

Letters

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Civil Rights, Race, and Memory

By Richard King

On April 3-4, 2008, the Warren Center hosted a conference in response to Robert Penn Warren's 1965 book *Who Speaks for the Negro?* Entitled "We Speak for Ourselves," the gathering of scholars and activists joined together to revisit issues raised in Warren's provocatively-titled volume. Richard King, Professor of American Intellectual History at the University of Nottingham and former William S. Vaughn Fellow at the Warren Center, delivered these remarks at the conference.

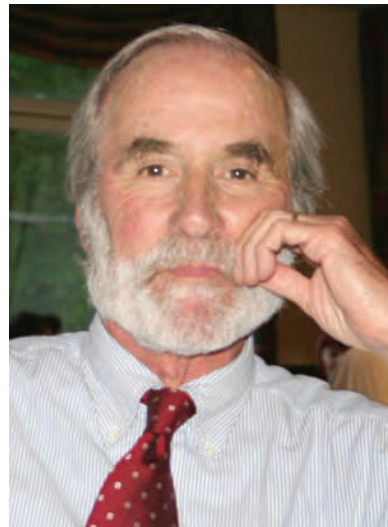
It is tempting to answer the question posed by the title of Robert Penn Warren's *Who Speaks for the Negro?* (1965) with an abrupt "not you, at least." One of the original Vanderbilt Agrarians, Warren contributed his "The Briar Patch" essay to the manifesto of Agrarianism, *I'll Take My Stand* (1930), and it was the only piece in that collection to deal directly with race. Despite its reasonable and even progressive tone, it rested on a basic assumption of white supremacy. Despite nods toward protecting Black rights and making a secure economic place for Black people, Warren concluded that the Negro was best suited for rural and small-town life and that his or her place would never entail full equality with whites. Even then, Warren's more conservative Agrarian colleague, Donald Davidson, who taught English at Vanderbilt for years, thought Warren's piece smacked too much of contemporary sociology, i.e. was too solicitous of progressive notions.

Yet, at the beginning of *Who Speaks for the Negro?*, Warren informs us that his 1930 essay had nagged at him for years. This suggests that Warren's oral history of the Civil Rights movement was a way of re-visiting the issue of race in order to be "quits" with the issue once and for all. Surprisingly, race never really assumed a central place in Warren's fiction, which tended to focus on the individual as he or she sought to

overcome self-division and to achieve some sort of moral coherence. Moral identity would be achieved by taking responsibility for one's hidden fears and denied actions. Typically, as in *All the King's Men* (1946), the protagonist, in this case Jack Burden, acquires hard-won knowledge about the terms of his existence and thereby becomes capable of action and feeling. That said, one of the central concerns of Warren's non-fiction was an obsession with regional, racial, and national identity.

For Warren, then, the central purpose of collective existence mirrors that of the individual: the achievement of moral identity in the face of wrenching historical change. In the terms he had himself once suggested, Warren's fiction tended to assume the South as a setting, while his historically oriented essays, memoirs, and reflections often posited the South itself as a central theme.

Specifically, in two short books published in the wake of the Brown vs. Board of Education decision, *Segregation* (1956) and *The Legacy of the Civil War* (1961), Warren sought to puzzle out the meaning of the impending revolution in race relations faced by the South and by the nation. *Who Speaks for the Negro?*, then, was both a culmination of his meditations upon the moral trajectory of recent southern and American history and a significant step beyond those two books in intellectual and moral complexity. In it, Warren shifted the terrain upon which his exploration was carried out. If the dominant focus of the two shorter books had fallen primarily (though not exclusively) upon the way white



Richard King

southerners and white Americans were dealing with America's racial dilemma, *Who Speaks for the Negro?* focused on the way that Black Americans, south and north, were responding to the revolution in race relations touched off by the Brown decision and by the burgeoning Civil Rights movement in the South. In form, *Who Speaks for the Negro?* was different than the two earlier books since it was explicitly devoted to the direct airing of Black voices

on these and related matters—though Warren's own views were subject to scrutiny as well.

