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featuring
The 5th Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities
"Historical Biography and the Privilege of Unknowing"
By Nell Irvin Painter



When we ask who we are and what our lives ought to mean, we are using the humanities. The Nebraska Humanities Council enhances the quality of life in communities across our state through programs that study the human race, its achievements, its creations, its dreams and aspirations, its failures and triumphs. The NHC promotes a better understanding of Nebraska – who we are and where we have been – to build a better future.

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On the Cover:

The NHC expresses appreciation to Art McWilliams Jr. for permission to print the cover photograph from the McWilliams family collection. In her address at the biography symposium following the Governor's Lecture in the Humanities, Nell Irvin Painter explored how the historian can use photographs to reconstruct the history of people whose lives have been circumscribed in some way. The McWilliams collection, Painter said, will be a useful tool in overcoming Nebraska's own "privilege of unknowing."

From the Chair

by Pamela Snow, Chair of the Nebraska Humanities Council

On September 7 the Nebraska Humanities Council, in collaboration with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, presented the 5th Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities.



Pamela Snow

Noted biographer Nell Irvin Painter presented a thought-provoking lecture on historical biography, drawing examples from her recent biography "Sojourner Truth, A Life, A Symbol."

As the title indicates, Painter's depiction of Sojourner Truth is multidimensional – the recreation of a life based on factual evidence and an exploration into the creation of an individual as a symbol for all time.

Most of us are familiar with the conventional historical biography, biographies of well-known and well-documented individuals whose lives are seen as primary shapers of societies.

Less familiar are the biographies that Painter refers to as "subaltern," biographies of people whose lives are restricted in some way. Although they are rarely seen as individuals as in conventional biography, they too are shapers of societies.

Even now, Painter's discussion of the relationship between conventional and subaltern historical biography and the "privilege of unknowing" continues to spark conversation among people who attended the lecture.

The "privilege of unknowing" is a phrase first employed by critic Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and can be best defined as not knowing, or ignoring, something you could, or should, easily know. In an effort to present the focus of an historical biography in the best possible light for a contemporary audience or to have the subject serve as a symbol for purposes beyond the contextual reality of their

Most of us are familiar with the conventional historical biography, biographies of well-known and well-documented individuals whose lives are seen as primary shapers of societies. Less familiar are the biographies that Painter refers to as "subaltern," biographies of people whose lives are restricted in some way.

lives, the author overlooks, ignores, chooses not to know.

As I listened to the replay of Painter's lecture on the Nebraska Humanities Council's public radio program, "Connections," and as I now reread the transcript, I am struck by the number of probing questions Painter asked the audience during the course of her lecture.

I am also struck by a feeling of unease as I think about her examination of the "privilege of unknowing" and as I witness its application not only in historical biography, but in the larger societal and political sense.

It is the humanities at its best – thought-provoking, challenging and perhaps one step closer to the truth.



Historical Biography and the Privilege of Unknowing

The 5th Annual Governor's Lecture
in the Humanities, Lincoln, Nebraska,
September 7, 2000

By Nell Irvin Painter



Gov. Mike Johanns introduces Painter.

We all know that biography is a hot topic. If you go to Barnes and Noble on the Web, you will find that biography has its own link. Amazon.com says that it stocks something like 180,000 biographies. They sell well, and it's doing well in the American marketplace.

One of the things that make biography so attractive is its intimacy. Biography brings you together with one person. The reader comes to know one person well, kind of like a family member or friend.

Unlike scholarship in the humanities or the social sciences, biography seems unencumbered by theory. It seems natural. It seems almost unseemly to speak of biography in terms of culture or theory or ideology. It almost runs counter to the whole reason for biography.

Why should you generalize about a culture when you're talking about one life? You may ask that, and that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to generalize because theory is the work of the scholar.

I'm going to talk about two kinds of biography, one I'm calling conventional and one I'm calling subaltern. I'll talk about these two kinds of biography in relationship to a phenomenon called "the privilege of unknowing."

Continued next page

This address is in two parts. In the first, longer part, I'll talk about subaltern biography and the privilege of unknowing. I'm going to use my own experience as a biographer of Sojourner Truth as a kind of case study. The second, shorter part will deal with conventional biography. I'll mention three biographical figures, very briefly – Thomas Jefferson, Charles Lindbergh and William Randolph Hearst.

What I'd like you to remember is that the privilege of unknowing allows authors and readers of biographies to ignore much about the lives in question. In the case of subaltern subjects, what we ignore is what is uniquely individual, to read and write as if we did not know that subaltern subjects, especially African-American subjects, lived individual lives, and they lived them sometimes in ways that were not politically correct.



Nell Irvin Painter

Sometimes we read as if each subaltern individual were interchangeable with every other, as if the Negro or the African American or the woman could be just the same as any other. We choose not to know individual difference.

In the case of conventional subjects, we ignore the ideology, the tenor of the culture. In those cases, we read and write as if we did not know that conventional subjects, especially privileged white men, lived their lives in the context of a society that might be politically incorrect.

We choose not to know the racism and the sexism of the cultural context. I'm going to close with my disappointment over the gulf that continues to separate the portrayal of American society in subaltern biography and the portrayal of American society in conventional, prize-winning biographies.

