a wanted man, "I mention it to show the superstition

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

inspired by this brigand."<sup>184</sup> If by "superstition" Townsend meant irrational fear of Lowry, this was not readily apparent from the interviews. Townsend rejected the idea of approaching Lowry as ill-advised, even though both a Shoe Heel merchant and the *Robesonian* editor told him that this could be done safely. As the editor told Townsend, Lowry "appreciates his consequence in the *role* [emphasis in original] he has assumed."<sup>185</sup>

But Townsend cut short the hunt for his Livingstone, and instead relied on secondhand observation. In this, he acknowledged that his sources had private agendas. After one set of interviews, Townsend confided to the reader that "much of the above" was "probably deceitful,"<sup>186</sup> a recognition that there were no neutral parties in Robeson County, either as a result of allegiances or fear of retribution. The narrator he considered the most reliable was also the person he encountered with the lowest station. This was the ex-slave, Aunt Phoebe. Townsend reported that she served him supper at the Shoe Heel house where he spent the night, and that she recounted to Townsend how her former slave master had knocked her front teeth out with a club. In Townsend's memoir, he remarked that only she seemed to grasp why the *Herald* was there, and the idea that the newspaper might make some difference in the perception of the story.<sup>187</sup>

Apart from a black waiter Townsend questioned briefly at the hotel, and an unproductive jailhouse interview with a wary Calvin Oxendine, Aunt Phoebe was the only interaction Townsend had with Robeson County's underclass. As such, Townsend gave her unusual prominence, both in the story and in his memoir of the story. The latter went to great lengths

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>187</sup> Townsend, "Hearing My Requiem," 197.

to emphasize the danger Townsend felt he was in at Shoe Heel, and also expressed concern that the servant might have suffered repercussions from her former slaveowner for the interview she gave. Such highlighting of the danger in effect underlined the *absence* of danger to Townsend himself, and the failure of his reporting methods to perform the authorizing journalistic function of eyewitness proximity<sup>188</sup> that the *Herald* so prized. Feigning authority while reporting from a position of safety was the practice which, in another age, came to be disparaged as "hotel journalism."<sup>189</sup> In contrast, this would scarcely apply to the third reporter the *Herald* assigned to the Lowry story, A. Boyd Henderson, who traveled to North Carolina with a single mission. He was to land an interview with the Lowry Gang.

### **"The Outlaws on Themselves"**

Ten days after Henderson checked out of his Wilmington hotel and left for Scuffletown with a foreboding flourish, leaving in the care of a desk clerk his overcoat, valuables, and a last letter to his wife in the event of his death, the correspondent reappeared to great fanfare. Headline writers at the *Herald*, who at this point renamed the outlaw saga "The Swamp Angels," piled no less than twenty-three decks of cross-bulletins atop the first account of the "Inner History of the Herald's Exploit," advertising horror ("Terrible Tales

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<sup>188</sup> For a discussion of the authorizing function of eyewitness journalist, see, Barbie Zelizer, *Covering the Body: The Kennedy Assassination, the Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992), 189-197.

<sup>189</sup> For this critique of correspondents, not to be confused with the post-Baghdad use of the term to denote censorship and control, see, for example, Evelyn Waugh, *Scoop* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1938).

from Terrible Tongues"), promiscuity ("A Night in Rhody Lowery's Cabin"), and backwoods bacchanalia ("How They Eat, Drink, Sleep, and 'Pick' the Banjo.")<sup>190</sup>

This was highly anticipated news, after almost two weeks of advance publicity in the *Herald* and other newspapers about whether the correspondent was dead or alive. Southern newspapers had discounted Henderson, who unlike George Alfred Townsend was neither well-known nor well-connected. North Carolina newspapers had dismissed the twenty-seven-year-old, 115-pound journalist as "the little Henderson,"<sup>191</sup> naïve, literally a lightweight. Green enough that he lost his wallet on the train trip south, but determined enough to continue the journey that he pawned his watch,<sup>192</sup> Henderson had begun the year as a lawyer in the small town of Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, where he had previously published an evening newspaper. By the last week of March 1872, he was the toast of New York, not only a correspondent on a major national news story but the *subject* of the news story.<sup>193</sup>

One reason Henderson's reporting received attention was that it filled what had become a gaping news hole for the *Herald*. After the doldrums of months with only wisps of news concerning Stanley's fate in Africa, Henderson became a proxy for the *Herald's* self-promotion, and a mystery that provided a relatively swift dénouement. With Cuthbert feeding

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<sup>190</sup> "The Swamp Angels: Our Correspondent Among the Lowery Bandits," *New York Herald*, March 26, 1872, 3.

<sup>191</sup> See, for example, "Loyalty in Robeson," *Southern Home* (Charlotte, NC), October 28, 1872, 3; "Rhody Lowery," *Raleigh (NC) Sentinel*, August 22, 1873, 1.

<sup>192</sup> Eccles Cuthbert, telegram to *New York Herald*, March 1872.

<sup>193</sup> See, *Williamsport (PA) Sun-Gazette*, March 22, 1872, 4; "Boyd Abroad," *Clearfield (PA) Republican*, March 27, 1872, 2; Evarts Blake, ed., *San Francisco and its Municipal Administration* (San Francisco: Pacific Publishing Co., 1902), 59. Henderson later became managing editor under William Randolph Hearst when Hearst inherited his first newspaper, the *San Francisco Daily Morning Examiner*. On arrival in California, Henderson was enlisted to ride with a posse in a two-month search for the robber Tibureio Vasquez.



updates from Wilmington, where he plied daily train passengers from Robeson County for information, the *Herald* played the suspense to the hilt. The last known sighting of Henderson had been by Rhoda Lowry, who first arranged a meeting between the reporter and the outlaws, and who later carried messages from the gang and the correspondent to a train conductor, who on Rhoda Lowry's instruction relayed the messages back to the *Herald*. As speculation grew, the *Herald* printed a telegram Henderson sent to his wife that he was "with the Lowerys, perfectly safe."<sup>194</sup> The *Herald* appended this item to an update on Stanley, whom the paper said was believed to have "died at his post" in search of Livingstone. Segueing to the Lowry expedition, which offered further proof of the "customary enterprise" with which the newspaper did its "duty as a public journal," the *Herald's* Lowry update began, "To-day another of our correspondents is in deadly peril, owing to the fidelity and courage with which he has attempted to carry out his instructions."<sup>195</sup>

But apart from timing, what also made the story sensational— or in the words of *Harper's Weekly*, "a romantic and daring feat" of journalism, and one "not likely to be repeated"— was the sheer wonder of it.<sup>196</sup> The interest was not the who, what, when, and where of the story, amply chronicled in Townsend's articles. It was the "why" and "how." How did a newspaper reporter penetrate the secret hideouts of outlaws who eluded local, state, and federal authorities for seven years? And why would the bandits let him?

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<sup>194</sup> "The Swamp Angels: Confirmation of Our Correspondent's Capture by the Outlawed Lowerys," *New York Herald*, March 20, 1872, 7.

<sup>195</sup> "The Outlaws of the Swamp—The Enterprise and Daring of Herald Correspondents," *New York Herald*, March 20, 1872, 3.

<sup>196</sup> *Harper's Weekly*, April 20, 1872, 315.

The *Herald*, in its undisguised northern bias toward a region and people it deemed inferior, had walked a fine line in characterizing the Lowry affair. On the one hand, officials in Robeson County showed what the *Herald* termed "disgraceful and cowardly panic" in the face of the Lowry band.<sup>197</sup> The paper compared North Carolinians, and by extension the state's newspapers, to children frightened by a bogeyman. On the other hand, minimizing the threat would have also minimized suspense over the outcome of the *Herald* sending "an emissary into the heart of the outlaws' camp."<sup>198</sup> The explanation, then, was that the assignment was "one of great danger," but never too great for the *Herald*, because "the correspondents of the *Herald* are not accustomed to reckon risk in the discharge of their duty."<sup>199</sup>

The paper gleefully published letters to the editor calling for the paper to raise an expeditionary force against the outlaws, and prominently reprinted a roundup of editorials of competitors, North and South. Generally, these carped about the "little vacation" of the *Herald* correspondent, as the *Boston Daily Evening Traveller* put it, what the *Savannah Republican* called the "miserable twaddle" of the series, and what a *Cincinnati Times Star* commentator at one point called the "saddest announcement of the week," the news that "the Herald's North Carolina correspondent is not dead, but sleepeth."<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> "The Outlaws of the Swamp—The Enterprise and Daring of Herald Correspondents," *New York Herald*, March 20, 1872, 6.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> "The Swamp Angels: The Press Still Eager for More," *New York Herald*, March 30, 1872, 2.

But as the intrigue deepened with Henderson remaining incommunicado, the *Herald* found grounds for indignation, and more fodder for its self-aggrandizing salvos. Southern newspapers had now circulated a report that Henderson, seen moving about freely and wielding a rifle, had in fact joined the outlaws' cause. This report originating in the *Robesonian*, a newspaper the *Herald* now goaded as "effeminate,"<sup>201</sup> created a face-saving problem for both camps. For the *Herald*, the problem was the appearance that Henderson was not in mortal danger after all; the newspaper therefore maintained that he continued to be "in the clutches" of the gang.<sup>202</sup> For the southern editors, the idea that Henderson was in no danger hurt the credibility of Democratic newspapers. The conservative southern editors, whom the *Herald* routinely ridiculed as "the chivalry,"<sup>203</sup> led the community to believe the Lowrys far surpassed the Klan in violence. That a Yankee reporter could so readily gain access to the gang and scoop the southern newspapers in their own circulation area could only mean one thing, if the southern newspapers were to save face. In the words of the *Raleigh News*, Townsend had joined the outlaws' cause and "became one of their mess."<sup>204</sup> At last, the quarrel was settled when Henderson resurfaced March 25 in a driving rainstorm

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<sup>201</sup> "The Swamp Angels: Great Excitement in Wilmington Over the Herald Captive," *New York Herald*, March 23, 1872, 4.

<sup>202</sup> See, "A Prisoner of War: The Swamp Angels and the Herald," *New York Herald*, March 17, 1872, 9; "The Swamp Angels: Confirmation of Our Correspondent's Capture by the Outlawed Lowrys," *New York Herald*, March 20, 1872, 9; "The Swamp Angels: New Perils for the Herald Correspondent," *New York Herald*, March 22, 1872, 7.

<sup>203</sup> See, for example, "Comments By the Chivalry: How the Southern Press Regard the Lowry Outlaws and Herald Enterprise," *New York Herald*, March 26, 1872, 4. As was frequently the case, the *Herald* taunted southern editors as being in a "hopeless state of ignorance" and of blaming the South's problems on "the wrong cause, probably the lost one."

<sup>204</sup> "Yankee Enterprise, Mendacity and Ignorance," *Raleigh News*, March 28, 1872, 2.

on the road to Wilmington, bringing an urgent telegram to the *Herald* that he was safe, and equally important, that it was safe to publish his embargoed dispatches: "Escaped! Escaped! Publish All."<sup>205</sup> The articles that followed indicated that the reporter had been in real danger. But he had also been a participant in the story.

When Henderson encountered the gang in March 1872, he noted that it was a "particularly inauspicious time" for the fugitives, who were "enraged" by recent events.<sup>206</sup> Henry Berry Lowry was reported dead, though historians allowed that the report may have been a ruse,<sup>207</sup> and his right-hand associate, Boss Strong, had been mortally wounded in an ambush the previous week. Despite the poor timing of Henderson's arrival, he described Steve Lowry and Andrew Strong, Henry Berry's brother and brother-in-law, as receptive in their first meeting, arranged by Rhoda Lowry, but also cautious in the extreme.

This distrust persisted from the moment the *Herald* reporter appeared until the day he departed, the outlaws vacillating between believing that Henderson was a journalist, and suspecting that he was one more bounty hunter in a clever disguise. At one point, after they searched him for chloroform and threatened to execute him, the reporter made "a favorable impression" when he produced an envelope bearing an engraving of the *Herald* building. But the suspicions persisted, and the outlaws further demanded that Henderson take out all his

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<sup>205</sup> Eccles Cuthbert, telegram to *New York Herald* from Wilmington, NC, March 25, 1872.

<sup>206</sup> "First Letter from Our Captured Correspondent," *New York Herald*, March 26, 1872, 3.

<sup>207</sup> See, Evans, *To Die Game*, 244. Rhoda Lowry said her husband fatally shot himself by accident, but the body was never found. The report of the shooting came immediately after Lowry's theft of \$27,000 from the Lumberton bank. Conflicting sightings of Lowry followed, and historians concluded that the bank robbery and the reported shooting were either a coincidence or a trick by Lowry to escape bounty hunters.

notes and read them aloud.<sup>208</sup> Ultimately, the reason the outlaws chose to believe Henderson was a reporter, Steve Lowry told him, was that Henderson made no pretense of caring about the outlaws or seeking to help them. The gang understood that the reporter was motivated by self-interest, "for the money you would make and the help it would give your paper that you came."<sup>209</sup>

That the wanted men argued vehemently among themselves about whether to trust Henderson or execute him, as Tom Lowry proposed, indicated that they saw not only drawbacks but advantages to the situation. Henderson quoted them as saying they were "glad of an opportunity of giving their story to the country, for the 'papers were telling so many d---d lies about them.'" Andrew Strong, according to Henderson, said "they would tell me all I wanted to know if I would question them."<sup>210</sup> A literal betrayal to the authorities was the immediate gamble the Lowrys took with Henderson, but not the only gamble. Assuming that Henderson was indeed with the *Herald*, Steve Lowry understood that a newspaper story would backfire if Henderson portrayed the gang negatively. This was Steve's explanation for why the outlaws were granting a one-time interview, and why Henderson should never return: "If your report is hard on us we won't see you, while if it is in our favor the white people will kill you."<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> "The Swamp Angels. Our Captured Correspondent," 4.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> *The Swamp Outlaws*, 76.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

Yet in seeking a chance for deliverance, or at least what Henderson called "a clear and just conception" of them,<sup>212</sup> the gang had reason to believe the *Herald* was its best hope. After Henderson read to the gang Townsend's previous coverage of the story, the reporter wrote that Steve called it "a fairer account of us than we had ever seen."<sup>213</sup> What also swayed the gang in Henderson's favor was that he brought accurate details about Boss Strong's killing from the week prior, much as the details enraged the gang. This was information Henderson had from an interview with the shooter himself, a man named Donahoe (also known as James McQueen. Henderson told Steve and Andrew, Boss Strong's older brother, that Donahoe, a bounty hunter, fired on Boss Strong "through a cat hole" in Strong's cabin as the outlaw lay by the fire playing his harmonica, a shooting witnessed by Andrew, Andrew's wife, and Rhoda. At this point, the gang told Henderson that even though they had resolved, "we'd neber trust no stranger agin," they felt he was telling the truth.<sup>214</sup>

Here, Henderson's ethical problem arose. The tone of southern newspaper editors' criticism of the reporter revealed anti-northern animus and professional jealousy when they protested that Henderson belonged "in the same jail"<sup>215</sup> as the bandits and was a "consummate fool and interloper" who was attempting to portray the gang as "unjustly persecuted."<sup>216</sup> But accusations that the correspondent participated in the gang's activities were not baseless. The gang informed Henderson that Donahoe, Boss Strong's killer, now

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<sup>212</sup> "The Swamp Angels: Our Correspondent Among the Lowery Bandits," 3.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> "The North Carolina Swamp Angels," *Wilmington Journal*, March 20, 1872, 3.

<sup>216</sup> "The Lowerys and *Herald* Correspondent," *Roanoke News* (Weldon, NC) March 23, 1872, 1.

wanted to kill the reporter as well, and the outlaws told Henderson they wanted him to act as bait in their attempt (ultimately unsuccessful) to trap and kill Donahoe. In enlisting the correspondent as an accomplice, the outlaws appealed to his journalistic ambition, arguing that the "rare opportunity given a newspaper correspondent to witness a killing by them,"<sup>217</sup> as Henderson put it, would make a better story.

It was a story in which the gang intended to dictate the outcome: "We are gwine to keep you heah till you can put in de paper how we killed Donahoe."<sup>218</sup> Henderson, informed that it would be "powerful bad" for him if he tried to escape, confided to the reader that he felt "somewhat dismayed" by this warning, but told the outlaws he was "satisfied with the arrangement." He believed he would be in no danger if he acted "honestly;" furthermore, he reasoned, "I saw I would have an opportunity of seeing wild life not often enjoyed by northern men."<sup>219</sup>

The outlaws in turn regarded the *Herald* as an opportunity to regain control, even as sheriff's posses and bounty hunters closed in, and they frequently punctuated their remarks to Henderson with the instruction, "You put dat all in de paper, mister."<sup>220</sup> The gang let Henderson communicate with his newspaper via train conductors, and they sent a message to the *Herald* as well, saying they had taken the reporter prisoner but would not hurt him.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> "The Swamp Angels: Our Correspondent Among the Lowery Bandits," *New York Herald*, March 26, 1872, 3. Donahoe was also known as James McQueen.

<sup>218</sup> *The Swamp Outlaws*, 78.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> "A Prisoner of War: The Swamp Angels and the Herald," *New York Herald*, March 17, 1872, 9.

They told Henderson this was for effect: "We gwine to send a telegraph to the paper for a joke dat we hab got you, so-dey will see the outlaws ain't all dead yet."<sup>222</sup>

In the sense that the fugitives, particularly Steve, were crafting their image through the *Herald*, their behavior toward Henderson can be read as performative. Not only would they emphatically make their case to him that they had been forced to live as fugitives; their actions suggested that they were mindful of impressions the reporter would take away. In his first letter, Henderson's description of his time with the gang differed markedly from Townsend's portraits in substance, tone, and inference; and a comparison of the two texts showed that many of Henderson's telling details and key interviews did not appear in *The Swamp Outlaws*. Townsend's descriptions of individual gang members were consistent and menacing. Steve Lowry, he wrote, was "the brigand of the gang" and "a robber and murderer of the Murrel stamp," referring to the "land pirate" John Murrell, later mythologized by writers including Twain;<sup>223</sup> meanwhile, Townsend called Andrew Strong the "Oily-Gammon of the party," who despite a mild manner was "the meanest of the band," a man "loving to see fear and pain."<sup>224</sup>

Henderson painted a different portrait, though it varied according to how the outlaws regarded him. Overall, Steve was "loquacious" and "the most communicative, most friendly,

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<sup>222</sup> "The Swamp Angels: Our Correspondent Among the Lowery Bandits," *New York Herald*, March 26, 1872, 3.

<sup>223</sup> Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1883).

<sup>224</sup> *Swamp Outlaws*, 19-20. "Oily-Gammon," literally, "fatty ham," in nineteenth-century literature was a character who appeared kind but was in reality cold-blooded.



and most jolly of the party."<sup>225</sup> The reporter meanwhile gave repeated examples of Andrew's behavior toward him as polite, even cheerful, although in the end, the reporter saw a "surly and morose" side of Andrew and Steve when they claimed to have "proof" Henderson was a spy.<sup>226</sup> In contrast to Townsend's ornate and polished prose, Henderson's account was in the form of a travelogue, truly a "ragged narrative," filled with digression, repetition, and stray detail. The cumulative effect was a portrait of the gang members as mostly hospitable, and of Henderson as a guest who warmed to their company. After Steve declared Henderson's revolver "rusty," Andrew cleaned and oiled it, then returned it to Henderson. He also apologized to Henderson for a lunch of bacon and eggs; had they known he was coming, Andrew said, Rhoda would have "done killed a chicken."<sup>227</sup> "Rhody," as Henderson called her, taught him to "rub snuff," and Henderson described Steve Lowry's singing and banjo-picking as "exceedingly pleasant."<sup>228</sup>

Aside from interludes of suspicion when the gang members blindfolded and threatened to shoot him, they treated Henderson as an important guest. At Henry Berry Lowry's house, Rhoda Lowry gave the reporter the only bed in the cabin, and Steve Lowry on another occasion paid for the reporter's lodging, instructing the owner of the house to feed Henderson "a good supper" and then let him go to bed because the reporter was "clean done worried

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<sup>225</sup> "The Swamp Angels: Our Correspondent Among the Lowery Bandits," *New York Herald*, March 26, 1872, 3.

<sup>226</sup> "The Swamp Angels: Final Thoughts," *New York Herald*, April 6, 1872, 4.

<sup>227</sup> "The Swamp Angels: Our Correspondent Among the Lowery Bandits," *New York Herald*, March 26, 1872, 3.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

out."<sup>229</sup> Henderson also wrote that when they came upon a washed-out bridge, Steve twice carried Henderson on his back for eighty yards to keep the reporter dry (or as might be inferred in retrospect, to keep the reporter's *notes* dry).<sup>230</sup>

The purpose of all this ceremony became clear in Henderson's final letter, in which he tried to satisfy the gang's "strong desire to have their justification of their course given to the country."<sup>231</sup> With their leader now dead or disappeared, each of the three remaining gang members had been forced into outlawry, they argued, and they killed the private detective only after learning that he was merely posing as a schoolteacher but in reality worked for the Klan. In his possession, they found a list of forty-eight names of "colored men" to be assassinated, including brothers Patrick and Sinclair Lowry, and James Oxendine, "as honest a man as you have ever seen."<sup>232</sup>

The argument Henderson detailed for why all three remaining gang members defied the law was that law had been perverted into an instrument of oppression. Andrew Strong had been forced to work on the rebel fortification during the war, a scene of brutality and malaria epidemics, and he later returned to Robeson to work in turpentine manufacture. His legal trouble began when he was accused of the theft of meat found on two men who worked for him. Authorities tried to force him to turn evidence against Henry Berry Lowry and Steve Lowry in exchange for his freedom and a reward. Tom Lowry had been condemned to die for

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<sup>229</sup> "First Letter from Our Captured Correspondent," *New York Herald*, March 26, 1872, 3.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>232</sup> "The Swamp Angels: Final Thoughts," *New York Herald*, April 6, 1872, 4.

a murder he denied committing, and lived as an outlaw after Henry Berry broke him out of jail before he could be hanged.

The oldest Lowry brother, Steve, had worked as a fireman on the railroad, and like Tom, had been sprung from jail to escape hanging in the murder of the ex-sheriff, he told Henderson. First, he had insisted on standing trial, professing his innocence and producing alibi witnesses. According to Steve, the judge instructed the jury "that an alibi was often the last desperate resort of a guilty man to escape deserved punishment."<sup>233</sup> Because the alibi witnesses were the same race as the defendant, the judge told the jurors, they were likely his friends and their testimony was to be viewed with suspicion. After the jury found him guilty, Steve escaped from jail with Henry Berry's help, and had since been an outlaw.<sup>234</sup>

Not only did they believe the court system had failed them; the outlaws argued that they had become scapegoats for the crimes of others. Since 1865, the gang told Henderson, "Every outrage perpetrated in or near Scuffletown was laid at the outlaws' door;" moreover, the Lowrys had refused frequent monetary solicitations to commit crimes "not under the ban of justice"<sup>235</sup> by those who "misunderstood their position." Steve said he had only killed once in cold blood, when he killed the private detective, and "if you were a colored man and would see the list he had of innocent men who were to be killed by the Ku Klux Klan, you would do the same."<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> "The Swamp Angels: Our Captured Correspondent With the Lowery Outlaws," *New York Herald*, April 6, 1872, 1.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ban, in historical usage, was a feudal summons to arms.

<sup>236</sup> "The Swamp Angels," April 6, 1872, 4.

The desire to set the record straight, then, emerged as the outlaws' last and only demand; anything more was hopeless. Steve, foreseeing that he himself would be killed, "and perhaps soon,"<sup>237</sup> gave a final monologue devoid of the colorful dialect Henderson employed elsewhere. Had the governor removed the reward, Steve said, the outlaws would have left the county with their families. But this would never happen, and the men refused to leave Robeson County without their wives and children. "It is a hard life," Henderson quoted Steve as saying. "I would give all the money in the world if I had it to be allowed to lead an honest, peaceful life; no man who has not experienced it can know what it is to be hiding in the swamp, searched for continually, a price upon his head, and nothing in the future to look forward to but a violent death."<sup>238</sup> Now looking beyond his death, Steve imagined what would occur later. He told the reporter he saw the gang as standing between "the colored people" and the Klan. Once the gang was out of the way, it would be worse, Steve warned, "unless others like us rise up to defend themselves."<sup>239</sup>

This solemn appraisal seemed lost, at least for the time being, in the hype with which the *Herald* inflated the story. When Lowry and Henderson at last parted, the outlaw gave the reporter three pieces of silver, for Henderson's wife, his baby, and one for himself. The gesture could have been interpreted as the bequest of a doomed man to the last party he would trust. But the *Herald* called it a "souvenir" of Henderson's "time with the Carolina outlaws," a grand finale to the adventures of the Swamp Angels.

The *Herald* reveled in the attention generated by the exclusive, which dominated public discourse. At one point the cast of a Broadway revue extemporaneously performed a rhyme

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<sup>237</sup> By 1874, Andrew Strong, Tom Lowry and Steve Lowry had been separately hunted down and killed.

<sup>238</sup> "The Swamp Angels," April 6, 1872, 4.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

about the reporter's captivity, and a famed illusionist offered \$100 if Henderson would agree to sit in a box at the theater and be introduced. Whether or not Henderson made such appearances, his renown rocketed. Less than a month after his triumphant return to Wilmington, Henderson had his portrait featured as a pen-and-ink etching from a Rockwood photo in *Harper's Weekly*, the height of celebrity in nineteenth-century media. Harper's introduced him as "the enterprising and daring correspondent . . . to whose graphic letters the public is indebted for an inside view of the home of these desperadoes."<sup>240</sup>

Two months later, Henderson was the basis for the main character in a play that opened on Broadway and then toured major cities in the year following. With *The Swamp Angels*, the well-known dramatist Charles Foster created a jumbled vehicle with the reporter as both hero and long-lost brother of Rhoda Lowry, come to rescue her. Despite taking ludicrous license with the facts, the show was a promotional triumph for the *Herald*. The Bowery Theatre audience gave a standing ovation to the reporter-hero, who upon making his entrance knocked down seven ruffians, proclaiming, "I am the correspondent of the New York Herald, the most fearless and independent journal in America or the world. I am here to protect innocence and virtue and get the earliest news for the New York Herald." The show received a glittering review—in the *New York Herald*.<sup>241</sup>

The commodification of the "Swamp Angels" ended neither with the *Herald*, nor with the deaths by 1874 of the last remaining gang members. Newspapers nationwide referred to the saga simply as the "Swamp Angels," and within a decade the name became a metonym for the region, cropping up as a geographic and historical tangent in stories that had little or

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<sup>240</sup> "Mr. A. B. Henderson," *Harper's Weekly*, April 20, 1872, 315.

<sup>241</sup> "Bowery Theatre—"The Swamp Angels," *New York Herald*, June 18, 1872, 3.

nothing to do with the Lowry saga. Thus a reprinted *Richmond Dispatch* roundup from the state senate described passage of a railroad bill involving a branch "via Shoe Heel, near the Paradise of the Swamp-Angels."<sup>242</sup> The passage of time created intervals for commemorative journalism, for example a lengthy, nationally reprinted newspaper retrospective in 1889 that recalled a gang "more terrible than the Hatfields, as daring as the James boys," and featured a purported interview with Henry Berry Lowry in debtor's prison, seventeen years after he had been reported dead.<sup>243</sup> In the same year, the story inspired an exhibit at the North Carolina State Fair. Among sideshow "curiosities" including snake charmers, a 550-pound man, and a large Indian wigwam accommodating twenty-four "genuine" Cherokees, a performer purporting to be the outlaw widow Rhoda Berry Lowry had a special department in the Exposition Building.<sup>244</sup> The Lowrys had entered the annals of popular history: In an 1885 encyclopedia of American criminals, five chapters on the Lowry gang, borrowing heavily from *The Swamp Outlaws* dime novel, placed Lowry alongside other notorious nineteenth-century stories such as the Helen Jewett murder and the James and Younger gangs.<sup>245</sup>

Much as this appropriation of the past encased Lowry in collective memory nationally, it created tension locally over authority. This enabled a discourse of illegitimacy that centered on the claim of proximity to the events. Southern newspaper editors continued to resent

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<sup>242</sup> "The Railroad Bills," *Weekly Star*, (Wilmington, NC), March 2, 1883, 3.

<sup>243</sup> This story ran in newspapers across the country. See, for example, "Swamp Angels: A Strange Story of a North Carolina Feud," *Oakland Daily Evening Tribune*, December 21, 1889, 1.

<sup>244</sup> "The Best Yet: It is a Fair Worthy of the Grand Old State," *Weekly State Chronicle* (Raleigh, NC), October 18, 1889, 2.

<sup>245</sup> Frank Triplet, *History, Romance and Philosophy of Great American Crimes and Criminals* (New York: N. D. Thompson Publishing, 1885), 464-92.

journalistic poaching, especially by northerners who pointed to the Lowry War as proof of the cowardice and ineptitude of white southern men. In the case of a widely circulated retrospective on Lowry by a *Chicago News* reporter, reprinted in a number of southern newspapers, the *Wilmington Daily Review* complained the report was "as ridiculous a pack of lies as was ever strung together and palmed off for facts."<sup>246</sup> The Wilmington paper observed that the story had the geography wrong, for instance, stating that the "Scrabbletown" outlaw was the son of a shipwrecked Portuguese sailor and a Creole woman, and that Lowry had escaped and "joined his future with the James boys."<sup>247</sup>

A deeper struggle over proximity played out in Robeson County, where Lowry's victims and supporters occupied the same space. Here, the contest was over the substantive facts and what they meant. One example of this was the local history by Mary Norment, widow of a Confederate official who was a county police captain killed by Henry Berry Lowry. Though Norment obviously intended the account as an indictment of Lowry and his associates, the book was inconsistent on key points because of the way it lifted verbatim sections from Townsend's *Swamp Outlaws*. For instance, this included Townsend's wording that Lowry never committed arson or rape, and "generally warns before he kills." Within ten pages, Norment contradicted this idea by stating that Lowry and his gang would fire on their victims "without a moment's notice," and that thirteen of Lowry's victims were killed as a result of

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<sup>246</sup> "The Robeson County Swamp Angels," *Daily Review* (Wilmington, NC), September 21, 1889, 1.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

the "stealthiness" and "ambuscade."<sup>248</sup> As noted above, Norment's rendering of Scuffletown's Back Swamp came directly from the *Herald*, which had in turn recycled the descriptions from a lengthy 1871 report filed by the adjutant general and published in North Carolina newspapers.<sup>249</sup>

Worth emphasizing is a pattern to the genealogy of these texts. Local newspaper reports fed into national reports, which became the basis for histories that were widely regarded in establishment media as authoritative and reliable. The publishing of these histories became news in themselves, and newspapers recirculated them to the community, credentialing them and further legitimizing them in commemorative accounts. For example, the *Wilmington Morning Star*, one of the newspapers a Raleigh competitor had lampooned as "one of the Ku Klux sheets," in 1906 reprinted Norment's book in serial fashion under a decorative standing logo, "Robeson's Terror in Reconstruction Days."<sup>250</sup> The fact that details were consistent across these various accounts, rather than being an indication of a monopoly of information, was seen as certifying their truth. In an historical edition of the *Robesonian*, for example, a writer commented on the passage in Norment's history claiming that Lowry never committed arson or insulted white females: "Every available account of the outlaw complies with this description, especially the fact that he never insulted a woman."<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Mary Norment and Fred A. Olds, *The Lowrie History: As Acted in Part by Henry Berry Lowrie, the Great North Carolina Bandit, with Biographical Sketch of His Associates*, 4th ed. (Lumberton, NC: Lumbee Publishing, 1909), 12, 21-22.

<sup>249</sup> "Letter from Adj't. Gen. Gorman," *Wilmington Morning Star*, October 27, 1871, 3.

<sup>250</sup> "Robeson's Terror in Reconstruction Days," *Wilmington Morning Star*, June 10, 1906, 9.

<sup>251</sup> "Henry Berry Lowry's Revenge Brought on Ten-Year Reign of Terror," *Robesonian*, February 26, 1951, 8G.



Not that the narrative was immobile, even in Norment's case. By the fourth printing in 1909, the publisher who bought Norment's copyright felt compelled to add an appendix to the volume "showing the growth and steady improvement of the Indians of Robeson County." The publisher wrote that the addition was "in justice to the race of people, (some of whose representatives figure in and are the leading characters of the facts recorded.)"<sup>252</sup> The publisher reminded the reader that Norment had been an eyewitness to the events, but not the *only* witness. This equating of proximity with authority opened the space for a counter-narrative to take shape, ultimately manifested in the pages of the *Robesonian* itself.

For a century after its 1870 founding, the newspaper remained the only stable publication of record in the community.<sup>253</sup> Near the turn of the twentieth century, the *Robesonian's* treatment of people it had once labeled "mulattoes" gradually changed as a result of political developments. In 1885, a white *Robesonian* editor with political aspirations and a desire to ally with newly enfranchised Indian voters advanced the Lost Colony theory of local Indian origins, and engineered the state's designation of the Indians of Robeson County as "Croatans." After the name was changed in 1913 to "Cherokee Indians of Robeson County,"<sup>254</sup> the now twice-weekly *Robesonian* recognized this by placing that heading over an inside column of community news devoted to Indians.

Ostensibly, these were soft-news correspondences such as visits by relatives, church homecomings, and educational accomplishments. But within this "soft" space, the harder

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<sup>252</sup> Mary Norment and Fred A. Olds, *The Lowrie History*, 3.

<sup>253</sup> James Locklear, "Pembroke's Rich History of Print Journalism," *Native Visions*, January 2008, 24-6. In the first half of the twentieth century, several newspapers started by Indian publishers were short-lived.

<sup>254</sup> "Cherokee Indians of Robeson: Rightful and Ancient Name of Indians of Robeson and Adjoining Counties Restored," *Robesonian*, March 13, 1913, 4.

edge of cultural formation took shape in a discourse of proximity, particularly in relation to the historical figure that remained the Indian community's chief historical marker: Henry Berry Lowry. One platform that kept the Lowry name in the news as late as the 1930s was yearly birthday celebrations of elders, including the sister of Henderson Oxendine, the county's "oldest living Indian," and Sallie Jane Ransom, Henry Berry's sister and last living sibling. The events were church suppers in honor of the elders, but as Pembroke community correspondents structured the announcements, they were also invitations for the public to commemorate Henry Berry Lowry.

At age 100, Oxendine's sister Christian "can talk and tell about many events that happened during those days," a correspondent wrote, and still kept relics including the rope used to hang her brother and the small hymnal he gave their mother before his execution.<sup>255</sup> Of Lowry's sister, known to the community as "Aunt Purd," a New Hope Church committee member wrote, "There have been many things said and written about (Henry Berry) that were untrue but Mrs. Ransom can tell you more facts about him in 5 minutes than you will ever read about him."<sup>256</sup> Another year, Pembroke correspondent Mrs. Theodore Maynor wrote that Ransom "recalls many incidents of the pre-civil war days and can relate many interesting facts not recorded in history."<sup>257</sup>

The community used the *Robesonian*, itself a source of written history, as a kind of back channel to privilege living memory and orality over white historiography. And just as these

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<sup>255</sup> Mrs. Theodore Maynor, "Among Robeson's Cherokee Indians," *Robesonian*, July 19, 1939, 2.

<sup>256</sup> "Sister of Noted Lowrey Outlaw Is 97 Years of Age," *Robesonian*, October 31, 1935, 8.

<sup>257</sup> Mrs. Theodore Maynor, "News Items Among Cherokee Indians of Robeson County," *Robesonian*, October 5, 1936, 2.

last widows drew near the end of their lives, Indians marked another commemorative milestone in the *Robesonian*: the rewriting of history. This was general news, rather than being confined to the Indian news columns. The *Robesonian* used its front page both for advance publicity and lengthy coverage of a lecture by a Nashville surgeon, Dr. Earl C. Lowry, billed as an "Indian History Authority."<sup>258</sup> He had professional credentials: He was described as a "highly respected" author in medical publications and a visiting staff physician at a Protestant teaching hospital. He also had the credential of proximity: He was born in Robeson County, and his great-uncle was Henry Berry Lowry. The headline of the surgeon's 1937 talk to a packed auditorium at Cherokee Normal School was that Henry Berry was alive at 92 and in Florida, although the surgeon declined to say exactly where. The more implicit news was that an Indian was taking written history back from authors such as Mary Norment. Lowry's talk used lantern slides that were the same illustrations used in Norment's (and Townsend's) book, but he termed Norment's factual assertions and interpretations "unreliable and prejudiced."<sup>259</sup> In this way, Indians in the twentieth century were using material circulated back through mass media, reinterpreted for their own cultural aims. They were also using white media to broadcast their writing back of history.

In his descendant's view, Lowry's past related to the present, especially in a decade when Indian rights were debated under the Indian Reorganization Act. Dr. Lowry's talk dwelled heavily on how Native Americans had been little more than "taxpayers," disenfranchised from civil rights including the right to vote, hold office, or testify in court. This bending of

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<sup>258</sup> "To Lecture Sunday On Henry B. Lowry: Dr. Earl C. Lowry, Indian History Authority, to Speak at Pembroke," *Robesonian*, March 24, 1937, 1.

<sup>259</sup> "Claims Henry Berry Lowry, Leader of Band Of Outlaws, Alive at 92," *Robesonian*, April 5, 1937, 1.

the law by whites rendered Henry Berry's status as "outlaw" paradoxical, his great-nephew reasoned. The respect his famous ancestor commanded among Indian elders resonated contemporaneously, Lowry argued: "He was the first of his of his race to rise up and demand rights for his race."<sup>260</sup>

The report of the talk became a text to which Indians responded by articulating a sense of place in the *Robesonian*, particularly through reclaimed artifacts and other physical traces of the shared Lowry past. For example, a Wilmington court clerk who read the report of the Pembroke speech returned a Winchester rifle purportedly owned by Henry Berry to the outlaw's descendants, Earl's brother Kermit Lowry told the *Robesonian*.<sup>261</sup> But the reclamation followed not only blood relations of the outlaw-hero; it came by dint of the land itself. Also in 1937, the newspaper caption to a standalone photograph titled "A Tree With a History" told the story of a twin-trunked oak at Eureka known as the "Henry Berry Lowry oak."<sup>262</sup> A farm agent had photographed it for its unusual two-legged shape, but it was for "older settlers" to interpret its meaning. In 1870, according to elders, Lowry had split the tree with his bowie knife as a symbol of his plan to disband the gang and depart once it had exacted vengeance.<sup>263</sup>

The tree, which the newspaper reported "still stands along the Eureka road," was living proof, and even in the pages of the Democratic *Robesonian*, Henry Berry Lowry had the last

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>261</sup> "Famed Outlaw's Rifle Returned," *Robesonian*, April 12, 1937, 7.

<sup>262</sup> "A Tree With A History," *Robesonian*, September 13, 1937, 8.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

word. Like Spanish moss draped above the swamps, he was suspended over the present, very much alive.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 3-a:** "Bad Medicine for the Klan," *Life*, January 27, 1958, 20.

Maurie Rosen's iconic photo of Lumbees Charlie Warriax and Simeon Oxendine with the captured Klan flag was published in the *Charlotte Observer* and newspapers nationwide before it was reprinted a week later as a full-page in a *Life* magazine spread.



**BATTLE BEGINS** as Indians move in. Man in center touched off attack by shooting out light bulb. **ATTACKING**, one Indian seizes Klansman's microphone as another jabs him with butt of his rifle.

**Figure 3-b:**

*Florence (SC) Morning News*, January 20, 1958, 6.

The AP photo capturing the moment Indians confronted a klansman who set up a light bulb and P.A. system first appeared in newspapers.

### 3. CAPTURING THE FLAG: MEDIATED VICTORY FOR THE LUMBEE TRIBE

It was to be a taste of Indian justice, and in 1958 Pembroke, North Carolina, the place known a century earlier as the settlement of Scuffletown,<sup>1</sup> the roles were this time reversed. An Indian judge prepared to impose sentence on a Klansman at a court hearing covered in *Life* magazine<sup>2</sup> and the *New York Times*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, Michael Hill and William S. Powell, ed., *North Carolina Gazeteer* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 31. In 1895, Scuffletown, or "the Settlement," was renamed Pembroke after Wilmington and Weldon railroad official Pembroke Jones.

<sup>2</sup> "Indians Back at Peace and the Klan at Bay," *Life*, February 3, 1958, 36-37.

<sup>3</sup> Wayne Phillips, "Klansman Fined for Maxton Role," *New York Times*, January 23, 1958, 13.

Ordinarily, the misdemeanor docket in Recorder's Court was an obscure setting even for local media coverage, but this was no ordinary case. Four days earlier, on January 18, 1958, hundreds of armed Indians surrounded an anti-Indian rally by the Ku Klux Klan. Before the rally could get underway, Indians fired warning shots, seized a public-address system, and forced fifty or so Klansmen to beat a disorganized retreat while reporters and photographers looked on.<sup>4</sup> The incident at Maxton, a country crossroads formerly known as Shoe Heel, attracted up to two dozen journalists including a team from the Soviet Tass News Agency<sup>5</sup> and generated celebratory headlines and telegrams to Lumbee leaders from Indians and non-Indians across the country.<sup>6</sup>

For media, the attraction was powerful. The run-up to the confrontation had "all of the ingredients of a great story,"<sup>7</sup> as one local correspondent wrote. There were Klan costumes, nighttime pyrotechnics, speeches, and threats of violence by a white supremacist group which mainstream media, including North Carolina media, long sought to delegitimize.<sup>8</sup> South Carolina Grand Dragon James "Catfish" Cole had announced that he intended to "teach a lesson" to the Indian community, publicizing the rally with handbills, press

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<sup>4</sup> Bloys Britt, Associated Press, "Judge Deplores Klan Entry Into Peaceful Indian Land," *Robesonian* (Lumberton, NC), January 22, 1958, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce Roberts, former editor, *Maxton Scottish Chief*, interview with author, June 15, 2014; see, also, Richard Glen Lentz and Karla K. Gower, *The Opinions of Mankind: Racial Issues, Press, and Propaganda in the Cold War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2010), 41-42.

<sup>6</sup> "Redskins Whoop Lumbee," *Robesonian*, January 23, 1958, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Lynn Nisbet, "Robeson May Be Scene Of Top '58 News Story," *Robesonian*, January 29, 1958, 5.

<sup>8</sup> See, Jeffrey Alan Van Dyke, "Bedsheets and Broadsheets: Covering the Ku Klux Klan in North Carolina," (master's thesis, University of North Carolina, 1986), 41-45.



interviews, and two advance cross-burnings targeting Indians for "race-mixing" and "mongrelization" in the county.<sup>9</sup> When the clash finally resulted in a near bloodless victory for about 400 Indians, who outnumbered the Klan by almost ten to one, the story spread quickly. Newspapers, national magazines, editorial writers, and such widely syndicated columnists as Walter Winchell and Inez Robb<sup>10</sup> reveled in the symbolism of the Klan's humiliation, claiming it as a proxy victory over white supremacy.

With the verdict in mainstream media seemingly unanimous against the Klan, judgment was yet to be heard in Recorder's Court in the case against the only man arrested at the rally: James Garland Martin, a Klan "titan" deputies found lying in a ditch.<sup>11</sup> Charged with public drunkenness and carrying a concealed weapon, Martin renounced his fellow Klansmen for leaving him behind when they fled the cornfield, and he vowed to have no further dealings with the KKK.<sup>12</sup> As camera shutters clicked away in the crowded Maxton courtroom, focus shifted to Judge Pro Tem Lacy Maynor, a full-time barber who was the second Indian in the history of the county elected to the bench.<sup>13</sup> Headline writers, previously intoxicated with

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<sup>9</sup> "Klan Cross Burnings Anger Robeson Citizens," *Maxton (NC) Scottish Chief*, January 17, 1958, 1.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Walter Winchell, "Walter Winchell of New York, Man About Town," *Burlington (NC) Times-News*, January 28, 1958, 4; Inez Robb, "Lumbee Indians Praised For Attack on Klansmen," *El Paso (TX) Herald-Post*, January 24, 1958, 5. Winchell's column ran in more than 2,000 newspapers. Robb, part of King Features Syndicate, appeared in 140 newspapers.

<sup>11</sup> "One Klansman to Face Charges; Minister Slated For Indictment," *Raleigh (NC) News and Observer*, January 20, 1958, 1, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Ken Clark, "Klansman Is Irked At KKK After Pals Deserted Him," *Charlotte (NC) Observer*, January 21, 1958, 2.

<sup>13</sup> See, interview with Early Bullard by Adolph Dial, July 22, 1969, Southeastern Indian Oral History Project, University of Florida; interview with James Moore by Malinda Maynor, October 16, 2003, U-0011, no. 4007, Southern Oral History Program, University of North Carolina. In 1955, Early Bullard was sworn in as the first Lumbee elected to a judiciary post.

metaphors of "whooping"<sup>14</sup> "Redskins"<sup>15</sup> on the "warpath"<sup>16</sup> having "scalped"<sup>17</sup> the Klan at Maxton field, turned sober in the light of day. The Indian jurist—described in an AP report as "grey-eyed," "well-groomed," and speaking in "low, measured tones"<sup>18</sup>—declined to impose the maximum penalty on Martin. Instead, noting the "tragic" aspect of the cigarette factory worker's circumstances, the lower-court judge let Martin go with a suspended sentence, a \$60 fine, and what the *Times* described as a "soft-voiced lecture."<sup>19</sup> Shifting the perspective, headlines now cast the Klan as the "invading"<sup>20</sup> force in "peaceful Indian land,"<sup>21</sup> with both local and national reports devoid of wordplay or embellishment in chronicling Maynor's remarks at sentencing. He told the Klansman, in part:

You have helped to bring about nationwide advertisement to a people who do not want that kind of advertisement—who only want to create a community that would be an asset to our nation. If your organization had something worthwhile to offer, we would be happy to have you. But the history of your organization proves that it has nothing to offer.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "Whooping Lumbees in Wild Uproar," *Greensboro (NC) Daily News*, January 19, 1951, 1.

<sup>15</sup> "Redskins Whoop Lumbee Victory," *Robesonian*, January 23, 1958, 1.

<sup>16</sup> "When Carolina Indians Went on the Warpath," *US News & World Report*, January 31, 1958, 14.

<sup>17</sup> "How Indians 'Scalped' the Klan," *Charlotte Observer*, January 19, 1958, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Bloys Britt, "Judge Deplores Klan Entry Into Peaceful Indian Land," *Robesonian*, January 22, 1958, 1.

<sup>19</sup> Wayne Phillips, "Klansman Fined for Maxton Role," *New York Times*, January 23, 1958, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Associated Press, "Indian Judge Merciful To Invading Klansman," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 23, 1958, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Bloys Britt, "Judge Deplores Klan Entry Into Peaceful Indian Land."

<sup>22</sup> Aubrey Graves, "Meet the Indians Who Routed the Ku Klux Klan: Lumbee Town is Like Any Other," *Washington Post and Times-Herald*, January 26, 1958, 1.

Judge Maynor's emphasis on advertising reflected awareness that this was a prime media moment for Lumbee self-representation, one of several the Klan routing provided. Maynor, whose photograph and remarks appeared in media outlets nationally including *Life*, used the moment to describe a vision of citizenship, progress, and self-determination that Lumbee community leaders in the Cold War era advanced. At the same time, Maynor expressed acute awareness of media's historical double edge. This "nationwide advertisement" was capable of projecting an unwanted image of Robeson County Indians as shotgun-wielding and backward, representations Maynor countered with his restrained words, demeanor, and restrained sentencing.

This chapter examines media representation of Robeson County's complex racial dynamic through the first half of the twentieth century, the long arc that led up to Lumbees' act of resistance to the KKK and the iconic place this mediated event came to occupy in tribal memory. There were parallels between the circumstances for Lumbees in the late 1950s and that of Indians in Robeson County during the Civil War and Reconstruction. In both eras, Indian autonomy was endangered when whites sought to classify Indians as blacks. Under the Confederacy, whites tried to conscript and enslave Indians. In the late 1950s, Indians again faced loss of social identity when desegregation threatened their most important public institution, all-Indian schools.<sup>23</sup>

Comparable to the nineteenth century racial backlash and North-South animus that was the backdrop to Henry Berry Lowry, the Indians' challenge of the Klan played out in an era

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<sup>23</sup> For a comparison of Indians' sociopolitical standing in Robeson County between these two eras, see, Karen Blu, *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American Indian People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 148-160.

of heightened sectional and global Cold War tensions, providing a cultural script of valor and democracy. For media, this advanced a linear progression of history, giving the story traction regionally and nationally. In Lumbee memory, however, the incident conformed to a circular conception of time, the idea of past battles reenacted in the present. And because Lumbees were the protagonists, they could exert authority over how the story was told and later commemorated in media.

Indians and Klansmen alike used publicity surrounding the Maxton rally and the cross-burnings to portray power. Media, too, had compelling interests in advancing the story, and these interests varied by relative position. Recalling Jeffrey Olick's concept of chronic differentiation—the process by which people distance themselves in time from a preceding era<sup>24</sup>—this study in part examines how journalists used Maxton as a historical bookend dividing *now* from *then*. One part of this differentiation was to consign to the distant past the Klan and all it embodied.

Just as media's narrative needs and motives in the Lowry era varied according to proximity and distance, media interpretations of the Indian-Klan confrontation were relative to geographic position. For editors of the *Robesonian*, the story was a chance to confront its own albatross. The Klan signified a legacy of secrecy and violence in the twentieth century that rendered the sprawling county a perceived backwater of the state. By first exposing the Klan and then dismissing it, the newspaper tried to authenticate itself as an opinion leader in tri-racial Robeson County, where there were approximately 40,000 whites, 30,000 Indians

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<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey Olick, *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 175-192.

including Lumbees and Tuscaroras, and 20,000 African-Americans.<sup>25</sup> For moderate state newspaper editors at the next ring of proximity in the state's three largest cities, the agenda was to draw a line between the Old /Deep South and the desired image of a New South in the post-war. North Carolina media could point to the Old South's ideological center across the border in South Carolina, the first Confederate state to secede.<sup>26</sup> One hundred years later, South Carolina was home to Catfish Cole's Klan chapter, but more significantly, the States' Rights Democratic Party. Leading that organization was a US senator and former governor of South Carolina, Strom Thurmond, whose Dixiecrat movement following World War II sought to return southerners to the past.<sup>27</sup> The effort by North Carolina media to demarcate their own state from their southern neighbor is a recurrent theme in coverage of the Maxton incident and other Klan activity. At the final ring of proximity, national media in the Cold War had a geographic and chronological line to draw as well. With an ugly racial showdown over schools appearing probable across the South, Indians' grassroots defeat of the Klan at Maxton was a novel counterpoint to American racism, an ideology Soviet news agencies equated with Naziism.<sup>28</sup>

This chapter addresses two questions. First: How did American journalism at various levels—local, state, national—represent Indians and Klansmen in relation to modernity?

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<sup>25</sup> US Census data, Robeson County, NC, 1958.

<sup>26</sup> Bernard E. Powers Jr., "'The Worst of All Barbarism': Racial Anxiety and the Approach of Secession in the Palmetto State," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 112, no. 3/4 (2011): 136-156.

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of segregation politics in this period, see, Kari A. Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South, 1932-1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 106-173.

<sup>28</sup> Johnpeter Horst Grill and Robert L. Jenkins, "The Nazis and the American South in the 1930s: A Mirror Image?," *Journal of Southern History* 58, no. 4 (November 1992): 667-694.

Second: What were the contours of the resulting space for Lumbees in white media, and how did they become an available means for Indians' internal identity work?

To trace the trajectory between the Lowry era and Maxton, the first part of this chapter gives an overview of the intervening years, through primary and secondary sources that describe developing tensions in media discourse surrounding Indians as well as the Klan. The analysis then turns to the *Robesonian* and its highly situated engagement with both Indian issues and the Klan. The study used a purposive sample of whole editions of the newspaper from the turn of the century through the 1950s, with particular focus on accounts of local controversies in those decades that touched on race, as well as journalistic routines in which racial positioning was embedded. For the second part of the chapter, examining representation of the Maxton incident itself, the primary sources were the *Robesonian* and print reports by state and national metro newspapers, wire services and syndicates, national news magazines, and transcripts of syndicated television broadcasts. Columbia Broadcast Service holdings, along with digital databases ProQuest, newspapers.com, and LexisNexis enabled retrieval of 829 news reports, editorials, columns, letters, and TV listings—including duplicates moved by wire services and syndicates, demonstrating traction and broad appeal. In addition, the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* provided a thematic cross-section of how national media awareness of Lumbees as a tribe took shape. It is important to note that the January 18, 1958 news event occurred less than two years after Congress on June 7, 1956 approved federal recognition of the Lumbees—albeit in name only.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See, An Act Relating to the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina, Pub. L. No. 570- 375, 733-4 (1956); Liz Sonneborn, *Chronology of American Indian History* (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 287. The Lumbee Recognition Act, which Congress passed June 7, 1956, specifically prevented the tribe from receiving federal funds or services.

## Narrative Needs in the Cold War

Overnight, the Maxton media coverage elevated Lumbees to front-page prominence across the United States. National TV talk shows booked Lumbees to talk about the Klan routing.<sup>30</sup> News services prepared background stories about the largest tribe east of the Mississippi River.<sup>31</sup> Folk singer Pete Seeger recorded a hit song<sup>32</sup> about the Indian victory over the Klan that had not one nickname, but two: the Battle of Hayes Pond and the Battle of Maxton Field. Big-city newspapers and slick news magazines profiled the community, portraying Lumbees as educated, up-to-date, and respectable.<sup>33</sup> Most important to a tribe that "not one in 10,000" readers had ever heard of, as a *Washington Post* reporter wrote,<sup>34</sup> the Maxton coverage gained Lumbees a *visual* representation in mass media, and one that was largely their own making.

Two historical conditions in the Cold War era help account for why mass media were receptive to Lumbee expressions of sovereignty. The first condition was narrative need. By late 1957, with segregationists encouraging massive resistance to *Brown v. Board of*

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<sup>30</sup> "Oxendine And Son Complete TV Tour," *Robesonian*, January 27, 1958, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Sam Hanna, "Lumbee Indians Rated Biggest Tribe in U.S.," International News Service, January 26, 1958; Sam Hanna, "Lumbee Indians Largest Tribe Thriving In East," International News Service, February 6, 1958.

<sup>32</sup> Malvina Reynolds, *The Battle of Maxton Field*, on Pete Seeger, *Gazette*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Folkway Recordings, 1958).

<sup>33</sup> See, "Natives Are Restless," *Time*, January 27, 1958, 20; "North Carolina: Indian Raid," *Newsweek*, January 27, 1958, 27; "When Carolina Indians Went on the Warpath," *US News & World Report*, January 31, 1958, 14; "Indians Rout the Klan," *Commonweal*, January 31, 1958, 446.

<sup>34</sup> Aubrey Graves, "Meet the Indians Who Routed the Ku Klux Klan: Lumbee Town is Like Any Other" *Washington Post*, January 26, 1958, 1.

*Education*, a discourse of racial tension over school desegregation and concurrent media coverage of public displays at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, showed Americans that the virulent hatred at the root of World War II continued to flourish at home.<sup>35</sup> Mass media presented a visual challenge to white Americans' self-image as liberators. An Associated Press news analyst wrote that news photos of "shrieking, surging" white mob violence at Little Rock communicated "the horror of the scene" that was "a day for reappraisal."<sup>36</sup>

You can search long and far for a villain in this tragedy, right back to the first slave trader who brought the first Negroes to America. But the search would . . . be better spent looking for a hero—someone who can point a way out of this mess.<sup>37</sup>

This described the second condition the Maxton incident satisfied: the need for moral clarity. A hero in the right presupposed a villain in the wrong—an anti-hero who was legible, unambiguous, differentiated in time and space from the confident, homogenous American experience that white national mass media (particularly national advertising)<sup>38</sup> cultivated in the 1950s, and that Little Rock so disturbed.

In the role of villain, the Ku Klux Klan functioned as an antithesis to Lumbees, and by extension, patriotic Americans. As this chapter demonstrates, northern and North Carolina media had incentives to isolate the KKK, portraying it as the mummery of a failed culture. The juxtaposition of the Klan and Lumbees yielded what a national headline writer dubbed a

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<sup>35</sup> Ed Creagh, "The World Today," *Robesonian*, September 24, 1957, 4.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> See, Elizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 112-191.



"cowboys and Indians" tale.<sup>39</sup> But in reality, it was the Western turned inside-out. The eastern Indians were the heroes, wearing Veterans of Foreign Wars overseas caps, occupying seats of civil authority, holding church homecomings. It was their white antagonists who were marginal and arcane.

