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# IMPACT: The Journal of the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning. Volume 7, Issue 2, Summer 2018

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*Boston University*

# IMPACT

THE JOURNAL OF THE CENTER FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING & LEARNING



VOLUME 7, NUMBER 2, SUMMER 2018

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## ABOUT US

*Impact: The Journal of the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning* is a peer-reviewed, bi-annual online journal that publishes scholarly and creative non-fiction essays about the theory, practice and assessment of interdisciplinary education. *Impact* is produced by the [Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning](#) at the Boston University College of General Studies. *Impact* accepts submissions throughout the year and publishes issues in February and July. Please submit your essays for consideration at <https://citl.submittable.com/submit>.

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## EDITORIAL STATEMENT

Dear Readers,

In the weeks and months following August 12, 2017, members of the Boston University community struggled—like Americans everywhere—to comprehend the series of troubling, and tragic, events which would come, almost immediately, to be denoted in the national imagination by the metonym “Charlottesville.” This special issue of *Impact: The Journal of the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning* comprises a series of responses to these events and their aftermath, as well as the conditions which enabled them, by faculty members from across the BU campus.

A range of disciplines and fields of study are represented in the contributions which follow: African American studies, theology, rhetoric, political science, American studies, humanities. What all share, however, is a deep concern with history; each insists, in its own way, on the vital importance of contextualizing Charlottesville by making connections with the past. (For many, the events of last summer are only the most recent reminder of the essential truth of Faulkner’s often-quoted aphorism: “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”)

These responses take different forms as well, from dialogue to essay. The first piece, “A Historian’s Take on Charlottesville,” derives from Joelle Renstrom’s wide-ranging interview with Ashley Farmer. The next three contributions grow from the “Lessons from Charlottesville” event which took place on September 19, 2017 in the George Sherman Union Metcalf Ballroom at BU’s Charles River campus. This event, organized by Dr. Virginia Sapiro (Professor of Political Science, CAS), was the first of the BU Dean of Students Office’s newly-launched Student-Faculty Forum, a series that aims to bring together the BU community around the discussion of current topics of particular interest and importance. Three participants in this conversation—Walter Fluker, Nina Silber, and Spencer Piston—have contributed modified versions of their remarks here, which historicize the events of Charlottesville from different disciplinary perspectives (the brevity and informality of these pieces reflects their origin as oral remarks). Finally, a longer essay by Cheryl Boots juxtaposes two sets of events separated by half a century, the Danville demonstrations of 1963 and the “Unite the Right” rally of 2017, contrasting the role played by singing and chanting, respectively, in each. I am grateful to my colleagues across BU for sharing their timely and insightful reflections with *Impact*.

Best,

Aaron Worth, Editor

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE'S AUTHORS

**Cheryl Boots** is a senior lecturer in humanities at Boston University's College of General Studies. She is an interdisciplinary scholar who draws upon literature, history, and music in her analysis of social change and racial justice. Her book, *Singing for Equality: Hymns and the Indian Rights and Antislavery Movements, 1640-1855*, traces the use of sacred music in colonial and antebellum efforts to include indigenous peoples and African Americans as Americans. A founding member of the Marblehead Racial Justice Team, she is also a singer-songwriter. This essay is part of her current book project, *When the Spirit Says: Singing in the Southern Freedom Movement, 1955-1968*.

**Ashley Farmer** is assistant professor of history and African American studies at Boston University. Her research interests include women's history, gender history, radical politics, intellectual history, and black feminism. Her first book, *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era*, analyzes African-American women's intellectual production to uncover how they shaped gender constructs and political organizing in the black power movement. She is also the co-editor (with Keisha Blain and Chris Cameron) of *New Perspectives on the Black Intellectual Tradition*, a collection of innovative research in African American intellectual history. Professor Farmer's scholarship has appeared in numerous scholarly venues including *The Black Scholar*, *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*, and the *Journal of African American History*. She has also contributed to popular outlets like *The Independent* and the History Channel, and is a regular blogger for the African American Intellectual History Society (AAIHS).

**Walter Earl Fluker** is the Martin Luther King, Jr. professor of ethical leadership, the editor of the Howard Thurman Papers Project and the director of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Initiative for the Development of Ethical Leadership at Boston University School of Theology. Dr. Fluker is the author of *Ethical Leadership: The Quest for Character, Civility and Community* (Fortress Press, 2009). His most recent manuscript, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America*, was published with New York University Press in 2016. Fluker is recipient of major awards and grants from the Oprah Winfrey Foundation, National Endowment of the Humanities, the National Archives (National Historical Publications and Research Commission), the Lilly Endowment, the Henry Luce Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Coca-Cola Foundation, J. P. Morgan Chase, Bank of America, The Zeist Foundation and other charitable and philanthropic organizations. He is a 2016 recipient of a Louisville Institute Sabbatical Grant for Researchers and from the Boston University Center for the Humanities.

**Spencer Piston** is assistant professor of political science at Boston University. His scholarship examines racial and economic inequality by analyzing the influence of attitudes about social groups on public opinion and political behavior. His book, *Class Attitudes in America*, was published in 2018 by Cambridge University Press. His articles have been published in leading political science journals, including *The Journal of Politics*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Political Behavior*, *Political Communication*, and *Political Psychology*. Piston was named a Distinguished Junior Scholar by the Political Psychology Section of the American Political Science Association.

**Joelle Renstrom** is a lecturer in rhetoric at Boston University's College of General Studies. Her collection of essays, *Closing the Book: Travels in Life, Loss, and Literature*, was published in 2015. She is a columnist for the Daily Beast and a staff writer for *Panorama: The Journal of Intelligent Travel*. Her essays—mostly about science and technology—have appeared in Slate, Aeon, *The Guardian*, and other publications.

**Nina Silber** is professor of history at Boston University, where she has taught in both the history department and the American and New England Studies Program. Her research and teaching focus on the US Civil War, US women's history, and the history of the American South. Her books include *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (1993); *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (1992); *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (2005); and *Gender and the Sectional Conflict* (2009). She has been the recipient of numerous grants, including the Charles Warren Fellowship at Harvard University, a Fulbright Senior Lectureship at Charles University in Prague and at Sapienza University in Rome, and a Senior Research Fellowship through the Boston University Humanities Foundation. Aside from her teaching and research, Professor Silber has also worked on numerous public history projects, ranging from museum exhibitions at the Gettysburg National Military Park to film projects on the Civil War and Reconstruction eras.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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### Latest Announcements

Please refer to CITL's website for our latest announcements: <http://www.bu.edu/cgs/citl/>.

