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#1253 BELL

A Halloween Story: The First African American Students at Randolph-Macon Woman's College

Little did I know when I decided several months ago on the topic for my Sphex Club debut that Senator Trent Lott's remarks at Senator Strom Thurmond's birthday party—and events following those remarks—would provide such an appropriate context for this Halloween story. It is a story about race,[1] and before I begin telling it, I would like to beg the forbearance of two members of the Club, Peter Marcy and Bill Quillian, who have heard—or rather, have read—some of these words before. Both Peter and Bill have been extraordinarily helpful to me in the seemingly endless process of writing the history of Randolph-Macon Woman's College of which this paper is a part. Of course, neither Peter nor Bill bears any responsibility for what I have written here, but I do want to acknowledge my debt to them for their patient attention to my ongoing effort to transform myself from an English professor into a social historian.

In the way of social historians, I must tell you about my "situatedness" with respect to tonight's topic. Like some others in this room, I grew up in the segregated South, not in Virginia, in my case, but in the Deep South—in Louisiana, a state whose potent blend of fine cuisine and corrupt politics is unmatched and well known. I have lived among African Americans all my life, but in my many years of formal education I never attended integrated classes, nor did I have the opportunity to work closely with African American colleagues until eight years ago, when I became involved with the Legacy Museum of African American History. I backed into involvement with Legacy as a result of my work on the Randolph-Macon history. This project covers the years between 1950, when

Roberta Cornelius's history ends, and the college's centennial in 1993. I realized soon after beginning work on the book that because of the way Randolph-Macon has embodied the contradictions inherent in southern racial and gender ideology, I would need to reach some understanding of events, behavior, and regional cultural patterns that I had observed and experienced all my life but had not thought very deeply about. So I began reading—about the civil rights movement, about the experiences of black domestics, about the experiences of black students at predominantly and historically white colleges like Randolph-Macon—and I also began interviewing African American alumnae and retired employees. The story you will hear is based on that research.

I tell the story well aware that discussions of race, especially in interracial groups, make people uncomfortable; indeed, in interracial groups such discussions are taboo. One effect of this taboo has been the "racial denial" of which Clarence Page[2] and others have written in the weeks since Trent Lott's birthday tribute to Strom Thurmond. "Racial denial" is explained very well by novelist Toni Morrison in her book *Playing in the Dark*, although she does not use the term. Morrison writes: "Statements . . . insisting on the meaninglessness of race to the American identity . . . are themselves full of meaning. The world does not become raceless or will not become unracialized by assertion. The act of enforcing racelessness . . . is itself a racial act."[3] Racial denial—the tacit refusal to acknowledge race, however understandable that refusal may be, and however comfortable it is for those of us who are white—has, as Page argued in his column in last Sunday's *News and Advance*, contributed to a one-sided view of history. Tonight, I want to look at the other side.

* * * * *

In the spring of 1963, the trustees of Randolph-Macon Woman's College voted unanimous approval of a new policy statement: "The Charter of Randolph-Macon Woman's College does not limit enrollment on the basis of race, creed, or color. The Charter will be interpreted in its broadest sense, and students will be admitted wholly on the basis of academic and personal qualifications."[4] When board president John Pearson wrote alumnae chapter presidents to inform them of the new policy,[5] he explained that the college had not been under any pressure to admit African American applicants, since there had not been any, though there had been inquiries.[6] Rather, the decision had been based on the belief that "in an educational institution founded upon Christian principles, the relevant considerations for admission are one's academic qualifications and one's character." Pearson went on to observe that among southern women's colleges, Agnes Scott, Mary Baldwin, Queens, and Meredith had announced similar policies within the past year, as had Davidson, Duke, Emory, Sewanee, Wake Forest, and others.[7]

The summer before the trustees established this open admissions policy, an African American teacher from Lynchburg, Cornelia Campbell, had attended a six-week summer institute for high school teachers of science and mathematics, a project supported by the National Science Foundation. And in 1964, Jane Hubbard, a college employee, began two years of part-time classes under the new policy. Jane Hubbard was one of the dozens of African Americans who had written encouraging letters to the two Randolph-Macon seniors jailed after a sit-in at Patterson's Drug Store in December of 1960.[8] Eighteen-year-old Janie drew even closer to the civil rights movement when her godmother, Essie Elva Gordon, was arrested for sitting in at Patterson's a few months later.[9] Janie's father died while she was still a student at Dunbar High School, so when she graduated, she had

to postpone her plans for college and content herself with summer courses at Howard University and, during the rest of the year, a job in her hometown. She found one at Randolph-Macon. It was an obvious place to look. Her mother, Elizabeth Hubbard, had worked at the college since the mid-1950s, receiving guests in East Hall and later in Bell Hall, as well as doing personal laundry and ironing for students, keeping "my girls' clothes clean and nice."[10] Janie's uncle, Robert Harris, worked at R-MWC as well, as a janitor in Main; he also drove students between the college and the stables and helped to maintain President Quillian's car. Janie began her employment as a "date maid" in East Hall, cleaning the date parlors, answering the phone, greeting—and screening—guests. When she finished her work, she often visited with the students who lived on the first-floor corridor just behind the reception area. Wearing her black uniform and white apron, Janie chatted comfortably with these women who were just a little younger than she, so when she began to talk about the possibility of taking courses at R-MWC, her student friends encouraged her.[11] Mildred Hudgins, who was director of religious life at the college and head of hall in East, encouraged Janie too, and explored the possibility with the president and the dean.[12] Their response was that Janie should wait a year, since the new open admissions policy had as one of its provisions that no African American students would be accepted until 1964. Janie waited, applied again, and, with her summer credits from Howard, was accepted as a special student.

