

Document A

One ploy on the part of today's conservatives is to celebrate and exaggerate the gains of the movement precisely in order to reverse that progress. [...] A second group that has exerted considerable influence upon the public memory of the civil rights era is composed of those who seek to domesticate the movement, homogenize it, make it universally palatable. They delete from the movement's history its troublesome radical outcroppings, subordinate its communal character to tales of individual heroism, and make the narrative into a story of American triumphalism. [...] The memory of the movement is also contested in the popular culture and in its commercial appropriation. Debate has swirled around the portrayal of President Lyndon Johnson in Ava DuVernay's feature film *Selma*. Some have complained that the film slights Johnson by portraying him as a grudging supporter of their movement and even, in some instances, a petty, vindictive adversary. [...]

The Civil Rights Movement should be a source of pride and inspiration. It should not, however, be the basis for uncritical triumphalism. Even its best leaders sometimes erred or displayed deficiencies in character or sensibility. The movement was marred by retrograde prejudices in its own ranks. Despite the contributions of Rosa Parks, Septima Clark, Ella Baker, Dorothy Height, Fannie Lou Hamer, and countless other women, no woman was allowed to give any of the major addresses at the March on Washington. Roy Wilkins, executive director of the NAACP, disliked Bayard Rustin and James Baldwin, not just because they were radical, but because they were gay. King put himself and his associates in jeopardy by recklessly carrying on extramarital affairs that gave his enemies ammunition with which to intimidate him. That they failed is partly due to sheer luck. After magnificently challenging racism in the most dangerous precincts of the Deep South, Stokely Carmichael and his colleagues in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) succumbed to the impatience, stupidity, and hubris that gave rise to the Black Power slogan, which mischievously vexed the movement from 1966 onward. Nothing in the history of the civil rights era is more doleful than SNCC's descent. It began as an organization open to anyone committed to challenging racism through defiant, dignified, peaceful protest. It ended as a clique of narrow-minded, blacker-than-thou ideologues who, having gotten rid of all the white members, proceeded to turn on one another.

Another cautionary lesson can be derived from the story of the Black Panther Party. Its founders, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, rightly perceived police misconduct to be a major problem in black neighborhoods and aggressively sought to address mistreatment, by policing the police. Unfortunately, the Panthers discredited themselves with obnoxious rhetoric ("Off the pigs!") and a hankering for association with third-world dictatorships (Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Castro). The Panthers also naïvely underestimated their enemies, dabbling with provocative gestures that gave police—local, state, and federal—all of the cover needed to rationalize a brutal campaign of repression.

We should, by all means, recall the reformers who conducted themselves admirably in ways that beckon emulation. However, we need to remember, too, the bad behavior. The Civil Rights era teaches yet again that oppression provides to victims no magical inoculation against vice, thoughtlessness, and bigotry. The movement did not always succeed, even in its heyday.

The record of the Civil Rights Movement, then, is mixed. As Professor Tom Sugrue aptly observes, it "is full of paradoxes and ambiguities, of unfinished battles and devastating defeats." How successful was it? The answer depends on the baseline of measurement. Viewed through the prism of King's most ambitious demands, or Malcolm X's ultimatums, or the agenda of the Black Panther Party, or the reversals being experienced today at the hands of reactionary legislators and courts, the movement's accomplishments may seem transient and disappointing. On the other hand, viewed through the prism of the demands voiced in the important anthology *What the Negro Wants* (1944) or the report of President Harry S. Truman's Committee on Civil Rights (1947), or the protests in Montgomery (1955), Birmingham (1963), and Selma (1965), the movement's achievements appear much more impressive.

In my view, the Civil Rights Movement is one of the most inspiring examples of mass dissent in world history. It typically sought worthy ends, fought for those goals with high intelligence and laudable ethics, and succeeded in attaining major reforms that continue to benefit American society. The limitations of its achievements are evident. With respect to practically every indicator of well-being, a substantial gap continues to separate blacks and whites. Narrowing these gaps is a daunting

enterprise. We can, however, take heart from what our forebears were able to achieve. The memory of the movement's history, like all history, will remain contested. But if we are to continue to pursue the movement's unfinished business, we need to remember accurately what cannot be denied.

Randall Kennedy, "The Civil Rights Movement and the Politics of Memory," *American Prospect*, May 12, 2015.