## ***IMPACT* ESSAY COMPETITION**

Every December, the editors of *Impact: The Journal of the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning* invite submissions of scholarly and creative non-fiction essays between 1,000 and 5,000 words on any aspect of interdisciplinary teaching or research. The author of the winning essay will receive a \$250 award and publication in *Impact*.

Essays should be readable to a general, educated audience, and they should follow the documentation style most prevalent in the author's disciplinary field. Essays for this contest should be submitted by the first Monday in December to <http://CITL.submittable.com/submit>. See our general submission guidelines in Submittable.

CITL reserves the right to not publish a winner in any given year. Faculty and staff from the College of General Studies are not eligible to submit to this contest.



## A Historian's Take on Charlottesville: An Interview with Boston University African American Studies Professor Ashley Farmer

By Joelle Renstrom, Boston University

The past few years have been eye-opening for many white Americans who thought or hoped that prejudice, racial violence, socioeconomic oppression, miscarriages of justice, and other race-related issues that have dogged the country since its founding were improving. We've been presented with countless stories of black people who have paid for bigoted mindsets and behavior with their lives: Trayvon Martin, Sandra Bland, Philando Castile, Eric Garner, Stephon Clark, and so many more. Hand-wringing and comments about how "this isn't the America I know" or "I had no idea things were this bad" highlight white privilege; for black Americans, this reality is not new. Systems of black oppression and disenfranchisement have never been even close to resolved, and it seems that people who previously tamped down their racist, sexist, and/or xenophobic views have been emboldened to demonstrate them loudly and proudly, as we saw at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville last summer.

*Impact* spoke to Boston University African Studies and History professor Ashley Farmer about what insights we can take away from Charlottesville one year later—and where we can find hope for change.

*(edited for clarity and length)*

**Renstrom:** You've written a lot about the events of August 25, 1961 in Monroe, North Carolina, when an angry white mob attacked the [Freedom Riders'](#) non-violent protest against segregation. How would you compare that event to what happened in Charlottesville, and how might those similarities and/or differences be instructive?

**Farmer:** Racism and racist violence manifest in historically specific ways. That said, we can think about how different manifestations of violence can stem from or be representative of overarching ideas and anxieties. Although the Monroe and Charlottesville events happened in different locations and eras, both non-violent protests were organized by progressives of all races in an effort to challenge white supremacy. In both cases, white mobs wanted to maintain or reassert the status quo. Considering these two events in tandem can help us think about what forms of protest or challenges to power tend to provoke white racial violence, where and how white supremacists draw and reassert the boundaries of whiteness (in both instances they attacked white men and women), and the importance and limitations of allies in anti-racist protesting.

**Renstrom:** The violence in Charlottesville was a product of white nationalism and supremacy, but, considering intersectionality, that wasn't the only dynamic at work. What role do you think gender had in those events?

**Farmer:** Since the founding of our nation, whiteness has always been tied to ideas of manhood. The country was conceived of as a place for white men to be leaders, property owners, and to have power over all people, including white women. On the surface, the rally of white men at UVA was a response to the potential removal of a Robert E. Lee statue in a city park. However, it was also a representation of white male anxieties over their perceived loss of power, as demonstrated by the protesters' chant: "you will not replace us." This loss of power certainly has a racial component, but it is also a manifestation of gendered anxieties. It is not a coincidence that the group was all men and that this happened after an election in which a white woman vied for the presidency.

**Renstrom:** I've noticed that while movements such as the Women's March and #MeToo represent a sense of sisterhood, that unity can break down along racial lines. Is that tension caused by a connection between whiteness and womanhood?

**Farmer:** White women play a critical role in manifestations of racial violence. Explicit examples include the many white women who falsely claim that black men assaulted them, or in the case of someone like [Emmett Till](#), simply looked at them the "wrong" way, knowing this would result in the death of those black men. Other examples include their endorsement of white supremacy through voting for avowedly racist candidates or joining white supremacist groups including the KKK. Although these women may not carry torches, their support of white supremacist men and their

## ESSAYS— CONTINUED

attachment to ideas about white womanhood and femininity embolden men to engage in violence on their behalf, including at Charlottesville.

**Renstrom:** In the 2016 presidential election, [Black voters were least likely to vote for Trump](#). Similarly, Black voters [propelled Alabama senate candidate Doug Jones to a win](#) over Roy Moore, a candidate who demonstrates consistent racism (and was accused of sexual assault by [8 teenage girls](#)). After these elections, we see outpourings of thanks for Black voters, who despite suppression and disenfranchisement made their votes count. But I also see backlash, as “thanks” is the equivalent to “thoughts and prayers.” I saw this sentiment summed up at the Women’s March last year, where I saw a black woman with a sign that said: “So we’ll see all you nice white ladies at the next Black Lives Matter march, right?” What insights do you have about the effects of current racial and gender dynamics on politics?

**Farmer:** These voting patterns are not new. During the twentieth century, African American women have consistently voted for progressive candidates and have often been the voting bloc that secured progressive and/or democratic victories. It may be because someone as abhorrent as Roy Moore was close to securing a Senate seat that people are now paying more attention. Thus, the current political climate can be understood as one in which African American women are rightly frustrated for not receiving wider recognition for their voting and organizing efforts, though there is now much more public acknowledgement of their vital contributions. We can best recognize and continue to honor African American women’s contributions by supporting their causes, candidacies, and organizations. Allies can also do some more of the heavy lifting and not expect African American women to stand up for progressive causes in their stead.

**Renstrom:** In your 2017 [interview with BU Today](#), you said, “we only humanize black women by proving that they did the same things other people do in their daily lives.” In thinking about humanization, I was reminded of the *New York Times*’ [November 2017 profile](#) of a white nationalist that drew harsh criticism because the writer presents a relatively sympathetic view of him. How do you think race and gender contribute to the humanization (or lack thereof) of people such as the Nazi sympathizer—or of black women?

**Farmer:** This country has a long history of dehumanizing minority populations. To be sure, some think that because minority and marginalized communities have some protections, everyone considers these groups as both equal and human. Articles such as the Times piece indicate that this is not the case. Society still has very entrenched ideas of who is human and who deserves to have their story told or heard. This, like most forms of bias, manifests in racialized and gendered terms. There is a general cultural consensus that if a white man adopts a different or negative view it must be because of something we don’t understand, whereas if a black man or, especially, a black woman, has done so, something is wrong with that person.

**Renstrom:** Your book [Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era](#) focuses on the contributions of female leaders in the Black Power movement. How were these women able to overcome multiple forms of marginalization and effect change?

**Farmer:** [Mae Mallory](#) [who supported the Freedom Riders in 1961] and the other women I study found a wonderful balance between a clear-headed analysis of intersecting forms of oppression and a vibrant imagination of what a new world free from racism, sexism, and poverty could look like for African Americans and people around the world. It’s easy to get lost or overwhelmed by the issues that we face and how to resolve them, but black women radicals of the past were able to keep hope alive, and I think that this could be a source of inspiration for us as well.