For two years Janie Hubbard lived at home and attended Randolph-Macon part time, taking classes in anthropology, education, and biology in the daytime and working nights at the college switchboard. Her presence scarcely caused a ripple. Mildred Hudgins "helped [her] ease in without controversy," and she found most of the people

she encountered to be helpful and caring. But then, she "was like family at R-MWC" because her mother and uncle were college employees. At twenty-two, she was only a little older than most of the students, and her face was already familiar. Although "the people who wanted me there were happy and positive about it," she recalled two exceptions, both faculty members. One was psychologist Audrey Shuey, who, Janie believed, had claimed in her book *The Testing of Negro Intelligence* that "the smartest black person was dumber than the dumbest white person." Another exception was the professor who ignored her when she raised her hand, who "made me feel I was in the wrong place."[13] By contrast, her vertebrate zoology professor served as "a pathfinder" for her. On a field trip to Norfolk, when the class stayed in a hotel that had never been open to African Americans, Professor James L. Chamberlain simply said, "'These are my students,'" and took them all in together.[14]

Through her godmother Essie Gordon, who had remained active in the civil rights effort after her arrest at Patterson's, Janie saw the movement firsthand, traveling to Selma and meeting Martin Luther King, Jr., on one of his visits to Lynchburg. In the spring of 1965 she represented the college at a symposium at Wake Forest University on "The Emerging World of the American Negro," reporting to the student newspaper about it afterwards.[15] That same spring she submitted a story to the literary magazine.[16] In the story a young black man named Sam Dowdy, who resembles Julian Bond, speaks to a "staunch conservative" college audience in Lynchburg. The speech is an angry one, and his audience grows angry as they listen. When the speech ends, "a girl," transformed into an "angry young woman," comes forward to shake the speaker's hand. The girl who got angry, Jane Hubbard Johnson said in 1995, was white, and the story was written for

Randolph-Macon, to show how Janie felt about the civil rights movement, which for her at that point involved class more than color. The white people she knew at R-MWC lived comfortably, in nice homes; the African Americans she knew "didn't have nice houses and were trying to get them. I wanted my audience to feel what I felt and join in the fight. [The story] was a solicitation." Most whites at R-MWC, in Janie's view, were not well informed about the civil rights movement and did not understand its agenda. She wanted to change that, but her audience seemed indifferent. She got no comments on her story; "it was as if it had never been published."[17]

During Jane Hubbard's last year as a part-time day student, the first full-time African American boarding students arrived. They were Ann Richards, from Suffolk, Virginia, and Lois Dooley, from Roanoke.[18] The college prepared for Ann and Lois with "the best will in the world" but with large uncertainties about particular issues. For example, the consensus was that there should be at least two black students, but should they room together or live in different dormitories? "We were all in such virgin territory," sociology professor Shirley Strickland remembered. "It was, 'What can we do that will be best?' and nobody knew the answer."[19] The adjustment posed far more serious difficulties for Ann Richards and Lois Dooley. Ann Richards Kearns remembered how hard it was to get used to "hearing people who reminded me of my mother and my grandmother being addressed by their first names. That was not part of my culture." Hearing "a man like my father or grandfather referred to as 'boy'" was equally difficult to adjust to. The plantation imagery of the black-uniformed, white-aproned "date maids" in dormitory lobbies was another affront: on the plantation, Kearns pointed out, "we [had been] on the other side, we were the field workers." But she felt

"tremendous support from the black personnel on the campus." According to custom, the college's African American janitors and groundskeepers, working for tips, carried suitcases and trunks upstairs when students arrived in the fall, but the man who carried Ann's suitcases and paraphernalia up four flights refused to accept the tip Ann's father offered him: "'It's been a pleasure,'" the man said. Smiles, looks, and pats from the African American employees sustained the new black students,[20] establishing a pattern that would prevail for decades, in which black adults on the staff offered an antidote to the hostility and indifference of the predominantly white environment and brought fresh significance to the family metaphors that had long been part of college culture. In some cases, kinship between staff and students was literal,[21] but even without blood kinship, family feeling prevailed. The employees knew "it was kind of rough" for the black students, housekeeper Helen White remembered, and "everybody tried to do everything they could to make them happy. A lot of Sundays I would come and get them and take them to church and take them to my house for dinner. I felt like, you know, nothing like a home-cooked meal when you're so far away from home."[22] To all appearances, Ann Richards fit in well at Randolph-Macon. She held leadership positions and in her senior year was named to Who's Who. One African American alumna who was in school with Ann observed that she seemed "like a fair-head child, very comfortable, like she was just already in there, already a part."[23] But there were lonely times. Like the African American students who followed them, Ann Richards and Lois Dooley, of necessity, built a solidarity that was soul-sustaining. Even though they lived in singles in different dorms, sometimes they would quietly study together simply because they needed to be near each other. [24]