As such, the book was distinctly innovative. It is no simple transcription of the Q and A between Warren and various African American respondents, but, rather, a sophisticated collage of questions and answers, responses and counter-responses, interrogations and arguments. At intervals, Warren drew back to gather his thoughts and then present them in essayis-

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tic form or as “notebook” entries. Warren also came prepared with a battery of questions that he posed to the interviewees. What did the person being interviewed understand by “Freedom Now?” If the federal government had compensated the slave owners in 1861 and the War plus Reconstruction had been avoided, would it have been worth it? Were southern Blacks apathetic

By no means were these men radicals or activists. They shared a Cold War liberal suspicion of radical ideologies and grand abstractions applied to historical reality; added to that was a southern scepticism of “Yankee” attempts to characterize race relations with neat phrases or elegant diagnoses. There is no better way to capture the essence of this position than to read the thirty

plenty of young people, particularly students and Movement activists, that material fails to come alive in the way the interviews with the more familiar—and more famous—figures do. (The interviews with Stokely Carmichael and Robert Moses, then relatively unknown, are exceptions.) So worried is Warren that the common Black people of the South will be unduly romanticized that he fails to underline just how remarkable their civic courage was. Closely related but more significant is the paucity of women canvassed in the book. This is not just a matter of achieving some sort of arithmetical balance. We now know that women clearly played a major role at the grass-roots level and on up the leadership ladder of the Movement. One thinks, of course, of Ella Baker, who has only one index entry. Certainly any oral history of the Movement should include conversations with Rosa Parks (who receives a couple of mentions on one page) or Fannie Lou Hamer, who is mentioned three times but apparently is not interviewed. Clearly, Warren is most comfortable with African American men in positions of authority. Surprisingly, though both Martin Luther King and Wyatt Tee Walker have “good” interviews with Warren, the role of religion, whether Christianity or the Nation of Islam, is relatively neglected. Fellow writers James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison receive a total of around fifty pages, but a younger black writer such as Leroi Jones is omitted. Except for Bayard Rustin, there are no interviews with former members of the CPUSA; neither A. Philip Randolph nor other people with union experience are spoken to. In that sense, the democratic spirit of the oral history genre is compromised by the comparatively narrow range of types of people Warren consults. It is not that a white man is speaking for African Americans, but that too narrow a range of Black voices are heard.

Other issues remain largely unexplored—perhaps inevitably so. In an approach that stresses “voice,” it is hardly surprising that impersonal institutional factors tend to be neglected. The book certainly includes no critique of the economic system or of dominant social and educational institutions. Overall, Warren’s largely moral-psychological approach, with its emphasis upon identity, respect, and recognition, also makes it difficult to focus much attention on the need for economic and social change. Warren does, however, seem to be concerned with the Civil Rights movement’s loss of focus, the fear that the leaders he is talking with may be losing their authority. In this, of course, there was a certain intuitive accuracy. Malcolm X and James Forman, angry men who

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Who Speaks for the Negro? focused on the way that Black Americans, south and north, were responding to the revolution in race relations.

and, if so, why? Above all Warren kept raising the identity question, usually combined with a reference to W.E.B. Du Bois’s famous “double consciousness” thesis. Ultimately, the book was a remarkable meditation on morality and power, identity and alienation, the complexity of which was mirrored in the book’s structure and in the interaction of its voices. A prime example of the best of oral history, a genre that proliferated in the democratic 1960s, Warren’s *Who Speaks for the Negro?* anticipated Studs Terkel’s *Division Street* (1967) and *Hard Times* (1970), not to mention Howell Raines’s later oral history of the Movement, *My Soul is Rested* (1977). Thus, as a kind of book, as a repository of historical voices that at the same time gave historical efficacy to those voices, Warren’s *Who Speaks for the Negro?* was first among equals in a decade when New Left historians called for “history from the bottom up.”

Here the literary and intellectual history of the southern response to the Black freedom struggle should also be remembered. Among the post-war epigones of William Faulkner were two particularly talented white male writers, Warren and William Styron. They, along with Cleanth Brooks, Warren’s one-time co-author, southern historian C. Vann Woodward, and African American writers Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray, lived in the New York-New Haven area and, over the years, had become good friends. When brought together by the young editor of *Harpers*, the white Mississippian Willie Morris, or the then-liberal Norman Podhoretz at *Commentary*, they constituted a kind of southern literary-intellectual community in self-chosen exile. The title of Morris’s autobiographical memoir *North Toward Home* (1967) and Warren’s own ambivalent relief as he left the South in Segregation testify to the complex relationship they had to the South: “Yes, you know what the relief is. It is the flight from the reality you were born to” (91).

page exchange in *Who Speaks for the Negro?* between Ellison and Warren, who had become close friends by the 1960s. One of their favourite topics was the way that white and Black southerners shared more than what divided them, and they understood each other better than “Yankees” understood either. Indeed, this was the basic presupposition, I think, underlying Warren’s concern with the achievement of a new moral identity shared by Black and white Southerners. Such a bi-racial Southern identity would ideally trump separate white and Black regional identities.

