

Invisible Struggles: A Civil Rights Project Impacts Classroom and Community

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Abstract

This article examines a five-year engagement project that began as a research-oriented class that involved students in oral history and digital video interviews of community members who were young adults living in the Warren, Ohio, area during the civil rights era. The project evolved into an hour-long documentary, which was broadcast on a regional PBS station three times in February 2007. The faculty used the acceptance of the documentary for broadcast to expand the project to include a town forum featuring business, civil rights, and political leaders discussing contemporary racial concerns. Further engagement activities included the development of school curriculum packets, the dissemination of DVD copies of the documentary to regional public and school libraries, and the establishment of a scholarship fund for area minority students.

Introduction

Morris Hill looked right into the camera and said, “they hid it more than anything. They tried to keep the segregation out of the eyes of the public, but . . .” the people of Warren, Ohio, knew it existed.¹ The relative invisibility of small-city northern segregation in the post-1945 period is a fairly understudied historical situation. We know about the larger boycotts and marches and their often violent reactions. We’ve read interviews and watched documentaries outlining the role and meaning of significant leaders. But for the most part these activities are presented against the backdrop of southern racism and a legal and social system that reinforced the overt separation of white and black Americans.

In the fall of 2002, Professors Kenneth J. Bindas and Molly Merryman began teaching a research-based course they hoped would bring the story of a small city’s minority population out from the shadows so that the students (and later the larger community) could learn the depth at which racial division and segregation dominated American society. This project would expand beyond the classroom, as the student interviews were edited into a documentary and were broadcast, along with a companion town forum on contemporary race issues, by a regional PBS station into

a geographic market serving 4.3 million people. The documentary itself was a catalyst for other community outreach projects such as curriculum packets supplied to area schools, the distribution of grant-produced DVDs to regional public and school libraries, and the establishment of a university endowment for area minority and diversity-oriented students.

Project Methodology

Before the course was implemented, both Bindas and Merryman conducted preliminary research on racial segregation on Warren, Ohio. One of the difficulties in illuminating northern segregation is that because it was culturally enforced rather than structurally enforced (like southern Jim Crow segregation), there were limited records or textual evidence of its existence. Therefore, it was decided early on to utilize oral history methodology as the primary means for data gathering. Records from local civil rights groups like the NAACP and Urban League as well as newspaper archives provided information on important concerns and actions taken during the civil rights era, in order to better develop questions.

Bindas created a series of questions that allowed the informants to document their experiences in the form of a life narrative. This meant that rather than directly asking questions concerning race and community, more general categories preceded the more specific content questions. The first set of questions dealt with general biographical questions, while the next two sets concerned work, education, family, and home life. The final section asked about the community and their place in it as African Americans. This allowed the interviewer and informant to establish a relationship so that when more emotional and difficult questions were raised, the foundation of trust allowed the informant more space to tell their story (*Thompson 1988, 309–23*). Merryman introduced the use of snowball sampling,² a nonprobability method of data collection that has been proven effective for locating hidden populations through referrals from earlier identified respondents.

One year before the class was offered, the faculty worked with the campus dean and minority representatives of the board of advisers in order to introduce the project and the faculty to Warren's African American community. This was particularly important since both faculty are white and neither lived in the Warren area. Letters were sent to area churches and community organizations that explained the project and introduced the faculty. One of the most interesting contacts that came from this outreach was Paula Johnson, a woman whose parents were active in the local

civil rights movement. Ms. Johnson called the faculty asking if they would extend permission for her to take the upper-division course even though she wasn't currently enrolled in classes at the university, a permission they readily extended. Later, students enrolled in the course were expected to make efforts among their own social networks to locate interview subjects who fit the criteria of being African American and residing in the Warren area during 1954–64. For some white students, this requirement revealed to them just how segregated the community remains, when they realized they knew of no one fitting that profile. At this point, initial community contacts derived from the outreach process (including those of student Johnson) were shared with the class, and those individuals provided other contacts, thus snowballing the survey population.

