

Remembering Reconstruction at Carolina

Seeking Historical Truth at UNC: Taking the Next Step Toward Becoming the University of the People

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I want to begin by thanking all of the people who made this possible--Harry Watson and the Center for the Study of the American South, the Chancellor for endorsing this process, and, in the spirit of what Michelle Laws said about the struggle that it took to get the Black Cultural Center, I want to give special thanks to all of those who worked with me to get signatures for the letter to the Chancellor and to push for this discussion to take place. Without a movement we would not be here today. We are not here simply because we have controversial icons, or statues, or building names. It required that somebody make an issue of these things.

My theme for this morning is, “Seeking Historical Truth at UNC: Taking the Next Step Toward Becoming ‘the University of the People’” This implies that the goal of the university is to become the university of all the people. It also suggests that we have taken some steps toward our goal, but we have not fully achieved it. Finally, it asserts that our historical memory is flawed and stands in the way of our becoming a more democratic institution. Thus, we must become seekers of historical truth so that we will have the knowledge we need to take the next step in becoming the university of the people. We must build a movement for historical truth.

This will not be easy. It means criticizing the university, looking at some disturbing aspects of our history without flinching, and stirring up controversy. As I can tell you, while my experience is not as difficult as those in Alabama who have raised these kinds of issues, we will have to deal with some harsh criticism. At the same time, it is important for us to appreciate how hard it is for many people to hear criticism of what they hold dear.

For many of us, Carolina is our livelihood, our community, and our hope. Carolina provides us with beautiful surroundings, exceptional resources, and treasured memories. So I understand that many people have strong feelings of love and respect for this university, and it is hard to let go of any of that. Even so, we need to learn that caring enough to criticize is constructive. Being honest is not bashing. We cannot love the university blindly. While it is right to love all that is good at UNC, we must also be strong enough to challenge the university when it is wrong. We cannot forget that the median income of students at Carolina is twice that of the rest of the state; that the diversity of our student body and our faculty does not match the diversity of the state; or that women workers of color are still concentrated in the lowest pay grades of employment, while white males still dominate the highest levels.

These problems are the past in the present. They are the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow. Therefore, the university is more comfortable not talking about the past. It prefers to remember the past as seen through rose-colored glasses. This makes the historical causes of present day problems difficult to see and obscures institutional responsibilities for these problems. For example, although many of us know that UNC was the product of a slave society, we don't like to acknowledge this, so we censor our history. This makes the historical causes of Carolina's low wage, racially defined laboring caste invisible. It makes the workers invisible. So, to correct the problems we must first correct our historical memory.

Let us now look at the construction of memory at UNC. This is a process that reflects our values as well as historical facts. The question facing us today is whether we are going to demand honesty, no matter how painful. As we begin to reassess our history, and to think about making changes in the commemorative landscape, we should be clear on one thing: the movement for historical truth has nothing to do with censoring history. This is a straw man, or woman. It is because UNC's history is already censored that we are here today.

Let me give just one example. In the most recent history of the university, William D. Snider states, "The university, as a child of the Revolution, emerged directly from [the] eighteenth-century thrusts toward political liberty and public enlightenment." (1) Sounds good. Omitted, however, is the significant and disturbing fact that the university emerged from, and helped strengthen, the institution of slavery. This is the problem of omission that Erin Davis, president of the Black Student Movement, referred to earlier. Such intellectual dishonesty and moral indifference, however, is certainly not acceptable at a university that claims to be the university of the people. The longer we accept such distortions without protest, the harder it will be to take the next step in making the university more democratic.

Before we discuss the question of developing a more honest history and transforming the commemorative landscape, it is important to spend a moment reviewing the history of how our memory of Reconstruction and the reopening of the university has been shaped.

