

ENGL 591-CJP
Proposal for the Study of African American Literacies (Final)
Oral Histories

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**The Baraca-Philathea Lyceum of Bethel AME Church in Champaign, IL:
Redistribution of Rhetorical Activities seen in Current Church Practices**

Literary societies—educational societies, reading-rooms, debating societies, and lyceums—formed in the early 19th century in the US, were inexpensive sources of education and entertainment for adults in a community (Logan, 2008; Ray, 2005), which emerged in response to increasing democratic spaces (Bode, 1956), and whose lectures were given in public spaces (Logan, 2008). Their organization evolved from a system of random lectures to public school and library venues (Bode, 1956). Among these societies, the lyceums were instances of evening entertainment that developed during the mid to late 19th and early 20th centuries and served as sources of practical education (in the sciences) and community information (Bode, 1956; Logan, 2005; Logan, 2008; McHenry, 2002; Powell, 1895; Ray, 2005). Their interests ranged from trade training, to civic participation, to biographical writings, and to the discussion of community needs—libraries, schools, and teacher training (Logan, 2008).

Most scholars agree that these lyceums declined when their activities were taken over by the formal training and entertainment offered by public schools, museums, libraries, and universities (Powell, 1895; Bode, 1956; Logan, 2008). Moreover, the need for lyceum venues is explained by the need for spaces to discuss slavery, democracy, women's participation and culture; when these themes were firmly established as relevant concerns, or when some of them ceased to be 'problematic' (i.e. once slavery was abolished), the lyceum was no longer needed (Powell, 1895). Therefore, the decline of the lyceums, and of other literary societies, is understood as the external redistribution of their practices to outside venues (community and college venues), where

political and social issues continued to be discussed (Logan, 2008), thus suggesting shifts in the location of rhetorical training.

Research on literary societies and on the lyceum movement, suggest that black lyceums, which seldom intersected with their mainstream counterparts, were sites where African Americans obtained and displayed their rhetorical education, as a by-product of their political activism. Such societies, typically sponsored by local black churches, emerged for economic and intellectual self-improvement, and served as sites for entertainment, and for the discussion of race issues as extensions of their former abolitionist societies (Logan 2005; Logan 2008, McHenry, 2002; Porter, 1936; Ray, 2005). Therefore, from the articulation of *slavery*, these societies engaged in the articulation of their progress as citizens. That is, as African Americans began asserting their rights to citizenship and civic participation, their own lyceums became safe spaces for the articulation of their contributions to the American experience (Ray, 2005), their roles following emancipation, and their needs—schooling and increased civic spaces, for instance (Logan, 2008). Most notably, these were sites for the articulation of their ‘humanity’ and their value (Ray 2005), as increasing signs of their eloquence and literacies emerged and challenged notions of black inferiority (McHenry, 2002; Ray, 2005), thus aligning with notions of literacy as sociopolitical action, where efforts to acquire literacies are directed at social change (Royster, 2000).

Within this framework, this project will focus on a local instance of the lyceum movement—the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum (ca 1910-1940s)—a literary society sponsored by the Baraca Men’s Bible Study (or Baraca Class) of Bethel AME Church, an African American congregation in Champaign, IL (Bethel, 1938; Gray & Thornhill, 1920; Lee, 1912-28). Information on this lyceum is limited, and can be partially inferred from archival records at the University of Illinois. Specifically, the Albert Lee Papers (Record Series 2/6/21, Box 3, Baraca-Philathea Lyceum

folder), in a series of institutional letters, illustrate the lyceum's concerns ('what is good for the race'), and its organization based on literary and musical programs. Therefore, this lyceum, as a non-denomination venue open to the community, served as a site of rhetorical education for African American students at the university (Gray & Thornhill, 1920; Lee, 1912-28).

A close examination of its 1920s programs (and extempores) and preliminary observations of current church practices, suggest that several of these might be embodiments of old lyceum-type of activities. Some of these include Bethel's missionary women meetings, organized around a sequence of historical readings, recitations, and songs; its Men's Bible study, which discusses devotional matters within political (and race) concerns; or its Sunday services bulletins, including upcoming church forums to discuss schooling, or local elections (Bethel, 2009; Observation Notes, March 1, 2009). Thus, to question the external redistribution thesis (or decline of the lyceum) as the sole explanation for a decline, this project intends to trace the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum's connections to current practices, which may have stemmed from, or paralleled old lyceum ones. That is, this project intends to investigate the redistribution of the lyceum's tasks, within church activities—internal redistribution. In doing so, I hope to be able to identify what may have been supplied and replaced by university venues, what did remain and was transformed in Bethel, and the mechanisms by which these practices became resilient.