Students received in-class education about proper oral history and documentary interviewing techniques, and practiced the methodologies on camera with each other. This exercise was intended not only to get students comfortable in using the methodologies appropriately, but also to have them experience firsthand the discomfort of being asked questions on camera, in the hope that this would make them more sensitive to their subjects. Interviews were conducted on campus. The professors decided it would make both students and interview subjects less nervous if they didn't directly observe, but Merryman was available in a nearby office to prepare students beforehand and offer troubleshooting if necessary. Students self-selected into pairs for the interviews, with one student running camera and the other interviewing. Each pair did two interviews, alternating responsibilities.

The Course

Plans for a course on northern segregation developed in the fall of 2001, when two faculty from different disciplines (history and justice studies) decided to explore the community served by their campus. Bindas and Merryman realized that utilizing oral history methodologies would reveal stories of informal practices of segregation while providing undergraduate students with academic research experiences. In addition, the two established as a goal training students in digital video techniques so that the interviews they gathered could be used in the development of a broadcast documentary. With their combined backgrounds in historiography, documentary filmmaking, and oral history, Bindas and Merryman established as course goals the introduction of students to oral history and documentary video techniques, as well as historical research theory and methodology. On a larger scale, they

wanted to help give voice to a largely invisible urban population, which they believed would serve the larger community by creating dialogue concerning a shared past.

One subject later interviewed in the class, Norman Smith, said that people “really don’t realize the price we paid for freedom” in Warren.³ And certainly that was the case for the twelve students enrolled that fall. The course began with Bindas setting the historical context and outlining oral history theory and methodology. Drawing on secondary sources, he outlined the general history of the struggle for civil rights from Abolition through the 1964 Civil Rights Act, augmenting this national focus with local NAACP and Urban League reports, census data, and appropriate secondary literature to connect Warren, Ohio, to the larger historical picture. Students read through the local newspaper from this time period to locate stories on African Americans and civil rights. One student, Renee Pisan, noticed “there wasn’t a lot about Civil Rights history. It’s going to be very interesting,” she said, “to actually get a real perspective.” Another student, Angela Gianakos, concurred, saying that the research paper prepared her for the interview by helping to introduce the “mindset of what [I’m] going to be dealing with and what [I’ll] hear.”⁴

The next phase involved introducing the students to the theory and methodology of oral history and then working with them, interviewing local African American residents who were young adults during the period 1954–64. Bindas chose to follow the course outlined by Paul Thompson in *Voices of the Past* (1988, 309–23). Bindas and Merryman chose the period after 1954 because it corresponded with the emergence of the modern civil rights movement, many of those who lived through the era were still alive and cogent, and enough time had passed to allow for “honest” responses. In the year prior to the class, Bindas compiled a list of questions in the form of a life narrative, supplemented with policing questions developed by Merryman. The questions worked quite well and the relationship that developed between the students and black respondents allowed for greater liberty for both. In the final analysis, the students from the course rated the oral histories as an excellent learning experience on the final student evaluations.⁵

The final section of the class focused on the students learning and practicing digital video production. Video gives voice to its interview subjects, an experience that can be extremely empowering for subject and student both. In addition, for minority students (based on race, gender, class, age, sexual orientation), digital video can provide a means of expression, of representing subject

material that isn't easily accessible to students using the written word. Within the larger theoretical framework, the use of digital video in this way fits in well with the liberation education philosophy developed by Paulo Friere and advanced by Ira Shor, which emphasizes democracy in the classroom as an experiential model for expanding democracy in the world (*Shor and Freire 1987*). Thus the style of learning intrinsic to digital video pedagogy allows for shared expertise among students and faculty, and de-centers the professor as expert because everyone becomes engaged in the production of knowledge through the production of original video

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pieces. Liberation education also increases the subjectivity of participants, gives voice to ordinary people, and features normally oppressed people as experts. The subjectivity of voice became a powerful element in the course. Digital video allowed the students to explore their subjects and give them greater voice. With our course, the integration of minority subjects as the primary component for student filmmaking

was particularly important, as the class was mostly white, middle-class, and heterosexual students. As student Holly Davis said, “the community I come from, we don't have any African Americans. We had three and they were all from the same family.” For her, and for many of the other students, this video interview exercise would be their introduction to another aspect of American life.⁶