Much has been written about this event, with previous scholarship on the Maxton coverage highlighting how mainstream media relied on primitivizing clichés to describe the confrontation.<sup>40</sup> Yet there has been little corresponding inquiry into how Lumbees engaged media to counter and reposition these figures of thought and speech with Indians' literal, physical presence. Even though the Klan routing was a spontaneous event, this analysis will consider the narrative necessities of the rendering, along with its roots and consequences. The marginalization of the Klan by newspapers, in this case particularly southern newspapers, offers clues to white editors' self-image in the region and the country by the 1950s, and the role newspapers played in constructing a moderate white southern identity, or what historian William Chafe termed a "progressive mystique" in North Carolina.<sup>41</sup>

More important, the social construction of a modern South—what newspaper editorialists and members of the community in the 1950s articulated as "advertising" for their region—created an opportunity in media. This study examines how Lumbees seized that opportunity to affirm tribal identity to each other, using the media to disseminate information, publish

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<sup>39</sup> "Cowboys and Indians," *Washington Post and Times Herald*, January 21, 1958, 14.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Christopher Arris Oakley, "'When Carolina Indians Went on the Warpath': The Media, the Klan, and the Lumbees of North Carolina," *Southern Cultures* 14, no. 4 (2008): 55–84; Mary Ann Weston, *Native Americans in the News: Images of Indians in the Twentieth Century Press* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 120–21.

<sup>41</sup> William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 1–69.

opinions, and broadcast coded visual references. Anthropologist Karen Blu once concluded that the prime source of Lumbee identity sprang neither from theories of Lumbees' origins, nor from how outsiders defined Lumbees; instead, the seat of identity lay in the tradition of Lumbees "recounting who they are among themselves."<sup>42</sup> Approached from this perspective, media representation takes on a reflexive dimension. As Randall Lake argued in relation to later Indian militancy, the overriding function of American Indian protest rhetoric was not to persuade whites, but to consummate identity by addressing *Indians*.<sup>43</sup> White mainstream media, in this view, become a back channel of communicative agency for the subaltern, or what Mary Louise Pratt termed "transculturation": This is the performative process by which colonized people fashion, for their own selfhood, material given them by a dominant, invading culture.<sup>44</sup>

### **Media Delineation of a "Little Race"**

To focus on mass media is not to suggest that Indians in postwar Robeson County otherwise lacked primary channels of communication or points of cohesion. On the one hand, rural Indians adhered to long-held connections of kinship and place, Malinda Maynor Lowery observed, particularly as Depression-era foreclosures squeezed small farmers and as Jim Crow laws continued to shut them out of hourly jobs at factories.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, strands of Pembroke-based leadership began to develop around churches, fraternal lodges,

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<sup>42</sup> Blu, *The Lumbee Problem*, 156.

<sup>43</sup> Randall A. Lake, "Enacting Red Power: The Consummatory Function in Native American Protest Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (May 1983):127-135.

<sup>44</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1998), 1-82.

<sup>45</sup> Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South*, 58-59.

and school committees, leaders Lowery referred to as "town Indians," as distinguished from rural "swamp Indians."<sup>46</sup>

The path for Indians seeking government recognition in the twentieth century was anything but clear, particularly against the backdrop of a National Industrial Recovery Act that mostly left out minorities.<sup>47</sup> When National Council of American Indians founder Gertrude Bonnin addressed a mass meeting of Indians at Pembroke's St. Anna Freewill Baptist Church in 1934, she praised Robeson Indians as self-sufficient and free, in contrast to western reservation Indians left, in her words, "ragged, starved...suffering" by the federal government's broken promises and bureaucracy.<sup>48</sup> Even though Robeson Indians' naming problem represented a long-term wedge issue, the community showed permanence, and the playing out of the conflict itself gave Indians visibility and efficacy in the local press.

In 1911, Indian publisher A. S. Locklear began the short-lived biweekly newspaper the *Indian Observer* with the motto, "Unity, Industry, Education and Christianity."<sup>49</sup> The mission statement on one hand expressed binding Protestant values of work and worship, and on the other, inscribed two key issues Robeson County Indians faced coming into the twentieth century: group cohesion and schools. Historians have noted how these two issues were inseparable in the context of racial segregation, particularly as Indians found themselves

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 59-77.

<sup>47</sup> See, Juan F. Perea, "Echoes of Slavery: Recognizing the Racist Origins of the Agricultural and Domestic Worker Exclusion from the National Labor Relations Act," 72 *Ohio State Law Journal* 95 (2011): 100-126.

<sup>48</sup> "Robeson Indians Farther Advanced-Speaker Asserts," *Robesonian*, April 26, 1934, 6. (Bonnin also published under her Lakaota name, Zitkala-Su.)

<sup>49</sup> "Robeson News Briefs," *Fayetteville (NC) Index*, August 2, 1911, 2; "Special Newspaper Work," *Robesonian*, September 11, 1911, 4. There is no known archive of the *Indian Observer*.

caught in a white-black caste system. Indians were barred from attending white schools, and at the same time refused to be categorized as black, a conflation white society used to strip them of legal rights before the Civil War.

Post-Reconstruction legislation to recognize Robeson County Indians and create an Indian-only school system was a victory for Indians, Lowery noted, but was also a divide-and-conquer tactic by Conservative Democrats.<sup>50</sup> Politics was therefore at the root of the tangled saga in the twentieth century over what name the tribe chose to call itself, and media were a perpetual thread. The name "Croatan," adopted after a campaign by a white newspaper editor and legislative candidate to obtain recognition for Robeson Indians as descendants of Sir Walter Raleigh's "Lost Colony,"<sup>51</sup> was mutually beneficial. Indians were granted a tribal name—Croatan—with which to lobby for educational funding; white Democrats meanwhile won over Indian support. But enough Indians grew restless with the "Croatan" designation—especially when it was shortened in common usage to the derogatory "Cro"—that the tribe changed its name to Cherokee Indians of Robeson County in 1913,<sup>52</sup> then debated a name change to Siouan in the 1930s,<sup>53</sup> and eventually gained partial federal recognition of the name Lumbee in 1956.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South*, 7. Republicans benefitted from the Indian and black vote; therefore, Democrats' ability to split the non-white vote and court Indians helped the party win a majority.

<sup>51</sup> See, Hamilton McMillan, *Sir Walter Raleigh's Lost Colony* (Wilson, NC: Advance Presses, 1888), 8-27. The origin of the name was the cryptic carving of the word "Croatoan" found on a tree at Roanoke Island in 1587, after the second group of settlers disappeared.

<sup>52</sup> C. F. Lowrey, O. H. Lowrey, letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, August 25, 1910, 8.

<sup>53</sup> "Makes Strong Argument," *Robesonian*, February 26, 1934, 4.

<sup>54</sup> H.R. 4656 (The Lumbee Act), Public Law 570, Chapt. 375, June 7, 1956, 70 Stat. 254.

Over the first half of the twentieth century, the effort to confer a middle racial rank to Indians was evident in the *Robesonian's* approach to the tribal naming issue, and in continued speculation about the tribe's Lost Colony origins. The implicit assumption was that the exceptional achievements of the Indian community in Robeson County came about not in spite of European contact, but *because* of it. The assimilation and success of the tribe was seen as self-validating to western civilization. Amid these divisions, some Indian movers-and-shakers projected middle-class white values in order to navigate the system of white supremacy in North Carolina, while other leaders sought alliances directly with federal officials and the Office of Indian Affairs.<sup>55</sup> These tactics reflected fundamental, long-standing differences in the community over how best to function in a white-dominated society, amid changing state and federal definitions of the concept of "Indian."<sup>56</sup>

This is an example of how the ability to carve out a racial identity for peoples Ariela Gross termed ambiguous "little races" depended on a group's ability to reject blackness,<sup>57</sup> and media reflected and augmented this discourse. An examination of the *Robesonian* in the early twentieth century suggests the external and internal pressure Indians felt to dissociate and differentiate themselves from African Americans. In 1900, supporters of a constitutional amendment to strip the voting rights of blacks in North Carolina and throw out the Fusionist

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<sup>55</sup> Lowery, 75-91.

<sup>56</sup> See, Christopher Arris Oakley, *Keeping the Circle: American Indian Identity in Eastern North Carolina, 1885-2004* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 42-53.

<sup>57</sup> Ariela Gross, "'Of Portuguese Origin': Litigating Identity and Citizenship among the 'Little Races' in Nineteenth-Century America," *Law and History Review* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 467-512.

Party<sup>58</sup> used the media to appeal specifically to Indians, warning that the so-called Croatans and whites were being "overshadowed by negrodom."<sup>59</sup> A page one letter in the *Robesonian* urged Indians to support an amendment to disenfranchise black voters because it was in their best interest, and urged Indians to keep their "contract" with white politicians.<sup>60</sup>

Think of it. Your insane don't any longer go to the negro asylum, but to the white asylum at Raleigh. You don't now have to list your taxes or vote as colored, or as negroes, and your marriage licenses are issued to you as Croatans, and not as negroes, as heretofore.<sup>61</sup>

In some cases, Indians answered this call in the media. A. N. Locklear addressed fellow Indians in a letter to the *Robesonian*, calling for them to support the anti-Fusion amendment as a strategy for advancement: "Don't you want a share in the pie; If so, come and go with us on the amendment and we will do thee good."<sup>62</sup>

At a time when Indians in Robeson County were attempting to establish an official tribal identity, eugenics theories held that "one drop" of Negro blood classified a person as black.<sup>63</sup> White mass media reinforced this racial pecking order. In 1900, an invitation printed in the

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<sup>58</sup> For a treatise on the Fusion era in state politics, an alliance between Populists, Republicans, and black voters, see, Helen G. Edmonds, *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina, 1894-1901* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013) 34-46. The alliance gave rise to the reactionary White Supremacy Campaign in 1898, advocated by *Raleigh News and Observer* editor Josephus Daniels, and carried out by the Red Shirts, an arm of the Democratic Party that used vigilante methods comparable to those of the Klan.

<sup>59</sup> W. B. Purnell, letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, July 6, 1900, 1.

<sup>60</sup> W. H. Humphrey, letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, June 26, 1900, 1.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> A. N. Locklear, letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, July 27, 1900, 2.

<sup>63</sup> See, Allyson D. Polsky, "Blood, Race, and National Identity: Scientific and Popular Discourses," *Journal of Medical Humanities* 23, no. 3/4 (Fall 2002): 171-186.

*Robesonian* to the White Supremacy Club meeting, which was organizing a meeting of Red Shirts,<sup>64</sup> exhorted "every white man and croatan [*sic*], in Lumberton township, be present and aid us to accomplish the worthy purposes of the organization."<sup>65</sup>

White media presented Indians as a buffer against blacks, not only politically, but socially. For example, the 1909 trial of a black Robeson man found guilty of raping a Croatan Indian woman brought an editorial comment from the *Robesonian*, reprinted in the *Charlotte Observer*, that was a revealing nonsequiter. The matter, the *Observer* noted, reminded the *Robesonian* "that there is no case of any Croatan attacking a white woman."<sup>66</sup> The editorial, referencing the notion that the Indians possessed "the blood of Sir Walter Raleigh's Lost Colony in their veins," nostalgically invoked the Lowry War as an example of what the headline termed "Croatan Indian Chivalry":

Croatans often had white women at their mercy, but it is said that there is not a case on record where they offered insult to a white woman by word or deed ... To their everlasting credit, be it said that it seems some spirit of chivalry toward the women of the white race has governed the men of the race of Croatan Indians, a spirit powerful enough to hold in check even members of Lowrey's lawless band.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> For more on the Red Shirts, who carried out killings of blacks and an overthrow of the government in 1898 Wilmington, see, Christoph Strobel, "'We Are All Armed and Ready': Reactionary Insurgency Movements and the Formation of Segregated States in the American South and South Africa," *North Carolina Historical Review* 80, no. 4 (October 2003): 430-440.

<sup>65</sup> *Robesonian*, June 19, 1900, 2.

<sup>66</sup> "Croatan Indian Chivalry," *Robesonian*, July 29, 1909, 2.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 6.

Seeking racial division, the writer's essential message was that in contrast to black men, who according to the predominant trope lusted after women above them in the racial hierarchy, Indian men did not pose the most primal threat to white male hegemony, miscegenation.

During this period, racial phenotypes in southern media were so rigid that "defamation by racial misidentification"—in other words, a newspaper listing a white person's race as non-white—was held actionable in some former Confederate states.<sup>68</sup> Between the polar opposites of black and white, white media patrolled the boundary. An example was an all-points manhunt in 1911 for a notorious North Carolina fugitive accused of killing a deputy sheriff and shooting a police chief.<sup>69</sup> In an item reprinted from the state capital newspaper the *News and Observer*, the *Robesonian* used its front page to clarify that the desperado was black and not Indian.<sup>70</sup> The Maxton lawman who captured fugitive Lewis West complicated the question, identifying West as a negro, then speculating that West's mother was Croatan.<sup>71</sup> A Wilmington report identified West as a "mixed-breed Croatan Indian."<sup>72</sup> The wording of the correction the *Robesonian* ran on page one suggested that it was Indians who sought to

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<sup>68</sup> For a history of the concept see, Samuel Brenner, "'Negro Blood in His Veins': The Development and Disappearance of the Doctrine of Defamation Per Se By Racial Misidentification in the American South," *Santa Clara Law Review* 50, 333.

<sup>69</sup> "Fearful Tragedy Was Enacted by Negro at Wilson Last Night," *Charlotte News*, February 4, 1911, 1.

<sup>70</sup> "Lewis West Has no Croatan Blood in Him," reprinted from *News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC), *Robesonian*, February 16, 1911, 1.

<sup>71</sup> "Lewis West in State's Prison for Safe Keeping," *News and Observer*, February 12, 1911, 1.

<sup>72</sup> "Wilson Murderer Captured," *Wilmington (NC) Morning Star*, February 12, 1911, 1.



clarify West's race and deny Indian responsibility for the crime, and more broadly, deny any historical "mixing" of black and Indian blood:

Senator Cobb, on his return from Robeson says that the Croatans deny strongly the allegation that Lewis West, the negro who was recently brought to Raleigh, has any Croatan blood in him. They want it understood of all men that the desperado is not in the slightest connected with any of their number, no matter how many generations back.<sup>73</sup>

Similarly, as Gross noted, the *Robesonian* ran a correction to a 1914 story that mistakenly identified an Indian man as a "darky."<sup>74</sup> As the paper conceded in the correction, the man was in fact "a highly respected Indian."<sup>75</sup> Indians' internalizing of the color line was further illustrated in a 1922 letter to the editor of the *Robesonian* from A. S. Locklear, the former *Indian Observer* editor, under the headline, "A Malicious Falsehood."<sup>76</sup>

I have just learned that the report has been circulated that I said that during the Baptist State convention at Rocky Mount Rev. J. J. Bell, Indian, of Saddle tree township, stayed in a negro hotel. In as strong language as is proper I desire to brand this as a malicious falsehood that has no foundation whatever.<sup>77</sup>

Even as Indians embraced this social separation, a theme of resistance was developing in white media against the historical identity imposed by whites, including the Croatan identity. Indians were afforded conspicuously little voice in the *Robesonian* and other white newspapers in the state during the period; still, resistance to imposed identities can at times

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<sup>73</sup> "Lewis West Has no Croatan Blood in Him," *Robesonian*, February 16, 1911, 1.

<sup>74</sup> Gross, "'Of Portuguese Origin,'" 505.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> A. S. Locklear, letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, August 24, 1922, 3.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

be deduced in the vigor with which white editorialists defended the Lost Colony thesis. On the desire of the so-called Croatans of Robeson County to change the tribe's name to Cherokees, a 1910 *News and Observer* editorial reprinted in the *Robesonian* lamented:

They claim, though, to be descendants of Raleigh's Lost Colony and to have white blood in their veins, and if their name is changed they would loose [*sic*] what connects them now with their proud boast.<sup>78</sup>

The editorial, with which the *Robesonian* concurred, suggested that Indians were now ungrateful for the distinction whites had conferred by virtue of their blood:

These Indians have a romantic history that lends interest to them—an interest that will increase as the years go by. It looks like they are about to give up a real claim for an elusive one—surrendering the substance for the shadow.<sup>79</sup>

The insistence was that the lore which appealed to the imagination had substance and was more of a "real claim" than Indians' efforts to trace their history in the region to an officially recognized tribe--the Cherokees--that had been subjected to removal a century earlier. White media protested that the use of "Croatan" was not intended as a pejorative term, a defensive posture which implied that Indians found the name derogatory. By 1912, when the Union Chapel picnic was publicized for "the Indians of Robeson County" rather than the Croatans, an Indian committee chairman protested in the *Robesonian* that this showed "gross ingratitude" to Hamilton McMillan,<sup>80</sup> the newspaper editor, white legislator, and folklore

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<sup>78</sup> "Pursuing a Shadow," *Robesonian*, February 7, 1910, 7.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> O. H. Lowery, "An Allegged [*sic*] Error as to Picnic at Union Chapel July 27 Corrected," *Robesonian*, July 25, 1912, 2.

enthusiast who in 1885 used his Lost Colony theory as the justification for funding separate Indian schools.<sup>81</sup>

### **Media Intervention in Indian Sovereignty**

The relationship between racial identity and segregated school systems has been the focus of important scholarship, and the goal here is to examine specifically how this linkage manifested in media and self-representation. For dominant society, public education was a laboratory for testing social theories and instilling racial hierarchy in the young. Conversely, segregated schools had unintended results for those relegated to the margins of Robeson County's four-way segregation.<sup>82</sup> Communities formed around a common purpose and a version of sovereignty, albeit within the architecture of Jim Crow, and more broadly, within the bleak educational picture in rural North Carolina as a whole. To the Indian community, lobbying for state-supported schools, raising funds to supplant meager state allotments,<sup>83</sup> and staffing the schools became a staging ground for political activism, and one that promised concrete results. As Mark Edwin Miller concluded, "local schools served as centers of Indian communities, confirming Native identity and fostering future leaders."<sup>84</sup> Education not only

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<sup>81</sup> Starr, *The Lumbee Indians*, 67-69.

<sup>82</sup> In addition to white, black, and Indian school systems, a separate system was required for the Smilings, a community of people who claimed Indian identity, but were refused entry into Indian schools because they were purported to be of mixed-race origin.

<sup>83</sup> See, for example, "The Croatan School," *Robesonian*, May 30, 1902. The state appropriated \$500 per year for the Indian school in Robeson County. In 1902, that money was exhausted within the first five months of the year, and the school announced it would close until the following January.

<sup>84</sup> Mark Edwin Miller, *Claiming Tribal Identity, The Five Tribes and the Politics of Federal Acknowledgement*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 42-43.

symbolized a path to future aspirations, a way out of deprivation and exploitation; it provided a staging issue for media representation, and tools for *communicating* those aspirations.

For local journalists, covering education was a basic function, and one that could scarcely be performed by outside media. Public education is an institutional, brick-and-mortar story that satisfies the needs of news routines because it is official, incremental, and involves scheduled, open meetings. Thus, one byproduct of the education issue was to raise the profile of Indians in media, and education meanwhile enabled Indians to represent themselves in media in guest correspondences, announcements, and letters to the editor. Partly as a result of this higher profile, the *Robesonian* consistently publicized Indian community events such as the annual picnic held at Union Chapel, by 1909 a requisite invitation for state politicians and school officials, and an opportunity for Indians to gather as a community.<sup>85</sup>

Until the 1970s, journalism in twentieth century Robeson County remained mostly confined to *white* journalism. There were several brief attempts at Indian-run newspapers such as the *Observer* in the first half of the twentieth century, but the *Robesonian* remained the local newspaper of record for white, black, and Indian readers.<sup>86</sup> Gradually, Indians found space in the *Robesonian* to report the activities of groups such as the Indian Schoolmasters' Club.<sup>87</sup> These early non-byline reports typically ran on page six or seven,<sup>88</sup> behind the white-

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<sup>85</sup> "Local Briefs," *Robesonian*, July 19, 1909, 3; "A Big Croatan Picnic at Union Chapel," *Robesonian*, July 26, 1909, 3.

<sup>86</sup> See, James Locklear, "Pembroke's Rich History of Print Journalism," *Native Visions*, January 2008, 24-6. Attempts to publish newspapers for the Indian community included the the *Indian Observer* in the 1920s, and during the 1940s and 1950s, the *Lumbee Advance* and the *Lumbee Progress*.

<sup>87</sup> See, "Ladies Night Is Held By Indian Schoolmasters: Festive Annual Occasion Features Debate, Songs, Hearty Meal," *Robesonian*, May 4, 1936, 7.

oriented "Society" page.<sup>89</sup> Schoolmasters' reports were a cross between community columns and meeting minutes recording topics, speakers, and attendees. One such 1934 report ended with an invitation to the next meeting: "We are looking for a good feed and a great time there. Let's all go."<sup>90</sup> The newspaper, in its routines and organization, maintained the lines of segregation—for example, identifying black and Indian subjects by race, and also stratifying community news by race with "Negro News"<sup>91</sup> or by the 1940s, "Negro News Notes"<sup>92</sup> running on inside pages, along with an Indian news department under various standing headlines including "Pembroke Indian News,"<sup>93</sup> or "News Items Among Cherokee Indians of Robeson County."<sup>94</sup> Over time, community correspondents, notably Lew Barton among Indian writers, gained bylines, beginning with the 1948 series, "Meet The Robeson County

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<sup>88</sup> During the Depression, the page count of the *Robesonian* fluctuated, as did the publishing cycle.

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, "Society," *Robesonian*, January 8, 1934, 6. The Society page was edited by Ann Courtney Sharpe, whose husband was the paper's editor.

<sup>90</sup> "Indian School Masters [*sic*] Meet At Normal School," *Robesonian*, January 8, 1934, 6.

<sup>91</sup> H.E. DuBissette, "Negro News," *Robesonian*, September 8, 1927, 12. DuBissette, a local dentist and elder at First Baptist Church, wrote a weekly column for the newspaper in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

<sup>92</sup> "Negro News Notes," *Robesonian*, February 10, 1948, 6. Although the weekly column typically offered church, farm agent, or club news, the writers also took on issues such as protests over unpaved and impassible roads in black communities.

<sup>93</sup> "Pembroke Indian News," *Robesonian*, June 7, 1936, 2.

<sup>94</sup> Mrs. Theodore Maynor, "News Items Among Cherokee Indians of Robeson County," *Robesonian*, September 14, 1936, 2.

Indian."<sup>95</sup> But in the main, front-matter news pages, black and Indian voices were largely absent during the first half of the twentieth century, with important exceptions.

The July 22, 1938 front page suggested the *Robesonian's* contradictory approach to race. An AP wire story from nearby Fayetteville reinforced the trope of black men's crimes against white women<sup>96</sup> with a report on a black youth from Robeson County captured by a posse after the teen was accused of attacking a white woman.<sup>97</sup> Two more public safety stories on the same front page offer a contrasting view. One gave funeral and obituary details for a black Robeson County man, described as a husband and father of two, killed in a Baltimore mine explosion;<sup>98</sup> an adjacent story reported that the county sheriff was recovering from head wounds from a sawblade, injuries inflicted by a "young white man" during an arrest.<sup>99</sup> In the mine explosion story, a black man was an innocent victim to be mourned; in the second story, the victimizer of the sheriff was identified as white.

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<sup>95</sup> Barton, an Indian publisher and professional musician, frequently wrote for the *Robesonian* from the 1940s until the early 1970s. See, for example, Lew Barton, "Meet The Robeson County Indian," *Robesonian*, March 17, 1948, 4; Lew Barton, "Indian News Beat: Indian Voices Begin to Get Through to Nation," *Robesonian*, July 22, 1971, 19.

<sup>96</sup> See, Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Random House, 2002), 190-214.

<sup>97</sup> "Young Robeson Negro Captured In Assault Case," *Robesonian*, July 22, 1938, 1. The 17-year-old, who was gathering firewood in a white merchant's backyard, was charged with "criminally assaulting" the merchant's wife.

<sup>98</sup> "Local Negro Is Killed In Blast: Funeral For Victim Of Baltimore Mine Explosion To Be Held Here," *Robesonian*, July 22, 1938, 1.

<sup>99</sup> "Sheriff Page Back On Job," *Robesonian*, July 22, 1938, 1.

Illustrating the hierarchy of three-way segregation, an article placed between those two reports detailed corrections to a War Memorial plaque to Robeson's World War dead.<sup>100</sup> The names on the plaque were grouped by race: white, Indian, then Negro.<sup>101</sup> On the one hand, this adhered to the rungs of the social ladder; at the same time, the names were remembered on the same plane, lending a measure of social worth in death. A final story from the page, a report on the Siouan Council of Indians in Robeson County, was notable for its treatment, subject matter, and source. The article—and the headline—reported that with the award of a Farm Security housing grant, the Siouan Council had effectively achieved recognition;<sup>102</sup> moreover, the story explained at length the reason for Indians' historical objection to the former "Croatan" designation by the state, quoting in critical fashion the Smithsonian Institute Bureau of American Ethnology's *Hand Book of American Indians*,<sup>103</sup> which had been cited by the Secretary of the Interior in 1914:

"The theory of descent from the lost colony [*sic*] may be regarded as baseless, but the name itself (Croatan) serves as a convenient label for a people who combine in themselves the blood of the wasted native tribes, the early colonists or forest rovers, the runaway slaves or other negroes, and probably also of stray seamen of the Latin races from coasting vessels in the West Indian or Brazilian trade."<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> "Urge Perfection Of War Memorial By August 15th," *Robesonian*, July 22, 1938, 1.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> J. A. Sharpe Jr, "Siouan Council's Main Objective Realized In Indian Resettlement Project, Biggest Federal Benefit," *Robesonian*, July 22, 1938, 1.

<sup>103</sup> Frederick Webb Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico, A-M, vol. 3, part 1* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1910), 365.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., quoted in "Siouan Council's Main Objective Realized," *Robesonian*, July 22, 1938, 4.

The newspaper report, written by the editor's son (and eventual successor) J. A. Sharpe Jr.,<sup>105</sup> was significant because it privileged a member of the Siouan council, James Chavis, as a key source, and entitled him on second and subsequent references as Secretary Chavis, legitimizing his authority. Meanwhile, the story delegitimized the positivist, Gilded Age encyclopedia entry (and by implication, the Secretary of the Interior and the 63rd Congress the encyclopedia had informed) as lacking authority and credibility. But again, an adjacent feature of the front-page layout showed the ambivalence of the *Robesonian's* treatment of Indians, and demonstrated how within the same news organization, disparate attitudes and personalities of individual journalists inflected coverage. Notched into the text of the Siouan Council story was an unrelated three-paragraph national wire report on the first flight of the so-called "Papoose Plane," an experimental British craft designed to piggy-back on a "mother ship."<sup>106</sup> The boxed layout suggested that the two topics were a package; but in fact, the only connection was that one story dealt with Indians, and the other used a Plains Indian motif to describe emergent technology. Meanwhile, the same edition bluntly illustrated where African Americans fit in the labor caste system of the tobacco-producing county. Next to a five-column display ad for the tobacco auction, featuring portraits of eight white men,<sup>107</sup> ran a two-column help-wanted ad placed by the state employment commission: "Wanted 500 Colored Women," to work in tobacco processing plants.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> See, "Owner-Editor Is Stricken At Lumberton," *Burlington (NC) Times-News*, October 25, 1947, 1. The younger Sharpe took over the paper when his father died in 1947.

<sup>106</sup> "'Papoose Plane' Crosses Safely," *Robesonian*, July 22, 1938, 1.

<sup>107</sup> Display advertisement, Liberty Tobacco Warehouses, "Mr. Farmer, Here Are the Men," *Robesonian*, July 22, 1938, 3.

<sup>108</sup> Display advertisement, NC State Employment Service, "Wanted 500 Colored Women," *Robesonian*, July 22, 1938, 3.



## Indian Self-Representation in the World War II Era

Indians increasingly used media to write back. An important instance of self-representation of the history of the tribe, one which found purchase in media, arose on the eve of World War II: the federally-funded pageant of local Indian history, *Life-Story of a People*.<sup>109</sup> For the Farm Security project, the OIA commissioned ethnographer Ella Deloria, a Dakota, to conduct field research and write the program, which cast 150 members of the Indian community.<sup>110</sup> The pageant, gaining newspaper coverage not confined to the "Indian News" columns inside,<sup>111</sup> portrayed the tribe's pre-contact beginnings, represented an unnamed Lowry-esque leader through an off-stage heroic voice,<sup>112</sup> and ended with Indian combat veterans of the Great War passing a torch to a new generation of soldiers,<sup>113</sup> a particularly timely scene when the pageant's second season opened the night of December 7, 1941. Deloria's three-hour production did not directly link Robeson County Indians to the Lost Colony, and the ethnologist was quoted as saying that any definite connection "must forever lie buried in an intriguing mystery."<sup>114</sup> Even so, a former *Scottish Chief* editor<sup>115</sup> writing for

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<sup>109</sup> "Scenes in Preparation of Indian Pageant," *Robesonian*, December 3, 1940, 7.

<sup>110</sup> Susan Gardner, "'Weaving an Epic Story': Ella Cara Deloria's Pageant for the Indians of Robeson County, North Carolina, 1940-1941," *Mississippi Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2006): 33-57.

<sup>111</sup> See, "Indians of Robeson Will Present Historical Pageant Early Next Month," *Robesonian*, November 11, 1940, 1; Ray Pittman, "Governor Broughton To Attend Tonight's Pageant In Pembroke," *Robesonian*, December 8, 1941, 1. The front-page placement of the latter story is notable in an edition dominated by the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

<sup>112</sup> "Robeson Indians Present 'Life Story of a People,'" *Robesonian*, December 6, 1940, 1.

<sup>113</sup> Ray Pittman, "Governor Broughton To Attend Tonight's Pageant In Pembroke."

<sup>114</sup> Marshall Thompson, "Director of Pembroke Pageant Believes Robeson Indians Are Descendants of 'Lost Colony,'" *Robesonian*, December 3, 1940, 3.

the *Robesonian* implied that Deloria believed the theory. In an article headlined, "Director of Pembroke Pageant Believes Robeson Indians Are Descendants of 'Lost Colony,'" Marshall Thompson quoted some of the main arguments white historians made in advancing the theory, then speculated that Deloria shared this belief:

Miss Deloria does not go into all this but one is led to feel that there is hope in her heart—as it is in many others—that some day, some way, this broken link in the evidence may be mended.<sup>116</sup>

The article and a lengthy photo caption were intent on interpreting *Life-Story* as a "fitting postlude," in the words of an editorial, to the successful, established outdoor drama *The Lost Colony* produced at Roanoke Island.<sup>117</sup> This was a concept Deloria studied but rejected;<sup>118</sup> even so, the editorial praised Deloria (incorrectly) for taking the view that "the evidence that the blood of the Lost Colonists flows in (Robeson Indians') veins is convincing."<sup>119</sup> Again, however, the *Robesonian* showed a diversity of views. An unsigned editorial that ran three days after the pageant's premiere called the production "a turning point" for the local tribe, and urged that speculation about the Lost Colony and other creation stories be laid aside as "mere theories without proof"<sup>120</sup> in favor of moving forward. The editorial column ran

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<sup>115</sup> "Maxton News," *Robesonian*, August 22, 1935, 4.

<sup>116</sup> Marshall Thompson, "Director of Pembroke Pageant Believes Robeson Indians Are Descendants of 'Lost Colony.'"

<sup>117</sup> "Robeson Indian Pageant," *Robesonian*, December 3, 1940, 4.

<sup>118</sup> Susan Gardner, "'Weaving an Epic Story,'" 43-44.

<sup>119</sup> "Robeson Indian Pageant," *Robesonian*.

<sup>120</sup> "Should Make It Annual," *Robesonian*, December 9, 1940, 4.

adjacent to double-deck installments of Al Capp's syndicated comic strip *Li'l Abner*,<sup>121</sup> in which the Yokums of Dogpatch County wore ragged clothes, lived in shacks, and spoke in hillbilly dialect, the satirical representation of rural Americans that some 900 newspapers gave their readers.<sup>122</sup>

The Robeson County which the editors constructed was a century removed from the Yokums; the editorial on *Life-Story* urged that Indians focus not on the past but on "what the future may hold in steady progress onward and upward."<sup>123</sup> This echoed in the copy for display ads the newspaper sold white-owned local businesses to promote *Life-Story*, ads that extolled the "industry and thrift"<sup>124</sup> of Robeson Indians, and "their progress and their earnest efforts to advance."<sup>125</sup>

The *Robesonian* editors' expressed desire to face forward instead of backward applied not only to Indian identity but white identity as well, with the South struggling to emerge from the Great Depression. To understand the occupational culture of North Carolina editors during this time, it bears remembering that one of their own, *Charlotte News* editor W. J. Cash, in 1941 won the Pulitzer Prize and later a Guggenheim Fellowship for refuting the zeitgeist of the Old South. Cash's *The Mind of the South* rejoined the collective memory of the Lost Cause and the southern caste

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<sup>121</sup> Al Capp, *Li'l Abner*, "Inhoomin Woomin," "Fools Rush In!," *Robesonian*, December 9, 1940, 4.

<sup>122</sup> Edwin Arnold, "Al, Abner, and Appalachia," *Appalachian Journal* 17, no. 3 (Spring 1990): 262-275.

<sup>123</sup> "Should Make It Annual," *Robesonian*.

<sup>124</sup> Display advertisement, Liberty Manufacturing Company, *Robesonian*, December 3, 1940, 3.

<sup>125</sup> Display advertisement, A. Weinstein & Sons, *Robesonian*, December 3, 1940, 3.

system promulgated by his fellow North Carolinian, Klan apologist Thomas Dixon.<sup>126</sup> As this study will show, the advent of World War II, leveling the field of representation for black and Indian men, opened further space for Robeson Indians to access media.

### **The Klan in the National News**

In contrast, the discursive space mainstream media afforded the Ku Klux Klan had by the time of the Maxton routing in 1958 degenerated into what might be afforded "a comic opera," as broadcast journalist Mike Wallace put it.<sup>127</sup> In May 1957, the second-ever edition of *Mike Wallace Interview*, precursor to *60 Minutes*,<sup>128</sup> gave the Klan its most far-reaching media moment since *The Birth of a Nation*. Wallace, forced to cancel a scheduled interview with Sen. Joseph McCarthy, who was on his deathbed,<sup>129</sup> proposed in his introduction that the "unrehearsed interview" with Eldon Edwards, Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, provide a referendum on the New South.<sup>130</sup> The question was, why give the KKK leader a national television audience? Some viewers might fault the decision, Wallace acknowledged in introducing the Sunday evening show. But Wallace's purpose was "to ascertain whether

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<sup>126</sup> W. J. Cash, "The Mind of the South," *American Mercury*, October 1929, 185-192; Cash's article was later expanded into his book, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941).

<sup>127</sup> Mike Wallace interview with Eldon Edwards, *Mike Wallace Interview*, May 5, 1957, Columbia Broadcasting Service, Harry Ransom Center Film Collections, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>128</sup> Wallace had been a TV interview host in New York City, and began the nationally televised show for American Broadcasting Company in April 1957.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

the Klan is a potent, faithful representation of Southern feeling or whether the Klan is, as some Southerners describe it, something to laugh at, something comical."<sup>131</sup>

The news peg was the looming implementation of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, and the issue was whether the Klan planned violent resistance in the South. Edwards, a 48-year-old autoworker, traveled from his home in suburban Atlanta and wore his gold satin robes and pointed hat for the New York City studio interview.<sup>132</sup> He disavowed any threat of violence by his "Protestant faith organization,"<sup>133</sup> leading Wallace to confront Edwards as to the Klan's strength. The host cited a 1957 *New York Times* article and a *Look* magazine report depicting an impotent group that had negligible membership numbers. In the historic Confederate capital of Montgomery, Alabama, Wallace recounted, robed and hooded klansmen had been openly mocked by African Americans they sought to intimidate.<sup>134</sup>

The widely promoted ABC segment,<sup>135</sup> which "burned up the airwaves" in the words the Hearst syndicate,<sup>136</sup> was prime exposure for an organization that thrived on performance. As with the Klan's post-World War I resurgence associated with the 1915 release and periodic rereleases of *The Birth of a Nation*, with its potent appeal to southern white memory,<sup>137</sup> the professed secret order again used conspicuously public tactics to gain media attention. In the

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> "Wallace to Interview Ku Klux Klan Wizard," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 5, 1957, 26.

<sup>136</sup> Atra Baer, "Radio, TV Chatter," International News Service, May 6, 1957.

<sup>137</sup> Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 1-22.

era of Jim Crow, the regalia and lexicon of klancraft, daytime parades, nighttime rallies, and well-publicized cross-burnings were designed to evoke memory of Reconstruction,<sup>138</sup> and enlist mass media in a more raw and cinematic appeal to whiteness than did Citizens' Councils in the 1950s.<sup>139</sup>

For Edwards to be given a half-hour segment on national television was a prime opportunity. But under Wallace's withering cross-examination, the results were unflattering. The Klan leader invoked Scripture in arguing for segregation, but when pressed, was unable to cite Bible verses. Nor could he account for why a list of conservative white southern politicians, clergy, and Edwards's Atlanta hometown newspaper, the largest in the South, all repudiated the Klan. If the Klan had such broad support, Wallace asked, why didn't southern media express this? "Well," Edwards answered, "the smaller press does. The smaller papers. The weekly papers and things of that nature."<sup>140</sup>

This endorsement, and the mentality it implied about the rural South, rankled editors of these "smaller papers" in North Carolina, where the national KKK leader was at the time recruiting James "Catfish" Cole to begin a membership push.<sup>141</sup> In comparison to conservative whites in South Carolina and the Deep South who vowed to defy *Brown*, state

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<sup>138</sup> Elaine Frantz Parsons, "Midnight Rangers: Costume and Performance in the Reconstruction-Era Ku Klux Klan," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 3 (December 2005): 811-836.

<sup>139</sup> For a discussion of white supremacy Citizens' Councils, see, Neil McMillen, *The Citizens' Council: Organized Resistance to the Second Reconstruction, 1954-64* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

<sup>140</sup> *Mike Wallace Interview*.

<sup>141</sup> David Mark Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 347.

officials and editors in North Carolina tried to present a more moderate front.<sup>142</sup> Responding to Edwards's touting of the allegiance of "smaller" newspapers to the Klan, the *Shelby Daily Star*<sup>143</sup> called the Edwards interview "embarrassing to Southerners."<sup>144</sup> In an editorial reprinted in the *Robesonian*, the *Star* listed Edwards's most outlandish claims from the TV interview. For example, Edwards said that the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* was "edited by the NAACP," that other daily newspapers in the South were controlled by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and that Baptist ministers were incapable of interpreting the Bible.<sup>145</sup> But this paled in comparison to how Edwards answered Mike Wallace's question about the "one-drop" rule of white racial purity. If one drop of black blood were enough to "taint" white purity, Wallace asked, what did this suggest for the injured white GIs who, the US military confirmed, had received transfusions of blood donated by black troops? Edwards's answer: The darker skin pigmentation "might show up in the offspring" of the white GIs.<sup>146</sup>

Such preposterous assertions made Edwards a convenient target for newspapers like the *Robesonian*, which were meanwhile continuing to endorse segregation as a practical

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<sup>142</sup> See, William Henry Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) 48-49.

<sup>143</sup> The *Shelby (NC) Daily Star* was published in the birthplace of Thomas Dixon Jr., author of *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*, the play from which D. W. Griffith adapted his 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation*.

<sup>144</sup> "Clipped Comment: Klan Wizard Embarrasses (sic) South (Shelby Daily Star)," *Robesonian*, August 1, 1957, 4.

<sup>145</sup> *Mike Wallace Interview*.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*.

necessity.<sup>147</sup> But his unapologetic racism also pricked a deeper problem of conscience for southern gradualists after World War II. The blood of US soldiers, white and non-white together, had been shed to defeat the Axis, and the losses were felt heavily in Robeson County.<sup>148</sup> As the *Robesonian* editorialized about World War II during a commemoration of Brotherhood Week, "differences of race, religion and color were submerged for the common good in the fight against . . . enemies who tried to found a mastery of the world on the evils of bigotry, prejudice, and race hatred."<sup>149</sup> To hear white Americans in the post-war period mimic the language of Hitler about "mongrel races" such as blacks and Jews was therefore unsettling. This was especially true for those who had seen the results of Hitler's racial ideology up close, for example allied infantrymen who liberated death camps, including Indian troops from Robeson County.<sup>150</sup>

The Klan's resemblance to Nazi storm troopers was a theme familiar to the press at large and the southern press. Newspapers including the *Robesonian* gave prominent play to a federal investigation of alleged ties between the Third Reich and the German-American

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<sup>147</sup> See, for example, "Integrated Murder," *Robesonian*, August 1, 1957, 4. In an editorial that ran in the same column as the *Shelby Daily Star* reprint, the *Robesonian* suggested that integrated swimming pools were to blame for the killing of a white teen in New York City. The editorial meanwhile criticized the fact that there had been a "national commotion" over the Emmett Till murder in Mississippi, "even though the boy had given provocation."

<sup>148</sup> According to the Selective Service Board, more than 9,000 Robesonians served in World War II, and at least 120 were killed in action.

<sup>149</sup> "Brotherhood Week," *Robesonian*, February 20, 1946, 4.

<sup>150</sup> Interview with Jesse Oxendine by Jeffrey T. Williams, J. Murrey Atkins Library, UNC-Charlotte, April 19, 1995, Item NAOX0025.



Bund,<sup>151</sup> and commentators highlighted the fact that at rallies, the Klan sold copies of the same anti-Semitic tract that had inspired Hitler.<sup>152</sup> Newspapers sometimes took the resemblance between the two groups literally, illustrating the idea that the camera did not lie, and that "seeing," as visual theorists Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen held, is "synonymous with understanding."<sup>153</sup> Following the 1945 Stone Mountain Klan revival, the *Robesonian* ran, without editorial comment, a large wire photo of the grand dragon, identified in the caption as Dr. Samuel Green. The physician wore a coat and tie, ordinary in every respect but one: He sported a mustache styled like Hitler's.<sup>154</sup> Months later, a syndicated column in which *Constitution* editor Ralph McGill warned of a post-war Klan revival, a column reprinted in the *Robesonian* and other papers, flatly stated, "The Klan stands for a revival of all Hitler stood for. Let's all recognize that fact and say so in so many words."<sup>155</sup> For journalists who ascribed to the view that the Klan was un-American, there was a corollary: Those who opposed the Klan were patriotic.

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<sup>151</sup> Associated Press, "Klan and Bund to be Probed," *Robesonian*, August 8, 1946, 1; AP Wirephoto, "Klan Compared With Storm Troopers," *Robesonian*, August 14, 1946, 1; Brack Curry, "Klan-Nazi Bund Links Found By Federal Agents," *Robesonian*, October 1, 1946, 1.

<sup>152</sup> *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a chronicle of a conspiracy by Jews to take over the world, had been exposed as a literary hoax, but the Ku Klux Klan continued to promote the pamphlet.

<sup>153</sup> Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (London: Routledge, 1996), 168.

<sup>154</sup> Associated Press Wirephoto, Dr. Samuel Green, *Robesonian*, October 24, 1945, 3.

<sup>155</sup> Ralph McGill, "The K.K.K. Is Hitler Stuff," *Robesonian*, May 20, 1946, 4. McGill years later won the Pulitzer for a front-page column condemning the October 1958 bombing of Atlanta's oldest Hebrew temple.

In that regard, officers in the North Carolina Press Association, including *Robesonian* editor J. A. Sharpe Jr., likewise shared in the reflected glory of a Pulitzer Prize-winning 1950s small-town newspaper anti-Klan crusade in nearby Whiteville and Tabor City, resulting in 63 convictions in the tobacco-farming area along the North Carolina-South Carolina border.<sup>156</sup> Observers argued that these investigations and resulting convictions, stemming from the beating of a black woman, prevented the Klan from regaining a post-war foothold in the region.<sup>157</sup> But a secondary consequence of the Pulitzer and related honors was that they accrued to the regional press association and the legislature in Raleigh. This was vindication by association, unburdening the southern editors of a sectional inferiority complex that stretched back a century. This was evidenced by the laudatory editorials penned in nearby small cities such as Lumberton (located one county seat over from Whiteville), Burlington, Kannapolis, Statesville, and High Point.<sup>158</sup>

As Sharpe wrote in the *Robesonian*, the two newspapers in Columbus County overcame the Klan as well as "the stigma that attaches to it."<sup>159</sup> This stigma likewise attached to the small-town southern press marginalized by their urban peers, North and South, as provincial

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<sup>156</sup> See, Klan Trial Nears End," *New York Times*, July 29, 1952, 16. In 1952, the NC Editorial Writers Conference honored the editors of the *Tabor City Tribune* and the *Whiteville News-Reporter* in Columbus County, next-door to Robeson County, just as news broke that the leader of the Klan in the eastern US surrendered after reading about himself in the newspaper. The following year, the two newspapers won the 1953 Pulitzer Prize Gold Medal for public service; and the accolades, invited speeches, and write-ups by their small town brethren continued.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Associated Negro Press, "Court Action Seen Ending Regrowth Of Ku Klux Klan," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 9, 1952, 16.

<sup>158</sup> All were member newspapers in the press association of which the Whiteville publisher was then president.

<sup>159</sup> "Earned Public Gratitude," *Robesonian*, May 8, 1953, 4.

"chicken-dinner" newspapers too backward, isolated,<sup>160</sup> and meek to carry out the democratic function of journalism. The awarding of the 1953 Pulitzer, the first top prize to a non-daily newspaper, legitimized the capacity of rural journalism to be fearless, and proximity only amplified that trait. As the Pulitzer board judges noted in their comments, the fact that the newspapers published in small towns increased the immediate risk—physical and financial—of printing dangerous stories.<sup>161</sup>

### **The History of the Klan and the *Robesonian***

Proximity to the Klan was no theoretical concern for the *Robesonian*. It went to the institutional memory of the organization, and how the newspaper aspired to position itself on race relations in the future, an important issue in the trajectory of this study. Sharpe's father, J. A. Sharpe Sr., editor and publisher of the *Robesonian* for forty years until his death in 1947, from the beginning of his tenure refused to sell advertising to the Klan,<sup>162</sup> this at the time when major Sunday newspaper editions across the state<sup>163</sup> sold full- and half-page ads to

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<sup>160</sup> See, Tom Gould, "Introduction to the Community Journalism Special Issue," *Online Journal of Rural Research & Policy* 5 no. 6 (2010): 1.

<sup>161</sup> See, for example, Penelope Muse Abernathy, *Saving Community Journalism: The Path to Profitability* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 11-13; Thomas Clark Terry, *That Old-Time Religion: Three Journalists in the Triangle of Race, Religion, and Liberalism in the South at the Cusp of the Modern Civil Rights Era, 1950-1953* (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 2007) 191-202; Maurine Beasley and Richard Harlow, "The Community Press: Occasional Voices of Courage," unpublished paper presented at Association for Education in Journalism, Seattle, August 1978, 5. *News-Reporter* publisher Leslie Thompson and *Tribune* editor W. Horace Carter received physical threats to their families, and both reported subscription cancellations of up to fifty percent as well as plummeting ad revenues during the Klan-busting campaign.

<sup>162</sup> "The Robesonian, Established 1870, Oldest Newspaper in the County," *Robesonian*, February 26, 1951, 4.

<sup>163</sup> See, for example, Display Advertisement, "Au Kee L.O.O.K. Loyal Order of Klansmen, Inc.," *Charlotte Observer*, June 8, 1919, 32; *Durham (NC) Morning Herald*, June 15, 1919, 6; *Asheville (NC) Citizen-Times*, June 15, 1919, 17.

the Loyal Order of the Klansmen, Inc.<sup>164</sup> During peak years of the Klan's second-wave resurgence in the 1920s,<sup>165</sup> Sharpe and the editor of the *Scottish Chief* in nearby Maxton repeatedly editorialized against the Klan and used their front pages to unmask the society and its sympathizers, and decry a membership push that included prominent politicians.<sup>166</sup> The *Chief*, in a commentary reprinted in the *Robesonian*, editorialized that there was "no place for secret societies here."<sup>167</sup> To underscore the reality, the *Robesonian* ran directly below the guest editorial a news story with the headline, "Two Negroes Lynched in Aiken County, S.C."<sup>168</sup>

But the newspapers' stance in the 1920s by its very nature implied dissonance with the status quo in their communities. This was notable in coverage of a 1923 Lumberton trial that attracted state and national attention, a case that turned not on race but on sexual morality enforced by vigilantes. The case was the brutal "flogging," as authorities at the time called

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<sup>164</sup> See, "A Gold Brick Proposition, Foolish and Wicked," *Robesonian*, July 3, 1919, 2. The ads, featuring a death's head emblazoned with "Ku Klux Klan." Then-Gov. Walter Bickett denounced the print campaign as "a wicked appeal to race prejudice" attempting to evoke the "dark days" after the Civil War, this at a time when "all of us need to be considerate and kind and trustful in our dealings with the negro."

<sup>165</sup> Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry*, 1-22. MacLean argued that investigations by northern newspapers such as the *New York World* helped rather than hurt Klan recruitment; the KKK meanwhile published 40 weekly newspapers of its own.

<sup>166</sup> See, "Cawthon is Ku Klux Defender," *Robesonian*, March 29, 1923, 1; "Klu Klux Organizer Seems To Fail Here," *Robesonian*, August 29, 1921, 1. The *Robesonian* reported that "several prominent citizens" had stood up to be inducted at a Klan meeting, where a KKK leader claimed that a US senator and a congressman from North Carolina had already joined the order.

<sup>167</sup> *Maxton Scottish Chief*, "Ku Klux Klan," reprinted in *Robesonian*, September 12, 1921, 2.

<sup>168</sup> "Two Negroes Lynched in Aiken County, SC," *Robesonian*, September 12, 1921, 2.

Klan beatings,<sup>169</sup> of two white women in nearby Proctorville by seventeen men in masks and white robes, with another masked man dressed as a judge,<sup>170</sup> and another later identified as a local police chief.<sup>171</sup> When the crime was first reported, newspapers around the state took notice of what the *Charlotte Observer* called "The Robeson Question."<sup>172</sup> The *Robesonian* reprinted their editorials both before and after the trial, "not because it approves of what these papers are saying," the *Robesonian* editors wrote, "but to let home folks know what is being said by papers outside the county."<sup>173</sup> Wrote the *Raleigh News and Observer*: "This blot on Robeson County is a blot upon the state."<sup>174</sup> The *Wilmington Dispatch* termed the incident "a bad advertisement" which brought "notoriety" and "stigma" to North Carolina, where "we pride ourselves upon having advanced socially, intellectually and morally."<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> See, David Mark Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1981). 28-39; 92-99. An "epidemic" of brutal beatings and so-called "tar and feather parties" by the Klan across the South brought a 1921 series of exposes of the Klan in Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*, joined by William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal American*.

<sup>170</sup> "Subpoenas Served on Alleged Head of Fairmont Ku Klux Klavern Requiring Him to Produce Roster of Membership and Record," *Robesonian*, July 18, 1923, 1. By night, the mob had dragged the women from their homes, bent them over a log, pulled their dresses up, and beaten them severely with a leather strap. Ostensibly, the women were being punished because couples had been seen dancing at one woman's house, and because the other woman, married to a policeman, had "not treated her husband right." The newspaper at the time normally published twice weekly, but printed daily editions for the duration of the trial.

<sup>171</sup> "Ku Klux Trial Next Week," *Robesonian*, July 9, 1923, 1.

<sup>172</sup> "Newspaper Comment on the Robeson Affair," *Robesonian*, July 30, 1923, 2.

<sup>173</sup> "More Unfair Comment," *Robesonian*, July 30, 1923, 4.

<sup>174</sup> "Press Comment on Whipping of Women," *Robesonian*, May 3, 1923, 2.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

Among the witnesses who examined the victims' injuries after the beatings, in addition to the directors of the health and the social services departments, was the editor of the *Robesonian*, Sharpe.<sup>176</sup> Three days after Sharpe's court testimony, the *Robesonian* ran an editorial defending the rule of law and answering critics who accused the paper of bias. The editorial read, in part:

Any person who does not agree that those who are guilty of this crime should be punished has a strangely perverted idea about what constitutes a crime.... [Y]ou'd just as well make bonfires of your court houses and jails, quit employing officers and turn every home into an armed camp and every citizen into a walking arsenal.<sup>177</sup>

This was the argument, partly one of journalistic self-preservation, that to deny any citizen the right to liberty and due process threatened to deny those rights to all. The newspapers' anti-KKK stance in one sense echoed the national sentiment of influential publishers such as Pulitzer, Hearst and William Allen White,<sup>178</sup> but also resistance to intimidation of the local press.

The case marked the first time a grand jury in the county indicted defendants for crimes committed in the name of the Klan, and at the time, the trial was the longest and most high-profile case in Robeson County history.<sup>179</sup> The significance was three-fold. First, as the above-quoted editorial suggests, the trial exposed the nature of the Klan activities as not only targeting minorities, Catholics, and Jews, but also moral vigilantes; second, it unmasked Klan

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<sup>176</sup>Ibid. Sharpe testified in court that the women's flesh "resembled beefsteak which had been beaten preparatory to cooking."

<sup>177</sup> "The Ku Klux Danger," *Robesonian*, July 20, 1923, 2.

<sup>178</sup> Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 271, 313; 144-148.

<sup>179</sup> "Not Fair to Robeson," *Robesonian*, July 26, 1923, 4.

membership in general;<sup>180</sup> third, and most important to the arc of media involvement traced in this study, it engaged the newspaper as an interested party and a hostile witness against the Klan.<sup>181</sup>

After the trial ended in acquittals, except for a Klan detective jailed for intimidating witnesses, the *Robesonian* reprinted over a month's time columns of editorials from the state's major metro newspapers about what the *Wilmington Star* termed the "unenviable notoriety that has recently attached" to Robeson County.<sup>182</sup> Raleigh's *News and Observer* inferred that the not-guilty verdicts reflected public opinion in the county, and the writer asked, "What is the matter with Robeson? Why is it the hot-bed of Ku Klux sympathy and sentiment?"<sup>183</sup> Quoting a prosecutor who had implored, "God help Robeson County," the *Greensboro News* commented, "God helps those who help themselves, and Robeson shows no disposition to help herself."<sup>184</sup> The same newspaper later editorialized on the so-called "Lumberton Affair," leading the *Robesonian* to weakly dissociate its community by observing that the flogging of the two women took place 14 miles from Lumberton,<sup>185</sup> in the isolated, southernmost part of the county.

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<sup>180</sup> As reported beneath banner headlines on page one of the *Robesonian*, the court subpoenaed a Fairmont attorney who headed the "klavern" to produce the society's rosters. Moreover, the jury selection process required potential jurors to answer in open court whether they belonged to the Klan, proceedings the *Robesonian* reported gavel-to-gavel in daily extras.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> "Newspaper Comment on the Robeson Affair," *Robesonian*, July 26, 1923, 4.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> "The Chief Is Dead," *Robesonian*, August 13, 1923, 4.

The *Robesonian*, as if to disprove what it called an ongoing "tirade of abuse,"<sup>186</sup> in 1924 joined with the *Scottish Chief* in denouncing a series of anonymous threats signed "KKK" to residents of Maxton's Syrian immigrant community.<sup>187</sup> The *Robesonian* continued through the 1930s to monitor the Klan, and to criticize what it deemed complacency at the highest levels toward the Klan's existence,<sup>188</sup> and officials' shoot-the-messenger attitude toward journalists, in place of concern over the issue.<sup>189</sup> Thus, there was an established pattern in local media of opposition to the Klan—or at least, desire to disassociate from the Klan.

This was partly an inherent objection to Klan tactics, and partly a desire to avoid the cloud of negative publicity that Klan activity generated. Following the five-day flogging trial in 1923, for example, the *Robesonian* noted that "more newspaper writers sojourned in Lumberton last week than ever before visited this town at one time," including an AP writer who covered the case gavel to gavel, and a total of 75,000 words sent out via Western Union. Wrote the *Robesonian*:

Here's hoping that the next time so great an array of  
of newspaper talent is sent to Lumberton it will be for  
the purpose of giving the town and county better advertising

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<sup>186</sup> "A Species of Lynch Law," *Robesonian*, August 9, 1923, 4.

<sup>187</sup> "Lynch Law Again," *Robesonian*, June 9, 1924, 4. Following the kidnapping and brutal beating of a Syrian merchant in the town by unknown perpetrators, the *Robesonian* observed that the case was "peculiarly sad," because the merchant had emigrated to the United States to escape persecution in his homeland.

<sup>188</sup> "Black Is Called 'Life Klansman,'" *Robesonian*, September 20, 1937, 1. The newspaper prominently reported allegations that Sen. Hugo Black, the Supreme Court nominee, had belonged to the Klan.