**Renstrom:** Which black female leaders today particularly inspire you?

**Farmer:** The tradition of black women radicals is alive in scholars and activists across the country. These include, but are not limited to: [Charlene Carruthers](#) and the incredible women working with [Black Youth Project 100](#); [Mariame Kaba](#), founder and director of [Project Nia](#), which works to reduce incarceration in Chicago; to [Barbara Ransby](#), [Cathy Cohen](#), and the other founders of [Scholars for Social Justice](#). These are just a few of the many African American women doing important and transformative work.

## ESSAYS— CONTINUED

**Renstrom:** Do you see either the beginnings of another Black Power movement today—perhaps in the Black Lives Matter movement? And how might the events in Charlottesville galvanize or affect such a movement?

**Farmer:** The Black Power movement was a historically specific wave of activism responding to late 20<sup>th</sup> century manifestations of racism, sexism, and economic inequality. The activism today is different. Nevertheless, I do think a new movement is emerging to address the latest manifestations of the white supremacist patriarchy, most notably embodied in the Black Lives Movement. Although the current movement is different in its form, scope, and goals, we can see how activists organize with the lessons of Black Power in mind. First, the BLM movement is not defined by a single leader or organization; rather, it has multiple local leaders and activists who address ground-level manifestations of race, gender, and economic issues. Second, we see an effort not to repeat the same issues of exclusion that hampered earlier movements. There is now a concerted effort among activists to embrace a wide range of women, trans, and gender non-conforming leaders in order to support and articulate an expansive political platform.

**Renstrom:** Did the events in Charlottesville affect your research or teaching? If so, how?

**Farmer:** For historians, ideas about racism, sexism, and homophobia are never really far in the past. As a historian of African American women's history, I constantly research and teach about manifestations of white supremacy and patriarchy and their effects on the past and present. However, many students don't think about the omnipresence of these issues, largely because they are often taught historical narratives about American exceptionalism, democracy, and progress in their early education. Events such as Charlottesville offer history teachers an opportunity to disrupt this narrative. Students are often shocked that these events could happen today. This gives history teachers an opportunity to contextualize such events, explain how they are part of larger systems of power, and push students to think more critically about how current ideas about race, sex, and class underlie events like Charlottesville.

**Renstrom's note:** If you would like to contribute to the causes, candidacies, and organizations that support African Americans, here are some suggestions:

- [BYP \(Black Youth Project\) 100](#)
- [Project Nia](#)
- [Scholars for Social Justice](#)
- [Advancement Project](#)
- [IMPACT Strategies](#)
- [Essie Justice](#)
- [Campaign Zero](#)
- [Black Alliance for Just Immigration](#)
- [Girl Trek](#)
- [Girls for a Change](#)
- [SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective](#)
- [Higher Heights](#)
- [A Long Walk Home](#)
- [National Black Women's Justice Institute](#)
- [Trans Women of Color Collective](#)
- You can find a list of black women running for various political offices throughout the country at [blackwomeninpolitics.com](http://blackwomeninpolitics.com)

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

### Charlottesville, Civility and Contested Democratic Space

By Walter Earl Fluker, Boston University

The domestic terrorism that took place on August 12 in Charlottesville, Virginia was not an isolated event in the chronicles of American history. It is part of a long and ghostly past of racism, ethnic cleansing and violence that we are too quick to repress and forget. Whenever we forget or repress this past, we become more and more like the proverbial ostrich that places its head in the sand in the face of imminent danger. When we do so, we leave more exposed than is hidden. In events like Charlottesville, we are witnessing a dangerous period in our history that I sometimes call “American post-post racialism” represented in the language of “America First” and “Let’s make America great again.”

Therefore, Charlottesville is about a deeper and more profound issue that threatens the very future of our republic and democracy. In the midst of the ideological divide of politics during this new season of “making America great again,” we have been revisited by an older and more insidious problem—it is a campaign to reconfigure time and space back to an era where certain non-white people knew their place in the racial and ethnic architecture of this nation. This challenge has a long and difficult history that we cannot adequately discuss here but I hope we can begin.

First, Charlottesville is a sign of “contested democratic space.” Democratic space rests upon certain assumptions, beliefs and values like individual autonomy, political freedom, representative leadership, accountable governance, and respect for human rights.

When these assumptions or values are tested in events like Charlottesville, we are forced to rethink what it means to be a part of a liberal democracy. For instance, is the right to peacefully assemble, to come together to collectively express, promote, pursue, and defend ideas and values the same as coming together to propagate violence and hatred?

Second, democratic space also depends on some form of civility. Civility is an overworked term often used without conceptual clarity; and in a variety of contexts, its use masks complex historical, sociological and methodological issues. In common usage, civility refers to a set of manners, certain etiquettes and social graces that are rooted in specific cultural locations of class, race, gender, sexual orientations and moral sensibilities. In this context, civility means that we must create and share space with others without violence. Sharing space with others with whom we have become accustomed is not hard, but to work to create space with those with whom we strongly disagree or who frighten us in their otherness is hard and dangerous. Democracy at its best is a squabble, a contentious exchange of ideas, opinions, values and practices within the context of civil relations. When we forget this important truth, we create conditions of alienation and violence. However we feel about building walls to keep others out, our greatest challenge is not keeping others out of our country, but developing new and better ways of seeing and responding to our own interrelatedness and interconnectedness.

Third, Charlottesville, like Ferguson, like Minneapolis, like St. Louis and so many places around the country, is a wake-up call! Poor white people in the rural areas of this nation deserve to be heard just as much as poor people locked in the confines of urban centers. But we must make this happen without giving sway to the irrational, nonproductive fallacy of racial privilege that breeds fear, misunderstanding and violence. We must not allow our concerns for gender diversity, sexual orientation and disability to be mocked and cast aside as foul, profane and un-American. We cannot allow the things that divide us to prevent us from seeking democratic space!