But the difference between the way Styron and the way Warren engaged with the racial complexities of the 1960s is striking. Where Styron dared assume the voice and persona of the leader of the 1831 slave revolt, Nat Turner, in the novel *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967), Warren’s format allowed other voices and positions besides his own to be heard. Styron notoriously ran into a firestorm of criticism for his controversial depiction of Turner—and even more so for presuming that he, a white Virginian living in suburban Connecticut, could speak not just for but as a black slave, Nat Turner. This is not to suggest that Warren was a silent partner in the dialogues he constructed in *Who Speaks for the Negro?* He was nothing if not garrulous and opinionated, peppering his interviewees with questions and challenges, e.g. his rapid-fire exchanges with psychologist Kenneth Clark about John Brown. And we need only compare Warren’s description of Martin Luther King’s “rich, resonant voice, with a vibrance of inner force” (220) with the “stoniness” and “characteristic wide, leering, merciless smile” (245) of Malcolm X to be struck by the way Warren, the seasoned novelist, worked to shape his readers’ reactions.

But *Who Speaks for the Negro?* was not without weaknesses. Though Warren does talk with

Robert Penn Warren and *Who Speaks for the Negro?*

As part of its 20th anniversary celebration, the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities is pleased to announce the launch of a new web archive of interviews Robert Penn Warren conducted with Civil Rights activists. This archive, created in partnership with the Jean and Alexander Heard Library of Vanderbilt University, is now available to the public at <http://whospeaks.library.vanderbilt.edu/>, and it features over forty previously-unheard interviews with Civil Rights leaders from across the country. It comprises a landmark collection of interviews, correspondence, and other research materials related to Warren's 1965 book *Who Speaks for the Negro?*

In 1964, Robert Penn Warren began traveling around the United States to conduct interviews with activists and scholars for a new book on the Civil Rights movement. He took with him a reel-to-reel audio tape machine and recorded nearly everyone he met along the way, from nationally-recognized leaders to those working in the trenches of the Black Freedom movement. When it was published in 1965, *Who Speaks for the Negro?* was a ground-breaking work, weaving literary, journalistic, and oral history traditions in an attempt to find a voice, or voices, for the turbu-

In 2007, the Warren Center discovered that the original reel-to-reel tapes from *Who Speaks for the Negro?* were still in tact—some held at the University of Kentucky and others at Yale University. With assistance from Kentucky's Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, Yale's Beinecke Library, and Vanderbilt's Heard Library, the Warren Center initiated a process of digitizing all of the existing tapes for a web archive. Thanks also to the generous support and encouragement of Warren's children, Rosanna Warren and Gabriel Warren, Vanderbilt now holds the only complete digital collection of these original audio recordings of the interviews from 1964.

The tapes, as well as their transcripts, are all now available in searchable, streaming form on the website. Included among the interviews are Warren's conversations with giants of the movement, like Martin Luther King, Jr., Stokely Carmichael, James Farmer, and Malcolm X, as well as leading academics and writers of the time, like Kenneth Clark, Ralph Ellison, Carl Rowan, and Stephen Wright. Most importantly, perhaps, Warren's interviews include many of those whose names have been lost in the official history of the movement: Clarie Collins Harvey, Ezell Blair, Gloria Richardson, and others. The Warren Center also

conference titled "We Speak for Ourselves: A Poet, a Prophet, and Voices for the 21st Century" from April 3-5, 2008 to commemorate both the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Center, as well as the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Warren Center invited a diverse group of scholars and activists, including five of the original interviewees from *Who Speaks for the Negro?*, to participate in several activities over the course of the three days. The group attended a screening of the film *Faubourg Tremé: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans*, produced by Lolis Eric Elie, a journalist and writer whose father, Lolis Elie, was interviewed by Warren for *Who Speaks for the Negro?* On Friday, April 4th, the anniversary of King's death, Angela Davis, Professor of History of Consciousness and Feminist Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, gave a lecture entitled "We Are Not Now Living the Dream: Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and Human Rights in the 21st Century" to an overflow audience of nearly 500. Later that day, the group—which featured Houston Baker, Distinguished University Professor and Professor of English at Vanderbilt University; Richard King, Professor of American Intellectual History at the University of Nottingham; and Ruth Turner Perot, Executive Director of the Summit Health Institute for Research and Education, who was interviewed by Warren in 1964 when she was Executive Secretary of the Cleveland Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)—joined in a panel discussion of Warren's book. A keynote address by Reverend James M. Lawson, Distinguished Visiting Professor at Vanderbilt University, who was also interviewed for Warren's *Who Speaks for the Negro?*, took place that evening at the Fisk University Chapel, with a performance by the Fisk University Choir. The group of participants also gathered for a final full day of closed-door sessions, marking a set of discussions among this diverse group of scholars and activists to continue the much-needed conversation on community and justice in the history and future of the movement.