In subaltern biography, disparities of power play gigantic roles, but in conventional biography, in the biography that wins prizes, those biographies seem to come from some other world, a world of perfectly equal opportunity. The thoughtful reader of historical biography sometimes must come away wondering, "How can it be that subaltern subjects and conventional subjects might live in the same culture, the same country, the same time?"

Now you know my conclusions. Let me go back, start over, define my terms – historical biography, conventional biography, subaltern biography and the privilege of unknowing.

When we talk about biography, we usually divide it. We talk about literary biography, and we talk about historical biography. I'm not going to talk about literary biography, but I want to mention it because most people who write about biography write about literary biography.

Historical biography is biography about people who were important historically. Usually they're political figures or people who held power. Very often they're white men, and the people who write them use historical methods. That is to say, they go to the archives and they read historical sources and they say, "This happened, this happened and this happened."

It unrolls historically. We don't spend a lot of time talking about the artwork or the artistry or whatever that the person might have made on the side. So, they concentrate on what happened and give you a person one step at a time. That's historical biography.

Now, I'm only talking about historical biography, but I'm dividing it into two – conventional biography, subaltern biography. Conventional biography is sort of normal biography, great figures, great people, great men. These are the biographies that usually win prizes. The quintessential conventional biography would be a biography of Abraham Lincoln.

Those tell you where the person was born, perhaps what the ancestors were, the childhood, the education, the greatness and then the death. Usually, this is about one life, and you don't get very much about what was going on around the life. You don't get very much of the culture or the society. Those kinds of biographies usually don't have theory in them.

Subaltern biography is the biography of subjects who are people whose lives are circumscribed in some way. Subalterns can be white women because women still do face limitations in life on account of their sex or their gender. Subaltern biography can be African-American people who are surrounded by prejudice, by racism - especially in the 19th century or before - just a whole series of impediments.

Subaltern biography is about people who are *relatively* powerless. I stress the *relatively* because not all subaltern people are equally powerless, and one person can change over a lifetime. For instance, when I was a young black girl I was more subaltern than I am now as a chaired professor, not to mention a governor's lecturer.

To a certain extent, we read all biographies for lessons on how to live. How did somebody like me live a life before, how do I face those same challenges? But when we read subaltern biographies, the biographies of women or people of color or other racial or ethnic minorities, we identify with those subjects.

For instance, I have heard white women who are biographers of white women express chagrin when they discover that their subject was a lousy parent or was a treacherous friend. "Oh, I'm so disappointed!"

Or, for instance, a black male biographer of a famous black man, discovering late in the life that the subject became a party hack. You don't want to put that part in your book because we read these biographies - and often write them -

If you exercise the privilege of unknowing, you're not knowing something you could easily know. You're choosing not to know. That's the privilege of unknowing.

as if they were us, as if they were our role models, as if they were our family.

So, if that white woman is a terrible parent, it says something about another white woman or about her reader or about her biographer. If this black woman turns out to be a liar and a cheat, somehow that says something about me. There's that kind of tightness in subaltern biography that doesn't necessarily exist in conventional biography.

The privilege of unknowing. Now, this is not my own phrase. It comes from a critic named Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. She talks about regimes of truth. What can be said? What must be forgotten? What should be left out? What should be emphasized?

For instance, part of our American regime of truth is the openness and equality of opportunity. And then somebody will say, "Hey, hey, wait! What about those people who were enslaved and couldn't read and write?" That is not part of the regime of truth. We forget that part. Do you see what I mean about what we forget?

So, if you exercise the privilege of unknowing, you're not knowing something you could easily know. You're choosing not to know. That's the privilege of unknowing.

For instance, if I were standing... no I wouldn't be standing in front of you a hundred years ago. How am I going to do this? Ummm, this is hard. If, somehow, I were standing in front of you a

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hundred years ago... you'd be all white men. This is not working.

Say Ron Hull were here a hundred years ago and he said, "Every great Nebraskan is on videotape." A hundred years ago? Well, let's say that Ron Hull stood in front of you last week and said that every great Nebraskan is on videotape. And, then last week I said, "Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey. What about the first black woman pioneer who founded the city of Lincoln?"

And he'd say, "Oh, yeah, I forgot about that." That would be the privilege of unknowing. Do you see what I mean? We're all caught up in times. If I take you too far back when you wouldn't know about a famous black woman, then I couldn't be there. If I do it yesterday, then you would know better already. I hope you understand. I think you get the point that there are some things we don't want to know.

So, there are some things we don't want to know because they don't work with our scholarship,

and they don't work in our everyday life. And, especially in conventional biography, we don't want to know some things about the context in which individual lives unfurled.

I want to give you a case study from Sojourner Truth. I call this part of my lecture "Unknowing Sojourner Truth: Aren't I a Woman?"

Sojourner Truth did not say, "Aren't I a woman?" Sojourner Truth was born in upstate New York about 1797. She died in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1883. She did go to a women's rights meeting in Akron, Ohio, in 1851. She did speak up.

In 1863, 12 years later, a woman named Frances Dana Gage wrote an article called "Sojourner Truth." In that article, she said Sojourner Truth went to a meeting in Akron, Ohio. It was a meeting of white women who didn't want anything to do with black women, but then all the white men started trashing the white women, and the white women started not knowing what to do, and they were all being bowed down, and Sojourner Truth rose up like a force of nature and with great strength said, "I have shucked and I have bound and I have hoed and aren't I a woman?" And then all the white women said, "Oh, yes, yes, yes! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!" And, Sojourner Truth carried the day.