<sup>189</sup> "Supporters Slighted," *Robesonian*, September 29, 1937, 4. After US attorney general chided news reporters in Washington, saying that the Justice Department saw no need to screen eminent men in public life, the *Robesonian* criticized as absurd the idea that reporters were "impertinent" to question a nominee's background.



than was given by the nature of the news sent out last week, though it was all to the credit of the county that there was an entire absence of disorder during the trial of this most unusual case.<sup>190</sup>

On an intellectual level, the attitude was complex, paradoxical. On the very issue against which the local newspaper crusaded—the Klan—the editors took a defensive posture toward the attention of outsiders. On the level of professional pride, the issue was simple, what might be termed the Dogpatch Syndrome: Not only did out-of-town trial coverage result in the Othering of the community, it Othered the *newspaper* in the eyes of its better-read, better-paid counterparts. As in 1871, when the *Robesonian* opened its files to a star reporter from the *New York Herald*, the local newspaper was not only concerned with how Robeson County appeared to out-of-town readers, but to out-of-town *journalists*. And regardless of what local editorial writers hoped, the 1923 trial was not the last time the Klan brought droves of reporters to Robeson County. Much as the editors of the *Robesonian* were concerned with a linear, "onward and upward" construction of their community, events circled back in the gravitational pull of the past. Again, in the wake of a war, the prospect of a racial realignment stirred white backlash.

### **The Klan and the Discourse of the New South**

After the close of World War II, when the KKK announced its revival with a symbolic 300-foot cross-burning at Stone Mountain, Georgia,<sup>191</sup> the *Robesonian* editorialized on what it called the Klan's "recrudescence," and revisited the newspaper's 1920s Klan coverage. Commenting on an Atlanta contemporary's account of a hostile anonymous phone call he received after an anti-Klan newspaper column, the *Robesonian* called this "mild" compared

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<sup>190</sup> "Not Fair to Robeson," *Robesonian*, July 26, 1923, 4.

<sup>191</sup> "KKK Bobs Up Again," *Robesonian*, November 5, 1945, 4.

to the "anonymous threats by phone and letter hurled at the editor of this paper over a period of many weeks," warning of "every form of secret and sudden violence to person and property."<sup>192</sup> When J. A. Sharpe Jr. assumed the editorship in 1947, the *Robesonian* maintained its anti-Klan position. For example, the younger Sharpe editorialized that Robeson citizens might gain new appreciation for the "peaceable relations existing between the three races in this county" after a 1950 incident in nearby Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.<sup>193</sup> After the Klan surrounded a black dance club, a Klansmen killed in an ensuing gunfight with the dance-hall occupants was found to be wearing his Conway, South Carolina, policeman's uniform under his KKK robe.<sup>194</sup> Here was a relative positioning of Robeson County by the newspaper: The county was undeniably segregated, the editorial seemed to say, but race relations—and criminal justice—were measurably worse across the border in South Carolina.

The local paper in the 1950s also maintained its sensitivity to appearances and the perceptions of outsiders. Just as the *Robesonian* participated in newspaper exchanges in the nineteenth century, the paper continued to print outside editorial views of local issues, and on occasion responded to these commentaries. This trend will become increasingly salient through the remainder of this study, providing a counterpoint to the pre-Civil War and wartime ideological "quarantine," as Michael Kent Curtis termed it, that most southern newspaper editors imposed on abolitionist viewpoints, from within and without.<sup>195</sup> An

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<sup>192</sup> "Recrudescence of KKK," *Robesonian*, May 24, 1946, 4.

<sup>193</sup> "No Place Here," *Robesonian*, September 4, 1950, 4.

<sup>194</sup> "Policeman Killed in Klan Skirmish," *Robesonian*, August 28, 1950, 1.

<sup>195</sup> For a discussion of the free speech crisis surrounding slavery, particularly in North Carolina, see, Michael Kent Curtis. *Free Speech: "The People's Darling Privilege,"*

example of the reverse phenomenon a century later, notable because of the play and space the *Robesonian* afforded it in the summer of 1950, was "The Changing South,"<sup>196</sup> a 12-part series by Bem Price, a national reporter for the Associated Press.<sup>197</sup> The series, which the *Robesonian* ran at the top of its editorial page, portrayed a region of "terrific ferment" where whites and blacks increasingly clashed, and which was subject to internal and external pressure for change. The cotton economy was collapsing, Price wrote,

And there are world pressures in which the south finds itself held up as an example of a nation which talks democracy, but refuses to grant full citizenship rights to nearly 10,000,000 people.<sup>198</sup>

This raised the idea that in international waters, the South was America's albatross, compromising the nation's stature as a flagship of freedom and democracy. Regardless of external pressure, segregation held fast at the micro level, and mirroring the community, this included the *Robesonian*. By late 1949, the twenty-four-person newspaper staff included no Indians (apart from community stringers) and just one black employee, a pressman in the stereotype department.<sup>199</sup> During this period, the newspaper's editorial page referred euphemistically to segregation as a southern social custom,<sup>200</sup> implying a benign tradition. Editorials meanwhile placed orphan quotation marks around the term "civil rights,"<sup>201</sup> a

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*Struggles for Freedom of Expression in American History*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 131-181, 271-298.

<sup>196</sup> Bem Price, "The Changing South," *Robesonian*, June 12, 1950, 4. The Associated Press series ran on the *Robesonian*'s editorial page daily from June 12-July 3, 1950.

<sup>197</sup> Price was later known for coverage of *Brown* across the South, the Korean War, and the McCarthy hearings.

<sup>198</sup> Bem Price, "The Changing South."

<sup>199</sup> "New Rotary Press and Larger Staff Marks Paper's Growth," *Robesonian*, October 7, 1949, 5.

<sup>200</sup> "Not A Pretty Problem," *Robesonian*, May 24, 1955, 4.

<sup>201</sup> "Minnesota Follows Suit," *Robesonian*, July 21, 1950, 4.

device to signal that the newspaper leadership accepted neither the legitimacy of the term nor its face-value denotation.

The Klan, then, served a narrative need, providing a primitive foil to the moderate self-image of the *Robesonian* and the white community. By relegating the Klan to white southern memory, the *Robesonian* constructed a genteel, civilized New South. And as readers of the comics page recognized in the portrayals of *L'il Abner* and his country bumpkin contemporary *Snuffy Smith*, nothing marginalized or archaicized the Klan as effectively as ridicule.

Important to understanding the rhetoric of the Indians' Klan routing is the strategic use of satire during World War II. Ridicule had become a favorite device for comedians lampooning fascism,<sup>202</sup> and in the post-war period, it became a tool of critical news coverage and commentary, figuring prominently in the Maxton coverage and Lumbee self-representation. The process of trivializing Nazis and the KKK was an attempt to historicize and minimize the threat the organizations posed. Nazis and Klansmen signified something to be feared; but behind the signifiers, this discourse implied (correctly or incorrectly), time had revealed them to be weak and laughable. An example was an editorial from the Greenville, Mississippi, *Delta Democrat Times* that spoke of the "silliness" of Hitler, a "crackpot" who was "flabby, undistinguished, uneducated."<sup>203</sup> Descriptions of his top ministers were an

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<sup>202</sup> See, for example, Charles Chaplin, *The Great Dictator* (Hollywood, CA: Charles Chaplin Film Corp., 1940); Jules White and Felix Adler, *I'll Never Heil Again* (Hollywood, CA: Columbia Pictures, 1941).

<sup>203</sup> James Thrasher, "Silly, But Sinister," *Delta Democrat-Times* (Greenville, MS), May 24, 1945, 4.

inventory of negative physical and moral attributes.<sup>204</sup> Germans were not the only people who had followed unworthy leaders, the editorial argued, evidenced by "our own history's shameful chapter of the Ku Klux Klan" in the 1920s.<sup>205</sup> Similarly, the media's postwar descriptions of the Klan displayed skepticism bordering on sarcasm. A column that mentioned a Klan warning about the "menace of the Pope of Rome" observed, "The fact that they have to explain, locally, that the Rome<sup>206</sup> they are talking about is one of those foreign countries, and not Rome, Ga., is a complete characterizer of about two-thirds of their membership."<sup>207</sup> Klan leaders in turn frequently voiced hostility toward the press, and the organization's attempts at self-representation via mass media met with derision.<sup>208</sup>

Although the history of the Klan demonstrated that the group's capacity for violence remained a lethal threat, particularly in the Deep South, the *Robesonian* used terminology in its articles and headlines that marginalized the organization. For example, a KKK official was described as a "self-styled Ku Klux Klan organizer,"<sup>209</sup> delegitimizing his status and authority. Another report on a Klan leader's speech undercut the strong-armed words with a

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid. Thrasher wrote of Goebbels as "talentless, thwarted;" Himmler "weak of eye, chin and will;" and Goering as a "vain, strutting, sponging, plundering, porcine, former dope addict."

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> "Klan Wizard Not Guilty 'Until Proven,'" *Robesonian*, May 29, 1952, 1, 4.

<sup>207</sup> McGill, "The K.K.K. Is Hitler Stuff."

<sup>208</sup> See, for example, "Ignored By Press, Klan Rally Flops," *Robesonian*, June 24, 1957, 1; "Klan Wizard Embarrasses South," *Robesonian*, August 1, 1957, 4.

<sup>209</sup> "One Year Ago Today...," *Robesonian*, March 14, 1951, 4.

description of the leader as "pudgy."<sup>210</sup> Meanwhile, a headline reporting the jailing of an Alabama Klan leader minimized his predicament: "Klan Leader Goes Back to Pokey."<sup>211</sup> The *Robesonian* also jeered at the story of three Klansmen accosted by the mayor of Soperton, Georgia. After the mayor received a call at his home that the three were wandering the street in KKK regalia, he reportedly "rushed out, yanked the masks from the faces of the three men and tossed them in jail."<sup>212</sup> The complaint, according to the mayor, was that the Klansmen had "frightened several ladies."<sup>213</sup> The incident, which the *Robesonian* continued to follow on page one, implied that the Klan was easily confronted and dispatched, even when it was three against one.

But satire had limitations. When Klan activity was in such far-off places as South Georgia and Alabama, the Lumberton newspaper could afford to diminish the threat, and blithely distance Robeson County from the Deep South. But when the issue was in closer proximity, across the state line in Myrtle Beach or just over the county line in Whiteville, it required a more nuanced argument. These explications necessarily recognized that the Klan had a local history, and that white readers' collective memory of Reconstruction valorized this history, aided mightily by *The Birth of a Nation*. The rhetorical move, then, was to differentiate Robeson chronologically, drawing a line between past and present. The *Robesonian* reinforced the idea that what had once been "a Southern institution" had "degenerated" into a "disgrace" that deserved "the contempt of all men—white, red, black and yellow--who

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<sup>210</sup> "Klan Leader Not Guilty 'Until Proven,'" *Robesonian*, May 29, 1952, 1, 4.

<sup>211</sup> "Klan Leader Goes Back to Pokey," *Robesonian*, August 2, 1949, 1.

<sup>212</sup> "Georgia Mayor In Clash With Klan," *Robesonian*, May 24, 1949, 2.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

believe in sportsmanship, honor and courage."<sup>214</sup> The editorial's headline indicated that the Klan lacked the quintessential southern masculine ideal, calling the Klan, "Men Without Honor."<sup>215</sup>

A related strategy to isolate the Klan was to portray it as a performance that was irrelevant and out of step with the 1950s. A commentary skeptical of the Klan's attempted comeback in neighboring Columbus County described the Klan's only function to be "entertainment value."<sup>216</sup> The robes and masks were equated with costumes at a children's Halloween party, for those who felt "unimportant" and in need of scapegoats to blame for their own dissatisfaction. The *Robesonian* likened Klan activity to historical play-acting:

In fact, most of the appeal of the Klan might be said to be imaginary. The robe and the burning cross are survivals of a day when Klansmen took the law into their own hands and struck a blow against the tyranny of carpetbagger rule in the South. But any such action now is a violation of laws that Southerners have made for themselves.<sup>217</sup>

Not that the newspaper considered the Klan harmless in the 1950s. For example, the city editor under J. A. Sharpe Jr. was assaulted and beaten in 1953, allegedly by a man angry that his name appeared in an article about the Klan.<sup>218</sup> But if that incident had a chilling effect on the city editor, Penn Gray, it was not evident in his coverage from 1956-58 of a Knights of

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<sup>214</sup> "Men Without Honor," *Robesonian*, January 16, 1952, 4.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> "Ku Klux Klan Tries Comeback," *Robesonian*, August 14, 1951.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> "Not A Personal Matter," *Fayetteville (NC) Observer*, reprinted in *Robesonian*, November 24, 1953, 4.

the Ku Klux Klan leader, James "Catfish" Cole, who at the direction of Imperial Wizard Eldon Edwards, had set his sights on Robeson County.

Compared to brief items about Klan meetings of the past, coverage of Cole's 1956 rally and cross-burning differed in key respects. This was the first open KKK meeting held in Robeson since 1953 passage of a state's anti-mask law,<sup>219</sup> and the high-speed film newspapers began using in the 1940s enabled night photography.<sup>220</sup> Instead of the usual sparse news account dictated by a reporter on deadline, Gray himself attended the Friday night rally and filed a lengthy color story with photos for the next edition on Monday,<sup>221</sup> along with a scathing, signed commentary for the editorial page.<sup>222</sup> Klan leader Cole, who had a *Free Will Gospel Hour* on a local radio station, had used handbills and newspapers to widely publicize the rally, held in a cornfield in the tiny crossroads community of Shannon. This attracted reporters not only from Lumberton, 17 miles away, but also a crew from a Fayetteville TV station as well as press from an hour away in Durham. The exaggerated alliteration of *Robesonian's* page-one headline, "Krowd Keeps Kalm At Klan Konklav,"<sup>223</sup> matched the tongue-in-cheek tone of Gray's story. The Klan issued strict guidelines for the press to follow under threat of expulsion, which Gray wrote "brought laughter, but

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<sup>219</sup> Associated Press, "Legislature Gives Lawmen Whip Over Hooded Hoodlums," *Robesonian*, May 6, 1953, 1.

<sup>220</sup> "High-Speed Film Developed For News Photographers," *Science News Letter*, August 4, 1944, 85-6.

<sup>221</sup> Penn Gray, "Krowd Keeps Kalm At Klan Konklav," *Robesonian*, October 22, 1956, 1.

<sup>222</sup> Penn Gray, "A Chiel's Among Ye Taking Notes, and, Faith, He'll Print It," *Robesonian*, October 22, 1956, 4.

<sup>223</sup> Penn Gray, "Krowd Keeps Kalm At Klan Konklav."



compliance."<sup>224</sup> The story termed the rally a "show" and a "performance" with stage lights and a sound system, and Gray noted that the "grand klailiff" Cole, dressed in royal purple robes, was flanked by members in full costume "including a woman and a small boy of about nine, tricked out in a miniature robe."<sup>225</sup> Two photos from the rally dominated the top half of the front page. One was a closeup of Cole in his satin hood and robe; the other showed a burning cross with a man and a child wearing matching peaked headpieces and robes, the child staring unsmiling at the camera.<sup>226</sup>

Gray's story, rather than focus on Cole's message about truths "you have not seen in your smear sheets called newspapers,"<sup>227</sup> foregrounded amateurish production details of the rally, and as the newspaper had done in the past, described the Klan's attempted intimidation as a failure. While Cole spoke from the back of his flatbed truck, Gray wrote, "four negroes stood in the very shadow of the still flaming cross, apparently much intrigued with the proceedings."<sup>228</sup> The newspaper's message was paradoxical. On the one hand, the *Robesonian's* above-the-fold placement of the story and pictures suggested a serious news event. At the same time, the satirical tone, beginning with the headline, communicated the opposite. That juxtaposition—prominent placement with marginal treatment—was a deliberate strategy by the *Robesonian*, as evidenced by Gray's editorial page column in the same edition. The city editor wrote that the "hoods and costumes" were for dramatic effect,

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

and he concluded that "the Klan got the publicity it was after,"<sup>229</sup> essentially inviting front-page ridicule. With the newspaper having made its point, a subsequent KKK rally by Cole supported this. Holding another rally in June 1957 at the same spot, Cole blamed poor attendance on a lack of advertising in the *Robesonian*. The event itself received short shrift. A reporter who filed a two-paragraph brief wrote that Cole's address "was composed of hate, Bible, and libel in about equal proportions."<sup>230</sup>

In an editorial published in September 1957, pegged to the Little Rock school integration occurring the same month, the *Robesonian* called its eastern North Carolina county "something of a workshop in racial relations" where people were no longer afraid of the Klan.<sup>231</sup> As evidence, the writer pointed to an incident reported one day earlier in the nearby community of Parkton, where the Klan needed a police escort as protection from nine carloads of African-Americans armed with rifles and shotguns.<sup>232</sup> As the *Robesonian* editorialized: "Instead of terrifying the Negroes, the Klansmen were taunted by them. The hooded figures were hooted at. Seeing the boggy men, the Negroes said, 'Boo.'"<sup>233</sup>

The newspaper's amusement faded a few months later when Cole began to issue, through statewide news agencies, "warnings to Indians in Robeson County against race-mixing

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<sup>229</sup> Penn Gray, "A Chiel's Amang Ye Taking Notes."

<sup>230</sup> "Ignored By Press, Klan Rally Flops," *Robesonian*, June 24, 1957, 1.

<sup>231</sup> "Klan Meets Defiance," *Robesonian*, September 24, 1957, 4.

<sup>232</sup> "Negroes Gather As Klan Meets; Patrol On Job," *Robesonian*, September 23, 1957, 4.

<sup>233</sup> "Klan Meets Defiance."

attempts."<sup>234</sup> On a single night in mid-January 1958, the Klan burned a cross near the homes of two Indian families who had moved to a white Lumberton neighborhood, and also burned a cross in the driveway of a white St. Pauls woman the Klan believed was dating an Indian man.<sup>235</sup> This time, the *Robesonian* cautioned that the threat of violence at an upcoming Klan rally in Maxton was no laughing matter, despite an out-of-town newspaper headline it quoted, "Lumberton Klan Goes On Warpath Against Indians."<sup>236</sup> The word "warpath" was a colorful figure of speech, the *Robesonian* conceded, but "Still, it has a threatening sound and some people are inclined to take statements at face value."<sup>237</sup> The newspaper cautioned that this was unlike the incident at Parkton months earlier, when the Klan "had their feelings hurt" but nothing more. "Indians seldom say 'boo' when they have serious business to attend to," the *Robesonian* editorialized. "And there are indications that many Indians have taken a serious view of so-called 'warnings' from the Klan."<sup>238</sup> Even as the language delegitimized and belittled the "so-called" threat the Klan posed, the Indians were depicted as "serious." The possibility of an armed confrontation at an appointed time and place, now being promoted by the press, guaranteed press coverage. And if the nationally broadcast *Mike Wallace Interview* had been an "embarrassing" episode, what was to take place in a rented

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<sup>234</sup> See, Associated Press, "Lumbee Indians Up In Arms Over KKK," *Burlington (NC) Daily Times-News*, January 17, 1958, 2; United Press, "Klan Faces Indian 'War' After Cross-Burnings," *Washington Post and Times-Herald*, January 17, 1958, 1.

<sup>235</sup> Evans, *To Die Game*, 253.

<sup>236</sup> "Anything May Happen," *Robesonian*, January 17, 1958, 4.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

cornfield outside Maxton, North Carolina, population 1,800, was a worldwide public relations debacle—at least, for the Ku Klux Klan.

### **Lumbees in the National News**

The confrontation at Maxton was a tailor-made for media. On the night of Saturday, January 18, 1958, a crowd estimated at 400 Indians converged on a much-publicized KKK rally, encircling the Klansmen and firing shots in the air and at the tires of parked cars.<sup>239</sup> This caused the group of about fifty klansmen including Cole to flee into the swamps, leaving behind wives, children, sound equipment, and a large white banner with the letters "KKK" sewn in red.<sup>240</sup> Reporters and headline writers used the words "melee" and "riot," but the confrontation ended quickly when law enforcement officers moved in. The clash had "a strange orderliness to it," as one local reporter later wrote, and the outcome a symmetry usually reserved for sporting events. The event started on time, and there was a winning side and a losing side, with uniformed police officiating to prevent serious injuries.<sup>241</sup> There was even an attempt at comic relief: After deputies used tear gas to disperse the crowd, Sheriff Malcolm McLeod announced over a loudspeaker that there was still "time to get home and see *Gunsmoke*,"<sup>242</sup> a humorous allusion to the popularity of TV Westerns.

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<sup>239</sup> Associated Press, "Indians Fire On Klan," *Kansas City Star*, January 19, 1958, 1.

<sup>240</sup> Associated Press, "Ku Kluxers Blamed For NC Dispute," *Baltimore Sun*, January 20, 1958, 1.

<sup>241</sup> Two of the four people treated for minor injuries from buckshot were photographer Bill Shaw and reporter Pat Reese of the *Fayetteville Observer*.

<sup>242</sup> Staff Photo by Norment, "Robeson County Sheriff," *Robesonian*, January 20, 1958, 1. *Gunsmoke*, a Western in which the main character was a sheriff, was the top-rated show in January 1958, according to Arbitron.

Importantly for the press, there was also time to make the Sunday editions. In this case, the story that thrust the Lumbee tribe into the national media limelight leapfrogged ahead of local media, and potentially helped shape local coverage. By a quirk of the publishing cycle, larger newspapers across the state and nation delivered the news to readers on Sunday morning, as much as 36 hours before it appeared in the closest daily, the *Robesonian*, an evening paper with no weekend editions, and several days before the next edition of Maxton's weekly paper, the *Scottish Chief*.<sup>243</sup> Nationwide interest in the story was no quirk, however. For days leading up to the rally, the Associated Press, United Press, and International News Syndicate moved reports that raised expectations of a showdown between klansmen and Indians, and these were prominently published coast to coast. Headlines, both in North Carolina and in out-of-state newspapers around the country, predicted violence: "KKK Meeting May Start Race Riot,"<sup>244</sup> "Klan-Indian Violence Is Feared In Rural North Carolina Area,"<sup>245</sup> "Indians Will Fight If Klan Starts It,"<sup>246</sup> "North Carolina's Indians Threaten Clash With Klan,"<sup>247</sup> "KKK, Indian War Looms."<sup>248</sup> The INS reported that Cole

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<sup>243</sup> Bruce Roberts interview with author. Roberts, former editor of the *Chief* and the paper's sole news staffer, refrained from writing about the rally after the fact, anticipating being called to testify in court against James Cole.

<sup>244</sup> "KKK Meeting May Start Race Riot," *Corpus Christi (TX) Caller-Times*, January 18, 1958, 1.

<sup>245</sup> "Klan-Indian Violence Is Feared In Rural North Carolina Area," *New York Times*, January 17, 1958, 1.

<sup>246</sup> "Indians Will Fight If Klan Starts It," *Gastonia (NC) Gazette*, January 18, 1958, 1.

<sup>247</sup> "North Carolina's Indians Threaten Clash With Klan," *Tucson (AZ) Daily Citizen*, January 17, 1958, 8.

<sup>248</sup> "KKK, Indian War Looms," *News-Journal* (Mansfield, OH), January 17, 1958, 1.

demanded federal protection from the Lumbees.<sup>249</sup> The UP moved a report by its Raleigh correspondent that "normally peaceful Croatans" were preparing to meet the open challenge by the KKK, and that sales of guns and ammunition in the Indian community were "skyrocketing."<sup>250</sup>

The run-up to the confrontation demonstrated Lumbees' facility in using media to cultivate an image of masculinity and restraint, and also to communicate intent back to the Indian community. In a widely circulated AP report, Pembroke Mayor James C. "Sonny" Oxendine confirmed that Lumbee Indians were "stirred up," but advised that observers "consider the source" of the KKK threats: "We feel we are more intelligent than that," Oxendine told the AP, "and we feel that the people of North Carolina are behind us."<sup>251</sup> This isolated the Klan as outsiders, and cast Indians as proxies for North Carolinians. Further identifying Lumbees with mainstream society, the mayor's son, Simeon Oxendine, argued that whites and Lumbees had long intermarried and belonged to the same churches, attended school together, and joined the same Boy Scout troops.<sup>252</sup> But moderation had its limits. The mayor predicted no trouble "unless [Klansmen] insult somebody in their speechmaking," observing that there were 30,000 Indians in the county and an estimated ten Klansmen.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> International News Syndicate, "Klan Leader Wants Ike's Protection Against Indians," *Atlanta Daily World*, January 19, 1958, 2.

<sup>250</sup> Erv Parkins, "Klan Rally Doubtful; Maxton Indians Arming," *Raleigh (NC) Times*, January 17, 1958, 1.

<sup>251</sup> Associated Press, "Wary Indians Plan To Attend KKK Rally Tonight At Pembroke," *Burlington (NC) Daily Times-News*, January 18, 1958, 1.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

Journalists' privileging of civil officials like the Pembroke mayor, who owned a gas station, café, and movie theater in town,<sup>254</sup> was standard practice. But the increasing role the mayor's son Simeon played as community spokesman suggests the evolving relationship Lumbees had with white media in the Cold War era, and is important because of the function the younger Oxendine performed in mobilizing Lumbees in a show of power. Just as the Klan used newspapers to telegraph threats<sup>255</sup> and also suggest expanded police protection,<sup>256</sup> Indians used the same forum to communicate solidarity. A story before the rally which included comments from white civic sources, law enforcement, and both Mayor Oxendine and his son question whether the Klan would proceed with the rally, and concluded that there would be a "large crowd" waiting for the Klan:

The Indians, reportedly targets of two cross burnings earlier this week, were said to be planning to attend the rally near Pembroke in large numbers—possibly to break it up by force.<sup>257</sup>

Lumbee agency in media did not materialize overnight. Indians had long used the *Robesonian* as a forum for political advocacy and debate,<sup>258</sup> and the newspaper by the 1940s privileged Native American perspectives on tribal recognition, land and Indian education

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<sup>254</sup> Interview with Jesse Oxendine.

<sup>255</sup> *State v. Cole*, 249 N.C. 733, 735 (N.C. 1959). The editor of the *Scottish Chief* and the *Lumberton Post* testified that in the week before the rally, Cole sent a klansman to the newspaper office to invite the media organization to witness and report on the cross burnings.

<sup>256</sup> See, "Wary Indians Plan To Attend KKK Rally Tonight At Pembroke," *Burlington (NC) Times-News*, January 18, 1958, 1. The story quoted Cole as comparing the Maxton situation to the deploying of troops at Little Rock, Arkansas: "If Ike had the right to call out troops for nine burly-heads, I see no reason why he can't do the same for us at Maxton."

<sup>257</sup> "Question Is Whether Klan Will Meet," *Robesonian*, January 17, 1958, 1.

<sup>258</sup> See, for example, Ralph Brooks, letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, April 28, 1948, 4; "Indian Name Bill Hearing Attended By Both Factions," *Robesonian*, April 12, 1951, 1.

issues.<sup>259</sup> Particularly with World War II mobilization, a dominant, protracted development which affected all three races, Lumbees were represented as part of a story that was not an Indian issue per se. Simeon Oxendine's status as a war hero was a prime example.

All four Oxendine sons were in combat in World War II, emblematic of the heavy involvement of Robeson County in the war,<sup>260</sup> but the most decorated and publicized was Simeon, a B-17 rear waist-gunner in the famous 303rd "Hell's Angels" Bomb Group.<sup>261</sup> During the war, the community followed his progress overseas via the *Robesonian*. When the newspaper published a photo in 1942 of American GIs in England throwing a Christmas party for British children, Simeon played Santa Claus.<sup>262</sup> His photo appeared again in 1944, this time in his airman's gear and white scarf, when at age 24 he received a Distinguished Flying Cross after flying 30 bombing missions over Europe, including the costly Schweinfurt raid.<sup>263</sup> After the war, Simeon's civilian stature—and frequent mentions in the *Robesonian*—grew through his involvement as a youth baseball coach, an assistant fire chief, member of the school committee, and district commander of the VFW.<sup>264</sup> Thus, reporters sought him out as a source, endowing him with authority in the days leading up to the rally, and interviewing him as an eyewitness to the rally and a spokesman in the aftermath. Another Lumbee who

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid. Three of the Oxendines were staff sergeants, and a fourth was with an 82nd Airborne unit that liberated a Nazi death camp.

<sup>261</sup> Crew list, 303rd BG (H) Combat Mission Reports, 303rdbg.com/missionreports.

<sup>262</sup> Central Press, "Yanks Play Santa Claus to British Children," *Robesonian*, December 18, 1942, 4.

<sup>263</sup> "S. Sgt. Simeon Oxendine Completes 30 Bombing Missions Over Europe," *Robesonian*, May 18, 1944, 6.

<sup>264</sup> Penn Gray, "A Chiel's Amang Ye Taking Notes," *Robesonian*, March 26, 1958, 4.



was a decorated veteran,<sup>265</sup> radio broadcaster and musical performer, Lew Barton, was an established contributing columnist in the *Robesonian* after World War II, and gathered news from the Indian community.<sup>266</sup> When the Klan routing occurred, Barton was therefore positioned as an ombudsman and a recognized name in the community, publishing a series of lengthy commentaries played prominently on the *Robesonian's* editorial page.<sup>267</sup>

Klan leader Cole, in contrast, was treated as an interloper who had no connection to the community he sought to activate. The stark difference between how Cole and members of the Lumbee community navigated mass media in the aftermath of the event highlights the extent to which Lumbee leaders shaped media representation. For Cole, the most devastating national profile came in the *Washington Post and Times-Herald*, after a reporter visited his home in South Carolina and filed a story under the headline, "Klan Boss, Former Carnival Worker, Frowned On in Carolina Hometown."<sup>268</sup> The story, which detailed Cole's record of drunken driving and assault, and appeared to question his war record and his ordained status as a minister, was a primer in rural stereotypes. Cole had preached in a tent "until it fell down," and what he now called his "church," a term the writer placed in quotation marks as a disclaimer, was "a room in an abandoned service station," described in minute detail, down

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<sup>265</sup> "Lew Barton Has Five Decorations," *Robesonian*, November 30, 1945, 5.

<sup>266</sup> Lew Barton, "Pembroke Review of News Events," *Robesonian*, March 5, 1948, 6. Barton frequently wrote for the community columns in the daily paper, including a series, "Meet the Robeson County Indian" and a regular column in the 1940s and 1950s.

<sup>267</sup> See Lew Barton letters to the editor, *Robesonian*, January 20, 1958, 4; *Robesonian*, January 30, 1958, 4; *Robesonian*, February 3, 1958, 4; *Robesonian*, February 20, 1958, 4.

<sup>268</sup> Aubrey Graves, "Klan Boss, Former Carnival Worker, Frowned On in Carolina Hometown," *Washington Post and Times-Herald*, January 27, 1958, A3

to the dirty dishes in the sink.<sup>269</sup> The material, gathered mostly from a press conference with Cole, was featured in other newspapers including the *Charlotte Observer*, which pointed out that Cole had a "ninth-grade education," and also incorporated Cole's carnival resume into the headline.<sup>270</sup> The *Post* writer checked in with the editor of Cole's hometown *Marion Star*, who disowned Cole. People in Marion were ashamed of Cole and laughed at him, the editor said, and the only time Cole's name appeared in the *Star* was when he placed ads for patent medicines.<sup>271</sup> Cole nevertheless produced a thick file of out-of-town news clippings for the visiting reporter, and proudly relayed that after years when "nobody paid attention to me," he now received phone calls from TV and radio stations "from everywhere." The story indicated that Cole was oblivious to the reporters' intent: "I don't care what you write, boys," he said. "Just be sure you write it."<sup>272</sup>

But not all publicity was good publicity for Cole,<sup>273</sup> and his history of legal and financial problems did not escape the glare of attention.<sup>274</sup> Media accounts portrayed him as indecisive and cowardly in the critical moments before the rally, when the sheriff advised him that violence was likely if he did not desist. The *Raleigh News and Observer* described Cole's reaction to the sheriff's warning:

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Kays Gary, "This Is Cole—Klan Wizard Minister, Ex-Carnival Man," *Charlotte Observer*, January 23, 1958, 1.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Julian Morrison, "Cole's Wizardry Pulls No Crowds," *Robesonian*, February 24, 1958, 1.

<sup>274</sup> "Troubles Pursue Home-Bound Cole," *Robesonian*, March 17, 1958, 1.

His fuzzy-bearded face appeared livid with fear. He swallowed, his thin neck muscles working. "I want to get my wife and babies out . . . somebody's going for them . . . My little babies," he said.<sup>275</sup>

A salient detail in later retellings, and one that noticeably echoes tales of the Lowry era, is that Cole fled the field without getting his "wife and babies out." This suggested that the klansman not only deserted his compatriots, but his own children. A variation of this story that served to contrast Lumbee valor to Klan cowardice was that Klan leader's wife, Carolyn Cole, had panicked and gotten the family's car stuck in a rut, and a group of Lumbees helped push the car free.<sup>276</sup> There are indications that this was apocryphal,<sup>277</sup> which makes the variations revealing of how fluid events are refitted to the narrative mold. Lumbees, in this case specifically Lumbee men, were sporting and neighborly even in the midst of conflict. Like Henry Berry Lowry, the ideal Lumbee man's way was not to frighten or insult women—not even women whose husbands insulted Lumbees. In every aspect, Lumbees wore the white hats, and material that did not fit the narrative was downplayed or discarded in commemorative retellings, for example in the *Robesonian*<sup>278</sup> and the *Fayetteville*

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<sup>275</sup> Charles Craven, "One Klansman to Face Charges; Minister Slated For Indictment," *Raleigh (NC) News and Observer*, January 20, 1958, 1.

<sup>276</sup> See, Chick Jacobs and Venita Jenkins, "The Night the Klan Met its Match," *Fayetteville (NC) Observer*, January 18, 2008, 1; From the Editor's Desk, "Away With the KKK," *Robesonian*, January 18, 2008, 4.

<sup>277</sup> See, Jay Jenkins, "Death Prowled a Bleak Field," *Charlotte Observer*, January 20, 1958, 1; Charles Craven, "The Night the Klan Died in North Carolina," *True*, March 1975, 64. The *News and Observer* reporter recalled a woman running across the field with three children, "practically dragging" the youngest. Meanwhile, a group of Lumbees had "pretended" in jest to push the car out of the mud.

<sup>278</sup> Mark Locklear, "Lumbees Celebrate Routing of the KKK—Friday Marks the 50th Anniversary," *Robesonian*, January 17, 2008, 1.

*Observer*.<sup>279</sup> Likewise, another evolving detail that echoed the Lowry era was the introduction of a Lumbee marksman who expertly shot out the single light bulb over the microphone at the Klan rally and plunged the scene into darkness. Some initial newspaper reports of the moment had less flourish, recounting that in the close scuffle, an Indian had smashed the light bulb with the butt of a shotgun,<sup>280</sup> a sequence that matches published news photos.<sup>281</sup> The introduction by *Newsweek* magazine of a "sharpshooter"<sup>282</sup> followed the contours of the Robin Hood template, and recalled Lowry's daring stand at Wire Grass Landing. *Time* magazine's physical description of the unnamed rifleman was reminiscent of Lowry, and implied that the youth led the Indians:

A tall Indian youth walked closer; raised his rifle, calmly drew a bead on the light bulb, and bam—out it went. Suddenly the band galloped toward the huddled Klansmen, yelling old war cries, firing into the dark night and at auto tires.<sup>283</sup>

A more substantive example of media's revisionist tendency was a statement by Simeon Oxendine that might have complicated the story and was accordingly edited out of a broadcast report. A TV reporter with NBC's *Today* said he deleted a provocative comment by an emotional Oxendine in an interview immediately after the rally, because it did not relate

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<sup>279</sup> Pat Reese, "The Night Lumbees, KKK Clashed," *Fayetteville (NC) Observer*, January 17, 1998, 1.

<sup>280</sup> See, for example, *Gastonia (NC) Gazette*, January 20, 1958, 1.

<sup>281</sup> See, *Florence (SC) Morning News*, January 20, 1958, 6. Contradicting later accounts, which described a William Tell-like shot over the hooded Cole's head as he was about to speak, photos from the scene showed Lumbees surrounded an unidentified man in plain clothes hold the light bulb on a pole.

<sup>282</sup> "North Carolina: Indian Raid," *Newsweek*, January 27, 1958, 27.

<sup>283</sup> "Indians: The Natives Are Restless," *Time*, January 27, 1958, 20.

directly to the story and "was bound to have violent repercussions."<sup>284</sup> It was unclear what the TV reporter deleted; however, in a published AP account, Oxendine was quoted as having said after the rally, "the Negroes should have done something about this" after a Lumberton KKK rally, and that if the Klan came back to the Indian community, there would be "bloodshed."<sup>285</sup> In the meantime, there was little attention and no editorial comment on a report that unidentified gunmen who said they were "looking for Klan members" after the rally accosted and fired on a vehicle full of news reporters.<sup>286</sup> In a similar vein, editorials that did comment on the minor gunshot wounds journalists sustained during the rally blamed the Klan by implication, even though there was no evidence offered as to who fired the shots.<sup>287</sup>

For the most part, Lumbees' words to the media were carefully chosen, and the media presented them in a uniformly sympathetic light. After the Klan routing received national attention, reporters asked Simeon Oxendine about KKK leader Cole's claim that he would hold a subsequent gathering of 5,000 Klansmen who would vastly outnumber Indians and be

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<sup>284</sup> Joe Michaels, "News Reporting by Pictures," *College Composition and Communication* 9, no. 4 (December 1958): 230.

<sup>285</sup> See, "Indians Rout Klan; Court Action Looms," *Burlington (NC) Daily Times-News*, January 20, 1958, 1; "Klobbered Klan," *News & Observer*, April 19, 1964, 1, quoted in Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 138. Tyson argued that Lumbees were unaware of black armed resistance to the Klan because white media did not report such activity. However, the *Robesonian* had reported and editorialized on several confrontations in the Carolinas, including in Union County, where Rev. Williams headed the NAACP. See, for example, "Monroe Negro Wires Ike That Cops Cover Up KKK," *Robesonian*, October 7, 1957, 1; "Klan Meets Defiance," *Robesonian*, September 24, 1957, 4; "Negroes Gather As Klan Meets; Patrol On Job," *Robesonian* September 23, 1957, 4.

<sup>286</sup> United Press, "Gunmen Pepper Newsman's Car," *Charlotte Observer*, January 20, 1958, 1.

<sup>287</sup> Pat Reese, "Observer Man Hit In Wild Firing Melee," *Fayetteville (NC) Observer*, January 19, 1958, 1.

"the greatest rally the Klan has had."<sup>288</sup> Oxendine listened in silence, according to the report, then gave a guarded response: "He said that, did he? Well, we'll just wait and see."<sup>289</sup> Invited to appear on the nationally broadcast show, the *Tex and Jinx Show*, Oxendine drove to New York City with his father and several other Lumbee elders, an appearance notable enough that the Lumbees gave the *Robesonian* advance notice so that the newspaper could run a standalone photo of the party setting out.<sup>290</sup> To advance the Maxton story in the meantime, local, state, and national publications prepared background stories on who the Lumbees were. The first AP report on the routing had included only two paragraphs of background on the tribe and how it took its name, but by the following day, the newswire moved a sidebar that went into greater depth about the history of Indians and the US Census, the distinction between Lumbees and the smaller, independent community known as the Smiling Indians,<sup>291</sup> and the student racial makeup of local schools.<sup>292</sup>

Lumbee leaders were portrayed as expressing "no rancor" toward the Klan, as AP writer Bob Willis saw it,<sup>293</sup> and maintained an ironic, composed stance toward anti-Indian Klan

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<sup>288</sup> "Cole Plans Another Rally With Indians Outnumbered," *Robesonian*, January 27, 1958. 1.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Staff Photo by Norment, "Five Pembroke Citizens," *Robesonian*, January 23, 1958, 1; "Oxendine and Son Complete TV Tour," *Robesonian*, January 27, 1958, 4.

<sup>291</sup> See, Blu, *The Lumbee Problem*, 21. According to Blu, the Smilings (so called for a family name) moved to Robeson County in the early twentieth century from Sumter, South Carolina. They refused to send their children to black schools, and in the 1950s, their Independent Indians' school merged with Lumbee schools.

<sup>292</sup> "Proud Tribe: 30,000 Lumbees Live in Robeson," *Florence (SC) Morning News*, January 20, 1958, 6.

<sup>293</sup> Robert A. Willis, "Indian Proudly Shows His Klan Trophy."

activity as it was summed up in the *Sun* cartoon title, "Why Don't You Go Back Where You Come From!"<sup>294</sup> Because the Klan's anti-Indian rally had been a performance, and a show of force that backfired, exalting the victory would have been overkill, and would have contradicted the narrative of a peaceful Indian community preyed on a redneck outsider from South Carolina. Related to this sympathetic narrative was the phenomenon of participation by journalists, a pattern repeated from the Lowry era, and one which would repeat itself in decades subsequent to the 1950s. In the abstract, journalists were seen as neutral parties, to the extent that four of them were called as the state's key witnesses in the later trial of "Catfish" Cole.<sup>295</sup>

But in a more concrete sense, journalists were part of the Maxton story, just as the *New York Herald* correspondent had been part of the story 76 years earlier. The Klan blamed the *Scottish Chief* for failing to prevent the showdown and for inflammatory stories about Indians stocking up on firearms,<sup>296</sup> and on the night of the rally, a United Press car carrying a group of journalists was stopped and searched three times by groups of armed men, and at one stop the armed men blew the car's tires out with shotguns.<sup>297</sup> Three of the people injured at the rally were journalists from different news organizations, resulting in reporters filing

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<sup>294</sup> "Why Don't You Go Back Where You Come From!," *Robesonian*.

<sup>295</sup> In addition to Roberts, other journalists who testified included Charles Craven of the *News & Observer*, Bill Shaw of the *Fayetteville Observer*, and Paul Nathan, a Chapel Hill radio reporter.

<sup>296</sup> "Was Editor Scapegoat of Battle?," *Charlotte Observer*, January 20, 1958, 4. Roberts testified at Cole's trial that he had not written any of the stories at issue.

<sup>297</sup> United Press, "Gunmen Pepper Newsman's Car," *Charlotte Observer*, January 20, 1958, 1.

stories about themselves<sup>298</sup> and becoming the subject of editorials.<sup>299</sup> Newspapers also promoted the performance of the AP Photofax service, which had moved photographs until 2 a.m. after the rally, where, in the words of one caption writer, photographers "risked their necks to shoot scenes amid the fiery flurry."<sup>300</sup> A further circumstance that cemented the division between heroes and villains was the identity of the fourth person injured: a member of the 82nd Airborne, a Lakota Sioux stationed at Fort Bragg. So not only had the Klan been in a battle with the media and members of the VFW; the melee had caused a casualty to a soldier in the US Army who was a Native American.

As these details trickled out over the days that followed the Saturday night fracas, the story stayed in the news and out-of-town reporters continued to travel to Maxton. For example, even as a blizzard hit the Midwest,<sup>301</sup> the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* flew a veteran reporter on the rewrite desk in the newspaper's private plane to obtain a Sunday feature. As the reporter, Carl Baldwin, told local journalists, "It's the story of the year."<sup>302</sup> Local media meanwhile showed acute awareness of how national media played the story. Three days after publishing its own coverage, the *Robesonian* published reprints of the *Newsweek* and *Time*

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<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Editorial, *Fayetteville (NC) Observer*, January 21, 1958, 6.

<sup>300</sup> "AP Photofax Busy Sending Coverage," *Florence (SC) Morning News*, January 20, 1958, 6.

<sup>301</sup> Associated Press, "Blizzard Stuns Midwest With Huge Snow Drifts," *Florence (South Carolina) Morning News*, January 22, 1958, 1.

<sup>302</sup> "Reporter Flies Here in 'Heap Big Hurry,'" *Florence (SC) Morning News*, January 22, 1958, 1. Although the rally was the top story as of January 1958, it did not make it into the year's top ten by the following December.



articles on the rally,<sup>303</sup> along with a *Baltimore Sun* cartoon depicting a buck-toothed anti-Indian klansman with a jug of moonshine and the note, "shoes optional."<sup>304</sup> Klansmen were not the only target. An editorial in the *New York Herald Tribune* held up for ridicule the system of three-way segregation in Robeson County, where "all the essential ludicrousness of discrimination seems to reach its absurd epitome."<sup>305</sup> Closer to home, the *Charlotte Observer* went a step further, pointing out that Robeson's racial picture was "unique in the South" because it was, in fact, *four-way* segregation. The small tribe of Smilings, who were not recognized by Lumbees, were barred entry to either Indian or white schools, and refused to attend black schools.<sup>306</sup> An editorial in the *Robesonian* acknowledged the "sting" of the description in *Time* of "backward Robeson County with its three-way segregation in schools."<sup>307</sup> But the newspaper argued that compared to school integration disturbances in Little Rock and even nearby Charlotte, outsiders might look favorably on a community "where even a riot can be conducted cheerfully" by Indians who made their point but also "had a good time at the expense of the klan."<sup>308</sup> Seeking to draw a contrast to black-white racial strife, the *Robesonian*, like state and national media, portrayed the Maxton rally as a less menacing confrontation in which the Indians' weapons were not guns, as a cartoon

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<sup>303</sup> "Two Magazine Versions of Indian Action Against Klan," *Robesonian*, January 23, 1958, 8.

<sup>304</sup> "Why Don't You Go Back Where You Come From!," *Robesonian*, January 23, 1958, 4.

<sup>305</sup> "Lo the Poor Indian!" *New York Herald Tribune*, January 21, 1958, 20.

<sup>306</sup> Clyde Osborne, "Robeson Race Issue Is Unique," *Charlotte Observer*, January 20, 1958, 1.

<sup>307</sup> "Cheerful Clash," *Robesonian*, January 22, 1958, 4.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*

reprinted on page one of the *Robesonian* implied, but a toy arrow shot in the posterior of a fleeing Klansman.<sup>309</sup> Again, the emphasis was on performance. As the *Greensboro Daily News* chimed in, the Indians defeated the Klan with "the cleansing power of laughter."<sup>310</sup> Distinguishing the Maxton scenario from escalating racial tension, the editorial concluded, "What the descendants of slaves could not do in a climate still conditioned by the hand of history, the Indians could do—and did."<sup>311</sup> Newspapers outside the South were not so intent on drawing a line between black and Indian resistance to what an Ohio editorialist called "strong-arming by southern suppressives."

The bully never fights on even terms. And that is why so many people who find little in the ordinary run of the news to cheer about felt like cheering because some mid-20th-century Americans of mixed ancestry fired a few more shots that deserve to be heard 'round the world.<sup>312</sup>

Yet there were limits to resistance, and to the magnanimity of the press. A case in point was the misreporting of one of the cross-burnings that led up to the Maxton rally. It was widely reported that the Klan was reacting to an Indian woman who was involved with a white man.<sup>313</sup> In fact, it was the reverse: The Klan's warning was to a white woman in St. Pauls

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<sup>309</sup> Hugh Haynie, "Point of No Return," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, reprinted in *Robesonian*, January 22, 1958, 1.

<sup>310</sup> "The Power of Laughter," *Greensboro (NC) Daily News*, reprinted in *Robesonian*, January 21, 1958, 4.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>312</sup> "More Shots Heard 'Round the World," *Evening Review* (East Liverpool, Ohio), January 21, 1958, 4.

<sup>313</sup> See, for example, "Lumbee Tribe Wanting Peace," *Gastonia (NC) Gazette*, January 18, 1958, 7.

who purportedly had a relationship with an Indian man.<sup>314</sup> The reversal of the details was persistent, and speaks to what was acceptable to white society. As Vine DeLoria Jr. termed the "Indian-grandmother complex," whites who routinely boasted of "Indian blood" uniformly claimed an Indian grandmother, but never an Indian grandfather, because the former would not "dominate the family tree."<sup>315</sup> Some narratives were sacrosanct.

### **The Ironic National Metaphor of the West**

When Sheriff Malcolm McLeod offered up for jailhouse interviews the lone prisoner he took from the Klan rally, the sheriff reprised the joke he made the night he dispersed the crowd at Maxton Field.<sup>316</sup> As reporters took notes, McLeod told jailed klansman James Martin, "You fellows made me miss *Gunsmoke*."<sup>317</sup> The quip was self-deprecating on the part of a popular career lawman,<sup>318</sup> and also acknowledged the cultural ritual mass media provided. The joking suggestion was that the adventures of TV's Sheriff Matt Dillon were more essential (or at least more interesting) than the actual duties of a county sheriff. But it was also a comment on the chronic dissonance of the Maxton situation. Gunfights belonged to a colorful past commemorated in the leisure of the family living room on Saturday night.

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<sup>314</sup> See, Evans, *To Die Game*, 253-254; Neal Shirley and Saralee Stafford, *Dixie Be Damned: 300 Years of Insurrection in the American South* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2015) 89-118.

<sup>315</sup> Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (New York: MacMillan, 1969), 3-4.

<sup>316</sup> Staff Photo by Norment, "Robeson County Sheriff," *Robesonian*, January 20, 1958, 1.

<sup>317</sup> Ken Clark, "Klansman Is Irked At KKK After Pals Deserted Him," *Charlotte (NC) Observer*, January 21, 1958, 2.

<sup>318</sup> McLeod, the son of the Lumberton police chief and nephew of the previous sheriff, served for 28 years.

The Klan's reenactment was a misreading that was out of place and out of sync, an unwelcome disruption of cultural routines.

The joke escaped the klansman. He replied, "I don't think Matt Dillon would have had a chance out in that field,"<sup>319</sup> choosing to identify with the peace officer rather than be cast as an unruly, gun-toting perpetrator who disturbed the peace in Dodge City. Like the cowboy-and-Indian vocabulary that permeated the Maxton coverage, the repeated *Gunsmoke* references reflected a shared male iconography of the 1950s. Westerns were far and away the dominant genre in post-war American mass entertainment, evidenced in the frequency and popularity of Western movies in the post-war,<sup>320</sup> the prevalence of TV westerns in the late 1950s,<sup>321</sup> and the popularity of imagery such as a 1949 *Life* magazine cover of a rugged Texas cowboy, hand-rolled cigarette clenched in his lips.<sup>322</sup> Memory of the Wild West, more than what cinema historian Stanley Corkin termed "a proving ground for masculine fitness," was an escape from the anxiety and complexity of the Cold War, and resonated as a triumphant moment of nation-building.<sup>323</sup> The annexing of the frontier was a site of

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> See, Tom Foley, "Examining the Mythic Past: 1950s Westerns and Interdisciplinary Interpretation," *Concept* no. 36 (2013). From 1946-1958, traditional and "B" Westerns accounted for 30 percent of theatrical releases.

<sup>321</sup> "The Top Ten," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 29, 1958, 4. According to Arbitron, six of the top ten TV shows belonged to the genre: *Gunsmoke*, *Wells Fargo*, *Wyatt Earp*, *Have Gun Will Travel*, *Restless Gun*, and *Wagon Train*, and on Saturday nights alone, the airwaves were crowded with numerous other western series such as *Kit Carson*, *Western Marshall*, *Range Rider*, *Annie Oakley*, *Rin Tin Tin*, and *Death Valley Days*.

<sup>322</sup> Leonard McCombe, "Texas Cowboy," *Life*, September 12, 1949, 1.

<sup>323</sup> Stanley Corkin, "Cowboys and Free Markets: Post-World War II Westerns and US Hegemony," *Cinema Journal* 39, no. 3 (Spring 2000): 66-91.

"conquest and consequences," as Patricia Limerick wrote, and gave historical context to US imperialism abroad.<sup>324</sup> But if telling how the West was "won" served as the template for reproducing ideology, what was the implication of persistence by Indians, particularly by a tribe of 30,000 Indians on the East Coast?

What soon surfaced in the Maxton coverage was the inherent problem in the ideology, and a creeping awareness that American racism undermined US claims of exceptionalism. This was the paradox Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal brought to the fore during World War II.<sup>325</sup> American reporters sent to Maxton encountered journalists from the Soviet news agency Tass. And just as southern editors were sensitive to the impressions of their northern peers, US editors were sensitive to how Tass perceived the event. Thus, some gave Soviet media portrayals of Maxton front-page, above-the-fold treatment.<sup>326</sup> No longer was race exclusively a southern problem: Americans as a group were now being Othered. Maxton was more than a battleground for Indians and klansmen, it was also a field for waging propaganda.

Although Tass erroneously reported that Indians made up two-thirds of the population in Robeson County,<sup>327</sup> the report on the Soviet newswire and Radio Moscow veered little from American accounts. Tass noted that segregation required a separate school system for each

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<sup>324</sup> Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: Norton & Sons, 1987), 20-23.

<sup>325</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper Bros., 1944).

<sup>326</sup> Associated Press, "Tass Version," *Raleigh (NC) News and Observer*, January 20, 1958, 1.

<sup>327</sup> "Ku Klux Klan On Warpath, Russians Told," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 20, 1958, 19.

race in Robeson County, and that "peace loving" people were forced to defend themselves.<sup>328</sup> The choice of words in how the AP summarized Tass sought to delegitimize the news service dispatch, pointing out that Tass "rounded up what it called new racial outbreaks in Little Rock, Arkansas, North Carolina and elsewhere in the United States."<sup>329</sup> The wording by the AP suggested that *calling* these incidents "racial outbreaks" was inaccurate, and that attempting to connect them in a news roundup was misanalysis.<sup>330</sup> Yet American news organizations essentially treated them the same way. Even though US newspapers were in closer proximity to racial unrest in the South and in a better position to differentiate between Little Rock and Maxton, wire editors tended to publish the continuing stories side by side,<sup>331</sup> suggesting that they were contiguous on the national scene. If neither the details nor the context of Tass's accounts were in dispute, that left US media to disprove the interpretation. The move was to invert the narrative, so that Maxton fulfilled the needs of the media. When mainstream news organizations applauded Indians as heroes, this undermined the claim that Americans were racist.

For domestic observers, the media's heavy dependence on Wild West motifs invited irony. In a letter to the editor of *Life* magazine about the Lumbees' routing of the Klan, Hollywood screen and stage actor Thayer Roberts wrote,

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<sup>328</sup> "Tass Version."

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> See, for example, Woodrow Wilson Mann, "The Truth About Little Rock," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 20, 1958, 2; "Klansmen Face Arrest," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 20, 1958, 2; "Two Klansmen Are Indicted On Charge of Inciting Riot," *Raleigh (NC) News and Observer*, January 21, 1958, 1; "Stick of Dynamite Found In Locker at Little Rock," *Raleigh (NC) News and Observer*, January 21, 1958, 1.

In a wonderful reversal of the usual Hollywood picture plot it was the redskins coming to the rescue in wild and backward Maxton, N.C. We should give the country back to those hardy Indians. They were running it very well when we arrived.<sup>332</sup>

Similarly, a *New York Herald Tribune* columnist and national TV host observed that the Maxton incident reversed the usual frontier plotline, and suggested that television scripts might now need revision, along with government policy:

I wonder how this front-page victory will affect the Indians in Hollywood who haven't won a television battle since the first redskin bit the dust on a living room screen? Will the Injun extras demand the right to okeh scripts? . . . To win seven out of every cycle of thirteen episodes? . . . To integrate and marry the delicate blonde wife of Guntown's crooked sheriff? Yep, those North Carolina braves sure gave us plenty to think about. . . . the politicians as well as the teevee producers.<sup>333</sup>

The columnist, Hy Gardner, appeared the following week with Lumbee leader Simeon Oxendine on the *Tex and Jinx Show*, when a delegation of Lumbees visited New York City. The producer who booked the show recalled Oxendine's visual appearance, saying that he "looked like he came off a box of Wheaties."<sup>334</sup> Here was the same preoccupation with physical description as nineteenth-century journalists had shown toward Henry Berry Lowry, but with different results. As if by reversal processing in the darkroom, media now developed an image of Lumbee men as being everything Ku Klux Klansmen were not. Where Catfish Cole was portrayed as a bearded, thin, former carnival worker with a questionable military history, Simeon Oxendine was cast as a clean-cut former gridiron star who was an assistant

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<sup>332</sup> Thayer Roberts, "Letters to the Editors," *Life*, February 17, 1958, 18.

<sup>333</sup> "Hy Gardner Calling," *New York Herald Tribune*, January 21, 1958, 17.

<sup>334</sup> Barry Farber, "John Stossel and My Pleasure Jolts," *WND Commentary*, March 30, 2011. [www.wnd.com/2011/03/281009](http://www.wnd.com/2011/03/281009). Wheaties cereal boxes featured photos of celebrated athletes.

fire chief and a war hero. Where Cole was described as having a ninth-grade education<sup>335</sup> and as looking "like a pleased little boy" when reporters wrote down what he said,<sup>336</sup> Lumbees were depicted as the opposite. Pembroke Mayor Oxendine was portrayed as "a cultured and intelligent gentleman" calmly fielding calls from New York City newspapers and reassuring the British Broadcasting Company that journalists should ignore "false rumors."<sup>337</sup> Visually, there was no confusion as to which side won the media skirmish in the Battle of Hayes Pond. But how had Indians gained the narrative high ground, and who was the audience they were addressing?

### **Analysis of *Life* Images**

Along with the inherent newsworthiness of Indians turning the tables on the KKK, a headline that all but wrote itself, what gave the story extraordinary appeal was this visual aspect. There were numerous action photos of the scuffle in the cornfield, although they required captions to explain who was who. The prints were harshly lit, and apart from one klansman wearing a robe and two Indians wearing toy war bonnets,<sup>338</sup> there were no obvious markings to differentiate the two sides. The exception was a large white KKK banner that Indians tore from a klan car and paraded around the field. An "ecstatic" AP photographer

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<sup>335</sup> Kays Gary, "This Is Cole—Klan Wizard Minister, Ex-Carnival Man," *Charlotte Observer*, January 23, 1958, 1.