When Cornelia Spencer wrote the hymn for the reopening in 1875, she lauded the “golden days” of the slave master’s university and called for an end to the disruptions of black freedom struggle and democratic insurgency. She wrote, “Recall O God! the golden days; May rude unfruitful Discord cease....” (2) In 1888, when she wrote her history of North Carolina for school children, she distorted the Reconstruction story so that white supremacy, the Klan, and all that was done to suppress black freedom and biracial politics seemed necessary and justified. Spencer claimed that Reconstruction was nothing more than the attempt of “northern adventurers” to manipulate the “ignorant freedmen” for personal gain. She said, “they came like harpies only for prey.” She was also careful to omit information about the many democratic reforms of Reconstruction, or the fact that tens of thousands of white North Carolinians, including her brother, Samuel Field Phillips, supported the Republican cause. (3) Finally, Spencer tried to paint the Ku Klux Klan as defenders of law and order. She described the Klan as, “a well-organized body of horsemen who rode at night and in disguise, punishing criminals whom the law had failed to punish.” Although she acknowledged what she called the Klan’s “excesses,” she ultimately defended the Klan, saying, “Such things will be when people are goaded beyond their patience....” (4) Confederate veterans organizations picked up this racist version of history and developed it into the myth known as “the Lost Cause.” Around the turn of the century, racist historians, including J.G. de Roulhac Hamilton, for whom Hamilton Hall over here is named, gave the Lost Cause myth a veneer of intellectual respectability. (5) Such studies dismissed the effort to build a society based on freedom as an era worse than the Civil War itself. D.W. Griffiths, the groundbreaking filmmaker, popularized the Lost Cause myth in his vicious epic, *Birth of a Nation*, released in 1915 and used as a recruitment tool by the Ku Klux Klan. University historians like Louis R. Wilson, William F. Powell, and William D. Snider have repeated this story with only slight variation. (6) The most recent university history, Snider’s *Light on the Hill*, commissioned for the university’s bicentennial, is based almost entirely on Jim Crow sources. It ignores the social movements of the sixties and repackages the old stories, simply omitting most references to slavery and white supremacy.

Although many UNC historians promoted the racist myth of the Lost Cause, it should be noted that there is also a parallel, democratic tradition at UNC. According to historian Bruce Baker, beginning in 1939, “UNC became the single most important institution in the nation in promoting a new understanding of Reconstruction, one that did not depend on the assumption of white supremacy and appeal to the lowest forms of racial prejudice.” (7) Pioneered by black historians who were largely ignored in their own day, this interpretation, which sees Reconstruction as a bold movement for democracy and racial justice, with the freed slaves as the central actors, is widely accepted today. (8) Both the speeches today by Laura Edwards and Jim Leloudis, as well as the speech last

night by Thomas Holt, reflect this consensus. UNC's current southern historians strongly support this revisionist interpretation. This is one of the traditions of which we can be proud, and we should build on it as we re-examine the university's history.

Unfortunately, the democratic tradition of Reconstruction history has had virtually no impact on popular understandings of the history of the university. The white supremacists saw the reopening as a great victory for light and liberty because they, once again, led the university. The university has celebrated the reopening uncritically ever since.

Let us now turn to a reconsideration of the history of the university during Reconstruction, in particular, to Cornelia Spencer's role in the Redeemer Movement and white supremacy.

Spencer grew up in Chapel Hill before the Civil War. (9) Her father was a UNC professor and both of her brothers attended the university. Her brother, Charles, became a UNC professor, while Sam became a successful lawyer. Cornelia received an elite education at home. In addition to the intellectual opportunities her environment provided, Spencer came to know many of the influential men of the state as they passed through the university or visited UNC president, David Lowery Swain. This laid the foundation for her future public career, which depended on the patronage of these leading men.

Cornelia Phillips married a UNC graduate, Magnus Spencer, and moved with him to his plantation in Alabama shortly before the Civil War. Magnus succumbed to disease in 1861, however, and Cornelia moved back to Chapel Hill with her young daughter to live with her parents and their slaves.

After the war, Governor Zebulon Vance and university president David Lowery Swain recruited Spencer to write a favorable account of their part in the last ninety days of the war. (10) The relationship with these powerful politicians set the stage for Spencer's leading role in the white supremacy movement to overthrow Reconstruction, beginning in 1868, when the Republican Party gained power in North Carolina.

Spencer was an important leader in a vicious and reactionary movement organized by the Democratic Party to suppress black freedom and biracial politics in North Carolina during Reconstruction. This is known as the Redeemer Movement. Although propagandists for this movement framed it as a white supremacy crusade to "redeem" North Carolina from "Negro domination," the true aim of the movement was to restore the power of the gentry, the former slave owning elite, over all of the working people, white and black. (11) The success of the Redeemer Movement ushered in an era of white supremacy in North Carolina that culminated in the disfranchisement of African American voters in 1900 and the institutionalization of segregation known as Jim Crow. The suppression of black freedom and popular democracy and the reinstatement of white supremacy and elite rule was the essence of the overthrow of Reconstruction.