Preliminary Findings

Preliminary research in the University of Illinois Archives, revealed that the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum served African American students during the interwar period, and apparently became a dynamic forum then, up to an unknown date in the 1940s, when no further mentions of the lyceum are made in any official documents (Lee, 1912-28). The lyceum was a site that connected these university students to the community (North End of Champaign), and to Bethel, by means of its dependence on the Baraca Class, and its Bible studies (Lee, 1928). Most notably, these local ties promoted and sustained by Albert R. Lee—President of the lyceum (1922-23), and Chief Clerk for several UIUC Presidents, during his tenure (1895-1947)—afforded housing and eating spaces to these students, when those were not found in campus (Guide to African-American Research Resources, 1994; Interview notes, February 25 & March 10, 2009; Lee, 1912-28). In terms of literacy spaces, the lyceum, held twice a month in Bethel, on a Friday evening, was organized around programs composed of literary and musical numbers and socials. Relevant labels for their activities, as listed in archival materials, were live discussions, civic betterment, occasional debates, and journals (possible publications); specific tasks involved readings, declamations, orations, extempores on topics discussing the ‘negro situation’ (Lee, 1912-28).

In preliminary conversations with church members, it became clear that all elderly members remembered the Baraca Class, and some had heard of the lyceum, although none had been part of it. At times, their recollections seemed to conflate both venues since some members remember the lyceum as a male structure (Interview notes, February 25 and March 10). However, all remembered Albert Lee, and his support to African American students in his capacity as university official, and his organization of literary programs, where racial matters were always part of the agenda—race students at UIUC, number, progress, and activities; Champaign Branch of the

NAACP; black migration; activities against the KKK; vocation and businesses for African Americans (Lee, 1912-28).

In these preliminary talks, it also became clear that all members who remembered the lyceum understand its decline as external redistribution. That is, several members claim that the migration of African American students to campus spaces, in search for education and entertainment, responds to the progressive opening of rhetorical, housing, eating, and social spaces in campus. However, preliminary observations of several of Bethel's practices (socio-cultural, political, and religious activities), and my inspection of institutional documents as well as local old newspaper clippings shared by some members, suggest that events similar to the programs for the lyceum take place in Bethel today. Furthermore, the fact that the lyceum, the Baraca Class, and Albert Lee are all present at the level of these members' collective memory, suggests the permanence of this lyceum beyond their partial recollections.

Statement of Objectives

This project on Bethel (its former lyceum and its current forms of literate activities), is situated within studies of race and literacy, where the scholarship has focused on the ways African Americans have negotiated and adapted white structures, and attained rhetorical training for their social benefit and uplift—for the 'advancement of the race' (Logan, 2004; Logan, 2005; Logan, 2008; McHenry, 2002; Ray, 2005; Royster, 2000). Within this framework, this study will pay close attention to how the practices of a particular structure (the lyceum), may have remained in church-sponsored venues, and in members' activities and initiatives in Bethel (internal redistribution of practices). Regardless of this focus, this project will not reject the external assimilation of practices

to university spaces, thus allowing me to explore university mechanisms during transition times for the lyceum (1940s for instance) as they connect to Bethel and its members.

As a first step, this investigation will collect individuals' oral histories on Bethel, on the lyceum, and on their past and current practices—literate, social, and cultural—as they point to community and political involvement. Such retrospective accounts will also be examined in light of archival records, both at UIUC and in Bethel. A *practice* in the context of this research is then understood as any customary institutional activity performed by church members, in that capacity, for Bethel, as well as any non-church-sanctioned activities on site that members engage in, at their own discretion. These include, but may not be limited to, Sunday services, Bible classes, choir rehearsals, church committees (i.e. Women Missionaries) and their programs, socials, organizational meetings, school superintendent liaisons, AME connections, city council work, and bulletin publications.

This oral histories collection is done to reconstruct and interpret incomplete archival material on the lyceum (and on Bethel), which dates from the early 1920s and extends to the late 1930s. Collecting detailed oral histories, where members share recollections, and reconstruct Bethel's practices from existing *personal* texts and publications is the *only* means available today, since most *institutional* records are partial, dated, or even non-existent—the Baraca Class documents for instance, were deemed unnecessary at one time, and purposefully destroyed in a fire. Collecting oral histories is also a sound research practice in composing field texts, in approaching spaces and admitting accounts, which may not have been sufficiently explored, and in allowing individuals to articulate their own memories and explanations (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Fontana & Frey, 1994; Stanfield, 1994).