Most classroom situations privilege the experiences of white and middle-class students. Using digital video to address issues of discrimination and/or privilege allows the power dynamics of courses to be shifted so that the experiences of minority students are privileged. The white students struggled as outsiders; they did not have familiarity with the community or its issues. African American students, on the other hand, had the experiential and conceptual knowledge of where to locate subjects and how to distinguish the validity of the topics addressed. They were the class experts, with more knowledge on these local topics than the faculty. This shift empowered the minority students and destabilized the power of white students, which in turn led many of them to insightfully question the privilege accorded to their whiteness within the university setting. Students placed library/textual material on the same table with the spoken histories of African American subjects,

thus recognizing the artificial (and typically racialized, patriarchal, and class-based) privileging of some knowledge over other knowledge. In addition, one of the great advantages of desktop nonlinear editing systems is that they allow for video materials to be easily edited, with material added or removed at any point in the timeline. In terms of minority subjectivity, this affords students the opportunity to screen their pieces with their interview subjects to make sure that the contexts of interviews are correct, and it empowers subjects to have voice even in the production phase. The potential for empowerment and critique increases the power and involvement of the subject as expert witness and increases the likelihood of interview subjects actually engaging in a discourse or dialogue on the topic at hand, rather than being “used” as an object of research. This notion of discourse is particularly important with regard to minority subjects.

Initial Video Production and Outreach

The students collectively gathered more than twenty hours of digital video data, which they edited into individual video oral histories later presented to participating subjects. As the semester progressed, the professors realized that those interviewed were developing a strong connection to the project, sharing their involvement with friends and family, and interested in the outcomes of the interviews. An initial plan had been to host an informal get-together for subjects and students during finals week, but soon it was realized that this project’s momentum was bigger. Community members were learning of the interviews and asking students and professors if they could see footage. Knowing that the development of the finished documentary was going to take several years, Bindas and Merryman then decided to use consumer-level video editing software and over Thanksgiving week pulled together a thirty-minute compilation video that incorporated these interviews as well as interviews with the students about their experiences with the class.

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The faculty then consulted with the campus dean and diversity council and requested funding for a catered reception that would

unveil the project to the greater Warren community and screen the compilation video plus the individual oral history interviews edited by the students in the course. In December, the campus hosted an event attended by more than 250 people. (This number was astounding because invitations were sent only to students and participants, and only one small notice appeared in the local newspaper. Despite this, considerable interest arose through community dialogue.)

The audience watching these interviews was witness to an interesting dichotomy concerning the framing of race. For the black informants, empowerment came from their ability to openly discuss the past in racial terms. This was particularly true as they were imparting their experiences to young white students with little understanding of the pervasiveness of the region's segregation. They used the interview to frame their experience as one that made them a better and stronger person. Muriel Robinson looked directly into the camera and expressively told her interviewer that to document all the instances of prejudice and racism would take far too long. The importance, she said, was understanding that "as a person [this was a journey I] was supposed to travel." Her experiences made her "aware of who I was through the racism and prejudice . . . and it made me a wise, knowledgeable person." From the modern perspective their experiences reflect the general acceptance of African Americans into mainstream society, so there is a pride in the way they frame their responses. Theirs was a difficult journey and the stories they tell as survivors reflect the empowerment and consciousness change in which they participated. They recall vividly not only specific events, but also how these events made them feel and the legacy of that feeling.⁷

One of the more poignant moments came when the video clip of former city public safety director Frederick Harris played back to an audience that included his family. "When I die," Harris intoned into the camera, "I'm no longer here, I'm the last of my group—we was the last group that actually faced legal discrimination, so when we're no longer here, our children, our grandchildren, they have no idea what we went through. My son doesn't know—he's never heard this, 'cause I've never told him."⁸

The audience of university and community members listened to this and other significant truths during the course of the evening's programming. Cindy Martin, a student who admitted her initial interest was simply to satisfy an upper-division elective in taking the course, changed her view by the end of the semester, saying, "this is an important thing we are doing."⁹

One unanticipated problem did arise from this event: the community interest led many people to eagerly anticipate screening of the finished documentary. We couldn't quite communicate the effort that was going into that part of the project, so we often were directly and indirectly fielding inquiries as to whether or not we had forgotten or quit the documentary component. We of course had not.