Is that the story you know?

I won't take you through all the history, but let me just tell you that I am not the first person to notice that Sojourner Truth did not say, "Aren't I a woman?" Another biographer, in 1993, noticed that and wrote it. And before that, a whole collection of anti-slavery speeches and articles called the Black Abolitionist Papers also figured that out in the early '90s. But I think my book has gotten more attention, so the whole question of "Aren't I a woman?" and Sojourner Truth has come up with intensity.

I discovered that Frances Dana Gage, who was at this meeting and who wrote this article 12

years later, made it up. She invented "Aren't I a woman?" She invented a whole lot in that article. She was speaking more to Harriet Beecher Stowe than she was to what was going on with Sojourner Truth.

Sojourner Truth *did* say something to that effect, but she didn't say those words. If you're interested in this, look at chapter 18 in "Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol," and you will find the fine-grain history of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Frances Dana Gage and Sojourner Truth and how that phrase came to be.

What I want to concentrate on is the response. I got very good reviews. I will not complain about my reviews, but most historian reviewers talked about Sojourner Truth's life. They didn't get into "Aren't I a woman?" They also didn't talk much about the photographs because this was all stuff that wasn't usually found in biographies, especially subaltern biographies.

The Women's Review of Books didn't review the book. They couldn't find a reviewer who was willing to go public saying, "Ohhhhhh!"

A colleague of mine who teaches at a Southern university told me that she taught my book, and after they read that chapter on "Aren't I a woman?" that says Sojourner Truth did not say, "Aren't I a woman?" one of the students came up in tears afterwards and said, "No, no, she had to say it! She had to say it!"

Someone I know, a scholar, said – I think, half joking – "I think she said it. It sounds like her."

Earlier this year, I took part in a biographies conference at the New York Public Library, and we were speaking to people who work in the library. These were *book people*. If anybody would know anything about books, and about reading, these would be the people.

In the discussion that came up, I said, "Well, Sojourner Truth didn't say, 'Aren't I a woman?'"

And, a woman in the back said, "Wait! Wait! Wait! She must have said it *someplace, sometime!*" This is a librarian. I said, "I'm sorry. Maybe she did say it someplace, sometime, but I'm a historian and I need a source."

All this is to say that many readers desperately want Sojourner Truth to have said, "Aren't I a woman?" I keep saying that there are many greatnesses about Sojourner Truth, and there are many reasons to admire her, many reasons to respect what she did, her courage, her ability to keep at feminism and anti-slavery, her overcoming of a wretched childhood. She was a slave until she was 30 years old.

There are many reasons to admire Sojourner Truth, but for many people taking away that one little tagline makes Sojourner Truth less a symbol and more of a person. That is a kind of unknowing.

I want people to renounce that privilege of unknowing and to admit that a subaltern figure like Sojourner Truth can be an individual, can be a person in her own time, can live a long life, can change over her life. And, it's a life we need to know in its own integrity, its individuality.

What about the privilege of unknowing in conventional biography? In conventional biography usually the figure stands alone, stands free, really unfettered, and the wider society doesn't weigh very heavily. Sometimes, if it does appear, it's as the American mood or something like that. So that, unless you're talking about someone who's experienced slavery, somebody like Sojourner Truth, you wouldn't necessarily know that there was slavery around figures who were, say, living in the South.

A recent biography of Thomas Jefferson, a prize-winning biography of Thomas Jefferson, "American Sphinx," never really gets into Thomas Jefferson's thorny relationships with people around him who were enslaved. You're saying, "What about Sally Hemings?"

Continued next page

This book came out before the recent DNA, but even before the recent DNA we knew that something was going on. So, in this biography we get Thomas Jefferson kind of as a lonely figure who may be surrounded by an institution but not surrounded by people whose freedom is fettered. The Sally Hemings story, in this biography, gets put in an appendix, kind of off back on the side. That virtual silence is a kind of privilege of unknowing.

I should also add that Thomas Jefferson said nothing, and his biographer respected that silence. One way of respecting that silence is not to read the materials that come out of African-American studies and African-American history, black women's history, and the biographer in question this time also did not read that material. Not reading is a way of exercising the privilege of unknowing.

Ralph Bunche was a black American figure. Charles Lindbergh was, of course, the famous American flyer, the American hero. In a biography of Ralph Bunche, we encounter Charles Lindbergh as an example of narrow-minded, racist thought. But, if we look at the biography of Lindbergh, we discover a tiny acknowledgment that Lindbergh believed in eugenics. Yes, Lindbergh did go to Nazi Germany, and, yes, he did get the highest award that the Nazis gave. They also gave this award to Henry Ford.

But, reading those biographies, you would not know that this way of thinking belonged to thousands of other Americans. To recognize the existence of that kind of thought in early 20th century America is not to condemn all Americans, but to recognize it is to put those figures in a world in which a Ralph Bunche lives, in which a Ralph Bunche faces discrimination and difficulties.

So, in terms of the Lindbergh biography, if you did not know United States intellectual history,

you would not be able to pick up the hints about Lindbergh's ideology.