The main objective is therefore to explore what these oral histories reveal about past practices, their permanence in Bethel, and their connections to current ones as they enact/reveal civic and political involvement. Most notably, I hope to explore the mechanisms by which these practices are sustained in Bethel, including those that may stem from the church, from members' initiatives, or from strong figures in the community. Specific objectives are *a)* to collect accounts of Bethel's literate practices and their connections to university people and venues, and to their higher denomination in the AME church; *b)* to analyze transitional times for the lyceum (1940s) and its residues in emerging and current practices; *c)* to account for the ways in which the lyceum may have developed into current forms (new sites for rhetorical education); and *d)* to account for practices that paralleled the lyceum, and have survived it.

Research Purposes

This research takes shared, yet limited knowledge of the lyceum, reconstructed through archival research and preliminary conversations with church members, as a *point of departure* for the study of past and current church practices dealing with 'self-improvement', 'racial uplift', and 'mutual aid' (Logan, 2008). My preliminary research has shown that oral histories are valuable in complementing archival findings—approaching another's experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994)—which in turn are valuable in clarifying conflicting recollections from church members. Thus, my purpose (researcher's intentions) is to elicit oral histories (on the lyceum, and on Bethel's past and current practices), and to examine them against archival records, and attending practices in Bethel as they are being collected, since understanding the mechanisms by which lyceum practices may have remained, is not a matter of simply extrapolating cultural, social or political trends from old to current times.

Proposed Plan

I am therefore proposing to conduct an independent study on Bethel's practices, which will have as a *first step* the collection of oral histories, having as points of departure, discussions on the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum when possible. Anticipated tasks and dates are *a)* continued conversations with members informing them of the project, participant observations, and anticipated collection of texts and materials (during summer 2009); *b)* formal collection of oral histories (during fall 2009); and *c)* organization, transcription of portions of the interviews, and preliminary analyses, possibly pointing to systematic ways of identifying rhetorical frames (toward the end of fall 2009).

Methodology. Data collection will be based on individual interviews that I will conduct with current (or former) members of Bethel to collect their oral histories. For these oral histories, I would expect participants *not* to remain anonymous; however, if they choose to do so, their contributions will be treated as anonymous interviews. Therefore, this collection will be composed of oral histories or anonymous interviews. Such contributions, members' retrospective accounts, will be examined against archival records, and my own participant observations of current practices, as a valid means for exploring individuals' experiences (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Stanfield, 1994).

For this research, former members, who are still in town, or may have moved to closer areas, and wish to participate, will be approached, either in person, or by telephone or letters (through family contacts, or Bethel's Pastor). Interviews will be audio and/or video taped with the participants' consent; if focus groups are deemed necessary, for identification purposes, participants will be video taped, provided they grant permission. I will take notes during the interviews. Telephone conversations may also be audio recorded. Interviews will most likely be

text-based ones, with partially structured questionnaires—common questions, and emerging ones (see Appendix 1, Interview Protocol). When approaching consenting members, I will share my findings with them, on which part of the conversations may be based. If members offer their own materials to be part of the research, then those could become part of the conversations as well. Relevant texts include archival documents, old and current photographs, newspaper clippings, available church files, Sunday bulletins, and/or personal documents explicitly made available to this research. Use of texts is done in support of members' recollections about events that they may have experienced (as primary witnesses) when they were very young, or that they may have heard (as secondary sources) from older relatives. Specific methodological details are outlined in the *Participants' Tasks and Research Procedures* section.

Roles of personnel involved. As a participant/observer in Bethel during spring 2009, I have established contacts with some members in the community, who have held long-standing positions in Bethel, and have been educators, housing activists, city board members, school district representatives, and university students and officers. I have also approached individuals whose parents, now deceased or living in another city, have held similar positions, or have been politically involved in the North End. The roles of these individuals will then be as hosts, when I approach new individuals; as informants, to point me to potential subjects; or as subjects and contributors of histories and texts.