It is important to review the reform program of the Republicans to understand what was lost by the overthrow of Reconstruction. It provides a standard by which to judge both Cornelia Spencer's attack on the Republicans and her own reform efforts.

My assessment of the Republican reform program during Reconstruction is taken largely from *A History of African Americans in North Carolina*, an invaluable little book published by the North Carolina Division of Archives and History. (12)

In 1868, the biracial Republican Party won 107 of the 120 seats in the state convention to write a new constitution for North Carolina. "The convention proceeded to write a dramatically more democratic constitution for North Carolina. It guaranteed manhood suffrage, abolished the state's high property qualifications for holding office, provided for the election of judges to terms of eight years, and revamped local government. The county courts, through which an appointed, wealthy elite had for generations controlled local affairs, were scrapped. In their place, the convention created an elected government, consisting of five commissioners, for each county.... The convention also committed the state to a modern system of tax supported public schools...that would serve whites and blacks separately..." In the subsequent elections, Republicans won more than two thirds of the seats in the legislature. "Among the legislators were twenty black men--three state senators and seventeen representatives.... Most had been slaves.... Republicans also dominated the elections for county governments, putting into office a new kind of official.... Instead of planters, slave owners, lawyers, and physicians, the people holding power were plain farmers, mechanics, blacksmiths, and artisans, and some of these new officials were black... With Republicans in office, black Tar Heels could expect local judges and constables to treat them with a reasonable degree of fairness and respect and not side automatically with the former slaveholders. Black Republicans and white Republicans as well were enthusiastic for expansion and better funding of the public school system.... The Republicans also improved and opened state-operated charitable institutions, such as the lunatic asylum, to people of both races. To revive the economy of the state, Republicans put their faith in railroad development, which was tremendously popular in that day among all parties.... Black legislators tried, without success, to require equal treatment in transportation and public accommodations and fought vigilantly at all times for equality before the law. They were supporters of reform as well, and were interested in woman's suffrage, temperance, and the ten-hour workday.

As to reforms of the university, the Republicans made it clear that what they called "the people's university" would cater to North Carolina's working families as well as to the gentry. Although the campus at Chapel Hill would not be integrated, there would be a division of the University of North Carolina for African Americans at a separate campus. (13) The Republican Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees even recommended that the university be made coeducational, a proposal rejected by the full Board. (14)

An important part of the Redeemer campaign to overthrow Reconstruction was to destroy Republican control of the university, even if that meant forcing UNC to close. White supremacy and elite class attitudes informed both personal and political antagonisms to Republican control of the university and the state. Charles Manly, the former governor and UNC treasurer who had sold university slaves to get cash for operating expenses, noted, “‘An old field school for niggers,’ he told his brother, might arise on the ruins of the University. In any event, ‘the glory of our beloved Alma Mater is gone forever.’” (15) Manley’s attitude reflected widespread concern among the Redeemers that the Republicans might one day integrate the university. Nor was this farfetched. The University of South Carolina integrated in 1873, and there was widespread concern that the federal government might mandate integrated education. Even beyond this concern, white supremacists found the Republican university, with its separate but equal department for African Americans, abolitionist professors, and its embrace of the common people, repugnant. (16) Outside of state government, the university had been the slave master’s most important institutional base. To leave it in the hands of the Republicans was personally offensive and politically dangerous. Likewise, Republican leaders looked on the university as a central component of their educational reform strategy, and they feared letting it fall again into the hands of the aristocracy. Contention over control of the university, therefore, became one of the central arenas of struggle during Reconstruction.

It is best to understand the Redeemer attack on the university as having three components, all directed by the leadership of the Democratic Party. Those components were propaganda, terror, and political maneuver.

Governor Vance personally convinced Cornelia Spencer to remain in Chapel Hill to assist the Redeemer movement, rather than moving back to Alabama. (17) As a resident of Chapel Hill, closely connected to the Democratic Party elite through Vance and others, Spencer played a crucial insider role in the Redeemer attack on the university. She was given complete access to the Democratic Party newspapers and to other important statewide publications. Her passion, insider knowledge, and biting sarcasm made a major contribution to the propaganda campaign of the Democrats. The Democrats encouraged a boycott of the university by well to do families and tried to discourage the legislature from providing funds to the university.