<sup>336</sup> Charles Craven, "The Night the Klan Died in North Carolina," *True*, March 1975, 64.

<sup>337</sup> Jay Jenkins, "'Uprising' Bothers All But Indians," *Charlotte Observer*, January 19, 1958, 1.

<sup>338</sup> See, Pat Reese, "Observer Man Hit In Wild Firing Melee," *Fayetteville (NC) Observer*, January 19, 1958, 1; Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 348.



shot pictures of several Indian youths, exhorting them to "hold that banner higher."<sup>339</sup> Under the circumstances, the AP photos by Rudy Faircloth were poorly lit and unclear, receiving only temporary play. But a day later, newspapers around the country ran with a clear, well-composed image shot in a photography studio showing two Lumbees celebrating with the captured KKK flag. The photo, which later ran as a full page in *Life*, encapsulated the story, needing little explanation. Significantly, the photo was taken neither at the site of the rally nor at a post-rally celebration in Pembroke.

What became the most famous image in the history of the Lumbee tribe was in fact a stroke of luck for a graveyard shift photographer working in a newsroom 100 miles away in Charlotte. But it did not occur by accident. On the night of the Klan rally, Simeon Oxendine and fellow Lumbee Charlie Warriax had taken time out from a Charlotte VFW convention to travel to Maxton and take part in the demonstration.<sup>340</sup> Hours later, the VFW members returned to the Charlotte convention and celebrated the victory, Simeon waving the captured KKK flag and proclaiming, "This Ku Klux Klan banner is mine. And I'm going to walk into the lobby of the Charlotte Hotel wearing it like a scarf."<sup>341</sup> Shortly after midnight, Oxendine, Warriax, and Oxendine's brother Jesse<sup>342</sup> walked triumphantly into the offices of the

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<sup>339</sup> Charles Craven, "The Night the Klan Died in North Carolina," *True*, March 1975, 64. Craven covered the rally for the *Raleigh (NC) News and Observer*.

<sup>340</sup> Interview with Jesse Oxendine by Jeffrey T. Williams, J. Murrey Atkins Library, UNC-Charlotte, April 19, 1995, Item NAOX0025.

<sup>341</sup> Robert A. Willis, "Indian Proudly Shows His Klan Trophy," *Florence (SC) Morning News*, January 20, 1958, 1.

<sup>342</sup> Interview with Jesse Oxendine.

*Charlotte Observer* carrying the banner.<sup>343</sup> There, Warriax and Oxendine sat for an interview with the lone night-side reporter, and a studio session with the only *Observer* photographer not assigned to cover the rally, Maurie Rosen.<sup>344</sup> One photo showed Warriax and Simeon, both dressed in coats and ties, standing and smiling as they held up the large banner. But for the more famous photo that ran nationally, Jesse Oxendine recalled that photographer Rosen had the men sit with their backs to the camera and the KKK flag draped around their shoulders "like an Indian blanket."<sup>345</sup> Jesse declined to be in the photo because, he recalled, he had missed the Maxton rally and did not want to "take credit."<sup>346</sup>

By the Monday after the Saturday night rally, Rosen's photo had been sent out over the AP wire and appeared prominently in other newspapers. In an interview with an AP reporter based in Charlotte, Simeon Oxendine pronounced the Klan "finished" in Robeson County, and remarked, "I told the boys to take it easy. Slap 'em around a little, if you have to, I told them, but don't hurt 'em."<sup>347</sup> Oxendine spoke in baseball terms, comparing Pembroke's excitement over the routing to Brooklyn "after the Dodgers won the first pennant."<sup>348</sup> This

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<sup>343</sup> Jim Batten, "'Klansmen Were Begging' To Let Them Out Of There," *Charlotte Observer*, January 20, 1958, 1. Batten, the future CEO of Knight-Ridder, was in 1958 a cub reporter at the *Observer*.

<sup>344</sup> *Observer* Photo-Rosen, "Klan Scalpers," *Charlotte Observer*, January 20, 1958, 1; Author interview with Bruce Roberts, former editor, *Maxton Scottish Chief*. Roberts left the *Chief* to join the *Observer* photo staff in 1959.

<sup>345</sup> Interview with Jesse Oxendine.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>347</sup> Jim Batten, "'Klansmen Were Begging' To Let Them Out Of There," *Charlotte Observer*, January 20, 1958, 1.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*

suggested that the KKK confrontation required the minor use of force to capture the flag, and that the trophy was the byproduct of a harmless prank or a sporting rivalry more than it was armed conflict. Along with portraying Lumbee restraint, the story emphasized that Oxendine was a veteran of foreign wars and had flown 30 missions over Germany. "But the KKK banner, he grinned, deftly shifting theaters of war, 'is going to fly like that flag over Iwo Jima.'"<sup>349</sup> Oxendine's overseas combat experiences placed the domestic fray in scale, but the invocation of Iwo Jima also envisaged the iconic appeal of the image of Lumbees holding the Klan banner.

Sure enough, the Rosen image entered a different realm one week later with the publication of the full-page photo in *Life* on January 27, 1958.<sup>350</sup> This was part of two magazine spreads on the Lumbees in consecutive issues of the publication, at the time the nation's second largest magazine.<sup>351</sup> While the day's 5-cent newspapers were cheap and ephemeral, *Life* had a different relative worth, not only due to the 25-cent cover price, slick quality and 120-page heft. The magazine had a longer shelf life and "pass-along" rate,<sup>352</sup> remaining on the newsstand or the coffee table for a week, and sometimes preserved as a keepsake.

As much as the magazine's circulation and reach were important, so was its visual and tactile nature. For all the words that white mass media devoted to Robeson County Indians in

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> "Bad Medicine for the Klan."

<sup>351</sup> See, James L. Baughman, "Who Read *Life*?" in Erika Doss, ed., *Looking at Life Magazine* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 41-51; Dora Jane Hamblin, *That Was Life* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 34.

<sup>352</sup> Baughman, "Who Read Life?"

the post-Civil War, including exotic physical descriptions and dime novel illustrations, there were few images. All that survived the Lowry era were a few headshots of minor members of the Lowry gang, and a photo of bounty hunters posed over a gang member's dead body,<sup>353</sup> but no examples of visual self-representation by Robeson County Indians.

The photo essays in *Life* were almost nothing but. The magazine's ratio of pictures to text reversed that of newspapers, so that images were the primary means of communication, and text served the secondary function of explaining pictures. For the five pages and 15 photos *Life* devoted to the Lumbee story over two weekly issues, there were a combined total of five paragraphs of editorial copy.<sup>354</sup> In both cases, *Life* chose a dominant image that would require no explanation. The layout typified the magazine's approach to photojournalism, epitomized by such famous images as the monumental shot of the Iwo Jima flag-raising<sup>355</sup> or the cinematic Times Square kiss on V-J Day.<sup>356</sup> *Life* offered photos for their intrinsic aesthetic value, and the meanings they imparted made them a form of instant commemoration. Thus the anthropologist Karen Blu noted in a field study of Lumbees she began in 1966 that the first member of the tribe she met carried folded in her wallet, eight

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<sup>353</sup> Wishart Family Papers, 4624, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina. A frequently cited photo of Henry Berry Lowry was later identified as Quinn Godwin.

<sup>354</sup> "Bad Medicine For The Klan;" "Indians Back At Peace And The Klan At Bay," *Life*, February 3, 1958, 36-37.

<sup>355</sup> Joe Rosenthal, *Life*, February 23, 1945, 1.

<sup>356</sup> Alfred Eisenstaedt, *Life*, August 14, 1945, 1.

years after the Maxton event, a copy of the most famous of *Life's* Lumbee photos, the 10-by-13 inch image featuring the captured KKK banner.<sup>357</sup>

In that full-page photo, Warriax, clean shaven and hair neatly combed back, touched his balled fist to his cheek, one eyebrow arched, and gave a broadly exaggerated wink back at the camera. His gesture mimed a knock-out punch, the pose reminiscent of a vintage boxing publicity still, projecting competitiveness and sportsmanship. Oxendine also turned toward the camera, eyes squeezed shut in laughter, wearing his overseas cap bearing the Maltese VFW pin and the embroidered letters "North Carolina." The posing of the two Lumbees wearing the banner "like an Indian blanket," as Oxendine's brother recalled from the shoot he witnessed at the *Charlotte Observer*, was an example of a photographer's perception influencing the composition. The blanket, intended as a visual play, was an attempt to obscure the Lumbees' contemporary dress. The device was as old as American photography, a prominent example being Edward Curtis's 1905 portrait of Geronimo taken at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The portrait showed the Apache leader wrapped in a blanket and wearing a ceremonial headdress, hiding the modern clothing underneath.<sup>358</sup> The visual reference was to "blanket Indians," a shorthand term by whites in the Department of Interior for Native Americans who adhered to traditional culture,<sup>359</sup> a phrase that later entered popular usage, including newspaper headlines.<sup>360</sup> In an example illustrating the meaning, an Indian Bureau

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<sup>357</sup> Karen Blu, *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 89.

<sup>358</sup> Edward S. Curtis, "Geronimo 1905," Platinum Print, Peabody Essex Museum.

<sup>359</sup> Report of the Secretary of the Interior, *Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1863), 399.

<sup>360</sup> See, for example, United Press, "Blanket Indians Won't Be Granted Crack at Germans," *Pittsburgh Press*, August 9, 1917, 5; "Something New At Last," *Atlanta Constitution*,

commissioner described in 1915 the Eastern Band of the Cherokees as "good citizens" who were peaceful, Christian, and English-speaking: "I don't see a blanket Indian among them."<sup>361</sup>

What is critical is how Warriax and Oxendine short-circuited the coded message of the blanket by repositioning the image with the reality of their physical presence, subverting the photo to their own purposes. Whereas Klansmen literally cloaked themselves in the past, Lumbees emerged transformed in relation to the past. Warriax parodied the imagined stoicism of the noble brave by mugging for the camera, the "KKK" emblem stretched across his back like a mantle. Oxendine dominated the other half of the photo, flashing a toothy grin, not the butt of the joke, but the teller. Key to the visual composition was the conflict between the letters "KKK" and Oxendine's VFW cap, legible enough that it was discussed and expanded upon in photo captions sent out by the Associated Press and explained in *Life*.<sup>362</sup>

The photo was intensely American in its portrayal of strength tempered with wholesome good humor, and even the casual reader could not escape the power relations of the image. The flag was a crude, tattered remnant of domestic fascism, seized by veterans who faced a more fearsome enemy abroad. But these were not just *any* of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II. They were the *first* Americans. The fact that they had fought under the American flag overseas and now faced an arcane, anti-American foe at home provided

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November 25, 1883, 5. An advertisement for Dr. W. F. Carver's Wild West Show promised "Wild blanket Indians — genuine red warriors of the plains" who could "tell all about Custer's last fight."

<sup>361</sup> "N.C. Cherokees Going In To Growing Apples," *Wilmington (NC) Morning Star*, June 27, 1915, 12, reprinted from *Washington (DC) Evening Star*.

<sup>362</sup> AP Photofax, "Happy Hunting," *Florence (SC) Morning News*, January 20, 1958, 1.

tension in the image; their jubilation released that tension. It suggested that the post-colonial ideals America professed abroad might prevail at home, even in the South. *Life's* caption drove this home:

TROPHY OF VICTORY, a flag they tore from a Klan car, envelops triumphant Indians Charlie Warriax and Simeon Oxendine. Oxendine, wearing a VFW cap, is the son of the mayor of Pembroke, center of Lumbee colony. He was a flight engineer on a bomber in World War II and took part in first US raid on Berlin.<sup>363</sup>

The photo was ideally suited to *Life* not only because of its studio quality, but its tone and meaning. In tone, *Life* had long established itself as a playful magazine<sup>364</sup> that readers could page through at leisure in the waiting room or under the hair dryer. At the same time, the subject of the photo engaged one of the most consistent themes for *Life* publisher Henry Luce: the view that political extremists were un-American.<sup>365</sup> *Life*, both anti-communist and anti-fascist, expressed particular revulsion to anti-Semitism, drawing a visual parallel between the German-American Bund and the Third Reich.<sup>366</sup> Rhetorically, there was a straight line between *Life's* stance toward the Red and "Brown" scares and the visceral police actions toward Civil Rights marchers in Selma and Birmingham in 1963.<sup>367</sup> As early as 1943, *Life* made this visual connection. Under a half-page photo titled "Race War In Detroit," the

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<sup>363</sup> Doug Martin and Maurie Rosen (photos), "Bad Medicine for the Klan: North Carolina Indians Break Up Kluxers' Anti-Indian Meeting," *Life*, January 27, 1958, 26-28.

<sup>364</sup> James K. Glassman, "One Life to Live," *New Republic*, February 9, 1987, 39-40.

<sup>365</sup> Brett Gray, "The Pitiless Spotlight of Publicity," in Erika Doss, ed., *Looking at Life Magazine*, 77-88.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>367</sup> See, Victoria Gallagher and Kenneth Zagacki, "Visibility and Rhetoric: Epiphanies and Transformations in the Life Photographs of the Selma Marches of 1965," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 37 (March 2007):113-135.

editors ran the subhead, "Americans maul and murder each other as Hitler wins a battle in the nation's most explosive city."<sup>368</sup>

Rosen's KKK banner photo was the last page of a three-page package in *Life*, and ran with a group of six smaller prints from the rally taken by Doug Martin of the *Charlotte News*.<sup>369</sup> These showed a crowd of armed Lumbee men and women advancing and encircling klansmen standing under a naked light bulb, both sides dressed in nondescript street clothes, with Lumbees seizing a microphone on a stand, hitting a klansman with a rifle butt, firing shots into the air, then carrying off a cross held aloft, as officers arrested an allegedly drunken klansman.<sup>370</sup> The following week, *Life* returned to Robeson County with another photo essay on the Lumbees, this one a daylight view of the Indian community of Pembroke.<sup>371</sup> Of the eight photographs in the double-truck spread, seven portrayed Lumbees as a modern community that had for years lived "quietly and profitably."<sup>372</sup> The photo essay showed Lumbee schoolchildren in a "well-equipped classroom" of an all-Indian school; Indian Judge Lacy Maynor presiding over a klansman's trial, and later working in his barber shop; and several Indians who were described in terms of the academic accomplishments of themselves or their children, for example, a Pembroke High School senior, a Pembroke State

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 94. The article Gallagher and Zagacki quoted was "Race War In Detroit," *Life*, July 5, 1943, 95.

<sup>369</sup> Doug Martin, "Bad Medicine for the Klan," 26-27.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid. James Martin insisted that he staggered due to the effects of tear gas rather than alcohol, and that the blood alcohol test he requested was unavailable.

<sup>371</sup> Don Cravens and Edward Clark (photos), "Indians Back at Peace and the Klan at Bay," *Life*, February 3, 1958, 36-36A.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.



College senior, and a farmer who had sent six of his children to college. The two dominant photos at the center of the essay were Maynor's courtroom at the top, and beneath it, a group of bare-chested Indian Boy Scouts in feather headdresses and loincloths performing a ceremonial heel-toe dance. The caption explained that the troop made the traditional costumes and learned the dance to earn the "Indian Lore merit badge."<sup>373</sup> Visually, feathers and breechcloths might have conformed to a constructed historical identity, but it was an identity Lumbees chronically differentiated from the present within a larger social context, and within the quintessentially American 1950s frame of the Boy Scouts.

What Lumbees made clear with this social context was that they were not "movie Indians," as Simeon Oxendine's brother Jesse referred to stereotypical Plains Indian depictions.<sup>374</sup> A compelling example of this theme was a multi-page Sunday package of stories and photos in the state's largest newspaper, the *Charlotte Observer*, eight days after the rally.<sup>375</sup> The newspaper's Raleigh correspondent, who spent a day in Pembroke, called the town "the 'Indian capital' of North Carolina" (with no mention of Cherokee).<sup>376</sup> The "special report" described Lumbees as excellent farmers who were church-going and civic-minded, and included six photos from Pembroke State College and a street scene from the business district showing late model cars and appliance stores.<sup>377</sup> Implying a contrast to reservation Indians who were "wards of the state," the theme was that Lumbees "made their own way,"

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<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> Interview with Jesse Oxendine.

<sup>375</sup> Jay Jenkins, "Pembroke: A Town of Indian Pride," *Charlotte Observer*, January 26, 1958, B1.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> "A Special Report," *Charlotte Observer*, January 26, 1958, B1.

and that prosperity was the result of industriousness, assimilation, and modernization.<sup>378</sup> The newspaper drew a broad distinction between Indians with traditional folkways and Lumbees. If there were pottery to be found in Pembroke, the reporter wrote, it would say "Made in Japan" on the bottom. The implication was that Lumbees were genuine, and that white conceptions of Indians were anachronistic counterfeit. Scuffletown had "shuffled off," as one headline put it, and made way for Pembroke, home to a university, 75 to 100 Indian schoolteachers, a city government, and a police and fire department.<sup>379</sup>

Paradoxically, the only Indian quoted directly was interviewed because of his link to Robeson County Indians' historical marker, the Lowry War.<sup>380</sup> Billy Lowry, 97, was the nephew and last living close relative of Henry Berry Lowry, who, the story said, "became an outlaw when white men killed his father and brother."<sup>381</sup> In a folksy sidebar about the "sprit" elder known as "Mr. Billy," Lowry recalled for the reporter his famous uncle's vow "on a fateful day in 1864."<sup>382</sup>

"Mammy," he said. "The people come here and do just as they please. They kill us and we can't help ourselves. I'm going to take my Pa's gun and kill the last one of them."<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> "Churches and College Combine As Hub of Social, Civic Activity," *Charlotte Observer*, January 26, 1958, B1.

<sup>379</sup> "Scuffletown 'Shuffled Off' And Pembroke Took Over," *Charlotte Observer*, January 26, 1958, B4.

<sup>380</sup> "He Remembers Way Back..." *Charlotte Observer*, January 26, 1958, B4.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*

Lest readers missed the parallel to Maxton Field, the mainbar made it explicit. The Robeson Indians had served in every US war except the Civil War, when "Confederates made the grievous error" of forcing Indians into slave labor, precipitating the Lowry War.<sup>384</sup> Lumbees were "proud, loyal to their friends, and as the Klan discovered, fearsome when aroused."<sup>385</sup> Such was the narrative bind for mediated Indian identity. Mainstream media insisted on measuring Indians by the yardstick of assimilation, essentially a unit of negation, measuring that which was seen as *not* Indian. How would Lumbees reconcile past and present to represent their changing, adapting Indianness and reassert their difference as a group?

### **Strategies of Lumbee Self-Representation in Mass Media**

In a telling turn of phrase about the Maxton incident, an editorialist for the *Washington Post and Times-Herald* approvingly termed the Lumbees "real redskins."<sup>386</sup> The facile intent was to differentiate current-day reality from appropriations of a fictionalized past, such as the mascot of the city's pro football team, the Washington Redskins. But "real redskins" was an oxymoron: It contrasted the real and the performed even as it *perpetuated* the performed and retained it as part of the real. This recalls the tension in Stuart Hall's analysis, as well as that of Frantz Fanon, a conflict that made "expressing the real . . . an arduous task."<sup>387</sup> The problem is how to recognize colonialism's distortion of subaltern identity as part of a group's shared past, without this shared past distorting the ongoing project of future identity.

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<sup>384</sup> Jay Jenkins, "Pembroke: A Town Of Indian Pride."

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> "Cowboys and Indians," *Washington Post and Times Herald*.

<sup>387</sup> See, Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 116.

Scholars have frequently noted the patronizing treatment signified by the *Life* headline "Bad Medicine For The Klan,"<sup>388</sup> incorporating the same imagery and pidgin English as did a number of white newspapers including the *Robesonian*<sup>389</sup> and African American publications such as *Ebony*<sup>390</sup> and the *Pittsburgh Daily Courier*.<sup>391</sup> A more elusive issue is the varied, sometimes contradictory, sometimes syncretic communicative responses with which Lumbees engaged such representation. These strategies ranged from overt counter-narrating to more indirect forms of resistance such as subversion and irony in the Othering of whites. Where outsiders objectified Indians by means including racial humor and primitivizing wordplay, Lumbees at turns resisted and reclaimed these signifiers, in the latter case, appropriating and disarming them.

This circles back to the role of humor as a means, as Mikhail Bakhtin has expressed, of breaking through an external shell and "laying bare" the contents.<sup>392</sup> In the sense that humor relieves rather than escalates stress, this device was particularly applicable against the 1958 backdrop of racial tension and Cold War anxiety. As demonstrated, the general ethos of the Maxton press coverage which Lumbees moved within was irony, as the *Robesonian*

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<sup>388</sup> See, for example, Christopher Arris Oakley, "'When Carolina Indians Went on the Warpath' The Media, the Klan and the Lumbees of North Carolina," *Southern Cultures* 14, no. 4 (2008): 55-84; Mary Ann Weston, *Native Americans in the News: Images of Indians in the Twentieth Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 120-121.

<sup>389</sup> See, for example, "Governor Folson Gives War Whoop," *Robesonian*, January 22, 1958, 1; "Redskins Whoop Lumbee Victory," *Robesonian*, January 23, 1958, 1.

<sup>390</sup> "Heap Bad Kluxers Armed with Gun, Indian Angry Paleface Run," *Ebony*, April 1958, 25-6.

<sup>391</sup> Richard W. Hatch, "Plan Legal Action Against Klansmen in North Carolina," *Daily Courier* (Pittsburgh, PA), January 20, 1958, 1.

<sup>392</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination, Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 26.

characterized the incident, a "'cheerful' clash."<sup>393</sup> Despite the potential for tragedy, the *Charlotte Observer* noted the "thick layer of irony and novelty."<sup>394</sup> The *New York Times* editorialized on the absurdity of the KKK's "100 percent Americanism" being directed at Native Americans,<sup>395</sup> and the *Baltimore Sun* pronounced the spectacle of the fleeing klan "raucously comic."<sup>396</sup> This combined with the highly accessible symbolism of the event in a field day for cartoonists. Typical of the visual shorthand was a cartoon by the *Louisville Courier-Journal's* Hugh Haynie.<sup>397</sup> The cartoon, reprinted above the fold in the *Robesonian*, showed a klansman, eyes wide in terror through the holes in a bedsheet, scrambling as a toy arrow pierced his backside, and a flaming arrow with a note that said "Boo!" whistled past him. No matter that Lumbees, Tuscaroras, and members of other tribes including paratroopers from Fort Bragg were armed with pistols, shotguns, and automatic rifles; the conceit returned them straight to the Stone Age. But the response seemed to depend not only on the individual Lumbee, but on the perceived intent of the caricature. On the one hand, Lumbees voiced objections to historicization by outsiders; on the other hand, they redeployed these metaphors for their own rhetorical uses.

Because Indians literally marginalized whites at Maxton by chasing klansmen off the field and into the swamps, the scenario was intrinsically decentering, in the sense that it tilted the axis of the dominant perspective. A figurative expression advanced prominently in the

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<sup>393</sup> "'Cheerful' Clash," *Robesonian*, January 22, 1958, 4.

<sup>394</sup> "Trends of the Times," (reprinted), *Robesonian*, January 22, 1958, 4.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>397</sup> Hugh Haynie, "Point of No Return," (reprinted) *Robesonian*, January 22, 1958, 1.

aftermath of the rally was the derisive comparison of Maxton to Custer's Last Stand. The analogy first surfaced in the media after an anonymous long-distance call to the newsroom of the *Charlotte Observer* in the wee hours after the rally.<sup>398</sup> The caller, whom the newspaper said "swore there was no firewater involved," said KKK leaders had received a telegram. "It said simply: 'My deepest sympathies, (signed) George Armstrong Custer, Little Big Horn, Montana.'"<sup>399</sup> Written as a bright titled, "Gen. Custer Rides Again," the item noted the resemblance of the Maxton rally to "a frontier page of yesteryear," and noted that the incident had "its lighter side."<sup>400</sup>

The source of the Custer parallel became more clear two days later when the *Robesonian* visited with Mayor Oxendine and reported on the telegrams of congratulations and offers of support Oxendine and his son received from across the country, from whites and Native Americans alike.<sup>401</sup> The newspaper said that if the KKK returned, "they may find that they have the entire Indian population of the United States, reinforced by most other Americans, facing them."<sup>402</sup> Above a photo of the Oxendines leaving for New York to appear on TV, the interview with the mayor ended by reporting on the telegram that "rumor has it" was sent to KKK leader Cole: "Deepest Sympathy. Signed General Custer and Chief Little Big Horn."<sup>403</sup> In this case, rather than dispute the historicization, the joke furthered it at Cole's expense.

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<sup>398</sup> "Gen. Custer Rides Again," *Charlotte Observer*, January 20, 1958, 1.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid.

<sup>401</sup> "Redskins Whoop Lumbee Victory," *Robesonian*, January 23, 1958, 1.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

Equating the Klan with Custer in a light-hearted manner masked a serious historical claim. Lumbee sovereignty was part of a contested memory of Native American resistance as old as European contact. Ideologically, the Klan and the US Cavalry's Indian Wars derived from the desire for white supremacy and segregation. Regardless of how media rehabilitated and valorized Custer in newspapers, Wild West shows, biographies, and film,<sup>404</sup> the comparison to Maxton pulled back the curtain on the reality. If whites laughed, they were essentially laughing at themselves.

Clearly, there were no public objections from Indians when the white former publisher of the Maxton *Scottish Chief* wrote of "Lumbee braves" in the poem "The Charge of the Lumbee Indians," published a few days after the rally in the *Robesonian*<sup>405</sup> and the *Scottish Chief*,<sup>406</sup> mirroring the elegiac tone of Alfred Lord Tennyson. But in other cases, stereotypical representations implying that Lumbees were violent, uneducated, and therefore deserving of second-class treatment mobilized a discourse of resistance. In the *Robesonian*, a Lumberton reader who wrote that he was "neither a klansman or an Indian" caustically suggested that a "delegation of 'Lumbee Indians'" should wear war paint and feathers for a scheduled national TV appearance.<sup>407</sup> Another wrote that she was not a member of the KKK, but that "thousands of white people" felt the KKK was in the right and that "Indian Chief

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<sup>404</sup> Karen Miller Russell, Janice Hume, and Karen Sichler, "Libbie Custer's 'Last Stand': Image Restoration, the Press and Public Memory," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 84(3): 582-599.

<sup>405</sup> Harold Glenn Cuthrell, "The Charge of the Lumbee Indians," *Robesonian*, January 22, 1958, 4.

<sup>406</sup> Harold Glenn Cuthrell, "The Charge of the Lumbee Indians," *Scottish Chief*, January 23, 1958, 1.

<sup>407</sup> J. Lindsay Smith, letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, January 28, 1958, 4.

'Heap Big Mouth' Oxendine" should have been charged.<sup>408</sup> These expressions did not go unanswered. An Indian letter-writer from Pembroke wrote in response that she and fellow Lumbees did "not wish to be recognized as a war-whooping tribe with war paint."<sup>409</sup> Wrote another Pembroke resident, "Lumbee Indians have been dropped on the battle fields around the world in defense of this 'Great Nation,' and they didn't have war paint or feathers."<sup>410</sup>

At the same time, Lumbees easily subverted these tropes. A *New York Times* story from the post-rally victory celebration in Pembroke reported that one of the participants wore a souvenir Indian headdress,<sup>411</sup> a detail repeated in several accounts,<sup>412</sup> and the youth performed a comic war dance at the encouragement of his friends.<sup>413</sup> This detail was reprised in a 1958 folk song performed at Carnegie Hall.<sup>414</sup> Meanwhile, Lew Barton, a Lumbee writer who had previously operated a community newspaper, wrote in the *Robesonian* of longstanding ties between the races in Robeson County, where he said Indians had "buried

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<sup>408</sup> Sara Adcox, letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, January 28, 1958, 4.

<sup>409</sup> Avenna Locklear, letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, February 3, 1958, 4.

<sup>410</sup> Carlie Oxendine, letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, January 31, 1958, 4.

<sup>411</sup> "Raid by 500 Indians Balks North Carolina Klan Rally," *New York Times*, January 19, 1958, 1.

<sup>412</sup> See, for example, "Indians: The Natives Are Restless," *Time*, January 27, 1958, 20. A number of news sources reporting independently noted that the war bonnets bore the imprint, "Souvenir of Chimney Rock, N.C." The state park is a scenic attraction 200 miles west of Pembroke.

<sup>413</sup> Charles Craven, "The Night the Klan Died in North Carolina."

<sup>414</sup> Malvina Reynolds, *Little Boxes and Other Handmade Songs* (New York: Oak Publications, 1964) 16-17. The lyric read, "Or is it a Lumbee war bonnet/ That comes from Chimney Rock?"



the hatchet."<sup>415</sup> Appropriated and turned inward, these tropes took on different layers of meaning within the group, the encoding function referenced in Stuart Hall. Turned outward as performance, Lumbees' verbal and visual play with these tropes underlined resiliency and survivance—the capacity to subvert and separate white society's historicization from contemporary American Indian identity. Reducing Plains motifs to kitschy war dances and souvenir feather headdresses served only to underline their irrelevance to Lumbee culture and cement a mutual understanding of that irrelevance.

Another instance of irony was press statements by Simeon Oxendine. For the most part, particularly in the days after the rally, Oxendine's strategy was to maintain a bemused attitude toward both the Klan and whites who were well-intentioned but condescending. Unlike the grand dragon's performance on *Mike Wallace*, Oxendine smoothly navigated his nationally televised interview. Regarding the Klan's plan to hold a subsequent anti-Indian rally in Rockingham County, North Carolina, Gardner asked Oxendine where this was in relation to Pembroke. Oxendine replied coolly, "About as far as you can get,"<sup>416</sup> implying that the Klan had been intimidated by Lumbees. The producer, radio commentator Barry Farber, recalled going to a restaurant with Oxendine after the show, when they were joined by a Norwegian woman "who didn't 'get it' about the Lumbees:"

It got almost-but-not-quite down to, "How you like Big-Chief Eisenhower?" Simeon said, "Where are you from, Baby?" "Norway," she replied. "I know that," said Sim. "Where in Norway?" She said, "Stavanger." "I was a Flying Fortress gunner on the first American bombing raid on Stavanger," smiled Sim. That ended all talk of "Big-Chief Eisenhower."<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> Lew Barton, letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, January 20, 1958, 4. Barton had previously published the *Pembroke Progress*.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

Oxendine, as he had the night he stormed the offices of the *Charlotte Observer*, played the trump card of American liberator. As the New York producer described it, the purportedly condescending northern European was now being looked down upon by the southern aborigine—from an altitude of 10,000 feet.

This differed from the approach the letter-writers took, and from the strategy of older Lumbees such as Oxendine's father and Judge Maynor. But what appeared clear regardless of the communicative response was that Maxton gave Lumbees the opening to project a visible identity on the world stage, and in order for that identity to be an authentic Indian identity rather than a white construction, Lumbees required agency. Although the Klan orchestrated press attendance at the rally, it was Lumbees who seized the initiative to steer the narrative in the desired direction. In the months after the rally, Lumbee leaders signaled their intent to manage representation in mass media by forming an information bureau to provide accurate information to the media.<sup>418</sup> In the first news release of Lumbee-Land News Service, Lew Barton wrote that history proved the Lumbees "can not only survive but excel."<sup>419</sup> Although prejudice, ignorance, and persecution would continue, Barton wrote that "in the end, truth, good-will, and tolerance will prevail."<sup>420</sup> There is no apparent record that the effort by Barton, Oxendine, and Warriax was long-lived, but the plan demonstrated recognition of the salience of mass media in representation, and a perceived need for Lumbee authorship.

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<sup>418</sup> "Lumbees Form News Service," *Robesonian*, April 10, 1958, 4.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid.

The Maxton incident raised the visibility of the tribe in national media, and also raised Lumbees' visibility among Native American leadership. On the morning after the Klan routing, the five-column lead headline in the *Albuquerque (NM) Journal* emphasized geography: "1,000 East Coast Indians Disrupt Carolina Klan Rally With Gunfire."<sup>421</sup> Judge Maynor, speaking to the 1958 National Congress of American Indians, was introduced as a statesman<sup>422</sup> and described by the Associated Press as "a klan-defying southern judge."<sup>423</sup> Maynor accompanied the organization's executive director, and importantly, the judge introduced to the conference his 23-year-old daughter, who had completed her master's at Columbia University.<sup>424</sup> The daughter, Helen Maynor Schierbeck, would return as a featured speaker at the Conference of Indian Youth,<sup>425</sup> and in subsequent decades was a key national leader for Indian self-determination and education.<sup>426</sup> At the 1958 conference, Judge Maynor had stressed the importance of the vote, and in explaining the differences between Plains Indians and Lumbees, pointed out that Lumbees made up half the voting population in their home county. Yet when Maynor addressed the conference four years later in Cherokee, his

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<sup>421</sup> "1000 East Coast Indians Disrupt Carolina Klan Rally With Gunfire," *Albuquerque (NM) Journal*, January 19, 1958, 1.

<sup>422</sup> "Change in Indian 'Termination' Seen," *Idaho State Journal* (Pocatello, ID) September 23, 1958, 1.

<sup>423</sup> "Southern Judge Tells Indians To Use Ballots," *Independent Record* (Helena, MT), September 18, 1958, 12.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>425</sup> "Program Mapped For Conference Of Indian Youth," *Daily Republic* (Mitchell, South Dakota), March 23, 1961, 14.

<sup>426</sup> Smithsonian Institution National Museum of the American Indian, "Helen Maynor Schierbeck: One of the Twentieth Century's Most Significant American Indian Leaders," news release, December 21, 2010.

focus returned to what he had first spoken about from the bench when he sentenced the Klansman: mass media representation of Indians. Maynor observed that television showed Indians as "shiftless, drunken, law-breaking, ill-educated red men" who were "conniving, savage, untrustworthy, sneaky people." Indians, he argued, needed "to tell our story to all Indians and to all other peoples."<sup>427</sup>

But what would be the medium, and how would Lumbees gain access? At the height of the Maxton publicity, Lumbees witnessed the self-narrating capacity of mass media when North Carolina's major newspaper profiled the tribe as a thriving, successful people. Pembroke, the *Charlotte Observer* noted, was a "hub of social, civic activity" that revolved around churches, schools, and the university, and had "all the trimmings of a quiet village"—municipal government, police and fire departments, Lumbee-owned businesses.<sup>428</sup> But the reporter noticed one feature missing.

"Pembroke," the *Observer* reported, "does not have its own newspaper."<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> Associated Press, "Indians Told To Believe In Themselves," *Danville (VA) Bee*, September 6, 1962, 16.

<sup>428</sup> Jay Jenkins, "Pembroke: A Town Of Indian Pride."

<sup>429</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 4:** The office of the *Carolina Indian Voice*, circa-1975, Pembroke, North Carolina.

(Courtesy of Bruce Barton)

#### 4. RHETORIC AND PUBLIC MEMORY IN THE *CAROLINA INDIAN VOICE*

In January 1977, Lumbees in Robeson County rallied around an instance of misrepresentation in white media that encapsulated the tribe's past and future. The catalyst was a local reprint of a *Detroit News* article about a Lumbee boy up for adoption, a report that Indian readers described as a "slap in the face."<sup>1</sup> The forum for the communal critique was the Pembroke-based weekly *Carolina Indian Voice*, and the incident demonstrated the functions the five-year-old community newspaper served: a mediator of a subaltern people's resurgent historical identity, a witness to continued patterns of injustice toward Indians, and a vehicle for resistance. In the 1970s, Lumbees and Tuscaroras wrote back the past, and as the *Detroit News* incident illustrated, used the *Voice* as an implement.

The *Detroit News* women's editor, as part of her ongoing Sunday series on hard-to-place foster children, titled "A Child Is Waiting," had bluntly summed up the problem of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina. Under the headline, "Indian Boy, 10, Needs Catching Up" with an accompanying photograph, the article described the ethnic background of a transplanted Indian boy, referred to as "Tom," who was in need of a home.

Lumbee Indians exist in one small area of the South. They are not a tribe and do not have a language. Seemingly a mixture of black, white and Indian, they are

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<sup>1</sup> "Detroit News Article Provokes Ire of Lumbee Indians," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 21, 1977, 6.

so intermarried that no one can define the racial mix.<sup>2</sup>

The story, and a companion piece on a TV network affiliate the *Detroit News* owned, WWJ-TV, stirred a brief outcry in the transplanted Lumbee community in Michigan. However, in Pembroke, North Carolina, the Lumbee cultural center, reaction to the *Detroit News* piece was sustained. After the *Voice* reprinted the story and photo with an editor's note and deconstruction of the article by founding editor Bruce Barton,<sup>3</sup> subscribers to the *Voice* in subsequent weeks sent their own critiques of the *News* summary of Lumbee identity. The letter writers cited Lumbee history, arguments as to why the tribe deserved but had not been granted federal recognition, and explanations of how the tribe differed from western Plains Indians in language, culture, and lack of treaties or reservation land.<sup>4</sup>

In the pages of the *Voice*, by then a 3,000-circulation newspaper operating out of a squat cinder block building that formerly housed a chicken hatchery,<sup>5</sup> this was no isolated instance. It was the weekly staple. The newspaper, the longest-running independent Indian publication in the state between its launch in 1973 and closing in 2004,<sup>6</sup> became a discourse on all things Indian, and more specifically, all things Lumbee. Doing regular battle with the white political structure and the century-old mainstream newspaper of record, the *Robesonian*, the *Voice*

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<sup>2</sup> Ruth Carlton, "Indian Boy, 10, Has a Lot of Catching Up to Do," *Detroit News*, January 10, 1977, D1.

<sup>3</sup> "Detroit News Article Provokes Ire of Lumbee Indians."

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Adolph Dial, Gerald Locklear, letters to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 24, 1977, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce Barton interview with author, Pembroke, North Carolina.

<sup>6</sup> Glenn Ellen Starr, *The Lumbee Indians: An Annotated Bibliography, with Chronology and Index. 1954-1994* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1995). Starr's bibliography includes an extensive index of the *Voice*.

wove a counter-narrative of the contested Lumbee story, present and past. The newspaper and its audience stitched this narrative together from a standpoint of social memory that served to catalyze the Indian community in the 1970s, this occurring in a decade of activism and resurgence in native identity across the United States,<sup>7</sup> and of human rights activism globally.

This chapter offers a two-year window on how an alternative news organization, during a peak period of social change, articulated the reclamation of a community's narrative rights, composing identity around a symbolic interpretation of the past and a coherent vision of the future. The argument is neither that the *Voice* represented a consensus in the Lumbee and neighboring Tuscarora communities, nor that the Barton family set in motion political activism not already taking shape. Instead, this analysis explores how the *Voice* as an organization and a discursive space became a conduit for Indian self-expression.

In the *Voice*, Indians spoke to and debated each other directly rather than through the back channel of white media, the position of duality which the previous chapter discussed. Here, I argue that the *Voice* reproduced tribal identities, particularly in relation to the past, in a lexicon that was mutually understood. This reversed the pattern of white media conveying the first draft of native history. Indians now controlled the paper and ink, using the medium to authenticate and recirculate the past as a chronic and spatial referent as well as an organizing consciousness. Week after week, the newspaper reiterated these themes from a contemporary native-centric worldview, within the familiar conventions of a rural weekly. Yet, as local as those conventions were, the concerns of the *Voice* and its readers were

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the historical conditions surrounding the reaffirmation of a pan-Indian identity in the 1970s, see, Joan Nagel, "American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Politics and the Resurgence of Identity," *American Sociological Review* 60, no. 6, (December 1995): 947-965.



global: conservative white hegemony, police excessive force and mass incarceration, economic oligarchy, lack of indigenous autonomy, and a two-tiered educational system that enabled all of the above.

### **Method and Justification**

To gain an understanding of how the *Voice* used both conventional and alternative journalism strategies to constitute identity, this close reading is principally concerned with a four-year run of the Indian newspaper, 1975-78. Using bound volumes and microfilm available at UNC-Chapel Hill and the Robeson County Public Library, supplemented by the files of the *Robesonian* as they concerned the *Voice*, I examined 184 editions of the broadsheet, ranging from eight to 22 pages each, in order to describe the overall design and function of the newspaper. Although the *Voice* published for 32 years, the focus on a chronological sample is intended to approach the *Voice* from the perspective of the reader. That is, rather than analyze disconnected eras of the newspaper for common themes over time, this textual, visual, and organizational analysis looks at the interplay of news, editorials, historical features, letters to the editor, community departments, photographs, and advertising. A close reading seeks to gauge the juxtaposition of texts, discursive repetition, and cumulative use of historical symbolism at a point in time. The textual analysis focuses on three major elements the *Voice* used to consummate audience: shared proximity, collective memory, insider language— all the values and experiences that defined a communal "us." Here again, the analysis is not strictly textual, but incorporates socio-historical context in a three-tiered analysis including texts, interactions, and social practices, including the practices of the media organization. An important concern is intertextual discourse—juxtaposition from within and without the *Voice*— and historical context. Analyzing the process and

function of mediated memory in Lumbee history requires that each era in this study be situated against the broader historical backdrop.

The years 1975-1978 in the *Voice* are an appropriate cross-section of the paper's run because they marked a turning point for the community and for the media organization. During this period, Indians in Robeson County won key victories on the central issue of education: the seating of a majority-Indian school board, and replacement by Indians of a white board attorney and white superintendent who together had actively resisted desegregation and Indian self-rule. As of 1977, Pembroke had an Indian-owned bank and tobacco auction warehouse, a mobile homes factory, the tallest building in Robeson County, a half-dozen Indian attorneys, and a continuing outdoor historical drama based on the life of Reconstruction-era rebel leader Henry Berry Lowry.<sup>8</sup>

The period was likewise crucial in the career of the *Voice*. Plagued by financial problems, the newspaper survived an audit by the Internal Revenue Service, joined the Chamber of Commerce, began a subscription drive featuring the serialized "Life and Times of Henry Berry Lowrie," outbid its mainstream competition for a contract to print government legal notices, announced a public stock offering, and granted the small staff its first vacation in five years. Most significant were the events of 1978. The *Voice* began the year embroiled in controversy for a number of unpopular editorials that risked alienating advertisers, and so little operating capital that it faced closure. At that point, the Indian community acted to save the newspaper in a highly public manner, demonstrating the relationship between the *Voice* and its audience. Letters from readers expressed the idea that Indians did not always agree with the *Voice*, which had dispensed caustic, increasingly controversial rebukes to whites and

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<sup>8</sup> Lew Barton, "Old Man Pembroke Dons a Tux," *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 6, 1977, 9.

Indians alike. But Indians *needed* the *Voice*, as Ruth Dial Woods, Lumbee educator and architect of the North Carolina Commission on Indian Affairs, argued in a letter to the editor:

The Carolina Indian Voice is our forum...it is our point of debate and discussion... Where else can we speak openly, honestly, frankly, and yes, sometimes with personal bias, to people across this county? Where else can we find the vehicle of communication for ideas, issues, problems, and concerns so freely and realistically and characteristically Indian? Without the Carolina Indian Voice, the Indian Community will become silent again. Radio and television does not bring us together to learn what is happening to Indian people across our county . . ."9

A Robeson native who subscribed from Baltimore put it more succinctly in a letter to the editor: "Often I hurt with you, ache with you, weep with you, share your disgust and pain at the many injustices and inequities."<sup>10</sup> The *Voice* was not so much a reflection of the community as it was an appendage, especially as it concerned the personality of its gadfly editor. The goal here is to examine the cultural process by which this occurred.

### **Backdrop: Situating the *Voice* Amid "A Mighty Stirring"**

*Voice* founding editor Bruce Barton's political awakening is an inverted Rip Van Winkle tale. Barton, the son of a Lumbee writer who once published an Indian newspaper,<sup>11</sup> left his native community of Prospect in Robeson County in 1959 to join the Army, attend college, and experience a wider world, including time spent in the state penitentiary.<sup>12</sup> When he returned home in 1972 to launch the newspaper with a \$500 loan, Barton had changed considerably, but observed that the sprawling, eastern Carolina county seemed to have slumbered through

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<sup>9</sup> Ruth Dial Woods letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 26, 1978, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Luv-Lee Hill letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, April 14, 1977, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Lew Barton published the *Lumbee Progress* in the 1940s, but ceased publishing after a 1950 car crash.

<sup>12</sup> Lew Barton interview with Bruce Barton, Series LUM: 11A, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, Department of History, University of Florida.

the Civil Rights movement.<sup>13</sup> Still pervasive was a sense of isolation, rampant Indian-on-Indian violence,<sup>14</sup> and Robeson County Indians' comparatively subtle experience of Jim Crow, which Barton termed "Jim Gray."<sup>15</sup> Even though Indians and African Americans together made up about almost 60 percent of the population,<sup>16</sup> they functioned politically as minorities. The white power structure encouraged in-fighting and division between red and black.<sup>17</sup> Robeson's elite further nullified Indian and African American political agency<sup>18</sup> through a peculiar apportionment system termed "double-voting" that became the target of the first crusade for the *Voice*,<sup>19</sup> and its quintessential issue.

What inspired Barton to come home was an early indication that the native community was galvanizing politically. In 1972, the state announced its intent to tear down the most culturally important landmark to Lumbees and Tuscaroras. This was the Old Main building that was the original structure at UNC-Pembroke, until 1953 the nation's only publicly

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> In the early 1970s, Robeson County had the highest per capital homicide rate of any county in the US. In the twenty-first century, the county has consistently ranked in the worst five counties nationally for homicide.

<sup>15</sup> Lew Barton interview.

<sup>16</sup> US Bureau of the Census, General Population Characteristics, Advance Report, 1970. With a total estimated population of 77,161, Robeson was approximately 37 percent white, 34 percent Indian, and 29 percent black.

<sup>17</sup> See, Malinda Maynor Lowery and Willie Lowery, interviews with Carnell Locklear and Barry Nakell, U-007, U-0012, Series U-2, Southern Oral History Program, University of North Carolina.

<sup>18</sup> As of 1975, Indians and black voters combined out-registered white voters in Robeson County, according to the County Board of Elections. On January 1, 1975, there were 13,597 Indians registered, 10,178 black voters, and 18,915 white voters.

<sup>19</sup> Bruce Barton, "Double Vote?," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 18, 1973, 2.

funded four-year college for Native Americans,<sup>20</sup> a marker of Indian progress and the exceptionalism of the eastern tribes. Invoking the site's symbolic significance to native education, and by extension the tribes' hopes for the future, the Indian community protested the planned demolition and saved Old Main.<sup>21</sup> Barton, noting that African Americans had not won demands until they engaged in direct action such as sit-ins and boycotts, felt the Indian community was on the threshold of a new era of grassroots activism, or as his father Lew Barton termed it, "a mighty stirring."<sup>22</sup> As the younger Barton observed in a conversation with his father a few months before the *Voice* debuted in January 1973, "There's a militancy in the air. People are demanding their rights, as they should."<sup>23</sup> He planned to name his newspaper after the river, "the Lumbee Current," but instead took the name of a free bi-monthly historical publication his father started in 1972.<sup>24</sup> A comment by Barton's father in an interview that year may have suggested this alternative: "Any community without a voice," the elder Barton said of the plan for an Indian weekly, "is a very sad community."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Eleanor Lee Yates, "Pembroke University Celebrates 125 Years of Accomplishments, Growth," *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, November 22, 2012, 8. UNC-Pembroke was originally known as Pembroke State College, and had been a teacher training school, the Indian Normal School of Robeson County.

<sup>21</sup> See, Delores Briggs, "Old Main: Heritage or Hazard?" *Robesonian*, January 20, 1972, 15. After Lumbees prevailed against the planned demolition, a suspicious 1973 fire gutted the landmark, which the North Carolina Department of Administration in 1977 moved to reconstruct.

<sup>22</sup> "Leaders Feel the Lumbees Are Awakening," *Robesonian*, September 5, 1971, 13A.

<sup>23</sup> Lew Barton interview.

<sup>24</sup> J. Marshall Jones, "Indian Journal Begun By Group," *Robesonian*, April 9, 1972, 1.

<sup>25</sup> Lew Barton interview.

The *Voice* was not the first Indian newspaper in the county,<sup>26</sup> but what it had in common with earlier Indian newspapers was that it emerged during a period of turbulence. During these periods, Indians simultaneously experienced the push-pull of repression and aspiration, and recognized the need to organize. But previous Indian newspapers in the county and the state had lasted only briefly, noted the *Voice* editor's father, Lew Barton, who had written for the *Robesonian* and published his own newspaper, the *Pembroke Progress*.<sup>27</sup> The *Voice* was the first to be financially viable, to become a newspaper of record,<sup>28</sup> and to leave behind an archive.<sup>29</sup>

When the *Voice* debuted, the most pressing concern was education. The same had been true in the early twentieth century when Indians struggled to open their own schools, the first form of state recognition and self-rule for Robeson County Indians. The reverse struggle arose in the 1970s: the imminent closing of all-Indian schools because of integration, and the consequent loss of autonomy.<sup>30</sup> Desegregation, a thorny racial issue for communities across the South, was further entangled in Robeson County, with six separate school systems for

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<sup>26</sup> James Locklear, "Pembroke's Rich History of Print Journalism," *Native Visions*, January 2008, 24-26. Previous Indian newspapers published in Robeson County were the short-lived *Indian Observer*, the *Pembroke Progress*, and the *Lumbee*.

<sup>27</sup> Lew Barton, "A Decade of Service, Progress," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 20, 1980, 1.

<sup>28</sup> "Multiple Newspaper Advertising at Issue," *Robesonian*, May 7, 1974, 1, 2. Despite opposition on the part of the *Robesonian*, the *Voice* eventually obtained a municipal contract to run legal notices such as delinquent taxes.

<sup>29</sup> The *Carolina Indian Voice* is available in bound copies and microfilm at the Robeson County Public Library and in the Wilson Library Special Collections at UNC-Chapel Hill.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, "Lumbee Anti-Desegregation Suit Filed In U.S. Court," *Robesonian*, September 11, 1970, 1.

white, black, and red in the county and the cities.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, the *Voice* emphasized education over all other topics. The first news story Barton wrote for the inaugural edition was about white voters controlling Indian school districts through double-voting, a system that nullified majority-minority votes, and that the Supreme Court later struck down.<sup>32</sup> A story count of the next twenty years of the newspaper shows that Indian education remained the bread-and-butter issue for the *Voice*, which generated 444 education-related news stories, averaging one in every other edition. For Lumbees and Tuscaroras, all-Indian schools were a marker of community, undergirded by kinship and settlement, what Malinda Maynor Lowery termed "the fundamental layers of identity."<sup>33</sup> The *Voice*, by making this central font of community its franchise, became an important conduit for identity building.

Indian autonomy issues in Robeson County were localized byproducts of a long, closely situated social history, but did not unfold outside the larger picture for Native Americans. The same global winds pushed micro- and macro-history, and the waters flowed both ways. Just as a wave of Lumbee and Tuscarora activism in 1958 reached a wider pan-Indian constituency through mass media, Robeson County Indians by the 1970s were attuned to and touched by a high tide of activism nationally. The American Indian Movement and its highly

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<sup>31</sup> Until it was ruled unconstitutional in 1975, the uniquely local practice of double-voting gave predominantly white residents of towns in Robeson two votes in school board elections (one in their system, the other in the county.) This meant that the in the county, which was 80 percent Indian and black, residents' votes were diluted and voters had no chance to elect their own representatives to correct inequities between the racially segregated systems. The practice, representing political disenfranchisement of minorities, even when they constituted a numerical majority, was a single-minded crusade for Barton. It was the topic of the first article he wrote for the *Voice*, and of numerous editorials and editorial cartoons.

<sup>32</sup> Bruce Barton, "Double Vote?" *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 18, 1973, 1. (inaugural issue).

<sup>33</sup> Malinda Maynor Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South*, 257.

mediated acts of resistance epitomized the period, an appeal to an historical identity reclaimed in the present. In December 1969, for example, the mainland coordinator of the Alcatraz Island occupation, Dean Chavis, called on fellow Lumbees in his native Robeson County to show support for restoring the island to Indian control.<sup>34</sup> AIM leaders made frequent visits to Robeson County,<sup>35</sup> and in 1972, local Tuscarora member Carnell Locklear, seeking to charter an AIM chapter, urged that Robeson County Indians "need to be part of the great changes going on all over the country."<sup>36</sup> As Elizabeth Rich wrote of AIM's appeal to "Remember Wounded Knee," the site of the 1890 Army massacre of Lakota Indians became a metonymy that stood for more than one event, but rather "a host of stories, values, and historical characters."<sup>37</sup>

Reanimating this remembered past appealed to Robeson County Indians generally, although as discussed in Chapter 3, the strategies for achieving change and full federal recognition divided Lumbees and Tuscaroras.<sup>38</sup> Lumbee leaders pursued a largely administrative route toward legal remedies, seeking to maneuver within the shifting

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<sup>34</sup> "Lumbee Indian Support Is Sought In Alcatraz Push," *Robesonian*, December 10, 1969, 1.

<sup>35</sup> See for example, coverage of visits to Pembroke Tuscaroras by Dennis Banks, Russell Means, and Clyde and Vernon Bellecourt: Bill Price, "American Indian Group Holds Session With Local Tuscaroras," *Robesonian*, October 30, 1972, 2; Delores Briggs and Bill Price, "Indian Vigil Ends for Negotiations," October 31, 1972, 1; "Bellecourt Terms AIM 'Spiritual Movement,'" *Robesonian*, January 22, 1975, 9.

<sup>36</sup> Olin Briggs, "'Mad' Indian on the Warpath," *Robesonian*, August 4, 1972, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Rich, "'Remember Wounded Knee': AIM'S Use of Metonymy in 21st Century Protest," *College Literature*, 31:3, Summer 2004, 78.

<sup>38</sup> For a discussion of the contrasting strategies of Lumbees and Tuscaroras, see, Carnell Locklear, interview by Malinda Maynor and Willie Lowery, interview U-0007, transcript, Southern Oral History Project, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Barry Nackell, interview by Malinda Maynor, interview U-0012, transcript, Southern Oral History Project, UNC.



boundaries of the state and federal governments.<sup>39</sup> Tuscaroras regarded the Lumbees' stymied efforts as an impediment to their own recognition,<sup>40</sup> claiming to have blood quantum<sup>41</sup> and an extant indigenous language<sup>42</sup> on their side. Some dismissed the name Lumbee as a "white man's word"<sup>43</sup> and the Lumbee recognition effort as a failure.<sup>44</sup> Instead, Tuscaroras embraced direct action, for example joining AIM's cross-country Trail of Broken Treaties caravan in November 1972. Reaching Washington, DC, Tuscaroras helped occupy the Bureau of Indian Affairs headquarters, where they confiscated several tons of government documents and drove them home to Robeson County.<sup>45</sup> The following year, newly elected Tuscarora chief Howard Brooks voiced solidarity with the AIM occupation at Wounded Knee.<sup>46</sup> To show support for the 1973 siege, in which AIM protested conditions at Pine Ridge Reservation in

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<sup>39</sup> Carnell Locklear interview.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, "AIM Official Cites 'Upcoming Recognition' of Tuscarora Tribe," *Robesonian*, March 8, 1973, 2; "Tuscarora Chief Urges Reading of 'Lumbee Bill,'" *Robesonian*, October 29, 1973, 2. Tuscaroras pointed out that the 1956 federal act recognizing Lumbees specifically prohibited any US aid to the tribe.

<sup>41</sup> "Tuscarora Chief Urges Reading of 'Lumbee Bill,'" *Robesonian*, October 29, 1973, 2.

<sup>42</sup> "Group Plans to Form AIM Chapter in City," *Robesonian*, January 14, 1973, 1.

<sup>43</sup> Olin Briggs, "'Mad Indian' On the Warpath..." *Robesonian*, August 4, 1972, 7.

<sup>44</sup> "AIM Official Cites 'Upcoming Recognition' of Tuscarora Tribe," *Robesonian*, March 8 1973, 2.

<sup>45</sup> "3-Way Struggle For BIA Papers Revealed In Defense Testimony," *Robesonian*, December 18, 1973, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Bill Price, "Chief of Tuscaroras Calls For Unity In Support Of Wounded Knee Indians," *Robesonian*, March 8, 1973, 1.

South Dakota,<sup>47</sup> Brooks led a motorcade through Lumberton, an action blamed for vandalism including a broken plate-glass window at the *Robesonian* during what the paper described as a "rock-throwing melee."<sup>48</sup> In an action the same year, state police arrested Brooks, AIM national leader Vernon Bellecourt and 58 Tuscaroras for trying to hold a meeting at Prospect School<sup>49</sup> to protest the white-controlled school board, and Brooks also staged a protest at the local Board of Education.<sup>50</sup> Importantly, all of these actions played out in mass media, locally and nationally.