All of the sessions of the conference—from the public lectures to the private conversations—have been recorded on video and will join the original audio recordings, Warren's correspondence, notes, and transcripts on the web archive of *Who Speaks for the Negro?* Viewed together, this collection is a valuable set of materials for academics, students, and activists interested in the movements of the 1960s and the legacy carried forward to the 21st century. This record marks a major contribution to the history of the Civil Rights movement, and it offers an unprecedented opportunity to hear so many important figures speak candidly in their own voices. ■

WHO SPEAKS FOR THE NEGRO?

An archival collection of interviews conducted for Robert Penn Warren's seminal book

In 1965, Robert Penn Warren wrote a book, now out of print, entitled *Who Speaks for the Negro?* To research this publication, he traveled the country and spoke with a variety of people who were involved in the Civil Rights Movement. He spoke with nationally-known figures as well as people working in the trenches of the Movement. The volume contains many of the transcripts from these conversations. The *Who Speaks for the Negro?* Archive contains digitized versions of the original reel-to-reel recordings, as well as copies of the correspondence, transcripts, and other printed materials related to his research for the provocatively-titled book.

[LISTEN TO INTERVIEWS >](#)
[ABOUT THE BOOK >](#)
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Ralph Ellison

Original materials (recordings) through the generous support of the University of Kentucky and Yale University. Some abstracts courtesy of the University of Kentucky. Support from Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities, Vanderbilt University

Warren's interviews include many of those whose names have been lost in the official history of the movement: Clarie Collins Harvey, Ezell Blair, Gloria Richardson, and others. Warren's archive is available online.

lent movements of the 1960s. The book has been out of print for many years.

Included in *Who Speaks for the Negro?* are long, transcript-style passages from many of the original interviews, as well as snippets from Warren's "notebook" and commentary on the people and places he encountered on his journey. Yet for all he covered in its 450 pages, Warren edited out large sections from his multi-hour interviews, and he even deleted some interviewees entirely. Many of these voices thus never registered in his volume, and his interviews with several leaders and activists have gone forgotten and unheard.

found in the collection a previously-unknown interview with Septima Clark, the "grandmother" of the Civil Rights movement, which never appeared in Warren's book or the records of his papers.

Once this audio collection was brought together at Vanderbilt and on the web, the Warren Center worked with Professor Lucius T. Outlaw and Reverend James M. Lawson, along with partners at the Race Relations Institute at Fisk University, to create a program that would revisit unresolved questions raised in Warren's book and by its provocative title. Together, they hosted the

Edward H. Friedman Appointed as the Warren Center's New Faculty Director

Edward H. Friedman, the Chancellor's Professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature at Vanderbilt University, was recently named the new faculty director of the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities. The position is a three-year appointment, and during this time Friedman will help to develop and to support interdisciplinary activities and initiatives alongside the Center's executive director and executive committee.

Friedman's research centers on early modern Spanish literature, with special emphases on Cervantes, picaresque narrative, and the *Comedia*. Early in his tenure at Vanderbilt, Friedman led a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar for School Teachers on "The Outsider: Picaresque Variations in Narrative and Film." In 2004, while president of the Cervantes Society of America, Friedman organized a conference celebrating the 400th anniversary of the publication of *Don Quixote*. The conference was sponsored by the Warren Center.

He earned his Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins University in 1974; prior to teaching at Vanderbilt, he held positions at Kalamazoo College, Arizona State University, and Indiana University. He joined Vanderbilt's faculty in 2000. Friedman is the author of numerous books, essays, and articles on Cervantes and Spanish literature; his most recent work is entitled *Cervantes in the Middle: Realism and Reality in the Spanish Novel from Lazarillo de Tormes to Niebla*.