Access to special resources. Resources for this research are the individuals and their oral histories; and institutional materials (Bethel's documents, bulletins, and programs), private documents authorized to be included (read, quoted, and/or paraphrased) in this research, and published texts (newspaper articles). More specifically, these texts may be primary sources—journals, photographs, or archived/private letters—and secondary ones. Among the latter sources,

excluding literature reviews, and as part of my preliminary conversations with church members, I have already collected newspaper clippings from well-known periodicals—The News Gazette, the Herald, and the Urbana Courier—and from community papers, which the scholarship may understand as black press—the Illinois Times or the Spectrum—with editorials and news on the community. I will supply the audio and video taping equipment.

Research Subjects and Participation

Potential research subjects are current and former members of Bethel; they will be approached prior to the beginning of the research to be informed, and for their first consent. I will send a letter to Bethel's Pastor, describing the research, requesting a note to be included in their Sunday services bulletin, requesting access their programs and any description of events (social, cultural, political and literate), and asking for volunteers for the project (see Appendix 2, Sample Letter of Introduction to Research). From preliminary conversations with the Pastor, and with several stewards (highest lay positions in the church), names of potential participants have come up. After Sunday services in Bethel, I will also approach those suggested members to share the research with them, and to request their participation. Members' participation is voluntary, and they will have the right to withdraw at any time. Several degrees of participation (full name disclosure or anonymity, or being audio taped only as opposed to being video taped, for instance), will also be outlined and discussed during the consent process, which will determine whether my collections become oral histories or anonymous interviews (see *Confidentiality of Data* section).

Type of subjects and number of subjects in study. Basic criteria for subject selection are *a)* that subjects are/have been members of Bethel AME Church for a significant period of time; *b)* that they have memories of their social, cultural, and political activities, or of the lyceum, or that

they have relatives that may have shared such memories with them; or *c*) that they have participated in any of the several historical committees in Bethel. Participants of any background, race, gender, or age are possible subjects in this research, if they are willing to be so; they will not be screened in any way. I anticipate subjects will be adult members in the community—most likely elderly individuals, with insights into Bethel’s literate history. I will seek participants through the contacts that I have already made in the community, and by recommendations from Bethel’s pastor and stewards. I anticipate I should be able to interview 10 individuals.

Voluntary participation. Subjects’ participation is voluntary. To ensure that this is the case, individuals will be introduced to the research and its purposes prior to the interviews (see Appendix 3, Introduction to Research). Subjects will be given a consent form (with confidentiality option), containing similar explanations, and my contact information, my supervisor’s (RPI), and that of the Institutional Review Board (see Appendix 4, Informed Consent for Oral Histories/Interviews, with Confidentiality Option). Becoming a subject entails several terms of participation, all of which entail being quoted or paraphrased. Subjects may grant permission to be interviewed only; and to be interviewed and audio or video taped. Within these options, subjects may choose to keep their names confidential.

Oral consent will be obtained from each subject before each taping session. A release form *requesting* that materials brought to the interview be made available for the research (permission to quote/paraphrase from them), will accompany such oral consent (see Appendix 5, Release Form for the Use of Supplementary Documents in Published Research and Oral Presentations). Consent forms will combine degrees of participation (and of anonymity, as is described in the *Confidentiality of Data* section). Consent forms will be distributed any time an interview, whether recorded or not, takes place. These forms will be collected at the beginning of the interviews;

however, subjects may withdraw from the research, or modify their terms of participation, even after they have signed them. Subjects will keep a copy of every form that they sign.

Participants' Tasks and Research Procedures. Subjects will allow me to interview them at least once, about Bethel's social, cultural, and literate activities, which they may know from growing up in the community, or from relatives' histories. Since what is collected from one subject may be later brought to the attention of another one, with whom I may have already talked, subjects may be interviewed a second time, to clarify issues or to discuss other members' contributions, whose names may be kept confidential if needed. This is a practice supported by the oral history tradition, which necessitates several informants and sources (archival and published documents) to confirm evidence (Tuchman, 1994). I expect to conduct these interviews during a one-semester period (fall 2009). Subjects will however be entitled to discontinue their participation, limit their interviews at any time, or remain anonymous. Such conditions are outlined in their consent forms (see Appendix 4).

After securing their participation (on a day prior to the interview), subjects will be asked to consider contributing to the research any relevant texts, which may then be part of our conversations (their content, authors, and the contexts in which they were produced). I will ask them to allow me to use portions of those texts (direct quotes or paraphrases) for published research or oral presentations. Locations for the interviews will be determined by the participants—their own homes, their offices, any public venue, or Bethel.