Document B

Breakaway bottles used as props in fake saloon fights, posters for grade-B movies, a Hopalong Cassidy board game, Annie Oakley's pistols, Gary Cooper's toupee and a diorama of the O.K. Corral shootout: this is what you might expect to find in a museum founded by America's Favorite Singing Cowboy, Gene Autry. And here, at the Museum of the American West (formerly the Autry Museum of Western Heritage) in Griffith Park, nostalgic film buffs and aficionados of cowboy culture will find it all, much of it associated with an entertainer whose reputation was made with a guitar and a saddle, but whose greatest hit was a 1949 rendition of "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" that sold more than 30 million copies.

That is why it seemed so bizarre when, in 2003, the Autry Museum, with its \$100 million endowment, absorbed the Southwest Museum of the American Indian, with its neglected world-class collection of 250,000 objects associated with once-flourishing tribes. This takeover caused much consternation. It wasn't just the old cowboy-versus-Indian battle recurring in modern commercial form. It was the triumph of the phony cinematic West over its authentic past, with Hollywood's stage sets winning out over relics so neglected through the decades that many had been assaulted by mold, mildew and insect infestation.

But something is needed other than these comfortable formulas to account for what the Museum of the American West has already become. In the next few years it has the potential to map out a new form of historical museum in the United States, one that is neither an intoxicated celebration of Western fantasy — turning itself into another stage set in a fictionalized drama — nor romanticized recompense for those who lost out in the conflict, as is now so often the case; sadly, the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington set the standard for a new indulgent, sentimental tone of Indian self-celebration.

The possibility of a new kind of museum is apparent here. Mr. Autry's original goal when the museum opened in 1988 was to "exhibit and interpret the heritage of the West and show how it has influenced America and the world." But that heritage is complicated. [...]

Portraying the intersection of cultures has its own dangers: hypersensitivity, endless qualification and overly tentative exploration. But there is something about the Museum of the American West that makes this goal eminently plausible. The museum successfully mixes realism and fantasy, skepticism and enthusiasm.

Its first half is given over to fantasies of the West on stage and screen. But distortions are made clear in the midst of the celebration: the real West and the illusory West intertwine. Western figures, like Buffalo Bill, turn themselves into stage legends, while Annie Oakley, who was neither born nor reared in the West, becomes the archetypal Western woman.

In a display of movie costumes, a label reads that designers and producers "create their own visions of the West and Westerners," often providing "illusions of authenticity." Another display points out that in the "myth of the Hollywood western," "early Hollywood cowboys were hard-working, polite to the ladies, honest and patriotic to the core." Their corny cinematic tales became known as "horse operas" and "oaters." Props in B movies made their way from jungle films to westerns with minimal alteration: "Historians of the 'real' old West sometimes find such compromises to be maddening," one label playfully points out, "but as the saying goes, 'That's Hollywood!'"

So for all the memorabilia, there is no chance here that illusion will be left intact. But there is also great affection for the idea of the West mixed in with the criticism, and a great respect too for the passions it inspired. Those passions helped make the mythmaking possible. They also carry over into the next part of the museum, where history holds sway. The romance of the West is given its due in displays of marshal badges and Colt revolvers, in a life-size stagecoach and a mess wagon. So are its darker aspects, with a “legacy of pain and prejudice.”

“Conquest and settlement of the West in the 19th century inevitably meant destruction of native peoples and their ways of life,” reads one label. “By killing off millions of bison and by confining tribes to reservations, Americans dominated the West.” Warfare, the museum notes, caused suffering “on both sides” and “the permanent alteration of the land.”

You can sense throughout an attempt to look over the shoulder, to test out the formulations from differing perspectives, sometimes with too much strain, sometimes with great skill. Given its origins as well as its future, the museum has a continuing challenge: it must remain true to its enthusiasms and faithful to ever-expanding historical understanding. It must incorporate, sympathize, comprehend, mourn and celebrate. Extremes are to be avoided: mythmaking — like a stilted life-size diorama of the shootout at the O.K. Corral — is the antidote to cynicism. Skepticism — accounts of, say, the suffering of Chinese immigrants in the West — is an antidote to fantasy.

And somehow the bizarre mixture of spectacle and sobriety has an impact: the portrait of the West begins to become nuanced. But nothing is relativized. The nuance doesn’t mean withholding judgment; it means exploring complication.

Edward Rothstein, “Cowboys and Indians Reconsidered: The Mythic West, Lassoed In by Reality,” *The New York Times*, November 6, 2006.