Ann Richards and Lois Dooley were joined in the fall of 1966 by Evanda Gale Jefferson of Lynchburg. As a child Evanda had eaten leftovers brought home from a college kitchen by a neighbor; Main Hall chef Peronneau Johnson was a distant cousin.[25] Evanda first visited the college when she was a student at Dunbar and lived on Polk Street with her brother and grandmother. The visit happened this way. In the months before the 1964 presidential election, the Phyllis Wheatley Y-Teens, an after-school group of which Evanda was a member, decided that they wanted to hold a political debate, and Evanda agreed to represent the Republicans. The only problem was that she did not know any Republicans, since as far as she knew, "all blacks were Democrats." How would she do her research? The Randolph-Macon student who met with the club every week thought it was important for the Y-Teens to realize that "Republicans were not all anti-black,"[26] so she came up with a solution to Evanda's problem: she would take Evanda to the campus to meet the current president of the Young Republicans. Since the YR's were at that point deeply involved in the Goldwater campaign, they would be able to help Evanda with her project. Evanda Jefferson remembered years later that when she visited Randolph-Macon, "I had a feeling of being in another world." On her way home, she said to herself, "I'm going to this college."[27]

In 1966 Evanda Gale Jefferson entered R-MWC on full scholarship, the first African American woman from Lynchburg to attend full-time and to get a Randolph-Macon degree. Having participated with the Rev. Virgil Wood in demonstrations at the S&W restaurant in the early 'sixties, and having attended the 1963 March on Washington, Evanda had come to believe that "if we were going to change the world, then I must change my thoughts: I must become color blind." Competing in an

integrated world meant that she needed to go to an integrated college. Randolph-Macon was on her list, but Pauline Weeden, her guidance counselor at Dunbar, told her that she should not even apply there "because [she] was poor." When Evanda's English teacher, L. Garnell Stamps, defended her by saying that academically and intellectually she was qualified to go anywhere she chose, she resolved to apply even against her guidance counselor's advice. Since she could not afford the application fee, her godmother and teachers put the money together for her. Once Evanda had been accepted, a proud African American community supported her financially and morally. For her high school graduation she received four years' worth of dental care from Dr. Clarissa Wimbush and four years of bi-weekly hair salon services from her beautician, Ruby Hughes. Evanda's church, Eighth Street Baptist, raised a gift of money; eventually, since she could not afford the Villager shirtwaists she needed to perform with the Glee Club, she used the church's gift to have dresses made. The community was "just so proud of me," she remembered, and the support gave her confidence, but it also put pressure on her not to "flunk out and embarrass all of the black community." Throughout her four years at Randolph-Macon, she left campus at least once a week, on Sundays for church and dinner at home, and on Wednesdays for her bi-weekly trips to the beauty parlor; in these ways, she maintained her connections with her African American family and friends. "[B]y all standards I certainly should have felt that I wouldn't fit in [at Randolph-Macon], but I never did," she recalled; still, she always knew that "when it got really bad," she could go home to her "support system."[28]

Despite her resolve to become color-blind, Evanda Jefferson could not ignore the fact that many people at the college reacted to her race. When she moved into her

dormitory, she observed that her white roommate's parents and grandparents never spoke to her, and she was shocked by the Confederate flags and "the South will rise again" posters hanging on students' walls. It was hard not to conclude that some of her white classmates were "phony" when they would say "'Oh, how are you?' and then they'd wipe the smile off.'"[29] Not until Evanda was a sophomore did she realize why so many students and faculty had known her name the year before: it was because she was the only black student who had entered that fall. In an intimate environment like Randolph-Macon's, African Americans and whites could not help learning about each other. Just out of bed and wearing their bathrobes downstairs to breakfast, the students discovered that whites' "hair would bounce going down the steps, but with our hair, you could comb it and then push it and you'd get all this body, so that amazed them. . . . There was a whole lot of discovering that year," Evanda recalled.[30]

As Evanda Jefferson spent more time at the college, her confidence about confronting uncomfortable situations increased. During her junior year she took a current affairs course from political scientist Guy Carson, who "could not say 'Negro.' He said 'nigra,' and it used to just bother me and bother me. And finally one day I went up to him and I asked him if he knew what this was," pointing to her knee. "He said, 'Yes.' And I said, 'What's this?' He said, 'It's a knee.' I said, 'Well, if you just say 'knee-grow,' you will pronounce the word correctly. Then I walked out of class." Evanda made a fast friend in her chemistry professor, Muriel Dahlgard, and the African American employees she encountered were more like family than friends. "In my hall they would say, 'Hi, Sweetheart,' and . . . my room was cleaned so nicely," she remembered. Despite her Lynchburg connections, Evanda did not have an active social

life. At parties there was nobody for her to dance with, though once when a black band from Lynchburg came, she got to dance with a band member she knew from town.[31]

By the fall of 1968, the year Evanda Jefferson was a junior, Randolph-Macon seemed to have settled the conflict between the humanistic and Christian principles it professed and the policies it followed. With the coming of integration, a view previously held by a minority had modified and displaced the dominant view. But in 1968 Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy were assassinated, and the President's Commission on Civil Disorders found that "[r]acism and riots . . . would split the nation into 'two societies, one black, one white--separate and unequal--unless massive and costly remedies are begun at once.'"[32] Nine African American students and one African woman (from Sierra Leone) were enrolled at Randolph-Macon that fall. The number of women of color had grown large enough for organized action.