Fourth, creating democratic space means that we must allow opportunities for differences in perspectives and the ways in which we protest. This is a statement about civility, but civility need not be limited to simple rules of etiquette and manners; civility can also be disruptive, subversive and transformative. Subversive civility allows us to “civilize political contestation” and “subvert complacent consensus” by providing those with different beliefs, values and orientations with space to disagree and become opponents without injuring, maiming or killing them (see Jeffrey C. Goldfarb’s excellent discussion in *Civility and Subversion: The Intellectual in Democratic Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Finally, creating new spaces for others means that we can no longer see ourselves as solitary actors in a world populated by other peoples whose histories, industries, and life circumstances are intimately connected to our own. We have learned the tragic lesson that what happens in the White House affects what happens in your house; what happens

## ESSAYS— CONTINUED

downtown goes around town; what happens in Afghanistan affects what takes place in New York City; what happens to our natural environment affects the present and the future of our existence on this planet. Being the world's only real superpower brings with it extraordinary capacity to create or destroy fragile relationships with nature, other nations and cultures. While national self-interest is the legitimate prerogative of any nation, we run the risk of forfeiting that right through aggression and dominance by military and economic cooptation. A more reasonable and potentially productive course of action is to listen deeply to the unpopular voices in our society that seek diverse ways of understanding and that allow us to connect in spaces of strategic interest. So much weighs on our willingness to find peaceful ways to violent situations. Right now as we prepare to commemorate the legacy of our nation's greatest peacemaker, we have sent, and are planning to send even more, thousands of young men and women to fight against nations that most Americans cannot locate on a map of the world.

Questions for us might be:

- How do you understand “democratic space” and its relationship to Charlottesville?
- Is civility dysfunctional in situations like Charlottesville?
- Is it possible to engage in peaceful assemblies without violence?
- Can civility be used as a subversive and transformative tactic?
- Do we need to rethink the language of civility?

## ESSAYS— CONTINUED

### Reflections on Charlottesville

by Nina Silber, Boston University

This past August, Charlottesville, Virginia provided the stage for a protest that seemed frighteningly reminiscent of Nazi Germany. With 250 white men chanting slogans of hate – “blood and soil,” “Jews will not replace us” – many Americans rightly wondered how a small American college town could play host to such a scene of terror. The terror intensified when white nationalists and counter-protestors clashed and one anti-fascist demonstrator, Heather Heyer, was murdered when a white supremacist drove a car into the crowd.

The stage for this terror had, of course, been set by Charlottesville’s Confederate monuments, statues that had stood in city parks and city squares for 100 or so years, paying homage to the men who had led a failed political movement 50-60 years before their marble and bronze likenesses were ever built. The decision by the Charlottesville city council to remove a 1924 statue to Robert E. Lee had motivated the white nationalist protestors. That statue, said protest organizer Jason Kessler, “is the first and foremost reason that we’re having this rally, for that park and for that statue. It’s about white genocide. It’s about the replacement of our people, cultural and ethnically. And that statue is the focal point of everything.”

Some might wonder how a statue to a man often depicted in history books as brave and heroic could generate these kinds of sentiments and galvanize neo-Nazi protestors. But taking a long view of US history, going back to the era when the Confederacy itself first came into being, offers, I think, considerable, albeit troubling, clarity.

First, we need to reckon with the fact that the Confederacy’s founding rested on a brutal and explicit dedication to the principles of white supremacy. Although school text books often obfuscate Confederate principles with vague references to “states’ rights,” Confederate leaders understood their foremost objectives revolved around protecting, preserving and expanding their system of slavery and the racial underpinnings of that system. Our new government, explained Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens in 1861, “rests upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and normal condition.”

Stephens’s government failed in their bid to create an independent slave state, but Confederate thinking persisted amongst white Southerners, and even in the political and cultural life of the entire US nation, for years after Appomattox. There may have been no more pointed reflection of this white supremacist mentality than the 1915 film, *Birth of a Nation*, a movie that depicted the triumph of the white race over savage-like blacks in the aftermath of the Civil War and that achieved huge popularity across the country. At the same time *Birth of a Nation* was sweeping the country, Southerners were in the midst of a monument craze, erecting statues to the soldiers and leaders of the Confederacy. Although some saw those monuments as a way to pay homage to a generation of men rapidly passing away, Confederate memorialization in this era also dovetailed with the efforts of white Southern politicians to solidify a Jim Crow system and to erect a civic landscape that welcomed and celebrated white people while pushing African Americans to the margins. In Charlottesville, for example, a black neighborhood was demolished in order to make way for a park that would be home to a soaring statue of Confederate General Stonewall Jackson. At an unveiling ceremony in North Carolina in 1913, a white businessman spoke admiringly of the Confederate soldiers being honored as men who came to the defense “of the Anglo Saxon race.” This same speaker also bragged about how, soon after the war’s close, he “whipped a negro wench until her skirts hung in shreds because she had maligned a Southern lady.” Notable, too, is the fact that these statues were commissioned in an era when African Americans had been disenfranchised and barred from political office, thereby stripping them of any official channel for protesting this Confederatization of the Southern landscape.

In later years, the Confederacy and its symbols would remain a touchstone for those touting racist views. Adolf Hitler himself regretted that “the beginnings of a great new social order based on the principle of slavery and inequality” had been destroyed when the South lost the Civil War. The founder of an explicitly violent anti-Semitic group in the 1930s explained that his organization was dedicated to the ideals of southern chivalry and other “principles of the Old South” before the Civil War. In 1946, a *Life Magazine* reporter discovered an Atlanta organization affiliated with the KKK that venerated both Robert E. Lee and Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*.

## ESSAYS— CONTINUED

In the 1950s, Civil Rights counter-demonstrators may not have venerated Hitler, but they surely used the symbols of the Confederacy, especially the Confederate flag, to promote white supremacy. A photographer from that era recalls: “Southerners who believed in racial segregation displayed Confederate flags instead of the American flag.” In 1962, South Carolina legislators passed a resolution that would permit the Confederate flag to fly over the State House dome, never specifying a time when it would come down. True, the timing coincided with the Civil War’s centennial, but the placement of the flag also offered a voice to those protesting federal interference on civil rights. Moved to the South Carolina State House grounds in 2000 (following considerable protest by the NAACP), this flag would not be removed from this site until 2015 following the murder of nine black worshippers in a Charleston church by an avowed white supremacist, Dylann Roof. Consistent with the troubling history outlined here, photographs of Roof showed him posing proudly with the Confederate flag.

And so the events in Charlottesville, while shocking on so many levels, also seem tragically consistent with the historic place of the Confederacy itself, and the way the memory of the Confederacy has become a rallying point for a host of movements dedicated to racism, white nationalism, and even fascism. In some way, the Charlottesville protestors have forced us to strip a veneer of gentility away from Confederate monuments, perhaps even from the men those monuments were built to honor, and see a little more clearly the racist underpinnings in the history that surrounds them.

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

### Charlottesville Remarks

By Spencer Piston, Boston University

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the BU Student Faculty Forum “Lessons from Charlottesville.” I was grateful to have the chance to learn from my faculty colleagues and the students in attendance.

I believe political scientists need to study the resurgence of biological racism and the ascendance of white supremacists in contemporary American life.