The interviews will follow a set of common questions (partially structured); however, as is customary, new ones pertinent to certain individuals only, may emerge during the research process. Interviews will be text-based, and will most likely take the form of conversations, since, when relevant, I will bring some archival materials for them to read/watch and comment. Therefore,

some questions will be asked for specific passages of texts addressing the church, its activities, community involvement, the lyceum, or certain individuals. New questions may also emerge during interviews according to the material that subjects may share. Their answers may in turn lead to new questions, new material to be collected, or new individuals to approach. (Appendix 1)

Questions may be factual or interpretive. The interviews will address these general *factual* issues: *a)* the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum and their programs; *b)* Albert R. Lee, as a strong force for the lyceum, in Bethel's choir, in the school districts in Illinois, and for African American students in campus; *c)* the Baraca Class, and its changes in time, leading to the current Men's Bible Study; *d)* Bethel's connections to the university during the WWII and post-war periods (near Lee's demise in 1948) and their members' affiliations, as students, instructors, or workers; *e)* the sorts of practices that stem from Bethel's higher-order organization (their Methodist Episcopal connections), and those that are institutionally sanctioned; *f)* the sorts of practices that stem from members' own discretion; and *g)* their production of written work, speeches, and musical performances, as well as their reading/literary and Bible groups, or any other clubs or societies.

Interpretive themes are *a)* the possible connections of the literate activities depicted in archival material (from the lyceum, Bible study programs, notices of events, readings, and socials) to their current practices; *b)* the location of rhetorical display, training, and devotion in Bethel; *c)* the location of oratorical and written practices; *d)* the basis for decisions concerning the preservation of documents, their organization and importance for Bethel (in connection to the Baraca Class archives, destroyed when deemed unnecessary); and *e)* past and current enactments of their concern for the 'advancement of the race' as well as their notions of what it means to remain politically active (i.e. housing projects, school districts, and their connections to other churches).

Confidentiality of Data

For oral histories, individuals' names should be made public; however, confidentiality will be determined by the subjects' own terms of participation as outlined in the consent forms, in which case collections become oral histories, or *anonymous* interviewees. For subjects who choose their names to be kept confidential (in audio tapes, notes, or shared records), I will remove their names and use pseudonyms in all my notes, transcripts, drafts, or reports that I compose during and after the research, to ensure their anonymity. Relevant results may be published or shared (in journal articles, books, academic conferences, and lectures), in which case, subjects will consent to such dissemination. All of these possibilities will be outlined as choices for the subjects to indicate in their consent forms—yes/no checkmarks. If subjects wish to remain anonymous, but consent to their contributions (material made available for the research) to be quoted/paraphrased in publications, and/or their audio tapes to be shared in conferences, names will be deleted—blocked—from notes, tapes, transcripts, and documents. Voice distortion will be offered to further ensure data remains non-identifiable. If subjects' names are shown in newspapers clippings, or in any already published material that I intend use, anonymity may not be granted.

If individuals do not wish to remain anonymous, as is customary in oral histories, they may still refuse to have their images and voices disseminated, or used in presentations, in which case voice and image distortion could be applied to their recordings. Regardless of the subjects' decision for anonymity, I will keep notes, audio and video tapes, consent forms, and transcripts in a secure place in my home office, where no other individuals have access. I will not share notes, audio and/or video tapes (raw or already worked material)—parts or entire pieces—with any colleague, or individual. However, for cross-references, I may need to share quotes, or to

paraphrase contributions, in which case, specific permission will be asked from subjects. Shared quotes and paraphrases may still be kept confidential; yet subjects in Bethel may still be able to recognize the origins of certain contributions (from quotes, or from the research itself if published). During the analysis, data will be stored in my home computer, with password access, where notes and recordings will be coded for privacy. I will store all data indefinitely to support continued analysis, and in accordance to the practice of oral histories to preserve historical accounts.

Risks and Benefits to Subjects associated with Proposed Research

This research entails minimal risks only; all are considered justified, and none of them involves physical or emotional harm, or damage to the individuals' dignities. Risks concern a possible loss of personal time—leisure time reduced in search for materials and during interviews. Loss of privacy (their names and their information) is also a possibility if subjects do not object to data release. If they do, such loss is still possible, since they may be identified by other members in the community. However, these risks do not go beyond what could be considered normal/expected in any qualitative research. I will take precautions to minimize these risks by abiding to the specifics in their consent forms (interview and material contributions), by assuring that their participation is voluntary; and by safely storing and coding data, during collection, and later, during analysis. Finally, since analysis is never completed immediately after data collection, this passing of time reduces the likelihood of data identification.