Finally, to close, I want to mention a book that I have not had the chance of reading. This was reviewed in the New York Times Book Review in July. It's a biography of William Randolph Hearst. It's by a very good historian, by a historian I know. (Of course, all the historians I know are *good* historians.) At any rate, I don't say these things to condemn the historians, but rather to condemn a kind of writing of biography.

According to the reviewer, the biographer is *puzzled* that William Randolph Hearst cozied up to Mussolini and cozied up to Hitler. He saw Franklin Roosevelt as a communist dupe. Hearst actually commissioned Mussolini as a columnist. This is something I did not know. And, he asked his editors in New York to tone down their critical coverage of the Nazis in Berlin.

According to the reviewer, Hearst *misjudged* Hitler. According to the reviewer, it was a singular failure that he, Hearst, was blind to the realities of Nazi rule and Nazi anti-Semitism. At the end of his examination of all the material, the biographer confesses that Hearst's confidence in Hitler remains *baffling*.

It's just that sort of thing that I'm calling the privilege of unknowing, that a biographer could find a tendency in American life baffling. It's as if you have to put on a hood and a sheet and go out and burn crosses before people can realize that you believe in things we don't believe in.

But, looking backwards, we ought to be able to know that there existed in the United States in earlier times bigotry, anti-Semitism, racism, sexism and a host of other ideologies that I hope that we're moving away from.

I want to leave you with a hope that you will renounce the privilege of unknowing, in order

better to know individuals, in order better to know our past, because we must acknowledge the past and acknowledge the role of the past in individual lives before we can move forward as biographers and as readers.

Nell Irvin Painter is Edwards Professor of American History at Princeton University and author of "Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol," published in 1996 to wide acclaim. Painter also wrote "Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction," which traces ex-slaves as they moved northward after the Civil

War. Director of the African American Studies program at Princeton, Painter teaches the history of the United States South. She attended the University of California, Berkeley; the University of Bordeaux, France; and the University of Ghana, West Africa; and took her Ph.D. in history at Harvard University. She taught at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill before joining Princeton's faculty in 1988.



Painter attends Girls Inc. event in Omaha

Nell Irvin Painter participated in several important educational opportunities for Nebraskans during her early September visit to the state.

Her Governor's Lecture in the Humanities also served as the kick-off event for the two-day Carroll R. Pauley Memorial Endowment Symposium on "Biography and Historical Analysis," co-sponsored by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln History Department, the UNL Humanities Center and the Nebraska Humanities Council. The proceedings of the conference will be published by UNL.

Following the symposium, Painter attended a reception in her honor at Girls Incorporated of Omaha, an event co-sponsored by the



Nell Painter (center) with Girls Inc. members who performed "Aren't I a Woman?" From left they are Shayla Boone, JaMese Coty, Shardea Gallion and Rosha Taylor. On the far right is Angela T. Green, director of career and life planning for Girls Inc.

Omaha Chapter of Links Inc., Girls Inc., State Farm Insurance and the NHC.



Girls Inc. members (from left) JaMese Coty, Shayla Boone, Rosha Taylor and Shardea Gallion perform.

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of Links and the 25th anniversary of Girls Inc., several girls offered a dramatic presentation of "Aren't I a Woman?" After the dramatization, Painter applauded the girls' performance and spoke to the audience about why we think it is important to believe that Sojourner Truth spoke the words credited to her at the 1851 women's rights meeting in Akron, Ohio, and what the motives were for the 19th century writers who helped create the mythic speech "Aren't I a Woman?"

Following the lecture, Nell Irvin Painter responded to questions from the audience. These are a few of the exchanges.

Q: It was unusual that in his day Lindbergh wasn't criticized for being a fascist, but that he made commentary on the power of the Nazis.

Painter: One of the reasons that Hitler invited Lindbergh over was to show off the Nazi Wehrmacht, the war machine, so he would say something like that and scare Americans, keep them out of the war. But, it's never been a hanging crime to be a racist or a sexist or any of

these horrible things. People say, "Oh well, that's what people believed back then," and then that's that, but never stopping for a moment to see what that meant.

I know that when I talk about history and about biography, I'm talking about two genres that are in tension, so I'm not saying those of you who read biography or those of you who write biography should start writing history. I don't mean that, but stop turning a blind eye.



Q: How did you arrive at the conclusion that Sojourner Truth did not say, "Aren't I a woman?"

Painter: There was somebody taking notes at the time, somebody who knew Sojourner Truth – in fact, her host, somebody who was an abolitionist. His name was Marius Robinson. So, we actually have somebody trying to write down what she said. He admitted that it's very difficult to capture the whole of her self-presentation because it was also performance, as well as just the words on the page.

But Frances Dana Gage, in her report 12 years later, has Sojourner Truth saying, "Aren't I a

woman?" four times, and if Marius Robinson had never met Sojourner Truth and was not used to hearing her speak – she had a Dutch accent – if he were not used to hearing her speak, he might have missed it. He might have missed it once. He might have missed it twice. Say he was distracted, and he missed it a third time. But four times?

I'm not saying that either Gage or Robinson, the historical sources, were exercising the privilege of unknowing. I'm saying that readers and audience members very much want to hold on to a kind of symbolic Sojourner Truth and make her someone who satisfies our needs, instead of a person with a past. I call my book "Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol" because I wanted to do both things. I wanted to talk about the person who was born in the late 18th century and who flourished in the early and mid-19th century and also the person we need, the strong black woman, the woman we can insert into women's history so it isn't all white and into African-American history so it isn't all male.