Let’s start with the academy. It is common—though by no means universal—for media coverage of scholarship in the natural sciences to ascribe differences in health outcomes across racial groups to genetic variation across those groups. Furthermore, some research suggests that this narrative is more common in news articles in recent years that it was previously.

Meanwhile, genetic explanations for public opinion and human behavior are increasingly common in political science. Partisanship, ideology, and voter turnout, for example, are increasingly argued to be a function of genetic inheritance. This line of research does not (yet) ascribe racial differences in individual-level political preferences and behavior to genetics. Prominent economics articles appearing in recent years, however, do attribute racial differences in meaningful outcomes to genetic causes. One recent article in the flagship journal of the American Economics Association, for example, argues that the continent of Africa is less economically developed than other continents in part because of the genetic characteristics of its inhabitants. Another argues that interethnic conflict and economic development is influenced by genetics.

Outside the academy, Steven Bannon, Sebastian Gorka, and Stephen Miller have all occupied elite political positions in the Trump administration, despite—or perhaps because of—their associations with white supremacist groups. Richard Spencer and Milo Yiannopoulos have also become prominent focal points for white supremacists (and their opponents). Charles Murray has been invited to college campuses across the nation, while prominent media outlets such as the *New York Times* cover white supremacists in a remarkably sympathetic fashion.

President Trump himself, meanwhile, has done little to disassociate himself from white supremacist ideas. At times he has even promoted these ideas—by retweeting white supremacist memes, for example. During Trump’s campaign, white supremacist websites attracted so much traffic that some of them crashed. After Trump was elected, hate crimes swept the nation. Some of the harassers explicitly referenced Trump’s victory during the commission of their hateful acts.

What led to and what followed the protests in Charlottesville reaches far beyond Charlottesville. To my knowledge, none of the people I have mentioned were actually in Charlottesville during the protests. Biologically racist and white supremacist ideas have gained legitimacy not in a single town but across the country: on college campuses, in news articles, in the presidential administration, and, I suspect, in the mass public. The resurgence of biological racism and the ascendance of white supremacists are developments that cross many domains of American life.



## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

### “This Little Light of Mine” vs. “Jews Will Not Replace Us”: Implications of Singing and Chanting in Danville, VA 1963 and Charlottesville, VA 2017

By Cheryl C. Boots, Boston University

John Lewis, C.T. Vivian, and Julian Bond—giants of the Southern Freedom Movement in the mid-twentieth century—have made the claim that without the music, there would have been no freedom movement. Singing was integral to creating a “beloved community” as Martin Luther King, Jr. expressed the goal of racial and economic equality. Some social commentators today observe that the current wave of protesters do not sing. They chant. They have no widely-recognized “anthem.” They do not sing together. How are we to understand what the shift from singing to chanting in social activism means? A closer investigation of the events in the Virginia cities of Charlottesville and Danville provides evidence for consideration.

Two small cities in Virginia. Five decades apart. In both Danville (1963) and Charlottesville (2017) groups of activists took to the streets to assert their political and social agendas. The Danville Movement, as part of the Southern Freedom Movement, confronted entrenched racial segregation powers to contend for full access to educational, political, and community resources for persons of color. The Unite the Right demonstration in Charlottesville brought together members of multiple white supremacist organizations, ostensibly to protest the removal and relocation of statues celebrating the Confederacy, but more explicitly to appropriate first amendment protection for their inflammatory language of violence against people of color, Jews, Catholics, women, and non-heteronormative persons. Their convergence from around the nation prompted a corresponding response from counter protesters who rejected the Unite the Right’s agenda. Music and chants in the Danville movement affirmed African Americans’ identity and humanity. Music countered boredom and chronicled injustice; it comforted the incarcerated, energized the weary, and encouraged the down-hearted. Music created community. Chanting in Charlottesville built the Unite the Right’s cohesion by taunting listeners, threatening observers, and challenging opponents. Charlottesville counter-protesters responded with their own chants and a few invoked music from the Southern Freedom Movement.

While both Charlottesville and Danville are small cities in Virginia, their origins and histories differ considerably. Charlottesville is a county seat and education center of roughly 48,000. It is the home of the prestigious University of Virginia whose founder and original architect, Thomas Jefferson, brought a mixed legacy of neoclassical values and slaveholding economics to the city. Today, the University, including the Health complex, employs 28,000 people. Charlottesville census figures show 69% of the residents are white; 19% Black or African American; 6% Asian. Demographics [reported by the UVA](#) show 61% of UVA students are white; 12% Asian; and 10% Black or African American.

Danville, by contrast, hugs the Southern border of the state along the Dan River which separates Virginia from North Carolina. An industrial town devoted to tobacco and textile production, Danville has been literally controlled by the Dan River Mills Corporation in terms of town governance and its judicial system. [Roughly two-thirds](#) of Danville’s 50,000 residents in 1960 were white. Racial segregation was in full force as the Southern Freedom Movement simmered and boiled both near and far.

#### DANVILLE, VIRGINIA 1963

“Freedom”

All: Freedom, Freedom, Freedom, Freedom, Freedom

Leader: Everybody wants

## ESSAYS— CONTINUED

All: Freedom  
 Leader: Everybody wants  
 All: Freedom  
 Leader: Everybody wants  
 All: Freedom, Freedom, Freedom  
 Leader: Got to have my  
 All: Freedom  
 Leader: Got to have my  
 All: Freedom  
 Leader: Got to have my  
 All: Freedom, Freedom, Freedom

(Additional verses)  
 Let me hear you sing for (Freedom)  
 Don't you want to have your (Freedom)  
 Tell the people 'bout your (Freedom)  
 Sing it louder 'bout your (Freedom)

Refrain: Freedom, Freedom, Freedom, Freedom, Freedom ([Core Freedom Songs](#), 17)

In 1963, the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, many Americans were shocked when they saw Southern Freedom Movement violence: Sheriff “Bull” Connor’s brutal responses to non-violent direct-action demonstrators in Birmingham, Alabama. Men, women, and children peacefully protested on behalf of African American freedoms. Images of fire hoses blasting protesters off their feet and attack dogs biting adults and school children filled the nightly TV news and major Northern newspapers. That same summer, only five hundred miles away, authorities used similar brutal techniques in the little-known textile town of Danville, VA.

Frustrated by the inability of the local NAACP to change racial segregation and political exclusion of people of color in Danville, organizers created The Danville Christian Progressive Association (DCPA) as an affiliate of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). In keeping with SCLC expectations, the DCPA clearly articulated its goals: to have equal access to the town facilities, to include Blacks in town governance, and to employ Blacks in downtown businesses. Both SCLC and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sent staff to Danville to help organize the protests and to teach non-violent protest strategies.