What must be understood is that the antebellum university was funded by tuition payments, private contributions, and the proceeds from escheats. The university was never funded by the North Carolina legislature before the Civil War. In other words, it was an elite school. It was not really under the public control of the legislature. There were no funding strings. It was sustained by the profits of slavery. After the Civil War, that situation didn't hold. The boycott and bad publicity that Cornelia Spencer was, in part, responsible for, helped wither the pool of students who might attend the university, and it discouraged financial support by the legislature.

The campaign to overthrow the Republican university was never Cornelia Spencer's alone. Although the vendetta was personal for many, it was in essence an attack by the Democratic Party leaders motivated by white supremacy and their desire to regain power. Democratic Party editors across the state joined in the attack. (18) In this way, the Redeemers hoped to financially strangle the Republican administration at UNC. The Ku Klux Klan invaded Chapel Hill, intimidating black and white Republicans and harassing the university faculty. Historian Horace Raper concluded that these attacks specifically targeted the university. (19) Klan violence throughout the Piedmont of North Carolina also did much to destroy the fragile biracial Republican coalition and weaken their control of state government. Leaders like Vance and William Alexander Graham patiently maneuvered to bring about the overthrow of the Republicans through the political process. Eventually, the combined impact of the Redeemer attacks and the financial crisis of the post war era resulted in the overthrow of Reconstruction. In 1870, the Democrats regained control of the legislature. With no hope of legislative support, the trustees closed the university officially in February 1871. It was not until 1874, however, that the Democrats were able to replace the Board of Trustees with new members loyal to their program, and it was not until 1875 that the necessary funding was gained for reopening the university. When UNC did reopen, leaders of the white supremacy movement controlled its destiny. At the head of the Board of Trustees was William Alexander Graham, widely acknowledged as the leader of the Redeemer Movement. (20) In addition, on the Executive Committee, was Paul Cameron, formerly the largest slave owner in North Carolina, and Col. William L. Saunders, leader of the North Carolina Ku Klux Klan.

How should we view Cornelia Spencer and the reopening? You notice that I'm linking the two. I think that there's been too narrow a focus on Cornelia Spencer the individual and not enough on her part in the Redeemer Movement and on the reopening. The reopening is the reason why it is a "bell award" that celebrates the 1875 reopening, rather than what it should have been, a bicentennial award to celebrate the bicentennial. So, we are looking at the reopening today as well as at Cornelia Spencer. While it is problematic that Spencer was a white supremacist who tried to force the closure of the Republican university, it is even more troubling that the reopening itself represented the victory of white supremacy.

Some people say that to condemn Cornelia Spencer for her advocacy of white supremacy is an unfair judgment, a misuse of present day standards to evaluate the past. After all, wasn't "everyone back then a racist?" This is a profoundly racist point of view, and historically inaccurate, as well. One third of the North Carolina population during Reconstruction was black, and to ignore the views of African Americans and adopt a white norm is racist. Moreover, race relations during Reconstruction were far more fluid than after the establishment of Jim Crow at the turn of the century. Tens of thousands of white North Carolinians crossed the color line to join the Republican Party. That did not mean that they stopped being racist, but they did not adopt the program of white supremacy. They did not try to disfranchise African Americans and crush the democratic reforms of

Reconstruction. During Reconstruction, at least, white people, including Spencer, had a clear choice.

Perhaps the best evidence for this view is the example of Sam Phillips, Cornelia's brother. Sam attended UNC, studied law, established a practice in Chapel Hill, and became a prominent Whig politician, serving as Speaker of the House in the Confederate government in 1865. Abandoning his former affiliations, Phillips joined the Republican Party in 1870, became outspoken for black civil rights, and prosecuted Ku Klux Klan terrorists. After the overthrow of Reconstruction, Phillips left the state, but continued his advocacy for black rights the rest of his life. (21) Cornelia Spencer was not simply a product of her times, as none of us are simply a product of our times. We all have choices, and she had clear choices and alternatives at hand, but she chose the path of white supremacy.