Document C

The primacy of English as the medium of instruction in the U.S. university retains a powerful hold on teaching and learning, curtailing the development both materially and programmatically of a multilingual curriculum. Take, for example, Hampshire College, surely known for its progressive education. In 1994, a third of the curriculum consisted of courses in “cultural diversity,” and yet there were no “foreign” language courses at all. In contemporary English studies, while English-language writers across the global diaspora and works of world literature in English translation are widely read, there is no apparent institutional or critical space for the vast nonanglophone literature written in the United States. [...]

In the field of writing studies, until quite recently there has been very little discussion of writing in languages other than English in composition classrooms, and the writing that takes place in Spanish, French, German, Chinese, Arabic, and other language courses has remained largely invisible, both conceptually and pro- grammatically. For this reason, the question “Should We Invite Students to Write in Home Languages? Complicating the Yes/No Debate,” raised by Peter Elbow and coauthors (Bean et al.), is especially noteworthy because it focuses attention on potentially productive relations between English and other languages and dialects in composition. Nonetheless, the trajectory of writing instruction, for Elbow at least, remains largely unidirectional, with composing in a mother tongue represented not in terms of biliteracy but as a move toward a finished essay in English. In another recent experiment in cross-language relations, Isis Artze-Vega, Elizabeth Doud, and Belkys Torres have developed strategies for a bilingual composition pedagogy at the University of Miami, using bilingual texts, journals, freewriting, and class discussion in Spanish, and bilingual writing assignments in the style of Gloria Anzaldúa that call on students to embed Spanish (or other languages) in predominantly English compositions. To my mind, this latter work is particularly significant because, by figuring Spanish as a medium of writing equal to English, it begins to address

ex- plicitly the status of languages in the writing classroom and the problem of language policy in the writing curriculum.

The question traditionally asked in writing studies is how cross-language relations inhibit or facilitate students' mastery of academic literacy in English. I think the question needs to be changed, to ask instead how such available linguistic resources can be tapped to promote biliteracy and multilingualism. I want to imagine a new configuration of languages in the U.S. university and in U.S. college composition that realigns the old Anglo-American linguistic dyad, making English not the center but the linking language in multilingual writing programs, multilingual universities, and a multilingual polity. To do this would require a shift from the unidirectional and subtractive monolingualism that has long dominated writing programs in the modern U.S. university to an active and additive multilingualism in which a range of languages are involved as the medium of writing, as the medium of instruction across the university curriculum, and as the medium of deliberation in the public sphere.

I realize that the Anglo-American linguistic dyad is a coalition of the willing and that English monolingualism exerts a strong undertow on how we think about other languages. But it is precisely for this reason that, as Geneva Smitherman argued in 1987, academics in speech, language, and writing studies need to "take up the unfinished business of the Committee on the Students' Right to Their Own Language" by calling for a national public policy on language that would (1) teach standard edited English as the language of wider communication, (2) recognize the legitimacy of nonmainstream languages and dialects and promote mother tongues, along with English, as the medium of instruction, and (3) promote the learning of one or more additional languages, such as Spanish or other relevant languages. The exact configuration of languages to be studied and learned will depend on individual interest and local circumstances. The key point for Smitherman is that the "three-prong policy [. . .] constitutes an inseparable whole" (31) that is meant to change the status of languages in the United States by reconfiguring their relation to one another.

What Smitherman's proposal for a national language policy makes clear is that multilingualism does not mean simply affirming the linguistic rights of minority language groups to use their own language as they see fit. Certainly, a national public policy on language must defend such rights, which have never been fully recognized in the United States. As I see it, however, multilingualism signifies more than the tolerance of many languages. It also entails the status planning of languages and an additive language policy whereby all students as a matter of course speak, write, and learn in more than one language and all citizens thereby become capable of communicating with one another in a number of languages, code-switching as appropriate to the rhetorical situation. The goal of such a national language policy, I believe, goes beyond a discourse of linguistic rights to imagine the abolition of English monolingualism altogether and the creation in its place of a linguistic culture where being multilingual is both normal and desirable, as it is throughout much of the world. If anything, the multilingual language policy I'm advocating would loosen the identification of language with racialized and ethnic groups by putting multiple languages into circulation as means of participating in public life and linguistic resources of reciprocal exchange.

John Trimbur, "Linguistic Memory and the Politics of U.S. English," *College English*, Volume 68, Number 6, July 2006.