In addition to his teaching duties in the Spanish and Portuguese Department, he currently serves as the editor of the *Bulletin of the Comediantes*.



Edward H. Friedman



Roy Blount Jr.

Roy Blount, Jr. to Present Harry C. Howard, Jr. Lecture

Roy Blount, Jr., acclaimed author, humorist, and Vanderbilt alumnus (B.A. 1963) will present this year's Harry C. Howard, Jr. lecture at 4:10 p.m. on Thursday, October 30, 2008.

Blount is the author of twenty books that cover wide-ranging topics such as rambles in New Orleans, to the thoughts of barnyard animals, to hanging out with the Pittsburgh Steelers. His latest work, which will be published this fall by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, is entitled *Alphabet Juice: The Energies, Gists, and Spirits of Letters, Words, and Combinations Thereof; Their Roots, Bones, Innards, Piths, Pips, and Secret Parts; With Examples of Their Usage Foul and Savory*.

Blount's career is as diverse as his subjects. He is a contributing edi-

tor to *The Atlantic Monthly*, a regular guest on NPR's "Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me," a columnist for *Oxford American*, the president of the Authors Guild, a member of PEN and the Fellowship of Southern Authors, a New York Public Library Literary Lion, a Boston Public Library Literary Light, a usage consultant to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, and an original member of the Rock Bottom Remainers.

More information on the location and the title of Blount's lecture will be available on the Warren Center's website closer to the date of his talk.

The Harry C. Howard, Jr. Lecture Series was established in 1994 through the endowment of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Nash, Jr., and Mr. and Mrs. George D. Renfro, all of Asheville, North Carolina. The lecture honors Harry C. Howard, Jr. (B.A. 1951) and allows the Warren Center to bring an outstanding scholar to Vanderbilt annually to deliver a lecture on a significant topic in the humanities.

2008-2009 Faculty Fellows

The 2008-2009 Warren Center Fellows' Program, "New Directions in Trauma Studies," will examine the emerging field of trauma studies and will work to define its boundaries and enhance the field through interdisciplinary discussion. The Fellows believe that by addressing the lived experiences of trauma through an interdisciplinary humanistic lens, their work will augment the theoretical understanding of individual and collective experiences of trauma, will intervene in the suffering that results from trauma, and will assist in trauma prevention.

LAURA M. CARPENTER, assistant professor of sociology, specializes in gender, sexuality, and health. Her first book, *Virginity Lost: An Intimate Portrait of First Sexual Experiences*, examines how different metaphorical interpretations of virginity shape young women's and men's sexual decision-making and practices. She has published and lectured on sexuality over the life course, on mass media depictions of romance and sexuality, and on qualitative research methods. Her current research compares the controversies over male circumcision and female genital cutting in the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain to better understand how activists, medical professionals, state actors, and journalists influence public health debates. In 2008, the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality named her an Emerging Professional.

KATE DANIELS is an associate professor of English and the acting director of the Creative Writing Program at Vanderbilt. She is the author of four volumes of poetry, including the forthcoming *A Walk in Victoria's Secret*. She writes regularly on contemporary American poetry; she has also received numerous awards for her work, including a Best American Poetry Award 2007, a Pushcart Prize, and the James Dickey Award for poetry. Currently, she is researching connections between the experience of trauma, literary creativity, and psychoanalysis, and she is completing a prose collection entitled *Slow Fuse of the Possible: A Poet's Psychoanalysis*.

JONEBERT is a clinical psychologist and serves as an assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry. He is the Clinic Coordinator at the Vanderbilt Center of Excellence and serves on the Tennessee Governor's Office of Children's Care Coordination steering panel. He also provides clinical services in the Vanderbilt Mental Health Center. His clinical responsibilities include individual therapy, group therapy, fam-

ily therapy, community consultation, and multi-family group therapy; additionally, he trains graduate students, interns, and post-doctorates in consultation and psychotherapy activities. His primary areas of research interest are trauma and resilience, counter-responses and interventions with highly conflictual clients, dissemination of evidenced-based-practices for children and youth, and developing clinical competencies in student clinicians.