More important than Spencer's personal values was her leading role in the most reactionary social movement this country has ever known. In her own day, Spencer was honored for being a Redeemer, more than a bell ringer. William L. Saunders was a hero for the same reason. University leaders were at the heart of the Redeemer movement, as well as the white supremacy movement at the turn of the century. (22) The campaign to overthrow Reconstruction set back freedom in America more than one hundred years. This is the historical truth that has been censored by the way we remember Cornelia Spencer. With regard to racial justice and democracy, this is Cornelia Spencer's legacy. We should remember Cornelia Spencer, but we should remember her in her fullness, not as a narrow icon, up on a pedestal, who did no wrong.

As for the reform efforts that Spencer is noted for, including her advocacy of higher education for white women and improved public schools, we should respect her efforts. Nevertheless, to put this in historical perspective, the Republicans also advanced these reforms. Like closing and then reopening the university, Spencer helped to destroy the democratic reforms of Reconstruction and then adopted them as her own, but with a reactionary racial and class bias. What is true is that Spencer loved UNC as it was in her youth, and she devoted a good part of her life to the university. The work of women was undervalued then and it is still undervalued today. Changing that is part of becoming the university of the people, but we should not honor Spencer's example, which was to advance the interests of white women at the expense of African Americans.

Both contemporary observers and historians have agreed that Spencer was a leader in the Redeemer Movement, and that her goal was to drive the Republicans from power, even if that meant forcing the university to close. Her intent was to shut down the Republican university at all costs.

At her death, in 1908, the newspapers of the state were full of eulogies proclaiming her role as one of the leading Redeemers of the state and the university. George T. Winston, president of UNC from 1891-1896, claimed that "to her largely was due the overthrow of

the carpet-bagger and his exodus from the State.” (23) In another commentary, the president’s wife noted that Spencer “wrote and spoke and prayed unceasingly for the overthrow of the foul gang that were polluting the University halls and for the restoration of the University to its own. Her labors, her prayers were answered.”(24)

In 1953, Professor Louis R. Wilson, for whom Wilson Library is named, concurred. He wrote, “that in the period of the University’s tragic decline and suspension, 1868-75, Mrs. Spencer formulated a plan to drive the despoilers out and worked with others to achieve that end.” (25)

The most recent historian of the university, William D. Snider, wrote in his 1992 book, *Light on the Hill*, “Forceful, vindictive, and headstrong, she aimed unerringly at toppling the new regime. As a skillful polemicist, she freely indulged in exaggeration and overkill, blaming every ill on the Republicans, no matter where it originated.... The people of the state imposed a virtual boycott....” (26)

Finally, those who created the Bell Award, and even Chancellor Hooker, were fully aware that Spencer had played an important part in forcing the university to close. They believed this was her intent. During the deliberations on the Bell Award, Val Lauder, who proposed the Bell Award, wrote, “Recognizing that the only way to restore the old University was to bring down the new regime and see the University closed, allowing for a restoration, her pen hit the ink.” (27) In 1996, at the Bell Award ceremony, Chancellor Michael Hooker stated, “[Cornelia Spencer] used her gift for writing to both close and reopen the University. North Carolina’s Reconstruction governor closed the University in 1868, reopening it a year later under a new president and trustee board. Mrs. Spencer considered the new regime unfit for their office and unworthy of public confidence. She believed that the only way to restore the institution was to close it again....” (28)

There are two questions that this history raises with regard to the Bell Award and the commemorative landscape. First, why were both the Chancellor and the founders of the Bell Award in 1993 so unaware of the university’s true history? Second, once they were made aware of this history, why were they so slow to take any proactive steps to investigate or discuss the issues?

Selective historical amnesia regarding race is a national problem with profound implications. It masks the nation’s deep involvement in slavery and white supremacy, allowing us to avoid disturbing questions about how the past has produced the present. A lack of emphasis on the history of racial justice movements dulls our understanding of where the freedom we do have come from.

We see this phenomenon clearly when we look at the history of the Bell Award. The Bicentennial Committee of Women created the Bell Award in 1993 as part of the university’s bicentennial celebration. They proposed a Cornelia Phillips Spencer Day to

“celebrate UNC’s commitment to fairness, justice, and diversity.” (29) Although Dr. Spencie Love acknowledged in a newspaper column at the time that her great grandmother was a racist, this produced no apparent concern among UNC administrators. (30)

In 1996, when Chancellor Michael Hooker acknowledged that Spencer worked to “both close and re-open the University,” he explained this by simply repeating the racist code words--“unfit” and “unworthy”-- used by white supremacists in the 1860s and repeated by historians of the university ever since.