Despite Lumbee leaders' contrasting strategy of working within the system, it was clear that Lumbees, like Tuscaroras, experienced the spiritual renewal and cultural resurgence manifested across the American Indian world. This was an active period for indigenous scholarship on Lumbee history, and the period also saw a traditional music revival, a historically themed outdoor drama, an annual homecoming, and a Miss Lumbee pageant. Thus, a Lumbee thought leader like Pembroke State historian Adolph Dial spoke of the kinship he felt to Plains tribes when traveling the United States, enough so that a white journalist noted, with surprise, that the professor wore a Navajo watch and kept a photo of

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<sup>47</sup> As of 2012, the Oglala Lakota reservation remained the poorest demographic in the United States. See, Nicholas Kristoff, "Poverty's Poster Child," *New York Times*, May 9, 2012.

<sup>48</sup> In contrast, North Carolina's other major Indian tribe, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, issued a statement that it did not support AIM's protest at Wounded Knee. See, "N.C. Cherokees Snub Support for AIM Action," *Robesonian*, March 15, 1973, 1.

<sup>49</sup> "AIM Official May Contest Friday arrests," *Robesonian*, March 26, 1973, 1.

<sup>50</sup> "ECTIO Members Sentenced For Disorderly Conduct," *Robesonian*, September 23, 1973, 1.

Buffy Sainte-Marie on his desk.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, Simeon Oxendine, the spit-shined war hero who captured the KKK flag at Maxton and later followed his father into politics, now spoke in more militant terms about Lumbees thinking "for themselves"<sup>52</sup> rather than striving to accommodate whites. Oxendine and others publicly decried so-called "Uncle Tontos" and "Uncle Tomahawks," perceived opportunists who served their own interests above those of their people.<sup>53</sup> The critique of so-called "white man's Indians"<sup>54</sup> was enthymematic: The unstated premise was that whites subordinated and corrupted Indians against the good of the group. As Judge Lacy Maynor had argued at a national native leadership conference a decade earlier, white media were a principal means of subordination.<sup>55</sup>

In mainstream journalism, even when there was sympathy for native grievances and the struggle for civil rights, mass media in the 1970s tended to trivialize and patronize native identity. Despite shifting public opinion in relation to the Civil Rights movement, the anti-war movement, the counterculture, and women's liberation, mainstream media coverage remained innately oriented toward the status quo and official, establishment sources and perspectives.<sup>56</sup> On the part of white journalists, there was evidence of this conservative world

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<sup>51</sup> "Leaders Feel the Lumbees Are Awakening," *Greensboro Daily News*, September 5, 1971, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Associated Press, "Indians Told To Believe In Themselves," *Danville (VA) Bee*, September 6, 1962, 16.

<sup>56</sup> See, Susan Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female With the Mass Media* (New York: Random House, 1994), 160; Daniel Hallin, *The Uncensored War: The Media*

view of Indians in Robeson County. Journalism, as the next chapter in this study will discuss further, maintained the transitive function of reinforcing the theories of white anthropologists, genetic researchers, historians, and politicians toward native issues. The attitude of mainstream media coverage of Lumbees, which in 1958 had been novel, defensive, and somewhat celebratory (if condescending) around the Klan routing, was less sympathetic a decade later, both locally and nationally. A 1970 Sunday *New York Times* article about the tri-racial school integration illustrated the intractable problem that contested history and racial categorization by whites posed for the Lumbees. A *Times* correspondent described Indian students as "the swarthy but obviously non-Negro children of the Lumbee Indians."<sup>57</sup> The ostensible news was a lawsuit by Lumbees seeking to preserve the ethnic identity of Lumbee schools. Although no Lumbees were quoted in the article, the *Times* wrote that according to the BIA, "the Lumbees have no ethnic or tribal culture to preserve."<sup>58</sup> Likewise, when Tuscaroras sought to perform identity and articulate political concerns, white journalists portrayed them as dubious, if not ridiculous. When the *Robesonian* profiled Carnell Locklear, the AIM supporter, the page layout interspersed the text with generic Wild West line drawings of bare-chested warriors on horseback with spears and war bonnets, and the columns of text were arranged in the shape of a teepee.<sup>59</sup> Attempting an absurd historical juxtaposition, the writer began the article by describing Locklear's freckles and light hair,

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*and Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 23; Tom Wicker, "The Greening of the Press," *Columbia Journalism Review*, May-June, 1971, 7-12.

<sup>57</sup> Ben A. Franklin, "Indians Resist Integration Plan in Triracial County in Carolina," September 13, 1970, 78.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Olin Briggs, "'Mad' Indian on the Warpath," *Robesonian*, August 4, 1972, 7.

under the headline, "'Mad' Indian on the Warpath."<sup>60</sup> By delegitimizing Locklear's Indian identity, the newspaper minimized his grievances.

Attempts to negate Indian identity by no means went unchallenged by Indian readers. A case in point was when the *Robesonian* in 1973 published a front-page Associated Press report headlined "Robeson Indian Racial Research Findings Revealed."<sup>61</sup> The article, which indicated no specific time element to make it immediately newsworthy, purported to give the results of genetic blood tests of 1,273 Lumbee school children taken in 1958, with a researcher concluding that Lumbees had "more Negro and white ancestry than Indian."<sup>62</sup> In the following edition, a front-page disclaimer published "in response to inquiries," distanced the *Robesonian* from the report.<sup>63</sup> Signaling skepticism, the headline to the follow-up placed the words "race findings" in quotation marks, and the newspaper denied authorship of the report, saying editors simply ran what the AP sent them.<sup>64</sup> While never questioning the substance of the report, the newspaper printed a letter from the Chapel Hill researcher, who complained that the AP took his study out of context and misstated the findings.<sup>65</sup> Lew Barton, whose op-ed byline identified him as "Lumbee Historian" meanwhile attacked the ethics, the science, and the purpose of the study: "Is our history, as all three races in Robeson

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Associated Press, "Robeson Indian Racial Research Findings Revealed," *Robesonian*, May 16, 1973, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> "'Race Findings' News Story Not Staff Report," *Robesonian*, May 17, 1973, 1.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> William S. Pollitzer letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, June 6, 1973, 14.

County assert it, true? Or do we yield to a team of nitwit researchers?"<sup>66</sup>

While a subsequent chapter will examine the posture and entailments of white media coverage in greater depth, the goal here is to establish the backdrop against which the *Voice* emerged as an alternative, combining proximity, social memory, and symbolic rhetoric in a mediated public sphere for Indians.

### **A Rural Alternative Weekly: Using Proximity to Reproduce Community**

A paradox of alternative media, as Robert Hackett argued, is that the more oppression vernacular groups experience, the more the vernacular media flourish, even as oppressive conditions make it more difficult for these media to survive.<sup>67</sup> As a media organization, the *Voice* is an instructive case study because the newspaper did not solely concern itself with what Christopher Phillips has termed "hot" issues that visibly spark rebellion and revolution.<sup>68</sup> This is not to say that the *Voice* in the 1970s either lacked for hot issues or sought to avoid them: As this study will demonstrate, the newspaper took a prominent, activist stance on the indicators that created an underclass in Robeson County: voter disenfranchisement, educational inequity, lack of economic opportunity, racial bias in arrests and adjudication. But there was first a subtler ideological task for the newspaper. Before the *Voice* could hope to sway readers politically, it needed to constitute its audience socially.

Reporting on a local political issue that caused a furor among Indians, Barton wrote in 1977

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<sup>66</sup> Lew Barton, "Raps Research Project on Robeson Blood Lines," *Robesonian*, June 7, 1973, 2.

<sup>67</sup> Robert A. Hackett, "New Vistas for Peace Journalism: Alternative Media and Communication Rights," in Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, Jake Lynch, and Robert A. Hackett, *Expanding Peace Journalism: Comparative and Critical Approaches* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2006), 35-49.

<sup>68</sup> Christopher Phillips, "Team Arab: *al-Jazeera* and the Flagging of Everyday Arabism During the 2008 Beijing Olympics," *Nations and Nationalism* 18, no. 3: 504-526.

that the question was "currently being debated in barber shops, restaurants, coffee shops, drug stores, churches, and schools (wherever people congregate) throughout Robeson County."<sup>69</sup> The *Voice* became one more venue for Indians to congregate and debate, and the *Voice* used proximity—the kinship of shared place—to establish itself as a community newspaper.

Community news or "soft news" is a record of common consciousness; as Janice Hume argued in her study of obituaries, the process of selection and commemoration "may help distribute a type of ideology" to audiences, and also preserve everyday attitudes that might otherwise elude historians.<sup>70</sup> Lumbee researcher Glenn Ellen Starr Stilling seemed to describe such quotidian material in enumerating the types of coverage that her bibliographic index to the *Voice* excluded, whether because these did not meet the threshold of historical import, or because such topics were ubiquitous: engagements, weddings and anniversaries; family reunions; birthday parties; beauty pageants; awards and retirements; club, church, and fire department news; high school homecomings; and obituaries.<sup>71</sup>

Yet this vast, uncatalogued news hole is the space where average readers are most likely to see their names in print and their lives described. In part, the following analysis will examine how the *Voice* performed the role of the weekly which media historian Beth Garfrerick compared to a communal "family album," linking people to a specific place with a

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<sup>69</sup> Bruce Barton, "There Can Be Justice!," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 27, 1977, 2.

<sup>70</sup> Janice Hume, *Obituaries in American Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000) 16-22.

<sup>71</sup> Glenn Ellen Starr, *The Lumbee Indians: An Annotated Bibliography with Chronology and Index* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1996).

sense of continuity and home.<sup>72</sup> In contrast to metro daily newspapers, Garfrerick argued, weeklies could adopt a more personal, subjective style.<sup>73</sup> Southern historian Thomas Clark drew a related distinction. Where daily newspaper editors tended to smooth over opinion with what he termed "trappings of synthetic objectivity," editors of weeklies were historically closer to their readers, held more trust, and shared their readers' values.<sup>74</sup>

At its most literal, proximity means being in and of the same place as another—an idea related to identity—with reference points so familiar that they can be left unstated. Applying this to the function of community news echoes social psychologist Michael Billig's notion of "banal nationalism."<sup>75</sup> This is the idea that media, among other cultural institutions, reproduce identity through what is everyday and taken for granted.<sup>76</sup> Addressing readers as members of an identified group (such as a nation or a people) established a shorthand of assumptions found embedded in the small words of pedestrian features such as sports results and weather reports. These were words such as "our" (versus their) or "here" (versus elsewhere),<sup>77</sup> words that from their context assumed not only shared space, but shared consciousness and point of view.

Each edition of the *Voice* was designed to provide both alternative and community

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<sup>72</sup> Beth H. Garfrerick, "The Community Weekly Newspaper: Telling America's Stories," *American Journalism* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 151-157.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas D. Clark, "The Country Newspaper: A Factor in Southern Opinion, 1865-1930," *Journal of Southern History* 14, no. 1 (February 1940): 3-33.

<sup>75</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995), 6-12, 37-58.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.



news—beginning with the front page. There was the expected mix of government and political news, sometimes with a wider-than-local lens and often with a critical edge. But on the right side of the page, which modern broadsheet layout traditionally reserved for the lead news "hot spot,"<sup>78</sup> was a standing column of community items headlined "People and places and things." Typical was the January 26, 1978 edition. The left-hand news side of the page was Lumbee-focused: Democratic US Senate candidate and Robeson native Mac Smith paid a visit to the *Voice* office;<sup>79</sup> there had been a well-attended meeting on Indian education;<sup>80</sup> Robeson County's District Attorney Joe Freeman Britt's notoriety grew with the prosecutor's prejudicial remarks in the felony drug trial of a Lumbee;<sup>81</sup> Lumbee VFW commander and voter registration organizer Thadis Oxendine filed for local office. The right half of the page was the "soft" news that was the essence of the community aspect: an Indian Education Parent Committee meeting, enlistments in the Air Force and Marine Corps by Indian sons, a Pembroke High Booster Club meeting, a schedule for the Pembroke State homecoming.<sup>82</sup> In the inside pages as well, soft news was the glue that bound the *Voice* to its audience, and readers to each other.

In the case of the *Voice*, proximity also enabled presence and consistency. For a small community like Pembroke, broadcast outlets and even the county seat daily were too far

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<sup>78</sup> William Ryan and Theodore Conover, *Graphic Communications Today* (Clifton Park, NY: Thomson, 2004), 538.

<sup>79</sup> "McNeill Smith Senatorial Candidate Visits the C.I.V.," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 26, 1978, 1.

<sup>80</sup> "Positive Concepts and Academic Excellence set as Goals of Indian Education," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 26, 1978, 1.

<sup>81</sup> "Supreme Court Reprimands Joe Freeman Britt," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 26, 1978, 1.

<sup>82</sup> "People and Places and Things," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 26, 1978, 1.

away to provide regular coverage of day-to-day doings. This network function of local newspapers sheds light on Lumbee field worker Brenda Brooks's recollection of a 1972 voter registration drive in rural Robeson County, where she found isolation on the part of Indians displaced from farming but left out of what rural southerners called "public work," namely, manufacturing. Recalled Brooks: "I often found five or six members at one house, standing around one person, reading a newspaper. They lack education. They lack it to such an extent that they cannot go to the factory, fill out an application, and get a job."<sup>83</sup>

What Brooks described were the fire district back roads the *Voice* sought to reach. Much as Barton became a booster of Lumbee business, a chronicler of Lumbee youth achievements, and a rabble-rouser of Robeson county politics, the *Voice* never lost its primary identity as a newspaper for country people. For the rural poor especially, the *Voice* was more affordable at the 1977 subscription rate of \$7 per year (\$27 in 2016 dollars), as compared to the subscription price of the county's daily newspaper, \$34 (\$133 in 2016 dollars).<sup>84</sup> Moreover, the *Voice* created a sense of belonging for Indians. Barton cultivated community correspondents from each Indian crossroads, and he printed news of fish fry dinners and church homecomings. Aligned with the prominence Robeson Indians placed on church membership, the newspaper printed church news such as guest sermons and suppers in a front-page column, and ran a weekly devotional essay, "According to Scripture" on the editorial page.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Brenda Brooks interview by Samuel Proctor, July 31, 1972, Lumbee Collection, Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, Department of History, University of Florida.

<sup>84</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index, <http://www.data.bls.gov/timeseries>

<sup>85</sup> The religious column by evangelist Ted Brooks ran at the top of page two each week during the sample period.

The placement and space devoted to community news was a deliberate business plan. As Barton once observed about the importance the *Voice* gave to birth announcements and birthdays: "One of the secrets of the newspaper business is to keep the mamas and the papas happy."<sup>86</sup> Hyperlocal community columns meanwhile functioned as collective telephone party lines, carrying weekly updates on in the lives of Indian neighbors: who was home nursing the flu, or enjoying a weekend at the beach, or visiting relatives out of town.<sup>87</sup> Such proximity implied community ownership and editorial accountability. Barton, as a small-town newspaper editor, answered personally for mistakes of process and judgment. Readers called Barton to debate his editorials; Barton, in turn, used his column to lament his faults, and his battles with demons past and present, alcoholism and newspaper deadlines. A front-page humor column with a tagline identifying Barton as "Editor & Janitor of the Carolina Indian Voice" gave readers insight into the news routines and priorities.<sup>88</sup> Explaining why "my mistakes are monumental," Barton recounted mixing the chemical stop bath incorrectly in his darkroom, ruining two rolls of film that contained a weekend's worth of assignments the editor had covered: A twins' birthday, a Jaycees banquet, a Deep Branch school meeting, portraits of two political candidates, and a senior citizen with an eight-foot tomato plant.<sup>89</sup>

The *Voice* likewise projected identity in what it did *not* print, specifically, crime news. Granted, the weekly publishing cycle precluded spot news; the *Voice* attempted it only rarely,

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<sup>86</sup> Brue Barton, "The Perils of the Newspaper Business," *Carolina Indian Voice*, September 29, 1977, 1.

<sup>87</sup> Barton ran weekly columns from Pembroke, Mt. Airy, and other communities, which consisted of status updates gathered by community correspondents such as Bazie Hardin and Violet Locklear, or submitted to them by readers.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

and even then, focused on the community impact rather than the news event itself.<sup>90</sup> But the lack of crime news in particular was more intentional and indicative of the newspaper's alternative view. One of the more serious complaints Indian readers historically leveled at white media, in this case the daily *Robesonian*, was the perception that Indians only made the news columns when charged with crimes.<sup>91</sup> Barton was hardly unaware of crime in Robeson County,<sup>92</sup> which at the time had the highest per capita homicide rate in the state, and was triple the national average.<sup>93</sup> But as this chapter's discussion of unifying and decentering journalism will explain, the *Voice* approached the issue from a vastly different standpoint and ideology than that of law and order, a dominant theme of white mass media in the 1970s. The *Voice* advocated for equal treatment under the law, and advanced the idea that the legal system subverted justice and was a weapon particularly against Indians and African

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<sup>90</sup> See, for example, "5 Children's Deaths Bring Out the 'Goodness' in Robesonians," and, "Five Deaths Linked to Stove Fire," *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 24, 1977, 1. The deaths of five Indian girls (including baby twins) from a woodstove fire at a Raft Swamp farmhouse was a news story too big to ignore. But even in this instance, the *Voice* foregrounded the community aspect by placing an article about a relief fund set up by neighbors "red, black and white" higher than the shorter hard-news story about the fire itself.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, "'A New Day for Indians' Hailed in Pembroke Talk," *Robesonian*, July 4, 1971, 1. Pembroke native Brantley Blue, a Lumbee who was the first Indian member of the US Indian Claims Commission, in a speech at the Lumbee Pow-Wow, said the perception when he grew up in Robeson County had been that "the *Robesonian* never mentions an Indian unless it is reporting about his arrest or trial concerning a crime." Blue argued that this had changed by the 1970s, and supporting his point, the *Robesonian* ran the pow-wow coverage on page one.

<sup>92</sup> See, for example, Bruce Barton, "As I See It," *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 11, 1977, 2. Barton wrote, "death continues to haunt Robeson County. There have been drownings and murders and unfortunate deaths recently." But the *Voice* did not carry stories on these incidents.

<sup>93</sup> See, FBI Uniform Crime Report, 1972, 1973; Harriet J. Kupferer and John A. Humphrey, "Fatal Indian Violence in North Carolina," *Anthropological Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (October 1975): 236-244. The US homicide rate was 9.0 (per 100,000) in 1972 and 9.4 in 1973, while Robeson County's rate was 29 per 100,000 for the same two years.

Americans. A typical example of this approach was the 1977 murder case against James Calvin Jones of Pembroke. Reporting in the *Voice* on the October 1977 death penalty sentencing of Jones, convicted of murder in a homicide on July 3, 1977, Barton focused on the idea that the first person being sent to the gas chamber under North Carolina's new death penalty statute was a Lumbee. Tellingly, the *Voice* had not covered the original crime, the arrest, or the trial of the domestic-related slaying that bitterly divided the two Pembroke families involved and attracted gavel-to-gavel coverage in the *Robesonian*.<sup>94</sup>

The emphasis on kinship and commonality between Indians—rather than divisions—expressed in the slogan next to the newspaper's flag, "Dedicated to the best in all of us,"<sup>95</sup> was one of the ways that the *Voice* leveraged small-town proximity. Not only was the organization a family endeavor, with three siblings forming the masthead and father Lew Barton a columnist; the *Voice* approached Indian readers on a first-name basis. For example, a service recognizing a prominent and popular citizen was headlined, "Sandy Plains Church Honors 'Mr. Lonnie,'"<sup>96</sup> assuming that readers knew Lonnie Oxendine, or in another case, the featured "Miz' Beulah," a homemaker named Beulah Jones known for her green thumb and

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<sup>94</sup> The Jones trial pitted defense lawyer Horace Locklear, a state legislator who was a key death penalty opponent, against prosecutor Joe Freeman Britt, the district attorney who by 1976 held the record for the most death penalty convictions in the nation, with 42 convicted murderers on Death Row, 4 percent of the national total. Contrasted to the *Voice*'s lack of coverage of the killing and subsequent court case, the *Robesonian* ran a dozen articles on the initial case, which it called "a bizarre and complicated tale of jealousy and misaligned loyalties." See, Karen Vela, "'Tale of Jealousy' Emerges As Murder Testimony Ends," *Robesonian*, October 20, 1977, 2.

<sup>95</sup> *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 18, 1973, 1. The motto appeared from the newspaper's inception.

<sup>96</sup> "Sandy Plains Church Honors 'Mr. Lonnie,'" *Carolina Indian Voice*, September 14, 1978, 2.

holiday yard ornaments.<sup>97</sup> In what was assumed and unstated, the *Voice* reproduced community and kinship in its pages, as if readers were one extended family.<sup>98</sup> Projecting the ideal Lumbee, the *Voice* respected its elders, prominently displayed trophies of Lumbee youth, and spoke the church-going, hard-working language of the Indian small business owner. Even for Lumbees who had moved away, the *Voice* created a tangible network, like a letter from home each week, and also a way to correspond back to the community. A Lumbee mother in Illinois, determined to raise her sons with "dignity" regarding their racial background, wrote about showing her seven-year-old Little Leaguer a front-page interview in the *Voice* with pro baseball player Gene Locklear for "proof that Gene Locklear was an authentic Yankee player."<sup>99</sup> Similarly, a reader in California who was married to a Lumbee wrote to describe how she pinned Barton's columns and letters to her kitchen bulletin board.<sup>100</sup>

For Indians at home and abroad, the *Voice* was a textual record, and organizationally, its function as a newspaper and a communal printer became difficult to separate. Pembroke increasingly relied on the newspaper to publicize upcoming events and relay news of births, deaths, celebrations, and other milestones, but the *Voice* was simultaneously handling job printing related to these rituals. Barton remarked in passing about the frenetic makeup of his

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<sup>97</sup> "Halloween Season Evident in Miz' Beulah's Yard," *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 12, 1978, 1.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, Mrs. Bazie Hardin, "Pembroke News," and Mrs. Brenda Lowry, "Mt. Airy News," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 19, 1978, 6; "A Season For Gigantic Turnips," and "Senior Citizens Honored with Christmas Party & Cantata." *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 5, 1978, 8.

<sup>99</sup> Olivia Holmes Oxendine, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, May 5, 1977, 2.

<sup>100</sup> Toni Chavers, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 20, 1977, 2.

business during one particularly busy period in June 1978. The *Voice*, he wrote, "in the last few days, laid out, printed, and assembled 13,000 books of sundry kind, funeral programs, a newspaper, faced our banker who looked askance at our operations, etc., etc., etc. And we are weary."<sup>101</sup>

Like family members, then, readers could argue and disagree with the *Voice* without renouncing the relationship. As this study will show, that point became critical when the newspaper encountered crippling financial woes in 1978 and turned to readers for help, as one might turn to an extended family. On the one hand, *Voice* editorials tended to go out on the most precarious limb,<sup>102</sup> for example criticizing the largest Native American church in Robeson County (and possibly in the United States) for electing a popular white pastor, an ill-considered screed Barton came to regret.<sup>103</sup> But proximity also worked in Barton's favor. In the midst of furor, Barton might pen an appreciation of popular Scout leader Walter Pinchbeck, identifying himself as "one of Mr. Walter's boys,"<sup>104</sup> or recount a visit he paid the bereaved widow of a prominent Indian businessman killed in a car accident,<sup>105</sup> the widow later thanking Barton in a letter for coming to "visit my humble little cabin in the pines and

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<sup>101</sup> "Death Keeps Stalking Us," *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 29, 1978, 2.

<sup>102</sup> "Readers Respond to My Column Last Week," *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 24, 1978, 2.

<sup>103</sup> Bruce Barton, "Some Thoughts On Rev. Bob Mangum's Appointment at Prospect United Methodist Church," *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 17, 1978, 2. Barton was roundly criticized for the editorial, including by his own father, and later apologized to readers.

<sup>104</sup> Bruce Barton, "As I See It," *Carolina Indian Voice*, April 21, 1977, 2. In a later edition, the newspaper ran a lengthy oral history with Walter Pinchbeck, the Cree scout leader who had been featured in *Life's* photo spread in 1958. See, David Eliades, "A Conversation With Walter Pinchbeck," *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 23, 1977, 7.

<sup>105</sup> Bruce Barton, "But Last Week Was Not All Sticks and Stones and Criticism," *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 24, 1978, 2.

write this tribute to Harry."<sup>106</sup> The *Voice* was becoming an institution, and as with the prodigal son Barton had been, readers could forgive its excesses by chalking them up to youth.

### **Delineating Place: How the *Voice* Fused Present and Past**

This ideal proximity between Lumbee youth and elders was the outward manifestation of a profound relationship at the core of tribal identity: the correlation between the present and the shared Lumbee past. The pages of the *Voice* were filled with history, but always in the sense of living history that served to animate the present, and to tether a unified body to a place imbued with felt meaning.

In asserting narrative authority, Lumbees in the 1970s appropriated the same tools that had been used to write the story of an "outlaw" a century earlier—serialized journalism, dramatization, and locally written histories, with each form supporting and credentialing the others. Informing this analysis of collective memory in the *Voice* is Keith Basso's idea of place-making.<sup>107</sup> It is a universal tool of historical imagination, linking people's past to the landscape, and constructing felt attachments in the present through "narrative art" or "historical theater."<sup>108</sup> Neither passive nor received, place-making is an act of agency, recalling the oft-quoted notion from Albert Camus that sense of place is "not just something that people know and feel, it is something people do."<sup>109</sup> As to the form of narration, Lisa Brooks argued that there is no hard line between the written and spoken

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<sup>106</sup> Mary H. Locklear letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 31, 1978, 2.

<sup>107</sup> Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 5-8.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>109</sup> Albert Camus, *Noces Suivi de L'Ete* (Paris: Edition Gallimard, 1959), 88.



performance.<sup>110</sup> What the Native American view of history privileges, as Vine Deloria Jr. saw it, is the "what" and "where" of events over the "when."<sup>111</sup>

The most important historical marker remained the story of Henry Berry Lowry, which became a signature theme of the *Voice*, and a litmus of the present and more recent past. Of key significance to the idea of the vernacular writing back the past was the oral tradition that grew up around the Lowry legend, and the *Voice* reaffirmed orality as vital to the production of Lumbee identity.<sup>112</sup> Between 1974-1978, Barton's brother, Garry Barton, serialized the Lowry story weekly in the *Voice*. The series, "The Life and Times of Henry Berry Lowry," told the tale in short, dramatic episodes which ended in cliff-hangers foreshadowing the next segment. ("Next week: More crimes and depredations charged to the Lowry gang.")<sup>113</sup> The series alternately adhered to and diverted from the Mary Norment narrative of a century earlier, emphasizing the mitigating gestures of chivalry Norment included, but not the aggravating acts she attributed to cold-bloodedness.<sup>114</sup> Where Norment's version had

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<sup>110</sup> Lisa Brooks, *The Common Post: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008) 240-241.

<sup>111</sup> Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003) 61-75.

<sup>112</sup> "Storytelling a Popular Feature at LRDA Lumbee Longhouse Learning Center Kindergarten."

<sup>113</sup> Garry Barton, "The Life and Times of Henry Berry Lowry," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 6, 1977, 4.

<sup>114</sup> See, Mary Norment, *The Lowrie History, As Acted in Part by Henry Berry Lowrie* (Wilmington, NC: Daily Journal Printer, 1875); Garry Barton, "The Life and Times of Henry Berry Lowry," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 6, 1977, 3; and February 24, 1977, 9. The *Voice* presented the execution of the Lowry patriarch as cold-blooded murder rather than a military-style firing squad. Meanwhile, Barton's telling repeated the claim about Henry Berry Lowry: "[T]wo things he has never done... he has never committed arson nor offered insult to white females."

functioned as an elaborate captivity narrative, Garry Barton interpreted Lowry as a story of romance and heroic resistance.<sup>115</sup> Rhoda Strong, who married Lowry, meanwhile emerged as the hero's female counterpart, with the same qualities: heroism, loyalty, intelligence, beauty.<sup>116</sup>

At times, transcripts of court testimony from Lowry's trial, for instance recounting the execution of Lowry's father "in cold blood,"<sup>117</sup> carried striking referents to the week's news. A story dominating coverage in the *Voice* in spring 1977, for example, was the severe beating of an Indian motorist in a state Highway Patrol traffic stop, an incident witnessed by the town manager of Pembroke, who swore out a complaint against the troopers.<sup>118</sup> Synchronizing its coverage, the *Voice* described the ambush of the Lowry Gang by a posse commanded by "the cruel and brutal white sheriff"<sup>119</sup> and meanwhile reported the contemporary news story of the official clearing of the troopers despite glaring evidence of

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid. Barton wrote: "Although many writers contend that Henry Berry Lowry was motivated by vengeance for the murders of his father and brother, nothing could be further from the truth; the 20-year-old Indian youth was madly in love."

<sup>116</sup> For a discussion of Rhoda Strong's character, see, Eneida Sanderson Pugh, "Rhoda Strong Lowry: The Swamp Queen of Scuffletown," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 26, no. 1 (2002): 67-81.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> See, "Town Manager Complains of Trooper Brutality and Abuse of Power," *Carolina Indian Voice*, May 26, 1977, 1; "Indian Commission Looks Into Alleged Highway Patrol Brutality," *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 8, 1978, 1; Bruce Barton, "As I See It," *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 8, 1978, 2. The troopers were cleared of any wrongdoing, and the motorist, O'Neal Oxendine, was found guilty despite having 32 stitches in the back of his head and not being taken to the emergency room for more than two hours, according to court testimony. Barton incessantly editorialized about the case, running a full-size copy of the signed resolution calling for an inquest, and documenting the absence of Indians on the Highway Patrol. Gov. Jim Martin later integrated the state highway patrol unit in Robeson.

<sup>119</sup> Garry Barton, "The Life and Times of Henry Berry Lowry," *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 23, 1977, 3.

excessive force.<sup>120</sup> This evidence included the eyewitness report by an elected official, and injuries Bruce Barton had been enlisted to photograph, among them a "gaping hole" in the back of the suspect's head.<sup>121</sup> As Bruce Barton hammered away at the open-and-shut trooper investigation as "shades of Watergate," Garry Barton's Lowry serial described the "pools of blood" left by the ambushed Lowry Gang. In letters to the editor, readers were mindful of the past-present connection, writing, "Remember Henry B. Lowry," and "one way or another, we will get justice."<sup>122</sup>

Similarly, in the edition carrying the initial story of the traffic stop beating, Garry Barton drew a parallel to racial profiling in the nineteenth century. Describing a former Confederate colonel's command that the posse chasing Lowry "arrest and detain all persons who may come in contact with you unless they are known to be all right,"<sup>123</sup> Barton concluded: "In other words, they were ordered to arrest any and all Indians they came into contact with."<sup>124</sup> In another parallel to the news, "Life and Times" offered a critique of predatory lending, during the same period that Bruce Barton repeatedly editorialized against the white-run

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<sup>120</sup> "N.C. Highway Patrol Rules 'No Evidence' in Brutality Case Involving Troopers Evelyn and Covington," *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 16, 1977, 1.

<sup>121</sup> Bruce Barton, "Justice in Robeson County Seemingly is Reserved for Dark-Skinned Folks," *Carolina Indian Voice*, May 26, 1977, 2.

<sup>122</sup> See, Mrs. Cesary Jacobs, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 9, 1977, 2; Brantley Blue, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 9, 1977, 2; Floyd Freeman, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 16, 1977, 2; Madeleine Locklear Winninger, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 7, 1977 2.

<sup>123</sup> Garry Barton, "The Life and Times of Henry Berry Lowry," *Carolina Indian Voice*, May 26, 1977, 5.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

Robeson Savings and Loan.<sup>125</sup> In the Lowry era, the reputed head of the Klan extended "easy credit" to "mulattoes and niggers," forcing them to work in his sawmill or distillery when they were unable to pay him back.<sup>126</sup> Wrote Garry Barton:

Sad to say, many Indians and Blacks in the Scuffletown area felt that Taylor was doing them a favor by extending credit to them. It never occurred to them that he was taking advantage of them.<sup>127</sup>

In Barton's narrative, the problems of the twentieth century fit a pattern of post-contact native history, and for Lumbees, contested identity.

Reinforcing Lowry's place at the center of Lumbee identity, "Life and Times" featured a transcript of Andrew Strong's court testimony, in which he recalled a Confederate Guard official, John Taylor, rejecting pleas for mercy from "all you mulattoes."<sup>128</sup> Here, Garry Barton made a sweeping conclusion about Lowry's historic significance in the present. He wrote:

The largest majority, like Taylor, refused to acknowledge Robeson County Indians as such ... labelling them mulattoes ... It is little wonder Henry Berry Lowry rebelled. If he had not stood up for his people, it is highly possible that the bathrooms in Lumberton would still be labelled "whites," "Negroes," and "Indians."<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> See, Bruce Barton, "I Am Opposed to Robeson Savings & Loan Association Establishing a Branch Office in Pembroke," *Carolina Indian Voice*, November 27, 1977, 2; Bruce Barton, "A Cause Célèbre: Robeson Savings & Loan, Yes or No," *Carolina Indian Voice*, December 1, 1977, 2. In opposing a Pembroke branch, Barton wrote on November 27, 1977, that the S&L directors "talk glibly about providing a service, but their primary interest, as I see it, is getting as much of our money as possible."

<sup>126</sup> Garry Barton, "The Life and Times of Henry Berry Lowry," *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 25, 1977, 5.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Garry Barton, "The Life and Times of Henry Berry Lowry," *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 21, 1977, 3.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

Regardless of whether Lowry identified as Indian in his lifetime, he had become the embodiment of Indian resistance, and the *Voice* became a site of public memory. As Garry Barton viewed it, Lowry's "fighting spirit" had been evident in the comparatively bloodless KKK routing at Maxton, and years later, the Indians' procedural battle against voter disenfranchisement. Wrote Barton: "Changing with the times, instead of fighting in the streets, the Indians fought the 'double-voting' battle in the courts."<sup>130</sup> The juxtaposition of a vexing present with the knowable, understandable past gave the unfolding news of the day a narrative structure, and the fleeting present a dimension of permanence. Even partisan ins and outs were framed in terms of the Lowry War. After a Democratic power play in 1978 to name a state senator to an unfulfilled term, for example, Bruce Barton complained that politics had not changed since Reconstruction.<sup>131</sup>

Interpretive as the Lowry saga was, the series was more than just a received experience for readers. For the duration, the *Voice* solicited readers to help revise history, inviting them to contact the author with "tidbits concerning Lowry."<sup>132</sup> In introducing the series, Bruce Barton recalled his youthful reverence for Lowry: "We (Indian youth in Robeson) always put him in the best possible light. We talked about his badness. . . . The height of our ambition was to be as bad as Henry Berry Lowry." Barton now addressed the adult Indian reader:

I see him as a man who felt things deeply. A man of honor. A man who would knock a noggin' if he had to... Henry Berry Lowry deserves our adulation, our worshipful stare. Long live Henry Berry Lowry, the best

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Bruce Barton, "No Wonder Henry Berry Lowry Was a Republican Party Sympathizer!," *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 27, 1978, 2.

<sup>132</sup> Bruce Barton, "Henry Berry Lowry, My Hero," *Carolina Indian Voice*, November 21, 1974, 2.

hero a people ever had.<sup>133</sup>

The use of Lowry was constitutive not only in the sense that it united the Lumbee audience around a Reconstruction redeemer. In itself, commemoration of Lowry became an act of historical agency on the part of ordinary Lumbees, whom the *Voice* encouraged to valorize and cast Lowry in “the best possible light.” Rather than impeding collective memory, the dearth of hard or impartial information recorded in white histories and the journalism that informed them *enabled* Lumbees to reconstruct a usable past. The mystery surrounding Lowry and his disappearance left Lumbees free to sculpt a figure who would serve such narrative needs as honor, bravery, strength, survival, and visibility. Nor did the absence of a surviving photograph or composite sketch of Lowry discourage the *Voice* from representing him visually. Full-page house ads for the serialized story, including a clip-out subscription coupon, featured a striking period portrait of a bearded, iron-gazed man that the ad implied, incorrectly, was Lowry.<sup>134</sup> On one level, it did not matter. Lowry had become a metaphorical Lumbee Everyman. The axiom was that every Lumbee man or woman could be Henry Berry or Rhoda Lowry's proxy, or at least walk in their footsteps.

The most tactile text during this time was *Strike at the Wind!*,<sup>135</sup> the locally staged and

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> That photograph, iconic enough that it remained a widely-used image of the Lumbee hero for the next fifty years, was later identified as Quinn Godwin by Godwin's great-great-grandson, Dean Chavers. The telltale facial scar below Lowry's left eye described in bounty offers posted on Lowry was not present, Garry Barton wrote, because of the photo's "poor quality." See, also, Mary Norment, *The Lowrie History*, 10. Norment described the scar as crescent-shaped and black, "said to have been made by an iron pot falling on him when a child."

<sup>135</sup> Willie French Lowery and Randolph Umberger, *Strike at the Wind!* (Pembroke, NC: Robeson Historical Drama, Inc., 1976). The two-act musical, which included 15 songs, ran each summer from July 1, 1976 to 1996, and had several subsequent revivals. See,

Lumbee-scored drama of Lowry's life, a project the *Voice* tirelessly endorsed as a permanent outdoor production, frequently on its front page.<sup>136</sup> As early as 1973, the newspaper had urged readers to sign pledge cards to help raise money for the production, but put one condition on the newspaper's support: that an Indian play the role of Henry Berry Lowry: "Andy Griffith is not suited for the role of Henry Berry Lowry, an Indian's Indian. A real Indian must play the role of Henry Berry Lowry."<sup>137</sup> Barton's reference to Andy Griffith, who as a young actor played Sir Walter Raleigh in the outdoor drama *The Lost Colony* in coastal Manteo, North Carolina, was facetious, given that Griffith was by then a celebrity. But Barton's synecdoche—using the person of Griffith to embody a broad historical critique—had a serious purpose as well, expressing Indian ownership of the Lowry story, and bordering the exclusivity of "real Indians." This reflected awareness of how Native Americans had been usurped, both in media constructions using non-Indians actors in "ethnic" roles,<sup>138</sup> and in cultural appropriation outside of mass media.<sup>139</sup> If whites hijacked

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Christopher Arris Oakley, "The Legend of Henry Berry Lowry: Strike at the Wind and Lumbee Indians of North Carolina," *Mississippi Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (December 2006): 59-80.

<sup>136</sup> The *Voice* published its first editorial in support of *Strike!* on August 9, 1973, the first of 165 stories, photos, reviews, or letters about the production over the next two decades. Illustrating the importance the *Voice* placed on the show, 88 of these items ran on the front page.

<sup>137</sup> Bruce Barton, "Adolph Dial Has a Dream," *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 24, 1975, 2.

<sup>138</sup> See, Linda Deutsch, "Indian Movie Image Does New Turnabout With Major Changes," *Robesonian*, August 30, 1970, 17. Even though post-Alcatraz Hollywood studios produced a group of films sympathetic to the cause of Native Americans, these circa-1970 Indian-themed mainstream movies starred white actors such as Robert Blake, Richard Harris, and Dustin Hoffmann. (An exception was Anthony Quinn, whose mother was Mexican Indian.)

<sup>139</sup> The usurping of Indian identity in Hollywood or on stage was not the only concern about protecting native culture. There had long been non-Indians who were at best "hobbyists"

the performance, they hijacked narrative authority over the native past, and native identity itself.

Because the reenactment was the rightful claim of Lowry's descendants, Barton argued that they had the credentials to play the parts. Reiterating this point after the production debuted, Barton in 1977 used the front page to take issue with a *Fayetteville Times* theater reviewer's comment that the locally cast actors were "unprofessional."<sup>140</sup> Barton emphasized the believability of players who "cared about their roles," including a distant relative of Henry Berry Lowry cast as the outlaw.<sup>141</sup> This was an alternative view of narrative authority over the past. Symbols mattered, Barton wrote, and symbols drew meaning from how they connected past to present. Rather than employ disconnected actors to perform a script, he argued that Indians playing Indians "makes sense," with the "authenticity further embossed by the fact that the setting of the drama is in the area where Henry Berry Lowry and his band walked about."<sup>142</sup> This implied that identity derived from not only from place and kin, but also actions in that place. The symbolic past infused the land and its inhabitants as a place and a people of memory.

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appropriating selected New Age elements of native culture such as sweat lodges or pow-wows, or at worst, con-artists attempting to cash in. In 1977, Barton ran a half-page article warning his readers that a white German-American named Chief Thunderbird Webber and his wife, Princess Sunflower Morningstar, were fraudulently collecting tribal "registration fees" on behalf of the "United Lumbee Nation of NORTH CAROLINA and America Inc. *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 14, 1977, 2. According to a pamphlet obtained and reprinted by Barton, Chief Thunderbird had "resigned as Chief of the Georgia Cherokees to help the Lumbee People as their Grand Council Head Chief to form the Lumbees into a nation." The Georgia Cherokees disputed Thunderbird's account.

<sup>140</sup> Bruce Barton, "Review of *Strike at the Wind*," *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 14, 1977, 1.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.



What the *Voice* advocated in *Strike at the Wind!* was thus the return to Pembroke of a past that Indian publics could perform and inhabit, a century after Broadway audiences cheered the white reporter-protagonist in the exported version of the Lowry bio, *The Swamp Outlaws*. With *Strike!*, performance and reality blurred. Carnell Locklear, a well-liked Lumbee actor who played the colorful Boss Strong, opened a café in Pembroke that advertised and was also featured editorially in the *Voice* as “Boss Strong’s.”<sup>143</sup> Locklear was already known to the community, having challenged an unpopular white school board member for her seat, with the *Voice* urging Indians to support him.<sup>144</sup> The idea that Lumbees were reenacting the past resonated with readers. It was the letters to the editor column that raised the allegation of racial profiling—an issue the *Voice* had not yet explored as of 1977—when an actor who had played Lowry in *Strike!* was stopped at Pembroke State and arrested on a charge of marijuana possession.<sup>145</sup> A second letter writer alleged that upon visiting the driver in jail, she heard one of the guards jeer, “Yea, we got Henry Berry back there.”<sup>146</sup> For the reader, the jailer’s taunt not only ridiculed the young actor, picked up on a petty drug charge, as a pale imitation of the Lumbee hero; it also belittled modern Indians’ effort to identify with a heroic past.

Lowry had become a subjunctive feature of Indians’ historical imagination, and this imagining took place socially rather than in isolation. The collective memory of Lowry that cohered around “Life and Times” and *Strike!* was collaborative, reviving childhood stories

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<sup>143</sup> “In the Pines Café Now Open for Business,” *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 21, 1977, 1.

<sup>144</sup> Bruce Barton. “Pembroke vs. Lumberton,” *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 14, 1976, 2.

<sup>145</sup> Horace Locklear, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 3, 1977, 2.

<sup>146</sup> Sally Blanks, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 3, 1977, 2.

and early intimations of native identity. Such was the case when the *Voice* ran a front-page feature on another actor who played Lowry in the second season of *Strike!*, Melton Lowry (also a Henry Berry descendant).<sup>147</sup> The actor told the *Voice* that his grandfather lived in a cabin that once belonged to the Lowry gang. As a child, the actor would find coins beneath the house that the outlaws, according to his grandfather's lore, had dropped while counting their loot.<sup>148</sup> The past was more than a flat backdrop for the actor, whom the *Voice* said resembled the famous ancestor he played down to his heavy black beard. As he told Barton:

You know, history repeats itself. Henry Berry Lowrie [*sic*] personified [Robeson Indians'] struggle then, and today. And you know something else? I would have been in that gang, and if Henry Berry Lowrie wouldn't have had me, I would have sneaked around behind him.<sup>149</sup>

A new telling of the past covered the old, with traces still visible of previous outlines, like a pentimento. Juxtaposed to the Melton Lowry feature was a photo of a local doctor presenting a copy of the 1872 *Harper's Weekly* that featured the woodcut engravings to *Strike!* producers. The focus on orality continued in the next edition, when a standalone photo featured a further descendant of Lowry's holding an 1860 revolver he claimed once belonged to Steve Lowry that "still fires."<sup>150</sup> Like the expectation of eating at Boss Strong's café, authentic identity did not derive from treaties, certificates, or government blood tests. Authenticity, preserved orally, was the certitude that the past was taking up physical space in the present via collective memory. Barton's father, Lew Barton, wrote this about the Lumbee

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<sup>147</sup> Bruce Barton, "Melton Lowry Has Special Ties With Henry Berry Lowrie," *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 28, 1977, 1.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> "Steve Lowrie's Weapon Still Operational," *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 4, 1977, 4.

past in a 1977 *Voice* column:

Robeson's history is steeped in pathos and mystery. But above all, it is the story of ourselves. Here people live and love, struggle and die. It is the collective story of their triumphs and their failures, of their striving and accomplishing, of their hopes, fears, dreams and aspirations. But these are not people a thousand miles away. It is a story of you and your neighbor down the street.<sup>151</sup>

Lew Barton's proposition that the Lumbee story was not of "people a thousand miles away" was the argument that the past was not only the geographic *here*, but fused with the chronological *now*, implying that time was not linear but circular. And as the *Voice* began to invoke the physical presence of history, there was purpose in the circularity. The purpose was more pressing than nostalgia, tourism, an educational appeal to historic preservation of local lore, or even tribal pride. Bruce Barton's appeal was to ideology, spirituality, and political action. He wrote in the *Voice*:

Robeson County is lopsided, off base, afraid of her shadow, shamed by her past. The winds of Civil War madness still sweep through her ranks. And her nights are pitch black, eerie, unsettling. Everyone is on edge, paranoid, schizophrenic, looney-mad. The days of reckoning are here—right now! The spirit of Henry Berry Lowry moves in the land.<sup>152</sup>

The column evoked the clash of movements that was imminent. Much as Barton eschewed violence, he described a bottled-up inevitability, a bitter harvest sown by the misdeeds of the past that had reached into the present. Shared suffering equaled shared destiny. The *Voice* and its readers were preaching rebellion.

### **The *Voice* as a First Draft in Writing Back the Past**

As it had a century earlier, memory formation was migrating from mass media text to

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<sup>151</sup> Lew Barton, "Up from Dust and Darkness," *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 13, 1977, 3.

<sup>152</sup> Bruce Barton, "Madness Sweeps Robeson, or The Racial Games People Play," *Carolina Indian Voice*, September 4, 1975, 2.

history book, this time in the hands of Indians. The *Voice* devoted extensive coverage to the publication of histories by Lumbee authors in the 1970s,<sup>153</sup> and the process of intertextuality was reciprocal: The *Voice* lent these histories legitimacy, and the histories buttressed the *Voice*'s interpretive authority. The release of the first major Lumbee-written history, by Adolph Dial, generated a front-page, above-the-fold headline: "'The Only Land I Know' Off Press,"<sup>154</sup> and not due to a slow news cycle. The story appeared between hard-news items on a federal double-voting appeal hearing in Richmond and a story on an Indian rights hearing and a local speech by a jurist in the Wounded Knee trials,<sup>155</sup> an issue also covered in the next week's paper. Also inside the January 16 edition, a standalone photograph showed James N. Lowry, descendent of the Reconstruction-era rebel, laying a wreath at a grave, as his four children stood with their heads bowed. The headline read, "Great grandson of Henry Berry Lowry places wreath on father's grave," and the caption identified Lowry as great-grandson of "the great Indian warrior for Indian justice from 1864 to 1874."<sup>156</sup> The past, in a real sense, was "news." Not only did this function of mass media reverse Winston Churchill's epigram that history was written by the "victors," it showed the past as fused with the present, coloring and inflecting politics, community, and family life. This was evident in Bruce Barton's 1977 profile of a local doctor and great-nephew of Lowry who had written a

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<sup>153</sup> The Bartons profiled several Lumbee authors including Dr. Adolph Dial, Dr. Earl Lowry (son of Lumbee leader D.F. Lowry), and Lt. Milford Oxendine, an Air Force chaplain who wrote a book tracing Lumbee customs, rituals, and beliefs.

<sup>154</sup> Gene Warren, "'The Only Land I Know' Off Press" *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 16, 1975, 1.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 16, 1975, 3.

biography of the Lumbee hero after having “lived with the legend all his life.”<sup>157</sup> Barton wrote of Earl Lowry:

He has been researching and writing the book for fifty years. I know his book on Henry Berry Lowry will be factual and sympathetic. I am tired of reading what the wild-eyed anthropologists and thesis writers have said.<sup>158</sup>

By coupling “factual and sympathetic,” Barton implied an alternative definition of journalistic impartiality—that knowing all sides entailed *taking* a side. At the same time, he repudiated the claims of empiricism and objectivism of white historiography and anthropology, and by extension, journalism. The opposite of scientific, in Barton’s view, these conventional approaches were race-based, primitive, and thus “wild-eyed.” In an earlier demonstration of how Indians reclaimed the past from white anthropologists, the *Voice* and its readers condemned the use of Indian burial grounds by the state government. Twice, the newspaper had revealed that at Red Springs and Towne Creek, field staff from the Indian Museum of the Carolinas dug up Indian remains, sifted through dirt, and put ancestral bones on display.<sup>159</sup> The enthymematic aspect to the discourse was that neither the *Voice* nor its readers stated why the unearthing of remains was offensive, and how it echoed and perpetuated a history of attempted displacement and erasure. Robeson Indians’ past needed no introduction to *Voice* readers, and this assumption further constituted audience.

The denominator of historic suffering became an oft-evoked theme in the pages of the *Voice*, and like a map legend, the past was the key to the present. Just as past and present were overlaid, so were group identity and individual self. For example, one letter writer in

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<sup>157</sup> Bruce Barton, “As I See It,” *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 20, 1977, 2.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> “Digging ‘Indian Bones’ Discovered in Robeson County,” *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 6, 1975, 1.

early 1977 argued that “one of the reasons Indians of Robeson County are so tough and resilient is because they have had hard times. Hard times can either make you stronger or destroy you.”<sup>160</sup> Another letter writer cited a litany of injustice, broken treaties and suffering at the hands of whites, and expressed wonder at “those who cannot understand” the Wounded Knee occupation, the Bureau of Indian Affairs Building takeover and other acts of resistance on the pan-Indian stage.<sup>161</sup> Making the case for the self-sufficiency that comes from hardship, another letter writer, identified as a Pembroke elder who had lived among the Navajo in Utah, summoned tribal members under the ironic headline “Lucky Lumbees.” He argued that the tribe was fortunate not to have been “forced onto a reservation” and to have “had your freedom from government rules.”<sup>162</sup> The point was agency, the idea that instead of having been shaped by events, Lumbees were self-made as individuals and as a tribe, without the benefit (or in this view, the albatross) of government recognition.

Vine DeLoria Jr., who became a vocal supporter of Lumbee recognition, expressed a related idea in the *Voice*, that Lumbees did not exhibit the “spiritual deterioration” he observed on reservations.<sup>163</sup> But Barton expressed a more sardonic view of the “luck” of the Lumbees, as not only a source of wisdom, but wisdom gained from pain. Frequently alluding to his own battle with alcoholism and time served in prison, Barton saw Lumbees as survivors of oppression, accounting for what he termed a “jaundiced view” of Robeson as a

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<sup>160</sup> Letters to the Editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 24, 1977, 2.

<sup>161</sup> L. D. Malcolm, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, March 17, 1977, 2.

<sup>162</sup> Elder B. Glen Marble, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 16, 1975, 2.

<sup>163</sup> Bruce Barton, “Vine Deloria Jr. at Pembroke,” *Carolina Indian Voice*, April 21, 1977, 1

"life-robbing force."<sup>164</sup>

I am a product of a wretched and mostly ineffective school system. I am a product of double-voting. I am a wounded battler with alcoholism, and a graduate of Central Prison University. I remember the dark days ... sitting in the balcony in movie theatres in Lumberton, being turned away at pool hall entrances. Uncle Toma Hawks bartered away my heritage, my birthright. My sin was that I am an Indian.<sup>165</sup>

As a salve to his often outraged, frequently acerbic page-two political column, "As I See It," Barton adopted a fictitious alter ego under the satirical pen name "Reasonable Locklear." Dispensing humor and homespun common sense, Reasonable presented as an Indian elder who could recall the "dog days of racial madness" during the Depression.<sup>166</sup> When Barton's editorials became too morose for *Voice* readers, who accused him of being a "dark and dreary fellow," in his words, of "getting hung up on one issue"<sup>167</sup> (namely, race), Ol' Reasonable smoothed the rough edges of "that smart elecky Bruce Barton,"<sup>168</sup> as he called him. Reasonable harkened back to his youth, when, "On front porches, way back off the main road, the elders among us told our children of Henry Berry Lowry, and of the time he stood for something."<sup>169</sup> This device allowed the *Voice* to argue with itself as a counterpublic and to adopt a generational perspective. Reasonable's persona leavened the mood with satire,

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<sup>164</sup> Bruce Barton, "The Indian Psyche—A Phenomenon of Our Times," *Carolina Indian Voice*, April 15, 1976, 2.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> "Musing by Reasonable Locklear," *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 20, 1977, 2.

<sup>167</sup> Bruce Barton, "Condescension Rules the Roost," *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 13, 1977, 2.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> "'Ol Reasonable," *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 27, 1977, 2

even as he reinforced Barton by ridiculing the same targets of white society, white media, or Indians with whom Barton disagreed. Reasonable represented "the best and the worst in all of us," as he wrote in a letter in response to readers asking Barton the true identity behind the pen name.<sup>170</sup> The answer was a populist appeal to the self-image Robeson Indian elders cultivated: hard-working, honest, unpretentious, but nobody's fool.

Well, sir, I'm a cotton picker, a poor ol' Indian who never got to school enough. I'm mite near old enough to remember the hard times ... He's an Indian who never tenant farmed for a fellow in the spring and summer, and bought my groceries and hoes on a credit from the same fellow in the fall.<sup>171</sup>

An especially apt example of how Barton enlisted Reasonable was to counter a lengthy editorial written by the wife of the *Robesonian* editor. In it, the editorial writer criticized a Native American play at UNC-Pembroke for seeming to suggest that white people should feel guilty about the sins of the past. The white editorialist argued that the contemporary white community in truth bore no responsibility.<sup>172</sup> Barton, offering what he called an "alternative" view, refuted that argument at length, citing, for example, the fact that Indians had not brought segregated facilities nor educational discrimination upon themselves in the twentieth century.<sup>173</sup> Barton then deferred to Reasonable, who had earlier reminded readers that the sins of the "past" were not long past, but still manifested. He recalled a kind of literacy test for using the bathroom, because there were three sets of public accommodations under Jim Crow—white, black, and red: "God help the one that went in the wrong bathroom.

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<sup>170</sup> "Who Is Reasonable Locklear," *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 18, 1974, 2.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> "Cultural Heritage," *Robesonian*, March 16, 1975, 4.

<sup>173</sup> Bruce Barton, "Here is Our Alternative View," *Carolina Indian Voice*, April 3, 1977, 2.



Ignorance weren't no defense back then."<sup>174</sup> In one respect, this was a complex sociological argument. White supremacy, by its very architecture, oppressed Indians and blacks, who were then further oppressed if they failed to internalize the means and ends of their oppression. But on another level, it was high satire: disarmingly earthy, thoroughly absurd. Whites, even answering the lowliest call of nature, clung to their perch at the top of the social hierarchy.

### **Lumbee Shorthand: Insider Language as a Border to Identity**

At the more granular level of wordplay and imagery, the *Voice* authorized group membership through symbolic insider language. Though the use of media was an appropriation of a contemporary form, the communicative impulse that animated the form was a continuance of the past, and there was a complex correspondence to how Indians used traces of the past. The *Voice* reinforced continuance visually by featuring line art of a ceremonial drum throughout its editions, including on the front-page flag, and evoked Black Elk's words on the editorial page masthead:

The voice of the drum is an offering to the Spirit of the World.  
Its sound arouses the mind and makes men feel the mystery  
and power of things.<sup>175</sup>

The message was that although the form of communication had changed, the mindfulness and meaning was the same. Spiritually, the *Voice* identified Lumbees and Tuscaroras as part of a larger body that in the 1970s was experiencing a revival. In his column under the standing head, "Up From Dust and Darkness," Lew Barton returned to the theme of renewal that he and his son Bruce discussed in their 1973 interview. The elder Barton recalled that in

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<sup>174</sup> Reasonable Locklear, "Musing," *Carolina Indian Voice*. January 27, 1977, 2.

<sup>175</sup> *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 5, 1978, 2.

1947, he could not find enough Indian students at Pembroke State to form a history club to study the Indian past.<sup>176</sup> Three decades later, he observed, there were "Indian warriors and Indian crusaders galore," in what he termed a "great Lumbee Indian Renaissance" taking place in a once "sleepy town converted to a wide awake town," whose residents took their Indianness and citizenship seriously.<sup>177</sup>

To signify this consciousness, the *Voice* in this period substituted traditional Plains Indian trappings for Robeson Indians' comparative lack of visible indigeneity. This created a group shorthand that bordered and differentiated the *Voice* and its audience from the white and black communities. Bruce Barton's emblems, at odds with assimilated Lumbee culture, implied that there was more to Indianness than met the eye, and that Indians shared that understanding. What made this rhetoric constitutive was its legibility and exclusivity. Often, meanings were taken for granted, although at times Barton explicated the emblems to ensure that their messages were clear. Publishing a syndicated cartoon commenting on Indians' political self-sabotage, for example, Barton wrote an accompanying editor's note. The cartoon showed an Indian in a war bonnet on horseback grimacing over his shoulder as a quiver's worth of arrows pierced his back.<sup>178</sup> Barton, not satisfied with the caption, "Custer Won—We're Still Losing," wrote an editor's note sarcastically titled, "I See My People Are

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<sup>176</sup> Lew Barton, "The Henry Berry Lowry Memorial Award," *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 29, 1978, 5.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> "Custer Won—We're Still Losing," reprinted from Brigham Young University, *Carolina Indian Voice*, April 21, 1977, 2.