The action took the form of a letter, published in the student newspaper on October 31, 1968, protesting against the working conditions of the college's African American employees. In their letter to *The Sun Dial*, the black students noted the contradiction between "the stated purposes of this college" and "certain working conditions imposed on buildings and grounds personnel, which we feel deprive them to some extent of personal dignity and economic security: very low pay, no fringe benefits, no participation in policies that affect them, and lack of communication with those in supervisory positions." The letter continued: "As black students we are sensitive to the fact that most of these employees are non-white, and we feel they are victims of a discriminatory tradition established and accepted in the past, but which should have been examined and discarded many years ago."[33]

The African American students' letter followed a letter signed by six white students and detailing "unfair and unequal working conditions which present to us contradictions and inconsistencies in the goals and ideals of the college." Their letter mentioned "discriminatory patterns in what kinds of jobs go to blacks and which kinds go to whites"; segregated "eating arrangements in certain kitchens"; inadequate restroom facilities in the college laundry; inadequate lounge space; poor lighting and ventilation in the laundry; low wages; poor communication with supervisors, in particular, the absence of any organized structure for handling grievances; and "fear of loss of employment." The students explained that their observations had been drawn from a project conducted the preceding spring by sociology students. "An antiquated system has too long been perpetuated at this school," the white students wrote. "The time has come for us to seek alternatives to an intolerable, deplorable and frankly embarrassing situation existing before our very eyes."[34]

The two letters appeared in *The Sun Dial* on Halloween. That night, first-year student Patricia Washington, an African American from Lynchburg whose grandmother, Lucy Sadler Davis, had worked at R-MWC for more than three decades and whose great-grandmother, Emma Sadler, had also worked at the college, attended the West Hall Halloween party wearing a sheet and pillowcase and carrying a cross bearing the initials KKK.[35] Pat won the prize for best costume. Commenting in 1995 on why she had worn the KKK costume, Pat Washington Parrish '72 considered several possible reasons: "That I had a sense of humor. That I could take what could be a serious situation and turn it into something funny. That I was ready to break down barriers. That I was an all right person to be around. It was just a fun thing to do."[36] Given the racial situation at

the college in 1968, however, the KKK costume represented more than "just a fun thing to do."

When Pat Washington was ten, she and her sister had written a letter to Mary Edith Bentley, then in jail for the sit-in at Patterson's: "Dear Miss Bentley, We are praying for you and thank you for your effort."[37] Eight years later, in the fall of 1968, this graduate of Lynchburg's segregated school system, who "had never been around whites," was hammering out a relationship with her white roommate, Margaret Downing, whom the college had written in advance about her willingness to live with an African American.[38] Downing's father had marched for civil rights in Selma, and her next-door neighbors in the affluent Connecticut town where she had grown up were black, so when "asked to room with a black student, it simply was not a big decision for me." She later conceded that neither she nor Washington "had an appreciation of the background of the other."[39] Pat Washington Parrish's description of the roommates' relationship was less measured: "When I first came on campus and saw Margaret, I hated her." In fact, as Parrish remembered her first year, she and Downing "hated each other. It was two worlds conflicting."[40] In addition to the racial difference, the two were in every way opposites: "Margaret was so neat, and I was so junky. She was so smart, and I was just very mediocre. She was so studious, already knew what she was going to major in. I didn't have a clue." Washington wanted to go home, but her mother and grandmother refused to allow it. The relationship between the roommates was to change; the two would become "very close, almost inseparable," and by sophomore year Washington "wouldn't have any other roommate other than Margaret Downing. We were as close as sisters could be without being sisters." The two roomed together every year, and at graduation

they "clung to each other, tears just flowing" at the prospect of breaking "that bond that we had established for four years." But in the fall of 1968 they were opposites who did not yet attract.

As part of her adjustment, Washington was also witnessing firsthand what she had heard about all her life from her grandmother: that although the college offered its African American employees honorable work, not all of the white students treated them kindly. The employees "thought that they were disrespected by a lot of the white students. They felt that they were treated as less than human beings. There were a lot of changes going on with integration; the racial barriers were being pushed farther back, so they felt that this was an opportune time to really address this issue. But just hearing my grandmother talk over the years, this [was] something that they had felt for a long time." That fall Washington had overheard another student talking to her grandmother "like she was a dog, you know, 'I told you to clean my room, I told you to do this, that, and the other,' and it just set me off. I have a lot of respect for the people who work here, as I saw what they went through, lugging those trunks and unpacking those trunks for these girls who thought that they were above doing that. . . . When I checked into West Hall my freshman year, I unpacked my own stuff, I did everything for myself, and that's the way I felt it should be."[41]