VIVIEN GREEN FRYD is a professor of art history. She is the author of *Art and Empire: The Politics of Ethnicity in the U.S. Capitol, 1815-1860* and *Art and the Crisis of Marriage: Georgia O'Keeffe and Edward Hopper*. She has published numerous articles, most recently "The 'Ghosting' of Incest and Female Liaisons in Harriet Hosmer's *Beatrice Cenci*" in *The Art Bulletin* and "Suzanne Lacy's *Three Weeks in May*: Performance Art as Expanded Public Pedagogy" in *National Women's Studies Association Journal*. She is currently writing a book manuscript, "Representing Sexual Trauma in Contemporary American Art," which investigates the intersection between sexual trauma and visual representations, arguing that works of art can act as testimonies that give voice to that which has been silenced. This year, she is the Spence and Rebecca Webb Wilson Fellow and will direct the Warren Center Fellows' Seminar.

CHRISTINA KARAGEORGOU-BASTEA is an assistant professor of Spanish at Vanderbilt. She specializes in Spanish and Latin American modern poetry. Her book, *Arquitectónica de voces. Federico García Lorca y el Poema del cante jondo*, appeared this year, published by El Colegio de México. She is the co-editor of the Vanderbilt e-Journal of Luso-Hispanic Studies. Her interest in trauma studies is related to a new book-length research project, the focus of which is Lope de Aguirre, a sixteenth-century conquistador of Peru, his imprint on Hispanic cultures, and his intriguing metamorphoses in modern literary works from Spain and Latin America.

CLAIRE SISCO KING is an assistant professor in communication studies; she is also affiliated with film studies, women's and gender studies, and American studies. She has authored articles and chapters on such topics as Nazi propaganda, horror films, historical trauma, and masculinity. She is currently completing a book project, entitled *Washed in Blood: Sacrifice and Subjectivity in the Cinema*, which explores ritualized sacrifice as an overlooked cinematic trope aimed at

reconstituting hegemonic masculinity in the wake of historical trauma. Other forthcoming publications include an examination of film music and masculinity in the horror genre.

LINDA MANNING is the Director of the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center and has appointments in both the Women's and Gender Studies Program and in the Human Development Counseling Program. She is a licensed psychologist in Tennessee and Texas, and she has specialized in the treatment of trauma survivors for over twenty-five years. Her interests include teaching undergraduates about trauma, especially violence against women, and teaching and training graduate students and mental health professionals in body-centered approaches to trauma therapy. During her fellowship year, she also plans, with Warren Center colleague Charlotte Pierce-Baker, to create a course and syllabus that will bridge their two disciplines of psychology and the humanities.

CHARLOTTE PIERCE-BAKER is professor of women's and gender studies, with a secondary appointment in the department of English. She is an active participant in on-going activities of the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center at Vanderbilt and author of the highly regarded *Surviving the Silence: Black Women's Stories of Rape*. Pierce-Baker lectures widely, in the U.S. and abroad, on issues regarding women and violence. Her teaching emphasizes the connection between theory and praxis in her specialty areas of trauma, literature, and sociolinguistics. She is an activist-scholar whose current work-in-progress is a family memoir about her son's struggle with bipolar disorder. During her fellowship year, she also plans, with Warren Center colleague Linda Manning, to create a course and syllabus that will bridge their two disciplines of psychology and the humanities.

MAURICE E. STEVENS is an associate professor at Ohio State University and works in the areas of American, ethnic, critical gender, and cultural studies. He is particularly interested in the formation of identities in and through visual culture and performance, and in historical memory in relation to trauma theory, critical gender studies, critical race theory, psychoanalytic theory, and popular cultural performance. He has recently completed work on *Troubling Beginnings: Trans(per)forming African American History and Identity*. He is the 2008-2009 Visiting

2008-2009 Graduate Fellows

JEFF EDMONDS is a doctoral candidate in philosophy, writing his dissertation on the relationship between views of reality and educational practice. His dissertation, “Power and Pure Experience: the Metaphysics of Education,” explores the implications of the theories of experience of William James and Friedrich Nietzsche for democratic education. His project combines the instrumentalism of James and Dewey with the analytic techniques of Foucault and Deleuze to produce a genealogical and instrumental approach to metaphysical practice. By highlighting the educational effects of metaphysical views, he hopes to draw a closer connection between speculative metaphysics and ordinary life.

DONALD JELLERSON came to Vanderbilt from the University of Washington in Seattle, where he earned a B.A. in English *summa cum laude*. He joined the graduate program in Vanderbilt’s English department in 2004. An Arts and Science Graduate Select Scholar, Donald has won the John M. Aden Award for excellence in graduate seminar writing, the Rose Alley Press Achievement Award, and two Arts and Science Summer Research Awards. Donald returns to Vanderbilt from a summer of research in England, where he attended a Mellon-funded residential workshop at the University of Warwick and a conference at the University of Newcastle. Donald’s dissertation focuses on ghosts, historiography, and gender in the English Renaissance.