Still Behind Me."<sup>179</sup> He noted that the cartoon mirrored internal conflict between Indian politicians in the county, and evoked the shooting of Sitting Bull by white soldiers "while Indians held either arm." Wrote Barton: "We all lose when we squabble about nickels and dimes when the powers that be are walking away with dollar bills."<sup>180</sup>

This visual analogy applied not only to editorial content, but also extended to subscribers and advertisers. Although some businesses were identifiable as Indian-owned by their names, ads in the *Voice* used native imagery such as tepees, arrowheads, bows, feathers, and thunderbirds to reinforce the message.<sup>181</sup> Throughout its editions, the *Voice* used as filler commercially available clip art of Plains Indians wearing feathers and medicine masks.<sup>182</sup> This was virtually the same as the clip art the *Robesonian* page designers had used, but here it took on an alternative meaning. The *Voice* also generated its own art, for example a house ad featuring an Indian in fringed buckskins, moccasins, and feathers with his face buried in a copy of the *Voice*.<sup>183</sup> With humor, the ad made a subversive point: A people who were elsewhere misrepresented as backward and past-oriented were not only reading the newspaper, they were *writing* it.

Paired with this visual lexicon, Barton used the Plains Indian motif discursively, in community coverage and political commentary. For example, a weekly column reporting

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<sup>179</sup> Bruce Barton, "I See My People Are Still Behind Me," *Carolina Indian Voice*, April 21, 1977, 2.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> See, for example, advertisements for Lumbee Builders and Home Florist Flowers for all Occasions, *Carolina Indian Voice*, March 23, 1978, 3; Woods Nursery, April 6, 8.

<sup>182</sup> See, for example, *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 5, 1978, 8.

<sup>183</sup> Business Services Directory, *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 31, 1978, 8.

news from Pembroke High School used the standing head, "Smoke Signals."<sup>184</sup> One week after the newly elected school board with Lumbee members took office in 1977, Barton used this typical insider language in an "As I See It" subhead: "THE NEW ROBESON SCHOOL BOARD DOES NOT WEAR FEATHERS!"<sup>185</sup> Voicing frustration at the actions of Lumbees the community had worked hard to elect, Barton observed: "It takes more than the color of one's skin to make an Indian or a black man. It is the intent of one's heart, his compassion for his fellow man, his straight and narrow approach."<sup>186</sup> Reinforcing the Indian motif as an invisible badge of legitimacy, Barton editorialized that he had expected the first majority Indian school board, on the heels of a "symbolic" election, to "troop in wearing feathers."<sup>187</sup> Bitterly disappointed, Barton lashed out at the Indian-majority board's decision not to fire a conservative white school board attorney who had impeded integration, opting not to replace him with an Indian law firm.<sup>188</sup> Barton accused the board of internalizing white supremacy. This, in effect, was the definition of hegemony:

Was it psychological shock? Were their hands stilled by a reading of their infamous history? Faced with an opportunity to fire a white conservative ... were they overwhelmed with the thought of such potential power? ... Are we programmed? Are we indoctrinated by what has happened to us?<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> L. D. Malcolm, "Pembroke High Smoke Signals," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 5, 1978, 4.

<sup>185</sup> Bruce Barton, "As I See It: The New Robeson School Board Does Not Wear Feathers!," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 13, 1977, 2.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

What "happened to" Indians against their will—physical conquest and legalistic subjugation—was differentiated here from the psychological process that could only occur with Indians' consent: That is, internalizing white supremacy and Indian inferiority, which Barton compared to being "programmed" and "indoctrinated." This meant the surrender of will, and the definition of self in terms dictated from outside the self. For the *Voice*, this process manifested itself both in the minutiae of local matters and the broad national scale of pan-Indian tribal politics. When a press release from the National Congress of American Indians explained that members opposed Lumbee recognition because the tribe lacked tradition and indigenous language, and displayed "Negroid features," the *Voice* editorialized that the NCAI borrowed its definition of Indianness from John Wayne: "They must wear feathers," Barton wrote, "and Uncle Sam must have taken something of value from them, usually their land."<sup>190</sup>

But rather than simply reject and negate white-imposed constructions of Indianness, the stance of reclamation reversed them. The rhetorical move at once encoded them as figurative, legible to Indians, and inaccessible to whites. A succinct example was Barton's labeling of a compromised Indian politician as an "apple,"<sup>191</sup> a term the *Voice* saw no need to define for its readers. Again, this went to the issue of signification: If red skin did not automatically equate with Indianness, this implied that identity was active rather than passive. This was a direct challenge to so-called "blood quantum" and other criteria such as indigenous language and folkways as yardsticks of Indian identity. The *Voice* and its readers made a clear delineation

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<sup>190</sup> Bruce Barton, "NCAI: Paranoia in Action," *Carolina Indian Voice*, September 22, 1977, 2. Barton claimed in his editorial that the NCAI had not sent the document to tribes lacking full federal recognition.

<sup>191</sup> Unlike the *Voice*, the *Robesonian* defined the term "apple" Indians for its readers: "being red on the outside and white on the inside." See, Bill Brice, "Chief of Tuscaroras Calls for Unity in Support of Wounded Knee," *Robesonian*, March 8, 1973, 1.

between Plains Indian tropes as performance and Lumbee life as reality. Typical was the vigorous response to a letter signed by David Wilkins, who used the Indian name Karonhiawakon. His letter criticized the Lumbee homecoming for featuring girls in bathing suits.<sup>192</sup>

How can you call yourselves Indian? You have adopted the White Man's ways so easily, you are so fully assimilated, I fail to be able to distinguish you from them.<sup>193</sup>

Readers refuted Karonhiawakon's perspective in the next week's edition, and continued to reply to the letter for months, from as far away as a subscriber in Germany.<sup>194</sup> Capturing the objections was a letter from Donnie Locklear, who asked how many Indians Karonhiawakon knew who did *not* wear white men's clothing styles, drive automobiles, or speak English.<sup>195</sup> Locklear then threw the question of legitimacy back to Karonhiawakon, facetiously asking, "Are you really an Indian?"<sup>196</sup> The point his critics made was that Karonhiawakon, by conflating authentic Indian identity with superficial (and therefore irrelevant) trappings, did not comprehend Lumbees' source and definition of Indianness.

The *Voice* treated the relationship between the performed and the real as mutually understood, and further, subverted the relationship. The newspaper used a vocabulary of markers such as feathers and beads that were visibly *absent* as metaphors for an identity that was *present* but invisible—at least, to outsiders. Taking this logic a step further, it did not

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<sup>192</sup> Karonhiawakon, letter to the editor, , *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 14, 1977, 2.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Juanita Nicholson , letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, October, 6, 1977, 2.

<sup>195</sup> Donnie Locklear, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 21, 1977, 2.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

suffice to call oneself or think oneself a Lumbee. To be authentic, one needed to *walk* and *talk* as a Lumbee. In this vein, writing as Reasonable Locklear, Barton praised a Lumbee newly elected to a county board as being "a loud Indian who will not hunker down in his chair and let others pull his chain."<sup>197</sup>

By appropriating stereotypes which dominant society used to primitivize and historicize Indians, the *Voice* defused and recontextualized the pejoratives. This was analogous to the process by which some African Americans reclaimed the epithet "nigga" as fraternal code, or some homosexuals appropriated and embraced the derogatives "queer" and "dyke."<sup>198</sup>

Second, invoking outward signs of Indianness that did not literally apply to *Voice* readers<sup>199</sup>—totems, and in some cases, red skin itself—set up an ironic, paradoxical relationship between marking and meaning. This referred back to the original misrepresentation inherent in the term "Indian," a term Lumbees and Tuscaroras used routinely (including in the flag of their newspaper). This conception of Indianness, vastly different from what whites named "Indians," was not a stasis of being and identity received from history, but a path of agency informed by the past and actively composed in the present.

The *Voice* and its readers frequently articulated this active nature of symbols. In a column praising successful Lumbees, including the Lumbee Bank president, the directors of the

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<sup>197</sup> "Musing By Reasonable Locklear," *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 20, 1977, 2.

<sup>198</sup> Todd Anten, "Self-Disparaging Trademarks and Social Change: Factoring the Reappropriation of Slurs into Section 2(a) of the Lanham Act," *Colorado Law Review*, 106, No. 2 (March 2006): 388-434.

<sup>199</sup> Lumbee are only figuratively "red" and in general have light brown skin. Other than performing ceremonial dances as part of recently adopted pow-wows, Lumbees have not worn feathers or beads in the manner of western Plains Indians, and according to historical accounts, since the 1700s dressed, lived, farmed and adopted the language and religion of Anglo-Saxon immigrants.

Indian tobacco growers' warehouse, and New York Yankees outfielder and Robeson native Gene Locklear, Barton argued, "I want my symbols to be productive and stand for something."<sup>200</sup> Barton continually warned against skin color as an "empty" and "second rate symbol" when Indians in positions of power "did not wear the occasional feather."<sup>201</sup> Here, feathers signified the reverse of the historicized identity captured in Brian Dippie's term "vanishing" or Jean O'Brien's concept of "lasting,"<sup>202</sup> signifying the white idea that Native Americans were extinct. Indian identity and historical consciousness was a contemporary expression in an exclusive, fluid lexicon that bordered the differentiation of the group.

### **Unifying and Decentering: The *Voice* and Its Readers**

The flipside of bordering identity inward to the center, or what Geraldine Muhlmann termed "unifying journalism"<sup>203</sup> is the question of how the *Voice* mediated identity *outward* through the process of decentering. Following from Muhlmann, this refers to the subversive, adversarial journalistic stance that seeks to challenge dominant culture, and dominant journalism, through the practice of journalism itself, and is associated not with objective "seeing" but with a "voice" expressing a singular point of view.<sup>204</sup> American journalism historians have associated voice with the New Journalism of the 1960s and 1970s and a

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<sup>200</sup> Bruce Barton, "As I See It," *Carolina Indian Voice*, September 29, 1977, 2.

<sup>201</sup> Bruce Barton, "As I See It," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 6, 1977, 2.

<sup>202</sup> Dippie, *The Vanishing American*; O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*.

<sup>203</sup> Geraldine Muhlmann, *A Political History of Journalism*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008), 6-33.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-194.



rejection of an artificial objectivity from the Penny Press onward;<sup>205</sup> yet in the case of the *Voice*, the partisan press of the nineteenth century is also a helpful comparison. The *Voice* combined hyperlocal community journalism and a stridently outspoken editorial personality, complete with a Silence Dogood-like alter ego. In newspaper investigations of institutional racism in education and criminal justice, the *Voice* supported preexisting aims of such community organizations as Lumbee Regional Development Association and Lumbee River Legal Aid. But where the newspaper was uniquely positioned to do battle, and where Indian readers in the 1970s treated the *Voice* as indispensable, was in the contested arena of media discourse, the final focus of this chapter.

As the *Detroit News* episode that began this essay suggested, one of the functions of the *Voice* was as a journalism ombudsman. In a practical sense, this made the newspaper a one-stop aggregator where Indians could find a roundup of stories of Lumbee-related stories from sources as far-flung as the *Los Angeles Times* and *Hustler* magazine, and at the same time access a space to critically engage these targets.<sup>206</sup> The *Voice*, acting as a gatekeeper for white media, gave occasional approbation to mainstream media portrayals of Indians, particularly when white journalists incorporated Indian perspectives. This further privileged proximity and authenticity, with Indians representing themselves rather than seeking inclusion or vindication from outsiders.

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<sup>205</sup> Dan Schiller, *Objectivity and the News: The Public and the Rise of Commercial Journalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 75.

<sup>206</sup> See, for example, "Pembroke To Be Featured on 'Carolina at Noon,'" *Carolina Indian Voice*, May 26, 1977, 1; "Lumbees Subjects in N&O's Sunday Edition," *Carolina Indian Voice*, September 22, 1977, 1; Bruce Barton, "Tom Oxendine Featured (sic) in Hustler Magazine," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 5, 1978, 1.

One of Barton's tactics, as seen with the *Detroit News*, was to directly engage mainstream media, by reprinting white media accounts or commentary, offering and inviting rejoinders, and seeking rebuttal or explanation. Another example was when the *Robesonian* offered an apologist view of the controversial white District Attorney Britt,<sup>207</sup> who was running for reelection. The *Robesonian* dismissed reprimands of Britt by the state Supreme Court as the equivalent of the D.A. "getting his knuckles rapped now and then" for technicalities, all for the greater good of locking up the guilty.<sup>208</sup> Barton in response offered what he called "our alternative view" of a prosecutor the *Voice* regarded as no friend to the Indian or black communities. The *Robesonian*'s minimizing prosecutorial improprieties, Barton argued, suggested that the end justified the means, and advanced what Barton termed a "serfian view" that undermined the legal system.<sup>209</sup> Barton admitted to a "perverse pride" when the D.A. failed to invite the *Voice* to a press conference in which the prosecutor meanwhile lauded other local media for being "cooperative."<sup>210</sup> Barton wrote:

A newspaper's role is to be an adversary to public officials, if need be. Newspapers have a responsibility to "find the truth" even if it hurts. The Carolina Indian Voice is fiercely independent, and not a minion for any public official or body.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> "Errors of Commission" *Robesonian*, reprinted in *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 2, 1978, 2. Britt is no relation to the Robeson District Attorney as of 2015, Luther Johnson Britt III.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> "Robeson D.A. Does It Again," *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 2, 1978, 2.

<sup>210</sup> Bruce Barton, "Joe Freeman Britt Press Conference Seemingly By Invitation Only," *Carolina Indian Voice*, September 15, 1977, 2.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

The universal adversary for subaltern people, as the *Voice* saw it, was a mindset of white arrogance, the idea, as Barton put it, that Indians and blacks in Robeson never won anything of substance from whites "unless it is laced with the political arsenic of condescension."<sup>212</sup> Almost from the inception of the *Voice*, Barton consistently portrayed his competition as being the mouthpiece of the white power structure. In accord with that power structure, the *Robesonian* achieved self-legitimation and dominance, Barton editorialized, by subordinating and patronizing Indians and African Americans. Wrote Barton:

We must, again as I see it, present a united front to the representatives of White Democratic party oriented newspapers in the area. They, as a general rule, play up our differences and headline our stabbings and shootings. We are a good and industrious people, but you would never learn of this fact in the pages and headlines of the White-controlled, Democratic party 1860 mentality that publish newspapers in Lumberton. They use us terribly to sell their wares.<sup>213</sup>

Here was unifying and decentering in one breath—a plea for Indians to stand together against dominant society and media. Barton's view was that white politicians, in turn, used white media reports and photo opportunities to score political points at the expense of the Indian community. For example, Barton correctly divined that Deputy Hubert Stone was preparing a run for sheriff when the *Robesonian* featured a dramatic narrative by a reporter who rode along with deputies padlocking unlicensed Indian juke joints that were selling beer.<sup>214</sup> Barton, noting that the usual suspects were all Indians, wondered at the timing: "As a newspaperman," Barton wrote, "I am more interested in how Karen Vela, reporter for the

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<sup>212</sup> Bruce Barton, "An Indian Manifesto," *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 7, 1976, 2.

<sup>213</sup> Bruce Barton, "Politics Bore Me But..." *Carolina Indian Voice*, March 22, 1973, 2.

<sup>214</sup> Karen Vela, "Lock-Up Dries Up Beer Sources," *Robesonian*, April 8, 1977, 9.

Robesonian, got wind of the raid on the Indian bootleggers, as they call them."<sup>215</sup> The implication was that Stone sought to aggrandize and ingratiate himself to white society by subordinating and degrading Indians, and that the *Robesonian* was a knowing participant.

Importantly, however, Barton did not paint all white media with the same brush, and here, proximity worked in a contradictory way. Whereas the *Voice* often accused the *Robesonian* of carrying water for white politicians like Britt and Stone and therefore being a part of the establishment, Barton saw visiting white media outlets as unconflicted by parochial loyalties or biases. In an echo of the *New York Herald's* George Alfred Townsend, who a century earlier made his first stop in Robeson County at the office of the *Robesonian*, state and national reporters in the 1970s made the *Voice* their first stop on assignment in Pembroke. This created the perception that the *Voice* had the community's ear. Even though Barton often cautioned that he did not speak for Indians,<sup>216</sup> white media credentialed the *Voice* as de facto spokesman to the outside world. When Jack Anderson visited Pembroke, Barton shadowed the Watergate-era investigative reporter, whom he considered a journalism hero.<sup>217</sup> And when the *Los Angeles Times* sent a reporter to write a news feature on Lumbees, the story quoted Bruce Barton in the first paragraph, using Barton's fair complexion and "curly locks"

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<sup>215</sup> Bruce Barton, "As I See It," *Carolina Indian Voice*, April 14, 1977, 2.

<sup>216</sup> Bruce Barton, "As I See It," *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 9, 1977, 2. In response to a letter in the *Robesonian* that used the phrase, "we the Blacks..." Barton wrote of his role: "I like to think that I every once in a while espouse the Indian viewpoint and catch the tenor of our needs, but I do not and cannot SPEAK FOR ALL INDIAN PEOPLE! They (Indian people) will not allow me to do so."

<sup>217</sup> Bruce Barton, *Carolina Indian Voice*, September 1, 1977, 1.

to illustrate the idea that Robeson Indians' racial identity was not skin-deep but a complex epistemological question.<sup>218</sup>

As the *Robesonian* had been an explicitly interested party a century earlier, so now was the *Voice*. Speaking as a "loud Indian," in Reasonable Locklear's phrase, the *Voice* made no pretense of neutrality toward forces that worked against individual Indians, and the native community. In its government and political coverage, the bread and butter of local news, the *Voice* focused on malfeasance and abuse of power.<sup>219</sup> And when Barton undertook an ambitious investigative project, "Indian Education in Robeson County and Elsewhere," he explained that the series would have a point of view, and would "more than likely include some editorial judgments made by the writer."<sup>220</sup> The more discrepancies the *Voice's* reporting revealed, the more forceful its stance on social issues became. Barton was incensed when, in the midst of his investigative project, a *Robesonian* editorial lauded the outgoing white school superintendent as "one of the ablest men in Robeson County."<sup>221</sup> Barton decried white "condescension" that had subjugated Indian school children, with devastating results: "Our grave yards," Barton railed, "are peopled with the failure of the county system to teach the youth to think well of themselves. We visit the failures of the school system weekly in

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<sup>218</sup> Bryce Nelson, "Tribe Claims Key to Riddle of Roanoke," reprinted from *Los Angeles Times*, *Carolina Indian Voice*, May 26, 1977, 1.

<sup>219</sup> See, for example, "Pembroke Postmaster Resigns in Food Stamp Caper," and "More on Ticket-Fixing in Lumberton," *Carolina Indian Voice*, May 12, 1977, 1.

<sup>220</sup> Bruce Barton, "Indian Education in Robeson County and Elsewhere," *Carolina Indian Voice*, March 31, 1977, 1. The series, which continued intermittently on the front page through spring 1977, included detailed firsthand reporting of "stinking toilets" and disrepair inside the schools and extensive comparisons of school budgets and per-student allotments.

<sup>221</sup> "Departing Superintendent," *Robesonian*, May 18, 1977, 14.

our prisons."<sup>222</sup> The solution the *Voice* proposed was for Indians to vote their self-interests, as a block. As Barton wrote before the 1976 election in "An Indian Manifesto," a lengthy, blistering editorial reminding readers of white "massacres" and "betrayals:" "We want our share of the dollar. We want our share of everything!"<sup>223</sup> A week later, Barton put the call for "INDIAN POWER" in all caps with "An Editorial Viewpoint: Pembroke Vs. Lumberton:" "We fully intend to VOTE INDIAN. We fully intend to VOTE FOR EVERY LOCKLEAR ON THE BALLOT."<sup>224</sup>

The white power structure was the target, but so were Indians perceived as coopted by that structure. This meant the *Voice* was willing to skewer sacred cows, as KKK fighter Simeon Oxendine learned. Oxendine, by then a school board member, sent out a press release calling for a "no" vote on a subsidized apartment complex, arguing that Pembroke already had enough low-income housing.<sup>225</sup> Lew Barton attacked Oxendine's position, writing in a column, "I'll tell you the truth, Mr. Board of Education member. You nauseate me. And I'm honestly ashamed for people to know that you and I belong to the same ethnic group."<sup>226</sup> The column brought angry replies from Oxendine's friends and family,<sup>227</sup> but

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<sup>222</sup> "No More 'Cotton Pickin' In County Schools," *Carolina Indian Voice*, May 19, 1977, 2.

<sup>223</sup> Bruce Barton, "An Indian Manifesto," *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 7, 1976, 2.

<sup>224</sup> Bruce Barton, "Pembroke vs. Lumberton," *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 14, 1976, 2. Locklear is a common Indian surname in Robeson County. This was Barton's insider shorthand for urging readers to support Indian candidates, including a *Strike at the Wind!* actor running for school board.

<sup>225</sup> Lew Barton, "Old Klan Fighter Now Fights Robeson's Poor," *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 8, 1977, 4.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

Bruce Barton reiterated his father's critique in a subsequent editorial, arguing that opposition to public housing was "ironic" in Pembroke, a town "that has in the past fought many issues in the name of poor people."<sup>228</sup>

Narrow as these matters may seem, the *Voice* consistently framed the local as part of the global. A standing feature on the editorial page was "Indian Record," which featured major texts of importance to Indian country, for example presidential speeches.<sup>229</sup> The issues were bigger than Robeson County, Barton contended; they were part and parcel of a worldwide movement for indigenous self-rule. Indians sought autonomy "for the same reason we advocate Black majority rule in South Africa and southern Rhodesia. The people have the inherent right to govern themselves."<sup>230</sup> An article that ran adjacent to this editorial offered further evidence that the *Voice* viewed indigenous rights through a global lens, and gave a preview of the next institution the *Voice* was to take on. Traveling to report on a post-conviction hearing for the Wilmington Ten, associate editor Connee Brayboy, Barton's sister, localized the national story of a politically charged trial of African Americans in a grocery firebombing case.<sup>231</sup> Brayboy, who critiqued law enforcement's investigative techniques as duplicitous and the prosecution tactics as unethical, rejected facile TV coverage suggesting

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<sup>227</sup> See, Rodney Oxendine, Janice Jones, letters to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 18, 1977, 2.

<sup>228</sup> Bruce Barton, "Public Housing is an Unlikely Issue for Pembroke," *Carolina Indian Voice*, September 8, 1977, 2.

<sup>229</sup> "Indian Record," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 6, 1977, 2.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Connee Brayboy and Mac Legerton, "The Wilmington 10 Hearing: An Emotional Experience for Robeson Residents," *Carolina Indian Voice*, May 19, 1977, 2.

that the average North Carolinian "felt like (the case) was none of their business."<sup>232</sup> She and civil rights activist Mac Legerton wrote that those from Robeson County "knew better," and that the case "was affecting the whole world."<sup>233</sup> It was a merging of local and global by a small town newspaper. Brayboy's argument was that if justice could be subverted against the Wilmington Ten, as she claimed it had, it could be subverted elsewhere. Throughout this period, the *Voice* sought to link pan-Indian and African American grievances to a significant turn in US policy under the Carter Administration, symbolized by the president's speech on international human rights before the UN General Assembly.<sup>234</sup>

Informed by a human rights perspective, the *Voice* approached the criminal justice system as an institution that was detrimental to Indians. The newspaper reported and advocated on the issue weekly, even setting up a defense fund for a Lumbee woman in a capital case.<sup>235</sup> Meanwhile, the *Voice* ignored high-profile murder cases that did not carry social justice

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> "Indian Manifesto," *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 27, 1978, 5. The *Voice* reprinted the manifesto issued during AIM's 1978 cross-country march, The Longest Walk, and put the movement in an international human rights context.

<sup>235</sup> See, for example, "Cardell Spaulding's Fate in Hands of a Wake Jury," *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 29, 1978, 1; "Spaulding Receives Death Penalty," *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 6, 1979; Rick Giroux, "More About the Rozell Hunt Story," *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 27, 1978, 1; "Rozell Hunt Amplification," *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 27, 1978, 1; "Terry Lockee Trial Begins Today," *Carolina Indian Voice*, July 27, 1978, 1; Bruce Barton, "State to Build Gas Chamber," *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 17, 1978, 2. During the late 1970s, the *Voice* doggedly followed instances of excessive force, and several capital cases against Lumbees as examples of selective prosecution and unequal sentencing. These included the brutal beating of a Lumbee motorist by troopers, a domestic homicide by poisoning, *North Carolina v. Rozell Oxendine Hunt*, and *North Carolina v. Cardell Spaulding*, whose death penalty case put the prison system on trial.



implications or involve Indians.<sup>236</sup> Just as the paper initially focused on schools, the *Voice* became preoccupied with the legal and penal system, often running multiple, related items on a single page.<sup>237</sup> This concern was also a running theme in letters to the editor, and even soft news. An example was a letter from a reader recounting his learning-delayed son's trial for a moving violation.<sup>238</sup> After the son misunderstood the judge's order to rise when his case was called, the father wrote, the son was jailed and later found severely beaten in the head in an empty cell.<sup>239</sup> In the same edition, Brayboy authored a story that on its face was a garden-variety human-interest profile of a dedicated Little League coach from the Indian community of Prospect.<sup>240</sup> Yet James "Shorty" Hammonds was hardly routine. Brayboy wrote that the coach had been convicted of first-degree murder at age nineteen without proper legal representation.<sup>241</sup> Paroled after twelve years, Hammonds was sponsored by an Indian couple, found a job as a handyman, married, and started a family.<sup>242</sup> Brayboy made the moral of the story clear: There was an alternative approach to crime and punishment:

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<sup>236</sup> For example, the 1978 triple murder trial of Green Beret Jeffrey MacDonald and the arrest of serial killer Velma Barfield, both North Carolina stories, generated extensive coverage by state and national media outlets.

<sup>237</sup> See for example, Associated Press, "Prison Panel Important, Director Says," "State Refuses All Bids on New Central Prison;" "Droppings Inmate Hazard?," *Carolina Indian Voice*, September 14, 1978, 2.

<sup>238</sup> Ernest Otis Demery, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 10, 1978, 2.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Connee Brayboy, "James Allen 'Shorty' Hammonds: A People Profile," *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 10, 1978, 6.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

It all makes me wonder if the penal system brings about rehabilitation.  
It is my contention that love and concern will change a person's direction  
much faster than punishment.<sup>243</sup>

The reinstatement of the death penalty in North Carolina, combined with the fact that Robeson County had the nation's so-called "deadliest D.A.,"<sup>244</sup> made the issue of the gas chamber a crusade for the *Voice*. Barton, frustrated in ongoing efforts to visit two state penitentiary inmates and a Lumbee prisoner held in solitary confinement after killing a fellow inmate,<sup>245</sup> wrote a lengthy, impassioned column that recounted his own time served in the same prison on a breaking and entering conviction a decade earlier.<sup>246</sup> With the current inmate's defense strategy to indict the system itself as cruel, overcrowded, and debilitating,<sup>247</sup> Barton used his own experiences to help readers understand life inside.<sup>248</sup> As Barton struggled to meet his deadline, the staff holding the paper for his column, he wrote:

A lot will have to be left unsaid. I just know I have deep feelings about this case, and others like it. I am not a sociologist, a psychologist, a do-gooder necessarily. I am a product of Central Prison. I am a graduate of Central Prison University.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> See, Ross McWhirter and Norris McWhirter, *Guinness Book of World Records 1976 Edition* (New York: Sterling, 1976). Britt, whose death penalty conviction rate was approvingly termed the "Britt Blitz" by the *Robesonian*, held the Guinness title until it was dropped in 1987. See, Karen Vela, "Study Says First Degree Murder Is Reduced In Robeson Because of the 'Britt Blitz,'" *Robesonian*, March 18, 1976, 4.

<sup>245</sup> "It Is Easier to Get Out of Central Prison than to Get In," *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 8, 1978, 2.

<sup>246</sup> "Cardell Spaulding's Pending Trial to Afford a Closeup View of Prison Life," *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 15, 1978, 2.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

Incarceration of Indians was more than a cause, Barton wrote. It was part of his individual identity, and it was a threat to the tribe. Effectively, Barton was not simply a detached witness to the history of abuses in white-dominated courtrooms, jury boxes, and the post-Civil War Central Prison, which one letter writer from inside described as "man-made hell."<sup>250</sup> Barton and the *Voice* experienced and embodied this history, and with increasing clarity, the struggle of the *Voice* and the struggle of Robeson Indians were framed as one.

Where the unifying and decentering journalism of the *Voice* became entangled was when Barton increasingly turned his attention to what he called the "self-destructive" actions of Indians, both in the literal sense with Indian-on-Indian violence, and in the political sense, with what Barton saw as the sabotaging of successful members of the tribe by other Indians.<sup>251</sup> Barton accused Indians of favoring white institutions such as banks and newspapers over their Lumbee competitors because, he argued, Indians were "without good self images" or more simply, suffered from "psychic madness:"

Only those Indians who act like white folks seemingly make it in Robeson County. There have not been enough Indians elected to public office in Robeson County to to make a scientific judgment but few if any... have acted and voted and conducted business like an Indian.<sup>252</sup>

Barton, though inundated with criticism, returned to the theme of Indian (and African American) self-sabotage and white racism almost weekly, to the extent that a friend called the editor and pleaded for "a week's respite."<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Mitchell Woodell, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 17, 1978, 2.

<sup>251</sup> Bruce Barton, "Madness Sweeps Robeson, or, The Racial Games People Play," *Carolina Indian Voice*, September 4, 1975.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

Later that year, Barton intimated that criticism of the *Voice* was taking a financial toll. In December 1977, the editor hinted in his column that the *Voice's* "chronic lack of cash flow" was creating a crisis, and one linked to unpopular positions Barton had taken on the school system, the impact on Indians of the white-owned Robeson Savings and Loan, and a story involving an advertiser, Pates Supply Company.<sup>254</sup> Although Barton editorialized that the *Voice* would be better off "for not having sold its editorial integrity," he hinted that this had been a possibility:

The Carolina Indian Voice has stated editorial opinions when, as many of our friends in the newspaper business tell us, we should have remained silent. But I could not sleep nights if I succumbed to easy money, turning the cheek when it pangs my conscience.<sup>255</sup>

Decentering of dominant culture by the *Voice*, repelling threats to Indian survival, implied a unity of Indian identity. If the *Voice* therefore constituted a proxy for the body, how would Indians react to a threat to the newspaper?

The year 1978 put readers and advertisers to the test. Early that year, Barton wrote that "financial hounds continue to dog the heels of the Carolina Indian Voice."<sup>256</sup> Beginning a highly public campaign to save the newspaper, Brantley Blue, the US Indian Claims commissioner, wrote from Washington, DC, that businesses had "boycotted" the *Voice*

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<sup>253</sup> Bruce Barton, "Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired," *Carolina Indian Voice*, March 31, 1977, 2.

<sup>254</sup> Bruce Barton, "Grappling With a Miracle 24 Hours a Day," *Carolina Indian Voice*, December 15, 1977, 2.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Bruce Barton, "As I See It," *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 9, 1978, 2. The *Voice's* state tax bill had come due, and Barton was rejected for a bank loan after he offered to put up a real estate lot and his car as collateral. The newspaper struggled by with small donations from readers and a number of subscription renewals.

because Barton's editorials had been too "strident."<sup>257</sup> But Blue observed that "many Indians consider the CIV as 'our paper'" and urged that the *Voice* "not be silenced!"<sup>258</sup> A series of subsequent letter writers, some prominent and others ordinary readers, called on Indian consumers to persuade businesses, including white businesses in nearby cities, to buy advertising. The strategy appeared to work, because the *Voice* increased its weekly page count and advertising ratio.<sup>259</sup>

Equally significant was readers' articulation of their relationship to the *Voice* and willingness to act. The overall argument was that the newspaper was, as Ruth Woods wrote, "an important vehicle of communication which is vital and necessary to our survival."<sup>260</sup> The appeals came not only from politicians, ministers, and Lumbee community leaders<sup>261</sup> who called the newspaper "the voice of our people"<sup>262</sup> that "ties us together;"<sup>263</sup> they also came from ordinary readers. Murphy Locklear wrote that the absence of the *Voice* would leave "a

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<sup>257</sup> Brantley Blue letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 12, 1978, 2.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> By early February, for example, an Indian-owned supermarket near Lumberton bought a full page to advertise its grand opening. The following week, two competitors followed suit with three-quarter page ads. Within a year, the page count grew from 10 to 22, an addition of two full broadsheets.

<sup>260</sup> Ruth Woods letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*.

<sup>261</sup> See, for example, Rev. C. E. Locklear letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 9, 1978, 2; Rev. James H. Woods letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 9, 1978, 2; Sam Dial letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 16, 1978, 2.

<sup>262</sup> W. J. Strickland letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 16, 1978, 2.

<sup>263</sup> Mayor Reggie Strickland letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 9, 1978, 2.

great void in my life, week after week."<sup>264</sup> Stacy Locklear, another Pembroke reader, wrote that the *Voice* had become "integrated" in her daily life and had helped her "personal search for identity, self-esteem, dignity and a feeling of worthiness as a Lumbee Indian."<sup>265</sup>

For some, saving the *Voice* became a community project after an anonymous letter-writer suggested that Barton's inability to obtain bank financing was politically motivated. Signing only as a "Bewildered Indian Leader," the letter writer reported being summoned along with several other Indians in Lumberton to meet with "three men of great esteem in the county" to discuss how and why the *Voice* had not folded.<sup>266</sup> The white meeting hosts noted, according to the writer, that even though the *Voice* had angered some in the community, "dang it, it has a following."<sup>267</sup>

With the *Voice* still near bankruptcy as of March 1978, the community moved a step farther than soliciting ads and subscriptions. First, the Jaycees from nearby Hoke County threw a gala for the *Voice*<sup>268</sup> to mark five years of "Telling It As It Is."<sup>269</sup> Next, 400 guests attended another *Voice* fundraiser by the Pembroke Jaycees.<sup>270</sup> As organizer Carnell Locklear later wrote, "Someone has said that Indian people cannot unite unless the KKK

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<sup>264</sup> Murphy Locklear letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 9, 1978, 2.

<sup>265</sup> Stacy Locklear letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, March 23, 1978, 2.

<sup>266</sup> Anonymous letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 23, 1978, 2.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Bruce Barton, "As I See It," *Carolina Indian Voice*, March 9, 1978, 2.

<sup>269</sup> Advertisement, *Carolina Indian Voice*, March 9, 1978, 7.

<sup>270</sup> Photo, "The Carolina Indian Voice Honored With Dinner," *Carolina Indian Voice*, April 20, 1978, 1.

attacks. [The *Voice* fundraiser] Saturday night showed that statement to be false."<sup>271</sup> From the actor who had performed as Henry Berry Lowry's right-hand man, and who had meanwhile run for school board, it was a commentary on the different forces that threatened Indian identity, and the changing shapes that resistance took. Just as the Klan had threatened Indians individually, the potential loss of a communication network threatened the group. And where Indian men and women had used their bodies (and shotguns) to repel the last threat, their current defenses were words and buying power.

Seeking further community buy-in, Barton used the front page to announce an initial public stock offering by the newspaper in an effort to raise operating capital.<sup>272</sup> Offering 2,500 shares at \$25 each, Barton assured readers that the *Voice* was not in danger of going out of business, but argued that the paper's maverick stances resulted in what he termed "economic reprisals." Barton wrote that "each time we have said something against the grain, the economic hounds have begun to nip at our heels."<sup>273</sup> Although the newspaper doubled down on its community news,<sup>274</sup> the *Voice's* editorial stances became increasingly pointed, as Barton sought to assert the *Voice's* independence.

During 1978, Barton won a symbolic and financial victory in entering the low bid for printing delinquent tax listings. This was more than a chance to make \$5,000 in advertising and increase the page count from a previous average of ten pages up to twenty-two pages as

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<sup>271</sup> Carnell Locklear letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, April 20, 1978, 2.

<sup>272</sup> Bruce Barton, "The Carolina Indian Voice Goes Public...to sell 25% of Corporation," *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 3, 1978, 1.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> See, for example, *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 22, 1978, 1. The newspaper devoted its front page to coverage and photos from the Miss Lumbee and Little Miss Lumbee pageants.

of May 25, 1979. The debate surrounding the vote was a vehicle for Barton to one-up his daily competition, which viewed the county contract as its exclusive purview, and to answer what he called the "anti-Indian Voice" remarks by white politicians through the *Robesonian*. In this way, the *Voice* presented competitive struggles that might otherwise be attributed simply to rivalry between media organizations as endemic to the larger struggle by Indians. This meanwhile implied that the relative position of the *Robesonian* was a perpetuation of a lopsided sociopolitical history.

Legitimacy, a contested issue at the heart of Lumbee and Tuscarora identity, was a recurring problem for the *Voice* as an alternative media organization, and one the *Voice* treated reflexively by confiding to readers with a running account of its own practices and problems. When news sources ignored the *Voice* and instead released information to establishment media, Barton framed this as subordination of Indians.<sup>275</sup> Any perceived slight to the *Voice* as a public institution was thus interpreted as a slight to Indian publics themselves. Conversely, the viability of the *Voice* implied the viability of the community. Editorializing at the five-year anniversary of the paper's launch, Barton wrote that the *Voice* was "to be applauded for perseverance if for nothing else."<sup>276</sup> He reiterated the goal of using communication to bridge communities, "psychological barriers...fear walls, racial barricades," and to practice "the theory that a letter to the editor is better than the negative

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<sup>275</sup> See, for example, Bruce Barton, "We Ran a Good Race; We Fought a Good Fight...But," *Carolina Indian Voice*, June 13, 1974, 2. When the *Voice* reported on discriminatory hiring of a postmaster and the Postal Service chose to reply via the *Robesonian*, Barton editorialized that the action showed "a distinct lack of respect for Indian media."

<sup>276</sup> Bruce Barton, "As I See It," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 6, 1977, 2.



feedback of a shotgun blast."<sup>277</sup> The editorial philosophy, then was to unify the body, and inoculate it against harm.

By the close of the 1970s, the *Voice* was not seeking inclusion. Rather, by revealing a white mentality of exclusion—the critical stance of decentering—the *Voice* sought to demonstrate the illegitimacy of dominant social processes and institutions, including the journalism community. Thus, Bruce Barton, upon learning by decade's end that he had not been invited to join a professional press organization in the region, editorialized that the result was not to marginalize the *Voice*, but the white press association. "It will have little meaning without my participation," Barton wrote in the *Voice*. "I AM THE FIRST AMENDMENT!"<sup>278</sup> This reversed the question of legitimacy, primacy, and "inclusion." Native Americans were the authors of their own destiny, and any attempt at subordination was not only fallacy; it delegitimized the idea of dominance itself.

Making no pretense of neutrality, Barton exposed unacknowledged bias toward Indians on the part of his competition. In a close Pembroke election, Barton accused the *Robesonian* of "journalism at its dreary worst,"<sup>279</sup> calling out the newspaper's journalistic breach in running a campaign story detrimental to a Lumbee slate on the Monday evening before Election Day.<sup>280</sup> Barton argued that the timing of the story was calculated to embarrass a town official just as voters went to the polls. He wrote of the *Robesonian*'s view of Indians:

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Bruce Barton, "About this 'Recently Organized Coastal Carolinas Society of Professional Journalists' Based in Lumberton" *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 10, 1980, 2.

<sup>279</sup> Bruce Barton, "As I See It," *Carolina Indian Voice*, November 10, 1977, 2.

<sup>280</sup> Karen Vela, "Candidate Says Town Official Threatened Resident Eviction," *Robesonian*, November 7, 1977, 1. The article, largely based on the accusations of an opposing candidate,

They, as I see it, are not interested in our virtues, our saving graces. They will hang out our dirty laundry, they will push up our sleeves and expose our wart-ridden elbows ... History will not allow them to champion Indian causes and heroes. It is against their nature ... As I see it, the *Robesonian* insists on treating the Indian citizenry with condescension and a lack of respect.<sup>281</sup>

The column was part invective, part gauntlet. Barton predicted that Indians would "rise up in anger and demand equality, respect, and a fair representation, even in the pages of the *Robesonian*," but he also wrote of his Lumberton adversary, "they can never change."<sup>282</sup> The coming decade would test both those predictions, with a crucible of events that again thrust Robeson County into the national media spotlight. This time, Indians positioned white journalists as more than witnesses to the story. Journalists *became* the story, and faced what Barton so often inveighed against: the "negative feedback" of a shotgun.

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suggested that it was improper to circulate a sample ballot, a tactic elections officials had declared legal. Traditionally, news organizations observed a pre-election silence dictating that no eleventh-hour stories or letters be published that might sway voters and leave no opportunity for rebuttal before an election.

<sup>281</sup> Bruce Barton, "As I See It," *Carolina Indian Voice*, November 10, 1977, 2.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 5:** AP Wire Photo: Eddie Hatcher escorted to his federal trial in the February 1, 1988 hostage-taking at the *Robesonian*.

**Quote of the Day**

**By United Press International**

Editor Bob Horne, one of 17 people taken hostage at The Robesonian newspaper in Lumberton, N.C., by two Indians demanding a federal probe of racial injustice:

"If everything comes out OK, we'll get scooped on our own story."

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## CHAPTER 5. NEWS CAPTIVITY: DISRUPTING JOURNALISTIC NEUTRALITY

On February 1, 1988, the *CBS Evening News with Dan Rather* broadcast its number two spot from outside a storefront newspaper office in Lumberton, North Carolina.<sup>1</sup> There, two Native American activists armed with sawed-off shotguns, pistols, and grenades had burst into the yellow brick offices of the *Robesonian*.<sup>2</sup> When a panicked receptionist offered to open the cash drawer, one of the intruders replied, "This isn't a robbery, ma'am."<sup>3</sup> In what began a ten-hour siege, the hostage-takers had a story to tell, and held the press at gunpoint to tell it.

Apart from modern updates, the story followed the broad contours that a captive *New York Herald* correspondent reported more than a century earlier. Indians and blacks in Robeson County were being murdered in cold blood, the hostage-takers alleged, by whites wearing badges. In the 1988 version, the badges belonged to the Sheriff's Department, and the object was control of a lucrative cocaine trade using clandestine airstrips among the tobacco fields and Interstate 95, which cut through the sprawling county on the way from Florida.

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Rather and Bruce Hall, "Lumberton, North Carolina/Hostages" *CBS Evening News*, February 1, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Fred Grimm, "2 Indians Seize Newspaper and Employees to Dramatize Racial Strife in N.C. County," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 2, 1988, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Anna Griffin, "I Am Going to Make People Listen," *Charlotte Observer*, April 2, 2001, 1.

As the *New York Times* reported, the two Tuscarora Indians chained the glass doors shut and crowded nineteen hostages into the newsroom.<sup>4</sup> There, one of the gunmen grabbed a phonebook, looked up the number to the governor's office ninety minutes away in Raleigh, and insisted that an operator patch him through.<sup>5</sup> Captors Eddie Hatcher, 30, and Timothy Jacobs, 19, sought neither ransom nor amnesty.<sup>6</sup> Instead, borrowing a page from Red Power protest,<sup>7</sup> they demanded an investigation into alleged law enforcement brutality and corruption,<sup>8</sup> and inquests into fourteen unsolved murders and the death of a Black Muslim inmate at the jail next door to the newspaper.<sup>9</sup> But the immediate goal of the takeover was publicity, and the activists calculated that holding a newspaper hostage would achieve maximum results.<sup>10</sup>

The plan worked. As the tense standoff unfolded before a swarm of journalists outside, the captors and newsroom hostages gave telephone interviews until they grew hoarse, the

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<sup>4</sup> "Siege at Newspaper Ends With Hostages Safe," *New York Times*, February 2, 1988, 19. Initial reports indicated seventeen hostages, but those held at gunpoint later corrected the number to nineteen.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Randall Lake, "Enacting Red Power: Consummatory Function in Native American Protest Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 128.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis Pitts interview with author, Series-U, Southern Oral History Project, UNC-Chapel Hill. Pitts was a member of the defense team in *US v. John Edward Clark A/K/A Eddie Hatcher and Timothy Bryan Jacobs*, 88-7-01-CR3, Eastern District of North Carolina, October 1988.

<sup>9</sup> Susan Taylor Martin, "Flash Point in Carolina: Impoverished County's Social Ills Came to a Head in Recent Hostage Ordeal," *St. Petersburg Times*, February 14, 1988, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis Pitts interview.

newspaper's switchboard deluged with calls from state, national, and international print reporters and broadcast producers.<sup>11</sup> In the meantime, the new editor of the weekly *Voice*, Connee Brayboy, assumed the role of negotiator, helping a state legislator broker a peaceful surrender before returning to the business of covering the story.<sup>12</sup> Drawing an estimated 200 journalists to Lumberton,<sup>13</sup> the armed occupation of the *Robesonian* thrust a small county seat newspaper into the middle of a national story breaking not just in its own backyard, but in its own newsroom.<sup>14</sup> Yet for the *Robesonian*, media organization closest to the story, the eyewitness journalism passkeys of primacy and exclusivity<sup>15</sup> instead became barriers. As *Robesonian* editor Bob Horne later told one of the numerous news organizations to interview him: "We were getting phone calls from the entire world. We were sitting on the biggest news story of our lives, but we couldn't cover it, because we were the story."<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, midway through the standoff, the editor picked up a camera and began

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<sup>11</sup> Timothy Jacobs interview with author, U-607, Southern Oral History Program, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>12</sup> Connee Brayboy, *Carolina Indian Voice*, "Two Charged in Hostage-Taking," February 4, 1988, 1. Brayboy formed a defense fund for the hostage takers, and also became the spokeswoman for Concerned Citizens of Robeson County, an umbrella group active in the wake of the crisis.

<sup>13</sup> Anna Griffin, "The Terror of Robeson County."

<sup>14</sup> "Editor makes the news in his own siege story," *The Times* (London), February 3, 1988.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Deuze, "What is Journalism? Professional Identity and Ideology of Journalists Reconsidered," *Journalism* 6 (2005): 449.

<sup>16</sup> Bruce Henderson and Tim Funk, "Back to Business, Scooped Newspaper Finally Gets Its Tale Into Print," *Charlotte Observer*, February 3, 1988, 1.

photographing and interviewing his captors, resolving, in his words, to "act like a journalist" rather than a hostage.<sup>17</sup>

The question this chapter poses is what it meant to "act like a journalist," once a news organization was enlisted to participate? How did the dual perspective forced on the *Robesonian*—of representer and *represented*—alter its function in the aftermath, and what are the theoretical insights for journalistic detachment?

This analysis situates the hostage-taking as a final link in a historical chain of performances in which American Indians in Robeson County appropriated media to stage resistance. The purpose of this chapter is to interrogate the captors' specific use of local media, and how the linchpin of proximity, which the captors pushed to the extreme, changed journalism routines and perspectives on those routines. Against the backdrop of expected out-of-town media coverage, this chapter examines the unexpected implications for the media organization taken hostage, an inside-out position that pop psychology had long since problematized.<sup>18</sup> The inquiry here concerns the problem for journalism, in how the hostage-takers sought to decenter the worldview of the *Robesonian*, and by extension, its readers. The theoretical lens is Geraldine Muhlmann's joining of the critical concepts of decentering and unifying. Following from the Sartre's idea that conflict itself produces community,<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Taylor Sisk, *Takeover: The Trials of Eddie Hatcher* (Morrisville, NC: Take One Productions, 1997).

<sup>18</sup> Michael Adorjan, et. al., "Stockholm Syndrome as Vernacular Resource," *Sociological Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (June 2012): 454-74.

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (London: Methuen, 1957), 313.

this approach holds that decentering disrupts artificial consensus to arrive, ultimately, at a unifying vision, a “bringing together of voices”<sup>20</sup> as the fundamental project of journalism.

The physical experience of captivity, by forcing the journalists into the position of participants (recalling Muhlmann’s witness/ambassador),<sup>21</sup> determined the storytelling form of journalism itself, as it did in 1872 with the adventures of the *New York Herald’s* A. Boyd Henderson, who wrote a first-person account as a captive of the Lowry Gang. Further complicating the standpoint of the *Robesonian* was the overlay of proximity. For a journalistically conservative newspaper such as the *Robesonian*, which had practiced the detached, official, ostensibly “objective” reporting standards taught in journalism schools,<sup>22</sup> maintaining the status quo became irrelevant and impossible.

The chapter study first describes the circumstances leading up to the takeover, and second, traces an evolving narrative of the hostage-taking using oral histories along with 350 reports from a dozen of the national and regional media outlets that sent reporters to Robeson County<sup>23</sup> and followed the siege as bystanders.. Last, the chapter examines treatment of the event in the *Robesonian* itself through a further narrative analysis of 423

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<sup>20</sup> Geraldine Muhlmann, *A Political History of Journalism*, translated by Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 168-169.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-28.

<sup>22</sup> For examples of journalism education textbooks that normalized an objective approach for beginning reporters during this period, see, George A. Hough, *News Writing*, 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988); Ken Metzler, *Newsgathering*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1986); Fred Fedler, *Reporting for Print Media*, 3rd ed. (San Diego, CA: Harcourt College Publications, 1984).

<sup>23</sup> The primary sources were bound volumes and microfilm available at UNC's Wilson Library North Carolina Collection, and date/keyword searches of Vanderbilt Television Archive, America's NewsBank, LexisNexis, ProQuest, newspapers.com and NewspaperArchive.com



articles, editorials, and letters during 1988. This chapter posits the idea that the hostage-takers sought to change how white media, especially the local daily newspaper, apprehended and communicated reality. Narrative analysis is therefore a useful lens for this historical exercise because it examines how facts are presented and interpreted. Just as accounts of Henry Berry Lowry in 1872 and Lumbees' routing of the KKK in 1958 foregrounded select traits and tropes to fulfill a need, coverage by the *Robesonian* and other media of Eddie Hatcher and Timothy Jacobs lends itself to a formal analysis of narrative structures and the purpose they served. It is particularly relevant here to recall Richard White's assertion that the idea of "social bandits" arose where there was distrust of law enforcement and no clear distinction between criminality and paralegal violence by vigilantes.<sup>24</sup> What separated the folk hero from the common criminal—one who perpetrated "cold-blooded and calculated murder, crimes against women and children, acts of sadism and terrorism,"<sup>25</sup> as Richard E. Meyer observed, was the construction of a hero who possessed the attributes of a Robin Hood type. He was a pious, good-humored outlaw from a respectable family, forced into his audacious exploits only after having been provoked.<sup>26</sup> What made such a figure appealing and relatable was that it described the traits and capabilities common people desired for themselves. That is, the capacity of the individual to resist, outwit, and prevail against an unjust system.

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<sup>24</sup> Richard White, "Outlaw Gangs of the Middle Border," *Western Historical Quarterly* (October 1981): 388-389.

<sup>25</sup> Richard E. Meyer, "The Outlaw: A Distinctive American Folktype," *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 17, no. 2/3 (May-December 1980): 116.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-124.

The *Robesonian* was in an optimal position to interpret what occurred if, as Barbie Zelizer argued, journalists derive authority and legitimacy by virtue of "having been there in the same time and place as the events."<sup>27</sup> Although it was abundantly clear *what* happened during the hostage-taking, the exclusive function remaining for the *Robesonian* was to explain *why*, imposing structure and meaning, which Hayden White argued is the key function of narrative.<sup>28</sup> This chapter picks up where the splintered media landscape of the previous chapter left off, a deep contradiction between the *Robesonian*'s existing, pre-takeover stance and the worldview of the *Carolina Indian Voice*, embracing what BBC war correspondent Martin Bell termed "journalism of attachment."<sup>29</sup> The goal of this chapter is to assess how an act of resistance disrupted the standpoint of the *Robesonian* in three ways: 1) positioning journalists at odds with official sources; 2) imposing insider perspective on the media organization and its interpretation of events; and, 3) forcing the organization to reconsider its past performance and its future role in the community.

### **1980s Robeson County: A Study in Indigenous Repression**

The Reagan Administration's 1984 Anti-Terrorism Act, under which Eddie Hatcher and Timothy Jacobs became the first defendants charged,<sup>30</sup> is an indicator of the changing political mood between the late 1970s to the 1980s. The turn of the decade began with the

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<sup>27</sup> Barbie Zelizer, *Covering the Body: The Kennedy Assassination, the Media, and the Shaping of Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 132.

<sup>28</sup> Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 4.

<sup>29</sup> Keith Tester, *Compassion, Morality and the Media* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001), 10.

<sup>30</sup> Oscar Patterson III, "The Press Held Hostage: Terrorism in a Small North Carolina Town," *American Journalism* 15, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 125-39.

ongoing Iran-US hostage crisis and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iran-Iraq War, and rebellions in Nicaragua and El Salvador, setting the stage for the so-called "Reagan Revolution." Domestically, the neo-conservative political wave manifested itself in supply-side economics, deregulation, diminished social welfare programs, and recognition of what Senator Edward Kennedy termed "a permanent underclass."<sup>31</sup>

Although the discourse of the underclass centered on cities,<sup>32</sup> rural areas like Robeson County presented what local activists likened to "Third World problems."<sup>33</sup> By every socioeconomic measure, Robeson fared worst of any of the 100 counties in the state.<sup>34</sup> The county had double the national poverty rate, double the state unemployment rate, and among Indians, just over half the national high school graduation rate.<sup>35</sup> Politically, despite school desegregation and voting reforms in the 1970s,<sup>36</sup> minorities

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<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of linkage between Ronald Reagan's foreign and domestic policies, see, Robert M. Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture During the Reagan Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 59-92; 124-145.

<sup>32</sup> For discussions of systemic US poverty in the 1980s, see, Ken Auletta, *The Underclass* (New York: Random House, 1982), 26-30; Myron Magnet, "America's Underclass: What to Do?" *Fortune*, May 11, 1987, 130-150; Isabel Wilkerson, "Growth of the Very Poor Is Focus of New Studies," *New York Times*, December 20, 1987, 1.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Hunter James, "Lumbees Fight Poverty, Bias," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, February 23, 1986, 13; Bruce Henderson, "Some Lumberton Residents Say Publicity Could Help," *Charlotte Observer*, February 3, 1988, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Harry Greyard, "Native Son Finds No Hope for Robeson," *Robesonian*, February 21, 1988, 4.

<sup>35</sup> See, Monte Plott, "Impoverished N.C. County's Problems Finally Boiled Over When Hostages Were Seized," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, February 7, 1988, 1.

<sup>36</sup> Barry Nakell interview by Malinda Maynor, Series U-2, No. U-0012, Southern Oral History Project, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

in the county remained underrepresented.<sup>37</sup> But the most graphic ill afflicting Robeson County Indians was how poorly they fared in the criminal justice system compared to communities in other isolated, similarly situated rural areas.<sup>38</sup> This was the issue that prompted the hostage-taking, a context some observers saw as a domestic mirror of foreign policy. National civil rights leaders including presidential candidate Jesse Jackson likened oppression in Robeson County to El Salvador,<sup>39</sup> with its paramilitary "death squads."<sup>40</sup> The nexus of poverty, corruption, and drug trafficking via the I-95 corridor left 1980s Robeson County "awash in cocaine," as the US Attorney put it, with at least four major drug operations and an accompanying wave of violence.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Carnell Locklear interview by Malinda Maynor and Willie Lowery, Series U-0007, Southern Oral History Project, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>38</sup> Susan Taylor Martin, "Flash Point in Carolina: Impoverished County's Social Ills Came to a Head in Recent Hostage Ordeal," *St. Petersburg Times*, February 14, 1988, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Gary Moss, "'Facts' Missing in Hatcher's Case Against Robeson," *Fayetteville Observer*, March 13, 1988, 1. The Rev. Jesse Jackson, the Rev. Leon White, and the Rev. David Schilling all visited Robeson after the crisis and made comparisons to El Salvador.

<sup>40</sup> See, Steve Dobransky, "The Death Squad Dilemma: Counterinsurgency Policy and the Salvadoran Model," *Foreign Policy Journal*, October 2014, 1-9. The Salvadoran officers accused of leading the counterinsurgency squads were trained at Fort Benning, Georgia.

<sup>41</sup> See, Lee Freeland Hancock, "Cocaine Trade Rich in Robeson, Officials Say," *Raleigh News & Observer*, February 9, 1986; R.L. Godfrey and Larry Blue, "Robeson is Focus of Drug Probe," *Robesonian*, December 21, 1986, 1.