The etiquette of names and titles also rankled. When Washington asked her grandmother why she referred to a student as "Miss So-and-So," Lucy Davis told her granddaughter, "'I have to,'" whereupon Washington replied, "'Well, don't be calling her that in front of me.' Because I used to get angry with her, but then I realized where she was coming from."[42] Employees were routinely told to address students in this manner;

the practice was customary in the South, and the maids worked under instructions to "'try to please the girls and to make the dorms as much like home as possible.'"[43] Even the ironing Lucy Davis brought home to supplement her low wages came to seem demeaning to her granddaughter: "I can remember her bringing clothes home and bringing them back the next day. I said, 'Whose clothes are these?' And she'd say, 'I'm ironing these up for Miss So-and-so.'" When the chance came to sign a letter of protest against working conditions for African American employees, Pat Washington Parrish remembered, "I'd readily sign something like that." [44]

The *Sun Dial* letter gave Washington a dignified yet forthright way to express the anger she felt on behalf of her forebears—specifically, on behalf of her grandmother and her grandmother's friends and co-workers—as well as an opportunity to show solidarity with her African American classmates. And the KKK costume she wore the night the letter appeared externalized and perhaps relieved some of the stresses of her new, overwhelmingly white environment, a place where many of the humiliating customs and injustices of white supremacy were still practiced. At Halloween children often dress up as the ghosts and goblins they fear; furthermore, among African Americans there had developed a long tradition of public parody of white racism.[45] Pat Washington's costume brought the haunting fact of white supremacist attitudes into the open, identifying not only the fact but also the anger and dread the fact inspired. By acknowledging and mocking white supremacy, by cloaking it with humor in a kind of reverse minstrelsy, Washington scorned and challenged that weakening but still potent ideology. Her costume was a brave and shocking avowal of the instabilities inherent in her position as

an African American student in a predominantly white southern college: wearing her white sheet and pillowcase, she called the devil out of his name.[46]

In 1968 Washington's grandmother was working as a maid in Main Hall. There she met George Ann Grubb '70, a white student whose interest in racial issues led her to write a paper on massive resistance in Prince Edward County and to help form a campus Committee for Understanding Racial Awareness.[47] During her junior year, Grubb not only asked Lucy Davis not to call her "Miss George Ann" but also invited the maid to come into her room and sit down.[48] The preceding fall, Grubb had interviewed kitchen and laundry employees as part of a project for her American Minorities class. Indignant about what she discovered, she pushed the project's findings forward the following year.[49] When the white students' letter of protest against the working conditions of African American employees appeared in *The Sun Dial* on Halloween, George Ann Grubb's name was first on the list of signatures.

The class project that provided the findings cited in the two letters had been assigned by Meg Green '65, who was serving in 1967-68 as a sabbatical replacement in sociology. Asked "to select any situation on campus in which racial discrimination might exist" and to interview some of those involved, the students produced studies from which Green quoted in a report she sent to President Quillian in April of 1968. Drawing on the students' findings, Green described working conditions, wages, hiring and training practices, and communication that affected African American workers. She asserted the need for "drastic overhaul" of college policy, and she also recommended specific improvements.[50] Her students had seen the tiny Dark Closet where the maids in Main Hall took their breaks and had heard the "edged anger" of some of the younger kitchen

employees.[51] When students visited the laundry where their own clothes were washed and ironed, they found conditions worse than any on campus. In this building, built in 1906 and enlarged in 1909, interior walls were dark, lighting and ventilation poor, segregated restrooms inadequate; there were complaints of rats. Green's own memory of what the laundry looked like in 1967 was still vivid almost thirty years later: "The floors were very old and rough and kind of splintery. It was terribly, terribly hot. [The walls were] brown, the floor caked with--you can imagine how old that place must have been and how much human filth must have come and gone through the laundry bags, back and forth." The laundry, with its single toilet for twenty female African American employees and its padlocked bathroom for two white employees, reminded her of places she had seen as a child at her grandfather's home in Chatham, Virginia: "They were backwaters of the southern way of life, and that's what this laundry was. Only people who were black worked like this. Here on this gracious campus the only really ratty places were the ones that we expected people who were employed here to use." By the time she had finished writing her report to President Quillian, she saw clearly that "there was a way of life here, with all of these outwardly visible symbols of institutional racism, that were nevertheless gentle and graceful, and could probably go on forever because they were gentle and graceful and because they led to such lovely results. A place like this that stands for noble ideals is at variance with itself when these things exist." Although at the outset she had not thought ahead about the implications for the administration of the students' findings, by the time she finished the report, she could see "some real implications for what the college needs to do."[52]

The students' Halloween protest against African American employees' working conditions could not have taken the administration completely by surprise. President Quillian had received Green's report the previous April. The fact that the laundry was scheduled for demolition to make way for a new building undoubtedly accounted for some of the reluctance to spend money there; the customs and unspoken assumptions of white supremacy that had long governed the college's domestic routines probably accounted for the rest. But once the students had publicly called attention to conditions that were inconsistent with "a college community which prides itself . . . on its progressive stands on human rights," the president and treasurer quickly responded. Within four days of the *Sun Dial* letters, President Quillian and treasurer V. Howard Belcher met with the students. The two administrators cleared up some misconceptions about wages and fringe benefits, acknowledged that the college had not "'adequately provided the staff with restroom and lounge facilities,'" and announced plans to improve the laundry during Christmas vacation.[53] By February of 1969 the laundry boasted new light fixtures and window shades and a fresh coat of paint, as well as new and desegregated bathrooms.[54] In May *The Sun Dial* editorialized that R-MWC, unlike some campuses where students' voices went unheard, was a place where "going through channels" really worked to bring about change.[55]