This project should have a positive impact on participants, church members, and on Bethel AME Church, since findings may inform them of their past cultural, social, literate, and political history. It should also increase their understanding of how their lyceum movement may have remained in current practices in Bethel, and the mechanisms, by which it did so. Moreover,

becoming subjects in this project turns church members into active participants in the reconstruction of their old records documenting this time in their history, which were lost in a fire. Most notably, subjects should become more knowledgeable participants in Bethel, and better equipped to engage in current practices and connect them to past ones, since they would have had opportunities to reflect on their own initiatives, collective decisions, and church-sponsored activities. Furthermore, UIUC archival material, which they have not yet added to their records, should also contribute to the reconstruction of their histories. Subjects will not receive any monetary compensation for their time spent in interviews or collecting materials for this research.

Significance of the Study

In terms of black literacy scholarship, this research addresses key ideas within the black lyceum movement, which understands it as an alternative to formal schooling for rhetorical education, thus fitting with larger issues, where black communities and churches are seen as safe sites of black counterpublic development (Logan, 2005; Logan, 2008; McHenry, 2002; Porter, 1936). Its immediate impact may be seen in the recovery of the history of a part of the African American community in the North End of Champaign—a portion of the African American body yet to be determined—and in its attempts to recuperate and reconstruct what was lost during a fire in Bethel. In studying a local venue, this project attempts to unveil the intersections of ‘race work’ and literate activity (Logan, 2008), and should contribute to an understanding of ‘rhetorical habit’ (Bode, 1956) for the ‘advancement of the race’. In terms of its local stakes, this research wishes to contribute its collection to the Oral Histories Project of the Urbana Free Library, as it aligns with its purposes to document part of the history of the North End of Champaign.

Since this research operates within a religious organization, and seeks to find its connections to the university and the community, it integrates several local structures, and data stemming from these histories should complicate traditional views on the decline of the lyceum. Therefore, in terms of the scholarship on the lyceum movement, this research questions these traditional views, and investigates the internal redistribution thesis by means of eliciting oral histories from church members. In doing so, this research explores whether an external take-over by college venues may be an overestimation of the purposes of such spaces, and an underestimation of the ability of local venues to retain and modify lyceum-type of activities.

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Appendices

Appendix 1, Interview Protocol

Demographic Considerations

1. State your full name and date of birth.
2. When did you join Bethel AME Church?
3. What is your position/role in Bethel?
4. Do you hold any other positions in the community (i.e. university, school boards/superintendence, public libraries, city council, AME connections, or other churches)?

Interview Questions (ranging from 1920s to present)

1. Have you heard of the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum? If so, what do remember about the lyceum? What have you heard about it from parents or relatives?
2. Do you remember who Albert Lee was? Did you meet him? Are you familiar with the work he did for the lyceum? What have you heard about his way of organizing the lyceum and other venues in Bethel (i.e. the church choir)? [Show information on Lee—newspapers and Guide to African-American Research Resources.]
3. The lyceum that Lee (and his predecessors) directed, was organized around programs (literary and musical numbers). [Show subjects collection of programs, Albert Lee Papers, 1912-1928.] Where do you see similar organizational modes in other practices in Bethel?
4. Do you remember when Lee died (1948)? Did practices (choir, Bible classes, or university connections) change in Bethel after his demise? Who succeeded him?
5. Several of the lyceum's extempore topics concerned race matters. [Show collection of extempores, Albert Lee Papers, 1912-1928.] Where do you see 'race work' in today's practices?
6. Have you heard of the Bar-Philathea Journal? [Show brief mention of such paper in a History of Bethel, 1938.]
7. What recollections do you have of Bethel's written work (literary, speeches, musical)? Past and current?
8. What recollections do you have of Bethel's reading/literary, Bible groups, or any other clubs or societies? Past and current?
9. Were you familiar with the Baraca Class (Men's Bible Study)? Were you or any relative a member? Do you have a current version of such venue? What are their activities?
10. Programs for the Baraca Manual (for men' Sunday classes) contain lessons, drills on history and exercises. [Show Baraca Manual.] Where can we see these practices in the current Men's Bible Study? Do we see them elsewhere?
11. Were you familiar with the Philathea Class (Women's Bible Study)? Were you or any relative a member? Do you have a current version of such venue? What are their activities?
12. What do you remember/have heard of the interwar period in Bethel? What were the sorts of concerns/activities taking place in those times?
13. What was the WWII period like in Bethel? How were men/women redistributed (remained in town, enlisted, left for Europe) during the war period? Comment on the sorts of activities (cultural, social, literate, or political) that took place in Bethel during WWII?
14. How have university students remained connected to Bethel? In what venues? During WWII and