For regional and national media, neither the county's checkered past nor the Lumbee and Tuscarora quest for recognition had ever fallen off the news radar,<sup>42</sup> and these outside media painted Robeson in a harsher light than did the *Robesonian* itself. What changed in February 1988 was that these long-form stories by outsiders, typically Sunday takeouts designed to lend context and local color, moved to the front pages of major metros around the country.<sup>43</sup> As suddenly as the hostage crisis erupted, out-of-town correspondents recognized that the conflict was a volatile brew that "came to a head," as a Florida newspaper put it,<sup>44</sup> or in the words of an Atlanta headline writer, had "finally boiled over."<sup>45</sup> Trust in law enforcement by blacks and Indians had deteriorated in Robeson County, as evidenced by a rally attended by 600 in January 1987<sup>46</sup> and a protest march on the Lumberton courthouse by 1,000 the following April, generating

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<sup>42</sup> See, Hunter James, "Lumbees Fight Poverty, Bias in N. Carolina," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, February 23, 1986, 13; Eugene Meyer, "Baltimore's American Indian Enclave," *Washington Post*, June 27, 1985, 1.

<sup>43</sup> For more examples of front-page national coverage in metro dailies, see, Houston Chronicle News Service, "Indians surrender after striking deal," *Houston Chronicle*, February 2, 1988, 1; Peter Applebome, "Indian Hostage Case Brings Up Questions About Rural Justice," *New York Times*, February 8, 1988, 1; Matthew Spina, "Entering Robeson County, Home of a Deadly DA and Sudden Death," *Syracuse (New York) Herald-Journal*, December 21, 1988, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Susan Taylor Martin, "Flash Point in Carolina: Impoverished County's Social Ills Came to a Head in Recent Hostage Ordeal."

<sup>45</sup> Monte Plott, "Impoverished N.C. County's Problems Finally Boiled Over When Hostages Were Seized."

<sup>46</sup> Malissa Talbert, "600 Attend Rally for Cummings," *Robesonian*, January 16, 1987, 1.

national notice.<sup>47</sup> At issue were unsolved deaths of minorities, including the kidnap, rape, and murder of an African American textile supervisor,<sup>48</sup> and fatal shootings of Lumbee suspects in 1986 and 1987 by sheriff's deputies, incidents that sparked a series of citizen-led forums and a state commission to investigate treatment of Indians in Robeson County.<sup>49</sup> The chief catalyst was the 1986 fatal shooting of a Lumbee, Jimmy Earl Cummings, by Sheriff Hubert Stone's son,<sup>50</sup> a 23-year-old deputy who was the department's chief narcotics agent<sup>51</sup> and had been Cummings's childhood friend.<sup>52</sup> The probe of Cummings's death, which the *Robesonian* said gave "the appearance of a whitewash,"<sup>53</sup> later took on a corruption angle. A federal prosecutor alleged that

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<sup>47</sup> See, "1,000 Marchers Protest Deputy's Slaying of Indian," *Houston Chronicle*, April 21, 1987, 5; "North Carolina," *USA Today*, April 21, 1987, 8.

<sup>48</sup> Mab Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 78-9. At the time of her murder, Joyce Sinclair, 35, had just been promoted to supervisor. Her child described the assailant as "a white man dressed in white" and the body was found at the site of a previous White Patriots rally.

<sup>49</sup> Malissa Talbert, "Commission to Analyze Treatment of Indians," *Robesonian*, January 15, 1987, 1.

<sup>50</sup> See, John L. Godwin letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, January 30, 1987, 4. Sheriff Hubert Stone employed both of his sons as deputies in the Robeson County Sheriff's Department, and Stone's brother worked for him at the jail.

<sup>51</sup> R. L. Godfrey, "ACLU Agrees to Represent Cummingses," *Robesonian*, January 7, 1987, 1. The ACLU became involved after the coroner ruled that the Cummings' fatal gunshot to the head by the sheriff's son was "self-defense and/or accidental." Eight days after Cummings' 69-year-old mother filed a wrongful death suit, sheriff's deputies raided her home and charged her and her son with possession of 1.75 ounces of marijuana. She was sentenced to two years in prison. See, Tim Bass, "Cummings, Mother Get Jail Terms," *Fayetteville Observer*, March 11, 1989, 1.

<sup>52</sup> "Cocaine, Corruption and Killings in Robeson County, N.C." *Akwesasne Notes*, March 31, 1988, 10.

<sup>53</sup> "The Appearance of a Whitewash Given," *Robesonian*, November 16, 1986, 4.

Cummings feared for his life for weeks because he was selling more than a pound of cocaine that his unidentified supplier had stolen from the Sheriff's Department evidence room; also missing was \$50,000 worth of drugs seized in other cases.<sup>54</sup> Importantly, initial stories about Cummings's courthouse drug connection ran first in the Raleigh and Charlotte newspapers<sup>55</sup> instead of the local daily, which was obliged to pick up the out-of-town reports after the fact.<sup>56</sup> There were two explanations for the backward path of the news story. Either the newspaper missed the story in spite of its proximity, or chose to ignore the story *because* of it.

Preceding the takeover came two precipitating developments. In what Hatcher told reporters was "the last straw," a Black Muslim inmate at Stone's jail, Billy McKellar, died under suspicious circumstances January 13, 1988, three weeks before the standoff at the *Robesonian*.<sup>57</sup> Finally, in the days before the takeover, Hatcher claimed to have received death threats from law enforcement, including Sheriff Stone's son, because Hatcher allegedly had information linking the younger Stone to drug trafficking.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Larry Blue, "Investigators Link Shooting, Missing Drugs," *Robesonian*, January 21, 1987, 1. Three men, including a sheriff's deputy and an IRS agent, had already been indicted for stealing a pound of cocaine from the courthouse, but none of the drugs were recovered. Kevin Stone was one of two deputies with a key to the evidence room.

<sup>55</sup> See, "Slain Lumbee Had Feared His Life in Danger, Kin Say," *Charlotte Observer*, January 5, 1987, 4.

<sup>56</sup> Staff and wire reports, "Cummings Feared for His Life Before Shooting," *Robesonian*, January 5, 1987, 1, reprinted from the *Raleigh News & Observer*.

<sup>57</sup> United Press International and Associated Press, "Two Indians Alleging Racial Injustice End Siege At Newspaper," *Seattle Times*, February 2, 1988, 5.

<sup>58</sup> Jacobs testified that for the three days prior to the takeover, deputy's unmarked cruisers parked outside Hatcher's apartment, one of them driven by the sheriff's son, Deputy Kevin Stone.

The hostage-taking was not the first attempt to involve news media on the part of Hatcher, the older of the two hostage-takers and the leader. Hatcher, a Pembroke State student who worked for a Tuscarora tribal newspaper<sup>59</sup> and also volunteered at the *Voice*, had previously taken his law enforcement suspicions to the press, without results. In fall 1987, Hatcher contacted the state's largest newspaper, the *Charlotte Observer*, located two hours southwest of Pembroke, and told a reporter that he had been jailed for political reasons. The *Observer* published nothing about the interview until the day after the hostage-taking, when Hatcher's previous statements took on front-page news value.<sup>60</sup> The content of the earlier interview suggested that Hatcher was determined to gain media attention, but unable to prove his allegations, had concluded that direct action was required. The only hope for change, Hatcher had told the *Observer*, "is some kind of terrorist activity," and he added cryptically, "Bodies wind up in rivers over cases like this, but I'll take my chances."<sup>61</sup>

### **Local Media: The Entanglements of Proximity**

Hatcher also sought access to local media, but for the *Voice* and the *Robesonian*, the scope and libelous potential of his allegations exceeded the newspapers' capabilities or will. This was not for lack of interest. As the issue of law enforcement violence escalated in late 1987 with a second fatal shooting by a sheriff's deputy,<sup>62</sup> the *Voice* sharpened its attacks on the sheriff and district attorney, putting the *Robesonian* on the defensive. Connee Brayboy, who assumed the *Voice* editorship when her brother Bruce Barton retired that fall,<sup>63</sup> relentlessly lampooned Stone as inept and

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<sup>59</sup> Bruce Henderson and Elizabeth Leland, "Indians Free Hostages at Paper," *Charlotte Observer*, February 2, 1988, 1. *The Tuscarora Lightbearers* has no known archive.

<sup>60</sup> Bruce Henderson, "Hostage Taker Had Spoken of Violence," *Charlotte Observer*, February 2, 1988, 1.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Mike Mangiameli, "Godwin Questions Account Given in Zabitosky Shooting Death," *Robesonian*, November 19, 1987, 1.

<sup>63</sup> "Bruce Barton Severs Ties," *Carolina Indian Voice*, November 5, 1987, 1.



corrupt,<sup>64</sup> Britt as a bully,<sup>65</sup> and *Robesonian* reporters as shills for the power structure.<sup>66</sup>

The daily and Sunday newspaper, by then under the corporate ownership of Park Newspaper Company of Ithaca, New York,<sup>67</sup> projected a social identity of consensus, political hierarchy, and respect for authority. The paper's general manager in 1987 articulated this vision in describing the ideal reader who was "an amalgam of all our subscribers," a reader George Fain imagined as male, middle-class, and "Scottish, just like me."<sup>68</sup> This reader expected an episodic mix of government and community news, coverage of drug arrests, and "who was beaten in the streets."<sup>69</sup> But bad news needed to be within reason, Fain observed—not "so much crime news in the paper that it scares away the visitors and is bad for business."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> "Editorial Expression: Sheriff Hubert Stone's Seeming Arrogance Added Incentive For Recall Effort," *Carolina Indian Voice*, March 5, 1987, 5. Brayboy repeatedly reminded *Voice* readers that the sheriff wrote a character reference to a Florida court on behalf of a Pembroke contractor convicted of running what the DEA termed a "major distribution network" for cocaine.

<sup>65</sup> "Issues Remain the Same," *Carolina Indian Voice*, December 17, 1987, 2.

<sup>66</sup> "What's Next???" *Carolina Indian Voice*, August 18, 1988, 2.

<sup>67</sup> Park owned 110 newspapers, and more than a dozen TV and radio stations, for a time, the largest media company in the United States. See, Roy H. Park Jr., *Sons in the Shadow: Surviving the Family Business as an SOB (Son of Boss)* (Ithaca, NY: Elderberry Press, 2008).

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<sup>68</sup> George Fain, "This is *All We Want* from Our Newspaper," *Robesonian*, January 4, 1987, 4.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

The *Robesonian* also manifested its supervising mentality in the newspaper's ideal of the community mover and shaker. As the county approached its 200th anniversary in 1987, the paper ran a full-page interview by the managing editor with the white bicentennial commission chairman, Hector MacLean, described as "lawyer, banker, former Lumberton mayor, former state legislator and all-around civic leader of Robeson County."<sup>71</sup> MacLean, whose theme was "cooperation" between business leaders, was pictured on a section front next to a spread of three photos: his governor ancestor's<sup>72</sup> antebellum mansion, once a "landmark;" the bank, owned by the current MacLean, now occupying the same land; and finally, an imposing photo of MacLean's present-day home, which the *Robesonian* pointed out was "colonnaded."<sup>73</sup> In the *Robesonian*'s sensibility, the rhetoric of white collective memory was embedded in place and architecture, that of an Old South elite resting on the pillars of racial primacy, land, money, and political influence.

Leaders who emerged from the Indian community received less deference from the newspaper. In a disagreement over school desegregation, for example, the *Robesonian* expressed its "disappointment" in Indian activist John Godwin, a member of "the

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<sup>71</sup> Donna Pipes, "Robeson Bicentennial Leader Looks to 1987," *Robesonian*, January 4, 1987, C1.

<sup>72</sup> Angus McLean, a prominent lawyer, mill-owner, banker, and assistant secretary of the US Treasury, was known as the "businessman's governor" during his 1925-29 tenure. See, Mary Evelyn Underwood, *The Scotsman from Lumber River: Farmer, Industrialist, Banker, Public Servant* (Raleigh, NC: Pentland Press, 1996).

<sup>73</sup> Donna Pipes, "Robeson Bicentennial Leader Looks to 1987."

Indian community we had developed a measure of respect for."<sup>74</sup> The newspaper covered Godwin's forums<sup>75</sup> and printed his letters to the editor.<sup>76</sup> But when Godwin in late 1987 won a grant from a prestigious outside foundation for his social justice organizing, a *Robesonian* editorial cautioned that if he were now to "spout off irresponsibly," he could squander his credibility by "protesting for the sake of protesting."<sup>77</sup> Now that the Lumbee community organizer had white society's stamp of approval, he was expected to act and speak accordingly.

Legitimacy implied consensus for the business-oriented *Robesonian* leadership team. The newspaper suggested that "the group that calls itself Concerned Citizens for Better Government," an Indian-led organization advocating for social justice, faced a "credibility crisis,"<sup>78</sup> although the only crisis the editorial indicated was the disapproval of courthouse officials and the daily newspaper, which questioned the group's legitimacy. After a citizen forum in November 1987 to discuss a law enforcement shooting,<sup>79</sup> Horne editorialized that the group's use of a speaker sign-up list discouraged "those who wanted to speak in defense of the young officers involved

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<sup>74</sup> "Merger Plan is Sound," *Robesonian*, July 31, 1987, 5. Godwin, a retired opera singer who moved back to Robeson County, was president of Concerned Citizens for Better Government in Robeson County until his death in spring 1988 in a car crash.

<sup>75</sup> Mike Mangiameli, "Godwin Questions Account Given in Zabitosky Shootini 0

<sup>76</sup> John Godwin letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, January 23, 1987, 5; John Godwin letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, January 30, 1987, 4.

<sup>77</sup> "Godwin must be cautious in looking into shooting," *Robesonian*, November 29, 1987, 4.

<sup>78</sup> "Concerned Citizens Faces Credibility Crisis," *Robesonian*, December 2, 1987, 6. "

<sup>79</sup> "Group Walks Out of Zabitosky Hearing," *Robesonian*, November 25, 1987.

in the shooting."<sup>80</sup> The language suggested that innocent deputies were left defenseless from accusers, and that the process was rigged against law enforcement. Hatcher's reply in the letters column, in defense of the meeting rules of order, was provocative, particularly in view of the takeover two months later:

I ask Mr. Bob Horne, would he allow anyone, other than his manager, to rudely barge into his office unannounced only to disrupt and dictate what he should and should not include in one of his "works of art" called the editorial?<sup>81</sup>

The *Robesonian*, in Hatcher's view, was one of the county's "many dictatorships," deaf to minority concerns.<sup>82</sup> But Hatcher was hardly the only critic of the *Robesonian*, and recriminations about the newspaper's loyalties came from multiple directions.

Foremost was the *Voice*. Furor over the Cummings homicide escalated with the D.A.'s open-and-shut inquest,<sup>83</sup> which the *Voice* denounced as a "smokescreen"<sup>84</sup> then followed by publishing a double-truck reprint of the inquest transcript.<sup>85</sup> Putting further pressure on the *Robesonian* was attention the situation was attracting in the state capital and in newspapers across North Carolina.<sup>86</sup> A state commission had

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<sup>80</sup> "Concerned Citizens faces credibility crisis."

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<sup>81</sup> Eddie Hatcher, letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, December 22, 1987, 4.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Staff and Wire Reports, "Examiner Says He Wasn't Told of Inquest," *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 1, 1987, 2. Britt did not inform the medical examiner of the inquest, in which neither the shooter nor Cummings' passenger testified. The jury deliberated for six minutes. See, *Coroner's Inquest in the Matter of Jimmy Earl Cummings*, November 13, 1986.

<sup>84</sup> "Coroner's Inquest Only a Smokescreen," *Carolina Indian Voice*, December 10, 1987, 2.

<sup>85</sup> Concerned Citizens of for Better Government, Paid Advertisement, *Carolina Indian Voice*, November 6, 1987, 4-5.

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Stan Swofford, "Blacks, Lumbees Want Answers," *Greensboro News & Record*, December 14, 1986; Lee Freeland Hancock, "Slaying of Lumbee Rocks Robeson," *Raleigh News & Observer*, December 21, 1986, 1.

already concluded that Indians in Robeson had disproportionate arrests, convictions, and sentence lengths;<sup>87</sup> now came a steady stream of stories reporting that the ACLU<sup>88</sup> and the US Justice Department<sup>89</sup> suspected the Cummings shooting and the stolen courthouse drugs were related. Godwin's group bought full-page ads in the *Robesonian* denouncing "so-called 'justice'" in Robeson County.<sup>90</sup> Further aggravating tensions, another fatal shooting by a sheriff's deputy occurred in November 1987.

Much as coverage was being dictated by events, the sheriff and DA complained that the *Robesonian* was giving too much play to social critics and meanwhile withholding letters to the editor in support of law enforcement.<sup>91</sup> Horne bristled at the suggestion, pointing out that the pro-law enforcement letters were unsigned and therefore unprintable. In an editorial reply, Horne deduced that the sheriff and the D.A. had themselves written or solicited the anonymous letters: "Otherwise, why would they know about them?"<sup>92</sup> One pro-courthouse writer who did sign his name argued in a lengthy counterpoint that the Cummings tempest had been wrought not by "good

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<sup>87</sup> North Carolina Commission on Indian Affairs, *Report on the Treatment of Indians by the Criminal Justice System* (September 1987).

<sup>88</sup> R.L. Godfrey, "ACLU Agrees to Represent Cummingses," *Robesonian*, January 7, 1987, 1.

<sup>89</sup> Larry Blue, "Investigators Link Shooting, Missing Drugs," *Robesonian*, January 21, 1987, 1.

<sup>90</sup> Concerned Citizens for Better Government, Paid Advertisement, *Robesonian*, November 2, 1987, B8.

<sup>91</sup> "Letter Writers Must Identify Themselves," *Robesonian*, January 15, 1987, 4.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

honest people of Robeson County" but instead by "outsider, publicity-seeking individuals" seeking to "undermine law enforcement."<sup>93</sup>

I ask you, Mr. Editor ... what do you think is right?  
What side are you on? Where do you want Robeson  
County to stand? No. 1 in law and order or  
No. 1 on the FBI drug and major crime list?<sup>94</sup>

A week after this letter writer blamed "anarchy" by a criminal on the "wrong kind of publicity that they can read daily in the newspaper,"<sup>95</sup> Hatcher fired another missive at the *Robesonian*, this one published in the *Voice*. He accused the daily of "irresponsible back-scratching" in running a page one, above-the-fold story and photo on D.A. Joe Freeman Britt's announced candidacy for judge, while placing downpage a corresponding announcement by a Lumbee candidate for the bench, Julian Pierce.<sup>96</sup>

Wrote Hatcher:

Please don't underestimate the Indians and Blacks  
of Robeson County. Naiveté makes for a hard rump  
when beaten by a trump card, especially an ace.<sup>97</sup>

Even though Hatcher maintained that the *Voice* was "unintimidated by the political trash of Robeson County,"<sup>98</sup> he could not persuade the Indian paper to print his

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<sup>93</sup> James Bass, letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, January 15, 1987, 4.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Eddie Hatcher, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, January 21, 1988, 2.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Hatcher letter to the editor, *Robesonian*, December 22, 1987.

allegations of corruption. *Voice* editor Brayboy later said that Hatcher had shown her a map<sup>99</sup> of cocaine drops four days before the takeover, and that she told Hatcher to "bury" it because the map bore the names of law enforcement officials and prominent businessmen: "When I seen the map and the names on the map," Brayboy testified, "it frightened me so bad that I didn't want to see any more."<sup>100</sup> Brayboy said that Hatcher was receiving threats, and that he was more fearful each subsequent time she saw him because, he said, Sheriff Stone knew that he had the map and intended to take it to the media.<sup>101</sup> Alleging that sheriff's cruisers were circling his apartment, Hatcher had exhausted his avenues, or so he later told hostages and reporters: "All peaceful means we have tried have been futile. We have marched, written letters, begged, cried."<sup>102</sup> Attorney Pitts met in late January with Hatcher, but told him that the hand-drawn maps were not "self-substantiating."<sup>103</sup> Recalled Pitts: "The guy was scared. He didn't know

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<sup>99</sup> Eric Harrison, "Some Hail N.C. Hostage-Takers As Heroes of the Oppressed," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 7, 1988, C1. Timothy Jacobs later testified that an inmate led Hatcher to the map, which the defense produced in court. The handwritten document implicated law enforcement, politicians, and prominent businessmen in cocaine trafficking from Florida.

<sup>100</sup> Testimony of Connee Brayboy in *US v. John Edward Clark A/K/A Eddie Hatcher and Timothy Bryan Jacobs*, 88-7-01-CR3, Eastern District of North Carolina, October 1988.

<sup>101</sup> Sam Rankin, "'Hatcher Demands Called Reasonable by Indian Editor.'"

<sup>102</sup> Fred Grimm, "Indians Hope Hostage-Taking Delivers More Than Attention."

<sup>103</sup> Mab Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor* (Boston: South End Press, 1994), 121.

where to go for protection. What do you do? He thought maybe putting that big publicity out. And where else do you go? A newspaper.”<sup>104</sup>

But the question of why Hatcher chose *this* newspaper is important to the meaning and intentionality of the takeover as a mediated act of resistance. One answer was that the *Robesonian* was simply an available microphone for broadcasting a message to a wider audience, a familiar media trope in the 1980s.<sup>105</sup> Another possibility was that the *Robesonian* was part of the intended audience, with the hostage-takers seeking to influence the local media organization, and hypothetically, the thinking of the white community. The first explanation was more favorable to a criminal defense strategy because it indicated no malice or forethought. Hatcher and Jacobs insisted that they bore no grudge against the *Robesonian*, and Horne wrote that that they commandeered the *Robesonian* “not to target” his newspaper per se, but as “a means to an end.”<sup>106</sup> Initially, Hatcher told a hostage, he and Jacobs planned a takeover of the county courthouse, but reasoned that they would be outnumbered and outgunned by law enforcement, and chose the newspaper office across the street.<sup>107</sup>

However, Hatcher's desire for media involvement and his increasingly personal quarrel with the *Robesonian* suggest that the newsroom was not an incidental target.

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<sup>104</sup> Lewis Pitts interview with author, March 4, 2012, Southern Oral History Program, U-613, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, , University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>105</sup> Jonathan Friendly, "Press Role in Siege: Should Reporters Be Part of Events?" *New York Times*, October 20, 1982, B1.

<sup>106</sup> Malissa Talbert, "Robesonian Hostages Released," *Robesonian*, February 1-2, 1988, 1.

<sup>107</sup> Bruce Henderson and Elizabeth Leland, "Indians Free Hostages at Paper."



Months later, Hatcher conceded that the taking of the newspaper was designed to maximize publicity: "We figured if we wanted to get our message out, we should go straight to the messengers."<sup>108</sup> Jacobs agreed. The takeover was, in Jacobs' words, not a "personal vendetta," but it was "a way to gain world media attention."<sup>109</sup>

We targeted the *Robesonian* because it was the media.  
Whether Donnie Douglas[sports editor taken hostage,  
and subsequently *Robesonian* editor-in-chief] or any  
other members of the media were willing to tell that story  
before, they were going too tell that story now.  
And they were going to be a *part* of that story as well.<sup>110</sup>

This suggests that the takeover not only anticipated forcing the media to communicate the act of resistance, but also repositioning journalists as insiders. As such, the journalists would be reported on themselves, and would have to answer questions instead of merely asking them.

### **Journalists as Participants: The Discourse of Detachment**

The prospect of journalists becoming the news in hostage-takings had been contested in journalism discourse for more than a decade preceding, posing what *CBS Evening News* termed "an ethical dilemma."<sup>111</sup> In the post-9/11 world, the issues have, of course, shifted

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<sup>108</sup> Anna Griffin, "The Terror of Robeson County," *Charlotte Observer*, April 1, 2001, 1.

<sup>109</sup> Timothy Jacobs interview with author,,March 11, 2012, Southern Oral History Program, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In 2009, Hatcher died in prison from complications of HIV while serving an unrelated sentence for murder. He was 51.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Dan Rather, Bernard Goldberg, "New York City/Hostage Incident," *CBS Evening News*, October 18, 1982.

with an epidemic of kidnappings and murders of foreign correspondents, and the Internet's displacement of broadcast and print media to disseminate propaganda.<sup>112</sup> But as of the 1980s, enlistment and intervention of journalists in standoffs—or outright hijacking of domestic media organizations—was a novel enough trend to engender ongoing professional debate.

Conventionally, participation in breaking news was a taboo of the working press, and this held true beyond the empirical, high modern period of American journalism<sup>113</sup> and the rise of immersive, dialogic New Journalism.<sup>114</sup> Yet advances in technology such as the adoption of the TV Minicam in the 1970s enabled the split-second immediacy of eyewitness news,<sup>115</sup> intensifying competition for information. This held implications for the role of media, as two top national stories demonstrated in 1977. The first, a three-day hostage-taking in Indianapolis, forced the city's most prominent radio host to be the sole negotiator between police and a crazed gunman, introducing the idea that a participant in the news was required to recuse himself from a story's coverage.<sup>116</sup> One month later, in another three-day siege, Hanafi Muslim gunmen in Washington, DC, held 123 people hostage at three highly public locations, another

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<sup>112</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, "Statistical Analysis: 756 Journalists Murdered Since 1992," 1992-2015, <https://www.cpj.org>

<sup>113</sup> Mark Deuze, "What is Journalism? Professional Identity and Ideology of Journalists Reconsidered."

<sup>114</sup> Oren Soffer, "The Competing Ideals of Objectivity and Dialogue in American Journalism," *Journalism* 10, no. 4 (2009): 473-491.

<sup>115</sup> Dicky Howett, *Television Innovations: 50 Technological Innovations* (Devon: Kelly Publications, 2006) 47-8.

<sup>116</sup> Daniel Comiskey, "End of the Line," *Indianapolis Monthly*, February 2013, 128.

siege in which hostage-takers demanded to speak with a specific journalist, a popular local TV anchor. . .<sup>117</sup> During the crisis, reporters interviewed gunmen live, and these reporters became subjects of national news coverage at the same time that they covered the story.<sup>118</sup>

A discourse of media detachment—and of refusing terrorist demands—continued to evolve in the aftermath of the media's high-profile role in a 1982 hostage-taking at a Brooklyn, New York hospital.<sup>119</sup> At the request of police, the local ABC affiliate violated its own policy by broadcasting a gunman's statement, as did a radio station.<sup>120</sup> Illustrating the conflict between the ideals of journalism and the jockeying for scoops, the New York *Daily News* editorial page railed against exploitation of the media,<sup>121</sup> but the newspaper's Sunday front page used tabloid headlines to promote a first-person confidential by a *News* reporter the gunman demanded be brought to the scene.<sup>122</sup> Potentially raising the stakes on this debate in the 1980s, there were at least three US newsrooms taken hostage prior to the *Robesonian*, all involving gunmen with psychiatric problems. In 1980, a gunman seized a Cincinnati TV station and demanded

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<sup>117</sup> Tom Shales, "The Crisis And the Media," *Washington Post*, March 11, 1977, B1.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Jonathan Friendly, "Press Role In a Siege: Should Reporters Be Part of Events?," *New York Times*, October 20, 1982, B1.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Editorial, New York *Daily News*, October 19, 1982, 4.

<sup>122</sup> Bella English, "STATE OF SIEGE: My 47 Hours," New York *Daily News*, October 17, 1982, 1.

a videotaped interview.<sup>123</sup> In 1982, another held a Phoenix TV station hostage and forced an anchorman to read a 20-minute statement.<sup>124</sup> Perhaps the most controversial was a 1987 incident in which a Cleveland news director pulled the plug on a live newscast when an intruder thrust a gun (later found to be toy) against the back of an anchorman, ordering him to read a statement.<sup>125</sup> The editorial decision to go off the air, alternately denounced as callous<sup>126</sup> or applauded as principled,<sup>127</sup> laid bare misgivings about the role of journalists. These misgivings and gray areas remained much in play as of February 1988. Estes Thompson, a reporter for the Associated Press and one of the first assigned on the *Robesonian* standoff, was among the numerous correspondents who called the newspaper's main number during the siege and interviewed Jacobs. In turn, AP's managing editor warned the reporter that he had broken the rules: "The New

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<sup>123</sup> Associated Press, "Siege of TV Station Ends With Suicide," *New York Times*, October 16, 1980, 20.

<sup>124</sup> Associated Press, "Gunman Holds Four Hostages For Five Hours at TV Station," *Washington Post*, May 30, 1982, 18.

<sup>125</sup> Ted Rohrlich and Ted Thackery Jr., "Intruder With Toy Gun Puts KNBC off Air," *Los Angeles Times*, August 20, 1987, 15.

<sup>126</sup> Pauline Ross, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, August 28, 1987, B6; Marsh L. Marcoe, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, August 28, 1987, B6; Dale Van Aman, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, August 28, 1987, B6; Terry Tilford, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, August 28, 1987, B6.

<sup>127</sup> Douglas Borton, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, August 28, 1987, B6; Kelly Lange, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, August 28, 1987, B6; Ross Anderson, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, August 28, 1987, B6.

York editor, Bill Ahearn, wouldn't let us use it, saying we had 'inserted ourselves in the story.' Who knew?"<sup>128</sup>

Not that protests in the form of armed standoffs were unfamiliar. Civil rights attorney William Kuntsler, who joined the Hatcher-Jacobs defense, compared the takeover to AIM protests he successfully defended such as the 1973 siege at Wounded Knee: "The seizure of a newspaper office or any place without injury to anybody to protest conditions," Kuntsler told a reporter, "is sort of a standard American practice."<sup>129</sup> News media occupations were hardly everyday occurrences in the United States, but frequent enough that reporters sought novel story angles to differentiate one from the next, just as they might in covering an airline hijacking or a school shooter. This goes to the idea of framing, the power of media to impose interpretive structure on events by selecting aspects of the reality they perceive and giving them salience<sup>130</sup> to give breaking news meaning,<sup>131</sup> or simply to find a fresh angle. Depending on a particular hostage-taking situation, media might choose to highlight differentiating features such as hostage-takers' demands or past traumas, the ordeal for hostages, the symbolic location of the incident, or the law enforcement response.

### **Outside Media: Historical Templates in Local Color**

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<sup>128</sup> Estes Thompson interview with author, April 13, 2012. (Bill Ahearn is no relation to the author of this study.)

<sup>129</sup> Tim Bass, "Grand Jury Indicts 2 Robeson Indians in Hostage Case," *Fayetteville Observer*, February 10, 1988, 1.

<sup>130</sup> Robert Entman, "Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (October 1993): 51-58.

<sup>131</sup> William Gamson and Andre Modigliani, "Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach," *American Journal of Sociology* 95, no. 1 (July 1989): 1-37.

Outside media were a captive audience to the events unfolding inside the *Robesonian*, and lacking definitive updates from official sources during the 10-hour barricade, reporters turned to bystanders on the sidewalk to interpret the takeover, and began to craft a narrative that adhered to these interpretations. Reporters quoted some onlookers who were angry about the hostage-taking and felt that Hatcher and Jacobs were "sick in the head," as a white Lumberton man told the Fayetteville paper,<sup>132</sup> and it is possible that this was the prevailing view regardless of race. But the concern here is the media storyline, and overwhelmingly, the people whom reporters quoted voiced sympathy for Hatcher and Jacobs.

A *Miami Herald* correspondent found the attitude strange, even disturbing. The reporter described the developing picture as "if not outright sympathetic ... oddly understanding of something so dangerous and desperate."<sup>133</sup> One source after another, he observed, began conversations with the disclaimer, "I don't agree with what they're doing, but..."<sup>134</sup> During the standoff, the qualifier came from Elizabeth Mangiameli, the wife of a reporter being held hostage. Though her first concern was the outcome, she told the *Herald* that she "felt like this was the only way to get people to listen. I wonder if they'll listen now."<sup>135</sup> The hostages themselves were equally circumspect. As sportswriter Sammy Batten, held hostage for 10 hours, told an Orlando newspaper:

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Fred Grimm, "Indians Hope Hostage-Taking Delivers More Than Attention," *Miami Herald*, February 8, 1988, 2.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. The *Herald* quoted Elizabeth Mangiameli as saying that Hatcher and Jacobs "felt like this was the only way to get people to listen. I wonder if they'll listen now."

I've always had a feeling something like this might happen here. I don't necessarily agree with their methods ... but I believe there are some problems that need to be addressed.<sup>136</sup>

In this way, the reports turned the roles of heroes and villains upside-down, Robin Hood and Sheriff of Nottingham-style. For example, in the *NBC Nightly News* second-day report, Tuscarora Chief Young Bear gave the network an interview praising the captors, and in the same report, Sheriff Stone was put on the defensive, attempting to justify his son's fatal shooting of Cummings.<sup>137</sup> The story took the familiar shape of a historical template imposed on present-day Robeson County, and accounts reflected an *awareness* of that template. The Sunday *Philadelphia Inquirer*, a newspaper that specialized in narrative journalism, connected the dots back to the Lowry War in 1872 and the KKK routing in 1958, examples the *Inquirer* discussed at length.<sup>138</sup> Rev. Mac Legerton, accounting for what he saw as popular support for Hatcher and Jacobs, told the newspaper that the hostage-taking "falls right into the historical traditions of the county. Citizens who have suffered abuse have tended to violence as a means of resistance."<sup>139</sup> Connee Brayboy took the analogy further: "Just as Henry Berry Lowry freed us from the slavery camp," she

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<sup>136</sup> Tom Schroder, "Indians Release Hostages After Making a Point," *Orlando Sentinel*, February 2, 1988, 1.

<sup>137</sup> Tom Brokaw and Kenley Jones, "Lumberton, North Carolina/Hostages" *NBC Nightly News*, February 2, 1988.

<sup>138</sup> Eric Harrison, "Some Hail N.C. Hostage-takers As Heroes of the Oppressed," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 7, 1988, 1.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

told the *Inquirer*, "Eddie Hatcher and Timmy Jacobs have freed us from the slavery of the justice system."<sup>140</sup>

In a different category of interviews in the longer print pieces, sources were selected because they were representative rather than prominent. In an echo of the *New York Herald's* local color dispatches from a century earlier— for example, George Alfred Townsend's interview with Aunt Phoebe— journalists privileged the vernacular over the official. A Fayetteville reporter quoted an onlooker identified only as a 65-year-old black woman: "If the Sheriff's Department had done what they were supposed to have done, this would have never happened. Indians and blacks don't have no say, no rights."<sup>141</sup> Another interviewee, identified as "a nearby white woman," agreed: "Honey, she's telling the truth."<sup>142</sup> In nearby Pembroke, a reporter who interviewed a dozen Indians such as hair stylists, mechanics, and grocers quoted only praise for Hatcher during the standoff: "a fine fellow," "happy-go-lucky," "well educated" and churchgoing, not one to use "bad language."<sup>143</sup> Brushing aside a question about Hatcher's judgment and frame of mind, an employee of a print shop next door to the *Voice* was adamant: "No, no, no, he's smart. I'm talking brains. Eddie ain't crazy. He's got a lot to say and he needs to be heard."<sup>144</sup> By turning to man- and woman-on-the-street reporting during the wait for a resolution, media reports began to try Hatcher's case, essentially calling character witnesses,

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ellen Scarborough, "On Outside, the Waiting Was Tense."

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Gary Moss, "Hatcher Praised as Dedicated to Good Cause," *Fayetteville Observer*, February 2, 1988, 1.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.



legitimized by their proximity to the subject. As defense attorney Pitts argued, the captors gambled that there would be some sympathy and understanding of their grievances in the community where others lived with the same repression: "And it turned out," Pitts observed, "there *was* sympathy."<sup>145</sup>

But most counterintuitive in media reports outside the *Robesonian* was the hostages' overall sympathy, with some exceptions. In the immediate aftermath, Horne said he believed Hatcher and Jacobs's allegations "scream for serious investigation,"<sup>146</sup> and told the *Voice*, in an extraordinary quote that was picked up widely, that if there were proof of widespread corruption, "these guys (Hatcher and Jacobs) are going to be heroes."<sup>147</sup> Not only was this an apologist view of the captors' motives, reinforcing the social bandit idea; it aggrandized the hostage-takers' methods as well. Horne, asked about the captors' success at garnering national publicity, replied, "I don't know if anyone, anywhere has done a better job."<sup>148</sup> Hostages as well as law enforcement described the takeover as bold, serious, and carefully planned, even "professional."<sup>149</sup>

In a real sense, the *Robesonian* was siding with its own captors. Even though it took the newspaper another 24 hours to resume its publishing cycle, the moment of surrender by Hatcher and Jacobs illustrated to those waiting outside how dramatically the conventional line between journalist and participant had been crossed. Before Hatcher gave himself up

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<sup>145</sup> Lewis Pitts interview.

<sup>146</sup> Fred Grimm, "Indians Hope Hostage-Taking Delivers More than Attention."

<sup>147</sup> "Two Held in Newspaper Takeover," *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 4, 1988, 1.

<sup>148</sup> Kim Oriole, "Lumberton, Robesonian Are Back to Normal."

<sup>149</sup> "Paper Staff 'Admirable' in Ordeal," *Fayetteville Observer*, February 2, 1988, 1.

to the FBI, the Lumberton police chief circled the block three times with a bull horn, warning officers to hold their fire by order of the governor.<sup>150</sup> Horne, fearing that Hatcher and Jacobs would be shot regardless,<sup>151</sup> chose to walk out the exit first as a shield.<sup>152</sup> Physically, this was a reversal of the Stockholm syndrome: captors becoming attached to a hostage, who embodied the hope of survival. But Hatcher, who had made out his will the night before,<sup>153</sup> appeared less focused on physical safety than he was on representation. Hands clasped behind his head, he backed slowly along with Jacobs toward the authorities and made a last request of Horne: “Bob, please don’t do us too bad in the paper.”<sup>154</sup>

On its face, Hatcher's concern was so dryly understated as to be ironic. Seemingly oblivious to the crowd of reporters including the three New York-based national networks and Atlanta-based CNN, let alone the line of sharpshooters trained on his and Jacobs's backs, Hatcher fretted over how Lumberton's 15,000-circulation daily would tell the story. But on another level, it could be argued, the *Robesonian*'s ability to be impartial—to show the whole picture—would be the litmus test of the takeover. As attorney Pitts observed, the captors calculated that the local daily and its readers were

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<sup>150</sup> Ellen Scarborough, "On Outside, the Waiting Was Tense."

<sup>151</sup> Oriole. Immediately before the surrender, Hatcher took a call warning him that law enforcement planned to shoot him and Jacobs.

<sup>152</sup> Sisk, *The Trials of Eddie Hatcher*.

<sup>153</sup> Bob Horne, "Hatcher's Mother Says He Took Hostages to Protect His Life," *Robesonian*, February 8, 1988, 1.

<sup>154</sup> Bob Horne, "Despite Hostage Situation, Atmosphere Was Fairly Relaxed," *Robesonian*, February 1-2, 1988.

best positioned to appraise allegations of injustice.<sup>155</sup> And of all the media organizations in Lumberton at that moment, the *Robesonian* alone had the complete story.

It was an instance where the power of proximity trumped prestige. Unquestionably, national media had stature, reach, and unprecedented speed, particularly TV networks. But the compression of the news cycle by electronic newsgathering and satellite uplinks<sup>156</sup> cut both ways for a live story like the *Robesonian* takeover. News organizations descended on Lumberton the day of the crisis, composing quick sketches of Robeson's peculiar problems before either local paper managed to put out an edition. Then, as quickly as the TV networks parachuted in, they departed, in Horne's words, "for the next big breaking news event, and the next, and the next."<sup>157</sup> In fact, another unrelated hostage-taking dominated national TV news less than 12 hours after the *Robesonian* incident ended. On the morning of February 2 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, a gunman with an assault rifle held 28 grade school children hostage to call attention to homelessness,<sup>158</sup> and the story was the lead-off that evening on all three broadcast

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<sup>155</sup> Pitts interview.

<sup>156</sup> See, Jonathan Higgins, *Satellite Newsgathering*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Focal Press, 2007).

<sup>157</sup> "Let's work together on problems," *Robesonian*, February 14, 1988, 4.

<sup>158</sup> See, David McLemore, "Gunman at Alabama School Was Drifter," *Dallas Morning News*, February 4, 1988, 1. The breaking story was front-page news nationally, but quickly dropped to the inside pages after the freed child hostages described their captivity as "boring," and the captor was dismissed as a mentally ill "drifter" (and Vietnam veteran) who failed to secure his demand to hold a press conference and appear on national TV.

networks.<sup>159</sup> Bruce Hall, the CBS correspondent who covered the *Robesonian* takeover a day earlier, was now reporting live from Tuscaloosa,<sup>160</sup> another one-day story.

For the networks, the Lumberton story came and went before the *Robesonian* managed to get out its first edition the afternoon of February 2, having missed the February 1 edition. Conversely, the newspaper remained tethered to the event. By noon the day after the hostage-taking, at least 50 outside journalists who remained in Lumberton appeared in Horne's newsroom, interviewing *Robesonian* staff, photographing the journalists' computer screens as they wrote, even filming a reporter's notebook.<sup>161</sup> An unsigned editorial admitted to "sort of enjoying our day in the world's limelight," but also observed the surreal aspect of "being on both sides of the fence at the same time."<sup>162</sup>

Its [*sic*] strange to be trying to objectively report your own news story and be reported on at the same time ... Certainly, it can be disconcerting ... But we also sincerely believe we were more understanding about the overall picture than many sources are.<sup>163</sup>

The word "strange" signaled the journalists' awareness that the takeover left them in an unsettled position, one in which their accepted practice of reporting from a distance was no longer workable. Being the subject represented revealed to the *Robesonian* the inherent

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<sup>159</sup> See, Peter Jennings and Mike Von Fremd, "Tuscaloosa/ Alabama Hostages," *ABC World News Tonight*, February 2, 1988; Dan Rather and Bruce Hall, "Tuscaloosa/ Alabama Hostages," *CBS Evening News*, February 2, 1988; Tom Brokaw and Dan Molina, "Tuscaloosa/ Alabama Hostages," *NBC Nightly News*, February 2, 1988, Vanderbilt Television News Archive.

<sup>160</sup> Dan Rather and Bruce Hall, "Tuscaloosa/ Alabama Hostages."

<sup>161</sup> "Both sides of fence is a strange position," *Robesonian*, February 4, 1988, 4.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

distortions of the outside-in view. At the same time, the former hostages understood that the inside-out view—the fact of "being on both sides of the fence"—was not a predicament but an advantage in seeing the "overall picture." Here was an alternative definition of impartiality: the idea that attachment and involvement yielded a more accurate perception of reality.

### **The Inside View from the *Robesonian*: A Lexicon of Us and Them**

The rupture of journalistic roles began during the standoff, when the hostages served as facilitators who communicated to the outside on behalf of their captors. The five editors, four reporters, and almost a dozen business and production workers<sup>164</sup> answered phones, resolved short-term requests such as sending out for lunch, and sought to clarify Hatcher's list of demands and terms of surrender. Hatcher encouraged the hostages to give phone interviews, and Horne took it upon himself to begin interviewing the captors and taking photos "almost subversively," he told an interviewer.<sup>165</sup> For much of the day, Hatcher remained in phone contact with Rep. Sidney Locks<sup>166</sup> and *Voice* editor Brayboy, who reassured Hatcher and persuaded him to release some of the hostages.<sup>167</sup> A theme of *Robesonian* staffers' accounts was that after the first hour of chaos and panic, when Hatcher was at his most agitated, the captors treated the hostages with decency. Horne wrote that the captors "weren't threatening anybody, they weren't waving guns in anybody's face, they

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<sup>164</sup> "List of Employees, Individuals in Siege," *Robesonian*, February 1-2, 1988, 15.

<sup>165</sup> "The Trials of Eddie Hatcher."

<sup>166</sup> Mike Mangiameli, "Locks 1 of 4 Cited in Ending Takeover," *Robesonian Weekly*, February 17, 1988, 4.

<sup>167</sup> Sam Rankin, "Hatcher Demands Called Reasonable by Indian Editor," *Fayetteville Observer*, February 7, 1988, B1.

were nice and polite and courteous. I didn't think they would really hurt anyone."<sup>168</sup>

Reporter Larry Blue, a hostage released mid-standoff, concurred: "They were never abusive. They never threatened us or shoved us around. They said as long as you cooperate no one will get hurt."<sup>169</sup>

These hostage accounts privileged the humanity of the captors, while downplaying or leaving out the aggression some witnesses brought out in court months later. An employee in accounting, for example, later portrayed Hatcher as impulsive and menacing. Deborah Adams testified that Hatcher paced, complained of headaches, ordered the windows covered with cardboard, chain-smoked five packs of cigarettes by noon, and threatened the captives.<sup>170</sup> She testified that he pointed a pistol at her early in the takeover and warned that "innocent people are going to die today, and you are the innocent people."<sup>171</sup> These details were conspicuously absent in initial coverage. Upon their release, hostages reported that the gunmen showed concern and even apologized to their prisoners, and for most of the siege, let them make phone calls and move about freely in the newsroom.<sup>172</sup> The national accounts lingered on mitigating details of how the captors released hostages who complained of health problems, traded hostages for hamburgers for the group, and in Jacobs's case, gave

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<sup>168</sup> Bob Horne, "Despite hostage situation, atmosphere was fairly relaxed," *Robesonian*, February 1-2, 1988, 6.

<sup>169</sup> Tom Schroder, "Indians Release Hostages After Making a Point," *Orlando Sentinel*, February 2, 1988, 1.

<sup>170</sup> Bruce Henderson, "Fear Lingers, Say Witnesses in Indian Trial," *Charlotte Observer*, September 29, 1988, 1.

<sup>171</sup> Lorrie Wilkie, "Robesonian Staffers Express Disbelief," *Fayetteville Observer*, October 15, 1988, 1.

<sup>172</sup> Monte Plott, "Indians Free Hostages at N.C. Paper," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, February 2, 1988, 1.

"his last cigarette" to a hostage.<sup>173</sup> Again, these flourishes fit the theme of good-natured masculine chivalry foregrounded in accounts of Henry Berry Lowry as well as the Indian routing of the KKK.

Such strokes of perceived humanity on the part of the captors<sup>174</sup> contrasted with hostages' attitudes toward Gov. Jim Martin. The governor refused contact, and for five hours his staff refused to call Hatcher at the *Robesonian*.<sup>175</sup> Some hostages interpreted this as a lack of concern about either the Indians' grievances or the hostages' safety. As one hostage phrased it, the journalists set about trying to help Hatcher "get cooperation from the bureaucrats."<sup>176</sup> The us-and-them lexicon suggested, somewhat illogically, that what was impeding a safe resolution was not the captors, but rather state authorities operating from a position of safety. With the building surrounded and the governor's office refusing to communicate—in one case hanging up on a reporter-hostage—<sup>177</sup> captors and captives alike increasingly feared that law enforcement, or what reporter-hostage Mike Mangiameli termed a trigger-happy "Rambo" within the ranks, would

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<sup>173</sup> Matthew Spina, "Chief Asks Help for Fugitives—Hatcher, Jacob Played 'Roles,'" *Syracuse Herald-Journal*, December 19, 1988, 1.

<sup>174</sup> Ellen Scarborough, "On Outside, the Waiting Was Tense," *Fayetteville Observer*, February 2, 1988, 1.

<sup>175</sup> Bob Horne, "Despite Hostage Situation, Atmosphere Was Fairly Relaxed," *Robesonian*, February 1-2, 8

<sup>176</sup> Kim Oriole, "Lumberton, Robesonian Are Back to Normal," *Fayetteville Observer*, February 3, 1988, 1.

<sup>177</sup> Larry Blue, "Martin Advised Not to Negotiate," *Robesonian*, February 1-2, 1988, 1. Martin's staff counseled him not to negotiate.

storm the building once darkness fell.<sup>178</sup> The implication was that potential recklessness by the police posed the danger, rather than the hostage-takers holding the newsroom at gunpoint. The captors and captives were collaborating toward a mutual end: survival. These were the classic conditions associated with the so-called Stockholm syndrome, the since-discredited adaptive behavior theory that hostages identify with captors because captors represent hostages' best hope of survival.<sup>179</sup> After the phenomenon was identified among victims in sieges, psychologists later came to understand the "syndrome" less as a pathology of trauma than a function of affect and empathy, especially in situations where the state could be seen as the underlying aggressor.<sup>180</sup> This is relevant to the *Robesonian* because Hatcher, unlike the delusional or suicidal gunmen in previous newsroom takeovers in the 1980s, was claiming plausible evidence that the state (in the person of Deputy Stone) wanted to kill him, and that Sheriff Stone had issued warrants for Hatcher's arrest.<sup>181</sup> Further, because the hostages were journalists whose job it was to bear witness, the identification with Hatcher and Jacobs could be viewed as an ethical response to the history of the state's violence against American Indians, a category of reaction that Cathy Caruth has interpreted this

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<sup>178</sup> Matthew Spina, "Chief Asks Help for Fugitives—Hatcher, Jacob Played 'Roles.'"

<sup>179</sup> Celia Jameson, "The 'Short Step' from Love to Hypnosis: A Reconsideration of the Stockholm Syndrome," *Journal for Cultural Research*, October 2010 14(4): 337-355.

<sup>180</sup> Louk Hulsman, "Terrorism and Victims" in *Final Report on Dimensions of Victimization in the Context of Terroristic Acts*, ed., Ronald Crelinsten, (Montreal: International Centre for Comparative Criminology, 1977), 158-160.

<sup>181</sup> "Hatcher Explains His Cause," *Robesonian*, February 1-2, 1988, 9.



byproduct of captivity.<sup>182</sup> The *Robesonian* had navigated the role of hostage, and the view from the newspaper's storefront windows had been from a position of powerlessness instead of power. Now that the journalists were freed, they saw their occupational processes, routines, and assumptions from a new vantage point.

Just as outside media turned a lens on the *Robesonian*'s processes, the newspaper now turned a lens on itself, in some instances literally. Horne later wrote that because there had never been a newspaper taken hostage in the United States, or "probably the world," there were "no guidelines on how to handle this situation. In fact, it might be said that the *Robesonian* is now writing the book."<sup>183</sup> Rather than the surrender returning the organization "back to normal," as one out-of-town headline put it,<sup>184</sup> the reality was the opposite. For a daily newspaper, an organization that necessarily functioned according to a set of routines, the end of the siege plunged the staff into a reflexive posture that was abnormal and without precedent, at least in conventional journalism textbooks.

### **Journalism of Attachment: The Entailments of Self**

The *Robesonian*, its publishing cycle interrupted on the most eventful day in its 118-year history, swarmed the story the next afternoon with a combined edition dated February 1-2, 1988.<sup>185</sup> Dominating the front page were exclusive photos by Horne of Hatcher and Jacobs

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<sup>182</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 23-24.

<sup>183</sup> "Hatcher, Jacobs Need to Act Responsibly," *Robesonian*, April 10, 1988, 4.

<sup>184</sup> Kim Oriole, "Lumberton, Robesonian Are Back to Normal," *Fayetteville Observer*, February 3, 1988, 1.

<sup>185</sup> "Lumberton Newspaper Gets Back to Work," *Fayetteville Observer*, February 2, 1988, 1.

holding sawed-off shotguns, Hatcher gesturing on the telephone, Jacobs seated in an office chair. Juxtaposed with this was a photo that communicated more tension and danger: a shotgun wielding-policeman peeking around a corner as if ready to ambush the newspaper office. The front page jumped to a package of ten inside articles on the takeover, "A Closer Look At the Siege," illustrated with photos and negotiation documents, which had been delivered by helicopter from Raleigh. The coverage dramatized the emotional ordeal for the staffers and also their resourcefulness, including a reporter who hid in an inner office throughout the siege and compared himself to TV's *MacGyver*,<sup>186</sup> reinforcing the idea that journalists were characters in the drama. Much of the inside coverage was by Horne, who typed up Hatcher's demands,<sup>187</sup> an explanation of his cause, and separate interviews with Hatcher<sup>188</sup> and Jacobs, explaining why the two occupied the newspaper.<sup>189</sup> Horne also wrote a long inside column providing a blow-by-blow eyewitness account of the siege, describing how the atmosphere inside went from tense to "fairly relaxed."<sup>190</sup>

The front page February 3 illustrated a reflexive turn that rendered news production routines, those practices the paper previously took for granted, as self-conscious and deliberate. The lead photo showed the *Robesonian* managing editor in the composing room overseeing paste-up of the previous day's historic front page, and secondary art showed the

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<sup>186</sup> Jeralene Gibbs, "18th Hostage Hid Quietly, Unbeknownst to Captors," *Robesonian*, February 1-2, 1988, 8.

<sup>187</sup> "Hatcher's List of Demands," *Robesonian*, February 1-2, 1988, 9

<sup>188</sup> "Hatcher Explains His Cause," *Robesonian*, February 1-2, 1988, 9.

<sup>189</sup> "Jacobs: I Just Hope People Understand What I Did," *Robesonian*, February 1-2, 1988, 9.

<sup>190</sup> Bob Horne, "Despite Hostage Situation, Atmosphere was Fairly Relaxed," *Robesonian*, February 1-2, 1988, 8.

pressroom supervisor watching the run.<sup>191</sup> The *Robesonian* was not only reporting the news, but reporting on its own newsgathering. An editorial in the same edition described a level of emotion and disorientation that left the journalists struggling for words, and asked readers to "excuse us if we can't gather our thoughts sufficiently at the moment."<sup>192</sup> The former hostages were examining their own reactions, as demonstrated by February 3's centerpiece on the local front, "Hostages Behaved Normally, Expert Says."<sup>193</sup> Quoting Horne's phrase that the siege was "fairly relaxed," a reporter interviewed a psychologist with the county. He assured the *Robesonian* that it was "normal" for hostages to identify with their captors and be angry at authorities, because the view from inside the situation was different from "what one sees objectively from the outside."<sup>194</sup> On the one hand, this suggested that the inside view from which the journalists identified with the captors— a view that did not conform to the accepted model of empirical observation from a place of detachment— was somehow skewed. But the psychologist, Dan Jordan, also had a contradictory theory. Journalists, he posited, were more likely to identify because they had a heightened consciousness:

People who are in the print news business tend to be more aware of what's going on, both worldwide and in the local community. Therefore, there would tend to be, I think, a tendency to identify with the folks doing the holding, especially if there tended to be some even faint sort of rational reason for what they were doing.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Staff photos, *Robesonian*, February 3, 1988, 1.

<sup>192</sup> "Thanks to so many who helped Monday," February 3, 1988, 4.

<sup>193</sup> Jeralene Gibbs, "Hostages Behaved Normally, Expert Says," *Robesonian*, February 3, 1988, B1.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

Here was validation of a new definition of objectivity for the *Robesonian*, offered by a source the paper credentialed as both local and an "expert." According to this discursive move, the ability to see the total picture was a requisite journalistic calling card. With that qualification fulfilled, identification was not a pathology resulting from manipulation. It was a rational moral response based on journalists' capacity (and obligation) to apprehend reality outside their own, and thus to be more aware than non-journalists of "what's going on."

As to the "faint sort of rational reason" behind the takeover, an adjacent story that was the news lead on the page continued a narrative that the siege was the last resort of "desperate" men, according to the headline.<sup>196</sup> Next to a dominant photo of Lumbee leader Ray Little Turtle at the siege, Concerned Citizens for Better Government leaders including John Godwin and Rev. Joy Johnson insisted that Hatcher and Jacobs were "frustrated and fearful," and that the takeover had been only "symptomatic" of the county's ills.<sup>197</sup> Viewed from this perspective, the takeover was not the cause of Robeson's problems; rather, Robeson's problems were the cause of the takeover. The *Robesonian*, which had previously marginalized the grassroots group "that calls itself" the Concerned Citizens for Better Government, now legitimized the same organization, consulting it in a time of crisis. Not only did its acronym, CCBG, appear in a headline, lending it institutional weight and recognition;<sup>198</sup> in the context of the crisis, a press conference by the group was treated as a self-contained news event, with no effort by the newspaper to provide equal time to

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<sup>196</sup> R.L. Godfrey, "Takeover Was Act of 2 'Desperate' Men, says CCBG," *Robesonian*, February 3, 1988, B1.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

courthouse officials. The takeover shifted both the axis and the parameters of news, of who possessed authority and of what constituted news. Hatcher, who had failed to get his last letter to the editor printed in the *Robesonian*, now dominated the front page, editorial page, and local section front, not as a criminal but as a newsmaker.

### **Inverting the Tropes of Troubled Loners and Outside Agitators**

There were two related media tropes which the *Robesonian* takeover inverted, at least in the short term. The first was the customary pattern of representing hostage-takers as troubled, enigmatic loners. The second was the general disavowal of direct-action protestors as outside agitators, especially in the American South. Both tropes served a similar function: to separate and isolate those who disrupted social routines.