Archival film footage of local news coverage shows African American protesters marching up the streets in Danville. Five and six abreast, they sing “We shall not be moved” and “Freedom” as well as rhythmically chant “Hey! Hey! Hey!” and “Freedom Now!” Similarly, television film of protesters on the City Hall steps captures a sit-in where participants sang “Freedom” as they clapped in time. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) published “Freedom” and “We Shall Not Be Moved” in the 1962 CORE Sit-in Songs. Inexpensively produced, the booklet contained 19 songs that were recorded as an album following the Freedom Highways project in 1962. The Freedom Highways project was direct action “to open chain restaurants along major federal highways to all persons.” These songs had been part of the Southern Freedom Movement for years, some since the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955. ([Core Sit-in Songs](#), Foreword). The tune for “Freedom” originally was an African American spiritual with a call and response format. The lead voice told a story or made observations and the group responded with “Amen. Amen. Amen.” Structurally, the song was readily adapted to Southern Freedom Movement purposes by substituting “Amen” for “Freedom” and creating verses that either were rele-

## ESSAYS— CONTINUED

vant to the large-scale struggle for rights and freedom or spoke to the specific needs and conditions of a local movement.

Other film footage from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities shows police and firemen dragging hoses into position. Still photographs present the destruction and violence of the hoses. What has been called “A Night of Infamy” in Danville began with a gathering of protesters to respond to the incarceration of young people the week before (“Danville,” [Virginia Historical Society](#)).

On June 10, Rev. H.G. McGhee had led a group of about 50 people to city hall. McGhee’s group knelt en masse between the municipal building and the jail “to pray for our brothers and sisters.” As they prayed, State troopers blocked the end of the ally, cutting off any exit for the praying activists. When they stood up, they heard the command “Let them have it!” At that point, city police, firemen, and garbage collectors who had been deputized for this purpose, attacked the demonstrators with clubs. Then high intensity fire hoses blasted the stunned crowd, “washing people down the street like so much trash. Gloria Campbell (wife of the influential Rev. Lawrence G. Campbell) received such a high-intensity stream of water, it tore her dress off...” (Katherine Calos, “Civil rights participants remember Danville’s ‘Night of Infamy,’” [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#), February 3, 2013). While the network television and major newspapers reported Birmingham, Alabama’s violent strategies, the same approach in Danville escaped the same level of national attention.

Inside the Danville jail that night, 17-year old Randy Adams didn’t feel the fire hoses’ punishment. But he did experience the harshness of prison conditions. “In jail, the demonstrators sang freedom songs and prayed with the black ministers who were among the leaders,” he recalled. “I remember us singing and hearing other people singing as well. I think it was just the point of us being together and doing something to pass the time and, especially the younger people, to make them feel comfortable and to know they were not alone” (Calos, “Civil rights participants remember Danville’s ‘Night of Infamy’”). Like the demonstrators depicted in the films broadcast on local TV, Adams probably sang “Freedom” and “We Shall Not Be Moved.”

SNCC operative Mary King wrote about her front-line experience in Danville in her memoir of the movement, *Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement*. King had familial ties to Danville extending back five generations. She recalled her father reminiscing about waking to the shrill whistle of the cotton mills when he was a thirteen-year-old school boy. In the summer of 1963, King went to Danville and participated in the picketing at the mills to press for fair employment: “Of the mills’ twelve thousand employees approximately eleven hundred were black, most of them doing menial work (Mary King, *Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc. 1987).

Walking back and forth carrying a sign, King soon discovered that demonstrating was hard work: “Picketing was not exciting. It was not fun. It was not even interesting. It was boring, tiresome, dull, and tedious.” She decided that she could better serve the Danville movement by spending time in the local SNCC office. There she applied her expertise: coordinating communications with the media and with the SNCC office in Atlanta. “Direct action without good communications was of little consequence” (Mary King, *Freedom Song*, 113).

In contrast to the tedium of picketing, King found more energy and enthusiasm at the mass meetings held nearly every night in Danville churches. She observed that “The mass meetings and the singing of freedom songs were a form of inchoate planning for the community...The soul-stirring singing, a crucial part of the black community’s mobilization in Danville as everywhere, bonded participants together emotionally, giving individuals strength, and forming a collective shield” (Mary King, *Freedom Song*, 98).

## ESSAYS— CONTINUED

Freedom chants helped demonstrators deal with the boredom of picket lines and long marches. Freedom songs helped participants in the struggle feel a sense of community in the face of violent oppression. Freedom songs served another purpose in the Southern Freedom movement: recording grassroots history.

### **“Legend of Danville” as Grassroots History**

In Danville on June the tenth  
In the year of sixty-three,  
From Bibleway Church to the courthouse  
Some people marched to be free.

2. The night was dark and the journey long  
As they marched two abreast  
But with the spirit of freedom’s song  
They didn’t need no rest.

3. As they fell down on their knees  
Led by Reverend McGhee  
He looked up and cried, “Lord, please  
We want to be free.”

4. They heard the voice of Chief McCann  
As it cut across the prayer  
I’ll never forget those violent words  
“Nigger, get out of here.”

5. And as they heard those brutal words  
They didn’t turn around  
And the water from the firehose  
Knocked them to the ground.

6. And as they fell down on the ground  
They were hit with the billy sticks  
I’ll never forget that terrible sound  
As the people’s heads did split.

### CHORUS and INTERLUDE

Don’t you stumble brother, don’t you falter,  
Oh mother, don’t you weep,  
We’re climbing up to our freedom  
Although the road is steep.

7. On June 13th we marched again  
They used the tear gas bombs.  
The grand jury indicted us  
On five thousand dollar bond.

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

8. In Danville town's corrupted courts  
 We got no justice done.  
 We were found guilty before the trial  
 And the judge he wore a gun.

Chorus: Move on. Move on, Move on with the Freedom fight.  
 Move on. Move on. We're fighting for equal rights.

(Matthew Jones, "Legend of Danville," *Sing for Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through Its Songs*. Guy and Candie Carawan, eds. 120-121)

Danville native, and U.S. Army veteran, Matthew Jones wrote this ballad, "The Legend of Danville," which documents the night marches, as well as the daytime protests and names the leaders of the civil rights advocates, Rev. McGhee, and Police Chief McCann. Jones's lyric recalls the power of the firehoses that "knocked them to the ground" and being beaten by policemen with billy clubs. The last two verses also witness to the police violence and the judicial system controlled by the Dan River Mills company.