SONALINI SAPRA is a doctoral candidate in political science and is a member of the Global Feminisms Collaborative. Her dissertation looks at the critical analyses and strategies that women’s environmental groups in India have

used to examine neo-liberal globalization and its impact on the environment, and how these analyses contribute to strengthening the broader theoretical frameworks of feminist environmentalisms. Prior to returning to graduate school, she worked in a non-governmental labor rights organization in India doing research and advocacy on the impact that domestic and international trade policies were having on India’s informal work force. She is the George J. Graham, Jr. Fellow.

DERRICK R. SPIRES is a doctoral candidate in English. He comes to Vanderbilt from Tougaloo College, where graduated *summa cum laude* with a B.A. in English. His research interests include nineteenth-century U.S. print culture, African American literary explorations of democracy, citizenship, and nation, science and speculative fiction, and Richard Wright. His dissertation, “Reimagining a ‘Beautiful but Baneful Object’: Black Activists’ Theories of Citizenship and Nation in the Antebellum U.S.,” examines how African American writers used the periodical press and pamphlets to fashion a print counter-public sphere in which they could debate and revise contemporary readings of nation and citizenship. He is a former Ford Predoctoral Fellow and is the current American Studies Fellow at the Robert Penn Warren Center.

LAURA TAYLOR is a doctoral candidate in religion. Her dissertation entitled “The Wisdom of *La Frontera*: A Christology from and for the Interstices” proposes that the Borderlands between the United States and Mexico—the crossroads of *La Frontera*—provide an important point of departure, both literally and metaphorically, for contemporary theological

investigations. Drawing on the fields of cultural studies, philosophy, history postcolonial and feminist theories, her work explores the construction of meaning, identity and difference in theological thought.

JONATHAN WADE is a doctoral candidate in Spanish and Portuguese. His dissertation, titled “Portuguese Nationalism in a Spanish Costume: Language, Literature, and Identity in Early Modern Iberia,” examines the strategies Portuguese writers used to manifest their national identity during Spain’s sixty-year occupation of Portugal. Overall, his dissertation seeks to uncover the textuality of early modern Portuguese national consciousness, highlight the cultural cross-pollination sweeping across the peninsula at the time, and contextualize the fundamental relationships among language, identity, literature, and the nation. He has presented and published work on several early modern authors from both Spain and Portugal, including Angela de Azevedo, Miguel de Cervantes, Manuel de Faria e Sousa, Jacinto Cordeiro, and Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz.

DAVID WHEAT is a doctoral candidate in history. His dissertation, “Keys to the Indies: African Settlers in Cartagena and Havana, 1570-1640,” examines the rise of the Spanish Caribbean’s most important port cities during an era which saw the first major waves of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Arguing that the lifelines of Spain’s “Golden Age” empire were built and maintained by tens of thousands of forced migrants from Upper Guinea, Lower Guinea, and West Central Africa, his work links early colonial Caribbean seaports to a broader Afro-Portuguese maritime world.

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are less concerned with complexity and balance, clearly disturb Warren.

Finally, the answer to the question posed by the title remains unanswered by Warren—and wisely so. Certainly Warren does not claim to have or want the final word. The question mark is earned rather perfunctorily. It is no great feat to pick out Warren’s favorites—Martin Luther King, Whitney Young, Ralph Ellison, and even Stokely Carmichael—or the figures with whom he felt somehow uncomfortable—James Forman, Malcolm X, Kenneth Clark, and James Baldwin. It is not so much that these latter figures are too radical for Warren’s taste *per se*. Rather, given Warren’s emphasis upon mutual

recognition as the keystone of moral identity, his fear, I think, was that they foreshadowed the way that Black leaders might lose interest in white recognition, no longer think of it as necessary for Black progress, no longer consider white people as points of reference; in sum, no longer care what white people think at all.