Media accounts of barricade situations tended to foreground the drama of survivor and negotiator stories, reinforcing themes of persistence and valor.<sup>199</sup> Gunmen and their objectives, relegated to the background, were often wrapped in pathologies of mental illness or post-traumatic stress that obscured any stated cause. When mental health was not the issue, anti-social methods were. Overall, media framed disruptive and violent acts of resistance as aberrant rather than symptomatic, with focus on the logistics of the disruption, not the underlying grievance. A sub-category of aberrance was a pattern of scapegoating social activists (and out-of-town journalists) as interlopers who came to otherwise tranquil communities to stir up trouble. This was a recurring theme of white media coverage stretching from abolition to the Civil Rights era,<sup>200</sup> and the *Robesonian* in the past had

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<sup>199</sup> See, for example, Christina Cheakolos, "Workers Forced in Cooler," *Miami Herald*, July 15, 1985, 2; Associated Press, "Waite is the 'Big Man' in Negotiations to Free Hostages," *Seattle Times*, January 25, 1987, 6.

<sup>200</sup> Kermit L. Hall, "'Lies, Lies, Lies': The Origins of *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*," *Communication Law and Policy* 9, no. 4 (June 2010): 417.

employed it to discount Indian activism as well. An on-point example was a spike of unrest and activism among Robeson Tuscaroras in the early 1970s. In that instance, the newspaper sought to blame visiting AIM organizers for instigating the protests,<sup>201</sup> and labeled AIM leaders "extremists."<sup>202</sup>

In contrast, the *Robesonian*'s February 1 post-mortems simultaneously invested Hatcher and Jacobs with sanity and communal kinship, and this began on the front pages in the days after the takeover.<sup>203</sup> An important example was a write-through the paper published on the first Sunday after the takeover, by a reporter who had not been held hostage. Hatcher's actions were out of character, the reporting suggested, and "the result of frustration, desperation and the lack of having someone trustworthy to turn to."<sup>204</sup> Community sources described Jacobs as "spiritual" and were quoted as saying only good things about Hatcher: They called him "calm, mild, humble" and serious enough to have informed his Pembroke State professors of an upcoming "emergency" (in retrospect, the takeover) that would cause him to miss class.<sup>205</sup> In a preview of the defense trial strategy, the *Robesonian* reversed the narrative of hostage-takers as ticking time-bombs. Instead, repression was the time-bomb, as John Godwin argued in the closing paragraph of the Sunday story:

Godwin added that thousands of people in Robeson County are held hostage, "not with a gun, but with the actions of elected officials. And this is a continuous thing. It's seven

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<sup>201</sup> See, for example, Toni Goodyear, "1973: Year of Troubles and Progress in Robeson," *Robesonian*, December 31, 1973, 1.

<sup>202</sup> "BIA Takeover," *Robesonian*, November 7, 1972, 6.

<sup>203</sup> Jeralene Gibbs, "Hatcher's Actions Surprised Those Who Knew Him Best," *Robesonian*, February 7, 1988, 1.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

days a week."<sup>206</sup>

This interpretation cast Hatcher not as a loner, but as a proxy for "thousands of people"<sup>207</sup> in Robeson subject to the same pressure. The justification was that Hatcher took extreme action after having been pushed to the extreme.

Another element with the potential to rehabilitate Hatcher and Jacobs in the court of public opinion was their family ties to the community. Reversing the trope of outside agitator, the newspaper ran two prominently placed interviews with Jacobs's and Hatcher's mothers, both written by Bob Horne, demonstrating that the hostage-takers were literally sons of Robeson County. First came Jacobs's mother, four days after the siege. Her contrite interview ran under a banner headline below the paper's flag, "Jacobs' Mother Says She's Sorry She Didn't Listen."<sup>208</sup> Not only did the story emphasize that Jacob belonged in Robeson County; his mother's expressions of regret suggested that she, in some way, shared in the blame. More striking than the prominent placement of the interview was Horne's empathetic tone. The article began:

Parents don't always have time for their children when the children feel a need to talk to them. Often the shunt has no adverse effects. But when subsequent events cause the parent to feel he or she could have done something to prevent the ensuing event, the parent often feels guilt. That's sort of where Eleanor Jacobs is now.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Bob Horne, "Jacobs' Mother Says She's Sorry She Didn't Listen," *Robesonian*, February 5, 1988, 1.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

By starting with a universal scenario—a parent not listening to a teenager—Horne invited the reader to identify with with the mother, literally to occupy the same place and time "where Eleanor Jacobs is now." Horne made every effort to present the mother as a typical *Robesonian* reader living in a subdivision and working as a high school lunch lady. Jacobs confided to Horne that she was ashamed of her son's long hair, had arguments with him so heated that that she hit him on the head with a "pot," and that as a result of the discord, the youth had gone to live with a relative. The mother told Horne that the night before the takeover, her son tried to talk to her about corruption in Robeson County. On her way out of the house, the mother responded that she did not have time to talk about the issue. The son's response: "You never have time to talk to me," a quote deemed critical enough that it was repeated in the headline. Horne asked the reader how many parents had said the same. By implication, he appealed to readers not only to absolve Eleanor Jacobs and her son, but to examine their own consciences.<sup>210</sup>

Three editions later came the first media interview with Hatcher's mother, running one week after the hostage-taking.<sup>211</sup> Played as the lead front-page story and photo,<sup>212</sup> Thelma Clark's interview emphasized that the hostage-taking was "nothing to be proud of," but that Hatcher's life was in danger. Even though Hatcher, at 30, was a less pathetic figure than the teenaged Jacobs, Horne painted a sympathetic portrait. Clark, traveling for work as a nurse during the takeover, twice called the *Robesonian* switchboard to reason with her son, who

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<sup>210</sup> Bob Horne, "Jacobs Told Mother: You Never Have Time to Talk to Me," *Robesonian*, February 6, 1988, 6.

<sup>211</sup> Bob Horne, "Hatcher's Mother Says He Took Hostages to Protect His Life," *Robesonian*, February 8, 1988, 1.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*



told his "mama" not to come, and not to cry: "He can't stand crying," she told Horne.<sup>213</sup> The editor asked her to characterize her son, and denying that "I'm just saying this because he's my son," the mother testified to Hatcher's intelligence and generosity to the point of "giving someone the last dollar in his pocket."<sup>214</sup> Both interviews established the mothers as spokeswomen whom the *Robesonian* privileged in subsequent coverage such as the trial and the anniversary of the takeover, and their presence inflected the newspaper's coverage. In Clark's case, she reappeared two days after the Horne interview in a front-page Sunday photo from a forum, juxtaposed with a photo of a Tuscarora supporter wearing a commemorative sweatshirt dedicated to "two brave men" who "made a stand."<sup>215</sup> If the two hostage-takers' most blameless champions came to occupy center stage, verbally and visually, it was the *Robesonian* that placed them there.

Like the Eleanor Jacobs interview, the subtext of the interview with Hatcher's mother was that she had come to the *Robesonian* to apologize. The Associated Press later reported that Clark had brought to the meeting a handwritten note from Hatcher to Horne, saying that he now believed the newspaper "provided service for all the people." Apologizing for his previous hostile letter to the editor, Hatcher wrote to Horne that he now had "the utmost respect for you ... no matter what happens."<sup>216</sup> The note could be interpreted as asking for forgiveness by the *Robesonian* as well as granting it to the newspaper. Wrote Hatcher:

I hope some day we can talk and until that time, please know that

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Jim Bounds, staff photos, *Robesonian*, February 14, 1988.

<sup>216</sup> Associated Press, "Hatcher's Note to Editor Repudiates Earlier Claims of Bias," *Robesonian*, February 14, 1988, 1.

I learned a lot about you and your staff during those 10 hours—and I know you provided service for all people, of all races, and are professional enough to do that. I understand that now.<sup>217</sup>

The note, reprinted in the newspaper, suggested that Hatcher forgave the *Robesonian* for the past, seeing the journalists in a new light. But did the *Robesonian* forgive itself? In the same edition, February 14, Horne penned an unusual full-column editorial absolving the gunmen, whom he referred to as "the conscience of Robeson County."<sup>218</sup> Writing that the newsroom had had more time to "deal with our own emotions" after being occupied "answering other media's questions," Horne now confronted his own questions about why the newsroom had been taken hostage.

As objective disseminators of the news, we have had to sacrifice our emotions in an attempt to deal with this event, and try to report it, objectively. But we see Eddie Hatcher and Timothy Jacobs as our conscience. Not necessarily the *Robesonian's*, although we certainly are included, but the conscience of virtually every person residing in Robeson County.<sup>219</sup>

He distributed responsibility for the hostage-taking in an editorial that was by turns confession, Sunday sermon, and Jeremiad. Of Hatcher and Jacobs, Horne wrote:

They represent your conscience, Mr. and Ms. businessman, whether white, Indian or black, who pays minimum or near-minimum wage, while you live in a big house and drive three or four cars ... sport wardrobes worth many thousands of dollars and perhaps have a vacation home at the beach.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> "Let's Work Together on Problems," *Robesonian*, February 14, 1988, 6.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

One by one, Horne indicted classes of corrupt officials, school administrators, court-appointed lawyers, apathetic voters, then saved the final blame for himself, "Mr. editor, when you fail to speak out sternly enough or without sufficient repetition about those ills, even if people do tire of reading them."<sup>221</sup> This became the object of soul-searching for Horne, retracing the community role he had played. He concluded that in letters he declined to print and grievances he refused to hear, he had abdicated public responsibility. In hindsight, according to this interpretation, Horne shared the blame for the takeover, just as Eleanor Jacobs acknowledged guilt in having ignored her son. The editor wrote, "We have decided we have a conscience of our own. Do you? Do YOU, Mr. and Ms. reader, care enough to get involved?"<sup>222</sup> From a journalistically conservative newspaper, this was an attempt at decentering not only the readership, but the editorial mindset of the newspaper itself: not to merely present contradictory voices, but to confront those contradictions and seek a fusion. To demonstrate his intent to listen, Horne ended the editorial by printing the paper's phone number. He asked readers to use it, and to help the newspaper "sincerely learn" about the concerns of all three races. The paper's goal, he wrote, was to help people talk "WITH each other, not AT each other."<sup>223</sup> Here was a departure from the imperial "we" the editorial page assumed only months before, the stance Hatcher had termed a "dictatorship." As the end result of decentering, the newspaper was seeking equilibrium and unity in a new definition of community. Importantly, this involved readers, with journalism

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

serving as their link to each other. Readers were invited to tell the newspaper what to think, rather than vice-versa.

Tellingly, the paper began to reference the siege in matters related only tangentially. Nine days after the takeover, the *Robesonian* weighed in against the flying of the Confederate battle flag over state capitols, a controversy raging in statehouses across the Deep South.<sup>224</sup> The editorial argued that the flag was a symbol not of 1860s heritage, a view it attributed to "a majority of southerners," but in reality had emerged as a symbol of 1960s segregationist defiance.<sup>225</sup> The task was now "to center on progress and unity rather than racial strife,"<sup>226</sup> and the editorial concluded with a winking aside to readers: "We in Robeson County can identify with that, too, can't we?"<sup>227</sup> Whether true or not, the newspaper implied a new, shared sensibility on the part of Robesonians, a recognition that the legacy of the South was "much deeper and broader" than the past represented by the battle flag.<sup>228</sup>

If the immediate aftermath of the siege relieved the *Robesonian* from being the standard bearer of the status quo, it meanwhile created professional entanglements for the newspaper as the criminal case moved through the courts. For months, the newspaper refrained from editorializing about the hostage-takers because, as Horne wrote, "we are unwilling participants, stripped of our neutrality."<sup>229</sup> This suggested, again, that because the newspaper

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<sup>224</sup> "State Capitols No Place for Confederate flag," *Robesonian*, February 10, 1988, 4.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> "Hatcher, Jacobs, Need to Behave Responsibly," *Robesonian*, April 10, 1988, 4.

had an interest in the outcome, it would be unethical to comment. Still, the paper could hardly avoid following the story. The crime reporter assigned to cover the case, Mike Mangiameli, had also been a hostage<sup>230</sup> but did not belong to what he called "the Eddie Hatcher fan club,"<sup>231</sup> and instead favored the establishment view. Mangiameli's report on the bond hearing attempted to link the hostage-taking to AIM, noting that defense attorney Kunstler also represented Russell Means in the Wounded Knee case,<sup>232</sup> an indirect attempt to link the hostage-taking to outsiders. Mangiameli took the question to the NC Commission of Indian Affairs, but executive director Bruce Jones said he "knew nothing about" outside AIM money coming in to support Hatcher and Jacobs, and assumed AIM had long since disbanded.<sup>233</sup> The bond hearing was reopened after the defense learned that Mangiameli, violating court procedure, told the federal magistrate that if Hatcher made bond, Mangiameli wanted a permit for a gun to protect himself.<sup>234</sup> The *Robesonian*, recusing Mangiameli and assigning another reporter by the next day's edition to cover the story, was again reporting on itself,<sup>235</sup> questioning its own motives and fallibility. Ultimately, Mangiameli resigned and

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<sup>230</sup> "List of Employees, Others Taken Hostage," *Robesonian*, February 1-2, 1988, B-1.

<sup>231</sup> Mike Mangiameli, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 20, 1988, 2.

<sup>232</sup> Mike Mangiameli, "Bond Hearing Begins for Hatcher, Jacobs," *Robesonian*, February 17, 1988, 1.

<sup>233</sup> Mike Mangiameli, "Indian Affairs Official Unaware of AIM Funding for Hostage Takers," February 16, 1988, 1.

<sup>234</sup> Southern Justice Institute, Box 2, *United States v. Timothy Bryan Hatcher*, North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>235</sup> Jeralene Gibbs, "Hatcher, Jacobs' Hearing Reopened," *Robesonian*, February 18, 1988, 1.

wrote about the decision in a letter published in the *Voice*.<sup>236</sup> Running a quarter-page in the broadsheet, his letter took issue with "the media" for reporting on corruption allegations that Mangiameli insisted were "unfounded rumors and gossip" on the part of "opponents of the judicial system."<sup>237</sup> Mangiameli quit the *Robesonian*, he wrote, because he could "no longer be objective."<sup>238</sup> Unable to conform to the expectations of detachment, the reporter surrendered his credentials, turning to the alternative newspaper as a suitable forum to address the conflict.

What began to force the *Robesonian* into a regressive posture was the realization that the hostage-taking, rather than being a seismic shift from which the community could now recover, was in fact only the first rumble. The racial fault line yawned wider with a sequence of events, beginning with a homicide in the wee hours of March 26, 1988. Lumbee lawyer and judicial candidate Julian Pierce answered a knock on his door and was met with three fatal shotgun blasts fired at close range.<sup>239</sup> Sheriff Stone initially called the killing "an assassination,"<sup>240</sup> then backpedaled to term it a domestic killing that was "just another murder."<sup>241</sup> Whichever it was, Pierce's death left Joe Freeman Britt, who had gained national

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<sup>236</sup> Mangiameli, letter to the editor, *Carolina Indian Voice*.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Richard Haag and Chip Wilson, "Indian Activist Killed in Robeson," *Charlotte Observer*, March 27, 1988, 1.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> "Indian Held in Candidate's Death, Sheriff Rules Out Political Motive," *New York Times*, March 30, 1988, 20.

fame as "the deadliest DA,"<sup>242</sup> the only remaining candidate for the judicial seat. The pattern of Robeson's past—rebellion and reaction—seemed to be circling back on itself, taking the *Robesonian* with it.

### **A Three-Way Mirror: Distance, Proximity, and Recoil**

The *Robesonian*'s experience of having been the subject of media coverage held up an occupational mirror. As Horne put it, the hostages learned what it was like to be asked "a stupid question" by a reporter; he meanwhile conceded that in the past, "we have asked them, too."<sup>243</sup> The newspaper recognized that it had been a stranger in its own land, an outsider with a distorted perception of reality. The paradox was that the newspaper, now an insider, also gained the perspective of distance through the eyes of strangers. This aspect was more akin to a three-way mirror: It allowed the *Robesonian* to see peripheral and rear views of itself—and the entangled racial history it was part of—as only the outside world could see them. Rather than dismiss the impressions of out-of-town media as it had in the past, the local newspaper now disseminated them, even at their most condescending. A prime instance was coverage by the *Charlotte Observer*, winner of two Pulitzer Prizes in the 1980s.<sup>244</sup> The *Robesonian* reprinted as its lead editorial a commentary from the *Observer* that built a complicated case for why the governor should address the problems of Robeson

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<sup>242</sup> See, "Prosecutor Wins Death Sentences," *New York Times*, December 25, 1985, 64; "'Hanging D.A.' Gets 2 More: Carolina Prosecutor Has Put a Record Number of Killers on Death Row," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 5, 1986, 5; Debbie Schupack, "42 Killers Sentenced to Die; Tenacious North Carolina Prosecutor Builds His Life on Death," *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 1986, 2.

<sup>243</sup> "Both Sides of the Fence is a Strange Position," *Robesonian*, February 4, 1988, 4.

<sup>244</sup> Carl Sessions Stepp, "Caught in the Contradiction," *American Journalism Review*, April 2007. The *Charlotte Observer* won the medal for Meritorious Public Service in 1981 and 1988.

County. Even this gesture by the *Observer* was backhanded, the metropolitan newspaper stipulating that Robeson County was a "gratuitous burden" to the state.<sup>245</sup>

Why dig into anything that messy and explosive—into issues of human misery, greed, fear, maybe even life and death, in a place the rest of North Carolina probably would rather forget?<sup>246</sup>

A century earlier, northern journalists might have said the same about the South, but distance was relative. The *Observer* writer had traveled from just two and one-half hours away, but that was far enough to view Robeson County through the prism of local color. On Easter Sunday 1988, the *Observer* ran a front-page weekender on "the battered people of Robeson."<sup>247</sup> A day earlier, the metro front carried a first-person travelogue of backwater pool halls and Piggly Wiggly supermarkets, attesting to the patronizing theme that "life is hard" for Robesonians.<sup>248</sup> In imagery that harkened back to *Harper's Weekly* engravings and *New York Herald* dispatches from Scuffletown, populated with ramshackle cabins and ragged children, *Observer* columnist Polly Paddock wrote:

I see that, in the aging mobile homes and sagging frame shacks that line the dusty side roads. I see it in the litter tangled in the weeds, in the dead dogs nobody bothers to scrape off the highways. I see it in the faces—black, white, and Indian—with resigned expressions and defeated eyes.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> "Robeson County is a Burden, But Also an Opportunity for Martin," *Robesonian*, June 24, 1988, 4.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> Bruce Henderson, "Robeson Hopes for Brighter Future," *Charlotte Observer*, April 3, 1988, 1.

<sup>248</sup> Polly Paddock, "Hard Life in Robeson Breeds Distrust," *Charlotte Observer*, April 2, 1988, B-1.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*



As a young, unnamed Lumbee woman told the *Observer*, "You have to grow up here to understand."<sup>250</sup> If this was true, that only shared identity enabled understanding, most unsparing was an essay by the *Observer's* young assistant business editor, Harry Greyard, a Robeson County native who now regarded his birthplace as an embarrassment. In an op-ed reprinted in the *Robesonian*, Greyard described trying to defend his home county to his big-city coworkers, who mainly wanted the quickest detour around Lumberton on their way to the beach.<sup>251</sup> Greyard confessed that he could find nothing good to say. Instead, reciting the familiar, painful litany of socioeconomic statistics, Greyard concluded that he moved away forever when he decided that Robeson offered nothing for "educated" young adults.<sup>252</sup> It was a devastating assessment from a perspective of both proximity and distance, a native Robesonian who left, and now worked for the state's largest newspaper.

However bitter these critiques by outside media, the intensity was lessened by distance. Robeson County and its far-off troubles made waves on the state and national radar, but in each instance, the frequency eventually faded. But for local media at close range, overtop and in the midst of the story, an opposite effect occurred. Proximity in the extreme produced not transformation, but collision and recoil. The siege at the *Robesonian* created a brief détente with the rival *Voice*, the Indian paper assisting hostage negotiators<sup>253</sup> and Brayboy

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Harry Greyard, "Native Son Finds No Hope for Robeson," *Robesonian*, February 21, 1988, 4.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> "Thanks to So Many Who Helped Monday," *Robesonian*, February 3, 1988, 4.

pledging to "resolve among ourselves" to mend fences,<sup>254</sup> accept responsibility for the crisis, and concur with the *Robesonian* that Hatcher and Jacobs should not "waste away in prison."<sup>255</sup> But when the *Voice* became an active part of the story beyond the siege, with Connee Brayboy organizing a legal defense fund<sup>256</sup> and collecting 4,500 signatures on a petition for Hatcher and Jacobs to be released, the *Robesonian's* Horne began to condemn the journalism of attachment.<sup>257</sup> Deepening the conflict between the two media organizations was news of Pierce's killing, which hastened a congressional investigation into corruption in Robeson County and again plunged the community into crisis.<sup>258</sup> With the *Voice* reporting Pierce "assassinated,"<sup>259</sup> and Brayboy editorializing that the killing "destroyed the pretense of harmony in Robeson County,"<sup>260</sup> the Indian paper called for a show of resistance, endorsing Pierce,<sup>261</sup> whose name remained on the ballot even though he was dead. When the tactic worked and Pierce won the race posthumously by more than 2,000 votes, Brayboy's banner headline was incendiary: "JOE FREEMAN BRITT

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<sup>254</sup> "What Next???", *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 4, 1988, 2.

<sup>255</sup> "Petition Sends Wrong Message," *Robesonian*, February 16, 1988, 4.

<sup>256</sup> "Robeson Three Defense Fund Organized," *Carolina Indian Voice*, February 4, 1988, 2. Brayboy chaired the fund, which used the *Voice* as its mailing address.

<sup>257</sup> "Petition Sends Wrong Message," *Robesonian*.

<sup>258</sup> Staff and wire reports, "Congressional Committee Probing Alleged Corruption in County," *Robesonian*, April 27, 1988, 1.

<sup>259</sup> "Julian Pierce Candidate for Superior Court Judge Assassinated," *Carolina Indian Voice*, March 31, 1988, 1.

<sup>260</sup> "What Next???", *Carolina Indian Voice*, March 31, 1988, 2.

<sup>261</sup> "What Next???", *Carolina Indian Voice*, April 14, 1988, 2.

HAUNTED BY THE SPIRIT OF JULIAN PIERCE."<sup>262</sup> Trumpeting the symbolic victory, the editor wrote, "It is ironic that the 'deadliest D.A.' seems to have been defeated by a dead man."<sup>263</sup> The message was victory. Indians prevailed over a corrupt legal system with spirituality and a sense of collective memory. The headline, by portraying Britt as "haunted" by his dead opponent, implied that Britt had stolen the judgeship and had a hand in Pierce's death. This implicated the *Robesonian* as well. The newspaper consistently backed the white DA's candidacy, and his record of aggressively seeking the death penalty. Instead of the decentering move by the *Voice* causing the *Robesonian* to reappraise its position, the *Robesonian* now drew back, hardening its position in defense of the status quo. The daily newspaper had again taken a side—but it was the other side.

The political backlash grew in fall 1988 when a federal jury in the hostage-taking trial found Hatcher and Jacobs not guilty,<sup>264</sup> a surprise verdict that the *Charlotte Observer* termed "stunning"<sup>265</sup> and that the former hostages greeted with shock and outrage.<sup>266</sup> This came after an emotional closing argument that Hatcher himself delivered in Kunstler's

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<sup>262</sup> Connee Brayboy, "Joe Freeman Britt Haunted by the Spirit of Julian Pierce," *Carolina Indian Voice*, May 7, 1988, 1.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Associated Press, "Jacobs, Hatcher Found Innocent; State Charges Next?" *Robesonian*, October 16, 1988, 1.

<sup>265</sup> Bruce Henderson, "Robeson Indians Acquitted," *Charlotte Observer*, October 16, 1988, 1.

<sup>266</sup> Associated Press, "Local Reaction to Hatcher-Jacobs Verdict Mixed; Paper's Employees Shocked," *Robesonian*, October 16, 1988, 14.

absence,<sup>267</sup> arguing that the takeover had been necessary because his life was in danger.<sup>268</sup>

In contrast to the *Voice*, which published weekly trial analysis written by guest legal correspondents who made no attempt at neutrality,<sup>269</sup> the *Robesonian* was hamstrung, carrying wire coverage of a trial in which its own news staff was called to testify.<sup>270</sup> With the not-guilty verdict, the newspaper could no longer maintain any pretense of detachment. The *Robesonian* editor now denounced the verdict as having "thoroughly violated" the rights of the hostages.<sup>271</sup> The newspaper was so close to the case that it found itself unable to perform its journalistic function. and finally, found itself in the alien position of denouncing the legal system that it had consistently affirmed in the past.

The turnabout that occurred next in the case placated the *Robesonian* but simultaneously vindicated Hatcher and fellow critics of criminal justice in the county. Hours before Joe Freeman Britt was sworn in as a judge, he spent his last morning as D.A. in front of a county grand jury obtaining indictments against Hatcher and Jacobs on 14

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<sup>267</sup> Associated Press, "Did Kunstler's Absence Help Hatcher's Case?" *Robesonian*, October 16, 1988, 1.

<sup>268</sup> For an explanation of the necessity defense, see, Matthew L. Wald, "Amy Carter Is Acquitted over Protest," *New York Times*, April 16, 1987, 2. The defense was first used in 1987 by former President Jimmy Carter's daughter Amy and activist Abbie Hoffmann against trespassing charges in an anti-CIA protest.

<sup>269</sup> See, Karen Coronado and William Richard Mathis, "The Trial of Hatcher & Jacobs Week 1," *Carolina Indian Voice*, October 16, 1988, 1. The two lawyers wrote lengthy, gavel-to-gavel analysis for the *Voice* throughout the trial.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.* This included Horne, whom prosecutors treated as a hostile witness because, unlike some of his employees, he corroborated the "necessity" defense.

<sup>271</sup> Associated Press, "Jacobs, Hatcher Found Innocent; State Charges Next?" *Robesonian*.

counts each of state kidnapping charges,<sup>272</sup> each charge carrying a life sentence. Despite the terms of the federal surrender,<sup>273</sup> in which the *Robesonian* had been so closely involved, both men served prison sentences for weapons and kidnapping convictions.<sup>274</sup>

The takeover had come full circle, and because of Pierce's murder, the white D.A. was uncontested to assume an eight-year judgeship the governor created to increase minority representation.<sup>275</sup> When Brayboy weighed in with a searing column in the *Voice*, calling the matter another chapter in "sleazy" Lumberton politics,<sup>276</sup> her counterpart at the *Robesonian* replied with a revealing broadside. In a full-column Sunday editorial headlined, "Newspaper's Attack on Judge Ill-Advised," the *Robesonian* editor professed to be breaking an unwritten rule in responding to the *Voice*.<sup>277</sup> At the same time, the editorial returned to the convention of the editorial "we" in correcting Brayboy, wrapping the commentary in an implication of majority consensus, professional authority, and power.

Very, very rarely do we address comments made in another newspaper. Generally, we figure their opinions are their opinions and should not be defended or attacked by us. However, an editorial in the *Carolina Indian Voice* Nov. 17 concerns us. And we felt that the editorial's slant

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<sup>272</sup> Lewis Pitts interview.

<sup>273</sup> See, *In Re: Kunstler*: No. 89-2815, US App. 1990.

<sup>274</sup> Tim Bass, "Jacobs Gets Six Years in Kidnapping Plea," *Fayetteville Observer*, May 5, 1989, 1.

<sup>275</sup> "What's Next???", *Carolina Indian Voice*, November 19, 1988, 2. The white Republican governor, Jim Martin, sought in an unsuccessful lawsuit to prevent Britt from being seated as judge.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>277</sup> "Newspaper's Attack on Judge Ill-Advised," *Robesonian*, December 4, 1988, 4.

had such a capacity to mislead, in two different areas that we feel compelled to respond.<sup>278</sup>

Horne defended a judge Brayboy had criticized along with Britt, "someone under constant attack from the *Carolina Indian Voice*," a tactic that was "one of the lowest blows we have ever seen in a newspaper."<sup>279</sup> What Horne revealed, in the heat of the editorial, was that the relative positions of the media organizations had shifted. Previously, the *Robesonian* staff pretended that the *Carolina Indian Voice* did not exist, despite the onslaught of Bruce Barton's taunts. The editorial now made clear that the *Robesonian* not only read the *Voice* but feared its influence in the "capacity to mislead." This was news to Brayboy, who in a dry rejoinder professed to be "encouraged" by such admissions regarding an Indian newspaper. She would study and try to learn from Horne's criticisms, "except for those that were "B.S." Appropriating the editorial "we" used by her Lumberton counterpart, Brayboy then repeated the original passage the *Robesonian* found the most objectionable: "We have not changed our opinion. We reiterate: *We have come to expect little in the form of justice from Lumberton.*"<sup>280</sup>

More than 100 years had come down to a small-town newspaper dustup. On one level, the media organizations had gone in a circle, following a well-worn groove of action and reaction. The white establishment held the aces; the apologist newspaper reverted to the pretense of a full deck. As Barton predicted a decade earlier: "*They can never change.*" But at a deeper level, that of communicative presence, Indians' seizing of the newsroom,

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> "WHAT NEXT???", *Carolina Indian Voice*, December 8, 1988, 2.

and an alternative newspaper's unconflicted journalism of attachment, laid bare a mainstream organization's assumptions about its own objectivity and perception of reality. If the takeover and subsequent trial demonstrated that there was no true detachment, the mainstream newspaper in fact had been biased all along. East Coast Indians, by appropriating the tools of media from within and without, forced the form and function of media to change. Mainstream and alternative, the journalists pushed each other to opposing sides of the same platform, squared off in a perpetual see-saw of repression, rebellion, backlash, equilibrium, like a railroad handcart clattering down the tracks.

## 6. CONCLUSION: INDIGENOUS HISTORY IS WRITTEN BY THE SURVIVORS

On the hot Wednesday morning of July 1, 2015, three days before the Lumbee homecoming parade and annual picnic, a small crowd gathered outside the Legal Aid office in Pembroke, North Carolina. The occasion was the unveiling of a memorial to the late Julian Pierce, a Securities and Exchange Commission lawyer who moved back to Robeson County to open Lumbee River Legal Services, co-author the Lumbee Petition<sup>1</sup> for federal recognition, open an Indian health service, and finally, run for judge. A large boulder bore a bronze design of the scales of justice, evenly balanced. Clumps of sea grass planted at the base symbolized new life, explained memorial fund organizer Harvey Godwin Jr., and smaller river rocks represented the Lumber River.

There to record the event was James Locklear, publisher of *Native Visions*, a monthly magazine devoted to the history of American Indians in Robeson County. Locklear, writing that day for the newspaper where he started his career, the *Fayetteville Times*, interviewed an intern from the legal clinic, a Michigan State law student who was not yet born when Pierce was murdered in 1988. "He inspires us to use our talents and gifts to help the community regardless of race," Lydia Locklear told the Lumbee journalist. "I never met him, but I feel like I have, because he has impacted my life so much, and others."<sup>2</sup> Three weeks later, on the last Sunday in July, Godwin, nephew of the 1980s civil rights activist John Godwin, bought an ad in the *Robesonian*<sup>3</sup> to announce his candidacy for Lumbee tribal chairman. In an

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<sup>1</sup> Julian T. Pierce and Cynthia Hunt-Locklear, *The Lumbee Petition* (Pembroke, NC: Lumbee River Legal Services, 1987).

<sup>2</sup> James Locklear, "UNC-Pembroke Monument Honors Slain Indian Civil Rights Leader," *Fayetteville Observer*, July 2, 2015, B1.

<sup>3</sup> Advertisement, *Robesonian*, July 26, 2015.



interview with the *St. Pauls Review*, Godwin spoke of his business experience and pre-law degree, but also his community roots.<sup>4</sup> He managed Pierce's campaign, Godwin told the *Review*, and acted the part of the hero Henry Berry Lowry in seven seasons of *Strike at the Wind!*,<sup>5</sup> the historical drama which Pierce helped keep financially afloat, and which Godwin now spoke of reviving. Ousting an incumbent tribal chairman in an election later that year, Godwin was sworn in as tribal leader in January 2016. His first public appearances in the position, chronicled by traditional media and posted on Facebook and Instagram, were visits to Maxton Field on the anniversary of the Lumbees' routing of the Klan, the placing of flowers on the grave of Rhoda Strong Lowry on her 150th wedding anniversary, and a visit to the marker where Henry Berry Lowry's father and brother were buried, executions that began the Lowry War, an era that inflected the memory, the social identity, and the lives of Indian people in the century to follow.

In the classic history of the Lowry War, *To Die Game*, William McKee Evans argued that of any people between the Potomac River and the Rio Grande, nowhere was the past more present than for Indians along the Lumber River. There, Evans wrote, each generation faced the "unfinished business of their ancestors, the survival of ancient wrongs."<sup>6</sup>

This was a place in which to a special extent no tide of history had ever swept quite clean, where relics of the past persisted to confront the present with curious contrasts.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bob Shiles, "Local Businessman Announces Bid for Lumbee Chairman," *St. Pauls Review*, August 1, 2015, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> William McKee Evans, *To Die Game: The Story of the Lowry Band, Indian Guerillas of Reconstruction* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 17-18.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

This dissertation investigated a particular pathway through which these "relics" not only persisted, but were deliberately reanimated in conveyance of modern American Indian identity. If life along the Lumber River was a perpetual living history lesson, mass media were an available chalkboard. On that slate, characters were drawn and redrawn, but their outlines remained. These traces provided a repertoire of legible patterns that were usable and had purpose. For an East Coast people continuously battling delegitimization by a dominant culture of westward expansion, mass media amounted to more than a repository of faded news clippings or dog-eared dime novels. Media became a performative space in which to reimagine the indigenous past, retrace its meanings in the present, and visualize a consonant future.

The four historical markers examined in this study hinged on Native American agency in media. In the Lowry era, members of the country's most wanted outlaw band permitted a correspondent from the world's largest newspaper to enter their hideout, recognizing the value not of kidnapping a reporter, but of letting him go. It was an early, desperate attempt at self-representation in media, parlaying an outside journalist's quest for first-person exclusivity and local color into an audience that might hear the fugitives' cause.

Similarly, Indians who chased off the Ku Klux Klan in 1958 leveraged media attention before and after the aborted rally. Indians used mass media to address their own communities in the run-up to the confrontation, then to narrate their victory in the aftermath. Indians' appearance in a metro newsroom to be photographed with the captured KKK flag and their later booking of national TV interviews in New York were examples of agency. The

subsequent effort to launch a publicity arm for the newly-named tribe—the Lumbee News Service—suggested that Indians recognized the absence of an Indian-centered media source to disseminate news through a channel they directly controlled. The vacuum was filled with the appearance in 1973 of the *Carolina Indian Voice*. While the *Voice* provides important insights into the mechanisms by which community news and alternative journalism reproduce ideology through both soft and hard news, of added significance is how the rhetoric of the *Voice* constituted audience through social memory and decoding of language. Structurally, the newspaper maintained a network between a cultural nucleus in Pembroke and a tribal membership that was far-flung. This network became integral enough to the tribe that when the *Voice* faced bankruptcy, the community acted to save it. The *Voice* enabled Indians to speak directly to each other, and also to critique white mainstream media as a force of repression and erasure of Native Americans. This speaks to the project of the *Robesonian* hostage-taking: to disrupt white mainstream journalism and alter it.

What connects these four historical referents? In each case, Indians in Robeson encountered heightened subjugation by dominant society and used mass media to mobilize and cohere around a shared past. Each link extended and reinforced the chain of communication, the past anchoring the present. A comparison across these eras suggests several insights into the role narrative need plays in shaping composed identities and into how journalism provides a medium for public memory to take shape. Within those outlines, the generational experience of Indians in Robeson County illustrates how a historically subjugated group navigated the duality/irony of performance and ultimately reclaimed autonomy in self-representation.

## **Narrative Templates: The Past as Story**

The Native American notion of time as circular rather than linear includes several entailments. First, cyclical recurrence presupposes that time is tethered to place. The notion that the present perpetually retraces the past implies that time bends, turning back on itself. This bending of time coincides with the theory of collective memory, the idea that the past is interpreted in relation to the present. So rather than the past being received, it is *composed* as a function of identity, which recalls Gerald Vizenor's concept of survivance, an existential act of persistence that presupposes choice and agency.

This approach to the past can be understood as narrative, a template that imposes structure on historical figures and events, formations of shared identities. So widely situated are the examples as to be universal, with common elements appearing in case studies as diverse as Jewish memory, diaspora, and borderland ballads commemorating Grigorio Cortez. Henry Berry Lowry, in a comparable way, became what subsequent generations needed him to be. In the early twentieth century, when his direct descendants were still in Robeson's midst, able to pass down first-hand versions of contested local history, Lowry stood for kinship and perseverance. On the eve of World War II, he could be a figure of loyalty and courage; in the Cold War era, a model of valor, pride, and resolve; in the 1970s, as integration threatened Lumbee sovereignty, he became a symbol of resistance, a father of Indian civil rights.

Conversely, the trajectory of Lumbee memory also suggests a mutual fulfillment of narrative. That is, subsequent generations not only shaped Lowry; the Lowry story, as Indians interpreted it, came to shape the people's shared identity and even individual destinies. Those who held Henry Berry and Rhoda Lowry as ideal Lumbees—investing them with loyalty, courage, intelligence, beauty—sought to emulate them and follow in their

footsteps. In social psychology, this is understood as the Michelangelo Phenomenon, the idea that the formation of self is partly "sculpted" by how others see us, and how those who share our ideals are able to bring out our better selves.<sup>8</sup> In the same realm as symbolic interaction, this is social construction of reality and meaning. From the raw material of existence emerges an essence, or in the case of a group, a shared identity. These are desired communal or tribal traits that form what it means to be a Lumbee—for example, endurance, faith, aspiration, joy. They are gathered and affirmed through a narrative of the shared past, but they are not cut from whole cloth. They are made up of diverse threads of oral tradition and family stories, Sunday school lessons, folk music, classroom primers, and, this dissertation argues, a malleable, ephemeral text that synthesizes all of the above: columns of newsprint.

### **Journalism as a Rough Draft of Memory**

A premise of this project is that journalism is not a neutral collection of cold, hard facts, but an arrangement and an interpretation, variable in perspective, permeable at the edges. This is true of New Journalism and old, alternative or conventionally objective journalism that privileges official, institutional sources of information. Journalism in its practices and rituals reproduces ideology because it imposes structure and meaning on reality, producing "news."

The star correspondent of the Lincoln assassination, George Alfred Townsend, referred to this narrative need in the first lines of his introduction to the dime novel reprint of the *New York Herald's* Lowry stories, the full title being, *The Swamp Outlaws, or the North Carolina Bandits: Being a Complete History of the Modern Rob Roys and Robin Hoods*.

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen Drigotas, Caryl Rusbult, Jennifer Wieselquist, and Sarah Whitton, "Close Partner as Sculptor of the Ideal Self: Behavioral Affirmation and the Michelangelo Phenomenon," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 77, no. 2 (1999): 293-323.

The homely old adage that there is “nothing new under the sun” is constantly verified by facts occurring every day. The accounts handed down by tradition of “the bold archer Robin Hood” keeping whole counties on alert and disputing the right to kill fat bucks in the royal forest with the boldest barons have seemed too daring for belief, yet here we are—in this enlightened period of the world's history—a whole state of the most powerful and enlightened nation of the earth successfully defied by a band of less than a dozen Outlaws.<sup>9</sup>

It was not so much the “new” that journalism prized, Townsend inferred. It was the cultural script, a new iteration of an old formula. The general plot was the downtrodden hero of the people against the despot king and corrupt sheriff (interchangeable with, depending on the era, the Confederate Homeguard, the KKK Grand Dragon, the autocratic school superintendent, the drug-dealing vice-narcotics deputy.) The outline was tried and true, and part of this tailoring of narrative was motivated by journalistic ambition. This feature mirrors scholarship on journalism and pop culture's role in mythologizing anti-heroes, whether gunslingers, cartel kingpins, motorcycle chieftains, or crime bosses. The object is profit and fame: A. Boyd Henderson, the Lowry Gang's sympathetic prisoner, became the basis of a Broadway play, and sat for a pen-and-ink sketch in *Harper's Weekly*, a remarkable publicity coup for a reporter who had only months before been laboring at a smalltown newspaper . The embroideries of writers like Henderson and Townsend appealed to newspapers because they sold, and they sold because readers not only understood them, they identified with them. Within the outsized dimensions was cultural material that could be shaped to fulfill needs. This was the romantic light in which ordinary men and women wished to see themselves: having the native resources to prevail against the odds.

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<sup>9</sup> George Alfred Townsend, *The Swamp Outlaws, or the North Carolina Bandits: Being a Complete History of the Modern Rob Roys and Robin Hoods* (New York: Robert M. DeWitt Publishers, 1872), vii.

If the Lowry saga was an opportunity to satisfy the *Herald's* appetite for "red and spicy" local color<sup>10</sup>— or for any confirmation of the inferiority and disarray of the conquered South—the jaunt nevertheless produced a text that had profound influence. Regardless of the newspaper's political motivation, this was a salient instance of resistance to white supremacy by a charismatic leader of ambiguous racial origin in the native South—descended from Portuguese castaways, the *Herald* ventured, his complexion "an admixture of copper," but in the final analysis, apparently Indian.<sup>11</sup> The text gained currency and circulation nationally, found its way into magazines, pictorials, plays. Paradoxically, even local histories that branded Lowry as the cold-blooded slaughterer of white innocents shared the *Herald's* seduction by the oddly chivalrous aspects of Henry Berry and Rhoda Lowry.

Two insights emerge about the function of the Lowry story as a historical template. First, these texts supplemented and influenced collective memory of the Lowry era and the character of Lowry himself, countering what the gang members had initially described as the "d—d lies" that had been published,<sup>12</sup> presumably by Conservative Democrat newspapers from the *Robesonian* to the *Wilmington Morning Star*. Second, northern journalists' intervention in the Lowry War demonstrated the power of publicity—what Judge Lacy Maynor in the next century termed advertising—and how that power might be harnessed. It bears emphasis that in each of the three highest profile stories involving Indian resistance in Robeson County—circa 1872, 1958, and 1988— the national media's dominant narrative leaned, in varying degrees, toward the Indian perspective.

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<sup>10</sup> George Alfred Townsend, "Hearing My Requiem," 196.

<sup>11</sup> *Swamp Outlaws*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

A paradox arose between proximity of local media and the distance of visiting journalists, and this became apparent each time Robeson County Indians made national news. During periods of white backlash against Indians in the nineteenth century, the prospect of a fair hearing in either the courts or the Democratic press was remote. Northern newspapers therefore offered a better avenue for the Lowry Gang, but again, mainly for the frisson of southern lawlessness, violence, and the sheer exoticism of the locale, deep in the strange, interior of the American South. This dilemma between proximity and distance recurs across the eras of representation of Robeson County Indians.

The *Robesonian*, content to assign Indians one rung above blacks on the social ladder of community news, demonstrated the problem of proximity. The organization's professed detachment left it blinkered to a caste system so inherent that it was taken for granted. Thus, when visiting out-of-town reporters in 1958 wrote articles remarking on the county's three-way segregation, the *Robesonian's* editorial paged shrugged off the social system as simply the status quo. But distance created problems of its own. Legal scholar Philip Deloria touched on this idea in cautioning against the tendency toward romanticism, and American media's "preoccupation with fads."<sup>13</sup> The problem, which the *Robesonian* occupation raised, was that such dramatic acts of resistance created worldwide interest and support in the short term, but did not help Indians solve endemic, historically situated problems in a community like Robeson County. As Deloria observed, "If anything, when the nation's attention

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<sup>13</sup> Philip S. Deloria, "The Era of Self-Determination: An Overview," in Kenneth R. Philip, ed., *Indian Self-Rule: First-Hand Accounts of Indian-White Relations from Roosevelt to Reagan*, (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1995), 203.



wandered, it carried with it an even more pronounced cultural stereotype of what it wanted its Indians to be."<sup>14</sup>

As both the *Voice* and the *Robesonian* demonstrated, neutrality was an untenable posture in the presence of injustice. The requisite impartiality, on the other hand, allowed for journalism to present the picture in perspective, which media scholars alternately define as framing or as second-level agenda setting. This definition of accuracy entailed judging what belonged in the foreground and the background, assigning dimensions, weighing truth and lies. This implied participation and involvement, an identification drawn from being in the same place and time as one's subject. The truth was not an external, documentary truth, to be rewound and played back. Journalistic presence was a politically charged act affording no neutral ground. This was the bind for *Robesonian* editor Bob Horne. Though he editorialized in favor of leniency for his captors and testified as a hostile witness when called by the government, Horne later expressed outrage at the not-guilty verdict, reverting to a law-and-order view. This became the journalism of entanglement.

The alternative was the unconflicted attachment of the *Voice*, which used proximity to exert narrative control in place-making, cultural production, and declarations of sovereignty. The *Voice* amplified these echoes week after week by running the serialized "Life and Times of Henry Berry Lowrie," continually drawing parallels between the historical account and contemporary news headlines, whether they concerned racial discrimination, law enforcement's use of excessive force, predatory lending, or political disenfranchisement.

Importantly, the *Voice*'s rendering of Lowry adhered to the typology of the social bandit operating outside the law because the law was unjust. Because this typology assumed a role

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

reversal, it was imperative to foreground details that served to mitigate the misdeeds of the heroes while aggravating those of the villains. Mary Norment, whose local history chronicled the killing of her husband by a Lowry associate, in many respects adhered to the narrative contours of northern publications, especially the *New York Herald* and derivative coverage in *Harper's Weekly*. There, Lowry was neither a rapist nor an arsonist, writers took care to emphasize. He returned the prey of a neighbor's coon hound, and to another, the wagon and team he used to steal a farmer's corn and distribute it to the Settlement's poor. Dashing, clever, armed to the teeth, Lowry sought only to avenge his father. The image of Henry Berry and Rhoda Lowry was the antithesis of the rum-running, slavetrading, womanizing, money-lending whites typified by Brant Harris, who rode herd over Indians and blacks around Scuffletown, and became the first casualty of the Lowry Gang.<sup>15</sup> Lowry, as the *Robesonian* editor described him to the *Herald*, was conscious of his image, and the process by which it was burnished in media. Lowry warned the local editor to be careful of what he wrote about the desperadoes; however, the small-town editor speculated, Lowry would probably agree to a *Herald* interview because the outlaw leader "appreciates his consequence in the *role* [italics in original] he has assumed."<sup>16</sup> There was a script, the editor's remark implied, and Lowry was playing his part.

Over time, the narratives that evolved out of the Lowry and Maxton Field incidents suggested to Lumbees how the outside world saw them. And in the case of the *Robesonian* takeover by two Tuscaroras, the narrative of the social bandit was a guide to how Indians sympathetic to the hostage-takers *wanted* to be seen. Activists such as Connee Brayboy, Rev.

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<sup>15</sup> *Swamp Outlaws*, 48-49.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Mac Legerton, John Godwin, and Ray Littleturtle not only employed a narrative template to interpret the event; they expressed awareness of how the template functioned. This goes back to the theory of transculturation, the process by which marginalized groups use the tools at hand. Indians sought to use media as a drawing board to compose identity and articulate collective memory, and the particular conventions of journalism enabled access, and the ability by Indians to use white media to address Indian audiences.

Along with the affinity for narrative, a key factor that attracted news media attention to acts of resistance was mainstream journalism's emphasis on conflict: winners and losers, captivity narratives, gunplay. The premium on eyewitness journalism and competition for exclusives played a role in the *Herald's* Lowry enterprise, in the heavy presence of out-of-town reporters and photojournalists at Maxton, and clearly, the *Robesonian* siege. In the case of Eddie Hatcher, the local daily and the state's largest metro alike were well aware of Hatcher's systemic grievances. But until he used force to interrupt the news production routine, neither newspaper afforded him ink.

### **The Irony of Subversion: Tension Between the Performed and the Real**

Hatcher's performance of resistance brings up a complex and problematic finding of this project: Indians' appropriation of white media in the subversion of meaning. Although the *Robesonian* takeover was its most literal culmination, this process was inherent throughout. Stuart Hall's concept of encoding and decoding of messages such as shared symbols and meanings in language<sup>17</sup> is an apt theoretical approach to Native American self-representation because Hall situates this as an active process that produces radical shifts in meaning

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<sup>17</sup> Stuart Hall, "The Television Discourse—Encoding and Decoding," *Education and Culture* 25 (January 1974): 8-14.

according to the context and ideology of the audience.<sup>18</sup> What Hall termed signification is central to the long post-contact representation of Native Americans, from the first journal entries by Columbus to the animated Red Man in Walt Disney's *Peter Pan*. Likewise, signification is central to the reclamation of these symbols.

In each of the eras examined, Indians adopted and redeployed hegemonic language and visual tropes intended by dominant society to subjugate and primitivize Native Americans. By recontextualizing these symbols, Indians formed an ironic relationship between performance and reality. This is the duality of performance, the awareness that one is a character in a story, but simultaneously inhabits reality. In theater criticism, the equivalent is breaking the "fourth wall," the invisible plane that separates the actor and the illusion from the audience, in the suspension of disbelief.<sup>19</sup> At various points, the characters in these narratives of resistance shattered the glass wall and stepped through it, either by referring to previous iterations of the script, or by engaging the audience (in this case, journalists) to participate in the drama. This was a form of metastorytelling, calling attention to the contrivances of narrative, and of journalism itself.

This tension hovers between the lines of an 1872 correspondent's dispatch from a railroad passenger train crossing through Lowry territory. A group of Indian performers with a traveling circus staged what the correspondent reported as a mutiny, after the performers were evicted from a local hotel for unruliness. The correspondent regarded the scene with alarm; how the Indians saw it can only be surmised—a group of actors presumably

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<sup>18</sup> Stuart Hall, ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 10.

<sup>19</sup> Bill Harley, "Playing With the Wall," in *Who Says? Essays on Pivotal Issues in Contemporary Storytelling*, ed. Carol Birch and Melissa Heckler (Little Rock, AR: August House Publishing, 1996), 129-140.

transported back east to don pretend war paint and die a thousand stage deaths in a nightly Wild West show. Less ambiguous was the rhetorical intent of the Lumbees who took the field at Maxton, an episode which, despite the high potential for violence, was characterized by play-acting that parodied white stereotypes. This was evident in the use of souvenir war bonnets and the performance of a satirical war dance by a young Indian participant, tactics that treated the assembled KKK as a laughing matter, and moreover, ridiculed the imagery of Indians as savages. A more layered subversion of the primitive trope occurred later that night in the photo studio at the *Charlotte Observer*, when Simeon Oxendine and his fellow Lumbee, Charlie Warriax, upended a photographer's attempt to compose a pun, a visual companion to the various Paleface-Heap-Bad-Medicine conceits employed by headline writers. The photographer placed the KKK banner around the Lumbees' shoulders like an Indian blanket, but the shot that appeared in newspapers around the country, and as a full page in *Life* magazine, communicated an alternative message. The exuberant Lumbees, both wearing coats and ties and one in a VFW cap, were emerging from the "blanket," which now appeared more as a prizefighter's robe, Oxendine winking back at the camera and Warriax mugging broadly. The decoded message to Indians across the country was a joke (theirs) inside a joke (the photographer's.) The encoded white stereotype, decoded by Indians around the country, was ill-fitting enough as to be ludicrous. Driving home a similar point were the contents of a prank telegram sent to the humiliated KKK leader and gleefully leaked to news media: "My deepest sympathies, (signed) George Armstrong Custer, Little Big Horn, Montana."<sup>20</sup> Turning the tables on historicization, Lumbees had the last laugh. The Klan was reenacting a battle from 1876, the telegram implied, and again fought on the losing side.

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<sup>20</sup> "Gen. Custer Rides Again," *Charlotte Observer*, January 20, 1958, 1.

Lumbees' strategy in the 1950s was to deride Plains Indian tropes that were ubiquitous in a decade when "movie Indians" migrated to the small screen in TV Westerns. But by the early 1970s, as reflected in editorial and letter columns of the *Carolina Indian Voice*, some Indians deployed these symbols in a more serious way. This coincided with cultural and spiritual rebirth across Indian country, and reclamation of the native past. Here, the figurative mention of symbols such as beads and feathers became code for Indianness, for remaining true to the tribe and refusing to be coopted by white society. The *Voice's* use of constitutive symbols such as the metaphorical wearing of feathers established a paradoxical relationship between the signifier (the object) and the signification. Deployed as insider language, this challenged white constructs of Indianness as essentialized by skin tone, blood, language, or folkways—the very markings Euroamericans obliterated through a combination of disease and military conquest. If, on the other hand, Indianness could be signified by markings such as feathers that did not literally exist in Lumbee culture at the time, this implied that identity was an active, internal process. It was not a received quantity that could be seen or measured by outsiders—or, for that matter, be taken away.

The era of *Strike at the Wind!* further illuminated the porous line between performance and reality. Thus, the local actor Carnell Locklear could open a restaurant referencing his role as Boss Strong, and at the same time enter the fray on the real battlefield for Indians in the mid-1970s: the quest for seats on the school board. Finally, the most drastic rupture of this fourth wall separating actor from audience was the *Robesonian* occupation, both in the placement of Hatcher and Jacobs and the participation of the newsroom hostages. After the initial confusion, the takeover became a surreal *mise-en-scène* staged for the cameras. Both the gunmen and the hostages gave interviews during the siege, taking pictures, and in the

case of one reporter, hiding for 10 hours and using techniques borrowed from a television character, *MacGyver*. Serious and dangerous as the situation appeared on the outside, on the inside, Hatcher made clear that his purpose was to act out a barricade, with no intention of firing a shot. In reality, at least one of the shotguns used was unloaded, law enforcement later revealed. Hatcher's parting words to Horne, that the editor not "do us too bad in the paper," underlined the theatrical aspect of the takeover. Viewed as theater, Hatcher's primary concern for the outcome was a good review.

Where the tension between performance and reality was figurative in the first three eras, the *Robesonian* takeover therefore posed this problem in the most literal sense. By forcing journalists to act out a captivity narrative while their out-of-town counterparts covered them live, the siege effected a double hijacking of news media. This was the final, contradictory link in the chain—the physical appropriation of mainstream media. In so doing, Hatcher and Jacobs disrupted the standpoint and routines of conventional newsgathering, forcing journalists to interpret reality through a posture of attachment. The social outsiders—disenfranchised, delegitimized, ignored—were on the inside, dictating routines. The social insiders--journalists accustomed to official access and autonomy--were placed in opposition to law enforcement authorities, perceiving them as the greater threat. What unsettled the *Robesonian's* routines in the broader sense was that the journalists had become the observed rather than the observers, and now apprehended a new reality. They saw a world they had constructed, and they beheld themselves through the eyes of the outsider. Proximity and distance traded places, subverting the form of journalism itself.

### **Return to Moss Neck Swamp: "Who We Say We Are"**

On the night of January 7, 2016, after Harvey Godwin Jr. was sworn in as tribal chairman, Pembroke schoolteacher Dale Scott posted a comment on the new chairman's Facebook page, reminding Godwin of when they starred together in *Strike at the Wind!* with Godwin playing Henry Berry Lowry. Scott wrote:

You introduced me to Julian Pierce when I played Rhoda.  
I didn't understand who you were introducing me to as a young  
girl of 17. But tonight I truly know and believe he is resting  
at peace knowing that you are at the helm of our tribe.

Godwin's campaign, he noted in his inaugural speech, had demonstrated the power to mobilize Indians through social media; but the same power, he argued, could turn Lumbees and fellow Indians against each other. Generations ago, before wireless, before wires, Godwin recalled, elders in small communities—Union Chapel, Mount Airy—had banded together to protect Indian culture, education, and self-determination for a people who had been "living beside Moss Neck Swamp for the last 10,000 years." It was time to go back and band together with those elders, to "control and determine who we are as a people not through stereotypes of what others say we are, and not even what the Bureau of Indian Affairs say we are, but who we say we are."<sup>21</sup>

To define that identity—not received, but self-composed—Godwin two weeks later invoked the circular nature of native time, and what lies at the center of the Lumbee world: what happened and where. He stood on Maxton Field, "hallowed ground," to mark an act of agency and a place in the Lumbee landscape, together "part of who we are." The past lent direction, from Lowry through Maxton through Julian Pierce, and all the turns took Indians back to the start, to wage new battles on an old field. "We drove the KKK out of Robeson

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<sup>21</sup> Harvey Godwin Jr. inaugural speech, January 7, 2016 (transcription), Givens Performing Arts Center, UNC-Pembroke.



County and they haven't come back since," Godwin said. "We need to use that energy to fight our battles today, but without the weapons."<sup>22</sup>

Like the present bending to the past, Robeson County Indians traced a cultural script in media as well, and it came full circle. Out of a multitude facing disintegration, Indians navigated back channels of mainstream white mythologies, emerged to reclaim sovereign voice, and survived violent disruption and the recoil that followed. Now, their voices are again a multitude, rising like Moss Neck Swamp, one of a hundred forks and branches that flow into the Lumbee. Unseen from the highway, the stream is in perpetual motion. It rushes in the hairpin bends and cuts into the banks at the high water mark, over rock formations sculpted smooth by the rains of 10,000 years.

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<sup>22</sup> "Tribe Recalls Rout of KKK," *Robesonian*, January 19, 2016.

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