The 1968 labor relations controversy was important for several reasons, not least that it was the first occasion when African American students organized and joined with whites to protest racial discrimination at the college. A second reason for the controversy's importance was that, as with the sit-ins at Patterson's eight years before, it was students who, by pointing out the contradiction between principle and practice,

forced their elders to confront and address a morally reprehensible inequity. The controversy mattered for yet another reason: it clearly marked the collision of past and present, of incongruous ways of life on the campus that could not continue to co-exist. The integration of white and black students on equal terms contradicted the inequities of the old segregated system with its plantation atmosphere, a system in which all students on the campus were white and all African Americans on the campus, working for low pay in less than desirable conditions, served those white students.[56] This incongruity had to end. In May of 1969, while the laundry's new coat of white paint was still fresh, the administration announced that the building would be torn down and students would rent their linens from a commercial service and would be responsible for their personal laundry, as well as for cleaning their own rooms. [57] Integration of the student body combined with economic considerations to make the change in domestic arrangements inevitable. Even if the financial consequences of revamping the old housekeeping system had not been prohibitive, its entrenched moral inequities could not have been easily eradicated.

Yet at this time of transition between old ways and new ones, old and new were inextricably connected. As Ann Richards came up the hill from the Dell after her graduation in 1969—along with Lois Dooley, Ann was the first African American to receive a Randolph-Macon diploma—she saw Helen White, Lucy Davis, and other black employees standing in a group, waving to her; she ran over to them, and they hugged her.[58] Their embrace symbolized the family feeling expressed in the literal kinship between Lucy Davis and her granddaughter, Pat Washington. Davis considered herself "the happiest person in the world, because she was going to have a granddaughter to

finish Randolph-Macon Woman's College." That granddaughter at her graduation would hand over her diploma for display in her grandmother's living room, where it would stay until Lucy Davis died.[59] Halloween 1968, with its letters of protest about working conditions for African American employees like Lucy Davis, and its costume party attended by African American freshman Pat Washington, dressed in the ghostly garb of the KKK, is surely one of the most poignantly unstable moments in the history of race relations at Randolph-Macon, a moment that delineates with breathtaking clarity the complex personal implications of a social revolution.

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Pat Washington's Randolph-Macon diploma is part of the Legacy Museum's current exhibit, "Prejudice, Perseverance, and Pride: Black Education in Central Virginia, 1923-1970."

Notes

Abbreviations used in notes

AB *R-MWC Alumnae Bulletin*

BTM Board of Trustees minutes

Heli *Helianthus* (R-MWC yearbook)

N&A *News & Advance*

SD The Sundial (R-MWC student newspaper)

WFQ William F. Quillian, Jr., R-MWC president, 1952-1978

1 Here and throughout this paper, I use the term "race" not, to borrow Henry Louis Gates's phrases, as "an objective term of classification" but instead as "a dangerous trope" to stand for an idea of difference that does not have firm biological footing but that does have profound social, cultural, political, and personal implications. See Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *"Race," Writing and Difference* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986), 4-5, and Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage, 1998).

2 Clarence Page, "Why Black History Is Important for Whites," *N&A*, 19 January 2003.

3 Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1992), 46.

4 BTM 10 May 1963.

5 John H. Pearson to Randolph-Macon Chapter Presidents, 28 May 1963. See also Alumnae Advisers to the Board of Trustees to the Board of Directors of the Alumnae Association, 10 May 1963; Anne Jeter Ribble to Members of the Board of Directors of the Alumnae Association, 13 May 1963. These letters and a description of the process by which the policy was developed were published in *AB* 56.4 (1963): 18, 19; see also *SD* 16 May 1963.

6 According to minutes of the May, 1961, board meeting, when trustee Robert Watts asked for confirmation from President Quillian that "Randolph-Macon was not available to colored people" and that African American applicants had been so informed, WFQ simply said that there had been one Negro applicant. In 1995, WFQ said he believed that in the minutes the word "applicant" had mistakenly been used for "inquiry" (WFQ to

author, 24 Oct. 1995).