The Documentary

The audience reaction to the screening of our quickly edited video short reinforced how powerful these interviews were, and how important it was that we get these stories to a wider audience. Our hope was to edit them into a finished documentary that we could get into local schools and libraries and, we hoped, persuade a local Warren-Youngstown television station to air. A technical problem was that the interviews were shot on the lowest level of digital video camera that provides broadcast quality, using the unit's internal microphone and existing room light, by undergraduate students with no prior experience in videography. As a consequence of this, sound and light levels varied tremendously, and the quality of all interviews would need significant finish editing to meet broadcast standards.

Our campus did not have the editing equipment necessary for this undertaking, so Merryman set about writing proposals for a computer and editing software of a level that could produce broadcast-quality footage. In the semester following the course, she also worked with three students from the original class in continuing interviewing, image research, and the shooting of B-roll footage of Warren.

By 2004, the necessary computer and software had been purchased, and primary editing began. Merryman contacted Paula Johnson to get her feedback on the content. Johnson's mother and father were both featured in the documentary, and as someone who was raised in a household active in the civil rights movement, Ms. Johnson had considerable personal knowledge of the issues. It soon became obvious that she also had more than a passing interest in the documentary, so Merryman and Bindas included her in the documentary process as a cowriter of the narration and as the voiceover narrator to the documentary. (Another student, Sherry Bacon-Graves, did more research and image discovery for the documentary.)

Because of Ms. Johnson's involvement in the project at this stage, we once again began to hear that community members were

getting excited about the project. Both Bindas and Merryman started to receive phone calls from interview subjects, former students, and interested community members inquiring about upcoming screenings. Unfortunately, completing an independent film edited by one faculty member with a four-class-per-semester teaching load would not prove to be fast.

In the spring of 2006, Merryman realized that she would need assistance in the finish editing, particularly to improve sound and color. She approached Dr. Joe Murray, an assistant professor of journalism/mass communication, to see if he had any students who might be willing to volunteer. After reviewing the rough edit, Murray volunteered to complete the editing and soon became a coproducer of the documentary. Dr. Murray also suggested that Merryman take the rough edit she'd made to Don Freeman, the chief operating officer at PBS 45 & 49, a public television station that has a broadcast reach of 4.3 million people throughout north-east Ohio and western Pennsylvania (including Warren, Ohio).

Freeman immediately accepted the documentary for broadcast, and agreed with the filmmakers that the optimum release time for it would be during Black History Month, February 2007. Furthermore, he agreed that the station would air the documentary not once, but three times, and the station would provide significant marketing support to advertise it.

Extended Engagement

Merryman and Bindas were excited about this and immediately arranged for their campus dean to fund a luncheon for the interview subjects and former course students to share the news and screen the rough edit of the documentary. The subjects stayed for hours, recounting more stories, and shared how important it was to them that their civil rights stories were going to come out of the shadows and into the living rooms of this and other regional communities. Several expressed their desire that we reach out to schoolchildren and were delighted to find out that we were already developing connections to do so, and all of them volunteered to help with publicity for another important component we shared with them: a large public screening of the documentary combined with a town forum on contemporary race issues.

The forum idea took shape as soon as the filmmakers received broadcasting confirmation from PBS 45 & 49. Merryman attended a national outreach scholarship conference in 2003, and had presented on this classroom documentary project at Kent State University's first conference on outreach and engagement. After

this, she had conversed informally with Kent State vice president for regional development Patricia Book about outreach possibilities with the project. As soon as PBS picked up the documentary, Merryman scheduled a meeting with Dr. Book about reserving a large community center, Packard Music Hall, to have a dialogue with Warren business, civil rights, and political leaders about contemporary racial concerns. PBS 45 & 49 COO Don Freeman had said that if Kent State could raise the production costs, this forum also would be aired as an hour-long follow-up to the documentary, thereby giving six hours of broadcast time to the project. Dr. Book immediately offered to support the town forum and its production.