The privilege of unknowing is not realizing, in a sense, that historical methods are useful for subaltern subjects as well as for conventional subjects. You can't ask a historian-biographer to try to make up something that's not in the sources. We don't work that way.

Q: You associated the notion of the privilege of unknowing with regimes of truth. Why didn't you call them regimes of untruth?

Painter: I didn't call them regimes of untruth because that's what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick said, and I want to give credit where credit is due to someone who thought of a very useful concept. As a black scholar, I'm very sensitive to people using my work without citation, so I don't want to do that to anybody else.

Q: Why is the phrase so important? "Aren't I a woman?" As you said in your lecture, Sojourner Truth said something to that effect. It seems to me that people would be much more concerned with the effect of what she said, rather than just the phrase itself.

Painter: I've asked myself that, too. I've had so many responses of people who want desperately to hold on to the phrase that I've had to try to find the answer. The answer is that people want a symbol, a tagline, a slogan, and they don't realize that there is something methodological and something historical. The methodological thing is that historians can't pretend that there's something there when it's not, even though people want it. They want something easy to hold onto. It sounds conspiratorial, but I think for many of us it's easier to have a simple figure, a stark outline, a tagline, than it is to have a fuller character. That's the methodological part. And that's also the historical part, I guess.

I was really interested in Sojourner Truth's being a Pentecostal. I thought that was really exciting because so many thousands of people, millions of people have empowered themselves in the way Sojourner Truth did, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Nobody's interested in that. I don't understand it.

Q: Do you see a relationship to the criticism of multicultural education and the privilege of unknowing and the relationship to reconstruction history?

Painter: I see a shrinking from all the stuff we have to learn if we're going to give many sorts of people, many racial and ethnic identities, their due. We've got to learn the history of Hawaii and the history of the Koreans and the Japanese and the South Asians. Then we've got to learn the U.S. South Asians and the people who are multiracial. It's too much to learn. That's a kind of privilege of unknowing because it's easier to learn a history that's simplified.

There are some things we just don't want to know. I hope the time is coming when Americans are ready to take another step forward into

revision. I think you can hold onto an understanding of the greatness of American life and the promise of American history and, at the same time, recognize where we came from and the ugliness in our history and the ugliness in the personal histories, as well.

Q: What difficulties do you think you would encounter in writing gay or homosexual biographies?

Painter: I think one difficulty would be the overall identity of gay-lesbian, bisexual, transsexual and transvestite. So, one is that large identity. Then, to give adequate sensitivity to the groups in that larger identity and to understand the relative ranking. This is what I mean by the different levels of subalternness.

For instance, if you're talking about homeless people in the state of Vermont, which gets very cold in the winter, and you're talking about gays or lesbians who are homeless who are living in Vermont, and then you try to lump them together with suburbans living in Silicon Valley or something like that. I guess the question that becomes most difficult when you have a racial, ethnic or other large identity is class differences within and then racial differences within, regional differences within, differences over time.

One challenge that historians and biographers face in slightly different ways is to be sensitive to difference, but also be coherent. In biography, you need a narrative biography that reads well, that makes sense. You don't want a subject that's all fragmented into little bits and pieces of identity or bigotry or transcendence. You need a coherent identity, a coherent individual identity in biography.

In history, you need a narrative line of some sort, or else you just get into the helter-skelter welter of everyday life. What if your life story were all the details of every day of your life? The book would be 99 CD-ROMs, and no one would want to read it. We have to find that coherent story. That's the hard part, to put together complexity and coherence.

Sower Award

Longtime public television manager Ron Hull is the winner of the 2000 Sower Award. The Nebraska Humanities Council's highest honor, the Sower Award recognizes outstanding contributions to public understanding and appreciation of the humanities.

Hull was honored Sept. 7 during a ceremony at Kimball Recital Hall in Lincoln, in conjunction with the 5th Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities.



Ron Hull

Associate general manager of the Nebraska ETV Network and manager of station KUON-TV in Lincoln since 1988, Hull also is a journalism professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

From 1982 to 1988, he was director of the Program Fund for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in Washington, D.C., where he administered some \$40 million in funding support annually to public television stations, independent producers and minority producers for nationally distributed programs.

While in that position, he advocated for the support of important programming in areas ranging from drama, performance and science to cultural affairs, documentaries and biogra-

phy, including such landmark series as "The American Experience" and "Eyes on the Prize." From 1955 to 1982, Hull was assistant general manager of programming at KUON-TV, where he was active in every phase of the development of the nation's seventh ETV station. From 1963 to 1982, he also was program manager for the statewide educational TV network.

Hull has been described as the quintessential champion of the humanities, devoting his professional life and personal life to bringing special presentations in the humanities to television and to building constituencies that will promote the humanities.

Hull was co-executive producer of the highly regarded "In Search of the Oregon Trail," working with producer-writer Michael Farrell to create the program, which has had three prime time PBS broadcasts. He also co-developed a series of six Mark Twain novel dramatizations that were broadcast on TV stations throughout the United States and Europe.

Hull has been especially supportive of Nebraska's native sons and daughters. In creating an archive for hundreds of the best programs produced by NET, he helped to preserve historic interviews with Nebraska writers John G. Neihardt, Mari Sandoz and Wright Morris, actress Sandy Dennis, talk show host Dick Cavett and UNL professors Bernice Slote, Robert Knoll and Virginia Faulkner.