- post-war periods?
15. What do you remember of the types of activities that took place in Bethel during the 1960s?
 16. What are Bethel's connections to the university? Do we have members that are students, instructors, workers or officers there?
 17. What are the sorts of practices that stem (and have stemmed) from Bethel's higher-order organization (Methodist Episcopal connections)?
 18. Comment on the type of literate activities that take place today in Bethel? What are Bethel's sources of rhetorical education? Where do you see rhetorical display, training, and devotion in Bethel? In what venues?
 19. Do you remember any guest speakers visiting Bethel? Or have any members been invited to give lectures in other venues (university, city council, or AME organization)?
 20. Comment on the sorts of practices in Bethel that stem from members' own discretion.
 21. Does Bethel remain politically active (i.e. housing projects, school districts, and their connections to other churches)? How and where?
 22. Have you been part of any of the Bethel's historical committees? If so, what are the sorts of matters that have been considered relevant? How have these committees worked to compile their information?

Note: Semi-structured interview; not all questions may be used with all participants; further questions may emerge depending on member's contributions to the research (church documents, programs, and bulletins, newspapers publications and editorials, old letters, and photographs).

Appendix 2, Sample Letter of Introduction to Research

Rev. Larry D. Lewis
Pastor Bethel AME Church
Champaign, IL

Dear Rev. Lewis,

I am writing to let you know about the research that I intend to conduct in Bethel AME Church during fall 2009. As you know, I have been conducting archival research on the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum, and have held preliminary conversations with several senior members of your congregation. My next step is to begin collecting their oral histories on the lyceum, and on past and current forms of literate, social, cultural and political activities in Bethel. To this end, I would appreciate whatever suggestions you can offer as to which individuals would be probable sources, and might wish to volunteer in this project.

I would also like to request your help in making this research known to Bethel, either during Sunday services (announcements portion of the service), and/or by means of a note to be included in the services bulletin. I would also be very grateful, if you would allow me access to any material relevant to this research (past literate programs, compilations by the historical committees, and information on community involvement and your Bible studies, for instance).

If any church members would like to approach me for further details or to volunteer, do not hesitate to share with them my contact information. I am grateful for the support you have given me, in the preliminary stages of this research.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Rouillon
Ph.D. Student, Department of English
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
(217) 766-9694
vrouill2@illinois.edu

Note: The text of this letter may be adapted to address members that may have left the community, and may not be reached by telephone, or after Sunday services. If letters are sent to current or former church members, requesting their participation in this research, the request for relevant materials will suggest as possible contributions the following: church documents, programs, and bulletins, newspapers publications and editorials, old letters, and photographs.

Appendix 3, Introduction to Research

Script for introducing the research and requesting participation (when meeting potential subjects)

“My name is Vanessa Rouillon, and I am Ph.D. student in the Department of English, at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. As you may have noticed, I have been participating in several functions in Bethel, and have had preliminary conversations with several senior members in the congregation. I am interested in exploring what you may know and remember about the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum, a literary society of the Baraca Class (Men’s Bible Study), which appeared to have been very active in the 1920s and 1930s, under the direction of Albert Lee. I am interested in collecting your oral histories on the lyceum (as a point of departure *only*), and on past and current forms of literate, social, cultural and political activities in Bethel that you may have observed.

If you decide to become a participant, I will conduct an interview with you at a time and location that is convenient for you. I would also like to request that you share with me, and bring to our interview, if available and possible, any documents relating to our subject matter—church documents, programs, and bulletins, newspapers publications and editorials, old letters, and photographs. Of course, this is not a pre-requisite, since I am interested in your recollections.

If you would like to participate in this research, you may contact me at 217-766-9694, or you may send me an email at vrouill2@illinois.edu. If you are interested in further details, you may also approach me on Sundays, after the services.

I am grateful in advance for your cooperation.”

Note: This text may also be published in Bethel’s Sunday services bulletin (announcements section), as per my request in letter to the Pastor above (Appendix 2). This note may also be kept in the church office or posted in their bulleting board for members’ reference.

Appendix 4, Informed Consent for Oral Histories/Interviews, with Confidentiality Option

Description and Purpose of the Research

Vanessa Rouillon, graduate student researcher, Department of English, is conducting research to fulfill requirements for a graduate college course titled ENGL 591-CJP, Research in Special Topics—Literacy and Race (Oral Histories).