Bindas, Merryman, and Trumbull Dean Wanda Thomas began meeting with civic leaders to ensure the participation of the Warren mayor and key business leaders in the town forum, which Murray agreed to direct. Merryman began to seek outside funding for sign language interpreters and closed captioning for the broadcasts. Bindas, Merryman, and campus staff joined forces with PBS 45 & 49 marketing staff to develop innovative advertising and public relations about the town forum and broadcast. Bindas developed a curriculum package for area schools, which incorporated the documentary into Black History Month education. These packets were sent to county schools and were placed on both a project Web site and the PBS 45 & 49 Web site.

Merryman also met with Kent State University's president, Lester Lefton, and successfully asked him to host a reception to raise scholarship money for minority and diversity-oriented Trumbull campus students. This resulted in a \$100/plate catered reception prior to the documentary screening, held at the local Packard Museum, which offered its site at no cost for the fund-raiser, providing a unique location. Documentary subjects and former course students were invited to attend the reception for free.

Merryman got a grant from the Ohio Humanities Council to get one thousand copies of the DVD made to send to local schools as part of the curricular packet, as well as to send to regional public and school libraries. Copies were also offered at the screening for a \$10 donation to the scholarship fund. The Trumbull campus printed up promotional T-shirts and tote bags to distribute at the fund-raiser and to raise additional scholarship money.

In the days leading up to the screening, town forum, and broadcast premiere, media and community interest increased significantly. Bindas, Johnson, Merryman, and documentary subjects

were interviewed by Warren, Youngstown, Cleveland, Canton, and Akron print, radio, and television media. Calls began to flood the campus as members of the community wanted more details about the events. But because the town hall forum was free and open to the public, no one knew how many people would arrive. The event was being held at Packard Music Hall, which holds five hundred people, the largest venue in Warren. But the staff of PBS 45 & 49 predicted that since the forum was going to be aired several days after the premiere, fewer than a hundred people should be expected—particularly since it was February, and a significant portion of the expected audience were senior citizens.

On the evening of February 1, after a full day of media interviews, Bindas and Merryman attended the fund-raising reception. They were just under their goal of raising \$5,000, so they were slightly disappointed. But seeing the subjects and students involved in the documentary enjoying the cars in the Packard Museum and engaging in spirited conversation with each other and their friends and families, excited by the evening and delighting in the fine food, both Bindas and Merryman felt as though they'd come full circle, that all was complete.

When they arrived outside Packard Music Hall, they walked into chaos. Cars were circling the parking lot; people were negotiating the icy asphalt to get passengers as close as they could to the doors of Packard Hall. The lot was full. As they entered the hall, both Bindas and Merryman noticed a solid, recognizable energy. This, they realized, was an event: an event that completely filled the lower floor and balcony with interested community members, who intently watched the documentary and town hall forum. After the questions ended and the audience was leaving, Bindas and Merryman found themselves surrounded by well-wishers—students, documentary subjects, university people, and community members. Merryman noticed an African American woman who looked to be in her nineties standing patiently waiting with a younger woman, and she walked up to the pair. The older woman grasped Merryman's hands, and as she held them tightly, she offered a mantra of thanks, concluding by saying: "I never thought I'd live long enough to see a white girl tell our story. Bless you."

What the Documentary Revealed

The story that this woman referred to was a complex confluence of informal but potent societal segregation. Warren, Ohio, like most northern cities, did not have Black Codes on the law books;

nonetheless, neighborhoods were solidly segregated. Interview subjects spoke of “knowing” where they, as African Americans, were allowed and not allowed to be. For example, Clifford Johnson, one of the first African American principals in the Warren public school system, told of sitting in his office wearing a suit, and having a salesman ask him when the principal would return. Johnson’s status as a school administrator gave him the ability to move into a white-only neighborhood. He recounted how, in his first days of living there, he was followed by local police when he jogged in the early morning. Johnson quite humorously explained how he called on the mayor and thanked him for providing a personal police escort—a message he recounted the mayor as disseminating, because the police scrutiny stopped. In a less amusing fashion, Frederick Harris recounted the humiliation and fear of being thrown up against a car by the police and taken to the home of a white catering client whose house he had previously left. Harris was released from custody after the client confirmed Harris’s reason for being in that neighborhood.