David McCullough to deliver Humanities Lecture in 2001

David McCullough, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and host of public television's "The American Experience," will deliver the 6th Annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities on September 20, 2001, in Omaha.

McCullough has been called a "master of the art" of narrative history. His books have been praised for their exceptional narrative drive, their scholarship and insight into American life and for their literary distinction.

In the words of the citation accompanying his honorary degree from Yale, "As an historian, he paints with words, giving us pictures of the American people that live, breath, and above all, confront the fundamental issues of courage, achievement and moral character."

McCullough is twice winner of the National Book Award and twice winner of the prestigious Francis Parkman Prize. For his monumental "Truman," he received the Pulitzer Prize.

For his work overall, he has been honored by the National Book Foundation Distinguished Contribution to American Letters Award, the National Humanities Medal, the St. Louis Literary Award and the New York Public Library's Literary Lion Award.

His books include "The Johnstown Flood," "The Great Bridge," "The Path Between the Seas," "Mornings on Horseback," "Brave Companions" and "Truman." As may be said of the work of few writers, none of his books has ever been out of print.

In a crowded, productive career, McCullough has been an editor, essayist, teacher, lecturer and a familiar presence on public television as host of "The American Experience" and as narra-

tor of numerous documentaries, including "The Civil War."

He is a past president of the Society of American Historians. He has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and has received 27 honorary degrees.



David McCullough

A gifted speaker, McCullough has lectured in all parts of the country and abroad, as well as at the White House, as part of the White House presidential lecture series. He is also one of the few private citizens to be asked to speak before a joint session of Congress.

Born in Pittsburgh in 1933, McCullough was educated there and at Yale, where he graduated with honors in English literature. An avid reader, landscape painter and Sunday night spaghetti chef, he lives in West Tisbury, Mass., with his wife, Rosalee Barnes McCullough. They have five children and 14 grandchildren.

McCullough's current project is a book about President John Adams, which is scheduled for publication this spring.



Governor's lecture contributors gather at pre-lecture benefit

Supporters of the Governor's Lecture in the Humanities attended a benefit, co-chaired by Allison Petersen and Judy Wilcox, in honor of Nell Irvin Painter. Gathering at the Embassy Suites hotel in Lincoln, they shared an appreciation for the humanities. *Photos by Kelli Kellogg and Tom Ineck.*



Pam Snow (left) and Pam Smith outside Regents Ballroom



Jane Hood (right) greets Dr. and Mrs. Harold Dinsdale and nephew Tom Dinsdale.



Jennifer Severin (left) and Karen Levin



Sen. Billy McCray of Kansas



Nell Irvin Painter (left) with students Nancy Beaner, Marina Mirtcheva and Aileen Altuna



Bryan LeBeau (left) and John O'Keefe



Gov. Mike Johanns with College of St. Mary students (rear, from left) Demetria Oliver, Lucy Ann Sanchez, Arlene Garcia and Marina Mirtcheva and (front, from left) Nancy Beaner and Aileen Altuna



Nell Irvin Painter (left) meets Leola Bullock as Marie and Loyd Fischer look on.



Sheila Stearns (left) with Gary Moulton and Hal Stearns



Norman Krivoshva and Ron Hull



Nell Irvin Painter and Lela Shanks



Anne O'Hara (left) with father, Paul O'Hara, and Sen. LaVon Crosby



L. Dennis Smith (left) and Jack Maddux



James Griesen (left) with Lincoln Mayor Don Wesely and his wife, Ann Marie May



Kelly Coday (left) and Nan Graf



Rick Wallace (left) and Jack Thompson

Cultural Diversity and the University of Nebraska

One of the most important goals among teachers and administrators at all three campuses of the University of Nebraska is to foster diversity and prepare students for the complexities of modern society.

Steps toward that goal can be seen in the curriculum; in student and faculty recruitment and retention; in the creation of a supportive environment; in the creation of commissions and faculty groups; in relationships with historically black colleges and universities; in intercampus cooperation; and in programs, conferences and community initiatives.



Drummer, dancer and artist Dadisi Sanyika of Los Angeles leads an African dance class at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Sanyika also teaches cultural arts classes at local schools as part of UNL's Artist Diversity Residency Program.

The following is an overview of cultural diversity initiatives at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL)

Minority graduate student enrollment at UNL has increased by 96 percent since the initiation of a vigorous recruitment plan in fall of 1989.

Courses specifically aimed at diversity issues have increased dramatically at UNL with the establishment of a requirement in the undergraduate comprehensive education program dealing with race, ethnicity and gender. Courses for this requirement are taught in various colleges.

The College of Arts and Sciences offers interdisciplinary programs in ethnic studies, women's studies, international affairs and Judaic studies. Language offerings emphasize connections with international studies.

The College of Fine and Performing Arts provides a variety of courses that emphasize diversity and multicultural issues and sponsors the Artists Diversity Residency Program to bring minority artists to campus to work with students both in classes and out-of-class settings.

Works by non-Western and minority artists are emphasized, and the program works with nearly

every UNL college, the Lincoln Public Schools, Southeast Community College, other organizations in Lincoln and six high schools in communities outside Lincoln.