The next year, however, one of the members of the Bicentennial Committee of Women tried to set the record straight. Dr. Annette C. Wright, associate director of UNC’s Center for the Study of the American South, published an article about Spencer in the *North Carolina Historical Review*. It included the statement, “Cornelia Spencer’s endorsement of nineteenth-century white supremacy will not surprise many of the historians studying southern women of that era.” (31)

Again, this clear statement, published in a prestigious journal by one of the original founders of the Bell Award, produced no apparent concern among UNC administrators.

In 1999, Professor Jack Richman, chair of the Bell Award Selection Committee, quoted Louis R. Wilson's *Selected Works of Cornelia Phillips Spencer* in his remarks. Remember, this was written in the period of Jim Crow. It was published in 1953. Richman noted that Spencer “faced the problems of those dark periods and spurred North Carolina to the support of causes that have profoundly affected every phase of the State’s life.” (32) He went on to discuss Spencer’s championing of the cause of higher education for women, but he ignored completely the cause of white supremacy, absolutely one of the most key causes that ever existed in this state. Nor did Richman quote provocative statements from Wilson’s book that might have raised disturbing questions. With reference to the federal Civil Rights Bill under consideration in 1875, Spencer wrote in a statewide magazine column, “‘All men created free and equal!’ Never was there a greater misstatement.... you know about the Civil Rights Bill--you know what it proposes--to place the colored people on a social equality with the whites--and you know what its effect will be if it is ever a law and is enforced: --to obliterate distinctions of color and race. I cannot write of it coolly or without a shudder.” And earlier, at the height of the Ku Klux Klan’s attacks on Republicans in Chapel Hill, she wrote a newspaper editorial saying, “[the people of Chapel Hill] go on their way rejoicing that a weapon has at last been found, keen enough to pierce the hitherto impenetrable armor of Radicalism.”

Despite such easily accessible evidence demonstrating Spencer’s white supremacist outlook and support for the Ku Klux Klan, she has been consistently held up as a symbol of “fairness, justice, and diversity.” Assistant Provost, Laurie Mesibov, made what was perhaps the most blatant distortion of Spencer’s history at the 2000 award ceremony. Mesibov urged her audience to remember that Spencer was much “more than a bell-ringer,”

adding, “She worked . . . for decades in a myriad of other ways to strengthen the University and open its doors to all.” (33) Well, no, the thought that the university should be open to all never crossed Cornelia Spencer’s mind.

Even after the initial protests of the Bell Award in 2002 brought statewide publicity to the issue, Chancellor Moeser took no action. Indeed, there seems to have been a willful effort on the part of university administrators to ignore any discussion of UNC’s involvement in the history of white supremacy. Not only the Bell Award protests, but also concerns raised by black students and faculty over Silent Sam and Saunders Hall, have been dismissed until today. (34) Like the reliance on a white norm to judge Cornelia Spencer, this reluctance to deal with the concerns of African Americans is a form of institutional racism that we must address.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Like the workers, students, women, and community activists of the 1960s, we can change the university. We can make the commemorative landscape more democratic and more honest, and we can change the institutional culture by demanding that the university publicly honor the aspirations and human dignity of all people equally.

Imagine, if you will, a campus transformed by a sense of social justice. Let’s walk across Franklin Street and enter the campus by Battle-Vance-Pettigrew. The first thing we would see is a statue of Dr. Martin Luther King reaching out to us to help “save the soul of America.” As we walk on, past Silent Sam, we would come to the statue in front of the Alumni Building honoring UNC’s Unsung Founders, the black workers, slave and free, who built Old East and other university buildings. Approaching Saunders Hall we would note a plaque stating that Saunders led the KKK during Reconstruction and served on the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees at the time of the reopening. The plaque would acknowledge and repudiate the university’s participation in white supremacy and would invite all to enter Saunders Hall and view the permanent exhibit discussing the university’s role in slavery, the overthrow of Reconstruction, and the making of the Jim Crow state. Across the quad in Murphy we would visit a comparable display about the impact of the Civil Rights Movement, the Women’s Movement, and other democratic social movements on UNC. Upon entering Lenoir, we would see a plaque honoring the black workers and students who participated in the cafeteria workers strike of 1969. Featured prominently would be the two women who led that strike, Mary Smith and Elizabeth Brooks. Finally, approaching Davis Library, we would stop and read the words engraved on a black obelisk, written by the “Black Bard of Chapel Hill,” slave poet, George Moses Horton, who published the first book by an African American in the South in 1829. As we continued our walk around the campus, we would notice that the portraits and artwork on the walls honored the heritage and contributions of all those who were formerly limited and denied by the University of North Carolina. Their faces next to the faces of white leaders would send a clear message that UNC truly intends to become the university of all the people.