Several interview subjects revealed the role of local law enforcement in upholding these unwritten rules of segregation. However, among reasons that stories of northern segregation are more interesting and conflicted than southern segregation is that the Warren police department had black officers on its force dating back to the 1940s. Geneva Owens Rogers was one of the first black officers and was its first woman officer. Hired in 1946 in the limited role of policewoman, Owens Rogers (a college graduate) was primarily assigned to work with juveniles. Several subjects recounted how her job involved regulating the behavior of black kids differently than white kids: for example, removing them from stores and parks.

Entertainment was strongly segregated, and much of *Invisible Struggles* addresses the segregation of local parks, restaurants, movie theaters, stores, bowling alleys, and even the local newspaper.¹⁰ What is most compelling about these stories is that these were the first avenues of segregation that local civil rights activists and organizations took on. Some subjects, such as Olive Reese, participated in organized efforts to desegregate restaurants. In one of the documentary’s most painful moments, she recounts an experience where a restaurant seated and fed a group she was in, but then proceeded to break their plates in front of everyone, rather than gather them to be washed and reused. Norman Smith has a more amusing story of a bowling alley that told him and his companions that it was closed when they showed up to bowl. Their tactic was to

regularly show up, forcing the place to close down each time they appeared, until finally the business relented and let them bowl.

Interview subjects also revealed how employment and education discrimination gradually receded as the impact of *Brown v. Board of Education* (the 1954 Supreme Court ruling ending segregation in schools) and the 1964 Civil Rights Act extended to Warren. Blacks who'd been denied access to Warren's then-lucrative automobile manufacturing industry began to be allowed jobs besides custodial work. James Johnson, a local civil rights activist, recounted how this transition was complicated by myriad individual acts of employment discrimination once African Americans were included in these workplaces.

The stories of the struggle to end local segregation were shared with humor, indignation, pride, and wisdom. Interview subjects revealed their belief that their efforts made contemporary times better for blacks, but also their hopes for a more equal future.

Continuing Engagement

The *Invisible Struggles* project was a powerful experience for interview subjects, students, faculty, and community alike. It is hoped that it represents the beginning of understanding and the fostering of relationships between campus and community. Merryman is working with African American community leaders met through the course and engagement project to develop a task force to improve minority recruitment for students in the Justice Studies program and at the campus police academy. (Minority recruitment is already up following the screening and broadcast of *Invisible Struggles*, but it can be better.)

In the spring of 2008, Bindas and Merryman taught a course on community identity that again used digital video and oral history methodologies to involve students in revealing community memories of Warren, Ohio, for a project that explored the collapse of the area's steel and automobile industries and its impact on various sub-cultural populations of the region. The end goal of this course is to further cultivate the community engagement fostered in the *Invisible Struggles* project, establishing a digital video and textual community memory online archive that will hopefully generate more community dialogue, sustained engagement, and improved scholarship. One limitation of a broadcast documentary is that the project by necessity has an end point. After the broadcast of the documentary, Bindas and Merryman were approached by many local people with stories of different eras and different forms of discrimination

and struggle. The intent of this new project is to create a space for ongoing dialogue and collection of local stories.

One of the most important features of the documentary process was the exposure the community received and the empowerment that came as a result. The people—students, participants, faculty, and audience—came together as *community* and began to view themselves within that context. Race is an important component of American society (and not just for minority members of this society!), and the process of creating and disseminating *Invisible Struggles* played a small part in opening the dialogue within the community concerning this topic. Did it solve the problem of racism in Warren? Of course it did not, but it did legitimize the story of past racist behavior—implicit or explicit—and perhaps encouraged people to rethink how they viewed their neighbors, coworkers, or customers.

What began as a course designed to introduce students to local history, race relations, post-1945 American history, oral history theory and methodology, digital video, and documentary film editing grew into a community event that will continue to influence and impact the Warren area, a consciousness-changing experience for most of the students, and an opportunity for the faculty involved to create a broadcast-quality documentary. But it also exposed the importance a service-learning project could have on a campus and its partnering community, how classrooms can be made student-centered, and how faculty can grow beyond the original syllabus and encourage the project to blossom into something that just keeps growing.