Teachers College requires students to take a course addressing diversity issues as they relate to the educational process. Almost every course in the college gives some attention to diversity issues. Every teacher education student is required to complete a one-semester practicum in a school with a high percentage of students of color that mainstreams special education students and includes students from across the socioeconomic spectrum.

The College of Business Administration has focused on the development of programs in the international business area to help sensitize students to international issues. It has worked to infuse content and activities in many classes aimed at that objective.

Native American studies has initiated a network of activities to give structure to UNL's efforts to recruit and retain Native American students and to allow both Native American and non-Native American students to acknowledge and appreciate Nebraska's indigenous cultures.

The College of Law has made a considerable effort to diversify its student body and to provide a supportive atmosphere for minority students. In recent years, more than 10 percent of the college's student body has been minorities.

The Teachers College, the Naval Science Department, the College of Human Resources and Family Sciences and the College of Journalism and Mass Communications have scholarship programs to attract minority students.

The undergraduate enrollment of minority students in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources has increased 122 percent in the last five years, in large part through the establishment of a minority resource/re-

Native American studies has initiated a network of activities to give structure to UNL's efforts to recruit and retain Native American students and to allow both Native American and non-Native American students to acknowledge and appreciate Nebraska's indigenous cultures.

cruitment position funded by the college and the Nebraska 4-H state office.

Through the Student Involvement Office, the Office of Student Affairs supports the Minority Student Development program, which works to generate an environment where minority students can develop and maintain a sense of their cultural heritage, succeed personally and excel academically. The Culture Center houses minority student organizations, fosters a home-like atmosphere and generates student-led programming each year.

The Critical Moments Project, funded by the Woods Charitable Trust and the Cooper Foundation, develops skills in interpersonal communication, critical thinking, cultural diversity, problem solving, writing and oral expression. In small groups, students confront issues complicated by race, class, gender and ability and develop problem-solving strategies that foster greater success.

Modeled after the unique approach of the Goodrich program at UNO, Critical Moments is integrated into courses for first-year students in the University Foundations Program and the Textiles Clothing and Design Department and develops campus leadership on diversity issues.

continued next page

Six graduate departments are involved in the American Sociological Association's Minority Opportunities Through School Transformation (MOST) Program. In addition to UNL students, they work with students and faculty in 18 undergraduate colleges and universities throughout the United States to bring mentoring and other educational experiences to minorities.

The program has expanded to all interested students, but diversity remains an emphasis. One of the major undertakings has been to infuse



Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa speaks at the E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues last spring at the Lied Center for Performing Arts on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus.

diversity issues across the entire curriculum. Supporting the teaching programs is a variety of out-of-class opportunities to learn about cultural diversity.

For example, the Culture Center and the Office of Student Involvement host speakers and sponsor such events as the Native American Pow Wow, Chicano Awareness Week, black history programs and international events such as Saigon Night, Malaysia Night, Night in the Orient, India Night and the International Bazaar.

The Cooper Foundation lecture series, in conjunction with International Affairs and the Di-

vision of Continuing Studies, promotes a worldview on the part of UNL students and the many who view these lectures over state-wide satellite transmission.

Educational materials for the study of diversity are available through the University Library, which has a multicultural collection that includes "Ethnic Newswatch" on CD-ROM and the Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History. University Television also has materials valuable to the study of diversity.

The Chancellor's Commission on the Status of People of Color works with UNL administrators and the UNL director of affirmative action and diversity to advise, council and recommend actions on the status of people of color.

UNL's College of Human Resources, through grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, fostered relationships with Tuskegee Institute, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Tennessee State University and Virginia State University. At the heart of the program are student and faculty exchange, graduate student and faculty development in the areas of diversity and technology.

Cooperative Extension's Family Community Leadership Program is aimed at improving the quality of rural life. A recent emphasis has been on multicultural representation, with a Native American team from Winnebago and Macy and Hispanic teams providing leadership training in communities statewide.

The Division of Continuing Studies provides for the study of diversity through its Independent Study High School for students all over the world. Among the specific courses it offers are "Ethnic Studies" and "Multicultural Literature." A division-sponsored national conference on people of color in predominantly white institutions attracted participants from 20 states and Canada.

The Goodrich Scholarship Program, an academically rigorous program for financially disadvantaged students, is UNO's prime example of cultural diversity at all levels – faculty, staff and students across a two-year curriculum. The program has won two national awards and a NU system award for its multicultural curriculum.

The Institute for Ethnic Studies provides leadership in research initiatives that foster diversity and multiple perspectives. Specific initiatives include research on quality of life issues for people of color in Nebraska communities, participatory community research, research on youth at risk, research on homeless youth and health-risk behavior among youth of color.

The Office of Graduate Studies initiated the Ethnic Minority Graduate Research Symposium, which showcases the research of graduate students of color and of those researching minority issues.

The Larson Minority Graduate Fellowship helps to defray the travel expenses of graduate students of color who will present results of their research at regional or national professional meetings.

The office also coordinates the Summer Undergraduate Research Opportunities program, which provides stipends to undergraduate students who are conducting research with faculty mentors. This program, along with the Ronald E. McNair Program, is aimed at students from ethnically underrepresented groups and students from low-income and first-generation-in-college backgrounds.

University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO)

UNO defines its critical role as an urban university in a city where the majority of the state's ethnic minorities live.