7 According to C. Vann Woodward, before southern resistance became entrenched in the mid 'fifties, about forty private colleges and universities in the South had admitted Negro students; by 1953, African Americans were enrolled in twenty-three public colleges in the South at the graduate level, in ten at the undergraduate level (*The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 2d ed. [New York: Oxford U P, 1966], 143, 145). Among Virginia colleges, Virginia Polytechnic Institute admitted its first black student in 1953. According to Peter Wallenstein, this student "'became the first black undergraduate admitted to any historically white public four-year institution of higher education in Virginia or indeed in the former Confederacy" (*Virginia Tech, Land-Grant University, 1872-1997: History of a School, a State, a Nation* [Blacksburg, Va.: Pocahontas Press, 1997], 187). The University of Virginia desegregated at the graduate level in 1950, at the undergraduate level in 1955 (Muhammad S. Yusuf to author, e-mail, 8 Mar. 2002; see also Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 180-81). Emory and Henry College integrated in the summer of 1963 (Scott Arnold, telephone conversation, August 1995). Mary Washington College had a black day student in the summer of 1962 and another the following summer; the first black boarder came in 1964 (Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 222). Lynchburg College trustees voted unanimously in the fall of 1964 to eliminate the word "white" from its original charter, and the first African American student was admitted in the spring semester of 1965 (WFQ, "A Chapter in Lynchburg's History" [paper presented to the Sphex Club, Lynchburg, Va., 16 Nov. 1989]). Radford admitted black students in 1966 (Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 222). Washington and Lee admitted two African American students, one in the law school and one in the first-year class, in 1966-67 ("May Queens and Effigies," *Newsweek*, 5 June 1967, 98). Sweet Briar had to appeal to state and then federal court and eventually to the U.S. Supreme Court for relief from the requirement in Indiana Fletcher Williams' will that the college be open only to whites. Litigation began in 1964 and continued until 1967, with the first two African American students entering in the fall of 1967 (WFQ, "A Chapter"). Hollins integrated in the mid-1960s (Frances J. Niederer, *Hollins College: An Illustrated History* [Charlottesville: U P of Virginia, 1973], 187). Mary Baldwin College opened admission to African American students in 1963 and enrolled its first African American student in 1968 (Patricia H. Menk, *To Live In Time: The Sesquicentennial History of Mary Baldwin College, 1842-1992* [Verona, Va.: Mid Valley Press, 1992], 253-54, 315). VMI admitted African Americans in 1968, and Hampden-Sydney College admitted its first African American student in 1968 (John Luster Brinkley, *On This Hill: A Narrative History of Hampden-Sydney College 1774-1994* [Hampden-Sydney College, 1994], 777). Longwood and Madison "began to enroll black students by 1971" (Wallenstein, *Virginia Tech*, 222).

8 Undated note to Mary Edith Bentley, R-MWC archives.

9 Mack Johnson, "8 More Negroes Booked for Sit-Ins," *News*, 14 Feb. 1961.

10 Elizabeth Hubbard, phone conversation, 23 Jan. 1995.

11 Jane Hubbard Johnson, phone interview, 23 Jan. 1995.

12 Johnson, interview; Mildred Hudgins '26, interview, Lynchburg, Va., 11 Sept. 1993.

13 This faculty member has not been identified.

14 Johnson, interview.

15 *SD* 25 Mar. 1965.

16 Jane Hubbard, "The Angry Young Man," *Potpourri* 12.3 (Spring 1965), 17.

17 Johnson, interview.

18 According to *AB* 58.4 (1965): 5, three African Americans were accepted for entrance in 1965. Ann Richards received a scholarship supported by "Project '65," a student-sponsored fund begun in 1964 to encourage black students to enroll (*AB* 62.2 [1969]: 10-11; for more on Project '65, see *SD* 10 Dec. 1964 and 4 Feb. and 22 Apr. 1965). For further details about the first African American students, see Hudgins, interview; *SD* 25 Mar. 1965; *Potpourri* 12.3 (1965): 17; "May Queens," 101; *SD* 3 Dec. 1964; Shirley Wilson Strickland '45, interview, Lynchburg, Va., 19 Jan. 1995; Ann Richards Kearns '69, remarks, Black Alumnae Mini Reunion, videotape, Lynchburg, Va., 20 Mar. 1990, copy in Alumnae Office, R-MWC; Helen Greer White, interview, "In Celebration of Virginia Women: Their Cultural History," videotape, Virginia Women's Cultural History Project, Lynchburg, Va., 12 Dec. 1984; Evanda Gale Jefferson '70, interview, Lynchburg, Va., 9 Feb. 1995; *SD* 13 Feb. 1989; and notes from conversations with Elizabeth Diuguid Hubbard, Jane Hubbard Johnson, Brenda Wilson '72, Nancy Tolley Gray '66, and Alice Louise Neff Lucan '66. In addition to those regularly enrolled, several black students visited R-MWC on exchanges during this period (see *SD* 22 Apr. 1965, 27 Oct. 1966, 9 Feb. and 13 and 20 Apr. 1967, and 14 Mar. and 9 May 1968). Earlier, exchanges with northern colleges had involved R-MWC students in sometimes uncomfortable discussions about race (see, e.g., *SD* 21 Feb. 1963). Plans for an exchange with Bennett College in 1990 (*SD* 8 Oct. 1990) did not materialize.

19 Strickland, interview.

20 Kearns, remarks; see also "May Queens," 101.

21 African American alumnae with family connections to the college included Jane Hubbard, Patricia Washington '72, Dianne Pannell '77, Robin Walthall '80, Anne Edmonds '77, Gloria Simon '89, Daphne Waugh '94, and Dwana Waugh '00.

22 White, interview. White students also experienced the care and concern of African American employees; see, e.g., *AB* 80.1 (1986): 13.