In *Who Speaks for the Negro?* Warren insisted that America was witnessing a momentous historical attempt on the part of Black Americans to wrest recognition from the white oppressor and to overcome “that look in the eye that denies human recognition” (33). History for him seems to revolve around the search for recognition; moreover, it also implies the obligation of white

Americans to acknowledge the rights and recognize the humanity of Black Americans. Beyond that, near the end of Segregation, Warren also speculated that the next question asked by Black people might be: “After all the patience, after all the humility, after learning and living those virtues, do I have to learn magnanimity, too?” That is, do Black people have to be patient with white people while they learn what they should already know? “I’m glad,” Warren concluded, “that white people have no problem as hard as that” (107). ■

National Endowment for the Humanities Chair Bruce Cole to Deliver Chancellor's Lecture

Bruce Cole, the chairman for the National Endowment for the Humanities, will give a lecture on "The State of the Humanities," Friday, September 5, 2008, as part of the Chancellor's Lecture Series. The talk is also the culminating event in a series celebrating the Warren Center's 20th anniversary.

Before being appointed to the NEH by President George W. Bush in 2001, Cole was Distinguished Professor of Art History and a professor of comparative literature at Indiana University in Bloomington.

As NEH chairman, Cole launched We the People, a program created to encourage the teaching, study, and understanding of American history and culture. We the People has expanded since its inception and now



Bruce Cole

includes Picturing America, a new initiative to help students trace the nation's history through American art.

Cole has written fourteen books, many of them about the Renaissance. They include *The Renaissance Artist at Work*; *Sienese Painting in the Age of the Renaissance*; *Italian Art, 1250-1550: The Relation of Art to Life and Society*; *Titian and Venetian Art, 1450-1590*; and *Art of the Western World: From Ancient Greece to Post-Modernism*. His most recent book is *The Informed Eye: Understanding Masterpieces of Western Art*.

Previous events in the Warren Center's 20th anniversary celebration included a lecture by Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú, a symposium on Franz Rosenzweig, a conference marking the 40th anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, and a concert/reading celebrating the musicology of *Little House on the Prairie*.

Cole's lecture will open with a reception at 5:00 p.m., and the talk will begin at 6:00 p.m. while streaming live on VUCast: <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/news>.

2009-2010 Warren Center Fellowship Opportunities

The Warren Center will sponsor two fellowship programs in the 2009-2010 academic year: one for faculty members and one for Vanderbilt University graduate students.

The 2009-2010 Faculty Fellows Program will be co-directed by Daniel B. Cornfield, the Harvie Branscomb Distinguished Professor of Sociology, and Gary Gerstle, the James Stahlman Professor of History. Over the year, the group will examine the topic of "Immigration and the American Experience." The Warren Center will sponsor a Visiting Fellow with expertise in the area of study in addition to selected Vanderbilt faculty members. Information regarding the internal and external application processes can be obtained from the Warren Center or from its website: www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw_center.

The Warren Center will also sponsor an interdisciplinary year-long Graduate Student Fellows Program. Vanderbilt University graduate students in the traditional humanities departments or those whose work is of a humanistic nature are invited to apply for the six dissertation-completion fellowships. The fellowship provides a stipend of \$18,000 as well as a \$2,000 research

fund. Students are not allowed to hold any other form of employment during the term of the fellowship. Graduate Student Fellows are expected to complete and defend their dissertations before the start of the next academic year.

The Graduate Student Fellows will meet in weekly seminars at the Warren Center, giving presentations from their work to the seminar and discussing texts of common interest. The Warren Center will also arrange for a number of visiting speakers to meet with the seminar during the year to provide opportunities for discussion of issues pertinent to scholarly life, such as the art of writing, successful strategies for publication, funding opportunities, grant writing, and workshops on delivering academic presentations. The seminar will also have funds available to invite outside speakers of the participants' choosing. Each Warren Center Graduate Student Fellow will be asked to give a public lecture in the spring term. Fellows will also be expected to be active participants in the life of the Warren Center during the year of their tenure.

THE ROBERT PENN WARREN CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES

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For a listing of Warren Center programs and activities, please contact the above address or visit our Web site at www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw_center.

Statement of Purpose

Established under the sponsorship of the College of Arts and Science in 1987 and renamed the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities in 1989 in honor of Robert Penn Warren, Vanderbilt alumnus class of 1925, the Center promotes interdisciplinary research and study in the humanities, social sciences, and, when appropriate, natural sciences. Members of the Vanderbilt community representing a wide variety of specializations take part in the Warren Center's programs, which are designed to intensify and increase interdisciplinary discussion of academic, social, and cultural issues.

Vanderbilt University is committed to principles of equal opportunity and affirmative action.

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