Ever mindful of the school's place and role, UNO Chancellor Nancy Belck three years ago initiated a strategic plan that clearly delineates cultural diversity as one of its priorities. It is addressed administratively through monitoring of faculty and staff hiring.

UNO has made efforts to recruit and hire a culturally diverse faculty and staff. It also has made progress increasing the enrollment of students of color, especially Hispanics. Inner-city student enrollment also has increased.

The academic program in the College of Arts and Sciences, which has long housed the black studies department, was bolstered with minors in Latino studies and Native American studies.

Since its inception, the College of Public Affairs and Community Service has been multicultural. It continues this tradition with its unique blend of multicultural faculty and staff and its long-term relationship with Omaha's ethnic communities. It also is the home base of the Goodrich Scholarship Program.

A 28-year-old, academically rigorous program for financially disadvantaged students, the Goodrich Scholarship Program remains UNO's prime example of cultural diversity reflected at all levels – in faculty, staff and students across a two-year curriculum.

The program has won two national awards and a NU system award for its multicultural curriculum: The Noel-Levitz Award in 1991, the NADE award in 1999 and the university-wide, \$25,000 Departmental Teaching Award in 1997.

continued next page

The state provides \$1 million a year to fund the Goodrich Scholarship Program. About half of the funding goes for scholarships and the other half for faculty and staff. The program admits 70 students a year, about 55 percent of whom are minority students.

Individual departmental programs in UNO's eight colleges teach courses in cultural diversity, most of which satisfy UNO's cultural diversity requirements for graduation.

The strategic plan is student-centered, with much attention focused on student recruitment and retention of students of color. To this end, the areas of student affairs programming and support services have been restructured and relocated to ensure accessibility and user-friendliness to all students.

Diane Ariza recently was hired as director of multicultural affairs. For students of color, her office offers the M.A.S.T.E.R. Success Program and Early Monitoring Program, two student-retention initiatives.

The former provides the opportunity to match first-year multicultural students with upper-class multicultural students for the academic year, while the latter is designed to provide monitoring and mentoring to fulltime, first-year students of color and students on scholarship.

Leadership councils for African-American, Latino and other people of color have brought community expertise to the UNO campus. These community leaders offer advice on how to improve minority student enrollment and retention.

To ensure student retention and academic success at UNO, Project Achieve monitors the academic progress of its multicultural students and institutes programs to ensure their social well-being. Student programming also has been uniquely multicultural, from sponsoring Native

Minority applications for teaching positions at UNO were up 26 percent, and the hiring of minority faculty increased by 76 percent in the last year, adding tenure-track faculty members of Hispanic, Native American, African-American and Asian-American heritage.

American dances and heritage celebrations to Black History Month events to Hispanic Awareness Week events.

Pathways to Harmony is a series of workshops in diversity training for UNO faculty, staff and students. The workshops help participants to identify culturally insensitive behavior, to discover cultural barriers to communication, to understand and respect cultural differences, and to affirm the values of openness, social justice and respect for the individual.

Minority applications for teaching positions were up 26 percent, and the hiring of minority faculty increased 76 percent in the last year, adding tenure-track faculty members of Hispanic, Native American, African-American and Asian-American heritage.

University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK)

Chancellor Gladys Styles Johnston has continued consultations with faculty to discuss diversity issues at UNK and in the community, and she has created a growing number of scholarships for minority students.

As a result, two new offices have been created – multicultural affairs and international affairs. In the last year, more than \$150,000 in tuition waivers was awarded to international and minority students.

All UNK students are required to take six hours of cultural diversity courses in the general studies curriculum.

Minority faculty members have created the Minority Faculty Cultural Alliance. In the 1998-1999 school year, six of 10 new tenured faculty members were females or minorities, and seven of 17 tenured faculty members were females or minorities. Forty-nine percent of all faculty hired between 1998 and 2000 were minority teachers.

Minority and international student groups receive institutional support to attend conferences that foster leadership skills and refine strategies to promote cultural diversity.

During the 1999-2000 school year, UNK started targeted recruitment outreach campaigns through various offices to increase awareness of UNK through more frequent activities with minority populations.

With the emphasis on recruitment and retention of minority teachers and students, the offices of academic affairs and student affairs have increased contact with minority populations in Omaha, Lexington, Grand Island, Lincoln, Scottsbluff and the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

The College of Fine Arts and Humanities has initiated connections with groups in Omaha that can bring college faculty into contact with prospective students and families.

The College of Education has intensified work to attract minority students in central Nebraska to education careers.

The admissions office has brought groups of Hispanic and Asian-American students from Lexington, Grand Island and Hastings to UNK for recruitment visits and plans to expand the program to Omaha, Lincoln and Scottsbluff.

Visits to high schools and communities by faculty, staff and students also have increased.

By special arrangement with Boys Town in Omaha, UNK has begun a cooperative program designed to enroll and support minority and disadvantaged students from that institution.



The English Language Institute of the University of Nebraska at Kearney is open to all qualified students who wish to learn English in a nurturing environment.

Colleges have improved activities to mentor to multicultural students and faculty.

The office of international education collaborated with a Japanese student recruitment organization to bring Japanese students to UNK.

The annual James E. Smith World Affairs Conference draws ethnically diverse artists and scholars to UNK.

Fall orientation programs for minority and international students have been established.



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