Lost Cause mythology has had a powerful impact on institutions of higher education in the South. As Bruce Baker has said, "It has caused acts of injustice to be celebrated, and it has obliterated memory of achievements that should have been remembered as among the schools' proudest moments."⁽³⁵⁾ Thus, today, we celebrate the reopening of the university by the leaders of white supremacy, while the struggle to create a society based on freedom is dismissed as an era worse than the Civil War itself. Fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, Carolina still uncritically celebrates slave masters, Klansmen, and the architects of the Jim Crow state, yet there is almost nothing in our daily environment that calls us to honor, or even remember, the slaves upon whose bodies Carolina was built, those who resisted the Klan during Reconstruction--including Sam Phillips, who I think should be a monument or an award for him--, or those who fought to dismantle Jim Crow.

This conference is a good first step in a necessarily longer discussion. It does the university proud. But we cannot allow the discussion to end here. Although the Chancellor committed the university to continue this process past this conference, there is today no definite, publicly accountable process in place to deepen and broaden the discussion, resolve the Bell Award controversy, or oversee the process of making additional changes in the commemorative landscape. This is a dangerous situation, as we all know that there are many powerful interests that oppose a thorough re-examination of our history. That is why we must build a movement for historical truth.

It is time for all true Tarheels to step up to this challenge by demanding that UNC be honest about its history and honor its best values. Thank you.

Notes

1. William D. Snider, *Light on the Hill: A History of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1992), 7. Snider consistently avoids or downplays the involvement of the university and its leaders in slavery, white supremacy, and resistance to desegregation. The fact that the university was an institution of slavery, by slavery, and for slavery is disguised and dismissed as of no consequence for the present.
2. Cornelia Phillips Spencer, 1875, in Louis Round Wilson, ed., *Selected Papers of Cornelia Phillips Spencer* (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 1953), 688.
3. Cornelia P. Spencer, *First Steps in North Carolina History* (New York, American Book Company, c.1888, rev. ed.), 233.
4. *Ibid.* 236, 237.

5. Joseph Gregoire de Roulhac Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1914); Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1988), 609.
6. Wilson, *Selected Papers*; William F. Powell, *The First State University: A Pictorial History of the University of North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1972, 3rd. ed. 1992); Snider, *Light on the Hill*.
7. Bruce Baker, letter to UNC-CH Chancellor James Moeser, 2004, in author's possession.
8. The path breaking work of anti-racist Reconstruction history is W. E. B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction*. (New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1935).
9. The most important published sources on Spencer's life and writings include: Wilson, *Selected Works*; Hope Summerell Chamberlain, *Old Days in Chapel Hill: Being the Life and Letters of Cornelia Phillips Spencer* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1926); Phillips Russell, *The Woman Who Rang the Bell: The Story of Cornelia Phillips Spencer* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949); Pamela Blair Gwin, "'Poisoned Arrows' from a Tarheel Journalist: the Public Career of Cornelia Phillips Spencer, 1865-1890," PhD dissertation, Duke University, 1983; Annette C. Wright, "The Grown-Up Daughter: The Case Of North Carolina's Cornelia Phillips Spencer," *The North Carolina Historical Review* (July 1997).
10. Chamberlain, 102-103.
11. Paul D. Escott, *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina, 1850-1900*, (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1985), 146.
12. Crow, Jeffrey J., Paul d. Escott, and Flora J. Hatley, eds., *A History of African Americans in North Carolina* (Raleigh, Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1992), 84-88.
13. Horace W. Raper, *William W. Holden: North Carolina's Political Enigma* (Chapel Hill, UNC Press, 1985), 123-126. Also, Robert Delmer Miller, "Of Freedom and Freedmen: Racial Attitudes of White Elites in North Carolina During Reconstruction, 1865-1877," PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1976.
14. Powell, 144.
15. Charles Manley to Rev. Basil Manley, August 4, 1868, quoted in Miller, 265. For an example of Manley's slave selling as UNC Treasurer, see Charles Manley to Mathias Manley, January 27, 1839, University Papers, UNC Archives. On January 22, 1839,