The judge referred to in "The Legend of Danville" was Archibald M. Aiken, Jr. who did, indeed wear a gun. He invoked an 1859 Virginia statute prohibiting anyone from "conspiring to incite the colored population of the State to acts of violence and war against the white population." The statute had first come to light in the wake of the 1831 Nat Turner rebellion and was the legal basis for John Brown's execution after the Harper's Ferry raid. In the Danville freedom movement, legal actions using this statute extended to SNCC organizers who worked behind the scenes as well as lawyers representing the individuals who had been arrested. SNCC workers Bob Zellner and Dottie Miller fled the city when they learned the grand jury was on the verge of indicting them. Dottie and photographer Danny Lyon "were driven out of town, hiding on the floor of a car, at high speed by a local resident." They used pseudonyms to make their plane reservations at the airport, for fear that their actual names would be recognized and lead to their apprehension (Mary King, *Freedom Song*, 113-114). In a time when local media ignored the protests and national news coverage focused on larger urban demonstrations, Matthew Jones's ballad kept alive the experience and details about the Danville movement.

Like SNCC staff Bob Zellner, Dottie Miller, and Danny Lyon before her, Mary King escaped Danville under threat of grand jury indictment. Hunched down on the floor of a local resident's car to make her getaway, she took up temporary residence across the Dan River in a Roman Catholic convent in North Carolina. The grand jury delivered on their threat against her in absentia. So, unable to be of any use to the Danville movement from the far side of the river, Mary returned to Atlanta and continued her work in communications with Julian Bond and others at the SNCC central office. Her case continued on the books until 1973 when it was part of the last group of sentences that was finally suspended (Mary King, *Freedom Song*, 114-119).

Many people today consider the violence of the local and state authorities against the Danville freedom movement as an aberration in Virginia's record of civil rights activity during the 1950s-60s. In other Virginia cities at the time, direct actions were non-violent and led to negotiations that produced changes in access to public facilities, in expanded enrollment of eligible voters, and in hiring practices that included African Americans. The results in Danville were uneven: an African American policeman was hired in 1963. In 1966 Danville voters elected a Black councilman. However, it would take until 1970 to desegregate the Danville public schools.

In Danville, anti-segregation activists used chants and songs to advance their goal of a "beloved community," a town

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

where all residents had equal access to political participation, to employment opportunities, and to tax-supported services. Chants and songs countered the boredom of the picket line, energized the gathering of the activists and their allies, and chronicled the violence perpetrated against nonviolent protesters. Over five decades later, the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally took to the streets to promote a completely different agenda.

### CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA 2017

On Monday, August 14, 2017, Joe Heim of *The Washington Post* produced a thorough outline of the Charlottesville events. Heim identified three groups involved at Charlottesville: the white nationalists, the counter-protesters, and state and local law officers (Joe Heim, “Recounting a day of rage, hate, violence and death,” [The Washington Post](#), August 14, 2017). Keep in mind that each of Heim’s terms is an umbrella term. “White nationalists” is a collection of right-wing groups including neo-Nazis, white militia, and other alt-right affiliates. “Counter-protesters” include UVA students, #BlackLivesMatter marchers, clergy who came at the invitation of Charlottesville clergy, and anti-fascists (known as Antifa).

Starting with the rumored but so-called “surprise” tiki torch march for Friday night before the “Unite the Right” rally on Saturday, the article’s timeline continues on through the next day’s demonstration and counter demonstration. The article culminates with the three deaths related to the Charlottesville protests: the death of counter protester Heather Heyer hit by a car allegedly driven by James Alex Fields, Jr. a “Unite the Right” participant, and the deaths of two state police troopers, Lt. H. Jay Cullen and Berke M. M. Bates, whose helicopter crashed after they had been observing the rally (Joe Heim, “Recounting a day of rage). Understandings of what happened at Charlottesville depend on what individuals observed, when they made their observations, and what their sympathies were prior to the event.

Visual footage of the “surprise” march on Friday night shows about 250 khaki-clad white nationalists, most of them men, carrying tiki torches and chanting. “You will not replace us!” and “Jews will not replace us!” Another chant came in a call and response format, part of the group shouting “Whose streets?” and the remainder yelling “Our streets!” The long line marching in pairs wound across Nameless Field on the UVA campus and toward the statue of Thomas Jefferson. At the statue a small group of students faced the torch-bearers. Behind a sign reading “VA students against white supremacy,” these counter-protesters encircled the statue, arms linked. They chanted “Black lives matter!” and “No Nazis! No KKK! No fascist USA!” The white supremacists surrounded the statue and the counter protesters ([Vice News Tonight](#), HBO). Once they confronted the counter-protesters at Jefferson’s statue, the white-supremacists chanted “White lives matter!” Initially a single campus police officer was at the statue. Eventually a phalanx of law enforcement personnel in riot gear took position and moved to disperse the crowd. Reporter Heim described what happened: “Shoves. Punches. Both groups sprayed chemical irritants. Many marchers threw their torches toward the statue and the students.” Individuals in both groups sustained injuries before law officer reinforcements arrived. Casualties were eventually treated by first responders (Joe Heim, “Recounting a day of rage).

Heim’s timeline for Saturday includes an entry about counter-protesters who gathered at Emancipation Park. “9:30 a.m. Strains of the Civil Rights Freedom Song ‘This Little Light of Mine’ wafted across the park.”

This little light of mine  
I’m gonna let it shine.  
This little light of mine,  
I’m gonna let it shine.  
This little light of mine

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

I'm gonna let it shine.

Let it shine. Let it shine. Let it shine.

("This Little Light of Mine," *Sing for Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through Its Songs*, Guy and Candie Carawan, eds. 21-23).

This song was a staple of the Southern Freedom Movement. A traditional African American spiritual, it became a mainstay for a number of reasons. Its repetition and simple tune made it easy to learn and remember. Verses could readily be improvised depending on the location of the singers and the conditions of the protest. The imagery of light can be interpreted creatively and dynamically. So it is not surprising that "This Little Light of Mine" formed part of the soundtrack for Charlottesville. There the 30 singing clergy clasped their arms as they sang only 20 feet from the shouting demonstrators. Their voices prompted white nationalists to respond with chants "Our blood, our soil!"—a common chant of the 20th century Nazi movement in Germany. The contest between voices of the Unite the Right conglomerate and the counter protesters would continue throughout the day (Joe Heim, "Recounting a day of rage").