Endnotes

1. Morris Hill, interviewed by Holly Davis, November 1, 2002, *Documenting Justice* (hereafter *DJ*). For another take on the interviews and their meanings, see Bindas and Merryman 2005.
2. Numerous examples of research utilize this methodology for uncovering minority subjects and hard-to-reach subculture members (notably for public health research). An early article that explains the value of this methodology is Welch 1975.
3. Norman Smith, interview by Cindy Martin, October 28, 2002, *DJ*.
4. U.S. Bureau of the Census 1942, 815; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1952, 35–54; U.S. Bureau of the Census 1962, 37–538; for employment comparisons, 37–614–867; *Warren Tribune Chronicle* 1954; Renee Pisan, interview by Laura Dangerfield, October 30, 2002,

DJ; Angela Gianakos, interview by Sherry Bacon, October 31, 2002, DJ.

5. Many sources discuss the importance of such a community-based project, including Crothers 2002; Forrest and Jackson 1990; Ebner 1976; Long 1991; Bornat 1998.

6. Holly Davis, interview by Mike Ciferno, October 31, 2002, DJ.

7. Muriel Robinson, interview by Paula Johnson, October 25, 2002, DJ. Much of how the interview subjects frame their memories can be better understood by exploring the connection between personal and collective memory. For more on this topic, see Halbwachs 1992 and move through works representing a variety of disciplines, including Nora 1996, 1–21; Jeffrey and Edwall 1994; Wertsch 2002; Blight 2002; Barthel 1996; Sheperd et al. 2006; Frisch 1989. For collective memory and race, see Romano 2006; Fabre and O’Meally 1994; May 2000.

8. Frederick Harris, interview by Theresa Davis, October 2002, DJ.

9. Cindy Martin, interview by Paula Johnson, October 25, 2002, DJ.

10. The *Warren Tribune Chronicle* featured blacks only in crime stories and obituaries, and occasionally national stories on civil rights issues were covered. The paper published a separate insert section titled *For Black Subscribers Only* that published social news stories on African Americans, such as birth notices, graduation and other achievement stories, community organizations, and other coverage.

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About the Authors

- Kenneth J. Bindas is a full professor and chair of the History Department at Kent State University. He has published a variety of books and articles that examine the intersection of politics and culture—especially relating to race, class, and gender. His most recent work, *Remembering the Great Depression in the Rural South* (University Press of Florida, 2007) uses over six hundred oral histories from the rural south to paint a vivid portrait of how rural southerners responded to the Great Depression and the New Deal. The work strikes a balance between letting the voices speak for themselves and placing these voices within a coherent understanding of the existing historical literature of the 1930s. He has also published *Swing, That Modern Sound* (University Press of Mississippi, 2001) and *All of This Music Belongs to the Nation: The WPA’s Federal Music Project* (University of Tennessee Press, 1996). He served as coproducer and assistant director to the documentary *Invisible Struggles: Stories of Northern Segregation*.

- Molly Merryman is an associate professor of justice studies, and coordinator of Justice Studies and Women's Studies at the Kent State University Trumbull Campus. Her research is focused on struggles in equality, power and justice for women, racial and sexual minorities, and how societal structures control and regulate minorities. She has published one book, *Clipped Wings: The Rise and Fall of the Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II* (New York University Press, 1998/2001), and numerous articles. She has made several documentaries, including *Queens of Columbus: Performance and the Art of Illusion* (1992) and *Women Who Flew* (1994). While at Kent State University, she has been actively involved in the Women's Studies Program, and cofounded the LGBT Program. She also holds academic affiliations with the History and Journalism/Mass Communications departments. She served as executive producer and director to the documentary *Invisible Struggles: Stories of Northern Segregation*. Merryman's latest documentary *Country Crush*, an exploration of farm culture and masculinity that focuses on combine harvester demolition derby, will premiere at the Jihlava Documentary Festival in the Czech Republic.