23 Jefferson, interview.

24 Kearns, phone conversation, 4 Mar. 1996.

25 Jefferson, interview.

26 Ibid.; see also Gray and Lucan.

27 Jefferson, interview. All quotations in the following paragraph are from the same source.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.; "May Queens," 101.

30 Jefferson, interview.

31 Ibid.

32 Qtd. by Charles V. Willie, "The Social and Historical Context: A Case Study of Philanthropic Assistance," *The Education of African-Americans,* ed. Charles V. Willie, Antoine M. Garibaldi, and Wornie L. Reed (Boston: Auburn, 1991), 21.

33 *SD* 31 Oct. 1968. The letter was signed by all nine African American students: Lois Dooley '69, Ann Richards '69, Evanda Gale Jefferson '70, Janice Embrey '71, Pearl Green '72, Charlynn R. Bennett '72, Dianne Oliphant '72, Patricia Washington '72, and Brenda Wilson '72. The tenth signatory was Salmata Johnson '70, from Sierra Leone, R-MWC's first African international student; see *AB* 63.4 (1970): 25-26, and *SD* 26 Oct. 1967.

34 *SD* 31 Oct. 1968; see also *AB* 62.2 (1969): 8 and 62.3 (1969), 10-11.The letter was signed by George Ann Grubb '70, Mary Carrico '71, Debby Bransford '71, Kathy Webb '71, Anne Gates '71, and Elizabeth Keesee '69. All these students, along with Ann Richards '69, were officers in the YWCA, of which Mildred Hudgins was still executive director. In the 1960s the YWCA continued programs and activities designed to address racism; see, e.g., *SD* articles for the following dates: 6 Oct. 1960; 20 Feb. and 21 May 1964; 4 and 11 Feb., 4 Mar., 8 Apr., and 18 Sept. 1965; 18 Mar., 3 Nov., and 1 Dec. 1966; 16 and 30 Nov. and 7 Dec. 1967. The Y Forum on Poverty held in December of 1967 was attended by over 500 students, more than half of them from other colleges. Mildred Hudgins described this event as "'the most integrated activity we have ever had at Randolph-Macon'" (qtd. in *SD* 7 Dec. 1967).

35 *Heli* 1969. On the symbolism of KKK headgear, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford U P, 1982), 454-55.

36 Patricia Washington Parrish '72, interview, Lynchburg, Va., 29 Aug. 1995.

37 Patricia Washington to Mary Edith Bentley, 13 Feb. 1961; R-MWC archives.

38 Margaret Downing Acquarulo 72, conversation, Hartford, Conn., 3 Mar. 1995.

39 Margaret Downing Acquarulo '72 to author, 28 Jan. 1996.

40 Parrish, interview; remaining quotations in this paragraph are from the same source. In contrast to Parrish's memory, Acquarulo did "not recall us ever arguing about anything" (Acquarulo to author, 28 Jan. 1996).

41 Parrish, interview.

42 Ibid.

43 Meg Green, "An Exploration of Some Aspects of Labor Relations at Randolph-Macon Woman's College: A Report to the President by Meg Green, Instructor of Sociology," Lynchburg, Va., Apr. 1968, 12.

44 Parrish, interview.

45 Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin': African American Expressive Culture from Its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1998): "Through parody and ironic reversal [African Americans in postbellum parades] signified against whites, unmasking the masking practices that erased blacks' humanity" (149; see also138, 144).

46 In black dialect, to call someone out of his name is to call him a name that is not his own; in other words, it is an insult.

47 George Ann Grubb Samuels '70, conversation, Lynchburg, Va., 19 May 1995; see Sarah Patton Boyle, *The Desegregated Heart: A Virginian's Stand in a Time of Transition* (New York: William Morrow, 1962), 98. Grubb's paper on massive resistance was called "Stand Steady, Prince Edward!" (Sophomore Colloquium, R-MWC, 5 Dec. 1967; copy in R-MWC archives). The Committee for Understanding Racial Awareness, of which Carter Heyward '67 was a part, was started by a group of students at Union Theological Seminary (New York); see *SD* for the following dates in 1968: 4 and 11 Apr., 9 May, 3 Oct., and 7 and 14 Nov.

48 Parrish, interview.

49 Meg Green Maguire '65, phone conversation, 15 Nov. 1995.

50 Green, "Exploration."

51 Meg Green Maguire '65, interview, Lynchburg, Va., 1 Apr. 1995.

52 Ibid.

53 *SD* 7 Nov. 1968. WFQ later commented that the students' concern was "appropriate" and that "probably the administration needed some prodding along this line" (WFQ interview, 15 July 1993). Student government took up the labor relations issue in December (*SD* 12 Dec. 1968, 16 Jan. 1969).

54 *SD* 6 Feb. 1969.

55 *SD* 8 May 1969; see also *SD* 1 May 1969 and 5 Feb. 1970.

56 Following Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, I use "plantation" as a descriptive term, not an analytical one (*Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* [Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988], 32). Cf. *AB* 59.2 (1966): 20, *SD* 19 Apr. 1973.

57 *SD* 8 May 1969.

58 Kearns, phone conversation.

59 Parrish, interview.