One of the counter-protesters, Kristen Adolphson, a 41-year old UVA alumna now living in New York City, had come to Charlottesville previously when the KKK had demonstrated there. As a Buddhist, she eschews violence: "I was vacillating between fear of violence and the importance of standing up against this hatred as a white person. By not going out there, I'd be basically saying, 'Everything is fine.'" On Saturday morning, she faced her fears about the armed alt-right protesters and went to participate with the counter-protesters. According to Adolphson, "Many of the counter-protesters were occupying Lee Park—or Emancipation Park, as it's now known—which has the Robert E. Lee statue, supposedly the issue of contention... Some skirmishes started breaking out and the state police, in their riot gear, started clearing everyone out. Generally, I didn't feel like the cops were out there to be violent toward us, or valuing—like at the K.K.K. rally—certain people's rights versus others." (Charles Bethea, "A Witness to Terrorism in Charlottesville," [The New Yorker](#)). After leaving Emancipation Park, Adolphson walked through other parts of the city. The word had spread that white supremacists had marched through Friendship Court and reportedly "tried to cause problems" in the "a low income housing area where many minorities live." "So," she explained, "we marched by, in silence. We didn't want to make a scene. We just wanted to be in solidarity with the people there." After leaving Friendship Court, she saw a different group of counter-protesters on Second Street. "We all were cheering together, marching together, clapping and chanting. There was no one else around. No standoff. We were just marching, being peaceful. This was around two o'clock, I guess. It was a very exuberant feeling of solidarity, community, all that" (Charles Bethea, "A Witness to Terrorism").

In his article for the Los Angeles Times, Matt Pearce quoted "Leftist anti-fascist organizers from Washington, DC": "Before the attack occurred, we chased the Nazis out of their park, removing their platform... We were at our most powerful, all of us together chanting with enthusiastic support from the people of Charlottesville. That was the moment that we were attacked" (Matt Pearce, "Who was responsible for violence at Charlottesville? Here's what witnesses say," [LA Times](#), August 15, 2017).

Pearce also cited reports from Charlottesville posted on the far-right website Occidental Dissent. One blogger using the name "Marcus Cicero" mobilized as part of a group called League of the South. He stood in a line of shield bearers. "As we advanced down the street toward the park, I immediately noticed a horde of Antifa, BLM terrorists, and other assorted genetic refuse ready and willing to block the street leading up to our destination." Another Occidental Dissent blogger, Hunter Wallace, described the same scene: "[The counter protesters] immediately launched an attack on our group with mace, pepper spray, bricks, sticks and foul liquids. The police stood idly by on the sidelines while a brawl was allowed to ensue. We had to fight our way into Lee Park and dozens of our people were injured by mace and pepper

## ESSAYS—CONTINUED

spray as we marched through the gauntlet.” Matt Parrott of the white supremacist group Traditionalist Youth Network noted: “With a full-throated rebel yell, the League broke through the wall of degenerates [blocking the Lee Park entrance]” (Matt Pearce, “Who was responsible”).

These accounts from Charlottesville vary in intensity and each bears the marks of the participant’s alliances. Chanting without an opponent was, at least for Adolphson, part of a peaceful camaraderie on the Charlottesville streets. Both “leftist anti-fascists” and right wing bloggers associated chants with power and aggression. The difference between Kristen Adolphson’s account and the others may be due to her pacifist beliefs as well as the non-confrontational atmosphere at that particular moment and place. By contrast, in different contexts, shouting chants at each other encourages aggressive behavior which can escalate dangerously. Chanting may not have caused Heather Heyer’s death, but it contributed to an environment of verbal and physical aggression that led to her murder. The Unite the Right “surprise” tiki torch march started aggressive chanting on Friday night.

The Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally scheduled for Saturday, August 12, 2017 and the unscheduled night march August 11 contrast in many ways with the June 1963 Danville movement. The white supremacist participants who gathered in Charlottesville in 2017 held political and philosophical views in diametrical opposition to the cause of the 1963 Danville movement protesters. While the Danville movement organizers worked with telephones and the mass media of television, newspapers, and radio, most of their organizing efforts were face-to-face. Fifty-four years later, Charlottesville demonstrators and counter-demonstrators largely used the Internet and social media, particularly to communicate with their support base; they provided information to electronic and print news media outlets for wider distribution outside their right-wing networks. On television in 1963, Americans viewed the physical oppression by law enforcement agencies, violently wielding firehoses and attack dogs against the Southern Freedom Movement non-violent activists. TV coverage of movement violence has been credited with motivating President Kennedy and Attorney General Kennedy to abandon their conciliatory political tactics with Southern white politicians, eventually becoming more supportive of racial equity. In contrast, the Charlottesville rally emerged in the midst of a national environment where the agendas of white supremacists have been given increasing visibility and legitimacy at the highest levels of government and in public venues.

The contemporary protest scenario in Charlottesville and elsewhere has taken to chanting as a means of expressing group cohesion and force. The Saturday morning performance of “This Little Light of Mine”—a flashback to the Southern Freedom Movement—prompted white supremacist yelling, and one might wonder if the sound of singing prevailed despite the shouting. In contemporary American culture, group singing has dwindled for several reasons. Popular culture characterizes singing as “weak” and ineffective, even though countless participants in the Southern Freedom Movement at large and in Danville specifically vouched for the power of group singing to establish communal connection across space and time. Comic parodies of children or naive campers sitting around the fire singing “Kum Ba Yah” have effectively made group singing a joke. The relationship of congregational singing and religious services in an increasingly secular society may also undermine the popularity of informal music-making. Furthermore, self-consciousness among singers seems to have increased in the intervening decades, especially since the 1980s, when public school budgets began cutting monies for music teachers and music programs. And one more nail in the coffin of widespread group singing is the ready availability of commercially recorded music for individual listening. Commercially successful songs in rap, hip-hop, and other genres now include spoken word, so chanting in lieu of singing may be a more comfortable group expression due to its familiarity. R&B, rock and roll, Motown, and folk-rock of the 1960s, along with spirituals like “This Little Light of Mine,” powered the Southern Freedom movement through amateur voices accustomed to singing to entertain themselves. Increasingly sophisticated technology now brings professionally mastered and remixed performances into any spare moment of people’s lives. The highly produced professional recordings help lead potential sing-



## ESSAYS— CONTINUED

ers to claim they “aren’t good enough” to sing anywhere other than in the shower.

Chanting on the front lines of social activism is a current practice and may well continue to be so in future direct actions. Shouting chants can offer group members a sense of belonging and solidarity, whether their political affiliation supports or rejects human equality. Shouting Nazi chants such as “Blood and soil!” provides a quick connection with fascism that satisfies its members and chills its opponents. In that sense, chanting may be meeting the white supremacists’ groups’ needs for expressing their anger and violence. Chanting may meet the needs of counter protesters to validate their determination and strength, to express their power as well. But the chants fall short of telling and preserving a current history, like Matthew Jones accomplished in his “Legend of Danville.” Neither can chants provide a diversion and solace like Randy Adams experienced in the Danville jail. Shouted slogans as performances produce a sparse rhetoric that discourages thoughtful—even if contradictory—exchanges of ideas. In these challenging times, we need to find ways to communicate across chasms of difference to work toward unity, not unanimity. Finding ways to expand our conversations, not constrict them, will move us closer to being a community, if not a “beloved” one.

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