Mathias Manley wrote to Charles from New Bern: "My Dear Brother, There is a negro girl and two or three children here who I believe have escheated to the university. The facts are that an old negro man a few years ago was emancipated by one of the Jones family of this neighborhood after which he purchased the girl who is his daughter. The old fellow is now dead without having any kin of inheritable blood or making any provisions for his daughter + grandchildren. Under the circumstances what ought to be done? I have thought the case rather hard to proceed in without express instructions." A note on the back of this document states, "M.S. Manly on Escheated Negroes. Answered + "instructed" to take possession + sell for cash. 27 Jan. 1839."

16. Raper, 117-126; Miller, 263-268.

17. Zebulon Vance to Cornelia Spencer, January, 1869, quoted in Chamberlain, 154-155.

18. Cornelia Spencer to Laura Phillips, June 14, 1869, quoted in Chamberlain, 166. "Englehardt of the Wilmington Journal has opened a forty-gun battery on the University."

19. Raper, 126.

20. Otto H. Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade: The Life of Albion Winegar Tourgee*, (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 90, 158.

21. By far the best source on the life of Sam Phillips is Robert D. Miller, "Samuel Field Phillips: The Life of a Southern Dissenter," *The North Carolina Historical Review* (July, 1981).

22. Escott, 253-262. Among the prominent university men who were leaders of both the white supremacy movement of 1898 and the movement of 1900 to disfranchise black voters were: Alfred Moore Waddell, who received an honorary degree from UNC in 1895 at the same time as Cornelia Spencer, and who led the massacre of African Americans in Wilmington in 1898; Josephus Daniels, university trustee and editor of the *Raleigh News and Observer*, who helped plan the campaigns and used his newspaper to instigate mob violence against African Americans; Francis Winston, the first student to enroll at UNC when it reopened in 1875, university trustee, and brother of university president, George T. Winston, who was the chief engineer of the disfranchising amendment; and Zebulon Vance, friend to Cornelia Spencer, former governor, and university trustee, who served as the main spokesman for the movement.

23. *Raleigh News and Observer*, March 15, 1908.

24. *Raleigh News and Observer*, March 13, 1908.

25. Wilson, 3.

26. Snider, 79.
27. Val Lauder, Notes from the Bicentennial Observance Office, University Relations, in UNC Archives, Box 2:5.
28. Michael Hooker, remarks at the 1996 Bell Award ceremony, from files in South Building at UNC, copies in the author's possession.
29. Cornelia Phillips Spencer Day project proposal, 1992, Notes from the Bicentennial Observance Office, University Relations, in UNC Archives, Box 2:5.
30. Spencie Love, "Bell Ringing Perfect Way to Launch Cornelia Spencer Award," Chapel Hill News, March 19, 2000.
31. Wright, 261.
32. Jack Richman, remarks at the 1999 Bell Award ceremony, from files in South Building at UNC, copies in the author's possession.
33. Laurie Mesibov, remarks at the 2000 Bell Award ceremony, from files in South Building at UNC, copies in the author's possession.
34. In October, 1999, black students organized a group called Students Seeking Historical Truth, which did an anti-Klan "decoration" of Saunders Hall and demanded that the university tell the truth about Saunders leadership of the KKK. In February, 2000, Dr. Gerald Horne, Director of the Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center wrote an opinion column in the Chapel Hill News calling for the removal of the university's Confederate statue, Silent Sam, as a symbol of racism. In 2001, a black student organization called On the Wake of Emancipation (OWE) protested racist activities on campus involving David Horowitz, as well as the Genocide Awareness Project. They issued 14 demands, including #3, "The University take a more active role in the accurate depiction of the history of underrepresented groups."
35. Baker letter. Bruce Baker's letter is available on the Campaign for Justice and the Bell Award web site http://www.unc.edu/~alfredo/yonni/Bell_Award.html.