This research consists mainly of observations and interview work, as well as interpretation and analysis of information gleaned from these activities. The general purpose of this research is to learn how members of a community, in this case current and former members of Bethel AME Church, make sense of their literate, social, cultural, and political activities and purposes, as they relate to other people, communities, and institutions, and as they relate to past literate practices and literary societies, such as the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum (ca 1910-1940s) of the Baraca Class.

If you decide to participate, you will be video taped (with audio), and/or audio taped during interviews that I will conduct with you. Each recording will last no longer than one hour. Once you have signed this document, oral consent will be obtained from you before each taping session. If you become a participant, you grant the researcher permission to use excerpts of these video, and/or audio recordings (quotes and paraphrases) in written work and oral presentations.

Voluntary Nature of Participation

Participation in this research is voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time. You may at any time request that the video recorder be turned off, and/or that a recorded session be destroyed and excluded from the study. To withdraw, contact the student researcher. Participants in all EUI-affiliated research must be at least 18 years of age.

Confidentiality

In this study, any personally identifiable information will only be disclosed with your permission. If you choose your name to be kept confidential, no records will be created or retained that could link you to personally identifiable images, descriptions, paraphrases or quotations. What you say or share with me during the interviews may be presented without specific reference to you, in which case I will use pseudonyms.

Upon your request, you may review any video/audio clips and photographs (or still images) prior to their dissemination. All video cassettes will be kept in a secure place such as a locked cabinet in my home office.

Risks and Benefits

This research entails minimal risks only; all are considered justified and expected in any qualitative research; and none of them involves physical or emotional harm or damage to your dignity. Risks concern a possible loss of personal time and of privacy. I will take precautions to minimize these

risks by abiding to the specifics of your consent form, and by safely storing and coding data, during collection, and later, during analysis. Your participation is voluntary.

This study should inform you of Bethel's literate, social, cultural, and political history. Moreover, you will become a more knowledgeable member of your community, for your collaboration in this historical reconstruction, and for the opportunities to reflect on your own practices, and collective decisions. You will not be paid for your participation in this research project. The student researcher named above will benefit from this project by learning how to conduct graduate-level research.

Contact Information

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this research project, please contact the Responsible Project Investigator (RPI) and Student Researcher:

•Catherine Prendergast, Department of English, 217-333-2345, cprender@illinois.edu (RPI)

•Vanessa Rouillon, Department of English, 217-766-9694, vrouill2@illinois.edu (Student Researcher)

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at Suite 203, 528 East Green St. Champaign, IL 61820, 217-333-2670 (you may call collect if you identify yourself as a research subject) or via email at irb@illinois.edu.

Consent Statement

I have read and understand the forgoing description of this research project, including information about the risks and benefits of my voluntary participation. I consent to participating in this project.

Signature

Print Name

Date

I grant the researcher permission to audio _____, and to video _____ tape this interview (Please initial to grant consent).

I do _____ / do not _____ wish my identity to be kept confidential in video _____ excerpts. (Please initial one).

I do _____ / do not _____ wish my identity to be kept confidential in audio _____ excerpts. (Please initial one).

There are two copies of this form. Please sign both. Return one to the researcher and keep one for your records.

Appendix 5, Release Form for the Use of Supplementary Documents in Published Research and Oral Presentations

You have agreed to participate in a research conducted by Vanessa Rouillon (graduate student researcher, Department of English, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign), as part of the requirements for a graduate college course titled ENGL 591-CJP, Research in Special Topics—Literacy and Race (Oral Histories).

I am interested in collecting oral histories from you that involve your experiences in Bethel AME Church (literate, social, cultural and political activities) as they connect to a past form of a literary society—the Baraca-Philathea Lyceum, of the Baraca Class. I will therefore conduct an interview with you, and will ask you to share with me your recollections on these matters.

Participation in this research is voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time. You may at any time request that the video recorder be turned off, and/or that a recorded session be destroyed and excluded from the study.

Consent Statement for the use of Supplementary Documents

I make _____ / do not make _____ available to this research, the materials brought to this interview. (Please initial one).

I grant the researcher permission to quote _____ , paraphrase _____ from the materials made available to this research, in published research and oral presentations (Please initial to grant consent).

Signature

Print Name

Date

There are two copies of this form. Please sign both. Return one to the researcher and keep one for your records.